Sept. 17 is a big day for Americans. We celebrate the date that our Constitution was signed in 1787 with Constitution Day and Citizenship Day. But what does it mean to be a citizen?

**What is a citizen?**
A citizen is a person who lives in a city, town or state. He or she is loyal to the government and the government protects its citizens.

Citizenship is the act of being involved in our society and government.

In a democracy, citizenship is very important. During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln reminded Americans that their government is “of the people, by the people, for the people.”

**In our history**
Citizenship helped shape our country. Even during the Revolutionary War, when communication was slow and there were differences among people in the Colonies, Americans joined together with a common purpose.

You may study our country’s history and then not think much more about it. But imagine yourself as a young person fighting against the British just to defend your home. He had worked for three years, since he was 8. What positive change would you like to make in your community? Why did they join the service? How did their service contribute to our society? Study other countries, and consider the rights and freedoms we have that some other countries may not have. Remember that all through our history, people have worked and sacrificed for our freedoms.

**Being a good citizen**
- Learn about how our country was formed. Read about our founders.
- Ask parents or grandparents who have served in the military about their service. Why did they join the service? How did their service contribute to our society?
- Study other countries, and consider the rights and freedoms we have that some other countries may not have. Remember that all through our history, people have worked and sacrificed for our freedoms.
- Pay attention to our national holidays and their meanings. For instance, we just celebrated Labor Day. But it’s more than a day off from school. Find out how Labor Day began.
- Make friends with all different types of people. Is there someone in your school who was born in another country? Talk to that person about his or her heritage.
- Go to a rally for a candidate for office. This could be a mayor or a city council candidate. Pay attention to how people act and what the candidate says.
- Send a care package to servicepeople overseas.

**Protest**
Sometimes being a good citizen means working against an act or a rule that you think is wrong. For example, during the Vietnam War, many Americans protested against U.S. involvement in that conflict. You can also work for something important to you. In July, an 11-year-old boy named Jackson in Holland, Michigan, successfully convinced his city government to improve a crosswalk near his home to make it safer. He had worked at it for three years, since he was 8. What positive change would you like to make in your community?

**Who are citizens?**
In the United States, there are two ways to be a citizen: by birth, or by law. If you were born in the United States, you are automatically a citizen. Or if at least one parent is a U.S. citizen, the child is a citizen at birth.

People born outside the U.S. can become citizens through a process called naturalization. People who apply must pass a test about U.S. history and government and the English language. If a person passes the test, he or she is sworn in as a citizen.

**On the Web:**
- goodcitizen.org
- bit.ly/1d07UX
- youTube47zDG55UMU

At the library:
- “Citizenship” by Ann-Marie Kishel
- “Being Responsible” by Cassie Mayer

**Cook’s Corner**
**A(vocado), (B)ean and (C)orn Salad**

You’ll need:
- 1 ripe avocado, diced
- 2 (15-ounce) cans black beans, rinsed and drained
- 2 (15-ounce) cans corn, drained
- 1 medium bell pepper (any color), diced

What to do:
1. Combine all vegetables and beans in a large bowl.
2. Stir in lime juice and seasonings to blend.
3. Chill for 1 hour. Serves 10 to 12.

- ¼ cup fresh cilantro
- juice from small lime
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- sprinkle of salt to taste

**Puzzling**
Unscramble the words below that remind us of citizenship.
nzitcie
cemorcad
negorntmev
irtoyhs

- Answers: citizen, democracy, government, history

**Try ‘n’ Find**
Words that remind us of citizenship are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

- BIRTH, CITIZEN, CONSTITUTION, CONVENTION, DEMOCRACY, FOUNDERS, FREEDOM, GOVERNMENT, HISTORY, LAW, MILITARY, NATURALIZATION, PROTEST, RIGHTS, SERVICE, STUDY, WORK.

**Mini Fact:**
Of the 55 delegates at the Constitutional Convention, only 39 signed the document.