

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

BULLETIN

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of SCHENECTADY COUNTY, NEW YORK

MAY 2008

MAY EVENTS

*The Schenectady County Working Group on Girls presents
A Community Forum for Parents,*

*Educators and
Service Providers*

UR UGLY



When the Bully is a Girl

Wednesday, May 14, 2008, 7 to 9 pm
The 1st Reformed Church of Schenectady
Community Room
8 Church St., Stockade

Speakers: * Cathy Welling, BOCES Bullying Prevention Trainer
* Jim Dillon, Principal, Lynnwood Elementary School
Guilderland CSD, author of *The Peaceful School Bus*
* MaryAnn McGovern, Retired Police Detective, currently
Peer Mediation Coordinator, Center for Community Justice

Our speakers will address a variety of topics: warning signs, cyber bullying, parent tips, effective strategies, effective programs, bystander involvement, working together.

Working Group on Girls Mission Statement: Working together to put the spotlight on girls and educate the community about their challenges, needs, opportunities and successes.

For more information contact Joanne Tobiessen at 393-0477 or jtobiessen@hotmail.com.

Refreshments will be provided.

Tuesday, May 27 at Noon

FRIENDLY LUNCH

Schenectady Pump Station Tour

Bring your own bag lunch for a picnic on the grounds or if it's raining we can go to a nearby pavilion.
Driving directions are more specific in the Environment Committee article inside or call Nancy at 374-5810.

Save the date:

Wednesday, June 11, 5:30-8:30 pm...Annual Dinner at the Turf
Tavern in Scotia

50 Year Members

We are hoping to honor 50 year members of the League. If you are or know of one who is, let Joanne (393-0477) know.

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

Meeting with DSS Commissioner Dennis Packard

Helga Schroeter, Co-Chair JudicialAT Committee

A small group of League members met with commissioner Dennis Packard on March 25 to get an update on the status of social services in the county. The commissioner pointed out some current trends, concerns and success stories.

Mr. Packard first high-lighted a preview of the governor's proposed budget, which shifts the county's share to 27% from the previous 25%.

The second big change is that the county will bear the full 100% cost for the detention of children (juvenile delinquents) and provide more local and less restrictive services.

Medicaid, public assistance and shelter allowance grants remain unchanged in the proposed budget, but assistance for singles is changing to 48% state and 52% county funding. Medicaid funding is shifting toward increased outpatient services to stress the importance of preventive care.

Other preventive services, funded 65% by the state and 35% by the county include the hiring of probation officers for schools and more intensive support from case workers for families working towards re-unification to keep children safe and out of placement.

The commissioner mentioned several positive trends happening in the department:

1) the Job Training Agency will now be part of DSS and will be physically located in the new DSS building to be opened by 2009.

2) Child support collection has had a record year; the agency has a good working relationship with the Family Court's Support Magistrates.

Roughly 1600 children are in day care, parents may paying up to 25% of the cost, depending on income. About 70% of Schenectady's day care is regulated, and the providers are represented by CSEA. 30% of providers are unregulated, which poses more of a challenge in terms of supervision.

Other challenges mentioned were re-entry issues for people returning from prison, needing such as health care coverage and employment. The "One Stop" serves all job seekers, providing help with resumes, interviews, workshops on re-entering the work force and some limited training. The commissioner is hoping to relocate a satellite Unemployment Office to Schenectady and house it in the future DSS building.

DSS, through the Youth Bureau, also deals with summer employment for over 400 youths, finds work for the disabled as well as for mental health patients and for places able-bodied public assistance recipients in jobs.

Finally, the commissioner stated that he strongly believes in the "housing first" model for those who are hard to serve and may be dually diagnosed. DSS works with local agencies, e.g. Bethesda House, the Monastery on Duane Ave and the Salvation Army to find places for the homeless. Mr. Packard is very committed to staying as flexible as possible to address the needs of the department's clients.

NOTES FROM THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Nancy Peterson, Environment Committee Chair

The LWV Environment Committee participated in three Earth Day events. On April 15, the day of Environmental Advocates Earth Day Rally, we also lobbied in Albany for several environmental bills, including net metering, green construction standards, and the Bigger Better Bottle Bill. On April 17 we participated in a tabling event at SCCC, and again on the 19th at the Mabee Farm.

Our next event will be the May Tuesday lunch, on the 27th. You've probably heard of the Albany Pump Station, but we're meeting at the Schenectady Pump Station, part of our Aquifer water system. They are prepared to give us a demonstration of how the Pump Station works. This is part of our series of Aquifer informational sessions, following the April 6 Power Point presentation Jason Pelton did a in the McChesney Room. The presentation is scheduled for noon and will take about 45 minutes. We're planning to have a bring-your-own brown bag lunch picnic afterward, at a nearby picnic area. In case of rain, those who want to join us may drive a couple of miles further west following Rte. 5S to the pavilion at Kiwanis Park. To get to the Pump Station, take Rte. 890 west from Schenectady toward Rotterdam Square Mall. At the L&M Motel, take Exit 2B off Rte. 890 onto Rice Road. The Pump Station is about half a mile on the left.

We're always happy to see new faces at our meetings, which are on the first Monday of every month at noon. Our next meeting is May 5th. If you are interested in attending please call Nancy Peterson at 374-5810 to find out the location.

MAY MEETINGS

Monday, **MAY 5**...Noon, Call Nancy (374-5810) for the location.

Monday, **MAY 5**...Working Group on Girls, 3 pm, Girls' Inc., Albany Street.

Tuesday, **May 6**...Board Meeting, 4 pm. Connie Young's, 1400 Keyes Ave.

Wednesday, MAY 14... UR UGLY When the Bully is a Girl, 1st Reformed Church, 7-9 pm.

Tuesday, **MAY 29**...Friendly Lunch, Noon, Tour and picnic at the Schenectady Pump Station. Call Nancy 374-5810 for more information.

SAVE THIS DATE;

Wednesday, June 11...Annual Dinner, 5:30-8, Turf Tavern.

Call Joanne (393-0477) if you know anyone who has been a League member for 50 years or more. We would like to honor those persons.

Check out our website at www.lwvschenectady.org

League of Woman Voters of Schenectady County Local Program 2008-2009

Justice and the Law

Support improvements to the local criminal justice system by:

- a- strengthening the Probation Department and rehabilitation programs in the County Jail.
- b- using The Release on Recognizance Program, excluding those who are considered a danger to themselves or the community.
- c- facilitating the implementation of alternative courts (problem solving courts) in Schenectady County and promoting collaborations to support them.

Local Government

Monitor activities of county governmental units, including town boards, the Schenectady City Council and the Schenectady County Legislature; monitor activities of other quasi-governmental units, public authorities and agencies such as Metroplex, IDAs and Planning Boards; monitor activities of elected public school Boards of Education.

Support standards of high professional qualifications and political nonpartisanship in manager form of government.

Children at Risk

Support efforts on behalf of children at risk.

Collaborate with other organizations to identify the needs of girls in Schenectady County and to educate the community about their needs and challenges.

Local Education

Monitor local initiatives related to charter schools and financing education.

Environmental Issues

Study water resources with a focus on the aquifer, and work to protect the water resources of Schenectady County.

Promote energy efficiency, renewable energy, and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through "green " building practices in Schenectady County.

Increase public awareness of environmental issues through public information programs.

Local Health Services

Support a basic level of quality physical and mental health care for all Schenectady residents.

Monitor planning for local health care service delivery.

Educate residents of Schenectady County about health care issues.

LEAGUE OPPOSES DEPORTATIONS, SUPPORTS EARNED CITIZENSHIP

Highlight of League Policy

The full immigration policy approved by the national League's Board of Directors in March was studied by the organization's membership for more than eighteen months. In achieving overall policy goals, the League supports a system for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status, including citizenship, by paying taxes, learning English, studying civics and meeting other relevant criteria.

The League supports:

- federal immigration law that provides an efficient, expeditious system for legal entry of immigrants into the U.S.

- federal policies to improve economies, education, job opportunities, and living conditions in nations with large emigrating populations.

- federal payments to impacted communities to address the financial costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.

The League supports the following criteria for legal admission of persons into the United States:

- family reunification of spouses or minor children with authorized immigrants or citizens

- flight from persecution or response to humanitarian crises in home countries

- economic, business and employment needs in the U.S.

- education and training needs of the U.S.

The League supports:

- due process for all persons, including the right to a fair hearing, right to counsel, right of appeal and right to humane treatment.

- improved technology to facilitate employer verification of employee status

- verification documents, such as status cards and work permits, with secure identifiers

- significant fines and penalties for employers who hire unauthorized workers

- improved technology for sharing information among federal agencies

- more effective tracking of individuals who enter the United States

- increased personnel at borders.

The League also supports programs allowing foreign workers to enter and leave the U.S. to meet seasonal or sporadic labor needs.

Health Care in Schenectady- Update

Carol Furman

You are probably aware that due to the failure of St Clare's Hospital to come to an agreement for joint governance with Ellis Hospital by December 31st of 2007, St Clare will be giving up its license as a hospital and Ellis will become the single acute care hospital system in Schenectady. A transition of St Clare's services to Ellis will be occurring over the next months. Ellis Hospital is taking steps to also offer a home to the Family Practice Residency and Dental Clinic currently situated with St Clare's Hospital.

Jim Connolly the CEO at Ellis Hospital and others from the facility or its Board have been meeting with groups in the community to share what the hospital is planning and the process they will follow to consolidate the services currently provided by St Clare's and Bellevue into the Ellis System. These focus groups gave attendees the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback. Attendees were also asked to answer questions to prioritize valued services and identify where they receive primary and specialty care.

Ellis Hospital was a participant with area Primary Care Providers, County Officials, representatives of Home Town Health and the Free Clinic, nursing homes and the Visiting Nurse Association, in a meeting to identify needs for Primary Care Services in the County. This group worked to make recommendations for a proposal for funding of a Primary Care initiative available through Heal-NY Phase 6 grants.

Two main concepts were supported at this meeting according to an attendee from the Free Clinic:

1- Renovation and upgrading of part of St Clare's Hospital to provide urgent care, as well as better access to specialty clinics, quick insurance and Medicaid applications and other support services.

2- Information Technology systems and technology to support the sharing of information between providers for better coordination of care.

It was recognized that while this grant would give an opportunity to make a step in the right direction, there was a need to look more broadly at the problems of providing adequate primary care and efficient, cost effective, and accessible quality outpatient care. Future collaborative efforts will be needed. Schenectady County will undergo many changes in this process. It is important to follow these changes and to advocate for needed services in the County as well as the access to health insurance for all.

The County does not have a broad based organization for comprehensive health care planning. It has been apparent that there are many in the County who are uninsured or underinsured. Services like the Free Clinic and Home Town Health have been having financial difficulties as has St Clare's Hospital as a result of trying to serve this high risk group. Universal access to Health Care Insurance coverage is needed to allow the system to respond in a timely way to prevent or control illness at lower cost. It is important that we all keep this in mind as we make decisions on our electing next President and as we vote for our State Officials as well.

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Pat Kessler, Health Care Committee Chair

Many many thanks to one and all who helped make the April 9th Health Care Reform Program a huge success! We had almost 90 people at the program and all the feed back to date has been very complimentary.

A copy of all the questions that were written that evening will be available on-line at our website www.lwvschenectady.org We only had time for 5 or 6 to be answered by the speakers, so we are hoping to answer the rest of the questions in coming articles for the newsletter. I think you'll be impressed by the breadth of the questions and the apparent engagement of the audience.

If you have any other feedback for the committee, it would be welcome! We will try to have another committee meeting in a couple months and plan our next activities.

Again, Thank you everyone!

LEAGUES HOLD HEALTH CARE RALLY

Local Leagues are encouraged to attend a Single Payer Lobby Day and Rally on May 6, organized by New Yorkers for Single Payer Universal Healthcare and co-sponsored by the Capital District Alliance for Universal Health Care at the Legislative Office Building in Albany. According to Dr. Richard Propp, Chair of the Capital District Alliance for Universal Health Care, the rally begins at 11:45am on Tuesday May 6 on the West Capitol Steps with music by RUTH PELHAM of the MUSICMOBILE! Speeches by healthcare activists will begin at 12 noon, with more music at 12:15 and followed by brief speeches until 12:30.

For more complete information contact: Mark Dunlea at 434-7371 ext# 1.

RECYCLING STORE OPEN

The Schenectady Affiliate of Habitat for Humanity decided to launch its own used home improvement merchandise recycling retail outlet. It would be called "ReStore®." ReStore® is a registered brand name coined by Habitat for Humanity International and used throughout the United States and Canada as a way to identify a Habitat affiliate's special brand of recycling store. The ReStore® is one way for local affiliates to add another revenue stream to help raise funds to help build Habitat homes.

It is a "win-win" for everyone... prospective customers, people remodeling their homes who had good things to give away, and contractors and remodelers with used materials in good to excellent condition needing an outlet for disposal other than the landfill."

The location for the ReStore® was found in the former Reale's location at 1957 Foster Avenue in Schenectady (off Nott Street) (phone 518-395-3412). With next to no advertising, the ReStore has been making a modest and growing profit in recent months.

The inventory ranges from all types of items new and used, like windows, doors, sinks, toilets, kitchen cabinets, lighting fixtures, washers, dryers, stoves, paint and finishing material, good pre-owned furniture, office furniture, garden items and a host of miscellaneous things too numerous to mention. All items are marked at between 50 and 90% off retail prices depending on the condition.

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are needed to see this picture.

Pictured here are League Members Betsy Forkas and Mary Pritchard with noted feminist Gloria Steinem in Albany, April 2nd for the Gloria Steinem Day Pay Equity Rally. Ms Steinem addressed large audiences at the Legislative Office Building in the morning and then again at the First Unitarian Society in the evening. People were heartened by her presence and her words in support of the New York State Fair Pay Bill.