

A League of Our Own!

HISTORY OF THE  
CALVERT  
COUNTY, MD.  
LEAGUE OF  
WOMEN VOTERS

1967-2015



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## THE STORY OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CALVERT COUNTY, MARYLAND

### "A LEAGUE OF OUR OWN!"

At the 1966 fall meeting of the Scientists' Cliffs Book Club, several members noted the lack of available information concerning proposed amendments to the State Constitution on the ballot in November. "This is where a League of Women Voters would come in handy," said Grace Parr, a former member of a Virginia League. Pat McClain, who also had five years experience in a Virginia League, just before moving to the Cliffs, chimed in with, "Well, why don't we organize a League of our own?"

And they did, with the help of Dorothy Plummer, Eleanor Peter, Jane Coffin and Myrtle Patten. A meeting was held with state board members who explained a minimum membership of 35 with annual dues of \$5 would be necessary to set up a Provisional League. Several discussion groups were held that winter, and on April 19, 1967, the first full membership meeting of the League was held in Christ Church Parish Hall, Port Republic. Officers were Pat McClain, president; Dorothy Plummer and Myrtle Ray, vice-presidents; Lillian Roy, secretary, and Gertrude Dalrymple, treasurer. Board members were Elsie Wakeman, Betty Porter, Kitty Buys, Baker Hinchliffe, Linda Hugglestone, Bobbie Lehman, Barbara Hinshaw, Grace Parr and Jane Coffin.

By June the membership was 59! Myrtle Ray headed the first publication of Know Your County (which sold for 50 cents) and Ruth Reid, Eva Wilcox, Myrtle Easter and Mrs. Wilfred Bullard contributed assignments. The first Voters' Guide was completed and mimeographed by Baker Hinchliffe, and in June, we distributed one thousand copies throughout the county.

In 1968, the membership climbed to 70, then 73 members. The Annual Meeting in April elected Myrtle Patten, vice president, and added board members Ruth Dunlop, Jo Bowlby, Cynthia O'Connor, Veda Taylor. New members in the fall included Elizabeth and Regina Brown, Jane Estabrook, and Ruth Weincek.

In March 1969, our League was recognized by the League of Women Voters of the United States, and we became a full-fledged League. On April 26 at the Second Annual Meeting, new officers were elected: Dorothy Plummer, president, Barbara Hinshaw, vice president; Jane Estabrook, secretary, plus Pat McClain and Gertrude Skidmore, board members. The membership voted to adopt a Study of Calvert County government, including the proposed charter form of government.

## THE SEVENTIES - YEARS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

### GROWTH

The League grew in its first 10 years to 70, 80, 90 members. The county population rose from 15,800 in 1960 to 20,700 in 1970, and to 28,000 by 1978. (In 1999, there were nearly 75,000 residents, and our League membership was 123).

### GOVERNMENT ISSUES

The League studied fiscal policy in 1971, asked the county commissioners to appoint a charter writing committee in 1975 (the charter drafted in 1969 had never come to a vote), and we studied family court in 1979. There were only three county commissioners in the 70's.

### SOCIAL ISSUES

The League studied and reached consensus on many social topics such as housing, mental health, alternatives to welfare, prison reform, and health needs. A strong case was made for a local housing authority in the early 70's, which bore fruit within a few years.

### NATURAL RESOURCES

The environment was a frequent topic of study: air quality and land use in 1971, and 1973, bay water, solid waste disposal, and zoning. In 1973, a 35-minute video was produced about growth and land; "The Challenge of Change" and was shown widely in the county (Does anyone have a copy?).

### EDUCATION

State school construction and equitable school funding dominated our work in 1972. Members of our local League visited Huntingtown Elementary School to see open classrooms in 1973, with excellent press coverage. The elected school board question was examined in 1975, with no consensus reached. In 1973, Mary Loew and committee produced a booklet on Calvert County school system, updated in 1978.

### ELECTIONS

LWVUS proclaimed 1970 the Year of the Voter and focused on voter registration and petitioning for DC voting rights. Each election featured candidate forums or candidate "fairs" and voter guides. In 1974, members gathered 800 names on a petition to Congress to pass a comprehensive campaign finance bill. An issue at the candidates' forum in 1974 was the "dualization" (divided highway) of Rt. 2/4 south of Prince Frederick.

### LEAGUE ACTIVITIES

Barbara Hinshaw was elected president 1971-73, Pat McClain in 1973, Whitall Clevenger in 1974, Pat Bash 1975-77, Ruth Wiencek 1977-79, and Lottie Goettel 1979-81. We named our newsletter the Calvert County Voter until 1969 when we

changed it to the Bulletin, published on the new Gestetner mimeograph machine. The League held meetings at Christ Episcopal Church, Port Republic, and later at the Library and Trinity United Methodist Church, Prince Frederick.

Know Your County was first published in 1968, and at the end of the 70's, we prepared the 1980 edition. Calendars were sold as a fundraiser for several years beginning in 1972. An excellent column in the newspaper called Facts and Issues kept League activities before the public (The newspaper cost 5 cents!). A yearly United Nations Day observance featured poster contests and songs and dances. The first Government Day was held in 1979 with tours of the courthouse, speeches, and music - the musicians sat in the jury box.

### THE EIGHTIES - GOING STRONG!

In 1980, Calvert County population was 34,638 and within the decade went to 51,372! In 1980, League membership was 90 and 101 in 1989; there was a peak of 116 members in 1982. Dues were \$15 in 1980, \$25 in 1988, and \$30 in 1989.

Presidents were: Lottie Goettel 1979-81, Eleanor Prince 1981-83, Margaret Moran 1983-85, June King 1985-87, Kitch Eisenman 1987-89. June was quoted in the newspaper as saying the theme of her term would be "Honor the past, work in the present, prepare for the future" – good advice!

Continuing activities from the 1970's included Government Day at the Court House, voter guides and candidate forums every 2 years. Housing continued to be studied at local and state levels. In 1986, the study of growth in Calvert County featured a meeting about water and waste management. Our League was still studying elected vs. appointed school board. Evening unit meetings were held for several years but did not maintain attendance and were dropped; they were also tried in the early 1990's.

February 10-16, 1980 was proclaimed League of Women Voters Week by the county commissioners because of the "important contributions women make to the political process" and because it was the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the League. Delegate Tom Rymer often praised the League's work in Hats Off items in his newspaper column "Rymer Reason."

The League registered voters and gave out election information at county fairs until space fees became too expensive. In 1980, Randi Vogt resigned as vice-president to take a job in the county planning office, a direct use of her League expertise. In 1982, we began to put ads in the Bulletin to offset costs. In 1983, LWV helped restore the Old Polling Place in St. Leonard.

Anne Whisman edited the informative 1980 and 1988 Know Your County booklets. Kitch Eisenman chaired the Transportation Study in 1986, advocating a county official be in charge of transportation (only took ten years). The Comprehensive

Plan of 1983 was studied and later the League pushed the County to follow-up on recommendations.

In 1980, Jim Warnock chaired the Budget Process Committee producing a 73 page report ending with recommendations for more open process for citizen input, modification of the code of public laws, and budgets with narrative explanations and justifications. Records show the commissioners showed little interest in March 1981, but by 1987 the new process was in effect incorporating LWV suggestions, especially opening up budget meetings to the public.

Local issues regarding Health and Mental Health, chaired by Marie Andrews, reached consensus; the Mental Health Association and Hospice formed as a result. During the 1980's, members of our League were honored at Annual Women's Recognition Day by the Commission for Women, including Glossie Leake, Dorothy Plummer, Marie Andrews, Jessie Jo Bowen, Elizabeth Brown, Elaine Cochran (Dunkle), Ada Golub, Anne Mychalus, Ruth Showalter, Regina Brown, June King, Margaret Phipps, Eleanor Prince, Margaret Moran, Gracie Rymer, Juanita Nelson, Pat Pease, Doretta Popka, and others!

#### THE NINETIES - BUSY, BUSY YEARS

Our League saw increased visibility. We tackled issues such as transportation, water quality, housing, solid waste, education and children, and revision of the 1983 Comprehensive Plan. We participated in many Maryland and U.S. studies and held consensus meetings.

Our membership grew to 123 members and county population grew from 51,000 in 1991 to over 75,000 before the end of the decade. As of Election Day, November 3, 1998, there were 16,858 Democrats, 15,296 Republicans and 4,821 declines and others, for a total of 36,975 registered voters. The turnout on November 3rd was 62% for our County. The Motor Voter Bill, passed in 1990, supported by the League, has meant many new voters registered across the country. Candidate forums and Voters' Guides, for which the League is best known, were again presented at every election.

Our study on children began in 1995, and in 1996 our publication "Children at Risk: A Wake-Up Call for Calvert County" was instrumental in highlighting problems and successes in the County. The commissioners proclaimed 1997 "Year of the Family", and the Crusade for Children was incorporated in 1998 to address the concerns of children and families.

Other publications during this period included "Know Your County" 1998 edition, a "Transportation Report" in 1993, "Year Round Schooling" in 1994, and "Who's in Charge" pamphlets after each election. An "Education Fact Book" was published in 1998. A study of Tri-County Council was accomplished.

Our interest in public government led to public meetings and programs on the Comprehensive Plan, Making Democracy Work, Financing Education and Electric Deregulation. Many of these meetings have been shown on cable television.

We were fortunate to receive grant money from the former United States Information Agency and later from the State Department through LWV-US to host two women, Moosho and Josephine, from Zambia in 1998, three in 2001 and three in 2002 who came to learn grassroots participation in democracy. Then we sent two League members, Jenny Plummer-Welker and Deborah Harris to Zambia to help Moosho and Josephine continue training Zambian citizens. The exchange continued for four years with Tammy Vitale and Glinda Anderson, Anne Mychalus and Jane Hardy, and Pamela Lucas and Cheryl Johnson traveling in pairs to Zambia, and six more Zambian women coming here. It was an enriching experience for all who participated, including other Leagues.

Presidents in the busy Nineties were: Elaine Cochran Dunkle 1989-91, Gracie Rymer 1991-93, Mary Kidd 1993-95, Barbara Fetterhoff 1995-97, and Marie Andrews 1997-99. Marlyn Kefauver was elected in 1999 but had to resign for personal reasons in October 2000: Vice President Candace Sullivan filled out her term through May 2001.

## A NEW CENTURY - 2000 – 2015

### GROWTH

Our League membership reached a high of 128 members in 2004, which declined slowly (mainly due to the recession) to 119 in 2006, and 83 in 2010. Membership remained at this level until June 2014 when we counted 95 members and 85 in 2015. Calvert County population grew to 88,977 as of January 2011. In June 2011, the Board of Elections recorded 54,807 registered voters, including 22,408 Democrats and 21,894 Republicans.

In 2003, Annette Funn and Fran Poling prepared a New Member Handbook. When we ran out of copies, Vivian Horner and Roberta Safer brought out a new edition in 2015.

### SOCIAL ISSUES

Over these years we were active in Housing for all Calvert, The Family Network, a Leisure Expo at the Library, Health Care, plus Children, Youth and Families. In 2005, Marie Andrews spearheaded a drive for an indoor aquatic center, which was finally built and opened in 2010. A well attended Anti-Bullying Forum was conducted in the fall of 2009. In 2011-12, we took part in national studies on Drug Abuse, led by Anne Mychalus and Education, led by Annette Funn.

## WOMEN OF THE WORLD LUNCHEONS

The "WOW Luncheons" have celebrated Calvert County women and girls for 13 years. The first WOW luncheon grew out of a 2002 League of Women Voters Women's Empowerment Exchange, when Anne Mychalus returned from Zambia with a vow to celebrate women as she had seen in Africa.

Each year the League and the Commission for Women join with other nonprofit and women's organizations to honor Calvert's best. Partners have included Calvert Collaborative for Children and Youth, Chamber of Commerce, Calvert Memorial Hospital Foundation, Community Mediation Center, Concerned Black Women, Girl Scouts, Calvert Hospice, American Association of University Women, Nu Zeta Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and United Way.

The 2014 and 2015 WOW events, led by Debora Harris of LWV and Margaret Dunkle of Commission for Women, were held at the College of Southern Maryland in Prince Frederick. Recent League honorees have included Sharron Bickel and the Transparency Team, Elaine Cochran Dunkle, Sue Kullen, Dawn Balinski and the Green Study Committee, Marie Andrews and the Indoor Aquatic Center Committee, Annette Funn and the Voter Services Committee, and Frances Dunkle Poling.

## NATURAL RESOURCES

Dawn Balinski, in 2008, chaired the Greening of Calvert Study. It led to the formation of a Calvert County Citizens Advisory Green Team which began hosting annual Green Expos. An Aquifer Depletion forum was co-sponsored with St. Mary's LWV at the Calvert Marine Museum in April 2010.

## GOVERNMENT ISSUES

Code Home Rule was considered for Calvert County but our League did not take a stand. Ultimately, it was defeated by voters in 2004. In March 2006, we held a Homeland Security and Disaster Preparation Forum at the College of Southern Maryland. We hosted a Nuclear Waste Forum in the spring of 2009, partially in response to a proposed 3rd Nuclear Reactor in Lusby.

In October 2011, we partnered with the LWV of St Mary's to conduct a public education forum on Nuclear Safety at Calvert Cliffs, A Review of Issues Arising from the Japanese Accident. The forum was held at Calvert Marine Museum and was attended by 100 people. Klaus Zwilsky was the major organizer.

In 2009-10, under Kathleen Riley's direction, we partnered with the U.S. Census Bureau to publicize how taking the census benefits the community and encourages local participation. Also in this year, we participated in an Administration of Justice study.

In 2010, we initiated the Observer Corp for the weekly County Commissioners meetings under the leadership of Sharron Bickel. Monthly meetings of the

Observer Team, some with Calvert County speakers, allowed members to discuss their impressions of Calvert County Government. When it developed a lack of government transparency was evident, Sharron Bickel, Anne Mychalus, Robert Poling, Roberta Safer and Klaus Zwilsky began a year-long study. The completed study was presented to the Board of County Commissioners in the fall of 2014. This was followed up with ongoing meetings with County Commissioners and continued monitoring.

In 2012-13, we took part in the LWVMD Election Administration study led by Annette Funn and John Perryman.

In 2014, it was decided, with Annette Funn as Chair, to extend our monitoring to the Board of Education, which now has its own Observer Team and meets separately each month to discuss their findings.

Redistricting has become a major issue, and we hope to join the LWVMD in activities to correct current gerrymandering.

#### EDUCATION and PUBLIC INFORMATION

State studies included adult literacy consensus and charter schools. We continued to support educational activities of the Calvert Crusade for Children, which is now the Calvert Collaborative for Children and Youth. Two public information forums were held in the 2013-14: one about the Affordable Health Care Act and a second about the Cove Point Liquid Natural Gas expansion. We continue to have excellent press coverage in the Calvert Recorder, County Times, Calvert Gazette, Chesapeake Current and BayNet online.

#### VOTER SERVICES

Voter Guides and forums are the focus of all elections. We participated in polling place evaluations for several years, beginning in 2006 until the Board of Elections decided to do their own evaluations.

We continue with primary and general election candidate forums for the county as a whole and for North Beach and Chesapeake Beach.

In 2014, our Candidate Forum in North Beach was filmed by a team from Angola, an emerging democracy, as an example of candidate forum procedure. Beginning in the fall of 2011, John Perryman made available Voters Guides on line. The Board of Elections began supplying us with mailing labels for out of state and overseas voters. We followed through by sending flyers with directions for downloading our non-partisan, printable Election Voters' Guides and how to access [www.Vote411.org](http://www.Vote411.org) for non-partisan information on all candidates.

In 2012, the Board of Elections provided League volunteers with registration training and we began conducting day and evening student registration at the



College of Southern Maryland in Prince Frederick. We have continued these activities before each election, and in 2014-15, we began assisting with voter registration after monthly Naturalization Ceremonies at the federal courthouse in Greenbelt, Maryland.

In all our publishing and publicity endeavors, Fran Poling has been of outstanding help with her proof reading, creativity and styling of printed material and computer mailings.

#### SOCIAL MEDIA

After many difficulties with the LWVMD provided computer programs, we decided to investigate the commercial market to provide us with programs which are easy to use and allow us to better keep in touch with our membership. In 2013, Krista Boughey launched a new Facebook page and has taken the responsibility for managing it. Anne Sundermann has located programs for a new website to manage our membership records and now allow credit card payments for our events.

#### FUND RAISING

Celebrity Shows in 2003 at Vera's, at the Lighthouse Inn in 2005, followed by one at Vincenzo's, featured county leaders and citizens and were fun Fundraisers.

In the fall of 2011, we presented "GOOD EVENING CALVERT", a social evening that spoofed Calvert County. It was held at Annemarie Garden and greatly improved our financial status. Another event using a satirical script built around the Family Feud television show format was presented in the fall of 2015. Roberta Safer led the organization and execution with many local elected and appointed officials playing themselves. The evening at the College of Southern Maryland, Prince Frederick, included a catered dinner. It raised money and received front page color coverage in the Recorder.

#### MEMBERSHIP EVENTS

Each year we have planned a summer event and a winter event for members and their guests. Events have been held in private homes and local restaurants (where members have been charged a fee.) The speakers have been varied: a woman member of the local Watermen's Association, representatives from environmental associations, President and Vice President of the College of Southern Maryland, the Director of the Center for Environmental Science in Solomons. A program held in the "Show House" of a local developer led to a discussion of affordable housing, and a beach picnic on the shores of the Patuxent gave us the opportunity to hear former Senator Bernie Fowler. Another program was a food demonstration, complete with tasting the finished product.

## TOWN HALL MEETINGS

In 2013, Sue Bilek presented the idea of the League holding a series of Town Hall Meetings. Rather than a forum with main speakers and a question and answer period, these programs would have short introductory talks by experts in the field and then a public discussion. The discussions were led by a moderator and covered such topics as Water, Calvert County Economic Development and transportation in Calvert County.

## OTHER LEAGUE ACTIVITIES

We held House Parties in 2002, 2003, and 2004 which brought in new members and stimulated our membership to participate in program planning. They were held in different parts of the county, in homes, Phillips House and Asbury-Solomons. In 2014, we held a new member meeting at the home of Norma Imershein and plan to hold similar meetings in the future.

Five Russians (and an interpreter) were hosted in October, 2005, after 5 months of planning with LWVUS and the Open World Program, coordinated by Annette Funn. It was a busy schedule for all, with day trips to Annapolis and St. Mary's City, county offices, luncheons and dinners. Roberta Safer and Klaus Zwilsky played hostess and host for our Russian visitors.

In 2017, we will celebrate our 50th Anniversary, and LWVUS will commemorate 100 years in 2020. As of the end of 2015, our county has grown by over 5,000 residents to approximately 94,300. There are 24,449 Republicans, 22,983 Democrats, 341 Libertarians, 142 Greens, 12,541 unaffiliated and 407 other. There are 1,223 League members in Maryland in 13 Local Leagues including 85 members in Calvert County LWV as we look to future growth and impact.

Recently, we were asked to summarize the League in 5 words. We chose:

INFORMS VOTERS, ADVOCATES GOOD GOVERNMENT

PRESIDENTS OF LWV OF CALVERT COUNTY

Pat McClain	1967-69	Mary Kidd	1993-95
Dorothy Plummer	1969-71	Barbara Fetterhoff	1995-97
Barbara Hinshaw	1971-73	Marie Andrews	1997-99
Pat McClain	1973-74	Marlyn Kefauver	1999-00
Whitall Clevenger	1974-75	Marie Andrews & Barbara Fetterhoff	2001-03
Pat Bash	1975-77	Barbara Fetterhoff & Annette Funn	2003-05
Ruth Wiencek	1977-79	Annette Funn & Kathleen Riley	2005-07
Lottie Goettel	1979-81	Kathleen Riley	2007-09
Eleanor Prince	1981-83	Anne Mychalus	2009-10
Margaret Moran	1983-85	Kathleen Riley	2010-11
June King	1985-87	Norma Imershein & Anne Mychalus	2011-13
Kitch Eisenman	1987-89	VPs Debbie Harris & Roberta Safer	2013-14
Elaine Cochran Dunkle	1989-91	Annette Funn & John Perryman	2014-
Gracie Rymer	1991-93		

League of Women Voters of Calvert County, P.O. Box 1510, Prince Frederick,  
MD 20678, LWVCalvert.org

## PRESIDENTS OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND

Mrs. Charles Ellis Ellicott	1922-39	Lois Stoner	1977-81
Virginia Williamson	1939-41	Marjorie Johnson	1981-83
Alice Hostetler	1941-43	Kathleen Ellett	1983-85
Irene Sandifer	1943-45	Betsey Cullen	1985-86
Gladys Barber	1945-47	Millie Tyssowski	1986-87
Betty Downs	1947-49	Priscilla Hart	1987-91
Ruth Hirschmann	1949-53	Patty Pollard	1991-95
Gratia Woods	1953-55	Joan Paik	1995-99
Caroline Wood	1955-59	Joan Trafton	1999-01
Marion Satterthwaite	1959-63	Judy Morenoff	2001-05
Helen Koss	1963-67	Lu Pierson	2005-09
Ilse Darling	1967-69	Nancy Soreng	2009-13
Gloria Cole	1969-73	Susan Cochran	2013-14
Bert Booth	1973-74	Barbara Schnackenberg & Nancy Soreng	2014-
Dale Balfour	1974-77		

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## PRESIDENTS OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE U.S.

Maud Ward Park	1920-24	Ruth Hinerfeld	1978-82
Belle Sherwin	1924-34	Dorothy Ridings	1982-86
Marguerite Wells	1934-44	Nancy Neuman	1986-90
Anne Lord Strauss	1944-50	Susan Lederman	1990-92
Percy Maxim Lee	1950-58	Becky Cain	1992-98
Ruth Phillips	1958-64	Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins	1998-02
Julia Stewart	1964-68	Kay Maxwell	2002-06
Lucy Wilson Benson	1968-74	Mary Wilson	2006-10
Ruth Clusen	1974-78	Elizabeth McNamara	2010-

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