



**40th Annual
National Conference
Salt Lake City, UT**

2025 Professional Practices Program

Owlbert Learns to Vote Charleston County, SC

Submitted by:

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Willing to do Webinar/Workshop? Yes



Introduction

Instilling a sense of civic duty in the next generation of voters is a crucial responsibility for election offices. By educating and encouraging youth to participate in the electoral process, election offices lay the foundation for preserving democratic principles and fostering lifelong public participation. This cycle continues with each subsequent generation, maintaining an engaged electorate across all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Development

In Charleston County, an innovative idea was formed to connect more directly with our youngest residents as they began to explore and learn about the community around them. Following the enthusiastic response to the launch of our “Future Voter” stickers in 2022, our office recognized the desire among young families to learn how to teach their children about democracy in a relatable and accessible way. In response, Charleston County Board of Voter Registration and Elections (BVRE) Executive Director Isaac Cramer developed the concept of creating a children’s story that explained voting through a scenario children could easily understand.

BVRE partnered with Charleston County Public Library (CCPL) to develop *Owlbert Learns to Vote*, a story featuring the library’s mascot, Owlbert. In the story, Owlbert and his classmates face a community proposal that would impact their local field—a decision about whether to construct a playground where they currently play soccer. Despite differences of opinion, their teacher emphasizes that cooperation and respect are essential for a thriving community and that disagreements don’t have to divide people permanently.

Promotion

This collaborative, multi-department initiative was heavily promoted through BVRE and CCPL’s social media platforms, as well as traditional media outlets. Executive Director Cramer conducted interviews with local Charleston-area media and national broadcasters, including National Public Radio (NPR)¹ and Cable News Network (CNN). The story’s universal themes were designed to resonate with readers not just locally but in communities across the country and even globally.

A celebratory book launch event at CCPL’s newest branch in North Charleston attracted local media coverage and dozens of community members. Children attending the event were treated to a visit from Owlbert, a read-along session led by a librarian, their own copy of the book to take home, and a mock election where they chose a dessert to enjoy. Starting that day, *Owlbert Learns to Vote* became available for checkout at all 18 CCPL locations.

1. Parks, Miles. “S.C. Local Elections Official Pens Children’s Book: ‘Owlbert Learns to Vote.’” NPR, NPR, 24 Oct. 2024, www.npr.org/2024/10/24/nx-s1-5153926/s-c-local-elections-official-pens-childrens-book-owlbert-learns-to-vote.



Outcomes

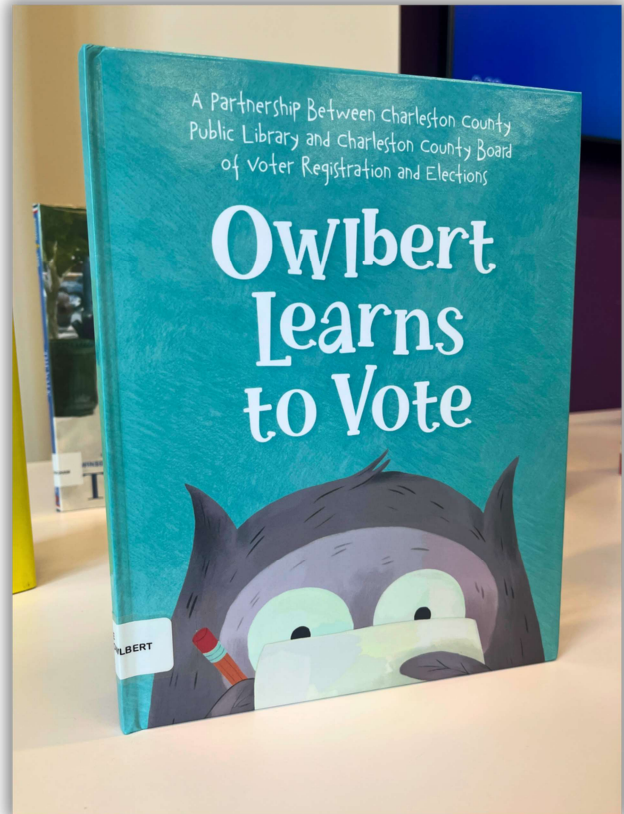
The book has been an overwhelming success, generating significant interest from parents, teachers, and election officials both locally and internationally. Requests for copies have come from across the United States, including from schools in Connecticut and Florida, demonstrating the wide appeal of *Owlbert Learns to Vote*.

In Charleston County, BVRE has partnered with Charleston County School District (CCSD) to make the book available in dozens of school libraries. This initiative will expand the reach of the story and reinforce ongoing outreach efforts through BVRE's Future Voters Program. As part of this program, election officials visit schools to conduct mock elections, teach lessons about the electoral process, and engage directly with students' questions.

The book has also been integrated into classrooms in other states, where it is used as an educational tool to introduce voting and civic engagement to young learners. Locally, *Owlbert Learns to Vote* has strengthened partnerships between BVRE and other community organizations, including the public library system and area schools.

Conclusion

Given the overwhelming demand, BVRE and CCPL are currently exploring opportunities to make the book available for purchase, ensuring that families, educators, and election offices nationwide can access this valuable resource. However, the book is utilized at our numerous outreach events throughout the year. At a reasonable production cost of \$2.96 per book, this effective resource is shared at a similar price point to other promotional items distributed to citizens. The success of this initiative underscores the power of creative, child-focused approaches to civic education. By meeting children and families where they are, through engaging storytelling and accessible lessons, Charleston County has fostered excitement about democracy and established a model for election offices nationwide to follow. *Owlbert Learns to Vote* has not only inspired children to think about their role in the democratic process but has also encouraged their families to engage in meaningful conversations about voting and civic responsibility.



Clockwise: Charleston County Board of Voter Registration and Elections Executive Director Isaac Cramer and Charleston County Public Library Executive Director Angela Craig promote the release of Owlbert Learns to Vote with local media; Owlbert Learns to Vote is featured during a release celebration at Keith Summey Public Library in North Charleston, South Carolina; Cramer and Craig pose with Owlbert during a release celebration.



Clockwise: Lowcountry children and family members listen to a librarian read Owlbert Learns to Vote during a release celebration at Keith Summey Public Library in North Charleston, South Carolina; A child rushes to hug Owlbert after listening to a reading of Owlbert Learns to Vote; A child shows off giveaway items obtained during a release celebration of Owlbert Learns to Vote..





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S.C. local elections official pens children's book: 'Owlbert Learns to Vote'

OCTOBER 24, 2024 · 3:53 AM ET
HEARD ON MORNING EDITION

Miles Parks

2-Minute Listen

Isaac Cramer, a South Carolina voting official, is celebrating the release of his first children's book. Cramer says kids inherently understand voting because they are kind of doing it all the time.

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Beloved Charleston Library mascot 'Owlbert' stars in new book about voting

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Charleston library teaches kids to vote by asking: Get a new playground or keep the soccer field?

BY MADDY QUON MQUON@POSTANDCOURIER.COM
OCT 17, 2024

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