Communities

A community is a place where people live, work, and play. There are three types of communities: rural, suburban, and urban.

- Rural communities are located in the countryside.
- Suburban communities are located near a large city.
- Urban communities are located in a large city.

Communities help people to meet their needs by providing services. The community’s needs are safety, education, transportation, and recreation. The money to pay for these services is collected through taxes.

Americans are people of diverse (or different) ethnic origins, customs, and traditions, who are united by the basic principles of a republican form of government and respect for individual rights and freedoms. Some benefits of diversity in the United States are food, clothing, and music.

Citizenship

Good citizens have many responsibilities such as: voting, obeying laws, paying taxes, improving the community, and respecting the rights and property of others. Citizens can also serve their community, state, and nation by volunteering or joining the military.
**Government and Civics**

**U.S. Government**

**Rules** tell us what we can and cannot do. **Laws** are the important rules written and carried out by the government that all people must live by. The purpose of rules and laws is to let people know how they should act or behave. Rules and laws also keep people safe and maintain order.

A **government** is a group of people who make rules and laws, carry out rules and laws, and decide if rules or laws have been broken. Governments are necessary because they develop the laws and protect the rights and property of individuals.

The United States has a **republican form of government**. A republican form of government is a representative democracy where we elect people to speak for us in the making of laws.

Governments exist at the local (community), state (Virginia), and national (United States) levels.

A **mayor** is a leader of a local community. Adults in the community vote to elect a mayor to be the leader of the local government. They might also select a group of people, called a **city council**, to make laws and rules for the community.

The **governor** is the leader of a state.

The **President** is the leader of our nation.

Our American government is based on the **basic principles** that all men are created equally and that we have certain unalienable rights (rights that we are born with that cannot be taken away). The people of our country are united by these basic American principles—the right to **life**, **liberty**, and the **pursuit of happiness**. They are also united by the belief of **equality under the law**.
Famous Americans Who Defended Our Basic Principles

Many people worked to defend the basic principles that formed the foundation of our government.

**George Washington:** Known as “The Father of Our Country,” he was the first President of the new nation. He worked under the new republican form of government. He helped put the basic principles into practice for the new nation.

**Thomas Jefferson:** He was born in Virginia. He was the third President of the United States. He wrote the Declaration of Independence, which states that people have certain rights. He was a leader who helped develop the country.

**Abraham Lincoln:** He was the United States’ 16th president when the country was divided over the issue of equality for all people. He helped free African American slaves.

**Rosa Parks:** She was an African American woman who refused to give up her seat on a public bus as was required by law many years ago. She helped to bring about changes in laws and worked so that all people would have equal rights.

**Thurgood Marshall:** He was a lawyer who defended people at a time when not all people had equal rights. He was the first African American justice of the United States Supreme Court. He helped to make sure that laws treated people the same.

**Martin Luther King, Jr.:** He was an African American minister who worked for equal rights for all people. He helped bring about changes in laws through peaceful means.

**César Chávez:** He was a Mexican American who worked to improve conditions for farm workers.

**Important U.S. Holidays:**

**Veteran’s Day:** This is a day for the recognition of and respect for Americans who served in the military. It is observed in November.

**Memorial Day:** This is a day for the recognition of and respect for Americans who died in wars while they were serving their country. It is observed in May.

**Independence Day:** This is a day in which people celebrate our freedom. It is celebrated on July 4th.