

President's Annual Report

League of Women Voters of Sussex County, DE

September 4, 2020

Nineteenth Amendment

Under the leadership of Martha Redmond, the 19th Amendment Committee developed an outstanding calendar of events commemorating the signing of the Nineteenth Amendment. This enthusiastic committee consisted of members from the Southern Delaware Alliance of Racial Justice, American Association of University Women, Village Improvement Association, Freeman Foundation, Daughters of the American Revolution, Pathways to Success, Lewes History Museum, the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, and the Delaware Community Foundation. Events presented included the screening of *Dignity and Defiance: A Portrait of Mary Church Terrell*, and a book club discussion on Elaine Weiss' *The Woman's Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote*. Two additional events included a march in Georgetown celebrating International Women's Day 2020 and a lecture on the women's movement by Dr. Cynthia Newton.

Census Report

Connie Jones reported the findings of the 2020 Census for Sussex County, Delaware. The self-response rates from households online, by mail, and phone were 51.4% in August. The overall rate for the state was 66.9%. The 2020 Census will conclude its data collection operations on September 30, 2020.

Membership Committee

Under the direction of Pat Newcomb and Jan Willis, the League of Women Voters of Sussex County, Delaware, (LWVSCDE) stands strong with 156 active members, of which forty-six are new members. This increase is attributed to membership recruitment efforts during monthly fun lunches and forums, as well as our social media presence on the LWVSCDE website and Facebook. Pat and Jan continue their efforts by developing and maintaining the Membership Committee Manual. They also engage new members by making them aware of opportunities to participate in league activities and events.

Observer Corps

The challenges of the coronavirus pandemic has not kept the Observer Corps from its duties and responsibilities, thanks to the strong leadership of BR Breen, whose committee covered an impressive twenty-nine Sussex County Council meetings and eighteen meetings of the Planning and Zoning Commission. They plan to increase coverage of the Board of Adjustment in the future.

The committee successfully presented the annual Sunshine Report to County Council last September, and plan to do the same this year.

We are grateful for the committee's efforts throughout the year in keeping us informed on the complexities of issues surrounding watching, reporting, and holding members of the council and commissions accountable to the community.

Press Release and Calendar Notice Report

Jane Lord keeps Sussex County informed on all league events, activities, meetings, and forums. Her efforts to report these happenings to the community are reflected in the thirteen press releases, twenty-two community calendar notices, and two letters to the editor prepared throughout the year.

Website / Social Media Annual Report

Rain Tyler continues to develop and expand our website, providing the membership with important and meaningful information. The additions included a new webpage for the Nineteenth Amendment Celebration Planning Committee and an expanded Social Policy Committee page. She also updates the voter information page on an on-going basis.

Instrumental in providing us the option of making online payments, Martha Rothenberg made an essential contribution to the services on our website. Other remarkable changes included posting League of Women Voter of Delaware minutes on the Members Only page and adding a Google calendar for league events. However, the effort it takes to post sixty-two articles, fifty-seven league events, and 100 community events is remarkable. But it does not stop there: our Facebook boasts 315 posts; and our Twitter account, 172 new tweets.

Social Policy Committee

Under the strong leadership of Janet Ambrose, the Social Policy Committee and the American Association of University Women (AAUW) presented two forums on public education in Delaware to the Sussex County community. The first included four distinguished panelists: secretary of education, Dr. Susan Bunting; associate secretary for operations, Dr. Chuck Longfellow; senior fellow with University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration, Dr. Kevin Carson; and Rep. Ruth Briggs King of Georgetown. The discussion surrounded the ways in which tax dollars are distributed to fund public education.

The second forum focused on issues of inequity in funding Delaware schools. Neil Kirschling, director of policy and advocacy at Rodel; Richard Morse, senior counsel at Community Legal Aid Society; and Mark Steele, superintendent of the Indian River School District (now retired), provided insight as to how educational inequities and disparities exist and its impact on local school systems.

Voter Services

Where would we be without our Voter Services Committee? After all, that's who we are. I quote our mission: "Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy."

Under the knowledgeable leadership of Martha Redmond and her committee, we stand firm in our commitment to our mission. Voter Services offers a broad spectrum of services, such as voter registration, the get-out-the-vote drive, candidate forums, and VOTE411.org.

With an eye on our youth, the committee held voter registration events at Delaware Technical Community College for Constitution Day and National Voter Registration Day. Plans were set for a high school voter registration program but were suspended due to the pandemic.

To better inform the citizens of Sussex County, DE on the voting process, Connie Jones and Martha Redmond are providing presentations to various organizations via Zoom events. They have also initiated

two campaigns, a poll worker recruitment program and a voter registration initiative to distribute postcards to 500 people in underserved communities. In October, their committee will call or text 18-to-35-year-olds with a history of no or infrequent voting.

Finally, thanks to the efforts of Denise Davis and Lori Yadin and their diligent work on VOTE411.org, voters in Sussex County, DE are well informed on candidates running for school board as well as those in the general election.

Summary

This report reflects the tasks the LWVSCDE has accomplished over the last year. Although it demonstrates what the league has done, it states little about the motivation behind these actions. League members are dedicated, diligent, and compassionate women who believe in these words: Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

As League President, I stand in awe of these remarkable women and their accomplishments, even in the face of adversity. They can be counted on to bring their full selves to each meeting, event, or cause. And for that, I am incredibly thankful to stand among them.

Submitted by

Gwendolyn Miller, President

League of Women Voters of Sussex County, DE

September 2020