

'I was not raised to be quiet'

By *GLENDA WOLIN*

When water activist Amy Hardberger stood up to speak as the honoree of the League of Women Voters of the San Antonio Area on Oct. 12, she promptly announced that she was not going to talk about water.

But any qualms anyone in the audience might have had were quieted immediately when she explained that receiving an award from a group founded for the sole purpose of giving women a voice made her think, "There is something about being honored for speaking up and asking yourself, 'Why is it that I am comfortable often being the lone voice in the room?'"

So she decided to talk about some of the women in her life who had an



Amy Hardberger speaks at the Bravo luncheon in her honor.

impact on her.

The guests – League members, Hardberger's friends and family, and members of the community who wanted to honor her – sat rapt at the Magnolia Gardens luncheon as she told of her family's history of strong women, beginning with her great-grandmother.

Bedridden and mostly deaf and blind, her Mamaw would ask a simple question about lineage when little Amy would enter the room: "Now who are you?" But at age 4,

Amy understood it as a much more existential question from the first strong person she identified with. She has continued to ask herself that question through her life.

Her great-aunt Lucille followed as her next role model.

"To say she was opinionated doesn't even get us there," she said to laughs, particularly from her family. "She made no apologies for who she was. She made a huge differ-

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League of Women Voters members and friends met at the Magnolia Gardens in honor of Amy Hardberger.

ence in the community. She spent her energy and her money where it was going to be best used.” She also helped raise a portion of 40 nieces and nephews, “and did it all with unbelievable grace and power,” she said.

Emphasizing the importance of the messaging we give our daughters, Hardberger said, “Even though she was two generations older than me, Aunt Lucille never once told me to act a certain way or hide my opinions...her first question to me was not who are you dating, it was what are you working on? She was an incredible example of what women can be.”

The first person Hardberger met whom she recalls leaving her star-struck was Gov. Ann Richards, who came to town when Hardberger was in high school, to try to stop a catfish farm from being able to pump. Her father and Richards knew each other from their days at Baylor.

Seeing a woman governor “not behaving,” she said, using air quotes, “was extremely impactful for me. The fact that she was there in a water-type setting sealed my fate then and there.”

Switching gears, Hardberger addressed the fever pitch that gender issues have reached in the United States and the tremendous discomfort with seeing women in power.

“I’m not sure what that’s about, but I’m sick of it,” she said with her trademark bluntness.

“To be out there in front of people and being argumentative and ‘not behaving well’... is uncomfortable. We have some obligation to be uncomfortable and speak our piece. And when you look all the way back to the Suffragette movement and see these women who are happy to be uncomfortable, so the rest of us can pick up that charge and continue to be uncomfortable, there’s a tremendous value in that.”

She said she thinks one of the reasons she was given the Bravo Award was the difficulty she faced with her solitary stand against the Vista Ridge project. “It has been difficult to try to speak truth to

power and hold the line when you are out there all alone and you feel like the game is somewhat rigged,” she said.

In the heat of the Vista Ridge battle, someone on the other side but with whom she had a good relationship got frustrated because some of her ideas were gaining traction. At an event at Hardberger Park, of all places, he said to her, “Why can’t you just behave and be quiet?”

Following gasps from the audience, Hardberger continued, “I have thought a lot about that question. I keep coming back to my Mamaw asking, ‘Who are you?’

“The answer is,” she said, “I was not raised to be quiet, and thankfully, neither were you.”

League thanks Bravo Luncheon sponsors, supporters

The League of Women Voters of the San Antonio Area wishes to thank those who sponsored the Bravo Award Luncheon and who donated to the LWV of Texas Education Fund.

Bravo Award Luncheon Sponsors: Councilwoman Maria Berriozábal, Rep. Lloyd Doggett, Mayor Phil and Linda Hardberger, Judge Michael Mery, Theresa and Gary Poenisch, Margaret Mireles.

Education Fund Contributors: Rosie Alvarado, PC, Gloria Barrera, Commissioner Tommy Calvert, Rep. Charles Gonzales, Syble Johnson, Barbara Kyse, Kathleen Sadler, Shivers & Shivers, Judge Tina Torres.

The LWV-SAA would also like to thank the members and friends who contributed time and effort to make the luncheon a success, including Nancy Price, Evelyn Bonavita, Chris Forbrich, Martha Lankford, Theresa Poenisch, Sue Robertson-Dodd, Joyce Soell, Anne Wiatrowski and Glenda Wolin.

League, UTSA sponsor candidate forum featuring judge, sheriff candidates

By GLENDA WOLIN

When do you think was the last time 10 lawyers in the same room unanimously agreed on something?

That momentous event happened Oct. 5 at the UTSA Downtown Campus during a forum co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters of the San Antonio Area and UTSA College of Public Policy. What was even stranger was that the 10 were actually five partisan pairs of lawyers running against each other in the Nov. 8 election.

On most matters, the candidates disagreed as expected, but on the question of whether they favor some sort of judicial election reform, such as nonpartisan elections, appointments or appointment followed by election, they all heartily supported reform. The consensus was, however, that the legislature is not willing to give up the power that comes with partisan judgeships.

Participating in the forum were Republican Jason Pulliam and Democrat Irene Rios, running for Justice, 4th Court of Appeals, Place 6; Republican Linda Molina and Democrat John Longoria, County Court-at-Law No. 5; Republican David Kaliski and Democrat Norma Gonzales, 131st District Civil Court; Republican Leslie Sachanowicz and Democrat Angelica Jimenez, 408th District Civil Court; and Republican Libby Wiedermann and Democrat Catherine Torres-Stahl, 175th District Criminal Court.

Also present and introducing themselves but whose opponents were absent were Democrat Rosie Alvarado, running for 438th Dis-



Voter Services chair Phyllis Ingram introduced the candidates and set the rules for the judge and sheriff candidate forum at the UTSA Downtown Campus Oct. 15.

trict Civil Court; Republican Laura Parker, 386th District Juvenile Court, and Republican Jan Ischy-Prins, 399th District Criminal Court.

All four candidates for Bexar County sheriff – Republican Sheriff Susan Pamerleau, Democrat Javier Salazar, Libertarian Larry Ricketts and Green candidate James Dorsey – participated in a separate forum afterward.

Judicial candidates

For ethical reasons, judicial candidates can't say much in detail about their judicial philosophies or anything specific about cases, but they did talk about their backgrounds and what they think makes them the best candidate.

Pulliam, appointed to the 4th Court of Appeals in 2005 by Gov. Rick Perry, said in over 100 opinions, he has never been reversed or overturned by the Texas Supreme

Court or the Court of Criminal Appeals. He pointed out that he is the only candidate with both criminal and civil experience. "I have a passion for public service," he said. "People who have a level of success have a duty to give back."

Rios, his opponent, pointed to her 26 years as an attorney and her 14 years as a trial judge. She was the first judge of County Court-at-Law No. 10, established in 1999. Out of 54 applicants for that seat and two others, she was one of the three selected. "I have never forgotten the impact of my decisions on the people who came before me," she said. "I want to use my experience to continue to do good work."

Molina, seeking the seat on County Court-at-Law No. 5, described an effective judge as one who gets a defendant to a treatment program or to Bexar County Jail,

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Sheriff candidates (from left) Susan Palmerleau, Javier Salazar, Larry Ricketts and

James Dorsey spoke at the Oct. 12 candidate forum.

whichever is needed, with the goal of preventing people who come into county court from becoming repeat offenders or felony-level offenders. “I have handled every kind of criminal offense there is at every point in the process,” she said.

Her opponent, John Longoria, said there is an expression in Spanish: “The Devil knows more because of age and experience than merely because he is the Devil.” And, he said with a laugh, “I will tell you, I’m an old devil.” At age 71, Longoria touted his life of service and noted that although he is the only Democrat among 12 Republicans on the 13 criminal benches in Bexar County, his fellow judges unanimously voted him their leader.

Wiedermann, running for the 175th District Criminal Court seat, has “spent most of my 21-year legal career every day in the felony

courts,” she explained, splitting her time almost evenly between being a prosecutor and being a defense attorney. She outlined the details of her experience “so you know I haven’t just dabbled in prosecuting and I haven’t just dabbled in defending,” she said.

Her opponent, Torres-Stahl, who was ousted from her position as a district judge in the 2010 Republican sweep, noted that “the position requires us to balance our decisions in terms of protecting our community and redirecting a life if possible, and I think I am that person.” She has spent her 23-year career as a public servant, including as a municipal judge for 10 years. She started the teen court in San Antonio and oversaw two other early intervention programs.

“It has always been a calling,” said David Kaliski, explaining why he is running for the 131st District

Civil Court seat. “When you think about what the courthouse does, it’s a place that keeps the peace. If you care about your neighbors, if you care about your business, that’s what this is about.”

“Experience matters,” his opponent, Norma Gonzales, said, pointing to her gray hair and 32 years as a lawyer. “I’m the only one in this race who practices family law and that realm alone.” The 131st District Court focuses almost entirely on family law. She said she felt an obligation to run because of the high level of experience the court was losing with the retirement of the current judge and the lesser levels of experience of her opponents.

Leslie Sachanowicz, who is running to be judge in the 408th District Civil Court, explained that both he and his opponent are nice people, “but we are different in our years of practice and that makes a big difference.” He has practiced law for 27 years and has been active in the community, teaching and being involved in community organi-

Voter forum available on NOWcastSA

The complete forum was recorded by NOWCastSA and can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/forum-judges> and <http://bit.ly/forum-sheriff>

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zations.

His opponent, Anjelica Jimenez, told of growing up poor in Eagle Pass but graduating from high school – at the top of her high school class – and from UT-Austin. After marrying and having three children, she went to law school and again graduated at the top of her class. She said she has always served the community, tutoring and mentoring students, and that now “serving as your judge is the next progression for me.” She pointed out that she has experience in family law: “Every day I am in the trenches.”

Candidates for sheriff

Sheriff Susan Pamerleau introduced herself as the person whose department is “leaving behind the stubby pencil era and moving into technology 30 years ahead of the era where we stood when I became sheriff,” freeing up deputies and jailers to be doing their jobs rather than paperwork. She also recently broke ground on one substation for the first time in history and will be starting on another soon, cutting response time significantly.

“My profession, law enforcement,

is in crisis,” said Javier Salazar, a 23-year veteran of the San Antonio Police Department, “because many agencies are having a hard time communicating with the communities they serve, and people are dying. It needs to stop. We need to serve as the example to be emulated across the country.”

Larry Ricketts, the captain in the public relations department in the Precinct 4 constable’s office and a former Bexar County deputy, spoke of morale problems among deputies, “because they are not being treated with the dignity they deserve.”

James Dorsey, a former deputy and currently the sergeant for the South San ISD, recalled how in 2012 after losing the primary, he told Pamerleau there were some problems in the jail that needed to be taken care of, but that four years later it’s worse than ever. “We have to make the right decisions for Bexar County. We have to,” he said.

Mental health within the jail population was raised by Salazar, who said we need to take a more proactive approach to prevent suicides and in dealing with mental health issues.

Pamerleau responded that her office has reduced suicides in the jail by 27 percent over the four years prior to her taking office.

Ricketts said that in his seven years working in the jail, in the 1990s, there were no suicides. “Old times still work. Some of the new stuff is not working,” he said, supporting the method of jailers checking constantly on the inmates.

Discussing the problem of reducing property crime, most of the candidates supported involving neighborhoods by teaching them to be aware of unfamiliar cars and people and to make their houses and possessions less vulnerable to theft.

Pamerleau also touted the new substations. Salazar pointed out that while solving crimes is important, prevention is more important and that empowering the public to take a role is vital. Ricketts urged people to ask people in unfamiliar cars in your neighborhood what they are doing there. Dorsey took a different tack, suggesting giving all peace officers in the state the ability to serve everywhere so that if they are the closest to a crime in prog-

Advocacy ranks high on League goals

By *ELAINE TALARSKI*

Advocacy is an important part of the League mission, which states, “The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.”

Issues the League of Women Voters actively pursues with the Texas Legislature are based on studies that have been conducted and supported by local League mem-

bers in Texas. During the upcoming state legislature, convening in January, attention will be given to bills pertaining to LWV-Texas League program positions. The issues tracked by the League impact citizens statewide and locally.

League members are encouraged to follow bills pertaining to LWV Texas positions on the issues. Information pertaining to League programs and advocacy is available on the League home page, www.lwvtexas.org, under League and Advocacy. Some of the information

will be updated with a list of issue chairs following specific issues. If you are interested in being involved in advocacy on one or more issues, you may contact Grace Chimene, vice president, LWV-Texas State Board, gchimenelwv@gmail.com.

A legislative newsletter will be published and made available to inform LWV-Texas members on the status of bill during the legislative session by email and the LWV-Texas home page.

Elaine TalarSKI is the state issue chair for drug laws and policies.

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League welcomes Gayna Dupont

I have lived in San Antonio for many years and love to read and travel. I am very interested in politics, especially in the areas of girls and women. I am married and have two sons, ages 22 and 20.

I graduated from Texas State University (when it was Southwest Texas State University) with a bachelor of science degree and got my master's in accountancy from UTSA.

I have spent my career as a tax advisor, financial analyst and planning analyst at several San Antonio firms and now I am a senior tax accountant consultant at the San Antonio office of Aventine Hill Partners.

Besides my new membership in the League of Women Voters, I am a member of the American Association of University Women and the National Organization for Women.

League members distribute Voters Guides

By PHYLLIS INGRAM

The November general election Voters Guides have been distributed.

We had a record number of members volunteer to help this year, which made it much easier. Thank you to Leslye and Bill Altemeier, Raymond Baber and Evelyn Bonavita, Karen Davis, Gayla

Dupont, Marian and Jim Edson, Mary Heye, Arlis Olson, Theresa Poenisch, Teri Swartz, Laura Valle, Lani Van Petten and Mary Wilson, and of course, Steve Ingram who helped me with the library distribution and did the heavy lifting on the guides we delivered.

You can also get your individualized ballot on Vote411.org.

Upcoming Events

Election Day is Nov. 8

Membership and Leadership Development Call is Monday, Nov. 14, at 4 p.m. This monthly conference call with our coach, Carol Pino, is open to all members and helps us be a more effective league. Email Kathy Hill, kathy@khillpr.com, for call-in instructions.

Younger Women's Task Force is presenting "EduDialogue: Current State of Education for Girls and Women," about the legislation, changes and challenges that will impact education locally, statewide and nationally. Event is Nov 15, 6-7:30 p.m., at 1209 St. Mary's St. RSVP by Nov. 8 at ywtf-sanantonio@gmail.com.

Lobby Days at the Capitol in Austin are Jan. 29-30.

Making Democracy Work Dinner is Jan. 29 at the Austin Club in Austin.

State Convention: The 2018 State Convention will be held April 27-29, 2018, at Inn of the Hills, Kerrville.