

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS



QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.

of SCHENECTADY COUNTY, NEW YORK

FEBRUARY 2009

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ANNUAL PLANNING SUPPER at SONIA's

Wednesday, February 11 from 6 to 9 pm
at Sonia Rubenstein's, 841 Londonderry Rd.

Please come! We need all of your ideas to keep our
League active and relevant.

We will discuss next year's
programs & issues.

Bring your favorite salad...hot

cold

pasta

green

fruity

Call Connie Young 393-7061 to let us know that you're coming. Limited parking. Try to car pool.

***Please bring this issue of the Bulletin with you as it contains the
local
League's Program and the New York League Positions in Brief.*

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FRIENDLY LUNCH at the MEETING ROOM of the NISKAYUNA PUBLIC LIBRARY
Nott St. Extension

Tuesday, February 24 from 11:45-12:45 pm

We will get updates from the WORKING GROUP ON GIRLS by Joanne
Tobiessen

and from the OBSERVER CORPS---Maxine Borom and Helga Schroeter

*Bring your own lunch and beverage. Call Connie Young, 393-7061 to let us know that
you are coming.*

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.

Pres: Joanne Tobiessen (393-0477)

Vice-Pres.: Connie Young (393-7061)

Newsletter: Helen MacDonald (346-7006)

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Joanne Tobiessen

Greetings,

On Tuesday, 1/27, at the urging of our very persuasive Helen Quirini, Carol Furman, Helen and I made a visit to the historical documents of the LWV of Schenectady County, housed at the M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University at Albany. It was a beautiful, sunny day for a field trip.

Brian Keough, the Director, gave us an overview and told us particularly about the Archives of Public Affairs and Policy, which houses collections from advocacy groups (such as the League of Women Voters from Schenectady, Albany, and Rensselaer Counties) and personal papers of activists concerned with 20th century NYS public policy (including the papers of Helen Quirini from her decades of activism with GE's labor union and other groups; the subpoena she received from Senator Joe McCarthy's HUAC to be questioned in Albany was on display).

Then we got to see the storage units, which hold our history, our minutes, annual reports, committee reports, 'Who's Who,' bulletins and other state and national publications.

We learned that **'on April 30, 1925**, Mrs. Charles Richmond, wife of the president of Union College, invited approximately fifty women to her home for a talk by Mrs. F.W. Slade, chairman of the New York State League of Women Voters. After Slade's talk, the women at the meeting decided to elect officers and adopt by-laws thereby forming the Schenectady County League of Women Voters (later renamed League of Women Voters Schenectady County).'

The first entry in the collection was a set of 3x5 cards with the hand-written minutes of the first meeting. Carol saw the name of Mrs. R.O. Coggeshall. She became the president from 1935-37 and was the mother of Almy Coggeshall, who was awarded (with his wife Anne) our Susan B. Anthony Award last June. (He spoke at that time of growing up with his mother, who was a role model of community service and actively involved in the League.)

The League's motto, at the time, was "To Let the People Know – To Make the People Care – To Help the People Act." The League jumped into issues of the city manager plan of government in 1925, had a district meeting at Hyde Park with Mrs. Roosevelt in 1927, heard Gov. Al Smith address the club at the Van Curler Hotel in support of a birth control bill in 1928, and in the 1930's worked on divorce laws, child welfare, county reorganization, women as jurors, and the League of Nations.

It was a fascinating visit, reassuring us that our history is well housed and available for future research, and reminding us to turn over our more recent records to the Archives.

And now we have a chance to continue writing our history as we develop our agenda items for action in the coming year when we meet at Sonia's this February 11th for our annual Program Planning Meeting. Hope to see you there!

Joanne

SCHENECTADY COUNTY EMBRACES DIVERSITY (SCED)

The Schenectady City School District in collaboration with [Schenectady County Embraces Diversity](#) is offering a four week study circle experience Helping Every Student Succeed beginning the week of [February 23](#). Parents, students, and interested adults from the entire community will come together to listen and work together to find solutions to help young people do their best in school. Trained facilitators will help participants talk, build relationships and plan action steps to help all students succeed.

You are invited to participate in this city wide endeavor. For more information contact Kay Ackerman, 393-5000 or go to the Schenectady City School District *web site* www.schenectady.k12.ny.us and look for the link to Study Circles. You can view an interesting video about the study circles program on Schenectady Cable Channels 16 and 17 (shown at various times daily).

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 ISSUES

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.

LWVNYS Positions in Brief....2005-2007

ELECTION LAW

Support of measures to protect, extend and encourage the use of the franchise; open the political system by enacting a public campaign financing law for statewide offices; establish legal, ethical campaign guidelines; monitor campaign practices; simplify rules for ballot access.

And restore integrity to the election process – specifically support uniformity in election laws and procedures and in their implementation and enforcement; promote measures that ensure the integrity of all ballots; and

Support adequate funding for these procedures and for training of all involved election personnel.

Opposition to term limits for members of the NYS Legislature.

Opposition to term limits for NYS statewide elected officials.

GOVERNMENT

Support of standards to ensure equitable representation in the State Legislature and the Congress.

Support of improved measures to provide representation for legislative districts in case of a vacancy.

Support of responsive and responsible legislative processes which increase the role of the individual member and the committee system.

Support of effective lobbying and ethics regulation.

Support of procedural reforms in the constitutional convention process to promote openness and nonpartisanship.

HEALTH CARE

Support of measures to assure a basic level of quality physical and mental health care for all state residents including regulatory incentives to encourage development of cost-effective alternative methods of delivery; funding for health promotion and disease prevention programs; provisions for effective citizen participation in health policy decisions.

Support of measures that enable individuals to assume responsibility for their own health and to participate in decisions including termination of extraordinary life-extending procedures.

Support for uniform eligibility and coverage of basic health care costs through public financing.

JUDICIAL

Support of a unified state court system with improved provisions for judicial selection.

Support of statewide guidelines for law enforcement at all levels to prevent racial and economic profiling.

Support of measures to improve pretrial procedures in the criminal courts.

Support of measures to promote a fair and efficient jury system.

Support of alternatives to incarceration.

Opposition to the death penalty, with life without parole as the primary alternative

NATURAL RESOURCES

Support for measures to achieve watershed protection including limiting pesticide uses and applying Best Management Practices.

Support for a state-established, intergovernmental system for land resource management.

Support for a proactive role for New York State in regional land use planning, containing urban sprawl and protecting sensitive areas.

Support of reconditioning of the New York State Erie/Barge Canal System and its development for recreational uses.

SOCIAL POLICY

Support measures to meet the needs for low-income housing through use of state funds and incentives to localities.

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STATE FINANCES

Support reforms for greater equity in education financing for both pupils and the taxpayers.

Oppose in principle the use of public funds to support non-public schools, kindergarten-twelfth grade.

Support of a uniform equitable assessment and property tax system.

Support of measures to provide for openness and accountability in the operation of the New York State public authority system.

Support of a timely and responsive state budget.

Support the funding of public higher education and the existing formula for financing the community system, 1/3 tuition, 1/3 state aid, and 1/3 county support.

WOMENS ISSUES/SOCIAL POLICY

Support of measures which hold marriage to be an economic partnership with a presumption of equality between the spouses.

Opposition to measures that contain a presumption of joint custody of the children.

Support for equity in employment laws and practices and equal pay for jobs of comparable worth.

Support of measures to reduce the incidence and effects of domestic violence.

Support for measures to meet the needs for affordable and accessible housing through use of state funds and incentives to localities.

These state positions are based on LWVUS principles and public policy positions. State actions on other items not covered under a state position can also be taken under LWVUS positions. Reproductive choices (Government position) and welfare reform (Meeting Basic Human Needs position) are two examples.

February Dates

The YWCA of Schenectady is holding its annual "Unsung Heroines" program on Sunday, February 8, at 3 p.m. at the YWCA, 44 Washington Ave. This program honors local women for their contributions during Black History Month. Please call the YWCA for more information.

Patricia Rush is reviewing the book Hot, Flat and Crowded : Why We Need a Green Revolution--And How It Can Renew America, by Thomas Friedman at Books Sandwiched In, downtown library, noon to 1 p.m. on Monday, February 23. The program is sponsored by Friends of the Library.

The Judicial/AT Court committee is meeting on Thursday, February 26, at 4p.m. at Helga Schroeter's house to discuss issues to be presented to the Schenectady County legislature. Please call Helga for further information at 370-5042.

SAVE THE DATES!

Wednesday, March 11, 2009 At 7 pm in the McChesney Room (Main Branch Public Library), the LWV Environment Committee is presenting a program entitled "What Is New York State Doing about Climate Change?" Our speaker is Mark Lowery from the New York State Office of Climate Change. This is the agency that has been working with RGGI (Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative), a 10 state cooperative effort to cut greenhouse gas

emissions. Their successful “Cap and Trade” auctions were recently in the news, the first in the US. The presentation will be followed by a Q&A.

Tuesday, March 24th at 7 pm the LWVSC will be holding it’s National Popular Vote Consensus Meeting at the 1st Reformed Church on Church Street in Schenectady. The consensus questions plus pro and con background information are available on-line at our website: lwvschenectady.org. The link for National Popular Vote is near the bottom of the options list. More information will be published in the March Bulletin. If you have specific questions: Contact Judy Middelkoop at 382-761

LeaderSpark Report

Submitted by Joan Elliott

Two alumni from the League of Women Voters of Schenectady County-sponsored LeaderSpark will head to Students Inside Albany in April to learn more about New York State government and public policy.

The two students who join a statewide group of high schoolers at the conference that is an annual event are:

Matthew McKenna, a senior at Scotia Glenville High School and Morgan Schmidt, a junior at Niskayuna High



School. They were elected by their LeaderSpark peers. The alternates are Schuyler Smith, a home schooled sophomore from Ballston Lake and Erin Hoyt, a sophomore from Mohanasen High School.

The League of Women Voters of New York State pays the costs for two students from each league's LeaderSpark program and for one student nominated by leagues without the

LeaderSpark program to attend the conference from April 19 to April 22 in Albany; the local league pays for any transportation costs.

Fifteen students completed Schenectady County's 2008 LeaderSpark program, representing Amsterdam, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake, Mohanasen, Niskayuna, Schenectady, Scotia-Glenville high schools, and the home schooled community. LeaderSpark participants evaluated the program very positively, as one that helped them with a range of skills designed to make them future young leaders. Everyone had fun with a building tower project and, in the process, showed their teamwork and creativity skills. Morgan Schmidt posted photos of the tower buildings on FaceBook and participants created a montage of photos for the League of Women Voters of Schenectady County,



its sponsor.



Parents who attended the "graduation" ceremony were universally positive about the program and felt their sons and daughters had learned skills they had not had before. They gained from working with groups of their peers on skills they were practicing. In LeaderSpark, participants learn about: leadership styles and their use in different settings; working with groups; planning projects; dealing with conflict; presenting themselves; interviewing; and public speaking skills. This year in the planning of a project, participants focused on how they could recruit participants for

LeaderSpark in the future and how they and the League could market the program. LeaderSpark participants receive a manual that they can use as a resource for skills they will use at school, in the workplace, and in college. These manuals and the licensing agreement for the program are paid for by the League of Women Voters of New York State.

LeaderSpark is a major commitment for the students—six (four hour sessions) on Sunday afternoons in October and November and outside assignments. In addition, the adults involved also make a commitment as Lead and Small Group facilitators, recorders, and coordinators. Those involved were: Skip Darcy, Rita Biswas, Maxine Brisport, Grace Hillers, Madelyn Thorne, Cora Schroeter, Joan Elliott, Dick Shave, Sandra Harrsen, Shirley Readdean, and Ed Kosior (of the Schenectady County Youth Bureau). (continued next page)

Small group facilitators included: Liz Cooke, Kim Hendron, Carla Mastroianni, and Stephanie Lopez as well as others who were the lead facilitators as well. Recorders were Helen MacDonald and Maxine Brisport. Rowie Taylor, executive director of the YWCA of Schenectady County, was the major speaker at the ending program. Lee Cutler, the secretary-treasurer of the New York State United Teachers also spoke. Mary Pritchard is the coordinator for LeaderSpark in Schenectady County. She serves on a steering committee with Ruth Bonn and Joan Elliott. Connie Young is the coordinator for soliciting food donations for the program.

Many thanks should go to donors that make this program possible: League of Women Voters of New York State, Dr. Balasubramaniam, and the YWCA of Schenectady County. WalMart, Stewarts, HomeStyle Pizza, I Love New York Pizza, and Fireside Pizzeria contributed refreshments and materials. Other sponsors include New York United Teachers, State Farm Insurance, Key Bank, CSEA, Golub Foundation, and Hampton Inn & Suites.

*This Public Statement was delivered on January 21, 2009 at the Open Space Plan Public hearing at the Department of Environmental Conservation Offices in Rotterdam with the approval of the LWVSC Board by Carol Furman, chair of the Environment Committee of the LWVSC.

The League of Women Voters of Schenectady supports the identification of the Woodlawn Pine Barrens Wet Lands in Schenectady as a priority for conservation; the protection of the Great Flats Aquifer, one of only five sole-source aquifers in upstate New York; the protection of Wolf Hollow, with its unique geological, botanical, and cultural importance; the purchase and protection of buffer lands surrounding The Mohawk River State Park in Niskayuna, as well as the protection of linkage parcels that contribute to the continuity of a statewide canalway trail system as part of the New York State Open Space Plan.

The League of Women Voters of the US supports:

- 1- management of land as a finite resource, not as a commodity, since land ownership, whether private or public, carries responsibility for stewardship;
- 2- identification and regulation of areas of critical concern: fragile or historical lands, where development could result in irreversible damage .
- 3 -acquisition of land for public use.

The LWV of NYS takes the position that:

In order to conserve natural resources and improve the quality of life for its residents, NYS should take a proactive role in regional land use planning, enhancing urban neighborhoods, containing urban sprawl, and protecting agricultural land, open space, watersheds, and other sensitive areas.

The League of Women Voters of Schenectady applauds the State's efforts to create an open space plan and to set as its goals, objectives from four areas: responding to climate change, fostering green healthy communities, connecting New Yorkers with nature and recreation, and safeguarding our natural and cultural heritage. We ask that you approve and implement this plan to purchase and protect these important and valuable lands.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please send this membership form with your dues to Lynda Nichols, 1038 Maryland Ave. Schenectady, 12308

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ email _____

Membership choices: Student \$20 Individual \$55 Family \$75 (Needs Adjustments can be made.) *These yearly dues are not tax deductible.*

February Meetings

Mon, Feb 2....Environment Committee, Noon,
SAAC- TV board room, Broadway.

Tues, Feb 3....League Board, 4pm, 1400 Keyes Ave.

Sun, Feb 8....."Unsung Heroines", 3 pm, YWCA

Mon, Feb 9....Working Group on Girls, 3:30, YWCA,
Ongoing plans for Girls' Days.

Wed, Feb 11...Annual Planning Potluck,
841 Londonderry Rd, 6 to 9 pm.

Mon, Feb 23...Books Sandwiched In: Thomas Friedman's (Hot Flat & Crowded), Noon, Main Library

Tues, Feb 24 **Friendly Lunch**, Niskayuna Library, 11:45 am.

Thurs, Feb 26....Judicial/AT Court Committee, 4 pm, 1436 Lowell Rd.

Check out our website at www.lwvschenectady.org.