

The

Our 81st Year!

FRESNO VOTER

Phone: 559-226—VOTE

Info.lwvfresno@gmail.com

Web site:
www.lwvfresno.org

Happy
New
Year



From Your Board



Kay



Francine



Patty



Robin



Terri



Sue



Maureen



Marianne



Janice



Dolores

JUNE 19



Angela

Next Members Meeting

Thursday, January 26

5:30 p.m. Stone Soup

It's All About the Parks!



See Page 3

Co-President's Message



You probably know that Kay Bertken and I alternate planning and running the monthly Board meetings; until now whoever's turn it is also writes the Voter column that month. But we skipped our regular meeting in December in favor of the holiday event which of course we had to cancel. So I woke up last week suddenly realizing that I had to write the column even though this is Kay's meeting month.

By the time you read this I will have just had my 89th birthday and 68th wedding anniversary. Those are awesome numbers and give plenty of food for thought. Is almost 90 the new 70? Because that's how I feel most of the time. I'm involved not only with the League but with a number of other organizations that require lots of input, for which I am thankful, really. If I were not so involved in community activities I'm afraid I would vegetate mentally. I have no intention of doing that and deliberately do crossword puzzles every day in the Bee and the NY Times, as well as a daily jigsaw puzzle on line at a fairly difficult level. I also ride a stationary bike every day, having giving up the gym in favor of a home model...well, almost every day... probably at least 5 out of 7.

I've had to give up my obsessive knitting and crocheting because of shoulder problems, and walking and standing are limited because of other orthopedic problems. Fortunately my husband is adept at filling in the large motor deficits that I experience and for that I am enormously grateful.

I'm telling you all this because from my advanced age – I must be one of the oldest members – I'm hoping to inspire you not to just support the League with your dues, but also to step up and come to our interesting member meetings and get out to other community events as much as you can. Even if you are concerned about Covid in this endless pandemic, pick and choose an event that will allow you to sit apart from others and wear a mask.

As for our big anniversary number, how did we get here? Just like most families, we have had our triumphs and tragedies; choosing the right partner helps a lot as does determination (me); compromise (both of us); and patience (Murray).

Happy and healthy New Year to everyone. Thank you for letting me be your co-president with such a wonderful colleague as Kay.

Francine




Donation: A generous gift was made to the League from Marianne Kast, directed to the Farber/League RBG Scholarship fund at San Joaquin College of Law.

Program Planning: See page 3 for our next membership meeting on January 26.

NEW YEAR'S WISHES FOR LWVF

Kay


- ◆ A new appreciation for political forums, debates and candidate statements among local politicians 
- ◆ An excellent new Measure C proposal
- ◆ Good health and continuing enthusiasm among our members

Francine



- ◆ Get our mural project underway, with a site selected and approved and a designated artist
- ◆ Have our league-supported transportation project grow and become a model for other areas, using electric vehicles in local communities and employing local residents as drivers
- ◆ Increase our dedicated core of members who always show up, with more active volunteerism this year

Marianne

- ◆ Robust transit to our transportation hubs (airport, train stations, and long-distance bus stations)  county's
- ◆ A cloud of empathy and understanding toward Fresnans experiencing homelessness to envelop our County Supervisors
- ◆ Elected officials and government leaders to recognize that they work for the voters and must invite and listen to their suggestions

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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.

JOIN US ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 26

5:30 P.M. * Stone Soup

ALL ABOUT MEASURE P

with Aaron Aguirre



Aaron Aguirre

Aaron Aguirre was hired in 2021 as the new director of PARCS—Parks, After School Recreation and Community Services. A Fresno native, he previously served as assistant PARCS director and has worked for the city of 13 years,

A full biography was not made available to the Voter by publication date.

Also speaking on January

26 will be Kimberly McCoy.

She is the climate and environmental policy advocate for the Central California Asthma Collaborative. In addition, she serves as the Board chair for the City of



Kimberly McCoy

Fresno's Parks, Recreation & Arts Commission, the oversight board tasked with helping the city provide transparency and accountability to voters while ensuring proper planning and budgeting



THANK YOU, LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Because of your donation of winter coats, socks and shoes, blankets, arts and crafts, and toys, over 80 students in our Playgroup and Preschool program experienced a love beyond the holidays, thanks to your organization.

Families struggling to keep up with rising prices and other hardships had a joyous holiday season and peace knowing that someone cares enough to help. **Thank you** for gifting our students with smiles, laughter, and joy this holiday season! It is donors like you that help keep our mission alive of envisioning a world in which every person is respected and families have the resources they need to cultivate growth and positive change.



Stone Soup Fresno is determined to inspire children and nurture families to realize their full potential in America.

Your contribution helps us get even closer to that goal.

of Measure P funds. A dedicated community advocate and leader, she was part of the Fresno Building Healthy Communities coalition for more than five years, starting as a volunteer before joining in 2018 as Project Director.

Kimberly was also the Field Coordinator for the Measure C campaign which brought \$38.5 million into the City of Fresno parks system.

Education

by Kay Bertken



In their last meetings before the long winter break, the recently elected school trustees were sworn in and new officers elected. Valerie Davis, Veva Islas and Keisha Thomas will resume their seats; and Susan Wittrup replaced Terry Slatic as the Bullard area representative. Trustee Islas was elected the new board president, and Wittrup will be the clerk.



Supt. Robert G. Nelson

One action of the board this month was the approval of a new five-year contract for Superintendent Nelson. The contract increased the district contribution to his retirement account, but otherwise did not increase his basic salary. The district is unusual in its continuity of leadership and Nelson's relatively long tenure. In one of his last acts, Trustee Slatic cast the one negative vote for that contract. He made his final speech contending that the superintendent ought to take responsibility for the district's low achievement scores, and any contract ought to reflect his failure to improve those scores.

While students were on break until January 3, the district was still providing important services. While there are concerns around the country that students are deprived of important nutrition when schools are not in session, meals were being distributed at school sites around Fresno Unified across the holiday season. In addition, the district was partnered with community groups to sponsor winter camps during this break. These camps mirror the very successful summer program of camps that gave students opportunities in sports, art, computer skills and outdoor adventures.

Good news for teachers: in the midst of ongoing contract negotiations: a provision of the previous contract was triggered by the district's budget revenue increases. Teachers got a retroactive six percent salary increase in time for the holidays.

Kaybertken752@gmail.com

Behavioral Health

by Carolyn Evans



The Housing Access and Resource Team (HART) identifies Permanent Supportive Housing opportunities for individuals who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness and assists with placement. It is a program within the Behavioral Health Department's Adult System of Care that serves clients of the Clinical Team. The members of the Behavioral Health Board made a virtual visit to the program and learned that there are 93 housing units for individuals who are homeless and 135 units for clients who are at-risk of homelessness. These units have on-site supervision and support for residents who may need help in maintaining their housing.



This month the Substance Use Disorders Committee learned about the rehabilitation program at Poverello House. Forty-five men are housed on campus or at a nearby house, where they have classes, therapy, and jobs on-site at The Pov. Case management, vocational preparation, and job opportunities are provided. Mental health services (called "enrichment") are a new component of the program, with 50-70% of the clients participating. Currently there are no residents in the program with Serious Mental Illnesses. Referrals are from the courts or local agencies, or self-referral by walking in off the streets. The program lasts from six months to a year. Family nights, field trips, and recreational activities are provided. After completing the program men may live in one of two sober living homes for a short while. Poverello hopes to provide a women's program soon.

The Adult Services Committee heard from Blue Sky Wellness Center that provides a peer support recovery program for its participants. Last year it served 750 unduplicated clients with approximately 14,000 contacts. New members go through a welcoming intake process. There are support groups and recreational activities such as art classes, ceramics, and jewelry making. Clients may be connected to services to aid in their recovery. Peer volunteers learn goal setting, phone and people skills, janitorial work, and group facilitating.

(continued on page 6)

Health Care

by Richard Bertken, MD



Gender Identity - Part Two

Gender incongruence was not assigned a medical diagnostic code until 1980. Despite modern brain imaging and genetic analysis, it remains a mystery. For many years it was attached to a code for sexual deviations and perversions. Recently gender incongruence was moved out of the category of mental disorders. It is now a “condition related to sexual health.”

The treatment of gender incongruence evolved slowly until the mid-2000’s. Prior to then, voice, gait, and mannerism training were the starting point. Some patients opted for feminizing or masculinizing hormones. A minority of patients opted for plastic surgery, most commonly mastectomies. Most did not start treatments until after puberty, too late to prevent the physical features of the rejected gender. As measured by the prevalence of depression, suicide, social isolation, and poverty, this cohort fared poorly.

Over the past 15 years, enabled by puberty-blocking hormones, gender affirming therapy centers have expanded from none to 100 across the US. Claims data from 2017 to 2021 show sharply increasing numbers of patients seeking gender affirming care—42,000 in 2021. Delaying puberty allows time for the gender uncertain patient and her/his family to make a clearer choice on whether to proceed with sex hormone and surgical treatment. Current data shows that most new patients are *not* promptly proceeding with puberty-delaying hormone therapy. The sparse data available suggests that surgical treatments are done primarily for older teens or adults. This information contradicts the political platitude that gender incongruous youths and their families are being hustled into treatment.

The medical and social issues confronting these children and their families are complex and emotionally draining. The medical and surgical treatments pose short- and long-term hazards that must be weighed against the suffering of the child and eventual adult. While there is no long-term registry of gender affirming treatments, the American Academy of Pediatrics and other relevant professional medical associations support the work of transgender

(continued on page 6)

Water News

by Diane Merrill



As California continues to deal with on-going extreme drought conditions and predictions of a hotter, drier future, the California Department of Water Resources is partnering with state, federal, and non-governmental organizations to advance development of a tool to help local groundwater agencies in their efforts to prevent dry wells and water supply shortages.

As the Department continues the process of reviewing Groundwater Sustainability Plans submitted by local groundwater agencies, it became apparent that better data is needed about rapidly changing groundwater conditions. The Groundwater Accounting Platform under development is being designed to help local water agencies deal with drought impacts in the near term and transition to groundwater sustainability over the long term.

The tool can be used to refine water budgets by accounting for the rates of inflows, outflows, and changes in water storage. It can also be useful in assessing and quantifying the impacts and benefits of water management actions, such as groundwater recharge projects, water trading programs, and water conservation activities.

The Newsom administration recently published “California’s Water Supply Strategy: Adapting to a Hotter, Drier Future.” It is projected that California will lose 10 percent of its water supplies over the next 20 years as the West continues to experience hotter and more arid conditions. Since groundwater contributes between 40 and 70 percent of water supplies in California, informed and effective management of this resource is important to the future of California.

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Climate Change

by Andrea Farber De Zubiria



In urban areas like ours, trees can play a critical part in our quality of life and resilience in the face of climate change.

There is increasing interest in how to maximize the benefits of trees in our area. “Tree Equity” is something we may be hearing more about. American Forests created an interactive map that shows the overlap of tree coverage, race and income throughout the country. If you look up Fresno on Treeequityscore.org, it is not surprising to see that as you move north and east on the map there are more trees, and as you move south and west the “tree score” drops considerably.



How do trees help us with the global warming that leads to climate change? Trees capture and store carbon dioxide emissions during photosynthesis—reducing air pollution and heat-trapping gases in the atmosphere. They also reduce the amount of energy needed to cool our homes and other buildings. The U.S. government’s Climate Change Resource Center states that trees sequester over 12% of carbon emissions, keeping that much out of our air and atmosphere. According to their website, 100 million mature trees around residences in the United States would save an estimated \$2 billion annually in energy costs.

At our committee’s Zoom presentation last year, Transform Fresno’s project manager told us about their grant-funded program that has enabled approximately 400 new trees to be planted in Southwest Fresno, with a goal of 500.

The non-profit Tree Fresno has been working diligently in partnership with cities, schools, commercial businesses, community-based organizations and private citizens to expand our tree canopy since 1985. They have planted over 50,000 trees. You can assist Tree Fresno by contacting them at 221-5556 with ideas of locations that could benefit from more trees. They are currently partnered with The Metro Black Chamber of Commerce to provide a paid eight-month training program to expose young people (18-40) to the value of trees and to jobs related to trees.

afarberdezub@gmail.com

Behavioral Health *(continued from page 4)*

Vocational workers help with resumes, applications, mock interviews, and appropriate clothing. Blue Sky will be opening up again post-Covid to the community for events, such as Art Hops and Resource Fairs.

The Board plans to begin the new year by continuing to meet virtually until the Covid emergency order ends, but hopes to begin meeting in person in the spring of 2023.

evansalca@comcast.net

Gender Identity *(continued from page 5)*

treatment centers. The NIH is conducting a comprehensive study of the mental health and potential adverse effects of 400 transgender youths treated at four U.S. children’s hospitals. Presentation of the initial analysis of the data is a year away. This and similar studies in European countries will clarify early risks and benefits, but we will need another decade of observation to confidently inform treatment protocols.

Meanwhile, political efforts to prevent parents from exploring these options, even charging them and their doctors with criminal child abuse, will undermine research to clarify the benefits and risks with gender affirming care.



The dilemma of the gender incongruous child is beautifully captured in *This Is How It Always Is* by Laurie Frankel.


Rbertken@comcast.net

HUGH WILLIAMSON

Hugh Williamson died in November while enjoying friends and family until the last few minutes. A man of principle, he would not become a member while the name of the organization was League of WOMEN voters but was very supportive of our League and always happy to host events at his house. His wife, Jennifer, has been a member for 40 years.

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one wild and precious life?" - Mary Oliver*

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Men and Women age 16 and above Making Democracy Work

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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.

Yearly Dues Individual - \$70 ~ Family - \$100 (2 members, same address) ~ Student - Subsidized

Please send your check payable to the League of Women Voters, Fresno, with registration form (below), to: LWVF, 1345 Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710.

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