

North Andover's 2013 Annual League of Women Voters Report

May, 2013

by Heather McNeil

As part of the Andover/North Andover League of Women Voters, we in North Andover have really focused this past year on planning events and programs providing nonpartisan voter information to residents as well as really advertising these events and programs so people know they exist, watch them, feel more informed, and are encouraged to run for office or head to the polls or to Town Meeting to vote.

In January, our Selectman, Richard Vaillaincourt, and our Town Clerk, Joyce Bradshaw, participated in the Running for Office workshop which was in Andover this year. As usual, all members of the panel provided great insights into the nuts and bolts of running for and serving on a board as well as the personal decisions and impact this experience can have on a person as well as his or her family.

In March, we worked with the staff and volunteers at North Andover Community Access and Media (NACAM) including Brian Frasier, Cary Friedman, Tiffany Begin, and Sandy Gleed to plan and hold our annual Candidates Forum. It took place this year at the North Andover Town Hall. There were two candidates for one seat on the School Committee, one candidate for one seat on the Board of Selectmen, and one person running for one seat on the North Andover Housing Authority. The candidates for School Committee and Board of Selectmen participated in the forum which was broadcast live and rebroadcast by NACAM. Sandy Gleed, who is a volunteer at NACAM, also filmed some PSAs with our Town Clerk, Joyce Bradshaw, a couple of which were incorporated into the Candidates Forum. These PSAs provided information on registering to vote, absentee ballots and other general information that people may need to participate in elections.

We also worked very closely with North Andover CAM, of which our local League is a member, as well as collaborated with the Town of North Andover to produce a 2013 Town Meeting Preview program. We worked closely with the Finance Committee and its chair, Alan LeBovidge, the Town Manager Andrew Maylor, Superintendent Kevin Hutchinson, and Town Moderator Mark DiSalvo in order to produce a program that included information on how to participate and what to expect at Town Meeting, the FY14 budget, as well as capital improvement projects that are proposed for the upcoming year. In about an hour and a half, people can get caught up on all the basic information as well as delve into further details by following recommended links before attending and voting at this year's Town Meeting which will begin on May 21st.

We are also looking forward to presenting the League of Women Voters Book Award to a deserving junior at North Andover High School this coming June. If anyone is interested in making this presentation at the awards ceremony this year, please let us know. Thank you to Diane Huster who has done this important work in past years!

There have been a few of our other members who have helped out with these efforts. Many thanks to Kathy Stevens who helps plan this event regularly and to Cindy Blandini and Caroline Cole who helped with this year's Candidates Forum. We also had some citizen volunteers who are not members of the

League but who are committed to helping with voter education including Keith Connors, Rene Heron, and Crowell Freeman.

In closing, the voter service work we do is essential in North Andover. There is no other group that provides the nonpartisan voter education opportunities that we provide. We really could use more volunteers to continue this work. There are tasks both large and small that fit many schedules. Many are one time tasks or tasks that can be completed within a short period of time. We are on a mission to get more people informed and engaged so that more people run for office, go to the polls and vote, as well as attend Town Meeting to make the important decisions that affect all of us. Please consider volunteering or if you know of someone who would be interested in this work, please let us know. Thank you!

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