



Suffolk County Voter

www.lwv-suffolkcounty.org

Annual Convention 2009

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Suffolk County Local Leagues Report

Brookhaven League

The year 2008-09 was a good year, with a number of new members but, sadly, the loss of others. Our major study item was Health Reform, based on the LWV US study adopted at the Convention. We also watched the changes in Town Government,

Continued page 2

Huntington League

"Fair, Vibrant and Strong" the theme of the LWVNY's convention, certainly describes the LWV of Huntington. Our Meet the Candidates Night which we held on Oct. 27, and the consensus meeting on the Compact for a National Popular vote we held on April 21 not only were well attended but demonstrated how our league is fair and strives to be nonpartisan.

Continued page 3

Smithtown League

Our first event of the year was an evening of antique appraisals called "Trash or Treasure". As last year, we again partnered with the Smithtown Arts Council. This fund raising event was held at the Mills Pond House, the historic house that is home to the Arts Council. The event was a success in spite of an horrific rain storm.

Frank DeRubeis, director of the Smithtown Planning

Continued page 4

Hamptons League

We began the year by hosting a luncheon for women in elected office in the towns of Southampton and East Hampton, at which 17 women in office, surrounded by their friends and family, heard a wonderful talk by Judith Hope, the first woman Town Supervisor on the East End, who urged women to seek political office and described why it was so important that they do so.

Among our forums were a meeting on transportation alternatives in the Hamptons; in September we explored the thorny question of education funding and property taxes; in October we hosted a slew of debates: candidates

Continued page 2

Shelter Island League

We had a busy year and fulfilled all of our goals save one. One of our goals was to do some serious fundraising; another was to raise the profile of the League and educate the community about what the League is and does; and another goal was to involve our students in more of our programs. The last task was only partially achieved and we're looking forward to next year to engage these young future voters in town government.

- We held a major fundraiser, a dinner dance--"Swing Vote"--just before the general election that was attended by some 100 people and raised approximately \$4000.

Continued page 4

Brookhaven con't

and were able to get involved by holding a debate for the candidates for Town Supervisor, our first debate in many years. We also held meetings to present information and take consensus on the Compact for a National Popular Vote. We invited speakers on the threats to local waters from pollution and the need for a plan to protect the Carman's River, and transportation in Brookhaven Town and Suffolk County. We heard speakers explain Restorative Practices in the schools and members met with superintendents of two school districts to advocate for the program. We had a meeting to make suggestions for the Brookhaven 2030 Comprehensive Plan, and some of our members attended the public presentations.

We have been watching Suffolk County's plans for a walkable community on county-owned land in Yaphank, and are watching the discussion about questions raised by environmentalists and town government. Other housing issues that affect the town were reported at the board meetings, especially the foreclosure crisis and its impact on local communities. We have also pointed out the need for housing for families earning less than 80 or 50 or 30 percent of the median income, and have been gathering information for housing built for people with special needs.

Our members held voter registration drives at colleges, libraries, and Brookhaven Town Fair and moderated four candidates meetings. Our guest at our Annual Luncheon was New York State Senator Brian Foley, whom we got to know when he was Supervisor of Brookhaven Town and a Suffolk County Legislator.

Nancy Marr, President

Hamptons con't

for congress, state senate, state assembly and Southampton Town Counsel were all heard from. In November, we hosted a forum on the Riverhead Resorts project. The forum received a huge amount of publicity, and we have been told by Sea TV that the video was their most requested and purchased video ever.

In January we hosted a representative of the Board of Elections who described the workings of that body; in March we held our second Trivia event, for the benefit of Southampton Hospital. We doubled attendance, and more than doubled proceeds.

Throughout the year, our membership committee beat the bushes to encourage people to join, with the result that we are bucking the trend of decreasing membership, and are increasing our numbers. The government committee began work on its study on the structure of town government, and will be hosting a forum on that topic in July. Voter services, doing the basic work of the league, registered voters up and down the east end, educated us on voting machines, gave out voter guides, answered voters' questions and gave out "I voted" buttons on election day. Natural resources worked on the follow up to the Greening of the South Fork forum, which will take place in October. The health committee has been meeting with elected and appointed officials to find out what is going on with health care, and will be presenting a forum on that topic in June.

Our publicity dynamo has ensured that all of our functions are reported, recorded and shown to the community. The Voter continues to look better and better; it is self sufficient and, in actuality, a profit making enterprise and we have a new, improved and gorgeous web site.

To make the circle complete, the education committee has presented a wonderful program called Running and Winning which takes up the mantle cast down by Judith Hope, and provides a means to encourage young women to consider careers in public service through views with women elected officials interviews and participation in a mock campaign.

We held our annual meeting at the beautiful Long House Reserve, where we honored Dorothy Lichtenstein, President of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, for her contributions to our league and the artistic, educational and political communities on the East End.

Hamptons con't

At the New York State convention held in May, we received the following awards:

- Youth Services: Judi Roth and Judie Gorenstein of Huntington won for their work on Vote 18.
- Action on a Local issue: Barbara Jordan and the video she produced have won this award for their tackling of the affordable housing issue.
- Action on a National Issue: the Natural Resources Committee won this for their work on the Greening of the South Fork, and their alliance with GAIN.
- Visibility: Arlene Hinkemeyer won this award.
- Publication other than the Voter: Early on in the election process, the Health Committee made up a table setting forth the position of each of the candidates on health care which won the award for publication other than the Voter.

Carol Mellor, President

Huntington con't

Our committees and the varied programs we presented this year demonstrated how vibrant we are. The voter service committee held 10 voter registration drives and distributed voter guides as well as palm cards with important dates and contact numbers for registration and voting. We also provided a guest speaker at the Dominican Village Assisted Living Center, the Chamber of Commerce of Amityville, and the Grey Panthers to inform people of the current and impending changes in the election process. We taught Vote 18 to over nine hundred students at Long Island University, Sonderling High school, Bellport High School, and North Babylon High. Our newly formed legislative committee carefully studied our state legislators and Legislative Agenda of the LWVNY before we met with Assemblyman Andrew Raia, Assemblyman James Conte, Sen. Carl Marcellino, and Sen. John Flanagan.

Although we do not have a program committee, our board and members did a wonderful job in program planning. In Sept. we showed "Iron Jawed Angels" at local libraries. On Sept. 25, our league and New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty cosponsored an event at the Cinema Arts Centre where we presented "Exonerated". Martin Tankleff was the keynote speaker, discussing his experience with being wrongfully convicted and addressing what is wrong with our justice system. We continued our liaison with the Cinema Arts Centre and New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty, recently renamed New Yorkers for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and on May 12, presented "After Innocence" a documentary of exonerated-innocent men wrongfully imprisoned for decades who were released after DNA evidence proved their innocence. Our keynote speakers that evening were Alan Newton, who was wrongfully convicted of rape and exonerated after serving 21 years in prison, Elizabeth Webster from the Innocence Project, and Susan Schindler from NYADP. During March, Women's History Month, we showed "America's Victoria: Remembering Victoria Woodhull" at the Cinema Arts Centre, which affords us a venue with high visibility and an opportunity for excellent public relations. The 90+ people who attended this program learned about the first woman who ran for presidency of the US, and got to meet the renowned composer and conductor Victoria Bond who wrote an opera "Mrs. President." Our other programs during the year were the "Wetlands-Can Long Island Have a Katrina Like Disaster?", an orientation meeting held in Jan. where Brian Herrington of the Attorney General's office discussed Project Sunlight, and an educational meeting in Feb. where Supervisor Petrone and various town staff discussed Horizons 2020, the Town of Huntington's Comprehensive Plan. In addition to these programs, our league continues to advocate strongly for affordable housing in Huntington.

Our strength is not only demonstrated in our programs but also in our membership. Our membership has grown to 85 with 15 new members since last year. Four of these new members have already taken an active role in our league programs. Yes, we are Fair, Vibrant, and Strong

Judie Gorenstein, President

Shelter Island con't

- We held a forum on domestic violence –“Domestic Violence a Family Community Affair” with a panel that included representatives from The Retreat as well as our Chief of Police that was aired on our local access channel 22. An article on the effect of domestic violence on the community was written by the forum’s chairwoman, Barbara Olton, and was published in our local paper.
- I gave the membership an hour-long power point presentation on how to run a successful program on Shelter Island and emphasized the nonpartisan image that must be reinforced when the opportunity arises—particularly at our public events.
- We held the first in a series of “Civic Conversations” which is intended to conduct informal conversations about issues that affect the island. The first one was on the Assessor’s Office and the Board of Assessment Review. This program was also aired on our local cable access channel.
- We held our second annual “State of the Town” luncheon with our Supervisor which was attended by some 80 people. We invited the seniors at our local high school—half of whom attended. We arranged to have the Supervisor to sit with the students so that they would both have the opportunity to have a rare one conversation.
- We sent two members to the NYS convention for the first time in a number of years thanks to a healthy treasury.

We have an upcoming annual meeting at the Gardiner’s Bay Country Club which will feature one of our town justices as our main speaker.

Cathy Kenny, President

Smithtown con't

Department and members of the Smithtown Chamber of Commerce gave a presentation depicting what could be done to revitalize Main St. Smithtown. It is evident that not much has changed on Main St. in the last forty or fifty years. They had illustrations of how things could be improved to make the area more walker friendly. Many of the existing structures could make cosmetic changes to improve their appearance. Some landscaping is also necessary. Everything hinges on sewers being constructed in this section of the town.

Members of the LWV of Smithtown participated in the formation of the Nissequogue River Stewardship Action Plan. The Nissequogue River lies within the Town of Smithtown. The watershed encompasses an area of forty square miles. The river flows north from its source to the Long Island Sound. It is the only tidal river draining the Long Island Sound where the costal portion remains in relatively undisturbed condition. It is one of the largest coastal wetlands on the north shore. The river includes diverse habitats.

The Compact for the National Popular Vote was originally scheduled to come to consensus in early 2009. In October members of the LWV of the Hamptons graciously came to Smithtown to give an excellent presentation of the pros and cons of NPV. They were very helpful to our membership giving much of the information necessary to form consensus.

In honor of Women’s History Month we went to the Ward Melville Educational & Cultural Center to see “Suffrage and Courage: A Women’s Quest for Equality”, a drama debating a Woman’s Right to Vote, circa 1917.

Two of the most important things we did were our youth programs. Leader Spark groups were held twice. In the summer the program was held at the Bay Shore YMCA facility for their counselors in training. In the spring students from high schools in Smithtown participated in the program. Our next involvement with youth was Students inside Albany. We sent two students.

In addition we had an enjoyable holiday party. As has become our practice we hold a covered dish party at the Mills Pond House. Our guest speaker was a nutritionist. We had an additional special guest from India who was quite interesting.

Joyce Rosenthal, President