Fall dinner a memorable night

About 65 Leaguers and their guests gathered Sept. 28 to enjoy tasty surprises, renew friendships and make plans for the coming year at our fall membership potluck. After dinner, we honored one of our own, Peg Hathaway, and enjoyed a rousing talk by Kay Maxwell, President of the League of Women Voters of the United States.

Peg Hathaway personifies the League of Women Voters in our community and across the state. A founding member of our local League, Peg has served in many capacities on the board, including three terms as president, over more than thirty years of service. Currently she is Action Chair and Publicity Director. During her three terms on the LWV-NYS Board of Directors, Peg served twice on the State nominating committee and organized state-wide voter service. In honor of her dedicated service, Margaret “Peg” Hathaway’s name will appear on a plaque alongside those of other exceptional League leaders in New York State. This plaque will reside at the state League office in Albany, and be displayed at state conventions. Her reaction to this surprise recognition left her “stunned and humbled.” [see profile on p 8] Kay Maxwell’s presentation was assured and informative. Touring the nation in a get out the vote effort, she has been traveling since Labor Day and will continue until the election, talking with election officials, concerned citizens and local Leagues. When we learned the planned topic for her talk, “5 things every voter needs to know on election day”, many wondered “What on earth she could say that informed members of the League don’t already know?”

Always gracious, Ms Maxwell’s indignation seeped through as she talked about the importance of voting. She referred to the recently released HBO movie, Iron Jawed Angels, which (continued on p. 3)
Upcoming LWV Events

Mon. Oct 11 – LWV Oneonta Board Meeting*  
Maggie Winne’s home, 7pm, 432-6206
Sat. Oct 23 – New Member Orientation 10  
Walnut St, 10am
Tue. Oct 26 – Candidate Forum  
Morris Hall, SUNY Oneonta, 7-9pm
Thu. Nov 4 – Adopt-a-Highway  
Denny’s, 8am
Mon. Nov 8 – LWV Oneonta Board Meeting*  
Tue. Nov 16 – Consensus Meeting on Death  
Penalty Study 7pm
Paul & Sarah Patterson’s residence, 40 Elm St. 3-5pm

*All board meetings are open to any member, please call for info/directions.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

LWV has Op-Ed series in Daily Star

Each Saturday in October, the Daily Star newspaper Commentary section will feature a column written by local League members. We are very excited about this opportunity for outreach, voter service, and issue advocacy. Karen Geasey, Pat Gourlay, Peg Hathaway, Barb Hein and Kay Stuligross are the committee working on this project. In addition to (hopefully) motivational information about voting rights and procedures on Oct 5 and 30, we plan to address health care, the economy and civil liberties on the intervening weekends. ★

From the President's Desk

What can the League of Women Voters do for you this year and what can you do for the League? I hope you’ve filled out your Information Form for our Membership Director, Kay Stuligross. If not, find it in your last Bulletin and take a look. There are many ways to help make this organization a vital part of the community - it can only be done with all of your help.

Thanks to Karen Geasey and her voter service volunteers, our Voter Registration efforts have been very successful. The LWV was spotted at several locations around Oneonta in September. We provided registration assistance to nearly 300 people – most of them first-time voters! Volunteers are still needed for the candidate forum on Oct. 26th – call Karen today and ask how you can help.

Lucille Wiggin is looking for a few good hands to help with highway cleanup on Nov. 4.

Along with the above activities, is there Local, State, or National issue you’d like to pursue? Your new membership booklet lists LWV positions. Pick out something of particular interest and let me hear from you on how you can get more involved.

Thank you all for renewing your membership this year and a big Welcome to our new members. Board meetings are open to all. Come and see what we are doing and give us your input. The next one will be October 11 at my home - 3 Handsome Ave.

Enjoy this beautiful fall weather and support our advertisers who support us.

Maggie Winne ★

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The LWV Oneonta Bulletin is published ten times per year for members and friends.  
Contributions and constructive criticism are welcome – contact the Editor at babalu17@dmcom.net or call 433-8807.
dramatized the struggle for women's right to vote in the early 20th century. Carrie Catt, a pioneer for women's rights and the founder of the League of Women Voters, inspired a younger generation of suffragettes. Some of the latter group adopted more militant tactics than Catt, Susan B. Anthony and other early leaders. They spoke out publicly, organized parades and picketed the White House during wartime to draw attention to the hypocrisy of denying full citizenship to American women. As a result, they suffered abuse and imprisonment, but eventually won their struggle for the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. And some of us don’t vote because it’s raining or we plan to take the children to dance lessons!

Since voter registration is essential to participation, she updated us about the impact of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), and described how it is working across the nation. The LWV supported the adoption of HAVA and its provisions which promote access to voting rights.

Closing with the five things voters need to know, she explained that if a voter’s name doesn’t appear on the registration list at the polls, he/she should ask for a provisional ballot. These ballots will later be checked against registration lists for accuracy, but the voter will not be turned away. As we know, New York has had provisional ballots for many years, but often they are not counted for one reason or another. "Every qualified vote must count," averred Ms. Maxwell.

New voters should come prepared with identification. All voters should read the signs with directions on how to use voting machines, a list of voting rights, and instructions for filing a complaint if their rights have been violated. Poll workers are there to help - so if you have a question, ask.

Not sure if you are registered? Call the board of election ahead of time to find out and to learn your polling place. Be patient. If the line is long, wait. Better yet, try to come during off-hours. Bring a friend. Every vote is important.

Hearing the national leader of our organization was a treat for us, but her message went beyond our group...
STUDY UPDATE:  
THE DEATH PENALTY IN NY STATE

The committee continues our study and preparation for the membership consensus meeting on Tuesday, November 16th. We are using the NY State League’s booklet on Capital Punishment in NY State, issued in July, 2004 as a resource. The following is an excerpt from the latter pamphlet: Human Rights Aspect of State Killing.

THE HUMAN RIGHTS ASPECT OF STATE KILLING

More than half the world’s countries have abolished the death penalty and only a handful of those with the death penalty apply it frequently. Only China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia are known to have executed more prisoners than the United States in 1997. Also in 1997, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights passed a resolution calling for all states with capital punishment to consider suspending executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty. In April 1998, the Commission released a report condemning the application of the death penalty in the United States. (CQ Press, 2002) Organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch continue to work for abolition of the death penalty worldwide.

Polls have shown that supporters and opponents of the death penalty are most concerned about the moral question. Is capital punishment the right thing to do, even if it has some unfortunate side effects? Breslin and Karp (2003) cited a poll showing that the reason given most frequently (by 60% of those polled) for support of the death penalty is retribution. According to Breslin and Karp, “The retributive perspective is the dominant theme of our society’s justice system. It is based on the belief that accountability should be measured on a scale of proportional punishment - a light sentence for a minor crime and the ‘ultimate’ for the worst crimes.” In this way “we affirm society’s standards, even if it is costly, even if we make occasional errors.”

Opponents of the death penalty argue that the State should not play the role of executioner. The Bartlett Commission established by Governor Rockefeller in 1965, which called for the abolition of the death penalty in New York, stated “The execution of the death penalty calls inescapably upon the agents of the State to perpetrate an act of supreme violence under circumstance of the greatest cruelty to the individual involved.” (Christianson, 2003) Proponents argue that people who murder deserve to die for their crimes. Further, they argue that the only way to prevent a murderer from killing again is to execute him or her.

Professor Franklin Zimring argues that the issue should be reframed from one of criminal justice policy to a matter of fundamental limits on state power. Thus the issue would be moved outside the ordinary scope of criminal justice concerns. (Zimring: 2003)

Does the death penalty give closure to the family of the victim? In recent years, the use of the word closure, as it applies to the death penalty, has taken on a special meaning for the families of victims in capital murder cases. As defined by Margaret Vandiver, “At its best it has come to mean “a turning point in the process of grieving beyond which survivors are able to feel more in control of their lives and better able to face the future.” (Acker et al., 2003:622) Many victim families have expressed the hope that the execution of the murderer of their family member would bring them closure. Many feel that execution of their family member’s murderer is the only way that justice will be served. In other cases, however, particularly for family members who are anti-death penalty, the execution has only brought continued pain. “As a relative of one of Timothy McVeigh’s victims said, ‘The only closure I’m going to have is when they close the lid on my casket.’ ” (Acker et al., 2003:622)

The very process of seeking the death penalty in capital cases prolongs the family members’ exposure to the legal system. Appeals in death penalty cases often go on for many years. At each juncture of the process, family members face anew a flurry of interest from the courts and the media along with pictures and details of their loved one’s death, all of which is extremely painful.

CONCLUSION

From reviewing arguments on both sides of this issue, it probably is safe to say that consensus in the United States or New York State will not be easily achieved in the near future. But so long as there are homicides with offenders on death row and homicide victim families, citizens cannot ignore the issue. Should the ultimate penalty of death be an option in the New York State criminal justice system? If so, are there improvements needed in the law? Or should we abolish this punishment in favor of life without parole or another sentence?

More information is available on the website www.lwvny.org. We are also planning showings of the video The Empty Chair at various locations in the community. Watch for news of this. ☆
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Voter Service Update

It's been a very busy voter registration season! We have successfully helped hundreds of first-time voters to register, and instructed many others on the procedure for voting by absentee ballot. League volunteers registered SUCO students at a table in the student union, at an evening Multicultural workshop, and at the campus' Exploration 2004 event. More than 180 SUCO students were registered to vote, either in Oneonta, or via absentee ballot in their hometown districts. Another 35 people registered at our outreach tables during the Grand and Glorious Garage Sale and the Oneonta Peace festival. It appears that the citizens are very motivated this year!

Other LWV volunteers assisted more than 40 students at the Utica School of Commerce and Oneonta Job Corps to register. Students from Laurel Elder’s Political Science classes assisted 30 other Hartwick students with registration and absentee ballot applications. Thanks to Bette Wagner, Lucille Wiggin, Maggie Winne, Barb Hein, Dorothy Bloom, Dennis Shea, Annette Lindell, Bunny Joseph and Cathy Lafontaine for helping out.

We held a Candidates’ Debate on Wed., Sept. 8 from 7:00-7:30 at SUCO’s IRC television Studio between Charles Hobbib and Rudolph Laguna, Democratic Primary candidates for District #13 seat on the Otsego County Board of Representatives. Thanks to Bob Holstead for timing the candidates and Maggie Winne for answering the telephones.

We have a Candidates’ Forum scheduled for Tuesday, October 26 to be held at the Craven Lounge in Morris Hall at the SUNY Oneonta campus. Candidates for the 24th Congressional District are scheduled for 7:00pm -8:20pm and the candidates for the 13th District for the Otsego County Board of Representatives are scheduled for 8:20-9:00pm. Join the audience at Morris Hall or watch on Time Warner channel 23 – you can call in your own questions for the candidates. We are looking forward to working with the Political Science Clubs at Hartwick and SUNY Oneonta in Get Out the Vote efforts as the election draws near.

Our League website, www.lwvoneonta.org has been updated to include the registration deadlines for this election season, including absentee ballot information. It has a link to DNet, www.dnet.org, a good, user-friendly site for voters to become better informed on candidates and issues. There is a link to the polling places for Oneonta on our website under the Voter Registration and Citizen Information page.

Thanks again to all who helped make this year’s voter service activities very productive. We got a lot of positive feedback for our efforts and the visibility helps get others interested in our organization.

Karen Geasey, Voter Service Director
432-8158

New Voters Guide

This fall, your State League is producing a “Voters Guide” to replace the old “Facts for Voters.” It will have a new, colorful look in a newspaper-like tabloid format. In addition to the familiar information on registration, voting, absentee voting, political calendar deadlines, and statewide ballot proposals, the Guide will include information on candidates for US President, US Senate, and Congress. Copies will be mailed to all League members.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Welcome new members:
Cheryl Carter Lipari and Michael Lipari
Alice Kelly
Dorothy Oatman

and returning members:
Shirley Van Cott
Kevin Hodne

CORRECTION to membership roster:
Katie Kotz’ email address is kkotz@stny.rr.com

Please update your membership roster!
LWV New (and not-so-new)
Member Orientation is Oct 23

Do you wonder how the three levels of League (local, state and national) fit together? What do we mean by consensus? Is the League all work and no play? Come to the Orientation Meeting on Saturday October 23, 10 a.m. at 10 Walnut St., and find out.

This meeting is designed to give new members an introduction to this broad organization they've joined, but returning members, anyone who hasn't attend an orientation in the past, and long term members are welcome too. Indeed, questions and comments by not-so-new members enrich the discussion.

If possible, let me know you plan to come. However, if you decide that morning that you'd like to join us, please do so.

Kay Stuligross
Membership Chair
432-6974

Meet the Board of Directors
Each month this column profiles one or more of our local League leaders. This month we'll get to know one of LWV Oneonta's All-Stars!

Peg Hathaway

She's held every position in the lineup at one time or another, and whatever her official role, Peg's always personified the LWV's mission and ideals. Her nonpartisan, articulate and reflective approach sets a high standard for our organization.

Peg first became involved in the local LWV in 1958, when she was a stay-at-home mom. She credits "a convincing friend" with inviting her to a meeting, and she assumed the job of Bulletin Editor almost immediately. Unfortunately, that first local group, populated by many young moms, dissolved within a few years, but a strong core of original members (including Peg) revived the LWV of the Oneonta Area in 1965.

By that time, Peg had four children, ages 2 to 11. In 1969, she began a 20-year career teaching art at Laurens Central School. Still, she remained passionately committed to the work of the League—promoting citizen awareness and participation in government. Her consistently outstanding service on our Board of Directors, as President (on three separate occasions), Voter Service Chair, Public Relations Chair, Action Chair and Study Chair is no small reason for the Oneonta LWV's continued strength and success after nearly 40 years.

Peg has also shared her enthusiasm and skills with the Statewide LWV—as Voter Service Chair for the LWVNY Board of Directors from May 1997 to 2003, she oversaw the publication of "First Vote," an attractive, user-friendly guide to registration and voting procedures for new voters in NY state.

An accomplished watercolor artist, Peg also serves on the board of the Upper Catskill Community Council on the Arts and the Steering Committee for Oneonta's Unitarian Universalist Society. Her hobbies include reading, birdwatching, and enjoying her four granddaughters. 🌟