

LWW LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF SOUTHWEST MISSOURI

The Voter

UNIT MEETINGS

April Unit Meetings

GOOD Dads, an organization helping kids and communities one dad at a time.

Monday, April 15, 5:30 PM at The Pitch

Speaker: Jennifer Baker, Founder & Exec. Director

Tuesday, April 16, Noon at Schweitzer-Brentwood Library, Speaker: Jim Millsap, Strong Schools

Coordinator

The three key ingredients for a great place to live are **robust economies, safe neighborhoods and strong schools**. But a community without engaged fathers can't hope to have any of these! When we foster responsible fatherhood, kids do better in school; relationships have less friction; crime rates decrease; economies flourish; people of all socio-economic levels are healthier and happier. It's clear that dads are a critical piece of the puzzle. Good Dads uses a holistic approach to inspire and encourage fathers to be involved in the lives of their children. Come and learn about how Good Dads' resources and events are used to serve those who want to be the best dad they can be.

ANNUAL MEETING

The LVWSWMO Annual Meeting will be held on Monday, May 20, 2024, at 5:30pm at Empower: Abilities. Dinner will be catered by Bambinos and includes iced tea, dessert, and gluten free/vegan options. The cost is \$15.00 per person. Deadline to sign up is May 13, 2024. You can bring cash or a check to a meeting, pay online on our website

<https://lwvswmo.org/donate/> or mail a check to:

LWVSWMO

PO Box 3036

Springfield, MO. 65808

REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM INITIATIVE PETITION UPDATE

Missourians for Constitutional Freedom launched its Reproductive Freedom initiative on Feb. 8, and has until May 5 to gather and submit over 171,000

signatures to get the initiative on the ballot in November 2024. Besides LWVMO, other Missouri organizations that have come together to support the initiative include Access Missouri, Abortion Access Missouri, Planned Parenthood, Women's Voices Raised for Social Justice, and Jobs with Justice.

The LWVMO endorsed the Reproductive Freedom Ballot Initiative in November 2023. The League's position on reproductive choice was set in 1983: "The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that public policy in a pluralistic society must affirm the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices."

As of the week ending March 16, (the halfway point) the LWV of Metro St. Louis has trained over 60 people to gather signatures for the Reproductive Freedom Initiative Petition, and they have filed more than 1,800 signatures. That doesn't even include members who have collected signatures at parades and entertainment venues that are organized and notarized by our partnering agencies. When combined with other partners, we are making huge progress. With signatures counted so far, we are on track halfway through the course. The LWV contribution is more than a dent. We have become an integral part of the signature collectors' team.

Even though we have made great progress in the metropolitan area, we will need to push even harder for the second half since rural areas have much smaller signature gathering events. But the energy and volume of the volunteers is incredible, so we are very hopeful we will meet the goal. If you would like to help, contact Kay Park at ReproRights@lwvstl.org.

The next hurdle is the Missouri legislature. Politicians are doing everything they can to defeat the Reproductive Freedom initiative. After a legal battle with Attorney General Andrew Bailey over false funding information he provided and then a legal battle with Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft who crafted false and misleading language in the ballot summary, the initiative was delayed by six months. Now Missouri legislators are desperately trying to make it nearly impossible for the

citizens to get a constitutional amendment on the ballot or approved.

They are proposing not only a majority vote on an initiative petition that makes it to the ballot, but also a majority in five of eight congressional districts. This is even more unfair than their last attempt to require 60% of the vote to pass an amendment. "The key to understanding how concurrent majorities work is to know that the votes in districts that support a measure can be overwhelming, even 100%. But if it fails by a single vote in enough districts, it would thwart the statewide majority," states Rudi Keller of the Missouri Independent.

The Senate approved SJR 74 even though it violates "one citizen one vote" and would allow minority rule. If approved by both houses, this constitutional amendment would likely be on the August ballot. We need to vote it down!

As Missouri House Speaker Dean Plocher said at the end of the 2023 legislative session, "If a referendum to restore abortion rights in Missouri needs only a simple majority to pass, it would."

Let's prove him right and eliminate the abortion ban!

LEGISLATIVE CALLS TO ACTION

Members are urged to use the weekly LWVMO Legislative Bulletins and devote time each week to follow through on Calls to Action. Even 5 minutes a week can make an impact! Remember to communicate with legislators as individuals, not in the name of LWV. You can voice your opinions to any senator and representative, not just your own. But it is important to mention that you are a constituent if communicating with ones from your district. [Click here to view the LWVMO Legislative Bulletins.](#)

TREES ARE INVISIBLE PRESENTATION

The Environment and Sustainability committee is collaborating with White River Group Sierra Club to sponsor a presentation by Dan Chiles. The presentation

April 2024


is entitled, "Trees Are Invisible." It is a "fast moving, colorful, and lively exploration of the deep mystery called trees." It will be held in the Community Room at Schweitzer-Brentwood Library on Monday, May 6 at 6:30pm.

BUS WRAPS UPDATE

Last month we announced that a collaborative effort with Leadership Springfield and NAACP had placed bus wraps on some city buses to encourage voter turnout for the April 2 election. Voter turnout has been a Red Flag in the Community Report since 2004. Bringing attention to Election Day is a way to encourage and remind voters to exercise their right to vote. This first phase of the project was paid for by a Making Democracy Work grant and private donations. Now, a Jewell Schweitzer Collective Impact grant has been awarded through the Community Foundation of the Ozarks. This will finance bus wraps for the August and November elections. Keep your eyes out for the buses, take some pictures to share in future newsletters, and tell others about the project! Getting Out the Vote is one of the League's most important obligations.

**KNOWLEDGE IS POWER:
We have a lot of work to do!**

2024 LWVMO Spring Conference



Where: St. Louis
When: Saturday, June 8, 9 am to 3 pm

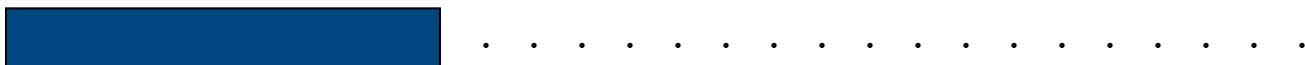
Topics include: Election Security; How to be the Face of the League; Library Censorship; Youth Voting; and League Work on Initiative Petitions

Watch for registration information at LWVMO.org

ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY UPDATE

The Environment and Sustainability Committee will continue to fulfill its commitment to the Adopt-A-Street program by picking up trash along Sunshine Street. Please join us on the following dates:

- Sunday, April 28, 9:00 am (note date change from April 20)
- Saturday, October 19, 9:00 am
- Saturday, November 2, 9:00 am



DEI UPDATE

DEI Committee members will meet four times for lunch in April to complete RAP surveys, which evaluate the restaurants for accessibility. Anyone interested in attending or receiving other information about DEI may email Cynthia Erb at cynerb@gmail.com.

VOTER SERVICES UPDATE

Deputy registrars were present for twelve voter service events beginning the last week of February and ending the last of March. Locations included Ozark High School and Ozark Innovation Center, the O'Reilly Center of Hope, Township Senior Living, Eden Village 1 and 2, Strafford Transition Fair, SPS University, and events at MSU including the PAWs Voter Fair and the MSU NAACP student meeting. Seventy-six registration applications were turned in to either the Greene County Clerk's Office or the Christian County Clerk's Office. We have one more event scheduled for March and that will be the Transgender Day of Visibility Cultural Event being held on March 30.

Events scheduled for April include a second collaboration with the History Museum and its Civics on the Square presentation. And, deputy registrars will be providing registration opportunities at the O'Reilly Center for Hope, Harmony House Resource Fair and a Naturalization Ceremony is scheduled to occur at Marshfield during the Missouri Cherry Blossom Festival held at Marshfield.

Although registrations don't always occur at each event, registrars have opportunities to answer questions about upcoming elections, voting procedures, what is on the ballot (assuming the information is available) and what a registration Identification card looks like.

Three deputy registrar training dates for 2024 have been set. They will all occur at the Library Center in Community Room B. The dates and times are:

- Tuesday, May 7, 9:30am
- Wednesday June 5, 1:00pm
- Friday, September 13, 10am

You must register in advance by emailing cpointer@greencountymo.gov.

The Informed Voter Coalition and Paws to the Polls have completed their Springfield Board of Education

April 2024

candidate interviews and each set of interviews is available to voters. These interviews provide insight into each candidate's thoughts and views on public education.

UPCOMING DATES

National Library Week

April 7-13, 2024

Unit Meetings

Monday, April 15, 2024, at 5:30pm at the Pitch

Tuesday, April 16, 2024, Noon at Schweitzer-Brentwood Library

Trash Pick-Up Dates

Sunday, April 28, 2024, 9:00am

Saturday, October 19, 2024, 9:00am

Saturday, November 2, 2024, 9:00am

Trees Are Invisible Presentation

Monday, May 6, 2024, 6:30pm

Community Room, Schweitzer-Brentwood Library

Deputy Registrar Training Dates

Community Room B, The Library Center

Tuesday, May 7, 2024, 9:30am

Wednesday, June 5, 2024, 1:00pm

Friday, September 13, 2024, 10:00am

Education Committee Meeting

Monday, May 13, 2024, 1:00-3:00pm

Schweitzer-Brentwood Library

Annual Meeting

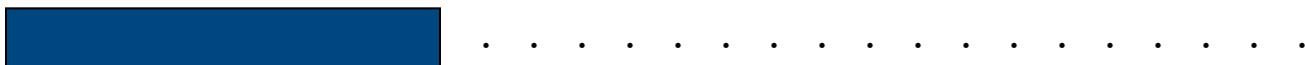
Monday, May 20, 2024, 5:30pm

Empower: Abilities

LWVMO Spring Conference

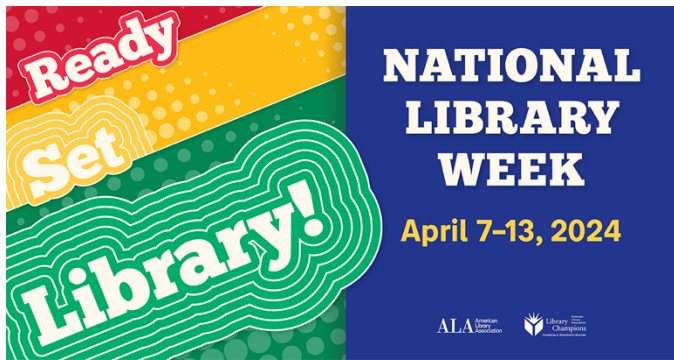
Saturday, June 8, 2024, 9:00am-3:00pm

Location: St Louis



NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK

If you’ve ever moved to a new area, you know how exciting it is to locate your public library, a place where you know you will feel welcome. Libraries have always been community hubs that provide materials and activities for patrons of all ages. If you haven’t visited your local branch lately, April is an excellent time to do so because the **American Library Association is celebrating National Library Week, April 7-13**. The ALA theme for Library Week 2024 is “Ready, Set, Library!” which promotes the idea that “libraries give us a green light to something truly special: a place to connect with others, learn new skills, and focus on what matters most.”

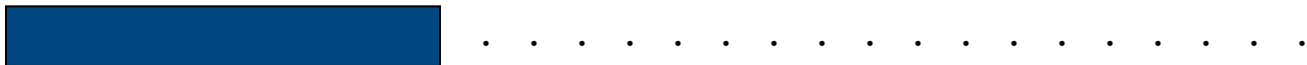


If all libraries did was circulate books and media (for free!), that would be reason enough to celebrate them. However, libraries offer much more than books for their communities, including research tools, internet access, maker spaces, printing, tax help, genealogy, guest speakers, digital media, meeting rooms, visiting authors, book signing, passport applications, voter information and registration, movies, art contests, crafting, book clubs, concert series, and one-reads. Our local library systems even offer **seed** libraries. Read the events newsletters from [Springfield-Greene County](#) and [Christian County](#) or the program calendar of [Webster County](#) and you will be amazed at the variety of offerings.

Many League members are already aware of the stress libraries across the country have been under in these past two years. Book challenges have skyrocketed, funding has been put in jeopardy, librarians have been vilified (called groomers!), and many states have rushed through unnecessary legislation that is both confusing and intimidating to library personnel. For instance, Missouri

Statute 573.550 went into effect in August 2022 threatening a year in jail and \$2000 fine for any librarian who provides a minor with sexually explicit material even though providing minors with obscene content is already illegal-and not something that was actually happening in any school or public library. Laws like this are insulting, intimidating and unnecessary, which is why the League advocated against them. In June of 2023, the Missouri SOS office enacted a set of regulations (15 CSR 30-200.015) tied to library funding. Many of these, such as a publication of selection policy and procedures for book challenges, were procedures libraries have always followed. Other guidelines are both vague and burdensome, such as trying to determine what materials or displays are “age appropriate” or could be considered “obscene,” especially since a handful of parents consider it inappropriate for LGBTQ+ characters to exist within any book. Librarians purchase material for a wide range of patrons with many different interests and needs. They’d be the first to say to place a book you aren’t enjoying back in the book drop and try again. The legislation against MO libraries continues. Currently in discussion is HB2498, a bill that takes duties (approval of materials, personnel, and events) previously performed by professional librarians and gives them to an elected library board. The League opposes such measures.

Each day of the ALA Library Week celebrates a different feature of libraries. April 8 is “Right to Read Day.” This is a day of action for the right to read and also the day the ALA releases its State of American Libraries report, along with a list of the most challenged books of the previous year. The majority of books challenged across the country today are written by minority and LGBTQ+ writers. Here are some ideas for celebrating your right to read: Check out and read a book that has been banned or challenged, participate in a book club sponsored by your local branch, read PEN America’s [Banned in the USA report](#), examine the ALA’s [Library Bill of Rights](#), sign the ALA [Freedom to Read Statement](#) (70th anniversary), watch the 13 min [60 Minutes account](#) of a South Carolina community who worked together to combat censorship, or view the Oscar-nominated documentary *ABCs of Book Banning* (Paramount+). You could even choose to join an organization fighting book censorship. Because the League considers censorship a First Amendment issue, both our state and local leagues have signed on to the [Right to Read Coalition](#). Individuals are welcome to



join. Another local group fighting censorship in schools and libraries is [U-turn in Education](#).

If you do visit a library this month, please take a moment to thank a librarian. What they do is remarkable. Librarians use a limited budget and carefully select materials for all ages and interests. There is something for everyone to love in a library. It is sad that a small but vocal group of individuals have spent time searching for books to remove from libraries (often books that they have not actually read) instead of using their time to find something they would love to read-and sharing that information with others. Surely book promotion is much more rewarding and enjoyable than book banning. So, take some time in April to promote your love of books and your love of libraries.

RADIO PROGRAM

Have you listened recently to our weekly Making Democracy Work program on KSMU radio? The League hosts a weekly program, every Monday at 9:45am, on KSMU 91.1FM. In case you missed the most recent episodes, you can click here to browse through the archives for topics you might want to listen to now: [Making Democracy Work](#).

March 5: [Creative nonprofit repurposes unused art supplies in Springfield](#)

March 5: [It's scholarship season at CFO. The nonprofit says students need to apply before the March 24 deadline](#)

March 12: [Springfield individuals working together reimagine a better city, one block at a time](#)

March 18: [The Informed Voter Coalition brings you Nixa, Ozark, Willard and Springfield School Board candidate interviews this week on KSMU](#)

Springfield-Greene County Library System

1901: A group of 50 prominent businessmen and Mayor Ralph Walker proposed a plan to build a community library.

1903: The granite cornerstone of the new public library was laid, following a \$50,000 contribution by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie.

1905: The doors opened with 700 books, one staff member, and an annual circulation of 8,657.

Today: The Director is Regina Greer Cooper, and the mission statement is "Building a stronger community by enabling lifelong learning and enrichment." The system has an annual circulation of 3,026,602 and has expanded its holdings to more than 550,000 volumes of materials in ten locations, a mobile library, and several express locations.

Christian County Library System

1956: The Christian County Library opened with five staff members and about 14,000 volumes of materials.

Today: Renee Brumett is the Director. Four branches in Ozark, Nixa, Clever and Sparta, plus a pick-up location in Chadwick, several express drop-off locations, and a mobile library. About 95% of the county's population live within ten miles of a library. The system has more than 166,000 patron visits annually, 533,000 physical and virtual materials circulated, and more than 84,000 physical and 930,000 digital items in the collection. More than 28,000 patrons attend library programs and events each year.

Webster County Library System

1910: City Library Board Appointed

1911: Dedication of Marshfield (Carnegie) Public Library

1963-65: Library joins the Kinderhook Regional Library, expands to a county library with passage of a county library tax. Renamed Webster County Service Center

1995: Garst Memorial Library facility opens in Marshfield

1998: Webster County Library leaves Kinderhook Regional

2001: Rogersville Branch Library opens (location change in 2011)

2002: New Additions open at Garst Memorial Library

Today: The Director is Terri York. The system contains over 66,880 items. The most recent annual report included 100,071 check outs, 70,610 visits, 920 new library cards issued, 732 WiFi uses, 4,968 patron uses of computers, and 5886 patrons participating in various programs.

