



LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®

League of Women Voters
of La Plata County

VOTER

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Sixty-four Years Serving La Plata County
92 members

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Inside this Issue

Upcoming Meetings	1
President's Message	2
Legislative Conference	2
Nuclear Energy Meeting	3
Program Plan'g Results	3
Ideas Forum	3
Health Care Update	4
Sustainability	
Concurrence	4
Book/Author Lunch	4
<i>Stones into Schools</i>	
Review	5
Calendar	6
Board of Directors	6

Flyer:

**United Nations Seminar,
February 20, Denver Center
for International Studies**

**First Call to LWVCO Council
Lake Short Lodge, Estes Park
May 21-22, 1 pm - noon**

For more information on our committees, meetings, Colorado's fiscal crisis, the LWVLP calendar and easy links to pertinent articles, check out our website at www.lwvlaplata.org. Contact Ross Park, webmaster, for a tutorial at eandrpark@aol.com.

Mark your calendars!



February Meetings

Nuclear Energy: Two Perspectives

Tuesday, February 16, 7 pm
Lyceum, Center for SW Studies, Fort Lewis College
Dave Nulton, energy and management consultant
Travis Still, an attorney with the Energy Minerals Law Center
Moderator: Josh Joswick, SJCA

Speakers will present a cradle-to-grave look at nuclear fission as a source of energy for the future.

Co-sponsors: San Juan Citizens Alliance (SJCA) and Fort Lewis College Environmental Center

Legislative Lowdown

Saturday, February 20
9:30 – 11:30 am
The Peaks, Durango Rec Center
Rep. Ellen Roberts and
Sen. Bruce Whitehead

Hear what's up in the 2010 Legislative Session, have your questions answered and join us in celebrating the 90th Birthday of the League of Women Voters with coffee and a big birthday cake!

LWV Ski Day at Purg!

Join us for a Ski Day at Purgatory. Skiers, and non-skiers who prefer to sip cocoa in a condo, are invited to participate on Thursday, February 25th. For more details, see the website and forthcoming email from Stephanie Huss stephanie@frontier.net or 970-259-7263.

President's Message

The recent snow storms that engulfed Durango reminded me of what this year's Colorado legislative session will be: long, difficult, and, at times, overwhelming.

Ellen Park and I are just back from Denver and LWVCO Legislative Day. We learned that we are facing a \$1.3-1.5 billion budget deficit. Senator Rollie Heath (D-Boulder), chair of the Interim Committee on Fiscal Stability, told us the League's grass roots help is crucial to educate the public about what is coming if we don't fix Colorado's perpetual budget crisis. See Ellen's column and check our website, www.lwvlaplata.org for more information. We will be following this legislative session very closely.

Our annual Legislative Lowdown will be held on Saturday, February 20th from 9:30-11:30 a.m. in The Peaks room at the Durango Recreation Center. State Representative Ellen Roberts and State Senator Bruce Whitehead will give us their analysis of what is happening in the Legislature. We'll have cake and coffee to celebrate the League's 90th anniversary. Bring a friend to this public event and learn how our legislators are representing Southwest Colorado during this difficult budget year.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions, suggestions or want to get involved.

-Stephanie Huss



Ellen Park and Stephanie Huss (center and right) enjoying lunch with colleagues at Legislative Conference in Denver January 25.



Dateline Denver, January 25, 2010

LWVCO Legislative Conference

After several days of inch an hour snowfall in Durango, Stephanie Huss and Ellen Park caught a flight to Denver (streets were dry, no snow) for the annual LWVCO Legislative Conference, meeting up with Marilyn Brown, who was already up in the Front Range. For the first time in years we were bumped out of our usual venue in the Old Supreme Court Chambers, convening instead in the Colorado History Museum, getting off to a shaky (literally) start when the organizers realized that because of the last minute change, they forgot to order coffee for the 130 League members in attendance at 8:30 in the morning. Mad dash to a local coffee shop and then away we went to five agenda topics and a flood of information, but the bottom line was elegantly summarized by Senator Rollie Heath (D-Boulder). The state is facing a \$1.5 Billion budget gap for the upcoming fiscal year 2010-2011, by law must balance the budget, and because of several constitutional amendments passed over the years (e.g., TABOR) has limited flexibility on where to cut. While we are the 7th wealthiest state (measured in median income), we pay lower taxes than all but 3 states, rank 50th in Higher Ed funding, 50th in Medical School Funding, somewhere between 40th and 47th (depending on what is measured) on K-12 spending, 50th on mental health spending, and our infrastructure is in constant danger of crumbling. As citizens of this state we must have a debate around the following two questions:

1. What kind of state do we want to have?

If the current situation works for the majority of Coloradans, then we are where we are.

2. But if it does not, how do we pay for what we want?

To read the entire report about the Legislative Conference please click:

www.lwvlaplata.org/Legislation.html#Leg_Conf_2010

then click on "Legislative Conference Report for 2010". Or, if you have received a paper version of the newsletter, type www.lwvlaplata.org/Legislation.html#Leg_Conf_2010 into your browser and then click on "Legislative Conference Report for 2010"

-Ellen Park, LWVLC Legislative Action Chair

Nuclear Energy: Two Perspectives

Nuclear energy is a hot topic in energy discussions these days. On February 16th, the pros and cons of nuclear energy will be presented at a forum at Fort Lewis College. The evening will provide a “cradle to grave” look at nuclear fission as a source of energy. Dave Nulton, energy and management consultant and retired Department of Energy official, who has forty years of experience in the nuclear field, will discuss reactor designs and safety, costs of various sources of energy including renewables, and nuclear waste storage. Travis Stills, an attorney with Energy Minerals Law Center, will address issues with uranium mining and waste disposal. The presentations will be followed by questions from the audience.

The event will begin at 7:00 p.m. and be held at the Lyceum Room in the Center for Southwest Studies. It is co-sponsored by the LWV LPC, San Juan Citizens Alliance and the Ft. Lewis College Environmental Center.

-Deanna Collins

Results of National Program Planning/2010 Advocacy Meeting

Twenty-six members and two guests enjoyed four different and fabulous homemade soups and accompanying breads and cookies along with free-wheeling discussion of our choices for LWVUS 2010 advocacy and for national studies in the 2010-2012 biennium. Our advocacy recommendations have been submitted to our national board liaison Judy Duffy for board decision as this newsletter goes to press. Our delegate to national convention will take our study recommendations into consideration when voting on program in Atlanta in June. Our consensus in each category is listed below:

National program planning:

1. Update of energy position to include examination of all non-greenhouse-gas-producing energy sources and their economic cost-benefit and realistic development timeframe.
2. Study of current and possible alternative methods of meeting the future financial/budgetary commitments to health care, social security/disability payments in view of projected demographics.
3. Cabinet level department of peace.
4. Federal role in education.
5. Election of Senators in case of vacancy.

2010 Advocacy

1. Fair Elections Now Act
2. Decision-making in the Senate

Results (cont.)

(Note: we assumed that immigration advocacy would occur anyway if a bill were introduced.)

After the general meeting and in fact after the deadline for submission of recommendations, the board voted to support the request of the LWV of Steuben County, NY to support raising the national LWV's priority on the FRAC Act. The companion bills HR 2766 and S 1215, both introduced last June, would repeal the exemption of hydraulic fracturing from the Safe Drinking Water Act and require disclosure of chemicals used in hydraulic fracturing (aka hydrofracking or fracking). Judy Duffy said she would include our support in her verbal presentation to the board.

Many thanks to Trish Pegram, Suzanne Becker, Stephanie Huss and Sally Bellerue for the soups; Marilyn Sandstrom, Alex Huss, Nadine Ancel, Ellen and Ross Park, Grace Deltscheff and Cherry Miloe for breads and cookies and to Sally for organizing the whole delicious spread. It'll be a 'first annual', guaranteed! The soup recipes are posted to our website <http://www.lwvlaplata.org/about.html#Recipes>.

-Marilyn Brown

Ideas Forum, Saturday, February 27

The Ideas Forum is part of the planning process for the County's new Comprehensive Plan. Sally Bellerue (with Sue Herbst as her alternate) has been involved in the Working Group for this new Comprehensive Plan.

The group has been developing goals and policies over the last six months and seeks public input. League has long had positions on Land Use Planning and this is your opportunity to give input as to how THIS COUNTY will grow into the future. What will we be like? Will we resemble Aspen? Farmington? Will we be able to preserve Open Space? Will those that work here be able to live here? What is the future for our Ag community? Will we be able to preserve it in a way fitting for ranchers and town folks alike?

La Plata County, and co-sponsors Sustainability Alliance of SW CO (SASCO) and the Cattlemens Association, are hosting the Ideas Forum. Community members are invited to present **your ideas** to help La Plata County tackle the challenges ahead for the next 20+ years. The event will be held at the Durango Recreation Center from 9 am – 3 pm; light breakfast, lunch and refreshments will be served. If you are interested in attending for all or part, please RSVP to Jason Meininger meiningerjl@co.laplata.co.us or call 970.382.6267. For more information about the process, or to see our progress to date, please visit the website www.laplatacountyplan.com.

-Sally Bellerue

Health Care Update

At the National level no, I can't go there. It's too depressing. If you're interested, there is some food for thought at: [BostonGlobe-Weiss](#).

Which makes it even more important that we pursue improvements at the local level, and there I do have some good news.

In the latest *Community Update* from Southwest Mental Health Center (SWMHC), they outline their "plans and efforts to transform from a traditional community mental health center to an integrated healthcare system", which will include an eventual change in their name to *Axis Health System*. The concept of integrated healthcare is based on "a model that integrates physical health, mental health, substance use, and public health (wellness, prevention and healthy lifestyles) approaches. (It aims to) treat the whole person." This concept has been widely discussed in recent years and there already exist several very successful systems that use this approach, including some right here in Colorado.

The *Community Update* quotes David Stacher, MD, Ph.D., past Surgeon General of the United States, who said, "Mental health is fundamental to overall health and well being...mental disorders are physical disorders and are real." It goes on to say:

"Consider that:

- Over 60% of mental health services nationwide are provided in a primary care setting;
- Just under half of the persons presenting with a physical health complaint in a primary care setting have a co-occurring mental health or substance abuse issue;
- Depression is associated with risk-taking behaviors such as smoking, substance use, unsafe sex, and not following medical regimens;
- Due to stigma and limited access to services, the average length of time it takes to seek treatment for a major mental illness is just under 10 years; and
- Persons with a serious mental illness are dying 25 years younger than the general population."

They believe that their "model transforms or enriches both primary care and behavioral health through enhanced assessment, treatment and follow up:

1. *Assessment.* It broadens the initial assessment of patient need by looking beyond allergies and medical conditions to include life-style issues, substance use, depression and anxiety - an assessment addressing the whole person;
2. *Treatment.* For patients with co-occurring physical and mental health and/or substance use, treatment is provided by a care team to address the full scope of needs and the interactions between them; and

3. *Follow-up services* move beyond recommendations to warm handoffs to smoking cessation programs, weight loss alternatives, self-help groups and specialty services."

SWMHC plans to establish fully integrated sites across their five-county region and are beginning in Cortez: "On January 6, 2010 we took a major step forward when we completed purchase of a 4-acre parcel at 635 East Empire St., in Cortez. We are poised to secure architectural services and begin construction with completion of the new facility in 12 to 18 months. This facility will replace our Arbecam facility and will be the first fully integrated health care facility of its kind in Colorado. This clinic will combine traditional primary care, mental health, substance use and certain public health services in one healthcare system."

This is an exciting development for our area and bears watching closely. You can read the entire *Community Update* on our website www.lwvlaplata.org under "What's New: Healthcare".

-Jill Patton

Sustainability Concurrence

A concurrence meeting for a LWVCO Sustainability Principles Statement has been scheduled for March 25th. A brief overview of the LWVCO concept of sustainability and dynamics between and integration of position areas will be discussed. The Principles Statement is below:

Sustainability is a way of life which seeks to balance environment, economic and human needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet the same goal. The concept of Sustainability is implicit in the Principles of the League of Women Voters. League positions are in compliance with the fundamental principle of sustainability, recognizing the interdependency among issues of public policy, and the impact of current decisions on the global welfare of future generations.

Mark your calendar and join us on March 25th at 1:00 p.m. at the Christ the King Lutheran Church for this important and timely discussion.

-Deanna Collins

AAUW Book/Author Lunch

LWV member Ann Flatten and her sister Martha Cramer will discuss *From Holes in My Soles to Rocks in My Socks*, their mother Dorothy Stillman's autobiographical book, Saturday February 27 at the AAUW Book and Author Luncheon at the Durango Public Library at noon. For tickets contact [Kathy Redford](mailto:kathy@redfordassociates.com) at kathy@redfordassociates.com, 51 Skyline Drive, Durango, 81301, 970-259-5671. Checks should be made payable to AAUW, Durango Branch, \$30 per person.

Thoughts on *Stones into Schools*, Greg Mortenson's latest book

The memory of Greg Mortenson's journey to our area in September 2008 still burns bright with Durangoans and is made even more so by his recent description of his day with us in his latest book *Stones into Schools*. The generous gift of \$125,000 from a town numbering slightly over 16,000 was remembered by Greg in the words of a local citizen, "...just tell them that it comes from a little town in Colorado so that their daughters can go to school." I remember wondering to myself on that day: what brings this man to Durango, what motivates him to attempt his seemingly unachievable goals and, finally, what keeps him going through endless one-night fundraisers from coast to coast.

It has been somewhat difficult following the path of Greg Mortenson since he left Durango, which makes his newest book ever more interesting. His twitter messages are short and infrequent, his parent organization, Central Asia Institute, only occasionally posts his plans or accomplishments and his discussions of late with the U.S. military have been welcome but veiled. With news of the recent Taliban violence in Pakistan and Afghanistan, I have often caught myself worrying about destruction of his schools or, at least, wondering if not, why not.

Stones into Schools takes us very far in both understanding what has transpired since September 2008 but also what makes up this man, Greg Mortenson. The numbers are impressive, at this writing, with 131 Central Asia Institute schools scattered throughout Pakistan and Afghanistan and only one of these schools disrupted but later restored. Even more impressive is the shift to building schools in areas that are considered much more dangerous than CAI's first efforts. That is, progressing from the Karakoram Range of northeast Pakistan to the Panjshir Valley of Central Afghanistan to the upper regions of Badakshan and to the forbidden area of the Wakhan Corridor high in the Pamir Range bordering Tajikistan. Greg's seemingly simple answer when asked about this progression is that the village elders in these regions have asked him to build these schools and that he has promised to build them.

So, aside from sheer will, how can Greg do the seemingly impossible? Greg, in *Stones into Schools*, explains that the tribal elders have only two requests; first, we do not want our babies to die and, second, we

want our children to go to school. The Taliban have simply not been able to deliver on either of these requests. In Greg's mind therein lie both the motivation to continue and the protection necessary to work in seemingly impenetrable areas.

In his previous bestselling book, *Three Cups of Tea*, Greg was quite critical of the U.S. military and their tactics as used in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, arguing that the only way to make progress in these countries is to "sit down and drink tea with them". He continues to proudly state that he has never taken a dollar of assistance from military sources. But in the space of the two books, Greg's message has noticeably had an effect at the highest levels of the military establishment. Not only are his books "required reading" for all from cadets to top brass but his conversations with our highest officers including General Petraeus, CENTCOM commander, and Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, are changing minds about the importance of winning the hearts and minds of Afghans through not only wide deployment of counterinsurgency techniques but the importance of providing schools and services for the populace. This shift of strategies is far from complete but it is progressing with the view that more and more Afghani villages have realized that the Taliban cannot meet the needs of their people.

Finally, *Stones into Schools* gives me a view of Greg, the man that was missing from his brief visit to Durango. No, he is not a superman and yes, he does get tired and frustrated with his sometimes arduous task. To this point, I was gratified to find that he has the unfailing on-the-ground support of a few native associates such as Gul Mohammad and Sarfraz Khan to carry on his mission while he satisfies the ever-increasing need to raise funds far from his schools. To quote Greg, he often yearns to be away from the one-night stands facing packed audiences, to be bouncing in his ancient Land Cruiser across perilous roads while anticipating a shared tea with an anxious native elder. But as he states, he is a happy man with a passion deeply embedded in him that can be satisfied with the smile of an educated child. So we can only hope that his message continues to resonate the hope and inspiration that we experienced directly from him in 2008 and that he soon finds his way back to the generous people of Durango. In the meantime, we must say *As-Salaam Alaakum* and that a cup of tea is always waiting for you here.

-Ross Park

Calendar



LWV La Plata County
www.lwvlaplata.org
 296 Highland Hill Drive
 Durango, CO 81301

February	
2 and 4*	<i>Kenya and R2P</i> , Great Decisions
Tue 9	Gail Harris's Book Signing, Maria's Bookshop, 6:30-7:30 pm
Sun 14	LWVUS 90 th BIRTHDAY!!!
16 and 18*	<i>Global Crime</i> , Great Decisions
Tue 16	Nuclear Energy: Two Perspectives, Center for SW Studies, FLC, 7 pm
Sat 20	Legislative Lowdown, 9:30-11:30 Peaks Room, Durango Rec Center
Sat 20	U.N. Seminar, Denver International Ctr
Thu 25	LWV Ski Day at Purg!
Sat 27	AAUW Book/Author Luncheon, 12, Durango Public Library
Sat 27	Ideas Forum, County Comprehensive Plan, Durango Rec Center, 9-3 pm

March	
Mon 1	Board meeting, Deanna Collins' home, 2-4 pm
2 and 4*	<i>U.S.-China Security Relations</i> , Great Dec
16 and 18*	<i>Global Financial Crisis</i> , Great Decisions
Thu 25	Sustainability Concurrence, Christ the King Church, 1 pm

May 21-22	LWVCO Council, Estes Park
June 11-15	LWVUS Convention, Atlanta
June 25-26	Leadership Retreat, Holiday Inn, Frisco

***All Great Decisions sessions are held in Program Room, Durango Library, brown bag lunch**
Tuesdays 11:45-1:45
Thursdays 12:30-2:30

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

Join the League! Anyone of voting age may join the League of Women Voters. Others may be associate members. Discounted household memberships are available. Call Marilyn Sandstrom, 764-4596, for more information.

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