



# VOTER

February 15

## CALENDAR

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## March 2010

**2 Tuesday Topics -  
Topeka and Shawnee  
County Public Library,  
11:30**

**Speaker-Professor Jeffrey  
Jackson  
Judicial Selection Sys-  
tems and Diversity**

**MENU:** Turkey club  
croissant with fruit cup, chips,  
cookies and iced tea.

**4 League day at the Capitol**

**9 LWVT/SC Board Meet-  
ing - Topeka and  
Shawnee County Public  
Library, upstairs meeting  
room, all members welcome,  
11:30-1:00**

## April 2010

**6 Tuesday Topics -  
Topeka and Shawnee  
County Public Library,  
11:30**

**Speaker-Secretary of  
Revenue Joan Wagon  
State Taxes: Stopping the  
Bleeding**

**MENU:** Quiche with tossed  
salad, rolls, cookies and iced  
tea.

**13 LWVT/SC Board  
Meeting - Topeka and  
Shawnee County Public  
Library, upstairs meeting  
room, all members wel-  
come, 11:30-1:00**

**16 VOTER DEADLINE  
5pm—send articles to  
lois5510@hotmail.com or  
Lois Cox 910 SE 43rd  
Street, 66609**

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

## Prez Sez



**Gwen Elliott**  
**President LWVT/SC**

During the last few weeks, our League held a successful program planning meeting and heard another informative speaker on the topic of State Tax Exemptions. The members who attended the program planning VOICE meeting on January 21<sup>st</sup> agreed to the following local study for the next two years:

Analyze the Financial Structure of Topeka and Shawnee County Government:

1. Sources of income: interrelationships and proportional sources for City and County
2. Nature of expendi-

tures: interrelationships and proportional expenditures for City and County.

The proposed study will need to be adopted by vote at the Annual Meeting in April.

Thanks to both the budget and nominating committees who met in January and produced a new proposed budget and a new slate of officers, both of which will need to be voted on at the Annual Meeting. We also plan to recognize 50-year members at the Annual Meeting.

We will commemorate the League's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on February 14<sup>th</sup> with a letter to the editor written by Grace Wilson. We need to focus on our year-long commitment to the judicial diversity project and to continue to promote it whenever possible. Our March Tuesday Topics speaker, Jeffrey Jackson, will speak on that issue. Maryanna Quilty is working with KTWU to arrange a public forum on that topic in May.

Anita Epps and her committee will be register-

ing voters at the Lawn and Garden Show during the weekend of February 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>. That is surely a sign that spring is on the way!

March 4<sup>th</sup> will be League Day at the Capitol, featuring talks by Paul Johnson, who follows legislation for the State League, and by Joan Wagnon, who will speak about Kansas Revenue. Joan will also be the speaker for our Annual Meeting on April 6<sup>th</sup> on the same topic.

It is not too early to start making plans to attend LWVK Council on May 1<sup>st</sup> in Manhattan. Any League member may attend. We are pleased that our board member, Liz Post, has agreed to serve on the new State Board.

As always, it is a pleasure to serve with such a competent and committed local board and with the many members who assist us. Think spring!

## **Tuesday Topics: March 2**

**Local Beautification and Safety**

**Professor Jeffrey Jackson**

**Judicial Selection Systems and Diversity:**

**Taking the Best Method and Making it Better**

**On March 2, 2010, Tuesday Topics will host Washburn Law School Professor, Jeffrey Jackson as the first speaker in our series of offerings regarding a diverse judiciary in Kansas. Professor Jackson, Associate Professor of Constitutional Law, advised and assisted the Topeka-Shawnee County League with its application for the grant awarded to us through the National LWV by the Open Society Institute. You may remember him from his lively and thorough presentation on the Electoral College. Join us at the Topeka/Shawnee County Library for lunch at 11:30AM and lecture/discussion from 12:00 to 1:00PM.**

## **Tuesday Topics: April 6**

**State Taxes: Stopping the Bleeding**

**Secretary of Revenue Joan Wagnon**

**Joan Wagnon, Secretary of Revenue, will join us for discussion of tax exemptions in Kansas at our Annual Meeting, April 6, 2010 at the Topeka/Shawnee County Public Library. Joan is considered to be the originator of the idea of reviewing tax exemptions in relation to balancing the budget in our state. She brings years as a legislator, mayor, YWCA and bank executive to bear on her insights. Don't miss this opportunity! Come for lunch at 11:30AM or 12:00PM for presentation and meeting.**

## **2009 League Fund Drive**

**Thank you to all who contributed to the Leagues 2009 Fund Drive. With the economy as it is, your contributions are especially appreciated this year. We received a total of \$1020.00 in contributions for our local league. We also received \$275.00 for the National Education Fund. Our expenses were \$182.86 leaving us with a total of \$1112.14 for the fund drive total. Thank you for your support! I would also like to thank the following volunteers: Charlotte Adair, Nancy Shaughnessy, Brenda Guilfoyle, and Betsy Rohleder.**

**Teresa Stambaugh, Fund Drive Chair**

## **REFLECTIONS ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE TOPEKA CITY COUNCIL FROM OCTOBER 2009 TO DECEMBER 4, 2009**

**BY JOE SARGENT**

I was pleasantly surprised when I opened my Topeka Capital-Journal paper on January 6th and found that our city was ranked third in the nation according to a real estate expert on NBC's "Today" show as a desirable place to buy a house. This expert used such factors as size and value of houses, job growth, quality of education, low unemployment, and stable home pricing to rate the area.

On December 9th Councilman Wolgast reintroduced the helicopter issue because of recent surveys showing a majority of the population favored having a police helicopter. In his plan the helicopter would only be used for designated missions such as searching for lost persons or responding to a natural disaster and would be budgeted for up to \$150,000 for 2010 out of a special fund. The helicopter unit would be downsized and would use the available Schweizer 300C helicopter. Later, Wolgast withdrew his proposal because of lack of support on the council to override a mayoral veto and as of January 1st we have no police helicopter service.

In early December, the Topeka Zoo director, Mike Coker, retired as of December 25th, amid controversies at the zoo. In late January, the city received a letter from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums stating that the association will determine at a hearing in March the zoo's accreditation. In addition, the U.S. Department of Agriculture in a two day walk through in January cited the zoo for seven non-

compliance issues. Interim zoo director, Dennis Taylor, indicated that he was addressing these issues. City manager Boneparte stated at a council meeting on January 26th that the search for a new zoo director would take several months.

At its December 15th meeting, the council approved five street improvement projects totaling a little over \$13 million using the half-cent sales tax approved by the voters in April, 2009 for this purpose. Also, approval was given to thirteen capital improvement projects totaling nearly \$3.6 million using general obligation bonds with a debt service of nearly six million. Subsequently, Mayor Buntin vetoed four projects involving replacement of three traffic lights, replacement of golf cart paths at the city's Cypress Ridge Golf Course, construction of a new office, classroom, and work area for the Helen Hocker Theater, and extension of the Landon Trail. Eventually, three of these vetoes were overridden; the only one not overridden was the replacement of the golf cart paths at Cypress Ridge.

Boneparte in early January recommended changes in the format of the council's meetings. Instead of four meetings per month used to act on ordinances and resolutions, he would reduce these meetings to twice per month and have abbreviated meetings twice a month to approve the consent agenda and first readings of proposed council legislative items that would be acted on later. The abbreviated meetings would then

be followed by work sessions during which matters under consideration could be discussed in greater depth.

The council approved the replacement of the Garfield pool, built in 1926, and renovation of its bath house at a cost of nearly \$2 million with a debt service of slightly over \$3.2 million. Councilperson Archer raised concern about replacing the Crestview pool, the only one in Southwest Topeka, with a spray park; it services a larger population living within a two mile radius than the other four pools.

The council on January 26th approved the widening of Southwest 29th street between Wanamaker and Urish Roads at a cost of \$9.3 million. This will include the replacement of the round-about at 29th street and Urish Road and will take two construction seasons to complete. The businesses in the area are greatly concerned about how this project will affect their business.

The city administration is presently considering the 2010 budget and in order to stay within the budget the city will possibly terminate some employee positions with a savings of \$1 million. At the same time the city faces the expense of replacing an aging fleet of snow removal equipment as well as the increasing deterioration of our streets

## NOTES ON COUNTY COMMISSION MEETINGS

BY GEORGIA SANDLIN

### December 10, 2009

Norine Staab is retiring from the Elections Office after 39.9 years (I would say 40) years of service. Other workers from the office were in attendance and Elizabeth Ensley helped the commissioners honor Norine.

A representative from the U.S. Census Bureau appeared before the commission and received support for the 2010 census that will be occurring in Shawnee County along with the rest of the country. It was stated that an accurate count is to Shawnee County's advantage because the government money goes where the people are.

Shawnee County Parks and Recreation is buying equipment, including benches, trash cans, pitching mounds as well as services. A contract was approved with Sherpa Sport III, LLC to manage the 2010 and 2011 Tinman Triathlon at Lake Shawnee.

It appears if a department wants an effective negotiator for a contract the county counselor's office knows how to do the job. Anne Freeze reported that the counselor's negotiating skills saved the agency \$15,000 for an electronic system for management and record keeping.

Shawnee County Treasurer Larry Wilson reported to the commission that the responsibilities of the treasurer's office are unclear regarding an

annual report due to the county commission. Apparently, about 10 years ago, by an informal agreement, these responsibilities were shared with the financial administrator and information technology. Treasurer Wilson reported that he would work with the counselor's office and these other departments to have a document that clarified the duties of each department regarding the requested report.

### December 14, 2009

Two items on the agenda may be of interest. First, was the report from the county treasurer's office regarding the closing of the annex at White Lakes. The cold temperatures combined with the lack of heat in the mall area resulted in temperatures so cold in the office workers were wearing coats and gloves and were still cold even with the heat cranked up as far as it would go. The large doors opening to the mall area cannot be opened and closed easily so remain open. Mall management reported no plans to heat the mall. County treasurer, Larry Wilson, reported he would find a solution to the doorway so it can be closed to the freezing mall area.

The second item of interest to LWVTSC members was the report made by Steve Bolton, head of refuse and recycling for Shawnee County. LWVTSC has a position advocating recycling. Mr. Bolton reported to the commission that so many people

are taking advantage of the recycling bins provided by the county that the workers can't keep up with the materials. He is proposing curbside pickup for \$7.50 a month. The commissioners were skeptical that enough citizens would be interested in participating. They will be looking for more information before a decision is made.

### December 17, 2009

After the routine business of approving requests and encumbrances the commissioners were faced with a decision concerning Social Service Funds and the Topeka Youth Project. Allocations for the social service funds were recommended using certain criteria and screened by a committee headed by Nancy Johnson, director of the Community Resources Council. Topeka Youth Project had not met the required criteria so were denied funds. It was recommended that funds earmarked for them be divided among the other agencies. The commissioners asked questions of Ms Johnson and representatives of the Youth Project. There was apparent angst among the commissioners, as each indicated a respect for the work done by the Topeka Youth Project. A final decision was deferred until December 28.

Anne Freeze, Health Agency, reported on the H1N1

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*(Commission continued from page 5)*

Vaccine distribution. She reported a successful clinic at Shawnee Heights High School. 25,000 vaccines have been given. The agency hopes to be finished with clinics and school distribution by the end of January.

### **December 21, 2009**

Two big money items were deferred at this meeting. One deferred vote was the tax exemption for US Foodservice so language in the agreement can be changed. Purchases for the Expo Centre was the other. Time was spent in executive session to discuss the Expo purchases but still no decision was made today.

Tom Vlach, public works, reported the price of three options for replacement of the Willard Bridge. It was emphasized that the new bridge is in the planning stage because money is not available currently. The commissioners voted to proceed with plans for an alignment east of the current bridge. A west alignment would involve relocating a house and a church. Commissioner Miller emphatically stated he did not want to relocate a church. My guess is that is a can of worms he doesn't want to deal with.

### **December 28, 2009**

US Foodservice returned for their tax exemption today. The wording was changed to guarantee that the company would maintain the same number of employees to keep the tax exemption instead of increase the

number of employees.

The Topeka Youth Project funding also reappeared. The commissioners voted 2-1 to fund all the social service agencies with the same amount as 2009. This means the Topeka Youth Project is funded without the required audit. Commissioner Buhler reported that she thinks all social service agencies should be held to the same standards so did not vote to approve that funding..

Another big expense the commissioners will be looking at is the replacement of the surveillance system at the county jail and the juvenile detention system. Dick Kline reported there had been major failures in the equipment that is 12 to 20 years old. The commissioners voted to have Mr. Kline solicit bids.

The last item on the agenda was the big one. Commissioner Miller presented a resolution that would change the distribution of fuel tax money received by the cities, townships and the county. In this resolution the county government would keep the money that is currently shared with the cities. Commissioner Buhler expressed concern for the loss of revenue to the communities. The mayor of Auburn mayor, Tim Cochran, appeared before the commission to express his concerns for the communities that depended on the revenue to maintain their budgets. Today was the first reading of this resolution and it must pass unanimously.

### **December 31, 2009**

There were many black

suits in the commission room this morning, including all 3 commissioners. Did everyone read Dress for Success? After the commissioners approved requests and contracts from the departments of Shawnee County Public Works, Elections, Parks and Recreation, and Corrections the main event started. Commissioner Miller added a resolution to partner with the one presented Monday. The second resolution stated that an increase of fuel tax money would go to the communities in Shawnee County, except for Topeka. The people from outside the city limits of Topeka that spoke to the commission spoke in favor of the resolution with the exception of Tim Cochran, mayor of Auburn. Mayor Bunton, Mike Tepley, Topeka public works, and Karen Hiller, Topeka City Councilwoman, and Chad Manspeaker, from Laborer's Local 1290, spoke to the commission in opposition of the resolutions. Commissioner Miller repeatedly took the opportunity to use many words to refute the testimony of each person that spoke against the resolution. Commissioner Miller contends that the City of Topeka has plenty of money for roads and implied that the city used its money unwisely. Commissioner Miller said he intended to use the money to reduce the county property taxes. Both resolutions failed by a 2-1 vote. Commissioner Buhler voted no to each resolution because she said the purpose of the fuel tax money is to maintain streets and roads and should be used

*(Commission continued on page 7)*

*(Commission continued from page 6)*  
as such.

### **January 4, 2010**

The Shawnee County Commission meeting was brief this morning. There were few questions for the two resolutions, two contracts, and one request that were approved. There was some discussion about the conditional use permit to establish a rock quarry on SE 45<sup>th</sup> to emphasize that traffic on SE 45<sup>th</sup> would not see an increase in traffic.

Ann Freeze reported that the Health Agency is still waiting anxiously for the completion of the independent audit so grant money can be obtained

### **January 11, 2010**

Most of this meeting was spent organizing for the year ahead. Shelley Buhler will serve as chairperson of the commission. Vic Miller will be vice chairman. Ted Ensley will lead the board of directors of the Joint Economic Development Organization.

Commissioners set the calendar specifying the days and hours the courthouse will be open and the dates and times of the commission meetings for 2010.

Commissioner Ensley favored The Capitol-Journal to serve as the official county newspaper but his motion died for lack of a second. Commissioners Buhler and Miller voted for the Topeka Metro News to serve in that capacity, probably because it is less ex-

pensive. The commissioners also made these appointments: Buhler to the Metropolitan Topeka Planning Organization and the Shawnee County Health Board, Ensley to the Ambulance Board, and Miller to Expocentre board.

### **January 14, 2010**

Tom Vlach, public works, came before the commission to report on a bridge project on Carlson Road. Since the road is the county line the cost of the bridge is shared.

Dick Kline, corrections, won approval for a contract for the inmate drug and alcohol treatment program. We learned that it is available to all inmates. For those that work during the day night classes are available.

The commissioners also approved the annual contract with Valeo Behavioral Health Care. The county provides \$2 million to a \$15 million budget. The Valeo representative reported that the Valeo pharmacy has been very successful. The pharmacy had more sales for its first month in business than any other Mental Health pharmacy in Kansas.

### **January 21, 2010**

This Thursday morning meeting had 18 items on the consent agenda, probably because there was no Monday meeting this week when ML King's birthday was celebrated.

Shawnee County Parks and Recreation Department brought two contracts, two requests and one authorization before the commission. They included guardrails, brochures,

pumps at the beach, photography services and synthetic grass. All were approved 3-0.

Shawnee County Treasurer Larry Wilson reported that the peer review committee recommended an auditor be hired to serve on the treasurer's staff. Commissioner Miller requested a copy of the complete report of the peer review committee. Commissioner Buhler requested that Mr. Wilson confer with the audit/finance department in writing the job description. Action by the commission was deferred by a vote of 3-0.

Tom Vlach of public works requested a snow blower attachment for the "Caterpillar skid steer loader." Apparently, because the county roads include more urban areas, including roundabouts, different equipment is needed.

KDHE is paying for out-of-state travel for county employees so the commissioners did not hesitate to approve a trip to Atlanta for three employees of the health agency.

### **January 25, 2010**

The district attorney's office took another step toward a more tech savvy department. The commissioners approved contracts for two systems requested by Eric Theel of information technology department for use in the District Attorney's office.

Tom Vlach, public works, received the OK from the commissioners to seek a locked-price for diesel. This price would be good

for the rest of this year and the fuel would be used by the Refuse, Parks and Recreation and Correct

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*(Commission continued from page 7)*

ions departments also. Commissioner Miller stipulated that the fuel be priced at less than \$2.60.

As usual, Ann Freeze's request for out-of-state travel for two employees of the health agency was approved because KDHE will foot the bill. Ms Freeze also reported on planned H1N1 clinics at Washburn Rural Middle School, Rossville and Silver Lake.

Commissioner Buhler asked Tom Vlach to report on the work being done on the Auburn Bridge. Mr. Vlach reported that, unfortunately, the detour is very long and explained the reason for the timing of the repair. I'm thinking Commissioner Buhler is getting phone calls.

### **February 1, 2010**

Commissioner Ensley was not in attendance on this Monday morning. The consent agenda was 15 items long because there was no meeting on January 28. There were also 9 renewals of tax exemptions that were approved by the two commissioners in attendance.

The commissioners approved a change of zoning for the southwest corner of SW 10<sup>th</sup> and Auburn Rd. Sometime was spent describing the planned efforts to make the property attractive when the commercial facility is built.

County Treasurer Larry Wilson asked to create

a position for an accountant in the treasurer's office. After he told the commissioners that the position could be funded within his budget this request was approved. Next, Treasurer Wilson submitted a list of those personal property taxes that would be referred for collection by a collection agency. The commissioners asked for certification that the treasurer's office had made a concerted effort to collect the taxes before the agency is used. The vote on this notification was deferred for one week. Finally, the deputy treasurer reported to the commission that reconciliation has been completed for months through February 2009. Reconciliations for 2010 will not be started until 2009 is complete.

### **February 8, 2010**

The meeting began with unfinished business. Treasurer Wilson returned with certification that listed Shawnee County residents that have not paid county property taxes and said names would be referred to a collection agency. Commissioner Miller wanted assurance that the list of names did not include people that had been issued a current license tag even though the taxes had not been paid. Action on this item was deferred until this information was brought to the commission.

Later in the meeting commissioners denied Treasurer Wilson's request for funding of the newly established Accountant II position in the treasurer's office because they were informed earlier that the position was funded within the treasurer's budget.

Two requests were approved, one to submit a grant application for for the Shawnee County Drug Court Program and the other to negotiate for improvements at the Expocentre.

Tom Vlach received the go-ahead to write a contract with Capitol City Oil for a locked-price for diesel fuel. The commissioners will need to approve the final contract.

### **February 11, 2010**

Once more this meeting started with the unfinished business of referring tax payers to a collection agency for collection of unpaid taxes. Apparently, some people on this list have their current license tag. Commissioner Miller would like them removed so the county can collect all the taxes owed when they apply for a license tag instead of the collection agency getting 25%. Action was deferred again until the list can be revised.

The big money item today was a resolution that authorized a combination of agreements, with Certificates of Participation, which allow for the financing of a variety of county expenses/purchases to the tune of \$3.25 million. Departments included are Corrections facilities, siren replacement for Emergency Management, site and equipment installation to Lake Shawnee facilities and replacement of display equipment at the Kansas Expocentre.

Action on the contract with the City of Topeka, a inter-local agreement of the city's Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, was deferred. Commissioner Miller wanted time to peruse any changes from the last contract.



## MARCH FORTH

### LEAGUE DAY AT THE CAPITOL, MARCH 4, 2010.

League's annual Day at the Capitol is traditionally a time when Leaguers from around the state gather in Topeka to learn about current legislation, meet with legislators, and re-connect with friends in other Kansas Leagues.

Again this year we will meet in Willard Hall in the lower level of the First Presbyterian Church, 817 SW Harrison, across from the Capitol.

Don't miss this opportunity to find out what's really happening in Topeka!

- 8:30 Registration and continental breakfast
- 9:00 Opening Remarks by LWVK President
- 9:15 Joe Molina, Lobbyist for Kansas Bar Association
- 10:00 Paul Johnson, League Legislative Consultant
- 10:45 Meet with legislators, attend committee meeting
- 12:00 Lunch at the church
- 12:30 Keynote Speaker, Joan Wagnon, Secretary of Revenue
- 1:15 Meet with legislators, attend committee meetings of choice

Cost: \$25 which includes breakfast and lunch. Make checks payable to LWVK and send to **League of Women Voters of Kansas, 618 Kansas Ave., Suite B1, Topeka, KS, 66603, by March 1.**

Parking is not permitted in the church parking lot, but is available beneath the Capitol and on the street.



## McMillan Addresses Tax Expenditure Issues

By Grace L. Wilson

“A tax preference can take the form of a credit, a deduction, an exclusion, a tax rate decrease, or a timing difference,” said Lori McMillan, Washburn Law School, in a presentation at the February Tuesday Topics lunch. She spoke about the role of government in raising revenue, making expenditures and properly allocating the tax burden so “we can feel the pain equally.”

“It is not that easy to put a value on tax expenditures,” McMillan said. The tax code is complex with overlapping provisions, making transparency and accountability a concern. For instance Section 121 allows for a principal residence exclusion whereas Section (h) reduces to zero the rate on certain capital gains.

As for transparency, tax preferences are not subject to the same scrutiny as direct expenditures which must be accounted for in a budget. There may be no cap on the tax preference. It may be allowed for anyone who qualifies and “take on a life of its own.”

The tax preference may be for a specific beneficiary or be interpreted to cover a large group. For instance, McMillan said, what if it was for “anyone feeding hungry children?” It is not a direct expenditure, so how does the government evaluate the service? Also, tax preferences are rarely sunsetted.

“Some have good purposes,” McMillan said, “but I believe that tax expenditures should all be evaluated.” A tax preference is often a financial incentive to support or encourage socially desired behaviors. Each culture may be different. The U.S. culture values home ownership with a mortgage interest write-off. In the Netherlands, citizens pay more in taxes if they own a home than if they rent.

“Just because something doesn’t have an incentive,” McMillan said, “does not mean you won’t do it. It doesn’t mean it’s not going to happen.” In the case of charity, it will not stop people from giving just because there is no tax preference. Just because something is good, should it be rewarded with a tax break?

The tax rate or percentage is applied to the tax base. The tax base includes assessed property value, taxable sales and taxable income. The government could just increase the tax base without increasing the tax rate. The more entities that are put in the tax base, the more revenue.

The government has money needs years in advance. If people are granted tax preferences, other people have to pay more. There may be good policy reasons for a tax preference, but since there is a set amount that the government has to raise, someone has to pay more for another person’s or organization’s tax preference.

Kansas could gain \$7 billion from just sales tax exemptions, and we would only need a 2.3 percent tax rate to raise the same amount of revenue. McMillan said that tax expenditures must be scrutinized and evaluated. Just because some lobby favors it, or it was sound practice in the beginning, does not mean it should be continued. Just removing prescription drugs would bring in \$68 million.

Tax preferences are either organization-specific, taxpayer-specific, or for an out-of-state beneficiary. If it is an organization, it might be a nonprofit hospital or religious organization. McMillan pointed out that KNI and education are really feeling the revenue crunch. Is it fair: Nonprofit vs. KNI, religious organizations vs. education, agricultural machinery vs. plumbers’ equipment. As a fairness issue, maybe all should pay or none.



Long time Leaguer **Alice Stoland** passed away on February 8, 2010. Alice once served as local League president.

Most of the League members remember Alice as chairperson of the Tuesday Topics calling committee for many years. She greeted attendees at the Tuesday Topics registration table.

Over the years, Board of Directors and committee meetings were held in her wheelchair accessible home.

Alice loved to cuddle the babies on her lap. She had tea parties with the little girls and often held and fed Eric, grandson of caregiver, Pam.

*She will be missed!*



## *Safe Streets* Concept Working in Topeka

By Grace L. Wilson

Sally Zellers of *Safe Streets* said if she just had one message for the January Tuesday Topics audience, it was “Quit leaving things in your car!” She said that neighbors watching and cooperating is the best way to prevent crime. If you don’t fix the first broken window, Zellers said, it can start the deterioration of the neighborhood.

“We need to quit stereotyping parts of the community,” Zellers said. She gave a handout with a crime comparison table showing the number of crimes committed in each area, emphasizing that we might be surprised at the numbers. It is the perception versus reality, Zellers said.

“We want to be the safest community in the nation of our size,” Zellers said. As far as violent crime, Topeka is fairly safe for cities its size, but Topeka is high in the number of property crimes. Topeka has burglary and theft across the board.

The 200 members of *Safe Streets* meet the first Wednesday of every month from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Overland Station. Zellers gave an overview of 12 of 28 “Plays” from the Playbook of the “Safest Capital City Team.” Each “Play” plan has a quarterback or coordinator and *Safe Streets* members can choose which areas they want to be involved in.

**#1 Lock it, Remove it or Lose it** Are all your cars empty?” Zellers asked. They have put metal signs around the community with the slogan on one side and advertising on the other. They also have cards to stick under windshields with the slogan.

**#2 Prevent Underage Drinking** Zellers said the

community is having a problem with binge drinking in kids as young as in 6<sup>th</sup> grade. They use energy drinks to stay up later to drink alcohol. How are parties handled? Do parents know there is a \$1,000 fine for serving minors? Sixty-eight percent of kids said they wouldn’t get caught. Want to monitor how stores are selling.

**#3 Character Recognition** “We don’t do enough,” Zellers said.

*Safe Streets* has a form to nominate people for recognition.

**#4 Safe Property Management** “The majority of landlords are wonderful,” Zellers said, “but they are not mobilized.” She said that their landlord training program was critical.

**#5 National Night Out Against Crime** This event will be held on Aug. 10, 2010. At least 30 neighborhoods have participated.

**#6 Neighborhood Watch** *Safe Streets* took over this program from law enforcement in 2001. Zellers said we need to empower people in their neighborhoods. They should know that they have *all* the power.

**#8 Citizens on Patrol** In some neighborhood, volunteers patrolling might have a magnet sign on their car, but each neighborhood is different.

**#9 Record It, Report It, Recover It** Pawn shops are a key partner in recovering stolen goods. *Safe Streets* also has Invisa-ID Pens for \$2 for people to mark their belongings with their Kansas Driver’s License number. Law enforcement has a special light that can read the number.

**#17 Retailers’ Association** Loss prevention officers and law enforcement meet with business owners to talk about the latest theft, forgery and shoplifting incidents. Some shoplifters steal all over Kansas and sharing names and photos can be effective.

**#19 Hot Pocket Cards** These are hot pink cards listing 24 hour crisis resources or service providers who can provide a safety net.

**#26 Complete Streets** The City Council just passed an ordinance for the Complete Streets concept. This means looking at the whole picture when they dig up a street. Are there sidewalks and handicap accessibility? By designing streets that encourage people to be out walking or riding rather than just driving, neighborhoods are made less vulnerable to crime.

**#27 Cutting for a Cause** For people who do not own a mower or have health issues, *Safe Streets* has volunteers who mow lawns. They can always use more help with this.

“A handful of criminals commit most of the crime,” Zellers said. A top car burglar got out of jail and there was a hike in the number of stolen cars until he was caught again and went back. “We need to stop recidivism.” Zellers said that she would like to get on the prevention side instead of being on the defensive side of crime. She would also like to reach children as young as possible with the *Safe Streets* message.

An audience member complimented *Safe Streets* for a time when her neighborhood had a house that was being used for drug deals. A *Safe Streets* volunteer came and knocked on the door in a friendly way every day, and the people moved out shortly thereafter.

# Board Briefs

by Lea Billinger, secretary

February 9, 2009 LWV Board meeting at Pizza Hut, 10<sup>th</sup> and Topeka– 11 board members were present.

Sybil Weigman reports that our Topeka League has 88 members.

Nancy Shaughnessy has met with Heartland Visioning, she insured that the League is on the list of partners (we were accidentally dropped). Their next meeting, about Downtown Topeka, will be February 25, from 5:00 to 7:00, at the Ramada.

Board member, Liz Post, will be joining the board of LWVKS.

Local study on K-12 Education in Shawnee County is wrapping up. New local study was accepted to analyze finances of Topeka and Shawnee County, the interactions between, income and expenditures.

Maryanna Quilty is working toward holding a televised forum on the Diverse Judiciary. This will be on KTWU, probably in May.

February 14 is the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of the League of Women Voters. Look for a letter to the editor from Grace Wilson.

Anita Epps will be registering new voters at the Lawn & Garden Show, February 19-21.

It was reported that the nominating committee (made up of new members) has recently met. There was discussion of who is willing to remain on the board, with all agreeing to at least one more year.

## ***THE STUPIDITY***

- 1. Only in America .... do drugstores make the sick walk all the way to the back of the store to get their prescriptions while healthy people can buy their cigarettes at the front of the store.**
- 2. Only in America .... do people order double cheeseburgers, large fries and a diet cokes.**
- 3. Only in America .... do we leave cars worth thousands of dollars on the driveway and put our useless junk in the garage.**
- 4. Only in America .... do they have drive up ATM machines with Braille lettering.**
- 5. Ever wonder why you don't see the headline "PSYCHIC WINS LOTTERY." ?**
- 6. Ever wonder why a lawyers brief is 50 pages long?**
- 7. Ever wonder why the time of day with the slowest traffic is called rush hour?**

# *Keep America Beautiful*

## Organizes Volunteers, Wins Awards

By Grace L. Wilson

The local *Keep America Beautiful* organization organizes volunteers to promote recycling, litter and graffiti abatement and beautification. It is funded partially by the city and county. She writes a lot of grants and receives a few.

People in the United States create an average of 4 pounds of refuse a day, said Philicia McKee of *Keep America Beautiful*. The local landfill has a life expectancy of 46 years. Seventy-five percent of the trash could be recycled. Thirty-percent is paper. There is less plastic, but it lasts longer.

Why do people litter?

“Maybe it’s because there’s no sense of ownership,” McKee said. “Or that someone will clean up afterward.” At the movies or at a stadium, people may take the attitude that it is already littered.

The city will take care of graffiti. A volunteer group called “Teens vs. Graffiti” helps. People can report abandoned houses as they are places where crime starts.

Last year *Keep American Beautiful* had a budget of \$47,000 and recorded 357,000 volunteer hours. She figures that the equivalent of \$5.9 million was returned to the community in services. The local Keep America Beautiful program took First Place last year for cities with a population of 50,000 to 150,000. With some volunteer awards, the program had seven awards.

Around Earth Day, there is a free landfill day and free yard disposal. Two years ago, Expert Tire took 6,000 tires to recycle. Extreme Recycling will take “almost everything with a cord.”

The program achieved a 62 percent decrease in cigarette butt litter with a campaign to inform smokers that the butts wash down the drains and it takes 17 years to break down.

McKee is writing a grant for a program called “No Child Left Inside.” They hope to have murals painted on the underpasses on the Shunga Trail. They have a group of volunteers providing mowing for the elderly and the disabled. She hopes to start an E-newsletter for volunteers.

“It is not just my job or the volunteers job,” McKee said. “It’s everyone-in-this-community’s job.” The local landfill is very environmentally conscious. They are building a plant to harness methane for energy. It will be one of 100 plants in the nation.

“Children are the best ambassadors, she said. “They nag their parents and grandparents.” That is why she gives talks to fourth-graders.

The program has no money for advertising, but has received free advertising.

“We are strictly grassroots.” McKee said.

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
LOIS COX, VOTER EDITOR  
910 SE 43RD STREET  
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66609-1620**

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

\_\_\_\_\_ \$53 for a 1 year Individual Membership.

\_\_\_\_\_ \$75 for a 1 year Household Membership.

\_\_\_\_\_ \$85 for a 1 year Sustaining Membership.

\_\_\_\_\_ \$25 for a 1 year Student (age 18) Membership.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am unable to join the League at this time, but enclosed is a tax-deductible  
Contribution in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to league of Women Voters Topeka Shawnee County and

Send to Sybil Wiegand, Treasurer, 2805 SW Tall Grass DR., Topeka, KS 66614-6206.

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