

## **2019-2020 ANNUAL REPORT**

### **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEE COUNTY FLORIDA**

#### **Message from Clara Anne Graham, President**

#### **Leaguers—**

The League of Women Voters of Lee County (LWVLee) completed a very successful year. Thank you to all of our members and supporters for your many contributions. League education and advocacy increased understanding of major public issues for Lee County citizens. I believe knowledge is power. Being involved with the League increases individuals' power and their impact on public policy.

#### **A Very Special Thank You to the Board of the League of Women Voters of Lee County:**

Mary Barter, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Policies, and Program Planning  
Stasia Arcarese, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President and Monthly Educational Programs  
Sandy Frank, Secretary, Website, President and PR Administrative Assistant, Membership Directory  
Carol Fuechsel, Treasurer  
Anna Callwood, Director—At the Table and Regional Advisory Committee on Trauma Services  
Patty Duncan, Director-Environment and Solar  
Louis Eason, Director--Public Relations and Juvenile Justice Director  
Judy Greenberger, Director—Reproductive Health and Social Justice  
Irene Kepler, Director—Social Policy and Facebook  
Sarah McDonald, Director  
Murray Newton, Director—Government  
Jim Pelstring, Director-Voter Service  
Patricia Sala, Director—Census

#### **And Special Thank You to**

- Amy Wulf, Membership for welcoming and involving new members
- Adriene Kaltman, LWV Lee County Florida Climate Change Facebook Page.
- Marcia Probasco, General Meeting Reservations
- Jan Lonsdale, LWVLee National Popular Vote Coordinator who organized the LWV/FGCU Constitution Day event, the January LWVLee educational meeting and spoke at Sanibel LWV educational meeting.
- Kathleen Finderson for organizing and involving member in voter service activities.
- LWV members serving on Task Forces/Boards including Estero Bay Agency on Bay Management-- Laura Miller, Dunbar Core Group—Judy Alves and Amy Wulf, FGCU STEM Committee—Louis Eason, the Fort Myers Coalition to Celebrate Women's Suffrage—Clara Anne Graham and Patricia Sala, LWV Florida Juvenile Justice Action Team—Louis Eason. Local 2020 Census Complete Count Committees - Murray Newton and Patricia Sala, LWV United States Climate Change Task Force - Clara Anne Graham.
- Members of the Education, Environment, Reproductive health, Social Policy and Voter Service Committees for their active involvement in implementing our program plan.
- Nominating Committee: Mary Barter, Joan Collins, Patti Palgutt, Sarah McDonald
- Observer Corps members who attended and reported on local governmental meetings including the Fort Myers City Council—Sue Osin, Lee County Board of County Commissioners-- Lana Cowell, Patty Duncan, Louis Eason, Sandy Frank, Irene Kepler, Lee Health Board-- Laurie Hutton-Corr and Barbara Shearer, the Lee County School Board—Sandra Wurdeman, and the Lee County Human Services Council-- Louis Eason, Sandy Frank, Irene Kepler.
- Members who registered attendees and provided refreshments for LWV educational meetings: Stasia Arcarese,

Lyn Brown, Joan Collins, Peggie Erickson, Carol Kindt, Terry Lianzi, Patti Palgutt, Amy Wulf.

- Judy Alves for youth book collection for Dunbar Core Group end of school event.

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## VOTER SERVICE

In 2020 the LWVLee is continuing its tradition of conducting **Candidate Forums for Voters**.

On March 2, 2020 the League conducted a candidate forum for the Bonita Springs City Council candidates for District 2 and 4. Jim Pelstring, conducted the forum and posed every question to each candidate. The video of the forum was posted and widely viewed

LWVLee utilized the **Vote411.org** on-line voter guide for the March 17, 2020 elections in Bonita Springs and Fort Myers Beach Information about referenda and questions and answers for most candidates were posted and viewed by citizens.



LWVLee continues to identify new opportunities for **Voter Registration**. League members certified by LWVFL to conduct voter registration registered voters at Florida Southwest, Harry Chapin Food Bank distribution sites and other locations. Coordination with the Lee County Supervisor of elections allows the League to focus on events and locations without duplicating efforts. Thanks to Kim Shunk, Amy Wulf, Laurie Hutton-Corr, Mary Beth Gentleman, Kathleen Finderson, Phyllis Becker, and Judy Alves.



GETHER

### ADVOCACY and VISIBILITY

- Maintain the LWVLee Climate Change Website. The LWVLee board members voted to co sponsor a LWV United States Climate Change caucus at the June 2020 National Convention.
- Members responded to Florida and LWVUS Action Alerts on League Issues including Voters Rights, Health Care, Reproductive Rights, Environment, Housing, and Child Welfare,
- Distributed information on League issues and opportunities for voter education through direct email, press releases, and postings on Facebook and [www.lwvlee.org](http://www.lwvlee.org).
- Addressed the State of Florida Lee County Elected Official Delegation and met with Ray Rodrigues, Chair of the Florida House Health and Human Services Committee to discuss the League's priorities and positions.
- Through meetings and emails encouraged County elected officials and government staff to support League positions including juvenile justice, voter rights restoration, affordable housing, the environment, leadership and funding for human services.
- In preparation for the 2020 Census, encouraged involvement from the government, civic and non profit sectors. Patricia Sala and Murray Newton participated in three **Census 2020 Complete Count Committees**: Lee County, City of Fort Myers (organized and co-chaired by Sala) and Lehigh Acres.
  - Increased League Visibility. League booths at community events including the June 15, 2020 Juneteenth Celebration, January 18, 2020 Women's March, and the January 20, 2020 MLK Celebration at Centennial Park. Co-sponsorship and support of Toasts to Tenacity, Delta's scholarships, and more.



### VOTER EDUCATION

August 25, 2019. **Toast to Tenacity -- Honoring Women's Suffrage** at the Alliance for the Arts. Co-sponsored by LWVLee.

September 17, 2019. **We the People - Celebrating Constitution Day** at Hodges University. A panel discussion of the Constitution; Voting Rights; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Census; and more. Panelists included The Honorable Judge Devin George, The Honorable Judge Archie Hayward, Kati Calvo, Esquire, Attorney at Law, Keith Grossman Esquire, Attorney at Law, and Shaina Zuppe, Esquire, Attorney at Law. Co-Sponsored by The Fort Myers Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. and the League of Women Voters of Lee County.

September 17, 2019. **The U.S. Electoral College and National Popular Vote (NPV) Controversies Forum** at FGCU. Addressed the National Popular Vote (NPV) movement in the U.S.; the history of the Electoral College; and why and how the current process of electing the US President and Vice President could be changed.



Speakers included: Jan Lonsdale, LWV, Patrick Rosenstiel, political commentator, and Dr. Roger Green, FGCU. Co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Lee County and Florida Gulf Coast University.

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September 23, 2019. LWV **Amendment 4 Implementation** Seminar at the Alliance for the Arts. For attorneys and advocates, approved for Continuing Legal Education (CLE) by the Florida Bar. Cecile Scoon, League of Women Voters of Florida, Voting Rights Restoration Chair conducted the training on Amendment 4 and how to assist persons with felony convictions to register to vote under the burdens of SB 7066.



October 5, 2019, **Education: Equity, Diversity, and Title IX** a LWVLee Educational Program at The Collaboratory. Speakers for this League of Women Voters Educational Program include: Precious Gunter, FGCU Director of Equity, Ethics & Compliance and Title IX Coordinator; Chuck Bradley, Lee County School District Director of Positive Prevention; A student serving on the Lee County Student Advisory Council; Dr. Shirley Chapman, Chairperson of the Lee NAACP's Education Committee.

October 17, 2019, **At the Table** at Heritage Palms. Anna Callwood coordinated this event for LWVLee members and their guests as part of a county wide effort sponsored by the Southwest Florida Community Foundation. Discussions focused on environment and human services. Recommendations were included in the program planning process.



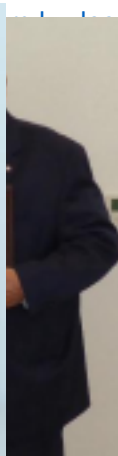
October 26, 2019, **Progressive Women's Day**. LWVLee Conducted two workshops on League Issues. League speakers included Clara Anne Graham Moderator, Geri Ware Voting Rights, Patricia Sala 2020 Census, and Irene Kepler Lee County Human Services.



November 2, 2019 Environment: **A Bill of Rights for the Caloosahatchee** at the Laboratory Theatre. Presenter: Joseph Bonasia, a former educator, the Outreach Coordinator for the Citizens' Climate Lobby of Ft. Myers, a

Community Coordinator for Pachamama Alliance of SW Florida, Sierra Club activist who recently organized the first electric vehicle showcase at the Edison and Ford Estates.

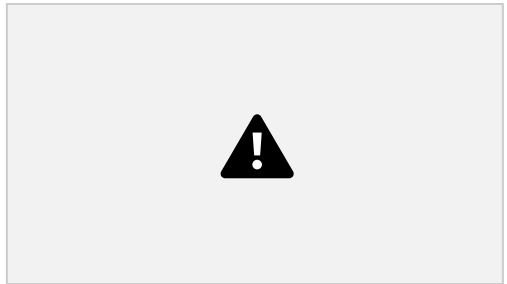
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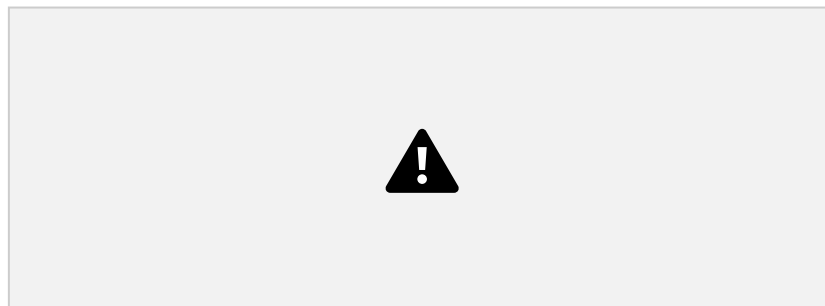
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Clara Anne Graham and Frank Mann, LWVLee's first male member

LWVLee Past Presidents:

Stasia Arcarese, Carol Fueschel, and Laura Miller



Proclamation from Village of Estero



Proclamation from City of Bonita Springs Proclamation from City of Fort Myers

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January 4, 2020, **Presidential Elections...Making Every Vote Equal** a LWV educational program at the Collaboratory. Featured speaker Deb Mazzaferro a member of the League of Women Voters of Florida National Popular Vote Committee discussed The National Popular Vote (NPV) movement in the U.S.; the history of the Electoral College; and why many believe the current process of electing the US President and Vice President should be changed.



January 22, 2020, Screening and Discussion of **Backpack Full of Cash**, A Film Exploring the Cost of Privatizing America's Schools at the Fort Myers Regional Library. A discussion of public education in Lee County followed the screening. This educational event was sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Lee County in partnership with Ft. Myers/Lee County American Association of University Women (AAUW), Lee County National Organization for Women (NOW), the Teachers Association of Lee County, and Voices for Public Education (VPE). The League of Women Voters of Lee County and its partners support adequate funding for public education in Lee County.

January 25, 2020, **Cela Tega 2020**, "The Estero Bay is in trouble: What Citizens can do to help" at FGCU. Laura Miller one of seminar planners, Clara Anne Graham was a seminar presenter. Co-sponsored by the LWVLee.



February 1, 2020, Celebration of the LWVUS 100th Anniversary at Shell Point. Patricia Brigham, President of the League of Women Voters of Florida discussed the League's commitment to Making Democracy Work and the League priorities and work including election reform, voting rights, preservation of natural resources, prevention of gun violence, juvenile justice, health care, and economic opportunities for all. The League of Women Voters was founded by Carrie Chapman Catt in 1920 during the convention of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, six months before the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, giving women the right to vote after a 72-year struggle. More about the League's history: <https://www.lwv.org/about>

[us/history](#)



Patricia Brigham and Clara Anne Graham

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February 5, 2020, **Solar Educational Event at the Laboratory Theater**. The solar educational event detailed the process of going solar and the role of the solar co-op. Information included how solar works, locations that are acceptable, potential legal hurdles, and lists of solar providers with price comparisons. The Solar Co-Op Program is presented by a partnership of Lee County and Collier County League of Women Voters and Solar United Neighbors (SUN). Southwest Florida Solar Co-op is open to residents of Collier County and Lee County, Florida; more than 70 have enrolled.



March 7, 2020, **Affordable Housing and the Sadowski Act** a LWVLee Educational Program at the Collaboratory. Lana Cowell moderated the panel discussion of Lee County residents' housing needs, issues and resources. Speakers: Michele Hylton-Terry, Executive Director, Community Redevelopment Agency, City of Fort Myers and Carolyn Stanley, Board Member, Lee Interfaith for Empowerment (LIFE).



April 4, 2020. **Reproductive Health and Justice** a LWVLee Educational Program. POSTPONED due to concern for public health – Coronavirus.

**FUNDRAISING**

March 14, 2020 LWVLee Fundraiser: Ballot counting for the Bonita Springs Utilities Board of Directors election.

The Board created new categories for contributions to the League of Women Voters of Lee County operating fund:

\$100 Suffragette \$250 Susan B. Anthony \$500 Carrie Chatman Catt **SCHEDULED FOR**

#### **THE FUTURE**

- May 2, 2020 LWV Lee County Board Retreat. Members Welcome.
- June 25 through 27, 2020. LWVUS 2020 Convention. Washington DC
- August 28, 2020 100th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage Celebration at FGCU. Sponsored by the LWV Lee County and FGCU.
- Candidate Forums for the August 2020 Primary and the November 2020 General Election. Dates TBD. May be Virtual.
- Monthly Educational Meetings. October through April.

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