



League members gathered July 9 to discuss what they want to accomplish in the coming year. Peg Hill, state league coordinator for local chapters, guided the discussion.

## ***Goals set for coming year at strategic planning meeting***

The annual strategic planning session, in which members of the League of Women Voters of the San Antonio Area mapped out plans for the coming year, included a lot of good fellowship and good food along with a lot of good planning.

Phyllis Ingram hosted 17 members of the league, who all contributed to setting goals and coming up with ideas to make the year starting now the best one yet.

Under the guidance of Peg Hill, the state league coordinator for local chapters, we started the session talking about the need to attract millennials to the league, both because we need to grow and involve younger people, and because this

18-to-35 generation tends to be progressive but nonpartisan, which is just what the league represents.

We discussed the problem of our program this year being to grow voter turnout when the top of the ticket in both major parties is causing many people to be unenthusiastic about voting. The suggestion was made that perhaps this is a good year to emphasize the importance of state and local elections and how people elected at this level can have as big or bigger influence on our lives than people higher up the ticket.

We went over the results of the survey many of you answered, which was very useful in helping us figure out how many members

want to contribute in what ways, and what you find important. The results are reported below this story.

Before breaking for lunch, we came up with some goals for the year:

- ◆ Big voter turnout;
- ◆ Increased visibility, possibly using public service announcements on television and radio emphasizing our nonpartisanship as well as testimony on the local and state level concerning issues on which the league has positions;
- ◆ Increased membership, using engagement and mentoring of prospective and new members, mak-

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ing sure new leaders get help from previous ones and making sure the nominating committee knows all the members;

◆ Improving fundraising, perhaps using the Houston chapter's "Rising Stars" idea of annually honoring a group of under-35 community leaders. The chapter holds a fundraiser to announce the new class of Rising Stars, who chair the event.

After a guilt-free potluck lunch of salads and light desserts, we broke into groups to come up with ideas for program planning, membership and voter participation, and reunited to share our ideas. The program planning group

reported back on its plan to attract new members with a town hall-style event in September and another event in the spring.

The membership group came up with several ideas:

◆ "Unit meetings," small meetings of members who live close to each other;

◆ The "Rising Star" idea from Houston;

◆ Orientation, in which new members would be paired up with older members and walked through program planning to see what is involved;

◆ Name tags for everyone at each meeting, greet everyone at the door, new members get mission

statements, calendar, everyone who hasn't filled out survey gets one, guests paired up with members.

The voter participation group suggested that we remind people about TurboVote, which sends them reminders before each election. Candidate forums are popular, but often people can't get to them, so we will try to broaden our reach by videotaping them. We can create our own YouTube channel for them. They can be used in classrooms or by anyone who wants to see them.

After several hours of intensive planning, everyone left tired but satisfied that we had accomplished a good day's work.

## ***Survey reveals makeup, interests of members***

The survey sent to members of the local league offers a snapshot of the kinds of people who belong and what they would like to see the chapter do in the coming year. Here is a look at what the survey found.

◆ Almost 73 percent of respondents are retired, and 18 percent work full-time. Among the occupations represented are library director, teacher, SAWS conservation director, oncology research nurse, retired biology professor, pediatrician, public relations and many more.

◆ Among the special skills, talents and interests that members would like to share are data processing, mental health issues, public speaking, women's health care, environmental issues, writing/editing, office management and many others.

◆ Practically all respondents

find email, including the monthly newsletter and special announcements, their preferred method of receiving information.

◆ About 55 percent of respondents read The Voter 8 times or more in the past year; 12 percent read it 4-7 times, and 21 percent read it 1-3 times.

◆ About 33 percent of respondents are interested in being involved with the league by working on one-time activities for which they help for a couple of hours; about 27 percent would be interested in an ongoing project that involves 2-3 hours a week for a period of time; and 30 percent prefer to support the league by just paying dues.

◆ The activity that generated the most interest by members was helping distribute Voters Guides, with 80 percent of respondents willing to help with that. About 65 percent showed interest in helping gather facts from candidates and elections

offices for the Voters Guides; 45 percent said they would be part of a committee to review a local study on the pros and cons of the minimum wage; and 25 percent expressed interest in being part of the Observer Corps, which attends City Council meetings.

◆ When asked which one-time activities they would be interested in helping with, respondents replied as such: 68 percent were interested in registering voters (but only 33 percent are currently a volunteer deputy registrar), 68 percent would be a timekeeper or question collector at candidate forums, 36 percent would help at the Bravo Awards luncheon, and 18 percent would write articles for The Voter using material from the LWVUS.

◆ The top four prospective topics for future meetings chosen by respondents were voting issues, 78 percent; campaign finance reform, 72 percent; public education, 66 percent; and wealth gap, 59 percent.

# Hardberger up to her neck in water issues

When Amy Hardberger was a baby, her father, Phil Hardberger, was a young lawyer trying to prevent a community of 100,000 people from being built over the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone. The rest of her family was made up of farmers and ranchers. Growing up, she always loved to be outside, in the water.

So it was inevitable that this year's Bravo Award honoree would grow up to be involved with water in some way.

That she did, taking a path as winding as the San Antonio River to her current post as associate dean for academic and student affairs and professor of law at St. Mary's University, where she teaches several courses related to water and environmental law.

She started out wanting to do water science and earned a bachelor's degree in geology from Earlham College and a master's in geology with a focus in hydrogeology from the University of Texas at San Antonio. But after a while, she decided the water policy aspect was better for her.

"I was already doing environmental consulting but it wasn't quite what I wanted," she said. "It wasn't until someone told me the work that you want, you have to go to law school to do it."

So it was back to the books at Texas Tech, where she graduated from law school with honors.

She landed a job at the Texas office of the Environmental Defense Fund, working on a variety of water issues and creating a water blog. She said it was great until a reorganization moved her into the energy program, which

took her away from where she wanted to focus. At the same time, a Texas Tech dean called and offered her a temporary job teaching, so she got a leave of absence

that became a year and a half.

Eventually she moved to St. Mary's, back home and with her recent promotion.

Then, there's the matter of her recent fame as the member of the San Antonio Water System's Capital



**Amy Hardberger will be the honoree at the League of Women Voters of the San Antonio Area's Bravo Awards Luncheon on Oct. 12 at Magnolia Gardens.**

Improvements Advisory Committee who was invited to leave by Mayor Ivy Taylor in May. Hardberger had been a member of the board since then-Mayor or Julián Castro appointed her in 2013.

She had always been the lone (but loud, as she points out) voice of dissent on the committee, which is largely composed of developers and is designed to assist in figuring out impact

fees. Although her term had expired in 2015, Taylor's move to replace her was seen by many as an effort to make the board even more one-sided.

She said she got along well with the developers and that even though they mostly disagreed, the developers listened to her, treated her with respect and tried to think about issues from another viewpoint.

Hardberger said she was surprised at the reaction her dismissal generated.

"It was massive. I think what she (Taylor) didn't account for was that, one, it would galvanize people over to my opinion, and two, that it would really tick people off and it would tick them off in a way that didn't fall along lines that might have been predicted," she said.

"So the folks that I think she may have thought would be thankful or appreciative, including development members of that committee, were mad. And they were mad that she upended the composition of that committee without getting input, so I think it backfired in predictable and unpredictable ways."

It also made Hardberger somewhat of a hero to the people who oppose the Vista Ridge pipeline, of which Hardberger has been a vocal critic and which the mayor supports. The 142-mile pipeline is expected to cost \$884 million to build and a total of \$3.4 billion including the purchase of 16.3 billion gallons of water a year for 30 years from Bureson County.

"I'm not actually against the pipeline," Hardberger said. "I'm against a take-or-pay pipeline for 50,000 acre-feet that we don't need right now." She explained that the original plan was for 20,000 acre-feet, but to bring the cost per 1,000 acre-feet down the amount was raised. It's a very complex issue, she said, but the end result is that we have to pay for all that water whether we use it or not.

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There's not one solution to having enough water for the expected one million new residents expected to live here by 2040, she said. Building out desalination is one part, she said. Phase 1 of the SAWS desalination plant is set to go online this October, with phases 2 and 3 expected in 2021 and 2026.

"I fundamentally disagree that we can conserve our way out of it or that rainwater will get us there," she said. "This goes back to the role of the developer and whether or not we're going to force them to the table. How we grow has so much to do with how much we're going to need in the future."

The expected rapid growth of the San Antonio area combined with climate change leaves Hardberger not very optimistic about the future of water here.

"We don't know how long we have, but will we be able to continue living exactly like we live now, building myriads of houses with sprinkler systems? No. Do we have enough water for that? No, I don't think we do. When are we going to hit the wall on

that? I don't know. It could be 10 years, it could be 30 years, but it's coming," she said.

"Especially when you think about New Braunfels, the fastest-growing city in Texas – you don't think that's going to encroach on us a little bit?"

Also, so much of the growth is in unincorporated areas in Bexar and the counties around San Antonio, where there are no land-use regulations, "I just don't know how bad it's going to get," she said.

We're also not being mindful of our water "savings account," she warned. Recalling just last year when there was so much spring rain that watering restrictions were lifted in June for the first time since 2011, "we had a savings and we just blew it," as the aquifer level immediately plummeted and restric-

tions were reinstated in July. "When we get a windfall, we need to treat it as a windfall and not a new habit," she said.

Solving the water problem is something everyone needs to get involved in, Hardberger said, acknowledging that it's difficult to think about running out of water.

"It's emotionally overwhelming and people don't want to go there in their minds. But people need to participate. We need representation of different cultures, genders, sexual orientation, because everyone is coming at it through a different lens and we're never going to have a successful conversation unless everyone is in the room.

"You just can't defer to other people and think someone else is going to take care of it."

### **Bravo tickets available for purchase**

Tickets for the Bravo Awards luncheon are \$50 for members and \$75 for non-members. For more information and to purchase tickets, go to <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/2585297>.

## ***Leadership training available through conference calls***

Did you know that from the comfort of your own home, you can benefit from leadership training once a month by a trained coach from the League of Women Voters of Texas?

Carol Pino of the Hays County chapter is our coach, who leads a conference call on the second Tuesday of each month, guiding board members and anyone else who wants to participate in growing and strengthening the league and its impact "with the help of state and national coaches for support. Local leagues, state leagues and coaches are all trained in tried-and-true techniques proven to recruit new members and engage and retain current members, develop leaders

and examine sustainability," the national website says.

More than 170 state coaches are working with 27 national coaches, providing guidance, mentoring and support to local leagues nationwide in the Membership and Leadership Development Program.

Since the program began 7 years ago, the national stagnancy in membership that began decades ago has started to rise, and in some states participating in the MLD program, the rise has been as much as 20 percent.

As an example of what the call entails, this month, in addition to taking questions from participants, Carol offered guidance on how to incorporate best practices in the areas of outreach, visibility and leadership

development as they relate to Election 2016.

She mentioned three projects empowering leagues nationally to strengthen our democracy while strengthening our organization: National Voter Registration Day on Sept. 27; Vote 411, our online source of all things election-related; and the election observer program, which is not allowed under Texas law but allows league members in some other states to go to voting sites on election days to make sure voters are allowed their rights and to see what works and what doesn't. Anyone who would like to participate in a call should contact Kathy Hill at [Kathy@khillpr.com](mailto:Kathy@khillpr.com) or 595-8099 to get the conference call information.

# Comal League hosts regional Hill Country planning workshop

The Hill Country, with its brilliant wildflowers, its gorgeous views, its eponymous hills and the sense of peace it gives anyone lucky enough to be there, is in danger of becoming just another series of suburbs.

As the populations of San Antonio and Austin converge and the counties between them become among the fastest-growing in the nation, uncontrolled development threatens the land and the resources, affecting not just the Hill Country, but also the cities surrounding it.

“I believe that unless area residents, non-profit organizations, and governments at all levels take action, we will see the demise of the Hill Country as we know it,” said Roxanna Deane, president of the LWV-Comal Area.

That’s where the League of Women Voters comes in. The Comal Area chapter has invited members from the four other area leagues – Austin Area, Hays County, Hill Country, and us -- to a workshop on regional planning for the Texas Hill Country. It will be Saturday, Aug. 6, from 11 a.m.

to 3 p.m. at the Bulverde Spring Branch Library, 131 Bulverde Crossing, Bulverde.

Britin Bostick, a principal of the consulting firm Stewardship Strategies, and our own Annalisa



**Controlled development is the focus of the Comal League’s Hill Country planning workshop.**

Peace, executive director of the Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance, will speak at the workshop.

Bostick, a recent graduate of the University of Texas at Austin with master’s degrees in Community and Regional Planning and in Public Affairs, will present the findings of the Hill Country studio convened by the UT School of Architecture in 2015 at the request of the Hill Country Alliance.

The Comal Area chapter’s forum on the study attracted more than 75 people. Bostick, a member of LWV-Austin and a sixth-generation Kerr County farmer, impressed many with her expertise, passion and respect for varied opinions, Deane said.

Peace will describe the advocacy work that GEAA has done in past legislative seasons and talk about its legislative priorities for the coming year.

In the afternoon, Jensie Madden of the Comal Area chapter will lead a whole-group discussion at which

participants can describe how growth is impacting their communities. The group will discuss some of the management tools described by the speakers and consider the Texas league position on land use. Madden will be the LWV-TX Issue Chair for Land Use in the 2017 legislative session. Mary Ellen Summerlin of LWV-Hill Country, the new LWV-TX Issue Chair for Water, may also attend.

Attendees will have time to begin outlining some action steps. Leagues might hold community forums to share information about the UT study, or some members might volunteer to help with advocacy during the legislative session.

Please bring a sack lunch. Drinks will be provided. Email Roxanna@gvvc.com if you plan to attend.

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# Last call issued for women's pay discussion

This is the last call if you want to share an evening with like-minded women (and probably some men) and learn why women's pay is in the red.

In fact, that's the name of the program – Can We Talk About Why Women's Pay is in the Red? – on Aug. 24. The organization, Can We Talk?, a coalition of more than 65 San Antonio women's groups, is commemorating the 1920 passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, granting women the right to vote. Guests are invited to take part in the Red Purse Project, in which people are asked to bring a new or gently used red purse filled with essentials that will be given to a woman in transition due to domestic violence or homelessness.

The League of Women Voters, represented in Can We Talk? By Arlis Olson, has donated a purse with essentials contributed by the area league board.

The program, at SAWS Headquarters, 2800 U.S. Hwy 281 N., begins with "shop til you drop" from 5-8:30 p.m., with networking at 5:30, dinner at 6:15 and the program with guest speaker Melinda Gaul, national director of AAUW, at 7. Cost is \$45. Tickets are available through Brown Paper Tickets, <http://bit.ly/CanWetalk>.

## Upcoming Events

**Summer workshop on regional planning** with four other area leagues, Aug. 6, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., Bulverde Spring Branch Library, 131 Bulverde Crossing, Bulverde.

**Volunteer Deputy Registrars classes** will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 9 and Sept. 13, at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Saturday, Aug. 27 and Sept. 10, at 10 a.m.; and Saturday, Sept. 27, at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. To register for the class, call Bexar County Elections at (210) 335-6625.

**Voter Registration at St. Philip's College** during school registration, Aug. 19, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., 1801 Martin Luther King Dr. Interested volunteer deputy registrars should contact Sybil Morgan at sybilmorgan349@gmail.com or (210) 775-8600.

**Voices for Children** event, Aug. 20, 7-9 a.m., Northwest Vista College, 3535 N Ellison Dr, San Antonio. Contact Sybil Morgan at sybilmorgan349@gmail.com or (210) 775-8600.

**Can We Talk?** Women's Equality Day Event, Aug. 24, SAWS Headquarters, 2800 U.S. Hwy 281 North, networking 5:30-6:15 p.m., dinner 6:15 to 7 p.m., program 7 p.m. \$45 after Aug. 12. For tickets, go to Brown Paper Tickets at <http://bit.ly/CanWetalk>.

**Bravo Awards Luncheon** honoring Amy Hardberger, Oct. 12, Magnolia Gardens, 2030 N. Main. Tickets: <http://bit.ly/bravoawards>

**Pass It On** If you enjoyed this issue of The Voter, please pass it on to someone you know who you think would also enjoy it.