

The VOTER

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The Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of Kent

November 2006

Annual Holiday Brunch to Feature Newly Elected Public Officials, *Growing Season* Photographer Harwood

Come join the League as it honors this year's newly elected public officials at a holiday brunch on Saturday, December 9, at 9:30 a.m. The festivities will take place at Twin Lakes Country Club, 1519 Overlook Drive, Kent.



Harwood

The featured speaker is Gary Harwood, chief photographer for Kent State University since 1987, who will display and discuss the photographs he took for

the book *Growing Season, The Life of a Migrant Community*. David Hassler, a KSU English professor and author of two books of poetry, wrote the first-person narratives of many of the migrant workers who are featured in *Growing Season*.

In photos and stories, *Growing Season* celebrates the work, play, and religious, medical, familial, and communal experiences of a group of Mexican migrant workers—young, old, male, female—in Hartville, Ohio. The book focuses not only on the migrant workers but also the dedicated, caring volunteers who support

them. It also teaches readers about dignity and humanity.

The voices of the migrants and community members are eloquent testaments to the importance of the culture, the resilience of the people and the power of the place.

When Harwood first stepped onto the K.W. Zellers family farm in Hartville to photograph the Mexican migrant workers, he did not expect to find such a strong, tightly knit community. Over a span of five years, he used his

See BRUNCH, p. 3.

Area Residents Discuss Openness, Accountability in Ohio Politics

Openness and accountability in Ohio politics topped the agenda at the Kent League's November 14 town hall meeting. Nearly 100 area residents joined to celebrate civic activism and review ideas for improvement in the elections process.

Held at the United Methodist Church in Kent, the town hall session was part of imPACT, a statewide effort that advocates

increased participation in government.

"Polls and studies document the dissatisfaction with the way things are going—or not going—in Ohio, but people still don't show up to vote," said Barb Hipsman, the Kent League's co-president and Kent State University associate professor of journalism. "Tonight is

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LWVK Events Alert . . .

Saturday, December 9, 9:30 a.m.
Annual Holiday Brunch; Twin Lakes Country Club, 1519 Overlook Drive, Kent; featuring newly elected public officials and KSU chief photographer Gary Harwood; Topic: *Growing Season*

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From the President's Desk:

Election... Candidate Forums... Voters' Guide... Town Hall Meeting

Hold your arm behind your head to touch the opposite shoulder and give yourselves a big pat on the back!

I wish it were my idea, but it was Ohio League Executive Director Jerilyn Barbee who said it pretty well. Thanks for all the help you have given the Ohio League and especially our Kent League of Women Voters in this election cycle. Whether it was a brochure handed out at a meeting or a call to a friend about the issues, we know you were there for us—every member did something!

We had a slim turnout at our first candidates' night when we hosted the judges, the state board of education and the auditor candidates, but the questions went more deeply to the core of the issues. The food, provided by the Thomas Anderson Corp. through Doria Daniels was nothing but the best and received lots of compliments. Thanks to their hard work and donation of the treats!

And word must have gotten out, because attendance tripled to more than 90 at the "debates" we held on a cold October Saturday morning between the candidates for the Ohio House and the three-way race for county commissioner. Thanks to all who got up to make breakfast treats. A special thanks to the *Record-Courier* for not only sending reporters to both events but also for featuring the debate front and center in a reminder on that Saturday morning. I'm sure that helped attendance.

Terrie Nielsen ran both events

with a professional presence, and helpers from across the League kept us moving along at both events. We also appreciate the interest shown in local politics by the Kent Political Union, a new, nonpartisan student group, too.

Special applause for all of those who worked on the Town Hall meeting to honor civic activists and begin some dialogue on how elections and politicians might change in future elections. This was the kickoff event for a two-year program of town hall meetings sponsored by the Joyce Foundation focusing on reigniting local engagement in civic debate. We honored Lois Enlow and Glenda Enders, the director and deputy director of the Portage Board of Elections, respectively; Helen Dix for Record Publishing's continuing promise to run the *Voters' Guide* for us free of charge; and Bill Schultz, a Kent city councilman who has led public debate in the city for decades. We appreciate their dedication and commitment to citizens in this county.

A special thanks to Nena Hankins, our trusty treasurer and jack-of-all-trades. Nena kept the ball rolling on the *Voters' Guide*, cracking the whip on Marilyn Byrne, Barb Hipsman, Vicki Kline and Jan Rusnack. Without her help, we couldn't have finished it. Thanks again to Heather Rainone at the *Record-Courier* for her patience. It's a tradition we all cherish when we see how many people carry it into the polls.

- Barb

Election Day 2006 Factoids

On Election Day alone, more than 750,000 people visited a League of Women Voters Education Fund Web site called VOTE411.org to find the facts on everything from absentee voting and ballot measures to ID requirements and provisional voting. Those who came to the site collectively viewed more than 3 million pages of election information that helped them to be prepared to vote. The national League's Web site, LWV.org, also saw a great deal of traffic, having almost 65,000 visitors on Election Day alone and more than 230,000 visitors in the week leading up to the November election.

The **VOTER** is published eight to 10 times a year by the League of Women Voters of Kent. The newsletter is available both in print and online at the League's Web site: <http://www.kent.oh.lwvnet.org/>.

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Call the co-presidents to volunteer to help with program meetings or committees or to get information about the League's activities and policies.

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Audrey Cielinski Kessler
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Jan Rusnack
Voter Registration

TOWN HALL

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just the first step. Our common goal is to help everyone get educated and get involved on the issues facing us today.”

The League committee that worked hard to get co-sponsors, organize refreshments and recruit facilitators included Nena Hankins, Kathy Hardy, Hipsman, Terry Nielsen and Stacy Yaniglos. Joining us, too, was Hillary Lovell, a founding member of the Kent Political Union, a new nonpartisan KSU group.

The Kent League also honored Helen Dix for the years of support the Dix family has shown for the League’s *Voters’ Guide*, published since 1956 for 50 years of telling voters what the issues are and offering information on thousands of candidates.

Also honored were Bill Schultz, a long-time civic activist in Kent, who has been on the Kent City Council since 1979. Schultz helped begin recycling in Kent, was behind the Solid Waste Management District for Portage County and has been the “soul” of city council on most things environmental.

Finally, the “Democracy Divas,” as they will be known from here on out—Lois Enlow and Glenda Enders, Portage County Board of Elections director and deputy director, respectively, were cited for their continuing dedication to efficient elections in Portage County. This year’s changes in election rules and the large number of state and local issues on the ballot taxed the dedicated staff of the office. The League continues its good relationship with the office, coordinating efforts to educate the public.

The imPACT campaign will see about a dozen town hall meetings across the state focusing on a variety of issues, including accountability and election law reform—the two topics the Kent League chose for its town hall meeting.

There were also many members from the Akron and Hudson Leagues in attendance at the event. Cosponsors included Record Publishing Co., United Methodist Church, Christ Episcopal Church, Unitarian Universalist Church, Kent Environmental Council, Ravenna Rotary Club, Kent Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club of Kent, Portage Kiwanis Club, Lions Club of Kent, Faith Lutheran Church, Portage County Bar Association, Portage County Trial Lawyers Association, Deerfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Kent Area Chamber of Commerce and the Ohio League of Women Voters.

Thanks to the facilitators and recorders, many of whom are long-time friends of the League. Each of them provided a unique perspective at the tabletop discussions and worked hard to keep the discussion going.

According to an article in the *Daily Kent Stater* by Adam Mil-sancic, tabletop suggestions for enhancing accountability included expanding Internet resources to offer new windows into government decision-making.

Other discussion points included moving Election Day to the weekend (or establishing it as a federal holiday), automatically registering 18-year-olds to vote, relaxing the restrictions that complicate voting by ex-felons and allowing new voters to register on Election Day, as is permitted in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

BRUNCH

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camera to study the lives and work of the migrants in their Hartville home. His artful photography movingly conveys their pride in work and family along with their struggles and joys.

Harwood has won four national Circle of Excellence awards from the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, was named the 2001 University Photographers Association of America’s Photographer of the Year, and won the 2005 James R. Gordon Ohio Understanding Award from the Ohio News Photographers Association. His work has appeared in national publications, including *Communication Arts Photo Annual* and *Graphis Photo Annual*. This year he received the Individual Artist grant for photography and the 2005 Artists and Communities grant from the Ohio Arts Council.

Growing Season was chosen as the “Canton city book” to be read by thousands of school children and residents and discussed in dozens of forums and book groups throughout Stark County.

The brunch menu includes scrambled eggs, French toast, home fries, fresh fruit, bacon, sausage, Danish and muffins. Coffee, tea and juice are available at 9:30 a.m. The brunch is served at 10 a.m. and is followed by the program at 11 a.m. Public officials Kathleen Chandler, Tim Ryan, Stephen Dyer, Chuck Keiper and Janet Esposito have been invited. Reservations are due by December 1. The cost is \$15 per person. To make your reservation, complete and mail the invitation form included in this *Voter*. For questions, call Jan Rusnack at 330/678-1261.

Election Ideas That Work

The national League of Women Voters has issued a report on innovative polling-place practices titled "Thinking Outside the Ballot Box: Innovations at the Polling Place." The report highlights some of the ways that elections officials used to make voting easier. Here are just a few:

- Early voting (no-excuses-needed absentee voting)
- Vote centers where anyone in a county can vote
- Electronic, rather than paper, poll books
- Introduction of new technology



CHECK IT OUT . . .

Be sure to check Kent City Manager Dave Ruller's blog at www.kent360.com

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**Coming
LWVK
Attractions . . .**

Late January

Program planning for the state and national Leagues of Women Voters. It's your chance to let your views be heard on a variety of issues and which ones you think the state and national Leagues should focus on in 2007.

February

Membership meeting featuring a quiet hour with a still-to-be-named public official.

March

A study of immigration. Make plans to share your input on this important issue.

April

Still in the planning stages. Stay tuned.