

VOTER

League of Women
Voters of Indiana
County, Pennsylvania



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

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LWVUS Convention Inspires

Submitted by Lea Masiello

When I first walked into the registration area for the 2014 National Convention of the League of Women Voters in Dallas, Texas, I felt that I was way out of my "league," but I quickly discovered that I was exactly "in the right league." I found myself joining in the tone of "can do" action, conversation, and friendship through meeting women bustling around with big smiles for anyone and everyone, talking to Dallas Leaguers posted throughout the building with helpful signs, and picking up and devouring flyers, handouts, and folders packed with interesting information. It didn't take long for me to get caught up in the excitement and enthusiasm for building the next national program, attending caucuses and workshops on topics such as climate change, human trafficking, building membership, fundraising ideas (the key gist of which is this: "people give because you ask them"), improving outreach to voters for education and registration, and a really wonderful one-woman show based on the life of Molly Ivins, the Texas political and feminist journalist who provoked, inspired, and delighted readers. Can Molly Ivins "say that"? You bet she can, and so can we all! This entertaining and powerful show reinforced the importance of contributing our voices to the political realm. I brought back to our Indiana League enough ideas on all the topics and more to last at least two years until the next national convention in 2016, which will be in Washington, D. C. I plan on going no matter what; no way would I miss this exciting scene in the heart of political action! You should go, too! You never know whom you will meet: while I was feeling a bit lost, I turned my head and saw an old friend at the registration desk—and called out loudly, "Jane Lord! Jane Lord!" She said to me that she thought, "Who's calling my name?" and we enjoyed hanging out together, having meals, and attending sessions. What a treat to reconnect with our old friend from Indiana. I especially enjoyed meeting and talking with members of her new League in Lewes, Delaware. Jane has continued to do great things, especially in the area of climate change as it was her League that brought the proposal for a resolution to the convention. As a "newbie" to the convention, I was also grateful for her mentorship, in addition to the guidance I gained from the other Pennsylvania delegates I met during the general sessions where people sit with their state Leagues.

One of the most meaningful aspects of being part of the convention was learning specifically how local Leagues are truly part of the network that builds the national program. It might have become a bit tedious occasionally to listen to arguments and counter-arguments on resolutions and on topics for study and implementation, but as I began to see how we all fit into the picture, I developed an interest in hearing everything, even the critical comments such as, "I propose we call the vote; we are getting too lost 'in the weeds' of discussion." I learned how the League makes things happen efficiently and sometimes, creatively. President Elizabeth McNamara was astonishingly skillful at keeping over a thousand members on track to get through all the day's business, even asking occasionally, "Ok, what is the sense of the membership: shall we take a ten-minute break or just dance in the aisles here for five minutes and move on?" When the group cheered for the shorter "dance break," she said, "Ok, let's play some happy music and dance," and at that moment, we mobbed-dance to "Happy" and were refreshed and invigorated! President McNamara competently balanced the need to get things done with the importance of making sure that everyone at the "response mikes" had a chance to speak. There was some tension during the convention over the challenge to the slate of candidates for officers and board members as a result of the nomination from the floor of a candidate for president, Deidre McNabb, who had initially been offered a position on the board, but had chosen instead to run for president against McNamara. McNabb and her supporters campaigned for more attention to building membership and increasing diversity in the League, and these were important issues to bring to everyone's attention. Although McNabb's bid was unsuccessful and somewhat contentious, I felt that her nomination from the floor and the ensuing campaign and discussions throughout the hallways truly demonstrated democracy in action, something the League stands for very strongly. I was pleased that President McNamara was re-elected, but I also felt the McNabb's candidacy gave us important positions to consider.

The Dallas organizing committee did a wonderful job of making everything go smoothly, including the election on Tuesday afternoon. It was an opportunity to vote and make our positions heard, again an important League value.

The organizing committee also created a fantastic roster of speakers. We were all inspired and enlightened by all of the speakers, including Sheriff Lupe Valdez, who is the highest ranking law enforcement officer in Dallas. Her welcoming speech highlighted the importance of connecting with all kinds of voters. Norma Valles sang the National Anthem, bringing a bit of a mariachi flavor to her interpretation, and we all loved it. Steve Murdock from Rice University gave an impressive presentation on the changing demographics in Texas, emphasizing the importance of strengthening educational opportunities for Hispanic families. I left realizing how important early childhood education is for the economic future of our country. Pepita, you are so right to be a fervent supporter of building collaborative pathways with early childhood education groups in Indiana County! One of the highlights for me was hearing the mayor of Houston, Annise Parker, speak since I had heard so much about her from my family members who live in Houston. I shared a ride to the airport with another speaker, Peter Levine, who discussed the values inherent in the League, emphasizing the importance of building civic renewal in our country. His book, "We are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: The Promise of Civic Renewal in America," quickly sold out as he struck an important chord for League members. I intend to get the digital version and keep the inspiration going. All of the presentations and minutes are available online at the National League's website. Take a few minutes to browse around and discover how YOU can connect to the new program. Each one of us can bring ideas to our own League for possible study and for community involvement. I'm more convinced than ever that we need, right here, to build many more collaborations in Indiana County. I look forward to seeing YOU at League events! Finally, I want to thank our League for this opportunity to attend the national convention; it was an experience of a lifetime, and I will be forever grateful. And I have to say this: Washington politicians, if you want to see democracy in action and learn how to get things done, join your local League and watch how we do it!

Peggy Clark Award Winners Honored at Annual Meeting

On May 14 at the LWVIC Annual Meeting, Jim Resh and the Indiana Community Garden received the Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership Awards.

Resh, who received the individual citizen environmental award, was employed by the Indiana County Conservation District for 20 years. In 1997 he served as the conservation district representative in the development of the statewide Dirt and Gravel Roads program. This program provides 28 million dollars annually to townships to keep road sediments out of our streams. He assisted Brookside Dairy in obtaining funding and design for the first manure digester in western Pennsylvania. The digester converts cow manure into methane and ultimately electricity. As a result of this project, Brookside Dairy has produced over 3 million kilowatt hours of electricity and reduced their herbicide and fertilizer use while increasing crop yields. Resh's efforts at the conservation district resulted in the establishment of the Waterworks Conservation Area Park along Two Lick Creek and the installation of mine water treatment systems in the Cessna Run, Salsgiver Run and Bear Run watersheds.

Resh currently serves as treasurer for the Indiana County Farmer's Market and is a board member of the Philadelphia Street Players. Resh recently retired from the conservation district and plans on spending his time managing his automatic chicken door business and volunteering where needed.

The Indiana Community Garden received the award in the group category. In the two years of its existence, this volunteer run group has taken giant steps toward realizing its goals and objectives. It has set up a vibrant space at Mack Park with 24 raised beds for individuals and groups, six compost bins, a rain water collection system, a 15 tree apple orchard, and a low tunnel with cool season crops and strawberry and rhubarb beds. That is just the gardening part.

They have also reached out to the community to work with seven different IUP student groups, six different elementary and secondary school student groups, Master Gardeners, the Indiana and Evergreen Garden Clubs, several IUP departments, several local restaurants, Friends of the Parks, Indiana Arts Council, and many other groups including the League of Women Voters. They have had workshops on food and nutrition, waste water management, and yoga, and held a plant sale. They also have an exceptionally beautiful web site.

The group continues to explore ways in which the garden can be used to show people how to conserve resources, preserve green space, beautify neighborhoods, promote sound ecological practices, and build connections between generations and community groups.



Above, left to right, Jim Resh, Lisa McCann and Kay Snyder (representing the Indiana Community Garden) and Sherene Hess, president of the LWVIC

Grant Awarded for Local Storm Water Education

The Water Resources Education Network (WREN) Project, a project of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania Citizen Education Fund (LWVPA-CEF), has announced that 22 community partnerships across the Commonwealth have been awarded a share of grant funds totaling \$68,720.

The Indiana County Storm Water Education Partnership is one of the grantees and has already begun working on the project. Collaborating with ongoing county efforts, this project will address the pollution effects of storm water runoff by holding a storm water education and management workshop featuring recognized experts. Aimed at municipal and county officials and engineers in and around Indiana County, the workshop will feature the benefits of existing rain gardens and water friendly practices, as well as provide additional resources to municipal officials and staff to encourage the development and installation of innovative storm water management practices in their own municipalities. The partners will create two interpretive rain garden signs to be installed at existing rain gardens in highly visible areas. Another aim of the project is to make progress toward enacting storm water regulations on a local level.



Above, Vera Bonnet of the LWVIC manned the League display of storm water issues and recruited many more folks from the townships to take part in a survey regarding these issues. The participants indicated what problems they see in their locations and what they would like to see happen to help mitigate storm water problems. The results of this information gathering will be included with information obtained at other events and will be used by the Indiana County Planning office in conjunction with the WREN grant.

The WREN Project has two clean water initiatives: watershed education to prevent polluted runoff to waterways; and source water protection education to raise awareness about the importance of protecting public drinking water sources, including groundwater and surface water, from contamination. The key to effective management and protection of water resources in Pennsylvania is local action. WREN projects help community coalitions develop successful local collaborations with key organizations and decision-makers and communicate the value of water resource protection and ways to take action to ensure sustainable water resources.

Fall Voter Registration Drives To Be Held

In 1965 Robert Penn Warren wrote that the, “work in voter registration involves, most importantly, the development of the will to stand up and act.” He added that this is, “basic for the long-range growth of political power, but...equally important for the growth of other kinds of power—and for the fulfillment of a person.” With this in mind, the LWVIC is busy organizing voter registration drives.

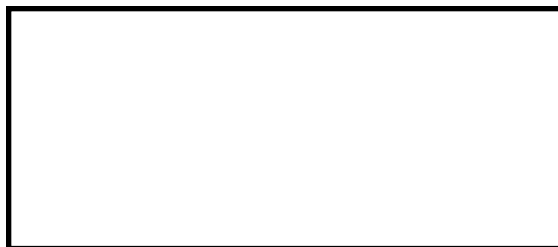
This fall will be an exciting time for voters in Pennsylvania with a hotly contested governor’s race sparking interest among eligible voters. The League is planning several local voter registration drives. We will be at IUP, Wyotec, and various grocery stores encouraging citizens to register and vote.

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 fulfill our power.

A newsletter of the
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CALENDAR of UPCOMING EVENTS

Know someone who may be interested in membership? Let President Sherene Hess know at 724-762-4162, and she will send a brochure & short letter describing LWWIC's activities.

Wednesday, August 6, 9:00 am—noon—LWVIC Board Retreat
(Location to be Announced)

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

Monday, October 6—Last day to register before the fall election

Tuesday, October 28—Last day to apply for a civilian absentee ballot

Tuesday, November 4—General election

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.