LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF LEHIGH COUNTY

May/June 2024 Volume 71, Issue 6

The VOTER

President's Message

Dear Members,

One of my favorite quotes about getting involved, civic engagement and caring about issues is from a speech given by Teddy Roosevelt in Paris in 1910 in front of 25,000 people. It became one of his most famous speeches! He talked about having courage in the face of criticism to step out and give of yourself. And this is how it concluded:

"*The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory or defeat."*

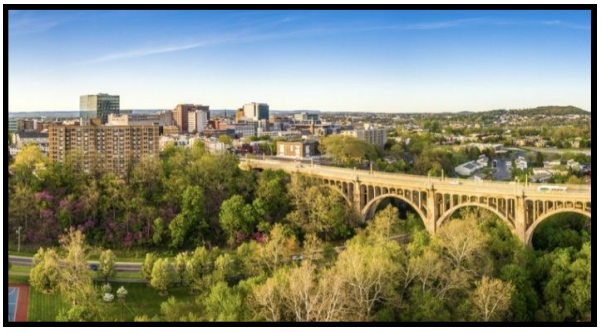
When I read that quote, I think of all those who came before us in fighting for the woman's vote. I think of those who have continued to strive to "*defend democracy"* and *"empower voters"* through the membership, support, and actions of the League of Women Voters from the national level right down to our Lehigh County League.

As we close in on another year; I want to say "thank you" to all who have joined, participated, attended Hot Topic Lunches, helped at events, and served so loyally on our Board of Directors. I thank you for all your support and hope we meet more of you as we begin to plan for a very important year. Stay tuned and check our website for events where YOU can be involved in that "arena!" Hope to see you at our Annual Meeting on May 13th.

Yours in League,

Mary Erdman, President

Our annual meeting will be held at on Monday, May 13 at Madeline's. It will begin at 11:30 am and will include a buffet setup similar to our regular Hot Topics luncheons. This meeting is important. Members will vote on the 2024-2025 Budget, a slate of officers and will vote to reaffirm our positions on local issues.



Community Outreach Report

A variety of community organizations have sought our assistance over the past year. Tabling events and presentations have provided voter registration opportunities as well as important information regarding voting procedures, both in-person and mail-in. Our outreach efforts have brought League members into schools, senior citizen residences, parks, churches, city streets, and parking lots. With the help of volunteers, we have made connections with citizens eager to learn about the work of the League.

During the summer months we were invited to participate in Community Outreach Day sponsored by the Lehigh County Office of the Public Defender, a morning devoted to sharing resources and information with residents of Allentown. This was quickly followed by the Juneteenth Celebration held at Cedar Beach Park, marking what has become regarded as America's second Independence Day, commemorating the end of slavery in Texas. During the summer months we set up our LWVLC table prior to Allentown's Movies in the Park, family community events sponsored by the City of Allentown's Park and Recreation Department.

Our outreach efforts to schools have brought us to both public and charter schools. Our League was represented at events at Harrison Morton Middle School, Sheridan Elementary, Building 21, and the Lehigh Valley Dual Language Charter School. The Parkland Community Fair held on March 16th at Parkland High School was a large and well-attended event, with over 100 community organizations represented.

September's presentation at the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living focused on voting basics and the November election and was attended by a lively, responsive group of young adults. October brought us an invitation to attend the Adult Forum at St. John's UCC, Allentown, always a welcoming gathering.

A presentation at B'Nai B'rith Apartments in February focused on voting basics, disinformation/misinformation, and voting security in Pennsylvania. Other events we were invited to attend included September's Constitution Day at Bethlehem Rose Garden, Allentown's Halloween Walking Parade, and the IAALV Diwali at Broughal Middle School.

Groups throughout the Lehigh Valley requested information from the League to assist in voter registration drives, including the Political Society of the Lehigh County Community College, the Bethlehem Area Public Library, and Southern Lehigh High School. Prior to the fall 2023 general election we were able to provide postcards to member libraries in the Allentown Consortium, the Hispanic American Organization of Allentown, the Hispanic Center of Lehigh Valley, Bethlehem, B'Nai B'rith Apartments, Allentown and Cedar Crest College.

Of special note this year has been the response of our members to two initiatives: a food collection drive celebrating Allentown's Parking Authority International Parking Day, and a t-shirt collection for the students of Harrison Morton Middle School. The contributions of League members resulted in our being able to deliver boxes of food stuffs and clothing to appreciative partners. Thanks to all for your support and generosity!

The coming year will be a busy one and we will need assistance in all our outreach efforts and programs. Voters are hungry for the type of non-partisan information the LWVLC is uniquely notable for. In your travels, spread the word about the League, what we do, and how we can help voters register and find candidate information. Presentations specific to a group's needs is one of the many distinctive ways the League reaches the wider community. And as always, thanks for your help over the past year!

Barbara Connolly, Voter Services and Community Outreach

Our First Happy Hour - A Huge Success!

The committee who bravely took the steps to organize our first, ever Happy Hour has been very satisfied with the results. We were expecting about 30 people and we had about 50 by the time the night was over! Attendees included: candidates, staffers, elected officials, college students, and executives from community organizations like the NAACP. Our members, including this one, had a great time relaxing, speaking with those in attendance and we even played a game of LWV Bingo created by Ellen Iobst. And then winners were thrilled with their Movie Basket prizes from AMC, as well as a few t-shirt give-a-ways!

It was great to see members mingling with officials, candidates, and other members and enjoying an evening of bi-partisanship and camaraderie over some special brews and the great food provided by the Gastrotruck.

As people left for the evening, many people asked - "when is the next Happy Hour?" We are thinking about that….stay tuned. This was a super opportunity to bring people together in the common goal of participation in our democracy. There was no need for speeches or presentations; people enjoyed speaking with each other much more. And attendees learned that as a League, we are interested in reaching out to *all* of our local citizens.

I want to thank the committee who made this happen: Barb Connolly, Molly Faust, Ellen Iobst, Tinku Khanwalker and Terri Purdy. I thank them for stepping out of our comfort zone and helping me create a new activity. I want to also thank the staff of Yergey's Brewery for their hospitality! We had some special help from my sister, Eileen Brida, a PR specialist and input from the younger generation courtesy of Stef Rafes. Thank you both.

It was truly a fun evening. Don't miss the next one!

Mary Erdman

Local Issues Report

The Local Issues Team of Ann Bartholomew, Barb Connolly, Molly Faust, Ellen Iobst, Rochelle Kaplan, Merry Landis and Cheryl Winters-Tetreau have been working on consensus on six issues over the past year. The six issues are Solid Waste Management, Local Water, Transportation Needs in the Lehigh Valley, Tax Base Sharing, Education, and Prison Reform - Bail/Bonding. The Board of Directors approved the consensus positions in April. The Local Issues will be presented at the Annual Meeting in May for final approval.

Ellen Iobst, Director, Environmental Policy

Voters Guide Distribution

The Spring 2024 Voters Guides were distributed on Thursday, April 11 and Friday, April 12. The Morning Call donated 500 copies of the Guide, which were delivered to 20 locations by 6 League volunteers. Recipients included county libraries, community centers, the PA Career Link, local government officials, and the Lehigh County Office of Voter Registration for use at polling places.

Thanks to the volunteer delivery members: Rochelle Kaplan, Bob Elbich, Molly Faust, Diana Marshall, and Charlie & Donna Barker. Special thanks to The Morning Call for its continued support of the League's efforts to inform and encourage citizens to exercise their right to vote.

Donna & Charlie Barker, Directors, Publication Distribution

DEIBA Report

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging and Accessibility (DEIBA) Committee met via Zoom on April 1, 2024 with Stephanie Sun presiding. At the April meeting, the words ***Transformation Roadmap*** came up. I thought I would use this space to give a brief explanation of how DEIBA came about as it is part of a transformation journey undertaken by the League recently.

In anticipation of the 100th anniversary of our founding, national and state leaders recognized that our organization needed to make changes if we were to succeed in the next 100 years. The areas of concern included: *a membership that was not reflective of our communities, a lack of tools to more effectively carry out the mission of our organization, and our inability to demonstrate our collective impact as an organization.*

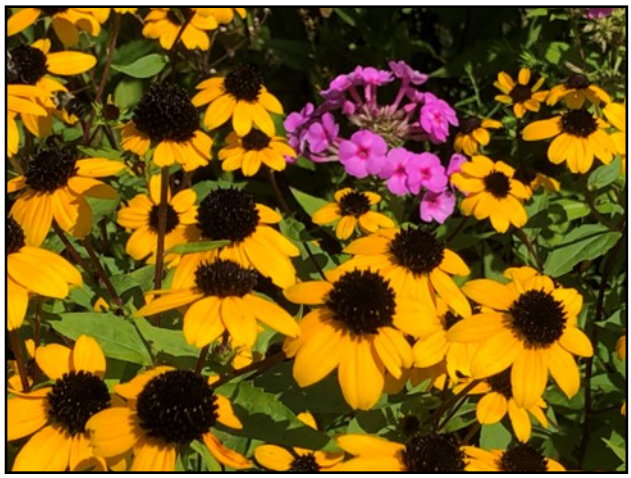
Following Convention 2016 a two year assessment began which included representatives from state and local leagues and included a cross-section of the country, large and small states, urban and rural Leagues. The meetings and committee work led to the creation of a ***Transformation Roadmap***, a 41-page document that is an analysis of stake holder interviews and a series of recommended action steps for LWV moving forward. (An executive summary of the ***Transformation Roadmap*** can be found on the LWVUS site – under League Management, Operations & Governance).

One of the assessments made was that the League has failed to adapt to current trends in volunteerism and to embrace diverse populations. It stated that "The League Way" -a long standing, commonly held set of rules and practices – is often regarded as "unwelcoming to new members" and that an "orientation toward the past," is slowing progress on new challenges and opportunities.

The recommendation to address this was to create a culture that is welcoming, inclusive, trusting and attuned to the needs of today's volunteers so that we grow our organization and have a greater impact. At Convention 2018 the national organization committed to developing a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan for the entire organization. Leagues across the country were encouraged to use a "DEI" lens in how they approached their work. The areas of Belonging and Accessibility were added this year.

Molly Faust, DEIBA Representative

Environmental Policy Report



At the last Annual Meeting, we approved Ellen Iobst as the Environmental Policy Director. It was a productive year for this new position as we worked on developing the policy and environmental education opportunities. We are looking forward to another productive year.

Last October, we held our first Sustainability Voter Education Program at the Allentown Public Library on Native Plants and Pollinators for children and adults. Becky Short, Master Gardener and League Member, gave a talk about the benefits of native plants and pollinators and the League provided voter information. In addition to the program, the League donated over 29 environmental education books to the Allentown Public Library. The event was funded by a Sustainability Grant from the PA League of Women Voters.

In January, we drafted the Environmental Policy. In March, the Board Approved the policy that was published in the January-February Voter Newsletter. We expect final approval at the Annual Meeting. Once approved, the work begins on further developing environmental local issues and community education.

In April, we hosted Jerry McAwards at the Hot Topics Lunch - Storm Water Runoff and the Impact on the Lehigh River. Jerry has seen the negative impacts on the river from riverside development, effects of poor quality wastewater treatment plants, and illegal dumping. Thankfully, the Lehigh River has benefited from the tireless efforts of very smart committed people and organizations that executed well thought-out reparation plans to create a chance for this river to come back to life and wildlife return.

Ellen Iobst, Director, Environmental Policy

Spotlight

Gayle Getz

Gayle Getz was born in Emmaus. As a child, she lived on a farm in Zionsville and attended a one- room schoolhouse. Gayle loved school and wanted to be a teacher to help children. After marrying and returning to Emmaus, she started her own childcare center. Later, Gayle and her husband became foster parents, eventually fostering more than 50 children.

It was through her involvement with foster children that Gayle became interested in the work of the League of Women Voters. The Lehigh County League at that time had developed a youth-centered focus, with initiatives addressing issues such as juvenile justice, homelessness, hunger, and health and hygiene. The children whom Gayle fostered presented her with special challenges in these areas, and as she says, "The League filled my needs."

A few of these League programs included teen health fairs presented at local high schools, teen help cards- pocket-sized references with emergency numbers, food collection drives to benefit shelters and food pantries, and a visit to the Allentown Juvenile Detention Center, where League members experienced incarceration by being locked in cells.

During her tenure as president of the LWVLC, Gayle made many friends and memories. Her current hobby is filling albums with photos and souvenirs of her family and her League days.

Donna Barker, VOTER Editor

Nominating Report

Here is the slate of officers that will be voted on at the Annual Meeting on May 13.

Officers:
President (2023-2025)- Mary Erdman
Vice President, Programs (2023-2025)- Chris Herbener
Vice President, Voter Services (2024-2026)- Barbara Connolly
Secretary-(2023-2025)-Vacant
Treasurer (2023-2025)- Barbara Williams

Directors:
Government Directory (2024-2026)- Cheryl Winters-Tetreau
Membership (2023-2025)- Margie Dunn
Publications Distribution (2024-2026)- Donna & Charles Barker
Voter Editor (2023-2025)- Donna Barker
Website (2023-2025)- Mary Bongiorno
Environmental Policy (2023-2025) – Ellen Iobst

Off Board Portfolios:
Budget Chair- Mary Bongiorno
Naturalization- Caryn Schoenthal
Lehigh County Voter's Guide- Julie Ambrose
Northampton County Voter's Guide- Sarah Barrett

Margie Dunn, Director, Membership

In Memorium

Mary Anne Stinner, 88, died February 18, 2024 in Allentown. Mary Anne was a longtime and active member of our league. She worked in Voter Education, Programs and Environmental issues. The league will have a Viburnum Bush planted at the Wire Mill Arboretum in Allentown in her memory.

League of Women Voters of Lehigh County
P.O. Box 3275
Allentown, PA 18106

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEHIGH COUNTY

Name _____

Street _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Membership dues include membership in the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) and the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania (LWVPA) and a subscription to the local and state *Voter.*

League dues and contributions are not tax-deductible as a charitable donation.

Contributions to the LWV Education Fund (LWVEF) are tax-deductible.

Membership in the League of Women Voters is open to all citizens. Voting members must be at least 16 years old.

ANNUAL DUES 2024

$70 individual $105 household $25 full-time student

$35 if 35 years or younger

Please make check payable to LWVLC and mail to:

LWVLC
c/o Margie Dunn
8411 Carpet Road
New Tripoli, PA 18066