League of Women Voters
Of the Oneonta Area ~ Bulletin

PO Box 434, Oneonta NY 13820 ~ (607) 436-4050 ~ www.lwvoteonta.org

May 2005

Annual Dinner Program May 24th
Susan B. Anthony & Pay Equity
Featuring Otsego Town Historian Tom Heitz

Susan B. Anthony visited Cooperstown in 1855, and returned to Otsego County in 1894. Tom Heitz, a retired librarian and Cooperstown LWV member has discovered contemporary newspaper accounts of the famous suffragette’s visit and the local response. Heitz will share some of what he’s found – including an 1855 draft resolution calling for pay equity, sermons opposing women’s rights and conservative 19th century editorials in a special presentation at LWV-Oneonta’s annual dinner on May 24 at lanelli’s Restaurant.

Equal pay for equal work – is it still a radical idea? We’ll reflect on this issue as we look back on how women’s rights have evolved. We’ll also see how the League of Women Voters and our own local League has become a force for empowering both women and men to participate in their democracy.

Heitz’s program also features period suffrage music, illustrating the ironic humor and cultural thrust of the suffrage movement. This is not the year to miss our annual dinner, as LWV Oneonta celebrates 40 years. Our annual business meeting will follow the dinner and presentation; Members can find the proposed budget, program, and Board nominations in last month’s Bulletin. Dinner reservations and payment are due by May 16th – see the form on page 8. ♠

Oneonta High School essayists attend statewide conference

Sara Sason, an Oneonta High School junior, was the winner of this year’s local essay contest. She received a $100 scholarship awarded in memory of longtime Oneonta LWV leader Fran Waddington. Sara and John Pontius, also an OHS junior, were selected to attend the New York State League’s Students Inside Albany Conference, which was held on April 3-6.

Both Sarah and John reported back afterwards—they were enthusiastic about their experiences and quite appreciative for the opportunity. The following article is digested from the thoughtfully written accounts submitted by Sara and John after the conference.

The SIA conference participants were twenty-six high (Continued on page 4)

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FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK:
Dear Members and Friends of the League,

Time for our Annual Meeting and Dinner and I sincerely hope you have it on your calendar so you can help us celebrate the 40th Birthday of our chapter here in Oneonta. Any Past Presidents who are still in this area are especially welcomed. Of course, several of them are currently on the Board of Directors and active in other areas as well. It will be a privilege for me to honor you on May 24th.

We had a very informative meeting in April on current health issues as well as the newest in electronic home health care. Cathy LaFontaine, Judith Sweet and Laurie Neander presented some new and interesting facts on the latest news about Medicare and the care for those who are in need at home. Also, check out Cathy’s information in this issue on the walk/rally for health coming up in mid June. She’ll need lots of volunteers, so this will be a great opportunity to become involved.

I was happy to meet several of our new members at two orientation meetings held at the home of Kay Stulgross. Only by being informed can you truly realize all that we do and what are the possibilities when you say you are a member of the League of Women Voters. Whatever your interests, there is a place for you in our organization. BECOME INVOLVED.

It has truly been a privilege to serve as your president these past two years. You will be hearing more from me as I take over some of the duties of Membership Director. There are several areas of interest for me and I hope to pursue at least one other along with the above. See you on the 24th!

Maggie Winne☆

Upcoming LWV Events

Tues. May 17
Oneonta City School District Election
Polls open Noon to 9pm.

Fri. May 20 – Sun. May 22
LWV NYS Convention
At Desmond Hotel in Albany – Members interested in attending as an observer or volunteer contact Maggie Winne at 432-6206.

Tues. May 24
LWV Oneonta Annual Meeting and Dinner
Gannelli’s Restaurant, 6pm
(See reservation form on page 8)

Tues. June 14
Walk for Health Care Reform
Participants in Oneonta – contact Cathy LaFontaine for details- 432-1125

Wed. Sept. 13
Regional Meeting in the Albany area
emphasizing networking
Details TBA

Wed. Nov. 16
Annual UN Briefing – Status of Democracy: Iraq and Afghanistan
More info TBA see www.lwvny.org

LWV of the Oneonta Area - Officers & Board of Directors
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The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization whose purpose is to encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government. The LWV does not support or oppose candidates or political parties, but does support or oppose issues after study and member agreement. Membership is open to all men and women of voting age.

The LWV Oneonta Bulletin is published 10 times per year for members and friends. ☆
Healthcare Presentation Recap

A small group turned out for the spring membership meeting on health care on April 26. Presenters Judith Sweet, R.N. and Catherine A. LaFontaine, LWV Board Member covered several aspects of healthcare in the United States today. Included were updates on Medicare and Medicaid, prescription drugs, the Modernization Act of 2003 and the rising costs attached to healthcare services. Catherine also offered background information on Medicare, outlining changes in the program from its beginnings in 1965 to today.

Additionally, LaFontaine discussed some current healthcare problems and possible solutions. For example, universal health care would reduce the high costs associated with the multi-payer system currently used in the United States, offering a more equitable and affordable health care system for all. LaFontaine pointed out several healthcare reform portions of the newly adopted New York State 2005-06 budget, including: a plan to reform the Medicaid system to provide increased investments in community-based programs, including a two-year $25 million increase in the Expanded In-Home Services for the Elderly Program (EISEP), and a new $10 million “Access to Home” program to help elderly individuals remain healthy and independent.

Catherine included a plug for changes to improve the U.S. healthcare system: “What we need is a more accessible, equitable and affordable system for all.” Grassroots organizations are forming, at the local, state and federal levels. The new Secretary of Health and Human Services, Michael O. Levitt, is leading a newly formed American Citizens’ Health Care Working Group, appointed by the U.S. Comptroller General, David M. Walker, who heads the Government Accountability Office. This group will begin a national dialogue on healthcare issues this year. LaFontaine noted that this information comes from the Institute for Health Freedom in Washington, D.C. Some have referred to this initiative as the “blueprint for universal health care in the United States”.

Next, the audience turned its attention to Judith Sweet, who demonstrated the new Telehealth in-home monitoring system. Judith’s employer, At Home Care, Inc. of Oneonta, has obtained an initial ten monitors through a grant. Sweet demonstrated the equipment for the audience with the assistance of an At Home Care, Inc staff nurse and volunteer “patient” Bette Wagner.

The new monitoring system provides an innovative, efficient and cost-saving method of home care delivery especially in a rural area like upstate NY. The monitor works by a simple dial-up phone line method which brings up a computer-like viewing screen that monitors the interaction between the nurse in the office, and the patient in his/her home. The system’s equipment records that patient’s vital signs with the assistance of the nurse. For example, the patient assists the nurse by attaching a device such as a blood pressure cuff that monitors his/her own blood pressure. The monitoring system also includes readings for oxygenation levels, weight, and glucose testing.

Judith explained that early identification of a problem enables the Telehealth nurse to interact with the patient’s physician to develop a treatment plan. This in turn often results avoiding a trip to the emergency room or a re-hospitalization for the patient. In addition, by performing “virtual nursing visits”, those nurses who are out in the field can be utilized more productively. This new method of rural healthcare delivery leads to more efficient, less costly care. Telehealth services are currently in place for residents of Otsego, Delaware, Herkimer and Schoharie Counties.

Welcome New Member:
Julie Pollak
7 Gardner Place, Oneonta
432-1650
school students from all over NY State. After their arrival and some getting acquainted time on Sunday afternoon, they heard from Melissa Mangino about the Campaign for Fiscal Equity. This presentation sparked discussion among the conference participants about problems at their home school districts and how they might be addressed. Both Sara and John admitted that after hearing of conditions at some other schools, they felt a greater appreciation for OHS.

On Monday, the students attended several lectures. The first addressed open government. Later a panel of lobbyists explained their roles: one lobbyist represented a single-issue organization, one was from the NY Public Interest Research Group, and one was a “hired gun”.

Two legislative interns joined the students for lunch. Sara writes, “This lunch was one of the better parts of the day. The intern who sat at my table was from Ireland, so we not only got to see how a college student found the capital, but also how an international student found it.”

After lunch the students spent a couple of hours shadowing their Assemblyman. Sara and John spend time with Bill Magee, discussing local issues including Indian land claims. While accompanying Assemblyman Magee as he attended to various duties, they also got to meet Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, and visit the assembly chamber.

After a tour of the Capital building, the conference participants were treated to dinner and some socializing and “playtime” at Jillian’s Restaurant and arcade.

On Tuesday, the group heard from LWVNY’s lobbyist Barbara Bartoletti’s high school intern Melanie Rockefeller. She told them about her experiences lobbying for a sex education requirements bill. The next speaker was Laura Noeker, the Staff Development Program Administrator for CSEA, who spoke about the history and impact of unions. Sara found this topic quite interesting, as she’d recently written an article for the school paper about the Oneonta district’s clash with the teacher’s union over health care benefits.

After lunch, the students shadowed their state senators. Sara and John had an opportunity to talk with Senator Jim Seward, and observed him meeting with constituents. “After all the lecturing about lobbying, we finally got to see it in person,” Sara commented. They were also able to observe a meeting of the Rules Committee and a debate over legislation in the Senate Chamber. John said, “Spending two whole days in the State Capitol Building made our government process understandable and come to life.”

Tuesday evening, a panel of media representatives discussed their perspectives on government censorship. The students stayed in Albany for one more evening and departed on Wednesday.

Sara found that her SIA conference experience enhanced her awareness and appreciation of some of the issues and responsibilities she’s faced in her work on the school newspaper “I would once again like to thank you for making this possible for me. The friends I met, the information I learned, the events I experienced, it was all so amazing and I wouldn’t trade this opportunity for the world.”

John reports that this experience “has encouraged me to locate an internship program for this summer that is involved with local government, and eventually pursue a career in politics… Thank you for making this memorable conference possible. I realize the activities that I participate in now, such as school representative for the student council and as an editor on the school newspaper, paper staff, are preparing me for further involvement in our democratic process.”
Walk for Health Care Reform is coming to town June 14

The Tompkins County Health Care Task Force is planning a walk for health care reform in New York and nationwide. The group is planning to start the walk in Kingston and walk to Jamestown, holding rallies or town meetings in towns along the way. So far, the planned route will be Kingston to Delhi, Oneonta, Norwich, Cortland, Ithaca, Watkins Glen, Elmira, Corning, Bath, Hornell, Cuba, Olean, Salamanca, and Jamestown. They’ll then take a bus back to Owego, walk to Binghamton, bus back to Ithaca and walk to Auburn, Waterloo and Geneva.

It’s an ambitious undertaking, but a needed one. The group plans to start the second week of June and walk until they drop! I am the contact person here in Oneonta who will assist in organizing for their visit here in Oneonta. At this point, the walkers plan to be in Oneonta on June 14th. They’ve asked for overnight accommodations for three members to stay overnight. Several LWV of Oneonta members have already volunteered rooms in their homes.

I plan to send out updates as I get more details on the walking group’s itinerary. If anyone has suggestions or ideas for their visit here in Oneonta, please pass them on so we can do the planning. My home phone number is (607) 431-1125, e-mail address is lafontca@dmcom.net. Thank you for your input for this very timely and important event!

Cathy LaFontaine ☆

Why Three Levels of League?

Here in Oneonta, we keep busy monitoring and supporting citizen participation in government. Our bulletin is full of candidate meeting information and notices of informational programs on such vital topics as health care, the death penalty, local government and upcoming lobbying and road clearing activities.

Yet, when we read our local League’s amended budget which we’ll vote on at the Annual Meeting this month, we see that our anticipated dues income totals $4000 but our dues to LWVNY and LWVUS total $4180. Is it worth belonging to those organizations?

Yes - a resounding yes! Both the State and National Leagues provide valuable leadership training materials and meetings, which help us right here in Oneonta. When a study is underway on either the State or National level, we receive information and guidance that allows us to conduct a valid study and then reach a position which takes all sides into consideration.

More than that, both LWVNY and LWVUS provide clout and visibility as they lobby in Albany and Washington D.C., for or against legislation guided by the positions we’ve reached. State and national LWV representatives also testify in hearings and committee meetings as legislation is being drafted.

A look at the web sites, LWVNY.ORG and LWV.ORG, reveals the breadth and depth of activities and resources that these levels of League encompass. To access the member section of the national site, use the password: LWV and the ID carried on your key fob. You’ll find current action, ongoing studies, history of past action and more here. You can also sign up for action calls, which would come to you via e-mail. Contacting your representatives that way is quick and easy.

Here in Oneonta, we’ve deliberately kept our dues low so that cost will not deter anyone from membership. We also provide partial scholarships for those for whom $40 so heavy a burden. We rely, therefore, on the generous contributions of our members and the community to meet the dues shortfall and to finance our many activities during the year. ☆
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Oneonta City School District
Annual School Election
May 17, 2005
Polls open 12:00 Noon - 9:00 P.M.
Polling Places listed on www.lwvoteonta.org
and/or www.oneontacsd.org

Voting on:
1) Two Seats on the Board of Education, 3-yr terms:
Candidates are Martha Stayton and Anne Payne
2) Annual School Budget:
Copies of the budget can be found at Huntington
Library, all Oneonta City schools, the Oneonta City
Post Office and Oneonta Town Hall.
3) Proposition to replace two school buses

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www.lwvnj.org

LWV of the Oneonta Area
Annual Dinner Reservation Form & Membership Dues 2005-06*

Name(s) ____________________________________________________________
Address ____________________________________________________________

Phone ___________________________ Email _____________________________

Individual Dues ($40) $ __________________

Additional Household member ($20) $ __________________

Annual Dinner Buffet [Name(s) of Dinner guest(s): ______________________]
(_ people @ $20 each) $ __________________

Additional Contribution to
LWV Oneonta
(NOT Tax-deductible) $ __________________

Total (payable to LWV Oneonta) $ __________________

Tax-deductible contribution to
The Education Foundation $ __________________
(Make separate check payable to Oneonta LWV EF)

Please return form and payment to:
Kay Stuligross
10 Walnut Street
Oneonta, NY 13820
by May 16th
Questions? Call 432-6974

*The Oneonta League year is June to June. If you paid your dues anytime during
2004, your dues are now due. ($40 and perhaps a contribution). However, if you
joined after Jan. 1, 2005, your dues are paid until next spring.