

LWV of Albany County

November 2008

Educate

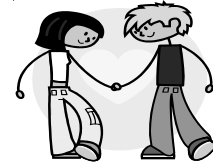
Participate

Advocate



Souper Supper

Monday, Nov. 17, 5:30 pm
Bethlehem Public Library, Delmar



International Topic:

European Approaches to Sex Education: Lessons Learned

Speaker: Carol P. Stenger, M.Ed. & MA

University Counseling Center, University at Albany

The United States continues to have the highest teen pregnancy rate of all industrialized nations as well as an epidemic of sexually transmitted infections among youth. The presenter joined members from the Advocates for Youth program and traveled to the Netherlands, Germany and France along with 22 colleagues from across the US to research sex education practices and other factors that might account for the difference. This group of sexuality professionals met with experts in the fields of health, education, media, policy and religion; did site visits in clinics, schools, universities, churches; and interviewed parents, youth and professionals. Comparative results will be presented and discussed, along with an analysis of the current push for abstinence only programs in the US.

Carol P. Stenger is a sexuality educator and sexuality counselor at the University Counseling Center, University at Albany, S.U.N.Y. She possesses an M.A. in Human Sexuality/Health Studies from New York University and an M.Ed. in Counseling from Pennsylvania State University. Carol is responsible for a wide-range of health promotion and prevention programs, with a specialization in sexuality education and sexuality counseling. Carol has studied cross-cultural sexuality in Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Germany and Russia. She has taught a popular undergraduate human sexuality course since 1984 on the University at Albany campus. She founded and directs a 40 member peer education group, "Project SHAPE: Sexual Health and Peer Education" which provides over 125 sexual health workshops each year for the University at Albany community. Carol is a regular speaker on sexuality topics at schools, universities, community based agencies, and has appeared on local radio and television shows.

Please call Gael Vecchio (459-9958) to volunteer to bring soup or side dishes. Please try to remember to label the contents of your dish, and to bring your own bowl/plate and utensils.

League Day at the UN: Global Warming

This year's annual UN Day will be on Tuesday, December 2, 2008. The topic will be the *Impact of Global Warming on Women and Children Around the World*. In addition to the main presentation, the day's schedule will include an optional tour of the UN and an optional buffet lunch in the Delegates Dining Room. Be sure to register early – space is limited and seating is on a first come-first serve basis. Just complete the registration form on page 6 and send it in with a check to the State League Office.

League of Women Voters of Albany County

Website: www.lwvalbany.org Email: lwvac@crisny.org

Lori Keegan-Brady and Maggie Moehringer, Co-Presidents

Carol Webster (439-1491) and Martha Kennedy (439-4559), Membership Co-Chairs

Laura Ladd Bierman, Newsletter Editor



From the Co-Presidents

WHEW! The election is over, and while as this writing we have no idea of the results, we know that many, many of you played a role in the vast array of voter service activities we provided this year. Kudos and thanks go to our Voter Service Director, Mary Ann Lettau, for handling it all with such aplomb and for her new and creative ways of serving the voters of Albany County. Our Library Project was a great success, and something we can build on in years to come. Many voters were registered, our partnership with Vote 18 received front page coverage, our DA Forum was a huge success, voter guides were distributed, and we did ourselves proud. Thanks to all of you!

Thanks also to our intrepid poll reporters, especially to Marggie Skinner who directed the effort once again! This is a great way to raise funds for our League, and it's fun. If you missed out on doing it this year, make a resolve to try it next year. You won't regret it.

Speaking of funds, November is LWVAC Fund Drive Month. As you know, our dues go to paying our Leagues' dues to State and National League, and nothing is left over for local activities. We rely on you, and you've always come through for us! Please watch your mail, see the article elsewhere in this bulletin for what activities your contributions fund, and thanks in advance for your generosity.

This month marks our first "Souper Supper" of the year. Our International Relations committee has brought us a highly recommended speaker, Carol Stenger, who will help us to understand why the US seems to struggle with teen pregnancy and sexuality issues, by contrasting us to the European nations to which she has traveled, and where she has done extensive investigation on this topic. She is a great speaker and comes highly recommended!

LWVNYS has another trip to NYC and the UN planned for December 2nd. The reservation form is included in this bulletin. Please make your reservation to Stephanie at the State Office by Nov. 18th. This is a wonderful outing, whether you go for the UN luncheon and seminar or just share the bus ride with fellow Leaguers and hit the city. Reserve early – there's only so much space on the bus and it WILL fill up! And don't forget our December luncheon – Dec. 10th at Normanside, with Michael McNulty (really!)

Thanks for all you do!
In League,
Maggie and Lori

New Members

Barbara Traynor Slingerlands
Julia Lee Troy
Steve and Jeanette Gottlieb Albany
Tina Raggio Delmar

Welcome!

New Member Coffee

Carol Webster

On Wednesday, October 15th the LWVAC hosted a new/prospective member coffee at the home of Martha Kissinger. We are pleased to report we had 12 guests in attendance. Maggie Moehringer, co-president of the LWVAC presented an informative overview of the organizational structure of the League, fundamental components of the League, namely voter services and how study issues evolve and consensus is reached within the League. A spirited discussion ensued ending with the enjoyment of each others' company over some refreshments.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan citizen organization that promotes the informed and active participation of citizens in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a League member.

This newsletter is published by the League of Women Voters of Albany County, 12 Coventry Road, Glenmont, New York 12077 and mailed to League members. The frequency of publication is as follows: one mid-summer issue followed by nine monthly issues from September to May.



LWVAC Fall Fund Drive

As you know, we are a completely volunteer organization, and we need your support for our annual fund drive. Did you know that:

- for every single LWVAC membership we must pay dues of \$28 to the National and \$18 to the State Leagues (Albany County only retains \$4 on which to operate);
- a donation of \$150 will pay the cost of printing and mailing our annual membership directory;
- a donation of \$215 will pay the cost of printing and mailing one monthly bulletin;
- a donation of \$200 it will pay for our bulk mailing permit for one year;
- a donation of \$100 will fund our annual pot-luck?

In addition to funding ongoing operations, the League has expenses associated with running its programs for our members and for the community. This Fall has been unusually busy with voter registration drives, the library voter registration project, the distribution of voter guides, and candidate forums. We are drawing more young people into the electoral process through our co-sponsorship of the Vote 18 program at Albany High School and a presentation to students of the Glenmont Job Corps. We participate in and help to fund Fair Campaign Practices for the Capital Region, Inc. We continue to work with the State League to monitor the integrity of the voting and voter registration processes, as New York State computerizes its rolls and replaces its old lever machines. Your contribution also supports our local study – “Greening our Albany County Towns and Cities: Encouraging Responsible Use of Natural Resources by our Municipalities.” League members are interviewing local governmental units to determine their energy usage practices, with the goal of issuing a report on how local governmental units might decrease their carbon footprints in a cost-effective manner. In addition, we will be participating in a national study of the compact for a national popular vote.

You can see that we need your donations to keep our League operating and to maintain our diverse program. Please consider making an additional contribution to your LWVAC!

Health Care Forum

Close to 100 members from the Capital Region local Leagues were the lucky recipients of a considerable amount of health care wisdom at our forum at the Rockefeller Institute. Entitled “When You Pull the Lever, What Will Happen to your Health Care?” and moderated by Channel 10’s Elisa Streeter, the forum brought together experts representing a McCain program view, an Obama-esque view, a view from the provider side, and our very own Courtney Burke, a nationally recognized health policy expert. The forum was recorded and will be available via YouTube, and will be available on the LWVNYS web site. The forum was our October monthly meeting and part of National League’s emphasis program on health care policy. Donna Mahoney, LWVNYS’s off-board specialist for Health Care, was responsible for bringing together the forum with the help of a committee from the local Leagues. Our thanks go to Marian Schwager and Courtney Burke for their contributions to this effort on behalf of LWVAC.

Some interesting points from Courtney’s presentation:

- The candidates focus mostly on coverage, but there are many other important issues.
- There are major differences in the candidate’s approaches to coverage, but several similarities in their approaches to quality and cost.
- States will still play a large role in care capacity, the administration of programs, coverage for low-income recipients, and regulation; experiments at the state level are likely to continue.
- Cost, quality, and capacity remain very important issues, but receive less attention. This is where more reforms may occur after the election (because there is more consensus).
- All these issues must be addressed to make the system better and sustainable.

The role of States is somewhat overlooked in our focus on the presidential election, but the role of the States is very important. According to Courtney:

- States will still largely regulate insurance and benefits, provide additional subsidies, administer programs for low-income people, and engage in new reforms.
- The Obama plan is largely based on the Massachusetts plan, and also supportive of state experiments.
- McCain would encourage more state experimentation.
- New York is in the process of initial reform (the Partnership for Coverage) and modeling different coverage options.

(continued on page 4)

Observer Corps Reports

Ann Brandon

League member observations of Town and County Government Meetings:
Albany County Legislature

Loretta Simon attended the Albany County Legislature on October 14. Several people spoke during the public comment, urging legislators to fund continued testing of former employees and neighbors of NL Industries for radiation contamination. The U.S. Dept. of Energy was given the job of cleaning up the site from depleted uranium dust. But concerns continue. A resolution was introduced by Legislator Douglas Bullock to hold a public hearing; the resolution was sent to the Health Committee.

The legislature also passed a resolution to establish an Albany County Renewable Energy Power Authority. This would have to be approved by the state Legislature. The next meeting is Monday, November 10, at 6:30 pm

Bethlehem Town Board

Roberta Fox, Alice Schrade, and Ann Brandon attended this meeting on October 22nd. The hall was packed because they were honoring Parker Mathusa, longtime planning board member and leader of the Quadricentennial Henry Hudson Committee. They presented a bench with a plaque that will be placed at the Henry Hudson Park. After this ceremony was over, the room thinned out!

There were two public hearings:

- 1) Local Law amending the town code to add fire lanes to all town plazas. This was passed.
- 2) Proposed town budget for fiscal year 2009. Supervisor Cunningham gave a presentation on revenues and expenses. Property tax brings in 27% of the town budget of \$38 million.

He listed several initiatives they hope to begin: to join the county in a health consortium study, start a study of consolidating all 911 call centers in the county, development of property next to the Job Corps that the town owns, developing a five year capital plan.

Several people commented on the budget, mostly saying they can't afford higher taxes in this economy. The budget will be passed at the next meeting on November 12th, 6:00 pm

Guilderland Town Board

Thayer Heath attended the Oct. 21st meeting and found it fascinating. The board first issued a proclamation making October Pancreatic Cancer Month. Then there was a public hearing regarding changes in sewer assessment roles. Next they passed a resolution entering into an agreement with an engineering firm to conduct work at Stuyvesant Plaza to prevent flooding. This will cost \$600,000 with the NYS Dept. of Transportation providing \$150,000. Work will be done next summer. A group of people from the Guilderland library were there, concerned about traffic entering and exiting the road to the library from Western Ave. A new development called Glassworks Village is being proposed behind the library and MercyCare, which will bring more traffic. They asked for study of an alternative traffic pattern. November meetings are 6 & 18, 7:30 pm.

Other upcoming meetings: Colonie Town Board, Nov. 6 & 20, 7:00 pm; Albany Common Council, Nov. 3 and 17, 7:00 pm.

If you can attend a meeting of your town board, city council, or county legislature, call me at 439-4332. I think you will find it a fascinating and worthwhile evening. Ann Brandon, Action V.P.

(continued from page 3)

Health Care Forum

From the Partnership for Coverage Web Site (<http://partnership4coverage.ny.gov/>): "The State of New York has begun to reform the State's health care delivery system and expand health insurance coverage in the State. Legislation enacted this year will control the growth rate of Medicaid spending, reallocate funding based on patient care priorities and provide incentives to improve patient outcomes. Additional measures have been enacted to expand eligibility under the Child Health Plus program to 400% of the federal poverty level, to streamline enrollment in all publicly sponsored health insurance programs and to allow employers to participate in the Family Health Plus program. The State is interested in proposals that build on these initiatives for achieving health system reform, increasing access to health insurance coverage and determining ways that universal coverage can be achieved."

Citizen Court Monitoring

This program began in 1975, when non-lawyer volunteers were recruited to observe court proceedings and report on their findings and recommendations. The program has been influential in solving many of the problems that ordinary citizens face when dealing with the courts. It has been highly successful at achieving numerous public-interest objectives. The Fund for Modern Courts wants to expand its monitoring program of local town and village justice courts into additional counties throughout the state. They hope to partner with local Leagues in identifying volunteers for this program. If you're interested, contact the State League office at 465-4162.

Albany County's Proposed 2009 Budget

Summary of the Executive's Proposal

County Executive Michael Breslin made the following points in his Executive Budget Message. See the budget and the full text of the address at <http://www.albanycounty.com/departments/executive/>, and click on "Albany County Proposed 2009 Budget."

- Most revenue sources will be stagnant or worse. The next State budget will include significant reductions which will dramatically reduce revenues. Housing, credit, energy costs, unemployment, and stagnant wage factors will make it necessary for the County to proceed with great concern and caution.
 - The decrease in State Aid and other uncontrollable costs make a 4% real property tax increase unavoidable. For a taxpayer with a home valued at \$150,000, this represents an increase of \$13 to \$26 a year, depending on municipality.
 - The proposed budget does not rely on the use of any surplus or reserves.
 - All departments were asked to further reduce their budget requests based on expectations of additional State Aid reductions, and further mid year reductions may be necessary.
 - Economic stresses increase the demand for human services; the proposed budget increases funding for Family Assistance, Emergency Assistance and services for seniors, among other increases.
 - The proposal commits continued funding for the Albany County Housing Trust Fund which supports affordable housing programs. Housing has long been a major issue and the housing financing crisis will increase the needs.
 - In spite of numerous energy conservation efforts already undertaken, energy and related costs are anticipated to increase by 12 percent in 2009. Energy expenses will be centrally tracked and managed. Of interest to our League for our "Greening" study, new County efforts to reduce energy consumption in the coming year include the following:
 - o The Sewer District has received a grant of more than \$2 million from NYSERDA to assist in an innovative waste heat recovery/cogeneration project to reduce the District's energy consumption and generate power.
 - o Energy audits are planned at the Albany County Correctional Facility and for other County buildings.
 - o County employees will be encouraged to use public transportation by increasing the subsidy to the CDTA Swiper program from 50 to 75 percent; facilities for secure bike storage and showers will be provided.
 - o Albany County will become an official Reporter to The Climate Registry, a national organization designed to help entities evaluate and mitigate their carbon footprint. The County hopes to minimize its impact on global climate change and simultaneously add value to the local environment and economy.
 - The antiquated Ann Lee Home has been closed and its residents transferred to the Albany County Nursing Home. The consolidation and a two year federal grant will reduce the nursing home deficit; however the deficit is a concern. While a painful alternative, and while no positions providing direct care to the residents will be eliminated, the consolidation has made reductions in staff possible and unavoidable.
 - The State's dire fiscal conditions and waning commitment to County operated nursing facilities will continue. While building a new nursing home is necessary, there are very hard decisions to be made in the areas of size, staffing, and funding. The commitment of County resources to community-based long term care services must continue so that many nursing home-eligible individuals can stay in their homes or other less restrictive settings.
 - The cost of health benefits for County employees, dependents and retirees continues to rise. The increase, \$1.8 million, is greater than the increase in Medicaid costs and does not include the liability the County has been accruing for the future costs of retirees. The County continues to search for equitable means of controlling the growth of health care costs both for the taxpayer and for beneficiaries.
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Membership: 'Tis the Season

An Election year is an especially good time to talk to your friends about joining the League. People turn to the League for information so they can cast an informed vote. They look to League-sponsored debates and forums for their non-partisan fairness. They also consult our "Facts for Voters" for reliable information on where statewide and national candidates stand on the issues they care about. And at a time when the entire nation seems even more partisan than usual, the League's non-partisan approach is a refreshing change.

Convention 2009

The next LWVNYS Biennial Convention will be May 15- 17 at the Doubletree Inn in Syracuse, NY. The Convention theme will be "Fair, Vibrant and Strong". In addition to the usual outstanding speakers, presentations, and entertainment, this Convention will introduce a preconvention training workshop on Friday afternoon, May 15. This Training will provide more extensive opportunities for training and sharing of experiences in areas most often identified as challenging. While aimed at the new leader, there will be modules geared specifically to the seasoned Leader. Consider coming to Syracuse early to participate in this new Training.

Victory:Great Lakes Compact

The Great Lakes are a unique and precious resource, providing fresh water for the 40 million people who live within the basin. Each year, rainfall and snowmelt replenish only about one percent of the water in the basin; the remaining 99 percent is finite and nonrenewable. The Great Lakes Compact, for the first time ever, treats groundwater and surface water as one system subject to the same standard; considers the Great Lakes and their tributaries to be one ecosystem; establishes protection of Great Lakes ecosystems and economies as priorities everywhere in the basin; and ensures that every Great Lake state will have the same fair set of rational protections, while allowing each state flexibility. The U.S. Senate and House have approved the Compact and the President has signed it into law.

News from Voter Services

Mary Ann Lettau

It's been a productive season and I have learned a lot. On September 24th, 50—that's right, 50!—new voters registered at a drug recovery drop-in center in Albany. Shortly after, Tina Lord set up a Library Project at Albany's main branch. Maureen Cooley and I did a table at Bethlehem Public Library. (Maureen is known as the "solo artist" because she passes out registration forms on her own around Bethlehem; she's had a lot of interest from her fellow Stewart's customers!) Forms and information about homeless persons' voting rights were delivered to several shelters, drop-in centers and food banks. We directly registered several hundred people since we began; and hundreds of registration forms and absentee ballot requests have been taken—and hopefully sent in to the Board of Elections—from the various library and other sites.

The Voters' Guide Part Two has been distributed widely. Thanx to Judi Campbell, Joe Galu, Aimee Allaud and Rita Redlich for their help.(If I forgot anyone, I apologize.) Three thousand Guides were delivered to all public libraries and three campus libraries; to downtown churches and uptown churches and community centers; to the YMCA's; to the annual ARISE meeting (an organization of church and activist organizations); the Whitney Young Health Center, Lark St. merchants, the Warehouse, Clearview Center and other spots around town.. Rock the Vote pins from MTV were a big hit among young and old wherever we offered them.

The League helped organize and moderated the debate between the District Attorney Candidates; 250 persons attended at the Law School, and the event generated a lot of publicity. The final debate was among the four candidates for Albany City School Board; about 70 people attended. Special thanx to Marggie Skinner who moderated both debates very effectively; she was even interviewed by USA Today after the D.A.'s event. Also thanks to Nell Stokes-Holmes who assisted at both. To the other volunteers who helped out—my thanx to you also.



League Calendar

<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHAT</u>	<u>WHERE</u>	<u>MORE INFO</u>
Nov. 4 Nov. 4	Election Day Poll Reporting Board Meeting	Bethlehem Presbyterian Church, 585 Delaware Ave., Delmar	
Nov. 17, 5:30pm Nov. 19	Souper Supper: International topic Deadline for Dec. Bulletin	Bethlehem Public Library Lbierman@nycap.rr.com	see page 1
Dec. 2 Dec. 3 (tentative) Dec. 10	Trip to the UN Board Meeting Holiday Luncheon Speaker: Mike McNulty	NYC Location TBA Normanside County Club	see pages 1 & 6
Jan. 6 Jan. 12	Board Meeting LWVAC Meeting National Popular Vote Consensus Mtg.	Location TBA Bethlehem Public Library	

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