Article for November 2020 LWVIN Newsletter

Spotlight on Local League

Attached to email: Photo of 2/15/2020 legislative update

LWV of Bloomington-Monroe County

Ann Birch, president

Our League began in 1913 with the Women’s Franchise League and we have about 120 members. Like all local Leagues, this has been a year of adaptation for us. No more meeting in person. No more live events. We scrambled to figure out how to accomplish our tasks in this year of COVID-19 and a very contentious election. In addition, we had set some challenging goals in our program regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as operational sustainability. The latter involves the development of board and member materials to increase member involvement in committee and leadership roles. So even without COVID we had a challenging year in front of us.

I must say, we’ve gotten pretty good at Zooming. Teleconferencing has proven to be a game changer in many ways. On the positive side, it has made conducting regular board and committee meetings, and even member meetings, much easier. In addition, it has increased collaboration with LWVIN and LWVUS as well as community groups. I guess this is both a blessing and a curse…one can’t be Zooming all the time, and it seems like we are. One other downside is simply the lack of person-to-person contact, which we will need to work to regain once the possibility of contagion goes down. At any rate, Zoom is here to stay and will continue to change the way we operate.

Below is a list of our main projects in 2020 in addition to our program (hoping I haven’t forgotten anything!):

* Two in-person legislative update public events with area legislators in collaboration with the local chamber of commerce. The third event was cancelled due to COVID-19.
* Collaboration with IU’s Jason Peifer on “Making the News: A Community Conversation”
* Two virtual public screenings of voter suppression documentaries with Q&A.
* A virtual public climate solutions forum with guest experts and lots of audience participation
* Development of webpages and materials on the centennial of the 19th Amendment and the League.
* Collaboration with local history center on centennial activities.
* Supporting voter registration by two church groups and a local social service group to participate in National Voter Registration Day.
* Development of voter information flyers in English and Spanish and a special flyer for the homeless and evicted.
* Preparation and distribution of 150 “Check Your Registration/Vote Early” yard signs.
* Participation in vote411.org for the second year; this time using the platform to communicate with candidates.
* “Keys to the Candidates” published as a pullout section in the Bloomington Herald-Times and widely publicized, with special delivery to 50 senior citizen residences and extra copies available at local library branches.
* Participation by invitation by the president and voter service co-chairs in more than eight community public events.
* Collaboration with Indiana University’s Political and Civic Engagement program and the Big Ten Voting Challenge.
* Numerous guest columns, letters, and press releases in local media.
* League observers who covered 16 government entities.
* Development of podcasts featured on WFHB radio.
* Significant increase in Facebook presence with almost daily posts and an increase of 30% in followers.
* Establishment of ClubExpress account and upload of membership.

Currently, we’re working on publishing the Monroe County Government Officials List and preparing for next year’s legislative updates.

We really welcome the increased collaboration and communication with other Indiana Leagues, LWVIN, and LWVUS. It is great to hear what other Leagues are doing and how we might learn from them.