



The Voter

The League of Women Voters
of the Space Coast
www.lwv-spacecoast.org



Volume 34: No. 2

October, 2013

Mission: The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Timely Topics

Foster Care – Speaker Valerie Holmes



Valerie Holmes has worked in the social services field and in a variety of community based settings since 1994, including those that serve victims of domestic violence, as well as the seriously mentally ill and terminally ill. For the past 10 years she has devoted her services in the field of child welfare. She received an M.S. degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Central Florida in 2001 and her M.S. degree in Counseling and Psychology from Troy University in 2005. Valerie has served as the director of operations for Child and Family Services at Brevard Family Partnership, since the agency’s inception in August, 2004. She has trained and engaged stakeholders through the start-up and transition to the new system of care, which moved Brevard County’s child welfare program from a state-run to a localized, community based form of management. In September 2009, Valerie began her role as the executive director of Brevard C.A.R.E.S (**Coordination, Advocacy, Resources, Education and Support**) Valerie also works in concert with the C.A.R.E.S. national replication team and serves as the principal point-of-contact and project lead on any research and data analysis of Brevard C.A.R.E.S.

When: Wednesday, October 16, 2013

Where: Tuscany Grill
7640 N. Wickham Road
Melbourne, Florida 32940

Time: 11:30 A.M.

Cost: \$20.00

Menu:

- **Chicken or Salmon Acropolis** - Your choice sautéed with artichoke, red peppers, sun dried tomatoes, and calamata olives, in lemon and white wine butter, served over pasta.
- **Rigatoni Ala Grill** - Italian sausage sautéed with roasted red and green peppers, onions, tomatoes, and Italian herbs, tossed with rigatoni.
- **Eggplant Rollatini** - Thin sliced battered eggplant stuffed with a garlic ricotta blend, baked and topped with mozzarella, and served over spaghetti and marinara.

All entrees served with house salad, italian bread with pesto dipping oil and one non-alcoholic drink.

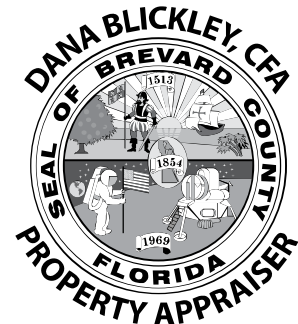
Reservations: to Anita Smith 321-255-3002 by Saturday, Oct. 12th.

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Underwriter of the month





President's Corner

Marilynn Collins & Priscilla Griffith

Dear League Members,

How did Space Coast League come to be and why? In the 1950's, Brevard's economy was based on ranching, citrus, fishing and tourism. There were 150 teachers in the county and three high schools--Titusville, Cocoa, and Melbourne. With the establishment of the Space Center, came flocks of outsiders. Among the new arrivals were some public-spirited, intelligent women who looked around and saw that this rapidly expanding area needed improving. Of course, they formed a League, which they named the Cape Kennedy League (1960's). This League played a large role in creating the Child Care Association of Brevard, which for many years made a significant difference in the county. Based on their study of county governments in the state and a study of Brevard's government, they became interested in the idea that Brevard should have a charter government.

Some time after this League was formed, the South Brevard League was created by more of the same type of women. Things went along quite well for a time. Each League conducted its own business, sent members to League of Women Voters of Florida meetings each year. However, they both began to realize that each League needed more "woman power". Finally, the time came when neither League could fill all the officer and board positions. Combining the two Leagues was the solution. In 1980, the two Leagues became The League of Women Voters of the Space Coast.

The Space Coast League has a long list of accomplishments (See p. 3 of your membership book.). Each one of them has a story. A few of them will be highlighted in this article. Many of them have to do with the "growing pains" of Brevard and Florida.

The Kennedy League's interest in a charter continued on with the Space Coast League. The study was completed and ultimately in a few years Brevard did become a charter county by vote of the citizens. A charter county has a status like a city in relation to the state government.

Space Coast has been and is very active in environmental issues. Among others, we formed a coalition with several of the nearby county Leagues which were in the St. Johns River Water Management District. These Leagues sent observers to the board meetings in Palatka for a number of years. Together with the Audubon Society and the Native Plant Society, we founded the Partnership for a Sustainable Future, Inc., which is a coalition of environmental groups and individuals. It is still active.

Examination of the list on page 3 of your membership book will show that we have formed

coalitions with a variety of groups and served on a number of advisory committees and councils. We were one of the main institutors of the Environmentally Endangered Lands Program, considered one of best such programs in the U.S. League's involvement in this action was based on a committee study of the unique lands in our county. Our members served on county committees which helped develop the required Long Range Comprehensive Plan (one of the first in the state).

More recently, we had speakers promoting the Fair Districts Amendments to the Florida Constitution.

Many of our activities involve social issues: child welfare, education, health, international relations. Please read that list on page 3 and think of some current issues that we might be interested to study and take action on!

Priscilla Griffith, Co-President



Board Bytes

- 103 members
- Maria Mongollon-Seemer has been appointed to our Board of Directors and has also agreed to be Chair of the Children's Committee taking over for Marguerite Orban who is moving out of state.
- Health Committee, Natural Resources, and Children's Committees look forward to additional members joining the group or groups of their choice.
- Children's Committee encourages members or friends when traveling to save toiletries from hotels that could be given to homeless students in Brevard. These items and additional purchased items will be collected at the League's Holiday Luncheon in December.
- Maureen Rupe discussed the latest on Fertilizer Ordinances in cities of Brevard County.
- Marcia Booth spoke to us on the Recycling Program in the Schools.
- November Timely Topics is very early in the month. It will be Monday, November 4th. Details are in the International Relations Article on Page 5.
- A Meet and Greet event is being planned for November. This was very successful last year for our members and hopefully it will attract new members. It will be at the Melbourne Village Hall this year. Last year it was also in Melbourne Village but at the Hester Wagner Community House.



Children's Committee

Maria Mogollon-Seemer – Chair

League of Women Voters of the Space Coast has joined with other Florida Leagues to study School Choice in Florida. The 2013 League State Convention in Tallahassee in April approved this study. Originally school choices of the McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program, Florida Tax Credit Scholarships and Virtual Schools were included in the study, but at this time just Charter Schools are being studied.

The Florida State League already has Charter School issues under **the LWVF State Program 2013-2015.**

Education in Florida: Support for a free public school system for Florida with high standards for student achievement and with equality of educational opportunity for all that is financed adequately by the state through an equitable funding formula.

Issues for Action:

- Promote adequate funding of public education with no use of public funding for the expansion of funding of private education through a voucher program.
- Promote the extension of public school testing of student achievement to private schools, charter schools, virtual schools and any institutions that receive state funding directly or indirectly.
- Support the increased oversight of the development and implementation of charter school contracts with regard to administrative fees, facilities, teacher salaries and benefits and instructional innovation.

The new state study has additional questions.

This is not the first time that League of Women Voters of the Space Coast has done research on Charter Schools in Brevard County. An article written in 2011 by Chair, Marilza Novaes-Card can be found on our website www.lwv-spacecoast.org under the Newsletter Tab. It is found on Page 3 of the April 2011 Voter. A later article on charter schools was written by Doreen Archer. You can find that article on Page 4 of the April, 2012 Voter. Both articles are found under the Newsletter Tab on the website.

Charter schools became law in 1996 under Florida Statue 1002.33.

The following information is found on the Florida Department of Education website.

http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/information/charter_schools/faqs.asp

"General Information

1. What are charter schools?

Charter schools are public schools that operate under a performance contract, or a "charter" which frees them from many regulations created for traditional public schools while holding them accountable for academic and financial results. The charter contract between the charter school governing board and the sponsor details the school's mission, program, goals, students served, methods of assessment and ways to measure success. The length of time for which charters are granted varies but most are granted for five years.

The Florida Legislature, in authorizing the creation of public charter schools, established the following guiding principles: high standards of student achievement while increasing parental choice; the alignment of responsibility with accountability; and ensuring parents receive information on reading levels and learning gains of their children. Charter schools are intended to improve student learning; increase learning opportunities with special emphasis on low performing students and reading; and measure learning outcomes. Charter schools may create innovative measurement tools; provide competition to stimulate improvement in traditional schools; expand capacity of the public school system; and mitigate the educational impact created by the development of new residential units.

2. Who is eligible to attend charter schools?

Charter schools are open to all students residing within the district; however, charter schools are allowed to target students within specific age groups or grade levels, students considered at-risk of dropping out or failing, students wishing to enroll in a charter school-in-the-workplace or charter school-in-a-municipality, students residing within a reasonable distance of the school, students who meet reasonable academic, artistic or other eligibility standards established by the charter school, or students articulating from one charter school to another. Additionally, a charter school may give enrollment preference to the following student populations:

- Siblings of current charter school students
- Children of a charter school governing board member or employee
- Children of employees of the business partner of a charter school-in-the-workplace or resident of the municipality in which such a charter is located
- Children of residents of a municipality that operates a charter school-in-a-municipality

(continued on Page 5)



Natural Resources

Susan Little – Chair

Report from Maureen Rupe–Natural Resources Consultant.

Water & Land Conservation Petitions

The Florida League of Women Voters and the League of Women Voters of the Space Coast, are enthusiastically collecting petitions for the Water and Land Conservation Petition to go on the ballot in 2014. Unfortunately, at times it becomes essential that the people must take issues into their own hands, when a government is falling short of what the people think is right. This time it is conservation, and there are some facts below that are the impetus for this petition.

From 1990 through 2008, Florida had the largest conservation land program in the nation. During this time it received \$300 million per year, and purchased 2.5 million acres for Florida's state forests and other wildlife management areas. The state also gave grants to the counties and cities for trails, playgrounds, parks, and working seafood waterfronts. After 2008 with \$300 million, the funds were cut significantly: FY2009-10 was \$0, FY2010-11 was \$15 million, FY 2011-12 was \$0, FY2012-13 was \$8.7 million, and 2013-14 (this year) was \$20 million, plus up to \$50 million if they sell lower priority conservation land to buy high priority conservation land.

Every year the program has been a very high priority to environmental groups, while our legislators are convinced the state owns too much land. Our state representatives don't seem to understand the program not only protects our wildlife habitat, but also improves our water quality and helps our economy by attracting visitors and new residents.

At the same time that the state cabinet is determining we no longer need some of our land for conservation (a requirement of the Florida Constitution), while we are collecting signatures for an amendment to provide an average of \$796.3 million for conservation lands for the first 10 years and \$19 billion over the 20 years stated in the amendment.

There are arguments that there is too much land off the tax rolls and those that believe that the state owns too much land were doing their best to prevent conservation groups from accomplishing any more purchases. Just this past legislative session, Florida State Senator Alan Hays, R-Umatilla tried to pass Senate Bill 584, which required the sale of land before state agencies or local governments could buy more and Senator Altman tried to pass Senate Bill 466, which would allow state lands to be given away in exchange for

conservation agreements on private lands. Fortunately both bills died in committee.

It is extremely important we all participate in this petition drive. For the people to be able to put issues on the ballot is a right that must be used. The Florida legislature does not believe we should have that right. In 2011, the legislature lowered the time to gather signatures from 4 years down to 2 years, and Governor Scott approved it in May 2011 to try to discourage citizens from petitioning changes in the law. For the 2014 general election, all signature verifications must be recorded no later than February 1, 2014, so we only have the next three months to collect signatures. We must show the state's elected officials that the people still have a very loud voice when it is essential for its citizens' quality of life.



Finance

Doreen Archer – Chair

Thank you

- to Bob and Maria Seemer for their generous donation
- to Tony Dutton for procuring an underwriter for the November VOTER.
- Please note that underwriters for our VOTER are needed. If anyone knows of a business that might sponsor an edition, please let me know.



Telephone Committee

Martha Bradshaw – Chair

Returning Telephone Committee Members are Jan Bancroft, Ann Downing, Pat Huggins, Fern Patton and Carol Riley. Connie Hogerty has joined us, but at least one additional caller is needed. If you are willing to make 8 brief calls monthly, often speaking to an answering machine, please contact Committee Chair, Martha Bradshaw at the phone number or e-mail addresses given in the Membership Book.

Thank you, all who have or are continuing to serve on this committee.



International Relations

Mary Nicolay – Chair

The International Relations group studies global issues in a non threatening, non partisan atmosphere. We meet once a month September thru January. February thru May, the group meets two times a month with materials provided by the Foreign Policy Association titled GREAT DECISIONS used as study guides.

The GREAT DECISIONS BOOKLETS, \$ 21.00, will be prepaid to avoid problems for the coming year. Connie Hogerty has graciously agreed to accept these monies and will be ordering the materials for 2014.

Great Decision Topics for 2014 are:

- Defense Technology
- Israel
- Turkey
- Islamic Awakening
- Energy Independence
- Food and Climate
- China’s Foreign Policy
- U.S. Trade Policy

Perhaps you will volunteer for one of these topics?

We may also add a program as our wonderful speaker on Nuclear Non Proliferation, Cherie Roberts, has offered to speak on Syria and the Middle East. She will get top billing on dates and I will let you know more as the new year approaches.

The following schedule of topics for the remaining calendar year:

October 8th, 2013, HUMAN SLAVERY, SELLING GIRLS.

November 4, 2013, CONFLICT RESOLUTION, guest speaker, Jane Wilson, USAID worker, lawyer, in Bosnia/Herzegovina (note that we will be meeting on a Monday rather than Tuesday and it is the first Monday of the month.)

December 10th, 2013, the group will tour the RUTH FUNK MUSEUM on the Florida Tech campus.

The **November** meeting as mentioned above will be held on **Monday, November 4th from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Satellite Beach Library.** This is the **Timely Topics** event for November.

Jane Wilson is an attorney who has worked overseas for much of her career. Since November 2002, she has worked and lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), managing electricity, gas, and energy efficiency technical assistance projects pursuant to subcontracts for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Ms. Wilson has a Juris Doctor and a Master’s degree in International Studies. More details on Ms. Wilson’s career will be in the November Voter. Her topic will be **Conflict Resolution**



(children’s article continued from Page 3)

- Students who have successfully completed a voluntary prekindergarten program provided by the charter school during the previous year
 - Children of an active-duty member of any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces.
3. **How are charter schools created, organized, and operated?**

Charter schools are created when an individual, a group of parents or teachers, a business, a municipality, or a legal entity submits an application to the school district; the school district approves the application; the applicants form a governing board that negotiates a contract with the district school board; and the applicants and district school board agree upon a charter or contract. The district school board then becomes the sponsor of the charter school. The negotiated contract outlines expectations of both parties regarding the school's academic and financial performance.

A charter school must be organized as, or be operated by, a nonprofit organization. The charter school may serve at-risk students, or offer a specialized curriculum or core academic program, provide early intervention programs, or serve exceptional education students.”

The Florida Department of Education website stated that the 2012-2013 school year had 570 schools with an enrollment of over 200,000 students. Brevard County has 10 charter schools Three of them are new this school year. Charter schools are an alternative to public schools. However they are funded by taxes. Educational resources are being redirected from traditional public schools to charter schools.

Consequently questions arise.

1. Do they abide by the same standards and rules of public schools?
2. What population of students attend charter schools?
3. What are the innovations in charter schools?
4. How do they compare with public schools in teaching staff?
5. What could be done to improve abuses that exist in some charter schools that lead to headlines in the press?

Oversight is very important. Lucia Watson

The League of Women Voters of the Space Coast will promote in all aspects of the League’s activities, a philosophy of inclusion that reflects the diverse composition and issues of the community.



Medicaid Fact Sheet

(Updated on June 10, 2013)

<http://thefloridavoter.org/files/download/697>

Why was Medicaid created? Medicaid was created in 1965 to provide healthcare to those who had no other means of affording health insurance. It provides lifesaving care to 3,420,845 Florida residents.

What did the U.S. Supreme Court decide about Medicaid when it ruled on the ACA in 2010? The Court said the ACA could not be used to force states to expand Medicaid. The ACA expands health insurance primarily through 3 provisions: (1) the expansion of Medicaid to cover the poorest segment of the population (annual incomes below 138 percent of the FPL); (2) health insurance subsidies on the new marketplace for low- and medium-income people (annual incomes of 100-400 percent of poverty who lack access to employer coverage or Medicaid); (3) a mandate for the uninsured to buy insurance. The Act does not allow people with incomes below 100 percent of poverty to receive subsidies on the marketplace.

Who would be eligible for Medicaid if it were expanded? The ACA creates a national Medicaid minimum eligibility level of 138 percent of the federal poverty level for nearly all Americans under age 65. It's estimated that 1,300,000 adults will enroll in the program in Florida by 2022 including those adults eligible as a result of the Medicaid expansion.

What is the status of Medicaid expansion in Florida? The Florida legislature dithered on whether it should find a way to accept \$51 billion in federal funding to expand medical care to more than one million Floridians and create an estimated 120,000 jobs. The legislature adjourned without reaching a decision.

What legislation does the LWVF support? Senator Joe Negron's plan that uses federal dollars that would have been used for expansion to help subsidize the premium costs of insurance plans. It allows participants to purchase private insurance plans. The program would be administered through the Florida's Healthy Kids program – the state program that helps kids ages 5-18 obtain coverage – it would be called Florida Healthy Families.

What are the benefits to Medicaid expansions? It would mean a large reduction in the uninsured; a large influx of federal dollars; thousands of new jobs; and new coverage to reduce the need for state payments for uncompensated state care. Reduction in the uninsured would be a relief for hospitals which must treat anyone who comes into the ER regardless of ability to pay. Benefits would be extended to workers in Florida's tourism, hospitality and agricultural industries that employ large number of low-paid workers and account for a quarter of Florida's \$750 billion annual economic output.

Who will be eligible under expansion? Most adults under age 65 with incomes up to 138 percent of the FPL will be eligible (\$32,499 for a family of four and \$15,400 for a single person).

What happens to the funds if Florida does not expand Medicaid? We may lose the money paid by Florida taxpayers and the money will go to states moving forward with expansion. Those in the poorest segment of the population may lack access to affordable health insurance.

What are the reasons state legislators give for not expanding Medicaid? (1) It is too expensive – they claim it would cost the state \$26 billion over the next 10 years. That figure doesn't take into account the full amount that the federal government will reimburse states for expanding Medicaid. A more accurate analysis found that about one million uninsured people would gain coverage at a 10-year cost to the state of around \$1 billion. Federal contributions for new eligibles would be 100 percent between 2014 and 2016 and would taper after that to 90 percent and stay there. States will pay 5 percent in 2017, 7 percent in 2018, 8 percent in 2019 and 10 percent in subsequent years with the federal government paying the balance. State spending increases in 2019 as coverage is phased in to full implementation levels and federal matching rates for new eligibles fall to 90 percent; (2) Some want a partial expansion of Medicaid, i.e., people with incomes below 100 percent of poverty because they would be eligible for federal subsidies on the marketplace. The ACA does not support partial expansion using federal funds; and (3) the federal government might not provide the promised funding. With this thinking, there would be no laws whatsoever. Furthermore, Florida balances its budget with billions in federal money, taking dollars to build roads; provide health care for elderly nursing-home residents; offer school lunches for poor children, etc.

What will happen if Florida does not expand Medicaid? We will spend much more and get much less and leave millions of residents uninsured. The uninsured above poverty could receive help, but those below poverty could not. In Florida, 1.0 million newly eligible uninsured adults have incomes below the poverty level and would not be able to qualify for federally subsidized exchange coverage; they would not receive any additional help obtaining insurance coverage under the ACA if Florida does not expand its Medicaid program.

**Condolences to
League Member, Molly Tasker
in the loss of her husband,
Dick Curtis**

Signature Gatherers for Florida Water and Land Conservation Amendment



Barbara Dutton



Jo Shim and granddaughter Isabelle Shim

Good-bye to Marguerite Orban



Marguerite Orban & Connie Hogerty



Tony Dutton, Barbara Dutton & Brigitte Sinton



Maria Mogollon-Seemer & Doreen Archer



Marilza Novaes-Card



Marilynn Collins & Lucia Watson

~October Calendar - Members welcome at all meetings~

Wednesday, October 2 - Board Meeting at Suntree Library at 10:15 A.M.

Tuesday, October 8 - International Relations Meeting at Satellite Beach Library 1 P.M. to 3 P.M.

Discussion on Human Slavery, Selling Girls

Wednesday, October 16th, Timely Topic - Foster Care at Tuscany Grill (see 1st page for Details)

Sunday, October 20th - Children's Committee at Home of Maria Mogollon-Seemer in Rockledge (Tentative Date to be confirmed) 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Monday, October 21st - Health Committee at Suntree Library - 6 P.M.

Voter: Monthly publication (except June, July, August)

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