



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF NEW ORLEANS
LEAGUE ESSENTIALS

Volume 52, Issue 2

Autumn, 2009

MAYORAL DEBATE

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15th
XAVIER UNIVERSITY STUDENT CENTER
BALLROOM
1 Drexel Ave.

DOORS OPEN AT 5:30 pm
MUST BE SEATED BY 5:45 pm
Moderator: Norman Robinson
WDSU 6 Broadcast Live 6:00 pm
Simulcast by WNOE NPR 89.9 FM

Be present at the first major mayoral debate (after qualifying). All candidates are invited. Eleven local good government groups are sponsoring the program, which is hosted by Xavier University.

DIRECTIONS: Washington Avenue
Turn on Pine Street toward the main campus
Turn right on Drexel
2 open parking lots next to the Student Center

The November 15th meeting at Xavier has been postponed until January.

*******REMINDER: Our Holiday Party is December 13th 3-5PM*******

In Memoriam: Maida R. Thokaey, who died October 8th

Letter from the President: Many Challenges and Opportunities

As LWWNO moves into the 2009-2010 election cycle, there are new challenges and opportunities for us. New Orleans voters will elect a new mayor, City Council representatives, and one assessor in 2010. We and other cosponsoring groups have mayoral and City Council forums and debates planned, and we will also be co-sponsoring a mayoral issues forum in January, 2010. We're also glad to see a new full-time Inspector General, Ed Quatreveaux, come in and take on the many challenges of monitoring our city government - holding its officials accountable to the public.

One of our great opportunities is our continuing participation in our city's Master Plan. Everyone is encouraged to download the Master Plan (or, at least, the part concerning your neighborhood), read the information, consider the ideas and visions, and contribute your own ideas, hopes, dreams, and concerns. The Master Plan website is available through the City Planning Commission link at the City of New Orleans website.

I also encourage everyone to go to our website, the LWWLA website, and to the LWWUS website, read about our slates of activities, find an action on one of these websites that interests you, and take part. Write a letter to our Congressional representatives on the health reform plans, and talk about how those health reform proposals will affect your lives, and the lives of your family members. Contact our board members, and let us know what you're interested in doing, and we'll help you get involved. LWWLA will be publishing the statewide newsletter again, after a long absence. Please consider contacting the LWWLA and volunteering to write an article for the LWWLA newsletter. Of course, your ideas or information for our own League Essentials are always welcome as well.

Wendy King

LOOKING AHEAD FOR VOTER SERVICE

November: Compile questions for debates. Members should submit ideas for questions to Dorothy Smith, dpsmith6@gmail.com

December 5: Voter Registration, Freret St. Market, noon to 5:00pm

Voter Service Committee meeting, 9:30 am, 1215 Prytania, room 224

December 9-11: Qualifying at Orleans Parish Courthouse. Our distribution of packets to candidates to collect information for website.

December 12: Voter Registration, Sankofa Marketplace, Lower 9th ward

December 15: Mayoral Debate, Xavier University Student Center, 5:30 pm

January 6: Last date to register to vote in February 6 primary

January 11: Target date to release website candidate information

January: Issues Forums for mayoral race

Voter Registration for Run-off race

January 23-30: Early Voting for Primary

February 2: Last Day to register vote in March general election

February 6: Primary election for Orleans Parish: Mayor, 2 Council-at-Large members, Council Members, Assessor, Sheriff, Coroner, District Court Judge, Section J, Juvenile Court Judge

February 20-27: Early voting for Run-off

March 2: Mayoral Debate for Run-off, Xavier University Center, 5:30pm

On October 10th, Leaguers shared their personal experiences with male co-workers during Lea Young's Saturday morning mentoring talk. Here are a few excerpts from Lea's presentation:

Testosterone in the Workplace: Survival in a Man's Domain

According to the attorney I work with my success in working with males is because I think like a man! Now what exactly is "thinking like a man?" Here is my analysis:

- I don't flirt with the men I work with - no comments on their looks, clothes etc.
- I always address them as intelligent adults, never use terms like sweetie, honey.
- If they call me sweetie etc. I look them straight in the eyes and say "OK sweetie" back to them. If it is an older man like a doctor or professional I may ignore the "sweetie" part unless they persist. If it is a younger man I will add sugar or some other adjective to one up their comments. I found that most men who use these kinds of comments do it to all women and often don't think of it as sexist. They are amazed if you take affront at the comment.
- I avoid any comment that might play on emotion (most women tend to cry when their feelings are hurt or when they are angry). Men take tears as being weak or silly. Their response in the work world is negative, not caring. It tends to diminish you as a co-worker.
- When I am in charge, I take charge (If you have a squeaky high pitched voice, work at speaking louder and with a lower tone). When challenged, I would say, "I am in charge and this is how we are going to do it." I come prepared and ready to argue my point.
- My presentations to my deputies were always strong and straightforward. No *if* or *would you* but just *this is what we are doing*. For specific jobs, I would write out exactly what a deputy should do so there was no misunderstanding.
- When in a meeting with a group of men, especially professionals, always maintain your equal status. Example: When I worked as a city planner, we had a meeting with the engineering dept. and the planning consultants. The first thing on the agenda was to have coffee available. They all looked at me, to which I responded, "Have a clerk come in to make it". Next they decided someone should take minutes and again they all looked at me. I said, "Have a secretary come in to take them." After that, no one ever suggested that I take on a lesser task than that as the city planner. Had I taken those menial tasks, I would have relegated my status to the impotent.
- Later I had a new sexist boss who wanted me to quit so he could hire his own assistant. He made many deprecating remarks, which I ignored. In the current workplace, I could file sexual harassment charges against him for hostility in the workplace with the federal EEOC. I did quit in the end to take a better paying job with the state
- Years later I wound up running the Sheriff's Reserve Deputies Assn. You can imagine dealing with 500 men, all different ages and races and professions. Male professionals tended to be the most demanding as they felt that they knew best. The blue-collar men didn't like some gal bossing them. The threat of offending me and the Sheriff kept them in line however.

Looking back over my career I have been lucky to survive the pitfalls that menace women. I know that my adult sons have a better attitude towards their female co-workers. Just watch the TV show "Mad Men" to realize how far we have come. But we still need equal pay for equal work. It is time to remind young career women that it was a hard fought battle to achieve our rightful position in the workplace, and they need to always be on guard for any loss of their Rights.

Lea Young

Recent Reports on Public Education in New Orleans

Ann Meese, PhD - Chair, Education Committee

In the last several weeks three different publications have highlighted the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) progress of the Recovery School District (RSD) and the New Orleans Parish Schools (NOPS), the overall Katrina recover progress and the implications for the future. The first publication, "New Orleans Schools 4 Years after Katrina: A Lingering Federal Responsibility", was published by the Southern Education Foundation in Atlanta, Georgia. The second publication, "Reconstructing Education in New Orleans Post Katrina: Lessons in Education Reform", a seminar held and co-sponsored by the Loyola College of Law, The Journal of Public Interest Law and the Loyola Institute for Quality and Equity in Education focused on the findings of ten speakers (two different panels). The third report authored by Charles J. Hatfield, Center for Action Research on School Reforms in New Orleans, "Spring 2009 LEAP Status of RSD and NOPS Schools: 2014 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Implications" shows ongoing concern for the proficiency levels of high school students and of students in the many still low performing elementary and middle schools.

The recent Report of the Southern Education Foundation highlighted the following five concerns about public education in New Orleans:

- a. More federal funds are needed for the construction of public schools since the federal government was complicit in the destruction of schools and the dislocation and trauma of students.
- b. New Orleans will serve as a crucial test of whether an education system comprised primarily of autonomous charter schools can succeed in the long run.
- c. An ongoing financial concern is over the distribution of resources and the debt burden left by the OPSB.
- d. School & city officials must do more to educate poor families about options if parental choice is going to work long term. (A handful of public meetings and web site are not enough.)
- e. Concern was voiced about the public schools with selective admissions because their existence could hinder the city moving forward educationally. (5% of the public school population is white, and 2/3 of that 5% are enrolled in just three New Orleans public schools).

In the next issue of this newsletter, findings from the remaining two reports will be outlined. If you have questions or suggestions, please call Ann Meese (504-218-8985) or email her at ameese@cox.net.

Donor Thanks and Appreciation!

Weil-Bohn Foundation, Mary Francis Gardner, Carol Levy

Welcome New Members: Ann de Montluzin Farmer & Donna Hamsher

Welcome Back: Kathy Foulkes & Rosalind Peychaud

Wisdom Corner: We're starting a new section of the Essentials: what we can learn from our members. If you have any contributions, please call Anne (232-9787) or e-mail her at readsong@juno.com

What League Affiliation Can Do For You

By Felicia Kahn

This morning, while making vegetable soup, I watched C-Span 2. I kept thinking, “just like the League of Women Voters.” The problem discussed was that, though young people voted in record numbers during the last Presidential election, even greater numbers than older people, they still don’t have the power to make things happen. Do you know why the League was organized? When women got the right to vote, certain ladies decided to educate women to know the issues and gain power through this education. So those young voters discussed on TV are perhaps back where women were in the 20s, needing organizations to empower them to become active citizens.

My training to be an active citizen began when Martha Robertson, then president and founder of LWV, came to the Newcomb college campus. After doing some work for Mrs. Robertson, I attended a meeting at Mathilde Dreyfous’s home. She was a local president and later the first Louisianian to serve on the national League board. Soon the state board needed someone to care for publications, and I got my first appointment. After that, I think I held almost every board position for a period of nearly twenty years.

Now back to citizen’s education and training. In the ‘60s, the national League Education Fund used it’s money to train some of us to go into the inner cities and do League type Voters Service as well as education for citizens to learn to speak out in their own behalf. Doesn’t that sound familiar? We’ve been encouraging you to do so while our master plan is being written. Betty Wisdom and I and some others went to training meetings and began this project in Carrollton but also did some citizens’ education in the Irish Channel and Desire Project. We with VISTA volunteers did exactly what was talked about as necessary on C-Span today. The young people need training in how to make their voices heard and how to become active citizens.

I have had a wonderful career as a result of my LWV training. After three years as President of the New Orleans League, I decided to turn to active politics. I was elected to the Democratic State Central Committee for eight years where there were only five women out of more than a hundred men. I’ve been an elected delegate to Democratic national conventions, and I ran unsuccessfully for the state legislature twice. I was very active in the Louisiana women’s movement and was a lobbyist for the New Orleans League when our State Constitution was written. We couldn’t pass the ERA, but we wanted women’s rights written into the constitution. Later when I had a career in real estate, I was appointed to the CBD Historic District Landmarks Commission and served about 15 years. Now I’m an elected member on the Orleans Parish Democratic Executive Committee, and I had the great pleasure of being elected last year to go as delegate to the National Convention in Denver.

So my history shows what can become of a person with League of Women Voters training in citizen participation. Let’s hope today’s young people will be able to speak out for themselves and actively contribute to their communities. They could use LWV as a model.

Big Fun on the Bayou

On October 24th, the League met in the 9th Ward to investigate current activities. We witnessed the sad condition of Bayou Bienvenue, which lost its once thriving cypress trees as a consequence of MRGO bringing salt water into the area. We learned that 3000 homes were destroyed in the 9th Ward due to the 8/05 levee failures. Brad Pitt sponsored an architectural design competition, and we visited some of the resulting homes (I personally liked the floating house that can rise up to 12 feet in a flood! The Geothermal house was also impressive – working on a closed loop, it doesn’t use any energy at all). All these new houses are of LEED design (Leadership, Energy, and Environment). We heard how community gardens are being implemented, especially rain gardens that improve drainage. We were told that federal money for schools didn’t go to the most devastated areas like the 9th Ward, so recovery in education has been slow. Plans are being made to construct a massive wall, 25’ tall and 3 miles long, to protect the area rather than building 100-year flood protective levees, much to the citizen’s concern. The 9th Ward is yet still a thriving community, despite the disaster. Residents are banding together for the sustainable restoration of their neighborhoods and bayou, offering their neighbors a welcome path to return home.

LWVNO BOARD 2009-10

President: Wendy King, 1st VP: Renee Smith, 2nd VP: Francine Giugno, Secretary: Lela Neff, Treasurer: Judy Fisher
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Special thanks to Linda Santi and Lela Neff
for arranging a wonderful field trip in the Lower Ninth Ward.

Here is a list of the organizations and websites
so that you might keep in touch with all that is going on there:
Lower Nine Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development www.hl9cas.org
www.historicgreen.org globalgreen.org
www.holycrossneighborhoodassociation.org www.helpholycross.org/
makeitrightnola.org www.sierraclub.org (delta chapter)

Don't forget to shop at the Sankofa Market, at the corner of Caffin and Claiborne Avenues, on
the second Saturday of every month. www.sankofamarketplace.org

Also, consider joining in the campaign to bring Recycling back to New Orleans in 2010:
<http://twitter.com/NOLAREcycles> or <http://www.facebook.com/NOLAREcycles>