

The *Our 81st Year!*
FRESNO VOTER

Phone: 559-226—VOTE

Info.lwvfresno@gmail.com

Web site:
www.lwvfresno.org

**Please join us
for a HOLIDAY EVENT**

Sunday, December 11, 3:00 p.m.
Home of Angela and Mike Presto
1526 West San Jose, Fresno

◆ *Members and guests invited*



◆ *Please bring an unwrapped gift
for Stone Soup; wish list on
page 4*

◆ *Delicious refreshments
will be served*

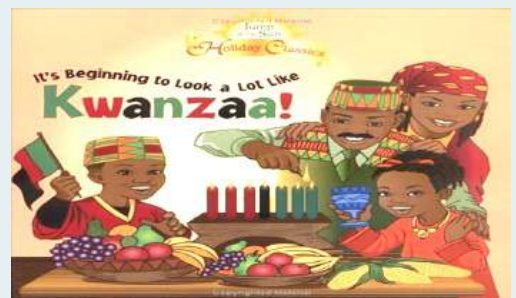


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**Merry
Christmas**



JUNE



A recent article in the New York Times indicated that teens between the ages of 13 and 18 spend an average of 7 hours and 22 minutes a day looking at screens. Phone apps occupy a good part of that time.

There are reports of teen self-esteem adversely affected by routine exposure to the “beautiful lives” photos and videos that other kids post or by negative messages that get shared. Tracking apps are posing another problem. *Where are my friends? Are they with someone else and leaving me out?* The self-confidence of an adolescent can be taxed by peer hierarchies and comparisons. Cell phones multiply and amplify those stresses.



In a related experiment at Bullard High, the school’s administration has deprived students of cell phone use during the school day. As of November 9, students’ cell phones were locked in a magnetic pouch while they are on campus. Unlocking devices are scattered around campus and with teachers and various school staff. The policy is meant to preclude personal interactions between students and distracting them in class.

The policy was to begin at the outset of this school year but was delayed after protests by parents and students, concerned that taking away access to phones would prevent students from contacting their parents in an emergency and/or document wrongdoing on campus.

The school has enumerated alternatives for contacting parents should the need arise, and there are sound arguments against immediately contacting parents in an emergency. Schools have elaborate plans to deal with emergencies, including evacuation plans that rely on staff being able to account for students moving to a safe area. If parents are rushing in to pick up their children, staff cannot keep track of who is there and who has been taken and who has done the taking.

At Bullard a false alarm about an active shooter drew police to campus. There were concerns that parents who came to the school (and many did come) would wander the campus and be in danger from any shooter or the police.

The importance of cellphones to document wrongdoing on campus is worth considering if we believe that school personnel are not trained or interested in eliminating those behaviors or would choose not to

(continued on page 3)

Guest: We were joined virtually by Alexandra (Alex) Starr, the new “coach” that has been assigned to us by the LWVC. Her role is to assist us when requested and to make suggestions that she thinks would be helpful. She receives our Voter every month. She recommended checking the Youth Voter Movement Site for ideas about high school registration.

Donation: A generous gift was made to the League from the trust of Alan and Karen Goodman, long-time members now deceased.

Voting: Marianne described the targeted registration efforts that are being made by local community agencies and suggested that we work with them to provide voter information when they visit county organizations to provide knowledge about various activities.

Program Planning: We will have a December holiday party at for our members and guests and invite Stone Soup and the Fresno Climate Lobby to attend. See front page for details. In January we will invite the leaders of the Parks, Arts and Recreation Commission to speak with us, as well as the Director of the Parks Department. We want to learn more about Measure P.

Transportation Project: A driver has been hired for the Biola electric vehicle project and plans are moving forward to sign an agreement between the county Rural Transportation Agency and the Biola Community District.

Mural project: Since plans have stalled on using an outside wall of the County Registrar’s Office building, we are going to explore the use of the wall outside the county Warehouse on Hamilton. It faces the Fairgrounds and gets lots of exposure.

Video: A Public Service Announcement video was made by CMAC (Community Media Access Collaborative) because we are a member of their service. It is a 60 second announcement scripted and “performed” by Francine and will be shown whenever there is space in the CMAC schedule. A final copy will be placed on our website.

LWVF IS A 501 C3 non-profit organization and all donations, including dues, are tax deductible. Donations are always accepted for the RBG Scholarship Fund at San Joaquin College of Law, the League’s general fund, and any other purpose. Your estate planning is encouraged to consider LWVF. Please make out checks to LWVF and send to Treasurer, LWVF 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno 93710.

The Voter is a monthly publication of the League of Women Voters of Fresno

Mailing address: 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710

Volume 81 No. 12 Editor: Francine M. Farber

Education

by Kay Bertken



Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



Some things did not change in local education as a result of the November elections. Marcy Masumoto will stay on the Fresno County Board. Valerie Davis and Keisha Thomas retained their seats on the Fresno Unified School Board of Trustees. As of the last count, so will Veva Islas, although her race was tight. Terry Slatik lost his seat representing the Bullard region to Susan Wittrup, a former FUSD psychologist.

Superintendent Bob Nelson got a positive evaluation from the Board so will not be leaving any time soon, but the district will be looking for a new Chief Financial Officer to replace Santino Danisi who will be City of Fresno's controller.

Current initiatives in FUSD include the development of a public dashboard (the district has an in-house tracking system) that will report real time student statistics to parents and the community. The dashboard will include student performance measures on test scores as well as other metrics. There will be an update on the dashboard's progress in 6 to 8 months.

A steering committee has been established to design, pilot and plan for the long-term expansion of community schools within the district. Dr. Linda Hoff, formerly from Fresno Pacific University, is leading the commission. A formal collaborative relationship with the Fresno Teachers Association has been signed and the FTA president is on the commission. A community school is one that offers an integrated focus on the whole child and the child's family through aligning community resources as well as academics.

Ten schools were invited to pilot the program. Five elementary schools and one middle school will proceed: Norseman, Birney, Thomas, Wolters, Holland and Fort Miller. More schools will be added. The State is supporting the work through grant aid.

This winter the district will be offering 15 winter camps for students. In partnership with community providers, there will be sports, arts and tech camps offered to students on a first come-first served basis. kaybertken752@gmail.com

CO-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE *(continued from page 2)*

believe student reports without filmed evidence. Distrust is a problem that itself needs attention beyond any cell phone policy. Susan Wittrup, who won the race for Bullard area trustee, stated she was not in favor or against the ban but was unhappy with the outreach to parents about it. *Kay*

The Behavioral Health Board had a virtual site visit with the Crisis Intervention Team and received an outcomes report on its services from the Department of Behavioral Health.

The Crisis Intervention Team is a partnership between law enforcement, the Department, and Kingsview Behavioral Health. A team of 16 mental health clinicians works with law enforcement officers in the Fresno metropolitan area. Officers may call for a clinician whenever they encounter a mental health crisis; clinicians usually respond within 20 minutes. Individuals calling 911 for assistance with a mental health crisis may request that a clinician also respond.

Families, community members, and schools often call for crisis team services. Officers secure the scene, while clinicians evaluate individuals in crisis and determine the best options for a resolution. Clinicians look for opportunities for individuals to receive care while remaining in the community; if that is not possible, clinicians may write a "5150" involuntary hold, so that the individual may receive treatment and care in a safe environment. Approximately 60% of calls result in 5150 holds.

Clinicians are available from 6a.m. to 12 a.m. every day of the year. Last year the crisis team received over 5,000 calls. Soon the team will be joined by case managers who will serve as liaisons to community services. The crisis team is making a difference by offering support and hope to individuals and their families.

The Board's Adult Services Committee heard from the contracted Family Advocates Program that supports families of individuals who live with behavioral health disorders. Families often feel lost and need help in navigating the system of care to obtain services for their loved ones. Advocates educate families about the services available, how to access those services, and what they can and cannot do for their loved ones. The three advocates receive an average of 20 calls per week, and will meet family members at the office, in their homes, or out in the community. Advocates communicate with care providers and with schools, resulting in many calls back and forth between care providers and family members. Last year the program assisted 540 unique families.

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Climate Change

by Andrea Farber De Zubiria



Carbon offsets usually refer to certified projects that reduce greenhouse gases. Individuals, companies, organizations and governments invest in these to compensate for activities that create emissions in an effort to be “carbon neutral.” They are often considered an unreliable method of lowering greenhouse gases, due to the difficulty of estimating how much projects truly reduce gases in the atmosphere.

Dr Alex Sherriffs, a local climate and clean air advocate, has pledged a donation to LWVF as a wonderful alternative to compensate for the “carbon footprint” of a recent vacation. Dr. Sherriffs has been president of the Fresno Madera Medical Society and served on the Air Resources Board and California Medical Association Climate Health Champions. He wrote:

“Whenever I travel, or find myself in an internal combustion vehicle, I worry about my carbon footprint. Transportation is one of our biggest sources of greenhouse gases.

“How big is our travel footprint? There are a lot of calculators out there. I surveyed several, did some averaging and rounding. I suggest the following rule of thumb: \$5/air hour, 3/4 cent/internal combustion mile. We recently went to Maine, a five-hour flight from the West Coast. On the East Coast, the nine of us lighthouse-and-seafood-seeking happy tourists covered 1000 miles in a shared van. If each of us took full responsibility (rather than dividing by nine of us) the travel carbon footprint for each of us for the week’s vacation would be under \$60—a small portion of the cost of our trip.

“In a more rational and efficient world, the mitigation of our carbon footprint would be built in— carbon would be priced everywhere. In the meantime, we need to be personally mindful. We talked about this in the van as we toured and everyone on the trip committed to donate at least the cost of our carbon footprint to an organization working on climate change. Then they committed to join, give a membership to someone else, or make an extra donation— every single time they travel.”

Many thanks to Dr Sherriffs for his pledge and for sharing this great idea.

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Stone Soup Fresno Wish List 2022



There are 150 children onsite daily. These are the wish items from their teachers to help children stay warm this winter.

Throw blankets for nap time in neutral colors

Warm fleece hats (sizes 4 to 6)

Warm fleece gloves (sizes 4 to 6)

Warm scarves or ear muffs

**Socks for children in Size M/
Child shoe sizes 10 - 4**

Simple learning toys: building blocks, puzzles, stacking toys, board games (no electronics)

Simple motor-skills toys, such as Playdoh, clay

Girls and boys jackets or coats in child size 6 to 8

Sneakers (blue, green, grey, white) Child shoe sizes 10—4

Gift cards of any amount to FoodMaxx or Walmart for our neediest families

Gift cards for gas for our neediest families



Health Care

by Richard Bertken, MD



Gender Identity

Part One

Among all the fault lines separating our political parties—racism and its remedies, immigration, climate change, abortion, guns, and crime and policing—sexuality and gender identities occupy a special hot zone.

The complexity of gender identity exemplified by transexuals, rare as it is, has emerged as a particular flashpoint for conservative reaction.

Legislation prohibiting “gender affirming” medical care for adolescents (the target group for effective gender transitioning) was passed in four states. Fifteen other states drafted bills to inhibit hormonal and surgical treatments. Nine states refused to allow their Medicaid programs to pay for gender affirming treatment despite non-discrimination requirements of the Affordable Care Act. Transexuals were banned from certain restrooms and sports.

Dial back to 1969, the Age of Flower Children. In a UCLA Medical Center lecture hall, a very tall and bulky man occupied center stage. An academic psychiatrist interviewed the 30-something man who staunchly insisted he was a woman. No doctor had been able to help him with this peculiar “delusion.” After he made a recent failed attempt at self-

emasculatation with a kitchen knife, the psychiatric service intensified his psychotherapy. The conference served as one aspect of his crisis management and as a lesson to medical students in mental care challenges.

Over the ensuing five decades, the scientific community has verified gender incongruence (individuals who feel and behave contrary to their biologic gender) and gender fluidity (individuals migrate through gender identities). We see these attributes throughout the animal kingdom. A commonly cited frequency for gender incongruence in humans is 0.6%. It predicts at least 2.2 million persons in the US are uncomfortable with their physical gender.

As I recall this unforgettable medical school scene and consider our new knowledge, I applaud the professor for concluding that psychiatry could address only the secondary consequences of this patient’s gender incongruence. Social derision and isolation, bullying, physical abuse, and job loss lead to depression and suicidal ideation meriting psychological support. But the core problem of gender incongruence was not psychiatric. **It was a mystery.**

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This important column will be continued in the January 2023 issue of The VOTER, Please look for it!

Water News

by Diane Merrill



I was mistaken when I reported in the October issue of The Voter that California Senate Bill 222 had been signed into law by Governor Newsom. The Senate and Assembly passed the legislation, but the Governor vetoed it. SB 222 would have established a permanent Water Rate Assistance Program and Water Rate Assistance Fund to provide water affordability assistance for drinking and wastewater services to low income ratepayers. All community water systems and wastewater systems would have been required to participate and to provide this assistance to residential ratepayers.

In his veto statement, the Governor explained that the legislation would result in a permanent program that would not be implemented or initiated until funding is provided, and no sustainable, ongoing funding source had been identified. He remarked that signing on to SB 222 would have resulted in “significant General Fund pressures in the billions of dollars to continuously provide such assistance.”

The Governor stated that the last two budgets have provided billions in rebates, debt relief, assistance grants, and free support services. For example, the 2021-2022 budget provided \$1 billion to the California Water and Wastewater Arrearage Payment Program that cleared water and wastewater debts resulting from the pandemic.

There have been several attempts to establish a source of continuous and reliable water funding since the legislature passed Assembly Bill 685 in 2012, recognizing that “every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes.” The governor commended the bill’s author and stakeholders for their work and urged them to continue their efforts to craft a bill that would provide a sustainable source of funding for water affordability assistance that will be ap-

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Holt explains DBH goals, priorities

by Francine M. Farber

Susan Holt rattled off information and statistics as though she were reading from a teleprompter, except that she wasn't. The new Director of the Fresno County Department of Behavioral Health spoke before an interested audience of members and guests last month to describe her priorities and goals.



Susan Holt

She wants the entire county to be a recipient of health and wellness activities. That includes people with mental health and/or substance use disorders, people who are unhoused, children, and her large staff of over 700 employees, some of whom suffer from burnout. She's looking forward to changes in payment that will take place in July of 2023 to help the department's funding and reduce paperwork.

Although the department is not a housing developer, she stressed, it does participate with the Housing Authority in recommending decisions about permanent supportive housing needs – that is, permanent insofar as an individual needs it. At this time there are about 300 supportive housing apartments in the county. The most recent opening this month is named "Butterfly Gardens" and is the first supportive housing apartments complex in Clovis.

Prevention is an important part of the Department's array of programs. Efforts to work in schools have been boosted by 200 clinicians hired through Fresno County Office of Education to do screening, assessment and treatment. During the pandemic telehealth appointments of patients and clinicians became routine. These will still be offered where desired by patients.

Obstacles to some Department goals include the many staff vacancies: 60% vacancy rate in licensed vocational nurses, 30% in clinicians and 100% in the small number of RN's needed.

CARE Court (Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment) was recently enacted in California. The governor's plan connects a person struggling with untreated mental illness – and often also substance use challenges – with a court-ordered Care Plan for up to 24 months. Each plan is managed by a care team in the community and can include individualized interventions with supportive services, medication, and a housing plan. The client-centered approach also includes a public defender and supporter to help make self-directed care decisions in addition to the full clinical team.



It was quite a year for elections, with four held within a 14-month period. Janice Maroot and I want to thank all of the volunteers who worked at the Warehouse opening ballots and those who worked at the Elections Office answering phones. Many of you volunteered for multiple elections in this short time period and we are grateful to you. Ballot opening continued through November 17.

There were not a significant number of observers this election at the Warehouse. Those observers who were there appeared more interested in the ballot machines. League members put in 348.5 hours at the warehouse. Members volunteered 321.75 hours for the phone bank. The phone lines were busier this election than during the special election and the June primary. In the future, it would be helpful to have more volunteers there.



These activities are not only providing a civic service appreciated by the Elections Office, but provide income to the League which helps fund our other endeavors.


As far as we know there are no state-wide election-sor ballot measures in 2023, but that doesn't mean something won't come up. In preparing for the presidential primary and the general election in 2024, we are looking at making a concerted effort to register voters, with a particular emphasis on the youth vote. While the percentage of those people 18-39 is increasing in the population and increasingly voting, the percentages of this demographic actually voting is still less than others. However, even with the smaller increases, their power is being felt and has made a difference in election outcomes in some areas.

In addition to schools, we will be looking at other places to hold voter registration drives. These drives work best when we can discuss the value and need for voting rather than just tabling. Put your thinking caps on and if you have any suggestions contact me. Consider volunteering for these activities once they are arranged.

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DIVERSITY POLICY: There shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the LWVF on the basis of race, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or socio-economic level.

What do you get when you join the League? All for one fee, you become a member of the Fresno, California and National Leagues and receive their newsletters. You may participate in League studies of issues; receive leadership training; hone your public speaking skills; become knowledgeable about local and state issues; learn more about government, natural resources and social policies as your time and interests dictate. You will also meet some interesting and friendly women and men who represent diverse backgrounds but find common ground in keeping abreast of current issues.

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