

Americana for Children

FAWCO Conference
Dublin, Ireland
March 23, 2012



What is Americana?

Program that seeks to ground American expatriate children in the history and traditions of American life and culture



Some Sample Songs:

"Over the River and Through the Woods"

"Oh Susannah"

"Three Cheers for the Red, White, and Blue"

"America"



Why Americana?

Most American children living overseas -- even if attending American schools— often do not have the opportunity to learn key aspects of American life and culture including:

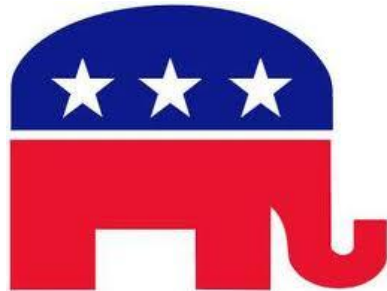


- the Pledge of Allegiance
- our national anthem
- traditional American songs
- traditions about our country, our flag, our culture
- American history



Without Americana . . .

children can often feel like “foreigners”
when they return to the United States



What is Americana?

A monthly, hour-long program to teach expatriate American children ages of 3-10 those things about the United States that most Americans learn through simple exposure while growing up in the United States. (And to inspire them to do more research.)



How did it start?

- Grew out of nascent American Women's Association in Dubai in 1991
- Inspired by one woman's story of how her brother in the US took her son to a baseball game
- Wanted to fill gaps in our children's education—gaps that existed even if children attended American schools overseas

Result: Americana for Children



Who develops and presents programs?

VOLUNTEERS

- People from diverse backgrounds, nationalities, professions and educational backgrounds; parents, non-parents; parents with young children, grown children
- All interested in deepening own knowledge of American history and culture and sharing it with our children



Are special skills necessary?

Not at all. We **all** have things to offer.

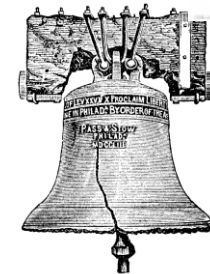
Individuals always needed who:

- can teach
- can sing or play instruments
- like to present and perform
- can lead and engage children in activities
- like to develop presentations and materials
- are tech savvy
- can brainstorm

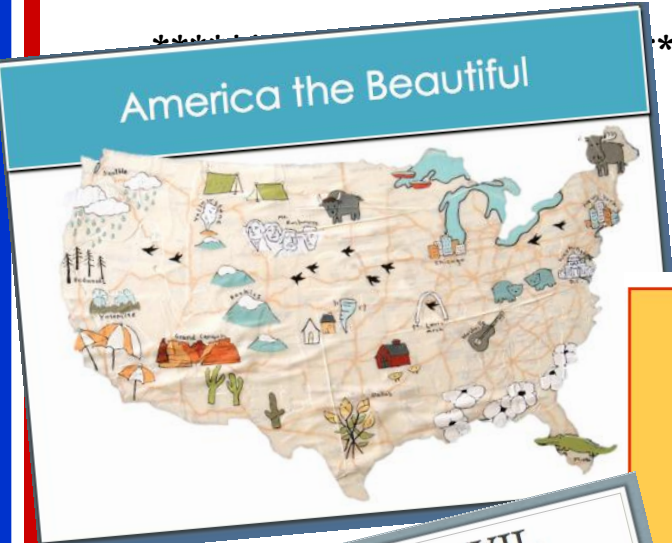


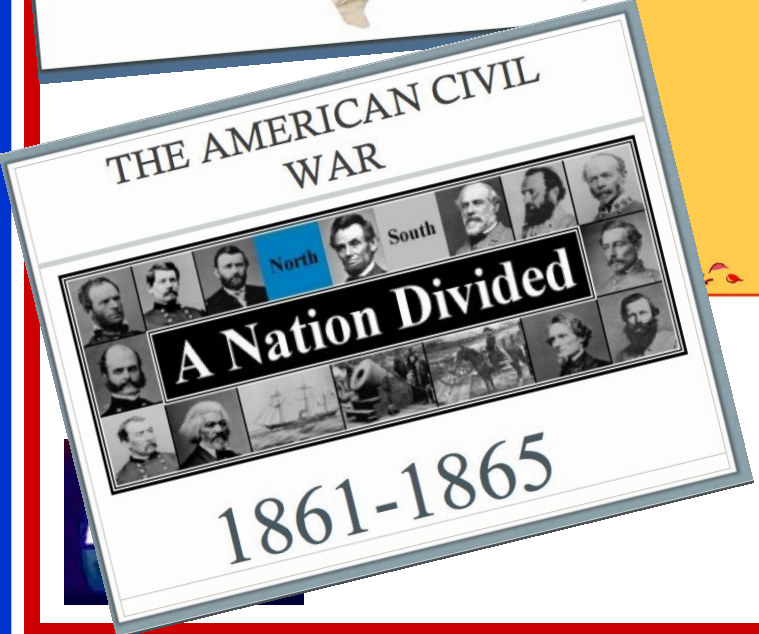
What are programs about?

- National holidays (Columbus Day, Thanksgiving)
- Historic events (Pony Express, Presidential Elections)
- Cultural celebrations (Black History, Melting Pot, Cowboys)
- Famous people (Presidents, Explorers, Inventors)
- Geography & symbols of the US (America the Beautiful)
- Our flag
- US currency



Sample Topics





- The **Underground** Railroad was not a train but **routes** slaves took to escape to the North and to homes (stations) where people risked their lives to help them.

A map titled "THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD" showing the routes of the Underground Railroad across the United States. The map uses color-coding: green for "FREE STATES & TERRITORIES" and blue for "SLAVE STATES". Red arrows indicate the "UNDERGROUND RAILROAD ROUTES" leading from the slave states in the South towards the free states and Canada in the North.

Tone & Focus

- Positive and relevant to children
- Focus on spirit and ideals that unite us
- Emphasize multitudes of things that are great, unique, and interesting about the US
- Provide opportunities for participants to learn, reflect, and enjoy



Basic Program Development

- Select topic and research or use prepared program
- Determine content (what info & who will present)
- Develop related materials (visuals, props, costumes)
- Select songs & related activity (game, craft, skit)
- Plan format/flow of session
- Prepare program handout for parents including song lyrics, national anthem, and pledge + relevant graphics



Basic Program Components

- Flag ceremony (done by children)
- Pledge of Allegiance & National Anthem
- Program/presentation for children, as interactive as possible
- Music and activities related to theme
- State of the Month (optional)
- Announcements, thank those who helped, upcoming programs



- Retiring the colors

What do you need to consider for a program in your city?

- Venue
- Schedule
- Publicity
- Funding
- Team



Venue

Consider:

- Number of participants - will there be a maximum?
- Session format
- Local climate

Possible venues: a residence, clubhouse, or any other suitable location

- Classrooms NOT ideal
- More intimate spaces lend greater feeling of community
- Embassy residence (ambassador's, deputy's, consul general's or other) can be beneficial in creating sense of American community
- Also need space for planning meetings
- **Consider security**



Schedule

Need to determine:

- Frequency of sessions (monthly or periodic)
- Days and times - identify when most children free; consider varying times for security reasons

Also:

- Try to build a calendar and inform parents of next session or two in advance
- Consider local holidays, differing school holidays, and planning team's availability



How do you spread the word?

- Word of mouth
- Email - set up program email address such as:
Americana4ChildrenDoha@gmail.com
- Build contact list of interested parents and ages of their kids; establish a registration process. Remember security.
- Web - post announcements on relevant organizations' **secured access** sites (NOT on Facebook, bulletin boards, etc.)
- Make contacts at American schools and organizations (Scouts, etc.)
- Set up table at relevant events (AWA meetings, school fairs, etc.)
- Coordinate with local American embassy/consulate



Consider security

How do you fund expenses?

- Out of pocket?
- American Women's Association (note some children's mothers may not be AWA members, but it's OK)
- Sponsor (American company – Pepsi, HP, law firm) & note sponsorship on program handouts

Having sponsor(s) may enable you to:

- hold traditional Thanksgiving feast
- make use of alternate special venues
- purchase books or supplies

Funds may be required for:

- printing & photocopying
- materials for arts & crafts, costumes, and other activities
- A/V supplies (projector, screen, etc,) may be available through embassy/consulate or local business



But all that's really needed to get started is...

YOU!

What matters most is having a committed group of
volunteers who are able to plan and carry out the
program on a regular basis.
Together you can do amazing things!



History of Americana

- Dubai (1991-94, possibly longer; 2010-present)
- Bahrain (1994-96, maybe longer)
- Doha (2008 to present)

- All programs VERY successful but were not always sustainable
- With Internet and **sharing**, more sustainable and easier to start new programs.





Future of Americana

- Expansion to other cities
- Sharing of all programs
- Addition of **Americana for Teens** program (in development & progress in Doha) to include topics:
 - Elections (many nearly voting age)
 - Third Culture Kids



Re-entry into the US

Who Benefits?

- ✓ American expatriate children, aged 3-10, with no, one, or two US citizen parents
- ✓ Older American children who volunteer to assist with presentations & activities
- ✓ Parents of American expatriate children
- ✓ Program committee members
- ✓ Local community US children and their parents
- ✓ Sponsors and partner organizations (AWA, etc.)



Let's plan a program



- Topic: **“US Elections”**
- What do we need? Venue
- Song(s)
- Program
- Activity



Sample Election Program (Doha)

Pre-program: Ask children to bring passports and check them in for “voter registration” and then check them off as they vote.

Opening (door closed till end of anthem)

Flag ceremony (Scouts) (Everyone rises, right hand over heart)

Pledge of Allegiance led by scout (words on poster board)

National Anthem (words on poster board)

Welcome and explanation (decorations, day's program; ask who is current president, etc.)

Discussion of elections, campaigning, individuals' voting responsibility and freedom

Introduction of party candidates (for President and Vice President)

Speeches: (short, 4-5 points each)

Red Party campaign speech (party platform)

White Party campaign speech (party platform)

Blue Party campaign speech (party platform)



Sample Election Program (cont.)

- **Re-cap of responsibility, explains how voting works**
- **Re-cap party platforms, urging children to remember which party they want to vote for**
- **Introduce activity (3-6 year olds; 7-8 year olds; 9-12 year olds**)**
 - All but 5th graders go to specified activity area
 - Volunteers help kids at the polling booth
 - 5th graders start the voting

Procedure:

- Line up
- Check name off voting roster, each voter signs roster
- Give ballot
- Voter goes into booth* & marks their ballot - Voter puts --- ballot into central ballot box
- Give each person who has voted an "I VOTED " sticker

**Divide into groups for age-appropriate activity



Sample Election Program (cont.)

- Once voting completed (by all children attending)
 - Adults open ballot box (with some of scouts or 5th graders?)
- Ask for 3 volunteer from those not in flag ceremony or campaign to tally votes + one adult (need to do quickly to maintain interest)
- Tally votes, announce winners **“And the winner is”**
- Recap of process
- Brief explanation of inauguration and when it occurs (Jan 20th at noon)



Sample Party Platforms

- Red Party : Candidate is _____ and Campaign Manager (or VP candidate) is _____
- White Party: Candidate is _____ and Campaign Manager (or VP candidate) is _____
- Blue Party: Candidate is _____ and Campaign Manager (or VP candidate) is _____

ISSUES:

- ENVIRONMENT
- SCHOOL
- DOHA



Party planning:

- Each party has foam board in background color of their party.
- Each team decorates its poster. Each team continues to decorate and discuss what they will say.
- The campaign manager will carry the poster to the stand and will introduce the candidate and lead all the "cheerleading" of clapping and such.
- The candidate will deliver his/her speech* with what he/she will do and then will ask for everyone's vote.
- *Each team will have about 1-2 minutes.



Sample Party Platforms

- **Red Party Platform:** bring more plants to Doha, fizzy drinks, lemonade, Disney World and Taco Bell & iced tea all week
- **White Party Platform:** bring solar power to Doha, Nachos with cheese sauce, water parks, and Chick-fil-a, and have meat everyday
- **Blue Party Platform:** institute better recycling in Doha; bring hotdogs, "Doha Ski" park (as in Dubai) with indoor skiing plus skydiving, and Sonic drive-through restaurant



Benefits of Party Speeches

- Gets older children working together
- Gives practice in planning “winning” strategies
- Gives speaking practice for all “candidates”
- Remains neutral in terms of US elections
- Reinforces political process



Election program photos



First program

- Keep it small if you like
- Make it fun and educational
- Start off with a bang!
- Starts paying immediate benefits!



Getting Americana started in your city

Where would you like to start?

- The US flag?
- Our national anthem (meaning of words and protocol when it's played)?
- An Americana store?
- Cowboys?
- America, the Melting Pot?







Remember

- Creating programs is educational, inspiring, and FUN!
- Everyone learns.
- Inspire your children to learn more about their own country while respecting the cultures and traditions of the country they're in.



Shared Resources

- FAWCO website will post all previous files and links to internet resources
- Some previous programs posted, others to be posted soon
- Please send all programs you are willing to share along with relevant links to copyrighted material to: Ellie at Americana4Children@gmail.com



Contact Information

DOHA: Americana4ChildrenDoha@gmail.com

DUBAI: Americana4ChildrenDubai@gmail.com

Ellie: Americana4Children@gmail.com



Thank You for coming!

