

October 2010

**Board of Directors**  
**League of Women Voters of**  
**Greater Birmingham**  
205 583-5000  
[admin@lwvqb.org](mailto:admin@lwvqb.org)

Sarah McDonald, President

Nancy Ekberg, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President

Angelyn Simmons, Secretary

Amanda McGriff, Treasurer

Joyce Lanning, Director

Leonette Slay, Director

Ida Tyree-Hyche, Director

Joan Burroughs, Public Relations

Ginny Randolph, Voter Services

Karen Threlkeld, Editor  
*The Voter*

Connie Arnwine, Nominating  
Committee Chair

Jean Johnson,  
Off-Board Technical Director

Ann Smith,  
Off-Board Observer Corps Water  
Works

### The Railroad Park Ramble for Our One Mile Work Party for the Planet 10/10/10

In addition to supporting Our One Mile and celebrating Railroad Park, another purpose in organizing the Railroad Park Ramble was to encourage people to use person-power for more of their destination short trips. If the healthy walking and biking choice is the easy choice, we can improve health, increase short-term air quality and cut down on greenhouse gas emissions to address climate change.

We appreciate the thirty people who came together on September 21<sup>st</sup> to help define the Ramble and then spread the word and support it. We enjoyed working with our co-sponsors and volunteers from the community who heard about the project and came to help. In addition to the sponsors' support, we had some printing provided by the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham, which has laid the groundwork for pedestrian and cycling paths for years. The backbone of our work team came from the eight AmeriCorps volunteers who've spent the last five weeks in Birmingham building houses for Habitat for Humanity and we certainly thank them.

The invitation instructions for the Ramble said:

... park your car – then walk, run, bike, rollerblade, skateboard, push your stroller or wheelchair ... from your chosen spot to Railroad Park, tell us about your Ramble and enjoy the Park. 1 PM to 3 PM – rain or shine! Rally and photo at 2:30 (see the notice at [www.lwvqb.org](http://www.lwvqb.org)).

If you can't fit in a ride or walk that day, come to the Park anyway. You'll hear about the Our One Mile Kickoff scheduled for Tuesday, October 12, 5:30-7:30 at the Alagasco Center for Energy Technology, 1<sup>st</sup> Ave, 20<sup>th</sup> St. S. You can also use the information to plan future walks/rides and help identify and assess routes important to you.

And come they did!! We had over 75 people who signed in and a lot more who didn't. We received 45 bikeability and 45 walkability checklists which we'll turn over to the Our One Mile greenway planners. Our group photo, taken by professional photographer Monika Duran, will be posted on the League website and at [www.350.org](http://www.350.org) as soon as it's available.

-- Continued on page 4 --



### The League on WBHM 90.3

For public awareness and education regarding the upcoming election, the LWVGB Board decided to underwrite 5 *All Things Considered* programs on WBHM. We decided to use this to spotlight registering to vote and voting.

- October 6 the spot appeared at 5:00 p.m. during *All Things Considered* Be sure to listen for the League's name on the next ones scheduled for:
- October 18
- November 1
- November 2
- February 14, 2011 (our 91st Birthday)

## McDonald's Musings

With three weeks to go until the midterm elections, I am sick of poll results and talking heads telling me how I am going to vote. I have never been called by a national political pollster. If I had been, I'm sure the questions would have been designed to get certain answers. (My favorite pastime when anyone calls to do a survey is to figure out what the product is or who commissioned the poll.)

Poll questions that ask for "impressions" of a subject are garbage. For example, "Do you think the forces in Afghanistan are adequate?" How could I, a homemaker from Alabama, possibly know that? (I often miss the NSA briefings because I have to stay home for the plumber.) Politicians use this drivel to decide which way the wind is blowing on an issue. How refreshing it would be to have an elected official say to his/her constituents, "I have attended many briefings, read reams of information on this issue and believe I am quite able to decide this issue without your 'impressions.' If you don't like this approach, vote me out next time." Alas, this will NOT happen!

My other pet election peeve is money. Now I am not so naïve as to think money doesn't buy elections. But I ask why this is so. What is the money spent for? Ads? If voters ignored all the ads and got their information the hard way – reading and listening to candidates – all the ad money in the world would be wasted. But many of us are too busy, too angry, too lazy to do the work. Perhaps we need to begin very early to teach children to ignore the Mad Men, whether they are selling Happy Meals or Candidates.

## LAST CHANCE TO MISS GETTING A NASTY

### LETTER FROM US



Renew your dues by snail mail to:

LWBGB  
c/o Amanda McGriff  
P.O. Box 320847  
Birmingham, AL 35232

or renew online through Pay Pal at [www.lwvgb.org](http://www.lwvgb.org)

\$45 for a Single Membership,  
\$65 for a Family Membership.

# Dues are due!

## WANTED: OBSERVER CORPS COORDINATOR

LWVGB is looking for a member to coordinate the activities of our Observer Corps, support its efforts, and recruit and provide training for new observers.

This group of dedicated League members serves as the eyes and ears of the local League. Members attend meetings of various boards and commissions of area city and county governments. The coordinator could be one of the observers, or not. If you would like to be involved, but are unable to regularly attend day or evening meetings, this is a job for you.

Please contact Sarah McDonald or Ann Smith for more information about joining the Observer Corps or serving as coordinator.

## SEPTEMBER 30 MEMBER MEETING

At our **September 30, 2010 meeting** our speakers were from the Jefferson County Department of Health (JCDH) which is administering \$13.3 million in grants to from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. JCDH is leading a community coalition to support prevention efforts to reduce tobacco use (\$7 million) and obesity (\$6.3 million), both problems in our community. Awards from the two grants have been made to 19 organizations as part of the Communities Putting Prevention to Work grants. (see [www.championsforhealth.org](http://www.championsforhealth.org))

Dr. Teri Chafin, Director of Community and Dental Health, who is the Project Director for both programs, and Suzette Harris, who serves as Obesity Program Manager, gave us an excellent overview of the policy outcomes targeted by the grants.

The tobacco grant is working on: the adoption of a county-wide 100% smoke-free policy; eliminating distribution of tobacco samples and price discounts of tobacco products on higher education campuses in the county; required government warnings about the dangers of tobacco at the point of purchase; and passage of a tobacco excise tax by the Alabama State legislature.

Desired outcomes from the Obesity projects include: advancing smart growth land use policies; nutritional information available at point of purchase; improving access to fresh produce in underserved communities; child care center requirements for nutrition, physical activity, video screen time, and 3<sup>rd</sup> hand smoke exposure; nutrition training for all cafeteria workers; after school wellness policies; and improving the environment for physical activity by increasing use of flexible spending accounts for weight management programs.

After hearing an overview of the Health Action Partnership grants, the meeting focused on planning for the League's 10/10/10 Work Party for the Planet project, the Railroad Park Ramble for Our One Mile. Our co-sponsors for the Ramble include [Freshwater Land Trust](#), [Jefferson County Health Action Partners](#), [Operation New Birmingham](#), [Railroad Park](#), [Alabama Environmental Council](#) (AEC), and [Conservation Alabama Foundation](#) (CAF).

( continued right --> )

## ACCR LISTENING SESSIONS

This is a reminder that you are invited to schedule a Listening Session meeting at your church, school or neighborhood about constitutional reform in Alabama.

The League has long sponsored the need for a constitutional convention to rewrite the 1901 Alabama Constitution. Alabama Citizens for Constitutional Reform, Inc., which works to bring this about, wants to get input from citizens on the best choice for legislation in the next legislative session.

Should it be a Resolution to allow the people to vote on holding a convention, or a commission selected by the Governor or the Legislators, or working with legislators on one or more of the worst articles, or a campaign to get voters to "just vote no" on all constitutional amendments and bring the legislative process to a halt and thus force the legislators to consider a convention?

We want to know what you think. Contact Nancy Ekberg at [nanekberg@aol.com](mailto:nanekberg@aol.com) and schedule a session.

Representatives of AEC and CAF joined Teri and Suzette and our members to plan the final details for our Work Party supporting Our One Mile.

The **Our One Mile** project is part of the effort to combat Jefferson's County obesity rate, which is over 30%. This Freshwater Land Trust initiative will connect the community's places by creating a comprehensive greenway master plan for Jefferson County. The Our One Mile kickoff was on Tuesday, October 12, and visibility and interest for that important event was definitely raised by the Ramble the prior Sunday. The Land Trust will be soliciting public input to help identify a network of over 100 miles of trails, greenways and blueways to create a workable greenways plan for every community. There will be opportunities during October, November and December to come to meetings or provide information for the plan online. (See [www.freshwaterlandtrust.org/our-one-mile](http://www.freshwaterlandtrust.org/our-one-mile))

## Railroad Ramble, Continued from page 1

People shared their hopes for a healthy, connected community – posting around 120 messages which will also go to the greenway planners. Just a few:

A public transportation system that encourages people to use it  
Continuous bike lanes from Highland Avenue to Railroad Park  
Bike lanes – and light up the smoke stacks at night  
Public transport stops @ RR Park! Compost bins  
Bike trails that are wide enough for both bikes and walkers  
Bike lanes or paths crossing over the ridges in Birmingham  
Connect Vulcan Park to here, and connect to Homewood Park, Sloss, Zoo, Botanical Gardens, town.  
Get businesses and individuals to stop parking on sidewalks leading into Homewood.  
I wish there was a bike trail from Irondale to here.

And some about the Park:

Dear Park, Hello, I would like free rentable go carts to ride on,  
Thanks  
Bus service to get here  
Love love love the Park! Still need bike routes in B'ham  
Big trees for shade to read books and take naps  
Let's rent bicycles for visitors  
Have a community day once a month full of games, movies and fun!  
Free wi-fi (actually, it's already available)  
Train rides, face painting, a pool

And even a personal aspiration:

I want to be a teacher.

Maybe that young person will grow up to teach us all how to live in a more healthy, connected, and environmentally sustainable community. League members who participated in the Ramble all feel that we helped move the greater Birmingham area in that direction on Sunday, October 10 at Railroad Park with our Work Party for the Planet.

Just to top it off, in line with our basic purpose to make democracy work for all citizens, our Voter Services chair, Ginny Randolph, and President, Sarah McDonald, registered five new young voters and gave forms to several others.

So thanks to all who participated in any way in the Ramble and encouragement to all to continue recruiting friends to share information with Our One Mile in the coming months.

Read about the Railroad Park Ramble in ["Bikers, walkers weigh in on Birmingham Railroad Park plan \(with gallery\),"](#) an Oct. 11, 2010 front page article by Marie Leech in *The Birmingham News* on al.com.



## LWVGB Calendar

Month	Day	Time	Event
November	2	11:30am	<b>Board Meeting</b> <b>Community Foundation Building</b>



## QUOTABLE QUOTES

Because man and woman are the complement of one another, we need woman's thought in national affairs to make a safe and stable government.

~Elizabeth Cady Stanton

The cost of freedom is always high, but Americans have always paid it. And one path we shall never choose, and that is the path of surrender, or submission.

~John F. Kennedy

The woman who tells her age is either too young to have anything to lose or too old to have anything to gain.

~ Chinese Proverb

League of Women Voters of Greater Birmingham  
P. O. Box 530522  
Mountain Brook, AL 35253