

Commentator for September 2005

The League of Women Voters of Mid-Hudson Region

P.O. Box 3564

Kingston, NY 12402

(845) 340-2003

<http://midhudson.ny.lwvnet.org>

Chris Henning, President	(845)339-0509
Shirley Kobran, Membership	(845)382-6989
Emily Johnson, Newsletter	(845) 338-3554

Mission Statement:

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.

CALENDAR

AUGUST		
24	9:30-11:30	Pricing for yard sale at Elizabeth Askue's
27,28	9:00-3:00	Yard sale at Elizabeth Askue's
31	9:15-11:15	Program Committee at Gloria's
SEPTEMBER		
13	7:15-9:15	Board meeting at Jean McGarry's
14	3:45-8:00	Regional Training Workshop, Troy, NY
15	5:30-7:30	Membership mixer at Wiltwyck Golf Club, Marcia Merrins speaking
OCTOBER		
11	7:15-9:15	Board meeting at Jacki Moriarty's
18	7:00-9:00	Advocacy and Lobbying, Universalist Unitarian Church, Barbara Bartoletti to speak
NOVEMBER		
1	7:15-9:15	Board Meeting at Jacki Moriarty's
16	9:00-2:00	League Day at the UN

The Prez Sez...

Hi everyone! Summer has come and gone quickly yet again. I am very excited about the upcoming events with the LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region. We are having a Membership Mixer and I hope you will be able to attend and please bring a friend. Our state league president, Marcia Merrins will be speaking. I have heard her speak before and I have always left with energy and motivation. We are also having our first bus trip to NYC in October. I am looking forward to bringing my son to the Museum of Natural History and would love to see you and your family there. So, even though our summer has ended the fun is just beginning.

Chris

Save the Date

League Day at the UN on November 16 from 9:00 to 2:00. The topic is briefings on the status of democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan. Briefings are at 10:00 AM to 12:45 PM. There will be lunch from 12:45 until 2:00. This is sponsored by the LWV of New York State in association with the United Nations Department of Public Information. Car pooling to the UN should be possible, and there will be more information next month. If you want to go, call the LWV of NYS at (518) 465-4162 to find out whether you must register in advance.

Nonpartisan Policy 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.

A League member who holds elected partisan political office at any level shall be ineligible to serve on the state League board.

The President, the Vice-Presidents, and the Voters Service Director of the LWV Mid-Hudson region shall not run for partisan political office or hold office in a political club or engage in partisan activity nor serve on a campaign committee, nor shall they have their names listed for making contributions.

The political activities of a spouse or relative of a board member are considered separate from the activities of that board member.

Don't' forget the Membershp Mixer on September 15 at Wiltwyck Golf Club. RSVP to Emily Johnson by August 31.

Coming Voter Information

This year our League will be putting out more voter information than we have in the past, thanks to our new educational tool, the website.

Every year, we get a large number of *Facts for Voters* from the state LWV, and we distribute them to our members and to many other places in the community including but not limited to libraries, post offices, Board of Elections, city and town offices, and county officials and legislators. These *Facts for Voters* give information on the initiatives and proposals at state level and provide material on the candidates for office at a statewide level. This year we have ordered 20,000 for distribution in Ulster and Dutchess Counties. They are usually available late in September or early in November.

What has been missing is information about county-wide candidates and county-wide issues. Obviously, the state cannot gather this information for every county, and up until now, our local League has been unable to afford printing a county voter's guide for Dutchess and Ulster. This year, however, thanks to the new website, we can at least publish voter information on the website for people to look at online. (The website is

<http://midhudson.ny.lwvnet.org>.)

The voter's guide will cover both Dutchess and Ulster county elections and will provide biographies of all county-wide candidates who respond to requests. In addition, candidates will be asked to answer three questions briefly, and their answers will be included.

For Ulster County, the questions will be:

- What role should Ulster County play in providing affordable housing to its working population?

- What is your position on Ulster County's having an elected County Executive?

- What role do you feel Ulster County has in providing nursing home care for its disabled and elderly population?

For Dutchess County, the questions are:

- What should Dutchess County do about the overcrowding of the jail?

- What should Dutchess County do to preserve open space while supporting economic development?

- What is Dutchess County's role in providing affordable housing to its working population?

We are still exploring ways in which this information might also appear in printed form, perhaps sent to people who request it through the League telephone, but it is not clear that this will be manageable.



Local Government Observers

Informed and active participation of citizens in government, an increased understanding of major public policy issues and influencing public policy through advocacy and education is one important part of the LWV.

Here is an opportunity for you to attend public meetings of various governmental agencies as an LWV observer. By reporting on these meetings in the *Commentator*, the Local Government Observers will help all League members to be informed citizens.

Several of our members already attend some of the meetings. We are looking for others who are willing to participate. You may choose what meetings you are interested in as we hope to cover Board of Education meetings, county legislative meetings, and town board meetings. You do not have to commit to attending every meeting, as we want to establish a schedule in which all meetings are covered by different people at different times.

An Observer is a listener, not a participant, and interprets and summarizes the debates and decisions. The Observer also identifies problems, proposals, and actions that bear upon League program items or that might be significant in future program development.

Contact Elizabeth Askue, 338-1667, to let her know of your interest. After the yard sale, she will start working on the Observer Corps. Remember that the information will help us all to be better informed citizens, and you'll be surprised at how enlightening it is to see our government officials in action – legislators (town and county), school boards, and commissions and committees as well. Be there!

Regional Training Seminar

On September 14th, the day before she comes to Kingston to speak to us, Marcia Merrins will be in Troy, New York, to help run a regional training seminar for local LWV leaders and other interested LWV members. The seminar runs from 3:45 to 8 PM and includes dinner.

Registration is \$5.00. To register, phone LWVNYS at 518-465-4162 and either pay by credit card or send a check to LWVNYS, 35 Maiden Lane, Albany, NY 12207.

The agenda is:

3:45 Coffee

4:00 Welcome and introductions

4:15 "Building a Sound Foundation" LWVNYS
Education Foundation president, Jacqui LoFaro

5:00 "Ask and Ye Shall Receive" Lauren Candela-Katz, development consultant

5:45 Problem Solving and Networking Dinner

6:30 "R You in Tune to Membership?" Martha Kennedy VP Membership LWVNYS

7:15 "Nothing Endures but Change" Marcia Merrins, President LWV Of New York State

8:00 Adjournment

Place: Bruno Family Center, 2328 Fifth Avenue, Troy, NY. Phone: 518-272-6012. From Albany take route I-787 north to Exit 9 (Route 7/downtown Troy). Stay in the far right hand lane and follow the exit to Down-town Troy and exit to Hutton Street. At the traffic signal, turn right onto 5th Avenue. The Bruno Center is on the right. You can park on the street or in the lot past the Center. Contact Margaret Story at 518-272-1586 or mjstory@aol.com.



Marcia Merrins, President of the League of Women Voters of NYS

“Agility... robustness... nimbleness... total flexibility... It's all about leading in the age of agility. The implication is that we've got to look further ahead than ever before because we're going to arrive at the future sooner.”

I have been president of the League of Women Voters of New York State since May, 2003. Prior to that, I have served two years as VP Membership for LWVNYS and Secretary/Treasurer. I have concurrently served as the President of the LWV Chautauqua County until 2003.

Currently, I sit on several boards including the *Chautauqua County Board of Health, Northern Chautauqua Community Foundation Grants Committee, Chair of the Fredonia Cable TV Advisory Board, SUNY Fredonia Rockefeller Arts Center Board, Western New York Chamber Players Board.* In 1999, I was part of the creation of the *Chautauqua County Commission on Women's Issues* and served as the vice-chair for three years. I also served on the local school board for five years.

I was born and raised in Brooklyn and moved to Fredonia in Chautauqua County in 1974. Jogging and tennis are enjoyed often.

Commentator, September, 2005

There's always time for bridge, mah jongg, skiing, bicycling, gardening, cooking, and a good book. For fun, annually for 13 years, I am Elf Holly on the local access “Talk to Santa Show”.

Jim and I enjoy day hiking on adventures around the world. We are the proud parents of three adult children.

Marcia's Coming to Kingston September 15th

You will meet Marcia Merrins at our membership mixer on September 15. Come to the Wiltwyck Golf Club at 5:30 on the 15th. There will be hors d'oeuvres and drinks (cash bar for alcoholic drinks, complimentary tea, coffee, and soft drinks for all.

This is our kickoff meeting for this year's activities and projects and we are very excited about listening to Marcia and becoming energized for the busy year ahead.

From 5:30 to 6:00 there will be a social hour to talk to old and new friends. Marcia will speak and answer questions from 6:00 to 6:30, and will mingle with the group from then on

From 6:30 to 7:15 there will be an opportunity to see some of the projects we have done and are doing in our community. 7:15 to 7:30 is “wrap-up time” and we look forward to seeing everybody there and enthusiastic.

It's a Party!

**Don't forget to RSVP!! And particularly,
don't forget to come!!**

Meet Our Advertisers

Eugene De Stefano, DDS

Dr. Gene De Stefano's gentle almost scholarly manner imparts a feeling of confidence that this practitioner of a much maligned profession will exercise his considerable skills and intelligence to create a calm, reassuring atmosphere in his dental office.

Born in Brooklyn, Dr. De Stefano spent his developmental years in Queens Village and Nassau County. He graduated from Our Lady of Good Counsel Elementary School and continued at Chaminade, a high school noted for its academic standards. He then majored in biology and earned his BA at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

He spent the next three years doing graduate research in virology at New York University Medical Center. It was here he met Dorothy, a fellow research student who received her master's degree in micro-biology, he proudly relates. They were married in June, 1982.

At NYU, Gene took a course at the dental school which he found stimulating. He became aware of the precariousness of grants in the field of research and made a decision that Dentistry contained enough elements of scientific interest that he could seriously regard it as a profession for himself.

After receiving an acceptance to the NYU College of Dentistry he spent the next four years in professional training. Dr. De Stefano admitted under duress that he had excelled in his studies, and following his being awarded the degree of Doctor of Dental Surgery, he furthered his skills by accepting a residency at Northport Veterans Administration hospital in Suffolk County. He regards that time as an invaluable experience. He feels that the VA hospital provided both top quality care and materials for the patients and offered the professionals rigorous training in oral surgery.

As a result, Dr. De Stefano feels confident in performing a number of surgical procedures in his office which are not the norm for a family practitioner.

Following the completion of his residency, Gene worked in two different offices where he further refined his dental techniques. In 1992, Dr. De Stefano purchased the dental practice of a local practitioner who was planning to retire. His wife, Dorothy, became his office manager.

When asked what brought him to this area, Gene explained that they knew the area well since his wife's family had owned property in Boiceville for five generations and it was a locale in which he and his family had been vacationing for many years.

The De Stefanos have two daughters, Sarah, born in 1987, and Kristen, born in 1989. The family's first residence in the area was in Lake Katrine and the girls attended the Crosby School. After the De Stefanos moved to Boiceville, Sarah and Kristen became students in the Onteora School System. Sarah is now a freshman at American University in Washington, DC, while Kristen is a junior at Onteora High School.

For recreation, Dr. De Stefano enjoys golf and skiing and finds woodworking relaxing. He is a man who is content with his lifestyle.



Member News

We have another new member for you to meet and greet: **Laura Walls**.

Laura Walls could be characterized as a “pragmatic idealist.” If that sounds like an oxymoron, read on. Born in Queens, she spent ten years life in Long Island. Her family moved to Gardiner and she started in fourth grade in the New Paltz schools. A shift in residence resulted in her graduating from Walkill High School. Laura describes herself as “never a good student” so while she is a graduate of both Ulster County Community College and SUNY New Paltz, she did it, as she put it, “on the ten year plan.” During that time, she worked at a variety of jobs, such as waitress, process server, salesperson in the Book and Record Store and at JC Penney’s. While she was at Penney’s as assistant manager she realized that if she wanted the fulfillment of a successful business career, she would need a college degree. This spurred her to complete her education. She earned an associate’s degree in Business from UCCC and cannot praise the school enough for the preparation they gave her, not only academically, but emotionally and socially, to complete her studies at New Paltz in business administration.

While Laura was very invested in the business curriculum, she found political science a fascinating area and regards Gerald Benjamin (now Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at SUNY New Paltz) as a mentor.

Laura met Glenn Gidaly in 1980 and in 1981 they married. During this time, they worked on the “Save the Mountain” Committee. Later they co-chaired the Hudson Valley chapter of the Citizens Party, a local organization which sponsored the development of a third political party as part of a national movement. By this time, she was infected with an enthusiasm for public policy work. The Gidaly’s first son, Nicholas, was born in 1983, and their second son, Miles, followed four years later.

Laura recalls she worked two jobs most often. From 1983-1988 she was employed at then NYS Assemblyman Maurice Hinchey’s office.

In 1988, after leaving Maurice Hinchey’s office, Laura and her husband started Shingebiss Associates, Inc., a firm whose original mission was to foster the development of affordable housing and has metamorphosed into an organization that seeks to assist the development of communities for any public purpose. (The name “Shinge-biss” comes from a duck who triumphs over seemingly insuperable odds in a children’s story.) Laura mainly functioned as chief grants writer.

In 1993, Laura was elected to the Board of Education in New Paltz and served for a four year term but then retired because of domestic responsibilities.

In 1999, she was elected to a two-year term as Town Supervisor of Gardiner, running as an Independent endorsed by Democrats. She did not run again, although she enjoyed discharging her duties in office.

In 2003, Laura was elected to the New Paltz Board of Education, and in 2005, was elected President. For the last three years she has been employed as Research Director at Pattern for Progress.

Her passion for public policy has been a refrain throughout her adult life. She steadfastly holds that consensus decisions are the path to lasting change. Laura’s membership in the LWV is an extension of that conviction, and she sees herself participating in research and the deliberative process.. “Pragmatic idealist”, indeed!

Natural History Museum Trip October 1

Bus trip to NYC to the Museum of Natural History in Manhattan

A great opportunity for a multi-generational trip to explore the museum or just go to the city for the day. Prices \$49 for adults, \$39 for children. Includes entry to the museum and the planetarium. Bus only \$34. There is a lunchroom at the museum or you can bring a bag lunch. To sign up or find out more, call Lee Ridgway, 339-4927, or send your registration and a check to her at 19 Johnston Avenue, Kingston, NY. Time for leaving Ames parking lot is 8:30, leaving museum at 4:00.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Number of Adults: _____ Number of children: _____ Bus only: _____

LWV of Mid-Hudson Region Membership Application or Renewal to 6/30/06

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

E-mail address: _____

Member (\$50) _____ Family Membership (\$65) _____ Extra contribution \$ _____

____ Please call about local LWV meetings or ____ Please do not call.

Mail with check to:

Treasurer, LWV of Mid-Hudson Region, P.O. Box 3564, Kingston, NY 12402

If you know someone who might like to know more about the League of Women Voters, please provide name and address below and send this slip to:

Shirley Kobran, 53 Schuler Lane, Lake Katrine, NY 12449

We will send information out as quickly as possible.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____ e-mail _____

Your name _____