

President's Column

Reaching the Underrepresented

By MerriKay Olean-Burkey

Earlier this year the League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area (LWVKA) received a grant from the LWVUS Education Fund for a voter registration drive targeting underrepresented communities of students. Eight LWVKA volunteers participated in voter registration events between January and March at five locations: Kalamazoo Central High School, Loy Norrix High School, Phoenix Alternative High School, KAMSC, and Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC).

The schools were chosen because of the proportion of minority enrollment, ranging from 30% at KVCC to 87% at Phoenix Alternative High School, as well as the proportion of economically disadvantaged students. In the past seven years, Kalamazoo Public Schools averaged 69% of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch, a measure of the economically disadvantaged in this urban district compared to 47% statewide.

Our collaboration with the school administration made these voter registration events our most successful to date. We encountered over 140 students. A few were already registered to vote or were not yet citizens but 134 completed voter registration applications. At each event the students could view a sample ballot for the May election or received the website link to the ballot. Eighty of the new registrants were eligible to vote in May. Two weeks before the May 2nd election, vote reminder postcards were mailed to these newly eligible voters.

While the results of this voter registration project far exceeded, in numbers of newly registered voters and what we had achieved in previous years, LWVUSEF has shared some innovative ways to work with school districts. We will have the opportunity to try these ways when we return to these schools for voter registration in the winter/spring of 2018.

Voter registration is, of course, only the first step in getting young people and other underrepresented individuals such as communities of color and individuals with low incomes to exercise their right to vote. How do we prevent the disenfranchisement of these eligible citizens?

What's Ahead? This fall our League has the opportunity to collaborate with the LWVMIEF on a project targeting an underrepresented part of our community. We need to identify a local organization partner that serves the underrepresented and together plan a program that will focus on why it is important for them to vote, what the current voting laws are, what may be suppressing their votes, and what changes, such as early voting, could make it easier to vote. Program participants will be given the means of contacting their elected officials about voting changes they would support. A get-out-the vote plan for the November election in this underrepresented community will be a part of the project as well.

Volunteers are needed to work on this project. If you are interested, please contact me: moburkey30@gmail.com.

Calendar

AUGUST 2017

- 5 Voter Registration Mothers of Hope Ultimate Family Reunion**
LaCrone Park
- 8 Primary Election Day**
- 25 Women's Equality Day**
Fetzer Center, WMU
11:30am
- 14 LWVKA Board Meeting***
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse
5:30 pm Dine
6:00 pm Meeting

SEPTEMBER 2017

- 8 Voter registration**
WMU Bronco Bash
3-7pm
- 11 LWVKA Board Meeting**
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse
5:30 pm Dine
6:00 pm Meeting
- 19 Petticoat Patriots**
Special showing for LWVKA members
Ladies Library Association

OCTOBER 2017

- 9 LWVKA Board Meeting**
Walden Woods Condominium Clubhouse
5:30 pm Dine
6:00 pm Meeting

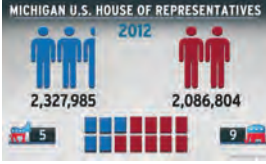
Note: Board meets on 2nd Monday. Members are welcome to attend all Board Meetings. Contact 269-599-1801 and moburkey30@gmail.com

** New day and location*



Find upcoming events, alerts and other announcements!

Redistricting Ballot Proposal Update



And example of gerrymandering —one party wins 52.7% of the votes yet still only has 5 of the 14 seats in the U.S. Congress

Statement from the League of Women Voters of Michigan (LWVMI) as of July 24th

LWVMI has been talking with a number of organizations including Count MI Vote, which also does business as Voters Not Politicians.

Count MI Vote filed a ballot committee with Michigan’s Secretary of State on February 24, 2017. The League of Women Voters of Michigan has not filed a ballot committee. Michigan’s Campaign Finance Law governs the activities of ballot committees as well as those organizations that have not filed a committee.

Count MI Vote (CMV) submitted petition language at the end of June to the Bureau of Elections. Since then, CMV has submitted several changes to the language. The Bureau of Elections is continuing to review the constitutional changes proposed by CMV’s petition. Once that review is complete, the Board of State Canvassers will meet to review the form of the petition language. Until that happens, CMV will not print the petitions.

Meanwhile, LWVMI continues to meet with a number of organizations in an effort to form a coalition. An agreement has not been reached yet. Negotiations continue. In our opinion, there must be a viable coalition that supports an agreed upon proposal in order for a campaign to be successful.

Since the League of Women Voters of Michigan has not signed a Memo of Understanding with a coalition, local Leagues cannot participate in CMV activities. Individual League members may participate in CMV activities as individuals, but not as League members.

Our goal continues to be one viable coalition supporting one agreed upon proposal. We will continue to work on this issue on your behalf and will let you know of any changes, as soon as possible.

Women’s History Exhibit: “Petticoat Patriots”

By Denise Hartsough

“Petticoat Patriots: How Michigan Women Won the Vote” highlights events during the 75-year fight for women’s suffrage. The exhibit shares the stories of more than 20 women who helped win the vote, includ-

ing three from the Kalamazoo area: Olympia Brown, Caroline Bartlett Crane and Lucinda Hinsdale Stone.

Created by the Michigan Women’s Historical Center & Hall of Fame, the exhibit features 18 panels. The exciting and inspirational story starts with the abolitionist and Quaker women who began to call for women’s rights, to the first Women’s Rights Convention in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848, and through the final passage of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote in 1920.

LWVKA has partnered with the Ladies’ Library Association (LLA) to bring “Petticoat Patriots” to Kalamazoo. LWVKA’s Education Fund is providing financial support, as is the Kalamazoo Community Foundation and Ladies’ Library Association. LWVKA members have volunteered to work shifts as hosts during the exhibit at the LLA’s historic building, 333 S. Park Street. Parking is available in the LLA lot at the corner of S. Park and Lovell Streets, next to St. Luke’s. Both the exhibit and parking are free.

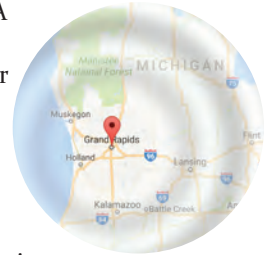
The exhibit will be open to the public from September 12th-19th, weekdays from noon-7:30 pm; Saturday, 10 am-5 pm; and Sunday, 1-5 pm. LWVKA members and friends are invited to gather for a private viewing of the exhibit on Wednesday, September 20, 3-6pm, 333 S. Park Street.

GR Unit Updates

by Eliana Bootzin

The Grand Rapids Unit enjoyed Suzanne Dixon’s June presentation on *Great Lakes Challenges and Solutions* highlighting areas such as protecting the lakes from invasive species and restoring wetlands within the watershed. Opportunity for action at the local level primarily consists of verifying that Kent County reduces polluted runoff by ensuring septic tanks are tested when property changes ownership.

We are excited to introduce **Mary Blauw** as our new representative on the LWVKA board. Mary has been very active this spring and summer greeting event attendees, entering candidate information for www.vote411.org (races for the August primary are now live!), and giving our first local version of the Redistricting Presentation.



Members of the GR Unit should **keep a look-out for an announcement about an election administration presentation** by the Grand Rapids City Clerk as well as sign-up information for volunteer shifts during voter registration this fall.

“The grandest thing has been the lifting up of the gates and the opening of the doors to the women of America, giving liberty to twenty-seven million women, thus opening to them a new and larger life and a higher ideal.”
—Olympia Brown

New Members & Directory Updates

By Chris Kuthe

Please welcome new members to the LWVKA. These members have joined in the last month and are anxious to be involved. If you have a project that you need help with, call or email to invite them.

Jill Dunham

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269-365-6678
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Jeanne Helmrick

984 Gladstone Drive SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
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Cynthia Kessler and Robert Weir

715 Regency Square #102
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
734-476-5594
bowlergirl90@yahoo.com



Member Directory Updates

Please make the following additions/edits to your LWVKA member directory. If you have a change in home address, phone or email, please contact me at ckuthe57@yahoo.com or call 269-501-3305.

Alison Parsons' email is:
alisonparsonsmi@gmail.com

Fundraising

by Ken Manley

Planned gifts for the LWVKA are now being accepted! For those who attended the annual meeting, we hope that you will fill out the section of the *“Julia Costello Legacy Circle”* brochure, and return your pledge now. For anyone who needs a brochure, or has questions about our program, please contact: Ken Manley, LWVKA Fundraising Chair @ 269-330-8579

Also, please be advised that we are still accepting gifts and pledges to our operating budget campaign.

Thanks for considering these opportunities!



What is the League of Women Voters Education Fund?

The League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area maintains two legal entities to carry out our mission. Each entity has a separate board. LWVKA is a 501(c)4 organization, which means that contributions are not tax deductible. Members cannot deduct dues on his/her income taxes as a charitable contribution because the League is established as a lobbying organization.

The League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area also maintains an education fund (LWVKAED). We are very fortunate to have our own fund because it is a 501(c)3 organization, which means that contributions to it are tax-deductible for the donor. It is through this side of the League that voter information and citizen education activities are funded.

The Internal Revenue Service has developed detailed regulations on tax-deductible and non-tax-deductible contributions. There are reporting requirements and restrictions on certain activities that are funded with tax-deductible monies. Voters' guides and candidate debate activities are reviewed to ensure that they do not give the impression of favoring any particular candidate. Questions should be unbiased, even on issues where the League has a position, so as to not reflect or suggest a bias or preference for or against any candidate's views. Events exhibiting even an unintentional bias may jeopardize the League's tax-exempt status.

LWVKAED currently has a seven member board. The members are **Paula Aldridge, Susan Atkinson, Dennis Elmer, Rebekah Fennell, Yolanda Mitts, Jessica Reiser, and Eileen Schoenfeld.** One of our responsibilities is to review requests for funding and make sure they comply with IRS rules.

Additionally, **Julia Costello** was a long-time active member. She provided the impetus for the creation of an endowment fund which is part of our education fund. The purpose of this fund is to provide for the financial stability of our local league. To honor Julia's memory and support, we have established the *Julia Costello Legacy Circle* to recognize visionary members and friends who have made lasting gifts to the LWVKAED. Please help secure our future and consider making a donation.

“It is through this side of the League that voter information and citizen education activities are funded.”



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

Kalamazoo Area

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Voter Registration Month & Thank You!

by Martha Cohen

There will be several opportunities to participate in voter registration in September. KVCC Texas Township and Arcadia Commons will have semester kickoffs on September 5th. Bronco Bash is happening on September 8th, and National Voter Registration Day will be held on September 26th. Watch for more details in the call for volunteers that Tamara Carpenter will send out mid-August.

Thank You Pride Volunteers!



Connie Ferguson, Hillary Pummill, Jules Isenberg Wedel, Sandy Steele, Mary Gustus and Martha Cohen registered several new voters at the 10th annual Kalamazoo Pride Fest on June 10. We registered more folks than we typically do at this event. Many thanks to **David, Jeff and MerriKay Oleen-Burkey and Steve Ferguson** who helped to set up and take down for the event.

Women's Equality Day

by Paula Manley

Join LWVKA members, YWCA members and other community folks in celebrating Women's Equality Day. The luncheon event will be on Friday, August 28, 2017 from 11:30 to 1:30 pm at the WMU Fetzer Center (note the change in venue from past years). **Lavonia Perryman**, award winning journalist and veteran political strategist, will speak on "How to Win: Women in Politics".

This year marks the 22nd year that LWVKA and the YWCA have jointly presented a celebration of this day which is an observance of the passage of the 19th Amendment, giving citizens the right to vote regardless of their gender. Watch the mail for your invitation to reserve your place or go online at ywcakalamazoo.org. We hope to see you there!



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