



Mid-Hudson Region *Commentator* for June/July, 2006

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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region covers the Mid-Ulster County area and the Dutchess County area. We belong to the LWV of New York State and the LWV of the US.

CALENDAR		
JULY		
5, 12, 19, 26	9:30 to 11:30	Yard sale pricing at Elizabeth Askue's
11	7:15 to 9:15	Board meeting at Gloria Plasker's
15	10:00 to 3:00	Board Planning meeting at Jean McGarry's
AUGUST		
1	7:15 to 9:15	Board meeting at Jacki Moriarty's
2, 9, 16, 23	9:30 to 11:30	Yard sale pricing at Elizabeth Askue's
4	10:00 to 12:00	1 st Charter School study at Emily Johnson's
22	10:00 to 12:00	2 nd Charter School study meeting at Emily's
26-27	9:00 to 3:00	Yard Sale at Elizabeth Askue's

Non-Partisan Statement

The League of Women Voters of the Mid-Hudson Region is a nonpartisan organization which does not support or oppose candidates for public office but does encourage its members as individuals to participate actively in the political process. The League acts on those issues the membership chooses for study and action.

Board members will use discretion in any political activity and determine in advance from the local and/or state board that such activity will not compromise the nonpartisan political policy of the League of Women Voters.

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Prez Sez...

This is my last column as President and I am grateful for all the support I have been given by all of you for the past two years. I would especially like to thank the board as they are an amazing group of people. I have learned a tremendous amount throughout the years from the people I have met in this organization.

This summer we will have another yard sale and our annual meeting will be fun as it always is. See you there—

Chris

Commentator Online

To cut costs and to save paper, we are putting material on the website and asking members to read it there or print it out themselves if it is convenient. Of course, any material they want in print will be available on request as our prime goal is to keep our members informed.

To make a start on moving online, we will send out an e-mail to all members with e-mail addresses asking if they wish to continue receiving material on paper. People who do not respond or will accept material online, will receive e-mail notices of material such as the *Commentator* when it is posted online. You will also be able to request that the printable newsletter be e-mailed to you.

We estimate that if half the members receive the *Commentator* online it will save us almost \$200 a year in postage and close to \$400 in printing costs. Like most organizations, this league has financial concerns and needs to cut costs where it can.

Yard Sale Activities

The yard sale is taking place on August 26th and 27th this year at Elizabeth Askue's. We need people to work on the yard sale. There are a number of jobs to be overseen and done and Shirley Kobran can only be a consultant.

Tasks include calling members for monetary donations (no bake sale this year), scheduling helpers for the sale days, keeping track of pricing days and the supplies needed for pricing, setting up and taking down the sale itself, and doing publicity including putting up signs with directions.

Everyone is aware that the yard sale has been a primary fund-raiser for us for many years. We have been very fortunate that Elizabeth Askue has given us space in which to collect, sort and price items and her time and energy to help with setting up, running, taking down the sale, and finding places to donate leftovers.

Over the years, the yard sales have gotten bigger and required more work to plan, organize, and run. It must become a much wider spread co-operative effort. Everyone is asked to consider what they can do for the sale before, during, and after the event.

Bring your formerly loved and not-too-tired items for the sale.

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting was held at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation on Sawkill Road in Kingston and was well-attended. As usual, the food was good and the meeting was lively.

The festivities started with wine, soft drinks and appetizers, followed by dinner and the business meeting at 7:00.

At this meeting we elected new board members, approved the budget, reviewed the work of the year, and set program for the coming year.

Studies this summer will work on the State Financing Education study and the proposed Ulster County Charter. Other projects will continue.

We also took the opportunity to roast John and Jacki Moriarty and their daughter, our outgoing president, Chris Henning. They have all contributed so much to the league over the years. Chris remembers working for the league at the age of eleven, when Jacki was president for the first time, and all the Moriartys, including Mark, who could not be at the meeting, have done much of the heavy lifting (literally and figuratively) for the yard sale every year.

Many thanks go to Gloria Plasker and her program committee for the arrangements. Vic Melville and Margaret Sellers did great work as liaison with the Congregation and as willing workers at the event itself.

For those who were unable to attend, annual reports are available on request. The annual report will also be posted on the website.

Board of Directors

Here's the new slate of officers and directors for the year 2006-2007

President	Jean McGarry 336-6622 President@midhudson.ny.lwnnet.org
1st Vice-President	Jacki Moriarty 331-3418 1VP@midhudson.ny.lwnnet.org
2nd Vice-President	Elizabeth Askue 338-1667 2VP@midhudson.ny.lwnnet.org
3rd Vice-President	Gloria Plasker 338-8079 3VP@midhudson.ny.lwnnet.org
Secretary	Lee Ridgway 339-4927 Secretary@midhudson.ny.lwnnet.org
Treasurer	Dare Thompson 236-3074 Treasurer@midhudson.ny.lwnnet.org
Commentator Editor	Emily Johnson 338-3554 Commentator@midhudson.ny.lwnnet.org
Finance Director	Margaret Sellers 339-3180 Finance@midhudson.ny.lwnnet.org
Membership	Shirley Kobran 382-6989 Membership@midhudson.ny.lwnnet.org
Public Relations	Esther Stickley 331-2919
Publications	Emilie Hauser (off Board)
Voters Service	Cindy Bell 336-5763
Web master	Jim McGarry (off-board)
Dutchess Unit Coordinator	Ellie Charwat 462-7061

Yard Sale August 26-27. Come one, come all. Bring and Buy!!

Meet our Advertiser...

Kevin Ginty is president of Independent Financial Services, 45 North Front Street, Kingston. Talking to Kevin Ginty is like talking to someone you've known for a long time. (He probably learned more about me during the interview at his office than I learned about him.) His boyish face is offset by some distinguished graying at the temples.

The wag who wrote a "Toast of the Town" article about Kevin for Gateway Industries said "He was born in a log cabin in the Bronx in 1947." Mr. Ginty did confirm that he indeed was a Bronx boy who received his education at parochial schools there and followed by completing a bachelor's degree from Marist College. He became a commodities trader for a firm in the World Trade Center. He met his wife, Jessica Pettengill, at Hunter Mountain during a skiing jaunt. Jessica's family was from the Kingston area, her dad having been an IBM-er.

After the Gintys married they lived in NYC for a while. In 1981 they moved to Ulster County and Kevin started working for Merrill Lynch in Kingston.

By 1982 Kevin was elected to the Hurley Town Board. In 1990, he decided it was time to strike out on his own and he founded Independent Financial Services, a firm dedicated to comprehensive financial planning for individuals and families, business owners and executives, professionals and retirees. Kevin earned the designation of Certified Business Planner after completing rigorous course work and examinations.

Along the way, Mr. Ginty has served on the Boards of the Ulster Performing Arts

Center, Gateway Industries, and the Children's Annex. He is currently serving on the Board of the Irish Cultural Center in East Durham, located in the "Irish Alps" (Catskills). Kevin is trying to raise funds to build a 9/11 war memorial there. An amusing digression revealed that his parents met in East Durham and so he figures life has come full circle.

We would be remiss if we didn't mention that Kevin Ginty was Grand Marshal (or is it Chief Leprechaun) of the Saint Patrick's Day parade in Kingston in 2004.

Kevin and Jessica have two daughters, one currently in college and one who has graduated and is contemplating her vocational options. Kevin's interest in things financial was transmitted genetically from the maternal side, as his mother had worked in the wheat commodities exchange. His sister is a certified financial planner and accountant.

Kevin recounted an anecdote about his brother who has put in 34 years in the NYC Fire Department and is now retiring. His brother, a lieutenant, was incorrectly reported dead in the 9/11 event at the World Trade Center. Fortunately, it was corrected but the Gintys realized that the whole world was watching 9/11 on TV and the relatives in Ireland had heard the terrible news. At that point the American Gintys notified the family of the terrible error.

Mr. Ginty's nephew, Brian C. Ginty, is a vice-president of Independent Financial Services, joining the firm in 2001, making it a family affair.

Kevin has served as MC in auctions and fund-raisers and his prowess in

conducting roasts of local politicians and celebrities is legend. Those singled include Hugh Reynolds, Tom Davitt, late mayor T.R. Gallo, and Lew Kirschner.

For relaxation and fun Kevin skis in winter and swims in summer. He has also been known to hit a golf ball around at times with a strong preference for 9 holes. This New York City native feels 18 holes just takes too long. He loves his work and says he's having too good a time to contemplate retirement.

Consensus on Financing Education

The May meeting for consensus on financing education was well-attended by League members and members of the public. The consensus dealt with where the money for schools would come from and its impact on the citizens. How can we establish equity of education between poor and rich school districts, how can we balance the needs of schools against the costs to citizens, how can we improve education without too great an impact on state finances? Should renters as well as home-owners pay school taxes? Should schools be paid for out of state income tax revenue?

Part II of the state study concerns the impact of charter schools. Emily Johnson will be heading a study in August for a consensus meeting in October.

Charter Schools

When the charter school legislation was proposed in 1998, the League opposed the original bill on the ground that it would divert public resources from public schools and on the ground that there was inadequate separation of church and state.

The original bill did not denominate charter schools as public schools. In taking a stand in opposition, the League relied on a Hudson Institute study that indicated that as many as one-third of the students attending charter schools had been enrolled prior to attending charters in non-public schools. Thus, not only were moneys being siphoned from public schools, they were siphoned to educate children who had never been educated by their home districts in the first place.

In response to the League's efforts, some of its objections were resolved by the Charter School Act of 1998. The Act prohibited the conversion of existing private schools to charter schools and prohibited religious organizations from running schools. The attendance requirements forestalled attempts to develop charters for home-schooled students. The Act did not address the League's concerns about funding.

The League's financing education position provides that public funds should be used to support public schools. Given that charter schools are public schools, the League, without development of a specific position on charter schools cannot join the debate on amending the Charter School Act.

Charter schools are a hybrid between public school and autonomous school districts, without an absolute mandate to educate a discrete group of students. This dual nature creates some major and often unarticulated problems for the traditional public school system. The State has recognized that small school districts are a fiscally inefficient way of educating children, and to that end has made monies

available for district consolidation. Yet at the same time the charter movement makes monies available for what are multiple educationally independent units, existing outside the supervision of school districts. While traditional districts lose money every time a charter is opened, they do not lose the absolute duty to educate children from their district attending charters, and the children can leave a charter and return to the home district at any time during the school year. Thus, to the extent that the home district retains ultimate responsibility for education of all students, including those in charters, it is hard pressed to realize the economies of scale touted as the result of a declining student enrollment.

The question of reaching consensus about charter schools is complicated by the different reception charters have received in New York City and upstate. The New York City Department of Education is more supportive of charters than are upstate school districts. One reason for the dichotomy of opinion is that students in NYC charters represent a very small fraction of students, so charters do not pose the financial risk that they do in some upstate areas.

Although there may be pressure to take an all or nothing position, unless the Black and Hispanic Caucus withdraws its support for charters, they are, in all likelihood, here to stay. Thus, if the League wants to have input into amendment of the Charter School Act, with the goal of making charters more responsive to the needs of children, it must forego an all or nothing position in favor of a more nuanced position.

Our study will include

- * Possible amendment of the Charter School Act
- * Oversight
- * Renewal and revocation of charters
- * Measure to limit the financial impact of charter schools
- * Retention of students
- * Public funding of research about the curriculum and student academic success in charter schools.

In the charter school study as in all our other studies, we will follow our non-partisan position and we will explore all sides of the question until we feel we have enough information to take an informed position as a group.

If you are interested in joining the study, call Emily Johnson at 338-3554.

Appeal for E-Mail Addresses

Some of you (like me) find e-mail less intrusive than telephone calls. Please give us your e-mail address. If you don't want us to send you e-mail, we promise we won't. If you prefer notices by e-mail, we'll be happy to do that. We can have an e-mail squad as well as a telephone squad.

Sustainability

An issue that we need to continue to be aware of is the need for living in such a way that the planet Earth can support us. Our current life-style requires the resources of five planets like Earth to support us and stay healthy. Unfortunately, we only have one, and we are stressing it to the breaking point. In fact, there is some question as to whether we have gone too far and caused irreversible damage.

What do we need to do? We who are comfortable find it difficult to contemplate simplifying our life style, and those who are not comfortable would like to improve their lot in life. This means a lot of resistance to changing to a more sustainable way of living.

Some things we can do right now, without too much impact on our comfort. First, be thoughtful in your use of cars; carpool when you can; make any trip multi-purpose and see if it's possible to use public transportation rather than a car. Think about the real cost of driving when comparing driving as opposed to a train or bus. Hertz used to figure the cost of driving a car at fifty cents a mile and it's undoubtedly gone up. Figuring that way puts a different light on bus fares. And don't just do it, talk about it. We have an

enormous amount of apathy or ignorance to change to informed thought.

Walking or bicycling whenever you can is also not only conservation of gas but conservation and improvement of health. You'll find yourself planning foot errands carefully.

Another thing to do is to buy local produce and other products whenever possible. It saves fuel not to transport food from California or Mexico, and the food is fresher as well as less fuel-guzzling. Growing your own garden or joining a cooperative farm is also good. Again, don't just do it, talk about it. We have local farmers' markets in Ulster and Dutchess counties. Use them and take your friends to them. Encourage farmers to get new varieties of produce.

Keep pushing for reuse and recycling to reduce the waste stream. Advocate the Bigger Better Bottle Bill in New York State (S1290). Make Joe Bruno bring the bill to the floor for a vote. Take cloth bags to market with you to use instead of supermarket plastic bags.

Some people take the multiple layers of plastic off their purchases at the store and leave them for the store to deal with, on the theory that if enough people do that the stores will pressure the manufacturers not to wrap things up so wastefully. However, that is something not all of us are comfortable with.

Water is becoming a problem in many areas, and we can all conserve water. The way you water your garden can make more efficient use of water; if you have a way to use "gray water" for garden watering and toilet flushing it saves water

use. In Israel at one point the water consumption was 1 ½ gallons per person per day and in the US it was more than 30 gallons. Again, these are old numbers, but they show the contrast. Do you think we have improved?

You can find many other ways to make a difference and perhaps there are better ways that have not been listed here. You are all encouraged to write letters to the *Commentator* giving your ideas and getting people excited.

The most important thing that needs to be done is to change people's attitudes and awareness by example and by publicity. It is too bad that our media are often fixated on celebrities and scandals rather than on the welfare of the world. Think Green, Act Green, and Talk Green!

Our yard sale supports sustainability. Remember to bring items for the yard sale. The sale is only as good as the things we have to sell. Nothing in unusable condition, please. We need Good Goods!!

Ulster County Charter Study

At the annual meeting a local study of the proposed new Ulster County charter was approved. The County Legislature is reviewing the document submitted by the Ulster County Charter Commission. This will be presented to the electorate at the November election.

We will be studying the proposed charter for an educational and concurrence meeting in September. Interested? Call Renee Sachs, 331-0552.

Membership News

Shirley Kobran has been in the hospital for a major operation but has now been moved to TenBroek Commons for recuperation. The operation was a success and she is her usual cheerful and optimistic self.

She was operated on the day after her being honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the United Jewish Federation. Those who attended said it was an impressive honoring and reminded us all of her contributions to the world. We are fortunate to have her as a devoted and energetic League member, and we wish for her rapid recovery.

Shirley would also like to remind everybody of the yard sale and its importance to the life and prosperity of the League. Not only is it a good fund-raiser, it is a great social event, both during pricing and preparation, and on the day itself.

I/we wish to become members of the LWV of the Mid-Hudson Region through May 31, 2007

Name: _____ Currently Member(s)?: ____

Address: _____

Telephone: (day) _____ (eve) _____

Email: _____

I/We
enclose: Individual Membership (\$50) ____ Household Membership (\$65) ____

Additional gift to the LWV Education Fund (*tax deductible*):
(Please send a separate check which **MUST** be payable to NYSLWV Ed Fund) \$

If this is a Household Membership, please include
the name and email address of additional
members

Check here if you prefer NOT to be contacted about local LWV meetings ____

Will read *Commentator* on website ____ or Please mail *Commentator* ____
**(Complete the above form and return it to us with your check at
PO Box 3564, Kingston, New York 12402)**

If you know someone who might like to know more about the League of Women Voters,
please give us his or her name and address and send this slip to:

Shirley Kobran
53 Schuler Lane,
Lake Katrine, NY 12449.

We will send out information as soon as possible.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Your name: _____

**Do you have any comments about the League or our programs? Shirley would like to
hear them too.**