

# The Voter

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MODESTO



March 2005

Vol. 57 No. 2

## Spring Membership Event to be held on March 10

Idaho,

Our annual membership event is just around the corner. Held for the first time at the McHenry Museum in Downtown Modesto, we are fortunate to combine charming ambiance with a dynamic keynote speaker. Mr. A.G. Block, *California Journal* former Editor-in-Chief, will provide his take on "The Role of the Central Valley in the Future of California Politics." Mr. Block had been with the *California Journal* since 1983, until the publication had to suspend production this January, due to lack of substantive funding.

While with the *California Journal*, he served as managing editor, became editor in 1995 and executive editor in 2000. Mr. Block's political writing experience began in 1968, when he received his political science degree from Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois. His previous experience includes editing a weekly periodical in Ketchum,

serving on the Ketchum City Council, and working as correspondent for the *Idaho Statesman*. His numerous years in Sacramento provide invaluable insight into the inner-workings of a complicated and often contentious political environment.

The event will run from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 10. Mr. Block will

speak at 7:00. Wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served. Parking is available in the Museum lot off 14th Street, or on 14th and I Streets. Participants are encouraged to R.S.V.P. by March 3, 2005 by calling Amy Christensen at 529-9497. We look forward to seeing you there!

-- Amy Christensen

### Calendar of Events

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| Thurs., 3/10 | <b>SPRING MEMBERSHIP CELEBRATION 6:30-8:30 PM</b><br>McHenry Museum (see article this page)        |
| Sat., 3/12   | <b>SCCW Outstanding Women dinner 6 PM</b> (see p. 3)   |
| Wed. 3/16    | <b>BOARD MEETING 6:30 PM</b> LWV Office<br>All members welcome                                     |
| Fri., 3/18   | <b>LOCAL ACTION COMM. 12 noon</b> , LWV office   |
| Tues., 3/29  | <b>LUNCH AND LEARN 12 noon</b> Appetez \$11.00<br>Jim Niskanen from Modesto Parks Dept. (see back) |

Coming in May: LWV Modesto Annual Meeting

# President's Message

I am writing this as I look out the window enjoying one of those beautiful late winter days when we are reminded of how fortunate we are to live in the valley - the air is clean from recent rains, the fog has cleared and the weather has warmed a bit. Even the morning paper reminds us it is a good time to begin our spring gardening activities.

With the fall elections over and spring election season still ahead, our League uses this window of opportunity to focus its attention on our finance drive, updating our state and local positions and planning a welcome to our new and prospective members. In addition, the nominating committee, chaired by Laurie Carley, has been busy finalizing the new slate of officers for 2005-06. The most interesting and important way to involve yourself in League is to serve on the board, which always welcomes both new and experienced members.

Please note Debbie Kleinfelder's article on p. 6: *Finance Drive exceeds its goal*. With the increase in PMP at both state and national levels, we are very dependent on this source of income to educate the public and advocate our positions.

If you missed the LWV Modesto Program Planning Meeting, you missed out on an exciting grassroots event that included a lot of discussion on issues that have a direct impact on our lives and that of our community, state and nation. Be sure to read Julie Saugstad's article on p. 5. Lynn Kelso provided delicious homemade soups and bread, and Board members brought home baked desserts.

Amy Christensen has lots of information to report about membership in this issue. Please plan to attend the event at the McHenry Museum on March 10 to welcome our new members and meet old friends. We invite you to bring a prospective member or guest with you.

--Patty Lundy

*Diversity policy: League of Women Voters of Modesto in both its values and practices affirms its belief and commitment to diversity and pluralism, which means that there shall be no barriers to participation in any activity on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin or disability.*

## LWV of MODESTO

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#### *2nd Vice President*

Julie Saugstad 526-0795

#### *Secretary*

Mildred Kinser 523-4222

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Betty Ann Vencill 577-1233

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#### *Membership*

Amy Christensen

### OFF-BOARD

#### *Lunch and Learn*

Margie Lipsky

#### *Webmaster*

Stella Berattis

#### *Voter Editor*

Susan Cassidy

#### *Office Manager*

Myrtle Osner



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**[www.lwvmodesto.org](http://www.lwvmodesto.org)**

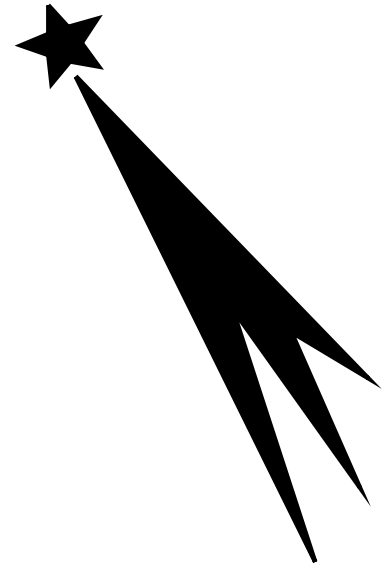
## Honoring Outstanding Women of Stanislaus County

March 12 is the 26th Anniversary Dinner for the Stanislaus County Commission for Women (SCCW).

League of Women Voters is proud to note that one of our Board members, **Maria Arevalo**, is one of the eleven honorees this year. In the past there have been many honorees who were League members. Our work has always been empowering for women, ever since we were founded in the year women got the vote, 1920.

If you wish to attend the dinner you must send \$40 to Laura Tarlo at 1136 Trinity Ave., Modesto 95350, by March 4, with your Dinner choices: Garlic Roasted Chicken, Herb-Crusted Salmon, or Vegetarian. Dinner is at 6 pm. at the Red Lion on Sisk Rd. If we have enough people who want to attend, we might be able to get a table for the League (seats 10). In any case, we invite you to honor Maria on this special evening. Call our office (524-1698) if you have more questions, or Laura at 558-5778.

*--Myrtle Osner*



## BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

February 9, 2005

- Local Action Committee made a statement regarding the second units proposed in a Village 1 Subdivision.
- 2005-06 budget was proposed and will be presented at the annual meeting.
- League will send two representatives to the State Convention in May.
- Nominating Committee will present a final report to the Board at the March meeting.
- Julie Saugstad reported the results of the State Program planning meeting. Our top choices for advocacy were air, redistricting and water. Our proposed issue for local programming is gangs.
- Letters on SB 131 about air quality were sent to Senators Boxer and Feinstein.

*--Patty Lundy*

## I want to add my voice to yours by joining the League of Women Voters of Modesto.

- \_\_\_ Student membership     \$15
- \_\_\_ Individual Membership     \$50
- \_\_\_ Household Membership     \$75
- \_\_\_ Please contact me with more information

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (for the directory) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail to: P.O. Box E**

**Modesto, CA 95352**

## WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

We have had tremendous success over the last year recruiting new faces to our chapter. As the Spring Membership Celebration approaches, I thought it fitting that these additions be highlighted. If you're coming to our event at the McHenry Museum on March 10th, make sure to introduce yourself and greet one of our thirty-three newest members.

Shawna Amaral – Modesto  
Nanette Austin – Turlock  
Carla and Peter Broderick – Modesto  
Beverly Brunker – Oakdale  
Charlotte Burnham – Modesto  
Cynthia Campos – Modesto  
Sue Chaffee – Modesto  
Amy Christensen – Modesto  
Carolyn Claybaugh – Modesto  
Denise Crosby – Modesto  
Martha Gausman – Modesto  
Mary Giventer - Turlock  
Larry Giventer – Turlock  
Sandy Harrison – Modesto  
Russ Harrison – Modesto  
Francis Heuring – Oakdale

Shana Honeycutt--Modesto  
Jean Jones – Modesto  
Judy Mahan – Modesto  
Anne Marie McKissick – Modesto  
Emilie McKnight – Modesto  
Lee Neal – Turlock  
Kathleen Simis – Hayward  
Carolyn Stanion – Modesto  
Karen Tobacco – Riverbank  
Edward Tobacco – Riverbank  
Cathee Vaughn – Hughson  
Sam Vaughn – Hughson  
Gillian Wegener – Modesto  
Kate Weiner – Modesto  
Anne Wolf – Modesto  
Lewis Woodward – Modesto

*--Amy Christensen*



The League of Women Voters celebrated its 85th birthday on February 14, 2005. Help us make this a milestone in the League's history by considering a gift of League membership to someone you know who cares about important issues of the day. Don't forget we also have student memberships available at a reduced rate. Contact  
Amy Christensen, Membership Chair.

[amy\\_v\\_christensen@hotmail.com](mailto:amy_v_christensen@hotmail.com)

# New Local Study is proposed

Lynn Kelso hosted our biannual State Program Planning Meeting in her home. A warm supper with homemade soup and desserts set the tone for a lively discussion directed by Julie Saugstad, Program Vice-President.

After an overview of the process by which local Leagues contribute to state planning, we divided into small groups. Each group was assigned to review one category of positions: Government, Natural Resources, or Social Policy. The groups learned about our positions by reviewing a summary including information on how we have used the positions. Each group discussed which issues they felt are most timely and crucial for education of members or the public and/or advocacy. Next the groups came back together and agreed that we need to retain all of our state positions.

Our last discussion revolved around selection of the three top issues of our 24 positions for state League focus over the next 2 years. To keep things interesting, we voted using a simple weighted system using 3 stickers each. The group recommended redistricting, air quality and water. These issues were approved by our board and sent on to the state League board. There they will be considered with input from all local Leagues to develop a recommendation for the state convention in May.

In an unusual action for a state program planning meeting, we also recommended a local study. The Social Policy group looked at the Juvenile Justice position and felt that it needs to be enhanced to address the issue of gangs. They persuaded the remainder of the group and so, the

recommendation for this study went to the February Board Meeting. The board will recommend a study of gangs at our Annual Meeting. Several members have expressed interest in working on this study. The study will educate our members about gangs in our community. We will focus on causes, prevention and solutions; not simply on law enforcement and criminal penalties.

This study could include:

- Research by a committee of members
- Speakers at membership meetings, including Lunch and Learn and other venues
- Presentations or *Voter* articles by the committee

This study may result in a local position that will allow us to advocate for expansion of the state juvenile justice position. To complete this study, we will need a committee of individuals who want to learn and educate others. We hope YOU will be one of those people! If you want to join the committee which will start work after our Annual Meeting in May (assuming approval), please contact Julie Saugstad.

*--Julie Saugstad*

Directory Changes:

Amy Christensen, Membership Director,  
has a new email address:  
[amy\\_v\\_christensen@hotmail.com](mailto:amy_v_christensen@hotmail.com)

# Finance Drive exceeds goal thanks to many donors

Thank you to everyone who contributed funds and their valuable time to help fulfill the League's objectives. Due to the generosity of the following League Members and Friends of League, we were successful in raising \$8,225, surpassing our goal of \$7,600.

The League extends a special thank you to our financial advisors for their invaluable input and for the time they spent writing personal notes on each Finance Drive letter.

*--Debbie Kleinfelder*

## Financial Advisors

Alita Roberts  
Kenni Friedman  
Myrtle Osner

Pat Paul  
Tom Van Groningen  
Judy Mathes

Larry Martin  
Randy Siefkin  
Paul Baxter

## Members

Zella Gharat  
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Stella Beratlis  
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Carole Davis  
Helen Gordon  
Mildred Kinser  
Lee Means  
Bev and Ralph Sturtevant  
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Martha Gausman  
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Elizabeth Dippery  
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Lynn and Ken Kelso  
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Dorothy and Roy Schmidt  
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Angela Keith  
Sharon Froba  
Patty Lundy  
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Paul Warda  
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Jeff Grover  
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Gary Lopez  
Garrad Marsh  
Carol Whiteside  
Peter and Bridgette Janopaul, Jr.



# State Superintendent Jack O'Connell's State of Education speech

*Excerpted and abridged from the Goals section of his speech on January 24, 2005.*

I am establishing a council to better coordinate how we deliver education to California students at all stages of life -- from preschool through college. The California P-16 council will help create a comprehensive, integrated system of student learning in our state. The P-16 council will be charged with examining ways to improve student achievement at every level of our public education system. This collaboration will help us as a state stay consistent and focused on high standards. And it will help us make progress on priorities and goals I have for 2005.

The first of those goals is to continue the work we've begun on high school reform. P-16 councils at the state and regional level will bring high schools, higher education institutions, parents, business, and labor leaders together with a goal of shaping more rigorous, more relevant high school programs.

Another of my initiatives this year will be to lay the foundation for quality preschool for all in California. I am convinced that the achievement gap that is most severe in our high schools will not be closed unless we start before kindergarten to prepare all students for academic success. I am convinced that that through legislation or ballot initiative, California should and will find a way to make voluntary preschool for all a reality.

I believe preschool should be as much about social development as early academic skills, and it should be a place that builds confidence, competence, and joy in learning. We are developing preschool content standards that reflect this view and, by this spring, a draft of the standards will be available for public review. I want to create a credential program for preschool teachers, through partnerships between community college districts and local universities. Preschool teachers should also have the benefit of the kind of ongoing, sustained professional development we try to provide in California for K-12 teachers.

And, finally, I want to address another issue I'm concerned about and will be focusing on this year, and that's the health and fitness of our students. Last year, physical fitness testing of our students found 32 percent were overweight, and close to three quarters were unfit. And nationwide, researchers found only 51 percent of children and youth eat even one serving of a fruit or vegetable each day. These unhealthy trends will harm our students in school and throughout life if we do not act.

Accordingly, this year I will support legislation calling for development and adoption of health education standards for our schools. We can do a great deal to address childhood obesity by making sure that all children who are eligible for free breakfast and lunch at school participate in these important programs. Our food policies at schools directly affect students' readiness and ability to learn. So I'll be working with the Governor, the Legislature, and State Board of Education to adequately fund school meal programs. We'll be working with the State PTA to educate parents about better nutrition and the importance of exercise. And finally, I'll work with the Legislature and State Allocation Board, and with businesses and communities through our P-16 councils, to make sure that when new schools are built, they include adequate space and facilities for meals and for physical education programs. (Full speech is available: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/se/yr05stateofed.asp>)

# Bill proposes State funding of preschool

On February 20, 2005 a bill (AB 172) introduced by State Assembly member Wilma Chan (District 16), will be heard in committee. The bill would require the state to offer “voluntary” universal preschool for 3-5 year olds. Preschool is already offered to all Californians but this bill would require the state taxpayers to pay for it rather than the parents of the child. This bill further states that a “compelling body of respected research demonstrates that quality preschool programs benefit children and their families, the public school system, public safety, the economy, and society”. The bill further states that “90 percent of brain development takes place before age five, making early childhood the best time to invest in preschool programs” which are known to “boost academic achievement in school, decrease grade retention, decrease special education placements, and increase graduation rates... reduces the likelihood of later arrest and incarceration, and increases college attendance and earnings in adulthood...” and that economists “report that every dollar invested in quality preschool returns as much as seven dollars (\$7) to the public.

See the complete wording of the bill at the legislative information website: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov>

## In memory of Susan Woodworth



Susan Woodworth died in January of 2005 after a long and productive life. She had been a member of the League of Women Voters of Modesto longer than anyone else living. We honored her with a life membership several years ago.

Susan was the League's Observer at the Modesto Irrigation District for years and years. The Directors got so used to her presence that they often would turn to her and ask what she thought about an issue, and they made her an honorary member of the District Board several years ago. She had so much history and care for the well being of the public interest that they respected her for it.

Susan walked everywhere, including over to the west campus of MJC when it was still the State Hospital. She continued to walk everywhere as long as she was able, probably contributing to her health and long life. We will miss her wisdom.

*--Myrtle Osner*



## **LEAGUE'S DEMOCRACY AGENDA IS TOP PRIORITY**

**Washington, D.C.** – The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) today announced a Democracy Agenda to guide the organization's work. Launched on the 85th anniversary of the League's founding, it is an advocacy and public education effort to strengthen and renew the basic tenets of American democracy.

"The occasion of our 85th birthday provides an opportunity to look back and to the future," stated Kay J. Maxwell, LWVUS President. "Since our founding in 1920 we've come a long way, but much still needs to be done. The Democracy Agenda focuses on the most important foundations of our government and nation," added Maxwell.

"Years of band-aid solutions and neglect have allowed the mechanisms of many of our government systems to become weak and in some cases break down completely. The Democracy Agenda presents viable solutions to help overcome these persistent weaknesses and educate communities nationwide on how to make things better," Maxwell said.

"We will move the Democracy Agenda forward through the work of our members and supporters, community organizations, elected and government officials and the people of this nation," stated Maxwell. This effort seeks to protect our electoral processes through election reform and campaign finance reform, advance our representative government through nonpartisan redistricting, and preserve our constitutional rights by safeguarding civil liberties. The League will work to tackle these issues and others in related areas on behalf of all citizens.

"Now is the time to get to work," said Maxwell. "Democracy is at risk when long lines and faulty voting processes keep Americans from voting and having their votes counted. Democracy is at risk when partisan gerrymandering ensures that elections are over before the people even vote. Democracy is at risk when government actions threaten basic civil liberties. And, democracy is at risk when special interests pay for election campaigns. We must renew and repair our democracy so that it truly works for all citizens," Maxwell concluded.

## **State ill-prepared to resolve issues over power supply**

Public forums recently presented by the League of Women Voters of California in Los Angeles and San Francisco shed harsh light on California's electrical energy system. According to energy experts and industry officials at the forums, price spikes, uncertain supply and distribution difficulties still threaten our electrical energy system. The well attended forums in Los Angeles and San Francisco marked the beginning of the League's update to its 1980 position on energy. Clearly, the energy crisis is not necessarily a thing of the past. For a description of the forums, read David Baker's coverage of the forums in the January 29, 2005 edition of the San Francisco Chronicle – it is available on-line at

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2005/01/29/BUG3RB2CQ11.DTL>

The League of Women Voters®, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

## League of Women Voters of Modesto

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## March Lunch and Learn

Modesto has received the All American City Award twice based on our city of parks and street trees. With budget cuts everywhere, maintaining our parks is receiving a low priority over police and fire protection and road repairs.

Come hear City of Modesto Director of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods

**Jim Niskanen**

***"Maintaining City Parks that are Safe to Use"***

**Tuesday, March 29**

**12 noon     Appetez Restaurant, Roseburg Square     \$11.00**

**Bring a friend!**