

## Mid-Hudson Region *Commentator* Nov./Dec., 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.

<b>CALENDAR</b>		
<b>JANUARY</b>		
8	7:15 to 9:15	Board Meeting at Gloria's <b>No General Meeting in January</b>
<b>FEBRUARY</b>		
5	7:15 to 9:15	Board Meeting at Gloria's February General Meeting will be an informational meeting on the Nursing Home Study. Time and place will be announced.
<b>NOTE:</b>		
<b>MARCH</b>		
4	7:15 to 9:15	Board meeting at Gloria'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 ... that such activity will not compromise the nonpartisan political policy of the LWV.

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## Prez Sez...

Greetings,

I enjoy board meetings. There is so much energy and exchange of ideas. That is, I enjoy board meetings until Lee Ridgway gives the Commentator deadline and reminds me Prez Sez is due. As I groaned at another deadline in my life, those energetic and enthused League members sitting around the table chimed in, "The election is over. You have lots to talk about". What a board!

The League did a very commendable job serving the public this election season. We sent out questionnaires to legislative and District Attorney candidates in Ulster County. While their response was poor, there was a surge of hits on our website reflecting the public's faith in the League's ability to provide information. League members made guest appearances on two local radio shows to give preelection information.. We had 11 requests to moderate debates in Ulster and Dutchess County and we were able to accommodate 8 of these requests. City Hall had standing room only in our League sponsored District Attorney debate on October 27<sup>th</sup>. We ended the season on election night reporting election results to the AP service. Much thanks to Cindy Bell, Tom Kadgen, and Jim McGarry for all their efforts to provide voter service to our community.

There is no rest for the weary. Charter transition, criminal justice oversight, county nursing home feasibility and voting machines all continue as on-going projects in the league's effort to oversee and advocate for programs and policy that benefit our community.

As usual, the board members were correct. I had much to say!

Jean

## County Legislature Report

The Legislature tonight voted to pass the County budget as amended and to urge the Congress to create a select committee to investigate the presidential Administration and to make recommendations regarding grounds for possible impeachment. A good sized vocal public contingent was present.

Budget highlights included a last minute \$100,000 for the Hudson Valley Center for Innovation, known as "the incubator." The money was probably necessary to keep the operation alive. It appears to have been left out of previous considerations, possibly because of mix-ups.

Family of Woodstock's funding for their supervised visitation program was also assured, as was an additional \$25,000 for UPAC that will be funded thru the arts program administered through Dutchess County. Other items

supported included a legal advisor for the Sheriff, needed due the success of confiscating property, a new public defender, and \$200,000 related to the announced solar economic development initiative.

-- Observer Corps

### Nursing Home Study

In October, members of the County Nursing Facility (CNF) study group met with Sheree Cross, Director of Golden Hill, to discuss questions the group had presented to her regarding the County home. The following is a summary of the information Ms. Cross shared with us during that interview.

The **mission** of Golden Hill “*to care for poor and indigent elderly county residents regardless of ability to pay*” **cannot be changed** to include all county residents. According to Ms. Cross, a public skilled nursing facility cannot legally *decertify* skilled nursing beds in order to offer alternatives such as short-term rehabilitation, medical assisted living, or respite care because Medicaid (which is their major source of reimbursement) would not pay.

Regarding **physical aspects** of the facility, she told us that two new sewer pipes were recently put in, but existing problems with water pipes had not yet been resolved. All but two of the 280 beds at Golden Hill are filled, and there is definitely a need for renovation and updating, but the cost to expand the

current site is formidable due to the rock that is on the property. An infrastructure study of the facility would have to be done by the county before any decisions could be made on how to alleviate their space problems.

**Demographic data** shows that Golden Hill is almost at full capacity with 278 elderly residents. Many of them are over 80 years old (several over 100) and many have crippling diseases. There is a separate inhouse care center for Alzheimer’s disease patients. A separate care center for geriatric psychotherapy patients, who require the most critical care, is badly needed. Golden Hill has 400 staff members, many of whom are long-term employees. The facility has a high employee retention rate and Ms. Cross credits employee dedication for the good reputation Golden Hill has for patient care.

**Financial support** for the center (mostly from Medicaid) is not received in a timely fashion. Currently Golden Hill is operating with a four million dollar deficit with income at \$20 million and expenses at \$24 million. The center is at the lower end of the revenue mix. Because county nursing homes tend to have primarily Medicaid patients, the reimbursement per day is far less than the real cost of the bed. Proprietary homes have the advantage of getting short-term, more lucrative (insured or private pay) residents

allowing them to recoup the actual cost of nursing care.

With the help of an expected \$7 per day raise in the reimbursement rate in 2008 and money from a large New York State grant to be shared by county nursing homes, Golden Hill hopes to reduce its deficit to \$2 million by 2010.

**Employment policies** dictate that the County Nursing Facility must pay its staff according to CSEA wage guidelines. According to Ms. Cross, Golden Hill's highest costs are wages, pensions and health insurance—costs over which they have no control because the administrators are not allowed to be involved in contract negotiations. Golden Hill's professional staff of nurses and physical and occupational therapists are all licensed and the nurse's aides are all certified. The facility also offers on-the-job training and continuing in-service programs for their Certified Nurses' Aides.

The nursing home study group is very grateful to Sheree Cross for taking the time to meet with us, provide such forthright answers to our questions, and give us her honest appraisal of the challenges that our county nursing facility at Golden Hill faces.

-- Irene McInnis

**If you are interested in joining the nursing home study, call Jacki Moriarty at 331-3418. There will be a meeting in January.**

#### Write-In Voting

A number of people have asked how to write in a vote on our current lever voting machines, as it is not immediately obvious. There is a row of write-in slides above the question row on the voting machine and each slide has a number below it. This number matches the number on the title for each office being voted on. Lift the slide for the right office and write in your candidate's name. Once you have lifted the slide, all the levers for that office are locked and you cannot change your vote. Of course, this information may be useless if the voting machines are changed before the next time they are used! Keep yourself aware of the status of our voting tools or find a reason for an absentee ballot.

#### Women As Leaders

The second annual meeting on women as leaders featured two leading women in Kingston: Karen Clark-Adin, the owner and proprietor of Bop To Tottom, and Marjorie Rovereto, president of Ulster Savings Bank.

Ulster Savings Bank provided the meeting place, and we are grateful for their hospitality, as they supplied the plates, silverware and venue for our brunch as well as the room in which we held the meeting.

Karen Clark-Adin spoke first. She was a psychology major in college, and worked for the corporate world for 18 years before deciding to quit and go into retail. After two years working in retail, she decided to go into her own retail business in Kingston. She spoke of the passion needed to succeed in your own business, and attributes her success to three factors: a network of three very supportive girlfriends; determination and the intention to satisfy customers always; and her strong involvement with the local business and customer community.

She says you need a passion for satisfying the customers, a belief in your ability, and a need to support and strengthen the community. Karen was a founder of the Kingston Farmers' Market and has been deeply involved in the Kingston Uptown Business Association. Although she sometimes agrees to disagree with some of her peers, she feels that the community must keep moving forward and that you may have to ruffle people's feathers for the benefit of the community.

She advises that you must not just make decisions with your head but be aware of your "gut" feelings and trust

them too. Maintain a positive outlook, work very hard, don't think negatively, "Just do it" if you feel it's right.

Karen's energy and passion were evident throughout her talk; she speaks with conviction and wit and projects her enthusiasm to everyone. Her philosophy? "Keep Joy in gift-giving."

Marjorie Rovereto grew up in Kingston and worked in her family's business, the Hub Deli.

She learned there that the customer is always right, don't argue, and keep your mind on your work, not on your social life. She has carried these rules into all her work at the bank.

She graduated from SUNY Albany and joined the Ulster Savings Bank in 1983. Since she loves people and is always dedicated to her job, she rose quickly in the bank. She became an officer in 18 months; Cliff Miller recognized her potential and mentored her. She became a vice-president in 1987 and had experience in all areas of the bank.

In 1992 she became Executive Vice-President, and on August 28, 2006, she became President.

Marjorie understands the importance of community involvement in retail banking. The bank needs the community to thrive and the community needs the bank in order to thrive as well. Ulster Savings Bank supports many community activities, with education receiving most support,

while health, human services, and economic development are also focuses of attention.

As CEO, Marjorie is also sensitive to the bank community and its employees. She has an open door policy for all employees and visits the branches regularly. She holds meetings with all employees and gathers feedback continuously.

She is very aware of the need to recognize home and work responsibilities and balance them; even so she is a member of many organizations as her personal contribution to the community.

She and her senior advisory group meet weekly. Her commitment to the bank, to its employees and to its customers were evident in her presentation. Her talk was both enlightening and interesting.

Thanks again to both speakers for participating and making it clear why both of them are truly women leaders.

#### LWV Day at the UN November 28

Vivi Hlavsa went to the UN Day this year and met a number of leaguers from other chapters. She reported that the lunch was spectacular and the contacts stimulating. Next year, perhaps, our chapter can have a bigger attendance.

#### Gloria Steinem Visit: A Reminder

Gloria Steinem is coming to Albany April 2 for a day on pay equity. Watch the state league website for details as they become available.

#### Commission on Higher Education

The Commission on Higher Education released its Preliminary Report earlier this week. To characterize the report, Commission Chairman Hunter Rawlings, President Emeritus of Cornell University, said: "This is a major milestone for higher education in the State of New York. Although these conclusions are preliminary, the report is the culmination of over six months of intensive deliberations about the future, and what it takes to keep New York competitive in the 21st century."

We are pleased to report that the Commission's findings and recommendations have been well received by interested parties from all around the state.

The Commission is going to spend the next six months listening by conducting a series of public hearings across the state. For further information on the work of the Commission, including dates and locations of upcoming public hearings, refer to

<http://www.hecommission.state.ny.us>.

If you wish to be on the Commission's mailing list, you may request to be added through the website above

### Presidential Candidate Voters' Guide

Thanks to the collaboration between members of the Maryland, National Capitol Area, and Virginia Leagues and the LWVUS/EF, the 2008 Presidential Primary Voters' Guide is now available. We have responses from: Biden, Clinton, Edwards, Obama, and Richardson on the Democratic side and Giuliani, McCain, Paul, Tancredo, and Thompson on the Republican side. Only Dodd and Romney were invited to participate and chose not to. We ended up with an 83 percent response rate, which is a testament to the League.

Download a complete pdf of the Voters' Guide from [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org). While the posting of this information on your Web site or linking to VOTE411.org is optional, all Leagues are encouraged to take advantage of this useful voters' service product. Interested Leagues may also choose to incorporate the information from the LWV/US Voters' Guide into their own state/local Voters' Guide.

### Privacy for Citizens

The Bush Administration has been pushing Congress to grant immunity to phone companies who permitted illegal surveillance of phone calls. Initially it seemed the legislation would pass but one senator said he would block the bill. Phone calls came from all over the country and other senators joined in. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid pulled the bill from consideration.

This is another example of what grass roots input can do. Keep aware of issues and speak out.

### Save Postage Dollars

You can save postage and paper by receiving your newsletters electronically. As more people go online, it will become more cost-effective, time-saving, and convenient. All you need is to be able to accept Word files or pdf files. Let Jim McGarry know if you would accept this alternative.

### *League Basics* Available Online

The LWVUS has replaced our basic operating publication *In League* by a new online document called *League Basics*. This tool helps League leaders understand the basic aspects of running our organization.

## Membership News

The holiday party was a great success. Many familiar friends were there, including **Len Cane** who seemed to be recuperating well after his surgery and subsequent infection. Sadly, the infection (or a new one) has flared up and Len is back in the hospital. **Esther Stickley** was there, but her husband was not yet well enough to attend, although he is improving. **Vivi Hlavsa** was there, steady on her two new knees, and **John** and **Jacki Moriarty** were as usual wonderful hosts. We missed **Shirley Kobran** and **Gloria** and **Stan Plasker**, all of whom had other plans, but wished they could be two places at once.

I cannot list all who attended, but it was a good group and we all had a good time in spite of depressing weather. We did have several people from the Poughkeepsie area and **Dare Thompson** and her husband came up from Marlboro.

We have gained a few new members, and you'll hear more about them next time.

Happy New Year to all!