

The VOTER

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The newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Kent

November 2003

League Supports Mental Health Replacement Levy

The board of directors of the League of Women Voters of Kent agreed to endorse passage of Issue 27, the mental health and recovery replacement levy on the November 4 ballot.

The League's support, said Christine Bhargava, Kent League co-vice president, stems from a process involving a nationwide agreement process in which Leagues across the country have adopted a position advocating basic health care—including mental health services—for all U.S. citizens. The consensus position, she added, also supports programs that promote the health and safety of children.

Recipient of the levy funds sought through Issue 27 is the Mental Health & Recovery Board of Portage County. The board

The 1-mill replacement levy supersedes one passed in 1983 and runs for 10 years, generating \$2.8 million a year.

consists of 14 members from across the county who oversee the planning, funding and monitoring of a countywide provider network, including Coleman Professional Services, Portage

Children's Center, Townhall II, Family & Community Services, and Safer Futures. In-home services are provided through the Bair Foundation for children with serious emotional problems.

Most of the Mental Health & Recovery Board's clients are between the ages of 18 to 45, and 15 percent are children and teens. Families are a top priority for the board, and counseling services are provided to help parents remain employed.

Issue 27 is a 1-mill replacement of a levy originally passed in 1983. It will run for 10 years

See LEVY, p. 3.

Date Changed for League Meeting on 'Making Democracy Work'

The date for the League's November general meeting on "Making Democracy Work" has been changed. The **new date is Wednesday, November 19**. The time and location are the same: 7:30 p.m. at the Portage County Courthouse, 203 W. Main Street, in Ravenna.

Those attending will hear Domestic Relations Judge Jerry L. Hayes speak about the court system and will be able to view the remodeled courthouse.

Marie Kunka, jury commissioner for Portage County, will discuss the jury-selection process. Lois Enlow, director of the Portage County Board of Elections, will discuss election trends, challenges and processes.

At press time, efforts to have a demonstration model of the new computerized voting machines available continue. So be sure to join us to see how Portage County is "making democracy work."



LWVK Events Alert . . .

Thursday, Oct. 30, 6:30 p.m.

Candidates Night; various locations; see article on page 3

Wednesday, Nov. 19, 7:30 p.m.

General Meeting. Topic: Making Democracy Work; Portage County Courthouse, 203 W. Main Street, Ravenna

Inside . . .

From the VP's Desk	2
Voter's Guide Workers Thanked	2
Observer Corps Wrap-Up	3
Candidates Night	3
Finance Advisory Committee	4
Calendar of Events	4



From the VP's Desk:

Issues . . . Candidates . . . Voting

Recently I've been thinking about how much this time of year exemplifies what the Kent League of Women Voters is all about—namely, voting. And it's not about just going to the polls on election day. At the League, we are concerned with every stage of the process: before, during and after.

Before voting, citizens want to be well-informed so they can make what they believe is the right choice. Our October unit meetings, therefore, focused on local ballot issues: the Kent Free Library bond issue (Issue 17) and the mental health and recovery replacement levy (Issue 27) for the Mental Health & Recovery Board of Portage County.

The League also is sponsoring a public meet-the-candidates night in late October for contested Kent city council seats in Wards 2, 4 and 6 (see article, p. 3).

Finally, what serious voter in the community does not count on the publication of our *Voter's Guide* in the *Record-Courier* just prior to major elections?

On November 4, you can be sure that League members will express their right to affect government by casting their ballot. The League encourages others to do so as well and to explain the voting process when needed, and register voters at public events.

After elections, the League studies election out-comes and sponsors events such as the September brunch with U.S. Representative Tim Ryan. The League's observation of local

governmental meetings also follows up on elected officials and policies. As the name implies, the League of Women Voters is entirely involved with voting—from start to finish. It's a lot of hard work by our members. We should feel proud—and worthy of the community's financial support in the League's upcoming annual fund drive.

And don't forget to visit our new Web site at www.kent.oh.lwvnet.org. It has lots of helpful information about the League and its activities. It looks great! Check it often.

With gratitude and respect for those League members who helped us become wise voters this fall, I offer a big thank-you.

— *Debby*

Voter's Guide **Proofreaders** **Thanked**

Thanks to everyone who helped with the proofreading of this year's *Voter's Guide*: Nancy Adams, Nancy Auran, Anita Bixenstine, Edith Chase, Sallie Hubeny (Northern Portage County League), Nena Hankins, Audrey Cielinski Kessler, Shirley Ohles, Roberta O'Keefe and Jan Rusnack. It was a time-consuming endeavor with more than 250 candidates and 40 ballot issues to check. Look for the guide in the October 31 *Record-Courier* and on the League's Web site at www.kent.oh.lwvnet.org.

The VOTER is published eight to 10 times a year by the League of Women Voters of Kent.

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Observer Corps Wrap-Up

Meetings of several local governmental bodies were observed by League members during September and October. Some highlights:

Kent City Council

October 1. Council approved the purchase of property on Gougler Avenue for the West River neighborhood project and endorsed the Mental Health and Recovery Board replacement levy (Issue 27) on the November ballot. (D. Newberry)

Portage County Commissioners

September 30. Commissioners approved a transfer to the general fund the \$1.24 million that will remain in the Jail Bond Fund after the last payment is made in December. Commissioners also discussed the sale of water by the city of Ravenna to Portage County so the county can in turn sell this excess capacity to the cities of Streetsboro and Aurora. (D. Newberry)

Volunteer observers are needed. More than 20 meetings per month are targeted for coverage. (see the October *VOTER* for a list of meetings). Scheduled meeting times include both morning and evening sessions, so it's easy to fit one or more into a busy schedule. If you would like to participate, call Debby Newberry at 330/678-1816, or send an e-mail to her at bnewberry@neo.rr.com. All observer corps members receive observer forms and a League button.

LEVY

Continued from p. 1

and generate \$2.8 million per year—a \$1.2 million annual increase, according to estimates from the Portage County Auditor's Office. The levy will cost the owner of a \$100,000 home \$1.50 more per month.

The demand for local mental health services continues to grow each year, reaching more than 7,000 residents—children, teens, families and adults—in 2002. Services to children and teens alone have increased 250 percent since 1990. In Ohio, 58 percent of children with severe mental health problems do not graduate from

Demand for mental health services in Portage County grows each year, touching the lives of more than 7,000 residents in 2002.

League to Host Candidates Night for Contested Kent City Council Seats

Come meet and greet the candidates for contested Kent city council seats in Wards 2, 4 and 6 at League-hosted Candidates Nights on Thursday, October 30, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

The meeting locations are specific to the ward in which the candidates are running. The locations are as follows:

- Ward 2 - Longcoy Elementary School Library, 1069 Elno Ave.
- Ward 4 - WKSU, corner of Loop and Summit roads; main meeting room
- Ward 6 - Walls Elementary School library, 900 Doramor Street

At each forum, the candidates will make an opening statement, and then questions will be taken from the audience.

The candidates for the three contested seats are as follows:

- Ward 2 - Ronald Heineking and Carrie Gavrilloff
- Ward 4 - Robert Felton II and Julie Gumerman
- Ward 6 - Beth Oswitch and Tracy Wallach

The forums' interactive nature provides an excellent opportunity to learn about where the candidates stand on the issues facing the city of Kent and the neighborhoods in each ward.

Candidates for the three uncontested council seats are Garrett M. Ferrara (Ward 1), Wayne A. Wilson (Ward 3) and Edward C. Bargerstock (Ward 5). The two at-large council seats are not up for election in November.

high school. In Portage County, it now takes one month for a child to see a psychiatrist.

Passage of the replacement levy is critical to continuing the current level of services in the face of state cutbacks of more than \$500,000 in the past two years and shrinking reserves. No new millage for mental health has been sought in 20 years.

Of each dollar raised by the levy, 96 cents is allocated for services and four cents for administration by the Mental Health & Recovery Board. For every one dollar of local levy money, the board generates roughly four dollars in matching federal and state funds. For more information about the board, go to: www.mental-health-recovery.org.

Public Advisory Committee to Assist with League's Annual Finance Campaign

The League's 2003 Finance Campaign will be enriched with the input from an Advisory Committee comprised of several community leaders, all of whom have invaluable experience to offer. Their compassion for community work and enthusiasm for the future of the Kent League of Women Voters should go a long way toward making this year's fund-raising effort a success. Serving on the 2003 Finance Advisory Committee are:

- Richard Coe (Portage Community Bank)
- Dean Dorsey (Kent State University)
- Mark Frisone (Family and Community Services)
- Karen Hilgert (Hilgert Farms and Market)
- Pam Mackintosh (Robinson Memorial Hospital)
- Robin Patton (FirstEnergy Corp.)

The League is grateful for their valuable time and advice toward making this year's Finance Campaign one of the best ever.

The VOTER

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LWVK Calendar . . .

November

12 League Board Meeting

Coleman Professional Services, 5982 Rhodes Road, Kent;
6:30 p.m.

19 General Meeting

Topic: Making Democracy Work; Portage County
Courthouse, 203 W. Main Street, Ravenna; 7:30 p.m.,

December

6 Holiday Brunch

Buffet brunch and short program on international
relations; Bistro on Main, 1313 W. Main Street, Kent;
10 a.m.; more details to come in a separate mailing

January

14 League Board Meeting

Coleman Professional Services, 5982 Rhodes Road, Kent;
6:30 p.m.

14 Program Planning

Discussion and selection of League programs for 2004;
Coleman Professional Services, 5982 Rhodes Road, Kent;
7:30 p.m.

15 Program Planning

Discussion and selection of League programs for 2004;
9:30 a.m., location to be announced