

September's real holiday: Patriot Week

By Michael Warren

Special to Digital First Media

Now that the three-day Labor Day holiday is far in the rearview mirror, you probably haven't given the holiday much thought. Actually, if you are like most people, you didn't think about it much even on Labor Day. Established by Congress in 1894, Labor Day (the first Monday of September) was created to commemorate the struggles and landmark accomplishments of the labor movement. No doubt a worthy cause. But let's face it, today it represents the end of summer and provides a three day weekend marked by barbecues and appliance sales. This has become so ingrained in the American mindset, we can never go back.

The real holiday to celebrate this September is Patriot Week. Starting on September 11 (the anniversary of the terrorists' attacks) and ending on September 17 (the anniversary of the signing of the Constitution — Constitution Day), Patriot Week renews America's spirit by celebrating the First Principles, Founding Fathers and other patriots, vital documents, speeches and flags that make America the greatest nation in world history.

Patriot Week began as a response to the commercialization and loss of meaning of traditional national holidays, like

Labor Day. Patriot Week invigorates American citizens' appreciation and understanding of their nation's spirit. It began when my 10-year-old, Leah, pounded on a restaurant table and demanded that we start a new celebration of America. What was I to do? Help her start Patriot Week.

In this time of discord and hyper-partisanship, Patriot Week provides a unique opportunity to remind us all of what unites as Americans. Studies upon studies reveal that our K-12 students, university students, and general public are generally uninformed and uneducated about American history, civics, and the Constitution. Without this common base of understanding, we are easily led to into vicious partisan squabbles and treating each other like the enemy. We have forgotten that every difference in opinion is not a difference in principle.

As a free people, we are responsible for our destiny. We have a solemn obligation to continuously and comprehensively educate all citizens about the foundations of our liberties or the blessings of freedom will be lost. Patriot Week meets that challenge head-on. Each day of Patriot Week has a specific theme — beginning with the First Principles of the United States articulated in the Declaration of Independen-

dence: the rule of law, unalienable rights, limited government, the Social Compact, equality, and the right to alter or abolish an oppressive government. These First Principles are the undergirding of the Constitution, and the foundation of our liberty. Although we were no doubt flawed at the time of the American Revolution, those First Principles were the animating reason behind our yet incomplete march to greater racial and gender equality.

This year, we have a wide variety of initiatives and events: a Patriot Festival; professional development for teachers; daily rituals anyone, anywhere can do; 5K runs; a movie at the classic Redford Theater; a gubernatorial debate; 9/11 commemorations; American Foundations Seminar; courthouse student activities; a National Library Initiative; and so much more. Check them out at <http://www.patriotweek.org/upcoming-events>. Please join us and have a meaningful celebration of America with the mutual respect we all deserve, and help save the republic while you are at it.

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