



Bulletin

League of Women Voters
of Greater Omaha
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League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha

December 2008

A non-partisan political organization open to all persons 18 years of age or older

Volume 51 No 5

League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha

Holiday Luncheon



Monday, December 8 - 11:30 a.m.
Upstream Brewing Company - West
17070 Wright Plaza (171st & West
Center Road)



Speaker: Leslie Byers

Author of "Heather's Rage"

"A Mother's Journey through Her Daughter's Mental Illness"
and Safe Haven Law

See reservation flyer

Reservations are due Wednesday, December 3



CALENDAR

Monday, December 1, noon, League Office: LWVGO board meeting.

Monday, December 8, 11:30 a.m., Holiday Luncheon, Upstream Brewing Company, 17070 Wright Plaza. Speaker: Leslie Byers, author of *Heather's Rage: A Mother's Faith Reflected in Her Daughter's Mental Illness*, will speak about children and mental health issues in Nebraska. See above and page 3.

Wednesday, December 10, 10:00 am, League Office: Social Policy Committee meeting. See page 2

Thursday, December 11, 12:00 noon, League Office: Digital Democracy meeting. See page 4.

Monday, January 5, noon, League Office: LWVGO board meeting.

Monday, January 12, 7 p.m.: League program planning for 2009-2010. Wine and cheese at home of Kathy.

Tuesdays, January 27 through March 17 Book group. See page 3.

Thursday, February 12, 11:30 a.m., Field Club, 3615 Woolworth Ave.: League birthday luncheon. Program to be determined.

Monday, March 9, 11:30 a.m.: General meeting. Dundee Presbyterian Church. Free potluck luncheon. LWVGO Book Club presentation led by member Anne Shaughnessy.

Saturday, April 25, 9:15 a.m., Champions Run, 13800 Eagle Run Drive.: Annual Meeting. Luncheon speaker to be determined.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Linda

Well. We have just experienced quite a momentous election, and I feel privileged to have been part of the action. I handed out hundreds of *Voters' Guides* to citizens waiting in line at the Douglas County Election Commission and was gratified to hear from voters who have depended on it for years. I also answered a great many phone calls to our office, and so did Helen Atwater, Helen Fisher, Carolyn Ireland, Ruth Kruse, and Marilyn Routt. Keri Rheinfrank assisted by being our phone link to the Internet, since we don't have that option at our office at the moment. The most common question was how to access our *Voters' Guide*; questions about the judges and Initiative 424 tied for second. But every day there was a new question or comment--or occasionally diatribe--to keep things interesting. The one call that made all that effort worthwhile was from a young African-American man who wanted to know how to vote. Not who to vote for, but what to do. I walked him through the whole process, described the ballot, gave him an idea of what else he'd find on it, and did my best to drive home the fact that pollworkers are there to help, not hinder. Then I said, "I'm glad you'll be voting tomorrow" and he said softly, "I am too."

If you have some thoughtful advice for President-elect Obama, and I would think all dedicated League members would, you can go to www.change.gov to submit it.

Since this is the month in which we dedicate a whole day to giving thanks, I want to say thank you to all who have made a difference in the past year. I'm very aware that the League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha is made up of a great variety of members who use their talents in many different ways. It seems every month we congratulate at least one member who has been honored by peers in one way or another (this month there are two!) I thank you, on behalf of our entire community, for all you do.

Thanks also to our many members who faithfully contribute money toward our League and/or Education Fund, which supports the costs of the *Voters' Guides*. We'll be sending letters in the next couple of weeks asking for your end of the year support. I hope you'll give generously.

Lastly, I thank Jonah Deppe and committee for stepping up on behalf of children who are dropped off at Nebraska hospitals under the new Safe Haven law. I know that many of our legislators will be grateful for our study and input. I encourage you to contact your Nebraska state senator with informed comments.

SOCIAL POLICY COMMITTEE

The Social Policy Committee met November 12 to discuss the Safe Haven Law and the ramifications for families and children with mental illness. Senator Lowen Kruse joined us for the discussion.

While the Safe Haven Law was passed to protect infants whose young mothers did not know how they could raise a child by allowing them to take their child (infant) to a hospital and leave the child, it was used by parents with older children who did not know what to do with their child or were unable to access mental health/behavioral health services. The Safe Haven law served as a beacon for these parents who were looking for assistance.

While there are fragmented services for children, there are not appropriate or adequate services available in Nebraska for children with mental illnesses. Further discussion will be held on this issue after the December 8 League meeting where we will hear about one parent's struggle to obtain services for her child. Leslie Byers will talk about her family's struggle to raise a child with bi-polar disease and obtain appropriate services for her child.

Building Bright Futures was also discussed and members were encouraged to attend a Building Bright Futures meeting on November 24 from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. in the Grand Ballroom at the Doubletree Inn located on 16th & Dodge.

The next Committee meeting will be at 10 a.m. on December 10 at the League Office.

Come to the December general meeting to hear about children's mental health issues and then join us for further discussion on the 10th.

In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity. - Albert Einstein

**AUTHOR LESLIE BYERS TO SPEAK ABOUT NEBRASKA'S SAFE HAVEN LAW
at December Holiday Luncheon**

Leslie Byers, author of *Heather's Rage: A Mother's Faith Reflected in Her Daughter's Mental Illness*, will speak at our December 8 holiday luncheon. The title of her talk will be: *A Mother's Journey through Her Daughter's Mental Illness*. Leslie will chronicle the years of frustration her family experienced as they fought an enemy they struggled to name, as they overcame mounting obstacles, and ultimately came to a place of discovery and healing. Leslie will bring copies of her book for sale, which she will gladly autograph.

Leslie Byers will also address the controversial Nebraska Safe Haven Law and talk about the repercussions on families who are dropping off their children at Safe Haven locations. This dilemma is highlighting the myriad problems with behavioral health systems, or lack thereof, for children in Nebraska.

The 11:30 holiday luncheon will be held at Upstream Brewing Company West. See the reservation flyer in this bulletin. We hope to see you there for this important presentation and discussion!

GREAT DECISIONS FOR THE BOOK GROUP!

Do you make New Year's resolutions? Want to add some intellectual stimulation to your routine? Enjoy lively conversations about subjects of importance? Then plan to participate in the Great Decisions program with the LWV-GO book group.

The Great Decisions Global Affairs Education Program is a project of the Foreign Policy Association (FPA). Each year eight foreign policy issues are identified as significant challenges for U.S. policy makers. Experts write impartial analyses of each issue; the FPA publishes these essays in a paperback Briefing Book, and posts additional information and resources on its website (www.fpa.org). Discussions start with questions suggested by the FPA, enhanced by additional queries from attendees. As each meeting closes participants are encouraged to respond on postcards bound into the Briefing Book; later in the year the FPA publishes and posts its summary of the responses it receives from participants throughout the U.S. and in other countries.

The LWV-GO book group will discuss one essay each Tuesday evening from January 27-March 17, 2009; March 24th and 31st will serve as "catch up" dates in case inclement weather leads to cancellation of any meetings. The 2009 schedule is

- January 27: U.S. and rising global powers
- February 3: Afghanistan/Pakistan
- February 10: Energy and the global economy
- February 17: the Arctic
- February 24: U.S. and Egypt
- March 3: Global food supply
- March 10: Cuba after Castro
- March 17: Universal human rights

Every LWV-GO member is welcome to attend any or all of these discussions, regardless of previous book group participation. League members are also encouraged to invite friends to attend the Great Decisions discussions. Contact Anne Shaughnessy (390-9316; amps2008@msn.com) or visit the FPA website for additional information about the program.

Doris Burgess has offered to order multiple copies of the Briefing Book. The bulk rate price is expected to be about \$17 per copy. Please call Doris at 558-3930 by November 30, 2008 to place your request. Individuals may also order directly from the FPA website; single copies are \$18 plus shipping. Shipment of pre-ordered books begins on January 7, 2009; Doris or Anne will notify members when the books have arrived.

Helen will host the meetings in her home; discussions begin at 7p.m. Please call Helen to let her know you'll attend.

CSG - December 4, 5 and 6 at the Hilton, Hilton Garden Inn, and the Qwest Center

We have submitted our list of volunteers to Beth Kramer, volunteer organizer for the Council of State Governments conference in December. However, if you'd like to be on the list as a possible substitute we'd be very glad to hear from you. Contact or Anne. Thanks.

THANK YOU TO ED FUND DONORS

During the month of November we pause to say THANK YOU to our member-donors during this calendar year:

Peggy	Gail	Elna
Stephanie	Muriel	Donald
Virginia	Pat	Lucille
Frances	Polly	Barbara
Carol	Kay Lynn	Caroline
Geri	Belinda	Anne
Mary	Nancy	Rita
Annette	Carolyn	M. Jane
Donna Allen	Karren	Cynthia
Betsy	Andrea	Deb
Jonah	Joanna	Jean
Joanne	Junie	Bev
Linda	Carol	Barbara
Bev	Mary Jo	Rosalee

Because of your generosity we were able to send seven Ghanaian girls to high school, fund two issues of the Voters' Guide, and help defray operating expenses for LWV-GO. A number of you sent money for the Shrimp Feed, thus making it one of our most successful ever, and a great many of you gave your time and talents to our various excellent causes. Many thanks to you all!

VG DELIVERY THANK YOU

Thank you to all those who helped deliver the Voter Guides (if I didn't get your name on this list, my apologizes--you're also appreciated).

Linda, Carolyn & George, Barbara, Barb, Anne, Rita, JoAnna, Kathy, Clyde, Ruth, Jennifer, Mary, Mary Ann, Shirley, Virginia, Barbara, Coleen, Annette, Peggy, Helen, Katy, Belinda, and Hedy who emailed hundreds to her work colleagues.

ANOTHER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

We are partnering with the Omaha Children's Museum in the upcoming exhibition, **Headed to the White House**. We're helping to plan events in conjunction with the exhibition, such as an inaugural ball for families and a children's town hall event for the local 2009 elections.

League members are encouraged to become volunteers to assist specifically with this exhibition at the museum at 500 S. 20th St. There will be training sessions mid-January and then the exhibit will open on January 17. They'll need volunteers every day of the week except Monday, when the museum is closed.

Please call Helen if you're interested in helping with this educational project. For more information go to www.ocm.org.

DIGITAL DEMOCRACY MEETING

Is it true that Omaha is renegotiating its contract with Cox? And that Cox is currently bound to set up three wi-fi hot spots due to a deal they made with the city a year ago allowing them to cut back on their public access obligations? How do we define broadband, white space, and net neutrality? And how does Tom Mumgaard figure in all this?

This could be very interesting, worthy of at least one meeting we think, so join us at the League office on Thursday, December 11 at 12:00 noon. Bring your lunch or plan to munch on the popcorn and cookies provided.

LWVGO MEMBERS HONORED

Congratulations to board member Mary Jane, who recently received the Andrus Award from Nebraska AARP. The Andrus Award is AARP's most prestigious and visible volunteer award. We think they chose well!

Member Dr. Debra recently received the 2008 Walter J. O'Donohue Jr. Award from the American College of Physicians, Nebraska Chapter. She won the Volunteerism and Community Service Award from them in 2003. Congratulations Debra!

CONDOLENCES TO THE FRIENDS AND FAMILY OF DORISRUTH

from Sharon

Until very recently Dorisruth Cutler was a member of the League. She passed away 10/20/08.

My memories of Dorisruth were *many* Saturday mornings at 6:30 am when we both helped escort patients into the Womens Services clinic off 46th and Dodge.

And my very last memory was of Dorisruth with her daughter at the Shrimp Feed a couple of years ago.

A gentle, yet strong woman, who worked for her convictions. She will be missed in this world.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION UPDATE

You should all have your 2008-2009 Yearbook by now. Please take a minute to look at your information and let me know if any updates are needed or any information is missing. Note that much League information is sent out via e-mail. If your current e-mail address is not shown, please let me know. Updates should be given to Kathy, and can be made via e-mail or by phone. It's important that we have your current contact information in order for you to be aware and take full advantage of all that League has to offer, so please take a minute to check your information.

MEMBERSHIP

Please contact your friends about joining the League of Women Voters. It's a great way to make a difference - Your community needs leaders like you to participate in order to be a strong, safe and vibrant place to live! Dues are \$60 for a single membership and \$90 for a family membership. If you or someone you know would like to join, please complete the information below.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State & ZIP: _____

Phone: _____

Email address: _____

____ I want to join the League of Women Voters with an **individual, one year membership of \$60.**

____ I/we want to join the League of Women Voters with a **household, one year membership of \$90.**

____ Enclosed is a contribution of \$_____ to support the League's work of mobilizing citizens and influencing public policy through advocacy and education.

Please send your membership information to the address listed below. Checks should be made payable to the League of Women Voters.

League of Women Voters of Greater Omaha
1941 S. 42nd Street, Suite 501
Omaha, NE 68105-2956

Krusing the Capitol, 2008, Topic F

November 5, 2008

Historic Election

by Senator Lowen Kruse

On election day, I woke as the sun was coming up. Peered out the window to confirm the sight, leaned back, thrust my arms in air, and shouted, "GLORY HALLELUJAH, THE LORD MADE ANOTHER DAY." That line is from a seminary roommate who shouted it every morning. He was long and lean, and also swung one foot up to rest his heel on the top of the door jam. I did not do that, but I enjoyed the memory.

In this newsletter, I promised a list of campaign innuendoes and have prepared it. However, it is too much to go with election thoughts. So next week. The following week the newsletter will be on the Safe Haven Special Session. The session is not needed, at least not for kids. However, it is being done to help the press to quit examining our kids one by one. We have a national problem and Nebraska will not solve it. More then.

I had high respect for both candidates and believed both would go for the changes we so desperately need. McCain would go back to 2000, to who he really is (I hope), and help us to move on. Obama has the gift of walking with profound thinkers, while listening to and organizing the ordinary citizen. Both are seasoned, experienced in political decisions and implementation, and both see that we must change direction. The election turned out to be much more than that. The people were reshaping themselves.

Two years of campaigning. Good Lord. I will not evaluate the choices we made, but clearly if it had not lasted two years Obama would not be the man. Even six months ago, the country was obviously uneasy about electing a black man. He apparently has trained himself not to pursue thoughts about race. Amazing, when there are people out there wanting to shoot him because of his skin color. He is as much white as he is black, especially in culture, but that is not the secret. His peculiar gift is the culture of Hawaii and it shows. Race should not count. Quite aside from political issues, could he possibly bring us out of this long nightmare of painful racial divide?

After writing that, I realize I am missing a profound truth which became evident in the celebrations. I ignore race, but race is a huge part of the victory. Three young black women were with us as we left the Omaha celebration. When we stepped outside they started screaming. I teased them about losing their voice. They were simply overwhelmed. Now I realize they had just discovered that they are authentic Americans.

Blacks are helpless about their skin color, but have been controlled by it. Extremely unfair, and frustrating. They accepted that! Today I heard the message, hammered home by many friends. They had not put into words their second class feelings. Now, they know "I am a genuine citizen!" An American. A real person, as good as anyone. One lady said she could now tell her grandchildren they are free. Their color will not control who they can be. I get choked up when I realize how even as friends we have missed the wordless prison they have experienced. I know their lives well, but I have not looked at my arm and seen a significant identifier. Strangely, on election day Nebraska voted to keep them in their place, behind barriers invisible to us who are the majority. Ignore that for now. This day – picture grown, professional women screaming in joy at their release.

I should have known this. Several persons of African descent spoke of the excitement of the Iowa Caucus night. It was not about Obama. They were amazed that a group of 99% pure whites would place high value on any person of color. Now I get it.

A profound observation by a pundit is that we are still fighting the Vietnam War. It may be in Iraq, but our emotions are in Vietnam. A patriot is one who is for our troops, which means being for the war. Wear a flag. Those who are against the war are generally the patriot who longs to improve our country. That person votes for social justice -- the poor. Fly a banner. Please, could we now talk about it?

Do we consider Rosa Parks a patriot? If not, why not? Hopefully this is a time when we can really grow as a people. Quit putting down as unpatriotic the person who has a different dream for America. I can get a feel for your dream and see if it fits any part of my dream.

An aside. Perhaps we should ask my wife to foresee the future. Ruth said last spring that by election day the gas prices would come down. She is a cynic, who thinks that Big Oil Guys (BOG) use prices to jerk the rest of us around. They want the people to think the economy is o.k. so that we do not make changes. I said market forces do have a role to play. She said the rich BOG control the market forces. Three months ago, when it came up again, she said, "Mark my words. On election day the price of gas will be \$2." Bingo. The day before, \$2.05. On the day, \$2. Perhaps I should offer her as a consultant.

We have chosen the president who is more deliberative and will move slowly on changes. I have high hopes that we the people will help to guide the changes, which is more important than what the president does. What we do as a people is the true challenge and will measure long-term blessing.

(Lowen and Ruth Kruse are members of LWVGO. If you don't receive this newsletter, and would like to, please send an email to annetteconser@cox.net asking to be on her list for forwarding.)

Linda Duckworth, President
Annette Conser, Editor
Mary Ann Kirchner, Mailer
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Monday, December 8 - 11:30 a.m.
Upstream Brewing Company - West
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**Speaker: Leslie Byers
Author of "Heather's Rage"
*"A Mother's Journey through Her Daughter's
Mental Illness"
and Safe Haven Law***

League Program Planning for 2009-2010

**Please join us at the home of Kathy
for wine, cheese, and planning.
Bring your bright ideas!
Monday, January 12, 2009 at 7 p.m.**

Your ideas are vital to the success of the League's 2009-2010 program planning session.