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gardening gloves, miniature flowered watering cans, flowered hatboxes, Peter Rabbit, and flowered candleholders. I will ask each girl to bring a packet of flower seeds to exchange. We will begin the morning by discussing gardening and flowers. Then I will have them create miniature topiaries using clay pots, Styrofoam balls, crushed rose petals, moss, and sticks. Afterwards they will make sachets using purple tulle, lavender silk flowers, ribbon, and flower potpourri. Finally, we will create firefly lights to hang in their own gardens made out of glass jars, paint, beads, and buttons. After they finish decorating their jars, I will have them coil a wire around the lip of each jar so they can be hung from a tree in their garden. Then I will have them go to the kitchen where Sonia will teach the girls how to make violet jelly from the violets she picks from our yard each year. For lunch, Sonia and I will have made miniature sandwiches and teacakes decorated with real flowers. At each girl's place they will find a Flower Fairy tin filled with garden seeds for their own garden.

These and many more ideas can fill up a year's worth of fun-filled days of fellowship and learning.

### The Citizens, the Celebration, and the Starry Crowns

by Lisa and Adrienne Burns

When homeschooling parents Richard and Anne Belley received their American citizenship in 2003, there was truly reason for a festive celebration. (The Belleys are originally from Canada.) America was begun by men and women who sacrificed earthly comfort to spend their lives settling the wilderness so their children could worship God as His Word directs. The Belleys have become part of this nation with the godliest heritage on earth from the Pilgrims at Plymouth to the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Their family can now claim the heritage of John and Priscilla Mullins, George and Martha Washington, John and Abigail Adams, and James and Dolly Madison. Joyfully, we sent out bright red, white, and blue flag invitations to our friends to come to celebrate the Belleys' privilege of adding their names and lives to this nation's chronicles.

For weeks in advance, Mother and Sara prepared patriotic desserts. Melting and coloring chunks of white chocolate, they made trays of candy flowers with blue and red petals and white centers. They stuck the sucker sticks down into Styrofoam balls covered with red and blue tissue paper and then put them into little flowerpots. In star-shaped tins, they baked white cakes, which were covered with white icing, adorned with blue icing rims and topped with small toothpick flags.

Blue and red jello was poured into trays that molded into jiggler stars. To make the jello jiggler stars, we consecutively layered red jello, sour cream mixed with unflavored gelatin, and blue jello in a Wilton aluminum cake pan. Each pan had six star indentations into which we poured the jello, allowing each layer to set before adding the next. Mother and Sara also dipped

strawberries two-thirds of the way into white chocolate and then one-third of the way into blue sprinkles. These were then arranged on an elegant glass platter with the jiggler

stars.

Thoughtfully, Mother purchased the proper decorations for the occasion. Nicholas, Sara, and Peter hung red, white, and blue Christmas lights around the kitchen ceiling and strung sparkly red, blue, and white streamer ribbons from the center lights across to the corner cabinets in six directions. Then they taped about sixty small red, white and blue balloons at six-inch intervals all along the ribbons. On the cupboard tops we set out our Fourth of July decorations, including wooden USA blocks, patriotic candles, and baskets.

We arranged the patriotic desserts as decorations on the counter and also on the kitchen and dining room tables. One table was covered with a flag tablecloth and the other with a white tablecloth and sprinkled with red, white, and blue star confetti. For a kitchen centerpiece, we put several six-inch flags in a flower vase. On the dining room table, we had red and white carnations with tiny navy blue flowers interspersed among them, and from the dining room chandelier, we dangled sparkling patriotic ribbons that dazzled in the light. On the buffet we arranged white candles covered with glittering stars in star-shaped glass candleholders. On the mantle, Mother laid patriotic placemats, and on top of these she placed a row of the planted candy flowers. Over the living room windows, we hung flag bunting in place of our

curtains.

On the day of the celebration, we warmly greeted our guests as we offered them appetizers of red grapes and a tray of red tomatoes, white cauliflower, and navy blue grapes arranged in the shape of a flag. Graciously, our friends, the Summers, brought spicy breads, while the Surreys arrived with all-American apple and cherry pies.

When everyone had come, we all assembled in the kitchen where Dad prayed before the feast of American food began. Mother removed the lids from aluminum trays of fried chicken. On patriotic paper plates, we heaped garden salad, mashed potatoes, and sweet corn. Patriotic napkins and silverware were available in a flag tin. Happily, we sat at the tables and enjoyed telling stories and talking politics. Best of all, we built friendships while encouraging each other.

After dinner, we gathered in the living room where Mother began the evening's entertainment by officially welcoming the Belleys to America and presenting Mrs. Belley and her daughters with crowns of wreaths of star wire garland and patriotic ribbon streamers. Mr. Belley, Sam, and Alexandre were crowned with star wreaths also. Then we sang famous American hymns, including America the Beautiful and My Country 'Tis of Thee while Lisa accompanied us on the piano.

The

celebration continued when Nicholas and Peter performed ♦The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere. ♦ Sitting at the table, Nicholas, wearing a long beard, pretended to be Longfellow writing and reading his famous poem by candlelight, while Peter, dressed as Paul Revere, acted out each line.

Next, we played historic charades and had each family reenact an historic event such as Washington crossing the Delaware, the first moon landing, the driving of the golden spike for the railroad in Utah and the first Thanksgiving. When the Belleys♦ turn came, they donned coats and scarves and became an immigrant family seeking a new life in America. Upon arrival, the ♦immigrant family♦ waved to the Statue of Liberty, which was Nikola Belley lifting a potted cactus for a flaming torch. (The entire Belley family came dressed in red, white, and blue.)

The Surrey family presented the Belleys with a gift bag full of American symbols. It contained a package of hot dogs, an apple pie, a baseball, and a model Chevy.

Later, Chad stood to give a stirring speech about the true reality of becoming an American citizen. He expounded, ♦Today is very special. We have met to celebrate the Belleys♦ new status as American citizens.

♦America, all that she is and represents, is simply the aggregate of her people ♦ If America♦s aims have been good, it is because her people are good. If her desire has been for freedom and justice, it is because that is her people♦s desire.

♦We are America ♦ her heritage lives in our memory, her justice and freedom in our morality, and her future lives in our dreams.

♦By becoming an American citizen you take on great responsibility. You have co-signed on America♦s debt of nearly \$26,000 per citizen. You are now engaged in war against a lethal and determined enemy, a war that spans the world and likely will span many years. You have become part of a society that desperately needs the light of the Gospel, and your responsibility is to help stem the tide of a decadent culture by standing publicly for the truth.

♦America in her turn gives you a rich and godly heritage unlike any other. Our society is still the freest on earth in which you can raise your family as you see fit and assemble to worship without fear.

♦You now have what millions have longed for and thousands have died to secure, American citizenship! On behalf of all

Americans, well known and obscure, we want to welcome the Belleys as New Americans. We are honored that they have cast in their lot with us. </FONT></FONT></P> <P

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</SPAN>◆We welcome you!◆</FONT></FONT></P><FONT size="3"><FONT face="Times New Roman"><SPAN style="mso-tab-count: 1">◆◆◆◆◆ </SPAN>In the end, each of the fathers present prayed God's blessing on the Belley family. May the Lord prosper them in America and make them virtuous, upright citizens for generations to come.

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face="Times New Roman" size="3">Adrienne Burns is a homeschooling mother of five children who lives in Bethalto, Illinois.</FONT></I><SPAN style="FONT-FAMILY: Webdings"></SPAN>