



Calendar

July 2020

- 6 Grand Rapids Unit Monthly Meeting**
7pm via Zoom, contact Courtney Winell @ winell22@hotmail.com
- 8 LWVKA Development Committee Meeting**
Gull Rd. Starbucks, 10am
- 10 Virtual Black Arts Festival**
- 12 more info @ blackartsfestival.org**
- 14 Calhoun County Unit Meeting**
7pm via Zoom, contact Sue Rosko @ roskos4@yahoo.com
- 22 DEI Committee Meeting**
6:30pm via Zoom, contact Millie Lambert @ millielambert3922@gmail.com
- 27 LWVKA Board Meeting**
6pm via Zoom, contact MerriKay Oleen-Burkey @ moburkey30@gmail.com

August 2020

- 4 State Primary Election**
- 11 Calhoun County Unit Meeting**
7pm via Zoom, contact Sue Rosko @ roskos4@yahoo.com
- 12 LWVKA Development Committee**
10am, Gull Road Starbucks
- 15 Do Dah Parade**
March with Ladies Library Association to celebrate 19th amendment
- 21 Women's Equality Day Luncheon**
Delta Conference Center
2747 S 11th St., Kalamazoo
- 24 LWVKA Board Meeting**
6pm via Zoom, contact MerriKay Oleen-Burkey @ moburkey30@gmail.com
- 25 LWVKA Book Discussion Group**
7pm, place and book to be decided, contact Aedin Clements @ aedinclements@gmail.com
- 26 DEI Committee Meeting**
6:30pm via Zoom, contact Millie Lambert @ millielambert3922@gmail.com
- 26 Women's Equality Day**

President's Column

By Fran Eckenrode & MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

2019-2020 Annual Report

The Centennial Year for the League of Women Voters of the Kalamazoo Area has been a memorable one. Despite a three-month shutdown, we have been able to carry out our mission of 'Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy' with the help of many LWVKA volunteers and we accomplished a great deal this year. Highlights from the year are described below:

Administration & Governance

Centennial Activities:

- Centennial Celebration Activities were highly visible as the League partnered with area libraries and the Kalamazoo Valley Museum to showcase the 100th anniversary of voting rights for women as well as the 100th anniversary of the League of Women Voters. In November and December of 2019 the Parchment Library hosted the first display, arranged by **Barb Dircks**. A display created by **Linda Timm** and **Madeleine Socha** was shown at the Portage District Library from late December, 2019, through February, 2020. The display included a continuous PowerPoint video featuring the struggle for women's suffrage and the history of the League of Women Voters. This display was moved to the Schoolcraft Library just prior to the Covid-19 shutdown.
- A League-sponsored exhibit "League of Women Voters—The First 100 Years" opened at the Kalamazoo Valley Museum in mid-December and remains on display through the end of 2020. A public reception was held at the Museum in January to mark the opening. A traveling version of the display will be featured at the Kalamazoo Public Library and KVCC later in 2020. The Museum's online magazine MuseON included an article in the winter edition: *League of Women Voters: First 100 Years "Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy"*. The display and article were created by Leaguers **Chris Kuthe**, **Barb Dircks**, **Yolanda Mitts**, **Cheri Bell**, and **Fran Eckenrode** in collaboration with Museum staff **Alecia Cross** and **Tamara Barnes**.
- LWVKA's Founders Day celebration at the Fetzer Center was its Day of Action highlighting our 100th Anniversary
- Among several events celebrating the LWV centennial, the Grand Rapids Unit partnered with the Women's History Council at the Grand Rapids Art Museum to provide information on the history of women's suffrage.

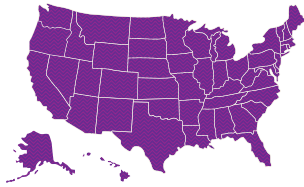
2020-2023 Strategic Plan: On October 6th, the LWVKA board held a retreat to initiate a three-year strategic plan. **Terry Hluchyj** opened the process and the result was the following five areas chosen for emphasis and goal-setting:

1. Redistricting and the Census—Support full representation of Kalamazoo County residents in order to ensure fair distribution of public resources and legislative influence.
2. Climate Change –Contribute to local efforts that align with global climate strategies and goals.
3. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion—Engage in purposeful action to advance di-

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LWVUS Update

By Paula Manley



The LWVUS 54th Biannual Convention was held virtually for the first time due to the pandemic. Delegates attended caucus meetings via Zoom late afternoon and evenings June 22–24 to learn about a variety of topics such as *Engaging Non-Voters*, *Holding Virtual Candidate Forums*, and *Youth Voter Registration* to name a few. Virtual Lobby Day was held on June 25 during which delegates contacted their Senators to urge passage of the Voting Rights Advancement Act. The Convention began officially Thursday evening, June 25 and plenary sessions were held from 3–8pm June 26 and 27.

Watch for the new PBS Documentary Series *The Vote* which will air on PBS July 6 and 7. This documentary is a two-part, four-hour chronicle of the hard-fought campaign to gain the right to vote. It highlights the unsung leaders of the movement and the deep controversies of gender roles and race that divided America then and now.

LWVUS sent comment to the U.S. House Judiciary Committee ahead of the Oversight Hearing on Policing Practices and Law Enforcement Accountability on June 10. The committee is considering legislation such as the Justice on Policing Act of 2020 and other legislation addressing justice reform in America.

LWVUS recently:

- Joined 200 organizations led by the Leadership Conference in sending letters to the Department of Justice calling on investigations into the circumstances surrounding the killing of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd.
- Joined over 400 civil rights organizations in a letter calling on Congress to implement needed policing reforms.
- Joined public health organizations in expressing concern over the U.S. government's decision to terminate the relationship with the World Health Organization. It also calls for the support for the recently proposed WHO resolution WHA 73.1 calling for governments around the world to impartially and equally address the COVID 19 pandemic. 🇺🇸

“Delegates contacted their Senators to urge passage of the Voting Rights Advancement Act..”

LWVMI Updates

Denise Hartsough, VP Program

Your State League in Action!

LWV of Michigan has endorsed the VoteSafe MI Coalition, a cross-partisan campaign to ensure that voters can vote safely during the pandemic through expanded access to absentee ballots and safe, sanitary and accessible in-person voting loca-



tions. The campaign is led in Michigan by Secretary of State **Jocelyn Benson** and former Congressman **Joe Schwarz**, and nationally by former Republican Governor **Tom Ridge** and former Democratic Governor **Jennifer Granholm**.

LWVMI protects voters in the courts, as well. The State League is the lead plaintiff in:

- the “Postmark” lawsuit, which challenges the constitutionality of the law requiring that absentee ballots be received no later than 8pm on Election Day. LWVMI asks that ballots be counted if post-marked on Election Day.
- a lawsuit challenging PA 608, passed in the 2018 Lame Duck Session, which makes signature collection for ballot proposals more difficult. LWVMI awaits a decision by the Michigan Supreme Court.
- filed an Amicus Brief in support of Secretary of State Benson and Count MI Vote in the lawsuit by the Michigan Republican Party against the Citizens Redistricting Commission. The 6th Circuit Federal Court denied the Party's claim. The Party appealed to the full Circuit Court of 16 judges, the majority of whom declined to hear the case. The Party may appeal to the US Supreme Court. 🇺🇸

New Members

By Jennifer Snyder, Membership Chair

Please welcome the following new members to the League of Women Voters Kalamazoo Area:

David Anderson
Jennifer Houghton
Lisa Reed
Mary Selden
Sharlene Smith

Do you have a change in your contact information? Please help us keep our membership list up-to-date. Email or call our Membership Chair, **Jennifer Snyder** at 269-929-8888 call/text or email jsyndergaard Snyder@gmail.com

WELCOME
New Members!

Annual Report Continued

iversity, equity and inclusion in the LWWKA

4. Expanded Access—Expand outreach and impact of voter services to more of Kalamazoo County

5. Housing—Contribute to local efforts designed to increase affordable housing and eliminate homelessness

Grand Rapids Geographical Unit: Working with the Grand Rapids Public Library, the Grand Rapids Unit compiled the history of the women's suffrage movement in their area that will fulfill a requirement to becoming a MAL (Member-at-Large) Unit. This is the next step for them to grow into a local League.

New Calhoun County Geographical Unit: On March 23, 2020, a Calhoun County Geographical Unit was formed as part of LWWKA. **Paula Manley**, LWWKA member and LWWMI Membership VP, is serving as their mentor and **Sue Rosko** is the GU leader and board representative.

Promotion Committee:

Debbie Phillips assembled tabling kits for promotion tables at community events such as Global Climate Strike and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and organized a *zazzle.com* store with sales of imprinted products benefiting our league. A banner with the new Vote411 logo was prominently displayed on the Westnedge walkover prior to the November election.

Book Discussion Group: Organized by **Aedin Clements**, the group continued to meet bimonthly to discuss books dealing with topics such as Climate Justice, Racism and more.

Leadership: Members of LWWKA continue to serve on the LWWMI board. They along with three other members represented us at the virtual LWWUS Convention in June.

Issue Study & Advocacy

Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee, chaired by **Millie Lambert**, recommended the board adopt the LWWUS Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy, and it replaces the existing LWWKA Diversity policy (page 5 of the LWWKA Handbook). At its monthly meetings, the committee members are engaging in discussions about DEI topics using *Ted Talks* and webinars to increase their awareness. Early in the year they initiated the "DEI Events to Consider" column in *The Voter* to bring them to the attention of

the membership. The DEI Committee has adopted a 2020-2021 Action Plan that will be discussed by the board in July.

Women's Equality Day: The 99th Women's Equality Day commemorating the passage of the 19th Amendment was cohosted by the YWCA and LWWKA on August 23, 2019, at the Fetzer Center. The keynote speaker was **Fadwa Hammond**, Michigan's Solicitor General and the first Arab American Muslim Solicitor General in the United States. She has also been a member of the LWW of Dearborn/Dearborn Heights.

LWV Lake Michigan Region: LWWKA member **Ruth Caputo** was co-chair of the LWV Lake Michigan Region Annual Meeting covering Michigan, Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin. It was held in Lakeside, Michigan in October. The theme was "The Great Lakes and Groundwater." The keynote speaker Liz Kirkwood representing For Love of Water, spoke on "Groundwater: The Sixth Great Lake." Speakers and environmental field trips in the area continued the theme.

Voter Outreach & Education

Three issues were the focus of LWWKA and the Grand Rapids Unit voter education this year: Voting Rights, Citizens Redistricting Commission and the 2020 Census. Organized by **Denise Hartsough**, VP of Program, a Town Hall, "Know Your Voting Rights" was held in conjunction with the Secretary of State's Office on November 14 at El Concilio in Kalamazoo. The Town Hall leaders also explained the importance and the logistics of the Citizens Independent Redistricting Commission; 15 audience members completed applications to serve.

In March, **Denise Hartsough** enlisted the help of LWWKA volunteers to assist with the Census at Ministry with Community in Kalamazoo. Unfortunately, the project could not be initiated due to the pandemic.

The Grand Rapids Unit collaborated with the United Way, the Census Hub for Kent County, to encourage participation in the census.

Voter registration / education events included WMU Bronco Bash, National Voter Registration Day at Ministry with Community, KVCC Cougar Kick-off (fall and winter

semesters), Stand Down 2019 in Kalamazoo, Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration at WMU, Global Climate Strike, and the Women's March in Kalamazoo. The Grand Rapids Unit hosted events at the Women's History Council; Cherry Health Westside; East Kentwood Homecoming Game & Community Festival; First Friday at Linc Up; the Kent District Libraries; the Grand Rapids Housing Commission communities of Creston Plaza, and Campau Commons; and Grand Rapids high schools. **Linda Pell** a LWWKA member in Battle Creek, conducted voter registration events at high schools in Marshall and Battle Creek prior to the Presidential Primary in March. Many LWWKA volunteers made these voter registration events possible.


Candidate Forum: Approximately 150 people attended the Candidate Forum organized by member, **KC Miller**, for eight Kalamazoo City Commission Candidates and four Mayoral Candidates on October 2.

Vote411 / Voter Guides: **Jules Isenberg-Wedel** reported that 14,950 paper voter guides were created and distributed throughout the county by LWWKA volunteers for the local elections in November 2019. Additionally, Vote411 served as the electronic voter guide for these local elections as well as for the March Presidential Primary and the May ballot initiative election.

Panel on Women Office Holders:

Courtney Winell from the Grand Rapids Unit was invited to facilitate a panel discussion of four current and past women public office holders in the Grand Rapids area for the Women in Successful Enterprises (WISE) group at their event, "Women in Office Mean Business," August 21, 2019. The mayor of Grand Rapids was one of the panelists.

Election Administration

The LWWKA Donor Appreciation Event organized by the LWWKA Development Committee was held on September 12, 2019, and featured County Clerk **Tim Snow**, who provided an update on Michigan enhanced voting rights passed by the voters in 2018; he explained how these changes impact the work of his staff. 

LWVKA Celebrates 100 Years

By Paula Manley




One hundred years ago on July 20, 1920 local women who had been involved in the Suffrage Movement organized the Kalamazoo League of Women Voters. This was five months after the League of Women Voters of the United States was formed in Chicago on February 14, 1920. **Dr. Caroline Bartlett Crane, Mrs. Caroline Hubbard Kleinstuck and Mrs. Leah (or Lydia) Shakespeare** were among the Kalamazoo founders. The stated purpose of the group was to further the political education of the newly enfranchised women. In the fall of 1920, the first non-partisan rally for candidates was held with 2,000 people in attendance. It was called “an innovation in political gatherings” and considered a great success.

In 1925 the Michigan League of Women Voters held its annual convention in Kalamazoo and **Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt**, Honorary President of the National League, attended. The Kalamazoo League was active through the 1920s and 1930s. Somewhere in the late 1930s it appears some of the prominent members died and there is no mention in the Kalamazoo Gazette of the League for a period of years.

In 1951 a group of women organized a Provisional League with **Caroline Ham** leading work on the “Know Your Town” study. The LWW of Kalamazoo was once again active in the community. In 1963 a League study found a shortage of housing for minority group members. The League supported an open housing ordinance and building code enforcement in the city which was approved. In 1973 LWVKA was an amicus curiae in a successful suit supporting Kalamazoo Public School desegregation. League President **Mary Brown** delivered the brief to Washington and testified before Congress.

In 2004 the League expanded its service area to include the entire county and became the League of Women Voters Kalamazoo Area. Throughout the years LWVKA has encouraged informed and active participation of community members in government and influenced public policy through education and advocacy.

The League began as an organization of mostly white middle class women, and welcomed its first male member in 1974. We are joining the LWVMI and LWVUS in focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion as we look forward to the next 100 years of “Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy”. 

Candidate Forums & Vote411—August Primary Bad News and Good News


By MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

Bad news! Due to limits on gathering size, social distancing, and all the other pandemic considerations, candidate forums need to be conducted using a virtual format such as Zoom. The LWVKA board decided that without the technical expertise, we cannot conduct candidate forums for the August Primary.

However, we would like to know if there are LWVKA members with experience in using Zoom who would be willing to help set up one or two forums for the November General Election? We have several Leaguers with the “How-to” skills to conduct candidate forums but we need technical help. Please let me know if you can help with the technical side of these candidate forums by emailing moburkey30@gmail.com or calling (269) 270-3302.

Good news! The online Voter Guide for the August 4 Primary has been published. You can find the online Guide with state and local candidate questionnaire responses as well as ballot proposals by visiting www.Vote411.org.

At the Vote411 website, enter your address to see what elected offices are on your ballot. If there are multiple candidates for an office you can select candidates to compare and see their questionnaire responses side-by-side. If there are ballot proposals on your ballot, you can also see the actual wording of those proposals.

Tell all the voters you know that the League’s online voter guide for the August 4th Primary is available. Watch future issues of the Voter for news about the voter guide for the November General Election. 



Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.



DEI Meetings & Events:

By Millie Lambert

The DEI Committee invites members to explore resources from the LWVUS: www.lwv.org/league-management/leadership-development/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-continued-learning

Meetings will be held via Zoom until further notice. At the June meeting we discussed the proposed revisions in the DEI Action Plan, the LWVUS Webinars 1 and 2, and began the review of the action plan as it relates to the DEI Strategic Plan. All future meetings will be held on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Our next meeting is July 22 at 6:30 pm via Zoom.

July/August Events to Consider:

Have an event or resource that should be included? Send it to millielambert3922@gmail.com.

Due to current restrictions regarding gatherings, many events have been cancelled or postponed.

What Is the AD — July 14, 2-4pm and July 16, 9-11am. Celebrating the 30th anniversary of the ADA. Webinar explaining what it is and why it is so important. Contact Miranda at the Disability Network 269-345-1516 x120.

Disability Pride — July 21, 9-11pm and July 23, 2-4pm. Workshop for people with disabilities. Presented by a person with a disability. Interactive webinar explores and celebrates our disabilities as an important part of who we are. Contact Miranda at the Disability Network 269-345-1516 x120.

ADA 30th Anniversary Celebration — July 24, 11:45-1:30pm. Due to Covid this is a virtual event. Contact Laurie at the Disability Network, 269-345-1516 x120.

Understanding the 2020 Movement for Black Lives with Dr. Deva Woodly — Sponsored by Women's March Action. Preregistration required. *People, Politics, and Drinks*. All are offered at 5pm July 14, July 21, 28 & August 4, 11, 18, 25.

ERACCE: Eliminating Racism & Creating/Celebrating Equity: Visit their Facebook page for resources including videos, film lists, articles, book lists, etc. Currently there is a wait list for the On-line Workshop *Introduction to Systemic Racism* July 15-16, 1-4pm.

Resources/Books/Videos etc.

Racial Equity Tools www.racialequitytools.org
COVID-19 – Racial Equity & Social Justice Resources. Information that will help communities and activists as they work to understand and respond to the moment and for the long haul. Resources are arranged in categories: Analysis, Resources and Tools, Healing and Community Care, Organizing and Solidarity, Resource Building & Rapid Response, Virtual Work and Online Engagement, and List of Lists.


Lovehasnolabels.com — This site has an abundance of materials covering DEI in depth. It provides information, activities to address DEI issues, and illustrates what media campaigns and other efforts are underway.

YWCA Advocacy – check out standagainstracism.org for their social-media tool kit, calls-to-action, and to listen to their podcast miniseries.

Society for History, and Racial Equity – SHARE: You are encouraged to explore the many resources available on this site: sharekazoo.org.

Lewis Walker Institute, WMU Campus – The Institute lists numerous resources (read on premises only).

Arcus Center – Justice in Community The Resources page provides downloadable materials currently divided into five categories: Social Justice Training Organizations, From ACSJL Workshops, Definitions, For the Community, and Icebreakers & Check Ins.

League of Women Voters US — LWV Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Webinars available from March 2019. Continues to be expanded monthly. In addition a DEI Guide is available and What to Ask When Examining your Work through a DEI Lens. 



Special Tributes

In Memory of Carol Urban

Denise Hartsough
David Deshon
Barbara Havira

In Memory of Jean Jones

Jessica Reiser
Ogden Jones

In Memory of Julia Costello

Jessica Reiser

In Memory of Yolanda Mitts

Jessica Reiser

In Memory of Ardis Carr Syndergaard

Jennifer Snyder

In Memory of Dalyte Hartsough

Denise Hartsough

In Honor of Emily Ritsema

Dora Mann

In Honor of Mary Brown

Caroline Ham

In Honor of Goldie Smith

Stuart & Karen Eddy

In Honor of Debra Lagasse & Pat Olson

Millie Lambert



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Join us monthly for
informative programs
and legislative
updates on issues
facing older adults in
our community.

Visit our website or Facebook page for
meeting details and membership information:
www.kcasi.net

 facebook.com/KalamazooCountyAdvocatesForSeniorIssues