



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

of Schenectady County New York

BULLETIN

www.lwvschenectady.org Summer 2010

Annual Report Edition

NATIONAL CONVENTION

Submitted by Judy Middelkoop, Treasurer

Pat MacKinnon and I attended the LWVUS Convention in Atlanta Georgia (June 12-15, 2010) as delegates, and we found it to be an enlightening and productive conference! We had the privilege of listening to numerous former presidents who talked about their own and the League's accomplishments. They spoke about Motor Voter, the Equal Rights Amendment, and the thawing of relations during the cold war to name just a few. These women are truly inspiring! The event was taped, and National promised to make a CD available to the membership.

The delegates approved the following two **studies** at convention:

1. The LWVUS Board recommended study of the Federal Role in Public Education. The study will focus on the role of the federal government in education policymaking, with possible consideration of funding, common standards and/or governance relationships among all levels of the government. The scope will depend on available resources, including committee and LWVUS staff time.
2. The non-recommended item on Privatization: the policy agenda to

transfer government functions, services and assets to the private sector.

We also approved **concurrences** to amend and update the LWVUS Arms Control position; to add the LWVMD & LWVME's position on Marriage Equality to the Equality of Opportunity position; and to add the following words as the third sentence to the LWVUS position on selection of the president: "We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished."

And we approved **resolutions** that the LWVUS should: support lifting the travel restrictions for Americans going to Cuba; support safe drilling and mining for energy resources; call upon the Senate to change its rules to limit the use of the filibuster; add the principle of TRANSPARENCY to the SARA Resolution; advocate strongly for bills that legislate for improved Medicare for all; and highlight the need for those responsible for the oil spill to be held accountable as well as demand that our government hold those responsible for the environmental disaster accountable for the clean-up.

We worked hard at the conference attending workshops and caucuses; debating and coming to conclusions on the studies, concurrences and resolutions; we approved the LWVUS program and budget and elected a new board. But it wasn't all work. We also had the privilege of listening to Secretary Kathleen Sebelius! She talked about the women's suffrage movement and the League's values. She also spoke on the Affordable Care Act and how groups like the League of Women Voters continue to have an important role to play by being a resource for seniors and all Americans who are confused or have heard conflicting information from special interest groups that were created to attack health insurance reform. For more information about the conference and to read transcripts of Secretary Sebelius's remarks go to the National League's website: www.lwv.org and click on [Get Up-to-Date Convention 2010 Information](#) in the upper right hand side.

SCHENECTADY COUNTY WORKING GROUP ON GIRLS

Submitted by Joanne Tobiessen, President

The Schenectady County Working Group on Girls (SCWGG) is now in its sixth year (inspired by the International Working Group on Girls, an NGO under UNICEF, where the national League is represented). In Schenectady, the SCWGG (as at the international level) is a collaboration of representatives. Here it draws from over a dozen different agencies and organizations that work with and care about girls. During this past year, we added to our mission statement 'facilitate programs on their behalf'. We created Girls' Day Out, a very successful community effort in conjunction with our member agencies and organizations, the City School District. We were fortunate to have many generous donors, and dozens of community volunteers who put on workshops on that day as well as other women who were trained to lead the follow-up Girls' Circles as 'Muses' in the City Middle Schools.

One hundred fifty 7th and 8th grade City School girls attended the 'First Annual Girls' Day Out: Breaking Barriers/Building Relationships' on November 18th 2009 at the Glen Sanders Mansion. The girls were able to each choose two workshops on building relationship skills and one workshop in arts expression, and then share what they had done in a finale with lively dance, singing, drama, poetry, art, and drumming. The follow-up Girls' Circles used a prepared curriculum focusing on the girls' strengths, positive attributes, future goals, and women they admired, culminating in a Celebration supper at the high school with music, participant panelists, and a slide show of the girls. All shared with and honored a woman of their choice. (This was held just before Mother's Day).

On May 12th, we held our 'Girls' Day Out: Report to the Community' at the Library's McChesney Room. Our goal was to inform donors and the community about what we did this year and where we are going from here. The program also included two panels of participants (five women who had contributed to different aspects of the program, and a girl from each of the middle schools) as well as a slide show of the girls. In the discussion, two mothers spoke movingly about the very positive impact the program had on their daughters.

We are now planning and raising funds for the coming year's 'Second Annual Girls' Day Out.' We will be meeting the second Mondays of July and August at 3:30pm at the YWCA. All are welcome. In September, we will be advertising for Girls' Circle leaders, whom we call 'Muses,' women who will inspire, encourage, support and challenge the 7th grade participants in small groups at their schools

They will meet twice monthly after Girls' Day Out. If you are interested, watch for more information, and/or contact Joanne at jtobiessen@hotmail.com for more information. LWV members who are on the SCWGG Include Maxine Borom, Karen Bradley, Maxine Brisport, Gwynne DeLong, Karen Draper, Betsy Forkas, Julia Helfman, Miranda Rand and Helga Schroeter. In addition, Lynda Nichols served as a muse and Shirley Readdean co-led several workshops.

Thank You

*Cay and David Raycroft
For many years of service. You have
stapled, taped, labled, sorted and lugged our
Bulletins to the Post Office in wind, rain,
snow and ice. Thank you for your generous
expense of effort and time.
Your service is very much appreciated.
The LWV Board*

TAKE ME TO VOTE

Submitted by Connie Young, Vice President

We had another successful year with the Take Me to Vote campaign. All the county elementary schools participated. The new voting machines were demonstrated with the students at four of the schools (Glen Worden in Scotia-Glenville, Hillside in Niskayuna, Woestina in Rotterdam Junction and Jefferson in Rotterdam). The children voted for favorite icecreams and vanilla won. Four schools (Glendahl in Scotia, Jefferson, St. John's in Schenectady and Hillside) were the winners with the highest percentage of voting parents. Assemblies were held so that the mayor and the town supervisors of the respective towns could award the winning plaques. Time-Warner Cable gave us a generous cash contribution and the Daily Gazette newspaper printed the 13,000 slips necessary to accommodate our program. Many of our helpers were retired teachers, AAUW members and poll workers, as well as members of our own LWV. All helped to educate our children to become responsible voters in the future. If you would like to join Take Me To Vote this fall, please call Connie Young 393-7061. It's fun and it takes a small amount of time to make a big difference.

MUNICIPAL HOUSING COMMITTEE

Pat MacKinnon, Chair

This year the LWV worked with both the Schenectady and Amsterdam Municipal Housing Authorities to assist in the administration of their Tenant Commissioner elections.

Schenectady: the nominating petitions were validated and 5 polling places were staffed from 12:00 noon until 8:00 pm on March 30. Joan Johnson of the Ten Eyck apartments and Ron Alheim, a Section 8 resident were elected as Tenant Commissioners for 2 year terms. We had 20 LWV members who assisted with this effort – many thanks to you all!

Amsterdam: MHA elections were to be held in June. However, no petitions were turned in. Our advice was sought, and after a lengthy discussion by our Board, we advised them to attempt to find a way to continue the process to secure a Tenant Commissioner. Their lawyer has advised them to allow the current term to

expire and then schedule a special election to fill those positions, which their bylaws allow. We will be hearing from them again soon, but will need only a few people to staff their elections.

CONSOLIDATION COMMITTEE

Pat MacKinnon, Chair

At last year's State League Convention, the study of Government Consolidation/Shared Services was approved. It was intended to set the parameters by which local Leagues and the state League will evaluate current and future legislation and/or proposals having to do with consolidation or shared services. The Schenectady LWV Consolidation Committee has been meeting since November to explore this topic. A panel discussion with local government officials from Schenectady County was held on Jan. 13th, and the committee members have interviewed all the town supervisors as well as a county official regarding the issues involved.

On May 25th, the League held its Consolidation Consensus Meeting, and reached consensus on most of the questions developed by the state league. The overall results will be published by the State League when their process is completed. Thanks to all who participated in the Consensus meeting and especially to the committee members: Maxine Borom, Sonia Rubenstein, Joan Elliott, Connie Young, Inge-Lise Pangburn, Helga Schroeter, Ellen Blake, Elmer Bertsch, Johanna Petersen, and Betsy Forkas.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Submitted by Gwynne DeLong, Chair

A list of community groups who are interested in our programs has been compiled and a monthly email message goes to these groups with information about upcoming programs. Flyers are often included that can be printed and distributed at their monthly meetings. These groups are: Schenectady United Neighborhoods, The Schenectady Neighborhood Watch, The Women's Republican Club, Better Neighborhoods, Schenectady School District PTO Liaison, and most of the individual school PTO groups.

There is information on our League web site encouraging interested folks to contact me if they are interested in receiving these monthly emails. I have received ideas from board members for more possible interested groups to add to the list and I will pursue those this summer so we are ready to go again in the fall. I have published a number of flyers and informational posters for League groups sponsoring events this year and have assisted in dissemination of this information. I will continue to make myself available to all our committees to assist in publicity.

I hope next year to be able to attend events in the community where I can help to make us more visible. I also intend to put our events up on the Say Schenectady web site on a monthly basis.

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

Submitted by Sandra Harrsen, Chair

During the 2009 – 2010 business year, the Fundraising Committee conducted one successful fundraising campaign. A total of \$1,085 was raised for the chapter's Operating Fund, and a total of \$2,105 was raised for our Education Foundation. A grand total of \$3,190 was raised for the business year.

The campaign ran in November and targeted both League members and non-member supporters of the League. Of the \$3,190 raised, \$175 was from our non-member supporters and from that \$175, \$70 was for the operating fund and \$105 for the Education Foundation.

Invitations were sent to our non-member supporters inviting them to our Fall "Kick Off Luncheon. Although none accepted the invitation, it was done in the spirit of enabling them to know more about the activities of the League.

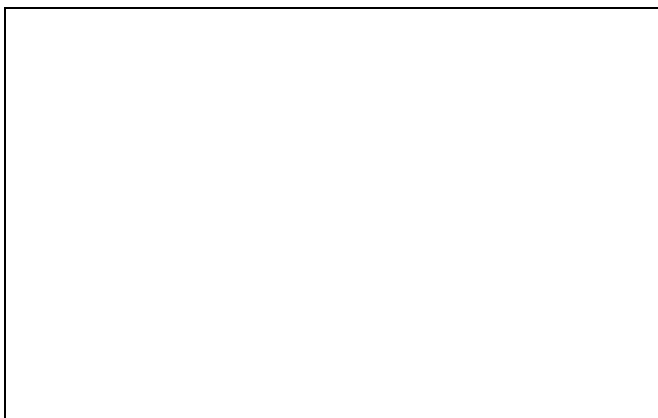
In March and April of 2010, attempts were made to secure underwriting support for our Who's Who's pamphlet. The list of potential underwriters came from various members of the board. This effort failed to deliver the desired results.

Conclusions/Observations:

- The larger totals for the Educational Foundation may indicate a desire for both our members and supporters to avail themselves of the associated tax deduction.
- Given the response to our non-member supporter mailings, the non-member support list needs to be carefully reviewed and updated.
- The effort to secure underwriters for our Who's Who has identified the need for a more effective network to be used for developing contacts and enlisting the assistance of members who are in a position to achieve the desired results.

Actions Taken:

- In keeping with its basic responsibilities the Finance Committee has been renamed the Fundraising Committee.
- Members of the committee will be charged with identifying and planning fund raising activities for the League for the coming year. Joan Elliot has agreed to assist with this effort. Joanne Tobiessen has been very instrumental in moving this along.



ACTION/ EDUCATION COMMITTEES

Submitted by Maxine Borom, Chair

ACTION

Several visits were made to Assemblymen Tedisco and Amedore and to Senator Farley concerning the LWVNYS issues of Ethics and Campaign Finance Reforms, Redistricting and Election Law (e.g. revision of the absentee ballot application form to include no excuse absentee voting). LWVNY compiles the results obtained around the state by local leagues.

Telephone calls were made and e-mails were sent when requested by LWVNYS.

The "Fix Albany Now" conference which was cosponsored by LWVNYS was attended by 14 Schenectady League members.

EDUCATION

Most of the activity was related to problems and developments in the Schenectady school district, with financial, personnel and school board election issues at the forefront. Many LWV members attended many meetings and provided thoughtful comments as the process evolved.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Submitted by Lynda Nichols, Chair

The Membership Committee has been very active making plans and trying some new things. Since July 2009, our membership number has varied only slightly, ending at the identical 165 total we had a year ago. We have gained 8 new local members and several National League members.

The Committee has set five general goals that are in line with the National LWV Membership Initiative: 1) target a new population and expand our publicity and communication network; 2) create an assessment system with new members to learn how satisfied they are with their first six months of membership; 3) make new members feel needed and included if they wish to participate; 4) ask members the reasons they join or drop; 5) reconnect with members who have dropped in the last five years.

One new form of publicity is the LWV information card that we have created. It is postcard size. We hope members will keep cards in their purses or pockets. If you meet someone who might be interested in joining the League, give one of these information cards to her/him. Contact Lynda Nichols to get your supply of cards. A second new publicity technique is our expanded email distribution list. Gwynne DeLong has created a wide distribution which sends information to school PTAs, Neighborhood Watch groups and many community organizations.

In these difficult times the Membership Committee is sensitive to concerns about the cost of our dues. We have created a dues "scholarship" fund to ease the payment burden for current or potential members. We ask that a current or potential member, or a friend contact the Membership Chair to request dues assistance from the fund. The request for partial dues support is confidential and would be known only to the Membership Chair and the Treasurer (for accounting purposes).

The Dues Scholarship Fund was established by means of a very successful Silent Auction at the June Annual Dinner. The Auction raised \$390 because of generous bidders and extremely generous Schenectady Sunday Green Market vendors. The following vendors contributed their products: American Buffalo, Buddhapesto, Cascade Mountain Winery, Cooper's Ark Farm, Cornell Farm, Dutch Desserts, Full Quiver Farm, Josephine's Whole Grain Baking, My Linh Restaurant, Olivia Royal, Our Daily Bread, Painted Goat Farm, Pixie's Preserves, R&G Cheese, The Red Barn, Saratoga Peanut Butter Company, Lloyd Spear Beekeeper, Sweet Tree Farm, Vegan Creations. (Please thank them when you go to the Sunday Market .)

One attempt to increase membership was minimally successful. We have created gift bags so our members can give membership to someone else. We began this offering in December. We have sold one gift membership. But Lynda Nichols has all the materials, and can assemble a gift bag whenever someone wants to buy a membership for a friend or relative! Committee members were Betsy Chase, Gwynneth DeLong, Judy Middelkoop, Inge-Lise Pangburn, Johanna Petersen and Joanne Tobiessen.

JUDICIAL/AT COMMITTEE

Helga A. Schroeter and Laura Zeliger
Judicial Committee Co-Chairs

The committee spent this past year focusing primarily on juvenile justice issues, since New York State is under pressure to change and improve its woefully inadequate system of dealing with juvenile delinquency. The state's secure juvenile delinquent facilities have a history of abuse and show a lack of rehabilitative and mental health services. New York is also one of only two states to treat juveniles as adults at the age of 16, if they commit a felony. It puts very young delinquents into the adult prison system. Furthermore, the vast majority of kids in the secure facilities are persons of color.

In order to gain a better understanding of the problems with the current system and to learn about some of the proposed changes, the committee invited several guest speakers. We heard from Joe Mancini who is in charge of juvenile probation in Schenectady County, from Joe Gallagher, who worked for Northeast Parent and Child Society for many years and currently holds the position of Executive Director of Mohawk Opportunities, and from the Hon. Joanne Assini, who is finishing her term as Family Court Judge at the end of 2010. In May, several committee members also attended a luncheon forum in Albany on Juvenile Justice issues, sponsored by the Fund for Modern Courts and the NYS Bar Association.

Some of the topics to be addressed to achieve reform are proposals to move juvenile probation from the executive branch into the Office of Court Administration; to create more therapeutic foster homes and to put only those juveniles into detention who are a danger to society or to themselves; to provide more assistance to troubled families and to introduce legislation to change the threshold of age 16 for juvenile delinquents to 18, more in line with most other states.

The committee has also continued to be involved in the county's prisoner re-entry program as it is being implemented in Schenectady County under the guidance of District Attorney Bob Carney and the Center for Community Justice. We will continue to monitor how the county addresses all these challenging

issues, and we will advocate for changes which address rehabilitation instead of punishment. Committee members were *Maxine Borom, Julie Burgess, Eunice Chouffi, Joan Elliott, Betsy Forkas, Sally Knutson, Linda Muralidharan, Inge-Lise Pangburn, Flora Ramonowski, Linda Ward, Jean Wilkinson and Connie Young.*

VOTER SERVICES COMMITTEE

Submitted by Karen Bradley

The Schenectady LWV conducted four Meet the Candidate Forums for the Fall 2009 election during the month of October. The Town of Glenville forum was held at the Glenville Town Hall; the Niskayuna forum was held at the Niskayuna Town Hall; the Town of Rotterdam forum was held at the Rotterdam Branch Library and the Schenectady City/County District Attorney and Sheriff forum was held at the Central Library. Each forum was filled to capacity.

The LWV encountered a unique problem involving one of the local elections when one party pulled out of the forum. The league will undertake a study of the National and State policy on the empty chair debate and develop a policy over the next several months.

We also provided a Meet the Candidate Forum for the Schenectady City Schools Board of Education race at the Black Box Theatre at Schenectady High School, in May.

League members who participated in the various forums were *Ruth Bonn, Gwynn DeLong, Evvie Currie, Desdemona Johnson, Inge Lise Pangburn, Maxine Borom, Joanne Tobiessen, Laura Zeliger, Helga Schroeter, Mary Maitino, Betsy Forkas, Ann Hicks, Julie Burgess, Carol Furman, Flora Ramonowski, Julia Helfman, Ann Bish, Elizabeth Cooke, Lynda Nichols, Johanna Petersen, Connie Young, Roberta Steiner.*

HEALTH COMMITTEE

Submitted by Carol Furman, Chair

The Health Committee decided to focus on three areas of interest this year: monitoring legislation concerning health care reform; understanding long term care alternatives including The Eddy Village Green; and understanding community health assessment results in the county.

The committee visited the new “Medical Home” at The Ellis Health Center and spoke with two nurse navigators to understand their role in reaching out to the community and assisting those without insurance to apply for it, and to help those without a primary physician to find one.

We shared information about the Eddy Village Green and intended to explore this further.

We invited the Schenectady County Health Commissioner, the CEO of Ellis Hospital and the CEO of Hometown Health Centers to present a program in April on “Health in Schenectady, Where Do We Stand Now and Where Are We Going?” This well attended program gave us an idea of the results of community assessments completed in 2009, as well as, an update on initiatives of the three organizations.

We developed a survey tool to speak with various representative organizations in the community about their thoughts on unmet health needs in the community.

Committee members met individually with more than twenty organizations. Survey results will be utilized to advocate for funding and development of needed services on a local and state wide basis. Results will be shared with the Schenectady County Public Health Advisory Committee.

The committee will not meet during July and August. The Health Committee will meet next on September 29th at 12 noon at the Moon and River Cafe in downtown Schenectady. We will discuss a strategy to share the results of a survey of unmet health needs in Schenectady that we undertook. We plan to advocate for services and funding to meet those needs.

Please join us. Contact Carol Furman at 346-2746 if you have questions, or if you will be attending for the first time. Members are Betsy Chase, Pat Kessler, Kathy Nye, Jenny Overeynder, Carol Possin and Mary Pritchard.

OBSERVER CORPS COMMITTEE

Submitted by Mary Maitino, Chair

The Observer Corps has 10 members this year, and has been monitoring the public meetings of the Schenectady County Legislature, Metroplex, the City of Schenectady, the Schenectady City School District, and the Town of Glensville.

We have been experimenting with the use of two or three reporting forms, and in the fall will discuss the pros and cons of each.

We would also like to monitor the school district and town meetings of Niskayuna, and Rotterdam, as well as the Scotia-Glensville School District. Potential new members, please contact me if you are interested in attending any of those meetings. It's usually a commitment of one meeting per month, and you don't have to attend every meeting. Usually the meetings are quite interesting, and have helped all of us learn more about how our local governmental bodies are working, and what is currently being discussed and proposed in Schenectady County.

Thank you to all who have been attending the meetings this year: Ruth Bonn, Maxine Borom, Eunice Chouffi, Liz Cooke, Jonetta Darcy, Helen MacDonald, Lynda Nichols, Carol Possin, Frank Quinn, Flora Ramonowski, Helga Schroeter, Laura Zeligier

2010 Susan B. Anthony Award Presented to Joanne Tobiessen

Joanne Tobiessen, our 2010 recipient of the Susan B. Anthony Award, became very active in our local League upon her retirement from Union College. She has skillfully led us as board president over the last three years and has done a fantastic job staying on top of the multitude of programs, issues and action items at the local, state and national levels. We have all greatly benefited from her gentle, but firm leadership.

Joanne genuinely cares about all of the LWV agenda, but her greatest passion lies in addressing the challenges faced by today's girls and young women. Joanne learned about the UNICEF International Working Group on Girls and then spearheaded the formation of the "Schenectady County Working Group on Girls.

Joanne expanded the group to an impressive array of organizations and agencies, including the Schenectady City School District. All the participating partners are concerned about the welfare, intellectual and emotional development of the girls in our community. Joanne initiated meetings of the group on a monthly basis, sharing ideas and concerns and ways to address them.

The WGG has put together several community programs on issues such as bullying, mentoring, girls and violence, etc. This past November, the group organized its first annual "Girls Day Out" and is already planning the next one. The one-day program, included many girls from minority and / or disadvantaged backgrounds, girls who may have never had a caring adult in their lives, to encourage them to pursue their own dreams and develop their talents.

Mission Statement: The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization. We encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government. We work to increase the understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy.

President: Joanne Tobiessen 393-0477

Vice-President: Connie Young 393-7061

Newsletter Editor: Helen MacDonald 346-7006



Pictured is Joanne receiving the Susan B. Anthony Award from Maxine Borom. Gwynne DeLong and Peter Tobiessen are observing.

Joanne has been the inspirational leader for these wonderful activities. She has brought together many community leaders and has obtained foundation funding for the activities. Many of the Joanne's efforts, along with all of her allies in WGG, have begun to make a significant difference in girls' lives.

Joanne is a most appropriate recipient of the Susan B. Anthony award – a woman who stood up for women's rights!

Congratulations, Joanne!

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Submitted by Ruth Bonn, Chair

The Environment Committee has several areas of interest: Water resources in the County; Global Climate Change (a National League priority) and energy use; and Solid Waste (based on a four League regional position). During the year we have also closely followed the issue of natural gas extraction in the Marcellus shale field. Pat Rush, a committee member, worked with the State League in developing a statement opposing drilling without more environmental review. She also presented testimony at several hearings.

On November 22nd we presented a well attended program, "Nuclear Energy in a Warming World." Carol Possin took the lead in organizing this very successful event. Howard Hart, GE research scientist, gave an overview of current and future energy needs and energy sources; Peter Ford, GE nuclear expert, addressed nuclear energy development, safety and disposal of nuclear waste. The Gazette published an article about the talk. The committee put together a summary article which appeared in the League Bulletin and the ECOS newsletter.

In January, Jeff Edwards, Solid Waste Planner in the County gave an informal but very informative talk to the committee about recycling and solid waste disposal in the County, and about the current efforts to plan for a regional solid waste facility, possibly including a waste-to-energy component. The County is mandated by the State to complete a new solid waste compliance plan by the end of 2010. Other issues were raised by his presentation. The committee decided to make following the issue of Solid Waste the priority of 2010-2011. The committee keeps abreast of a variety of environmental issues. We receive reports from members who observe at the Watershed Board, the Water Quality Coordinating Committee and Metroplex. Members are on the boards of ECOS (the Environmental Clearinghouse), SCEAC (Schenectady County Environmental Advisory Committee) and CREF (Capitol Region Energy Forum) and report to the committee. Several

members are active in the Capital Region Smart Growth Forum. Members attended a Climate Action Rally in Albany in November. Plans for next year include a program on "Peak Oil" with a film, "End of Suburbia" and a panel discussion. Tours of the new energy smart Price Chopper in Colonie, the LEED certified Golub office building on Nott Street are planned. We plan continued study of solid waste and recycling efforts in the County including a trip to the County Waste single stream recycling center in Albany. We will also be working with ECOS on a conference in February on Green development and combating sprawl and its harmful environmental and health consequences. Members of the committee are: Kathy Adams, Betsy Chase-secretary, Patrick Clear, Jan Elliott, Carol Furman, Nancy Peterson, Carol Possin, Patricia Rush and Katherine Wolfram. Thanks to all of them for their many, varied contributions to the work of the committee. We welcome new members. We are an active committee and welcome new members. We meet at the Moon and River Café on Ferry Street in the Stockade at 12 noon on the first Monday of the month.

SAVE THE DATE

for the
2010 Fall Buffet Luncheon
Wednesday, September 8 at noon
Stockade Inn, corner Union & Church

Stephen Feeny from the County Planning Department will talk about the four bike paths and their stages of completion, as well as, the funding stream that determines their progress.

Cost: \$20 per person.
RSVP Connie 393-7061 or
cyoung50@nycap.rr.com by September 5th

