

HISTORY OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of JO DAVIESS COUNTY

The idea of a League of Women Voters in Jo Daviess County began with Marge Hospodar and Bonnie Cox. Marge had been very active in the League in Oak Park and she talked with Bonnie about starting one here.

In February, 1981, representatives from the Illinois LWV spoke to a public meeting at the old Kentucky Fried Chicken (now home to the "Galena Gazette". Interest was great and so the process began, starting with the designation of our League as "pre-provisional" in September, 1981. Following completion of certain requirements, our League was given "provisional" status in March, 1983.

Our activities during these two stages included:

Juvenile Court Watching (1981)

Study and consensus on:

- Alternatives to Prison (3-83)
- National Security (10-83)
- Conducting a jail survey (12-83)
- Conducting an income assistance survey (2-84)
- Marital Property Law (4-84)

Conducting a Child Welfare Roundtable, led by LWVIL members (3-83)

Attending legislative seminars in Springfield

Attending LWVIL conventions

Hosting candidate forums

Building an observer corps (of public governing bodies)

Voter registration and

Attending regional workshops.

In order to become a full-fledged League, we also had to:

- Have at least 40 members;
- Write bylaws;
- Prepare a feasibility study;
- Do a study of local government issues;
- Write a nonpartisan policy;
- Develop program;
- Do citizen education;
- Elect officers;
- Financially support the League;
- Publish a "This is Jo Daviess County" booklet; and
- Publish a "Voter" newsletter.

Having accomplished all of this, we gained full local League status in January, 1985!

With our new status, we were able to conduct local studies, come to consensus and take action on:

- Natural Resources (1983)
- Mental Health Services: Preventive and Early Intervention (1985-86)
- Land Use and the Environment

- Planning and Zoning: Study of Land Use Planning & Practices in JDC (1989-90)
- Ground –Water Quality in JDC (1986)
- Landfill Proposals (involving public meetings to educate residents re. the expansion of a landfill near Galena, circulating petitions and mounting an intensive letter-writing campaign. The landfill sale did not take place and EPA closed the landfill site.) (Fall, 1993)
- Children at Risk (2000)
- Breaking the Cycle of Violence (2001)
- Citizen Involvement (2005)
- Immigration in the Tri-State Area (2006)

LWVIL Studies:

- Education (1980s)
- Community Mental Health (1987)
- Early Childhood Intervention (1998)
- KidCare (Illinois program providing health care coverage to children of low-income, working parents)
- Local Government
- Election Administration
- Campaign Finance (2000)
- Death Penalty (2003)
- Pension Study (2012)
- Charter Schools (2014)

LWVUS Studies:

- Agriculture (1987)
- Health Care (1991)
- Education (2011)

Honors Received:

- JDC Bar Association's **Lifetime Liberty Bell Award** in special recognition to persons or organizations with many years of outstanding service to their communities (May, 1997)
- Riverview Center, Inc.'s **Outstanding Community Leadership Award** (for efforts in helping to establish the Mental Health 708 Board) (2001)
- **Making A Difference Award** from LWVIL for our 3-year project on "Smart-Growth for Our County" Roundtable, "Tour de Sprawl" and a citizen education project on the County Comprehensive Plan (at the request of the JDC County Board and chaired by Lu Bleveans and Dick Pouzar) (Summer, 2003)
- **56th Biennium Community Impact Award from the LWVIL** for LWVJDS's "work in engaging and educating its community to appreciate the myriad issues and perspectives triggered by the siting of a mega dairy in Nora, Illinois, including learning more about the geology and hydrology of Jo Daviess County and encouraging science-based stewardship goals to protect water resources in the region." (2013)

- **Awarded the “Effective Community Engagement Award” at the LWVUS 2016 Convention in Washington, D.C.**, for our Water Resource Management Planning efforts in the county.
- **Nutrient Sensor Action Challenge Stage I Prize** of \$10,000 received for winning proposal to conduct continuous nutrient monitoring on the Galena River with low-cost sensors (2017).
- **2018 Blackhawk Hills Regional Council Award** for our water resource management work
- **2018 Watershed Stewardship Award from the Illinois Lake Management Association**

Fundraising Efforts:

- Garage Sales
- “League Day” for shopping (Participating merchants donated 10% of any sale to a customer stating, “This is a League purchase.”) (November, 1981)
- Fund Drive through telephone calls (June, 1985)
- Ads in our “Voter”
- Fudge Booth (1985 – 2005) (201? – current)
- League to League B&B (Summer, 1987)
- Chocoholic Dreams Booth at the June Arts Festival (1989, 1990)
- Silent Auction (1993)
- LWVIL fundraising calls
- “Celebrating People, Products and Progress in JDC” dinner (2015)
- From 2013 through 2018 received over \$32,000 in donations for water resource management work from various sources (City of Galena, East Dubuque Fertilizer Plant, Galena Lions Club, Grace Episcopal Environmental Committee, John & Marge Cooke, the Oak Lodge Foundation, and other private donors)

Other Activities:

- Sponsored a roundtable on ways to improve service to children and youth in JDC. (3-83)
- Participated in “Great Decisions”.
- Members attended National and State League Conventions.
- Conducted legislative interviews.
- Spearheaded a task force to organize Galena’s ordinances.
- Prepared voters’ guides at election times.
- Walked in Galena’s 4th of July Parades for several years.
- Farm Tour (2002)
- Luncheon series (2003, 2004, 2005)
- State of the County (2002, 2003)
- Held panel on computer voting at the Galena Library (the result of the “Help America Vote Act”). (2002)
- Sponsored Public Dialogue on the U.S. Health Care System leading to Congressional Hearings and action in Springfield. (2006)
- Sponsored forum on “Homeland Security Here at Home.” (2006)
- Sponsored production of the play “Great American 4th of July Parade”. (June, 2008)

- Members attended legislative seminars, regional workshops and leadership workshops.
- Sponsored a Mega Dairy Seminar with panel including representatives from the Illinois E.P.A. and the U.S.D.A., held at the Galena Middle School. (June, 2011)
- Members attended LWVIL issues briefings (2012, 2014-2017)
- Members attended LWVIL "State of the State" Luncheons (2013-2017)
- Members attended LWVIL conventions (2013, 2015, 2017)
- Coordinated an all-day tour for Ralph Martire with the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, to educate on the need for a Graduated Rate Income Tax amendment to the Illinois Constitution. (2014)
- Sponsored a Gun Violence Prevention Panel Discussion with over 100 attendees (2014)
- Participated in and LWVIL Membership/Leadership Development training and implementation
- Worked with Galena Rotary Club to offer daylong conference, *Water: We're All in the Same Boat* (2017).
- Initiated and led process to create the *Galena River Watershed Plan: Phase I* supported with \$38,000 Clean Water Act Section 319 grant funding through the Illinois EPA (completed in September, 2018).
- Initiated (in 2016) and led the formation of a farmer-led group in the Galena area, the "Soil & Water Health Coalition" and coordinated educational events with \$20,000 grant funding support through the US Fish & Wildlife Services Fishers & Farmers program.
- Created Jo Daviess County karst feature database in 2016 and continue to populate with data (springs, caves & sinkholes) as a model for the Driftless Area. \$17,000 in grant funding support from the US Fish & Wildlife Fish Habitat Assessment program has been received to date for this work.
- Conducted water sampling project on the Galena River and tributaries in the summer of 2017 and again in the spring of 2018 to analyze for nutrients.
- Worked with farmers in Galena River watershed area in the fall of 2018 to plant 100 new acres of cover crops as a best management practice expected to improve soil health and water quality

Working with Other Groups:

- Worked with the County Comprehensive Planning Committee.
- Participated in Child Welfare Roundtable led by the LWVIL. (3-83)
- Worked with the LWV of Dubuque on the Arms Control Study.
- Joined with others to see that a 708 Board was established.
- Provided a panelist for the JDC Joint Law Enforcement Association's State's Attorney race presentation.
- Served as tour guides for Top of the State Tour by 40 legislators (sponsored by the Community Development Fund of Galena).
- Joined the Driftless Area Partnership on committee to set up educational conferences to gather citizen input on County Land Use Management for the 21st Century Plan. (1998),
- Conducted a bus tour on land use "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly." (Sept., 1998)
- Co-sponsored a Kidcare Forum with the Galena Library.

- Co-hosted a forum on outdoor lighting and drafting a strong proposal for lighting with International Dark Skies Association.
- Suggested the 2001 Rotary Roundtable program of “Smart Growth for Our County” as follow-up to our “Tour de Sprawl: Working Together for Smart Growth.”
- Sponsored Voter Education Forums with the Galena Chamber of Commerce on: 1) Proposed sales tax increase and 2) Highland Community College referendum. (2004)
- Co-sponsored “Challenges for a New Millennium” with the LWV of Dubuque, Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation, JDC Natural Area Guardians, Sierra Club and the Dubuque Audubon Society.
- Sponsored viewing of the movie “Iron-Jawed Angels” recounting the struggle of suffragists who fought for the 19th Amendment. (2005)
- Participated in the Take Five Series on the Environment.” (2006)
- Hosted forum on possible ordinance to make Galena’s commercial establishments smoke-free, at the request of Galena City Council. (September, 2006)
- Our members Kathy Pearson, Julie Bruser, B’Ann Dittmar and Bev Mellskog worked on the Rotary Roundtable planning committee for the 2008 roundtable on the structure of the JDC Board.
- Kathy Pearson represented the League on the Jo Daviess County Board committee researching, studying and making recommendations to the Board on board structure (2009)
- Water Protection Partnership convened (2013)
- Two-year Water Resource Planning Project commenced, including Illinois EPA-approved surveys given to all township boards and city councils, resort core boards and the county board. Every-other-month committee meetings of stakeholders were held to set goals, objectives and an action plan for a county-wide water resource management plan completed in 2016. (2014)
- Provided booth at Galena Earth Day celebrations (2013-2017)
- Presented an interactive forum (“The Land and Water Beneath Us”) with the Illinois Water and Geological Survey scientists as presenters. (2103)
- Sponsored a luncheon and made a presentation to the Prairie Institute Retreat in JDC
- Sponsored a teleconference with Dr. Lynn Haefele, Classrooms First Task Force, for county superintendents and school board members to explore cost savings through cooperation. (2013)
- Several members participated in a Rotary Roundtable on Illinois” Fiscal Crisis.
- Co-sponsored a meeting on the Affordable Care Act and Health Insurance Marketplace with Midwest Medical Center and JDC Health Department. (2013-2014)
- Booklet sponsor and attendees on the Geological Survey Field Trip (2014)
- Co-sponsored, with the LWV of Dubuque, two public programs on storm water management.
- The boards of the LWV of Dubuque and LWV of JDC worked with other Leagues to form a League of Women Voters Upper Mississippi River Region Inter-League Organization (2014-2015) Sponsored first annual meeting of the UMRR ILO (October, 2015)
- Applied for a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife to complete spring testing in Jo Daviess County. (2015)

- LWV of JDC named a Watershed Leader on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife website “Fishers and Farmers” (2016)
- Co-sponsored a regional conference on water issues in the Upper Mississippi River Watershed with the Galena Rotary Club. (2017)
- Worked with University of Minnesota Extension personnel to organize the training of 47 Watershed Game facilitators from Jo Daviess County and other communities in Iowa, Wisconsin and Illinois.
- Participate actively in the Watershed Leaders Network, which brings a multi-state group of farmers and those working in watersheds together.

Advocacy:

- Supported and evaluated the County Board’s implementation of the County Comprehensive Plan.
- Lobbied for the Equal Rights Amendment. (2005)
- Voices for Children: Worked to increase public awareness of needs and provide information about resources
- Worked on Health Care: Dick Pouzar testified. (2006)
- Secured an Illinois Pollution Control Board hearing for Elizabeth, IL regarding the suitability of a CAFO near Nora, providing some of the testimony. (2012)
- Sent members to Springfield to lobby for a GRIT amendment on the November, 2014 ballot.
- Members passed petitions to get the Fair Map Amendment on the ballot. (2014 and 2016)
- Equal Rights Amendment (2017-2018)
- Abolishment of the Electoral College (2018 – current)

Outreach:

- Joined Facebook (January, 2012)
- The LWV of Jo Daviess County website went online. (2016)

League Work Leads to...

- Marge Hospodar began as an observer of the Oak Park Zoning Board and eventually became a member and chair of that board.
- Judy Gratton began as an observer of the JDC Board and went on to get elected to the board and become its first female chair.
- Bonnie Cox served on the board of LWVIL board of directors (2013-2017) and as LWVIL president. (2017-2019)

Prepared by: Kathy Pearson, March, 2010

*Updated by: Bonnie Cox, December, 2015 and January, 2017
Kathy Pearson, 2018, Beth Baranski, 2018*