

## Building the League of Tomorrow



Growing our ranks with younger members

**A Project of the  
League of Women Voters Young People Taskforce**

*The Young People Task Force (YPTF) was created as a collaborative effort between LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara and LWVUS staff in response to the Leagues' desire to attract the next generation of League leaders. The YPTF's mission is to seek ways to increase the LWV long-term membership sustainability by recruiting the next generation of League members.*

*The YPTF was created with these three distinct goals in mind:*

- *Gathering information about why young people join the League of Women Voters*
- *Creating resources for local Leagues to directly recruit and engage young people in their communities*
- *Creating a community for young professional League members (and utilizing this community to help move the League into the 21st century)*

*The YPTF is currently comprised of:*

- *2 Co-Chairs: Melissa Currence (LWV of the Cincinnati Area, OH) and Amy Hjerstedt (LWV of Michigan)*
- *3 Members: T.J. Leavell (LWV of North Carolina), Alice Giles (LWV of Howard County, MD) and Karen Oelschlaeger (LWV of Asheville-Buncombe County, NC)*

*Ad-Hoc Members of the YPTF include:*

- *2 currently sitting LWVUS Board Members: Mary Klenz and Anne Schink*
- *2 currently sitting [LWVUS Ruth S. Shur Fellows](#): Eva Rogers and Penney Van Vleet*

*The responsibilities of the YPTF member consist of:*

- *Participating in monthly Task Force conference calls to plan and discuss achieving the goals above*
- *Collaborating on a regular basis to gather information and create resources for local Leagues to recruit and engage young people (could include interviewing young people, developing materials, collecting success stories from local Leagues who effectively reach out to young people already)*
- *Participating in quarterly phone calls with League leaders from the LWV Young People Facebook Group and LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara*

## CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO – REACHING OUT TO MILLENNIALS ON CAMPUS .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>CHAPTER THREE: DEVELOPING A WINNING LWV INTERNSHIP PROGRAM ....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>CHAPTER FOUR - LWV ON SOCIAL MEDIA.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>CHAPTER FIVE - MENTORING IN THE LEAGUE.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>34</b>

### HOW THIS RESOURCE CAME TOGETHER

Before creating this document, the LWVUS Young People’s Task Force (YPTF) asked many questions, read books and articles, participated in conference calls and webinars and conducted online research for clues as to what makes young people tick and how best to engage them in our organization. In our exploration, we conducted some unscientific polls and questionnaires via Facebook and email, and interviewed various local Leagues that have been successful with membership increases in recent years. We also spoke with individuals on college campuses, at libraries, at companies who tend to promote volunteerism and at other membership and volunteer organizations. Finally, we interviewed each other. Since the five-member task force is comprised of young League leaders, who value and admire the League of Women Voters (LWV) and its work, we thought, who better to speak to than die-hard young members themselves.



Image by Jennifer Waggoner

## **CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION**

### **Now is the Time!**

Our democracy needs us more than ever and the League of Women Voters has an important opportunity to rise together to address that need. That need, is the need to protect the right to vote, to protect our environment, to address the obscene amount of money in politics, and to change the tone from fractured political half-truths to engaged civil discourse based on facts. What a moment to invite people into our trusted organization and engage a new generation in leadership for our democracy. This is an opportunity we must take together to increase our ranks of active volunteers and members that is also more reflective of the diversity in our communities. By adopting new tactics and expanding opportunities for interested individuals to get involved with the League, we have the opportunity to increase our effectiveness.

Many Leagues have become comfortable in their routine and their tempo. In order for the League to remain sustainable, energetic and have resonance beyond 2020, we must mix things up and try new techniques. It is important to get out of our comfort zone. By demonstrating our value to new audiences, we can seize this opportunity to understand what drives today's youth and then use that information to adapt and engage young prospective volunteers and future members and leaders. This will help strengthen our organization well into the future.

### **Young people share the same concerns as other League members.**

The issues cut across the generations: the passion for fighting is not exclusive to one generation or one issue. Young and established members alike understand that we all share a responsibility to get involved and make our democracy work. There are still many causes to continue fighting for and young people have specific talents and energy that the League can harness to create a more diverse discussion that incorporates new and creative ideas. Energizing our organization with more young people, and people from different backgrounds, will make us stronger and more approachable to future members and ensure that the League remains a dynamic force for dealing with issues as they arise in our communities.

### **Success is more than just numbers.**

Success should not be solely defined as recruiting a large number of young people at a single event or by a specified deadline. Conversely, recruiting a single or "token" member of a younger generation does not represent success either. Rather, adapting a sustainable approach to membership recruitment to intentionally engage other generations should define success. Much like the Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) program, it is about sharpening our message of the League's value and how we deliver that message to engage new potential members. The League must understand what motivates busy and tech-savvy people to join political organizations and must adapt our recruitment techniques to welcome these prospective members.

There are hundreds of organizations all vying for the same pool of young volunteers, yet the League stands out as an ideal choice because of our work, our reputation and our network of smart, dedicated volunteers. We can provide young people with skills and opportunities to make a positive impact in their communities, develop important leadership skills, network with leaders, gain work experience and experience personal growth. We can find creative ways to let young members use their skills to help our local Leagues.

## 'Young People' - how is this defined?

In our research, the YPTF was often confronted with the question: What is the age of a 'young person?' While 40 and 60 years old may be considered young in some local Leagues, we had to ask ourselves what age group would help keep the LWV sustainable past 2020 and beyond? The Baby Boomers are certainly an extraordinary generation, ready to volunteer and share their talents, and many are already familiar with the League. However, young people, from high school age to mid-thirties are not familiar with the LWV name or mission. This is the group we want to engage with and educate about the League. The YPTF heard this discouraging information several times when asking high school and college students about their familiarity with our organization. If the students knew our name (which many did not), they associated us only with the women's suffrage movement.

GenX, according to Peter Brinkerhoff's book, *Generations: The Challenge of a Lifetime for Your Nonprofit*, were born between 1963 and 1980.<sup>1</sup> There are roughly 45 million GenXers, and this group tends to be "independent, self-reliant, [has a] desire for stability, and [enjoys] informality and fun."<sup>2</sup> He goes on to point out that when working with GenX, that they "value" their work with an organization and "independent thinking" as well as "work-life balance."<sup>3</sup> More importantly, this generation is "very focused on their career path, even in early employment."<sup>4</sup> This is great news for the League! We have a lot to offer GenXers in the way of leadership development, networking, civic education and work experience, among other things.

Like GenX, **Millennials** (often known as GenY) are also confident and interested in work-life balance.<sup>5</sup> This generation, born between 1981 and 2002, is wired and connected to the Internet. Additionally, as Brinkerhoff discusses, **Millennials** have a strong sense of "social commitment."<sup>6</sup> **Millennials** are uniquely interested in volunteering in their communities.<sup>7</sup> This generation is volunteering in greater numbers than any other generation, as Putnam's *Bowling Alone* illustrates.<sup>8</sup> Besides already engaging in civics, Brinkerhoff adds that **Millennials** are also experts at networking, "superb time managers," "complete[ly] comfortable with technology," and very comfortable with diversity.<sup>9</sup> An interesting note about **Millennials** is that they often come to an organization when they know there will be other young people participating. If we can tune into their social needs, this generation is a great match for the League—they have a lot to offer and they are already eager to help their communities!

Based on our conversations with various people across the country, Generation X (GenX) and Millennials do not know who we are. These two groups of young people, numbering over 120 million, are America's future leaders. It is our goal to give more information and tools to local Leagues so they are prepared to reach and recruit these potential members so that we continue to serve voters of all generations.

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<sup>1</sup> Peter C. Brinkerhoff, *Generations: The Challenge of a Lifetime for Your Nonprofit* (Saint Paul, MN: Fieldstone Alliance, 2007), 14.

<sup>2</sup> Brinkerhoff, *Generations*, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Brinkerhoff, *Generations*, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Brinkerhoff, *Generations*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Brinkerhoff, *Generations*, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Brinkerhoff, *Generations*, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Brinkerhoff, *Generations*, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 129-130.

<sup>9</sup> Peter C. Brinkerhoff, *Generations: The Challenge of a Lifetime for Your Nonprofit* (Saint Paul, MN: Fieldstone Alliance, 2007), 14.

**Members of these two generations are looking for ways to stand out among their peers, contribute to society and continue to grow personally and professionally.** The League can offer these young people what they are looking for. The difficult task for us is to reach them. We have to *go where they are* and demonstrate to them what the benefits of becoming involved are; they need to know about the important and effective work being carried out by the League. To do this, we have to communicate in an interesting and fun way, and show how our work relates to them and will be more impactful with their help. Our strength is our mission, stability, reputation, reliability and good work. Our challenge is moving to the next step in our recruitment efforts.

### **Branding makes us stronger**

Many members have found when they talk to young people that they know very little about the League of Women Voters. Usually, once we share what the League is about, they are hungry for more information and excited by our mission.

These days, everyone is bombarded with advertisements, catalogues, status updates and emails of all kinds. So many organizations and businesses are scrambling for our attention. Making the League stand out among the millions of other messages is a challenge. We hope Leagues keep in mind this overwhelming amount of information when working on gaining and retaining young members. Young people in particular are used to this onslaught of messages, but they are also great at ignoring organizations with which they are not yet familiar. If we want younger members to join the League, we are going to **need to focus first on awareness** before young people test us out, learn to trust us and then join us.

You know best how your League can connect with your community and connect with the other levels of the League. Talk with your leadership about the ways your League can appeal directly to young people. Remember you need to **tailor your approach** depending on who you are trying to reach.<sup>10</sup> Asking those who you are trying to reach what they want from your League is a great start.

This toolkit aims help Leagues bridge generational divides and provide concrete examples of ways to start engaging young people. People want to be part of an organization that reflects who they are and what they stand for. We believe more young people will want to be part of the League once they know about us!

### **League Involvement as Career Skill-Building**

Young people today look at volunteering differently than older generations because of today's job market. Because the Dot Com bubble burst and the Great Recession in 2007 created economic turmoil, young workers have access to fewer jobs and career opportunities with dependable wages, job security, health insurance and retirement benefits. Further, because of the priority placed on higher education and job experience, young people face stiff competition since many are equally qualified with various

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<sup>10</sup> *Note: While both generations of young people will bring valuable contributions to the League, the YP Task Force is focusing its research and ideas for recruitment mainly on Millennials since their group seems most often unaware of the League and its ongoing work in the political process.*

degrees, internships and volunteer projects on their resume. Finding an enjoyable and challenging career that pays well is not easy.

Recent graduates and people changing careers need to meet certain prerequisites for serious consideration in the hiring process. Young people today are *résumé builders*: they must constantly think of how a particular experience, responsibility or new adventure will look to a prospective employer. Knowing how young people today must present themselves so they can compete with other job applicants is one way the League can prepare to recruit young people.

The League can provide young members with the opportunity to develop expertise in public policy and other areas that may help build their resumes in a new direction. Our reputation and nonpartisan political conduct attracts leaders in the community and our organization is a valuable place for people to connect, build their networks and find potential career information and experience.

Altruism is still an important value among volunteers. Regardless of an implicit commitment to our mission and work, we must still make the sell to get young people involved in our work. Young people are striving to grow their careers, raise their families and enjoy their leisure time. Volunteering in a complex organization with multifaceted missions and positions, such as the League, can be overwhelming for people already spread thin and inundated with information. The League needs to stand out, be flexible and be creative to help reach out and accommodate people who are involved elsewhere.

Professionally, the League offers leadership experience and behind-the-scenes government education for anyone looking to get involved in the political process. While participating in projects that promote and advocate for good government, **League members share networking, community bonding, and camaraderie, which contributes to many young people's desire to connect and grow in a way that promotes friendship and belonging.** When members enjoy the projects they promote and participate in, prospective volunteers experience a sense of commitment, loyalty and ownership in the organization.

## CHAPTER TWO – REACHING OUT TO MILLENNIALS ON CAMPUS

### Go where the young people are.

When your League is working to attract young members, the first thing you'll need to consider is where in your community do the most young people congregate? In many communities, the best place to reach young people in large numbers is on college campuses. The center of a student's social and volunteer life is typically their school. This is where they will be looking for like-minded peers and organizations that speak to the issues that concern them. By making the League a consistent presence on campuses, we not only gain membership but we further our commitment to educating young voters.

### Great Programs Attract Great People!

Probably the simplest thing to keep in mind is that the League has great programs! It is our greatest tool not only for making our democracy strong but also for making the League strong and this is true on campus as well as in other areas. The best way to interest students in the League is to offer some of our voter service and advocacy work on campus. Exposing students to the work the League does—and supporting their civic participation through that work—is the simplest way to show that the League is an organization worth getting involved in.

Be sure to advertise and promote your events and advocacy work through social media, college radio and university websites as well as through the traditional media outlets to be sure that students are aware that these events are taking place and that they are invited to attend.



Image by Amy Hjerstedt

### Success Story: The LWV of South Bend Area, IL

The League of Women Voters of the South Bend Area has had success in recruiting younger members and engaging young people through voter service activities.

- **Visible Youth-Oriented Work:** The South Bend League has participated in the LWVUS High School Voter Registration Project, putting volunteers in front of hundreds of young people in the community and making a memorable mark. They expect this program to build and expand to more schools in future years, thus perpetuating the League's lasting impact.
- **Embracing Young Leaders:** The Board of Directors is of varying ages. The co-presidents are both in their 40s and directors range from late 30s mid-70s. Once you have a younger presence in your League, it tends to attract more of the same. Young people have a seat at the table, are respected and have the opportunity to make a lasting impact through successful programs.
- **Embracing Technology:** The South Bend League has made technology updates a priority, starting with their website and social media. Without a dynamic, up-to-date website, you cannot effectively serve voters or recruit dynamic young members.

Another way to attract new members of all ages is to make sure that at your events you are making time for fun and socializing. Giving students an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the League and its members in an informal setting will give them an opportunity to introduce themselves, talk about their interests and casually get more information on the League.

**Some things to consider including at your events to attract young volunteers:**

- Unstructured time for socializing
- Member meet-and-greets
- Fun music
- Candy and snacks
- Free League trinkets
- Contests and games
- Trivia

**Building Relationships Professors and Staff Members**

Let's stick to what we know works. We have excellent programming, so why not help a professor by offering some of our programmatic work as a tool for their class? The League is a trusted resource and many professors will be thrilled to have our help. Work on building mutually beneficial relationships with staff by creating a system where students get extra course credit for volunteering with your League. You can also use LWVUS's "Empowering the Voters of Tomorrow: Developing Winning High School Voter Registration Programs" for ideas on what kind of tools work well in classrooms. Some other relationship building ideas include:

- Offering your voter guides for use in classes
- Registering new voters as part of a classroom activity
- Sharing LWV studies and research information
- Offering to provide guest speak in classes

**Same Message, Same Mission: New Delivery**

Reaching out to young people doesn't mean we have to change what we believe in. It's about making sure they know our mission, they know our passion and they know how they can get involved. Appealing to young people doesn't mean that our message needs to change; it simply means that we need to share the League's message in new and engaging ways.

**Success Story: The LWV of Larimer County, CO**

The League of Women Voters of the Larimer County has leveraged its important work to engage young volunteers—and provide lasting professional skills!

- **Being Visible in the Community:** Larimer County joined other Colorado Leagues in participating in VOTE411's popular online voter guide system, thus ensuring the League's name and important work reached many online information-seekers. The Larimer County League even managed to have VOTE411 ads placed on local buses!
- **Meaningful Youth Volunteer Recruitment:** One of the major employers in the area sponsored a volunteer fair in order to encourage staff to volunteer in the community. The League was one of many nonprofits invited to participate. The League made a list of short-term, immediate tasks that volunteers could take on and complete. The list included web design and presenting pro/con ballot issues to requesting groups before national elections.



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### Success Story: The LWV of Florida

**The LWV of Florida** is sure to make the League attractive as a social group as well as a political organization. One of the ways they've accomplished this is by holding cocktail receptions that are advertised primarily through social media. They invite a compelling speaker to address a topical issue but they keep the formal program short and focus more on networking and socializing. The League covers the cost of shared appetizers and guests buy their own drinks.

**Why it works:** It's fun and social, but there is more substance than just a simple happy hour. For attendees who are new to the League, having the topic introduced by the speaker to use as an ice breaker can take the pressure off initial interactions by giving them a specific topic to discuss.

When doing campus outreach the following things are critical:

**Energy:** League members are passionate people, and when that passion shows, that is when we are most engaging.

**Visibility:** Display the League logo proudly! Visual cues are key in making sure that students remember who we are and what we do. Have signs, banners, pins and other logo items on display or ready to pass out at your on campus events.

**Consistency:** One on-campus event is not enough. Let students know that you are committed by maintaining a regular presence on campus. Consider an on-campus partner or liaison to solidify the League's presence.

**Flexibility:** If having events in the afternoon doesn't yield a lot of interest then maybe it's time to consider an evening meeting or a different type of event that may appeal more to students. Be flexible and work with interested students so that they have the best experience possible.

### Success Story: The LWV of Jackson County, IL

**Jackson, Illinois** is home to the main campus of Southern Illinois University. The League there partnered with several other organizations to present a discussion on a critical issue in the community. The event drew a lot of interest and attendees, including many from the University. Young audience members had the opportunity to speak with League members and realized their common interests. After this event, when one young member joined, she drew additional young people to League events simply by introducing the League to her friends.

**Why it worked:** LWV of Jackson County held a well-planned, topical event and then once they attracted interest from a few young people, more followed.

## Having a Consistent Presence

When you are considering ways to begin your on-campus outreach it is important to think about your long term goals. Students at four-year colleges and universities tend to be very mobile and there is a distinct possibility that many students that engage with League as volunteers or even as members will only be in your area for the four years that they are in school. Starting over with a new batch of students every four years is not the best use of your time.

For this reason, it is important to try and find an on-campus anchor. Who in the university network is going to be around longer? Are there staff members you can work with to ensure a consistent League voice even as students trickle in and out?

### **Quick Tip**

Consider inviting a professor onto your local board to really cement the relationship between the college and the League

### Who makes a good anchor?

- Staff
- Spouses of staff
- Established clubs
- Departments

## Don't Overlook Community Colleges!

Community colleges can be great allies for the League for a number of reasons.

- **Smaller and in more locations**  
Community colleges as well as trade schools can be found in many more communities nationwide than their larger four-year counterparts. While your League may not be in a university town, there is still a good chance that you will be able to find a nearby community college to partner with. Community colleges also tend to be much smaller than traditional universities and this may mean that there aren't as many established clubs and student organizations on campus that could compete for students' time and focus. This could mean more possible volunteers or members and more of a need for the great programs the League provides.
- **Stronger and more permanent ties to the community**  
Many students at community colleges are actually from that specific community, unlike at larger schools where the majority of the student body is often from out-of-town or even out-of-state. This means these students can be more fully invested in community issues that the League focuses on. Also, after graduation, they are more likely to remain in your area.
- **Multigenerational student bodies**  
Community colleges tend to attract students of all ages, not just the 18-25 demographic that is the norm on most college campuses. If you aren't ready to focus all of your energy on 18-25 year olds, but rather would like to expand you League with members from a variety of generations, community colleges are a great place to start.

- **Underserved populations tend to be better represented**

Community college student bodies tend to be diverse, and include students from many of the underserved populations that the League tries to reach with our programmatic work. By working with community colleges your League can continue reaching out to these populations and also add to your membership.

### **Success Story: LWV of Champaign County, Illinois**

**Champaign County** is home to a large state university set in a middle income college town. The community is politically active, with accessible local government, and has a local League with over 100 members. LWV of Champaign established a student unit at the University of Illinois which held elections for its own board, organized campus events and advertised League events happening off campus. The success of this group depended largely on the student president and thus fluctuated year to year as leaders graduated and the unit was forced to start from scratch with new incoming students who weren't familiar with the League.

To solve this problem, LWV of Champaign has begun hiring a paid student intern who, among other things, leads the student unit and gives the League a viable presence on the University of Illinois campus. By bringing a student into the local League, LWV of Champaign can ensure that the student unit has the leadership it needs to sustain and making the intern position a paid position is further enticement for interested students.

**Why it works:** In the student unit, membership fees are covered by a former member's endowment, eliminating some of the barriers to membership that often hamper students. LWV of Champaign also encourages graduating seniors to make a connection with the Local League wherever they are headed next. If they're returning home, they are prepared to start helping their community and if they are moving to a new city or state, they can immediately make some network connections. Even though students may not stay in the area, the League in Champaign works hard to ensure that these students stay connected with the League wherever they may end up.

#### **Consider all the options:**

- What are the colleges and universities in your area?
- Are there any community colleges or trade schools nearby?
- Don't limit your search to traditional 4 year schools.

## Member v. Volunteer

Keep in mind that even the most interested students have a lot going on. It's possible that they may not have the time, the money or even a strong desire to commit to full membership immediately. Classes, clubs, athletics, jobs, volunteering and family obligations are just some examples of the numerous activities that today's college students are expected to juggle. Plus school can be extremely expensive and they may not be able to commit the paying membership dues right away.

Volunteer opportunities can be a much more attractive option to students because they don't necessarily require the same level of commitment as membership does. Volunteers are just as critical to the League's mission as a new member, especially if they are motivated and excited about the project.

### Consider all the Options

-What could your League do with 10 additional volunteers for just one upcoming event?

-What about for a whole semester?



Image by Kelsey Greenagel

By engaging student volunteers, you are familiarizing a whole new generation with the League of Women Voters and our mission. While some students may only be in your communities for a few years, an impactful experience with your League may lead them to join another local League in the future. And their volunteer time can be a huge boost to your League.

### The "First Date"

The first date is a simple concept in volunteering. Just like in dating, you are asking a volunteer to try out the League and see what they think before they commit to anything long term.

A first date should be ONE project based specifically on what the volunteer is interested in. During this one project, the volunteer will get to know the League and it is important for other League members to get to know the volunteer. Pay close attention to their interests and what motivates them. Be accessible and prepared to provide information about the League as needed *without being overwhelming*. There will be time for more information on subsequent dates. Some great and simple first date experiences include:

- Being the timer at a League forum
- Signing attendees in at a League event
- Assisting with voter registration drives, particularly at high schools

### The "Second Date"

On the second volunteer date, you can talk more talk about how LWV work is possible because of its members'/volunteers' support. The point is to ease the person into a longer-term relationship with the League. In general college students aren't known to be 'joiners;' they tend not to want to make a long

term commitment to any organization. Rather, college students tend to prefer a more casual association with a group, especially when they are still learning about what that group can offer. They would rather volunteer on a case-by-case basis, choosing the opportunities that speak to their passions and being able to say no to those opportunities that do not interest them.

For many college students, a relationship with the League won't include full membership while they are in school. Instead, local Leagues should consider creating a calendar of volunteer opportunities for students and working to create a volunteer schedule that ensures students are interacting with the League in some way on a regular basis.

### **Building a Future with the League**

The reality is that some students just aren't going to commit to membership. Even if their "first date" is awesome some students will be content to volunteer throughout their entire college career. This is normal. Even if a student isn't ready to become a member, building these relationships with young people is a great way to gain visibility for the League as a whole. Be sure to maintain contact with these student volunteers and continue to share with them what makes the League so special. The more visible we are on campus and the more contact we have with students, the better.



Image by Amy Hjerstedt

We are building for the future. A student may not join now, but when they graduate and settle down, they are more likely to join the League because they already understand our mission. If they enjoyed their experience with the League in college, they are more likely to join later. Being on campus and working with young volunteers ensures that a new generation of leaders know about the great work the League does and will be able to share the information with their peers. And one day, perhaps when they are more settled, they will be able to join.

### **Our Membership and Leadership Development Program Best Practices Work on Campus Too!**

All of the techniques that have made the Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) Program a success in attracting new members can be used in your on campus out reach. Working with student groups expands our League network and helps us elevate the issues that are critical to the League mission with a group of people who do not always have a clear picture of what it is the League does.

Working with students can also be a great leadership development opportunity for a current League member with connections to campus or someone who is looking to make an impact in new ways. Use campus outreach not only as a way to attract new, younger members but also as a way to give current members new opportunities for growth.

Reaching out to prospective members and volunteers on campus doesn't have to be difficult or drastically different from the outreach that your League does in other parts of your community. The most important thing to keep in mind is how best to make the great programs your League already does more accessible to students and young leaders. Building a presence on campus doesn't have to be hard; it's about finding those connections and fostering long-term, mutually beneficial relationships.

**Everyone has  
something to offer!**

What special skills  
or know-how could  
you offer a student  
as a mentor?

## CHAPTER THREE: DEVELOPING A WINNING LWV INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Internships are a critical part of a young person's professional growth. There is a lot of pressure now for students to have job skills before leaving school so they can compete in the job market. Interning with the League of Women Voters is a great way for students to gain professional experience.

### Why do we want to provide internships?

It is true that there is a lot of time and energy that must go into creating a successful internship program. Managing interns can sometimes feel like a selfless task – we are opening up our organization and using valuable resources to show these students the ropes.

But it is worth it. We need to be proactive in training the next generation of League leaders. Oftentimes, young people do not know about the League and our work. Providing internships helps us bridge that gap in a significant way.

Plus, you never know where an intern will end up! Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was an intern with LWVUS when she was part of the League's Youth Advisory Committee for our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and a co-chair of a youth leadership conference.

### What do interns bring to the League?

Interns bring lots of energy and a fresh perspective. When a student takes an internship with an organization, typically they have done their research. They choose organizations that speak to their interests. We need to harness their energy while they are with us. They are usually highly motivated, energetic and excited to do great work.

When we have interns, peer-to-peer engagement is easier. For example, students can help bridge the gap between League members and the audiences we want to reach for education and advocacy. Interns have been key in helping us have effective school voter registration programs, as they are a trusted, relevant voice to their peers. You may want to have more than one intern at a time because peer engagement increases excitement about the League and the opportunities it offers. Interns can learn from each other.

An Intern IS:

- A great addition to our democracy building team
- A potential future League volunteer, member, leader
- A source of new ideas, energy and enthusiasm

An Intern is NOT:

### Why Intern with the League?

-To be part of reputable organizations

-To make a positive difference

-To build your resumes

-To network

-To gain job experience

- A one-time volunteer
- Just administrative support
- An acceptable replacement for an employee
- Left without supervision or mentorship
- Just technology support

### Legal issues to consider

The legal definition of an internship and what it is appropriate to expect of an intern varies by state. Before you bring on an intern, you will need to check on your states requirements and ensure you have the ability to provide your interns with the support your state requires.

- Laws vary state by state
  - Know the requirements before you bring on an intern
- Federal regulations primarily cover for-profit organizations
  - They are still good guidelines for the League



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LWVUS summer 2013 interns had the opportunity to meet Rep. John Lewis at an event in Washington, DC.

### U.S. Department of Labor requirements for unpaid internships

The following six federal criteria must be applied:

- The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to training which would be given in an educational environment;
- The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern;
- The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under close supervision of existing staff;
- The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern; and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded;
- The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship; and
- The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.

## Launching your internship program

The first thing you need to do is to create a clear job description. An internship is a more formal position than other volunteer positions in your League. When you outline what you are looking for, you will increase your chances of attracting the right candidates for your League. Clarity will help to manage expectations for both you and the intern.

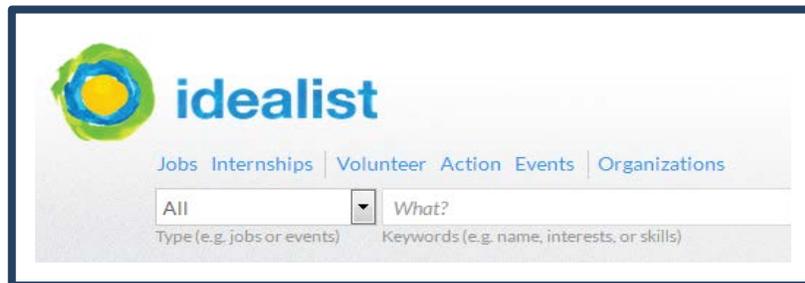
It is also important to be flexible when selecting interns. Even with the right job description, it is possible you might not get candidates who are totally right for the specific project you were planning. They might still be able to help you in other ways. It is easier to change your expectations early on rather than later when the intern has already been hired.

### SUCCESS STORY: LWV OF THE CINCINNATI AREA, OHIO

LWV of the Cincinnati Area had a graphic design intern for a semester from a local art college. The intern's goal was to design a visually engaging PowerPoint presentation for the speaker's bureau during the presidential election. The student was excited to learn more about the election process and use her design skills to communicate important voter education information, especially since it was the first presidential election in which she could vote.

## Cast a wide net to find potential interns

LWVUS has used Idealist.org, a popular website for nonprofit and public sector opportunities, to advertise for internships. VolunteerMatch.org may also work for your League. Appendix D provides you with a basic LWV internship advertisement template.



LWV internships are desirable, and college students want to work with us when they know about our openings. Advertise your internship opportunities on college and high school campuses. Many schools have career counseling offices that can help match the League with a suitable intern. Also consider approaching specific departments and professors to let them know of upcoming intern opportunities.

Don't forget to let your membership know about your position. It is quite possible that your members know of candidates that would be great interns and they would come with a recommendation from a League member. Also be sure to advertise internships at your events – especially large voter registration pushes or forums.

## Be transparent

When advertising for interns, the more transparent your League can be about expectations and goals from the beginning, the more likely the internship is to be a success. Be specific and be honest – not only with the intern but with yourself about what can be accomplished. As mentioned earlier, interns **are not replacements** for employees. It is better to be upfront, so no one is disappointed, and students will still be interested in your internship

## Interview your potential candidates

### Be sure to ask thoughtful, relevant questions!

-What specific skills do you want to learn from this internship?

-What three words best describe you?

(See Appendix E for a full sample interview)

Interviewing potential interns is a must. A short 15-20 minute phone conversation is enough. You will want to be straightforward about the position, but you will not need to fully review the position's details if your expectations are well-defined in the job description. Expect the candidate to ask questions about the internship, and be ready to make changes to the job description if you both agree on adjustments. Remember, an interview does not guarantee an internship. You can say no if a candidate is not a good fit.

In the interview, be sure to find out the potential intern's:

- Availability
- Interests
- Knowledge of the League

## How to start managing an intern

Before the intern walks in the door, decide who is responsible for the intern's introduction to the League of Women Voters and who will be overseeing her or his intern project. Choose one or two supervisors for the intern. Avoid having a committee manage the intern as having too many supervisors can be confusing and overwhelming.

A great intern supervisor is:

- Accessible to the intern for feedback and questions.
- A good mentor who isn't afraid to provide praise and constructive criticism.
- Willing to listen to interns' concerns.
- Willing to provide interns with a voice within the organization.

### Quick Tip

Think beyond the political science department. Some of the other fields from which LWV interns could be sourced are:

- Environmental Sciences
- Women's Studies
- History
- Marketing
- Public Relations/Communications

Consider the specific projects your League is working on and choose an intern whose interests match those projects.

## Give interns a voice within your League

As interns gain experience within your League, they will be more willing and able to provide more to the organization. Consider allowing interns to speak to a group of student voters, organize their own projects, or write their own blog pieces or Voter newsletter articles. Make sure to give your interns substantive opportunities and recognize their efforts as they grow into their positions.

It is important to acknowledge the work of your interns, especially publically. Consider sending out a press release, add their names to your website, write a blog post, acknowledge them at your events, and include stories about them in your *Voter* newsletter.

## Establish a routine

The supervisor and the intern must:

- Create a schedule with consistent hours, start and end dates
- Develop project goals
- Create a check-in system
- Outline expectations for BOTH the supervisor and the intern (consider writing an agreement or contract)

## Types of Internships: On-site or Off-site

**On-site internships** occur when an intern can work in a League office.

On-site internships allow for the interns and supervisors to check in with each other more easily. An intern who has an on-site internship will have more hands-on mentoring opportunities and can receive instant feedback.

**Off-site internships** occur when the intern's work is done elsewhere and brought or sent in for review.

It is still possible for Leagues who do not have offices to have a strong internship program. It is important to establish the correct tone at the start. Communicate how best to check-in, and schedule a regular email updates or reoccurring meeting times.

Both internship types are valuable and provide great experiences. Whether your internship is on or off-site, your interns need to be mentored and cannot just work on their own. Be sure to include whether your internship program is on-site or off-site when you advertise for the position.

## The importance of ensuring a quality experience for LWV Interns

People are very good at networking among their peers, and they **will share** information about their internship experience. When internships are positive, this feedback spreads through the intern's network, increasing the reach of LWV within the community and broadens our membership potential.

A bad experience for one intern can have ramifications well beyond that single internship. This negative feedback also spreads through the intern's network, but the consequences include missed partnership opportunities and damage to the League's reputation. If the internship is mishandled, the school from

which the intern came may be unwilling to work with the League again. Word may travel to other students and make finding both new interns and student members difficult.

Internships that are done for college credit often require formal feedback that is then logged by the school. In cases where the intern's experience is positive, this is great press and is a good way to create a lasting partnership with the college or university.

### Common course requirements for interns

Most internships for course credit require:

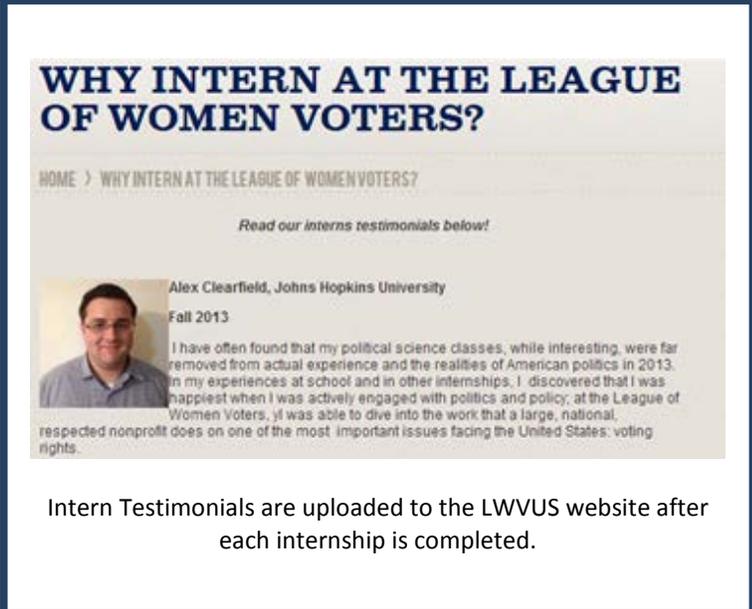
- Completion of paperwork prior to the start of the internship that includes the specific details of the internship.
- Proof that those internship requirements are met.
- Reviews, including a final review of the intern and his or her experience.

### At the end of an internship

After an internship ends, remember to get feedback on the experience. A former intern's ideas will make the experience better for your future interns. Also, gather testimonials from your interns that you can share with your members and community.

If an intern is leaving a project which another intern will be taking on, maintain consistency in the interns' work flow and think about how best to transition the project. Make sure their project doesn't halt. Tie up loose ends so the work they the intern has completed remains useful to your League or can be continued by a new intern.

Thank your interns for their hard work! Include stories about them and their projects in your publications. Keep the intern in your circle! She or he are now well-verse in the work of the League of Women Voters and will likely talk about their experience. Make sure to keep up that relationship and invite them to League events. A gift membership for a year may turn into a life-long League volunteer in the future!



The image is a screenshot of a webpage titled "WHY INTERN AT THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS?". The page has a navigation bar with "HOME" and "WHY INTERN AT THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS?". Below the navigation bar, there is a heading "Read our interns testimonials below!". The main content area features a testimonial from Alex Clearfield, Johns Hopkins University, Fall 2013. The testimonial text reads: "I have often found that my political science classes, while interesting, were far removed from actual experience and the realities of American politics in 2013. In my experiences at school and in other internships, I discovered that I was happiest when I was actively engaged with politics and policy; at the League of Women Voters, I was able to dive into the work that a large, national, respected nonprofit does on one of the most important issues facing the United States: voting rights." Below the testimonial, there is a caption: "Intern Testimonials are uploaded to the LWVUS website after each internship is completed."

## CHAPTER FOUR - LWV ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a critical tool to help build organizational reach. Social media is an especially useful way to share our positions, work and events with our larger communities. Young people tend to be especially tuned into social media outlets and will use it for everything from getting their news to networking in their communities. At the same time, the largest growing group on Facebook represents the League's traditional, older audience. While some Leagues might view adding a social media as "another thing to do," by investing time and energy in social media, Leagues can reach both audiences at once. In addition, there are several other great reasons to get active on social media:

### What is Social Media?

Any technology that people use to share content including:

- News
- Experiences
- Opinions
- Insights
- Perspectives

1. It is free to use! This is the most cost-effective way to reach prospective members.

2. Social media can utilize the same content as other visibility channels. In other words, it shouldn't be a lot of extra work; the content that you develop can easily be repurposed for social media channels. For example, if your League is issuing a press statement or a report, then publish it on your League's website, and share the link on Facebook and Twitter. In short, make your visibility outreach a "multi-channel" process.

3. Social media users are "hot prospects" when it comes to engagement. Social media users are considerably more likely than non-users to have:

- Volunteered for a community organization (69% versus 49%);
- Participated in a group related to a community issue (57% versus 43%);
- Donated money to a charitable cause (89% versus 81%).

Source: Heartland Monitor Poll, June 2012

### Social Media Channels to Consider



### FACEBOOK

Facebook is the dominant social networking platform, with 71% of all online adults having a Facebook account. The basic goal of a League Facebook page is to connect supporters to your League and to better introduce them to your work in the community, your positions and your members. Facebook is a huge network, and being part of that network allows you to connect with people in your community who you might not otherwise have a way of reaching. Facebook works best when it is used frequently, and your League actively engages with other groups and individuals. By posting regularly about a variety

of different League events and issues and sharing articles and interesting facts, your League can increase its visibility with new and old supporters, which is an important first step in attracting new members.

Frequently linking back to your website, blog, news clips highlighting your work or sharing content from other Leagues and partner groups is an easy way to stay visible without having to create new material, and it expands the number of potential members that are viewing each piece of content.



### To Create a Page for Your League:

1. Log into your Facebook page. (You must already be a Facebook user with a personal account in order to create a Fan Page for your League.)
2. Go to <https://www.facebook.com/pages/create>
3. Select Company, Organization or Institution.
4. From the dropdown, select Non-Profit Organization and name your page with the full name of your League, e.g., League of Women Voters of the Cape Cod Area, Massachusetts.

Once you've gotten started, you'll need to fill in more information regarding your League, including selecting a profile photo, entering your website, address, etc. Facebook does a good job of walking you through the process, but don't hesitate to reach out to LWVUS if you come across any problems getting your page set up.

### Tips for Posting Content

**Share regularly:** Facebook's top content changes quickly, so you want to post regularly to remain visible to your fans. We recommend posting 5-7 times a week, or 1-2 times a day. If posting more than once a day, then make sure to space your posts out, so they're not competing with one another. Facebook has a helpful scheduling tool to ease this process.

**Engage:** Social media is a back and forth. Ask your followers questions, or encourage them to respond to your content. Also, be sure to respond to their questions or comments. This can be as easy as "liking" their comments on your posts. Engaged followers are your best bet for finding potential members. They are already showing an interest in the topics that your League covers.

**Keep it easy, light and fun:** Facebook, like most social media sites, is very informal. It is not the best place to post long and in-depth updates. Instead, keep your posts short, light, pithy and entertaining.

### Facebook has:

- More than 1.1 BILLION active users
- 665 million daily active users
- 751 million active mobile users

**Images, videos and links are all very engaging.** Since users are constantly posting new content to Facebook, sometimes a great photo or video can really catch a person's eye, while they might have scrolled right past text. Make sure to include a link or image in every post.

## TWITTER

Like Facebook, Twitter is a great way to engage not only with League members and the broader public, but also to further your relationships with members of your local media, key opinion leaders, fellow advocates and organizational partners.

Twitter differs from Facebook in some important ways, most notably, the length of posts and the continuous flow of information. While Facebook moves and changes frequently, Twitter can move even faster. Unlike Facebook, tweets are not weighted based on interactions; they stream in real time and can be quickly pushed down a user's feed.

Twitter's hallmark is that posts are limited to 140 characters. It is remarkable how short that is – and how much it can communicate.

### You can say a lot in 140 characters or less!

- Be the change you want to see in the world – Mahatma Gandhi (62 characters)
- Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that – MLK (118 characters)
- The care of human life & happiness & not their destruction, is the first & only legitimate object of good government - Thomas Jefferson (138 characters)

## Shortened Language

Learning to understand tweets takes time because tweets typically use shortened language. Oftentimes, tweets use questionable grammar and spelling in order to keep the messages under the 140 character limit. Some abbreviations are easy to understand, such as "b/c" for "because," "abt" for "about," or numbers and letters like "r," "u," "2," or "4" in lieu of the words they represent. Others that you may see include "ICYMI" for "in case you missed it" or "h/t" for "hat tip," which is a way to recognize or thank someone. If you need help deciphering this language, a quick Google search will usually provide the answer. You don't need to partake in this type of communication, but you may occasionally find it helpful to use this type of shorthand.

## Short URLs

Twitter will automatically shorten all links sent via tweets, thereby allowing you to use more characters in your tweets. But external link shortening tools can provide you with custom URLs and stats on your tweets to help measure your success. Bit.ly, a free tool, offers the most comprehensive report and can connect directly to your Twitter account or any third party application used to manage your Twitter account. These tools generally shorten URLs to 20 characters or less.



### Things to remember when tweeting:

- Keep it simple
- Drive traffic to your website
- Ask people to retweet your content
- Follow people who have lots of followers
- Retweet, thank people for retweeting and create good karma
- Statistics, quotes, links. Have fun & be creative!

Ideally, you'll get in the habit of being on Twitter periodically throughout the day or week. Tweet on a smartphone or tablet when you're in line waiting to check out at a store or on public transportation. Tweet from your home computer during the ads of your favorite television program. It is okay to just get on for a few minutes and then hop back off. Don't feel like you have to catch up to where you were last time.

To get started try to send three tweets a day – an original tweet, retweet something of note from a local paper, partner organization or key opinion leader, and reply to another user to help facilitate relationships.

### How best to use social media in League

1. **Quality over Quantity.** Pick the right social networks; there is no reason to join every social network until you know what works best for your League. We recommend joining Facebook and Twitter because they are easy to set up and use, plus Facebook has a large audience and is good for reaching both current members and young members, while Twitter skews younger, but also eases interactions with journalists and key opinion leaders who may manage their own accounts. Experiment with different platforms until you find the right fit for your needs and goals.

2. **Be Transparent, and Be Yourself.** Always remember that you represent the League and its members, but don't be afraid to use your own words or let a bit of personality come through—especially if you're writing as the League President. When you write about a League event or campaign, redirect readers back to the League's position, or briefly state why the issue or event is important to your readers. Hyperlinks back to the local, state or national Leagues' websites are useful.

3. **Post frequently... but not too frequently.** Social networking shouldn't take a lot of time, but don't go on vacation and leave followers wondering if you're ever coming back. Likewise, don't post updates five times a day unless you have something new or useful to say. Don't post or tweet just for the sake of it. Respect your readers by providing content that is relevant and useful.

4. **Activate your network.** Make sure to ask your supporters to show their support from time to time, whether it's contacting their elected officials, signing a petition, becoming a member, or donating to your League. Be specific in your ask, and they will be more likely to participate again. Within reason, answer questions and respond to concerns, especially from League members or supporters. You can also thank people for their support or readership and ask for feedback.

5. **Be external** (go beyond the League). Link to articles, events or other information from League partners, relevant media or other blogs. Not every tweet, Facebook post or blog has to be 100% about the League, but make sure your readers understand why you're sharing the info by helping to frame the issue for them.





League of Women Voters of New Jersey Television host Steve Aduato Jr. interviewed the three candidates on his show "On the Line: Decision 2009" [http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2009/10/nj\\_gubernatorial\\_candidates\\_go.html](http://www.nj.com/news/index.ssf/2009/10/nj_gubernatorial_candidates_go.html)



**N.J. gubernatorial candidates Gov. Corzine, Daggett, Christie spar in TV forum | New Jersey Real-Tim**

Source: [www.nj.com](http://www.nj.com)

Saed Hindash/The Star-Ledger New Jersey Gov. Jon S. Corzine, left, greets Republican challenger Chris Christie as Independent candidate Chris Daggett, center, looks on before their first debate

in Trenton.

3 minutes ago · Comment · Like · Share

### Social media is a tool – it is not a silver bullet

Unfortunately a good social media presence isn't going to magically draw new members to your League. It is merely one of many tools that can help make you League more visible. The great work your League does is compelling, and when it is shared through a variety of different channels, there is a greater likelihood that potential members will see it.

### A sampling of other social media outlets

#### WHAT IS YOUTUBE?



YouTube is a website that allows users to upload and share their own videos. It is a great way for Leagues to share videos from candidate debates and forums, as well as other videos that may be produced, including ads or interviews with members and coalition partners on the importance of the League.

Every minute, 10 hours of video is uploaded to YouTube. User base is broad in age range, 18-55, evenly divided between males and females. The League has YouTube pages for [LWVUS](#) and [LWVEF](#) activities.

#### WHAT IS LINKEDIN?



LinkedIn is a site for creating and maintaining professional contacts. It can be used to reconnect with former coworkers and classmates, find people employed in the nonprofit sector and obtain professional references.

The site, currently boasting 5.5 million users, supports the creation of groups and has a dedicated category for nonprofits. Leagues can also post job or internship opportunities on LinkedIn, and build connections with partner organizations and coalitions. The National League is not currently on LinkedIn as an organization. You can find more information on LinkedIn [here](#) .

## WHAT IS PINTEREST?



Pinterest is a virtual “cork board” that enables users to collect images and ideas based upon their interests. Users create and share collections (called “boards”) of visual bookmarks (called “pins”) that include ideas for event planning, recipes, decorating or more.

Pinterest is currently the fastest-growing platform for online content sharing. The platform skews heavily towards white women, with women four times more likely than men to be users. Most users in suburban or rural areas, earn a household income of \$50,000 or more, and are between the ages of 18-29. According to Pew Research, 24% of US Internet users ages 30-49 have used Pinterest.

## WHAT IS TUMBLR?



Tumblr is an image-driven microblogging platform and social networking website that enables users to post multimedia and other content to a short-form blog. Users are able to upload text posts, images, video, quotes or links, as well as comment, reblog and like posts from other blogs.

About 6 percent of Internet users surveyed in late 2012 reported using Tumblr, versus two-thirds for Facebook. Tumblr is most popular among young adults ages 18-29. Tumblr tends to skew toward the urban and educated. Unlike other social media platforms, Tumblr users are equally divided between men and women.

## WHAT IS INSTAGRAM?



Instagram is a photo/video sharing and social networking service – most often used as a mobile app – that enables its users to apply digital filters to their photos and videos and share them on a variety of social networking services, such as Facebook, Twitter and Flickr.

Although Twitter and Instagram are quite different, their user counts and demographics are very similar. Like Twitter, Instagram has a particular appeal to younger adults, urban dwellers and non-whites. Over 90 percent of its 150 million users are under the age of 35. Instagram also skews heavily toward women; 68 percent of its users are female.

## ADDITIONAL LWVUS RESOURCES

- There are [online and social media guidelines](#), as well as PowerPoint presentations, available in the Members Resources section of the website. [These](#) resources are generally updated annually.
- There is a [closed Facebook group for social media users](#) in the League to share tips and resources. [We review and add new members routinely.](#)
- View this 2012 [webinar](#) to learn more about “Social Media 101.”

## CHAPTER FIVE - MENTORING IN THE LEAGUE

### Mentoring is about relationship building

League members are great mentors! Think back to when you started in League; most likely you had a fellow member who showed you the ropes. You probably also had individuals in your life outside the League that have provided much needed encouragement and advice at various times. Remembering how you have grown from these relationships will make it easier for you to see how you and your League can successfully mentor the next generation of League leaders.

### The importance of mentoring women

The League can be a great place for mentoring. Our Leagues are full of individuals who are talented and dedicated to serving their communities. According to a LinkedIn survey, 67 percent of women said that they have never been a mentor because no one ever asked them.<sup>11</sup> On the flipside, the same survey also found that 52 percent of women did not have a mentor said it was because there was “no one appropriate.” The League is a great place to change these statistics!



© LWVEF

### The value and benefits of mentoring

Mentoring is valuable because it “passes on knowledge and perspective”<sup>12</sup> but also it is important to the League in the following ways:

- Creates space for communication and helps avoid conflict
- Encourages friendship
- Renews and passes on skills and experience
- Engages individuals
- Passes on the League legacy
- Generates new energy and ideas

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kerryhannon/2011/10/25/boomer-women-flunk-mentoring-new-linkedin-survey/>.

<sup>12</sup> *Generations: The Challenge of a Lifetime for your Nonprofit*, pp 45.

In the League, we often seek to groom new leaders to fill various leadership roles. We routinely focus on providing instructions on how to do a specific job like membership chair or president. However, fostering the growth of other skills and tools, like self-confidence, institutional knowledge or growing one's personal network, is just as important. According to the Harvard Business Review, "mentoring works best when it focuses on the entire person versus focusing on skill development alone."<sup>13</sup> Mentoring is the key to helping young League members grow into confident and prepared League leaders.

Those on both sides of the mentoring relationship benefit greatly. Mentoring is a two-way relationship and provides diversity of thought, style, personality and culture.

#### **Mentoring provides mentees with:**

- An insider perspective
- Enhancement of skills
- Direct access to powerful resources
- A lasting network
- Identification of skill gaps

#### **Mentoring provides mentors with:**

- Exposure to emerging talent
- A way to recruit new members and leaders
- A lasting League network for the organization's future
- Open and honest forms of communication<sup>14</sup>
- A way to "give back" to the League

#### **Your role as a mentor**

There are many roles that a mentor will take on in the mentoring relationship. These roles include being:

- **An advisor** who gives advice and guidance, shares ideas, and provides feedback. They can also share information on "unwritten rules for success" within the League.
- **A source of encouragement.** It's important to continually be providing positive reinforcement for ideas or concerns about League work or other life challenges as they come up.
- **A resource person** who can identify specific resources to help the mentee develop and grow in his or her role. This role focuses on expanding the mentee's network of contacts.
- **A champion** who will serve as advocate for mentee whenever possible and seek opportunities for increased visibility and experience for the mentee.
- **A devil's advocate.** This can be very helpful in encouraging the mentee to think through a variety of strategies for dealing with any given situation.

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<sup>13</sup> American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, <http://www.asha.org/students/gatheringplace/benefit/>.

<sup>14</sup> These ideas in this section came from American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. [Read more about mentoring from ASHA here.](#)

## Types of Mentoring

As you set up your mentoring program, you'll want to consider the two types of mentoring, informal mentoring and formal mentoring, both of which have strengths and weaknesses.

**Informal mentoring** is the traditional relationship of a leader supporting, counseling, and guiding a more junior colleague. It is the type of causal relationship that happens often in the League where a seasoned leader supports, counsels and guides someone who is newer to the process.

**Formal mentoring** is a structured relationship with common goals such as leadership development and retention. Formal mentoring happens when you set in place a structure where there are common goals to increase leadership development skills and retention rates within your League.

### Which type will work for your League?

When establishing your League's mentoring network, you should consider how formal or informal mentoring will be applied. If you are establishing a brand new mentoring network, it is easier to start with a more casual style where mentors and mentees may exchange contact information and begin forming a bond. When you are bringing in new members, throwing them immediately into a formal mentoring structure can be intimidating and feel like too much pressure. Informal mentoring relieves that pressure and mentees don't have to feel forced to take over a certain job that they might not yet feel comfortable taking on.

Once a casual mentoring relationship has been established, it is easier to move towards a more structured system where the mentee and mentor have clear goals for the relationships, such as becoming an officer on the board or taking over an ongoing project. Consider establishing a formal mentoring structure once your League is ready and a specific goal can be set. This formal mentoring mechanism will help your leaders be intentional in growing the leadership skills of your organization. A formal mentoring structure creates a more consistent program within your League. This structure allows you to create a lasting mentoring program that goes beyond an informal mentoring relationship between just two members.

### How to set up the mentoring relationships

There are several options for setting up the mentoring relationship. Both the bonded duo and team mentoring style programs work well within the League. The bonded duo is an experienced League member taking a junior member "under their wing." Team mentoring occurs when a diverse group is matched with an experienced mentor. Team mentoring is often effective because there is benefit for all involved. Members in the team share support and advice with one another, essentially mentoring each other along with the experienced mentor.

### Break the Ice!

Do not expect the mentee to take the lead in starting this new endeavor, because they will likely be unsure or even intimidated at first.

The mentee must be willing to **open up** and share personal/professional experiences. Candid discussions about the mentor's background, experience, challenges and successes help to open the conversation up as well as the mentee. The mentor should **share** why they have decided to mentor, and ask the mentee why they want a mentor.

**Facilitate dialogue**; the mentor should ask questions about the mentee's goals, career, family, and League experiences. It is important to remember that strong **mentoring relationships do not happen overnight**. Commitment, dedication and open, welcoming conversations are key to moving the new relationship in the right direction.

### Agree on ground rules

Establishing ground rules will help the new mentoring relationship succeed. The mentor and mentee must talk about the goals they have for the experience. They must also agree on how many times they will need to meet and when those meetings will take place. If meeting face-to-face is too difficult, emails, videoconferences or phone calls also work as a way to touch base. Mentoring teams will likely need to meet often during the initial phase of the relationship, and then at least once a month thereafter.

Even if your League doesn't set up a formal program, informal mentoring relationships can benefit from intentionally contacting each other to check in. Make a mental note to check in every month.

### Equality of Voice

Conversational privilege by virtue of experience (from League and from life) will give the mentor more space to talk. To create a successful relationship with the mentee, it will be particularly important for the mentor to be aware of how balanced in conversation is and to ensure the mentee is encouraged to participate as an equal partner in conversation.

Some people are granted conversational privilege by virtue of:

- Status—career, life experience, class, etc.
- Resources
- Presence or style
- Gender, ethnicity or culture
- League status: In this case, conversational privilege will be likely given due to age and League experience and it is absolutely critical that we work to avoid that.

These characteristics can become the focus of attention so it is especially important to recognize them. Do not pretend that they do not exist but also understand how they help create our uniqueness and make the relationship richer and more meaningful.

### Create equality of voice

- Lead with questions
- Listen more than you talk
- Be aware of who has “conversational privilege”
- Create an ‘even table’ for all participants to share and learn

When working within a team-mentoring program, it is important to widen the circle and let all participants have a place at the table. League members come together as volunteers and citizens to make democracy work; so when they also decide to enter into a mentor/mentee relationship within our organization, they are deepening their role and responsibilities as members. Let them speak but also maintain a space for *everyone* to have equal time to learn and grow.

### Recognize Setbacks

Setbacks are natural mentoring program. Recognizing the signs will make it easier for you to adjust and get back on course.

#### Setbacks can include:

- Unworkable team
- Unrealistic expectations
- Time limitations
- An imbalance in responsibilities
- A lack of follow through

### Helpful Feedback

As a mentor, the art of providing helpful feedback is very important. “Good feedback is a gift”<sup>15</sup> and when giving feedback, the mentor must:

- Do it with purpose
- Make it relevant, timely and specific
- Identify areas that *can* be changed
- Be open to discussion
- Offer pros and cons for the mentee to consider.

#### *Qualities of a Super Mentor*

- Active listener
- Nonjudgmental
- Honest
- Resourceful
- Eager to learn and share
- Able to give constructive feedback
- Experienced
- Willing and able to devote time to developing others

You might notice that “expert” isn’t listed here. Being the expert isn’t the same as being a super mentor!

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<sup>15</sup> Work Better, Enabling a Culture of Learning, <http://www.claireantrobust.com/tag/learning/>.

Setting the right tone for feedback will make it more powerful. The mentor should explain the reasons for the feedback. But before giving feedback, she/he should make sure they are actively listening to the mentee's concerns to ensure feedback is relevant and well delivered.

Active listening is key to this process since it is critical that we truly understand the other person's perspective as much as possible. To be a successful active listener, the mentor should be asking open-ended questions. A great mentoring relationship is built on trust. The mentor and the mentee should honor that trust by understanding the other's point of view before making a judgment.

### **Mentoring is training at the local level**

By mentoring at the local League level, our leaders train the next generation of League Leaders. These first mentor/mentee relationships are the stones that pave the way to a sustainable League, and the skills passed on by leaders are the tools emerging leaders take with them to ensure competent members (and citizens) far into the future.

### **The MLD program: a formal mentoring relationship between state coaches and local Leagues**

Though the mentor-mentee relationship is not identical to the relationship between state coaches and their local Leagues in the [Membership and Leadership Development \(MLD\) program](#), there are many similarities. Learning about differences and working through challenges, asking questions, active listening, guiding and supporting new leaders and passing on leadership characteristics are all qualities that make the League's MLD program a success. This formal mentoring program is a great place for those who excel in the mentoring role to move up the leadership ladder and gain additional tools and knowledge. It is also a proactive place to give back to the League and help ensure future leaders have the skill sets to make our organization strong and enduring.

### **Suggested reading and citations for content:**

1. American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, <http://www.asha.org/students/gatheringplace/explore.htm>.
2. Brinckerhoff, Peter C., *Generations: The Challenge of a Lifetime for Your Nonprofit*. Saint Paul, MN: Fieldstone Alliance, 2007.
3. Hannon, Kerry. "Boomer Women Flunk Mentoring: New LinkedIn Survey." October 25, 2011. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kerryhannon/2011/10/25/boomer-women-flunk-mentoring-new-linkedin-survey/>.
4. Pozin, Ilya. "Why Young Professionals Need Mentors for Success." August 30, 2012. *Huffingtonpost.com*. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ilya-pozin/why-young-professionals-n\\_b\\_1842738.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ilya-pozin/why-young-professionals-n_b_1842738.html).
5. *Work Better: Enabling a Culture of Learning*. May 16, 2012 <http://www.claireantrobus.com/tag/learning/>.

**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Planning your On Campus Outreach**

What are the schools in your area that you want to work with?

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List any clubs, groups, or other organizations that work on similar issues already have a presence on campus.

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Who in your League has an on campus connection? How can that person help with the initial outreach?

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What would you ask of an allied student organization?

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How many members does the organization have that the League might reach?

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What's in it for them (the student organization)?

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## Appendix B: Speaking to College Organizations

This section contains recommendations for sample talking points to be used when publicly speaking to college students about the League of Women Voters. As with all talking points, these should not be read as a script, but instead be used as a guide when speaking publicly.

When drafting these talking points, we had the following three goals in mind –

- ❖ **Position the League.** The talking points below aim to establish and position the League as a leader in the community, as well as a leader in the field of democracy.
- ❖ **Establish a connection.** The second goal of these talking points is to establish a connection between the student organization and the League’s ongoing work. How does that student organization fit with the League’s work?
- ❖ **Ask.** As always, a critical component to include in all communications is the piece which asks others to join (or in this case volunteer with) the League and provides them with information about where to learn more.

We encourage Leagues to keep these same three goals in mind - and utilize talking points to support them - in all communications surrounding this effort.

That said, we also encourage League spokespeople to review these talking points and to make adjustments, put them into their own words so that they are comfortable using them.

### Talking Points

#### Positioning the League

- The League of Women Voters is an organization dedicated to improving our systems of government; it is the organization where leaders volunteer to make democracy work.
- The League of Women Voters of [INSERT CITY] is where smart, active leaders volunteer to make democracy work and create positive change in the community.

#### Establish the connection

- [INSERT CITY] needs everyone to participate in order to be a strong, safe, and vibrant place to live.
- It is important to prepare America’s young people to be effective leaders of tomorrow. One important step in turning them into engaged members of our community, is getting them involved, educated and registered to vote. America’s future depends on having active and informed citizens.
- The need to reach newly eligible citizens is great. In November 2012, approximately half of all eligible young people did not vote. Overall, young Americans remain severely underrepresented in the electorate. The League is working to change that.
- The League of Women Voters is dedicated to safeguarding democracy and creating positive change; your student organization can aid us in our mission.

**Ask**

- From the economy, to the future of their education and the safety of our neighborhoods, young people have a critical role to play in shaping important issues in our community and across the nation.
- We invite all those who want to join our efforts in making democracy work to learn more about the League of [INSERT CITY] and how we can affect change together. Through your school organization, you can volunteer with the League.
- We invite all those who want to affect change in our community to join the League of Women Voters. Contact [NAME] or visit [YOUR LEAGUE WEB SITE], for more information.
- Any of you can join our League and do the hands-on work to create lasting change in the community. Making democracy work is what the League of Women Voters is all about. We welcome more members of our community to join us and make an impact.
- Join the League, where community leaders are actively engaged in effecting change on the local, state and national level. Together, we can all make democracy work!

## Incorporate Your Own League Story

The League’s programmatic work covers a wide range of issues and activities, which can be overwhelming to individuals who are not familiar with them. Including your personal experience with the League will help others understand the League’s work, find it relevant and interesting, and join us.

My Personal League Story:

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### Helpful Tips to Create YOUR League Story:

**Keep it brief.** You should be able to say what you need to say in about a minute. Focus on what’s most important and cut away the rest. **What does your audience value? What is important to them? Write these down and prioritize them.**

**Avoid jargon.** Nonprofits are notorious abusers of acronyms, buzzwords and “insider speak”. Avoid these, or you’ll see the listener’s eye glaze over.

**Speak to Values.** What value does your organization provide? **What does your audience value, and how does your organization’s values intersect with them?** Values can be tangible (i.e., people living longer, healthier lives) or emotional (i.e., making people feel good about providing opportunity). Don’t just list your services or ideology—focus on outcomes, not process.

**Show Your Passion!** Perhaps the most important part of a good membership ask is the gusto, enthusiasm and commitment to the work it expresses. Don’t be afraid to demonstrate the passion and drive you feel for the work.

**Get to the Action Point.** Remember to ask them to join or get involved.

## Appendix C: Sample Interest Survey

Having students fill out surveys will inform you of what kinds of events and issues they are interested in and give you contact information for each individual student.

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

*What Issues Interest You?*

### **Guaranteeing Access to Health Care**

Reproductive Rights\_

Uninsured/Under-Served \_

Health Promotion \_

Insuring the Safety of Our Residents\_

Domestic Violence\_

Gun Control\_

### **VOTER SERVICE**

Candidate Forums/Debates/Meetings\_

Writing for League Publications\_

Voter Registration Activities\_

Please check the following ways you would be willing to participate in the League this year:

- Attend monthly meetings (League program presented)
- Make telephone calls for meetings and other activities
- A participant in a study this year or next (topic/area)
- Letter writing to our representatives and elected officials
- Voters service
- Refreshments for meetings
- Help with a specific activity (For example, for voter registration drive, new member orientation, holiday party, annual meeting, fundraiser, etc.)
- Recruit new members
- Finance drive

## Appendix D: Sample Advertisement for a General LWV Internship

[YOUR LEAGUE]  
[PROJECT TITLE] Intern  
[DATES]

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Membership is open to men and women of all ages. With 800 affiliates across the county, the League is one of the nation's most trusted organizations.

[YOUR LEAGUE] is seeking a [TIME FRAME: summer, fall semester, etc.] intern to assist with [SPECIFIC PROJECTS: civic engagement, staffing forums, public outreach on important issues, organizational development, drafting newspaper articles, updating the website, etc.]. Interns at the League have an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in [INCLUDE TASKS THAT LOOK GOOD ON AN INTERNS RESUME: project management, communications, member outreach, etc.]. Our Interns see firsthand how a national non-profit operates and influences policy at all levels of government by assisting with the development and implementation of issue and message campaigns at the grassroots level.

Specific duties include: [BE AS SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE: creating League materials (pamphlets, postcards, etc.), assisting with large scale mailing, e-mailing League leaders and members with weekly updates and requests for information, working with staff at League events and other similar activities].

The League offers flexible hours and a comfortable work environment. Internships with the League are [PAID/UNPAID]. To be considered for this position, please submit your cover letter, resume and writing sample to [CONTACT INFO].

## Appendix E: Sample Intern Questionnaire

Name of Applicant:

Date Interviewed:

1. Tell me about yourself and why the League of Women Voters appeals to you as an organization to intern with?
2. What specific skills do you want to learn from this internship?
3. How would you assess your writing and communication skills?
4. How would you assess your computer/tech skills? What's your familiarity with Microsoft Office Suite? Social Media? Uploading website content?

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5. What three words best describe you?
6. What is your greatest strength? Your greatest weakness?
7. Give me an example of a situation or a project you worked on where you were in a leadership role and you were really proud of the outcome.

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8. When would you be able to begin interning with the League? Until what date would you intern with us?
9. How many days per week would you ideally intern?
10. Will this internship be for credit?
11. Questions?

## **Appendix F: Sample Social Media Campaign**

This is a sample social media campaign developed around Giving Tuesday which is an annual campaign created to promote a national day of giving at the start of the holiday season and takes place the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. In 2013, Giving Tuesday fell on December 3 and this tool was created to give Leagues two weeksworth of sample social media posts leading up to the event.

These sample tweets and Facebook statuses can (and should!) be tweaked to reflect the work of your League. You can consider modifying the posts and the timeline to fit any event you wish to promote or just to celebrate the work of your League.

Adding relevant hashtags to tweets, including on your priority issues (for ex, #votingrights #education #climatechange) as well as your League's location (for ex, #virginia #cleveland #charlotte) will also help your tweets gain attention. This helps target and ensure that people interested in your work and area see your tweets! Make sure that your messaging focuses on issues on which you work.

In general, every tweet and Facebook status should include a link. These links should showcase your work. They can be a blog post (including one you wrote about #GivingTuesday), a news article you were featured in, a press release, a recent newsletter item, etc. You can also link to LWVUS's blog posts on #GivingTuesday and share our LWV #GivingTuesday image.

### **FACEBOOK**

#### **Tuesday, November 19**

Today marks just TWO weeks until #GivingTuesday! We've worked hard this year ["protect voting rights," "prevent climate change," etc]. Please support our work on December 3rd and help prove that the holidays can be about both giving and giving back! [Link to blog post, news article, recent newsletter item that makes the case]

#### **Tuesday, November 26**

Today marks just ONE week until #GivingTuesday! #GivingTuesday is a universal movement to encourage charitable giving on December 3rd, the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. We held over [insert number] forums and events this year to help ["protect voting rights," "prevent climate change," etc]. Please support our work on December 3rd and help prove that the holidays can be about both giving and giving back! [Link to blog post, news article, recent newsletter item that makes the case]

#### **Tuesday, December 3**

The countdown is over... It's #GivingTuesday! Today is about giving back. From registering voters to holding community forums, we've worked hard to make democracy work in [insert location.] Please take a moment to celebrate #GivingTuesday and help support our work! [Link]

#### **General Facebook Posts**

From registering voters to holding community forums, we couldn't have accomplished so much this year without supporters like you. That's why this year we've joined the #GivingTuesday movement, an annual campaign created to promote a national day of giving at the start of the holiday season. Celebrate #GivingTuesday on December 3rd by supporting our work. [Link]

Since we were founded in [year], [insert League name] has worked tirelessly to [insert line about your work] in [insert location]. If you or your loved ones attended any of our events this year, now is the perfect time to give back. On Tuesday, December 3, please help celebrate #GivingTuesday by supporting our work! [Link]

This year, we're taking part in #GivingTuesday, an international movement to promote a national day of giving after Black Friday, Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday. Support our work on December 3rd, and help prove that the holidays can be about both giving and giving back! [Link]

Why support us on #GivingTuesday? This year, we registered over [insert number] voters in [your location] and held [insert number] of candidate forums and events. On December 3rd, help prove that the holidays can be about both giving and giving back! [Link]

Why support us on #GivingTuesday? In the same way that retail stores come together to offer deals on Black Friday and Cyber Monday, #GivingTuesday brings us together around important community work. And community is what [insert League name] is all about. Since we were founded in [year], we've worked tirelessly to ["protect voting rights," "prevent climate change," etc] in [insert location]. [Link]

## **TWITTER**

### **Tuesday, November 26**

Just ONE week until #GivingTuesday! Support our work to ["protect voting rights," "prevent climate change," etc]: [LINK]

### **Tuesday, December 3**

Happy #GivingTuesday! Give back to [your location]! Support our work to ["protect voting rights," "prevent climate change," etc]: [LINK]

### **General Tweets**

Q: What comes after Thanksgiving & before Christmas? A: #GivingTuesday! [LINK to provide more info on how your League's participating in GT]

Why support us on #GivingTuesday? This year, we registered over [insert number] voters in [your location]: [LINK to blog post, news article, etc]

Attend any of the [insert number] events we held this year? Give back by supporting us on #GivingTuesday! [LINK]

Ever thought you should "give back" a little more? Support our work to ["protect voting rights," "prevent climate change," etc]: [LINK]

We worked hard to make sure [your location] citizens got out the vote this elections season. Give back by supporting our work on #GivingTuesday! [LINK]

Why support us on #GivingTuesday? Here's just one example of the work we're doing to [insert "protect voting rights," "prevent climate change," etc] in [insert location] [LINK to blog post, press release, news article, etc]

This holiday season, support our work to [“protect voting rights,” “prevent climate change,” etc] in [your location]: [LINK] #GivingTuesday

[Insert League name] worked hard year-round to improve our community. Support our work on #GivingTuesday! [LINK]

#GivingTuesday: give more, give better, give smarter. Support League of Women Voters of [your location] 12/3 [LINK]

Why support us on #GivingTuesday? Since we were founded in [year], we’ve worked tirelessly to [“protect voting rights,” “prevent climate change,” etc] in [your location]: [LINK]

Heard of Black Friday & Cyber Monday? There’s a new day in the Holiday Season – a day to give back! [LINK] #GivingTuesday

[Your League’s name] works hard year-round Making Democracy Work. Support our work on #GivingTuesday! [LINK]