

May 2017

League of Women Voters of the San Antonio Area

Morrison to keynote annual meeting

By *GLEND A WOLIN*

It happens just once a year, and it involves seeing friends you don't see often, breaking bread with them, and much more.

Yes, Christmas is like that, but this one is the League of Women Voters Annual Meeting, and it's just around the corner.

On Saturday, May 20, at 11 a.m., we'll be gathering at the Omni Hotel at the Colonnade. We'll be electing officers, taking care of other League business (all members have received packets by email or regular mail), enjoying a tasty lunch and hearing a wonderful speaker: Susan Morrison, an Austin attorney who is also on the board of the state League.

She is going to update us on the League's legislative activities and the status of the most important bills dealing with public education, voting rights and water.

She is uniquely qualified to talk about such issues. She recently merged her statewide law practice with the Chamberlain McHaney Law Firm, where she represents private and public schools and colleges in several matters. Before she ran her own practice for more than 20 years, she served as assistant general counsel for the Texas Education Agency.

She has received multiple recognitions for her voter education and

volunteerism, including the Secretary of State's Outstanding Service Award for voter registration and the Travis County Women Lawyers' Outstanding Achievement Award.

The Women Lawyers' Award is Morrison's most-treasured one, she said, explaining that it was "for three decades of dedication to my clients, the legal profession and my community – which started in 1979 helping the League pass the garnishment of wages for child support bill and constitutional amendment."

"I volunteered for five years to get that through both houses at legislature and toured Texas to educate voters to vote for it in 1983. That was the reason I went to law school in 1980."

School funding is more an issue of legislative will than devising a new plan, Morrison said.



Susan Morrison

of its own tax funds."

To show the dire situation of Texas's and Bexar County's public schools, she offered this scorecard from the Center for Public Policy Priorities: <http://bit.ly/edscore>

She is overjoyed with the recent Voter I.D. order from the 5th Circuit Court, calling it "fascinating because it acknowledged what everyone knew already – the redistricting lines were drawn to intentionally protect the Republican white guys in office and discriminate against minorities."

Despite Morrison's enthusiasm for what she does, she finds time to hike, bike, cook and garden with her husband, John. In spite of the fact that the San Angelo native does sometimes have communication problems with her East Texas husband, who says "ohl" and "aluminum "fol" and "Walmarts" while she says "oil," "foil" and "Walmart," they can often be found together kayaking on the Llano River or Lady Bird Lake.

As someone who joined the League as a young woman, she stresses its importance.

"LWV has got to keep growing and expanding member-

ship," she said, "so that there are enough members in every neighborhood to watch our governing bodies, follow legislation and advocate in the public interest."

Get your tickets now

Tickets to the Annual Meeting are \$40; \$25 for students. RSVP to Martha Lankford at 210-340-5366 or mblankford1@gmail.com. Let her know if you want a vegetarian meal. Make checks to LWVSAA and mail to LWVSAA, Radius Center, 106 Auditorium Circle, San Antonio, TX 78205. You can also use Brown Paper Tickets at <http://bit.ly/lwvmtg>.

"All the legislature needs to do is modify the ceiling level on Robin Hood to make it more fair. It should have been raised years ago to allow districts like Austin ISD to keep more

Meeting energizes group

By GLENDA WOLIN

There's an old Girl Scout song that goes "Make new friends but keep the old..."

That's what a group of veteran League members, new members and potential members did on a recent Saturday morning as they visited, snacked, and then settled down to hear about volunteer opportunities with the League and how the League works.

By the end of the meeting, several people had expressed interest in volunteer projects ranging from working on our new website to doing voter registration to working on the Voters Guide.

Kathy Hill kicked off the meeting by talking about the many volunteer possibilities that fall under Voter Service.

Leading up to elections, Voter Service is especially busy, she said, because the League is asked to moderate candidate forums while it is getting the Voters Guide ready.

Voter Service also gets requests from groups to speak on voting – why it's important, how to vote, how to pick a candidate – so if you like public speaking or want to develop your skills, there's a role for you as a volunteer talking to groups.

All year the League, through the Voter Service arm, registers citizens to vote. Becoming a volunteer deputy registrar – which involves a one-hour class – qualifies someone to register county

residents to vote, which is one of the League's major activities. With as many requests as the League gets to register voters, as many members as possible should get qualified. The Bexar County Elections office has a schedule of classes at http://bit.ly/dep_reg

If you are reading this, you know that the newsletter is important to spreading word about what's happening in the League. Not everyone can make it to every event, so being able to read about it is the next best thing, and it's difficult for one person to do it alone. It's also a good opportunity for people to try their hand at writing under the tutelage of an experienced writer and editor.

Anyone with a desire to write is welcome to cover an event, interview someone, take pictures or proofread an edition. I promise to be gentle in my guidance.

Membership director Sybil Morgan talked about the recent increase in membership and how more members are joining because they are looking for ways to become engaged. So she and others have been looking for things people can do right now.

One involves committees. Each board member is responsible for many duties and should have a committee of members helping, but generally the board members end up doing their job alone.

Another is to respond to Action Alerts, which are sent out by the state League every week while the



Clockwise from top left: Glenda Wolin describes volunteer opportunities with the monthly newsletter; Sue Robertson-Dodd and Marian Edson enjoy time together before the program begins; Chris Forbrich and Madhu Sridhar discuss the new website and how members can contribute; Kathy Hill and Linda Arronge catch up on "old business."

Photos by Tom Brereton

state legislature is in session and usually request that you contact legislators offering your opinion on an issue. If you are not receiving these, go to the state League website, <http://www.lwvtexas.org/>, and click on Sign Up for Action Alerts on the home page. Responding to an Action Alert is an easy and surprisingly effective thing to do.

"Just think, if every single League member in the whole state of Texas would respond to one Action Alert during a legislative session, the impact that could have," Morgan said.

She passed around a sign-up sheet for people interested in volunteering, but it's never too late. If you want to volunteer or learn more

about volunteering, contact her at sybilmorgan349@gmail.com.

Madhu Sridhar, the program vice president, talked about studies, the two-year projects Leagues undertake to delve deeply into subjects before creating a position on an issue.

She mentioned that legislators have great respect for the League. One reason is that it is a nonpartisan organization.

"But the second reason is that they know the process by which we come to the positions," she said. "We do not have positions that are handed down to us from the top. Every single issue is studied, and for most of the studies, the

minimum time that it takes is two years." Both sides are evaluated, and the whole membership is involved.

Legislators who are familiar with the League, she said, rely on our work, based on almost 100 years of experience, to provide thorough, unbiased work.

"If there is an issue you care deeply about that the League doesn't have a position about, you can start a study group, she said.

Yet another volunteer opportunity is the Observer Corps. If you are interested in government, you can go to City Council, County Commissioners Court or School Board meetings and report back to the League. It lets government

officials know people have their eye on them and keeps members informed.

There are volunteer spots for people interested in lobbying, leadership, grant writing, graphic design, technical support, social media and more. If you have an idea, suggest it and the League can probably find a place for you to do it, as it has for almost 100 years.

"I encourage you, if you like the mission of the organization," Sridhar said, "let's each of us do our little part. It's a great organization. If it's going to last another 100 years, so someone will be celebrating the 200th anniversary, we all have to do our part."

New Member

Elsa Pendleton

I grew up in northern Ohio and received my B.A. in French Literature from Oberlin College. Bob and I married in the middle of our senior year (he studied math at Oberlin), and we have lived in a number of states and had a number of different careers ever since. While he taught math at LSU in Baton Rouge, I attended Library School there, earning my MS in Library Science while our two boys attended nursery school and kindergarten. We ended up spending several decades in various parts of California, retiring from our jobs in the Mojave Desert, where we

worked for the Navy at China Lake Naval Weapons Center.

We grew to love the desert. I've written and self-published several novels, most recently *Ordinary Patriots*, a story about life in the Eastern Sierra during World War II.

Each time we settled in a new place, I found the League of Women Voters to be the first organization I joined, for fellowship and a useful way to learn about my new home. Now that we are both retired and traveling fulltime, I've joined the San Antonio group, because it's important for me to connect with others to work on important issues in these difficult times.



I can win what???

That's probably not what Leslye Altemeier and Martha Lankford were saying at the Meet & Greet, but you can win a best-selling book by writing the best caption for this photo of them excited about something. Email your entries to gwolein@gmail.com by May 21. The winner will be named in the next Voter on May 30.

Upcoming

Municipal elections are May 6. San Antonio voters will elect a mayor and 10 city council representatives and vote on an \$850 million bond issue. Several school boards will also be having elections.

The Annual Meeting is May 20 at 11 a.m. at the Omni at the Colonnade. See Page 1 for details.

Runoff elections are June 10. Any

of the May 6 elections that need runoffs will be that day.

Strategic planning for the San Antonio League's upcoming year is June 24. All members are encouraged to attend. Opportunities to get involved in committees and other volunteer activities will be available as well as the opportunity to participate in shaping the year's focus.

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