



A Collection of Michigan's Local League Histories

Centennial Convention
May 17-19, 2019
Livonia, Michigan



As a project of the League of Women Voters of Michigan's Centennial Convention in May, 2019 in Livonia, Michigan, local Leagues submitted their histories for this compiled booklet. We thank all the local League leaders and historians for their contributions.

Contents

<u>League</u>	<u>Page</u>
Alpena County	2
Ann Arbor Area	3
Berrien/Cass Counties	4
Copper Country	5
Dearborn/Dearborn Hts.	6
Delta County	7
Detroit	8
Eastern Upper Peninsula, MAL	9
Flint Area	10
Grand Haven Area	11
Grand Traverse Area	12
Grosse Pointe	13
Holland Area	14
Jackson Area	15
Kalamazoo Area	16
Lansing Area	17
Leelanau County	18
Macomb County, MAL	19
Manistee County	20
Marquette County, MAL	21
Midland Area	22
Mt. Pleasant Area	23
Northwest Wayne County	24
Oakland Area	25
Saginaw County	26
Troy Area	27

Note: The history of the League of Women Voters of Michigan can be found on the League's website, lwvmi.org.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALPENA COUNTY

In Alpena in January of 1964, in the cold winter of northern Michigan, the League of Women Voters of Alpena County had their first organizational meeting. In just a year and a half, the League had done a "Know Your County" study and had the required 35 members. The President of the LWV US said in the letter to the new official League that she was proud of the money that we had raised and glad to see that our League could find good places to spend the money. One of the original members of our League is still an active board member.

On the 21st Birthday Celebration, the League sponsored a contest for sixth graders in the local public and parochial schools. "What Freedom Means to Me" was the topic for the writing contest. Copies of the winning essays were sent to legislators in Washington, D.C. and Lansing, MI.

On the Fiftieth Anniversary of our League, we celebrated with a skit about how to adopt a study, and more serious matters, such as the history of our Waterfront and Water Quality since our town is on Lake Huron. We also reviewed our study of our nearby State Park-Negwegon. Our League favors a park that is used for hiking and supports the development of nature trails. We have worked with others to continue to protect, preserve and promote the park. Our League had 34 members.

Over the years, some of our most effective actions have been non-partisan voter education forums on local topics such as a recycling, eradicating phragmites, encouraging candidates to run, and informing our community about issues related to our local schools, library and hospital.

Last year our Voters Service activities took up most of our time and energy. We registered voters in high schools and on the street, marched in parades, held voter forums, millage issue forums, and sent letters urging YES votes on state and local issues to our regional daily newspaper. We are considering expanding our League area to include several more counties. Currently our League has five 50-year members and three student members. We have grown from the original 35 to our current membership of 63. We are eager to enter the next year and decade.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ANN ARBOR AREA

Founded in 1920, the Ann Arbor League grew out of the suffrage movement which was very active in Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County. Occasional meetings were held, but there wasn't much activity due to local controversy over Prohibition. Ann Arbor was a very conservative community at the time.

In 1934, the local League was re-organized when the state League gave it permission to be a "clearing house for governmental and political information to be taken to various city clubs." Fourteen members voted to become an active organization, pay dues of \$2, have monthly luncheon meetings and appoint the "customary committees". The Board sent letters to interested women asking them to join the League. Membership increased to 30.

In 1937, the League had active members, but no one was willing to be President. Mrs. Neil Staebler recalled she was visited by a League member who urged her to join the League. When Mrs. Staebler expressed an interest, her visitor asked her if she would be President, saying if she refused the League would have to disband. Mrs. Staebler was persuaded and agreed to join and to become President.

During the war years, finances were precarious. The treasurer had no bank account. She kept the cash, which averaged \$19 in a little tin box. In 1942, the League held its first finance drive. Dressed in their "best bib and tucker", the President and Treasurer looked for a familiar name in the directory of the First National Building. Finding one, they "blithely sailed into his office" and proudly exited with a check for \$5.

In 1942, League members, who had studied extensive background material, wrote to the Ann Arbor City Council proposing three amendments to the City Charter. The City Council put two of them on the November ballot and they passed. In subsequent years, the League has continued to serve the community in a variety of ways.

In 1974 the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti Leagues merged to form the Ann Arbor Area League. More recently, the League has welcomed units in Lenawee and Livingston counties. League members in both units have been very active in providing voter education and educational programs to their local communities.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BERRIEN AND CASS COUNTIES

The history of the League of Women Voters of Berrien and Cass Counties (LWVBCC) dates to its founding in 1957 as LWV Niles. Fourteen years later, its coverage area was expanded to include a neighboring municipality, and it became the League of Women Voters of Niles/Buchanan. In 1984, it was expanded again to include all of Berrien County and neighboring Cass County. Thus for the past 45 years, LWVBCC has pursued its mission of voter education and involvement throughout the two counties in the furthest southwest corner of Michigan, bordering Indiana on the south and both Indiana and Lake Michigan on the west.

LWVBCC's programs have been significantly influenced by its geography and economy: largely rural, agricultural, and recreational with access not only to the "big lake," but to beautiful inland lakes, rivers, and streams, as well, throughout both Cass and Berrien Counties. Many of LWVBCC's public forums over the years have been influenced by its geography and economy, bringing attention to the need to protect our waters—both surface and underground—from harmful chemicals, invasive species, and harmful runoff; on issues impacting availability of an adequate agricultural workforce; and on other subjects directly influencing the economy of our area. At the same time, however, we regularly broaden the scope through forums that focus on education, criminal justice, public transportation, and other issues of current interest and concern. Increasingly, we are working with other community organizations to broaden our reach.

LWVBCC has been active in voter registration and in providing opportunities for voters to hear from candidates for a variety of offices—mayors, county commissioners, judges, state legislators—about their views on issues at public forums and debates. In 2018, we registered about 500 people. That same year, though, LWVBCC's efforts to host candidate forums and debates were frustrated when, contrary to a decades-long history, candidates from one political party declined to participate. We are doing our best to assure that 2018 was an anomaly in that regard.

In its early years, the membership of our local League, like that of the League nationally, was only women. But when the League, at its national convention in 1974, voted to admit men to membership, that picture changed dramatically. Twice in the past, the president of LWVBCC has been a man. Now, almost a third of LWVBCC's members are men, and two of them serve on its Board of Directors.

LWVBCC is proud to have received a number of grants to support its work, including grants from the local Pokagon Fund to support voter education through the purchase of good equipment enabling us to record many events and make them available on YouTube to people who are unable to attend, thereby significantly expanding our reach into the larger communities of Berrien and Cass Counties.

For 62 years, LWVBCC has helped make democracy work in southwest Michigan. That history inspires commitment to continue the effort with vigor going forward.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF COPPER COUNTRY

1960 – January, after a year of work achieving provisional status, the Hancock-Houghton League of Women Voters became an official local League with 65 members. The name was changed to League of Women Voters of the Copper Country in 1968. |

60s - Adopted positions on local education, home rule, Houghton County Medical Care facility (did first advocacy campaign in support of millage); began observer corps.

70s – Published “Know Your Towns”; advocated for changes in conduct of county board of commissioners meetings for more openness, obtained a legal opinion from MI Attorney General calling for more public access to deliberations. Due to no response LWVCC initiated formal monitoring of the board. Following passage of MI Open Meetings Act 1976 LWVCC charged the board with violations. Observer was called as witness in case brought on that issue by a fired county employee and testified. Daily Mining Gazette article: “A six-person jury took the word of a League of Women Voters member over that of the board members that the meeting had been closed to the public.” This suit was reported by DMG to be “...apparently the first in MI in which public officials have been penalized for violation of the open meetings act.” During the same time period there was a controversy of voting irregularities and league members were involved in an ad hoc committee that brought a civil suit to bring attention to voting and jury errors that were found to have occurred.

80s- Investigated and monitored refuse dumping on hillside to Portage Canal. Supported research on high priority listing for Torch Lake Clean-Up as a Super Fund Site. Adopted Keweenaw Waterway position. Participated in pay-equity meeting in Lansing.

90s – Held a community forum attended by 300 citizens, US Rep. Stupak, members of medical community on proposed national health care reform (imitative chaired by first lady Hillary Clinton).

2005 to 2008 - LWVCC conducted a study of the conditions at the Houghton County Jail and adopted a position in support of building a new facility. Supported the County Plan published by the Ho. Co. Planning Commission. Held public forums for candidates and published the Voters Guide in the local newspaper.

2009 to 2012 - Member, co-chaired the Houghton Co. Justice Center study group which published its finding and an architectural design for a new county facility to house the jail, district court and sheriff’s office. A millage proposal for the building of the facility was defeated. Did public information programs hosting presenter from WUP Health Dept. to increase understanding of the new Affordable Care Act healthcare program. Held public forums for candidates and published the Voters Guide in the local newspaper.

2013 to 2018 - Studied Home Schooling in the Copper Country. Studied availability of public transportation in the Houghton and Baraga area and adopted a position in support of adequate funding for coordinated regional and local public transportation. Offered public education forums on redistricting, the Electoral College and National Popular Vote Initiative. Held public forums for candidates, ballot proposals and published the Voters Guide in the local newspaper. Participated annually in voter registration efforts and distributed informational materials on MTU campus regarding the pay gap on “Equal Pay Day”.

2018 - Activated the Jail Study committee in response to County Board of Commissioners plans for a new jail addition proposal. Conducted public meetings and efforts to gather public input regarding a broader scope of the needs of the jail, courthouse and sheriff office facilities. Public education on proposed national constitutional convention.

2019 – A League member was appointed to task force by county commissioners to address the county jail issue. Community education programs on Open Meetings Act, governing the Townships.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS DEARBORN-DEARBORN HEIGHTS

Early in 1949, 37 women from the Dearborn area participated in a study group of the Detroit League of Women Voters. Frustrated because they could not concentrate on Dearborn issues, the women arranged a pre-organizational meeting which was held in November 1950. The Dearborn League became a provisional League on March 19, 1951 with 37 charter members.

After completing a required study of the local Dearborn community, the Dearborn League of Women Voters was recognized as an official League with 78 members on December 19, 1951. The first president was Modesta Gamble.

On Election Day in 1952, the League worked with other organizations in Dearborn to provide child care at 63 precincts. Voter guides were delivered door-to-door in 1954. The Dearborn League was involved in efforts to hold a new state Constitutional Convention as early as 1955. Dearborn members spent many days in 90 degree heat, at Gate Four of the Ford Rouge Plant, obtaining signatures on petitions while convincing people of the need for a new constitution. Eventually, the Constitutional Convention was held and member Kay Cushman, a charter member of the Dearborn League, was one of the delegates elected in 1961.

In 1965, a Dearborn Heights League was established. Seven women attended the first planning meeting followed by a public meeting at Wellever School with more than eighty potential members. In 1968, members of the Dearborn Heights League met at Crestwood H. S. An important mayoral forum was held between the current mayor against a candidate whose platform included a plan to merge the cities of Dearborn and Dearborn Heights. Important studies included the possible merger of the then seven school districts, and problems related to the flooding of Ecorse Creek. At that time, the League became very active in opposing a proposal to enclose the Ecorse Creek, including writing a letter to the EPA office in Chicago.

In 1967, the Dearborn League opened an office on Mason St. The Dearborn League was the first suburban League in the Detroit area to have a telephone listing.

In 1971, three years before full LWV membership was awarded to men, Fred Hoffman joined the Dearborn League. Mr. Hoffman is still a member of our League.

In 1973, the Dearborn and Dearborn Heights Leagues merged and became known as the LWV Dearborn- Dearborn Heights.

The Dearborn- Dearborn Heights LWV has been a mighty force over the years but one early action stands out. In 1968, Dearborn teachers went on strike. The League organized a forum, with five other organizations, called "Crisis in Education - Where Do We Go From Here?" The forum was held at Ford Motor Company's "Glass House" with over 2,000 people in attendance. The event was held on a Thursday and the schools were open the next Tuesday.

The League of Women Voters Dearborn- Dearborn Heights looks forward to celebrating its 70th Anniversary in 2021.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DELTA COUNTY

In 1951, Dorothy Lindquist, a member of the Escanaba Board of Education became concerned about the lack of services for children in the Upper Peninsula. Upon learning that the Michigan League of Women Voters was studying the issue of services for children, she organized a meeting to explore the possibility of forming a League in Escanaba. This meeting was held in the "old city hall" in the Fall of 1951 with about 30 women present. The response was enthusiastic and officers were elected at this very first meeting. Clara Mosenfelder was elected the first president at 26 years old. To date, Clara is still an active member of the DCLWV.

One of the founding members, Mrs. Torval Strom, was elected vice-president and at early board meetings told the newly formed group about the Suffragette days in Delta County. According to her, the men of the county would tear down the posters advertising Votes for Women. The women would then hitch up the horse and buggy and proceed to put them back up on any available telephone pole or fence post.

The Escanaba League was formed as a "provisional league" and was required by the State League to do an in-depth community study of governmental services. This, together with observations of governmental bodies' meetings, voter service activities, such as, get out the vote drives and voter registration drives occupied the early years. The "Know Your Town" study was updated and published as a booklet in 1963.

In 1970, the State League of Women Voters Council met in Escanaba, with members from Lower Michigan arriving by bus.

It was in this same year, 1970, that it was decided to expand the Escanaba League to include all of Delta County and to make a formal name change to the Delta County LWV. A "Know Your County" study was undertaken and a booklet published. It was updated in 1977 and a second edition published.

Voter Service activities have always been a priority of the Delta County League. We strive to provide non-partisan Candidate Forums and Voter Guides in election years. For the past several years, we have published Delta County election information on the Vote411 website.

We have offered Public Programs on timely topics such as environmental studies, children's services, education and libraries. All issues important to the League. Our only fund raiser is an Annual Used Book Sale held in early August.

Most recently, we were offered the opportunity to mentor a new League. The Marquette League existed from 1968 until they disbanded in 2006. In 2017 they discussed reorganizing and the State League asked us to mentor the newly forming Marquette group. Our mission was completed February 2019 when the Marquette Unit became a MAL.

As we continue into the future, we will do our best to serve our community by focusing on Voter Services and public education.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF DETROIT

On April 11, 2019, we received news that the National League of Women Voters Board of Directors reviewed and approved our request for reinstatement as a full charter.

This has been a long journey for our League. The previous Detroit League was disbanded in 2007-2008 due to attrition.

On April 29, 2013, local Leagues in the area, primarily Dearborn/Dearborn Heights, Grosse Pointe and Northwest Wayne County, invited people in Detroit who were interested in the League's work to a "Detroit Voter Service Task Force" meeting to work on voter education in the 2013 Elections in Detroit. The task force included some of our former and current members: Suzanne and Delores Cleage; Carol Banks, Harriet Saperstein, Toni Tront, Kathleen Straus, Carol Campbell, Sheree McLaughlin, Cheryl Bukoff, Valerie Ash, and Diana Warshay. The group worked together to get the Detroit candidates to participate in VOTE411, to distribute the print Voter Guides, to conduct film interviews of candidates in cooperation with Detroit Public TV, and to work on the candidate forum for Detroit City Mayor.

In the fall of 2014, a meeting of those Detroiters who had participated in 2013 met again at a coffee house in Detroit to discuss becoming a League. Christina Schlitt and several other League members were present. Those at the meeting set up a series of meetings at which Suzanne Cleage and Carol Banks agreed to provide ongoing leadership to an expanded group of interested people. Mildred Shepard, Susie Antisdell, Toni Tront, and Harriet Saperstein, former members, joined us as well as others.

Christine Schlitt and Paula Bowman continued to work closely with the Detroit League to become a Member-At-Large unit (MAL). Betsy Cushman from the Dearborn/Dearborn Heights League, worked with the Detroit League on Voter Services. In 2014-2015, Valerie Ash, Cheryl Bukoff, Carol Banks and Suzanne Cleage made a request to the State Board to become a MAL unit, which was granted. We adopted bylaws, a non-partisan policy, established a board and committees, and began to serve our voting community. At this time, there were about ten paid members.

There were many steps and hurdles to overcome to complete the qualifications for the application to become an independent League. Our board and especially Susan Slattery, chair of the Charter committee, worked hard for months to complete the application process. We also worked closely with our Membership, Leadership and Development coach, Paula Bowman, and LWVMI VP of Membership, Christina Schlitt, to navigate the documentation requirements. Our website will have the application available for review. The State board was very impressed and proud of our achievements and we should be also. Without a hard-working and dedicated membership this would not have been possible. Congratulations Detroit League of Women Voters!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF EASTERN UPPER PENINSULA A MEMBER-AT-LARGE STATE UNIT

The hum of partisan political activity vibrated throughout Sault Sainte Marie in 2013. However, there were very few places, if any, to find nonpartisan, thoughtful information about elections, voting rights, the environment, and money in politics. Moreover, few high school and college students graduated each year knowing how to advocate for themselves or were registered to vote by the time they graduated.

In 2013 that changed when a small group of people from Sault Sainte Marie, Pickford, and surrounding areas, led by Amy Hjerstadt, joined together to bring the League's brand to the Eastern Upper Peninsula. They aimed to infuse thoughtful, nonpartisan information and help build a space for learning without feeling pressured to join one party or the other. So in the fall of 2013, LWV of Eastern Upper Peninsula was formed (LWVEUP).

With \$50 seed money from LWV of Michigan and about 15 members on the first member roster, LWVEUP started strong with forums every month educating residents on fracking, charter and public school funding, energy, domestic violence, dark money in politics, and several others. This small but mighty League also started an Observer Corps to watch city and county meetings as well as an Election Observer program to observe the electoral process during the 2014 elections. They also hosted several forums for local and state candidates running for office in the first year and a half of their founding.

The LWVEUP understood that young people and America's New Majority is the future and must be engaged early on. Therefore, League members reached a variety of ages in the EUP: they would drive to various high schools in the Eastern Upper Peninsula, sometimes over an hour and a half away just to register ten students; they worked with the public libraries in Sault Sainte Marie and Pickford to host craft and book readings about women's suffrage and civil rights for very young children; they registered college students to vote and coordinated with the Secretary of State mobile van to streamline the process, and they partnered with the Lake Superior State University (LSSU) Political Science Club to host a state representative candidate forum. Not wanting to miss anyone or any opportunity to educate voters and young people, LWVEUP hosted Constitution Day at the Chippewa County Courthouse to help families and students understand their constitutional rights and to provide a unique opportunity to learn from community and state leaders in the judicial and law enforcement fields.

In the first 18 months of LWVEUP's founding, this small group of good governance advocates grew to nearly 40 members. They tirelessly empowered new voters, created civil discussion and debate in a nonpartisan and thoughtful space, and brought new voter tools—such as www.vote411.org—to the community. Always thinking about who else to reach, who else to engage, and who else to develop into a community leader. In their first year, LWVEUP made a considerable impact bringing nonpartisan information to Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF FLINT AREA

In 1917, The National American Woman Suffrage Association outlined a plan uniting the enfranchised states into a National League of Women Voters as an auxiliary to their association. In 1919, Michigan, along with 14 other full suffrage states, joined to form the League of Women Voters. The goals were to educate voters, to work for needed legislation and to arouse citizens participation in government. Isn't it wonderful that we have a 100-year history of doing this?

The Flint Women's Suffrage Club became the League of Women Voters of Genesee County in 1920. Holding classes in citizenship and the mechanics of voting was a main focus. By 1924, six units were part of the League. In 1926, the records show there were 183 members and the dues were 50 cents. Surviving records can be found at the University of Michigan-Flint Genesee Historical Collections Center.

In 1929 our League hosted the state convention. Mrs. Samuel Moffet was our President and became the state president in 1932. The state office was moved to Flint. The Flint League was working on reorganizing county government and issues regarding Flint City Government. Another concern in the 1930s was the issue of better housing. The records show questionnaires being sent out to local candidates running for election, get out the vote campaigns and work on ballot issues.

In the mid-century, the Flint Area League had weekly radio broadcasts and published a Voter's Guide. Flint League news was moved from the society page in the local newspaper, the Flint Journal, to the city page. The League was frequently involved in the continued focus on funding of public schools. Peak membership in the League was in 1958-59 at 211.

In the 1960s, there was a focus on environmental issues, especially water quality, and on the passage of the new Michigan Constitutional which became law in 1963. Unfortunately, the Flint Area League has had to focus intently on water quality for the past several years. Records from the 1970s reflect a focus on relocation of Flint residents due to highway construction. Files of 2,000 families show pilot testing, selecting a random sample from the highway department and interviewing 149 families and then recommending changes. In the 1980s Flint had a speakers bureau and hosted a day-long workshop on how to run for office and become more involved in the political process. The League produced and broadcast a video, "New Focus on National Security." In the 1990s, League women and men took part in a downtown parade in suffragette dresses (and period clothing for the men).

Our Annual Reports continue and they reflect that we still believe our mission of encouraging informed and active participation in government, and to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Whenever some community action is considered, the League is one of the first groups to be summoned for involvement. Recently, the Flint League participated in a task force on changing the Flint City Charter. This past year, we successfully worked to pass proposals dealing with the issues of redistricting and gerrymandering.

As Carrie Chapman Catt told the delegates at our 1919 convention, "The League must be 5 to 10 years ahead of the political parties to be worth its salt."

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS GRAND HAVEN AREA

The Grand Haven Area LWV was organized in 1945 with Dorothy Woodford as the first president. Over the years, and under the leadership of many prominent community members, we have established our reputation as a fair arbiter of election information, voter education, and as an advocate for voting access and rights. Lake Michigan coast line erosion, environmental quality, land use, and health services are among the issues our members have studied for input into state advocacy positions. Two of our presidents, Barbara Sherwood and Dottie Seibold, served on the State League Board of Directors. Gail Ringelberg, another president, served as the Mayor of the City of Grand Haven. Our current president, Christine Baker, holds an elected position as a Grand Haven Area Public School Board Trustee – and is the daughter-in-law of our president from 1959-61, Katharine Baker. The tradition and history of our local League is strong and enduring.

At one time membership reached over 100, but since 1993 there has been a steady and significant decline. Many reasons contributed to the decline; aging members, working members, lack of political urgency and engagement; increase in other volunteer opportunities; and conservative values that sometimes were in conflict with state positions on issues. We reached a low in membership in 2010, but with resolve, hard work, and determination our small group kept moving forward and staying visible in the community, primarily with candidate forums. These forums ranged from local school board, mayoral and city council races to state house/senate and congressional races. Gradually, our membership has increased and stabilized. We now have a still relatively small but engaged group of members who continue to seek partnerships in the community to educate voters, provide election and voter resources, and advocate for important local issues. In addition to the traditional voter service activities typical for Leagues, our group has done some innovative and collaborative work on civility in political dialogue; community conversations around statewide public policy issues for Bridge Magazine; and actively supported community engagement on topics such as mental health and education.

We are happy to be participating again in state League activities, such as sending a delegate to Convention in 2019 - such a significant, historic, milestone year for League of Women Voters as an important, grassroots political organization. Stronger, for 100 years longer!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS GRAND TRAVERSE AREA

In February of 1960 a group of women in the Grand Traverse area received a Provisional Charter to form a local League of Women Voters. Once it was established, the League ladies donned their tennis shoes...and hit the deck running. They studied local issues, held public meetings and reached consensus on issues at the National, State and local levels of the LWV organization. Major efforts were made to support a proposed state Constitutional Convention which was approved in 1963. The League was also active in voter service, holding candidate forums, distributing voter guides, giving voting machine demonstrations, getting out the vote and encouraging registration.

In 1963 the local League was sued for a million dollars by Dan Smoot, a conservative television talk show host from Dallas Texas over comments made by Margot Power, President of the League in the *Voter* newsletter. Smoot was a politically conservative and often made accusations against activities the LWV-GTA supported including the United Nations, foreign aid and income taxes. Power's article accused Smoot of making comments that were poorly researched. It would have served Mr. Smoot well to have paid heed to a 1964 Wall Street Journal article that said "To differ with the League is to differ with motherhood and the flag." Eventually Mr. Smoot had to drop his case but not until it reached the Supreme Court of the United States. Thus the League began its nonpartisan political participation in Grand Traverse Area with a great deal of publicity and courage.

Ladies of the League took trips by canoe down the Boardman River and donned heavy boots and gloves to help clean it up and preserve it. In 1967 the League's interests broadened when it joined the Lake Michigan Interleague Organization and co-sponsored with NMC a six week symposium entitled "Preserving Environmental Quality in the Grand Traverse Area." Meanwhile men made many contributions to the development of the local League and in 1974 the national league recognized these contributions when they allowed men to join as full voting members. Our local League welcomed men even before Rotary admitted women.

In 1967 and 2001, the League hosted the state convention. In 1968, the League took part in a state-wide drive to place a Constitutional Amendment regarding judicial selection and tenure. The drive fell short of signatures needed but the League has continued to make judicial reform a top priority state-wide and in 2008 held a forum entitled "Courting Trouble" which called for promoting "public financing" for candidates seeking election to Michigan's Supreme Court.

In 2000 permission was granted to the League to change its basis of organization to include the counties of Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Antrim, Benzie and Kalkaska. The Benzie unit meets weekly during the school year. The Leelanau unit developed in 2008 and has conducted studies of clean energy resources, farmland preservation and agricultural migrant workers but then in 2013 decided to be their own League. Grand Traverse and Manistee Leagues co-sponsored an event in 2008 showing the HBO film "Iron Jawed Angels" at the newly renovated State Theatre in Traverse City. A reception at the nearby Park Place Hotel honored former first lady of Michigan, Helen Milliken.

Voter service which includes candidate forums, voter guides and registration drives continues to be a crucial part of the Leagues activities. The League also puts out a "*They Represent You*" publication each year for Grand Traverse and Kalkaska Counties. These publications include a list of important election dates, government officials and voter information. LWV-GTA has held candidate forums for every level of government from townships and school boards to the governor. During the 90's LWV-GTA held the only gubernatorial debates in Northern Michigan.

The League has been a strong advocate of libraries for several decades. During the 1980's and 90's the Library Action created awareness of the need for a new public library to meet the needs of citizens in the area. In the 1996 it spearheaded a successful millage to fund the building of the Traverse Area District Library (TADL) on Woodmere Avenue. In recent years the League has also conducted studies on Public and School Libraries and charter schools as well as presented numerous informational forums about local issues such as preservation of water resources, dark money, Public Transportation, county and city government.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GROSSE POINTE

The Grosse Pointe unit has a proud history. LWVGP was organized February 3, 1950 to focus on better local government. Their first project was an educational meeting about the Council-Manager form of government. The big issue was whether to change from a village to a city, eliminating Grosse Pointe Township.

By 1952, the branch had a membership of 200 members. That year, LWVGP held a massive voter registration drive, increasing registered voters by nearly 20% over a five-week period; the local paper tallied the increases weekly.

Membership grew to 356 in the '50s, and the GP League continued its strong history of voter services and thorough study of issues. The group developed local positions on Wayne County government, solid waste management, library expansion, land use, and recreation. LWVGP helped found the Northeast Guidance Center and Wayne County Community College in the 1960's, and launched the Pointes' first recycling efforts in the 1980's.

Until the era of websites, the LWVGP published a comprehensive guide to the five Grosse Communities, "Know Your Grosse Pointe," sold at local bookstores. Each year, we distribute more than 7,000 "Your Government Officials" brochures with contact information for all local, state, and federal governments. Until recently, members of LWVGP served as observers to the various council and board meetings; with the internet and ready availability of information, LWVGP determined that we would send observers for important issues.

Respected throughout the Grosse Pointes and Harper Woods communities, LWVGP is an active league presenting programs on recycling, climate control, gerrymandering, and more, as well as local school issues such as diversity and future school configuration. We have also partnered with other local community groups to note special days, such as Equal Pay Day and Women's Equality Day.

LWVGP hosts candidate forums for the six local city councils that make up our area, as well as forums for school board candidates, judicial nominees, and where appropriate, with the Detroit league for state representative and state senate candidates. The forums are recorded and shown on community cable channels, as well as uploaded to our own YouTube Channel. We even have voters living abroad who depend on our forums to educate themselves before marking their ballots!

In addition to voter education, LWVGP has actively worked with local city clerks for the last five years in May voter registration events at the local high schools and at Wayne County Community College.

We actively participated in the 2019 Promote the Vote effort, gathering community support and holding workshops on correct petition circulation.

LWVGP also sponsored the newly-formed Macomb County group from 2015-2017; it became an official Member at Large unit in 2018, the second step to becoming a stand-alone League. We are so happy to have nurtured this group, led by our own longtime member Maria Rivera.

Past presidents include this year's LWVMI President Nominee, Christina Schlitt. Current LWVGP president Tom Wells broke the "glass ceiling," taking on the Presidency in 2016.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF HOLLAND AREA

League of Women Voters-Holland Area has a long and active history. Not as long as the Michigan LWV, but half as long. In fact, many of our original charter members will be recognized and honored for their activism and work at our Annual Meeting this May.

As we reviewed the archives, and pieced together the blank spots, we identified the women who spearheaded the effort. Lyn Counihan and JoAnne Brooks began planning in April 1968 and held a pre-organization meeting in August, 1968. Eleanor de Kruif, Rosanna Black, and Rachel VanderWerf were also part of this original group. The State chair visited, and discussions began. The requirements to become a League were considerable. One of the requirements was to begin with 45 members; when that did not happen, the indefatigable women decided to begin by joining Grand Haven Tri-Cities League as a regionally cooperative unit. The Holland League then spun off from Grand Haven to form a provisional local League for about a year, beginning in November 1968. The women ticked off other requirements over the next months as a provisional unit: creating the Know Your Holland booklet and giving presentations to Zeeland Literary Club and Rotary. By March 1969 the archives were showing minutes for this provisional local League, with 62 paid members. On October 16, 1970 the Holland League of Women Voters was a full-fledged League, no longer provisional. In January 1980, there was a rise in membership due to the creation of a new chapter in Saugatuck/Douglas. The League's name currently reflects that: LWV-Holland Area.

Some interesting tidbits from the newspaper clippings available: the women were reported with the honorific "Mrs." or "Miss". It wasn't until 1980 that we noticed women being identified with their first and last names. The Holland League encouraged male membership after the LWVUS voted to allow men to join in 1974, and today our chapter's directory shows the names of several men who are active and contributing members. A review of past yearbooks and directories shows not only some of the same members who remain in the current directories (you know who you are!), but some very prescient topics for discussion and consensus and positions. The Holland League supported a system of social services in Ottawa County to provide financial assistance for citizens; eventually the local vocational center was created. It also encouraged the formation of a Master Plan of zoning and planning for Holland, Zeeland and surrounding townships, which included consideration of taxes, utilities, traffic, schools, recreation and preservation of historical sites and natural beauty spots. This encouragement of regional cooperation was the precursor of MAAC (Macatawa Area Advisory Council) and other regional planning efforts. In fact, in 1987 LWV-HA held a meeting where the members of the local planning and zoning boards met one another for the first time, despite being neighbors.. The League also organized forums to discuss charter schools, which are now quite established in the public school system.

An interview with JoAnne Brooks, a LWV-HA member for 50 years, showed why our League has been so successful over all these years. JoAnne's enthusiasm for the League's purpose is clear and unwavering. When asked why she joined League, all those years ago, she stated that "the times and the timing were just right! It was the late 60's, women's issues were dominant and when they asked friends & neighbors to come to a series of lunches to learn about LWV, every one of them joined!" She confirmed that Eleanor de Kruif was a driving force.

With the current political climate and the changes in the last election cycle, LWV-HA continues to generate the interest and energy that will keep it vital for years. Diversity in age and race and gender is slow but ongoing, and the League is reaching out in collaborative ways to partner with other like-minded organizations in areas such as natural resources. Voter registration and candidate forum efforts remain strong. Here's to the next one hundred years!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS JACKSON AREA

Jackson County has long played an active role in the work of the League of Women Voters. Before the current chapter, there was a strong, long-standing local League which existed from 1951 until the late 1990s. In fact, a recently found article from the local newspaper of 1919 referenced a League of Women Voters meeting in Jackson.

The League had a rebirth after several current members attended a Redistricting presentation in Jackson and LWVMI President Sue Smith was one of the speakers. Shortly thereafter, in January 2015, Mary Lee Clark from Jackson, met with Susan Smith and the Lansing Co-Presidents – Camilla Davis and Beth Moore. Under their guidance the Jackson Unit began to take form – monthly meetings were organized, members began to take on the functions of voter services and programming, as well as persuading Jackson political candidates to submit responses for Vote411. The Jackson Unit established a website and Facebook page, under the tutelage of their mentors in the Lansing League, and received training on the “How to Vote” presentation for High School students. The generosity and guidance of the Lansing co-Presidents and the Lansing Board laid the foundation for Jackson to develop into a growing, strong, independent League.

In December of 2017 the League of Women Voters Jackson Area was officially accepted as an independent League. In January 2018, the newly formed League held a day long retreat to help the members work together to set priorities and goals for a successful future. The Board is slowly enlarging along with the membership with the welcomed support of LWVJA’s League Coach, Denise Hartsough. The LWVJA has grown to a membership of 51 women and men and it informs the community through its many activities including:

- Six-per-year JXN Community Forums, educating the community on areas of particular relevance, including Candidate Forums
- Women’s Expo – exhibited since 2015
- Candidate Forums – every year since 2015
- Issues Forums – every year since 2015
- Voter Registration – developing a reputation - organizations have begun calling and requesting LWVJA register voters at an event or business
- Juneteenth – every year since 2015
- An increasing presence in the 14 County school systems with “How to Vote” Seminar
- Monthly Newsletter - sent to members and “Friends of the League”
- Website
- Facebook Page
- Other events designed to inform and improve the community

A study group is well on its way to establishing a local position on Community Stability. VOTE411 coverage, both online and the print guide, is expanding. The League continues its outreach and has gathered a strong set of members to share in the League’s committee work. New activities include a 20/20 Committee, planning a full schedule of events honoring the hundredth anniversary of Women’s Suffrage, such as a High School poster contest, weekly radio trivia contest, monthly book recommendations, a 2020 summer birthday celebration and voter registration event, and a Fall Celebration and Fundraising Democracy Tea. All activities are framed to raise LWVJA visibility while educating the community.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF KALAMAZOO AREA

The Kalamazoo County League of Women Voters was formed on July 20, 1920, five months after the formation of the League of Women Voters of the United States in Chicago. Each of the 16 Kalamazoo County townships covered by the League had a chairperson. The League central governing board consisted of five officers. The same group of women who had been involved in the fight for the equal suffrage amendment was instrumental in forming the local League. Dr. Caroline Bartlett Crane, Mrs. Caroline Hubbard Kleinstuck and Mrs. (Leah or Lydia) Shakespeare were among the founders. The stated purpose of the group was to further the political education of the newly enfranchised women. In the fall of 1920 the first non-partisan mass rally for candidates was held in Kalamazoo. It was judged a great success, having been attended by about 2000 people. It was called "an innovation in political gatherings."

In the early years, the Kalamazoo County League of Women Voters endorsed candidates, specifically women candidates for state representative and Kalamazoo School Board. The fledgling organization supported the formation of a School of Nursing at the University of Michigan and supported "dry" candidates and "anti-cigarette" programs.

With a membership of more than 300, the Kalamazoo League hosted the Michigan League of Women Voters annual convention in 1925. Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, Honorary President of the national League, attended.

By the mid-1930s many of the strong leaders who had formed the League were gone and the remaining members were finding it difficult to remain non-partisan. For several years the League was inactive though not formally dissolved. In the spring of 1951 a small group of women organized a Provisional League of Women Voters in Kalamazoo. Within a year there were 75 active members engaged in numerous local, state, and national issues, including child care, housing, sewage disposal, reciprocal trade agreements and metropolitan government consolidation, in addition to voter service activities.

In 1973 the League was an amicus curiae in a successful suit, taken to the Supreme Court, supporting school desegregation in the Kalamazoo Public Schools. Mary Brown delivered the brief to Washington and testified before Congress, an event that won mention of the League in the *Washington Post*. Members traveled to other Leagues, sharing their experiences with those mounting similar efforts.

In the ensuing years, Kalamazoo joined other Leagues in welcoming men as members. The traditional patterns of work, including frequent daytime meetings, were modified to accommodate the schedules of employed members. In 2004, the League service area was expanded beyond the county to the Kalamazoo area. On the occasion of its 90th Anniversary, the Kalamazoo Area League was awarded the YWCA Women's Group Achievement Award for "enduring contributions" to the community.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE LANSING AREA

The League of Women Voters of Michigan was formed in 1919 when the 19th amendment was approved in the state, granting women the right to vote. The League of Women Voters of the United State, founded in 1920, is a national political organization that never supports candidates or parties. It has two areas of emphasis: to promote active citizen involvement and to take action on policy issues after member study and consensus.

The League Presence in the Lansing Area: A League was formed in the 1930's and was an active force in the city of Lansing. However, because of increased partisan involvement, that League's charter was revoked in 1944. The East Lansing League was formed in 1942 and the group had considerable influence in shaping the East Lansing City Charter, adopted in 1943. As problems of a regional nature arose, it became evident that the East Lansing League would have to expand its membership as well as the area in which it could take action if it was to remain an effective force in the tri-county area. In the mid-1950's, LWVUS recognized the League of Women Voters of the Lansing Area as a League with fluid boundaries. This enabled the League to attract members from the entire metropolitan area and to look at problems from a community perspective rather than being restricted by local boundaries. The Lansing Area League presently focuses attention on Ingham, Eaton and Clinton Counties. Voter service activities are conducted throughout the three counties, involving 16 cities, 48 townships and 24 school districts.

The League: Educating Voters—Voters' Service has always been an important focus for the League of Women Voters of the Lansing Area, through voter registration, candidate forums and distribution of voter guides. However, these activities have changed to fit the times. When 18 year olds were granted the right to vote in 1972, the League responded to calls for registering voters on campus. That same year, the League also partnered with the Model Cities anti-poverty program to register voters throughout Lansing with a mobile registration drive. In 1982-3 the League partnered with Uno Mas (means "one more," signifying that one more vote does count) to conduct a voter registration drive in nine heavily Hispanic neighborhoods. In 2018, LWVLA volunteers registered 3000 new MSU students during the five weeks of summer orientation. The East Lansing City Clerk credited the League's registration and voter education efforts with increasing student turnout by 300% over the 2014 election. League volunteers also registered about 500 high school students and sent them text message to remind them to vote in the August and November elections.

League voter guides, containing responses from all of the candidates, have always been well-received by the citizenry. For many years the guides were printed as an insert in the *Lansing State Journal* and more recently in the *Lansing City Pulse*. In 2012, LWVLA began to participate in VOTE411, the online voter guide sponsored by LWVUS, providing even more coverage of candidates and issues. However, the printed version remains popular and volunteers distribute them throughout the tri-counties. Candidate forums help local communities learn about candidates and issues and the format and rules are consistently designed so that all candidates have equal opportunities to share their views. Over the years, co-sponsors have included school and neighborhood organizations and groups such as ACLU and NAACP.

The League: Taking Action on Policy Issues--Under League policy, action may be taken after members have studied the issue and reached member agreement, through a consensus process, to develop a position. Complete lists of the positions for LWVUS, LWVMI and LWVLA are available on the respective websites. Through the years, LWVLA has responded to local policy concerns by utilizing League positions. In the 1950's, LWVLA was active in helping to shape the adoption of the Lansing City Charter and in a discussion about Meridian Township becoming a city. A group of members conducted an extensive local government study, emphasizing intergovernmental relations. That study resulted in an educational booklet and programs concerning the issue. In the 1960's, when hundreds of Lansing citizens were displaced as the I-496 freeway was being built, the League was active in efforts to develop suitable housing alternatives. Due to an active observer program in the 1970's, the League was instrumental in the development of a county solid waste plan. In 2013, a community forum was the launching point for building interest in the issue of redistricting. Currently, League members are encouraging the use of solar energy in various units of local government. To better inform the citizenry, the League sponsors community forums on current policy concerns such as Understanding Michigan's Schools of Choice, An Update on Recycling, the Connection between domestic violence and gun violence prevention. League program committees or workgroups have changed over the years. In the 1980's there was an active International Relations committee; presently there are three issue workgroups: education, environment and gun violence prevention.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS LEELANAU COUNTY

From what began as a discussion group, Leelanau County resident Kathy Turner formed the Leelanau County Unit of the League of Women Voters Grand Traverse Area in 2008. There were fifteen women in the group. By 2010, thirty-five people had joined the League with Vina Mikesell as president. By the spring of 2013 the Leelanau Unit grew to sixty members who then voted to become an independent League. On June 17, 2013 the Leelanau Unit became the 391st League in America. We were very fortunate that Vina Mikesell's steadfast leadership led to a League with a robust board, growing membership, multiple study committees and programs and events that the citizens of Leelanau responded to with enthusiasm.

The group received a grant from the LWVUS Ed Fund to register high school students for the 2014 election. Every year League members, accompanied by County Clerk staff, go to county high schools and other venues to register new voters. A highlight of the 2015 state convention was the adoption of the Leelanau League position on Seasonal/Migrant Workers for the entire state.

In the spring of 2016, a committee was formed to create a resolution to support efforts to shut down Pipeline 5 in the Straits of Mackinac. The resolution was presented to Leelanau County townships and villages by League members. All of the villages and six of the townships voted to forward the resolution to state officials. In the fall, six candidate forums were held for state, county and township offices. The LWVMI is now a member of the Oil and Water Don't Mix Coalition with LWVLC president Tricia Denton as the LWVMI representative.

Membership continues to grow at over 180 and our Annual Fund Campaign continues to be very successful. The LWVLC has five very active membership committees: Farm Labor Task Force, Early Childhood Needs and Services, Energy and Natural Resources, ERA Committee and Voter Services Committee, along with its other standing committees. Our Age Friendly committee was disbanded after successfully advocating for and helping to pass a countywide senior services millage.

In addition to our well attended monthly forums, special programs and regular presence in local media, we've had several notable achievements this year:

- Six members attended the LWVUS Convention in Chicago, where we held a caucus to support passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. A unanimous vote of the more than 1,000 delegates adopted our resolution as part of the official LWVUS Program.
- We, in partnership with the Leelanau County Democratic and Republican Parties, hosted a Voter Appreciation Open House attended by nearly 200 people – a first of its kind event in the nation.
- After LWVLC held 4 candidate forums, registered voters at 9 events, promoted voting rights initiatives and produced a local voter guide, Leelanau County recorded a 71% voter turnout, tops in the state!

Here is a sampling of the topics we offered this year during our monthly forums held September-July:

- Ballot Initiatives Explained
- Understanding and Preventing Substance Abuse in Leelanau County
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection Today
- Make Your Voice More Powerful – How To Be An Effective Advocate For Public Policy
- From Idea to Advocacy: How the LWV develops position and program
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – What Is It and What Can I do?
- Remembering Important Women Who Have Changed History That Time May Have Forgotten, But We Have Not
- The Promise of Early Childhood – What Children Need, What Parents Want and the Community's Role in Supporting Them

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MACOMB COUNTY MEMBER-AT-LARGE STATE UNIT

What began in the spring of 2015 with a handful of people meeting in a living room, and operating under the mentorship of the LWV Grosse Pointe, the LWV Macomb County has become an important provider of much needed, non-partisan voter education. Our group, now ~32 members strong, has attracted some very talented and dedicated individuals who work very hard to make our county better.

Early on we created a simple, but important, communication tool: a Gmail account! We wasted no time creating a data base containing the contact information of elected officials and began inviting them to our meetings and events. We learned how to conduct candidate forums by assisting the Grosse Pointe League with theirs. Back then, meetings were held twice a month at various locations in Macomb County. By the fall of 2015 we found ourselves conducting three LWVMI "Redistricting in Michigan" presentations at all three branches of the Clinton-Macomb Public Library.

In 2016 we found a home for our monthly meetings at the Mt. Clemens Public Library. We were able to spread our wings a bit by taking advantage of state league workshops, including how to moderate candidate forums. During March, we were fortunate to participate with the national league by assisting with the "Raise Your Voice" concert. The VOTE411 on-line voter guide was implemented for primary and general election races. Our outreach efforts included three candidate forums, assisting the LWVGP with the Regional Transit Authority initiative and developing a program and presenting to high school students, highlighting the history of voting rights. It was a busy year!

In 2017, we established a more defined leadership team for voter services and various committees. Still operating under the guidance of the LWVGP, our group was able to begin trying out these positions. While continuing with voter services activities, we began to infiltrate the community a bit more by establishing relationships with Macomb Community College (MCC), the Interfaith Center for Racial Justice, Yoga at the Hill, and showcase our league by participating in the Richmond Good Old Days Parade. We thank the LWVGP for enabling a few Macomb members to attend our first state convention that spring. By year's end we applied for and received Member-at-Large (MAL) status.

On our own a bit more now, the year 2018 brought new challenges. We held our first Annual Meeting and election of officers. MCC Students interns began fulfilling a political science requirement by working on various League projects. We continue to participate in monthly Member Leadership Development (MLD) calls. We're on Facebook (www.facebook.com/LWVMacombCounty) and have a website (www.lwvmacombcounty.org) . In addition, our VOTER newsletter was created and we hosted our first major fundraising attempt: The 1918 Tea. We invited the public to join us for a Saturday afternoon of coffee, tea, conversation and a presentation by author Elizabeth Homer, in honor of Michigan women earning the right to vote 100 years earlier. As 2019 dawns, we continue to learn and grow. Our relationships with local organizations, the media, elected officials, college and high school teachers and administrators continue to grow stronger. On March 12 we hosted "the VNP Story" featuring Katie Fahey, founder of *Voters Not Politicians*. Watch her presentation on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9p2YGMv4sE4>. The 1919 Tea is scheduled for April 27th and features a reenactment of WWI telephone operators. We also plan to participate in the Richmond Parade for the third straight year. We welcome all League members, statewide, to join us for this year's parade on Sunday, Sept. 8, 2019.

Covering the county is a challenging job. But, we are up to the task as we strive to provide the most trusted, non-partisan voter information to Macomb County residents!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MANISTEE COUNTY

In the spring of 2006, thirty women gathered at the Bear Lake Manor in Bear Lake to discuss forming a Manistee County League of Women Voters. This was in response to an invitation which was published in the Manistee News Advocate by a Bear Lake resident! Anne Magoun was there from the Traverse Area League, and she helped us to get the ball rolling, with fifteen women signing up and four volunteering to become the first officers.

So that was the beginning of our MAL unit. We began to participate in state and national League studies and to hold candidate forums while living on a mostly non-existent budget. Then in 2008 we enjoyed a joint 88th LWV birthday celebration and fund-raiser with the Grand Traverse Area League, marching together to the State Theatre to host a free public showing of "Iron-Jawed Angels." It was nice to have a little money, so we invited all of the elected officials and civic leaders in Manistee County to the League's 90th Anniversary Party—to help us celebrate, to thank them for their service, and to raise awareness that our League was there and expected to be a force!

We love holding informational programs and inviting the public so that they (and we) can get educated about the issues that concern us, such as Health Care, Water, Climate Change, Wind Energy, Re-districting, Elections and voting, Michigan prisons, Education, Immigration, etc. We hold our meetings now from 5-7 p.m. and serve refreshments to encourage people to come.

Nine years ago, we needed to get serious about fund-raising and holding Pictionary Olympics every spring did the trick for us! We are happy to share the details, but basically we invite about 12-15 teams of four people who compete in a fun game of Pictionary at one of the local country clubs. We encourage each team to dress up, we have refreshments and a cash bar, and everyone really has a great time! Cost is \$100 per team. During all this time we had the invaluable oversight of members of the State League, Christina Schlitt, Donna Hornberger, Judy McDowell, and others. It was ultimately suggested that, since we now had around 30 members and a source of income and were completing the studies, we might want to become a "real" League. So, with that encouragement, our talented and committed board members completed the process, and in 2012 we became official. It was truly an exciting moment for all of us!

We are three years into a voter registration program where our members go to all the high schools in Manistee County in spring to show the seniors a power point about the voting process. All the seniors then attend a showing of "Iron-Jawed Angels" at our local theatre and hand their voter registration forms directly to the county clerk.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARQUETTE COUNTY MEMBER-AT-LARGE STATE UNIT

Our story begins in 1968. On September 19, an organizational meeting led to the formation of the first provisional unit of the League in Marquette County. Starting with 46 charter members, the Marquette County LWV grew to over 100 members at its peak. During the next 38 years, the Marquette County LWV earned the respect of the public, local civic organizations and the media through its many projects: holding candidate forums, publishing printed voters' guides, conducting a study of school financing options, and hosting an exhibit at the Marquette Historical Society celebrating the women who helped lead the struggle for women's suffrage and the passage of the 19th Amendment.

But as their numbers dwindled, the remaining members found themselves unable to muster the time, energy and commitment required to carry out the League's core missions, and they reluctantly decided to disband in 2006.

Fast forward to 2017: the election of 2016 resulted in diverse individuals coming together looking to find new ways to put their beliefs into action. A small group decided that the time was ripe to reactivate a local unit of the LWV, and thus began the next chapter in our story. Under the patient, helpful tutelage of the group's mentors, the LWV of Delta County, the revitalized Marquette group began to organize, reach out to past – and new – members, and in July of 2017, held its first public information meeting. Less than two years later, the group achieved official Member-At-Large status on February 9, 2019.

In the short time since its official rebirth in 2017, the newly-minted LWVMI Marquette County Member-At-Large State Unit has undertaken a number of challenging projects: a 6-person candidate forum for seats on the City Commission in October, 2017; development of a power-point presentation on the history of the LWV (local and national); inauguration of our website; our first ever *vote411.org* voter guide, a practice run for the greatly-expanded *vote411.org* project for local and county-wide races in the 2018 election cycle; compilation and distribution of a printed Voters Guide published in collaboration with the Mining Journal; a major voter registration and get-out-the-vote drive, including presentations to five rural Marquette County high schools on National Voter Registration Day; participation in the annual Women's March and March for Our Lives and a visible presence at many other venues and activities; launch of the Observer Corps, with volunteers regularly attending City and County Commission meetings, Township and various school board meetings, among others; presentations by 12 trained League volunteers in 11 different venues educating the public about the 2018 ballot proposals; even a float in the Fourth of July Parade!

Our resurgence has garnered favorable coverage from all the local media, including numerous articles, editorials, letters to the editor, television and radio interviews and stories, press releases, and educational articles. The reputation of the LWV has made our work easier and contributed to our new-found success.

We are looking forward to another very busy year as the LWVMI celebrates its centennial and the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment and as we gear up for the 2020 elections. It has been a year and a half of learning, forging new relationships, mastering new skills, finding consensus, building bridges, and renewing our democratic values. Our next milestone is becoming an independent League, which we hope to accomplish within the next twelve months.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE MIDLAND AREA

The Midland Area League was started by a group of women from Church Women United in the fall of 1967. A well-attended exploratory meeting was held in the old City Hall and we agreed to form a provisional League with Margaret Berhenke as president. At that time, a provisional League was required to form a board, create a budget and, most importantly, do a study of the governmental jurisdictions we were covering, Midland City and County. The results of this study were written up by Rosemary Wilson and published in a booklet for distribution to newcomers in Midland.

We became a full-fledged League in 1969 with Pinkie Snow as our first president. One of our first local actions was to open up City Council and County Commissioners meetings to the public. Both groups were in the habit of holding pre-meeting conferences where issues were discussed and decided followed by *pro forma* meetings to ratify and make public these decisions. Julie Schmidt was one of the most active in enforcing the Open Meetings Act and it took some time before the groups were comfortable with observers.

As we attended County Commissioners' meetings, we found that an inordinate amount of time was spent on details such as the purchase of a typewriter, and we concluded that there should be a County Administrator to take care of such business. The Midland Chamber of Commerce also favored this action and that was one of our first collaborative efforts. We did, and still do, collaborate with a number of groups who share some of our goals including: AAUW for education, women's issues and school board candidates' forums, Chippewa Nature Center, Midland Recycler0000 to pass the Michigan bottle return bill and, most recently (2018), Promote the Vote and Voters Not Politicians to make voting more accessible and to create more equitable voting districts.

The founding members of the League were concerned with foreign policy and in the 70's established Great Decisions discussion groups based on material from the Foreign Policy Association. Currently we have 3 groups meeting 8 times in the late winter and spring to discuss different topics of concern, e.g. Global Migration, the Middle East, international trade, Geopolitics, etc.

One of our most productive collaborations has been with the local community TV channel, MCTV. This effort was due, in large part to Vivian LeVier who worked closely with Ron Beacom, the station manager. They not only broadcast candidates' forums starting in 1989 but also ran interviews with league members and guests. For a time, we even broadcast a local version of network election night coverage out of the city/county building, reporting precinct returns as they came in and interviewing available winners and losers of local elections.

We started our website in 1998 with gifts given in memory of Mary Dee Rieke, our second president, and it has become an increasingly important source of information to members and the public especially at election time.

Like all Leagues, we have changed our ways of operating. In early days most meetings were during the day with a baby sitter. Now, as more women are in the work force, meetings are fewer and scheduled in the evening. We do less of our own research, relying more on specialized committees. We depended on individual donors to balance our budget, making formal calls on likely prospects. Then for many years we worked with the local radio station to air public service announcements with taglines from sponsoring businesses. Now, like other Leagues we sell ads on our website and are still searching for reliable resources.

Looking back, we have done well at adapting to changing times and we will certainly need this skill in the future.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS MT. PLEASANT AREA

In September 1969 a group of bright, energetic women met together and organized a provisional League chapter. The provisional League was granted full League status in 1971. Within this time, League membership grew to nearly 100. This year, 2019, LWVMPA celebrates the 50th anniversary of its founding. These early members of League were highly active. A booklet which described the community, *Know Your Town* was published in 1971. This publication was followed in 1972 by *Know Your Schools*.

In its nearly 50 years of existence, LWVMPA has studied and come to consensus on such national issues as water and air pollution; campaign finance; arms control. State issues studied included taxation; K-12 education; land-use reform; and children and youth. The League also studied local issues, city charter revision; K-12 budgeting process; juvenile services; housing code; library organization; and local public transportation. Voter Service Activities have been a priority of the League.

Voter registration, candidate forums and Voter Guides have aided members of the community to become informed and active participants in our democracy.

League members have been and still are active members of the community, serving on boards, commissions and holding elective office. Founding members of the League who are currently active members are: Sarah Delia, Gail Mitchell, Marilyn Bidwell, Betty Clason, and Penny Swart.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF NORTHWEST WAYNE COUNTY

In July 1960, 35 women, then officially members of the Detroit League of Women Voters (LWV), received permission from the state and national offices to form the Provisional LWV of Livonia. The Livonia LWV was officially recognized as an independent League in 1962.

Under the leadership of its first president, Barbara LaRue, the Livonia League nearly doubled its membership, and proved that it was financially stable, politically non-partisan and that it possessed the leadership to provide a study in government according to League program as well as citizenship training in the areas of voter service. In addition, the Provisional LWV of Livonia fulfilled another important requirement for recognition with the preparation and publication of a comprehensive resource booklet on the city entitled This is Livonia.

Livonia was only a 10-year-old city when the LWV originated. Thanks to early League studies on Land Use, Livonia Public Schools, Wayne County Home Rule, Public Libraries, Public Recreation, and the City Charter, the League was able to use their positions to advocate for municipal improvements, school millages, and bond issues in Livonia. The LWV was a significant influence in the establishment of goals, policies and procedures of the young city. In the first 6 years of the League's existence, nine LWV members were elected or appointed to the school board or city commissions.

In 1998, LWV Livonia welcomed members of the Northville-Plymouth-Canton League, which had folded a year earlier. In 2001, the LWV of Livonia was re-named the LWV of Northwest Wayne County to more correctly identify the communities that it served: Livonia, Plymouth, Canton, Redford, Wayne, Garden City, Westland and Northville Township. In 2016, the NW Wayne County League agreed to mentor League members in the 3 Belleville communities as they progress to becoming an independent League. We have also had the privilege of working with other Leagues in the SE Michigan area on regional issues.

Over the years, voter service has been our strength. We are grateful for the volunteer work of so many LWV members who have helped provide LWV services for the greater good. Conducting our candidates forums with professionalism, inclusivity and in a non-partisan way, and producing voter education materials that are available to all voters has made our local League a trusted source of election information. We are proud that our forums and voter guides achieve record levels of candidate participation because we know that voters who have the opportunity to learn about all the candidates are educated voters. We do not take this earned respect lightly; we are committed to representing the League of Women Voters with integrity so that all voters can be participants in our democracy.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OAKLAND AREA

The League of Women Voters Oakland Area was organized in 1991 by the merger of the following Leagues (and their communities) in Oakland County: Birmingham/Bloomfield (Birmingham, Bloomfield Twp, Bloomfield Hills, Southfield Twp & its villages of Beverly Hills, Bingham Farms, Franklin); West Bloomfield/Farmington Area (West Bloomfield Twp, Farmington, Farmington Hills, Orchard Lake, Keego Harbor, Sylvan Lake); Southfield/Lathrup Village/Oak Park; Royal Oak Area (Royal Oak, Huntington Woods, Berkley, Pleasant Ridge, Clawson, Madison Hts); and West Oakland County (Milford Twp & Village, Lyon Twp, South Lyon, Highland Twp, Commerce Twp, Walled Lake, Wixom, Wolverine Lake Village). Members in the City of Novi which belonged to Northville/Plymouth/Canton/Novi League mainly in Wayne County, split off and moved to Oakland Area as did Northville's Oakland County members. Other Oakland County communities which were not in any League were also added to Oakland Area. In 2003, the LWV Rochester Area covering Rochester, Rochester Hills, Auburn Hills and Oakland Twp. joined OA, which now has 60 communities. Troy is the only county community not in OA.

Of Leagues in Michigan, Birmingham-Bloomfield organized in 1932 was the second League in the state. MI301 is our lucky number. In the early years of the League, there were grave organizational and communication problems between the three levels of League with local members having little input. It was not until the 1946 national convention that local Leagues were allowed to send voting delegates to the national convention. The purpose of the local Leagues was spelled out in new Bylaws and they were organized into the appropriate state League.

In 1939 anyone could vote in a Birmingham school election with voters being imported by the competing interests. The Birmingham LWV petitioned the Board of Education to require that voters be registered. League and PTA members canvassed neighborhoods to register voters. Between 1943 and 1945 the real voter service was done by the local Leagues although the first candidate forum had been held in the fall of 1932. The Leagues had worked in support of the 1963 Michigan Constitution as well as giving speeches and local support for the constitutional convention.

The individual LWVs which came together to form LWVOA were of various ages but had cooperated in the 1980's by holding monthly President's meetings and working jointly on various studies and petition drives. Our extensive position platform required two years of work to combine and accept local positions of the individual combining Leagues.

Local LWVs published "Know Your Community" booklets, raising funds to pay for printing and then distributing them to local libraries, municipal buildings, schools and real estate agents. We marched in local parades dressed as suffragettes. We studied sex education in public schools, local library funding, local and county forms of government, child labor and the U.N. We met each month sharing information with our members in terms of lectures, skits, and printed research. Our local studies also covered low income housing, group housing, local parks and recreation, education on local and state levels, noise pollution and abatement, zoning standards. We went to our elected representatives and legislative bodies to lobby on our positions.

The associated LWVs were involved in Get Out the Vote campaigns and OA still is. This year they registered voters at local colleges and HopCat venues, going to where young people socialized.

In our 28 years as a countywide League, we have served 60 communities and 27 school districts in the County. In 2018 election, we distributed 20,000 Voter Guides and held 19 candidate forums in various districts. Eight "*They Represent You*" pamphlets are published at least biennially.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SAGINAW COUNTY

The Saginaw County League of Women Voters was organized on September 28, 1919, a few months before the national LWV. A "Suffrage Booth" was set up at the Saginaw County Fair, and memberships were sold for fifty cents. There was tremendous interest in educating newly enfranchised women. Over 100 women joined. noted Michigan suffragist Ida Rust Macpherson, who spearheaded the efforts.

In the 1920's through 1940's, the LWVSC conducted a number of local studies, dealing with city government, school consolidation, etc. and voter education efforts remained strong.

In the 1950's, interest in local issues remained strong, but the League's focused broadened to international topics like world trade and the United Nations. They also undertook an extensive study of Saginaw's housing conditions which angered local landlords.

Like many Leagues in Michigan, LWVSC members focused much of their efforts to encourage Michigan to have a Constitutional Convention. The statewide campaigns of 1948 and 1957 failed, but ConCon finally convened in 1962.

1962 was a busy year! The League undertook two important local studies: they supported the change in city government to a council/city manager system and they election of councilors at large rather than the ward system. Both form the basis of Saginaw government today.

The LWVSC has always maintained a strong focus on voter service. The LWV started a partnership with Delta College in 1962 to televise forums with Michigan Senate and House candidates which lasted until the 1990's. A longstanding partnership with The Saginaw News to print thousands of copies of the Voter Guide ended in 2007.

Recently the LWVSC has concentrated on voter service activities. For the past decade the LWV has partnered with the Birth To 5 Program to sponsor voter information nights (we supply info and the snacks) to educate young parents and encourage them to vote. SGTV is our partner to televise Saginaw City Council candidate forums and put them on You Tube. We partnered with local Hispanic organizations and an artists collective to sponsor a day long "Rock the Vote" get out the vote concert. Hundreds of people attended. The NAACP is always a valued partner for numerous forums and events.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TROY AREA

In the early 70s, the city of Troy was starting to grow dramatically and several of the women who moved into town were thinking about establishing a local League of Women Voters. Sarah Torrace, with much League experience, became our provisional president. The first organizational meeting was March 1, 1972. Our last remaining original member, Andrea Arends, has a notation in her calendar that the first board meeting was on October 23, 1972.

The LWV Troy was chartered in 1974. Joanne Hubbard was the first president. Several years later, Joanne went on to be the first woman elected to Troy City Council. Another early member, Sue Watson, became the first woman on the Troy School Board. In the late 70's the Troy League enjoyed a large membership. We hosted the LWV Michigan convention at the Renaissance Center. During this time most of the female elected officials and members of boards were League members.

In the late 80's, changing times greatly reduced the time women had available to join the League. All the other Leagues in Oakland County merged. The Troy League, however, continued and actually expanded, to become LWV Troy Area. This allowed the Troy League to concentrate on the Troy civic arena.

The last few years have seen a demise of many nonpartisan political groups, to the point where local papers have commented "League is the only nonpartisan game in town".

We are a small group of very busy people, and citizens know us best for our main outreach: to educate the voters in a nonpartisan way through candidate's nights, *Voter Guides*, VOTE411.org, *They Represent You* brochures, and voter registration, including our signature event: the yearly new citizen's reception and registering to vote; natural resources; and education. All of our meetings are open to the public and we are open to men and women citizens of voting age. We're continuing our League to honor those courageous women who started the League in 1920. You are welcome to visit us at www.lwvtroyarea.org.