

LWW LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF GREATER ROCKFORD

102nd

Annual Meeting

Saturday, June 1, 2024

Riverside Inn & Suites

Ballroom

700 West Riverside Blvd.

Rockford, Illinois

Doors Open at 8:00 a.m.

8:00 a.m.

Check-in, pay dues, view displays, enjoy beverages, and socialize.

8:45 a.m.

Breakfast

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Special Guests
Sue Theden, LWVGR President

9:45 a.m.

Introduction of
Trinity Rucker,

City of Rockford Youth Poet Laureate 2024

Introduction of Keynote Speaker Natasha Korecki
by Jo Minor

“Politics in Our Nation: An Insider’s Perspective”

NBC News Senior National Political Correspondent Natasha Korecki

10:45 a.m.

Break

11:00 a.m.

LWVGR Annual Business Meeting (30 minutes)

Meeting reservation and payment must be paid and received by Tuesday, May 21, 2024
\$33.00 for members and guests. Members are now able to pay dues by credit card, cash, or by
check at the Annual Meeting, or online at www.lwvgr.org/join/.

Early birds who renew and pay their dues by May 21 may win a door prize!

Need not attend to receive.



Featured Keynote Speaker

“Politics in Our Nation: An Insider’s Perspective”

Natasha Korecki is a senior national political correspondent with NBC News and is covering the 2024 presidential race. She formerly worked as a National Correspondent and White House reporter with POLITICO where she covered the 2020 presidential campaign and Joe Biden. In 2019, Ms. Korecki was inducted into the Hall of Fame of political reporters for the University of Illinois at Springfield, and in 2022, Korecki was inducted into the Illini Media Hall of Fame. She has won numerous state and national awards.

After graduating the University of Illinois, she worked as a reporter and legal affairs writer for the Daily Herald then moved to the Chicago Sun-Times. Ms. Korecki covered federal court for eight years, including the trials of two former governors – Rod Blagojevich and George Ryan, plus Tony Rezko, Conrad Black, Matthew F. Hale, and others.

She is the author of *Only in Chicago*, detailing the Blagojevich investigation and trial.

Ms. Korecki is currently reporting on the United States presidential election .



Natasha Korecki



Trinity Rucker 2024 Rockford Youth Poet

Trinity Rucker said she found poetry to be a powerful coping mechanism as she dealt with the isolation of pandemic lockdowns in early 2020.

What her teachers found was that Rucker, now 13, had power in her words that defy her youth.

“You could just see her life experience play out. ...She has a vivid vocabulary beyond her years,” said Bianka Serna, who taught Rucker in fourth, fifth and sixth grades at Maria Montessori in Rockford. “Everything she writes, it just has power behind it.”

“It’s such a huge honor and I’m forever grateful for everyone who pushed me and supported me thus far,” Rucker said.

“I really, really want to get out in the community and help people realize that poetry isn’t as boring as people believe it to be,” Rucker stated. “I want to help people realize that there is so much greatness in each and every one of us.”

Rucker has a free-flowing style. She draws inspiration from personal experience. Rucker’s poetry received an honorable mention in the Gwendolyn Brooks Youth Poetry Awards, where her first poem was published. At her Poet Laureate award ceremony at a Rockford City Council meeting she read a poem called “The Lord” before City Council and earned the praise of Mayor Tom McNamara.

“I can’t believe you’re in seventh grade,” he said. “I wish I was as mature and put together as you are.”

Poet laureates serve as ambassadors to the arts, helping bring poetry to places across the city. Rucker hopes to host workshops for aspiring poets and poetry readings at local homeless shelters. The youth poet serves a one-year term.“



102nd ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, June 1, 2024

A G E N D A

Call to Order

Sue Theden, President

Motion to Adopt Roberts Rules of Order

Announcement of LWVGR Scholarship Recipient

Minutes of the June 3, 2023 Meeting

Valerie Hanserd, Secretary

Action Item: Acceptance of 2023 Minutes

Financial Report

Christina Hiltrop, Treasurer

Action Item: Approve Proposed Budget 2024-2025

President's Report

Sue Theden, President

Membership Committee

Teresa Hill, Membership Chair

New Business

Recognition and Awards

Sue Theden, President

Adjournment

LWW

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF GREATER ROCKFORD





As you may be aware, LWVGR operates on a fiscal year from July to June of each year. Annual member dues are collected every June. As always, you may pay online by going to <https://lwgvr.org/join/>

Another thing to consider if paying on-line: Whether you choose to pay yearly or choose the automatic payment system, you may also opt to pay for PayPal's transaction fees so that 100% of your dues goes to LWVGR to assist in its work. PayPal collects a 3.49% processing fee plus a \$0.49 transaction fee. LWVIL and LWVUS is allocated \$64 of your dues. Question? Contact Treasurer Chris Hiltrop at billing@lwgvr.org.

LWVGR Membership Dues Application

*Membership to The League of Women Voters of Greater Rockford is open to all regardless of financial considerations, so please feel free to choose how much you can pay.

- Membership options: \$75.00 One Individual Membership at Full Rate, \$110.00 Household Membership (Two in Same Household)**, Young Member (35 years of age and under) \$20.00, New Member Introductory for First Year \$20.00, \$20.00 Individual*, \$30.00 Individual*, \$40.00 Individual*, \$50.00 Individual*, \$60.00 Individual*, \$65.00 Individual*

Annual League membership fees are due June 30 every year. You may pay online at lwgvr.org/join/ or you may complete this membership form and mail with your check to:

Christina Hiltrop
2937 Reserve Court, Aurora, IL 60502-1347

Questions? Contact Christina at billing@lwgvr.org or 815-262-6166.

Form fields for member information: NAME, **NAME(S) OF ADDITIONAL MEMBER(S) IN HOUSEHOLD, ADDRESS, CITY, ZIP CODE, PHONE (HOME), PHONE (WORK/DAY), PHONE (CELL), EMAIL ADDRESS, **PHONE (CELL) (Additional household member), EMAIL ADDRESS, EMERGENCY CONTACT NAME/RELATIONSHIP, PHONE, EMAIL



What would you like to accomplish in the LWVGR?

Thank you in advance for renewing your membership before May 21 to enter the early bird drawing!

Other available membership categories:

- Membership categories: Carrie Chapman Catt \$125.00, Susan B. Anthony \$150.00, Elizabeth Cady Stanton \$200.00, Julia Lathrop \$300.00, Lifetime Membership \$0.00 (Must have been a member of the League of Women Voters 50+ years)

Total Membership Amount enclosed \$

- Additional options: Written communications sent to members rather than emailed, \$12.00 per year. Amount: \$, Additional donation to Operating Fund. Amount \$, Additional donation to LWVGR Scholarship Fund. Amount \$, Additional donation to Educational Fund. Amount \$

Annual Meeting - Sat., June 1, 2024, 8 a.m. Riverview Inn & Suites, 700 West Riverside Blvd., Rockford, Illinois \$33.00 each for members & guests. Annual Meeting Amount: \$. Breakfast: Scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, breakfast potatoes, seasonal fruit & berry cup, chilled juices, coffee, and herbal teas. Tableside pastry platter.



Grand Total Amount enclosed \$

When mailing this form with a cash or check payment please notify the treasurer with a photo of the filled out form in an email to billing@lwgvr.org. Thank you!

League of Women Voters Greater Rockford Annual Meeting Minutes from June 3, 2023

Program

Co-President Claire McIntyre welcomed attendees and acknowledged distinguished guests that were in attendance; Illinois State LWV President Becky Simon, former Rockford Mayor and now Chair of the Illinois Commerce Commission Doug Scott, former IL House Representative Dr. Litesa Wallace, City of Rockford 6th Ward Alderwoman April Prunty, retired Judge Rosemary Collins, NAACP President Rhonda Greer-Robinson, and County Board Commissioners Angie Goral and Valerie Hanserd. She introduced Kaila Anderson, the recipient of the 2023 City of Rockford Youth Poet Laureate. Kaila recited her very enlightened poem entitled "A Princess Poem". (attached)

Co-President Sue Theden introduced both our keynote speaker Illinois Comptroller Susana Mendoza and Mary McNamara Bernsten, our moderator for today's program. Mary outlined the format and the series of questions that related to our theme "Women in Government: Building for the Future We Want." The questions covered economics, sexual reproduction, voter education and media. And respond she did! In addition to answering the questions, the passionate Susana spoke on how she got Illinois finances back on track, improved the credit rating, while building bipartisan relationships to serve Illinoisans. She is a true representative of what serving looks like as an elected official.

Former Illinois Representative of the 67th District Dr. Litesa Wallace gave a presentation on Advocacy and how you can become an advocate for the change you want to see. She gave 5 (five) tips for effective advocacy: (1) understand the issue and develop a clear message, (2) identify and educate key decision-makers, (3) build relationships with decision-makers, (4) mobilize your network, and lastly (5) follow up and stay engaged.

Annual Meeting

Co-President Claire McIntyre called the meeting to order at 9:10 am. She requested a motion to accept the adoption of Robert's Rules of Order, motion received, seconded and motion carried.

Janie Wilson-Cook announced the \$1,000.00 LWVGR Scholarship recipient this year was Syeria Scott, an Auburn High School graduate currently in a University of Georgia masters program in social work. This was the first year the amount was raised from \$500.00.

Recording Secretary Valerie Hanserd requested a motion to accept the minutes of the 2022 annual meeting, motion made by Janie Wilson-Cook, seconded by Christina Hiltrop, motion carried.

Treasurer Christina Hiltrop requested a motion to accept the proposed 2023-2024 budget, motion made by Jennifer Blaisdale, seconded by Angie Goral, motion carried.

Co-Presidents Claire McIntyre and Sue Theden gave their reports with review of 2021-2023 goals of the GOTV efforts due to low voter turnout. Discussions followed with Janie suggesting a Technology Committee due to the increase of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and cyber security Issues.

Rhonda Greer-Robinson suggested that the Education committee address children and mental illness. Kate Schnell suggested, due to the board seats on the newly-elected school board turnover, to ask what are the issues in the District and how the league could get involved. Janie added it was hard to get the candidates out during the School Board election cycle to discuss issues as this has been a statewide problem. Claire informed us we would have to review the State League's position and remind us we cannot back candidates. Angie Goral thanked the board for their efforts to inform the public and editorials are a great way to inform the public on the pros and cons. Teresa inquired of a grant writer for the Education Committee.

Outgoing Co-President Claire thanked the board during her eight-year tenure. She acknowledged that Co-President Sue was her "ying to her yang." Sue presented Claire with a beautiful orchid plant and thanked her for her leadership during her tenure as Co-President. The LWVGR goals for 2023-2025 biennium will be to build on the strides made in the 2021-2023 biennium goals of broadening citizen participation and education including the promoting of political responsibility, our advocacy issue of gun violence, increase GOTV efforts with our Go Vote 815 action network, and to reflect the diversity of our region in membership and activities.

Membership Committee Chair Teresa Hill reported an addition of 16 (sixteen) new members, a total of 8 (eight) 50-year members, and the loss of a member in 2022. We also had 4 (four) new members joined today at the Annual Meeting.

Action Items to approve by-laws amendment and election of the 2023-2025 LWVGR Board. Linda Miller of the Bylaw Committee reported after the review of other LWV and organizations there was a need to update our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy with a bylaw change. This will put us in compliance with the State League. Christina Hiltrop read the names of the proposed nominees and positions. Sue requested a motion to accept the bylaw change and the nomination and election of the 2023-2025 LWVGR board, motion made by Christine Haeggquist, seconded by Angie Goral, motion carried. She asked the new board to please stand as she introduced them.

Recognition and Awards; Sue presented to teachers Dr. Teresa Kruger and Rhonda Greer-Robinson certificates for providing election education in their classrooms. The prestigious Mildred Berry Award was presented to the outgoing Chair of Voter Services, Carol Davies. Carol has humbly served as a leader and member for many years. She leaves big shoes to fill as she passes on the torch.

Sue requested a motion for adjournment, Angie Goral motioned, seconded by Dee Dee Soderberg, motion carried.

Adjournment at 12:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Valerie Hanserd,
Recording Secretary



President's Report



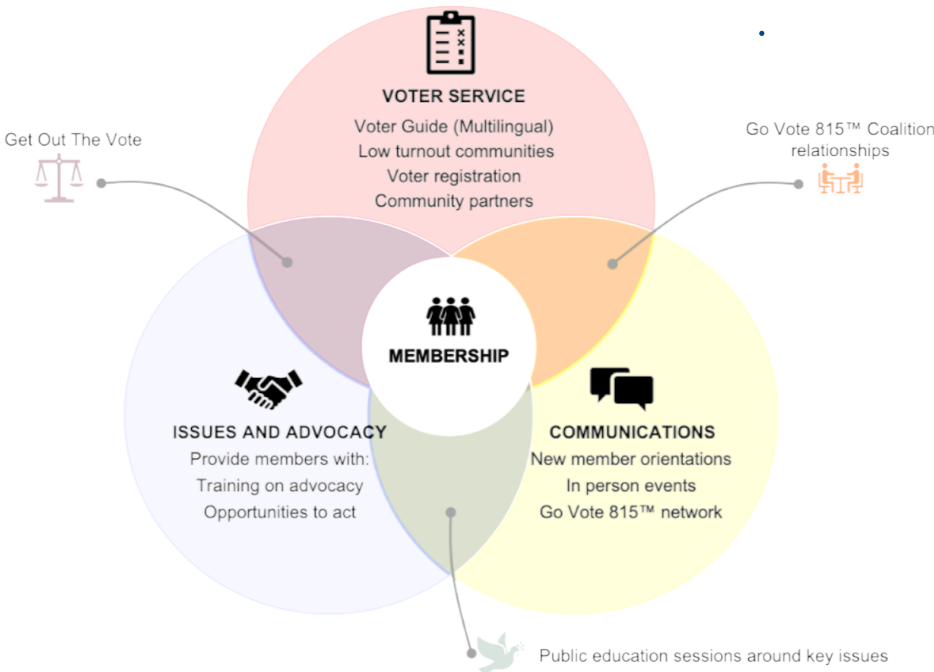
Sue Theden
President, LWVGR

As I sat down to write this annual report, the first thing I reflected on was last year's annual meeting. You may recall that we followed up with a survey to solicit members feedback on the meeting. Although attendees thought the meeting was great overall, and enjoyed the fellowship, the data was clear that we needed to: improve the on-line registration process, manage the time better, eat earlier

and improve the food choices. The annual meeting planning committee, led by VP Jennifer Blaisdell, has taken this important feedback into account, and I know you will have a better experience this year!

The second thing I reflected on is all the work you, as members, have accomplished this year. You have made a positive impact on our community by working to ensure that every eligible person has the knowledge and opportunity to participate in our democracy. I couldn't be prouder to be a part of the League.

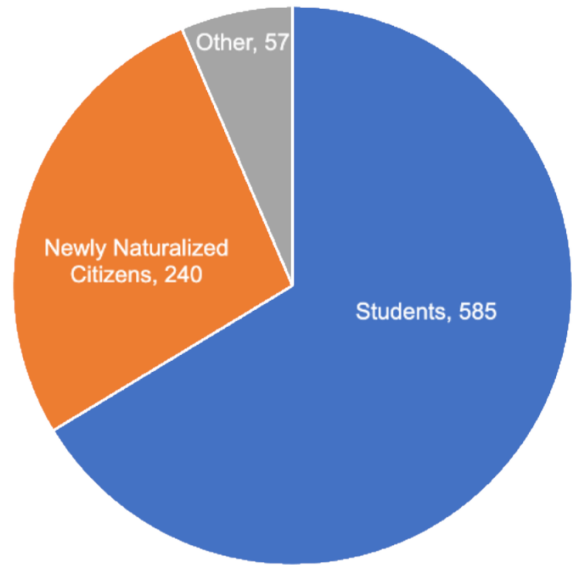
In 2021, the board created this Venn diagram to capture our priorities and focus our resources. The priorities remain the same: Voters, Issues and Advocacy, and Communications.



Voter Services

The Voter Services committee really knocked it out of the park this year, under the leadership of Carol Bailey. They have held 50 registration events and they are on track to reach 1000 new voter registrations by the annual meeting!

ON TRACK TO ACHIEVE 1000 NEW VOTER REGISTRATIONS THIS YEAR!



The Voter Services committee forged new networks with high school social studies teachers to accelerate student registrations and engagement, resulting in 585 new student registrations! The results were recognized by a nomination for the League for The Golden Apple Foundation Jan Jones Service Award for demonstrating a deep commitment to Excellence in Education in Winnebago and/or Boone County through volunteerism!

The committee was mindful to concentrate time and resources on lower voter turnout communities. Many of our Go Vote 815™ coalition non-profit partners recruited the committee to register voters at their community events.



(President's Report, continued)

Local Government

The Local Government committee, led by Terri Schierer, hosted 5 candidate meet and greets leading up to the March primary. Terri pioneered the formation of meet and greet teams which led to a smoother and more effective process and better results. The team leaders have already brainstormed 27 more actions to improve before the general election.

Issues and Advocacy

Issues Specialist, Claire McIntyre, hosted an advocacy event at Inscape Collective. Litesa Wallace, former IL Representative, did a great job teaching about the importance of advocacy and how it all translates into bills that become laws. She gave us great tips and insights on how to be the most effective advocates (and what not to do!). At the end of the meeting, we wrote postcards to our state legislators asking them to vote “no” on extending the invest in kids scholarship tax credit program.

Throughout the year, we encouraged members to file witness slips and to contact their government officials on a variety of issues that align with the League positions.

Education

The Education committee, led by Rhonda Greer Robinson, again provided Kids Vote 815™ democracy lessons to two 5th grade classes at Ellis elementary school.

Environmental Issues

Pat Kenney, along with several experienced committee members, revived the Environmental Issues Committee this year. They are partnering with other local non-profits to provide education and advocacy on key environmental issues.

Gun Violence Prevention

Gun Violence Prevention Committee, formerly led by Jo Minor, hosted an excellent panel discussion featuring an emergency room doctor, the police chief, a gun violence survivor and mental health experts. New member Danice Loveridge, will be the League’s new GVP chair. The next phase of the committee will be to collaborate with the NIU Center for Non-profit Excellence (NICNE) and community organizations to co-create solutions to the gun violence problems in our community.

Immigration

Immigration Committee, led by Sara Dady, hosted two excellent panel discussions on immigration. To counteract the Winnebago County Board anti-migrant resolution, League board members read a statement at two different Winnebago County Board meetings, voicing our opposition to the resolution against migrants.

Members-at-Large

The member-at-large board members, Paulette Gilbert

and Patty Stadelman, kept us engaged with other key community organizations including Women’s March Rockford and Rockford Women’s Suffrage Plaza, among others.

Communications

The Communications team, led by Joan Sage, is comprised of three technical and talented team members: Janie Wilson-Cook, (who is also Scholarship Coordinator) Maria Palmeri and Teresa Hill (who doubles as the Membership chair). We saw their work throughout the year on the webpage, Facebook, yard signs, fliers etc.

Teresa’s work with the other committee chairs enabled us to plan and host several membership events throughout the year. Twenty-eight new members have joined the League in the past year!

Administrative

League Secretary Valerie Hanserd did an excellent job capturing board meeting minutes and disseminating them in a timely manner, as well as keeping us connected with local government and community organizations.

We’ve also been able to strengthen our relationships with several other local non-profits to build on the Go Vote 815™ coalition momentum as we move towards the general election.

Membership Dues Structure

One of the key structural changes we incorporated this year is the new membership dues structure. The new structure reflects our belief that financial considerations should not be a barrier to joining the League, and to encourage young and new members.

Therefore, when renewing in June 2024, members will notice a sliding scale of \$20 - \$75.

The board is also encouraging young members (< 35) to join so their rate is \$20.

Finally, the board is encouraging the public to learn more about the league by joining – so we’ve offered new members a \$20 introductory rate for their first year.

Of course, for those who can contribute at the standard rate, or even contribute more, your generosity is greatly appreciated as we work together to educate and inspire citizens to engage on issues and the election process to improve our community.

As a reminder, the League’s fiscal year is July – June. Please pay your annual dues online or by check prior to the annual meeting, or in person at the annual meeting. The only exception is for our 50 year members, and new members who joined after December 1st, 2023 (you’re paid up through 2025).



(President's Report, continued)

A big thank you to our Treasurer Chris Hiltrop. For yet another year, Chris managed the Leagues finances astutely. She paid the bills, collected dues payments, prepared monthly financial reports and the roster for the board, annual reports for LWVIL and the government, financial analysis for the membership dues structure – and volunteered for several voter registrations and other events!

I am honored to be leading LWVGR and so thankful for all the amazing members. Whether you are on the board, lead a committee, register voters, volunteer at or participate in events, advocate on legislative issues,

- respond to member survey's, mentor me or donate money, I appreciate and value you immensely.
- As we grow, with your help, there are many more ways we can share knowledge with the community and increase voter turnout. Please let me know if you are interested in joining our high performing team to help in accounting, mental health or gun violence prevention committees, event planning, grant writing (or any other way).
- Sue Theden, President

Committee Reports

✦ Communication Committee

To create a greater awareness of the League's mission and to call our members and the public to action, the Communications Committee uses a number of platforms.

They include:

Social media with our website, Facebook, and YouTube channel.

Email notices to members, media and to our public list.

Releases to the Committee members include:

- Teresa Hill- social media manager — Using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tiktok to keep the public updated.
- Janie Wilson-Cook—webmaster, technologist, UX, graphic designer, user-friendly with access to the Illinois and US Leagues. Administers email and marketing list servers. Administers the Google marketing aides for YouTube, Calendar, Voice phone and the subscribable Apple Calendar. She has continually upgraded the lwvgr.org e-commerce. Janie is currently training chairs in publishing blog articles (Sue Theden and Carol Bailey were first) and webadmins to succeed her in retirement in June 2025.
- Maria Palmeri—web content manager, graphic design, marketing.
- Joan Sage Chair, media press releases.

Media coverage was significant for candidate Meet & Greets and committee mission specific events.

The LWVGR phone number is 815-201-3901.

Respectfully submitted,
Joan Sage, Chair

✦ Diversity Committee

- The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee seeks to promote diversity and pluralism through its programs, committees, and through coalitions of which it is a member. DEI is central to the organization's current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy.
- The Chair position is currently open. Please contact President@lwvgr.org if you are interested in leading the committee.

✦ Education Committee

- I am writing to share the delightful news of the Education Committee's continued partnership with Rockford Public Schools District 205, marking our second annual collaborative effort with the fifth-grade cohort at Ellis Elementary School.
- This year, we had the privilege of engaging with eager students and dedicated teachers, embarking on a journey to explore the fundamentals of a democratic society. Through interactive sessions and discussions, students were enlightened on the significance of community improvement and the crucial role of voter registration in shaping their future.
- The enthusiasm and participation level of both students and teachers were remarkable, providing a testament to the success of our program. The highlight of our sessions was the participation of two esteemed representatives from the Rockford City Council, whose presence enriched the learning experience with real-world insights into civic engagement.

We are immensely proud of the outcomes of this initiative



Committee Reports (continued)

and look forward to fostering this relationship further to inspire the next generation of informed citizens and leaders.

Respectfully submitted,
Rhonda Greer Robinson, Chair

✦ Environmental Committee

The Environmental Issues Committee advocates for the protection and preservation of our natural resources through the shared knowledge of local experts, print, and online sources and the expertise and talents of our committee members.

The Environmental Committee has discussed several cogent subjects. Kate Whitacre, a local organic farmer, told us her plan to create a municipal composting company. We learned that in nuclear power usage ranking among states and other countries, Illinois ranks ahead of all states and most countries. None of the nuclear energy generated is used in the Rockford metro area. We scheduled a field trip to Zero Waste, a sustainable product store. We attended a lecture on recycling by Executive Director Corrine Sosso from Keep Northern Illinois Beautiful at Katie's Cup. We learned about acceptable recycling items and composting among many other things. We plan outing to the Homewood Recycling Center and solar roof-top installation.

The committee voted to track local, state, and federal representatives votes on environmental legislation.

Through the generous support of the members, the environmental committee voted to have their own email list server. A collection of \$6.00 was taken to cover list server expenses.

The Environmental Issues Committee has sponsored the "Dripial Pursuit" contest for the Youth Groundwater Festival (YGF) since 1994. YGF is in its 27th year with a pause during the pandemic. This was the first year in person since the pandemic. YGF has four different programs, one of which is the trivia contest we host. Diane Cushing and Shawn Choinard have been the driving forces behind the League's involvement for many years and volunteered with Carol Bailey this year as well. YGF is the brainchild of the Winnebago Health Department and specifically, Ryan Kerch. It has been held every year at Rock Valley College who also sponsors the event. This year Burpee Museum was also a cosponsor.

Dripial Pursuit is a trivia contest pitting teams from each school against each other. The schools receive 100

questions and answers about groundwater issues in advance from which the questions are asked at YGF. This year there were three schools represented, Maria Montessori at RPS Marsh Grade School, the International Baccalaureate School at RPS Conklin Grade School, and Rockford Christian School. Many of the children were well-prepared and could answer the questions, which led to some pretty fierce competition. One round in particular went to five or so tiebreakers before a winner was determined! All the kids seemed to enjoy the event and the Youth Groundwater Festival in general.

Many thanks to the two League stalwarts, Diane and Shawn. It was a great learning experience for the students and for Carol.

Former and new members are welcome to contact the chair, Patricia (Penney) Kenney at environment@lwgvr.org. We meet at the Wesley Willows Town Center building in the Club Room on the third Tuesday of the month at 1 p.m. (Come at Noon for a delicious and affordable lunch).

Respectfully submitted,
Patricia Kenney, Chair

✦ Gun Violence Prevention Committee

Jo Minor led the Gun Violence Prevention Panel on June 14, 2023 where 100 people attended. The panel was the last in a series of three successful panels.

The panelists included: Dr. Ammar Ahmed from Rockford Memorial Health Systems and Mercy Health Systems Emergency Departments, Joshua Patterson from Community Solutions, Rockford Police Chief Carla Redd, plus a gun violence survivor and other mental health experts. A big thank you to committee volunteers Lynne Townsend, Carol Davies, Janie Wilson-Cook, Teresa Hill, Cathy McIntire and Pat Kenney for organizing and running this important panel.

After a brief hiatus without a leader, Jo's colleague from Rockford Mom's Demand Action for gun sense in America, Danice Loveridge, has joined the League and will be the League's new GVP chair. The next phase of the committee will be to collaborate with the NIU Center for Non-profit Excellence (NICNE) and community organizations to co-create solutions to the gun violence problems in our community.

Please contact Danice Loveridge, (gunviolenceprotection@lwgvr.org, 815-509-9445) or Sue Theden (president@lwgvr.org, 619-204-9650) if you would like to join us on this exciting journey.



Committee Reports *(continued)*

Healthcare Committee

The Health Committee has not met in recent years, but we are going to revive it and focus on mental health. Maria Palmeri was kind enough to author this call to action.

Understanding Mental Health Resources: A Call To Action from LWVGR

In the wake of recent community tragedies, there has been a profound awakening to the importance of mental health resources and education. These events have underscored the critical need for accessible support systems and proactive measures to prevent similar tragedies in the future.

In response to the heightened interest in mental health resources, the LWVGR is responding proactively to recent events by focusing on mental health resources and community education. Our Health Committee is committed to leading the charge in organizing a public education forum. This forum aims to not only raise awareness about existing mental health services but also to address the challenges hindering their accessibility and effectiveness.

The first step in this initiative is to appoint a dedicated and capable chairperson to lead the Health Committee. This individual will play a pivotal role in orchestrating the forum and guiding the committee's efforts in addressing mental health issues within our community. The chair would need to be knowledgeable about mental health issues, passionate about community education, and capable of organizing events like public forums. They should also have strong leadership skills to guide the committee in its efforts.

Why is this initiative so crucial?

Increased Awareness: By organizing a public education forum, the LWVGR seeks to shed light on the spectrum of mental health resources available within our community. Many individuals may not be aware of the support systems already in place, and this forum will serve as a platform to bridge that gap in knowledge.

Understanding Challenges: Beyond simply highlighting available resources, the forum will delve into the challenges that individuals face when seeking mental health support. From stigma to systemic barriers, understanding these challenges is essential.

Prevention and Preparedness: By proactively addressing mental health concerns, we can work towards preventing future tragedies. Education, awareness, and access to

resources are vital components of a community's resilience in the face of mental health challenges.

Empowerment Through Education: The LWVGR believes in the power of education to empower individuals and communities. By equipping our community with knowledge about mental health resources and challenges, we empower individuals to seek help when needed and advocate for systemic change.

We invite passionate individuals to step forward and take on the role of chairperson for the Health Committee by contacting Sue Theden, LWVGR President (email president@lwgvr.org or call 619-204-9650). You will have the Board's support and several talented members have already expressed an interest in helping. This is an opportunity to make a tangible difference in the lives of our neighbors and loved ones.

Respectfully submitted,
Maria Palmeri, Member

Immigration Committee

The Immigration Committee had a very productive and busy year. Immigration continues to be a hot topic in public discourse and campaigns. We are dedicated to educating and promoting civil discourse with the public on this issue. In March, we worked with AAUW to organize "What's Up at the Border," a panel discussion with local officials and immigration service providers about the how-and-why of the flight of migrants which landed at Rockford this past December. In April, we worked in partnership with Rockford Public Library to organize "What's Happening at the Border" presented by Fred Tsao, Senior Policy Counsel at Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights. Both events were very well attended.

The committee also worked to oppose an Anti-Migrant Resolution passed by the Winnebago County Board this year. We have organized a postcard campaign, with the League position on immigration and anti-migrant legislation, to local, state, and federal officials.

The League position on immigration: *Immigration policies should promote the reunification of immediate families, meet economic, business, and employment needs, and be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises.*

We would welcome any League Member who wants to join us in this important advocacy work.

Respectfully submitted,
Sara Dady, Chair



Committee Reports *(continued)*

✦ Issues Committee

One of the most important aspects of being a League member is to take action to support our positions-nationally, statewide, and locally. LWV was founded by women who fought for voting rights and who fight to this day to ensure our democracy remains strong while advocating for basic human rights. With statements by some of the more extreme politicians who question women’s right to vote and to make their own healthcare choices, those who would disregard the need to safeguard the environment, who advocate against sensible gun violence prevention laws, or the myriad of other positions held by the League and its members, we need more than ever to take action.

We began the 2023-24 year with a presentation on the importance of advocacy and the most effective way of advocating. It was presented by former IL Representative Litesa Wallace, 67th district. It was well-attended by both League members and invited guests. The purpose was to stress the importance of advocacy while giving members an insider’s viewpoint as to the most effective methods.

1. League members have been coached several times on how to submit a witness slip as well as how to follow a bill on the ILGA.gov website.

2. Members are also coached on how to reach out to their legislators and receive a request to report when they make contact or submit witness slips. While we have members who religiously do so, the percentage is low and needs to improve. You can always refer to <https://www.lwvil.org/time-for-action-alerts> if you are unsure of how to proceed.

3. During the fall, winter, and spring Legislative sessions, League members were asked to take action on several different positions and bills:

- a. The importance of letting the Invest in Kids Act sunset as originally planned.
- b. Support for increasing the Evidence Based Funding base from \$350 M per year to \$550 m per year. There are various reasons for this including increased funding for the Minority Teacher of Illinois Program.
- c. Witness Slips submissions supporting increased funding for mental health and substance abuse programs (HB 4475) and community mental health (HB 4665).
- d. Witness slip submission for gun control to help protect domestic violence survivors. HB 4469 Karina’s Bill

- e. Witness slip supporting HB 4591. Transparency in money in politics.
 - f. Witness slip supporting HB 4591. Transparency in money in politics.
 - g. Support Child Tax Credit by contacting legislators asking them to support this bill.
 - h. Advocate with legislators to ban single use plastic waste (HB 2376 and HB 4448/SB 2211
 - i. Winnebago County Board Anti-Migrant Resolution- LWVGR members Jennifer Blaisdell and Teresa Hill made a statement on behalf of the League opposing in concert with LWV position.
- More bills that need to be supported or opposed will be coming up in the next month. The Legislature doesn’t adjourn until May 31 so expect that this will be updated. Both LWVIL and FIF will be doing an Advocacy Day on May 1. We need to get members to attend if possible.
- Respectfully submitted,
 Claire McIntyre, Chair

✦ Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)

- The Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), also known as Title III of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA), requires states and local governments to establish local chemical emergency preparedness programs for their communities.
- The Winnebago County Local Emergency Planning Committee (WCLEPC) gathers hazardous materials information from industry and other users and prepare an incident response plan approach to hazardous materials incidents. They also provide public presentations and workshops for the community.

Diane Cushing represents the LWV at these monthly meetings. If you have any questions feel free to contact her at lepc@lwwgr.org

Respectfully submitted,
 Diane Cushing, Representative

✦ Local Government Committee

LWVGR Spring 2024 Candidate Meet & Greets

The Local Government Committee hosted five (5) Candidate Meet & Greets for the 2024 Primary Election Season.



Committee Reports *(continued)*

February 20, Tuesday 6 p.m. RPL Nordlof,
 118 N Main St. Rockford
 Team Leader: Faye Marcus
 Co-Sponsors: AAUW & Rockford Public Library

February 26, Monday 6 p.m. Northwest Community Center,
 1725 N Johnston Ave., Rockford
 Team Leader: Rhonda Greer
 Co-Sponsors: AKA Sorority, Northwest Community Center, and The Order of Eastern Star

February 28, Wednesday 6 p.m. Roscoe Community Ctr.,
 4562 Hononegah Rd, Roscoe
 Team Leader: Elizabeth Lindquist
 Co-Sponsors: Rockton-Roscoe News, Hononegah Key Club, and Student Council

March 5, Tuesday 6 p.m. Pilgrim Baptist Church,
 1703 S. Central Ave, Rockford
 Team Leader: Paulette Gilbert
 Co-Sponsors: AKA Sorority and Women’s March of Rockford

March 6, Wednesday 6 p.m. Belvidere North High School,
 9393 Beloit Road, Belvidere
 Team Leader: Karen Ruffner
 Co-Sponsors: Belvidere North High School Student Voice Club

Candidate Meet & Greets Revised Organization

This year we made a couple of changes in the organization of the Candidate Meet & Greets. Each Candidate Meet & Greet was appointed a Team Leader whose duties included securing a venue and moderator, and leading a team of LWVGR members and co-sponsors in the room set up, sign-in tables, PowerPoint Presentation on a laptop, etc. Each Candidate Meet & Greet was given a dedicated team of individuals responsible for specific tasks at the Meet & Greet. A spreadsheet with the various activities of a Candidate Meet & Greet included timers, laptop computer operator, greeters, registration tables, refreshments, and a courier to bring the meeting’s signage, maps, timing paddles etc. also indicated the responsible individual for each task and included a kit of materials. A Candidate Meet & Greet in a box, you might say. This ensured all the Meet & Greets were adequately prepared. A “courier” was also designated to pick up the larger items like easels from one Meet & Greet and deliver the items to the next event.

We also invited WNIJ to host a table at the Meet & Greets at Pilgrim Baptist Church, and Belvidere North High School. They set up a table for their reporter, station signage, survey cards and other materials provided by WNIJ.

The WNIJ reporter facilitated a discussion with the audience to understand their views on the upcoming elections.

Challenge of Low Number of Contested Races

We had a challenge this primary with the number of contested races being not just low but down right bleak! And it is predicted that there won’t be much improvement in the General Election for local offices. In this primary there were only two contested races in all of Winnebago County Election Races and one contested race in all of Boone County Election Races

This resulted in candidates putting the Candidate Meet & Greets as a low priority in their schedule. Some of the candidates didn’t even want to be bothered with Candidate Meet & Greets because as far as they were concerned, they already had won the election since it was uncontested. Candidates forgot the Meet & Greets weren’t just for them to get votes but also for an opportunity for voters to get to know their elected officials. This resulted in low attendance turnout. But we didn’t let that deter us.

Change in Format of the Candidate Meet & Greets

After the second Meet & Greet, it was evident that having a format with four candidates present wouldn’t give the voters a sense of the event being worth their time. As a committee we discussed avenues we could take and decided to provide the audience with a format that made the night more meaningful.

After discussions, we decided to incorporate at the last two Meet & Greets:

1. Instructions on how to use the Illinois Voter Guide
2. A Voter Issues Q&A Session with the Audience.

Both sessions took place before the candidates spoke. WNIJ also agreed to assist in the Voter Issue Q&A Session.

The sessions each were about 15 - 20 minutes.

The questions that were asked included:

1. What issue is most important to you in the upcoming elections?
2. Where do you get your election news and information?
3. How do you think reporters can better cover election news and information?

This Question & Answer Voter Issues Session and the instruction of how to use the Illinois Voter Guide made a great enhancement to our last two Meet & Greets.

The change in format was well-received by candidates and voters alike.



Committee Reports *(continued)*

Going Forward

After the five candidate Meet & Greets were completed, the Local Government Committee held a debriefing meeting on Saturday, March 30. We discussed the pros and cons of the last Meet & Greets and discussed ways to improve the Candidate Meet & Greets for the fall. The result was 27 action items that will be implemented to further improve the fall Meet & Greets.

A special thanks goes out to all the Local Government Committee who were part of this season’s Candidate Meet & Greets. Without such a dedicated crew these Meet & Greets would not have been possible.

Please contact Local Government Committee Chair, Terri Schierer, (localgovernment@lwvgr.org, cell 224-735-6974) for more information.

Respectfully submitted,
Terri Schierer, Chair

Membership Committee

The League of Women Voters Greater Rockford has 129 current members as of 5/1/2024. The number includes 8 life members, 91 renewed members, 29 new members, and one deceased member. Of those 129 members, 7 are household and 8 are student members.

The membership committee planned a social event in August and a Holiday gathering, both at Mary Kowing's home this year. It was a wonderful time to get to know fellow members and share ideas for the future. We plan to host more social events in the upcoming year. Carol Bailey has offered to host the Summer event this year. See the post cards for details at the Annual Meeting. If anyone has any suggestions for activities, please share with us.

We have added an emergency contact and phone number to the membership form. It is not required, but in case of any issue, it would be nice for us to have it on file. As we are adding more events we should always be prepared. This information will not be shared but kept for emergencies.

Membership committee schedules new member orientations as needed and focuses on recruitment of new and retention of present members throughout the year.

The committee is also ready when needed to help support any meetings/forums/events that each committee has planned for the upcoming year. This past year, working with the Communication team, we have created five event bags that include many items that are possibly needed at any event. Membership has also worked with the Communications team to create an event check list and forms that are helpful for planning an event. This includes

- a storage unit check list of items needed for any type of event. We hope this will help our members know the items we have available and help with planning.

- We have a tentative schedule for committees below. We plan to have an opportunity for all members at least once a month to gather about an issue or just a social event.

- We are sorry to report that Dee Dee Soderberg, the co-chair of our Voter Services Committee passed away. She is greatly missed.

- Our plan year is July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025 – which means dues are due on or before June 30, 2024. As an incentive this year, we will be offering a chance to win a Gift basket at the Annual Meeting for all members renewing before the Annual Meeting deadline. If you cannot make the meeting, you are still eligible. All members that have joined since 1/1/2024 will automatically be eligible for this drawing. We will draw the winner at the annual meeting but will coordinate delivery if needed.

- As always, many hands make light work and more enjoyable. Please consider joining our committee.

New Members:

- Jeanne Bissell Joined: 5/13/2023
- Rebecca Kendall..... Joined: 5/24/2023
- Teresa Kruger Joined: 5/10/2023
- Christine (Tina) Moore Joined: 6/3/2023
- Elaine Pannell..... Joined: 6/3/2023
- Aprel Prunty Joined: 5/26/2023
- Rhonda Robinson Joined: 6/3/2023
- Kathryn (Kate) Schnell..... Joined: 5/22/2023
- Jackie Hessian Joined: 7/20/2023
- Maria Mendia Joined: 8/1/2023
- Laura Frazier Joined: 8/17/2023
- Laurie Hamdani Joined: 8/17/2023
- Maria Palmeri Joined: 8/8/2023
- H Elise Cadigan Joined: 9/25/2023
- Deborah Johns Joined: 9/22/2023
- Pinky Langdon Joined: 9/25/2023
- Fannie Owens Joined: 10/23/2023
- Michael C Page Joined: 11/17/2023
- Bev Cicoello Joined: 1/10/2024
- Deb Zahniser Joined: 1/10/2024
- Mary Sargent Joined: 12/21/2023
- Denise Schott-Malek..... Joined: 1/4/2024
- Avajeane Griffith Joined: 1/20/2024
- Mathew Oakes Joined: 2/8/2024
- Susan Stanforth Joined: 2/9/2024
- Valerie Sanders Joined: 2/22/2024
- Shiraz Tata..... Joined: 3/21/2024
- Linda Johnson Joined: 3/6/2024
- Danice Loveridge..... Joined: 4/30/2024



Committee Reports *(continued)*

50 Year Members:

- Mary English—50 year
- Dawn Hallsten—50 year*
- Colleen Holmbeck—50 year
- Faye Marcus—50 year
- Sally Trefz—50 year
- Maxine Hadley—50 year
- Alice Heath—50 year
- Sandra Locke—50 year
- Joan Morton—50 year
- *new this year

Members who have passed:

Dee Dee Soderberg 3/4/2024

Life Members	8	6%
Renewed Members	91	71%
New Member	29	22%
Deceased	1	1%
UNPAID MEMBERS	0	0%
Total 23/24 Paid	129	100%

2024-2025 Tentative Monthly meeting plan:

- August: Pool Party – Carol Bailey’s Home
- September: Immigration, TBD
- October: Local Government - Forums
- November: Possible Election Recap - November 5, 2024
General Election
- December: Holiday Party, TBD
- January: Movie – topic TBD (one of the LWV Issues)
- February: Local Government – Forums for
Consolidated Election Feb. 25 Primary
- March: Possible Election Recap – April 1, 2025
Consolidated Election
- April: Environmental Issues Committee
- May: Education, TBD
- June: Annual Meeting
- July: Enjoy your summer!

Respectfully submitted,
Teresa Hill, Chair

Scholarship Committee

The Community Foundation of Northern Illinois (CFNIL) scholarship committees met in-person in March and April, 2024. League of Women Voters of Greater Rockford (LWVGR) members were Janie Wilson-Cook and Shawn Stacey-Choinard. Shawn served on the committee for the LWVGR scholarship. No more than two members of any donor group can be on the committee for their scholarship. Each committee made decisions for 3-6 scholarships.

The CFNIL computed that this year the amount capable of being awarded was \$1,000.00 scholarship. The LWVGR scholarship received potential recipients chosen by CFNIL computer algorithms.



Timberlyn Turner

Timberlyn Turner, a 2024 graduate of Auburn High School, was the recipient of the League \$1000.00 scholarship. The LWVGR scholarship will be awarded at a June 20, 6:30 pm ceremony to be held at Riverview Inn and Suites, formerly Cliffbreakers.

Please remember the LWVGR Scholarship Fund in your tax-deductible charitable giving. Donation directions are on the dues renewal form on paper and onsite.

Respectfully submitted,
Janie Wilson-Cook,
LWVGR Scholarship Coordinator

Sunshine Report

As your Sunshine Chair for 2023-24, it has been my privilege to send 16 messages of support to League members, writing congratulatory notes, get-well cards and expressions of sympathy throughout the year.

If you know of a League member who would appreciate such a note, please contact the president.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Scarpaci

Voter Services Committee

Our exciting year commenced on July 1, 2023 with the appointment of Carol Bailey and DeeDee Soderberg as Cochairs of the Voter Services Committee.

We decided to hold our monthly meetings in person to get to know the members of our committee and held our first monthly meeting in July. The committee tried different venues and settled on Inscape Collective for the latter half of the year. Dr. Shiraz Tata has been very welcoming and we’ve all enjoyed the meeting space. Dr. Tata has also decided to join the League.



Committee Reports *(continued)*

As of this writing, the committee has organized 50 Voter Registration drives and to date has registered 899 voters. High school and college registrations were 580 of that total with Naturalization Ceremonies adding 280 new voters. The committee has appeared at numerous community events and locations and participated in the National Voter Registration Day by hosting a voter registration drive at Roosevelt Community School. A primary focus has been reaching voters in low voter turnout areas of Rockford as well as making ourselves available to register voters in underserved communities.

The committee has welcomed fifteen new members this year whose participation has really enhanced our voter registration drives.

We changed the way in which we conduct voter registration drives at the high schools this year by going into the classrooms at Jefferson, East and to a certain extent, Belvidere North, which we've found to be very effective at increasing the number of voter registrations. We hope to continue that practice in the ensuing years. We want to make special note of the teachers who have facilitated and contributed to our success this year, namely, Dr. Teresa Kruger, Nicole Frazier, George Bathje, Jackie Hennelly Jonathan Logemann, and Brandy Salivar. At East we registered 130 students, at Jefferson, a total of 125 students and at Belvidere North, 95 students registered to vote. We've decided to award democracy certificates to the aforementioned three high schools to honor their tremendous achievements. And we're not done yet. We will continue to pursue the remaining high schools for voter registrations, naturalization ceremonies and community events. We're already scheduling high schools for the fall.

The committee volunteered to assist at the League Meet & Greets this year with committee members, Faye Marcus and Karen Ruffner organizing and leading two of the 5 events. Many other committee members contributed volunteer hours to that effort as well.

The committee is experimenting with a Student Ambassador Program by initiating a pilot program at Belvidere North High School with the able assistance of the Student Voice Club and Dr. Teresa Kruger.

Finally, the committee is planning to take the lead in the smart data voter project being initiated by the State League leading up to the fall election.

Sadly, on March 4 our friend and co-chair, DeeDee Soderberg passed away. We honor her unwavering commitment to our committee as well as to the larger

community. Her activism on behalf of voting rights, eliminating racism and the environment are true marks of a patriot and for those efforts and many others, we salute her.

Respectfully Submitted,
Carol Bailey, Chair

✦ Women's March Rockford

Women's March Rockford has been working with the Rockford Family Planning clinic to hire an escort coordinator to make sure that patients are able to enter and exit safely when visiting the clinic. Sara Loos from WMR will begin training the coordinator to pass on the compassionate care program. WMR is working closely with clinics trying to establish a chaperone/ companion system, working with people and agencies when women's reproductive rights are in question.

If anyone is interested in volunteering or like more information about the companion/ escort program, please reach out to WMR at womensmarchrockford@gmail.com.

WMR also co-sponsored the Candidate Meet and Greet on March 5th at Pilgrim Baptist Church.

WMR will look forward partnering up LWVGR and other partner organization for Candidate Meet and Greets Forums and events this fall.

Respectfully submitted,
Patty Stadelman

✦ Women's Suffrage Committee

The WSC2020 Steering Committee has been busy this year creating an activity book about The Women's Suffrage Plaza called *Piece by Piece the story of the Rockford Women's Suffrage Plaza*.

This book appeals to people of all ages. Our goal is to get this book to educators, students, group leaders, and other community organizations.

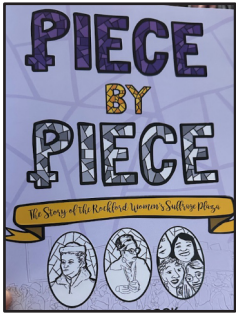
Grant Reports: We have received \$3,000.00 from Alpine Kiwanis, \$500.00 from AAUW State, and \$500.00 from AAUW Rockford Branch. The total collected so far in FY2024 is \$4,500.00. Pending grants are from AKA, LWV and Andre Goode and the Downtown Kiwanis.

Activity Books: Cost of first printing will be \$5600.00 for 2,000. WSC is looking for more donations to cover the first and future printing. Checks for Activity Books should be made to: RAAC—Suffrage Plaza and (memo line)





Committee Reports (continued)



Activity Book. Online donations can be made through rockfordsuffrageplaza.com. Click on the Donation button.

The price for the Activity Books: \$5.00 per copy. \$4.00 per copy bulk discount (20+per order)

We are creating flyers as an outreach to potential groups. One will be for Girl Scouts and others targeting school and other groups. We'd like to make a big effort this election year with voting!

The activity books will be for sale at the LWVGR annual

meeting. You can currently purchase the activity books at Womanspace 3333 Maria Linden Dr. Rockford IL.

We are finalizing a list of places throughout Rockford where the books will be available for sale.

Don't Miss the WSC fundraising event, Friday, September 27th 2024 5:30-8p.m., a Wine, Beer and Spirits Tasting at Artale & Co., 6876 Spring Creek Road, Rockford. Please, bring \$20 cash or check donation to WSC (RAAC)

WSC is in the planning stage for a community event at the WSC Plaza during the Head of the Rock Regatta on Oct. 13, 2024.

Respectfully Submitted by Patty Stadelman

LWVGR Contacts 2023-2024

- President: Sue Theden. president@lwwgr.org
Vice-President: Jennifer Blaisdell vicepresident@lwwgr.org
Treasurer: Christina Hiltrop billing@lwwgr.org
Secretary: Valerie Hanserd secretary@lwwgr.org
Member-at-Large: Paulette Gilbert boardmal1@lwwgr.org
Member-at-Large: Patty Stadelman. boardmal2@lwwgr.org
Communication Committee Chair: Joan Sage communications@lwwgr.org
Membership Committee Chair: Teresa Hill membership@lwwgr.org
Voter Services Chair: Carol Bailey voterservices@lwwgr.org
Issues Chair: Claire McIntyre issues@lwwgr.org
Diversity Committee Chair: TBD diversity@lwwgr.org
Education Committee Chair: Rhonda Greer Robinson education@lwwgr.org
Environmental Committee Chair: Patricia (Penney) Kenney environment@lwwgr.org
Gun Violence Prevention Cmte Chair: Danice Loveridge . gunviolenceprevention@lwwgr.org
Health Care Committee Chair: TBD. healthcare@lwwgr.org
Immigration Committee Chair: Sara Dady. immigration@lwwgr.org
Local Government Committee Chair: Terri Schierer localgovernment@lwwgr.org
Scholarship Committee Coordinator: Janie Wilson-Cook scholarship@lwwgr.org
Sunshine Committee Chair: Kathy Scarpaci sunshine@lwwgr.org
Website/Listserver/Email: Janie Wilson-Cook admin@lwwgr.org

LWVGR Public Email List

The League of Women Voters of Greater Rockford sends event emails to the public who opt-in Go to https://lwwgr.org, head for the form widget on the right, and sign up all your friends today.

No spam, no tracking, just pure civic involvement. Tell your friends!

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