



Calendar

July 2021

- 1 MICRC Redistricting Public Hearing**
6pm, Grand Rapids, DeVos Center and via Zoom. Go to lwvmi.org for link. Brittni Kellom of Detroit (Democrat) will chair hearing
- 13 Calhoun County LWV Unit Meeting**
7pm Hybrid (zoom and in person), contact Sue Rosko, Olwvkacalhouncounty@yahoo.com
- 14 LWVKA Development Committee Meeting**
10am via Zoom, contact Ken Manley @ kenmanley@hotmail.com
- 16 Kalamazoo Growlers "A League of Their Own"**
6:35, Homer Stryker Field. Honoring the 1950s Kalamazoo Lassies. Evening dedicated to women's empowerment, LWVKA will have a table for voter registration and education
- 26 LWVKA Board Meeting**
6pm via Zoom, contact MerriKay Oleen-Burkey moburkey30@gmail.com
- 27 LWVKA Book Group**
7pm via Zoom. Book by John Meacham, "The Soul of America: The Battle for our Better Angels". Contact Aedin Clements, aedinclements@gmail.com

August 2021

- 3 Primary Election**
Virtual Event, more details coming soon
- 10 Calhoun County LWV Unit Meeting**
7pm via Zoom, contact Sue Rosko, lwvkacalhouncounty@yahoo.com
- 11 LWVKA Development Committee Meeting**
10am via Zoom, contact Ken Manley @ kenmanley@hotmail.com
- 20 Women's Equality Day Celebration**
- 23 LWVKA Board Meeting**
6pm via Zoom, contact MerriKay Oleen-Burkey moburkey30@gmail.com
- 25 DEI Committee Meeting**
6:30pm via Zoom, contact Millie Lambert millielambert3922@gmail.com

ENJOY
THE
Summer

President's Column

by MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

Summer Events

- July 16**—Growlers honoring Women's Empowerment Volunteer to help host our LWVKA table (*More information inside.*)
- August 26**—Save the date for Women's Equality Day (*More information inside.*)

2020-2021 Annual Report

The LWVKA has had an active year of Empowering Voters and Defending Democracy. Many unnamed volunteers made these activities possible. For those of you who are new to the League, consider how you might become involved with one of these activities or suggest an initiative you would like to see us pursue. Highlights from this year are described within our five LWVKA strategic goals:

CLIMATE CHANGE Goal: *To contribute to local efforts that align with global climate strategies and goals.*

Progress and Success Indicators:

- LWVKA joined the Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition (KCCC).
- LWVKA co-sponsored events with KCCC:
- Discussion of Ron Kramer's book, *Carbon Criminals*.
- A virtual educational forum, 'The Global Political Economy of the Climate Crisis' presented by Professor Paul Clements.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY and INCLUSION Goal: *To engage in purposeful action to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in the LWVKA.*

Progress and Success Indicators:

- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Policy and Definitions were communicated to the membership and posted to the LWVKA website.
- The LWVKA Education Fund Board endorsed the DEI Policy.
- The LWVKA board approved DEI committee's first 12-month Action Plan. As part of the DEI Action Plan—
 - ◇ The LWVKA board began hearing about DEI learning resources at each monthly meeting.
 - ◇ A survey to collect baseline demographic characteristics for LWVKA was sent to the membership for anonymous response in September 2020. Results suggest a focus for DEI work.
 - ◇ Persons with expertise to review LWVKA materials through DEI lens provided their recommendations, and they were presented to the LWVKA board for action.
 - ◇ LWVKA co-sponsored the live-streamed forum, 'Women of Color & Political Influence,' featuring past LWVUS President Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins.
 - ◇ Collaborating with membership and promotion, DEI helped draft a LWVKA membership survey designed to expand engagement.
 - ◇ The DEI Committee hosted a Housing Issues Forum for the LWVKA membership as an initial activity to educate on an important local issue with DEI ramifications.

Continued on page 6



News from
National

LWVUS Update

Paula Manley

LWVUS released the following press release on 6-22-2021:

WASHINGTON — Today the League of Women Voters of the United States CEO Virginia Kase Solomón issued the following statement following the US Senate's failure to advance the For the People Act:

"Today's vote is hopefully just the beginning for this bill which will strengthen our democracy and ensure the freedom to vote for all Americans.

"As the Senate reconsiders the For the People Act in the weeks ahead, they must work to protect the merits of the bill for the American people, who support this legislation.

"The For the People Act is the only solution to put a check on the hundreds of anti-voter bills passed in states around the country. This bill will ensure that every voter has the access to cast their ballot in next year's critical midterm elections.

"The League of Women Voters supports legislation that strengthens our elections and increases voter participation so that every voice is heard in our democracy. We call on the Senate to work together to pass the For the People Act and find a solution for the American people."

Watch for Supreme Court rulings in *Americans for Prosperity v Becerra* and *Brnovich v Democratic National Committee*. The *Americans for Prosperity Foundation* has challenged California law requiring nonprofit organizations to disclose large donors. LWV of California, along with partners, has filed an amicus brief. LWVUS and LWV of Arizona filed an amicus brief in the *Brnovich v DNC* case which is a consolidated set of cases addressing collection of ballots by third parties and provisional ballots cast outside a voter's designated precinct. The argument is that Arizona law violates Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act which prohibits voting practices and procedures that discriminate on the basis of race, color, membership in minority groups. These rulings will impact the influence of money in politics and voting rights.

Keep abreast of events in Washington D.C. and around the country by subscribing to the League Update which is emailed to League members biweekly. You may subscribe by going to lwv.org and click on the League Management site. Also, you will find many helpful resources on the League Management site. ✓

Redistricting Tips

Denise Hartsough, LWVMI Monitoring Team

Michigan's Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (MICRC) welcomes your input about maps, Communities of Interest and comments on others' input. Provide input at www.michigan-mapping.org

The MICRC completes its current set of public hearings on July 1 in Grand Rapids.

It will move around the state for its business meetings through summer and fall. See the schedule here: www.michigan.gov/documents/sos/2021_ICRC_Mtg_Calendar_714351_7.pdf

The Michigan Supreme Court will soon rule on the MICRC's request to extend the deadline for initial maps. The ruling will affect how much time the public has to respond to the initial maps. ✓

National Popular Vote—Update

By Connie Ferguson

Based on the LWVUS position, LWVKA has encouraged other Michigan local Leagues to request that LWVMI advocate for Michigan's participation in the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC). A total of 17 local Leagues signed onto the letter we sent to the LWVMI board on June 6. As part of the June 12 LWVMI board meeting, they heard from former state Senator Rebekah Warren who is working on NPV in Michigan and Eileen Reavey, NPV's National Grassroots Director. They referred the question of taking action to the LWVMI Advocacy Committee with a request for a recommendation. At this point we're not sure when the Advocacy Committee will be discussing it and are awaiting further word. ✓

Sex & Gender 101

Denise Hartsough, LWVMI Membership/DEI Committee Member

A recording of the June 17th workshop, *Sorting Out Sex & Gender*, is available to any interested League member. Brooke Lindley of Equality Michigan explains the ever-changing terminology and League participants offer suggestions for action.

Email denise.hartsough@gmail.com or one of the LWVKA co-presidents for the link. ✓



Calhoun County

By Sue Rosko

The Calhoun County Unit continues to promote the MICRC's redistricting work by sharing information within the county and being available for assistance with testifying at the hearings. This past month the Calhoun Unit was invited to speak at Battle Creek Access Vision's Be Scene on Air, Battle Creek Rotary Club and Heritage Commons Senior Enrichment Center. Information on Communities of Interest, the Redistricting process and Commission's work, and Calhoun's LWVKA unit were shared. Much interest was shown at each presentation. We thank these organizations for their interest and support.

Members also assisted the Juneteenth Committee and the A Philip Randolph team in voter registration at the Juneteenth events in Battle Creek. The Calhoun members are looking at other events occurring in the county, being ready to take part in those. Relationships with other non-partisan organizations that promote our interests, values and work are being developed and calendars shared. The geographical unit is becoming a known presence in Calhoun County.

The Marshall City Council was contacted by the Unit to question the recycling program in the city. No information on what and how to recycle with the city's contract company had been shared with the community. The City is now pursuing the distribution of that information.

A large focus of the group has been on the advocacy issues surrounding the For the People's Act and the legislation being presented in Michigan. Action statements have been sent out as they are shared by the LWVMI or the US LWV. Plans are being made to continue to educate within the county on mis- and dis-information and the security of the election system, exploring new ways of sharing information to reach a larger audience.

As a trial, the group held their monthly meeting as a hybrid in June, discussed any difficulties with that model, and will meet offering in-person and zoom at the Unit's July 13 meeting. This was the first time a meeting has been held at least partially in person since the Unit's inception in 2020! With 26 current members we are excited to be growing and supporting the League of Women Voters in our county. 

DEI Housing Forum

On June 10th, 2021, the LWVKA DEI (Diversity/Equity/Inclusion) committee held their first, of what they hope will be many, forums on issues of importance to the membership. The topic this time was, Housing in the Kalamazoo Area. They invited League members to attend after viewing, reading and listening to a suggested list of references. **Barb Dircks** welcomed the group and explained the format along with procedural details. **MerriKay Oleen-Burkey** assisted in creating breakout rooms where small group conversations were possible and concerns and collaborative ideas were shared. Those in attendance returned for the final portion for general sharing and the opportunity to hear the variety of ideas that were raised and considered.

The hour went fast and resulted in many interesting exchanges. In the end, there were takeaways in regards to both concerns and hopes for improving the state of housing in the Kalamazoo area.

CONCERNS

Shortage of subsidized housing

- Limited Finances; would it be possible to leverage current monies to provide for extended investment
- Should we be rethinking what "providing housing" looks like?
- There is definite need to examine and address multiple root reasons for homelessness
- Solutions should not be limited to status quo - creative thinking and planning and leadership Complex set of issues surrounding housing shortages --affected by politics and community controls
- Are we prepared to stay the course?

HOPES

Passage of mileage means there is growing and shared awareness

- Involvement of neighboring communities will lend strength to policy actions
- Interested parties are growing and stepping up
- Input and direction of concern is leading to discussion and assessment of variety of solutions
- Role of League involvement will add strength to communication and outreach efforts
- Networking through conversations and interest groups will increase involvement
- Planning for long-term and short-term remedies need to stay front and center

It is hoped that as the DEI committee continues its mission of educating and sharing knowledge, all

Continued on page 5

DEI Meetings & Events:

By Millie Lambert



The DEI Committee invites members to explore resources from the LWVUS: lww.org/league-management/diversity-equity-inclusion.

The June DEI Committee reviewed the preliminary feedback from the June 10 Housing Webinar and began the process of drafting the 2021-2022 DEI Action Plan. Our next meeting will be on **August 25**, at 6:30 pm via Zoom. If interested in joining this committee, please notify MerriKay Oleen-Burkey or Millie Lambert.

July/August Events to Consider:

Have an event or resource that should be included? Email: millielambert3922@gmail.com.

Please check the various organizations for the August events as many have not posted them at the printing.

Event information is often not available early enough to include in this newsletter. Please subscribe to your selected organizations online and consider liking them on social media.

Yun-Fei Ji: Kalamazoo Institute Arts (KIA), June – Sept 2021. Exposes violence against Asian Americans, race based threats and contrasts the cultural Revolution in China to the propaganda, misinformation and fear that the U.S. is experiencing today.

Webinar: Rise Up! – July 22, 10am– 1:30 pm, Disability Network of Southwest Michigan (DNSWM), preregistration required; contact DNSWM 269-345-1516 or www.DNSWM.org

Webinar: What Is the ADA? – July 26, 12-1pm, DNSWM, preregistration required, contact DNSWM 269-345-1516 or www.DNSWM.org

Online Introduction to Anti-Bias Anti-Racist Education Workshop – 2 days: Aug. 9, 9am– noon and Aug. 10, 9am – noon; sliding scale cost. Contact ERAC/CE eracce.org

Online Introduction to Systemic Racism Workshop – 2 days: Aug. 25, 1–4pm and Aug. 26, 1–4pm; sliding scale cost, Contact ERAC/CE eracce.org

Online Understanding and Analyzing Systemic Racism Workshop – Analysis Workshop: 6 days: Dec. 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17, 2021; 1– 4pm each day. Registration required and must attend ALL six sessions. Cost \$425. Contact ERACCE eracce.org

Reading Race Book Club: Transcendent Kingdom July 13, 6:30-8:00 pm, preregistration required, contact Kalamazoo Public Library (KPL) ONEplace@kpl.Gov

Institutional Anti-racism: Kalamazoo Community Foundation – July 23, 10-11am, preregistration required, contact KPL ONEplace@kpl.Gov

Online video series:

Racism Has a Cost for Everyone. Mon., June 7, open hours. FREE Registration required. Contact KPL ONEplace@kpl.gov

Museography: Race – A Special Edition: Kalamazoo Valley Public Museum (KVM), on-line edition.

Online Exclusives:

Filling in the Gaps: The Art of Murphy Darden. Contact KVM. kalamazoomuseum.org

Close to Home: The Walker Brothers. Contact KVM. www.kalamazoomuseum.org

Exhibit: The Global Language of Headwear: Cultural Identity, Rites of Passage, and Spirituality, July 17-Oct. 24. Preregistration required at KVM www.kalamazoomuseum.org

Rally for Equality: Tentatively scheduled for Sept. 18, all day, contact Out Front Kalamazoo for more details.

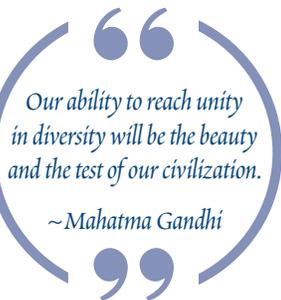
Mixed Race Affinity Group: identity and Healing – July 9, 2:00-3:00 pm, RSVP Truth Racial Healing and Transformation (TRHT) trhkzoo.org

Stand Against Racism: month of July – contact the YWCA for more information.

Women's Equality Day – see the Calendar and article in this issue of *The Voter*

Future Events:

Unveiling American Genius: KIA, March 1, 2021 – Dec. 31, 2022. The exhibition will explore key stories that women, African Americans, Latinx and other artists have told about our culture, art, and history. 



DEI Housing Forum, continued from page 3

members can participate and benefit. We thank DEI committee members, Bob Brown, Regena Nelson, Paula Aldridge and Sara Wick for their commitment and contribution to this advocacy, and appreciate the coordinating assistance of Millie Lambert in the push to make the event happen!

The following is a brief list of organizations that were suggested for those interested in following the topic: Cradle, Housing Matters, ISSAC

"We see things not as they are, but as we are." ✓

Congratulations!

LWVKA member **Denise Keele** received the Inaugural Climate Champion Award, given at the Michigan Climate Action Network's Energy Summit in May. Dr. Keele, an associate professor at WMU, is Chair of the WMU Climate Change Working Group. She is also Chair of the Kalamazoo Climate Crisis Coalition, of which this League is a member. League members who work with voter registration may encounter her also in another of her roles, working with the student WeVote organization.

We congratulate her on the award, on all that she has achieved in promoting climate action, and in the inspiration and leadership she continues to provide.

Kalamazoo Growlers Women's Expo: July 16, 2021

MerriKay Oleen-Burkey

The Kalamazoo Growlers are holding A League of Their Own night on Friday, July 16, 2021 at Homer-Stryker Field. They will be honoring the 1950's Kalamazoo Lassies who were part of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL), the first professional women's team sport.

The night is dedicated to women's empowerment, and the Growlers will be hosting an Expo of businesses and organizations that have made it a mission to empower women in the community. LWVKA will have a promotional table at this event offering voter registration and education. If you are interested in volunteering for our table and would like a ticket to the game, contact MerriKay (moburkey30@gmail.com).

The non-profit of the night is the YWCA and the

Growlers will help raise money for the YWCA Kalamazoo. The Growlers are playing the Rockford Rivets that evening. ✓

Membership

Jennifer Snyder

We are pleased to welcome three recent new members:

**Shardae Chambers &
Emma Baratta** of Kalamazoo

Claudia Murch of Marshall.

Please help us keep our records up to date so you continue to receive LWVKA news! Email contact information changes to Membership Chair **Jennifer Snyder**, jsyndergaardsnyder@gmail.com. ✓

Women's Equality Day Celebration

By Chris Kuthe

The LWVKA/YWCA Women's Equality Day celebration will be held virtually on **Friday, August 20** at noon. Please save the date. We are working on arranging a dynamic speaker and having lunch delivered to your home from Panera Bread restaurant. Watch for your invitation in the mail and email. ✓

Thank You!

A big thanks to those who volunteered to prepare the Congratulatory (register to vote online) Cards for high school graduates in Portage and Vicksburg:

Jennifer Snyder
Deb and Rick Freiman
Sue Nelmes
Denise Hartsough
Lorraine Alden
Angela Erdman
Kay Anderson



Special Tributes

In Memory of Mark Wheeler

(Denise Hartsough's husband)

Paula Aldridge & LWVKA Members



President's Column, continued from page 1

EXPANDED VOTER SERVICE Goal: *To expand outreach and impact of voter services to more of Kalamazoo County.*

Progress and Success Indicators:

- In lieu of in person voter registration, 687 Congratulatory cards were mailed to 2020 graduates of Kalamazoo Public Schools (KPS) and expanded to include 675 graduates from the Portage Public Schools (PPS) encouraging them to register to vote online, obtain absent voter ballots and use Vote411 to be informed voters.
- In September 2020, LWWKA advocated for expanded voter services (satellite clerk's office at WMU; expanded clerk hours; additional drop boxes) by Kalamazoo city clerk's office resolution at the Kalamazoo City Commission.
- With eight co-sponsors LWWKA hosted virtual Candidate Forums for MI House Districts 60, 61 and 63 covering most of Kalamazoo County and part of Calhoun County and had them live streamed by Public Media Network to reach more of the community.
- For a pandemic-modified Young Adult Voter Education Project (YAVEP), social studies teachers at each of the Kalamazoo County high schools received a slide presentation on voting for use with remote learning students. Schools not previously reached by the YAVEP, Portage Central and Vicksburg High Schools, responded. The Literacy Council also posted this presentation on their website.
- Expanding on the high school Congratulatory Card Project for 1234 KPS and PPS graduates, 175 graduates at Vicksburg High School received cards in their 2021 graduation packets.

HOUSING Goal: *To contribute to local efforts designed to increase affordable housing and eliminate homelessness.*

Progress and Success Indicators:

- LWWKA members studied and the board endorsed 'Homes for All' housing millage. The county housing millage passed on 11/3/2020.
- LWWKA representative to Housing Matters, Rick Freiman, presented to the DEI Committee about Kalamazoo County housing policy history. This informed the planning for the virtual Housing Issues Forum sponsored by the DEI Committee in June 2021.

REDISTRICTING Goal: *To support full representation of Kalamazoo County residents in order to ensure fair distribution of public resources and legislative influence.*

Progress and Success Indicators:

- At the LWWKA donor appreciation event in October 2020, Secretary of State staffers Sally Marsh and Sarah Reinhardt provided a status report on the Independent Citizen Redistricting Commission (ICRC).
- 'Communities of Interest' teams were formed, trained, and reached out to potential COIs in Calhoun, Kalamazoo and Kent counties during winter and spring 2021.
- Redistricting Town Halls to educate the communities about the redistricting process and the work of the Michigan ICRC were held in Calhoun County and Kalamazoo County on April 29th.
- LWWKA volunteers served as greeters and invited citizens to provide testimony at the Michigan ICRC hearing held in Kalamazoo on May 13th. 