

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Andrew E. Masich
President & CEO



American History 101

More than 150 people recently packed the History Center's Great Hall for a life-changing event. They were joined by close friends and family members as they anxiously awaited their big moment. And then, with a giant American flag as the backdrop, these visitors experienced a day they will never forget—they became American citizens.

Born in Africa, Asia, and Europe, these new citizens studied for and passed a naturalization test focusing on American history and civics education. Under the guidance of Federal Judges Joy Flowers Conti and Mike Fisher, the participants each received a naturalization certificate and an American flag. These new citizens studied hard and knew their stuff.

The History Center is working to ensure that all Americans understand and value the importance of American history and become better informed and engaged citizens. Working closely with partners at the Smithsonian Institution and a consortium of leaders from nearly a dozen top history museums across the U.S., the History Center is helping to lead an educational initiative with the working title: "American History 101."

If we understand our past, we can make good decisions in the present and plans for the future. If our history and civics education campaign is successful, in five years all residents would be able to pass the same test that new citizens complete. Basic knowledge of U.S. history and government will improve our cultural literacy and will allow each of us to better understand what it means to be an American.

Working with our national partners, the History Center is just getting started with "American History 101." Our strategic plan will include exhibitions, public programs, videos, events, social media, partnerships, and outreach. We welcome your ideas, too. Because just like the new citizens who proudly waved their flags at the History Center, reexamining what it means to be American can be a life-changing experience.

