

CANTON VOTER

Nov/Dec 2009



Canton League of Women Voters
www.LWVCT.org/Canton

WHAT A WONDERFUL WEEK IT WAS!

From December 5 - 13, our League of Women Voters of Canton hosted a delegation of six young lawyers from Russia. They were sponsored by the Open World Leadership Center (www.openworld.gov) and the national League guided our local League as it developed the agenda and found host families.

For a year, a committee, including Evelyn Kubas, chairman, Carrie Sinish, vice chairman, and Nancy Donoghue met and planned for this visit which included meeting with town leaders in government and business as well as members of the judiciary, lawyers practicing in various aspects of the law, and members of the faculty of the University of CT School of Law. They were assisted by Mark Quattro who was instrumental in helping set up several of the meetings for the group.

Our Russian delegates included Pavel Aleynichenko from Gelendzhik; Liliya Saburova from Moscow; Igor Savchenko from Chelyabinsk; Konstantin Tarasov from Moscow; Sergey Kalmykov from Orenburg; and Sergey Pukhanov from Tula. All were professionals in the field of law, except Sergey Pukanov, the facilitator, who was an Associate professor in the Department of Linguistics at Tula State University. We were very fortunate to have Sergei Vladov as our simultaneous interpreter.

The presenters went out of their way to make the delegation feel welcomed. The League is grateful to all of them for the gift of time, and information. There is not room in this newsletter to include the entire agenda (which League members have received), but a special thanks goes to town residents/officials who were involved as presenters. They include Senator Kevin Witkos, Representative Timothy LeGeyt, Superior Court Justice Marshall Berger, Superior Court Justice Michael Sheldon, First Selectman Richard Barlow, Chief Administrative Officer Robert Skinner, Police Chief John Murphy, Acting Police Chief Lori Coppinger, Mary Tomolonius, Chamber of Commerce, who made a gourmet luncheon for the group, Mark Quattro, Chamber of Commerce, and Mike D'Apice, Chamber of Commerce.

Other presenters included Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz, Deputy Secretary of the State Lesley Mara, Attorney Lewis Button and Attorney Seth Klaskin of the SOTS office, Representative Michael Lawlor, Superior Court Justice Jonathan Silbert, Attorney Peter Kelly, Professor Peter Kochenburger and Professor Mark Janis of the UConn School of Law, Hartford Courant Investigative Reporter David Altimari, Staffers of the offices of Senator Dodd and Representative Murphy, and Attorney Kara Hart of the Greater Hartford Legal Aid.

For the lighter side of their visit, Judi Friedman hosted a delightful dinner at the beginning of their visit while Nancy Donoghue gave a farewell dinner at the end of the visit when the League presented each of them a gift, photo albums prepared by the Clarkes and the Swibolds. Marjorie Clarke provided dinner at the week end wrap-up meeting, and Ev Kubas and Russian friends of the Kubases also hosted a dinner. In the middle of the week, they enjoyed an evening of American music which was performed by the Salt & Pepper Gospel Singers. The last full day, they attended the Hartford Pops Holiday Event at the Bushnell.

Manuela Campbell, Global Democracy Specialist, of the LWWUS came up from Washington, D.C. to join the group Thursday and Friday of that week. It was such a pleasure to meet her and to have her as a part of this event.

Please read the President's Letter for a listing of the League members who helped make this week the success that it was. The article, "More About the Russian Experience" will provide more information about the week.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

For those of you who could join us for some of the events surrounding the visit of the Russian delegation, I thank you. And for the twenty Canton League members who were actively involved in making this week possible, many, many thanks! It took the ideas, the time, and the energy of many people for this to happen.

It was a wonderful event which was well received by the six young Russian professionals. They returned to their country with a wealth of information, gathered from the various excellent presenters whom they met during their visit.

The following people assisted the Planning Committee (listed in alphabetical order):

Kathy Amrein- arranged for the initial host/delegate meeting place
Carol Barlow- kept track of all expenditures and wrote report for the LWVUS
Richard Barlow- one of the presenters
Karen Berry- provided refreshments for the Wednesday evening musical event
Karen Bristol- arranged the state Capitol tour for the group
Marjorie Clarke- provided dinner at her home for the Friday evening wind-up meeting, assisted in choosing gifts, back-up hostess
Roger Clarke- designed the program which was given to audience at the Wednesday evening performance, assisted in choosing gifts, back-up host
Nancy Donoghue- Planning Committee Member, hostess for farewell dinner
Judi Friedman- hostess for welcome dinner which was attended by League members
Mary Hess- In charge of Publicity/Media Relations
Evelyn Kubas- Chairman of the Planning Committee, hostess for one of the Russian visitors
Jane Latus- assisted Judi Friedman by organizing the pot luck dinner
Gina Magennis- hostess for one of the Russian visitors
Mark Quattro- advisor to the Planning Committee
Carrie Sinish- Assistant Chairman of the Planning Committee, hostess for one of the Russian visitors
Gil Small- host for two of the Russian visitors
Ruth Small- hostess for two of the Russian visitors
Gretchen Sonju- assisted with the first day arrival detail
Gretchen Swibold- assisted in choosing gifts, back- up hostess
Richard Swibold- assisted in choosing gifts, back up host

The League Board members provided appetizers, dessert and coffee for the farewell dinner. League members who attended Judi Friedman's dinner provided food for the event. Non- League members who also were instrumental in assisting us included Dave Kubas, driver of the 12 person van for the week and co-host of one of the Russian visitors, Barbara Backman who hosted one of the Russian visitors, Dave Sinish, co-host for one of the visitors, and Jim Magennis who was co-host for one of the visitors. Halina Wodja and Alla Tilton served as interpreters.

As you can see the success of this week was due to a huge team effort. Many thanks to everyone. I think we can be quite proud of our League.

Ev Kubas

MORE ABOUT OUR RUSSIAN EXPERIENCE

How we wish that each of you could have accompanied the Russian delegation as it proceeded from event to event. The laughter and singing in the 12 person van was really fun to experience.

Of course, our presenters provided in depth presentations, and the young lawyers took voluminous notes. Many hand outs were provided, so that the group had significant information to take back home with them.

But of note were the unexpected extras that our presenters gave to these Russian visitors or that they gave to us. The following summary of the week is written as it occurred, starting with Sunday, December 6 and proceeding through Saturday, December 12.

Michael Broverman, retired chairman of the CHS Social Studies Department, gave the group their grounding in U.S. history with focus on the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and then joined the group for a tour of the New Britain Museum of American Art, and for the Thursday events.

The group was given a wonderful welcome at the home of Lou and Judi Friedman. Judi gave each visitor copies of her children's book which she had authored, and they in turn taught us about the fine art of Russian toasting! The food, provided by the League, was so very delicious.

First Selectman Barlow, CAO Skinner, and Selectman Gilchrist provided a well thought out presentation of town government, but also gave the group wooden Canton Town Hall likenesses, as well as a wonderful spread of goodies to eat.

Police Chief Murphy and Acting Police Chief Coppinger, in addition to a wonderful exchange of information, provided a chance to put on bullet proof vests, get in a police car, see a taser demonstration, and experience the lock up.

Mary Tomolonius provided a gourmet luncheon, and Mike D'Apice gave the group certificates making them honorary members of the Canton Chamber of Commerce.

Senator Kevin Witkos, Rep. Tim LeGeyt, and Rep. Michael Lawlor gave an hour and a half of excellent exchange of ideas, and insight into law making, and provided a platter of cookies and brownies.

Dave Altimari of the Hartford Courant brought out the boxes of information that held the paperwork which he received after much difficulty from which he produced his articles about the hospitals' medical errors and the Catholic Church's reluctance to release documents regarding sexual abuse by certain priests.

Superior Court Justice Jonathan Silbert allowed the group to be present for a pretrial hearing by the opposing lawyers regarding a dispute between neighbors, and shared lunch with the Russian delegation in the court room.

Superior Court Justice Marshall Berger and Superior Court Justice Michael Sheldon gave the group a full day, providing the experience of observing parts of one criminal trial and two civil trials, spent a good deal of time sharing experiences with the group and answering questions, plus joined them for a wonderful lunch at First and Last Tavern in Hartford.

For those of you who came to the Wed. evening event, you know how remarkable the singing of the Salt & Pepper Gospel Singers was. Sadly the CHS Jazz Combo could not perform as school was cancelled that day.

In addition to the dialogue that was shared with Professors Kochenburger and Janis at the UConn School of Law, Professor Janis introduced the group to retired Professor Blumberg, 90 years young, who had collaborated and taught with Professor Olimpiad Ioffe, one of the most reknown Russian law professors who had been on the faculty at the UConn School of Law. These young lawyers had all studied textbooks of Professor Ioffe, and were thrilled to learn of this connection.

The meeting with the staffers of Senator Dodd and Rep. Murphy was informative, and interesting for the group. We missed Sen. Lieberman's staffers as there was the possibility of a group of protesters showing up at his office, so they could not attend.

Our tour of the Hillstead Museum was conducted by Barbara Backman who was also one of the hosts, an excellent, thorough presentation. Attorney Kara Hart provided a well thought out power point presentation regarding human trafficking and domestic abuse that provoked many questions.

Thursday evening Dave and Ev Kubas had the group over for dinner with two of their Russian friends. It was very casual, and was marked by singing and laughter.

Though we knew we would meet Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz, we did not expect to be able to speak with her. She graciously invited the delegation into her office, and they were able to sit down and ask her questions for about 20 minutes after which she had arranged for the group to meet with two lawyers who head up her two large departments, one dealing with the registration of businesses, and the other which runs the elections. It was all very fascinating.

The final professional meeting occurred with Attorney Peter G. Kelly who is principal of Updike, Kelly, and Spellacy, P.C. It was through Attorney Mark Quattro, one of our League members, that this was possible. The delegation found his discussion very useful, especially as he is a Director of PBN Company, a communications and strategic planning firm which has offices in Moscow, and other European cities.

Friday evening, Marjorie and Roger Clarke hosted a lovely dinner for the group, which gave them a chance to get to know our visitors a little better and find out how they were enjoying the week.

Saturday evening was a delightful catered dinner at the home of Nancy Donoghue. The League Board provided appetizers and dessert. It was a chance to give and receive gifts, as well as enjoy more Russian toasts. The Clarkes and the Swibolds, who were in charge of providing each member of the delegation with a gift, decided to put together a book of photographs of the week. The book of photos, which were taken by Dave Kubas and Roger Clarke, was a hit, and will be a source of pleasure in the future as each of the delegates thinks of this week which they had in Canton, CT.

Delegates with hosts and Alla Tilton



Delegates at Canton Town Hall



Russian Delegation with Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz



Delegates with Canton's CAO and First Selectman



Superior Court Justices Marshall Berger
And Michael Sheldon



Voter Service Report

The annual League of Women Voters of Canton Candidate Forum was held on the evening of October 20, 2009 in the auditorium at Canton High School. Candidates for First Selectman, Board of Selectman, Board of Finance and the Board of Education were in attendance. Ms. Leta Marks of West Hartford served as moderator. The event was videotaped by a Canton High School student under the guidance of High School teacher Jeff DuBois and was aired on Nutmeg public access TV on channel 96 on October 26th and 30th.

Many thanks go to all those who volunteered including co-chair Edie Offenhartz who also served as a timer on the evening of the event along with Lucy Royer and David Sinish. Barbara Checksfield collected questions from audience members and the questions were reviewed by David Kubas, Gina Magennis and Carrie Sinish. Membership chair Nancy Donoghue and Missy Zills greeted those in attendance at a table in the foyer with League information.

LEAGUE MEMBERS ARE ELECTED

This past November, three of our members were elected to offices in our town. They include Richard Barlow, First Selectman; Carlene Rhea, Board of Education; and Karen L. Berry, Constable.

Congratulations to all of you!

Program Planning Breakfast



A Program Planning Breakfast will be held at the home of Gina Magennis on Saturday, February 27, 2010 from 9a.m.-12 p.m. This meeting of our entire membership promises to provide a yummy breakfast, a time for lively discussion and a chance to catch up with fellow members. We will review the LWV studies that are being conducted at the state and federal levels and receive updates and ideas for local studies of our own. Please plan to attend.

CALENDAR FOR 2009 - 2010 LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CANTON

DECEMBER

5 - 13 Russian Delegation comes to Canton

FEBRUARY

27 Program Planning Breakfast (9 a.m. - 12 p.m. at Gina Magennis')

MARCH

23 Flatbread Fundraiser

APRIL

Community Forum (date to be announced)

MAY

15 Tag Sale

JUNE

10 Annual Meeting

From the National LWVUS Website:



ACTION ALERT: Pass Comprehensive Health Care Reform

The current state of health care in this country is unsustainable. America is facing a health care crisis caused by a combination of skyrocketing costs and an insurance system that leaves 47 million living day-to-day without coverage. The health care system is endangering both our economy and our health.

Enter your zip code to encourage your Senators to support strong health care reform legislation.

Health care reform legislation must guarantee access to comprehensive and essential benefits to all U.S. residents. It is universal coverage that will determine the humanity of our system, and a public option will make that possible for Americans who cannot obtain coverage through traditional employer-sponsored plans. We believe that the public insurance option is the only way to adequately control costs and protect consumer choice. Every American deserves a choice of health insurance plans, including a public option like Medicare.

The federal government needs to take strong action to reduce costs for individuals, businesses and communities. As a nation, we are spending \$1 out of every \$6 we earn on health care. Over the last three decades, increases in the amount spent on health care have consistently risen faster than wages and inflation. If nothing is done, we could be spending \$3 trillion for health care by 2011 and \$4.2 trillion by 2016.

Take action today to encourage your Senators to support strong health care reform legislation!

TAKE ACTION

1. Contact your Senators now, by entering your zip code, and tell them to support strong health care reform legislation with a public insurance option. Tell them that current health care system is endangering both our economy and our health, and that business as usual is not an option.

2. Send this alert to other concerned citizens - your grassroots network, your friends and coworkers. Encourage them to contact their Senators today!

BACKGROUND

[Learn more](#) about what the League is doing to support health care reform.

[Sign up](#) to receive Action Alerts directly by email. Don't miss an opportunity to take action! It's easy to sign up and the League will never share your email with others: <http://takeaction.lwv.org/lwv/mlm/signup/>.

For additional information, please contact LWVUS Grassroots Lobbyist Christina Vamvas at lobbying@lwv.org.



Message from your Co-Editors:

Happy 2010!! We wish you joy and peace and good health in the year ahead!

Thank you to all who contributed articles for this issue. The deadline for the next issue (Winter 2009) will be February 15th, 2010.

Thanks so much!

Carlene Rhea and Laurice Klemarczyk