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Empowering voters. Defending democracy.

We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and confidence to participate.

President's Corner

Well, here we are at Thanksgiving week! I am not sure what is going on with "time," but it sure is slipping by quickly, and our December 2nd All Member Social is upon us. I am looking forward to seeing all those who plan to attend. And, if you are attending, get those thinking caps ready, because we are hoping to "prime the pump" for our Annual Planning Meeting, by doing a little brainstorming at the Social.

Speaking of the Annual Planning Meeting, we have a date! Mark your calendars for January 27, 2024, beginning at 10:30 a.m. at the Poulsbo Library. More information will be coming your way. We are holding the meeting on a Saturday, in hopes that more of our members will be able to attend. (Reminds me of the old Oregon Ungreeting Cards — one said, "Last year in Oregon, Summer fell on a Saturday. That way more people got to enjoy it.")

So, what is this meeting all about? Each year, the League of Women Voters (on all three levels of the League) decides on a program of work for the next year. In other words, we pick the topics we are interested in studying, educating ourselves and the public about, or taking action on. Currently, our only program is the development of the Elizabeth Bondy scholarship. Voter Services is ongoing and part of our basic mission. Please join us as we decide the direction we will take in the upcoming year.

On a completely different note, if you happen to be in Port Orchard, look for the League of Women Voters Christmas Tree! This tree was decorated by South Kitsap Unit Chair Janet Stegemeyer and League member Shirley Wall, and you can vote for it as your favorite in the tree decorating contest.

Hoping you all had a drama-free Thanksgiving.
Robin Muir, President LWV-Kitsap

Civic Engagement

(An Interview with Robin Muir, LWVK)

The League of Women Voters (LOWV) is a nonpartisan organization that exists in counties all throughout the United States. Through championing and supporting civic education and engagement, the League works to strengthen democracy and increase voter participation.

A three-tier organization, the LOWV has county-wide, statewide, and nationwide Leagues. The League extends to all 21 counties within Washington state, including Kitsap County. Robin Muir, president of the Kitsap League of Women Voters, is actively involved in promoting the well-being of the community and advocating for local civic engagement.

“Our primary focus is to get out the vote,” said Muir. “We register voters and conduct candidate forums ... we have civic education events that look at the growth in our community and housing availability, as well as a very active healthcare committee that is looking into the possibility of a public hospital district here in Kitsap County.”

As an organization, the LOWV doesn't take a position on a party or a candidate. Rather, they study and address community issues. These studies “take at least a year and then a report is issued,” said Muir.

These reports are on a statewide level; they go to every League in the state, it is read, and questions are asked. Individuals and the organization then take a position based on their informed decision from the study to address the issues at hand and best serve the state.

Civic engagement, such as conducting or participating in these studies and reports, is vital to the success of a collaborative community and vibrant democracy.

“If you are knowledgeable about what is going on in your community, then it gives you an opportunity to take a stand one way or the other,” Muir asserted. “One way you can do that is by casting your ballot. Another way you can do that is to get involved with an organization that is like-minded.”

The League urges for political involvement for truthful and thorough representation of communities, especially as many voters' experience discouragement due to opposition or the structure of the electoral college.

“We're a democratic society — we are ruled by the majority, but we are in a place now where the minority is taking over on a lot of issues and the majority is staying quiet or because of the way votes are divided up in the electoral college,” Muir said. “We have to get involved on the local level. That is where your vote has the most impact and sway because it's in your community.”

When it comes to civic engagement and democratic participation, the League affirms that voting and access to voting is fundamental to its success.

“Voting is the bedrock of our democracy,” said Muir. “Say we only get 40% of registered voters who vote — that's already a minority. Of that, 50% have now chosen the direction of our community. Think about what a tiny fraction of the number of possible voters that are making decisions for everyone. To be part of the democracy, to vote, it's the most basic and fundamental aspect of being in a democratic society.”

However, voter demoralization is not uncommon as politicians are elected or legislation is passed that contradict one's values, but the League serves to empower and provide avenues for participation and ways to elevate one's voice.

“When you are in that position where you feel like you don't count and you're unseen, it's really difficult to come out of that dark place,” Muir said. “Find an organization or way to connect. You have to try to find a connection somewhere in the community. City council meetings and school board

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meetings might be boring, but they are very informative.”

Muir believes that not voting is unproductive when one is concerned about the state of their community or nation.

“When we disenfranchise ourselves, we have no room to complain,” she said. “You need to start voting. Citizens can also lobby, which is another thing we teach people how to do.”

In addition to attending local meetings and casting a ballot, there are several opportunities for community involvement that not only aid those in need but inform personal beliefs and values on the state of a community.

“It might be working with a coalition for housing for the homeless, it might be working at a food bank, it might be volunteering to pick up litter — all of it has some purpose and hopefully towards the good of the community,” Muir said.

The task of becoming more socially aware and engaging civic action and engagement can feel daunting and overwhelming. However, narrowing down your top concerns and focusing on improving or solving the issues can alleviate the pressure.

“You have to find your passion,” Muir said. “Whatever it is, you’ve got to find people and that’s what you’ve got to pursue.”

The League of Women Voters actively works to address issues throughout counties and states and prioritize the enfranchisement of eligible voters. Through providing civic education, litigating for voting access, collaborating with local organizations, and visiting schools to prepare students for voting registration, they contribute to civic engagement and inform the public on their civic responsibilities.

There are several resources available to register to vote. The Kitsap Auditor’s website allows for online registration while registration events occur around the county before election season kicks off. Additionally, 16-year-olds can pre-register to vote; the auditor will keep a hold on the registration until they turn 18 and are eligible to vote in elections.

*Rosalie Johnson**

**Rosalie Johnson is a senior at Central Kitsap High School. This article will appear in the Cougar Chronicle, Central Kitsap High School’s print magazine, and has been reprinted here with permission of the author.*

GOTV Spotlight: Democracy Begins with Voter Registration



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the graduating seniors. The schools were very cooperative, some even sent the flyers home in a senior packet, while others distributed them in a required class. All seniors received a copy.

In May and October 2023, we were able to go back into the schools again. In May, we registered

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approximately three hundred students. But in October we no longer have the data to report because so many students prefer to register online. We cover the high schools, the alternative schools and many of the private schools. All schools cooperated by posting our visit in the daily bulletin, on social media sites, and elsewhere.

The successful registrations would not be possible without the efforts of the leaders of each school and the many volunteers needed for each drive. The leaders of each school are:

Bainbridge Island: Julie Shryock

Bremerton: Connie Marchant

Central Kitsap: Debi Barner and Kathleen Gallagher

Klahowya: Debbie Klabo

Olympic: Candy Rankin and Janice McLemore

North Kitsap: Carol Larsen

South Kitsap: Becky Drotz and Janet Stegemeyer



May 2023 registration event from L to R: Kitsap County Elections Supervisor Amy Epperly, LWVK members Janet Stegemeyer, Ann Strosneider and Becky Drotz.

This group of leaders has remained the same (with one exception) since 2020. Each leader sets a date with their school, tells their contact what to post, organizes a team to go into the school, and gets their supplies ready.

In Washington State, 28.7% of voters aged 18 to 29 voted in 2020 according to a study by Tufts University. Getting the young voters registered is the first step. Answering their many questions about voting is another. Our teams do both.

We all can be enormously proud of each of the LWVK school leaders. They work hard to inspire the students, have the support of their school, and, most importantly, they register students and answer their questions so they can take part in the democratic process of voting.

Becky Drotz

Nominating Committee

Our Kitsap League Nominating Committee will begin meeting in January to fill positions on the LWVK board. We'll be contacting members and asking them to serve a two-year term for various positions on the board. The nominees will be presented at the May Annual Meeting for confirmation. Your participation in the League makes a difference. Please consider being a member of the board and saying "yes" when you get the call.

Carol Larsen

Kathleen Cahall

Cat Freudenburg

Barb Willock

Maureen Cervinsky, Committee Chair

Port Orchard Bay Street Christmas Tree Decorating Contest

The League of Women Voters of Kitsap is one of 57 sponsors this year decorating Christmas trees in
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the planters lining Bay Street in downtown Port Orchard. South Kitsap Leaguers Janet Stegemeyer (pictured L) and Shirley Wall (pictured R) decorated a tree in front of Gazebo Florist at 730 Bay St. with patriotic ornaments and red, white, and blue lights. Greg Wall and Patrick Wall assisted in the decorating. Brochure holders on the planter contain LWV TRYs and Be a Voter bookmarks.

The contest has four categories: Most Classy/Classic, Best Business Representation, Best Swiss Theme, and Overall Best in Show. Winners will be announced at the 25th annual Festival of



Chimes and Lights on December 2 at the Waterfront Main Stage at 5:10 p.m. To see the festival schedule of events, go to <https://portorchardwa.gov/schedule-of-events/>.

Board News: What's Moving & Shaking!

The Board meetings have been filled with excellent discussions, lots of planning, and business activities to discuss. The top two activities have been the final planning for the December Social and getting started with Club Express. Still very early in the Club Express migration, so look for more information on LWVK progress in the January Voter.

The December Social is shaping up nicely and a good turn out is expected with 44 RSVPs! Fun activities, yummy catered fare, and you might even find a treasure or two in the \$1 raffles! What a great way to wrap up a busy year and prepare for a new one.

The next regular Board meeting will be on January 6 (all are welcome to attend) in Bremerton at the Pearl. Then later in the month, all members once again will be invited to attend LWVK's Program Planning Day on January 27 at the Poulsbo Library from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Committee News

Early Education: 0 to 3

The committee has been quite busy this Fall. We had a small success but one that gave us pleasure. We facilitated bringing applications for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to St. Michael's Hospital birthing department. The application will be included in each of the packets that new mothers take home.

The suggestion that we include information about maternal services in our flyer was taken to heart, and we are presently at work redoing our flyer to include this important information for new mothers. We have yet to get all the agencies on board, but we're working on it.

We also had a very productive meeting with Julie Fairall, the Director of the State and District Programs for the Bremerton School District. We learned about her efforts to include early learning in

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many of the district's programs. Of particular interest was *Grown your Own*, a child development course taught at the high school. She also gave us contacts for organizations that work within the district. One of particular interest was the BSD Strategic Planning Community Forums. These forums will give us greater insight into how the district goes about setting priorities.

We had a Zoom meeting earlier in the month with Amelia Bachleda of the University of Washington's Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences (ILABS) to discuss our goal of having brain development included in the high school health curriculum. She was very supportive but thought it would be a long hard pull. Amelia was particularly interested in brain development over the course of the school years as she is very worried about youth mental health problems. She said in the new year she will be updating the presentation that she gives to School Board members and will forward it to the committee.

The members of the committee have made a commitment to attend their local school board meetings to see if there are opportunities to present brain development information to board members or elsewhere within the school district.

Rosalind Renouard, Chair

Forums Committee

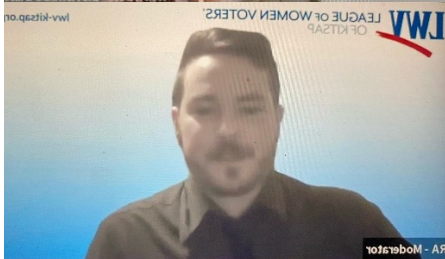
LWVK Members Rocked the 2023 Election Forums



It bears repeating — THANK YOU to all who stepped up to assist with forums. Fourteen forums were completed during the Primary and General elections with over 4,400 viewing on Zoom, on YouTube, and even in person at this year's four "hybrid" forums, the first undertaken since 2020. We reached many and word of mouth spread that knowledge. An additional avenue for voters were "watch parties" where more than 150 voters gathered in smaller groups to view the YouTube videos.



How did the Kitsap League empower these voters? YOU all stepped up to the challenge by supporting the forums directly, telling others about them and attending. Another fabulous number to share: 25% of our members were involved in this year's forums. The types of volunteer jobs range from graphic design of posters and on-line notices, posting and reposting social media and sending emails about forums, taking hard copy posters to bulletin boards, contacting candidates, finding venues for hybrid forums, setting up Zoom events, welcoming attendees to in-person forums, picking up, sorting and crafting questions, timing the answers to those questions, moderating the forums, and uploading the finished recorded forums to the League's YouTube page.



With the number of forums, there were many new volunteers. Three very visible new volunteers were three new moderators, Katie

Pratt, Mara Schmerfeld and Riley Abel (Pictured Top to Bottom). Thanks to each of them and to all the members who volunteered for this election cycle. With the 2024 elections not far off, planning is underway, and the Forums Team is starting the work to have another fabulous season. Join us!

Kim Abel, Forums Chair

A Shout-out to Kingston High School Civics Teacher and Students

Kingston High School teacher Lisa Gray-Fritz had her two Civics classes discuss the NK School Board's governance duties, student experiences, and what they'd like to see discussed. Then they came up with questions they submitted for LWVK's candidate forum. We used several of them, others

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were covered in questions already submitted by others. They were the only Civics students that came up with questions, and they were shown the video of the forum in class. This is the way to teach students about their civic duty, and I hope we see more of this next year for legislative forums from the rest of Kitsap County's Civics students. Great job, Lisa and your students.

Catherine Ahl

Healthcare Committee

The Healthcare Committee will have presentations about two new healthcare initiatives that will help improve equity in healthcare access and in the availability of comprehensive healthcare for Medicare beneficiaries.

Washington State requested and received a landmark 1,332 waiver for use of state funds for Apple Care (Medicaid) that allows immigrants to access healthcare regardless of their legal status and will impact more than 100,000 workers.

Medicare now supports healthcare providers with funding for services to address health-related social needs (HRSNs). This new funding, part of Medicare B, and Medicare Advantage plans, will allow physicians and other healthcare providers to contract with local community organizations to help patients access to things like adequate housing, transportation to medical appointments, food security, and more.

The meeting is on Zoom on Friday, December 8 at 12:30 p.m. The link is available on the [lwvk-kitsap.org](https://www.lwvk-kitsap.org) website calendar in the member calendar.

Leni Skarin, Committee Chair

Unit News

Bainbridge Island Unit

The Bainbridge Island Unit hosted the Bainbridge Community Foundation, represented by Jim Hopper, Executive Director, and Dana Binnendijk, Community Impact Officer. They discussed the recently released State of the Sector 2023 Community Report. The report provides an overview of what this community offers, what opportunities await us, and what challenges we will work together to overcome.

The presentation covered:

1. A framework detailing ten characteristics of a sustainable and supportive community.
2. An analysis of each of the ten characteristics using local, state, and national data.
3. A description of how nonprofits support our community in these areas.

Click here to read the report.

The meeting was recorded, and the video has been posted on the LWVK website. Colette also offered to help coordinate carpooling for the LWVK December Social scheduled on December 2 in Port Orchard.

Bainbridge Island Unit meets quarterly, Unit members will receive notice via email with the details regarding the next meeting.

Colette Crosby and Delight Willing, Co-Chairs

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Bremerton/Central Kitsap Unit

The password for the Bremerton/CK November Unit meeting failed. We don't understand what happened. It may have been a one-time glitch or the product of a major update to the site — several new features have been added. Whatever the reason, we are going to start fresh with a new link and password. We'll be sure to change the information in the League calendar and always send the notices for the meetings to our unit members and the League unit leaders.

If you missed the meeting, we recorded **Amy Peloff's tour of the Washington State League of Women Voters website**, and the recording is posted in the "For Members" section of our LWVK website. If you need the password for the LWVK "Members" page, contact your unit leader. Amy, LWVWA Administrative Director, was full of great recommendations and very funny, and it is quite clear that Amy is one of the best resources that the state League has to offer.

Our November meeting was a celebration of gratitude. Members able to attend shared a delicious brunch set up by Connie Marchant and Candy Rankin and collected Thanksgiving food donations for families in need at Armin Jahr Elementary School. (We also donated sweatpants for kindergartners in need of a change at school.) We are in conversation with Katie Seiple, one of five social workers in the Bremerton School District, about joining us, with her colleagues, at our February 17 meeting to talk about how the district, as part of the Bremerton community, supports children experiencing homelessness; so mark your calendars for our February meeting.

We are invited to attend an informational meeting, on January 9, at 3 p.m., about the Bremerton School District Levy. Pat Troxell arranged for this meeting with Dr. James Crawford, BSD Superintendent, for the residents at *Pearl on the Bay*, and invited League members. Stay tuned for a possible League BSD Levy Forum at the end of January.

Also, our unit was invited to participate in CKSD's *Leap into Your Future Day* at Barker Creek Alternative School. Members are in the planning stages for a kit to help students understand the mechanics of voting so they will be more comfortable assuming this responsibility. Janice Mclemore is taking the lead on this project, so contact Janice if you are interested in learning more.

The Bremerton/Unit will not meet in December. Our next unit meeting will be on January 20. Our guest will be Dr. Erin Prince, CKSD Superintendent, with an update on what is happening in the Central Kitsap School District. For information, contact B/CK Unit leader Maureen Cervinsky.
Maureen Cervinsky, Unit Chair

North Kitsap

The NK Unit meeting is scheduled for late November. The Unit invited fellow League member Natasha Fecteau-Minger, who ran for one of the NK School Board seats, to share her experience running for public office, and perhaps inspire others to take the plunge into running for public office. Also planned is a review of committee reports, discussion of the upcoming LWVK December social and the January Program Planning meeting.

South Kitsap Unit

The SK Unit decorated one of the *Festival of Chimes and Lights* Christmas trees on Bay Street in downtown Port Orchard. See the story elsewhere in this newsletter.

The SK Unit meets the second Tuesday of the month at 10:30 a.m. via Zoom. Our next meeting is January 9. There will not be a December meeting. Contact: Janet Stegemeyer, jans@oz.net, 360-471-9470.

Janet Stegemeyer, Unit Chair

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Voter Team

Editor: Katie Pratt

Layout: Barb Willock

Content: Cat Freudenberg

If you have questions or want to submit an article for a future issue of the Voter, please reach out to Cat. The Voter team welcomes your feedback!



Mark Your Calendar

Sat Dec 2, 2023

11:30am-2pm All Member "Bring a Friend" Social

Where: Bob Oke Long Lake Community Building, 5100 Long Lake Road SE, Port Orchard

Fri Dec 8, 2023

12:30pm Healthcare Committee

Tue Dec 12, 2023

10:30am: SK Unit Meeting

Where: Zoom

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Sat Dec 16, 2023

10am: CK/Bremerton Unit Meeting – **Cancelled**

Sat Jan 6, 2024

10am: LWV-Kitsap Board Meeting

Where: The Pearl on Oyster Bay, 550 Russell Road, Bremerton

Tue Jan 9, 2024

10:30am: SK Unit Meeting

Fri Jan 12, 2024

12:30pm: Healthcare Committee

Sat Jan 20, 2024

10am: CK/Bremerton Unit Meeting

Where: United Way of Kitsap County, 645 4th St., Unit 101, Bremerton

Sat Jan 27, 2024

10:30am to 2pm: LWVK Program Planning Day – All Member Meeting

Where: Public Library, Poulsbo

Sat Feb 3, 2024

10am: LWV-Kitsap Board Meeting

Where: The Pearl on Oyster Bay, 550 Russell Road, Bremerton

Fri Feb 9, 2024

12:30pm: Healthcare Committee

Tue Feb 13, 2024

10:30am: SK Unit Meeting

Sat Feb 17, 2024

10am: CK/Bremerton Unit Meeting

Where: United Way of Kitsap County, 645 4th St., Unit 101, Bremerton