

Empowering Voters.
Protecting Democracy.

Newsletter for April 2024

REACHING LWVCM

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Thank You, League Volunteers!

Happy Volunteer Appreciation Month! The late Rosalynn Carter once said, “Without volunteers, we’d be a nation without a soul.” Here at the League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg, this is a time to reflect on the brave volunteers who fought for women’s access to the vote—and through doing so, first formed the League of Women Voters 104 years ago. It is also a time to take a moment to share our deep appreciation for our local League volunteers who are continuing the work today.

Our volunteers are worth their weight in gold to our organization and our cause. The Board of LWVCM would like to extend a heart felt **thank you** to each and every member who devotes their time, talent and treasure without any compensation. Thank you to those who traveled to Raleigh for Leandro Day, those who registered voters ahead of the primary, those who brought a table, coffee or snacks to a meeting or event, and everyone in between. It takes a village and we are grateful that you are part of the little village we call “The League.” You are the lifeblood of our organization. We accomplish so much more when we “Educate, Advocate and Empower” together. We hope you will join us on May 2 for a Volunteer Appreciation Event. [Register here.](#)



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Find updates for League action and activities at goleaguego.org



NORTH CAROLINA Second Primary Dates/Deadlines

April 25: In-person early voting begins (6 sites in Mecklenburg)

May 7, 5pm: Absentee ballot request deadline

May 11, 3pm: In-person early voting ends

May 14: Second Primary Election Day

May 14, 7:30pm: Absentee ballot return deadline

Coming Events

Coming Up in April, May, and June

- **April:** *National Volunteer Month; Arab American Heritage Month*
- **Apr. 2, 6:30pm:** Board Meeting (Virtual)
- **Apr. 3, 10am:** Education Action Team Meeting (LWVCM Office)
- **Apr. 4, 3pm:** [Executive and Regulatory Advocacy](#) (LWVUS Webinar)
- **Apr. 4, 7pm:** [Benefits & Drawbacks of Lower Corp Tax Rate](#) panel discussion (Virtual)
- **Apr. 6, 11 am:** [Voices from the Past](#) (Charlotte historic cemeteries)
- **Apr. 6, 4pm:** [Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges: 60th Anniversary of Integration](#) (Winthrop University)
- **Apr. 10, 2pm:** [Public Education Listening Session Afternoon Tea](#) (Myers Park Baptist Church Library)
- **Apr. 11, 7pm:** [Direct Election of the President Webinar](#) (LWVNC Webinar)
- **Apr. 17, 6pm:** [It Takes a Village: Familial Caregiving & Communities of Color](#) (Caldwell Presbyterian)
- **Apr. 18:** [Carolinas Climate Summit](#) hosted by WFAE (The Dubois Center at UNC Charlotte)
- **Apr. 18, 5:30pm:** Communications Strategy Team Meeting (Virtual)
- **Apr. 20, 10am:** [Unity in Community North Meck Rally for Action](#) featuring (Davidson UMC Chapel)
- **Apr. 21-27:** *National Volunteer Appreciation Week*
- **Apr. 22:** *Earth Day*
- **Apr. 25, TBD:** [BKD Event: Brunch](#) (LWVCM Office)
- **Apr. 25, 1 pm:** [Environment + Sustainability Team Meeting](#) (Virtual)
- **Apr. 27, 10am:** LWVNC Western Regional Meeting (Hickory)
- **May:** *Asian American Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and Jewish American Heritage Month*
- **May:** *Mental Health Awareness Month*
- **May 1, 10am:** Education Action Team Meeting (LWVCM Office)
- **May 2, 4-6pm:** [Volunteer Appreciation Event](#) (The Olde Mecklenburg Brewery)
- **May 7, 6:30pm:** Board Meeting (Virtual)
- **May 12:** *Mother's Day*
- **May 16, 5:30pm:** Communications Strategy Team Meeting (Virtual)
- **May 20:** *31st Anniversary of the National Voter Registration Act*
- **May 20-21:** LWVNC Council (Virtual)
- **May 23, 1 pm:** [Environment + Sustainability Team Meeting](#) (Virtual)
- **May 27:** *Memorial Day*
- **May 28, 7pm:** LWVCM Book Club "Working in the 21st Century" by Mark Larson (Virtual)
- **Jun. 20:** [Annual Meeting](#)
- **Jun. 22:** Board Orientation
- **Jun. 27-30:** LWVUS 2024 Convention (Washington, D.C.)
- **Jun. 27, 1pm:** [Environment + Sustainability Team Meeting](#) (Virtual)

League Action & Happenings

“Voices from the Past” Brings History to Life

On Saturday, April 6 from 11 A.M. to 3 P.M., League members and the public are invited to the sixth annual “Voices from the Past”—a unique living history event that tells the stories of Charlotte’s founding fathers, civic leaders, pioneering women, and a few interesting characters. Guests are invited to take a “spirited stroll” through Charlotte’s historic cemeteries—Elmwood, Pinewood and Old Settlers’—and interact with portrayers as they tell the stories of the men and women who helped make Charlotte what it is today. (Find more information and sign up [here.](#))

The LWVCM is a cosponsor of the event. Our own Suzanne Elsberry, League President will represent the League in the reenactment with Gladys Love Avery Tillet (b. 1892-d. 1984), an activist, the first President of the LWVCM and eventually a LWVNC President years later. Elsberry’s interaction with Mrs.



Mrs. Gladys Love Avery Tillet (far right) is pictured in 1950 with Mrs. Truman (far left) and a group of Democratic Women.

Tillet, who will be portrayed by local veterinarian Dr. Katie Wolfe, will be a full circle moment as Elsberry escorted Tillet to Raleigh on February 28, 1973 to lobby the NC Senate to pass the ERA. The bill was defeated 27-23 when some senators switched their votes at the last minute.

“Surprisingly,” remarked Elsberry who never shies away from a presentation or performance, “I will not be the one in costume at this event!”



Tillet’s home on North Tryon.

Those interested in the event may get a sense of what is in store by watching a clip of the organizers as they appeared on [WBTV On Your Side](#). Lynn Mintzer, founder of “Voices from the Past” characterizes the event as telling the history of Charlotte by getting beyond the tombstone. As you look at tombstones, you see the name, birth and death dates. “We focus on the dash,” says Mintzer, “which is their life story.”

All Members Invited to Tea & Conversation

The League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg Education Action Team invites all League members for an Afternoon Tea and conversation about public education.

This listening session will be held on Wednesday, April 10 from 2:00 PM until 3:30 PM in the Myers Park Baptist Church Library.



The LWVCM supports public education and sees it as foundational to our democracy. Our public schools are being challenged and we want to hear your perceptions about public education in your community.

Members who are interested in joining may either register on our events page or email Linda Traum, Co-Chair LWVCM Education Action Team at ltraum1189@gmail.com.

Winthrop University Marks 60 Years of Integration

This year marks a momentous occasion at Winthrop University - the 60th anniversary of integration. Our own past president Delores Johnson Hurt ('68) will be honored as she was among the first Black students to enroll at Winthrop. Join the celebration [Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges](#) will be held on Saturday, April 6 from 4-6 p.m. in Richardson Ballroom, located in the DiGiorgio Campus Center.

This commemorative event will honor the trailblazing legacy of not only Delores, but the late Arnetta Gladden Mackey '67, Cynthia Plair Roddey '67, and Sue Frances Meriwether Steed '67, whose bravery as the first Black students to enroll at Winthrop marked a significant milestone in the university’s history. A wonderful short film called “Fulfilling the Promise” was created for the 50th anniversary of the integration of Winthrop. It may may be viewed [here](#).



League Action & Happenings

Environment Team to Visit the Innovation Barn

The Environment + Sustainability Team is scheduled to visit the [Innovation Barn](#) to learn about developing a circular economy—how recyclables can be turned into useful articles and products. The Innovation Barn is a joint project between the City of Charlotte and Envision Charlotte. As part of their tour, the E+S Team will experience and explore the inner workings of circular and sustainable initiatives such as: **Aquaponics vertical farming** (featuring a submarine aquarium/tank filled with tilapia), **Plastics Lab** (where plastic is shredded, melted, and remolded), **Glass Crushing Center** (turning glass bottles into crushed glass cullet and silica sand), **Textile Diversion** (through clothing repair, redesign and repurposing), **Composting with Crown Town Compost** (complete with a black soldier fly + worm composting room!), **Southern Spore Work's mushroom grow container**, **Change Please** (a non-profit cafe working to combat homelessness)....**and more!**

At their organizational meeting, the team decided to set their monthly meetings for the fourth Thursday of each month at 1pm via Zoom. Dates thru June are [now listed](#).



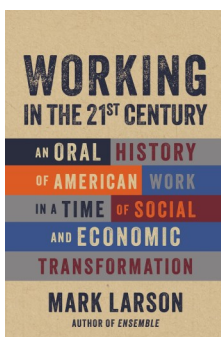
INNOVATION BARN

LWVCM May Book Club to Read "Working..."

Released in time to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Studs Terkel's 1974 classic "Working," the LWVCM Book Club will read "Working in the 21st Century: An Oral History of American Work in a Time of Social and Economic Transformation," by Mark Larson for our May 28 meeting. [Register here](#).

Goodreads: *From nurses and teachers to wildland firefighters and funeral directors—an intimate, honest, and illuminating collection of interviews that reveal what it's like to work in America at this historic and volatile moment in time. Author Mark Larson sits down with more than one hundred workers from across the socioeconomic spectrum as they share their experiences with work and what it has meant in their lives—the good, the bad, the mundane, and the profound. Doulas, firefighters, chefs, hairstylists, executives, actors, stay-at-home parents, and so many more talk about what they do all day and how it aligns (or doesn't) with what they want to be doing with their lives. ([Read more here](#).)*

You can also listen to an interview with the author on [Reduced Shakespeare](#).



LWVCM + YWCA Host Healthcare Justice Event

According to Mental Health America, almost 40% of caregivers identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC). Within each BIPOC racial/ethnic group, the **rates of caregiving are higher** than in white demographics. This year's "Until Justice Just Is" community panel and discussion will focus on caregiving in communities of color, the relevant cultural context associated with this practice and the necessity for radical change when it comes to the supportive services of both caretaker and those being cared for. It truly takes a village to not only care for a child but also the lives of those who may be experiencing short-term or long term limitations within our communities (Johns Hopkins Medicine).

The YMCA of Central Carolinas and the LWV of Charlotte Mecklenburg invite the community to this "Until Justice Just Is" event, [It Takes A Village: A Conversation on Familial Caregiving and Communities of Color](#). Panelists Dr. Montoro Rodriguez, Juanita Wade and Venitra White-Dean will lead the conversation.

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
Central Carolinas

A Conversation on Familial Caregiving & Communities of Color

April 17
6PM-7:30PM

Caldwell Presbyterian Church
1609 E 5th St, Charlotte, NC

In partnership with:
LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG

Sponsored by:
Google Fiber



The event will take place on Wednesday, April 17 from 6-7:30 PM at Caldwell Presbyterian Church. Those interested in joining may register on our [events page](#).

LWVCM President's Perspective



In a recent VOTER. I expressed gratitude to our wonderful **members**, both longstanding and new for their loyalty and support for the League of Women Voters Charlotte Mecklenburg. It goes without saying that minus our members, our organization would cease to exist. This month LWVCM recognizes and thanks our **volunteers** who enable us to fulfill our mission of empowering voters and defending democracy. League volunteers show invaluable dedication and generosity as they contribute their time, expertise, enthusiasm and treasure to guarantee our success as an organization. I salute you, one and all!

League members spent a busy March with activities involving our many programs. On March 19, Corrie Moore, Senior Director of Philanthropy for Planned Parenthood (South Atlantic Region) spoke to our members about reproductive health care and its challenges in our current environment. Attendees posed many questions and observations to Corrie during the lively Q&A following her talk.

The newly formed **BKDs group** (Be, Know, Do) of senior members enjoyed their first outing as they toured the Charlotte History Museum on April 25. The group plans a luncheon for April 25 in the Library Conference Room at Myers Park Baptist Church as their next activity.

Also in March, LWVCM Board members and guests enjoyed the play "The Thursday Night Bridge Circle" written by NC playwright, Ray Kennedy. Set in a small southern town, the play offers a thoughtful look at the traditions of racial discrimination peppered with comedic southern witticism reminiscent of the movies "Steel Magnolias" and "The Help." DEI Chair, Linda Traum arranged the event as a part of LWVCM's **DEI** learning experiences.

At our invitation, Dr. Crystal Hill, (CMS Superintendent) met virtually with members of the **Education Team** to answer questions regarding priorities in public school funding and staffing. The meeting helped direct the future advocacy efforts and focus of this energetic team.

Members of the LWVCM Board have been attending workshops sponsored by the Executive Services Corporation (a non-profit organization advising non-profits) for the past several weeks. Thus far, workshops led by executive level volunteers have offered comprehensive learning sessions in the areas of board development: Cohesive Boards, Harnessing Human Capital-the upcoming session will focus on Financial Management.

Our Archives Coordinator, Margaret Howe-Soper, has reenergized our **Environmental and Sustainability Action Team**. Their first activity is slated for April with a guided tour of the **Innovation Barn** on Seigle Avenue. A model for a circular economy, this sustainability initiative innovates ways to transform trash into treasure. Charlotte is the first U.S. city to launch such a program which strives to make waste a thing of the past by making it useful.

Speaking of reviving Action Teams, we are searching for a volunteer(s) to lead our **Women's Issues team**. A significant number of our new members have indicated an interest in Women's Issues, which include Economic and Political Equality as well as Reproductive Rights. A Women's Issues Team advocates for these rights which are so critically important considering the current challenging environment. Please consider taking a leading role in helping raise our chapter's voice for the passage of the ERA and restoring our reproductive freedoms.

Kudos and congratulations to 2nd V.P. and Civics 101 Team Leader, Jane Hoffmann, for the stellar session of the Civics 101 program which just completed. Jane and her amazing and dedicated team have scored another hit that not only garnered new members to LWVCM, but attracted much positive media attention!

LWVCM is a sponsor for **Voices From the Past** event being held on Saturday, April 6 at Elmwood, Old Settlers' and Pinewood Cemeteries from 11:00 A.M.-3:00 P.M. As the current President, I am looking forward to introducing the costumed portrayer of **our first LWVCM President, Gladys Tillet**. Mrs. Tillet was a renowned advocate for voting rights, civil rights and women's rights as well as a national political leader. I had the honor to meet our first League President in 1973 as I drove her to Raleigh to lobby senators for the ERA. The event, organized by the Mecklenburg Historic Association allows us to hear the stories of 33 of the memorable Mecklenburg citizens buried in the cemeteries. I hope you will plan to attend this unique event!

A final comment: With scores of the ballots certified by the NCSBE on March 26, the turnout in Mecklenburg's **March 5 Primary Election** was disappointing—a mere 19% of voters. Mecklenburg was 97th in voter turnout out of NC's 100 counties. Obviously, LWVCM has a big challenge to overcome for the General Election in November. So, let's resolve to redouble our efforts this fall and GOTV!

Warm regards,

President, League of Women Voters
of Charlotte Mecklenburg

League News

Welcome to New League Members

New Members in March

Richard King	Deborah Arnold
Mary Lee Saarbach	Ann Franklin
Elyse A. Williams	Jen Duncan
Rose Mary Seymour	

Remembrance

The League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg extends sincere condolences to our longtime member, the Honorable Becky Carney, on the loss of her husband Eugene Joseph Carney, Jr. on March 14, 2024.

LWVCM Gears Up for Political Forums

The League of Women Voters has always been held in high regard as key sponsors for political forums throughout our country. In years past, LWVCM has sponsored such forums and debates to educate voters about local candidates—their qualifications, platforms and to hear their answers on important issues effecting our community. As we approach the General Election in November, we would like to again offer this service to voters in Mecklenburg and surrounding areas.

If you are interested in helping our chapter to plan and hold a fall nonpartisan candidate forum please contact League President, Suzanne Elsberry via email: dessuz@bellsouth.net.

Opinion: NC Taxes

It is hard to believe that N.C. leaders have chosen to make the corporate income tax **zero** by 2029 instead of using our resources to pay for the necessary items that make our state a great place to live, learn and work. This will cause a revenue loss of more than \$2 billion annually – a loss that, among other things, will gravely affect funds needed to pay for a quality public education.

I live in Mecklenburg County and volunteer in a local public school. Eliminating the proposed corporate income tax couldn't come at a worse time, with the state's existing failure to comply with the Leandro funding plan which would support a sound, basic education for all N.C. students.

Corporate income taxes should **not** be eliminated. —Linda Levy, Matthews Township
Reprinted with permission from *The Charlotte Observer*

Voter Services Team Seeks Chair and Lieutenants

The League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg is looking for a Voter Services Team Lead(s) and lieutenants of subcommittees within Voter Services.

Subcommittees:

1. Voter Registration (VR) - Host VR drives and events year-round focusing especially on first-time voters, non-college youth, communities of color and low-income Americans. Promote VOTE411 at all events.



2. Voter Education - Work year-round to educate citizens on the importance of voting through partnerships with other non-partisan groups, training/advising high school/college students to host voter education and registration events.

3. Candidate Forums - Host nonpartisan forums of local candidates according to defined rules.



4. Get Out The Vote (GOTV) - Perform a variety of nonpartisan turnout-promoting activities in the period between early voting and Election Day.

If you are interested hearing more about any of these roles, please contact League President, Suzanne Elsberry via email: dessuz@bellsouth.net.

LWVCM Communications Team Seeks Co-Webmaster

Do you love keeping websites engaging and informative? Are you a team player who thrives in a collaborative environment? The Communications Team is seeking a passionate Co-Webmaster to join our team!

In this role, you'll be responsible for the **public-facing aspects** of our website. You'll work alongside a co-webmaster who handles the back-end, ensuring our online presence is up-to-date, informative, and engaging for our members and the public.

The LWVCM Seeks Women's Issues Team Lead(s)

Fun fact: 59% of our newest members expressed an interest in Reproductive Rights Advocacy. An only slightly smaller number are interested in advocating for Equal Status Under the Law. To that end, the League is seeking one or more individuals who would be interested in shepherding the Women's Issues Team that is currently without a leader. Interested? Contact Suzanne Elsberry, LWVCM President at: dessuz@bellsouth.net

League Action & Happenings

Civics 101's Final Session of 2024 Makes News

That's a wrap! The League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg once again hosted its hybrid "Civics 101" program—a series of six sessions for the citizens of Mecklenburg County. These educational classes covered voting; city, town, and county governments; CMS and the Board of Education; the county court system; and media literacy. Participants heard from current and former office holders, civil servants, and local reporters to gain an in-depth knowledge of the workings of their local government. Thanks to a generous donor, the 2024 program was free of charge for participants.

The final session featured a panel discussion by journalists from the Charlotte area—Ann Doss Helms (WFAE); Herb White (Charlotte Post); Diego Barahona (La Noticia); Joe Bruno (WSOC-TV); and Alexandria Sands (Axios). The discussion was moderated by J. Israel Balderas, who currently serves as assistant professor of journalism at Elon University, where he specializes in Media Law and Ethics. Professor Balderas kicked off the session with a compelling keynote presentation "Journalism at a Crossroads: Protecting Democratic Values in a Rapidly Evolving AI World."

At the close of the evening (and program), the League held a ceremony wherein those who attended in person received Certificates of Completion and cake! 13-year-old participant, Adhvik Pradeep, was the youngest Civics 101 participant to date and engaged with all six sessions.

WFAE Education Reporter Ann Doss Helms interviewed Adhvik, and her story appeared in her newsletter, with audio airing on the radio! [Read and listen here.](#)



For those interested in the LWVCM 2025 Civics 101 Program, you are invited to join the waiting list by filling out this [form](#).

You Are Nature's Best Hope

Many of us diligently "reduce, reuse, recycle" and even upcycle and still wish we could do more to help the environment. By the end of the century, up to 40% of the insect species may go extinct owing in part to habitat loss. Why does that matter? Insects help maintain healthy soil, recycle nutrients, pollinate flowers and crops and control pests. Without them, our ecology

will be out of balance. Entomologist Doug Tallamy and his organization, Homegrown National Park, are calling on us to help to increase biodi-



Appalachia sunflower (*Helianthus atrorubens*)

versity by planting native plants in our yards while decreasing the sizes of our grass areas. A plant is considered native if it has occurred in an area without human introduction. These plants have co-evolved with insects to be their food source and habitat. Maintaining grass lawns increases greenhouse gases, pollutes ecosystems, wastes water and diminishes biodiversity. By planting native species in our yards and containers we can make a difference, one person at a time!

—Lucy Kempton

Resources:

[Homegrown National Park](#), [Recommended Native Species for North Carolina](#), and [Landscaping for Wildlife with Native Plants](#).

BKDs Get a Guided Tour of the Charlotte History Museum and 1774 Hezekiah Alexander House

Did you know that the Charlotte History Museum has the original desk and a hand-written (recently discovered) letter of Hezekiah Alexander? Did you know that in the 1700s one form of tea was small compacted bricks, impressed with the maker's symbol from which the drinker cut a piece to put into hot water? Did you know that Alexander briefly imprisoned Tories in the third floor attic of his rock house on the Museum property?

These and other revelations about the museum's Hezekiah Alexander house, the oldest standing rock house left in Mecklenburg County, with the largest ground level seven-ton "Freedom" bell in the US impressed League members of the BKD group touring the grounds. (BKDs are LWVCM members over 60 that Be, Know and Do.)

Fourteen women and men participated in the first "field trip" of the new League group, getting to know one another and learning a lot of Mecklenburg history in the process. Members attending decided that the next event would be strictly social with a covered dish brunch on April 25 at the League office. A volunteer is needed to help organize the event and send out invitations. If you can be a one-time leader for April 25, send an email to membership@goleaguego.org. Watch your email and the League's website, www.goleaguego.org for details.



BKDs at the 1774 Hezekiah Alexander House.



From left: Journalists Herb White (Charlotte Post); Ann Doss Helms (WFAE); Alexandria Sands (Axios); Diego Barahona (La Noticia); and Joe Bruno (WSOC-TV) take part in a discussion moderated by Elon Professor J. Israel Balderas (at podium).

Presenters for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and Board of Education Civics 101 session included from left: Brian Schultz (Chief Operations Officer for CMS), Stephanie Sneed (Board Chair, District 4), Liz Monterey (At-Large), Jane Hoffmann (LWVCM Board Member and Civics 101 Lead), Summer Nunn (District 6), Dr. Crystal Hill (CMS Superintendent), and Beth Thompson (Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer for CMS)



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Dated Material

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