

VOTER

League of Women
Voters of Indiana
County, Pennsylvania



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

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LWVIC Board of Directors, 2014-15

Vicki Stelma
President
Newsletter Editor
724-599-9225

Sandy Whitson
Treasurer
724-463-7205

Carol Maderer
Joyce Magee
Ann Rea
Cindy Rogers
Stacie Sawallish-Adkins
Aida Shotts
Susan Wheatley

Convention Inspires

By Vicki Stelma

From June 5-7, the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania held its 51st biennial convention in Pittsburgh. Along with over 100 others, I, Vera Bonnet, and Cindy Rogers had the opportunity and privilege to attend the workshops and meetings, and Vera presented a workshop entitled *Shale Gas Extraction and Public Health*.

In addition, we attended sessions on increasing the League's social media presence (in the hopes of engaging some younger members of our community), managing successful civic campaigns, and building leaders in our League. We learned about the status of women in politics in PA (where 82% of our state legislators are male), and we had an opportunity to meet other members from other Leagues and to hear about the good that these Leagues continues to do across our state.

It's truly inspiring to spend time with like-minded men and women who understand the importance of engaging our communities in democracy and who have the knowledge and experience regarding how to actually do this.

I anticipate that good things will come from this experience as the LWVIC moves forward with our new knowledge and ideas.

Report from Annual Meeting

The LWVIC annual meeting was held at the Park Inn in Indiana on May 18. At that time, new officers and board members were elected as follows: **Vicki Stelma, president; Cindy Rogers, vice president; Stacie Sawallish-Adkins, secretary; Aida Shotts, Ellen Chinn, Kay Snyder, Laurie LaFontaine, and Anne Simmons, board members.** Congratulations and welcome to all!

In addition, our program for the upcoming year was adopted (see the March/April Voter for details), and the Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership awards were presented. (See article on page 2.)

Chad Nicholson, pictured to the right, of the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (<http://www.celdf.org/>), presented our members with information about his organization's work as well as the concept of Home Rule, which brings significant changes to the structure of local governments by transferring authority in municipal affairs from state law to local charters that are adopted and amended by voters and is being explored by residents of Grant Township in Indiana County.



With the conclusion of our annual meeting, we wrapped up a great year of action and are poised to continue and expand our work and influence in the upcoming year.

Peggy Clark Award Winners Honored at Annual Meeting

At our annual meeting on May 18, the League of Women Voters of Indiana County presented the fourth annual Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership awards. This award recognizes grassroots citizens, groups, or businesses who show exemplary leadership and active participation in policy issues that involve protecting or preserving our environment.

This year two IUP professors shared the individual award. Dr. Ed Donley and Dr. Ellen Yerger were recognized for their work with native species. Donley has transformed large parts of his 30 acre home site to native meadow and has hosted many community educational programs regarding the importance of restoring native flora and fauna. Yerger first encountered Donley's work at one of his educational programs and has since been conducting research on the importance of native species to our insect population. As partners, they have educated, instructed, donated, and labored to bring back native plants and a healthy ecosystem to western Pennsylvania.



Left to right, Ed Donley, Judy Wanchisn, Stacy Long (both of the East Run Hellbenders Society), and Ellen Yerger

The East Run Hellbenders Society, Inc. received the group award. They were recognized for their work on protecting the safety, health, and well-being of the citizens of Grant Township by opposing the development of a waste water well in their township. In addition, they were instrumental in working with the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund to develop and defend a Community Bill of Rights.

The Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership award was established in honor of a longtime Indiana County grassroots environmental activist and League member and is awarded annually.

Congratulations!

As an organization, the League gains its strength from our members. When we work to effect change, our membership numbers give us clout; the more members we have, the stronger (and louder) our voice is.

Beth Marshall, a long-time League member, understands this and has been working as a coach with LWVUS' Membership & Leadership Development Program to increase the clout of the LWV. In fact, at the LWVPA convention, Beth **was recognized for her "excellent service as a state coach to local Leagues in Pennsylvania."** Congratulations, Beth!

In addition, the LWVIC was recognized at the convention for increasing our membership for the third year in a row. **Let's continue to spread the word about our great organization and work to recruit new members this summer.** Printable membership applications are available at <http://indiana.palwv.org/aboutus.htm>.

Voter Registration Drives To Be Held

Franklin Delano Roosevelt once noted the following: “Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country.”

The League wholeheartedly believes in this statement and continues to work to make this conception of government a reality by registering and educating voters.

This fall will be an exciting time for voters in Indiana County with many contested races at our local level. In light of this, the League is planning several voter registration drives.

In honor of National Voter Registration Day on September 22, we will be holding a registration event at the Commonplace Coffeehouse in Indiana. In addition, Karen Ross is working on organizing other registration events around the area.

If you are interested in volunteering, or if you have suggestions for possible sites to register voters, please contact Karen Ross at ross.bert1@gmail.com or 724-349-0348.

Let's work together to make FDR's statement a reality.

Rain Garden Dedicated

On June 3 the Stormwater Education Partnership marked the official opening of the White Township rain garden. This event topped off a yearlong effort to educate municipal and county officials, landscape professionals, and residents about new stormwater management practices designed to reduce flooding and improve the quality of local waterways.

The program included the unveiling of a permanent informational sign explaining the design and construction of the rain garden and the benefits of installing one. Attendees also planted irises in the garden to mark the completion of the project.

In addition, the construction of the rain garden was featured in a video made by the partnership and funded by the Water Resources Education Network. You can view the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39v5YU9e8O0>.

The Stormwater Education Partnership is spearheaded by the environmental issues committee of LWVIC and includes the Indiana County Office of Planning & Development, White Township, Evergreen Conservancy, the Indiana County Conservation District, and the Indiana Community Garden.



On June 3, LWVIC presented testimony at a public hearing held by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection regarding the conversion of a production well to an injection well in Grant Township.

In short, the LWVIC, “based on our studies, the current research, and what the community believes is in their best long term interests...does not support the proposed reclassification of the Yanity well.”

The fight against this injection well is being led by the East Run Hellbenders Society, the group that won our Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership award this spring.

A newsletter of the
League of Women Voters
of Indiana County,
Pennsylvania

1105 Water Street
Indiana, PA 15701

724-599-9225

lwvindianacounty@gmail.com



CALENDAR of UPCOMING EVENTS

Know someone who may be interested in membership? Let President Vicki Stelma know at 724-599-9225, and she will send a brochure & short letter describing LWWIC's activities.

Monday, June 15, 7:00 pm—Board Meeting, All Members Welcome, PASEC meeting room, (1005 Oak Street, 2nd floor)

August—Board Retreat, date & location to be announced

September 22—National Voter Registration Day, Voter Registration event to be held at Commonplace Coffeehouse in Indiana

Monday, October 5—Last day to register before the November election

Tuesday, October 27—Last day to apply for a civilian absentee ballot

Tuesday, November 3—Election Day

Our Mission Statement

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