

LWV-LF/LB Area Board Report for 2014-2015

We stepped off the year, fittingly with a parade. Bev Nelson, Liz and Wyn showed League colors at Lake Forest Day. Wyn was just back from the LWVUS National Convention in Dallas, where she and Jean Brown got to vote on the national program for 2014-2016. We were disappointed, after circulating petitions for an Illinois constitutional amendment to set up an independent commission to draw legislative districts, to have a judge rule it off the November 2014 ballot.

We helped launch Noodles and Company in Lake Bluff with a fundraiser. We sold coupons, free to us, and raised over \$1000 for the League. Thanks to Ann Grant for the delicious and profitable idea!

Stormwater issues were presented by Krista Grimm at a program in Lake Forest June 30 and at a program in Lake Bluff arranged by Carol Russ on Sept. 14. Runoff of pesticides, pollution of the ravines, and ways to absorb stormwater were explained. We toured the Lake Bluff Water Treatment Plant and were impressed by the number of steps taken to purify our drinking water.

September was exceedingly busy. Wyn, Joy, Cindy and the Potsics went to the State of the State luncheon, helping to raise funds for the LWVIL Education Fund. Liz went to the Newcomers' luncheon to register new residents to vote. On National Voter Registration Day, Stephanie Victor and Kathy Cole were at the West Lake Forest train station to register voters. Our fall membership kickoff on September 30 drew over a hundred people interested in the Common Core standards. While Joy moderated, Kevin Rubenstein from Lake Bluff District 65 and Lauren Fagan from Lake Forest District 67 described how the standards were being implemented, and assured the audience of largely teachers and parents that there would be no reduction in quality of education at our schools.

Still in September, our candidate debate was organized by Terry Desmond and a committee including representatives of the Deerfield, Highwood/Highland Park and Glencoe Leagues. We met and heard candidates for State Representative, County Treasurer, Sheriff, and Clerk, and the Regional Superintendent of Schools. This also drew over 100 voters. Lalli Watt from the Wilmette League ably moderated. We were disappointed to not be able to draw both candidates for Congress to the district, but we were invited to Channel 7's studio to observe Bob Dold and Brad Schneider answer ABC's questions.

At holiday time, we paused our work to celebrate at The Grille. Linda Bartmes planned a delicious lunch. Barry Bradford described "Women Who Have Run for President" even before women got the right to vote, and continuing on to Hillary Clinton. A highlight was presentation of the Carrie Chapman Catt award to Carol Russ, who has filled so many roles in our league. Carol generously paid tribute to Marilyn Shineflug. She had been a strong opponent of nuclear power.

In February, full of new year resolutions to have fun while working hard, we began with a program on the Illinois Fiscal Crisis: Climbing Out of Debt. Rep. Drury gave statistics on the size of the state's debt, now and in the next budget year. He predicted the Illinois Supreme Court

would provide guidelines for pension reform, but in April it refused to allow reductions in benefits for present or past state employees and teachers. Now the legislature and governor are taking a new look at taxing retirement income, and services and raising the income tax. We Leaguers called our legislators to urge them to vote for more revenue rather than solving the imbalance problem by further cuts in education, human services, prison services, etc. The LWVIL supports graduated income tax rates. This well-attended event was co-sponsored by the Leagues of Highland Park/Highwood and Deerfield. Melanie Rummel ably moderated it at the First Presbyterian Church of Lake Forest.

Never giving up on the Equal Rights Amendment, we appealed to Rep. Drury to vote for it but Speaker Madigan didn't bring it to a vote, citing insufficient supporters. We also wrote a Letter to the Editor urging voters to inform themselves by reading the League Voters' Guide before the fall 2014 election.

Clean water came back on our radar Feb. 22 when EcoMyths Alliance sent Beth Klosson to give a program "Water - Just What Are We Drinking?" at Lake Forest College. We partnered with the College's Office of Community Education. Betsy Warren and Carol Shook manned our registration desk. It was alarming to hear that fertilizers and pesticides are found in 80% of fish and 33% of the aquifers in the ground.

To be sure we are well-informed on issues important to the state League, Wyn, Liz and Jane attended the Issues Briefing. This covered the state fiscal debt, the criminalization of mental illness (lacking mental hospitals, mentally ill persons commit crimes of survival which land them in Cook County Jail), cutbacks to human services, and how to advocate with legislators. The latter was very practical advice for which we would like to have time.

Women's History Month brought a luncheon with female elected officials. The Highland Park/Highwood League gathered Susan Garrett, Lauren Beth Gash, Margie Weiss, Ann Bassi and Alyssa Knobel. They reported experiences as women running for and holding office - some good, some not. Wyn, Liz and Mary Mathews attended.

What to do next year? Wyn hosted program planning in March. We decided to study Money in Politics and the federal constitutional convention process, take action on climate change/clean water and air, gun violence prevention, health care defense, fiscal policy and tax reform, and to support LWVIL on term limits if a study is initiated. We shall need all of our members to help, if we are to accomplish all of this.

Rep. Drury and Sen. Morrison submitted to legislative interviews using questions from LWVIL. Joy Guscott-Mueller, Kira Alvarez, Pat Jester, Linda Bartmes and Liz joined reps from Highland Park/Highwood and Deerfield. We found them open to our opinions and mostly in agreement with League positions.

There were no competitive races in the February Consolidated Primary and April General elections, so we needed no candidate forums. The next will be for the March 2016 primary.

Money in Politics was our topic for a program with Sen. Morrison in April. She said donors don't expect favorable votes, but contacting them takes an inordinate amount of time especially for officials with two-year terms. Jean Brown, Liz and Wyn also attended a forum presented by the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform earlier in the year. The ICPR is promoting a small donation matching program like New York City has.

Congratulations to middle schoolers from Deerpath to whom Joy Guscott-Mueller will present Know Your Constitution awards and from Lake Bluff, to whom Julia Fiske will present awards. The students have top scores on the federal and state constitution tests and excellent class participation.

Teenage mental health was the subject of two seminars attended by Liz, Carol Gayle and Jean Brown. They were sponsored by a local financial services analyst. After conferring with local police, we decided there was sufficient community monitoring in place without our help.

Our Increasing Threat From Gun violence will be our last program of this busy year. We will have experts from the FBI, the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence, Moms Demand Action and an attorney who successfully defended Highland Park's ban on assault weapons. After the Lake Forest City Council failed to pass such a ban here, last July, Highland Park was sued for its ban. Recently a court upheld it. We commented on the internet and in print media that such a ban was desirable here as well.

Thanks to the Board for your support this year. Marilyn Turchi organized membership and grew the total. Joy Guscott-Mueller as Secretary kept track of board actions and served as moderator of programs. Steve Potsic, our Treasurer works the incoming and outgoing money with great skill. Carol Gayle and Jean Brown develop our programs. Terry Desmond plans candidate debates. Mary Mathews sees that our events are publicized so that we can educate the public. Linda Bartmes arranges membership events. Ann Grant, Jane Partridge, Cindy Morehead and Judy Grisamore play a vital role. Stan and Diane Sanderson, Nicki Snoblin and Carol Russ handle telecommunications. You are all terrific!

Respectfully submitted: Wyn Cain and Liz Bradner, Co-Presidents