

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

BULLETIN

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decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

of SCHENECTADY COUNTY, NEW YORK

JANUARY 2009

January Events

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FREE MOVIE & POPCORN

Iron- Jawed Angels

starring Hillary Swank, Frances O'Connor and Anjelica Huston.

Come and see this inspiring depiction of the fiery young suffragettes who banded together to push President Woodrow Wilson and Congress to adapt the U.S. Constitution and guarantee women the right to vote.

A Free Movie to be shown on Wednesday, January 14 at the
1st Reformed Church on Church St. in Schenectady at 7pm.

Bring Friends & Family!

'Friendly Lunch' in Albany on Tuesday, January 27.

Our own Helen Quirini and Brian Keough, SUNYA Head of the Library's Special Collections will show us how the various archival materials are stored and preserved.
10:30 am tour followed by lunch at the Patroon Room. *(Read Joanne's Column.)*

Call Joanne at 393-0477 or email: jtobiessen@hotmail.com to reserve a spot and to receive directions.

Upcoming February Events *(more information next month)*

Wednesday, February 11.....Annual Potluck Planning Session
Sonya Rubenstein's house
7 to 9 pm

Tuesday, February 24.....Working Group on Girls
Friendly Lunch
(Location to be announced.)

Mission Statement: The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization. We encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government. We work to increase the understanding of major public policy issues and influence public policy through education and advocacy.

President: Joanne Tobiessen.....393-0477 Vice-President: Connie Young.....393-7061 Newsletter Editor: 346-7006

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Joanne Tobiessen

Greetings,

I hope you had a warm and merry holiday.

Here we are in the new year, 2009, a time of change and resolutions. Many are looking forward to change at the national level. At the personal and organizational level we hear of individuals and groups re-visioning themselves, looking more deeply at who and what they can be and shifting from within.

Our League works continually to revision ourselves to be relevant to changing times, thanks to the support and energy of ongoing and new members. Save the evening of February 11th for our annual pot-luck and program planning session to discuss recommendations for action in the coming year.

While looking forward to the work yet to be accomplished, we also want to keep ourselves connected to our roots. With that in mind, plan to join us on Wednesday, January 14th at 7pm for a night at the movies, watching 'Iron Jawed Angels,' a compelling and inspirational true story starring Hilary Swank, Frances O'Connor, and Angelica Huston showing what it took for women to get the right to vote in this country. Bring family, friends, and interested young people, for a thought-provoking and memorable night at the movies, complete with popcorn! First Reformed Church in the Stockade.

Also, looking at our roots, our 'friendly lunch' of the month will be held in Albany on Tuesday, January 27th. Helen Quirini and Brian Keough, head of SUNYA Library's Special Collections and Archives, have arranged to show us where our historical papers are being archived. Brian suggests a 10:30am arrival, followed by a tour, discussion of what they do, and then lunch at the Patron Room, a short walk from the library. If you are interested in joining us, give me a call at 393-0477 to reserve a space.

Looking back, looking forward, the League challenges us to remember what has been accomplished and continue to "empower citizens to shape better communities worldwide".

May this be a year of peace and joy for all.

Joanne

2ND SCEAC ENERGY FORUM

Submitted by Mary Werner

The Schenectady County Environmental Advisory Council (SCEAC) is sponsoring its second forum on energy issues on Wednesday, February 25, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm at the Schenectady County Library McChesney Room. This workshop will focus **on** low-cost and no-cost ways for Schenectady County residents to save energy and reduce home energy bills in both the winter and summer months. The "Save Energy, Save Dollars" workshop links consumers with programs that provide energy-efficiency improvements with subsidies, low-interest loans, or free services to qualifying households.

This workshop is the second in a series of informational events sponsored by SCEAC in support of the energy resolutions passed by the Schenectady County Legislature last spring. One of the resolutions passed by the legislature recognizes the importance of home energy audits in helping to reduce energy consumption. This workshop will provide participants with information to reduce energy costs by increasing the energy efficiency of their homes.

The workshop will be conducted by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Albany County as part of the Capital Region EmPower New York Program with funding from NYSERDA. Workshop participants will receive a free energy kit with outlet/light switch gaskets, outlet caps, rope caulk, CFL light bulb, shrink-fit window insulation kit, and a refrigerator thermometer.

The workshop is free of charge. For more information and to reserve your free energy kit, please contact Maria DeLucia-Evans at 765-3559.

Welcome New Members

***Margaret Watrous Maryanne Malecki
Janet Elliot Jaime Barrett Linda Nelson***

Margaret Watrous, a former art teacher, comes from a politically active family; both her parents were active in local politics and her mother was a former League member. Elaine Klein convinced her to join. She and Elaine did voter registration at SCCC this fall and recruited 60 new voters. She has been involved in anti-war protests and has written many letters to the editor on the subject. Margaret is aware of the programs the League offers and is just beginning to decide where she will fit in best.

Maryanne Malecki is a Social Studies and English Teacher who is currently the Education Director for WAMC. She is in charge of the Student Town Meeting Project on 90.3 radio. This program in rural and urban schools creates civil awareness, public speaking skills, and civil discourse among high school students. She is also involved with the Capital District Council and the NY State Council for Social Studies. She also teaches Developmental Studies and College Reading Skills at SCCC. Maryanne has friends in the League and joined because of the interesting people and the things the League represents.

Janet Elliot is a retired RN. She has always wanted to join the League because she wants to take action on world and local issues, especially with regard to Health Care and Environmental Issues. She is planning to attend the January 5th meeting of the Environmental Committee and would like to join the Health Care Reform Committee.

Jaime Barrett has been an English Professor for 6 years and is currently teaching at Hudson Valley Community College. She has been there two years. Prior to that she taught at Saint Rose, SCCC, and was Director of the Writing Center at Russell Sage College. She will be teaching on-line as well as on campus starting in January 2009. She likes the fact that the League is a non-partisan group and wants to learn more about what happens in government. Jaime is especially interested in the Working Group on Girls and the Environment Committee.

Linda Nelson joined the League this year because she wants to become more informed and support the group financially. She is a meeting planner and has owned her own business for 12+ years. She specializes in planning technical conferences with emphasis on nuclear power. The meetings she plans are international and national in scope and sometimes in colleges and universities. Linda will attend meetings as her time allows because of her business schedule.

Submitted by Betsy Chase

Comments from LeaderSparkStudents

What League LeaderSpark Students are saying:

- **“LeaderSpark taught me to take a risk—you never know until you try it.”**
- **“LeaderSpark taught me different ways to deal with the negative people who inhibit progress.”**
- **“The most helpful thing about LeaderSpark was the self-assessment section. This section helped me to better understand my leadership strengths and weaknesses.”**
- **“I honestly loved how the LeaderSpark program was run because it was open-minded and non-critical.”**
- **“LeaderSpark helped me learn that you need to have different strategies for working with different personalities.”**
- **“LeaderSpark helped me distinguish interpersonal skills from organizational skills, and I learned where my strengths and weaknesses fell.”**
- **“LeaderSpark taught me the difference between a person in charge and a leader.”**

RECENT PROGRAM REPORTS

Submitted by Connie Young, Program VP

Take Me to Vote-Another Good Year

We thank the many League and AAUW members who volunteered to do the planning, the assembling and the distributing of the Take Me to Vote materials. We are also grateful to the The Daily Gazette and the Time Warner Company for their support. All of the elementary students in Schenectady County were provided with a polling map and given information about the process of voting. Thanks to the Board of Elections four schools were given a voting machine in house so that the students could role play voting. The BOE also provided the polling maps. Two schools requested speakers to give informational talks to the classes. In all 2,365 Schenectady County children accompanied adults to a polling place. In eight of the schools, the participation was 40% or higher. The five schools with the highest participation were presented plaques by their elected town or city official. The five winning elementary schools were Blodgett in Schenectady, Glendaal in Scotia-Glenville and Hillside in Niskayuna, Jefferson in Rotterdam and Duaneburg. Blodgett had the highest-ever score with 66.6% participation and notably it is the only school with an on-site voting machine. In all, it was a highly successful endeavor. Thank you to everyone who made it happen.

Holiday Lunch & Informative Talk

Our holiday lunch held on December 10 at the Schenectady County Community College Banquet Room was an outstanding event. Gail Van Valkenberg, Director of the Schenectady Inner City Ministry Food Pantry presented a slide history and up-date on the food pantry. We learned about the history of the pantry, how it has changed and grown over time. She gave us a view of hunger in Schenectady and how it is increasing instead of declining. We were all impressed with her efforts and the amazing work of the many volunteers. League members at the lunch generously donated \$769 in the form of individual checks. We were happy to support this worthy cause.

UNITED NATIONS BRIEFING

Submitted by Elaine Klein

The State League trip to the United Nations on Dec. 2 was very worthwhile. The bus service was excellent, the food at the Delegates Dining Room was a superb mix of luscious international dishes, and the UN tour was informative and poignant. The trip also offered a great chance to mingle with members of other League chapters and to meet some people from other groups (e.g. Zonta, and the Grey Panthers). Another highlight was the opportunity to hear from League leadership, including Martha Kennedy, NYS President, Mary Wilson, President of the League nationally, and Doris Shapira, the League representative to the UN.

This year's theme was "Briefings on the Impact of Global Warming on Women and Children Around the World." The speakers included Rachel Harris of the Women's Environment and Development Organization, Climate Change Coordinator; Maaïke Teunissen-Jansen, United Nations Environment Programme, Programme Officer; and Michele Ferenz, United Nations Children's Fund, Senior Coordinator. Each speaker was very well prepared and presented information that clarified how severe climate conditions particularly affect women and children. For example, children's metabolism and nutritional needs being different from adults, they are especially vulnerable to diseases like malaria that increase because of extreme weather. Problems with water supplies, vector borne diseases (in which the pathogen is transmitted from one host to another by a 3rd organism), increased air pollution all result from climate disturbances and affect children. Climate events can separate families so that children and women become victims of crimes such as human trafficking. There are numerous efforts taking place to assist with these problems, with one of the most successful being UNICEF's wide distribution of mosquito bed nettings. Some points that were stressed include the need to do development differently in order to accommodate the specific needs of women and children. UN publications on relevant topics include "Climate Changes and Children," which is available at www.unicef.org/publications/index. It is anticipated that material from the briefings will be included soon on the NY State League's website.

JUDICIAL/AT COURT Committee Report
Linda Ward and Helga A. Schroeter, Co-Chairs

The committee met on December 4th, 2008 at Helga Schroeter's house. The purpose of the meeting was to clarify future plans of the committee. We evaluated what had been achieved to date and analyzed whether it would be meaningful to continue to advocate for the AT Court. The committee agreed to look into funding issues which may affect the successful continuation of the AT Court and other specialty courts. Serious budget shortfalls at the county level might jeopardize positions from probation and the mental health system which are specifically assigned to these courts.

We agreed on the following next steps: to check with the Department of Probation and the Community Services office whether the funding for the special court positions will continue in 2009; to visit the AT Court to observe whether it continues to function; to check with City Court Judges Clark and Versaci whether any progress has been made in establishing an AT Court at the misdemeanor level. We agreed to defer a discussion of the issues we will bring to the county legislators until we have done some of the research on the funding. The committee will meet again in February to discuss what the next steps should be.

P.S. Joan Elliott and Helga Schroeter visited the AT Court on December 5. The observations were cause for optimism. The court currently has 10 active cases. One woman graduated that morning to the enthusiastic applause of all present in court. We only recognized one other client from previous visits; everyone else appeared to be recently added. City Court Judge Clark indicated that she would be happy to come to a committee meeting in February to share what steps are being taken at the City Court level to establish a mental health court.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Submitted by Lynda Nichols, Membership Chair

Our Membership Totals as of January, 2009

I thought everyone would like to know the status of our membership as we begin 2009. It has been a good year for recruiting new members. 23 people have joined over the course of the last year. That is an impressive number, and we are very pleased so many people want to support our League activities and goals. However, we also had several member deaths, and probably the economy contributed to the "not this year" responses to our recent membership drive. Our current total membership is about 140 people, which is about 30 fewer than a year ago. So all of us need to continue to be on the lookout for any of our acquaintances or friends who might like to join our League. You all can help!

November New Member Meeting

November 12 was the date for our annual "New and Potential Member Meeting." As usual, Connie Young generously provided the location for the gathering. We had 12 positive responses to our invitations, but at the last minute only 8 new people were able to attend. The evening's conversation was extremely lively, with both our current member attendees and the guests contributing interesting information about the League and our community. It was a stimulating evening of great discussion and great food brought by our members. After the meeting four people joined our League. So the evening was a success.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please send this membership form with your dues to Lynda Nichols, 1038 Maryland Ave. Schenectady, 12308

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ email _____

Membership choices: Student \$20 Individual \$55 Family \$75

(Needs Adjustments can be made.)

These yearly dues are not tax deductible.

Meetings

*Mon. Jan 5...Environment Committee, Noon, SAAC-TV
Studio, 115 N. Broadway.*

Tues. Jan 6....League Board, 4 pm, 1400 Keyes.

Mon. Jan 12...Working Group on Girls, 3:30 pm, YWCA.

*Wed. Jan 14...Movie: Iron Jawed Angels, 7 pm, 1st Reformed
Church*

Tues. Jan 27...League Archives at SUNY, 10:30 am.

HEALTH CARE REFORM COMMITTEE REPORT

Submitted by Pat Kessler

THE HEALTH CARE REFORM COMMITTEE met Monday, December 15. The following plan of activities were discussed and developed:

- a. Schenectady LWV will be participating in another “*regional*” *health care reform program* which is tentatively scheduled for March or April. The program will focus on NY State activities and plans for health care reform. We will also discuss how state plans will mesh with activities under the new administration in Washington. We will also try to prepare an appropriate resolution for national and state reform that we can present to the County legislature for their action.
- b. *Long term health care* is an issue that needs to be researched by our committee and goals identified. Schenectady County has been approved to build a new county nursing home and members raised concerns about community and home based service that allow people the opportunity to ‘age in place’.
- c. *Comprehensive health care planning for Schenectady County* has been discussed for some time because of ongoing changes that have left Ellis Hospital doing most of the planning for the county. Committee members feel strongly that a hospital based planning system is short sighted no matter how good the intentions may be.