

Workshop on Membership and Leadership Development

Thanks to the efforts of Susan Schwarz, President Mary Lou Green, and other members the **Westchester County Inter-League Organization (ILO)** board, 32 League leaders gathered in Tarrytown on August 2nd to learn more about the LWVUS Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) Program.

Seven Westchester leagues plus **Albany, Putnam, and Rockland** County leagues were represented (Rockland by 5 people!), and **Laura Ladd Bierman** and the new Program and Policy Director, **Victoria Melillo**, from the LWVNY staff also participated.

The workshop itself was organized by **Dare Thompson** (LWVNY VP for Membership) and **Lisa Scott** (state coordinator of the MLD coaches) with considerable help from **Carol Reimers**, one of the founders of the MLD program when she was on the LWVUS board. Dare, Lisa, Carol and state MLD coaches **Susan Schwarz** (Rivertowns and the ILO) and **Donna Dardaris (Saratoga County)** all contributed to the training that day.

The purpose of the workshop was to explain what the MLD program is and how it works, to share many of the best practices promoted by that program, and to give league leaders a too-rare chance to see and hear other League leaders. When we did pre-workshop interviews the leagues all raised a need for more members (particularly younger and more diverse members) and for new leaders and that was our focus.

During the workshop, some leagues shared how they are using new management models to maximize the efforts of the leaders they have and to prevent burn-out. Co-presidents is the most common new model but some leagues have management teams instead of a president or co-presidents. Attendees were urged to download “**ABCs of a Streamlined League**” to get some helpful advice if they are looking for a new leadership structure. You can try out a new model and then change your by-laws at the next annual meeting if you find the new model is working.

The Streamlined League publication and many other publications, tips, and conversations with your peers can be found in the members-only **Forums** section of the LWVUS website (lww.org). All you need to get access to this is to sign up with the e-mail address that LWVUS uses to contact you and a password you make up.

One of the conversations going on in the Forums section is with members interested in attracting young professionals (and who isn't?!) including a webinar and slide show called **Young People and the League: Where Do We Go From Here?** and the toolkit “Building the League of Tomorrow: Growing our ranks with younger members.” If you're not using both the LWVUS website and our own state website (which Laura toured for us during the workshop), you're missing out on one of the big reasons your PMP payments are such a bargain. If you can't find something easily, try using Google – e.g. google “young people + lww.org” or “streamlined + lww.org.”

Donna Dardaris shared how as a fairly new leader she kept hearing people use the phrase “In League,” which she first thought was some kind of salute or catch phrase. Turns out it's the

basic League “guidebook” with a chapter on just about everything you need to know as a leader. What a discovery! Laura pointed out that although **In League** has become huge over the years, each chapter can be opened and downloaded separately on the state website.

Those attending the workshop were encouraged to consider being an MLD coached league so they’ll stay on track with all the good tips and best practices we discussed. They also went home with an MLD binder full of more tips on increasing members and leaders. The whole binder is available in the Forums section at lwv.org.

Finally, a few important **TIPS** that emerged at the workshop:

- 1) Focus OUT! Make sure you are truly serving your community, not just the LWV.
- 2) Find allies! Work with other groups to increase your impact, spread our message, and find new members.
- 3) Don’t try to do it all! Ask yourself: *What is the smallest thing we can do to have the greatest impact?* Don’t burn yourself out. Have fun!

Questions about any of the above, including how to become an MLD league? Contact Dare Thompson (darethompson@gmail.com) or Lisa Scott (lisawscott@gmail.com).

Want a workshop like this in your region? Ask them how to make it happen. MLD leagues are growing leagues!