

# LWV *The informed* Voter

League of Women Voters® of Appleton, Wisconsin



<http://www.lwvappleton.org/>

P.O. Box 1281, Appleton, WI 54912

Email

[League.appleton@yahoo.com](mailto:League.appleton@yahoo.com)

November/December 2018

(920) 738-7766

## Democracy award winners announced

Domestic violence volunteer, Appleton North junior recognized for efforts

A dedicated community volunteer and a student leader are the recipients of this year's League of Women Voters of Appleton Making Democracy Work awards.

Both award winners will be recognized at the League's Holiday Brunch on Dec. 8 at the Grand Meridian in Appleton.

Nancy Jones, honoree for the Making Democracy Work award, offers her time, energy, and expertise to several groups in the Fox Cities. Isabella DeVine, a student leader at Appleton North High School, has received the Making Democracy Work Youth Award.

A volunteer for Wisconsin Anti-Violence Effort (WAVE) since 2013, Jones initiates and organizes events to educate the general population as well as law makers on the



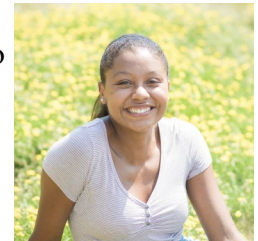
Jones

importance of sensible gun laws. Jones inspires others to action whether that be a march, meeting with lawmakers, participating in press conferences, or gathering for a vigil.

She worked with youth in the Fox Valley after the Parkland shootings to organize activities to bring attention to gun violence in schools.

Jones' passion for kids and public education make her a valued member of the community group Fox Cities Advocates for Public Education. Members describe her as organized and professional, informed and knowledgeable. She is respected as an outstanding advocate.

Jones has worked to mobilize people in the campaign to End Child Poverty. The goal is to



DeVine

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## Award winners continued

cut Wisconsin's child poverty rate in half in ten years. As vice president of ESTHER, Jones helped launch the campaign in the Fox Cities and frequently speaks to groups in the community. A core team leader for Stronger Together Fox Valley, Jones has participated in setting up community workshops to help people learn strategies for more effective communication in the present polarized climate.

She has facilitated "Community Conversations" events to discover areas of shared values in hopes to improve the well-being of the community.

As a member of the ESTHER Transit Task Force, she created a booklet and infographic to educate others, including legislators, on the importance for equitable funding for public transit. She planned advocacy efforts and gave testimony at a 2017 Joint Finance Budget hearing to further the cause. She supported a local press conference when a state coalition released a report on transportation access and equity.

Jones' many supporters in the nominating

process for the Making Democracy Work Award shared these sentiments: "Nancy contributes her time and energy to community service with an attitude of generosity, courage, and optimism. She has a heart for justice for those who are marginalized and a passion to make change. Nancy's strength of character and integrity guide her."

Isabella DeVine, a junior at North High School, is the first youth recipient of the League's signature award for *Making Democracy Work*.

Isabella has helped to organize canned food drives for the Salvation Army as well as fundraisers for Make a Wish, Leukemia and Lymphoma Society, Harbor House, and Hygiene drive for the local "homes" in the parks. Isabella is also president of *Girl Up*, a program to help female students become leaders. Isabella's Club Advisor and Nominator, Teri Berlowski, teacher at North High School, describes Isabella as having exceptionally strong leadership skills. As vice-president of Student Council, Isabella organizes, delegates, and advocates with ease.

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## Civility program draws large crowd, generates discussion

The November 19 panel discussion on "Civility and Civil Discourse" was well attended and well-liked. Many thanks to Mayor Hanna, Diversity Coordinator Karen Nelson, Rep. Amanda Stuck, and Dean of Spiritual and Religious Life Linda Morgan-Clemente for providing their thoughts on the panel, and to John Peterson for guiding the discussion. We had excellent press coverage from the Post-Crescent as well as ABC affiliate WBAY.

Post-Crescent article link: <https://www.postcrescent.com/story/news/2018/11/24/panel-focuses-civility-age-political-division/2055669002/>



WBAY link: (Note misstatement on Electoral College program, which will be in February.) <https://www.wbay.com/content/news/Appleton-forum-addresses-civility-in-politics--500881182.html>

# End-of-year thoughts from Jeanne Roberts

## **The power of League members working together**

Wow...what a busy couple of months. And it all culminated in a record voter turnout for a midterm election! League members from Appleton and all over the country worked to register and educate voters, and the results showed. The mission for League is "Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy," and we sure did that. Whether it was the programs on *A Strategy for Reinvigorating Our Democracy*, *Understanding Dark Stores*, or *Civility and Civil Discourse*, the LWV provided many opportunities for education.

In addition, our League was all over the Fox Valley registering voters, helping find polling places and answering many other questions as well as organizing and participating in four candidate forums and many other candidate guides. But our fight for empowered voters and a better democracy is not over. While we had a record turnout for a midterm election, there are still many people who either chose not to vote or did not feel as if their vote mattered. These are the people that we have to continue to try to reach. Thank you everyone for your support of our great work!

## **League attends Appleton city budget meetings**

Members of the League of Women Voters Appleton attended both "Budget Saturday" as well as the open meeting on the following Wednesday. Many items in the budget coincided with positions of the League including money for downtown development and library expansion, diversity, sustainability, and more. League members spoke at the open meeting regarding their views in these areas. In addition, League president, Jeanne Roberts, expressed appreciation for the open process of the city and the assistance of the city clerk in so many ways. The League also made

suggestions that we believe could improve voter turnout and satisfaction, including working with the city's diversity coordinator to recruit a more diverse class of poll workers, and to consider more bilingual poll workers.

Anyone interested in reviewing either "Budget Saturday," the open hearing on the following Wednesday or any other meetings can view videos of them on the city's website.

## **League members attend issues briefing**

The LWVWI annual Issues Briefing was held on November 10 with nearly 150 League members statewide in attendance. There were several speakers including Meagan Wolfe, Interim Administrator, Wisconsin Elections

Commission; Jodi Habush Sinykin, Attorney, Midwest Environmental Advocates, talking about the City of Racine Water Diversion; Challenge, a panel: United by Love - United Against Hate: Building an Inclusive Community moderated by Artists and Activists Kelly Parks Snider and Rachael Griffin; and a panel on the Role of Media in Our Democracy moderated by Joy Cardin, former host, Wisconsin Public Radio.

In addition, there was discussion on the Wisconsin Civics Game which is being co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters Wisconsin. Anyone interested in more information on this year's Issues Briefing can visit the state's website at <https://my.lwv.org/wisconsin/2018-issues-briefing>. Issues Briefing as well as the Annual Convention in June are great ways for especially new League members to find out all the great work being done by the League of Women Voters at local, state and national levels. Anyone who is interested in attending can contact Board members for information about the state meetings as well as any need for carpooling.



# Committee roundup

## 100th Anniversary Committee

The 100th Anniversary Committee held its first meeting on November 15, 2018. Current members include: Linda Bjella, LouAnn Graf, Marti Hemwall, Sue Hopfensperger, Barb Kelly, Dottie Leclair, Sue Silton.

We discussed the board's direction to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment and of the national LWV and the state League. We plan to have at least one major speaker, and decided we wanted to gather potential partners for this event, or for related events in order to advertise together.

The top priority is to help educate people about the 19th amendment and energize people to vote. We will meet at least once a month (more meetings in subgroups), on the first Tuesday of most months at 9 am or 4 pm. If you are interested in joining the fun, contact Marti Hemwall, [mhemwall@gmail.com](mailto:mhemwall@gmail.com).

— Marti Hemwall

## Diversity Committee

The Diversity Committee of the League of Women Voters of Appleton had its inaugural meeting in July of 2018. We are 13 strong and meet regularly on a monthly basis. The committee is composed of League members and nonleague members who represent diversity in the community. The League, from

national to state on down to local leagues, is fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and practice. The initial direction for our local committee is about learning about the diverse groups in the Fox Cities, reaching out and connecting. We are developing a spot on our website to highlight Diversity. We will keep you posted.

— Shirley Strange

## Fiscal Spending/Fundraising

The Fiscal Spending/Fundraising Committee is developing a tiered membership matrix which we plan to present to the Board in March and, if accepted, put into effect for our 2020 membership drive. The goal of a tiered membership plan is to increase and diversify our membership. To help fund this plan, we aim to run 50/50 raffles at our events (when appropriate).

Also, because many people prefer to pay by credit card, we are looking into setting up a merchant account and accept credit card payments, making it easier to pay dues, fees, and event tickets!

— Sue Hopfensperger

Remember to like and follow us on Facebook. Click [here](#) or search for League of Women Voters of Appleton!



# Dark Stores advisory referendum brings decisive result

On November 6, 2018, Outagamie County residents had the opportunity to express their views on closing the Dark Store Tax Loophole. A resounding 73.9 percent voted to end these tax loopholes that unfairly shift additional taxes to home owners and small businesses.

The Appleton League of Women Voters had a timely program on October 15<sup>th</sup> that provided information on the details of the current law and exactly what voting yes or no for the referendum would mean. At the Copper Rock Café, two speakers provided details, so voters would be able to make an informed vote.

Curt Witynski, Deputy Director of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities, spoke about the Dark Stores Tax loophole. Curt manages the LWM’s lobbying program, including representing the League regarding this legislation. Deann Brosman, City Assessor for Appleton, discussed local impacts of the loophole: how this issue affects local property owners.

The loophole is a tax break that commercial and manufacturing property owners use to save

themselves from paying their fair share of property tax.

Tax attorneys for big box stores (i.e. Walgreens, Lowes, Menards) use the dark store loophole to argue that the value of a new store in a busy, popular area should be based on the value of empty stores. These empty store properties are worth less, so big box stores can pay less in local property taxes.

The obvious conclusion is that if the big, box stores pay less in taxes, that shortfall for city and town budgets is passed on to property owners and small businesses. Homeowners already pay 68 percent of property taxes in Wisconsin (compared to Minnesota where the percent is 50). The good news is that there is bipartisan support to close this tax loophole. Two bills in the 2017-2018 Legislature had broad support but were never scheduled for votes.

Contact your state legislators and urge them to support the closure of the Dark Store loophole in the next legislative session.

— Cindy Fallona

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## Upcoming programming

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DATE	TOPIC	SPEAKER
Jan. 12	Lively Issues, Appleton Public Library, Room C, 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.	LWV
Feb. 18	Abolishing the Electoral College, Copper Rock, 5 - 6:30 p.m.	LWV Speakers: Irene Strohbeen, Sandi Rhode, Barb Dorzweiler
March 18	LWV Social: Diversity & Inclusion, Copper Rock, 5 - 6:30 p.m.	LWV
April 15	Carbon tax credits and Metrics with Citizens Climate Lobby, Copper Rock, 5 - 6:30 p.m.	
May 16	Annual Meeting, location and time TBD	LWV

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