

League of Women Voters of Newton

Newsletter

Volume 12 Issue 5

July/August 2006

A Brave and Lively Group

Kyrgyzstani Visitors Examine LWVN

On May 16, ten visitors from Kyrgyzstan came to learn how the Newton League operates. These representatives of Kyrgyzstani NGOs had been visiting in the Boston area under the aegis of World Boston (World Affairs Council) in a program administered by USAID.

This visit happened because Bonnie Carter has a phone listed under League of Women Voters and she was welcoming and willing. Mary Adelstein and Sue Rosenbaum offered to help.



Official photo of the entire group

When we learned how to spell “Kyrgyzstan” we consulted an atlas. Formerly part of the USSR, it is an extremely remote and mountainous country about the size of South Dakota with a population of one million more than Massachusetts. Kyrgyzstan is “slowly testing the waters of a democratic society.” The country is plagued with corruption, authoritarianism and xenophobia, while fighting border incursions by Islamist radicals. These NGO leaders were here to learn skills to help develop a civil society; it was hard to imagine what of our LWVN experience in our middle class marshmallow world would be relevant.



LWVN's Carter, Adelstein and Rosenbaum accept a remembrance.

Bonnie gave a brief history of the League and a necessarily complicated explanation of how we operate. Sue talked about how we do voters service and Mary gave an example of League action: the CPA. We met in City Hall and asked Mayor Cohen to greet the group.

It was slow going because every word had to be translated into Russian. A five syllable sentence translates into paragraphs of Russian! There were two interpreters alternating in 1/2 hour stints and they worked hard.

“Mirabile dictu!” David Cohen speaks some Russian. He was peppered with questions like; “What do you like about your work?” and “What is the hardest thing you have had to do as Mayor?” He enjoyed the interaction until he was dragged away to another meeting.

We got lots of probing comments and questions. “This seems like a very rich town. It can’t be very representative.” “Why don’t more people vote in the United States?” “Did your campaign for the CPA and the Mayor’s election campaign reinforce each other?”

Our visitors were completely engaged and engaging and they are on the front lines of democratization. In Kyrgyzstan, NGOs, especially those which receive support from outside the country, are suspect and increasingly restricted. They are viewed as a direct threat to governmental control.

Here are some of the organizations our visitors represent: DCCA or Development and Cooperation in Central Asia, an umbrella organization of ecumenical groups for micro enterprise and mutual support; STAAC or Social Technologies Agency, an educational organization which helps to develop leadership and civic participation especially by women; Babushka Adoption, an agency which supports frail and abandoned elderly people, Center for Civic Initiative, a civic organization in Karakol.

THEY ARE A BRAVE AND LIVELY GROUP.

Thanks to World Boston for making this encounter possible. ■

LWVN Officers and Directors 2006-2007

OFFICERS

President	Sue Rosenbaum	617-332-0306
Vice President	Bonnie Carter	617-969-0686
Vice President	Andrea Downs	617-969-7123
Vice President	Ann Grantham	617-964-0333
Clerk	Allison Stoner	617-527-4018
Treasurer	Andrea Kozinetz	617-964-6490

DIRECTORS

Carol Bock	617-594-7293
Deborah Crossley	617-244-7597
Lucia Dolan	617-332-1893
Andrea Kelley	617-964-4609
Roberta Leviton	617-965-0016
Sharyn Roberts	617-969-9588
Jennifer Stoner	617-283-5687
Sharon Stout	781-856-0004
Greer Tan Swiston	617-965-6008
Terry Yoffie	617-965-1796

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Jody Klein, Chair	617-244-4767
Amelia Koch	617-244-2647
Andrea Kelley	617-964-4609

OFF BOARD SPECIALISTS

Handbook	Robin Maltz	617-969-1554
Human Rights	Holly Gunner	617-964-0767
Legislative Roundtable	Ruby Ajanee	617-243-9888
Membership	Elaine Reisman Co-chair	617-244-6439
Topic Meetings	Pat Acton Linda Morrison	617-965-5572 617-332-6539
Recycling	Barbara Herson	617-964-7463
Web Site	Judy Jaffe	617-969-7427

NEWSLETTER

Editor	Ann Grantham	617-964-0333
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The LWVN Newsletter is published nine times per year. The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization open to all citizens of voting age. For more information about the League of Women Voters, call 617-964-0014.

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<http://www.lwvn.ma.lwvnet.org>

News and Views

From our President Sue Rosenbaum ANNUAL MEETING '06

Our successful Annual Meeting was due to the help of many. Thanks go to: **Andrea Kelley**, for presenting the Jane Leighton Award winner, for arranging the delicious menu from The Ground Round, and for providing the access to the meeting location.

Andrea Kozinetz for reservations.

Sharon Roberts and **Allison Stoner** for setup and cleanup.

Nancy Crowley for the table linens and flowers.

Barbara Herson for the mugs and linen napkins and her recycling initiative.

Bonnie Carter for her punch bowl and secret League recipe.

Robin Maltz for the Annual meeting workbook.

Amelia Koch for presiding at the meeting and continuous dedication to the board.

Mary Adelstein for serving as parliamentarian.

Beth Lowd for campaign leadership during the past year on the Board.

Jennifer Stoner for creating gift baskets with her homemade soaps.

And all the former Jane Leighton winners for their help in preparing for the evening.



DR. RUTH NEMZOFF spoke to an engaged audience about continuing communication with children as they become young adults and beyond

NEW BOARD ORIENTATION

To: Sandy Butzel and Carol Ann Shea

Thank you for your well-organized and informative presentation. The handouts provided interesting historical information and the perspective of long-time League members was invaluable to our new and continuing Board members. It was a great beginning to what I hope will be a successful league year.

From the Treasurer...

Andrea Kozinetz reports that the amount of money LWVMA sent to the Newton League for their Phonathon Fundraiser was intended to be \$350.00 rather than \$35.00 as indicated in the Annual Meeting Report. Thanks for clearing this up, Andrea! ■

PHOTO CREDITS

Page One-NATASHA PALMROTH OF WORLD BOSTON,ORG.

Page Two- ANN GRANTHAM,

Page Three - RICH MALTZ AND ANN GRANTHAM.



Jane Leighton and Robin Maltz

ROBIN MALTZ

Jane Leighton Volunteer of the Year 2006

Like many tried and true League members, the 2006 recipient of the Jane Leighton Volunteer of the Year Award is no stranger to political activism. As a little girl, demonstrating for peace was a family affair, an activity which was as normal a part of life as helping make the bed or being read a bedtime story.

She was born and lived her early childhood in the Midwest, close to the heart of the John Birch Society headquarters. Luckily for us, this family of liberal activists found their way east to Newton, as her father pursued a doctorate.

After high school at Newton North, college undergraduate work at Beloit in Wisconsin and the University of Hartford, a Masters in Public Health from BU, marriage and children ensued. Keeping her hand in volunteering and activism, she found the League. She has been both Recording and Corresponding Secretary, job titles that don't convey the full extent of her contributions. She has been the backbone to the operations of League work for many years. She has consistent follow-through and does not need to be reminded. This has made her tremendously valuable to Newsletter editors, and anyone who mails notices to League members or requires a reliable list of current membership.

She accomplishes anything asked quickly and efficiently, doing whatever necessary to get the job done, even offering the assistance of her children as junior assistants to the project. Some of her kids helped with labels before being old enough to read. That may have meant a few address labels placed upside down... not an insurmountable problem for a family-friendly volunteer organization! Now all her children are all old enough to read the labels if they are asked to help out, and thus has begun the third generation of activism rooted in childhood.

Always well organized, utterly responsible and on time, she has tackled

some of the less glamorous tasks such as updating the handbook, Annual Meeting Workbook, and providing sets of address labels. Robin is always willing to go the extra step, hand delivering a list or doing whatever it takes to finish the job. These projects allow her to work on her own schedule, while juggling the busy lives of her children: school, rock-climbing, baseball, dance, Hebrew school, and soccer, at the very least.

PTO work, organizing for Richardson Playground, being a Visiting Mom, and undertaking her own bat mitzvah at this point in her adult life (her family apparently did more marching and demonstrating than organized religion) are other areas that she has been devoted to.

If she says she'll do it, she will. And she knows when to say no, given her own time and priorities; a value we all respect, and wish we had more of ourselves. She thrives in well-defined, behind the scenes productivity. She has a can-do attitude, has never complained about a task, and brings reliability and grace to every job. The glory-seeking limelight is not her arena. She is probably blushing and uncomfortable right about now.

Back to the little girl: Despite her calm and level-headed demeanor, apparently this was a very determined child. Refusing to wear the required socks for an outing to a much anticipated movie, she did miss the showing of "Born Free", a reference that has stuck within her family as an indicator of her, not stubbornness, but determination. Despite that early punishment, she has apparently forgiven her mother as she recruited the indispensable Elaine Reisman to the Newton league.



Robin and mother Elaine Reisman

Award Presenter
Andrea KelleySurprise Guest
Rich Maltz

TONIGHT WE HONOR AND DECLARE OUR APPRECIATION OF
"BORN FREE" ROBIN MALTZ. ■

Committees - in - Action

Local Action

Contact: Andreae Downs, Chair 617-969-7123

Observers

ELECTION COMMISSION	Nancy Criscitiello
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES	Martha Richmond
NEWTON FREE LIBRARY BOARD	Mary Adelstein
NEWTON PARKS AND RECREATION	Priscilla Leith
NEWTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE	Janet Sterman

Representatives

NEWTON CITIZEN COMMISSION ON ENERGY	Deb Crossley, LWVN Representative
SUSTAINABLE NEWTON COMMITTEE	Sharyn Roberts, LWVN Representative

Committees

CPC LEAGUE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Focus *To follow the process of the granting of Community Preservation funds by studying proposals and observing meetings.*

Members

Anna Maria Abernathy	Priscilla Leith
Deb Crossley	Robertta Leviton
Andrea Kelley	Jennifer Stoner
Amelia Koch	Myra Tattenbaum
Jody Klein	

Contact Jennifer Stoner, Chair 617-283-5687

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Focus *Promoting resource efficiency and energy conservation in public facilities*

Members

Carol Bock	Martha Richmond
Halina Brown	Sharyn Roberts
Katherine Gekas	Heather Tausig
Barbara Herson	Linda Walden
Beth Lowd	

Contact Deb Crossley 617-244-7597

NEWTON NORTH DESIGN REVIEW OBSERVERS

Andreae Downs	Janet Sterman
Amelia Koch	Jennifer Stoner

•••

Feel free to call committee contacts or a Board officer or director to learn more.

Open Meeting Law 101

Like flowers and trees, democracy thrives in the sunshine – which is one reason why the Commonwealth, along with many other states, enacted Open Meeting statutes in the wake of the Watergate scandals. The League has supported state Open Meeting laws since their inception in 1977. Our observers' presence at public meetings has included monitoring local adherence to the law and offering briefings on the law for interested public officials.

The Massachusetts law, which is explained cogently by our own Mary Adelstein on the state League's site www.lwvma.org/guidetoopenmeetings.shtml requires most public boards and committees to hold meetings that anyone can attend.

"Anyone" includes the public and the press. In order to make public attendance possible, the law requires 48-hour public notice of meetings – at the local level, usually via the city clerk and the Internet.

That also means that meetings must be held when and where people can reasonably attend—somewhere wheelchair accessible, with room for all attendees. Further, controversial discussions or decisions cannot be delayed until most attendees tire and go home for the night.

Email or telephone discussions of board business are not proper, neither are small gatherings of some of the board members to decide board business or get information. Essentially, board business should always be discussed at publicly-posted open meetings, so the public may fully understand the information and deliberation that led to a vote or action.

A meeting may be open to the public but not open to public comment – that decision falls ultimately with the committee chairperson. Public hearings may also have special notification requirements, depending on the body and the type of hearing.

The minutes of open meetings must be available to the public within 10 days – whether approved by the body in question or not. This allows an interested individual to read about discussions or decisions even if he or she misses the meeting in question.

Bodies that don't keep minutes are in violation of the Open Meeting Law. Audiotapes, which are also public record, are not considered proper minutes. Other documentation used at a meeting, with a few exceptions, is also public and should be available to those who request it.

Voting must also be done openly (no secret ballots) and recorded in the minutes.

Some meetings are not covered by the Open Meeting Law. These are usually meetings that involve exempted bodies, like the judiciary or Department of Social Services. Boards and committees that fall under the Open Meeting Law can take a public vote to enter "executive session" for the purpose of making personnel decisions, conducting negotiations, mediating a dispute, considering security measures or tackling other issues that might violate individuals' privacy or jeopardize a deal.

But even in these cases, once a decision is reached, the minutes become public. Exceptions and their rules are clearly demarcated in Mary Adelstein's online booklet.

The public should be given a reasonable estimate of when the body will resume public discussions – executive session should not be used to exclude observers from subsequent board business that does not fall under the rules of executive session.

The open meeting law and the public information act have been a tremendous asset for citizens, the press, and civic organizations. These laws not only empower

Continued on page 8

Local Action



Mayor David B. Cohen
City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Centre, MA 02459

May 25, 2006

Dear Mayor Cohen:

If negotiations with the property owner are successful, the City may have the opportunity to purchase the property at 20 Rogers Street adjacent to the public beach and bathhouse at Crystal Lake in Newton Centre.

Crystal Lake is a unique public recreational facility heavily used and appreciated by Newton residents for many years. It offers swimming, boating and passive recreational opportunities. It serves people of all ages and abilities.

The League of Women Voters of Newton supports efforts by the city to purchase this property, if it can be accomplished for a reasonable amount. We encourage you to work with the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Conservation Commission, the Community Preservation Committee, the Law Department, city employees and elected officials to add to the existing public beach and bathhouse at Crystal Lake so that more Newton residents can use this valuable resource.

Sincerely yours,
Susan Rosenbaum,
For the Steering Committee
League of Women
Voters of Newton

Welcome New Members!

JANET STERMAN
120 Church St #3,
Newton, MA 02358
jjsterman@rcn.com
617 413-1323

RUTHANNE FULLER
32 Suffolk Road
Chestnut Hill, MA 02467
617 738-5311
damc3@aol.com

HANDBOOK CORRECTION:

ELEANOR BLOOM
HAS A NEW ADDRESS:
250 Hammond Pond Parkway
#1210S, 02467



Think Green... Save Trees!

Join our LWVNSaveTrees listserv and you will receive an electronic message to view the Newsletter. Send a blank e-mail to:
LWVNSaveTrees-subscribe@yahoogroups.com
and save trees! ■

Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

- I would like to join the League of Women Voters of Newton. Enclosed is my check for \$55 payable to LWVN.
- Lifetime membership \$1000
- I would like to receive materials about the League.
- I would like to be contacted by a League member to talk about LWVN.

Mail this form (and your check, if joining) to:
Andrea Kozinetz Holtz at 8 Stony Brae Road,
Newton Highlands, MA 02461

My email address may be shared with State and National LWV



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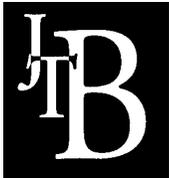
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Carol Ann Shea
 Owner Broker

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Non-Partisan Policy

On Thursday, June 29, the newly elected Board of Directors adopted the following :

THE NON-PARTISAN POLICY AS IT APPLIES TO MEMBERS

The League prides itself on having a membership composed of diverse, informed women and men. Its individual members are encouraged to participate fully in party politics and governments at all levels. Many league members have strong affiliations with political parties or candidates, or are elected officials themselves.

THE NON-PARTISAN POLICY AS IT APPLIES TO BOARD MEMBERS

The Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Newton has a responsibility to uphold the non-partisan status of the League as an organization. The President and Vice Presidents, Voters' Service Chair, Newsletter Editor, Education Chair, and Local Action Chair shall not engage in visible support of political candidates. Board members should use discretion to ensure their personal political activities are not identified with the League in the public mind. Candidates for elected office and their campaign managers cannot serve on the Board of Directors. If any questions arise regarding the nonpartisan policy, the matter will come before the Board for interpretation and discussion. If a Board member resigns from the Board because of a conflict in this policy, the member shall not return to the Board until after the next Annual Meeting. Final decisions about implementing this non-partisan policy rest with the Board of Directors.

*Adopted by the
LWVN Board of Directors June 29, 2006 ■*

LWV Legislative Priorities 2006

NATIONAL

Campaign Finance Reform
Civil Liberties
Election Reform
Lobby Reform and Ethics
Redistricting Reform
Voting Rights Act
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
Clean Air
DC Voting Rights

NEWTON

Maintain strong work of Local Action Committee
Community Preservation Act
Observer Corps: add NNHS Design Review observers; create three person teams
Newton Parks' Master Plan
Environment: Energy Action Plan, High-Performance Building Commission, Sustainable Newton Committee

STATE

Empowering Voters Project - Election Reform
Earned Income Credit
Education & Education Finance
Equitable Annuity Coverage
Health Care Costs
Health Care Trust
Health Education in Schools
Mercury Management
Patient Safety
Ongoing Education - Design Review and School Committee observers
Housing; Monitor implementation of the AAIP
Reduction in size of Board of Aldermen
Sidewalk Clearing

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

To be connected to the National League, their pdf files, including Focus on Issues (positions for each program area and how to use them at all levels), go to www.lwv.org. You will need the number in the address label on your Voter magazine to access information.

LWVM offers *Where We Stand*, which includes all the positions. Go to www.lwvma.org, and click on "Where We Stand" in the right hand column.

For LWVN's positions, visit our web site (www.lwvn.ma.lwvnet.org) or read our local handbook. ■

LWVN CALENDAR

July

- 11 Tuesday 7:30 p.m. **Local Action Committee** meeting at the home of Myra Tattenbaum, 210 Upland Ave., Newton Highlands. 617-527-3859.
- 18 Tuesday 7:00 p.m., **Working Board Meeting** at the home of Andreae Downs, 854 Chestnut, Waban, 617-969-7123.
- 20 Thursday 7:15 p.m., **LWVN Board** meeting at the home of Sue Rosenbaum, 1212 Winslow, Waban, 617-332-0306.

August

- 1 Tuesday 7:30 p.m. **Local Action Committee** meeting at the home of Andreae Downs, 854 Chestnut, Waban, 617-969-7123.
- 3 Thursday 6:30 p.m. **Working Board/Potluck** at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 Eastside Pkwy, 02458. 617-964-0333
- 17 Thursday, **Newsletter Deadline.**

September

- 3 Thursday 6:30 p.m. **Working Board/Potluck** at the home of Ann Grantham, 46 Eastside Pkwy, 02458. 617-964-0333
- 14 Thursday, 7:15 p.m., **LWVN Board** meeting at the home of Roberta Leviton, 84 Sumner St., Newton Centre, 617-965-0016
- 21 Thursday, **Newsletter Deadline.**

Legislative Roundtable



For current schedule log on to
www.newtv.org

OPEN MEETING LAW

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the public, but also increase understanding of government. The benefits of increased accountability of public officials and public information only accrue when the public is watching. Observation of public meetings should be part of what local organizations do. Friends of the library should attend meetings of the library trustees; environmental groups should watch conservation commissions and boards of health; parent-teacher organizations should attend school committee meetings.

The open meeting law is an important instrument of informed citizen participation in government. This statute is sometimes ignored and misunderstood, but where it is consistently employed it works well. Its fullest implementation depends not on government but on the active involvement of citizens.

Compiled by Andreae Downs from LWVM Guide to Open Meetings written by Mary Adelstein and revised in 1996 by the author and Lynn Cohen, Copyright ©1996 by the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts ■

League of Women Voters of Newton

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