

Freedom's Feast

★ 10 MINUTE LABOR DAY CELEBRATION ★

LEADER: Welcome to our Labor Day celebration! As summer ends and fall begins, the pace of life picks up. Before we rush back to our busy lives, let's consider Labor Day's original purpose and think about what our work means to us.

READER: Labor Day has been an official National Holiday since 1892 to honor the working men and women of our nation.

READER: The first Labor Day parade in New York City on September 5, 1882 gathered 10,000 workers who took an unpaid day from work to show their growing organizational power and to call for improved working conditions.

READER: In the late 19th century, the average laborer often worked a 12 hour day, seven days a week.

READER: Child labor laws were poorly enforced and child labor under the age of 16 wasn't prohibited until Congress passed the national Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938.

<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/childlabor/about.htm>

READER: It's hard for us to imagine an environment in which workers don't have rights, children aren't entitled to a high school education and workplace safety isn't monitored and regulated.

READER: The designation of a national Labor Day was a real achievement for the growing labor movement. It came in the midst of a nationwide Pullman workers' strike as Americans became more aware of unjust workplace conditions and the key role that laborers played in our economy.

READER: Yet even with injustice in the workplace, people have always come to America with dreams for a new kind of future.

READER: Waves of immigrants from England followed the Pilgrims. As they settled, each colony developed a special character reflecting a wide range of religious and political convictions.

READER: At the same time, a new type of citizen was emerging. Freed from Europe's rigid class system, he was independent, hard-working, well-schooled, multi-talented and adventurous. Most importantly his success depended on his own merit.

READER: Benjamin Franklin, an example of this new citizen, was one of our oldest Founding Fathers and one of America's early self-made men.

<http://www.pbs.org/benfranklin/>

LEADER: A writer, scientist, businessman, inventor, and philosopher, Franklin was America's foremost foreign diplomat. He established America's first library and hospital, invented bifocals, the lightning rod, the glass armonica and published "Poor Richard's Almanack" a collection of popular sayings that he edited to entertain Americans, but also to encourage habits for success, industry and frugality.



ALL: *Eat to live, and not live to eat.
No pains, no gains.
Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.*

READER: Franklin never forgot how others helped him achieve success. In 1990, 200 years after his death, a trust fund established in his will to create start-up loans for young craftsmen and public works projects was worth over \$6,000,000. Another generation of young Americans could pursue their dreams!

READER: For nearly 400 years, America has been the land of dreams for oppressed people everywhere. Immigrants have come from Ireland, Russia, Poland, Scandinavia, Germany, Italy, China, India, Mexico...*(name your own ancestral country if it has not been named)*. If we are not native Americans, we were all, at some time immigrants. They have been our railroad workers and our miners, our fishermen, lumberjacks and lawyers, our shipbuilders, entertainers, factory workers, our doctors, inventors and shop owners, our farmers, athletes, policemen, firefighters and ourselves *(name the jobs represented at your table)*.

READER: We must not forget that an entire group of Americans came here against their will. Torn from their homeland and their families, African slaves helped to lay the foundations of this country. Out of slavery came citizens who have enriched our nation with their many gifts.

READER: When we know that our government's power depends on our consent and when we are sure that our rights are protected, we can spend our time and energy differently from those who are fighting persecution and oppression.

LEADER: We can create, protest, learn, rest, organize, and invent. We can dream of the job we want and work to fulfill our dream. Listen to these Americans who loved their work and made a difference in other's lives. *(Ask participants to read the following quotes in rotation, citing the author.)*

I am an inventor. Faraday was a scientist. He didn't work for money...but I do. I measure everything I do by the size of a silver dollar. If it don't come up to that standard, then I know it's no good. **THOMAS A. EDISON**

Never interrupt someone doing what you said couldn't be done. **AMELIA EARHART**

Make it good, George, it might be important. **MOISHE GERSHWIN TO SON GEORGE WHILE GEORGE WAS WORKING ON RHAPSODY IN BLUE**

If you would not be forgotten, as soon as you are dead and rotten, either write things worth reading, or do things worth the writing. **BEN FRANKLIN**

If at first, an idea is not absurd, then there is no hope for it. **ALBERT EINSTEIN**

Ability is of little account without opportunity. **LUCILLE BALL**

The reward for work well done is the opportunity to do more. **JONAS SALK**

One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind. **NEIL ARMSTRONG, ON THE MOON, 1969**

The only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary. **HERMAN SCHAYES COACH, HOSPITAL AIDE
(FROM TIM RUSSERT'S WISDOM OF OUR FATHERS)**

Give the lady what she wants. **MARSHALL FIELD**

I want to live my life, not record it. **JACQUELINE KENNEDY ONASSIS**

ALL: May the coming year bring each of us good health, rewarding work and the chance for our work to be a blessing to ourselves and those around us.

Together we sing:

I'VE BEEN WORKING ON THE RAILROAD

*I've been working on the railroad
All the livelong day
I've been working on the railroad
Just to pass the time away
Can't you hear the whistle blowing
Rise up so early in the morn
Can't you hear the captain shouting
2 times:*

*Dinah, blow your horn
Dinah, won't you blow
Dinah, won't you blow
Dinah, won't you blow your horn*

*Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah
Someone's in the kitchen I know
Someone's in the kitchen with Dinah
Strumming on the old banjo, and singing
Fie, fi, fiddly i o; Fie, fi, fiddly i o
Fie, fi, fiddly i o—
Strumming on the old banjo.*

(Leader: Ask a participant to read this poem out loud:)

WALT WHITMAN poem

*I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning,
or at noon intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of
the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night, the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.*

Together we sing:

A M E R I C A T H E B E A U T I F U L

*O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee
And crown thy good
With brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!*

Enjoy your meal! Please consider using the following exercise: "What Did You Do at Work Today?" to enrich your table conversation. It was developed with our Raising Citizens partner, the Children's Museum of Manhattan.

PLEASE VISIT US AGAIN FOR THANKSGIVING @www.freedomsfeast.us!