

## **KIDS VOTING USA ANNOUNCES NEW HEADQUARTERS AND MANAGEMENT**

**[TOPEKA, KS ] (May 21, 2009)** – The board of Kids Voting USA is pleased to announce its new business partnership with the Kansas Press Association (KPA). KPA assumed management of its day-to-day business operations May 1. Simultaneously, the board named Rachel Willis as its new executive director. Both are moves important to the organization's future strategy and intended to optimize the current affiliate network.

Kids Voting USA (KVUSA) and KPA are working together to ensure that a knowledgeable and committed leadership and staff are available to serve the affiliate network and further the ideals of the Kids Voting organization, while moving forward with the strategic plan to bring the richness of the program to a broader and more diverse set of young people.

KVUSA Board Chair Geoff Gonella said of the new management arrangement: "We are so pleased to be starting a new chapter in our organization's history. The importance of civic education and engagement has never been greater and the impact we are having and will continue to have has never been more important. We are looking forward to working with the Kansas Press Association to continue to ensure the future of our democracy by creating educated engaged citizens."

Kids Voting USA was founded in 1988 by three Arizona businessmen who learned during a fishing trip to Costa Rica that the country's voter turnout is typically around 90 percent. This high turnout was attributed to a tradition of children accompanying their parents to the polls. The men were intrigued by the idea, but also recognized a missing link to education. They launched a school-based pilot project in a Phoenix suburb that expanded into a national program in 1992. Kids Voting USA exposes students to democracy and civic responsibility through a combination of classroom activities and an authentic voting experience. Working with teachers and election coordinators throughout the country, KVUSA affiliates are working to create the next generation of informed, involved citizens. Kids Voting Kansas was part of the original pilot group. Today Kids Voting operates affiliates in 26 states. Over 1.8 million students went to the polls in the 2008 election and several million more participated in classroom activities on civic education.

Willis expressed enthusiasm for her new responsibilities and the opportunity to work with the network of affiliates and the board of directors to advance the mission of preparing young people to be educated, engaged voters.

"This is such an exciting time for the organization. We had a record number of students vote in the 2008 presidential election and have some new ideas on how to continue to increase our participation. We will work closely with affiliates to learn from their experiences to improve and expand the curriculum and the voting experience," Willis said.

### **About Kids Voting USA:**

KVUSA operates through a national network of community-based affiliates that partner with schools and election officials to offer more than four million K-12 students a wide range of opportunities for civic learning. The combination of classroom instruction, family dialogue and an authentic voting experience help accomplish KVUSA's mission of achieving long-term change in voting behavior by preparing young people to be educated, engaged voters. For more information, visit [www.kidsvotingusa.org](http://www.kidsvotingusa.org).

### **About the Kansas Press Association:**

Kansas Press Association was organized in 1863 to serve, improve and promote the newspaper industry, and to protect the rights of a free press. Today, KPA continues its efforts by providing newspapers with marketing and educational services, legal and technology hotlines, legislative representation and a forum for the exchange of ideas. The association hosts conventions, conferences and seminars for the newspaper industry, and serves as a central source of industry information. For more information, visit [www.kspress.com](http://www.kspress.com).

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