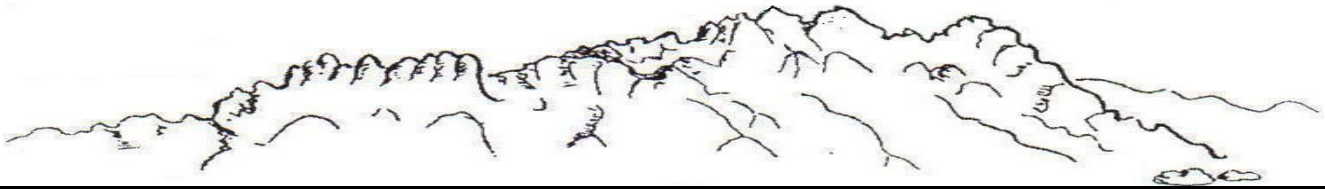


The VOTER

League of Women Voters
of Greater Las Cruces
(575) 524-VOTE (8683)
Web Site: www.lwvglc.org
August 2011



Lunch with a Leader

Monday, August 8, 2011, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Good Samaritan Social Center, Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle

CASA - Court Appointed Special Advocates *Speaker: Doreen Y. Gallegos, Executive Director*

You may already be acquainted with CASA and the work it does on behalf of children. This organization was brought to the Board's attention by Shannez Dudelczyk, a member who continued to work with CASA, Santa Fe, when she relocated her residence to Las Cruces. The League of Women Voters of New Mexico has a position under Social Policy, Child Care, that supports the kind of children's issues that will be discussed by Doreen Gallegos, Mesilla Valley CASA Executive Director.

CASA advocates for children in foster care and protects their interests. They help children replace a life of hurt with one of hope. Staff and volunteers become consistent persons in children's lives and are the eyes and ears of the children in court. Volunteers receive continuous training. The organization raises community awareness of the issues important in children's lives, and offers a way for the community to become involved in abuse and neglect cases. CASA serves as the bridge that links services with the child. Dedicated and committed volunteer advocates participate in Family Drug Court and are members of the state and national CASA.

Volunteers are very welcome! To become a volunteer, call the main office, 572-0035, located at 119 North Downtown Mall in Las Cruces. Volunteers complete a training program. Most volunteers are assigned one case of 1-7 siblings (although 7 is unusual and would likely have more than one volunteer assigned). The children are taken into custody by the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) on charges alleging abuse and/or neglect. CYFD has ten days to get the family into court for a Temporary Custody Hearing. If the judge rules that the children should be removed from the home, the children remain in the custody of CYFD and a member of CASA is assigned. What happens next will be revealed at the presentation by Ms. Gallegos.

Doreen Gallegos has been employed by the Mesilla Valley CASA since January 2001. She received both Bachelor and a Master of Social Work degrees from New Mexico State University. She has extensive experience in child protective services, the judicial system, and child and family therapy. Doreen is in charge of the day-to-day operations of the organization, supervises over 80 volunteers and five employees. She also is a member of the eligibility committee for the Third Judicial District Drug Court, a member of the National CASA Hispanic/Latino Committee, the New Mexico Diversity Committee and the Infant Mental Health Team of Doña Ana County.

The VOTER

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**The League of Women Voters of
Greater Las Cruces**

P.O. Box 8322
Las Cruces, NM 88006-8322
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Web Site: www.lwvglc.org

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Vice President & Program
Paula Nielson

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Erika Graf-Webster

**Director, Public Relation
(Off Board)**
Sharon Burbano

Nominating Committee
Chair: Vicki Simons
Elected Member: Sadie Valverde

STUDY GROUPS

Affordable Housing
Vicki Simons - 522-4813
Christina Little - 373-1882

Education
Bonnie Burn - 526-0013

**Mental Illness Services
in Doña Ana County**
Becky Beckett - 522-8171
Mickey Curtis - 532-5655

Metropolitan Court
Marjorie Burr - 522-2528

ACTION COMMITTEE
Vicki Simons - 522-4813

Web Master - Dale Yeo

Newsletter Editor
Bonnie Burn - 526-0013
burnb@comcast.net

CALENDAR

August 1 (Monday) - Education Institute, Unit Meeting 3, 10-11:30 a.m., Good Samaritan Social Center, Conference Room (next to Main Auditorium), "It Takes A Community to Build Good Schools".

August 1 (Monday) - Deadline for Lunch with a Leader. RSVP
Paula Nielson, Email: paulanielson@comcast.net, **Tel:** 386-7957.

August 3 (Wednesday) - 10-11:30 a.m., Board Meeting, Branigan Library, Board Room

August 8 (Monday) - 11:30 a.m - 1 p.m., Lunch with a Leader, Topic: CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), Doreen Gallegos, Executive Director, Good Samaritan Social Center, Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle. Lunch is \$10.

Notable Dates:

August 26 - Ratification of the 19th Amendment, U.S. Constitution

Board Highlights

July 6, 2011, 4:30 - 6 p.m., Branigan Library, Board Room

Treasurer's Report: Revenue for the month was \$2,148 from dues renewals and contributions. Monthly expenses were \$281. Checkbook balance on June 30 was \$8,558.. Education Fund balance was \$2,010. CD balance was \$1,076.

Rescheduled Board Meeting Times: Future board meetings beginning August 3 will be held from 10-11:30 a.m., Branigan Library, Board Room.

Membership: As of June 30, 75 members renewed their membership, 4 members have become Friends of the League, 5 members dropped their memberships, and for 18 members dues remain pending.

NM Bicentennial Celebration: The parade, in which our local League is committed to participate, will be held on January 7, 2012.

Voter Services: Erika Graf-Webster announced that there will be a candidates forum in late September or early October in Good Sam's Main Auditorium. As soon as Las Cruces City Clerk, Esther Martinez, has published an election calendar, work will begin on a *Voters' Guide* and voter registration.

Vice President Resignation: It is with regret that we announce the resignation of Vice President Shannez Dudelczyk, who is pursuing an education in law. We appreciate all that Shannez has done for the League and for continuing her membership. The Board appointed Paula Nielson to fill this vacancy. Paula will pick up the program activities formerly carried out by Shannez and will retain her interest in Special Projects, including the NM Bicentennial celebration.

President's Message

Redistricting during July continued to be a major issue of focus. As you already know, the City of Las Cruces selected Map F2 that kept the councilors in their respective districts and took communities of interest into consideration.

Doña Ana County Commissioners received a final report and recommendations from their appointed citizens' committee. Members not only reviewed all of the proposed maps but also organized meetings for public input in Hatch, Las Cruces and Sunland Park. A final decision by the commissioners is pending.



On July 20, the NM Legislative Redistricting Committee made up of 40 bipartisan members and co-chaired by Representative Mary Helen Garcia and Senator Linda Lopez met in Las Cruces, one of the cities on the Committee's public input tour of state cities. Redrawing of the district boundaries for the U.S. Congress, NM Senate and House, and the Public Regulation Commission (PRC) is under consideration. Final decisions are expected to be made at a Special Legislative Session tentatively scheduled for mid-September.

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico (LWVNM) is involved. The Redistricting Committee prepared testimony that is being presented at the city meetings. A "Redistricting Matters" pamphlet in English and Spanish also is being distributed. Joe Keefe, director, Communications, LWVNM, is taping the proceedings and CDs are available for local League use and will be posted on the LWVNM web site and possibly the NM Legislative web site.

A redistricting concern for Doña Ana County involves the U.S. Congressional seat. The population of NM is now 2,059,179. Since NM did not gain or lose congressional seats, each district should represent 686,393. District 2 that includes Doña Ana County has 22,437 fewer people than Districts 1 (+6,891) and 3 (+15,546). Therefore, the lines for the congressional districts will change. For armchair viewing, log on to the NM Legislative web site, www.nmlegis.gov, to access the Redistricting tab for more complete information. Redistricting is not going to happen for another ten years so it is important to be involved. **Bonnie Burn**



New Member

Judith LaPointe

Cell: (575) 496-9671
Email: judylap@aol.com

Winifred Adams

1164 Cave Springs Trail
Las Cruces 88011
Tel: 521-4646

Peter M. & Jean C. Ossorio

1251 Southridge Dr.
Las Cruces 88005
Tel: 647-1362
E-mail: peterossorio@comcast.net

Email Address Correction (Please add a "1")

Win Jacobs

winjacobs1@gmail.com

Friends of the League

John Ameriks, M.D.
Biad Chile Ltd. Co.
Joseph P. Camunez, DDS
Citizens Bank
Dental Associates, PA
Doggie Dude Ranch and
Cat Farm
Donald and Winifred Dresp
Adrian and Jackie Edwards
Nancy & Ken Hall
First New Mexico Bank
Edward Jones - Connie Lee
Patricia Kratz
Lilley Law Offices
Louise P. Lockhart
Barbara Myers
Francisco Mario Ortiz Law Firm
Judith Scott and Paul Thomas
Wanda Skowlund
LaJune Smith
Tom Tate
Zia Engineering & Environmental
Consultants

Thank You

Register
VOTERS

We Need Help!

Voter Registrars

Contact: Tom Schmugge
522-4546 or
tschmugge@gmail.com

Membership Directory



Available.
Early August

Contact: Sue Schmugge
522-4546 or sschmugge@aol.com



League News



Look Back – Superintendent Rounds on LCPS

Superintendent Stan Rounds, Las Cruces Public Schools, presented important information about our local public schools while also providing some entertaining stories about his early experience as a superintendent in Des Moines, NM.

Beginning with the measures of success, he pointed out that the number of students who graduate on time in Las Cruces has increased from 46% to 71.2% in 2011. The national graduation rate is 50%. Some of the success is attributed to the focus on students who may not achieve high school graduation. The Early College High School was cited as an example of this kind of focus. Students who were potential first generation high school graduates or first generation college students are in the program. Of the first freshman class of 116, 112 finished the first year of the program. Nationally, students often drop out during the freshman year. The four that left the program returned to traditional high school. He mentioned the three new schools for Las Cruces, Centennial High School, Mesa Middle School and Monte Vista Elementary School.

An area that needs attention is readiness of children to enter school at the pre-kindergarten (pre-K) level. The Head Start program, staffed by certified teachers, offers the best experience for children. New Mexico is continuing this program while some states have dropped it. Concern about private pre-K programs is that there may be more focus on care giving than on education.

The reduction in school funding continues to be a major concern for the district. State statutes dictate funding of the school budget, class size and teacher pay, leaving little latitude at the local level. School funding for 2011-2012 was reduced by 13% from the previous year and it has been reduced by 18% over the last three years while the school system has gained 1,000 students. Administrative costs have been reduced and teacher or staff positions were reduced by retirement and attrition. The NM Educational Formula that was established in 1974 is now providing 41% of school funding from General Funds as opposed to 54% provided in 1983. The greatest amount of spending occurs for instruction (64.1%), administration (6.5%), and requirements for

administrative reporting. The district recently spent \$1.25 million on software to ensure the accuracy of required reporting to state and government agencies and for various categories of information collected by the school district.

During the question and answer period the topic covered included: enrollment in the Early College High School, nutrition and healthy eating program, concern about availability of technology for students, education for sensory students (e.g., autism), testing assessment, and year round school.

Superintendent Rounds concluded the program with a suggestion that members work with the current League Education Study committee members and an invitation to contact him with questions or issues to which he and his staff may research answers. Also, if we want to tour the school buildings, let him know, and he will be glad to have us “kick the tires.”

Education Institute

The discussion about education continued at the first Unit Meeting on Monday, July 18, where League members came to hear presentations from members of the Education Committee about government regulations and how they impact local school systems.

The areas of school funding, core curriculum standards, teacher preparation and ongoing education, and mandated testing of students were presented. A question and answer period between topics produced additional interesting conversation. Comprehensive handouts were distributed to attendees, and are available on request from Bonnie Burn, 526-0013 or burnb@comcast.net.

The next unit meetings will be held on July 25 where information will be presented about charter schools, No Child Left Behind testing, Race to the Top, a competitive grant program initiated by President Obama, parental involvement and books by Diane Ravitch and Linda Darling-Hammond will be reviewed.

The final unit meeting, It Takes A Community To Build Good Schools, will be presented on August 1. Socio-economic issues, early childhood education, role of business, and community initiatives will be covered.

Report from Affordable Housing Committee, June 2011 - Vicki Simons & Christina Little, Co-Chairs

The committee continues with interviews and studying available materials. In June 2011 the committee met with David Dollahan, Neighborhood Services Administrator for the City of Las Cruces. David supervises Federal Housing Programs and Juvenile Citation Programs and has been one of our main sources of information. We discussed various affordable housing developments that have taken place during our year of study and since our first meeting with David.

The City of Las Cruces released the update this spring of the 2015 Consolidated Plan and adopted it in May. The plan is an overall guide for development in the city. The Community Profile and Housing Market Analysis and 2011 Action Plan is of interest to the committee and includes the following information:

- According to the 2010 Census, the City of Las Cruces has experienced much stronger population growth than projected earlier in the decade. Between 2000 and 2010, Las Cruces population increased by 31 percent, or at a compound annual rate of 2.8 percent. As of the 2010 census, the City had 97,618 people.
- Las Cruces poverty rate has declined over the past 10 years as resident incomes have shifted upwards. An analysis of the City's household income distribution shows substantial growth in the number of high income households and a decline in moderate income households. Poverty declined from 23 percent in 2000 to an estimated 19 percent in 2009. This decline in poverty did not occur for the City's children, however, child poverty was about the same (34 percent).
- The median value of owner-occupied homes in Las Cruces was \$155,000 in 2009. This is up from the median value of \$91,200 in 2000, or an increase of \$63,800 (70%). The City has experienced some softening in the "for sale" market, but nothing as dramatic as in many U.S. cities. Indeed, homeowners would need to earn approximately \$19,000 more per year in 2009 than in 2000 to afford the median-valued home in Las Cruces.
- The 2009 median rent in Las Cruces, including utilities, was \$629. Fewer than half (44%) of renters can afford to pay the median rent and utilities.

David also shared other information identified by the Plan that impacts affordable housing in Las Cruces;

- In 2000, there was a \$43,400 difference between the cost of a newly constructed home and a residential resale; by 2010 the difference was only \$3,600, demonstrating that the housing market has come down. From the point of affordable housing, this is good.
- The number of residents who cannot afford a rental unit without a subsidy (under \$20,000/annually) has risen to 6,546 but only 1,812 units are available in this price range leaving a gap of 4,734. This number is important in looking at the need for additional affordable rental units in Las Cruces.
- There are not enough rental units for residents that make over \$50,000 and they tend to rent units suitable for lower income levels thus reducing the total rental units available for people who earn less.
- Since the last survey in 2006, the need for affordable housing, both home ownership and rentals has increased.

There have been other developments this year that will eventually help to develop more affordable housing. The Las Cruces City Council established both a Land Bank and Housing Trust Fund. The Land Bank would provide a mechanism for the city to receive land for the development of affordable housing. The land could be acquired through donations, purchase, land swaps, etc. The Trust Fund is a fund like a bank account from which money can be used for various affordable housing needs. Funding might be from grants, state legislative funding, bond funds, or from Las Cruces Gross Receipts or general obligation bonds. Some members of the advisory committees for both of these organizations have been appointed, some have not. So far there is no funding. David hopes for some funding in 2012.

Other developments in the affordable housing area are that the large project of affordable housing that the city was planning to build at 575 Alameda has not been awarded tax credits which means that for the time being, it will not proceed. The proposed merging of the City and County Housing Authorities is proceeding and probably will be completed by October, but decisions remain to be made.

Dona Ana County Pursues Branch Libraries

Bonnie Burn, Reporting

At the Joint Meeting of City Councilors and County Commissioners on January 20, Lynette Schurdevin, Branigan Library Administrator, reported on the progress of establishing branch libraries throughout Doña Ana County (DAC). I had an opportunity to meet with Lynette and Mark Pendleton, who is the Branigan outreach librarian liaison with the County for this operation.

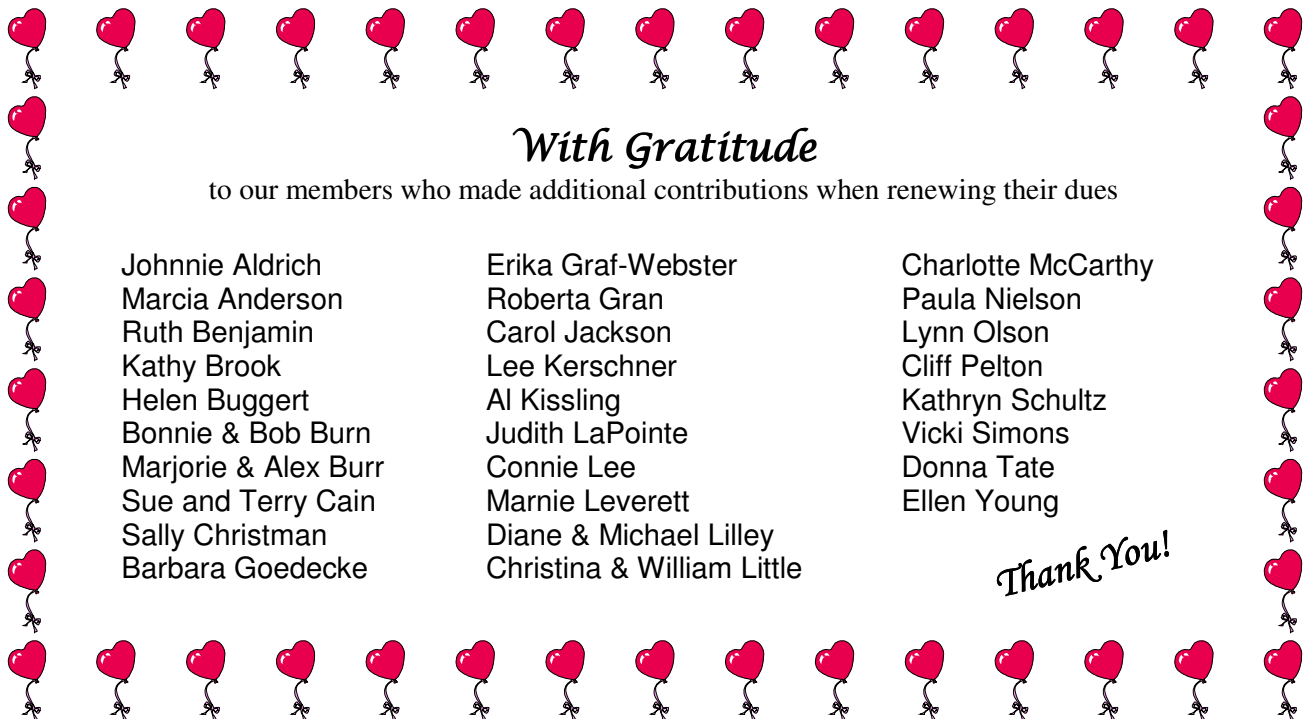
It is an exciting time. The County has placed the library function under DAC's Human and Health Services operation. The branch libraries operate out of a designated room or area of the Community Centers. Each center has assigned a staff person to oversee the operation, except for Butterfield that is staffed by a volunteer. As the branches move to full operation, the service is in flux. Mark Pendleton visits the branch libraries on a rotating basis. He ensures that each collection is tailored to community needs. Adult, children, English and Spanish books are in the collections that are refreshed on a regular basis. At present there are no computers on site; therefore, one cannot look up books in the Branigan collection, search the Internet, or look for work online. Special book orders have to be made by telephone and are sent out in the Books-by-Mail service offered by Branigan. The shelving for the

collections was rescued from the former City of Las Cruces Office Center. Usage among the branches varies and could be encouraged by more advertising directed at the users of the Community Centers.

The branch libraries operate on a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) established between Branigan and DAC.

There are public libraries in the Village of Hatch, Sunland Park, and the City of Anthony. The first two are part of the city governance structure. The latter remains under a contract agreement between DAC and the Anthony Charter School while the newly incorporated City of Anthony establishes its government.

In other news about the Branigan library, the renovations started some time ago are almost complete: the Roadrunner Room and the Children's Kiva Renovations are done. Expanding the children's section and bringing back the New Mexico Room that will contain the Southwest Collection and history reading room remain underway. Over the past year, great strides have been made to bring reading resources to the county.



With Gratitude

to our members who made additional contributions when renewing their dues

Johnnie Aldrich
Marcia Anderson
Ruth Benjamin
Kathy Brook
Helen Buggert
Bonnie & Bob Burn
Marjorie & Alex Burr
Sue and Terry Cain
Sally Christman
Barbara Goedecke

Erika Graf-Webster
Roberta Gran
Carol Jackson
Lee Kerschner
Al Kissling
Judith LaPointe
Connie Lee
Marnie Leverett
Diane & Michael Lilley
Christina & William Little

Charlotte McCarthy
Paula Nielson
Lynn Olson
Cliff Pelton
Kathryn Schultz
Vicki Simons
Donna Tate
Ellen Young

Thank You!

LEAGUE OBSERVER REPORTS

The League's Observer Corps can enable greater coverage and information gathering, provide early warning of upcoming issues of concern, increase League's visibility, and assist in networking with other groups. We appreciate the reports that are submitted by Observers. Following the League practice of publishing nonpartisan, objective reports, the information submitted may be edited for content and brevity.

Las Cruces Public School Board Meeting; June 21, 2011; 6:35 - 7:35 p.m. - *Sue Cain Observer*

President, Dr. Connie Phillips, called the board meeting to order with all members except Maria Flores present.

The Minutes, Agenda, and Consent Agenda Items were all approved.

President Phillips reported on the 5:00 p.m. Closed Session. Following Superintendent Rounds' evaluation, he was offered and accepted an extended contract for two years with no changes, starting July 1, 2011. Superintendent Rounds thanked the board for their extension of his contract and then the LCPS staff for their dedicated professional services to their students, parents and schools.

Michelle Estrada, a kindergarten teacher at Desert Hills Elementary School, was recognized for receiving the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching by Superintendent Rounds. Michelle was the only New Mexico teacher to receive this award. Michelle went to Washington D.C. to receive her award and a \$10,000 check from the National Science Foundation. President Obama spoke with winning teachers individually to recognize and thank them for their dedication to excellence in teaching their students.

Dr. Emma Armendariz, Director of bilingual and multicultural programs for LCPS, introduced and recognized 31 bilingual students who were graduating seniors at Las Cruces, Mayfield, and Oate High Schools.

Superintendent Rounds' Report included the following:

- Introduced four new principals in the LCPS. They are Dorothy Flores, Picacho Middle; Christa Vaudry, Tombaugh Elementary; Janet Candelaria, Conlee Elementary, and Janie Rios, Columbia Elementary schools.
- Indicated that the LCPS budget has received final approval from the NM Director of Public Finance.

- Announced the retirement of Asst. Superintendent for Operations Herb Torres. Mr. Torres was thanked and recognized for his many services to the LCPS and given a gift. His replacement will be Dane Kennon, former superintendent for the Cobre Public Schools.
- The Federal financing for Title I (homeless students), Title II (staff development) and Title III (Bilingual education) has been reduced.

The following items were approved:

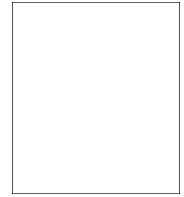
1. Resolution to Maintain 2010/2011 Employee Pension Contribution Rates.
2. The 2011/12 School Year Agreement between City of Las Cruces and LCPS for School Resource Officer Services. There will now be one more officer working in the middle and high schools which brings the total School Resource Officers to ten.
3. Construction project reports will be on the LCPS's web site and in the newspaper, but will only be shown in detail during the LCPS Board Meetings at the end of each quarter.
4. Presentation and Approval of the Professional Development Center Complex which includes roofing/remodeling project which was presented by Herb Torres.
5. Approval of superintendent or designee to award bids and proposals and to execute related contracts/agreements on behalf of the Board of Education until the August 2011 Board Meeting. These decisions will be reported weekly to the School Board Chair or Vice Chair until August 1, 2011.
6. Approval of Charter Amendment for Las Montañas Charter High School. Students will have classes for four days instead of five.

Ms. Flores sent a request that there be an opportunity for high school students to participate in LCPS Board Meetings. This will be discussed at the School Board's work session in August.



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FIRST CLASS

Education Study Unit Meetings



Program is the heart of League.
 Your voice is needed to reach
 consensus. Please mark your
 calendars and plan to attend.
 Unit Meeting #3 (see p 2)

August 2011
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Membership Application

Membership: Individual (\$60), 2nd Household Member (\$30), and Students (\$25)

Name: _____ **2nd Household:** _____

Address: _____ **City/State/Zip:** _____

Phone: _____ **Cell:** _____ **Email:** _____

\$ _____ Contribution to the League Make Check payable to LWV of Greater Las Cruces

\$ _____ Contribution to the Education Fund (Tax Deductible) Make check payable to
 League of Women Voters Education Fund

All checks should be mailed to

League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces, P.O. Box 8322, Las Cruces, NM 88006-8322

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