

Health Care Meeting

Our April 21 health care discussion (11-12:30, Durango Public Library) is one of a series of community-based 'Colorado Conversations' about health and health care in La Plata County that Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center (SWCAHEC) and, in our case, the Citizens Health Advisory Council (CHAC) are presenting. The conversation will focus on local-level programs happening in La Plata County to improve access, coordination, and cost of health care. Input from the audience about the programs will help guide future programs and improvements—this is your chance to be heard about health care and to give feedback on exciting local-level programs to improve health care!

The conversation will be facilitated by Dr. Emily Burns, MD, MSPH, Executive Director of SWCAHEC. Light refreshments will be provided.

Celebrating Lincoln of Civil War's Sesquicentennial

Judge Greg Lyman, 6th Judicial Court, will present Lincoln's words and words of those who knew him to explain Lincoln's commitment to the principles of equality and liberty, which transformed our nation. The one-hour program, 7 pm, in the sanctuary of the Unitarian Universalist Church, is sponsored by American Association of University Women (AAUW) and open to the public. (See attached flyer.)

Climate and Energy Action Plan

On March 30, Amanda Saunders, program coordinator for the Climate and Energy Action Plan (CEAP) with the Four Corners Office of Resource Efficiency (4CORE), presented an update on the CEAP. Forty Leaguers, City of Durango representatives, 4CORE staff, CEAP steering committee members, community members and political activists attended the program sponsored by the LWVLPC.

Several controversial questions were asked exhibiting a misunderstanding of what the CEAP is and where it goes from here. The CEAP is a plan developed by 600 volunteers representing a broad spectrum of industries and interests in the community and consists of their findings and recommendations that will be presented in June to government officials in La Plata County and cities of Durango, Bayfield and Ignacio.

Climate and Energy Action Plan (cont.)

The public comment period has ended and the plan is being finalized with feedback incorporated. Government officials will decide whether to ask for more information or evaluate (cost/benefit) specific recommendations, which would by process involve more public input, or do nothing. 4CORE will continue to provide resources and education on actions that individuals can voluntarily do to reduce resource consumption in Southwest Colorado. *—Deanna Collins*

EPA Hearing on FCPP

An Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) public hearing was held on March 31st at Ft. Lewis College to allow the public to comment on a Best Available Retrofit Technology (BART) proposal to reduce nitrogen oxides emissions by 87% at the Four Corners Power Plant (FCPP). This last of four hearings and the only hearing in Colorado was attended by about 80 people. Written public comments may still be submitted until May 2. At the other hearings, about two of every three comments received backed the proposal.

Environmental groups, a county commissioner, Navajos, and concerned citizens testified at the public hearing in Durango. Both LWVLPC and LWV of Montezuma County presented comments. All but one of the 28 presenters at the hearing strongly supported the EPA's proposal. Several presenters referred to League comments saying they agreed.

Although the BART proposal is a result of a haze ruling for national parks and wilderness areas, the same toxins that cause haze also affect health. LWVLPC President Stephanie Huss said "a recent study on the health impacts from FCPP estimated that in 2010, 44 deaths, 66 heart attacks, 800 asthma attacks, and 31 hospital admissions resulted from pollution from the power plant. The resulting health care costs were estimated at \$341 million for that year. This figure breaks down to over \$680 per person cost per capita in the 10 counties of the Four Corners."

The FCPP is a 45-year-old power plant and the largest emitter of nitrogen oxide in the United States. It is one of three coal-fired power plants in the Four Corners area that the EPA is proposing to clean up. A public hearing was held in February for the San Juan Generating Station (see p. 3) and a BART proposal is expected for the Navajo Generating Station this summer. *—Deanna Collins*



We are most grateful to League members Kirk Konick and Diane Wildfang for their generosity in donating the Rochester Hotel's garden and lobby areas, staff, and environmentally friendly china and glassware for our 65th annual meeting May 10, 2011, 4-7 pm





Candidates (l. to r.): Dick White, Emil Wanatka,
Connie Imig, Sweetie Marbury

City Council Candidate Forum

The LWV held a Durango City Council Candidates Forum on March 16, 2011. The four candidates, Dick White, Emil Wanatka, Connie Imig, and Sweetie Marbury were all present. More than 50 persons crowded into the City Hall Chambers to hear the candidate's responses to 14 questions submitted by the audience and asked by moderator, Ellen Park. A wide range of topics was addressed, including what they thought was the biggest issue facing the council, what priority they would give the environment, whether they would support another big box store such as Target coming to Durango, what was their feeling about supporting funding the arts in tough economic times, and what experience they had in creating jobs.

Balancing the city's budget in the face of declining revenues and increasing community needs was on everyone's minds. The candidates seemed to be well informed on the topics they were questioned about. The biggest differences between the candidates appeared to come from their backgrounds, which created differences in their experiences, and hence some differences in focus.

All candidates seemed extremely well qualified for the councilor role and all were passionate about seeking the position. The city is very fortunate that so many are willing to seek to serve in this difficult and often unheralded job.

-Julianne Ward, reporting

Updated LWV LPC and LWV MC Statement on EPA Four Corners regional coordinator proposal of February 2010:

[Ed. Note: Our LWV and the LWV of Montezuma County LWV jointly sent the following update to the state LWVs of NM, AZ and UT, as well as our legislators and other interested parties.]

The League of Women Voters of La Plata County and Montezuma County in southwestern Colorado appreciate

your consideration and support of our February 2010 proposal to the EPA advocating for a regional coordinator for the Four Corners Region. With the recent activity by the EPA to clean up the air in our region by reducing nitrogen oxide emissions at three coal-fired power plants, we have decided to put this project on hold. If we believe at some future date there is a need for a Four Corners regional coordinator, we will again request your consideration and support.

Further emissions standards for air pollutants, such as mercury and greenhouse gas emissions, are to be established by the EPA this year and would continue to improve air quality in the Four Corners. We are closely evaluating each request from the EPA for comment and would encourage your respective Leagues to do likewise. We may ask for support on a particular issue and will contact you at that time.

Thank you for strengthening the reputation of the League by standing with us as we fight for clean air in the Four Corners region.

(signed by representatives of both LWVs)

EPA Hearing on SJGS

LWV LPC President, Stephanie Huss, and EES Committee Chair, Deanna Collins, attended the EPA Region 6 hearing on the proposed Best Available Retrofit Technology (BART) for the San Juan Generating Station (SJGS) coal-fired power plant on Thursday, February 17, 2011 at San Juan College in Farmington, NM. There were over 200 people present. Local governments, the Navajo Nation, utility company owners of SJGS, environmental groups such as Sierra Clubs and Wild Life Guardians, and concerned citizens made 3-minute comments either supporting or opposing the EPA's proposal.

Comments were approximately 50/50 pro and con. Government officials and utility representatives expressed concern about economic impacts including jobs, utility rate increases, and reduced tax revenues impacting local education. Others elaborated on regional haze and its impacts on health as well as the power plant's pollutants negative effect on the traditional Navajo way of life. The Navajo president's chief of staff made a vague statement supporting SJGS doing what they can to clean up the air while protecting jobs. A Franciscan sister with the Interfaith Power and Light gave a strong statement, saying that "burning coal is a moral issue."

The public comment period ends April 4, 2011. Their final determination will be issued by June 21, 2011 as required by court decree.

-Deanna Collins

We'll all miss Bob Aitken, faithful LWV friend and husband of Judith Aitken, who died March 13, 2011