

Update

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE



September 2025

From Your Co-Presidents: Christina Bourgeois and Hudi Podolsky

Join Us As We Work to Defend Democracy

Happy new year! Happy League new year that is. September traditionally marks the beginning of the League's new year as we plan voter registration drives and candidates' forums ahead of the November election. Note as you read this issue of *Update* that this year is no exception, but our focus is expanded in connection with the LWVUS campaign to defend democracy.

Anna Gaeta, Voter Service chair, starts the month off with training sessions for voter registration volunteers. If you want to be involved in League work with an initial short-term commitment, consider volunteering to register voters. Tracy Roberts, Natural Resources chair, has organized a weekly webinar on plastic pollution led by Judith Enck.

On Wednesday, September 10, at 6:00 p.m. we will host a public meeting with guest speakers Michael Henrici and Lori Lehenbauer, Otsego County Election Commissioners. Their talk will illustrate how our Board of Elections staff work to assure that every vote is properly cast and accurately counted.

After the commissioners speak, we will be introducing our fall events as we kick off our local work in the context of the League's nationwide "Unite & Rise 8.5" campaign. In April of 2025, the League of Women Voters declared that our country was in a constitutional crisis and responded to their concern with the Unite & Rise 8.5. The League describes the campaign as having four pillars: Legal and Policy Advocacy, Public Mobilization and Coalition Building, Civic Education and Engagement, and Democracy Resilience. Our League will be looking to the LWVUS for projects involving legal and policy advocacy, but locally we will be concentrating on the other elements.

The event on September 10 is the first one that we plan to encourage greater civic engagement. We know that our community will be stronger if civic organizations work together and that's why we will be engaging in more coalition building locally to accomplish our goals. This event is co-sponsored (as of August 20) by: Community Foundation of Otsego County, Connections at the Clark Sports Center, Cooperstown Food Pantry, NAACP Oneonta Area, and Otsego 2000.

We encourage you all to attend a performance of "What The Constitution Means To Me" September 26-28. Our

League is a co-sponsor of the event (See story on page 3). We hope the audience will come away with a better understanding of our Constitution and why we have to protect and cherish it.



Co-presidents Hudi Podolsky and Christina Bourgeois

Finally, all of our work needs financial support. We hope you will all participate in the region-wide charitable giving effort, Mohawk Valley Gives on September 19. It's a cost-effective way for the League to raise the revenue we need. Your support, as a volunteer, an event attendee, and a donor makes our League the vibrant force it is.

Read more about all these activities in this issue. We hope to see you at them all.

An Attack on Voting

L league of Women Voters CEO Celina Stewart, Esq., issued a statement on August 18, in response to President Trump's vow to eliminate mail-in ballots and voting machines. Here is an excerpt:

"Vote-by-mail is secure, accurate, and trusted by millions of voters — including older adults, military members, rural communities, tribal communities, voters of color, and voters with disabilities. Vote-by-mail has proven to expand voter participation in recent elections.

"The President should get his facts straight: he does not have the authority to regulate elections, states have strong measures to ensure voting equipment is secure, and many countries successfully utilize vote-by-mail.

"The League of Women Voters will not stand by while politicians spread lies to limit democratic participation."

Read the full statement here: (<https://www.lwv.org/newsroom/press-releases/lwv-statement-mail-ballots-and-voting-machines>).

Help Keep Our League Vital! Be Part of Mohawk Valley Gives

Take note: September 19 is the 2025 Mohawk Valley Gives annual day of giving. Many non-profits in Otsego County, including our League, will participate in this 24-hour community-wide day of giving. The funds raised last year on the Giving Day were a substantial part of our operating budget.

It's easy to participate. Go to www.givemv.org and search for League of Women Voters, then make your donation to our League. Explore the other outstanding organizations that raise funds through Mohawk Valley Gives. If you are eager to get started, early giving begins on September 15.



The League is a trusted organization and our work supports a thriving democracy. This year's election is for local offices, and our League will once

again focus on helping voters learn what offices are up for election and who the candidates are, as well as providing all the vital information about registration and voting options. Your donation will support our activities such as voter registration drives, sharing election information, and our Students Inside Albany program.

Visit the Mohawk Valley Gives site (www.givemv.org) on September 19 and donate!

Your Vote Counts, but How is it Counted?

Join the League on September 10 to Hear from Our County Election Commissioners

Mark your calendars for Wednesday, September 10, at 6:00 p.m. when our League will host a public meeting on a timely subject. Otsego County Election Commissioners, Michael Henrici and Lori Lehenbauer, will describe how registration, voting and ballot counting are carried out. Their talk will explain how the Board of Elections staff work to assure that every vote is properly cast and accurately counted.

"After conversations with other Leagues throughout the state, we realized that Otsego County is indeed fortunate," notes LWVCA co-president Christina Bourgeois. "Our election commissioners have always been forthcoming and helpful as we carry out our work and we have learned much over the years working with them. We are so pleased that the general public can learn as we have how this important work is accomplished."

After the commissioners speak, the League will an-



Lori Lehenbauer and Michael Henrici, Otsego County Election Commissioners

nounce our fall program. This year our local work focus on the League's nationwide "Unite & Rise 8.5" campaign.

What is Unite & Rise 8.5? In April 2025 the League of Women Voters declared that our country was in a constitutional crisis and responded to their concern with a new campaign that they titled Unite & Rise 8.5. (Read more about the program on our website www.LWVCOOPERSTOWNAREA.ORG).

This event is co-sponsored by: Community Foundation of Otsego County, Connections at the Clark Sports Center, Cooperstown Food Pantry, NAACP Oneonta Area, and Otsego 2000.

Locally, our League will focus on three topics: Public Mobilization and Coalition Building, Civic Education and Engagement, and Democracy Resilience. The topic for the September 10 program will be a call for greater civic education and engagement.

Please join us on September 10 at 6:00 at the Ballroom in the Village Hall, 22 Main St., Cooperstown. And bring your neighbors!

Registration: the First Step to the Voting Booth Here's YOUR Chance to Help Others

On Tuesday, September 16, the Cooperstown League will participate in National Voter Registration Day (NVRD), a nationwide, nonpartisan effort to register voters. And we need your help! Registering voters is not difficult and we have



a plan to help you help others take that first step.

The League is offering two training/ refresher classes in voter registration at the Clark Sports Center in the Community Room on **Wednesday, September 3, from 12 noon-1:30 p.m.** and **Thursday, September 4, from 6-7:30 p.m.** (If you want to be part of NVRD, but cannot attend the training session, please contact Anna Gaeta (annaegaeta@gmail.com). Anna is also looking for volunteers on NVRD on September 16.

NVRD Events: Volunteer to Register Voters

Sept. 16 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. 2-hour shifts

Grand Union, Commons Shopping Center, Hartwick Seminary Elm Inn, 104 E Main St., Milford

Green Toad Bookstore, 198 Main St., Oneonta.

Contact Anna Gaeta (annaegaeta@gmail.com) to sign up.

Many people refer to the odd-year elections as “off-year” elections, however, the decisions made by the candidates in November’s election affect our daily life from keeping our roads plowed in the winter to making sure our county government is functioning. These elected officials may not live in Albany or Washington, D.C., but their decisions are just as important to our lives. Help us register voters on NVRD. You

will come away knowing that you made a difference in the lives of the individuals you met.

Other registration events will be held at different locations throughout the area before the October 25 registration deadline. If you can’t help register on National Voter Registration Day, please consider attending one of the trainings, so you can help at one of our later events.

“Beyond Plastics” Seminar with Judith Enck Coming this Fall

The League of Women Voters of the Cooperstown Area is hosting a free, online webinar series on plastic pollution at the Clark Sports Center Community Center. The course, “Beyond Plastic Pollution” will run for seven consecutive Wednesday evenings from 7-9 p.m. beginning on September 3 and continuing until October 15.

The course is offered by the grassroots-organization Beyond Plastics in conjunction with Bennington College in Vermont. Beyond Plastics is headed by Judith Enck, former EPA Regional Administrator and frequent WAMC Roundtable panelist.

Beyond Plastic Pollution is an eye-opening environmental course that focuses on the systemic reasons why millions of tons of plastics enter the ocean, environment and our

bodies each year. Featuring guest speakers, scientific readings, film screenings and panel discussions, this cutting-edge class will focus on the root causes of plastic pollution and its integral connection to climate change. It will reveal how the plastics industry continues to spin the myth of plastic recycling as the environmental justice and health impacts of plastic production and use worsen each day.

The course will also explore alternatives to plastic, and what we can do to address this growing problem, focusing on public policy action. The series is useful to anyone who wants to educate themselves about the issue and tackle it in their household, community, state, and nation.

No pre-registration is required. There is no charge for the course and it is open to the public.

What Does the Constitution Mean?

Award-winning Play Gives One Woman’s View

The League of Women Voters of the Cooperstown Area is pleased to help sponsor upcoming performances of “What the Constitution Means to Me,” a Tony-nominated play by Heidi Schreck. The play will be presented by Cherry Valley Artworks at the Star Theater, 44 Main St., Cherry Valley, on Friday, September 26, at 7 p.m., Saturday, September 27, 2 p.m., and Sunday, September 28, at 2 p.m.

“What the Constitution Means to Me” garnered Obie and New York Drama Critics’ Circle awards for best new American play and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. It is a timely and entertaining look at our founding document and its effect on our lives. Schreck was inspired by her experienc-

es at age 15 when she traveled the country entering Constitutional debate competitions to earn scholarship money for college. Her funny, hopeful, and achingly human play digs deep into the document’s beauty and contradictions.

Actor Maureen Iseman-Broeking resurrects Schreck’s teenage and present self to trace the relationship between four generations of women in her family and the Constitution. Joining Maureen are Chris Shearer and Bella Crowe.

The Cooperstown League has purchased pocket-sized editions of the U.S. Constitution to distribute to audience members at each performance. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased online at cvartworks.org. More information about the play is available at <https://constitutionbroadway.com/>

Have You Renewed?

Most members will be receiving notices to renew memberships in the upcoming weeks. In February, the League initiated a new membership system. Now your renewal notice will come via e-mail. You may use credit cards or ACH payments to pay for the renewals online. Checks are also accepted. There will be an opportunity for members to make direct donations to our League when they renew. The League also instituted a pay-what-you-can dues system with a minimum dues of \$20 and a suggested payment of \$75. There are no longer any memberships for households or students.

We are asking our members to pay what you can. Previously our dues were \$65 for an individual membership and \$90 for a household membership. If your budget will only allow the same as last year, that’s perfectly fine. If your budget allows more, we encourage you to indeed “pay what you can.”

We have put more information about renewing on the membership section on our website (www.lwvcooperstownarea.org). Contact Deb Dalton membership chair if you have further questions (ddalton@stny.rr.com).

Coming Up

September 3	Voter Registration Training noon-1:30 p.m. Clark Sports Center	September 26	Enck 7-9 p.m. Clark Sports Center "What the Constitution Means to Me," Cherry Valley Artworks at the Star Theater, 7p.m., 44 Main St., Cherry Valley.
September 3	LWV Cooperstown Board Meeting 3:30-5	September 27	"What the Constitution Means to Me," Cherry Valley Artworks at the Star Theater, 2 p.m. 44 Main St., Cherry Valley.
September 3	"Beyond Plastic Pollution" webinar led by Judith Enck 7-9 p.m. Clark Sports Center	September 28	"What the Constitution Means to Me," Cherry Valley Artworks at the Star Theater, 2 p.m., 44 Main St., Cherry Valley.
September 4	Voter Registration Training 6-7:30 p.m. Clark Sports Center	October 1	LWV Cooperstown Board Meeting 3:30-5
September 10	Your Vote Counts, but How is it Counted? LWV public meeting featuring Michael Henrici and Lori Lehenbauer, Otsego County Election Commissioners and kickoff for "Unite & Rise 8.5" campaign. Cooperstown Village Hall Ballroom, 6-7:30 p.m.	October 7	Welcome Home Cooperstown, LWV Table for Voter Registration and Information.
September 10	"Beyond Plastic Pollution" webinar led by Judith Enck 7-9 p.m. Clark Sports Center	October 8	"Beyond Plastic Pollution" webinar led by Judith Enck 7-9 p.m. Clark Sports Center
September 16	National Voter Registration Day (NVRD)	October 15	"Beyond Plastic Pollution" webinar led by Judith Enck 7-9 p.m. Clark Sports Center
September 17	"Beyond Plastic Pollution" webinar led by Judith Enck 7-9 p.m. Clark Sports Center	October 25	Last day to register for General Election
September 19	2025 Mohawk Valley Gives annual day of giving. Early giving begins September 15!	November 3	Last day to apply in-person for early vote by mail/absentee ballot
September 24	"Beyond Plastic Pollution" webinar led by Judith	November 4	Election Day

Officers & Board of Directors 2025-2026

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