

O Say, Can You... Sing?

New project re-teaches the national anthem.

When thousands of baseball fans head to ballparks this summer, chances are they'll have trouble reciting the words to our national anthem. Two out of three Americans don't know the words to "The Star-Spangled Banner," according to a recent Harris Poll.

As a result, the National Anthem Project, spearheaded by music educators, is dedicated to re-teaching people the words to America's official song. A cross-country campaign kicked off in January 2006, touring cities in the West from Los Angeles to Seattle.

Getting Vocal

The tour includes interactive exhibits and a singing contest. In each location, the singer who belts out the best version of the national anthem wins a \$1,000 donation to a school music education program of his or her choice. In Richmond, Virginia, an 11-year old boy took home the top prize.

Why don't people know the words to our country's most famous tune? "We see it as a consequence that music education programs are being **diminished**¹ in schools," project spokesperson Elizabeth Lasko told *Weekly Reader*. "[People who do] know the words say they learned them in school."

Piece of History

The nationwide anthem tour will **culminate**², or end, in Baltimore, Maryland, at Fort McHenry on September 14. That date and that place are when and where Francis Scott Key **penned**³ the poem that later became the national anthem.

According to the National Anthem Project, the song represents our country's history and culture. Many people sing it at community events.

"We want people to know the words so they sing it together," says Lasko. "If you're taught as a young person to sing it, you'll always be able to sing it." For more information on the National Anthem Project and tour cities, visit www.tnap.org.

¹ **diminished**: taken away

² **culminate**: arrive at final or stage

³ **penned**: wrote

"The Star-Spangled Banner"

During the War of 1812, Francis Scott Key wrote the poem that later became the national anthem.

On September 13, 1814, Key watched British ships bomb Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland. The next morning, he spotted the American flag still flying over the fort. The sight inspired him to write the poem. In 1931, Congress made it the national anthem.

Here is the first verse of the four-verse song:

*O say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last
gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through
the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched, were so
gallantly streaming?
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting
in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was
still there.
O say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the
brave?*