

LWVIC Wins Democracy Defender Recognition

by Susan Boser

The League of Women Voters of Indiana County (LWVIC) was recently recognized in Harrisburg for their work, winning the Democracy Defender Award. The Democracy Defender Award is a competitive, new award presented by the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania to a county

League in recognition of exceptional commitment to voter services in their community.

The Democracy Defender Award was presented to the LWVIC for their work in multiple ways. The LWVIC expanded voter registration opportunities for citizens living in rural communities through community festivals, (continued on page 2)

LWVIC Meets with State Senator Joe Pittman



On May 23, representatives of the League of Women Voters of Indiana County and Fair Districts met with State Senator Joe Pittman for a discussion of four issues of concern to many of his constituents: (1) equitable public school funding, (2) gun safety, (3) membership in the RGGI initiative, and (4) retaining books on the histories and cultures of various peoples in school and public libraries. Meeting with the senator were Susan Welsh, Susan Boser, Deanne Snavelly, Stanley Chepaitis, and Anne Simmons. Participants characterized the meeting as “an excellent conversation with a solid exchange of ideas. Senator Pittman was very generous with his time and listened thoughtfully to our comments.”

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public libraries, high schools and the university. In addition, they encouraged participation of diverse citizens in a number of informational initiatives including print media such as the Indiana Gazette, radio announcements and interviews with Renda Broadcasting WDAD, and digital media at IUP using screens in the HUB and on exercise equipment there.

The award was presented at the Pennsylvania League's biennial convention on June 17, 2023 in Harrisburg. On behalf of the LWVIC, Program Vice President Cindy Rogers received the award from Meg Pierce, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania League. Also present were LWVIC members Ellen Chinn, Vicki Stelma, Lizanne Porter and Susan Boser.



Cindy Rogers accepts the award from Meg Pierce of LWVPA.

Empowering Youth to Vote

Indiana County High Schools Win Civic Engagement Awards

by Anne Simmons

Each year the Governor of Pennsylvania recognizes the efforts of high school students to educate their fellow students about the voting process. In May 2023, two Indiana County high schools received the Governor's Civic Engagement Award at Gold Level, among 37 Gold Level high school winners statewide.

Indiana Area Senior High School and Purchase Line High School won these awards for registering 85 percent or more of their students eligible to vote. Student Ambassadors and their high schools received a plaque and certificates from the the Pennsylvania Secretary of State.

The League of Women Voters of Indiana County encouraged students in the Class of 2023 to increase their understanding of voting and elections by providing information about the GCEA program to school district superintendents and providing LWVIC voting information cards to senior high school students.

For information about the Governor's Civic Engagement Award program:

<https://www.vote.pa.gov/Resources/Pages/Governor's-Civic-Engagement-Award.aspx>

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Learn about Candidates:
Vote411.org
Primary Election
May 16, 2023
Municipal Election
November 7, 2023

**Register to Vote:**
vote.pa.gov
Voting is your superpower!

LWVIC Delegates Attend LWVPA Biennial Convention

by Cindy Rogers

Ellen Chinn, Vicki Stelma, Lizanne Porter, Suzan Boser and Cindy Rogers attended the 2023 Biennial Convention in Harrisburg as our five voting delegates. We arrived on Friday and attended a tour of the Capitol. If you have never been there, we highly recommend going on a tour of this absolutely beautiful building—very impressive!

Friday evening there were several sessions.

- Juneteenth and its significance for the LWV
- Caucus on special education funding by the LWV Greater Pittsburgh. We learned there is support from other leagues on various topics so we don't always have to "reinvent the wheel." Charter school funding was one of the topics; for more information see: https://lwvpgh.org/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=554754&module_id=498024.

Saturday began with breakout rooms and then the convention at 9 a.m.

Susan Boser led a breakout session on "Growing diverse membership with a DEI lens."

Another session highlighted climate change. Session leaders recommended the book *Draw-down* by Paul Hawken, which we will be buying. They noted we should be calling it Climate

Emergency rather than Climate Change. There is a climate interest group in the LWV and if you are interested they are recruiting participants.

Six rather than "Five Rs" were highlighted: Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot (compost) and Repair instead of buying new all the time.

The main convention on Saturday included a lot of organization business: adoption of rules, treasurers reports, budget, bylaws adoptions and election of officers and directors.

Sunday breakout rooms highlighted several topics.

The LWVPA board structure taskforce is looking into revamping board structure and how things are done. Other breakout sessions discussed PA Youth Vote, Fair Districts, and Navigating NON Partisanship during a hyper partisan time—a very interesting presentation.

At the conclusion of convention business, the audience was asked for guidance to the board in planning the next conference.

During the convention we were honored to accept the 2023 Democracy Defender Award in recognition of our outstanding services to voters.

It was a great opportunity to meet members from other Leagues, do some networking and learn about resources that we can utilize.



Lizanne Porter, Ellen Chinn, Susan Boser, Cindy Rogers, and Vicki Stelma were voting delegates representing the League of Women Voters of Indiana County at the Pennsylvania League's Biennial Convention in Harrisburg in June.

Environmental Books Donated to Library

by Cindy Rogers

The LWVIC Environmental Issues Committee has donated three books to Indiana Free Library to help educate people about climate change and plastics. Two of the books examine the problem of microplastics—the massive pollution it is causing and how it is affecting every aspect of our lives. *Life without Plastic* by Chantal Plamondon and Jay Sinha, and *A Poison Like No Other* by Matt Simon help us gain awareness of the problem and the importance of reducing our use of plastic.

The third book, *Coco's Fire* by Jeremy D. Wortzel and Lena K. Champlin, is for children. It educates children about our changing climate in a way that helps them understand and cope with it without becoming anxious.



Spring Membership Meeting and Salad Extravaganza

LWVIC members gathered on Saturday, May 20, at the U.U. Church in Indiana for the annual spring membership meeting and a potluck “salad extravaganza.”

The program began with the 2023 Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership Award presentations. In memory of League member and environmental activist Peggy Clark, the award is given annually to an individual and a group in the county who have demonstrated care of our environment. The awards committee selected the Blacklick Creek Watershed Association for the group award and Marie Olson of Indiana for

the individual award. (Read about these award winners and their projects on pages 6 and 7.) The LWVIC business meeting included a reorganization of local League committees, approval of proposed activities for the new fiscal year and election of officers and board members to a two-year term. Currently there is no one serving as president; those duties are being fulfilled by Program Vice President Cindy Rogers and Administrative Vice President Deanne Snaveley. Retiring President Anne Simmons was thanked for her service and given mementoes reflecting the serious and the fun sides of League work.



What on Earth Is Happening?

The Inflation Reduction Act and Climate Aid

by Ellen Chinn

If you've wondered about the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA), what it is, what's in it and how it can help you, here are resources and information to help you take advantage of this landmark act.

The IRA is the most significant climate legislation ever passed in the U.S. and offers funding, programs and incentives designed to speed up the transition to green energy and to the development of green technologies. It's \$369 billion directed at reducing carbon emissions to fight climate change while also lowering energy costs for consumers and small businesses. It will create good-paying jobs in America's growing clean energy economy and manufacturing sectors and help the consumer cover the costs of making the transition to greener living. Toward this goal, tax credits and rebates are being offered for:

- Rooftop solar
- Cost of home energy audits
- Home improvements to reduce energy leakage such as weatherstripping and caulking
- Home improvements and weatherization including upgraded windows, doors and insulation
- Energy efficient appliances including electric stoves, cooktops, ranges, ovens, and clothes dryers
- Energy efficient electric heating & cooling appliances like heat pumps, central air conditioners & water heaters
- Upgrade of a home's breaker box and electrical wiring
- Electric vehicle purchases, both new and used

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) gives this advice on how to best take advantage of "Congress's big climate moment" in *A Consumer Guide To the Inflation Reduction Act*:

<https://www.nrdc.org/stories/consumer-guide-inflation-reduction-act>

- Make preparations to make the most of your potential benefits, e.g. get a home energy audit.
- Educate yourself on when and how tax credits and rebates will roll out and what purchases apply.

- Put solar panels on your roof.
- Update or install other home renewable-energy options (e.g. wind, geothermal, hydro-electric, batteries).
- Invest in sustainable home improvements.
- Take advantage of rebates for energy efficient upgrades.
- Buy an electric vehicle.

Other provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act include:

- Creation of a 15% corporate minimum tax rate
- Prescription drug price reform
- IRS tax enforcement
- Affordable Care Act (ACA) subsidy extension
- Energy security and climate change investments

See these references for additional information:

Investing in America:

https://www.whitehouse.gov/cleanenergy/?utm_source=cleanenergy.gov

The Inflation Reduction Act: Here's What's In It:

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-sector/our-insights/the-inflation-reduction-act-heres-whats-in-it>

A Consumer Guide To the Inflation Reduction Act:

<https://www.nrdc.org/stories/consumer-guide-inflation-reduction-act>

Summary of Inflation Reduction Act Provisions Related to Renewable Energy:

<https://www.epa.gov/green-power-markets/summary-inflation-reduction-act-provisions-related-renewable-energy#:~:text=The%20Inflation%20Reduction%20Act%20of,of%20new%20clean%20electricity%20resources>

The Inflation Reduction Act is Now Law—Here's What It Means For You:

<https://www.forbes.com/advisor/personal-finance/inflation-reduction-act/>

Image: cms.gov



2023 Peggy Clark Environmental Leadership Awards

by Laurie LaFontaine

Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership awards were given at LWVIC's 2023 Spring Membership Meeting to the Blacklick Creek Watershed Association and to Marie Olson of the Indiana Community Garden.

Group Award

The Blacklick Creek Watershed Association (BCWA) was formed in 1993 as non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Since its inception, the primary focus of BCWA has been addressing the numerous sources of acid mine drainage (AMD) within the watershed.

The Association has completed 13 mine drainage and reclamation projects in the Blacklick Creek Watershed. The organization was instrumental in securing and managing a number of DEP Growing Greener and other grants which resulted in the construction of a series of successful passive AMD treatment systems. These efforts

culminated in the BCWA receiving the PA DEP Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence. These systems remain in existence today.

One of the most exciting developments is that the PA DEP is constructing an active treatment plant on the main stem of the Blacklick Creek near Wehrum along the Ghost Town Trail. The plant will treat the discharges from Vinton #6 Mine, Redmill Mine and the Wehrum mines. This will restore over 25 miles of the main stream of the Blacklick Creek, bringing back life and vitality to this area again after so many years.



Top: Blacklick Creek. Above: Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership Award committee members and 2023 recipients: Kay Snyder; Barbara Hauge, accepting on behalf of Marie Olson; Laurie LaFontaine; Janis Long, president of the Blacklick Creek Watershed Association; and Ellen Chinn. Snyder, LaFontaine, and Chinn are members of the Environmental Awards Committee.

2023 Peggy Clark Environmental Leadership Awards

Individual Award

More than 11 years ago, Marie Olson had a vision of a community garden for Indiana, PA. She believes in the power of gardens to heal communities. The Indiana Community Garden (ICG) has expanded over the years to add demonstrations of water harvesting with rain barrels, a covered pavilion with picnic tables, a schoolhouse, community garden beds for public and private use, murals and other art projects. In the last two years, Marie's vision was crucial in developing the ICG's pollinator meadow and the first food forest in our county.

Also in the last two years Marie was one of the leaders who revitalized the Chevy Chase Community Garden. Her vision for this garden included fruit trees and is now referred to as the Chevy Chase Food Forest. Marie and other volunteers harvest fresh produce for the Chevy Chase Community Center's food kitchen and pantry to provide meals free to anyone in the community.

Last year the garden under Marie's guidance celebrated its 10-year anniversary with children's plein air paintings of the garden, a story walk, garden tours, vendor booths, talks about the garden's history and a live concert. The community came out on that beautiful weekend to celebrate all that the garden has become—a community space in all of the best ways, thanks to Marie.



Left: Chevy Chase Food Forest. Top: Kay Snyder of LWVIC's Environmental Awards Committee gives the Peggy Clark Grassroots Environmental Leadership Individual Award to Marie Olson of Indiana, for her work with the Indiana Community Garden and the Chevy Chase Food Forest. Above: Indiana's Community Garden has expanded since its creation.

Learn—Think—Vote

Vote411.org Will Provide Information for County Voters

by Paul Huntington

Vote411.org is a League of Women Voters website that provides non-partisan information for voters about candidates in local, state, and national elections. The Voter Services Committee of the Indiana County League has been working hard to get all of the county races in November's general election represented on Vote411.org this fall.

Community-focused questionnaires are being sent to all candidates, inviting them to share their

positions on important issues. Each candidate's response will be displayed, unedited, on the website along with biographical information and links to the candidate's website and social media.

When all of this information has been placed on the Vote411 website in the weeks before the November election, voters can enter their street addresses there and get information about the candidates on their ballots.

More details about this effort will follow in the October issue of the LWVIC *Voter*.

Fair Districts PA and LWVIC Support Juneteenth

by Joyce Rizzo

Fair Districts PA had a table at the Juneteenth celebration in Mack Park. The non-partisan group gathered signatures on a petition asking for a change in state legislative rules so that bills with strong bipartisan and public support get a guaranteed vote in the PA General Assembly.



Sid Reger of Fair Districts PA invited Juneteenth celebrants to join the group's efforts to Fix Harrisburg.

LWVPA Voter Services Grant Awarded to LWVIC

by Donna Cashdollar

The League of Women Voters of Indiana County (LWVIC) was recently awarded a Voter Services Grant of \$1,048 to support its efforts to encourage more citizens to vote in the 2023 primary and general elections. The Local Democracy Defenders Grant is a program of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania (LWVPA) to support locally based voter services and civic engagement work.

Recognizing that off-year elections generally draw fewer voters to the polls, LWVIC has aimed to increase voter engagement countywide through a series of ads in *The Indiana Gazette* and *The Shoppers Guide*. The series reminds voters how decisions made by local officials on the ballots have a direct impact on our daily lives. The League's theme, "Your voice is loudest in local elections," underscores the need to have broad voter representation in elections of these officials.

The grant was written by Vicki Stelma with contributions from Donna Cashdollar, Joyce Rizzo, and Kay Smith. It supports the LWVIC voter engagement ad series through the November 2023 general election.

Rogers Receives Presidential Volunteer Service Award

by Ellen Chinn

In 2003, the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation founded the President's Volunteer Service Award to recognize the important role of volunteers in America's strength and national identity. This award honors individuals whose service positively impacts communities in every corner of the nation and inspires those around them to take action, too.

The PVSA has continued under each administration, honoring the volunteers who are using their time and talents to solve some of the toughest challenges facing our nation. Led by AmeriCorps and managed in partnership with Points of Light, this program allows Certifying Organizations to recognize their most exceptional volunteers.

<https://presidentalserviceawards.gov/about>

Cindy Rogers was selected as the 2023 recipient of the award by Friends of White's Woods. Representatives from many of the organizations for which Cindy volunteers celebrated at a luncheon honoring her at Benjamin's restaurant in downtown Indiana.

Cindy is the Board President and founder of Evergreen Conservancy, a Director of the Indiana County Conservation District, on the boards of the Indiana County Tourist Bureau and Friends of Yellow Creek State Park, a contributing member of Friends of Whites Woods, Plant Patrol, and Friends of the Indiana County



Sara King, President, Friends of White's Woods, presented the President's Volunteer Service Award to Cindy Rogers of Indiana at a luncheon honoring her exceptional service.

Parks, as well as a volunteer for Aging Services & The Chevy Chase Community Center. She assists with the organization of the Northern Appalachia Folk Festival and is an active member of the Environmental Issues Committee of the League of Women Voters, both at the local and state level, as well as Program Vice President of the local League.

Congratulations, Cindy, and thank you for your all you do!

Indiana Pride Festival Celebrates the Community's Diversity



by Anne Simmons

The Indiana Pride Festival, held in IRMC Park, was a joyous day with many Indiana County families and friends celebrating together. The event featured live music and performance, food, and vendors of art and crafts. LWVIC was there offering information and Pennsylvania Voter Registration Applications, which eight individuals completed. Volunteers at the League table included Lillian Clemons, Patti Holmes, Connie Jellison, Anne Kondo, Joan Rittenberger, Anne Simmons, Tom Simmons and Sara Steelman. League members Lizanne Porter, Don Lancaster and Sherene Hess volunteered their time with other community groups there.

LWVIC members Lillian Clemons, Lizanne Porter, and Tom Simmons

LWVIC Spring Garage Sale



Joyce Rizzo, Sandra Whitson, and Ellen Chinn preparing for the garage sale—another fundraising success for LWVIC.

Calendar

AUGUST

LWVPA Listening Session for LWVIC

Thursday, August 17

4:00 p.m. Eastern Time via Zoom

To request the Zoom invitation, please send an email to: lwvindianacounty@gmail.com

SEPTEMBER

Northern Appalachia Folk Festival

Saturday, September 9

Voter Registration Event, Philadelphia Street

National Voter Registration Day

Tuesday, September 19

LWVIC Annual Board Retreat

Sunday, September 24, 5:00 p.m.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF INDIANA COUNTY • BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cindy Rogers, Program Vice President
Deanne Snavelly, Administrative Vice President
Ellen Chinn, Treasurer • Susan Welsh, Secretary
Susan Boser • Donna Cashdollar
Lizanne Porter • Joyce Rizzo • Aida Shotts
Kay Smith • Deanne Snavelly • Kay Snyder

Editor, *Voter*: Donna Cashdollar

MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS

The LWVIC hosts board meetings on the third Monday of each month at 7:00 p.m. using the Zoom platform. LWVIC members are welcome to participate. To request the Zoom invitation and meeting agenda, please send an email to: lwvindianacounty@gmail.com.

LWVIC at Nature Palooza

by Susan Welsh

To help children learn about voting, LWVIC held an election for “Your Favorite Woodland Bird” at Family Nature Palooza on June 3. An annual event sponsored by the Children’s Advisory Committee of Indiana County, Nature Palooza took place at Blue Spruce Park. The red tail hawk won the election for favorite bird with 30 votes, followed by the wild turkey at 27 votes and the pileated woodpecker at 16 votes. The swan got one write-in vote.

LWVIC also involved children in a Stormwater Run-Off experiment. Opportunity for some water play engaged kids in designing a neighborhood without stormwater collectors and another neighborhood with many kinds of collectors of storm run-off. Children and their families could see how rooftop gardens, rain barrels, forests, rain gardens, and green spaces help protect a neighborhood from flooding in heavy rainfall.

LWVIC volunteers at the festival were Lillian Clemons, Joyce Rizzo, Sara Steelman, and Sue Welsh. Nature Palooza is one of several events each year at which LWVIC introduces children to voting and provides educational fun.

