

LWV-LF/LB Area Board Report for 2013-2014

ACTION! The League is an advocacy organization and certainly proved it in July. And what a statement we made. The Lake Forest City Council was faced with new state legislation that would eliminate our community's home rule right to pass ordinances banning assault weapons and restricting firearms. On July 1, Jane Partridge spoke on behalf of the League, and asserted the League's position banning assault weapons. She and Liz Bradner also testified with examples of their own personal negative experiences. After weeks of working with other concerned citizens, League members urged the City Council to pass a placeholder ordinance and preserve its rights for the future. Between the July 1 and July 15 meetings, the Aldermen had decided against drafting any ordinance. A gun ordinance was not on the July 15th agenda, but the Mayor did add time to the agenda allowing residents to speak. Jane Partridge, Mary Mathews, Beth Martin, Stephanie Victor, David Mueller, and Joy Guscott-Mueller all spoke at the City Council meeting. Many other members were in the audience supporting our efforts. We are very grateful for all the work and widespread support provided by so many members. The League considers the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons as a major health and safety threat. We will continue to work on sensible gun legislation at the state and national levels.

On a lighter note, July also brought us the Lake Bluff July 4th parade. This year, Steve Potsic provided our parade entry, a bright red convertible. He and family members were quite a hit, especially when performing a dance skit with our banner.

On a hot day in August, Stephanie Victor drove her car in the Lake Forest Day parade. Cindy Morehead and Liz Bradner were able to keep their cool while still waving to the crowds.

Also in August, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of women having the right to vote in Illinois. The General Assembly had passed a resolution marking the date and sent a copy to each League. Stephanie Victor arranged a celebration/fundraiser with "Raise Your Glass" wine tasting held at Grand Cru Wine Merchants, in Lake Forest. A portion of the sales and a generous donation by the owner Craig Brautigam were given to the League. Stephanie and Mary spent a pleasant afternoon greeting fellow League members and spouses, Lori Reszutek, Linda Bartmes, Barbara Monsor, Ann Grant, Jane Partridge, and others while also talking with non-members. If your supply of wine is getting low, please consider Grand Cru; Craig was very knowledgeable and accommodating.

Stephanie Victor again arranged for voter registration at the September Newcomers Luncheon. Liz Bradner and Tina O'Connor had a successful afternoon and are looking forward to continuing this outreach with another community organization.

In September, we hosted our annual fall kick-off membership event with "Culture and Politics" held at Re-Invent Gallery on Wisconsin Ave. in Lake Forest. Members and guests were invited to meet and talk with our 5 new legislators: Congressman Brad Schneider, State Senator Julie Morrison, State Representative Scott Drury, Lake County Board Commissioner Sandy Hart, and Lake County Board Commissioner Mike Rummel. Unfortunately, Congressman Schneider was detained in Washington DC due to the government shutdown, and Rep. Drury had a last minute family matter. Our legislators sat down and brought us up to speed with Lake County and Springfield and how they enjoy working together for our benefit. The beautiful background of vibrant paintings and sculpture, along with some excellent refreshments were enjoyed by all. Linda Bartmes, Stephanie Victor, and Ann Hamlin certainly 'kicked-off' the year to a good start.

Our first public program for the year carried over from the City Council meetings. Gun Violence Prevention is one of our focus issues. Deciding that the public needed education about the new state legislation, we hosted "Gun Laws Affecting You?" on October 16 at Gorton Community Center. State Rep. Scott Drury, Lake Forest Deputy Police Chief Karl Walldorf, and Nicole Chen, Pres. of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense, were the speakers. A number of reporters covered the program. Melanie Rummel did a great job moderating. Tina O'Connor graciously manned the registration table.

Our next important public program was held November 7th with the First Presbyterian Church co-sponsoring. "Obamacare, Just the Facts, Part II" was a follow-up to our popular program in April. Speakers were John Shustitzky, CEO of The Alliance for Human Services, Tony Beltran, Exec. Dir. of the Lake County Health

Department, and Anne Bassi, a LWV-Highland Park member and Marketplace Navigator. Jane spent a considerable amount of time coordinating with these expert speakers, but it was worth it. Kudos to Melanie Rummel for moderating again, and thanks to Carol Russ, Kathy Ryg, Happie Datt, and Tina O'Connor for helping.

As our liaison to LWV-Lake Michigan, Carol Russ attended its annual convention. She learned about the "State of the Lake" at a conference in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. League members all over Illinois were proud to learn that LWVIL and LWV-Lake Michigan had been awarded an Illinois Coastal Grant. With this grant, Carol is working with other League members to provide a public program about storm water. Watch for information about it this summer.

On Friday, December 6th, we took time off from our serious work and enjoyed our annual Holiday Luncheon at The Grille on Laurel. Jenny Riddle provided the entertainment with her performance "Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries --NOT". Linda Bartmes and Steve Potsic handled the arrangements flawlessly. Stacy Vermynen generously provided some of her hand-made jewelry for sale to augment the fundraising aspect. Linda, once again, donated her table centerpiece creations. As we wonder what holiday would be complete without books, Lisa Dietrich brought a selection from the Lake Forest Book Store. We appreciate the generous donation the Book Store made.

The highlight of the luncheon was the announcement of our first Carrie Chapman Catt Local Leadership Award. Our League has been truly fortunate with the ongoing leadership and countless volunteer hours from Phyllis Albrecht. She cannot be thanked enough.

The long cold winter had definitely set in by January, 2014. In spite of the weather, ten hardy League members met in the basement of the Lake Forest Bank and Trust on Waukegan Road to hear two speakers from LWVIL talk about the Graduated Rate Income Tax. Jane Ballengee and Janet Kittlaus explained why the League had supported a graduated tax for years and now was lobbying state officials. Kathy Clay, Steve Potsic, Diane Sanderson, Tom Meskel, and Mary Mathews followed-up with their legislators.

February brought the annual Issues Briefing in Chicago. Jane Partridge, Liz Bradner, Joy Guscott-Mueller, and Mary Mathews all attended various workshops and learned first-hand about the state League's activities. This is an opportunity to meet leaders from other local leagues, and possibly coordinate efforts on mutual interests.

A couple of weeks later, we were able to enjoy Trude Roselle's warm hospitality. She hosted our annual "Program" planning meeting. For the last couple of years we have timed our serious discussion regarding issues to coincide with Valentine's Day and the League's Birthday. "Grassroots and Goodies" gives members the opportunity to weigh in on next year's "Program", while enjoying camaraderie and special refreshments. Linda's homemade scones and tarts were big hits.

We were planning to hold candidate debates for the primary election. Unfortunately, there was only one contested race where both candidates were available. LWV-LF/LB will be working with other local Leagues on candidate debates for the fall general election. Be ready to volunteer!

One of the reasons for the lack of candidates is attributed to the redistricting done after the census. Redistricting is another issue where the state League has focused its attention. LWVIL joined a coalition of organizations in supporting 'Yes for Independent Maps'. Pauline Mohr, Liz Bradner, Steve Potsic, and Mary Mathews led the efforts locally in getting signatures on petitions for a constitutional amendment. After the City of Lake Forest passed a resolution advising residents to become informed about the issue, non-members contacted the League and asked to sign a petition or to pass them. The response was significant. The American Legion contacted Mary and asked her to address one of their dinner meetings. Mary and Paula Lawson, past president of LWVIL, explained the 'Yes for Independent Maps' efforts and the petition process. We are happy to report that enough signatures were gathered, but some steps remain before the amendment may appear on the November ballot.

Liz Bradner organized the LWVIL requested Legislative Interviews. Liz, Linda Bartmes, Wyn Cain, and Jane

Partridge along with members from other local Leagues met with State Senator Julie Morrison and State Representative Scott Drury. They discussed the many questions supplied by LWVIL.

Campaign finance has been a major concern at all levels of League for many years. Bev Nelson and Jane Partridge both held interest group meetings. Kathy Ryg, former State Representative, and Susan Garrett, former State Senator, volunteered to arrange a public program. After months of trying to coordinate travel schedules of our very busy speakers, "Money in Politics: Why It Matters" was held in March. At the last minute Corinne Wood, former Lt. Governor, and Peter Bensinger, Vice Chair, CHANGE Illinois!, were out of town and not able to return in time. But Cindi Canary, former Ex. Dir. of LWVIL; Mike Petro, Exec. Vice President, Committee for Economic Development; David Morrison, policy advisor; and Amy Loprest, Ex. Dir., New York City Campaign Finance Board, ably covered the subject and answered questions. We were truly fortunate that the Committee for Economic Development from Washington D.C. sponsored the whole event. Judy Grisamore, Linda Bartmes, Carol Russ, and Happie Datt helped with refreshments and registration at the event.

We quickly changed gears and took up another subject. Under Happie Datt's leadership, our League participated in the national Agriculture Study Update. On April 2, at Elawa Farm, we hosted a public educational program "Food, Farms, and the Feds". Wes King, Ex. Dir., Illinois Stewardship Alliance; Mike Sands, Senior Associate, Liberty Prairie Foundation; and John des Rosiers, Chef/Owner Inovasi Restaurant made very interesting presentations. Melanie Rummel not only moderated but also provided the laptop and projector. A week later, 16 members met at Happie's house to discuss and respond to the 50 consensus questions. We certainly learned a lot over the two year study period, and now are waiting for the new Agriculture position from the national convention.

Other activities for the year include one more public program which will be about storm water. We also have the Deerpath Middle School "Know Your Government Award" on May 28th.

Some of our activities aren't as public as our educational programs. Jane, our spokesperson, sent comments to the Lake Forest Plan Commission concerning two development projects in Lake Forest. She cited our League's local position supporting our communities' comprehensive plans. Both the Northwestern Lake Forest Hospital and the Rt. 60 & Saunders Rd. developments wanted to shorten the distance for setbacks from roads and property lines. This would impact both the neighbors and the character of Lake Forest.

We also submitted numerous letters or articles to Gazebo News, Patch, Lake Forester, North Shore Weekend, and Trib Local about tax reform, registering to vote, gun violence, redistricting, and voting.

Our public activities are only possible because of the year-long work done behind-the-scenes. Steve Potsic accounts for both our general operating funds and tax-deductible donations to the education fund. Cindy Morehead keeps our official minutes up to date. Kathleen Conlon-Wasik is our liaison with LWV-Lake County. Carol Russ writes the always witty e-alerts. Diane Sanderson edits the submissions for our quarterly newsletter *League Lines*. Stan Sanderson keeps finding ways to improve our newsletter. Nicki Snoblin is our webmaster and graphic designer. She also is our unofficial technical advisor for whenever something goes wrong. Ann Grant is to be commended for her fundraising efforts with beer and noodles.

Over the last few months many have helped with preparations for the Annual Meeting. Kitty Cole is hosting the event at her home. Joan Kaltsas and Diane Sanderson fine tuned the Bylaws; Ann Grant and Steve Potsic worked on the Budget; and Liz Bradner reviewed the Nonpartisan Policy. The Nominating Committee of Linda Bartmes, Judy Grisamore, Jeanne Kearby, Cindy Morehead, and Carol Russ has proposed a slate.

Stay in touch. Watch for email alerts, quarterly newsletters, and colorful postcard invitations. For current information about our activities, go to our website <http://LWV-LFLB.ORG> and 'like' and follow us on our Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/LeagueOfWomenVotersLakeForestLakeBluff> If you missed any of our programs or want to see them again, they can be seen on our website.

Thanks to all the League supporters and volunteers for this great year. We have enjoyed leading this vital organization for the last four years.

Respectfully submitted, Jane Partridge and Mary Mathews, Co-Presidents