

GREENWICH VOTER

www.lwvg.org



JANUARY 2016

Message From the Steering Committee

Dear Friends,

This past fall was a busy time for the LWVG. The League sponsored and moderated debates between candidates for all our local elections. We again published our well-received *Voter's Guide* in the *Greenwich Time* and in our town's new *Greenwich Sentinel*. Our educational programs were well attended and included our popular "Cocktails and Conversation" with State Representative Caroline Simmons and another related to the United Nations focus on "The Year of the Soil."

Of special interest to our members was the launch of our new website, which uses a new National LWV and State LWV platform. Another item of interest is our newly revised publication *How to Run for Greenwich Elective and Appointive Offices*. Many LWVG members also saw the movie *Suffragette* which was playing at the Avon Theater. It dramatized the movement in England as women struggled to obtain the right to vote. The League also celebrated the town's 375th anniversary with a representative group marching in the parade. With respect to Advocacy, we contacted our State Representatives to vote against defunding the Citizen Election Program, which was in danger of being abolished to help

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The League of Women Voters of Greenwich *invites you to...*

"Cocktails and Conversation" with Greenwich's New Town Administrator Benjamin Branyan

Mr. Branyan is responsible for the daily operations of all Greenwich Town Departments that are under the supervision of the First Selectman. These include Police, Fire, Parks and Recreation, Parking Services, and more. We look forward to his comments on the operation of the Town, followed by Q&A.

Thursday
January 14, 2016
6:45 - 8:15 PM

The Belle Haven Club
100 Harbor Drive, Greenwich, CT

Cash Bar

Guests of Members Welcome

Please RSVP to Jill Oberlander at JillKOberlander@gmail.com or 917-685-0181.

★★★ MEMBER MEETING ★★★

PROGRAM PLANNING NATIONAL AND LOCAL POSITIONS

Wednesday, February 17 at 7:00pm

Dessert and Coffee
at the home of Anne Maletta
60 Butternut Hollow Road, Greenwich

RSVP: Anne Maletta 203-629-6050 or mal7669@gmail.com
Please specify if you are able to contribute a dessert.

This is your chance to affect the course of the advocacy, programs, and priorities for our local League, as well as provide input on LWVUS program planning. Local League positions will be reviewed to affirm their active or archived status. Affordable Housing and Water have been the 2014-2015 Active Positions at the local level.

***Don't miss this opportunity to influence your League's action
at home and nationally. We hope to see you there!***

League of Women Voters of Greenwich 2015-2016 Board of Officers and Directors

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Deirdre Kamlani 203-862-4055

Steering Committee *continued*

close the budget gap. Fortunately, funding was continued for the Program. Many members also attended the State League's workshops on Voter Fraud and Voter Suppression "Myths and Realities."

As we move into the new year, we look forward to our annual Program Planning meeting February 17th and to learning about the results of our ongoing study on the RTM. Some members will be attending the National League's Convention in Washington DC in June, and we hope to see everyone at our Annual Dinner on June 1st.

We are grateful for all the hardworking volunteers who make the LWVG work, and we wish you all a healthy and productive New Year.

Caroline Adkins, Cyndy Anderson and Jara Burnett

RTM Study Update

The LWVG RTM Study is proceeding on schedule. A dedicated committee has read through open-ended surveys of RTM members, former members, district chairs and committee chairs. The First Selectman, Selectmen, and former First Selectmen have been interviewed, along with the Board of Education members, BET members, Town officials, members of several boards and commissions, and the Town Clerk. Thanks to committee member Andy Duus, the voluminous information has been annotated, and the first draft of an extensive document is being reviewed. The committee members are Anne Wichman, Chair; Cyndy Anderson, Jara Burnett, Andy Duus, Naomi Schiff Myers, Mary Ferry, Adele Teitell, Joan Faust, Eileen Simonson, Maryann Ramos, and David de Milhau.

ANNUAL DINNER SPEAKER ANNOUNCED

We hope to see you all at LWVG's Annual Meeting and Dinner on June 1st at the Riverside Yacht Club. Our featured speaker will be **Hagar Hajjar Chemali**.

Ms. Chemali was born and raised in Greenwich and is a 1999 graduate of Greenwich Academy. She attended Barnard College and is a graduate of the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University.

Ms. Chemali has had a fascinating career in government which includes work on Terrorism and Financial Intelligence for the U.S. Department of Treasury and three years working on the National Security Council in the White House, where she was the Specialist for Middle East Affairs. Her current position is Communications Director and Spokesperson for the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power.

LWVG Program Committee – Fall 2015 and Upcoming Events

The LWVG Program Committee hosted a *Cocktails and Conversation* discussion with CT State Representative Caroline Simmons on Wednesday, September 16th. Representative Simmons was elected to the CT State House, 144th Assembly District in 2014. Approximately 65 people attended the event at Riverside Yacht Club.

Representative Simmons spoke about her connection to the Greenwich community, the challenges she faced as a new State Representative and the opportunities to work with the State delegation from Greenwich.

The program, *The Dirt on Food Supply: Promoting Healthy Soil for a Sustainable Environment*, drew nearly 100 people to the Greenwich Library Cole Auditorium on November 17th. The featured speaker was Mr. Dave White, Former Chief U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service. Mr. White is also co-founder and partner of conservation consultants, the 9b Group.

Mr. White's presentation featured numerous slides from America's farmlands, showing the impact on the soil from over-farming, pesticides, weather, and other environmental hazards. He then showed the audience important changes taking place to help keep agricultural land productive. These changes are critical to meeting food demands as well as protecting the health and resilience of our environment. Farmers are understanding and appreciating the soil and are working with Mr. White and his colleagues to improve the agricultural land for future food production.

This presentation tied into 2015's "International Year of the Soil" as named by the United Nations in the hope of generating awareness of the importance of soil to human life. According to the 9b Group, in just a few decades, farmers will have to feed nine billion people each year.

Thanks go to our event co-sponsors: Greenwich Conservation Commission, Greenwich Library, Greenwich Tree Conservancy, Greenwich Land Trust, Audubon of Greenwich, Greenwich Community Gardens, and the Garden Education Center—who promoted this program with their constituents.

The Program Committee has several interesting discussions planned for winter 2016. Greenwich Town Administrator, Benjamin Branyan, will speak at a *Cocktails and Conversation* event on Thursday, January 14th at The Belle Haven Club.

On Tuesday, February 2nd, the LWVG is co-sponsoring a program with the Greenwich Alliance for Education and Greenwich Leadership Partners on experiential learning featuring the film, *Most Likely to Succeed*. And on March 1st, Michael Waldman, President of the Brennan Center for Justice at the NYU School of Law, will speak about his new book on the role of money in politics and campaigns.

Our Annual Program Planning Meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 17th. Board member Anne Maletta has graciously volunteered to host it as well as the preceding Board meeting (see page one for details).

Julie Faryniarz & Jill Oberlander
Co-VPs Program

LWVCT Supports Citizens' Election Program

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut is relieved that state legislators rejected the Democrats' budget proposal that would have suspended our vital Citizens' Election Program. This proposal would have eliminated our nationally acclaimed program of partial, voluntary public financing, which was used by 74% of state candidates in the 2014 elections. It also ignored the demands of voters who want to see more accountability from candidates - not more dark money flowing into campaigns.

We remind everyone that in 2005, Connecticut proudly passed a strong campaign finance law. It was designed to reduce the influence of big money in elections and turn the state away from the scandals that led to the conviction and imprisonment of public officials. Let's not return to the days of "Corrupticut."

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut is committed to strengthening our state's campaign finance system to ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and allow maximum citizen participation in the political process. We will also continue to press for the closure of loopholes that have crept into the program, because they are not in keeping with the original intent of the 2005 reforms.

We support Connecticut's historic campaign finance law, and we will continue to press for transparency and fairness in our campaigns.

Fall 2015 Voter Services Activities

Debates

During the 2015 local election season, the League of Women Voters of Greenwich organized a series of candidate debates. The League's goal in sponsoring the events was to help voters make informed decisions at the polls in November.

The series began with the debate for the office of Tax Collector on October 8th in the Cone Room at Town Hall from 7:00 to 8:15 pm, featuring Republican incumbent Tod Laudonia and Democratic challenger Howard Richman. Candidates for the contested race for the Board of Assessment Appeals made brief statements preceding this debate.

Next, on October 15th, from 7:30 to 9:00 pm at the Town Hall Meeting Room, candidates for Board of Selectmen and First Selectman discussed the issues. Kicking off the evening were Board of Selectmen Drew Marzullo (Democrat incumbent) and John Toner (Republican incumbent). From 7:45 to 9:00 pm, First Selectman candidates Frank Farricker (Democrat challenger), Peter Tesei (Republican incumbent) and James Reilly (petitioner, challenger) debated the issues.

The series wound up on October 20th with a Board of Education Forum co-sponsored by the LWVG and the PTA Council. The forum was held at Central Middle School from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Presenting their positions were Jennifer Dayton (Democrat incumbent), Gaetane Francis (Democrat challenger), Anthony Lopez (Democrat challenger), Barbara O'Neill (Republican incumbent), Peter von Braun (Republican incumbent) and Lauren Rubin (Republican challenger). Four candidates out of the six were seated.

Board of Education Debate at Greenwich High School

On October 28th, we coordinated a program with Greenwich High School's We the People Team and the six candidates seeking the four spaces in the November 3rd election for the Board of Education. It was a student run program. The students reached out to the candidates, composed and asked the questions. Kath Burgweger represented the League by starting out the program with the importance of voting speech.

The students asked great questions: on later starting time, digital learning, budget priorities, leveling the playing field for disadvantaged students, bullying and the significance of student input. The candidates were equally impressive as evidenced by their answers.

Mr. Aaron Hull, the We the People coach, did a great job of coordinating the program with other classes. There were two sessions, and hundreds of students heard part or all of the forum. Headmaster Chris Winters also attended.

Voter's Guide

Our nonpartisan *Voter's Guide* was once again prepared under the leadership of Kathy Burgweger and the final layout designed by Marla Laney. We have acquired a new partner, the *Greenwich Sentinel*, which distributed via mail over 18,000 copies. The *Greenwich Time*, our usual partner, was to have sent the *Voter's Guide* out in the Sunday, November 1 edition. Unfortunately, due to a glitch on their part, most of the copies went out on Saturday and were missed by the majority of voters.

For the first time, we have received several modest contributions from the public to defray the cost of

We warmly welcome these new League members:

Dean Allen
Dita Bhardava
Wendy Blumenthal
Jody Breakell
Cynthia Coulson
Leslie Davis
Wynne Delmhorst
Arthur Delmhorst
David de Milhau
Danielle Eason
Meg Finnerud
Candace Garthwaite
Ernest Garthwaite
Hilary Gunn
Trish Hussey
Suneel Kamlani
Ruhama Karp
Stephen Kinner
Amy McGrath
Sheila Mehta
Nirmal Patel
Claudette Rothman
Gary Rothman
Linda Sugzda
Elizabeth Theofanidis
Mary-Ann Zalman

publication. Many copies of the *Guide* were seen by poll workers.

Get-Out-The-Vote Activities

Sheila Mehta and Jara Burnett taped a video with the electronic arm of the *Greenwich Sentinel* emphasizing the importance of voting in local elections. Letters to the editor and an op-ed piece also urged participation. Finally, all League members received two Constant Contact messages urging them to vote on November 3.

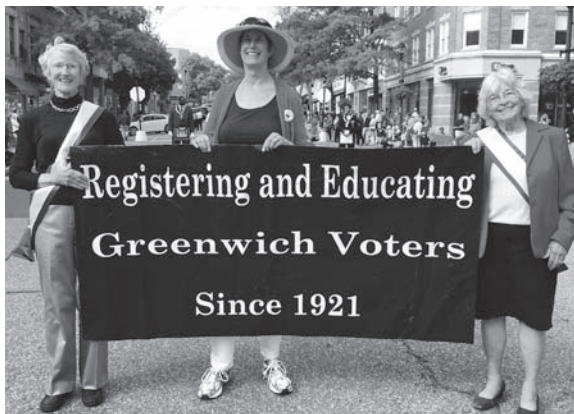
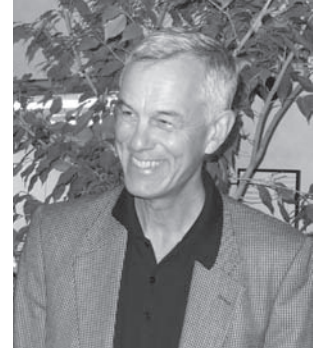
As the final activity of this election season, the *How to Make it Happen* pamphlet will be updated and printed.

Jara Burnett & Joanne Stavrou
Co-VPs Voter Services



Holiday Party

Over 70 attendees enjoyed this lovely evening!!



Town of Greenwich 375th Anniversary Parade

At the Debates





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GREENWICH
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MARK YOUR CALENDARS

- January 14** "Cocktails and Conversation" with Ben Branyan, the Town's new Executive Administrator
- February 2** Program on experiential learning featuring the film, *Most Likely to Succeed*
- February 17** Annual Program Planning Meeting
- March 1** Michael Waldman, President of the Brennan Center for Justice at the NYU School of Law, will speak about his new book on the role of money in politics and campaigns
- June 1** Annual Meeting and Dinner featuring keynote speaker Hagar Hajar Chemali, Communications Director and Spokesperson for the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations