

Camden Kiefer and Hailey Bishop Project Report

In the fall, Camden and I were assigned to choose a way to be civically engaged for our civics class. Our teacher, Kelly Van Hout, presented us with a few problems faced at Hinsdale High School that could be improved, but we decided to look more at the problems faced within our community. Darien lacks a true downtown area, and being part of this community, we hoped to bring about a more social gathering place for our town. So, we partook in bringing about a better sense of community in Darien by initiating the development of a seasonal farmers' market! The hope is to help local businesses, support citizens, and come together as a whole.

During this endeavor, we worked with the help of our classmates to do research, communicate with surrounding communities, and present our findings. Through communicating with other towns via email, phone calls, etc; we gained information about their vendors, products, profits, location, times, age groups that attended, and any other events that may take place there. Representatives from La Grange and Naperville, two towns near Darien, gave us testimonial benefits of how their local farmers market impacted and affected their communities. Nancy Cummings from the La Grange Business Association reported that this "...drives foot traffic to our central business district which impacts our restaurant or retail revenue". In addition, Kathy Mortenson, the Communications/Market Director of Naperville, shared that "[o]ur farmers market is 33 years old, being one of the first farmers markets". We were blown away at how much it has become a part of their community, as having a farmers' market around that long definitely means it's something citizens look forward to every week! The input of other towns really helped create a convincing argument for our farmers' market. Being able to express and show the impact that these markets bring to towns helped gain support from our following community members to move forward on this project!

As another part of our research, we decided to survey the community to get their opinions on creating a farmers market. Creating this survey couldn't have happened at a better time! With Halloween right around the corner, we had the advantage of asking locals to complete this survey about their opinion on a farmers' market in our community. We created a small sheet of paper briefly explaining our intentions and attached a QR code to candy that we passed out. Neighbors were greeted with a smile and a brief introduction to this project, while

also grabbing a few tasty treats. The results of this survey were phenomenal! Over 120 people completed this survey, and we found that close to 90% of people who took it thought that a farmers' market would be beneficial to their communities. Locals agree that having a social gathering spot nearby for all ages would definitely have positive effects on the community.

The presentation we created consisted of graphs and pie charts from our survey, as well as aerial views of possible locations that would be most beneficial in terms of size and location so that we could also focus on bringing revenue to the local businesses. Some towns held theirs near the train tracks, while other towns held theirs near a restaurant that brought in lots of revenue, local community park, etc. Although we don't have a railroad in our community, we still had many good ideas for locations we could possibly host our market. We presented the idea of possibly having the farmers' market in Hinsdale South High School's parking lot, local grocers, or the town's community park in Darien, Illinois. All would be great places to have it, as they all fall on busy streets and have many businesses around them. The purpose/benefits of having a farmers' market were also included in this presentation. Many would benefit from having healthier, organic grown food, complimentary fitness classes, a place to come together as a community, and a great social interaction spot for people of all ages! One local farmers market even offered bingo and story time, making this friendly for a variety of age groups. There were so many great ideas, as well as lots of statistics, put into our presentation!

Once we created this slideshow, we presented it to the teachers/advisors at Hinsdale South and were provided with feedback. After refining our presentation, we invited the Mayor of Darien, Joe Marchese, to our school to hear our idea, presented by Camden and I. He enjoyed it so much that he asked us to present it again at a city hall meeting! A month or so later, we went to the City Hall and gave our presentation to the members of the city council. We answered their questions, and they were impressed as well! The city council hooked us up with the Darien Citizens Action Committee, whom we presented to on a Saturday morning in February. This Darien Citizens Action Committee is composed of citizens that represent many different civic organizations in Darien, such as the Darien Lions Club or the Rotary Club. They are very interested in this project since it would help support local businesses and citizens, as well as promote/help the community to become more engaged with each other. We recognize that this is a big undertaking, but the members of this committee are able to help with the logistics of beginning a farmers' market, and are willing to help make this a

reality! Mayor Joe Marchese adored our intentions of improving our community and roles of civic virtue shown, leading us to success. Moving forward with the coordination of the Darien Citizens Actions Committee, we are hoping to have the Farmers Market up and running in 2023!

Through this project, we have learned a sense of teamwork, community, independence, discipline, involvement, and most of all, civic engagement. We also learned a lot about how the process of democracy works. Being young students and being involved in our community is so important, as it gives a sense of change, courage and confidence. We can't wait to be given more opportunities to help improve our community!

Camden Kiefer and Hailey Bishop Principles Essay

E Pluribus Unum, or “out of many, one”, represents the true meaning of what it means to live and be a citizen in the United States. Expanding on this, E Pluribus Unum represents the theme of the U.S. being one nation as a whole, and in a general sense, our nation being a community. We, as members of this community, are forever devoting ourselves to acting on our nation's civic virtues and founding principles stated in the Bill of Rights, serving our united community through many selfless acts. During the first semester of the 2022 school year, we were fortunate enough to be taught about these values and principles, and further to use them in our service learning project: bringing a farmer's market to our city of Darien, Illinois! While many of the civic values and founding principles were used, the civic value of “courage” and the founding principle of “democracy” were both largely found throughout the course of our project.

The civic value of courage can come in many different ways, both big and small. In our service learning project, courage was shown through speaking to new people, both in big and small groups. Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's not out of the question to say that many people's communication skills have deteriorated in the past few years. Teenagers have definitely been affected in this way, especially with all of the different forms of technological communication we have now. So between not getting to and not having to talk in front of or to many new people extensively in the past few years, the speaking part of the project came to be a bit nerve racking sometimes. But, we powered through those nerves and showed courage through it all! The first signs of courage in our project were

shown in finding information to use in our presentation. In the creation of our presentation for our project, we had to talk to representatives from other towns' farmers' markets and find out what made their farmers' markets so special. Once this presentation was finished, that's where the courage in this project was very visible- in public speaking! This presentation was shown three times: once to the mayor, once to the City Council of Darien (and the spectators of the meeting), and once to the Darien Citizens Action Committee. All three of these presentations were so different from each other and pretty nerve racking, as we were sophomores in high school talking to adults who could make or break our project. We also faced challenges throughout these presentations that could make anyone pretty nervous, such as difficult questions being asked about our project or having a presenter missing one day and having to cover for them. In conclusion, courage was exerted in many different ways throughout the course of our service learning project.

Democracy, a founding principle of the United States of America, could also be found in the process of our service learning project. Our wonderful civics teacher, Mrs. Van Hout, has a poster hanging in her classroom that stands out compared to the others. On this poster, a quote: "Democracy is a verb". This takes on a different meaning than what we typically think about democracy. Instead of democracy being a system or form of government, which many picture when thinking of it, democracy now becomes more inclusive within the community and action-oriented! It made me and many of my classmates realize that democracy is really a responsibility that citizens have to that democratic community. Yes, the government will listen to the will of the people, but only if it's made known. Democracy is taking action to improve your community, no matter how long it takes to do so or how vigorous the task is. Our experience was very time consuming, as we'd take many days and weeks out of class to make our service learning project happen! Democracy was seen within in the early processes just as much as the later ones, as research and planning our presentation to become informed citizens are responsibilities in a democracy! Our tango with democracy didn't stop there, though. Later in the process, we got into the much more obvious and well known stages of democracy: presenting to the leaders of the community of Darien! As mentioned earlier, our presentation was given three different times: once to the mayor, once to the Darien City Council, and once to the Darien Citizens Action Committee. This means that we were able to communicate with our local government in Darien to help make this project a possibility. Within this process, the aldermen, as well as the mayor, city clerk, and

treasurer, had to vote after our presentation to officially be able to continue with the idea of the farmers' market for Darien. Now, many got to see our act of democracy unfold- by seeing the community leaders elected by the will of the people, voting in favor of the will of the people! It was awesome seeing these actions take place, and even more awesome that all 10 city council members agreed that a farmers' market would be beneficial to Darien! Democracy was such a large part of our project, and we learned so much about the verb and what it truly means throughout the course of our project!

When it comes to "E Pluribus Unum", our project can definitely be seen as an example of it. "Out of many, one" - out of many ideas, ours was the one that became a reality! It wouldn't have been possible without the hours upon hours of dedication put in by many more than just us two (shoutout to the awesome staff members who were a part of this), as well as help from our classmates and the community members/leaders to make this project actually come to life! Right now, the Darien Citizens Action Committee is working tirelessly alongside us to make the farmers market happen sooner rather than later. Our service learning project has given us experiences and lessons that will last a lifetime, as it helped us learn so much about what it means to be a good citizen in our community, as well as more about democracy and courage! We cannot wait for our farmers' market to make its debut!