



Free Speech Icon Mary Beth Tinker to Launch Nationwide Tour in Philadelphia

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mary Beth Tinker, who was at the center of a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision on student rights, will kick off a nationwide civics education tour to American high schools and colleges on Tues., Sept 17 at the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall in Philadelphia to celebrate Constitution Day.

Tinker has been invited by the National Constitution Center on Independence Mall to participate in a day-long event of festivities to commemorate the anniversary of the Constitution's signing in 1787. She will be speaking at the center from 1:30-2:15 p.m. and sharing her story and the significance of the Constitution.

Tinker was the lead plaintiff in the landmark 1969 U.S. Supreme Court case *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*. The case arose after she and two other students in Des Moines, Iowa, were suspended for wearing black armbands to school to mourn those who had died in the Vietnam War. The court upheld students' First Amendment right to express themselves non-disruptively in public schools. To this day, the case sets the legal standard for students' free-speech rights.

After Philadelphia, she will continue on her nationwide tour in a colorful 29-foot RV that is sure to attract the attention to motorists and students alike. In all, the Tinker Tour will visit 19 states and the District of Columbia, including Tinker's own junior high school in Des Moines, where it all began. The goal of the Tinker Tour is to bring real-life civics lessons to schools and communities through Tinker's story and those of other young people.

Accompanying Tinker on the tour is Mike Hiestand (seen right), who



has written and lectured extensively on legal issues affecting the student media and worked for more than 20 years as an attorney for the Student Press Law Center.

The Student Press Law Center, www.splc.org, is the presenting sponsor of the tour. The SPLC is a nonprofit organization with nearly 40 years of experience supporting youth voices, and is assisting the tour with organizational and promotional assistance. The SPLC is an advocate for, and provides programming in the areas of, student First Amendment rights, for transparency in government, for youth civic engagement, and for online civility.

The Tour has the endorsement of dozens of education and civil-liberties organizations, including the NAACP, the Journalism Education Association, the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, the American Constitution Society, the Society of Professional Journalists, the National Constitution Center and many more.

For more information on the Tinker Tour, visit tinkertourusa.org. The tour can also be followed on Twitter at #tinkertour and on Facebook at TinkerTour.

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