



Mid-Hudson Region *Commentator* May, 2007

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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region covers the Mid-Ulster County area and the Dutchess County area. We belong to the LWV of New York State and the LWV of the US.

CALENDAR

MAY

8 7:15 to 9:15

Board Meeting at Jacki Moriarty's

5

Women's Health Fair at Tech City

15 All day

School board election and Annual School Budget vote

15 6:00 to 9:00

Annual meeting of LWV of Mid-Hudson Region, pot luck at

Unitarian Universalist Church

18-20 Starts Fri. PM

LWVNYS Convention in Albany

JUNE

5 7:15 to 9:15

Board Meeting at Jacki Moriarty's

Non-Partisan Statement

The League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region is a nonpartisan organization which does not support or oppose candidates for public office but does encourage its members as individuals to participate actively in the political process. The League acts on those issues the membership chooses for study and action.

Board members will use discretion in any political activity and determine in advance from the local and/or state board that such activity will not compromise the nonpartisan political policy of the League of Women Voters.

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Remember the Annual Meeting on May 15th at 6 PM. It's a month earlier than last year but be sure to come. We need your help in our decision-making!

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Prez Sez...

Greetings,

Our annual meeting is approaching and I again want to urge you to attend. We have important business to discuss due to the hard work of committee members during the past year. I had the opportunity to personally observe the workings of two committees and I commend them for their diligence and creativity.

The first committee I would like to recognize is the Finance Committee. Margaret Sellers leads a dynamite committee of eight, energized individuals who are resolute as they tackle new and challenging ways to make our league more financially solvent. Watching this group in action is truly a delight. There is so much dialogue, so much brainstorming, such an exchange of ideas on how the league can best be served. Raising money and thinking "budget" is not particularly fun but this group has brought number crunching to a level of wonderful congeniality. Special thanks to Chairperson Margaret, Treasurer Dare Thompson, "old timers" Jacki Moriarty, Emily Johnson, Susan Hirsch, and new members Betty Chin and Irene McInnis for all their efforts.

Another committee that I have seen in action is the By-laws Committee. This is such a daunting task as each line in the by-laws is examined to see if it follows the more recent guidelines recommended by LWVNYS. Besides the obvious need to make our by-laws gender neutral, the committee strove to conform to state recommendations, allow for more simplicity of language and greater flexibility in operations, and meet local needs. It was an incredibly difficult task for the very

seasoned league members who served on this committee. As of this writing, all state board members have reviewed our new by-laws and State President Marcia Merrins has informed the committee they are state approved. Thank you to chairperson Gloria Plasker, Lee Ridgway, Dare Thompson, Jacki Moriarty and Cindy Bell.

As in the United States Congress, the committee work in the league is the nuts and bolts of our organization. Come to the annual meeting. Get informed. Get connected and get on a committee! Greetings,

--Jean

Observer Corps Reporting

Human Development Committee The meeting of the Human Development Committee was convened by its chairman, Peter Kraft, at about 6:15 on April 17th, 2007 in the basement conference room of DSS at Development Court. The committee deals with matters involving Social Services, Coordinated Children's Program, the Youth Bureau and the Human Rights Commission.

In attendance were the legislative members (Distel, Liepmann, Loughran, Harris, Noonan, Parete, Kraft) and DSS personnel (Commissioner Rodriguez; Elizabeth Hilegis, his secretary; Barbara Sorkin, Director of Services; Patricia Hinchey, Fiscal Officer;) and Director of the Youth Bureau, Krista Barringer.

Initially, Mr. Kraft requested a moment of silence out of respect for the tragedy at Virginia Tech.

The first part of the meeting dealt with a report from a representative of the Salient Corporation, dealing with the Salient

Performance Management Solution to manage Medicaid and help control waste, fraud, and abuse in that program.

Consideration of this software program was begun under former DSS Commissioner Decker; UC recently purchased the program. However, there is a lengthy approval process which involves the approval of the contract by the NYS Department of Health before startup of the program (which is projected for fall, 2007) can begin in Ulster County. Approval includes recognition that all HIPA requirements of privacy and confidentiality have been met.

There are other DSS districts in NYS which are already using this program, i.e. Monroe, Chemung, Albany.

The program involves the use of a data base that is located in Albany that includes data on physicians, home health agencies, prescription drugs, etc. It is a view only system: there is no data entry done locally, no changes can be made locally; and it is a secure network that can't be copied. The remainder of the meeting dealt with resolution, the Commissioner's report, training requests (passed a motion that such requests amounting to less than \$1000 did not need to be brought before the public for approval), Youth Bureau report (working on insuring that its rules will meet requirements under the new charter) and some general comments under what is referred to as Open Forum...when members may bring up other matters of concern not on the agenda.

The meeting adjourned about 8:15. The next meeting is scheduled to be May 15,

but may be scheduled to May 17th or May 22nd. –Lee Cane

Legislative Health Committee- March 22

The Health Committee covers three separate areas that used to be three separate committees: Department of Health, Department of Mental Health, and Golden Hill Health Care Center. It covers about 800 county employees, about 400 in the Health Care Center alone. It oversees the maintenance and repair of three major buildings. A great deal of committee time is spent on oversight issues with little attention paid to policy issues.

April 12, 2007: The Committee heard from Health Care STAT, a group that is concerned about the hospital merger. Susan Zimet and Sam Magarelli spoke on behalf of the group. Their main concern is that the community has been left out of the planning process and they would like to have a seat at the table representing the community and a recommendation for that from the Legislature. While they feel that having the Kingston Hospital office building converted into an outpatient surgery facility would be worth considering, they are considerably less positive about it than the *Freeman* indicated. They have about two dozen members and meet largely by email and conference call. I requested to be put on their listserv. Chair Parete made them aware of the upcoming meeting of the Blue Ribbon Health Care Board where the hospitals will update the Panel on merger plans. Merger talks are moving quite rapidly.

Marshall Beckman, Director of Mental Health talked about preparation for potential Medicaid audits which may need more staffing in MH or in the County. All

Medicaid related areas could be affected including the Nursing Home and other Medicaid related operations. Under new recently published sentencing guidelines, department heads could be incarcerated and departments shut down, assets seized for Medicaid fraud if sufficient systematic due diligence is not maintained and "errors" were discovered. Current levels are inadequate.

The question was asked if this oversight would be the responsibility of the Controller after Charter implementation. No answer.

The rest of the business was as usual. --Margaret Sellers

Healthcare Services Advisory Panel: The Ulster County Legislature has formed a Blue Ribbon Healthcare Services Advisory Panel chaired by Robert Parete, who also chairs the Health Committee. The panel consists of the CEOs of the hospitals, County Health and Mental Health Departments, the NE Center, physicians, other community based health related organizations and Legislators.

Basically they are looking for gaps and overlaps in services to enhance efficiency and reduce costs including costs to county taxpayers such as the annual Golden Hill subsidy (\$6.5M), and improve the health care status of the county residents. They will use County Health Assessment developed at the end of 2005 by the County Health Department and the United Way resource directory developed for 211 as a starting point to contact all related community organizations. They will be working towards a "healthcare summit" in the near future. --Margaret Sellers

Law Enforcement Center Investigation:

The Ulster County Legislature has appointed a special committee to investigate the law enforcement center project. It is perfectly balanced, having two legislators from each party and being chaired by an independent. Tracy Bartels. The Deputy Chair is Robert Aiello, with Legislators Felicello, Kraft, and Richard Parete as members. All seem motivated to get to the bottom of the problem of cost and time overruns.

Having attended the Law Enforcement Center Oversight meetings from the beginning, I am quite pleased with the choice of the legislators. I firmly believe they will issue a report that will inform the citizenry with as much truth as can be discovered.

We wish this committee good fortune in meeting its objectives. --Tom Kadgen

Education Study Group

"Educating Kingston's Children: Bright Spots Ahead" was the focus of a meeting on April 14th at the Kingston Library, the second of a two-part review of the Kingston School District's progress in preparing all children to be responsible and productive members of our community.

Data presented at the previous meeting showed that 266 students left Kingston High School without earning a diploma during the 2004-05 school year. Unprepared for college or steady employment, these young people are likely to stay locally and be susceptible to social problems all too familiar in our city -- crime, racial tension, poverty and abuse. Over-represented among youth considered at risk of not completing high school are children from low income and minority backgrounds, often from families in which one or more adults has not had a successful school experience. Our goal was to highlight examples of successful programs and practices which show promise in educating the most challenging students.

The first of three presenters was Anna Brett, principal of Chambers Elementary School in the Kingston School District. The student population in this K-5 school is 60% white, 22% African American and 14% hispanic. The school's poverty level is gauged at 46%, determined by the number of families whose low income entitles their children to be provided with free or reduced price meals under the Federal government school lunch program. Ms. Brett showed assessment data indicating that high percentages of children in grades

1-5 at Chambers are progressing satisfactorily at learning the core subject areas required by NYS Education Department, despite their levels of poverty and minority background. She detailed the 'A B C' plan she devised which undergirds the school's success. Teachers Accommodate each student's individual learning needs, drawing from an assortment of instructional supports and interventions available within the school. The school staff continually reinforce with students the Behaviors conducive to learning, including daily recitation of the school pledge: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Ready to Learn. Lastly, staff utilize scheduled Collaborative planning time to discuss curriculum and instructional practices relating to their classrooms and individual students.

Principal Rosemary Mannino from the B.O.C.E.S. Alternative School described approaches used to guide towards graduation the 150 students in grades 7-12 at the Port Ewen facility. Students enter by referral from school districts in Ulster County where they have not been successful in traditional education programs. Social/emotional problems, substance abuse, disruptive behavior and difficult family circumstances are common issues which challenge these young people. The small school size, committed staff, and intense collaboration among the adults in the school are important elements of the Alternative School's approach. Teachers make their instruction engaging, using entertaining techniques which appeal to the adolescent students. Building on the established personal connection, teachers help students set life goals and

guide development of the behaviors, social skills and academic learning necessary to reach them. All students at the school participate in the technical preparation course at the neighboring B.O.C.E.S. facility, where discovering an affinity for a particular vocation can also lead to successful school completion and employment.

Adrian Manuel (Brown), a Kingston native and 1996 graduate of Kingston High School, grew up on Franklin Street during the 1980's and 1990's and is personally familiar with the negative influences young people encounter living low-income neighborhoods with concentrations of crime and drug use. Now principal of the Jordan C. Mott Intermediate School in the South Bronx (formerly designated as one of the two most dangerous middle schools in the city), he described the innovative programs and practices he has established there. 99% of the 800 students in his grade 5-8 middle school are from impoverished families. 68% are hispanic and 30% are African American.

The school has been broken down into smaller academies, each consisting of 100 to 200 students and organized around a particular theme (e.g. college prep, foreign language, technology focus, special education). Students within each academy develop strong relationships with their set of teachers over the years they are in the school, and it is this personal connection which keeps students from succumbing to the pervasive influence of neighborhood drugs, weapons and gangs. Students wear a simple neutral colored uniform which also helps deter gang activity within the school. Adrian emphasized that before

students can begin to learn academic material, they must be taught core character values by their teachers. When students do not have family support, teachers in the school assume that role and provide the connection which keeps a child coming to school despite the tremendous obstacles presented by out-of-school circumstances.

The presence in the audience of two Kingston school board members and a central administrator was a welcome sign that the subject of education is one of shared concern in our community. A quality public education for every child is central to the health of our city, and is the best guarantee of a secure and prosperous future for our community. A small group of attendees indicated interest in continuing discussion of this topic and will be meeting soon to consider appropriate next steps. If you'd like to participate, contact Linda Roberts at 338-1058 for more information.

Meet Betty Chin

Our featured member this month is Betty Chin, who is running for the League board. Renee Sachs met with her and submits the following information.

Betty Chin and I had a friendly exchange for this interview which involved my becoming acquainted with a friendly, funny and exceedingly bright individual who is impressive with the range of her skills and accomplishments.

Betty emanates from Yonkers where she lived with her parents and two brothers and sisters. They were a closely-knit family. Her parents owned and operated a storefront laundry and the family resided in an apartment upstairs. She and her siblings all helped out in the family business. They attended the local public schools to which they walked and returned home every day for lunch. She recalled with a laugh that in a metropolitan area there was no bussing and no snow days. The Chin children en masse attended the story hour every Saturday at the local branch library. At that time they routinely returned their borrowed books and checked out new ones. Betty says they all still love to read.

After graduating from Yonkers' Gorton High School, Betty moved upstate to attend SUNY New Paltz where she completed a degree in mathematics and decided to remain in this area. She was hired by the Kingston Schools and did her graduate work in education at New Paltz.

Betty stated that she finds this locale so attractive because it still has a small town feeling but it has easy access to New York City. She loves teaching and although she is officially retired from the Kingston

School District she now teaches calculus and pre-calculus part time at Coleman High School. She also does consulting for Ulster County Boces and conducts workshops for math teachers, including those who are responsible for conveying the subject to children with special needs. She acts as a math coach for non-math teachers as well and has developed content for this group.

From 1995 to 1998 she instructed algebra and trigonometry part time at New Paltz College and from 1998 to 2001 at Ulster County Community College. At the Kingston schools she taught at J.W. Bailey Junior High and later at Kingston High. During those years she advised the ski club, the yearbook and photography club and also worked with Homecoming and the Winter Carnival.

Luckily for us our local League president, Jean McGarry, brought Betty into the League about two years ago. Since then Betty has worked with the finance committee and has also become interested in membership. Betty is unequivocal about her praise for the League, its mission and the job it is doing in educating the public by providing vital information.

She has a multiplicity of interests outside her profession. Among them are theater, films and reading. Fortunately, she has a sister who resides in Manhattan, enabling her to subscribe to any number of series. She also weaves at her loom and sews. At one time she actually sewed her own garments, from lingerie to bathing suits. Travel is another passion and among the many places she has toured are Alaska, the Caribbean, Africa (on safari),

Paris, Rome, Venice, Budapest and Prague. This year she is planning a trip to Greece.

Among active sports she has developed an appetite for snowshoeing. She has also hiked Mohonk locally and the Shenandoah area in Virginia. When asked if she does camping also, she laughed and said that at the end of the day she prefers a soft bed and a hot shower. –Renee Sachs

Annual Meeting Schedule

The annual meeting will follow the same schedule as it did last year, with greeting and eating (hors d'oeuvres) at 5:30 and a buffet dinner at 6:00. You can count on plenty of good things to eat, as most of you will remember!

At seven o'clock we should start the business part of the meeting, because we have a lot to cover: bylaws changes, studies for next year, the budget and the election of new board members, as well as the socializing that is an important part of our annual meeting.

Give advance thought to what you would like to work on this coming year. We need people for the "nitty-gritty" work as well as the studies and occasions. Since we don't have a yard sale this year, we will want other events to bring us together and to raise money.

Be there! It's at the Unitarian Universalist Church on Sawkill Road in Kingston. For directions, call the telephone 340-2003 or call a board member. If you need a ride, call Shirley Kobran at 382-6989.

State Board Convention

The New York State League convention is from May 18th to 20th at the Crowne Plaza in White Plains. The title is "Reaching Out/Reaching In" because in order to grow as an organization at all levels we constantly must seek new ideas, opportunities to reach new members and partner with other organizations that are not so much like us. We must also ask our members and friends what we can do better and what things we need to add (or discard!).

There will be hospitality and camaraderie for all NYS attenders, and assigned delegates can vote. There will be discussions – formal and informal – of topics the League wishes to consider, and opportunities to compare notes on what local chapters have found successful as program, fund-raising, and attracting the community outside the League.

Let Jean McGarry know if you wish to attend. There may be a group going for the day on Saturday if you can't spend the whole weekend there.

I/we wish to join the LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region through May 31, 2008

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: (eve) _____

(day) _____

Email: _____

I/We enclose: Individual Membership (\$50) _____

Household Membership (\$65) _____

Additional gift to the LWV Education Fund (tax deductible:)

(Send a separate check which MUST be payable to NYSLWV Ed Fund) \$ _____

If this is a Household Membership, please include the name and email address of additional member(s) _____

Check here if you prefer NOT to be contacted about local LW meetings ____

Will read *Commentator* on website ____ or Please mail *Commentator* ____

**(Update the above form and return it to us with your check at
PO Box 3564, Kingston, New York 12402)**

If you know someone who might like to know more about the League of Women Voters, please send this slip with his/her name and address to Betty Chin, 69 The Hills Port Ewen, NY 12466

We will send out information as soon as possible.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Your name: _____

Do you have any comments about the League or our programs? Shirley would like to hear them too.

Be sure to visit our Advertiser's Page at
<http://lwvny-bulletins.org/Capital Region/Mid-Hudson-2006-10-ads.pdf>