

**EMPOWERING VOTERS  
DEFENDING DEMOCRACY**



**THE  
CAPITOL  
VOTER**

**MAY  
2023**

**IN THE MAY CAPITOL VOTER**

- President: Looking Forward
- Why Women's Clubs Mattered and Still Do
- Thank You, Hannah!
- Okemos High School and LWVLA Hold Voter Registration Drive
- June Book Discussion
- Schuler Book Days Recap
- Jumping Worms: Invasive in Michigan
- One Thing: Correction on Crisco
- Welcome New Member

**LWVLA CALENDAR**

**Friday, June 9, noon** – “Why Women’s Clubs Mattered and Still Do,” with guest speaker Dr. Sharon Carlson, MSUFCU (Farm Lane location); catered lunch program.

**Tuesday, June 13, 10 am** via Zoom, Book Discussion Group, **12 Bytes: How We Got Here, Where We Might Go Next.**

*For more information, see articles below.*

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Donna Mullins

It was a pleasure to see so many friendly faces at the annual meeting. Thank you to our Planning Committee, which was led by **Elaine Fischhoff**, Jacqueline Stewart, Kathy Lovell, Lisa Moore (and myself). At the meeting, we elected a new member to the board, Kathy Petroni. Kathy very recently retired from the Broad School of Business at MSU and knows a thing or two about accounting. She is a worthy successor to Barb Bidigare, who was a spectacular board member and treasurer. I know that Barb will continue to serve the League in the future. I look forward to working with Kathy in the coming year.



Speaking of the coming year, it will be my last in this position. While I have had fun (mostly) and feel privileged to have served you, this will be my fifth year as president and it is time to pursue other interests. My plan is to cut back some of the things that I do for the state League so that I can put things in order for the new president. It's time to start thinking about what you want the leadership to look like in the future.

Other changes will be coming as Proposal 2 is implemented. Local Leagues will be involved in educating people on early voting options, among other reforms. As we do this, there will be opportunities to learn about how to do some of the tech-related things that are often left to me, like creating entry and exit videos and simple editing. We'll also see changes in how our local LWV relates to the national League. It's likely that we will be mandated to change the platform of our website. That will take time, money and expertise. It will also take flexibility and an open mind to address the changes that will no doubt be seen as challenges (and, we hope, opportunities).

In 2024, there will be primaries and another "most important election in the history of our country." All the things that we do best will have to be done better in what promises to be another existential election year. The background to these activities is an earth that is in peril, mass shootings, threats to female autonomy, threats to free speech, and politicians who see the stoking of hate as beneficial. The League has a role in protecting democracy in our country, which was once the shining city on a hill. It's not time to give up. It's not time to let anything get in the way of uniting to create a more perfect democracy.

I have one more year in this position, and I'm going to give it all I have (without neglecting friends or family) because democracy at its best looks like love. And we look like love when we work

Together,  
*Donna*

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**WHY WOMEN'S CLUBS MATTERED AND STILL DO**

Jaqueline Stewart, V.P. Program

As members of the LWVLA, you do not need any convincing that women acting in concert can achieve great things. Stephanie Nawyn, the speaker at our annual meeting on April 24, enlightened us about the way that some women were able to vote and even run for office before the 20<sup>th</sup> century; but it was only when the League of Women Voters or its precursor, NAWSA (National American Women's Suffrage Association) organized and campaigned did women achieve *universal* suffrage in the U.S., in 1920. Black men and women still faced hurdles after the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, well into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. They organized themselves into groups to push back, then and now, against suppression of the vote. Black women continue to this day to be a potent force in electoral politics.

Women's groups form for different reasons. Some are purely social, some focus on charitable work, and some organize around community issues; others coalesce around a specific religion or church or campaign for particular issues. You may belong to other women's groups, or perhaps have a friend in a women's club or association.

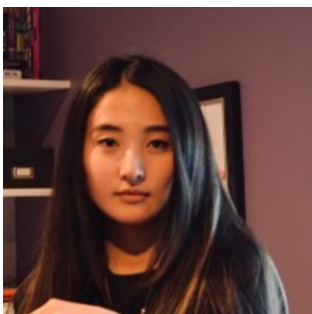
**On Friday, June 9 at noon, the LWVLA will host a lunch meeting** on this subject at the MSUFCU at Farm Lane and Mount Hope. Guest speaker Dr. Sharon Carlson will address the history of Women's Clubs and bring us up to date with why they still serve a vital purpose today.

If you do belong to another women's club or group or know someone who does, please consider bringing a guest from this other group to the luncheon, especially if the other group addresses community needs, inequities or issues that overlap with the mission of LWV. You may choose to pay for your guest's lunch or LWVLA will pay (up to a limit). Either way, it would be helpful to know if you are bringing a guest from another women's group so I can keep track of who is represented and how many extra lunches to budget for. My hope is to see a refreshingly diverse array of new faces. My long-term ulterior motive is that these connections will enrich us all by fostering collaborations. Contact me at [stewart3743@gmail.com](mailto:stewart3743@gmail.com), and watch for an email with more information and a flyer. Registration will open soon.

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## THANK YOU, HANNAH!

Donna Mullins



Nothing lasts, and this month Hannah Richardson, the first president of the Spartan League of Women Voters, is graduating and on her way to law school. Hannah was recently recognized nationally by the [ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge](#). Here's a bit of what they said about Hannah:

*A senior double-majoring in chemistry and political science, Richardson first connected with democratic engagement on MSU's campus through the Center for Community Engaged Learning's (CCEL) Volunteer Innovation Leader program, where she partnered with the League of Women Voters in Lansing. Richardson continued to participate in voter engagement efforts through 2021 and 2022 through her work with the League and MSUvote.*

Richardson has continued her partnership with the League through the Community Engagement Scholar Program (CESP). Through CESP, Richardson has acted as a liaison between the League of Women Voters- Lansing and the inaugural campus chapter of the League of Women Voters founded in 2022.

Richardson spearheaded the Spartan League of Women Voters, a registered student organization at MSU and chapter of the League of Women Voters. With the Spartan League, Richardson planned events revolving around civility education and understanding the passing of Proposition 3 in Michigan. Additionally, she served on the Michigan Secretary of State's College Student Advisory Task Force (CSATF), providing crucial input into youth voter access at a state level.

Many of our members who worked with Hannah over the last few years are not one bit surprised. Hannah enthusiastically says "yes" to opportunities when they arise. (She is wiser about her limits now, but still eager to participate.) She is one of those amazing people who pipes up in a meeting to say that she could help with something, often something you aren't aware that you needed. She is dependable. She is creative. She is intelligent. She remembers that the person in front of her should be treated with kindness and respect.

All who have met her have been touched by her brilliance and compassion. She is leaving a legacy for our League. She will not leave the hearts of those who have worked with her. Oh, the places she will go!

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## VOTER SERVICE UPDATE

### Joanne Winkelman, V.P. Voter Service

Okemos High School and the Lansing Area League of Women Voters held a voter registration drive on May 9. The event was planned with the assistance of Social Studies teacher Kortney Whitmyer and the U.S. Government advanced placement class. Enthusiastic students encouraged their peers to register and, as a result, 60 students registered in person while several others opted to register online after the event. League members Barb Bidigare, Kate Lein and Liz Kaufman worked alongside the students to help answer any questions and facilitate the process.

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## BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

### Donna Mullins

Our April discussion of Alice Randall's *Black Bottom Saints* was stimulating, as always (particularly for those of us raised in Detroit). Detroit had a thriving Black entrepreneurial and arts scene which was dismantled by I-375. That highway will soon be filled; the glory of the past will not rise quickly.

In June we will be reading Jeanette Winterson's *12 Bytes: How We Got Here, Where We Might Go Next*. It's about Artificial Intelligence but presented in a way that non-techie people will find accessible. Women have played an outsized and underreported role in



computer science, which is chronicled in this book. If technology is going to serve the underserved rather than protect the privileged, we need to understand it. Winterson, a brilliant writer with a British wit, explains the changes which already are making a difference in our lives. The Book Discussion Group will meet on [Zoom](#) at 10 am on Tuesday, June 13. For more information, contact [Donna Mullins](#).

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## SCHULER BOOK DAYS RECAP

Delores May, Development Director

LWVLA received a check for \$287.60 from Schuler Books for our Book Days! Many thanks to all who participated. Happy reading!

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## JUMPING WORMS: INVASIVE IN MICHIGAN

Betty Seagull, EAG member



Jumping worms, native to Southeast Asia, were discovered in Michigan at Oakland University in 2008 and have been spreading rapidly since. Similar in appearance to the familiar “nightcrawler”, [invasive jumping worms](#) are easiest to identify by their behavior: they thrash around vigorously, though in colder conditions this might not be demonstrated. Their castings (worm poop) are described as uniform and granular, similar in appearance to coffee grounds.

For context, the reader should know that all earthworms (“nightcrawlers”) in the Great Lakes region are exotic. The familiar earthworms we were taught are good for our gardens are actually a European species which is now widespread in North America. Those worms burrow deep into the soil vertically, pulling organic matter down and mixing it with mineral soil. This mixture is then deposited on the surface as ‘casts.’ They were originally brought here in European soil which was used as a ballast for ships in the colonial period. Now they are widely distributed by fishing, vermiculture, logging and other forest disturbances.

Exotic European earthworms influence forest soils by depleting the duff layer—the springy, loose, dense layer of decomposing organic matter on the surface of an undisturbed forest soil. They deplete the organic matter and compact the soil, disrupt fungal networks and decrease seed germination so that understory plants are lost. These changes then facilitate the growth of invasive plant species. Asian jumping worms deplete forest soils even faster and more severely. Unlike European exotic worms, they live in leaf litter at the top of the soil and do not make deep burrows. Found in high densities, they quickly consume the leaf litter, growing impressively from egg to sexually mature worm in one growing season. They are bad news for our forests, significantly altering the soil structure. There is currently no treatment.

The effort now is to not spread them and to try to protect as much forested land as possible from this invasion. Be on the lookout and do not purchase any plant if the soil surface looks like “coffee grounds.” Do not share plants with friends if they have soil around them. To be on the safe side, share only “bare root” plants, washing off all soil first

with a garden hose or by submerging in a bucket of water. Clean your tools if you go somewhere outside of your own garden with them. Brush your boots before and after hiking. Keep a boot brush in your car. Dispose of worms used for fishing bait in trash rather than letting them loose. Don't transport firewood. Report any jumping worms you find to [Mid-Michigan CISMA](#) or to [MISIN](#) (I have an app on my phone for this). If you want to get involved with citizen science, join the [Great Lakes Worm Watch](#). Whatever you do, **prevent their spread!**

If you want to compost using worms, buy red worms (*Eisenia fetida*) which don't damage the environment. Horizontally striped, they look different from earthworms or jumping worms. Source them carefully, as not all sellers know which worms are which. A recommended ethical source is [happydranch.com](#).

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## ONE THING

The December "One Thing" contained a grievous error, linking Crisco shortening with other commercial products that source from environmentally destructive plantations. Subsequent [research](#) found that "Crisco assures that the palm oil used in the shortening is only sourced sustainably. They have been committed to only 100% sustainable palm oil (purchased)...from responsible certified sustainable sources...Since 2012, Crisco has made Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)-certified palm oil purchases." One has to wonder, though, why they don't mention this on their web site.

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## MEMBERSHIP

Camilla Davis, Membership Director

### WELCOME NEW MEMBER

Susan Convery, East Lansing

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## OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK

All committees would welcome new members. Contact the chairs for more information.

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**VOTER SERVICE:** Contact [Joanne Winkelman](#)

**K-12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE:** Contact [Bettie Landauer-Menchik](#)

**PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE:** Contact [Linda Melaragni](#)

**ENVIRONMENT ADVOCACY GROUP:** Contact [Ellen Link](#) or [Elaine Fischhoff](#)

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