



Written by [Kelly Holt](#) on July 15, 2019

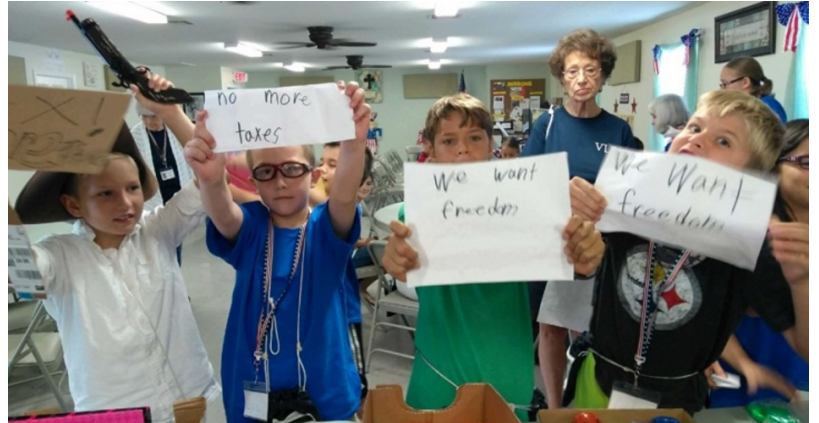
A New Twist on Vacation Bible School

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On Friday, July 12, a group of volunteers meeting at the Salado Church of Christ in Salado, Texas, concluded their annual summer session of Vacation Liberty School (VLS). *The New American* traveled to the tiny Texas town to visit this addition to summer kids' activities. By all accounts a resounding success, the curriculum presented creative ways to teach some concepts that many of today's adults don't even understand.



Judy Brady, a volunteer and church member, praised the church's willingness to host the week-long camp. She views it as one way to instill in children a proper understanding of American history. Brady's friend in nearby Georgetown, Texas, Ronda McCauley, had discovered Vacation Liberty School (VLS), first presented in Kentucky over a decade ago as a one-off educational event. VLS proved to be exactly what McCauley and other concerned Georgetown residents had been searching for.

McCauley and a nucleus of volunteers, activists, and parents had been researching ways to impart the basics of Americanism to children. Recognizing the total failure of government schools in teaching the heritage, history, and holiness of America's founders, their legacies, and the basics of our Constitutional system, they knew they would have to find their own teaching tools. McCauley's team examined VLS, customized it to their needs, and a year later launched the first program in 2013. McCauley shared it, and Brady was all in.

Similar in format to Vacation Bible School programs familiar to many evangelical churchgoers, the camps consist of five half-days of learning for little ones, with an advanced curriculum for older students. Built around the concepts of liberty and personal responsibility, structured lessons include reading, video instruction, snack times, and practical lessons about America's Founding Era, with an emphasis on taxes. Often, historical re-enactors playing George Washington and Ben Franklin show up.

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McCauley's group now consistently meets in a convenient church space, and has grown to three sessions per summer. The group charges a nominal fee to cover basic expenses, and insists on either paying its way in the form of rent, or making a donation to the host church. Brady's team offers the program free. VLS has expanded to a handful of other nearby Texas towns, with new ones in line for the program, with each group customizing the curriculum to the particular needs of the host community.

TNA visited out of curiosity and a desire to vet the accuracy of the teaching. We found solid lessons that



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taught accurate history and personal accountability. Children are expected to be able to read as they experience the origin and benefits of liberty from the perspective of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

On the day of our visit, a re-enactor in the face of Benjamin Franklin visited the children, and demonstrated what life was like without electricity — an entrée into his kite experiment later recreated in the church parking lot. He reminded the students of his many quips, and his experiences as a printer, writer, humorist, and patriot.

A different lesson emphasized the importance of the Constitution — demonstrated on a teeter-totter. One end is tyranny, and the other anarchy, with the fulcrum being the U.S. Constitution. The closer the riders on each end get to the center, the easier it is to reach proper balance between tyranny and anarchy.

Most impressive was the lesson about fiat money. When we first entered the church, we were immediately suspicious about an empty table in a corner designated “Central Banker.” Thinking, “Uh-oh, what’s going on here?” we later got a pleasant surprise. While the children didn’t begin the week understanding “fiat money,” they learned about it through a creative and brilliant demonstration.

Here’s how it worked: At the scheduled time, children were given the opportunity to spend “money” (in the form of fake gold pieces or wrapped butterscotch candy) that they’d earned all week by paying attention, practicing obedience, and learning the answers to questions. They could exchange their “gold” pieces for paper money, which were tendered at the camp “store” for candy, toys, or other appealing items. Each day, though, the stakes got higher. Taxes were added or the exchange rate changed, and soon the light bulbs went on — they realized their paper money wouldn’t buy as much as their gold pieces. At the end of the day, the Banker ended up with all the gold! He was willing to make loans, of course, in paper money, but wanted repayment in gold. By Friday, the kids wised up — they were no longer willing to exchange their gold for paper, and began to understand how the Central Banker might not be their friend. Brilliant!

In an interview with *TNA*, McCauley recounted an exercise she implemented one year to explain the difference between a republic and a democracy. The children were given a chance to vote on peanut butter and jelly, cheese, or tuna sandwiches for lunch. The majority, of course, dictated what everyone would eat, which was pbj. Immediately, the non-pbj crowd revolted at the unfairness with which they’d been treated. Lesson learned.

If we had a criticism, it was this: During a video about Ben Franklin, the narrator stated that Franklin helped craft the Constitution in order to codify laws “to help the country stay together and work right.” True enough, but no emphasis was made of the critically important nature of independent colonies, and that the States were 13 sovereign entities.

Both McCauley and Brady, along with all their team members, demonstrated a solid understanding of the Founders, the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the principles of liberty vs. freedom. And the children were anything but bored. They were bright, engaged, and interested in the lessons. Most importantly, they learned.

McCauley and Brady have managed to establish VLS in the shadow of one of the most liberal cities in America; Georgetown is exploding with growth from nearby Austin, which is itself bursting at the seams with new crops of liberals. Consequently, McCauley reports that the biggest obstacle in getting VLS established in a community is that most people think the group is too conservative. Imagine that. Brady said it differently — that churches are reluctant at first to host the camp because they don’t understand



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the imperative role of the Church in defending liberty. However, we ask the reader to sharpen his own study of American history.

McCauley's camp was visited by a re-enactor depicting John Muhlenberg, a founding-era patriot pastor. Britain itself placed the blame of the War for Independence squarely on the shoulders of the clergy in the colonies, pegging them with the name "Black Robe Regiment." And John Adams rejoiced, "our pulpits have thundered" against British oppression, and with the message of liberty. There's an opportunity, and an obligation to preach liberty from the pulpit.

We encourage all pastors and churches to follow suit. Vacation Liberty School is a great place to start.

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