

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF KENT
"A VOICE FOR CITIZENS ... A FORCE FOR CHANGE"

As I reflect upon the history that I have had the pleasure of compiling for our celebration of fifty years as a League, it strikes me how much has changed yet how much has stayed the same. I had to chuckle as I read the quote from the March, 1959 annual meeting minutes that identified the most disheartening problem of the past year was "lack of time and personnel to study adequately the large number of items!"

We can take some comfort that the challenges we face today with members juggling work, family, personal and League responsibilities have been with us during most of our history and, in spite of them, we have not only survived, we have thrived! Perhaps we should learn the lesson from our history that limited time and personnel is not a "disheartening problem" but rather a reality that we have become quite adept at surmounting. As you will read on these pages, we have had to change how we conduct League activities to recognize these changing realities. However, it is very clear that throughout it all our commitment to educating the voters (and encouraging them to vote!), our advocacy for issues dear to us and, above all, our gratitude for the very special friendships we have made through League have been unwavering. Looking to the future, the issues may change and candidates will certainly come and go, but our passion as "Leaguers" will not dim. We can take on the next half century with the confidence that we will figure out how to adapt so that the special times and activities we find only in League will be there to pass on to the generations that follow us.

We owe a great deal of gratitude to Edith Chase for this history of our fifty years. For our thirtieth anniversary, she compiled the history of the League of Women Voters of Kent through 1971. For the subsequent years, each president recorded the highlights of her term. Those presidents during the decade between our 30th and 40th anniversaries have Edith to thank for much of the information about their presidential terms as she again combed VOTERS in preparation for our 40th anniversary celebration.

It is my wish that what follows conveys our appreciation for the solid base our founders and many subsequent members have built, and the strong sense of commitment and fun Leaguers have had over the years.

Jane Preston Rose

April 25, 2003

HISTORY OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF KENT, OHIO
Volume I, 1953 - 2003

On **March 17, 1953**, a group met at the home of Mrs. Robert White to discuss the formation of a Kent League of Women Voters. The meeting had been arranged by Mrs. White and Mrs. Herbert VanMeter, former League members in Burlington, Iowa and Oberlin, Ohio, respectively. Mrs. Klinger of Warren, of members of the State Board, led a discussion of the league, its purpose, programs, and organization. As a result, a nominating committee was chosen.

*At the first meeting of the Provisional league of Women Voters of Kent on **April 21, 1953**, Mrs. J. Hale Myers, was elected president.* "Know Your Town" was the first topic for study. The Kent League, with Mrs. Myers as president, was formally recognized in April, 1954. Voter service work was initiated by distribution information about the primary election. Wider distribution resulted with the League's Candidates Bulletin was published in the November, 1956 in the *Record-Courier*.

Mrs. John B. Nicholson, Jr., presided over the growing years from 1955-to1959. Highlights of this period included support of the Kent recreation levy plus in-depth studies of the United Nations, Mental Health, City Planning, Water Resources, International Trade and Aid, Local Government and Know Your County. General meeting speakers included Dr. Stanley Corey on Ohio Finance, Dr. James Olson on Loyalty-Security, and Dr. Lawrence Kaplan on NATO. Quote from the minutes of March 2, 1959: "Proudest achievement for the year 1958-1959: Finance Drive. Most disheartening problem: Lack of time and personnel to study adequately the large number of items. Outstanding service to the voter: Candidates Bulletin."

The third president, Mrs. Thomas Marshall, served from 1959-1962. During 1959 several new activities were added to Voters Service, the most important being publication of a Directory of Public Officials, issued each spring since. Study committees regularly wrote information articles for a Voters' Column in the *Record-Courier*. In 1960, two Town Meetings were held; one in June (a debate between Mayor Redmond Greer and Mr. Robert Byrne), and the second in the fall on local levies. A reception was held in the Ravenna Courthouse for new citizens. Kits of League publications were given to local school libraries, and a UN Day program was presented in Kent Schools. Also in 1960, League members were presented with the "Blue Book", which listed the officers, calendar, program, and members. The local Bulletin appeared with a new first sheet, decorated with a Kent tree in green ink.

In 1961, the Annual Meeting was an all-day affair, with Mrs. Donald Francis, State League president, as the speaker at lunch, and Dr. Paul Kitchen speaking on the City Charter, a local CA (current agenda item). Other CA study items were Know Your County and United Nations. The Kent League contributed \$50 to the Kent Public Library addition and was granted shelf space in the library for display of League publications. In 1962, League was host to an all-day Area conference, which brought many Leaguers to Kent. Locally, we gave active support to a comprehensive Master Plan for the Kent area. One of the State CAs was Higher Education, and

at the 1962 Annual Meeting the League was privileged to have KSU President Dr. George Bowman speak on that subject.

In August, 1962, Mrs. F. Dewey Amner took over as president when Betty Marshall accompanied her husband to Mexico. International students were invited to a League UN Day tea that year. Local study items were Know Your County and Annexation. Kent voters approved a City Charter in May, 1963; the League joined in the campaign with flyers, speakers, and other publicity to support the charter. A special attraction to mark our tenth anniversary was a dinner meeting at which Robert Hill, dean of the College of Business Administration, spoke on the Common Market, "The Uncommon Challenge."

The years 1965-67, with Edith Chase as president, were marked by the multiplicity of program items, in response to the diversity of interests of League members. Emergency adoption of the national item on apportionment of state legislatures followed the U.S. Supreme Court rulings defining the one-person, one-vote doctrine. This added another topic to a program reflecting our members' long-range outlook on human resources, foreign policy, and water resources. Leagues' Local Government and Charter studies illuminated many corners of City and Township halls. Debate between mayoral candidates John Carson and Dean Hull brought Kent residents to "Meet Your Candidates" in October 1965. In 1966, the candidates meeting focused on state government with Ohio General Assembly candidates. The conference technique proved successful, with the Portage County Clean Water Conference in March 1966 and the Community Beautification Conference on April 1, 1967. Membership generally fluctuated between 80 and 99. In 1967, it numbered 114 as League continued to make new friends and extended its influence.

Pat Reed was president from 1967-1969. Emphasis continued on state government as members began Ohio Constitution and Education studies. Kent League members visited the legislature in Columbus in 1967 and helped choose a high school student to accompany Representative John Kainrad to Columbus for a week's inside view of the General Assembly. *This is Portage County*, an important League contribution to help residents understand how county government works, was published in 1967. The League promoted clean water with an open house at Kent's new secondary treatment plant in 1968. Also in that year a "Go-See" tour of Kent's historic sites and public buildings set the stage for the "Kent in 1980" conference on community planning. Out of that developed Kent Citizens for Progress, dedicated to the idea that citizens need planning and planning needs citizens. League members walked the streets to update the 1966 Kent Land use map as part of a major effort to promote the passage of a 701 Master Plan.

Membership reached a new height of 156 in 1969 as Phyllis Gordon was honored by national board for "best year-round membership activities" in Ohio. The fiftieth Anniversary celebration of the League of Women Voters of the United States was marked in 1969 with a luncheon and style show. This was a kick-off for a major effort to establish a sound financial basis for the League at the local, state, and national levels. The Stow and Northeast Portage County Leagues joined Kent in watching members model fashions of 1910-1929 – we've come a long way!

During the period 1969-1971 when Virginia Motycka was president, the League opened an office on South Water Street and was honored by a City Council resolution for its interest in good government. The membership was active in working with students and the Portage County Board of Elections on voting rights for students

Pat Reed, Juanita Carpenter, and Anita Bixenstine were appointed to the Charter Review Commission and Virginia Motycka worked as a member of the *ad hoc* zoning committee. Leaguers reviewed the Kent housing code and urged redistricting of Kent wards. Lawyers and agencies were interviewed on legal aid and student voting and some investigation was made of children's services funding in the county. Two local briefs, "How to Testify" and "How to Lobby", were distributed to members and contributors at public meetings.

The League sponsored a water conference for local, county, and regional officials; co-sponsored a film festival on pollution; and surveyed industries and auto dealers about air pollution. Work continued on local state, and national issues, including the new national item, US Congress, adopted at the May, 1970 national convention.

Pat Sattler served as president from 1971 to 1973. The office continued and we added a local item to our program concerning Voting and Elections, gearing up for action on the right of the eighteen year old to vote (a lively topic in a college town). In May, 1971, ninety (90) people from several area Leagues participated in the "Cuyahoga County Caravan", a tour of the Cuyahoga River area from northern Portage County to Akron, arranged by Edith Chase and Sylvia Coogan. September saw a local workshop on finance and a general meeting with Ohio Representative Marcus Roberto as the featured speaker. We applauded a new air pollution ordinance and a new zoning ordinance. Kent was one of the 300 Leagues nationwide to participate in a comprehensive election survey funded by the Ford Foundation. (At the National Convention a proposal to allow men full membership in the League was rejected!)

In 1972-1973, there were active studies on Aging, Juvenile Justice, and Hazardous Waste. We published "Portage County – Who's in Charge", a mini "Know Your County" and worked on voting representation and self-government for Washington, D.C. residents. We also started working on ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). In the spring, we held a Land Use meeting with Harold Mayer (Kent Planning Commission) and Ray Robinson (Tri-County Regional Planning Commission) as featured speakers. A lively candidates' meeting was held at Kentway prior to the spring primary, with five people vying for the position of mayor and 12 people running for council-at-Large. The highlight of the year must have been Sylvia Coogan (Voter Service Chairman) and Pat Sattler (President) pacing off the KSU practice football field prior to our fall candidates' meeting, and Sylvia's purchase of a \$1.00 "liquor license" to sell beer (a Kent League first). In actuality, the candidates' meeting was moved to the "old" KSU Student Union (now Oscar Ritchie Hall) due to high winds, but that's a long story!

Sylvia Coogan served as President from 1973 to 1975. At the September 1973 General Meeting we were fortunate to have as our speaker Nancy Duffy, Legislative Chairman for the State

Board, and knowledgeable editor of the State LWV's Legislative Bulletin. She gave us behind-the-scenes information on the Legislature.

Cooperation with other area Leagues was strong. We were active in the Lake Erie Basin Committee, the Jetport Committee (to study a proposed jetport for northeast Ohio; we eventually opposed it), NEFCO Committee (to observe NEFCO – Northeast Four County Organization), and ACCESS (a weekly radio program presented by Leagues on WKSU). Environmental quality issues were much in the forefront.

We had general meetings on flood plain management, sewage plants and planning in the Kent area, and housing needs in Portage County. Testimony was presented in support of open space conversation zoning along the Cuyahoga River, on the Fishcreek Regional Wastewater Treatment Plan, on Portage County's proposed subdivision regulations, and on NOACA's (Northeast Ohio Area-wide Coordinating Agency) application for agency status. Kent League members also served on the Tri-County Planning Commission and the Portage County Planning Commission and their committees.

Voter Service activities were prominent with publication of the usual Voters' guides in the *Record-Courier* and Directories of Public Officials. We sponsored three candidate and issue meetings in 1973; Kent City candidates, Board of Education candidates, and state and county ballot issues. In 1974, U.S. Congressional candidates came on October 21 and local candidates on October 28.

During this period we restructured our local board to have one vice president in charge of program committees and one to oversee organizational committees. Previously, the vice presidents had carried a portfolio. To make this possible the number of appointed and elected directors was each increased from six to seven. We began our study for publishing a new "This is Kent" under the direction of Linda Elman. The Kent Voter kept members informed through observer reports, background information on upcoming legislation, and information on new League publications.

Nationally, men were fully enfranchised by the LWV and became full voting members.

Nancy Wenninger served as President from 1975 to 1979. Her first term combined a very inexperienced president with a flurry of LWV activities on many levels – possible only because of the hard-working vice presidents and other directors on the board and additional active members. Highlights were the successful passage of city manager government for Kent in November, 1975 and the defeat of three proposed state bond issues which were heavily financed by the proponents.

In 1976, we published "This is Kent", sponsored a "town meeting" at the 1976 Bicentennial Festival; had Joan Lawrence, LWV-Ohio President, speak at our fall meeting on "LWV – What's in it for me?", and had units on apportionment in November 1976 (we do try to be prepared.) LLWV-Kent grew from 90 to 98 members and expanded to two morning units, again making three units. (We also had "Expanding" board members with five babies born between July 1975

and July 1976!) During this period the VOTER included many observer reports covering various government and advisory bodies.

WV-Kent grew to 107 members and then to 125. We had several units on energy and reaching consensus regarding an energy study at the national level. At our fall, 1977 general meeting we had our County Commissioners tell us about a day in the life of a county commissioner. We supported a flexible debt limit for Ohio, but it was defeated. We were also unsuccessful in our support for retention of Election Day registration.

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was a subject of concern throughout the late 1970s. LWV-Kent pledged \$1,250 and raised funds for LWV-US ERA support in various ways, including a very successful garage sale, organized by Diana Szambecki.

Another activity was a tour of county offices which included the County Recorder, the Health Department (back in the days when it was a lot more than a skeleton staff), and the Clerk of Courts. We conducted successful LWV-Kent finance drives (as usual), published the *Voters Guide*, and had good attendance at area conferences and other workshops and meetings.

In April, 1979, Jo Ann Zaynor took over as president after four stable, building years under the leadership of Nancy Wenninger. Membership numbered 103, making Kent the eleventh largest League in Ohio! The year began with a petition drive for an initiative law on mandatory container deposit legislation. (The petition drive was successful, but the law was defeated at the polls.) We continued our fund raising for ERA with a table at the Kentway flea market. A very successful candidates and issues forum, chaired by Diana Szambecki, was held on a Sunday afternoon in late October at Theodore Roosevelt High School. It was our first joint venture with the Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and the Portage County Women's Council of Realtors. We worked with KSU student government and at KentFest registering new voters. A new local study was begun on Kent City finances. Guest speakers during the year talked on the Portage Metropolitan Housing Authority, solar energy, and plea bargaining. Kent City's Solar Energy Project was a very active group, including several League members.

During 1980-1981, LWV-US celebrated its sixtieth birthday at the national convention in Washington, D.C. Hazardous wastes became a "hot topic" at both the local and state level. We extended our festival participation to include the Ravenna Balloon A-Fair, in addition to the annual July KentFest. An exciting new fundraising/educational project was held in September: THE ARCO car care clinics "Not for Men Only". We worked with Leagues throughout Ohio to place the FAIR (Fair and Impartial Redistricting) constitutional amendment on the November ballot. (The amendment was defeated.) Our interest in local public transportation was increased by a speaker from PARTA (Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority) at the fall opening meeting. The December general meeting featured "economic games" led by the Director of the Akron Center for economic Education. This biennium saw the beginning of increased attempts to understand the interaction between the economy and government programs.

Local news was dominated by the Ravenna teachers' strike, which stretched out to become the longest in the nation. A LWV-Kent committee spent many hours trying to arrange a public forum where both sides could be heard and questioned by Ravenna residents, but our goal was never achieved due to an inability to secure a suitable site for such a meeting. Kathy Chandler was elected a Kent city ward councilperson, giving the League two members on that body; Pat Reed had been elected previously. Nancy Wenninger was elected chairman of "Citizens for a Safe Kent" – a citizens group promoting passage of a city income tax increase at a special February, 1980 election. The campaign was a success under Nancy's leadership after similar proposals had been defeated numerous times. Nancy Wenninger became the third Leaguer on the city council and Nancy Hansford, elected in November 1981, was Kent's first woman mayor.

Money was on everyone's mind as we delved more deeply into Kent City finances with unit presentations on revenue sources for local governments. Much interest was expressed in LWV-Ohio adopting a new study on state finances. Committee work began on our newest local program item, Public Health, while other members worked with the Northern Portage LWV studying and testifying on the long-awaited proposal for county subdivision regulations.

During these two years our membership dropped to 87, a 14 percent decrease. We were struggling with the same problem facing many organizations; the decline of the "Full-time" volunteer as economic realities forced many women to seek employment or more education in preparation for employment. Our own Board was a reflection of this with the President, two Vice Presidents, and several members working at full-time jobs in addition to their family and League responsibilities. We were fortunate that many of our members remained faithful to the League in spite of increased demands on their time and energy, and felt that we ended these years with strength and commitment despite our reduced forces.

1981 to 1983 encompassed the tenure of Carol Murphy as President. 1981 through 1983 were exciting years as we utilized a variety of talents and skills of our members. Under the leadership of Carol Murphy, at orientation the Board set its goals and then organized to achieve them. Membership growth was a high priority. The Membership Committee set a goal to reverse the downward trend; membership climbed to 96 by July, 1982, and then to 108 by January, 1983. Events such as a lovely Saturday brunch, an early evening wine and cheese party (at which Congressman John Sieberling paid us a surprise visit), and a salad supper were all part of the "game plan" to attract new members and retain present ones. Lots of follow-through and attention to detail paid off as a success cycle began.

Public awareness of the League's presence in the community was largely responsible for our success story in membership and in our finance drives went over their goals. An active Public Relations Committee highlighted our work through the local newspaper, an attractive display board, and our participation in community events. Carole Olshavsky designed and built a new booth to be used for KentFest and the Ravenna Balloon A-Fair. Its geodesic dome design, clever decoration, and sale of red carnations helped us win first and second place awards at these festivals.

The very active Voter Service Committee provided a wide variety of services. We handled voter registration at Roosevelt High School, Kent State University, Kentway, Tower 43, and the Kent Downtown Sidewalk Sales, as well as during KentFest and the Balloon A-Fair. A candidates' meeting was held in cooperation with other community groups. It included brunch, activities for children, and a lively format. A speaker's bureau furnished talks about the ballot issues to many local groups and an expanded *Voters Guide* in the *Record-Courier* now covered all of Portage County. The Voter Service Committee also held our League's first reception honoring newly elected public officials.

Program committees gave us general meetings; there was a panel presentation about clean air, the state inspection of Portage County's jail spoke on state standards for jails. The Portage County Government Committee sponsored a tour of the County Administration Building with informative talks in many of the offices and an address about the "State of the County" by Commissioner Irene Roth. This committee also researched and wrote a new edition of the 1967 publication, "*This is Portage County*".

Unit meetings included programs on public health, energy, and Kent City finances; a film entitled "*The Regulators*", and a speaker from the Juvenile Court. We also toured the Portage County Jail and took consensus or concurrence on State Education, State Finances, Public Policy on Reproductive Rights, and Kent City Finances. Program planning included a skit written by Amie Cajka and presented by "the Fruit of the Loom Apple," "Kid Leo" with a Scottish Brooklyn accent, "Laurel and Hardy", etc. One year began with Channy Brokaw, president of LWV-Ohio, speaking to us in the Jaycees' railroad car, and ended with the appearance of "five and a half-year old Edith Ann" and numerous false fire alarms at the annual meeting. Another annual meeting featured a booklet designed by Amie Cajka entitled, "Real League Members Don't Eat Quiche."

Action supported our positions as we passed petitions for fair and impartial redistricting and in opposition to a tuition tax credit plan; gave time and money to keep Kent's Council/Manager form of government; lobbied for the ERA, reauthorization of the Clean Air Act, and the Voting Rights Act; endorsed Fair Housing in Portage County; entered a display at the energy Fair; cosponsored a conference on world hunger, and U.S. Foreign Policy; and read a statement regarding evening meetings at a Portage County Commissioners meeting. We also supported a county child welfare levy and a Kent recreation levy.

Recognition came to our members as Edith Chase and Jo Ann Zaynor served as consultants to local Leagues for the LWV-Ohio. Edith Chase also received the Environmental Recognition Award from the Ohio Environmental Council. Kathy Chandler, Pat Reed, and Nancy Wenninger served as Kent city Council members, Nancy Hansford as Mayor, and Donna Lightel as Kent School Superintendent.

Other activities included participation in both years in Clean Up Kent Day as we cleared litter and planted flowers at Fred Fuller Park. We sent many members to area, state, and national conferences, council, and conventions, and to State Government Day in Columbus. We also

sponsored training, a public relations workshop, and an observer's workshop. The Board worked well together and enjoyed an orientation in Vermillion as well as a visit from the "Great Pumpkin" at one October meeting. Our "Blue Book" became our "handbook", dues were raised to \$25.00 (with the addition of a budget item for scholarships), and a bulk mailing permit enabled us to send our excellent *Voter* to many interested non-members.

(Carol, after completing her term as LWV-Kent president, was elected to the LWV-Ohio State Board for a two-year term, 1983-1985. She then chaired the LWV-Ohio Nominating Committee, 1985-1987.)

Jane Preston Rose served as President from 1983-1985. The first year of Jane's presidency included a year-long series of events to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of the League of Women Voters of Kent. We began the observance of our thirtieth anniversary with unveiling a logo at 1983's Annual Meeting and planting a red maple on Haymaker Parkway, which reinforced the theme for the year, "Celebrating Our Grass Roots". Nancy Stillwagon Cartensen designed a special logo, which was used on stationery, handbooks, programs and other items. A series of special events were planned throughout the year, which involved a majority of the members.

U.S. Congressman Dennis Eckart was the featured speaker at the September General Meeting. A special event at the December General Meeting included honoring the charter members and the presentation of an original play about the founding of the league in 1920, "That Catt Woman", written by Amie Cajka. The play starred Jo Ann Zaynor, Pat Sattler, Edith Chase, Ruth Skerpan, Xina Stewart, Roberta O'Keefe, and Amie Cajka. We celebrated our official birthday party on March 9, 1984 with a champagne and steak dinner at the Kent State University Student Center. Dinner was followed by a program, which included the presentation of a proclamation from the City of Kent by John Thomas, President Pro Tem of the Kent City council, and then dancing. State League President Gretchen Denton and her husband attended. Finally, the "Actors" took their show on the road and presented the play at State Council in April. Special thanks were extended to ex-officio members David Stewart who provided our sound track and Phil Cajka who was the sound engineer.

The slogan for Jane's presidency, "Bite Sized Pieces", reflected the challenges organizations such as the League faced with members often juggling full time jobs, family responsibilities, and League interests, especially the president who married a loyal League supporter and became the step-mother to two young daughters halfway through her presidency. The Board worked towards breaking down the various League responsibilities into manageable pieces so members could enjoy their league activities without becoming overwhelmed and burned out. During these years, we published the second edition of *This is Portage County*, held January receptions for newly elected public officials, and continued the county jail and *Know Your Schools* studies.

From 1985 to 1987, Roberta O'Keefe served as President. Her presidency was marked by many different program studies and consensus. LWV-Kent completed Phase Two and Phase Three of the LWV-US study and consensus on financing the federal government. Phase One had dealt with the federal tax structure and Phase Two addressed the federal deficit. Dr. Bernard Hall,

Kent State University Professor of Economics, presented information on the federal deficit before LWV-Kent completed its consensus. The League position recognized the need to reduce the federal deficit and supported accomplishing such a reduction by reducing defense spending through selective cuts, increasing revenue through a broad-based progressive tax system, achieving savings through improved efficiency and management, with opposition to across the board federal spending cuts and to a federal budget line item veto. During Phase Three, through consensus, the League adopted the position that the federal government has a role in funding and providing for old-age, survivors, disability, and health insurance. Participation should be mandatory and coverage should be universal for such insurance programs. The position also provided that federal deficit reduction should not be achieved by reducing social security benefits.

The Kent League also participated in the National League study and consensus on the U.S. attitudes and policies toward the developing countries and the role of the U.S. Soviet relations in shaping our policies toward these nations. Also at the national level, we began a study designed by the LWV-US on "Meeting Basic Human Needs", which dealt with the public and private responsibility for providing food, shelter, basic income level, and access to health care.

At the local level, the "Know Your Schools" Committee presented a program on competency-based education and competency testing. As a result of its several years of study of the local school system, LWV-Kent advocated that the Kent Board of Education and the superintendent involve more citizens in their deliberations. More communication with the community was also encouraged.

Other local activities included presentations by Walter Adams on the Kent City charter and proposals for change, and by the National Resources Committee on identifying hazardous substances in the home, discussing safe alternatives, and learning guidelines for the safe use and disposal of hazardous products. Glenn Frank from Kent State University spoke to the league on ground water, and John Allensworth from KSU's Trumbull campus spoke on Central America. We updated our local Portage County Jail study and members toured the county jail. We also co-sponsored with the Northern Portage County League a presentation by the Portage County Citizens Committee on Government (better known as the Blue Ribbon Committee). The League urged that county commissioners establish standard procedures for all county board appointments and re-appointments.

Kathleen Downing Pownall was elected as LWV-Kent President in May, 1987. LWV-Kent received two membership awards at state convention in Toledo (1987 – 122 members). During her term, several state and county issues captured the attention of League members. Kady served on a Portage County Citizens Advisory Committee on the piggyback sales tax, along with Diana Szambecki and Sally Feinberg. LWV-Kent held a public forum on county issue #4 for a permanent one percent sales tax, which was then approved by the voters. League members collected signatures on petitions to put merit selection of judges on the November ballot, which was defeated by Ohio voters. Dr. Kenneth Rupp, Portage County Health Commissioner addressed the League in December 1987 on public health issues in Portage County. The Leagues

of Kent and Northern Portage County cooperated on a study and a panel discussion on meeting basic human needs in Portage County, part of a national League study, which was followed by consensus.

The League's Kent schools study committee reviewed physical education, middle school and school finances. The League asked the school board to meet at a time more accessible for citizens. The League developed a position statement and decided to support a school levy, which the voters approved in 1988. League members observed school board meetings for years, with observer reports in the *Kent Voter*.

The National League 1988 presidential debates were to be televised nationally but were cancelled because they were being orchestrated by the political campaigns. Kent League members participated in the LWV-US consensus on agricultural policies and the LWV-Ohio consensus on transportation of hazardous materials.

At the LWV-US convention, Representative Patricia Schroeder warned about the "coin-operated legislation machine" which we know as Washington, D.C. Retiring LWV-US Nancy Neuman commented on the commitment of League members and concluded that in large part what we do is not voluntary – adult Americans cannot leave the functioning of our democratic institutions to someone else! Delegates Kady and Diana Szambecki also participated in the debate at National Convention on the LWV long-range plans while "Keeping our grass roots green", led by the Florida State Board.

Kent League members continued to register voters at KentFest, Ravenna Balloon A-Fair, Portage County Fair, and even grocery stores! Following completion of her term as LWV-Kent president, Kady was elected to a two-year term on the LWV-Ohio Board.

Jan Rusnack began her presidency in May, 1989 with a goal of increasing the participation of League members in LWV-Kent activities. At the county level, a joint LWV-Kent and LWV-Northern Portage County study committee looked into county finances and sponsored a September meeting all which all three county commissioners discussed county government. Subsequently, all three joined the League of Women Voters. In the fall, 1989, the voters had to decide on approximately 200 candidates and 31 issues. A Ravenna candidates' meeting was a success. LWV-Kent supported renewal of the Kent Parks and Recreation levy and renewal of the Kent City operating Levy. The League also endorsed the county sales tax for financing a new jail which was approved by voters.

The LWV-Kent Schools Committee updated its information in 1990 on the length of the schools day, use of computers, emergency procedures, and gifted education. The Kent League also participated in the LWV-Ohio education finance consensus. The Schools Committee met with school board members and school administrators, and discussed these issues and community involvement. The Kent City School Board later moved its board meetings to 7:00 pm from 5:30 pm, as requested by the League so more citizens could participate.

LWV-Kent also reviewed the Kent City Charter. Two members, Janet Hoover and Kady Pownall, were appointed to the Kent City Charter Review Commission (an activity required every five years by the Charter.) Anita Foote was appointed as an alternate. The League's social Policy committee conducted a health care survey with Kent State University and found that 12% of county residents had no health insurance. Because this was a telephone poll, the actual number may be higher as many with no insurance may be without telephones, as well. In 1990, LWV-Kent joined LWV-US in celebration of the League of Women Voters 70th anniversary. At the December brunch, members presented historical vignettes of the League, *Pride and Passion*. League members began the national healthcare study with consensus in 1992.

LWV-Ohio brought the televised gubernatorial debate between George Voinovich and Anthony Celebreeze. Locally, LWV-Kent held spring and fall candidates/issues nights in Kent and Ravenna. Secretary of State Sherrod Brown honored the LWV-Kent with a certificate of recognition for Ohio's 1990 voter registration program.

League members began observing the Portage County Budget commission in 1991. League members toured the country's Juvenile Justice Center. Over 80% of League members participated in LWV-Kent activities in 1990. Following her service as League President, Jan was elected to the Kent City School's Board of Education, a 1991, a position in which she has served continuously since that time.

Gail Pytel was elected President at the May 1991 May annual meeting. The results of LWV-Kent's healthcare survey were announced at a LWV-Kent's first ever press conference on July 18, 1991, with articles in local newspapers and stories on WKSU and WNIR. The September meeting focused on reapportionment, "Drawing the Political Lines for the 90s" with Representative Paul Jones and Dr. Jack Gargan from KSU. The December brunch featured Marjorie Young from Kent Social Services who discussed the homeless. The March meeting on Riveredge Park extension was part of a series sponsored by the Kent Park and Recreation Board, which was asking for public input on the master plan for Kent parks expansion. LWV-Kent cooperated with other county organizations to support the establishment of the Portage County Park District in 1991. Judge Thomas Carnes then appointed three county residents to the board (included a League member). Also at the county level, The LWV-Kent Portage County study committee presented information on the county's Budget Commission. Problems included meetings cancelled or postponed, missing minutes, and lack of quorum. League members decided to support the election to two citizen members to the commission, but did not collect enough signatures to get the issue on the ballot.

The League's finance committee, under the leadership of Pat Sattler, organized the first annual "Night at the Races" at Northfield Park, which raised over \$500 for the finance drive. As part of Voter Service activities, Jane Rose, Jo Ann Zaynor and Gail Pytel gave a presentation on state ballot issues at Davey Tree Company during the employees' lunch hour and also registered voters. Kent League members also participated in a statewide effort as 1,000 schools studied issues and phoned in results, which were reported on television. The December brunch

featured Harriet Taylor Upton (aka Paula Copestick), who described her early days in Washington, D.C. as part of the women's suffrage movement and, after 1920, became involved in politics.

League members participated in the LWV-US health care consensus in 1992-1993/ A meeting on gangs in Kent opened many eyes as a panel made up of representatives from the police department, schools, juvenile court and community discussed gang activity and what we can do as a community. (Gail subsequently served as Treasurer on the LWV-Ohio Board of Directors.)

From 1993-1996 Anita Bixenstine served as President. Anita was elected president for the customary two year term in May, 1993 and agreed to serve an additional half term, until May, 1996, when no other candidate was available to assume the position. During her presidency, the LWV-US celebrated its 75th anniversary, the Ohio League its 50th anniversary, and the Kent League its 40th anniversary. At a dinner at the Rusty Nail to celebrate our 40th anniversary, we honored our own Edith Chase for her unfailing support of the League of Women Voters and the many ways she has toiled endlessly to inform voters and marshal their support for the preservation of our environment.

Fall League meetings included a panel on Franklin Township government and the secession issue, a tour of the Kent Bog, a discussion of children's services in Portage County and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). League members served as members of Vision 2000, a group working to envision Kent's future, and on a group formed by the new superintendent of Kent City Schools to develop a five-year strategic plan for the school system. Forums for community dialogue were part of that effort.

The Portage County Board of Elections sent a letter to LWV-Kent thanking members for community service in educating voters about candidates and issues. The Akron, Kent, Hudson, and Tallmadge Leagues cooperated to sponsor a citizen's forum on health care reform in 1994. This forum was followed by a health care videoconference at NEOUCOM. Sheriff Kaley updated League members and guests on the new county jail, now under construction. League members throughout Ohio updated their position statement on education, with consensus to oppose school vouchers. LWV-Kent members decided to support the Kent school levy on the November ballot.

***From the Model T...to the Information Superhighway
Celebrating 75 years of a good idea!***

The League of Women Voters of Kent's local celebration of the 75th anniversary of the League of Women Voters of the United States was spearheaded by a committee that included all of the former presidents of LWV-Kent still residing in Kent and was chaired by Jane Preston Rose. (That was certainly an easy committee to chair!) All of us owed a very special thanks to Amie Cajka who chaired the 75th anniversary dinner celebration. Her fine touches, from bookmarks to Susan B. Anthony dollars to excellent coverage in the *Record-Courier*, made it truly an evening to remember.

Our yearlong celebration included a fascinating and informative Eco Tour of Portage County; participation in the KSU Homecoming Parade (where we won a BIG trophy, and a very nice donation to our treasury) and a December brunch where our guest speaker was Representative Ann Womer Benjamin. Our celebration culminated in a 75th Anniversary Celebration Dinner at the Twin Lakes Country Club on April 20, 1996 (one day short of the forty-third anniversary of the first meeting of the provisional LWV of Kent).

At our celebration dinner, we had an opportunity to publicly recognize and honor three organizations, without whose support it would have been very difficult for us to carry on our activities as professionally and as consistently as we were able to do so over the years. These organizations were the Portage County Board of Elections, Kinko's and the *Record-Courier*. We ourselves were also honored with the presentation of two proclamations, one from the Ohio Senate, which was presented to us by Senator Leigh Herrington, and the other from the House of Representatives, presented by Representative Ann Women Benjamin. The speaker for the evening, John T. Hubbell, Professor of History and Director of the Kent State University Press, delighted us with witty, and very through provoking remarks about our quest for the vote.

From 1996 to 1997, the President of the League of Women Voters of Kent was "T.B. Deter".

With no likely candidate in sight to fill the presidency, Jo Ann Zaynor and Jane Preston Rose organized a potluck dinner in July 1996 at Jane's house, which was attended by many League members. In true League fashion, volunteers stepped up to the plate and the various League responsibilities were covered for the year. Jane agreed to facilitate the board meetings and try to keep the activities coordinated. In response to LWV-Ohio's request for the names of our officers, "to be determined" was submitted in the appropriate space for the president. Somehow that was translated at LWV-Ohio as T.B. Deter! Thanks to the good efforts of many, we continued our regular Voter Service activities and even managed a few programs. Fortunately, when the next election rolled around it was a good time in Amie Cajka's life to serve as President, so LWV-Kent was again "fully staffed".

From 1997 to 1999, Amie Cajka served as President. After a bit of a dip, our membership reached 88 by the end of my term due to excellent programs and those Friday night events masterminded by Membership Chair, Jackie Waltz at the home of Mary Beth Harper. Jackie was also meticulous about following up with prospective members. Jane Preston Rose kept the roster straight and that in itself was a great help. Under the leadership of Karen Schofield, the Membership Handbook was revised and printed. We had a crowd at a forum on Issue 2 (a statewide effort to increase the sales tax in response to the DeRolph school ruling), which was held at the old Davey Junior High School.

Our community events included one of the first educational programs on the Cuyahoga River. The issues ranged from altering of the dams, to water quality, to the legal wrangling between the City of Akron and Portage County. During my term, the issue of redistricting was resurrected with a state issue. The LWV-Kent pulled together a dynamic panel of state experts to talk about redistricting and the implications for persons in minority communities. We also began the process of looking at the diversity of our organization. We went to the beach for

program planning and had a great turnout! Although I never quite got the hang of Robert's Rules of Order during my term, I am grateful for the outstanding support I received from all of the board members who served with me and forgave my inability to call for the vote correctly.

Jo Ann Zaynor was elected to her second term as President at the May, 1999 Annual meeting.

A stalwart of LWV-Kent, she had provided leadership and energy to the organization for over twenty-five years and was tireless in her efforts to inform voters about issues and candidates. Upon her retirement from Kent State University, Jo Ann eagerly agreed to serve as our President. Unfortunately, that term was cut short by her untimely death in October, 2000. During her abbreviated presidency, potential members were invited to dinner and then taken to a Candidates' Night. LWV-worked with Kent State University to present a meeting on issues important to KSU students in making decisions on the selection of a President. The League was also an active participant in the Kids' Voting project in which school children studied election issues and accompanied their parents to the polls to vote in their own special polling section, conducted by League members.

Nena Hankins, who was serving as Vice President, assumed the presidency upon Jo Ann's death, was elected to a two year term at the May, 2001 Annual Meeting. She served until May 2003. Newly elected officials were invited to be our guests at our annual December brunches. Programs included the experience of students traveling in Cuba (2000), State Senator Leigh Herrington (2001), and a presentation by the National First Ladies Library (2002). The Kent League co-sponsored meetings with the Portage County Environmental Roundtable that eventually led to an updated position statement on Land Use in March, 2003. The Kent Schools position was also revised and updated in April 2003.

Our Annual Meetings were a time for entertainment, as well as business. In May, 2001, Ann Womer Benjamin and her daughter, Johanna, talked about their experiences at the Republican National Convention. May, 2002, brought us "Pirate" Amie Cajka followed by presentations about the Leader Institute by Ann Andrews, Logan Ferlito and Julia Steinberg.

Voter Service was our major activity. Before each primary and general election, the Kent League prepared the *Voters' Guide* that was published in the *Record Courier*, presented candidates' forums and issues meetings, and registered voters at the Heritage Festival. In 2002, we became involved in DNet, the on-line *Voters' Guide* with Nena Hankins as the local administrator. We also participated in the LWV-Ohio Voluntary Monitoring Groups that gathered information about judicial candidates in the November, 2002 election. Barb Springer volunteered our services as moderators and timers for public forums on the Crain Avenue bridge.

In September, 2002, we celebrated the planting of a tree near the Honors College at Kent State University in memory of Jo Ann Zaynor. Jo Ann's children and friends joined League members at the site and shared their memories.

April, 2003