

## THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS ® OF THE FAIRFAX AREA

# BULLETIN

Founded in 1925

Meeting Continuously Since 1946

June 2007

4026 Hummer Road #214 Annandale, Virginia 22003

Volume 59 Issue10

The topic for June Unit Meetings is Schools Positions Update - Part 1 and concurrence. All you need to know is in this *Bulletin*. Read it and participate in a unit meeting—make your voice heard.

It is membership renewal time, you can give your check for \$55 with the Application from the back page of this *Bulletin* to your unit membership chair, or mail it to the office.

Whichever way you choose, please do it today. We need you! Thank You.

#### Calandar

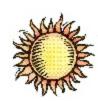
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**Begins** 



## **President's Letter**

So, we have come to the end of another League year. It was a busy and productive one. Next year will be even busier, with a huge election in Fall 2007, and activities involving voters service and outreach.

This month, we begin our review of the LWVFA positions on schools (FCPS) in Fairfax County and Fairfax City. Therese Martin 's committee has been looking at our current positions and provides material to update and reword some of them on pages P-1 through P-8. The newly worded proposed Schools Positions, Part I, are on page 6, to be used for membership concurrence at the June unit meetings. The remainder of the positions will be discussed next year in Part II.

Since our last *Bulletin*, several opportunities for LWVFA have arisen. *The Connection Newspapers* asked us to prepare a *Primary Voters Guide* for the June 12 primary elections – look for your copy in the *Connection* and on our website <a href="https://www.lwv-fairfax.org">www.lwv-fairfax.org</a>; and on May 23<sup>rd</sup> LWVFA co-sponsored with *The Connection*, a forum for Democratic candidates for the Providence District Supervisory seat (there were no Republican candidates for this seat). The only Republican primary on the June 12<sup>th</sup> ballot is for the Springfield District Supervisor's seat – we contacted the candidates; unfortunately, their schedules did not allow for a forum before June 12. But, we may be conducting a debate for this seat in the Fall.

And with this column, I bid a sad "good-bye" to Program Co-Director **Rona Ackerman** who has decided to re-enter the world where you get "paid" for your work! Rona will remain off-board Program, but her presence at board meetings will be sorely missed. Also Secretary **Mia Merin** will not return in July – I will miss her smiling face; and PR Director **Vanessa Johnson** has resigned, effective with the May board meeting, for the same reason as Rona. Vanessa has been a joy to work with and I will miss her a lot. Anybody want to volunteer for the PR Director?

I hope you have a good summer and I'll see you in September!



## WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP WITH CANDIDATES' EVENTS?

A busy election season is ahead of us, begining with the June 12 primary elections. Allocal and General Assembly elected officials will be on the ballot in November, 2007.

In addition to producing an extensive *VotersGuide*, LWVFA will be holding many cand-idates' events throughout the County in Sept-ember and October. We will need volunteers to be time-keepers, ushers, serve as moderator or on the "questions committee." And folks with computer skills to create event programs or flyers.

Would you like to help? If so, please contact President Zachry at 703-730-8118 or send an email to: Szachry@aol.com.

## UNITS WRAP-UP IS JUNE 23rd!

Remember to attend the Unit Officers' Wrap-Up meeting on June 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Mason District Governmental Center, starting at 9:30 AM. This event gives unit officers the opportunity to share information with each other and the board about what worked during the past year and what did not. It is a very worthwhile event–let's have all units represented.

#### LWVFA Bulletin © 2007

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## **Board Notes**

Lavinia Voss

At the April 18th board meeting, **Bette Hostrup** was appointed Off-

board Voters Service, through January 2008; **Baba Freeman** was appointed as the LWVFA representative to the WiehleAve/Reston Pkwy Rail Station Access Management Plan, or "R-MAG."

Therese Martin presented the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter FY06-07 Treasurer's Report that showed our checkbook balance reducing because of increased expenses, such as rent, and less income as membership declines. Martin was given approval to take money from Ed Fund to pay for half of the costs of new LWVFA stationery.

The board approved LWVFA sponsoring a Democratic primary candidates' forum in May for the Providence Supervisory District seat, if a League coordinator could be found; also approved producing a *June 12 Primary Voters Guide*, as requested by Mary Kimm of The Connection Newspapers. Membership dues increase will be effective April 21, Annual Meeting.

Program Co-Director Rona Ackerman reported that a preliminary report on the "Later High School Start Times" concurrence indicated the membership agreed with the concurrence statement; formal board approval will occur at the May 16<sup>th</sup> board meeting (see Program report on pg. 10). Units Coordinator Janey George said that Unit Officers' Wrap-Up is June23 at the Mason Dist. Gov't Center and that Units Kick-Off will be on Saturday, September 8, 2007, at the Packard Center in the upstairs conference room.

Justice Committee Chair **Judy Leader** gave an update on plans for the Law Day event on May 1, 2007 at GMU, saying the moot court videotape was being edited. Action Director **Jane Hilder** informed the board about the Affordable Housing initiative being proposed by the County and noted that AHOME is asking for LWVFA support.

**Zachry** noted that she had given LWVFA testimony on the BOS FY08 Budget on April 9; that the May 16<sup>th</sup> LWVFA board meeting would include the proposed calendar and tentative program for 07-08 League year and that the June 20<sup>th</sup> board meeting will be held at Pres. Zachry's house.

Seen and Heard Around Fairfax and Beyond-Our website now has a "Fairfax In Action" section. Testimonies, letters to the editor, etc. are all posted there.



## Community **Election Projects**

Una White 703-922-8721 <u>unawhite@gmail.com</u>

Wednesday, June 13, 2007, is the Skyline Plaza Condominium Election at 3703 S. George Mason Dr., Falls Church. It will be the last election for this fiscal year and it will be an all day election, as before, so we will need volunteers for morning, afternoon, and evening shifts. Kay McQuie and Doris James have agreed to cochair it again. They did an excellent job last year as did our volunteer registrars and vote counters. Contact by email - <a href="mailto:kaymcquie@aol.com">kaymcquie@aol.com</a> or call 703-765-7104 or contact me as above to find out if any more volunteers are still needed. Thanks for all your help.



## **Membership Update**

Leslie Vandivere 703-222-4173 <u>LVandivere@cox.net</u>

We are delighted to announce that **Ellen Gale** and **Shirley Olson** have been members of the League for 50 years or more and are recognized as

honorary life members. Ellen joined the League in April 1957, and Shirley in November 1955. Congratulations!

Membership renewals for the 2007/2008 League year are due by June 30. Dues are \$55 for single and \$75 for household memberships. Send your dues payment (with the membership form on the back page of the bulletin) to the office or give it to your unit membership chair. Please note that we have Sustaining and Advocate member categories—your extra financial support of the League is always appreciated. You can make a tax-deductible contribution to the Ed Fund by including a separate check to the LWVFA Ed Fund.

Women really do want to be on time. Its just everything starts so darned early.

Sela Ward

## **VIRGINIA HAPPENINGS**

Our Equine Legacy Bernice Colvard, League Historian

Horses from England first arrived here in 1610. Later, there was cross-breeding with Indian stock to improve the speed of the native horses. Prosperity in the Virginia colony enabled horse breeders to bolster bloodlines. Ultimately, the American Thoroughbred emerged. Virginia became the birthplace of the American horse business and still dominates hunters and jumpers. Dramatic changes have occurred in the equine industry over time, but it still plays a key role in the state's economy bringing in more than \$1 billion a year.

Horse country south and west of Northern Virginia provides varied activities from fox-hunting clubs to polo, racing, and jumping. Tailgate parties are huge favorites. Notable recent events included the Sep. 2006 USA vs. England International Silver Cup grass polo tournament at Great Meadow, The Plains (Fauquier Co.). Great Meadow is the home of the Gold Cup, the Virginia Gold Cup in April and the International Gold Cup in Oct.

Each spring and fall, Virginia hosts some of the best steeple chasing in the country. The current season opened at **Thornton Hill Hounds Point to Point** near Sperryville (Rappahannock Co.)—followed by the **Foxfield Race Meet** near Charlottesville and the **Virginia Fall Race Meet** at Glenwood Park near Middleburg (Loudoun Co.). Also scheduled were the Labor Day traditional **Warrenton Horse Show** in Fauquier Co. and the **Middleburg Classic Horse Show**. The **Great Meadow Invitational Grand Prix**, with a purse of \$100,000, drew Olympic caliber show jumping.

Virginia's horse shows have always provided one of the industry's prime showcases. Spirited competitions draw the best horses as well as the best riders such as at the **Keswick Horse Show** in Albemarle Co. each May. While smaller and more intimate than other major statewide shows, it draws about 400 horse and rider teams from Virginia and Maryland and as far away as New York and Canada. Hunt club-sponsored shows throughout the Commonwealth support local charities as Keswick's 2006 show benefitted Charlottesville's Habitat for Humanity.

The horse business provides much pleasure to both participants and spectators. Whatever the locale or event, it maintains tradition as well as green space in our beautiful state.

#### Sources:

Oldham, Patricia. "Tradition at Keswick." <u>Virginia Living</u>, April 2006, 45-6. Reardon, Julie. "Horsing Around the Blue Ridge." Old Town Crier, September 2006, 43.

#### The Truth About Jamestown

**Myth:** The settlers were far superior to the American Indians.

**Fact**: To the Indians, the English resembled savages. They had many diseases, rarely bathed and couldn't even farm to feed themselves. At least one may have turned to cannibalism.

**Source:** Winik. Wallwork Lyric, Intelligence Report, <u>The Washington Post</u>, May 6, 2007.



The NCA Annual Convention was held Saturday, May 12, 2007, at Jurys Restaurant in D.C. After a delicious breakfast, guest speaker, Juliet Eilperin, writer for The Washington Post and author of the book, Fight Club Politics: How Partisanship Is Poisoning the House of Representatives, talked to the group and answered questions. The business meeting consisted of electing officers and a board of directors, passing a program for 2007-09 and adopting the LWVNCA Budget for FY2007-08. At press time (early May), it was expected that an updated Regional Airports position would be approved by concurrence at the meeting. LWVFA members attending were: Sherry Zachry, Barbara Ewalt, Carol Hawn, Thea and Vanessa Johnson.

NCA board members are visiting the annual meetings of member Leagues—**Ann Jackson** from Montgomery Co. MD visited LWVFA's annual meeting.

Remember to Save the Date, <u>Friday September</u> 28, 2007 for an evening of fun with the *Capitol Steps* comedy group at 7:30 p.m. in the Reagan Building, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue. LWVNCA has reserved a block of tickets and is planning a pre-performance reception (refreshments). Tickets are \$40.00 each. **Deadline** for ordering tickets is <u>August 31, 2007.</u> See the website, <u>www.lwvnca.org</u>, for order form and metro stop instructions.

Mark your calendar now to keep the date. This will be the major NCA fundraiser for next year. You will be contributing to a good cause while having fun!



## **Action Faction**

Jane Hilder, Action Director jc.hilder@verizon.net 703-960-6820

Voting rights in the House of Representatives for the District of Columbia actually may become a reality. The House passed the bill co-sponsored by Rep. Tom Davis and Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton on April 19. The bill still needs to pass the Senate and be signed by the President, whose staff has reported that he would veto it. They insist the bill is not constitutional, but constitutional scholars are in disagreement over that issue. Even if the bill does get signed, the new law might well be challenged in court. Nevertheless, this is historic movement on this issue which is very important to D.C. voters and to the League of Women Voters of the U.S. which believes every citizen of the United States should be represented in Congress.

At least one member of LWVFA was marching for voting rights, as Marge Witting went down to Freedom Plaza on April 16 to attend the voting rights rally and march. The blustery nor'easter weather and the terrible news of the tragedy at Virginia Tech that day both served to tamp down participation and news coverage of the rally. Thousands of people did march, however, and there may be further opportunities for action as the bill moves into the Senate.

After challenging the federal Department of Education's requirement for testing of limited-Englishproficient students with the same grade level test all other students take, Fairfax County Public Schools did finally agree to use the required tests this school year. The Education Department threatened to withhold \$17 million in federal aid if the schools failed to use the same reading tests given to native English speakers. FCPS had originally planned to defy the federal requirement and said the comprehension required by questions about poetry and metaphors was too advanced for those learning still learning English, and the experience was too discouraging for them. In agreeing to use the tests, teachers are asked to allow limited-English-proficient students to quit when they say the questions are too difficult. Non-English-speaking students who enter the system during the school year are excused from grade level exams.

On April 4, the General Assembly met in the newly renovated state capitol to either pass or turn down the bills amended by Governor Tim Kaine, and potentially to override or confirm any vetoes. The Capitol renova-

tions were not complete, but the chambers were sufficiently finished to be usable on that date. One issue in question was expansion of the offenses eligible for the death penalty in Virginia. The GA had passed bills making killing of a judge or a witness or being an accomplice to a capital murder eligible for the death penalty. Kaine vetoed those bills. The GA overrode his veto, so killing of a judge or witness will become a capital offense; but the Senate did not agree to override the veto on accomplices to capital crimes, and that bill died.

The transportation funding bill that Kaine had substantially amended (on which I fully reported in last month's column) was passed.

## On Saturday, April 21, 2007

At the LWVFA Annual Meeting, a budget was approved with a dues increase of \$5. A slate of officers and directors was voted into office for 2007-09; a change in program was adopted and a new library position was accepted.

We also passed a change to our bylaws resulting from action at the 2006 LWVUS Convention. The change—to remove the word "citizens"—affects Sec, 1. Purpose, in both the Ed Fund and the General Fund Bylaws. This change is also reflected in the LWVUS Mission Statement. Other bylaws changes corrected differences in the tenses. The committee says that someone who is an English major needs to go through both documents, to clean up and change tenses so they all conform, and add our "virtual board meeting" policy. Do we have any takers? You would have a year to work on this.

## The [Jamestown] Anniversary Party...

Sandra Day O'Connor

Teaching young people the importance of voting is just one way to encourage civic involvement. Along with participation in community discussions and communicating with local, state and federal officials, voting is at the heart of America's democratic system... Over the past 40 years, the number of civics courses taught in our schools has declined significantly... More emphasis should be placed on civic learning to ensure that America's future generations are ready to meet this responsibility not only in the workplace but also in the polling place. ...

Source: <u>Time.</u> May 7, 2007.

## **Schools – Proposed Positions (Part 1)**

Promote equal opportunity for a quality education in Fairfax County/City schools. Support of proper planning, competent administration, programs to meet special needs, adequate personnel, facilities and financing, well defined channels for community input and review, and appropriate books and materials to support and enhance the instructional program.

## Organization, Personnel, and Services in FCPS

The LWVFA supports the assumption by the school clusters of responsibility for monitoring student achievement and school effectiveness and for ensuring good communication between schools and the community, especially in responding to problems and parent concerns.

The LWVFA believes that the primary considerations in determining pupil/teacher ratios and class sizes should be the system's instructional goals and enhancing the achievement of all students.

The LWVFA supports the broad and timely dissemination, using a variety of methods and media, of information about school policies, programs, procedures and organizational responsibilities.

The League supports:

- Efforts to attract and retain good, professionally qualified principals, teachers, and other school staff.
- A program of personnel evaluation, professional development and training to promote maximum utilization of talents and knowledge about current research and best practices.
- · Teacher participation in making decisions at all levels.
- The use of qualified, adequately trained and paid instructional and other school aides.

The LWVFA believes that comprehensive and effective guidance, counseling and psychological services at all levels are necessary to ensure a quality education. Emphasis should be placed on: diagnosing and solving children's learning and emotional problems; keeping students in the classroom with support services; and providing constructive options for students, family and school personnel. The schools should use expulsion only as a last resort.

#### **FCPS Programs**

The LWVFA supports flexibility in programs, services and grouping at all levels (preK-12) to help children develop their potential at their own rate, including children with disabilities and those with limited English proficiency. The LWVFA supports school readiness programs and believes that Family and Early Childhood (Head Start) programs and a comprehensive program for gifted children should be available for all

qualified applicants.

The LWVFA believes that FCPS should continue to provide a comprehensive instructional program of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for all grade levels. The League supports public/private partnerships such as workplace training and the work of community groups in teaching English.

The LWVFA supports an excellent, comprehensive and flexible special education program of instruction and services that is responsive to the needs of children with disabilities and delivered by an adequate number of highly qualified teachers and staff in settings that maximize the educational quality of instruction for all students. All teachers of special education students should receive the necessary training, support, and planning time to provide excellent instruction for all students.

The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area supports a K-12 Family Life Program in FCPS that provides students with age-appropriate knowledge and skills to make healthy, responsible, respectful, and life-enhancing decisions related to human growth and development, sexuality, relationships and mental health. The program should be presented by well-trained teachers, promote parent involvement, and reflect the values of the community. In respect for individual family culture, parents should be able to opt their children out of all or part of each grade's program. These children should have quality, appropriate lessons to replace the FLE classes they do not attend.

The LWVFA supports the FCPS Career and Technical Education program's academies and other efforts to make advanced technical and specialized elective course offerings available to more high school students.

The LWVFA supports the introduction of innovative programs and practices in Fairfax County/City schools. The LWVFA believes that:

- Innovative programs should be carefully planned and evaluated, and, when proven by piloting, they should be implemented without unjustified delay. As a general practice, new innovative programs should not be initiated until those already proven are applied throughout the school system.
- Teachers, principals and other staff implementing new programs should be supported and carefully trained.
- Evaluation procedures should determine if the desired changes are produced in the classroom, and if not, what further assistance is needed.
- Innovations should be considered whether they arise from the community, parents, individual school, or FCPS system personnel. (June 2007)

### AN UPDATE: LWVFA Schools Positions – Part 1

Barbara Beecy, Gail Doughty, Joanne Field, Diane Hardcastle, Jim Hardcastle, Jane Hilder, Julia Jones, Rita Koman, Nancy Larson, Ginger Shea, Sheila School, Margo Sterling, Mary Valder, Elizabeth Brooke (Editor), and Therese Martin (Chair)

Introduction: At the 2006 LWVFA annual meeting, the membership approved a study of the League's positions on schools for the purpose of reviewing and updating them to reflect the current situation in Fairfax County/City. Following unit discussions, members will be asked to concur with the revised positions recommended by the study committee and listed elsewhere in the Bulletin. The Board will consider suggestions from the units for changes in the recommendations. Due to the large number of schools positions, the study will be done in at least two parts. This first part covers topics and positions included in *Here We Stand* under the headings of Program; and Personnel Policies, Staffing/Classroom Management. The study will only cover topics that are addressed by the current positions, and due to space limitations, some topics will receive minimal attention.<sup>1</sup>

## Organization, Personnel, and School Services:

Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS), the 13th largest school system in the nation based on its enrollment of over 164,000 students, has a total of 239 schools and centers. Since the LWVFA last studied FCPS, its basic organizational structure has changed from four areas to three areas to the current eight clusters. Each cluster consists of approximately three adjacent high schools and their feeder middle and elementary school pyramids--resulting in close to 30 schools and/or centers per cluster. These clusters retain the responsibilities addressed by the League's current position, but the cluster offices are small and their task is to decide when a school is in trouble and negotiate with the central departments, such as the Department for Instructional Services, for the resources needed to address any problems. The clusters closely monitor student achievement data, but the measuring is done through the Department for Accountability. They also evaluate principals, monitor and assess school effectiveness, recommend training, respond to problems, and follow up parental questions. In effect, the shift to smaller clusters has brought administration closer to the school communities, reducing the span of control and enhancing communications, but has moved the service components to a higher, more centralized level.

A Note about Fairfax City: This study covers Fairfax City as well as County schools. Fairfax City contracts with FCPS for the management and operation of its schools (one high school, one middle school and two elementary schools). These schools are included in the cluster with Chantilly and Centreville high schools. There is good communication between the City and County. The City School Board oversees

the contract and the management of its facilities, and the City is invited to attend meetings to provide input, although it does not vote. Fairfax City provides extra funds for special programs, but otherwise its schools have the same programs, policies, class sizes, etc. as FCPS.<sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup>

Principals<sup>4</sup>: Most educational research identifies the principal as the critical person in school performance. Many believe that this is particularly true in the wake of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Primarily due to retirements, the school system has had a high turnover in school-based administrators in recent years, including an almost 100 percent turnover in high school principals. Therefore, FCPS is actively striving to identify and develop educational leaders. Efforts include:

- "The Learning, Empowering, Assessing, and Developing (LEAD) Fairfax program, which promotes systemic reform of leadership to significantly improve learning for all students. Key components in this process are attracting, developing, and supporting leaders who (a) have the ability to influence the action of others; (b) are knowledgeable about research-based practices in curriculum, instruction and assessment; and (c) are capable of managing people and resources effectively." This program, with support from the Wallace Foundation, is now in its fifth year. The major focus is on 82 schools with the largest numbers of disadvantaged students.
- FCPS has also centralized staff training and development in a new Office of Professional Learning and Training. The school system provides its own in-service training, and works with the state colleges and universities.
- A relatively recent development has been the inclusion of parents in the selection of principals. This may increase the investment of the school community in the performance of the school leadership. It can also make it harder to move a principal, which may sometimes be a problem.

Teachers<sup>5</sup>: The recruitment of teachers for FCPS is influenced by national trends in the job market, state licensing requirements, and the salaries, benefits, and working environment in each school district. "The teacher shortage that is plaguing the educational system is prompting all school divisions in the area to offer higher salaries and incentives to attract a quality teaching staff," per FCPS budget documents.

The Washington Area Boards of Education compiled a comparison of teacher salaries in nine area school divisions. In FY 2007, Fairfax County had the highest salary for Step 1 & Bachelors Degree: \$42,400. Fairfax County's average teacher salary of \$62,638 was third highest, behind Arlington

County (\$69,156) and Montgomery County (\$66,611). Fairfax ranked sixth in salary for Step 9 & Masters Degree (\$58,067).6

The FY 2008 budget calls for 13,661.6 school-based teachers. FCPS teaching positions are highly sought after by qualified applicants. They like the location and the system's excelent reputation for staff development, according to the FCPS Recruitment Coordinator. All new teachers may take a course called Great Beginnings and are offered workshop sessions on organization and classroom management. All new teachers and teachers new to FCPS receive the assistance of a mentor during their first year. There is also a Smooth Transition program for teachers, featuring interest-free loans, apartment rental incentives, discounted Internet service, and moving assistance.

Annual contract teachers are evaluated each year until they receive continuing contract status. Continuing contract teachers are evaluated every third year. The evaluator is the program manager, principal, or his or her designee. The assessment and evaluation process offers professional growth opportunities, provides support, recognizes teaching performance that exceeds expectations, gives special assistance to teachers in need of improvement, provides intensive assistance to teachers with conditional reappoints, and identifies teachers not meeting expectations.<sup>8</sup>

Aides: All school levels use both paid and volunteer aides for a variety of services, including cafeteria, clinic, and instruction. The paid cafeteria aides are often assisted by parent volunteers, as are the school clinic aides, especially when needed to conduct required health screenings. The classes for special education and children with learning disabilities are provided aides based on the number of students served. In addition, each school is provided with paid instructional aides based on its enrollment; the school decides how to use the aide(s), with some schools choosing to assign the aides to the library, computer lab or to work with small groups. Parent volunteers are also used for these purposes. With the strong shift to the mainstreaming of special education students at all levels, the instructional aides have become critical to the process. FCPS employs nearly 2,800 instructional aides who are generally over-qualified, and some believe underpaid, for the positions.

Psychological and Counseling Services: FCPS employs more than 130 school psychologists. Of these, approximately 90 are assigned to schools in the general education program. The others evaluate preschool children at the Preschool Diagnostic Centers to determine their eligibility for special education services. At each school, alternative school and special education center, a psychologist works with students, parents and staff providing individual, group

and parent counseling, crisis and behavioral intervention, instructional consultation, assessment and evaluation of students suspected of having an educational disability, administrative case management for children with disabilities, healthcare promotion, and psychological evaluation. They serve as liaisons between schools and community-based service providers, e.g., mental health centers and courts.

Each elementary school has at least one full-time school counselor. Schools with higher student enrollments have additional counselors. The elementary school counseling and guidance program is a part of the total school program and complements learning in the classroom. The elementary school counselor also conducts guidance lessons; consults with parents, teachers, and other professionals; and coordinates student services in the school.

Secondary school counselors play a critical role in communication between students, parents, teachers and school administrators, a role played partly by classroom teachers in the elementary schools. They focus on maximizing student potential and coordinating student services in the school. A sequential series of guidance activities helps students to gain competence in the areas of educational, career and personal life planning and decision-making. These activities include providing FCPS course offerings and college and career planning materials, explaining graduation requirements, assisting in developing an academic and career plan, arranging and interpreting standardized testing, assisting in the college application process, helping identify personal strengths, interests, abilities, and aptitudes, and providing post secondary options websites that may be of interest.

## **Class Size and Management**

Considering class size in education does not mean just reducing the number of pupils per teacher but finding appropriate class loads. Studies have shown that smaller class size results in greater achievement gains for students in the early grades, for those with lower academic ability, and for those who are economically or socially disadvantaged. Smaller classes improve pupil achievement because they allow teachers to spend more time with individual students. Class size also has a great influence on student attitudes, attention, interest, motivation and behavior. 9 10

In Virginia public schools, class sizes are governed by the Virginia Board of Education's Standards of Quality (SOQ). In 2006, the SOQ required that each school board: "assign licensed instructional personnel in a manner that produces division-wide ratios of students in average daily membership to full-time equivalent teaching positions, excluding special education teachers, principals, assistant principals, counselors, and librarians that are not greater than the following ratios: (i) 24 to one in kindergarten with no class being larger

than 29 students; if the average daily membership in any kindergarten class exceeds 24 pupils, a full-time teacher's aide shall be assigned to the class, (ii) 24 to one in grades one, two and three with no class being larger than 30 students, (iii) 25 to one in grades four through six with no class being larger than 35 students; and (iv) 24 to one in English classes in grades six through 12." It also requires full-time equivalent teaching positions of 21 to one in middle schools and high schools. All middle and high school teachers must have one planning period per day without any teaching or supervisory duties.<sup>11</sup>

In Fairfax County, the annual schools budget sets the formulas for the staffing and provides a detailed breakdown of the requirements for each core (English, math, science, social studies, and foreign language) and non-core position and school level. There are weighted factors that take in account the needs of programs such as special education and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). FCPS staffing standards must meet the minimum standards required by the Virginia SOQ, the Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia and Standards for Accreditation by the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges. In 2007, the average division-wide elementary school ratio is 20.7 students for each teacher. Excluding kindergarten, when all teacher scale positions – resource teachers in special programs, librarians, guidance counselors, art, music, reading, physical education and English for speakers of other languages – are included, the division wide elementary school ratio is reduced to 12.8 students for each teacher. Each individual school decides how to assign the teaching personnel allotted to it.

The Fairfax formulas for staffing are intended to provide a fair way to distribute teaching positions and exceed the SOQ requirements. However, they don't take into account individual situations or instructional objectives except in the broad sense. Does teacher workload affect the quality of instruction? Factors such as the number of classes, the number of preparations, subjects taught, student diversity, non-teaching responsibilities (such as supervision of extracurricular activities), in-service obligations, and the impact of including special needs students in the regular classroom are the subjects of current research.

Studies have shown that in small classes, classroom management improves and there are fewer discipline problems. This is an ongoing concern of many teachers, and includes: 1) making sure that negative behaviors by students are not an ongoing situation; 2) ensuring that students feel socially and emotionally safe in class; and 3) helping all students participate in classroom interaction. <sup>12</sup> <sup>13</sup>

FCPS policy makes the educational employee responsible for maintaining order and control in the classroom through

effective teaching and leadership techniques and, in cases of minor infractions, through imposition of appropriate class-room discipline. Teachers cite the need for continuing administrative support and in-service training to change or adopt instructional methods appropriate to changing class size, to modifying student behavior, and to communicating with students' parents.

## **Programs and Special Populations**

In its studies for over 50 years, the LWVFA has supported special programs and groupings of students to help them develop their potential at their own rate. The areas currently addressed by the positions are described below. One crosscutting concern for all areas is the need for adequate numbers of qualified, well-trained teachers.

ESOL<sup>14</sup>: Since the current position was adopted, the name of the program was changed to ESOL or English for Speakers of Other Languages. When the program began in 1975 it had 275 students; by 1999 the enrollment had grown to 11,000. Today that number has reached over 21,000. Recently, the growth rate of students participating in all levels of ESOL programs has slowed. Factors contributing to this trend include the lack of affordable housing in the Fairfax area and visa program changes limiting the growth of the immigrant population in general.

In 2006-07, FCPS had ESOL programs in all but three elementary schools and all middle and high schools. The final three will be added in 2007-08. In addition, four transitional ESOL high schools provide instruction for older international students (Falls Church, Robert E. Lee, Annandale and South Lakes) and three alternative high schools (Bryant, Mountain View and Pimmit Hills).

At the elementary level, the schools use ESOL teachers in a variety of ways – forming "small-group" classes (formerly known as "pull-out"); providing in-class support by collaborating with the classroom teacher; and monitoring individual students by using specific materials and strategies to assist students in reading, writing, listening and speaking until they can exit the ESOL program.

At the secondary level, beginning students receive three periods of ESOL: one in science and social studies concepts and vocabulary and two in literature and language. They take other classes with their English-speaking peers. Intermediate proficiency level students have two ESOL periods, and advanced students receive one period of ESOL. The middle and high schools also receive some additional staffing to help students transition into their content classes (for example, co-teaching a biology class that has some intermediate ESOL students). All ESOL students receive grades in ESOL courses as well as their other courses.

<u>ESOL Student Assessment</u>: FCPS trains all ESOL teachers on comprehensive assessments of their students' English listening, speaking, reading and writing. A portfolio is maintained for each student demonstrating his/her progress. Once a student reaches the specific designations for exiting ESOL services, that portfolio is reviewed and signatures are gathered from the ESOL teacher, the language arts teacher, and principal. It is then submitted to the ESOL office for review and approval

Other ESOL Programs: Fairfax County serves the preschool population by providing an ESOL specialist on preschool teams. The ESOL curriculum is infused into the regular preschool program. In addition, the schools promote programs for the parents of preschoolers. Dual Language Assessment teachers serve special needs students.

The Adult ESOL program offers English classes at several levels to foreign-born adults at 13 locations throughout the county. Businesses are offered the opportunity to conduct on-site classes for limited English-proficient employees and there are community-sponsored ESOL classes in community centers and churches throughout Fairfax. A Weekend Learning Lab (WELL) provides instruction at beginning and intermediate levels to small groups of students every Saturday at the Willston Multicultural Center.

#### Family and Early Childhood Education (Head Start):

Through the Head Start program, parents, other volunteers and community professionals work with school staff to provide comprehensive services to meet children's educational, health, nutritional, social and emotional needs—helping them develop the skills important to success in kindergarten. The program serves nearly 1,100 students, ages 3 through 5, in classrooms located in 52 schools. The students must meet federal and local income eligibility guidelines. Changes in the availability of low-income housing have resulted in a reduced number of eligible students at some sites, while population shifts have affected the space availability and wait lists in other schools. An Early Head Start program serves 24 children from birth to age 3 in a home-based option and 16 in a center-based option. The program addresses children's emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs.

Gifted and Talented (GT) Program: Programs are available for gifted and talented students, kindergarten through grade 12. The program includes both school-based programs at all schools, grades K-12, and full-time center programs for the highly academically gifted, for grades 3-8. In FY 2005, there were nearly 20,000 K-8 students served through school-based and center-based programs. The high schools offer Advanced Placement courses, the International Baccalaureate program, pre-IB, and honors courses in several subject areas.

School-based GT services in elementary and middle schools include K-2 response lessons, differentiated lessons for grades 3-6, and honors classes in the four core subject areas for middle school students. The center-based program for students in grades 3-8 offers a full-time challenging instructional program at 23 elementary school and 10 middle school centers. In addition, eight elementary schools in FY 2006 offered the GT center-based program for students in their schools.

To increase the number of students from historically underrepresented populations receiving GT services, FCPS began a Young Scholars (YS) initiative 2001 in 12 schools. In 2007, YS was in 58 schools, and funds are in the 2008 budget to provide for an additional increase. In YS, students with gifted potential are nurtured through flexible grouping, summer school, and after school programs to raise their personal expectations and prepare themselves for more challenging courses. Middle school honors classes function as a continuum of services to support the Young Scholars identified in the elementary schools.

Sixteen of the 24 FCPS high and secondary schools offer the AP program that provides rigorous academic work in major subject fields, with course content designed at a college level. The IB program also provides a comprehensive rigorous coursework with an international perspective and is open to 11th and 12th grade students. It is offered at eight high/secondary schools. The Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, a regional governor's magnet school, offers a comprehensive college preparatory program emphasizing the sciences, mathematics, and technology.

Alternative School Programs 15: FCPS has about 30 alternative school programs and participates in about 40 interagency school programs to meet the educational and emotional needs of its diverse student body. These are administered by the Office of Alternative School Programs. The goals for this office are to: 1) Improve test scores, passing SOL tests; 2) Increase community service and responsibility; 3) Increase enrollment in higher education; 4) Increase employment success during and after high school; 5) Keep students from dropping out; 6) Decrease serious discipline problems in schools. The majority of alternative school placements are not for behavior problems.

Students whose needs are served by alternative school programs include pregnant and parenting teens, older students returning to finish a high school diploma, serious discipline problems who would otherwise be expelled, students who are mentally disturbed and need hospitalization, those who are incarcerated in the Juvenile Detention Center or teens old enough to be in the adult detention center, and other students whose needs are best met outside the regular county

schools programs. The large number of programs gives a range of possibilities for meeting the needs of different students. Alternative school programs range in size from very small up to 450 students in an alternative high school. Some of the alternative programs for disruptive students are very short-term interventions such as time-out rooms. Eleven elementary schools, four middle schools, and five secondary or high schools have time-out rooms where students are expected to stay for an hour and to work on class work for the remainder of the period.

The FCPS Hearings Office is responsible for deciding to place students with discipline issues in an alternative school program. The number of students placed at any given time for disciplinary reasons may be a few over 1,000. The office attempts to fit the student to a program within the least restrictive environment that meets the student's needs.

Alternative High School Programs: The alternative high school programs enroll only students age 17 and above and offer credit courses leading to an FCPS diploma. Fewer than 15 percent of students in alternative high schools have any disciplinary record. These schools are designed to help students whose life circumstances could result or have resulted in an interruption in their education or in dropping out. This includes pregnant and parenting teens, older students who are finishing courses to complete a diploma, older ESOL students, students who may need a flexible or extended program due to family or work requirements, and occasionally students who want to accelerate their regular FCPS high school program. Students who have not graduated from high school have a right to an education until age 20. Those who have disabilities or ESOL students have a legal right to education until age 22.

Project Opportunity, at two of the alternative high school sites, provides classes to complete a high school diploma and training in marketable skills to pregnant and parenting teens of both sexes. Such services as counseling and parenting classes, mentoring, and in some cases day care assistance are provided. Interagency alternative schools are located at 24 sites and funded by other public agencies, three of them by state and federal grants. Each school is specifically designed to meet the needs of the host agency. Host agencies provide facilities, support staff, and utilities, while FCPS provides the teachers and educational program. The Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board hosts programs for students with alcohol and drug problems and serious mental health issues. Other programs are with the Virginia Department of Education, the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, and in the Boys and Girls Probation Houses.

**Special Education (SPED)**:16 FCPS offers comprehensive educational and support services to students with disabilities,

from ages 2 through 21, in all elementary and high schools and 12 special education centers. [About 300 students with serious disabilities are placed outside the FCPS system by the Contract Services Program when there is no program that meets their needs within the FCPS system. There is an attempt to place them as close to home as possible, but some attend schools in other parts of Virginia or out of state.] SPED services are designed to (1) identify students with disabilities, (2) to meet the needs of all students with disabilities in accordance with the goals and objectives specified in their individualized education programs (IEPs) and (3) to assure that due process rights of parents, students, and staff members are met in all phases of program operation. Increasingly, services to SPED students are provided by school-based teachers using general education content and emphasizing literacy development.

In 2005-06, 2,950 FCPS teachers and over 2,000 other personnel provided comprehensive services to 23,685 special education students. Total expenditures on special education services were nearly \$321 million, or 16.8% of the FCPS operating budget for the year. For 2008, the FCPS budget projects that more than 42,000 special education services will be provided to the 23,700 students, 14.4% of total membership, at a total cost of \$371.3 million, or 17.1 percent of the total FCPS operating budget for the year.<sup>17</sup>

Special education services are determined by each student's IEP, which is developed by a team including school staff, parents, and at the secondary level, the student. Staffing for the provision of these services is based on ratios established by the School Board. Virginia has specific regulations governing the program.

Level 1 services are provided to students in primary or secondary disability service areas for less than 50 percent of the school day. Services are provided in a general education classroom setting or in a Level 2 classroom. If a student receives only Level 1 services, he or she is counted for FCPS membership purposes as a general education student.

Level 2 services are those provided to students in primary or secondary disability areas for 50 percent or more of the school day. These services may be provided in general education, special education, or center classrooms. Students receiving Level 2 services are reported as special education students for FCPS membership purposes. Preschool special education services are provided to students under the age of 5. These services may be provided either in a classroom setting or in the child's home.

SPED services are provided in many areas. Services for emotional disabilities and learning disabilities are grouped into Category A. Autism, mild retardation, moderate retardation, physical disabilities, noncategorical, and severe disabili-

ties services are grouped into Category B. The Commonwealth of Virginia mandates that special education be staffed according to ratios for each category/service provided at a site. Services are also provided for adaptive physical education, communication disorders, deaf and hard-of-hearing, integrated (assistive) technology, class-based preschool, preschool resource, preschool autism classes, therapy services (physical or occupational), visual impairment, and career and transition services.

A range of service options is available to implement each student's IEP in accordance with the principle of least restrictive environment. This refers to the setting determined by the IEP team to give the child as much contact as possible with typical age-appropriate peers while meeting the child's unique educational needs. Students often receive services in more than one setting. For example, a student may spend part of the day in a general education classroom and part of the day in a special education classroom. As a student's needs change, different educational environments may be appropriate. Overall, there has been an increased focus on student access to grade level curriculum and the participation of all students in grade level assessments, in addition to an emphasis on educating SPED students in the general education classroom.

<u>Special Education Issues and Trends:</u> The current issues in SPED include some that are long-standing as well as some of more recent concern. They include:

- 1. The 2008 projected per-student cost of providing special education services (\$20,343) continues to be significantly higher than for general education (\$11,388), with resultant budget implications. The federal government has agreed to provide 40 percent of additional cost but has never funded more than a fraction of this obligation.
- 2. There is a shortage of qualified teachers and the quality of the teaching and individual attention that many special education students receive can be quite variable. One result of this shortage is schools' heavy reliance on provisionally licensing SPED teachers for three years while they take SPED courses. Another is the continued emphasis on professional training and development for SPED teachers.
- 3. The paperwork load that must be prepared and filed for each special education student by each teacher can be onerous and time consuming. Special education teachers often have to choose between keeping up with the paperwork or giving more service to the students. Some teachers who try to do both well can burn out. Improved use of computer systems may offer solutions to this problem. It may also be that the best teachers are not always the best diagnosticians or educational program developers. Most schools rely on

teachers to write the lengthy IEPs for each student and make SPED teachers case managers for individual students. Many academics argue that the case manager model has serious weaknesses and that a better model should be developed.

- 4. The emphasis on mainstreaming special education students into regular general education classes with special education teacher support works well only if both teachers have time to plan together and can truly share the load of presenting the material and testing so that all students can understand the material and have a successful experience in the class. This does not always happen.
- 5. One result of the fact that **most** SPED students' test scores are included in making determinations of Annual Yearly Progress for NCLB is that schools are placing great emphasis on assisting highest-functioning SPED students in passing SOL tests. Teachers now must focus on instruction based on SOL content in core curriculum areas in addition to a traditional focus on life skills.
- 6. Increased public awareness of autism and possibly greater incidence of autism is leading to significant increase in the number of students eligible for autism services. Research proven methods for instructing children with autism rely heavily on one-on-one or one-on-a-few instruction, which is very expensive.

Summer School: Summer programs are available for students who will complete grades K-11 during the 2006-2007 school year. Summer programs include opportunities for students to strengthen the skills and knowledge required for the SOL tests. Classes will be offered at 21 elementary schools, five middle schools, and five high schools and are also designed to reinforce academic skills and improve achievement on SOL tests. Enrichment opportunities in academic areas are also available as well as extended day programs, camps, and online courses. Students who receive free and reduced cost lunches receive free or reduced summer school tuition.

## **Instructional Programs**

The LWVFA has studied various programs of instruction over the years and currently has positions in these two areas:

Family Life Education: The Fairfax County Public Schools' Family Life Education (FLE) program was implemented by FCPS in 1990 in accordance with Virginia law (§22.1-207) and regulations, and reflects both state requirements and the values of the Fairfax community. It is "a K-12 program designed to provide students with age-appropriate knowledge, attitudes, and skills to make healthy, responsible, respectful, and life enhancing decisions related to human growth and development, sexuality, relationships, [and] men-

tal health." (Because of the opt-out provisions of FLE, the *state-required* alcohol, tobacco and other drugs (ATOD) program was recently moved to the regular health program.)

In accordance with state requirements, the FLE program is abstinence-based, includes a curriculum advisory committee that approves all objectives and materials, allows parents to opt-out their children from participation, and provides alternative lessons for students not attending the FLE lessons. Training is given to all teachers who provide instruction in Human Growth and Development, Personal and Community Health, Human Life Education (high school biology), and HIV/AIDS. Each school designates one employee as its FLE administrator, often an assistant principal. The advisory committee includes 10 teachers, three school-based administrators, 21 community members, and four students.

The FLE curriculum consists of two general parts: mental health in grades K - 10, and human sexuality in grades 5-12. The elementary FLE program is generally delivered by the regular classroom teacher and emphasizes the importance of families and friendships, distinction between good and bad touches, identification of common emergencies, etc. Human sexuality is introduced in the 5th grade Human Growth and Development unit, where students learn about male and female reproductive systems and the maturation process. Students are also taught that AIDS is a preventable disease. In grades 7 and 8, students are taught by health and physical education teachers and continue their study of human anatomy, physiology, the development of sexuality, and behaviors that put them at risk for substance abuse and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). They are also taught that abstinence is the only way to guarantee prevention of pregnancy and STDs. Gender-separate instruction is provided for the Human Growth and Development lessons for the elementary and middle school students and self-exam units in high school.

In high school, 9th and 10th grade students participate in FLE through their biology, health and physical education classes. The state-required units on HIV/AIDS and ATOD for 11th and 12th grade classes are handled by history and government teachers in social studies, since they must be covered in classes that are required for graduation. The 12th grade students are also provided instruction in "The Family in Virginia Law" through their social studies classes.

Information about the program, including course descriptions and materials, and opt-out request forms are made available to parents through the FCPS website and in written form in seven languages. The materials are also available for community review at media centers in individual schools, the Technology Center and on the Red Apple Channel 21.

The negative reaction to the FLE program is now limited to occasional episodic complaints from individuals or parts of the community. These are most often associated with the introduction of program changes. The most recent major controversy (2005) was over the inclusion of contraceptive information in an abstinence-based program. The general opt-out rate for FLE has decreased over the years and now stands at 1.9 percent. However, the opt-out rate for the 5th and 10th grade classes in Human Sexuality is close to 2.5 percent.

Current issues and initiatives of the FLE program include:

- Timely and regular revision of the curriculum and materials to ensure that instruction is accurate, up-to-date, consistent with changes in state law and curricula, and reflective of best practices in FLE and changing community values and needs. Some units are more than 15 years old. Because of the need to align the FLE program with Virginia SOL revisions, especially those affecting graduation requirements, the most recent changes have been made in the middle and 9th and 10th grades. For example, the 9th grade mental health unit was revised to include information on Internet safety and exploitation.
- Providing needed teacher training in new ways. About 400 FLE teachers, including 320 elementary teachers, are trained each fall in groups of about 25. Teachers in grades 5 8 and 11 12 participate in a one-day training program, while 9th and 10th grade teachers attend a 10-week academy course in the evening.
- Other issues include the use of standardized opt-out lessons to ensure consistent quality and appropriateness of instruction and the production of modified and updated curricula for students with low-incidence disabilities (autism and mental retardation).

In 1997, the Virginia Board of Education voted to make the FLE program voluntary for school divisions, and a 1998 attempt by the General Assembly to restore it as a mandatory program was vetoed by then-Governor Gilmore.

**Technical Education:** The LWVFA last reported on technical education in Fairfax County in 1995. Since then, the school system has opened five academies that integrate academics, technology and career pathways for students interested in pursuing careers in international studies and business, engineering and scientific technology, health and human services or communications and the arts.

Advanced technical and specialized elective courses are offered to 11th and 12th- grade students. The academies and the programs they offer are: Chantilly (engineering and

scientific technology/health and human services; <u>Edison</u> and <u>Marshall</u> (engineering and scientific technology/international studies and business); <u>Fairfax</u> (communications and the arts); and <u>West Potomac</u> (communications and the arts/health and human services).

In addition, Falls Church High School offers academy courses in criminal justice and health technologies. This year, two new academy course offerings were introduced: Pharmacy Technician, at Chantilly and West Potomac Academies, and Landscape Architecture and Turf Management at Edison Academy.

Students enrolled in the programs are provided with opportunities to participate in shadowing, mentoring, and/or internships with local businesses. In addition to courses offered at the academies, specialized programs for students with particular interest are available at community-based locations and at single school sites. There are currently over 3,300 students enrolled in academy programs. In the past two years, total student enrollment increased by 13.4 percent. Before entering an academy, students take a core of standard career and technical education courses in middle school and high school. The academies provide students with opportunities and experiences that are not available in their base high schools. Many of the courses lead to certification, licensure, or college credit.

The efficiency of the academy model has been questioned and may change significantly as the "High Schools of the Future" initiative is further defined and developed. Its goal is to provide greater access for all students to advanced technical and highly specialized courses, while minimizing the loss of instructional time due to required travel.

#### New Programs, Innovations and Initiatives

Both innovations and initiatives are usually defined (and used interchangeably) as the introduction of something new, such as a new idea, program, or method. Although the FCPS budget for 2008 states that it does not fund any new programs, it continues funding for the continuation and expansion of initiatives of earlier years, such as full-day kindergartens, foreign language in the elementary schools, alternative schools, positive behavior support, 24-7 learning, and the Young Scholars program. There are cost savings initiatives (e.g., no new programs and not increasing base spending levels); the Initiative for Excellence for teacher salary enhancements, and the School Board's strategic governance initiative.

There is an ongoing concern that proven initiatives are not fully implemented throughout the system before something new is introduced and supported. Another concern is that innovations are more often introduced and implemented from

the top down rather than from the schools up. Several school principals noted that innovations could come from focus groups, faculty meetings, or other school-based sources, with interactions at all levels.<sup>19</sup>

One current initiative is "High Schools of the Future," which is a vision for the FCPS high school curriculum that includes the strategic location of, and access to specialized programs. Superintendent Jack Dale has noted its importance in ensuring that FCPS is able to make strategic decisions on where to locate high school programs and academies, which high schools should be grouped together for efficient transportation, and on identifying courses that might be offered as FCPS gains greater understanding of how to best prepare its graduates.<sup>20</sup>

#### **Endnotes and Sources:**

<sup>1</sup> A significant portion of the information in this study was obtained through the FCPS web site: www.fcps.edu. This includes the 2008 budget documents. Individual attribution will not be provided.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Included in a report of a discussion between Jeanne Agee and Janice Miller, Chair of the Fairfax City School Board.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Fairfax City web site: www.fairfaxva.gov.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> This topic was discussed with Ann Monday, FCPS Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services and Jane Strauss, member of the Fairfax County School Board (Joanne Field).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> FCPS Performance Assessment and Evaluation Handbook: A Resource for all Teacher-scale Employees, 2005, was a source for this section.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Washington Area Boards of Education WABE Guide, FY 2007.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Telephone conversation with Joyce Dantzler (Ginger Shea).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Ibid. FCPS Performance Assessment and Evaluation Handbook.

<sup>9</sup> School Class Size: Research and Policy, by Gene Glass (http://eric.ed.gov/ERICwebportal)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Educational Issue Series – Class Sizes, WEAC – Wisconsin Education Association Council (www.weac.org/sage/research/classsize)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Virginia Board of Education website (www.pen.k12.va.us)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Ibid. Education Issue Series, WEAC.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> "Teachers Want Training to Hone Instructional, Management Skills," *Virginia Journal of Education*, Dec 2006.

<sup>14,</sup>Information for this section was provided by the FCPS web site and Teddi Predaris, Director of the FCPS ESOL Office and (e-mail) with Keith Buchanan, Coordinator, FCPS Office of ESOL Services (Mary Valder)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Information was provided by the FCPS web site and Teresa Zutter, Director of the FCPS Alternative Schools program (Jane Hilder).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Information was obtained through the FCPS web site, including the Special Education Parents Handbook, and from the Report on Implementation of the 2005-06 Special Education Annual Plan by Fairfax County and discussions with special education instructors (Sheila School).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Latter figures provided by Mario Schiavo, FCPS Director of Budget Services, in an e-mail to Therese Martin.

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 18}$  Information was also obtained from Elizabeth Payne, FCPS K-12 Coordinator for Health and Physical Education (Therese Martin).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Discussions with Linda Haaj, Principal of Lake Anne Elementary School, and Bruce Butler, Principal of South Lakes High School (Barbara Beecy, Margo Sterling, and Nancy Larson).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> E-mail from Jack Dale to Therese Martin.

## Notes from BOS Chairman Gerry Connolly's speech at LWVFA Annual Meeting 4/21/2007

by Rona Ackerman

On Immigration in Fairfax County:

- ► Thirty years ago, there were 500,000 people in Fairfax County; they were predominately young white families with a median age of 25. Blacks were the only minority and were 15% of the population.
- Now, we have 1,000,000 with a median age of 37. Fewer than 30% have kids in the school system. Our educational achievement has gone way up. We have the lowest dropout rate in the U.S. and 94% of those who graduate go on to higher education. There is no dominant ethnic group; 40% are minorities and 25% are foreign born. The crime rate is lower than it was 30 years ago; we have the lowest homicide rate in the U.S.; and the burglary rate is half what it was 30 years ago.
- ► Mr. Connolly stated that illegal immigration has not cost Fairfax County in terms of social services, etc. He did not know how many illegal immigrants were in the schools. He also does not believe that the police should be deputized for immigration enforcement

On job growth, affordable housing and transportation:

- ► Thirty years ago, only police officers, firefighters, and teachers worked in Fairfax County. Just about everyone else commuted into D.C.
- ► Now 55% work here and we are approaching 600,000 jobs in the County. We are a job magnet and expect more job growth.
- ▶ We need to address the housing problem or we will have an even bigger transportation problem. Right now, 60,000 come in from Prince William County each day. But our infrastructure was built for us to travel to DC. We need to fix this.
- Mr. Connolly wants to have a law requiring affordable housing in hi-rise buildings adopted this year.
- ► The Governor's transportation bill will create significant transportation funding. The State needs to use debt and not a pay-as-you-go policy for transportation funding.
- ► The Regional Transportation Authority has been given the authority to raise up to \$400,000 in revenue. The County can bond against that at a 10:1 ratio for additional transportation funding.

- ► The Governor also gave new power to local governments—a relaxation of Dillon's Rule restrictions. They are now able to impose impact fees on by-right development and impose a commercial tax rate differential of up to \$0.25 for transportation. This will allow Fairfax County to explore rail not only to Dulles but also out I-66 to Gainesville.
- ► Mr. Connolly would like to see the Fairfax County Parkway finished. We have the money but the road through the [Ft. Belvoir] Proving Ground is a sticking point. He hopes to get the Army to build it and the State to agree to accept it.

In response to questions on the environment:

- ► Mr. Connolly stated that the goal for solid waste recycling was 25% and we are now at 36%. The environmental plan adopted about 4 years ago contains action plans for all 30 watersheds.
- ► We lead the region in efforts to control air quality.
- ► We have increased the Park Authority's holdings 30%; currently 9.4% of the County is park land—the goal is 10%. The tree canopy needs to be preserved.
- ► The Government Center is environmentally sensitive. Twenty percent of Fairfax County employees tele-commute. The Herrity building is being retro-fit with a green roof. The Government Center was built next to I-66 so it could be a Metro stop.

Regarding a tunnel at Tysons Corner:

- ► It will last longer than an aerial stop, but there is a question about how expensive it would be. Everyone has already signed off on the aerial and the federal government will fund it.
- ► If we want to look at a tunnel, the Environmental Impact Statement will need to be amended, and that would take an additional three to four years to consider. There may not be federal funding at that time.

### **IN MEMORIAM**

Joanna May (Orland) Rubin passed away on March 25, 2007, in Delaware, Ohio. Jo lived in Northern Virginia from 1960 to 2002 when she moved to Ohio. She was an active member of the LWVFA, PTA, Council of Governments and other organizations while living here. She has daughters living in Burke and Lovettsville, VA and two other children living elsewhere in the USA.

## **Superintendent's Community Advisory Council Report**

By Ginger Shea

The March 20 meeting of the Superintendent's Community Advisory Council (SCAC) featured a discussion of how the school board's Linkage Subcommittee should communicate with stakeholders. They are working on a concept for a "key communicators" group.

Such a group would have some overlap in constituencies with the SCAC. Should SCAC and the key communicators be one group? How often should the key communicators group meet? Should it meet jointly with the school board and the superintendent, just with the school board, or alternate? How can such a group be kept small enough to be able to be function easily? These questions were discussed—the decisions will be made by the school board.

Deputy Superintendent Richard Moniuszko presented a Power Point presentation of the School Board's student achievement goals 2 and 3:

Goal 2--"All students will demonstrate the aptitude, attitude, and skills to lead responsible, fulfilling, and respectful lives."

Goal 3--"All students will understand and model the important attributes that people must have to contribute to an effective and productive community."

At the May 1 SCAC meeting, Dr. Dale said the Board of Supervisors' revenue forecast has been revised down. He raised the possibility that the expansion of full-day kindergarten may be slowed down. He also explained the decision agreeing to the ESOL testing required by the current No Child Left Behind Act. He said "our intent is to teach and test kids humanely." He said that in the last three weeks in Virginia it became clearer what it meant to give a test to a child. That would include putting a test in front of a child, but no inappropriate pressure on the child to try to complete the test.

Dr. Dale said FCPS was beginning to address the pay scale for teachers with master's degrees. He said he had asked the Teacher's Advisory Group to consider other models for how pay should be structured. In Fairfax, teachers get increased pay depending on their years of service in the form of step increases. Some other districts cap salary increases for teachers with only bachelors' degrees after 10 years. Further increases would be tied to gaining a master's degree.

There are strong feelings on both sides of this issue. The group had a preference toward the master's requirement.

Dr. Dale also reported that the way elementary school teachers structure their day has caused us to need more art and music teachers. For high schools, he described a plan to group the 25 high schools into five consortiums that would enable students to take courses at another school in the consortium.

## Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB)

By Therese Martin and Judy Leader

We have served as the League's representatives on the CJAB for the past year. The Board continues to hear presentations each month on various topics of interest and concern to Fairfax residents and the local justice community. At one of the meetings, we presented the study that the League did last fall about juries in Virginia's courts. It resulted in some interesting comments from CJAB members, especially from Commonwealth's Attorney Bob Horan, and Barbara Kenney, Chief Deputy, Courts and Records, of the Circuit Court. Other presentations during 2006-07 have included:

- Courthouse Security--a representative from the Fairfax Sheriff's Office discussed its activities in providing security for the Fairfax judicial complex, its judges, staff and visitors. The Jennings Courthouse is one of the busiest in Virginia, with an average of 3,500 persons entering daily, but is said to be one of the safest courthouses. The Sheriff's Office also manages the adult detention center, which is highly regarded both in terms of its structure and the treatment of inmates. One of the challenges facing the office is the hiring and retention of good, qualified individuals, due in great part to the pay disparity between the Police Department and Sheriff's Office. In its budget testimony this sprig, the CJAB asked that this disparity be eliminated.
- The Fairfax County Alcohol Safety Action Program (ASAP)--we heard about the background and programs of the organization, which is funded by the fees paid by persons enrolled, usually upon court orders. ASAP is charged with the evaluation, referral and education of individuals charged (cont'd on pg.9)

(CJAB -cont'd from pg. 8)

with driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In Virginia, there were 322 alcohol-related fatalities in 2005, compared with 535 in 1990.

- <u>Juvenile Residential Facilities</u>—presentations were made about several Fairfax facilities for juveniles: Boys Probation House, Girls Probation House, Less Secure Center, and the Supervised Release Program. These were followed by a presentation and tour of the Juvenile Detention Center, which is a 121-bed secure facility, although it is generally not filled to capacity. An interesting fact: it costs \$230 a day to house juveniles in one of these facilities.
- Victim Rights in the Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court—Maurine Houser, the probation officer who provides victims' services in this court, described the many activities that she does with the aid of only one half-time secretary. The League interviewed Ms. Houser while doing the Restorative Justice study and was impressed with what she was able to accomplish. In our budget testimony several years ago, we asked that she be given assistance. Her workload continues to increase but she has received no additional help. The League again addressed the situation in its recent budget testimony.

We continue to be impressed with the quality and dedication of those who serve Fairfax residents through its justice and public safety agencies and programs, at oftentimes lower pay than if they were employed in comparable positions elsewhere. We were pleased to see that the important roles they play in the community were recognized by many of the decisions incorporated in the Fairfax budget for the coming year.

## 2007 LWVFA Law Day Report

By Judy Leader

LWVFA sponsored a Law Day program on Tuesday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, in partnership with theFairfax Bar Association Law Education Committee (FBA), George Mason University (GMU) Law School, Trial Advocacy Association (Law School), and GMU Pre-Law Society. The program and video were funded in part by a grant from the Program on Constitutional and Legal Policy of the Open Society Institute, through a LWVUS grant, as well as by LWVFA and an anonymous donor.

Law Day celebrates the rule of law in the United States. This year's theme was: "Enabling Youth Ensuring Democracy." At the first event, held at George Mason University (GMU), Fairfax Campus, on May 1<sup>st</sup>, from 4-6:30 pm, a video of a Moot Court competition, filmed previously at GMU's Law School, with Judge Thacher of Fairfax County Circuit Court presiding, was shown. In the video, law school students argued the case, and the victim, defendant, and four witnesses were law students as well.

After the video presentation, a Panel, including The Honorable Jonathan C. Thacher of Fairfax Circuit Court; Fairfax County Assistant Commonwealth Attorney Kelly Pearson; and Corinne Magee, Esq., a prominent defense attorney, discussed the trial process from their perspectives, the importance of judicial independence and their personal experiences as litigators. A reception followed in which the students networked with the Panelists and other guests, including a judge, a judicial law clerk, local attorneys, high school teachers, and interested League members. In the Fall, the video will be shown to high school juniors and seniors in Northern Virginia during class, followed by class discussions.

The mock trial was videotaped by students who attend the Fairfax High School Academy for Communications and the Arts, which is part of the Fairfax County Public School system. The video was edited in part by a team of lawyers, a former film editor, and LWVFA members.

If you wish to be involved with the Fall in-school programs, or to serve as witnesses at future moot court competitions at GMU, please contact: Judy Leader, Justice Committee Chair, at 703-524-0991.

## Units Kick-off Will Be September 8, 2007

We have made arrangements for Unit Leaders' Kick-Off to be held at the **Packard Center** (LWVFA Office) on **Saturday, September 8, 2007**, in the upstairs conference room. Unfortunately, the Mason District Gov't. Center was not available for that date, so we will make do with the Packard Center. The meeting will start at 9:30 a.m. and as usual, will be followed by the Discussion Leaders' briefing. Please, mark your calendars now for this event!

## **Report on 2007 LWVVA Convention**

Lulu Meese & Sherry Zachry

Eleven local Leagues, 2 MAL Chairs, an NCA leader, plus ten LWVVA Board members participated in the Convention at The Roslyn Center in Richmond, April 28-29. Their actions included:

Bylaws change; adoption of proposed 2007-2009 General Fund Budget with amendment; adoption of Recommended 2007-2009 program— new study: The Civil Rights of Felons; Adopted concurrence addition to LWVVA position on Reapportionment and Redistricting; Retained all LWVVA positions; changed name of Vocational Training under Education position to "Career and Technical Education."

Elected the nominating committees' recommended slate of officers, directors and nominating committee for 2007-2009: **Olga Hernandez** from LWVFA as the President; Lynn Gordon(LWVSHR)-1st VP; Anne Sterling (LWVRMA)-2nd VP; Bonnie Franklin (LWVArl)-Secretary; Therese Martin (LWVFA)-Treasurer. Directors: Lynn Johnston (LWVRMA); Anne Kanter (LWVFA); Eileen Williams (LWVArl); Sue Worden (LWVAlex). Nominating Committee: Betsy Mayr (LWVLC)-Chair; Robin Gilbert (LWVSHR), Kathryne Thompson (Middle Peninsula MAL).

Direction to the Board: Support NCA Capitol Steps fund-raiser on Sept 28 at the Reagan Building in D.C.

Molly McClenon of Lynchburg has agreed to chair the new state study of the Civil Rights of Felons. Her contact is 434-384-7430, mcclenon@cstone.net.

Gifts to the outgoing President Meese were: a Brick for Capitol walkway with "Lulu Meese, Legislative Roundtable Chair" inscribed on it; \$500. donated to LWVVA in honor of Meese's work; a vase of carnations; and a "beautiful China Tea set."

## **Program Report on "SLEEP"**

By Rona Ackerman

The results of the concurrence for Later High School Start Times (aka "SLEEP"), conducted at the April unit meetings, were: 92 yea; 5 nay; and 11 abstentions. At the annual meeting, we changed the 2006-2007 program year to include "Later High School Start Times" discussion and concurrence. The board is expected to adopt the concurrence statement, as presented, at the May 16<sup>th</sup> board meeting. Once adopt-

ed by the board, LWVFA can take action on later high school start times, as appropriate. The membership will approve the statement, to be added to Schools' positions, at the next General or Annual meeting.

## **UNIT NEWS**

Janey George, Unit Coordinator, janeyg16@cox.net

Anne Kanter (MCL) recently traveled to Belgium with her husband. Judy Leader (MCL) has a new grandchild. Olga Hernandez (CHD) traveled to England with her husband in May. Therese Martin (RE) has been to both coasts recently—Portland, OR and NYC. Sheila School (PWA) will be reprising her singing role of 50 years ago in "Brigadoon" at her 50<sup>th</sup> reunion of Otterbein College Class of 1957 in Westerville, Ohio. Mary Elizabeth Gordon has been recuperating from a fall at Renaissance Gardens in Greenspring Village. If you want to send a card, her address is: 310 Rose Court, Renaissance Gardens, 7470 Spring Village Drive, Springfield, VA 22150.

## Goodbye Prince William Area Unit!

We bid a fond farewell to the Prince William Area Unit and its members. As you may know, the PWA Unit has decided to become a Members-At-Large Unit (MAL Unit) of the state League and received approval at the April 27<sup>th</sup> LWVVA board meeting to do so. Therefore as of July 1, 2007, the folks who are a part of the unit will no longer be members of LWVFA, but will join the state League as MAL members. **Sheila School** and **Shirley White** will co-chair the Unit.

As information, not every LWVFA member living in Prince William County or Manassas will go with the new unit. All will be given a choice regarding the League to which they want to be a member—and we are certain that several will stay with LWVFA.

Although we hate to see them go, we offer best wishes to the new MAL Unit as they embark on their way to becoming a League of their own! We believe that Prince William needs a League and we know these dedicated people will make that happen.

Goodbye and Good Luck from LWVFA!

## The Back Page/Unit Meeting Locations - Topic: Schools Positions Update

Members and visitors may attend any meeting convenient for them. At print time the locations were correct, please use phone numbers to verify sites and advise of your intent to attend. Some meetings at restaurants need reservations.

## Monday, June 11

## 1:30 pm Greenspring Vill. (GSV) **Hunters Crossing Class Room** Spring Village Drive, Springfield Call Jane 703-569-0079 for info.

## Tuesday, June 12

## 9:45 am Annandale/Barcroft (AB) Mason District Governmental Center 9:30 am Vienna Day (VID) 6507 Columbia Pike, Annandale Call Emily 703-346-9684 for info.

#### McLean Unit will meet on June 19

7:45 pm Vienna Evening (VE) 9517 Rockport Road, Vienna Call Liz 703-281-3380 for info.

#### Editor's Thank You.

I want to thank all of you who have been kind and thoughtful enough to send cards, messages and phone calls during my recent bout with assorted health ailments. Your kind thoughts and words of encouragement are greatly appreciated, I never realized so many of you cared. Each day I have to learn to pace myself and live with the limitations the body is imposing on me. It is a hard lesson for me to learn, but each each day gets a little easier. Thanks to you. Lavinia.

## Wednesday, June 13

## 9:30 am Fairfax Station (FXS) 7902 Bracksford Ct., Fairfax Station Call Lois 703-690-0908 for info.

## 11:00 am Hollin Hills Day (HHD) Mount Vernon District Gov. Center 2511 Parkers Lane, Alexandria Call Gail 703-360-6561 for info.

## Not meeting - attending other units Call Fran at 703-591-8328 for info.

## 12:00 Chantilly/Herndon (CHD) Eggspectation Restaurant 5009 West One Plaza, Chantilly Call Olga 703-815-1897 for info.

## 6:15 pm Dinner Unit (DU) Yen Cheng Rest. Main Street Center 9992 Main Street, Fairfax Call Pier 703-256-1019 for info.

## 7:30 pm Reston Evening (RE) Reston Museum, 1639 Washington Plaza, Lake Anne Village Center Call Therese 703-471-6364 for info.



Flag Day

## Thursday, June 14

## 9:00 am Reston Day (RD) 11020 Burywood Lane, Reston Call Viveka 703-404-0498 for info.

## 9:15 am Fairfax City Day (FXD) 3133 Singleton Circle, Fairfax Call Jeanne 703-591-4580 for info.

## 9:30 am Springfield (SPF) 7827 Anson Court, Springfield Call Anita 703-451-1048 for info.

## 7:45 pm Hollin Hills Eve. (HHE) 7409 Recard Lane, Alexandria Call Joann 703-768-3543 for info.

## 7:30 pm Pr. William Area (PWA) Great American Buffet Company 8365 Sudley Road, Manassas Come at 7.00 pm for dinner. Call Sheila 703-492-4574 for confirmation of date & time.

## Tuesday, June 19

## 12:30 pm McLean (McL) 1008 Heather Hill Court McLean. Call Anne 703-448-6626 for info.

Unit Officer's Wrap-up: 9:30 a.m. Mason District Governmental Center

Saturday June 23, 2007

The League of Women Voters of the Fairfax Area (LWVFA) 4026 Hummer Road, Suite #214 Annandale, VA 22003-2403 703-658-9150. E-mail: <a href="mailto:lwvfa@ecoisp.com">lwvfa@ecoisp.com</a>

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Sherry Zachry, President Lavinia S. Voss, Editor

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the public to play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state, regional and national levels, the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Any citizen of voting age, male or female, may become a member.

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### LWVFA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Current member dues thru <b>June 30, 2008</b> . Check all that apply: Individual \$55 Household (2 persons–1 <i>Bulletin</i> ) \$75 Advocate Member \$100 New Renewal Reinstate Donation Subsidy <i>We value membership—a subsidy fund is available, to use it,</i> ✓ <i>subsidy line and include whatever you can afford.</i> Student Coll. Attending Enrolled full/part-time student–half individual dues. Dues are <b>not</b> tax deductible. Tax deductible donations must be written on a separate check made payable to LWVFA Ed. Fund.  Please Print Clearly!										
Name Unit										
Address										
CityStateZip + 4										
Phone (H)		(W)			_ E-Mail					
Please mail your check and completed application to: LWVFA 4026 Hummer Rd. Suite 214, Annandale, VA 22003-2403										
Thank you for checking off your interests:										
<u> </u>	Fx. Cnty Govt. Fiscal Public Libraries Transportation		Voting Procedures Environmental Quality Land Use Planning Water		Health Care Human Services Judicial Systems Juvenile Problems		Schools Other (write-in below)			