

THE INFORMED VOTER

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• Empowering Voters
• Defending Democracy

SEPTEMBER 2025



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Strengthen Democracy in Times of Peril



Recently our local League Board “power-mapped” groups which agree with our values and mission. Astonishingly, we identified at least 62 groups in our community with whom we agree or strongly agree. What a coalition. Imagine what we can accomplish if we find a way to work together to strengthen our democracy in this time of peril.

In this ocean of like-minded groups, what makes the League of Women Voters unique?

- The League advocates for many issues. Our positions cover social, governmental and environmental issues. These are issues we have studied in depth and where we have found member consensus for the common good.
- The League represents local, state, and national organizations. Our local League was founded in 1939 and has a rich history of community leadership. Our state and national organizations founded with Women's Suffrage in 1920 inform our work — essential now that the Federal government's actions are affecting us at all levels.
- The League has two separate missions: Voter Services and Advocacy. Voter Services inspires us to register and educate voters. Advocacy spurs us to take action between elections on a myriad of issues we support including voting rights and DEI. Importantly, both missions are 100% non-partisan since we never support or oppose candidates or political parties.

While first and foremost the League of Women Voters empowers voters and defends democracy — we are way more complex.

As we embark on ***Unite & Rise 8.5*** in the next 14 months, choose your passion. We will communicate many opportunities for you to get involved — so seize the day. If you haven't already done so, please complete our [LWV-AFC Unite & Rise 8.5 Campaign Participation](#) survey.

We are all in this together — and together the League will continue to bend the arc of the moral universe.

*Forward,
Jan*



By Nancy Jones
Action Vice President
action@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

At a time such as this, each of us needs to find ways to keep informed, get engaged, and keep each other encouraged.

The Unite & Rise 8.5 Campaign is designed to accomplish all three of those goals, and will be a major focus for each level of the League of Women Voters over the next 14 months. **Nationally**, Unite & Rise 8.5 is a multifaceted campaign focusing on: **Legal & Policy Advocacy; Public Mobilization & Coalition Building; Civic Education & Engagement; and Democracy Resilience** and is designed with a series of 3-month-long micro-campaigns to keep the campaign up-to-date with new action opportunities.

LWV-WI's campaign is guided by the following pillars:

1. **Defend democracy and push back against rising authoritarianism and tyranny**
2. **Empower people to utilize their first amendment rights and stand in solidarity with those most vulnerable**
3. **Stand up to protect human rights** including: protecting voting rights; ending mass deportation and to keep families and communities together; protecting reproductive rights; and protecting LGBTQ+ rights.
4. **Lay the foundation for a more just democracy in Wisconsin**

Here are ways to participate in Unite & Rise 8.5 right now as well as in the coming months:

- Please respond to our local member survey: [LWV-AFC Unite & Rise 8.5 Campaign Participation](#) Your responses will inform our local League's efforts at this critical juncture for democracy in our nation. *Thank you* to members who have already replied to the survey.
- Take **daily nonviolent action to hold power accountable** by utilizing LWVUS's [Daily Democracy Practice](#).
- Subscribe to LWV-WI's bi-weekly [Unite & Rise newsletter](#) which gathers the latest opportunities in one resource.
- **Download the League in Action app** for action alerts to your phone from LWVUS and LWVWI Action Circle when you opt in to the state League Action Circle.

MEMBERSHIP: Welcome New Members to the 'Top 5'

Six new or returning members joined our League in August and early September, bringing our total membership to 167. This makes the LWV of Appleton-Fox Cities among the top five largest in Wisconsin. Welcome to all!

Georgina Holden, Fond du Lac • Karen Jansen, Menasha • Holly Roarty, Appleton

Bruce Bodnow, Appleton • Kathleen Mifflin, Oshkosh

Denise Haight, Appleton • Dory Witzeling, Appleton

PUBLIC SAFETY STUDY: Restorative Justice Creating Community Through Conflict Resolution

By Karen Pfefferle and April Savage

The Appleton-Fox Cities League of Women Voters Research Study on Public Safety is developing new advocacy positions on public safety. We are conducting research locally, to ensure we are advocating for the most impactful policy change. This is the third in our series of newsletter updates and action opportunities to keep you informed on special topics. Each of these articles may also be viewed [HERE](#).

Previously, we offered information and volunteer opportunities on crimeless revocation and early literacy intervention to avoid incarceration. These are complex issues, and there are numerous ways to get involved. Our intention is to provide you with insights on these issues in our community, and actions to take. These brief updates are in no way the complete picture. Hopefully we inspire you to learn more and get involved. If you feel there is something being left out, please share. It is not our intent to elevate one issue or organization over another. As an addendum to last month's early literacy intervention article, please see below on how to support the Fox Valley Literacy Council.

This month we are highlighting a newly forming organization offering practical tools to advance [Restorative Justice](#) in our community. The [Outagamie County Conflict Resolution Center](#) (OCCRC) is a 501(c)3 dedicated to helping people resolve conflict in ways that are fair, respectful, and rooted in communication. Volunteers are at the heart of their mission. By encouraging collaboration and understanding, mediators help people resolve disputes independently and build stronger, more resilient communities. Resilient communities are safer communities.

Recently, we were able to interview Douglas Haase, Executive Director of the OCCRC. A steady, experienced and humble leader, Douglas has a background developing personnel, logistics and operations in the Navy and corporate sector, as well as mediation in Winnebago County. He is committed to building trust in our community, one conversation at a time. He has seen first hand how mediation lightens the court docket exponentially, resulting in a 70-80% success rate that saves court costs, and has more resilience and endurance. With mediation, each party walks out having humanized the other party, and is more invested in the resolution. He also shared with us that evictions are a common case that can be life altering through mediation. Arising from disputes between landlords and tenants — especially single mothers, newcomers and other disadvantaged groups — evictions add to backlogs in courts, rarely leave either party happy, and require sheriff resources to enforce.

Here is his message to future volunteers:

"Volunteers at the Heart of OCCRC"

Dear Friends,

At the Outagamie County Conflict Resolution Center (OCCRC), we help people resolve conflict in ways that are fair, respectful, and rooted in communication. Our volunteer-driven mediation services empower individuals and communities to find practical solutions outside the courtroom.

Our volunteers are the heart of OCCRC.

They make it possible for us to offer low-cost or free mediation services to those who may not have access to legal representation. By encouraging collaboration and understanding, our mediators help people resolve disputes independently and build stronger, more resilient communities.

Volunteer mediators bring diverse life experiences and perspectives, ensuring that our services reflect the values and needs of Outagamie County. They also serve as ambassadors, raising awareness about mediation and building trust in the process.

We're inviting new volunteers to join us.

If you're curious, compassionate, and committed to making a difference, we'd love to hear from you. OCCRC provides thorough training and ongoing support to help you succeed.

Together, we're building a future where mediation is a trusted tool for resolving conflict through conversation and understanding.

To learn more or apply, visit <https://www.occr.org/>.

For media inquiries, contact:

Douglas Haase

Executive Director, OCCRC

director@occr.org

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Public Safety Study: Restorative Justice, cont.

Why it Matters

Our research and interviews suggest that public safety is multifaceted. Our connections are complex and intertwined. Shifting away from 'criminal justice' to 'restorative justice' is trending.

- Community is at the heart of public safety. Addressing root causes of conflict and ensuring equal protections make us all safer and stronger. It creates a process based on dignity and respect.
- OCCRC will divert people away from the often costly and time-consuming legal system. Cost effective conflict resolution is a win-win for Outagamie County.

The League has a unique opportunity with this new organization addressing systemic bias. The strain on community resources, and more importantly the devastating spiral effect on families, can be avoided if both parties can come to the table to agree on an equitable resolution. Please consider volunteering for the OCCRC. Don't under estimate your ability to be part of restorative justice in our community.

Learn more:

[what is mediation?](#)- 4 min YouTube video

[Purposeful Preparation](#):- article listing 10 essential mediator skills

[So You Want to Be A Mediator](#)- article with advice and reading list

[Inside the Mediation Room](#)- 25 min Podcast

OCCRC background, funding, other models in our area, and leadership in this recent [Post Crescent article](#).

Attend an information session, no RSVP required:

September 12th, 11:30-12:30p at Kimberly Village Hall

<https://occr.org/#events>

Supporting Literacy in the Fox Cities:

Fox Valley Literacy: <https://foxvalleylit.org/about-page/>

Volunteer, find out by calling how many are presently on the wait list:

<https://foxvalleylit.org/become-a-volunteer/elementor-5439/>

Donations to be purchased for clients: <https://foxvalleylit.org/wishlist-3/>

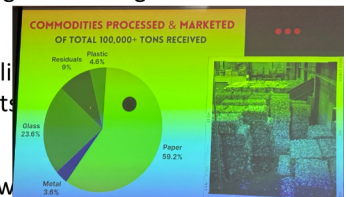
Programs: Members Suit Up to 'Talk Trash'

Our League enjoyed *the* best, informative, revealing, and poignant, although also smelly and disappointing, tour of the Outagamie County (OC) Recycling Facility that serves three counties on Monday, September 8. Although the timing was midday, approximately 25 members and guests gathered to learn more about the recycling process.

Jordan Hiller, the OC Recycling and Solid Waste Program Coordinator led the hard hat tour of the facility. County counterpart, Kelly Reyer, leading the classroom portion. Each revealed recycling do's and don'ts and look at the process from start to finish.

The process makes use of human sorters — some hired from a partnership with World Relief — who work at the plant, mechanical assists (think conveyor belts, blasts of air, electrical pulses, and the like), and robotics!

Surprisingly, and perhaps sadly, for as long as the public has been recycling, the tour revealed how much more education is needed, especially since many recycling rules are misunderstood by residents.



Thanks to Mary Klasen & Irene Strohbeen for tour photos

VOTER SERVICE: Civics Game Wins Fans at Community Events

By Jacqui Klimaszewski

Voter Services Vice President

voterservice@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

We had a great day on August 23 at the Farm Market. We partnered with Women's Action Coalition and made numerous contacts including handing out 11 membership brochures. Voting information was provided to 20 people and 5 received VOTE411 magnets. We also handed out 21 Future Voter stickers and played the Civics game with 46—young and not so young. A great way to interact with the community!

Upcoming Voter Services Events—mark your calendar!

- LatinoFest – September 6 – Pierce Park
- World Peace Day – September 13 – Pierce Park
- September 16 – National Voter Registration Day. We will be in the entryway at the Appleton Public library from 9:00 a.m.-7:30 p.m.

Come join the fun: voterservice@lwvappletonfoxcities.org



Officers Probst and Taschner stopped to visit with League voter registration volunteers Linda Bjella and Mary Sullivan.



New League member, Peg Dewante, plays the Civics Game with Future Voters Sawyer, Nora, Madeline, Braden and Ollie -- with a little assist from Mom.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION: Guest Speaker Leads Off New Season

By Kathie Kinnaman

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Director

dei@lwvappletonfoxcities.org

The LWV Appleton-Fox Cities DEI Committee kicked off the fall season with a guest speaker. Kole Torres, DEI Manager for the LWVWI, joined us via Zoom to share her job description and duties, and an update on activities around the state.

Among other things, Kole works with the statewide DEI Committee. This group meets once a month and brings together DEI representatives from locals around the state. She also works with the Community Action Committee, and is working to put bilingual ballots into practice.

Not only did we appreciate hearing about state actions, but we got a good shot in the arm as we continue our plans for the fall. We will meet next on October 7, via Zoom. New members are always welcome.

Our September book is "**The Story of Act 31: How Native History Came to Wisconsin Classrooms**," by J. P. Leary. It's from 1972 so it should be readably available. We will discuss it at Seth's in Little Chute, Wednesday, September 24 at 2 p.m.

The book "**Summer of Our Discontent**" is just coming out, so we put it off again in hopes it will be easier to get later on. So for October, we will read "**Everyone Who's Gone is Here: The United States, Central America, and the Making of a Crisis**," by Jonathon Blitzer. We will meet at Mondo's on the River on Wednesday, October 29 at 6 p.m.

Hélène is asking for League volunteers to drive immigrants to their court hearings in Milwaukee or Chicago. Dates don't start until November. Groups of 2 volunteers would be ideal.

At our recent meeting, we also talked about getting training for how to protest — what you legally can and cannot do at a protest, and what your rights are as a protestor. Mary Sullivan has already done this with GLoria Degrave through Citizen Action Network, and indicated there is an ACLU training video series on YouTube. It has been suggested that the League consider a viewing party!

ACTION

Monday, September 29 at 6:30-8:00 pm
Legislative Town Hall

The League of Women Voters Appleton-Fox Cities is planning our next virtual Legislative Town Hall for **Monday, September 29 from 6:30-8:00 p.m.**

We have invited our three area state Senators — Cabral-Guevara, Dassler-Alfheim, and Jacque — and seven of our area Representatives — Tusler, Snodgrass, Palmeri, Murphy, Kaufert, Goeben, and Gustafson — to share their legislative priorities with their constituents.

Remarkably, of these 10 legislators, in the past eight have agreed to participate in our Legislative Town Halls, an exemplary bipartisan response in our current political climate. We hold our virtual Town Halls even if not all legislators are able to join us.

As always, elected representatives will respond to prepared questions and to audience questions. It is always a highly informative evening, so make your plans to join us. Learn where your legislators stand on issues important to you. If you have specific questions for legislators please submit them to president@lwvappletonfoxcities.org no later than September 22.

Look for registration by email later in the month. The September 29 event will be held on Zoom and available as a recording after the event.

Legislative Town Hall



September 29, 2025

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK: Now Accepting Award Nominations

League of Women Voters of Appleton-Fox Cities Making Democracy Work Award			
2014 Kathy Elbert	2015 Amy Morrison	2016 Kathy Elbert	2017 Carmel Kover
2018 Nancy Jones	2019 May Ann Ross	2020 Kathy Elbert	2021 Kathy Elbert
2022 Kathy Elbert	2023 Kathy Elbert	2024 Kathy Elbert	2025 Kathy Elbert

For more than a decade, the League of Women Voters of Appleton-Fox Cities has recognized individuals and organizations that inspire and empower citizens to bring about positive change, to strengthen democracy and improve our local quality of life. To do this, the League presents its annual **Making Democracy Work Awards**.

Anyone can nominate an adult or youth (up to age 21) for this prestigious award using this [form](#). Nominations will be accepted now through **October 15**. A committee will evaluate the nominations and select a recipient who will be honored at our annual Holiday Brunch on Saturday, December 13.



Holiday Brunch

& SILENT AUCTION

Mark your calendar for the *Holiday Brunch*
Saturday, December 13, 2025
Bubolz Nature Preserve, Grand Chute
Featuring a "Doubling Down on DEI" Panel Presentation

This timely & inciteful program ties in beautifully to the Silent Auction fundraiser.
As you conjur up delectable & enticing basket items, please keep in mind
"Made in Wisconsin" & multi-cultural treasures reflective of our communities, especially
standout offerings that will elevate the auction's success.

- This year's bidding will start earlier, and be open for a shorter time, so get in the holiday spirit now to dream up items sure to be on everyone's wish list.