



The Voter

A Publication by the League of Women
Voters of Ames, IA
September 2005

From the Co-Presidents

Dear Members:

With the beginning of the School year we are also gearing up for what we plan to be an exciting year for the Ames League.

During September and October, we will have a special pre-General meeting, starting at 7 PM with the Program starting at the usual time.

The September meeting will be an important one, since the Living Wage study group will present their final report that, having been approved by the Board, will be presented to the membership for your concurrence. As you well know one of the strengths of the League is to study the issues before we take action.

*Study without action is futile;
action without study is fatal.*

One of our commitments for this year is to increase our efforts on advocacy and action. You will notice that the title for our February meeting is **Organizing for Advocacy**. The focus will be on how to be more effective in that area and how to get more members involved in advocacy particularly in the area(s) recommended by the Living Wages Study.

Board members have been doing a lot of phone calls to hear from each one of you. One of them told me how much fun she was having doing that, since it gave her the chance to get in touch with some members she had not talked with in a while.

We share with all of you our pride in our member Johnie Hammond as she was inducted into the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.

Please read all the included articles and specially the ones on:

- ❖ **Living Wage Study report.** Please bring that report to our meeting. The complete report will be posted in our Website at least one week before the meeting, and additional copies will be available for your reading at the meeting.
- ❖ **LWW Membership Inquiry Pre-Meeting**

Selva Lehman

Mark Your Calendar

Book Club

September 28th, 2005 (Wednesday) *Beer and Circus* by Murray Sperber Led by Jan Beran. Home of Mary Jo Brearley, 1537 Linden Dr., 232-1499.

Candidate Forum

October 24, 2005 (Monday) Ames City Council Chambers 7:00-9:00 p.m. Ames City Council Candidates

Board Meeting

October 6, 2005 (Thursday) At the home of Jackie Manatt 2926 Monroe Drive.

General Meeting

September 15, 2005 (Thursday) 3816 Fletcher Blvd.
7:00 Membership Inquiry Pre-Meeting

7:30 Living Wage Study at Stone Brooke Community Center.

October 20, 2005 (Thursday) 2200 Hamilton Dr.

7:00 Membership Inquiry Pre-Meeting

7:30 Story County Medical Center at Greenhills Dining Room

Other Important Dates

September 13, 2005 (Tuesday) School Board Elections

September 24, 2005 (Saturday) River Valley Park
7:45 a.m. Race Against Racism

League Information

LWV MEMBERSHIP INQUIRY PRE-MEETING, October 20, 2005

Another opportunity to understand more about your League of Women Voters comes on Thursday, October 20 at 7 pm.

For a half-hour before the October general meeting, you'll have the chance to find out about the League's "Observer Corps." What does it mean to be an observer? How does it help you and the community? What does an observer do? So come early—7 pm to the Green Hills Dining Room—and find out the answers to your questions.

This is also a good chance to bring any potential members so they can find out about one of League's functions. Notify Barbara Munson of potential members to invite: amesmunson@aol.com.

Congratulations Johnie Hammond

The Iowa Commission on the Status of Women recently honored Johnie Hammond, member of the Ames League for 30+ years, by choosing her as one of the 2005 Inductees in the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame. Many of her LWV of Ames and LWVIA friends, were present during the Award Ceremony.

The program says about Johnie:
"Guided by an unshakeable belief in justice and dignity for all, in the power of public education, and the democratic process to effect change, she has been an Iowa leader in ways that are far reaching and enduring. She has been a tireless advocate for those sometimes forgotten: children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, women, and low-income families and individuals."

**JOHNIE WE CONGRATULATE YOU AND GIVE OUR
THANKS**

Vote Today Signs

The Ames School Board Election is Tuesday, September 13. Please check your garages, basements, attics and Family Room Closets for "VOTE TODAY" signs, and see that they are prominently displayed along well-traveled streets by late Monday evening or by the crack of dawn Tuesday morning. Thank you! And don't forget to vote yourselves. Even an uncontested election deserves our respect and attention.
VOTER SERVICES

LWV Races Against Racism

The Board of the Ames LWV voted to grant \$350 toward the Race Against Racism. The 5K walk/run will be held September 24 at Nutty Woods, North River Valloey Park in Ames

The 5K fun run/walk will help the YWCA develop and implement a multicultural day camp for elementary school children in grades 3-5. The camp will provide opportunities for campers to appreciate different cultures and traditions. Campers will also learn important life skills and to appreciate diversity in our community through personal interaction, the arts, history and stimulation.

The League will be organizing at least 1 team to participate in the 5K fun run/walk. Team registration is \$12 per person (due by September 8) and each team needs to be at least 5 people. If you are interested in participating in the run/walk, please contact Julie Snyder-Yuly at jlsnyder@iastate.edu or 294-9867. Friends, children and spouses of League members are all encouraged to participate.

In addition to participants, the League is in need of volunteers from 8:00 a.m. to noon to pass out information at their table. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Jeannette Bohnenkamp or Selva Lehman.

The League encourages interested members to come out and participate in this fun family event. You can get more information about the Race Against Racism by calling the YWCA Ames/ISU at 294-1663.

Program Books

The 2005-2006 Booklets are ready for distribution. Pick your at our next General meeting. Please note the following Correction:
pg3., substitute November 8 (instead of the 15th.) for Election Day.
Pg.5, the correct address for Randi Peters is 3127 Greenwood Rd.
Please ad our Catt Associate student liasion **AMANDA JEAN WOLF** - Phone: 515-295-2201 Email: wolf03@iastate.edu

League Activities

Message to Members on Email Addresses and the New League Web site

July 28, 2005

We are excited that after months of planning and hard work, the new LWWUS Web site is nearly complete. In addition to a brand new design, the site has a content management system that makes it much more user-friendly and easier to find the information you want. All of these exciting developments are going to be available in the very near future.

Another new feature relates to online security. Although most of the information on the new LWWUS site will be available to the public, there is some information which needs to be limited to members. This is particularly true of our member-donor database. To keep that and other internal League documents (like budget and program planning documents) secure and accessible only by members, we have worked with experts in the field to develop a login procedure for our members' section. Key to this procedure is the use of your own email address as your personal identifier. Therefore, the LWWUS urges all Leagues to work with you as members to make sure we have your current email address, so that access to the new members-only information on the Web site is not delayed. By the way - the LWWUS NEVER sells or trades member email addresses, so you can be confident that this information will not be shared.

We are very excited about the new web site and its anticipated launch in the next few weeks. To make it easy for our members to remember passwords and log into member information there, we've set it up like most other Web sites where your email address is your user name and you set your own password.

If the members' email address is in our database, they can log in and that process will generate a security key that will be immediately emailed to them to use to complete the log in process.

If their email address is not in our database, they will be prompted to submit additional information in order to verify their identity and help ensure the information is accurate and the security and privacy of information is retained for all members. Once confirmed, they will receive their security code via email and can log in and access their own profile page, where they will also be able to set their own password.

Please help avoid any delay in member access by obtaining and updating the email addresses online. Remember - the LWWUS NEVER SELLS OR TRADES email addresses of its members.

We hope you will be excited once you begin to use the new LWWUS Web site. The entire site will have a new look and feel, and will be much easier to navigate. Access to the data and other materials in the members' site is one of the benefits of your League membership, and we want to make sure all members have the correct access code to ensure that they can take advantage of this information.

HOUSING EVERYONE TAKE 2

The Interfaith Economic Justice Initiative and the Story County Housing Coordinating Board is sponsoring a Public Gathering with Community Leaders Committing to Affordable Housing Solutions.

This is a good opportunity for the League to share our commitment to support programs in that area.

All League Members are encouraged to attend.

We do have a Position Statement:

Affordable Housing (1992): Support the city of Ames' housing goal to "provide a wide variety of housing types and locations to serve the residential needs of the present and future populations" (from *Ames Land Use Policy Plan*). To accomplish this goal we must create and maintain an adequate supply of sound affordable housing for the very low, low, and moderate income individuals and families in our community by:

- supporting programs to maintain and expand home ownership opportunities
- creating new affordable housing units in both the city and university community (both rental and owner-occupied)
- conserving and maintaining existing housing stock
- exploring planning for affordable and accessible housing in all neighborhoods and communities
- supporting public/private partnerships to expand housing opportunities
- using a variety of financing approaches to help families secure adequate housing.

Time and Place of the Public Gathering

Thursday September 29, 2005

5:30 PM Sack Lunch

6 to 9 PM Program

Bethesda Lutheran Church

1517 Northwestern, Ames

Pre-register by September 26th to reserve your \$5 sack lunch. Contact Bev Reddick at 292-0861 or bev_reddick@qwest.net

Living Wage Study Group Final Report

Leave it to the League of Women Voters to choose challenging local studies!

Two years ago this coming November we started to study the Living Wage possibility for our community. Twenty-two months later and tens of meetings later we can say with satisfaction that we have done that and are looking forward to your discussion, questions and decisions regarding our findings. An extremely dedicated and hardworking study group of ten of us grappled with sometimes conflicting perspectives, heard presentations from a wide range of persons working with people in poverty, read books, availed of media-print and electronic- information, interviewed employers and human resource personnel, consulted with communities where a Living Wage ordinance is in place, utilized research information, and finally condensed it all for you to digest and consider concurrence with our consensus statements.

We want to especially thank particular individuals. Ruth Jones, our faithful and accurate secretary and author of the first study report draft, David Sahr who 'finessed' our report presented to the LWV Board of Directors, Selva Lehman for her fine work in preparing power point slides for our program last year, and Vic Moss, who joined the study as our Consultant and was a regular attendee at the meetings.

We celebrated the conclusion of our study with a potluck and a farewell to Ruth Jones. We can honestly say that we do regret the large amount of time and energy invested because we learned so much and believe that this effort will have a long-term impact on our community

Jan Beran
Co-Chair of Study Committee.

LIVING WAGE STUDY REPORT To be presented to Members at the September 15 meeting

Introduction

There are many individuals in Ames and Story County who do not earn a self-sufficient living/livable wage* or do not have access to supplemental resources that will enable them to meet their most basic needs for housing, food, clothing, medical care, school fees, further education, transportation, child care, etc.

Generally, women head low-income families. They have primary responsibilities to care for children and to work. Their opportunities for employment in higher paying jobs are severely limited.

The probability that low-income families can achieve self-sufficiency is low, unless they are able to access and complete post-secondary education. Education is one of the primary ways to move out of poverty.

The lack of livable wages affects both wage earners and those dependent upon them, especially children. The poverty for children in the U.S. is almost double that of adults. Living without basic necessities means the children experience great disadvantage and deprivation. Further, their futures are being severely compromised.

With the constant financial struggle, low-income families experience significant emotional stress and family life suffers. This stress has a debilitating effect on marriages, parenting, and other relationships. Conflict over finances is in fact the biggest reason for failure in the relationship of couples. This stress also puts the children at greater risk, as it contributes to and accelerates child abuse.

Low-income families often fall behind in their rent and many face evictions. The result is that they are moving frequently and sometimes become homeless. This compounds the instability and insecurity in families, and the involved children often do poorly in school with negative long-term consequences for themselves and society.

Because low wages make many Ames housing options unaffordable, low-income families may move to communities where housing is cheaper. Transportation can then become an additional major expense. There is no countywide public transportation system.

Two factors are shifting more and more of the financial costs and social service obligations to the local community and not-for-profit agencies. One is the reduction and elimination of social safety nets. For example, welfare reform legislation enacted in 1996 includes a lifetime limit of five years for the large majority of recipients. The other factor is the increasing number of jobs that are not paying a livable wage. When families' incomes are inadequate, the families are forced to look elsewhere for the needed support to survive. These insufficient wages place an additional financial burden on the larger

community, which then must make available school lunch subsidies, food stamps, housing subsidies, assistance with medical and dental bills, heating assistance, and other financial aid.

* These terms will be used interchangeably.

Scope and Limitations

A Living Wage ordinance provides that a livable wage be paid to persons employed by

- ★ the city (Ames)/county (Story)
- ★ those businesses and corporations with whom the city/county has service contracts
- ★ those businesses that receive economic development funds and incentives.

Thus, public funds do not benefit governments and businesses that pay poverty-wages. Living wage ordinances most often use two Living Wage criteria: Living Wage level with benefits and Living Wage level with no benefits. The most effective ordinances also include a provision for annual inflation adjustments.

In this study we gathered information regarding ordinances in other communities that have Living Wage laws. We tried to ascertain whether such ordinances have made a difference in communities in terms of increased wages and benefits paid by cities and entities that contract with the city for services. Few statistical studies have been done to determine whether such studies have made a difference. Circumstantial evidence regarding Living Wage ordinances is included in this report.

Information on a wide range of employee salaries was gathered regarding the City of Ames and Story County. We also examined the wages and salaries paid to taxpayer-supported city and county employees, specifically City of Ames, Ames School District, Mary Greeley Medical Center, and Story County. Salary scale and benefits information were obtained from each of those entities.

Information was also acquired from Iowa State University. While it is a state tax-supported entity, it was included because it is a major employer in our community. DOT was not included because it is supported by state taxes, and many of their employees work throughout the state.

We also secured information from a sampling of the more than 200 employers who contract with the city. We also considered, to a limited extent, the impact a Living Wage ordinance would have upon small businesses and non-profits. Our group sought wage information from large businesses wherein persons are paid an hourly wage. We also gathered extensive information from persons studying the reality of poverty, non-profit agencies that have emergency assistance, and from government-related entities that supplement earnings.

Proposed Position Statement

The League of Women Voters of Ames:

- ★ Supports adequate wages to enable working people to cover basic needs and to live with dignity and a sense of self-worth.
- ★ Affirms the principle of equal pay for equal work.
- ★ Supports the city of Ames and Story County adopting a Living Wage ordinance requiring a livable wage be paid:
 - to all full- and part-time city and county employees,
 - by firms whose contracts exceed \$15,000.00 for any 12 month period. (This applies to the hours the employees are working on city or county contracts.)
 - by firms that receive economic development money or incentives from the city or county.

The following study group members prepared this report:

Jan Beran and Karen Bolluyt, Co- Chairs

Steve Aigner, Jan Flora, Mary Gillette, Betty Johnson, Ruth Jones,
Selva Lehman, Beverly Reddick, David Sahr, and Clayton Swenson

Vic Moss, Consultant

NOTE: The complete study document will be available on our Website one week before the meeting

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Co-Presidents:
Jeanette Bohnenkamp
Selva Lehman
Voter Editor: Julie Snyder-Yuly

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

Meet a Member

Randi Peterson

Co-President Elect

I grew up in Marshalltown and married my husband Steve in 1970. While attending the University of Iowa during 1970-1976 I became very politically aware. We have five children. We adopted three from Korea, our first daughter Kate in 1975, and daughter Michelle and son Joe in 1978. In 1979, my daughter Lindsay was born to us. Son Toby was born in 1983. He experienced heart failure two weeks later, was air lifted to the University of Iowa Hospitals and after three weeks of praying, waiting out a viral infection and finally heart surgery, he survived. I became more aware of health care issues and services, and patient and family services. I learned to be more active in public awareness issues.



We lived in Dubuque from 1976 to 1982, where I became active in Community Theater and the Iowa Women's Political Caucus. I was also active as a school volunteer and in my church.

In 1982, we moved to Ames, where Steve became the Associate Director at the Iowa State Center while I kept busy with children's activities, school issues, diversity awareness and also very active at Bethesda Lutheran Church. From 1990 to 1994 we moved away. During those years I became very involved with local schools committees. I was also active as a member on the Eden Prairie Multi-culture, Gender Fair, Disability committee that involved school personnel, the business community, parents and other community volunteers. I was also involved with the Hennepin County Library Committee in Eden Prairie.

After returning to Ames in 1994, I interned at YSS and received my Social Work degree at Iowa State. I later became a certified optician and managed Midwest Vision in downtown Ames. In 1996, when Steve formed his own private management company, manages theaters, arenas, civic centers and ice facilities for cities and counties, I became his assistant for community relations. I am involved with many organizations in Ames, including the League of Women Voters, AAUW, Bethesda Lutheran Church, the American Red Cross Board and DAT team, Rotary, and various diversity committees with the Ames School District, Breaking Down the Barriers and Ames Chamber of Commerce.