



League of Women Voters of Smithtown Township

VOTER

The LWV is a non-partisan organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy

April 2011

website: <http://www.lwv-suffolkcounty.org/smithtown.htm>

LWV of Smithtown presents

Gasland

a film by Josh Fox

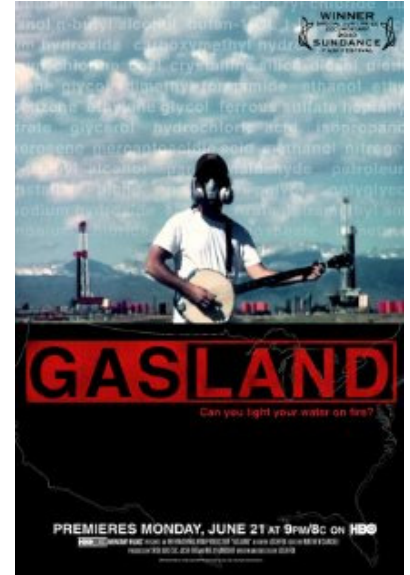
a Sundance award-winning documentary about hydraulic fracturing and its dangers

Tuesday, April 12, 2011

Mills Pond House, Rt. 25A, St. James, NY

6:30pm

refreshments will be served



The largest domestic natural gas drilling boom in history has swept across the United States. The Halliburton-developed drilling technology of "fracking" or hydraulic fracturing has unlocked a "Saudi Arabia of natural gas" just beneath us. But is fracking safe? When filmmaker Josh Fox is asked to lease his land for drilling, he embarks on a cross-country odyssey uncovering a trail of secrets, lies and contamination. A recently drilled nearby Pennsylvania town reports that residents are able to light their drinking water on fire. This is just one of the many absurd and astonishing revelations of a new country called GASLAND. Part verite travelogue, part expose, part mystery, part bluegrass banjo meltdown, part showdown, Gasland was nominated for an Academy Award for documentary in 2011.

LWV Smithtown Women's History Month luncheon at the Bonwit Inn on March 22

featured a special program with

Robyn Stein DeLuca, PhD

Women's & Gender Studies Program

SUNY Stony Brook

*Comparing the Roles of Women
in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*



Program organizer Sue Glatzer (LWV Smithtown), Prof. Robyn Stein DeLuca, and Joyce Rosenthal (LWV Smithtown President)

Prof. DeLuca's course at SUNY investigates how American women's roles in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have changed in the last century, with an emphasis on comparison of the traditional view of women from sacred texts, progressive interpretations, and the feminist theology point of view.

LWW of SMITHTOWN

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President's Message

In the past few weeks the downside of nuclear power plants has brought nuclear energy to the attention of the entire world. We in the United States use phenomenal amounts of electric energy to maintain our lifestyles. There are 104 reactors now operational in the U.S.A. Other sources of fuel for generating plants include coal, natural gas, water, geothermal, wind and solar power. All have a negative side.

Nuclear plants can, if an accident or natural disaster occurs, emit radiation. This is harmful to people and animals. Air, water and the ground are also contaminated. The wind currents carry the radiation around the world. Radiation from Japan has been detected in small amounts in Massachusetts and New York State.

Natural gas generators and hydroelectric plants are in the lead as clean sources of energy. This is true however that there are processes in obtaining natural gas that can be detrimental to air and water, causing horrific problems for people who come in contact with the contaminated water used in the gas extraction process.

Coal is plentiful in many parts of the world. When it is used it emits contaminants into the atmosphere, which in turn are harmful to people and animals. It is possible to make gas from coal. The process also causes environmental problems.

Hydroelectric Power is clean. The sources of water power in the United States are currently being used to the maximum possible. The dams required to control the flow of water to turn the turbines are in many places getting old. Should any one of them, as had happened in China, give way there would be an unimaginable loss of life.

Alternative sources of fuel such as solar, wind and geothermal power are of limited use. Solar and wind can only be used where there is a sufficient constant source of sunlight or wind. There are other problems

with alternate fuel sources. Solar panels are constructed of monocystalline silicon wafer (SPF). SPF can be hazardous to the environment when it is disposed of. It is a toxic substance. There is often local opposition to wind farms. They can kill birds or fish if they are offshore. They make noise, diminish property values and obstruct the view from your front or back porch. The sources of geothermal energy are often a great distance from the source to the location where the energy is to be used.

As in many things it is not too difficult to identify the problem. It is the solution that leaves us in a quandary.

Joyce Rosenthal

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The League of Women Voters of Smithtown thanks

Allison J. Cruz, Executive Director

and the staff of the Smithtown Township

Arts Council/ Mills Pond House Gallery

for its support of the League.

***We encourage all Town Residents
to support the Arts Council, par-
ticipate in its cultural programs,
and visit the historic Mills Pond
House in St. James.***

For info: www.stacarts.org.

STAC

Smithtown Township Arts Council



Mills Pond House

660 Route 25A, St. James, NY 11780
631-862-6575 fax 631-862-8730

Microfinance: Empowering Women, Transforming Lives

Recently the Provost Lecture Series of SUNYSB sponsored an informative talk by Mary Ellen Iskendarian, President and CEO of Womens World Banking (WWB), on the topic Microfinance: Empowering Women, Transforming Lives.

WWB's network of 39 financial organizations--also known as microfinance institutions--located around the world provides small loans, sometimes as modest as \$100, to people to start their businesses. The organization operates in 27 countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. There have been recent successful efforts in Mongolia and Peru

WWB is focused on ensuring that women have access to these loans. Customers use these loans in different ways: some purchase a cycle to transport vegetables to a market, or use the money to buy raw materials; others buy fertilizer for their crops, or a sewing machine to start a tailoring business. However, they all have one goal: to make a decent living and support their families' basic needs. Many are able to send their children to school for the first time, eat three square meals a day or make seemingly small home improvements that can actually have a significant effect on the household --such as move from a mud floor to a cement floor home.

WWB, headquartered in New York, serves as an umbrella organization to the 39 local organizations. It advocates for the benefits of microfinance and for the need to serve women. It conducts research and shares best practices. Most importantly, WWB develops vital financial products, such as savings and insurance, to enable microfinance organizations to better serve their clients and achieve the mission of bringing people out of poverty.

This effort is based on the idea that there is a strong connection between economic rights and human rights.

When women can provide and control a significant share of their own and their families' income, they are able to influence decisions made and quality of life. Women are more likely than men to spend the money they earn on nutrition, health and education for their children. Clearly this leads to a higher quality of life for the whole community. There can be unintended, but positive, consequences. For example: Identity cards are required to open an account. Once this card is obtained, a woman can also vote--and often will.

Predictably, there is resistance by many men to any measures which empower women and constitute a threat to their own authority. An early peak in domestic violence has been observed. Happily, this does tend to lessen significantly as improved quality of life due to the women's efforts becomes obvious. This type of negative side effect can be minimized by granting many loans in the same small community. Strength and power in numbers seems to work. Men resist less when most of their peers are being similarly affected. Often, then, competitive feelings arise and each man becomes proud of the achievements of his wife and children as his family's economic status rises. A win/win has been achieved.

Sondra Irvine

Women's History Month Performance at Mills Pond House

"Remember the Ladies: A History of American Women in Song" was the presentation at Smithtown Township Arts Council on March 27, 2011.

Balladeer Linda Russell sang some the popular songs of the past to showcase a musical survey of women's history in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She accompanied herself on dulcimers, pennywhistle and limberjack. She also read from diaries and letters in which women in American History told the story of their lives.

The Leagues' luncheon on "Comparing the Roles of Women in Judaism, Christianity and Islam" and "Remember the Ladies" completed a great Women's History week In Smithtown.

Mary Zopf

Library Board of Trustees Meeting Schedule

Regular meeting:

Tuesday: April 19

Smithtown
Main Library
at 7pm

The Center for Restorative Practices Joins Forces with Touro Law Students on a Juvenile Justice Project

The Public Interest Law Organization of Touro (PILOT) is Touro Law Center's public interest law organization. Our organization focuses on communities which are typically underrepresented in society and aims to ameliorate their hardships by offering legal assistance, educational information and a venue through which various pro-bono projects have been generated. The 2010-2011 PILOT E-Board was inclined to develop a project that assists youth who come into contact with the criminal justice system for relatively minor infractions. With this idea in mind, PILOT was then referred to the Center for Restorative Practices (CRP), which is an organization staffed within Touro Law Center's Public Advocacy Center. The Center for Restorative Practices, under the leadership of Ms. Carol McNally, LCSW, and in conjunction with PILOT has since termed this project, the Juvenile Justice Project.

LWV Smithtown board member Carol McNally is Executive Director of the Center for Restorative Practices, housed at the Public Advocacy Center at Touro Law School in Central Islip. The League supports Restorative Practices as part of its Alternatives to Incarceration position.

The primary goal of this project is to divert youth from the criminal justice system, by offering a community based approach to resolving issues that would otherwise leave such youth with a criminal record. To date, Touro Law Center has trained 15 Law students as Conference Facilitators through the CRP and has been engaging in conferencing within both the home and school setting. From domestic violence disputes, to in-school misbehavior, conferencing has been able to serve as a tool through which incidents have effectively been resolved.

Through the Juvenile Justice Project, we aspire to offer youth who have committed relatively minor infractions the opportunity to resolve these incidents independent of the criminal justice system, so that he or she may have a second chance at revising his or her behavior and understanding the repercussions associated with misbehavior in a more comprehensive setting.



The situations that are best suited for conferencing involve behavior that is not serious in nature. The problem that currently exists is that youth who have committed relatively minor crimes, find themselves on conditional probation. Then if they should breach a condition, they become eligible for prison terms. The issue with this formula is that the list of conditions is expansive and relatively easy to breach. Consequently, youth who have

committed minor offences may then find themselves sent to prison. Rather than being able to restore their lives, they instead learn the practices and techniques of career criminal behavior. They become not only discontent, but resentful toward authority figures and the criminal justice system.

The interest in and progress of the Juvenile Justice Project has been expanding since its inception. PILOT has created an executive board position that will be exclusively dedicated to the promotion of the Juvenile Justice Project, and two students will serve as Co-Chairs. Erika Vladimer will be the liaison between PILOT and the NYCLU and she will focus on promoting Advocacy within School Suspension Program. Cory Morris will be the liaison between PILOT and CRP and he will focus on promoting the Restorative Conferencing aspect.

Suzanne Valles



Suffolk County Voter

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Wed. April 20 LWVSC Board Meeting, SCCC, Main St. Riverhead 10am - 12noon

April 2011

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The Future of the John J. Foley Nursing Home

The status of the John J Foley Skilled Nursing Facility has been in question for more than a year; but as of January 2011 it has been in crisis mode. When the Legislature did not support County Executive Levy's plan to sell the facility, he vetoed any money in this year's budget to support the continuing operation of the home by the county. The County Legislature failed to override his veto by one vote. Since funding would expire March 31, 2011, Levy announced he would close the nursing home.

Towards the end of January NY State approved Levy's plan for closing the facility, shoring up the County Executive's case. At about the same time one employee and three residents of the home filed a lawsuit asking for a ruling to block the sale on the grounds that it could not be closed until the Legislature voted for closure. On February 1st the County Legislature voted by 11 to 5 to join the lawsuit. The month of February then saw court decisions: first allowing the closure, then blocking it. On February 16th, a Suffolk State Supreme justice refused a request for a temporary injunction to stop the sale by the County Executive. Levy immediately started laying off workers at the home (16 were told they were terminated), and simultaneously Levy's aides said new nursing home admissions were stopped. In addition letters were sent to residents' families telling them closure of the home was being phased in.

On February 21st however, the State Supreme Court Appellate Division issued a temporary order forbidding the County Executive to close the home. Levy then reversed himself, calling a special meeting of the Legislature for Thursday, March 3rd, to reconsider the deal of last fall to sell the home to a private operator. The County still has the deposit for that sale. The meeting on the 3rd was a very contentious one between the County Executive's representatives and the Legislature, ending finally after midnight with the Legislature voting 12 to 4 to approve the sale. The court still must approve the sale and there are still other issues to iron out, such as whether the sale will be effective this spring or at the end of the year, raising the question of who will fund it until the sale. The resolution included provision for a four million dollar fund that will make up loss of income for staff who are transferred to other positions, and for care for patients who need special care during the transition. Opponents of the sale asked if the County can afford four million dollars for transitional costs, could they not continue to fund the facility's operation? Another issue is whether the twelfth vote was cast illegally, since Legislator D' Amaro's wife is the County Attorney. Opponents suggest he should have abstained from voting.

It is obvious at this point there are still many issues to be resolved and the LWV continues to keep track of how the sale is progressing and the content of the final contract.

Marilyn McKeown

CPEP and Stony Brook Medical Center

It is not news to anyone that there are severe budgetary concerns afloat in New York State and in Suffolk County. Stony Brook University has, for the past three years, made very difficult, highly strategic decisions to accommodate these challenges and has cut back the operating budget while protecting the core academic mission of the institution.

Dr. Steven Strongwater, the Medical Center's chief executive, said that if the Governor's proposed budget goes through, it will result in the loss of up to 700 jobs. Key programs will have to be closed. The Medical Center is the region's safety net hospital, providing services that are unavailable elsewhere in the area. It is a major teaching hospital, the only Level 1 trauma center in Suffolk County, and the biggest provider of care for the underserved and uninsured in the area. Gov. Cuomo's budget proposal also severely cuts services to veterans, along with cuts which will seriously impact on the quality of the educational enterprise of the University.

Stony Brook has the only emergency room program for people with mental illness (Comprehensive Psychiatric Emergency Program: CPEP) in Suffolk County, a program to which the League has had a long-term commitment.

CPEP is in the process of a major renovation, designed to overcome the severe limitations of its facilities on its mission to fulfill its responsibilities to the County's mentally ill. Within the past two years, the County Legislature voted for a million dollar bond to assist this renovation (with County Executive Steve Levy's approval), but to date that financial support has not materialized.

The League strongly advocates for the County's support for CPEP's renovations, and for the actual delivery of its already-approved \$1 million bond to support those renovations.

Katherine Hoak



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS ®
OF SMITHTOWN**

**322 River Road
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Address Correction Requested

**POSTMASTER:
DATED MAIL-
Please Rush!**

DATES TO REMEMBER

April 2011

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|---|
| Mon. | April 4 | LWV Smithtown board meeting Mills Pond House, 11am |
| Tues. | April 5 | Town Board Meetings, 9:30am-Work Session; 2pm-Regular Meeting, Town Hall |
| Tues | April 12 | Gasland film, Mills Pond House, 6:30pm |
| Tues. | April 19 | Library Board Meeting, Smithtown Main Library, 7pm |
| Wed. | April 20 | LWVSC Board Meeting, SCCC, Main St., Riverhead, 10am-12noon |
| Thurs. | April 28 | Town Board Meeting, Senior Citizens Center, 7pm |