

## **Recruiting, Training and Retaining-Students Election Workers!**

**RESEARCH:** Traditionally Martin County poll workers are 65-80 years of age. But the Martin County of Elections office wanted to change that trend, and have all polling precincts mixed with young and old workers. It was then decided to develop a campaign targeting high school and college students to work the polls on Election Day, to accomplish the goal of having Election Day workers as young as 16 work the polls, with our senior workers. The Deputy of Elections Outreach contacted other Florida counties to determine best practices for the recruitment of younger workers. This research led to creating a focus group with generation Y staff members, high school Youth in Government students, School Districts-Social Studies Coordinator, School Districts-Volunteer Coordinator, a high school history teacher and a college professor to identify the best methods for recruitment of student workers. The focus group identified: 1) students did not realize they would be paid to work the polls; 2) if pre-registered to vote in the state of Florida, students are able to work at the age of 16; and, 3) and excused absence and extra credit would be granted by teachers participating students in the campaign, 4) students needed training classes after 5pm and on weekends, due to school schedules. After brainstorming, a “Work the Polls” campaign was created!

**OBJECTIVES:** The following **4** objectives were created to engage students to work the polls on Election Day: **(1)** Develop a campaign to communicate reasons for college and high school students to work Election Day; **(2)** Increase the number of student poll workers-starting from a base of zero **(3)** To educate and create a true sense of civic pride within a demographic traditionally not participating in the elections process; and, **(4)** To serve Martin County voters in a courteous and efficient manner, with an intergenerational team of workers in the precinct, **(5)** Offer training classes that work around their school and work schedules.

**IMPLEMENTATION:** The first phase of the campaign was communicating the **need** for student poll workers to representatives of Martin County School Board, Hobe Sound Bible College, and Indian River

State College. After presenting research, representatives granted permission to contact college and high school sponsors.

The second phase of the campaign was to hold meetings with sponsors and students from the following schools: South Fork High School, Martin County High School, Jensen Beach High School, Clark Advanced Learning Center, Hobe Sound Bible College, Pine School and Indian River State College. Sponsors and students received information for the “Work the Polls” campaign. For student recruitment a purpose, a link was added to the Elections Center’s website (Under our Voter Outreach tab) displaying a **“Work the Polls” video**- created by student interns, allowing students to view the video from their electronic devices. Additionally, the Clark Advanced Learning Center displayed a “Work the Polls” message on their digital marquee and Indian River State College placed the “Work the Polls” video on their homepage which made for an easily accessible link to MartinVotes.com, where students requested an application. Six (**6**) voter registration drives were held on school campuses with students registering to vote and signing up to “Work the Polls.” The Deputy of Elections Outreach also visited classrooms and presented information and answered questions regarding “Working the Polls” on Election Day. The Volunteer Coordinator for the School District, sent emails, phone messages and text messages to all eligible students.



**EVALUATION:** This voter awareness campaign fulfilled and continues to fulfill all objectives. Students from South Fork High School’s Youth in Government who “Worked the Polls” on Election Day utilized the monies they earned for a trip to the State Capitol. One student was featured in a news article and shared her experience working the polls. Robert Farley, a History Professor at Indian River State College, recruited **23** students to “Work the Polls” plus, we have recruited students as interns at the Elections Center, as a result of the “Working the Polls” campaign. Additionally, students have written testimonials about their Election Day experience and the Deputy of Elections Outreach has shared the success of this best practice, during the Florida State Association of Supervisors of Elections conference. In summary, all 28 polling precincts in Martin County have student’s ages **16-30** served their local community as “gatekeepers of democracy” by processing voters quickly and efficiently on Election Day. These students

receive excused absences from school, extra credit on their final exams and leave with a new appreciation of the elections process. We also continue to successfully **retain** students who have graduated from high school & college and remain local, as permanent Election Workers!

**Budget:** Work the Polls video - no cost - created in house by student interns-recruited to “Work The Polls”; Staff time - Deputy of Elections Outreach working full-time for 4 months at 40 hours a weeks. Recruited, trained and retained younger and energetic poll workers, creating an intergenerational group of Election Day workers in ALL Martin County polling precincts Election Day = **PRICELESS!**

Support Material

Student Election Workers



Some Student Election Workers



Election Worker Training-High School Students, College Students and Senior Workers

Navigate Our Site

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- Election Worker Information
- Vote By Mail Information
- Community Outreach
- In the News
- Work the Polls
- Transit Services
- Adopt a Precinct
- Awards Received
- Community Calendar

# Work the Polls



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Work the Polls Video-MartinVotes.com



Students attending tech training



Voter Drive to recruit student election workers



Student Intern/Election Worker