



# CoastLines

The League of Women Voters ® of Curry County

Volume 27, Issue 7

[www.lwvcurry.org](http://www.lwvcurry.org)

June 2011

*Tour three private gardens located in the Brookings area*

## *Secret Garden Tour*

*With refreshments served in one of the gardens*

**Sunday June 26, 2011**

**Seventh Annual**

**1 to 4 p.m.**

***Tickets: \$10 each***

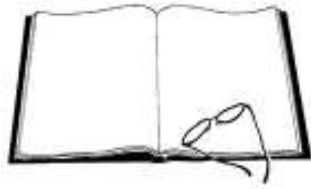
Tickets available at:

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- Chetco Pharmacy & Gifts
- Feather Your Nest

*Please note: only 120 tickets will be sold*

*Please—no strollers or pets*





### President's Message

Hello members and friends,

This is my last President's message. I thank our League's Board of Directors for all that they have done to help make this year a success. While every Board member has gone above and beyond the call of duty I think special thanks should go to Shirley Nelson.

She wrote and published the 2011 edition of our Directory of Public Officials. She organized all of our Voter Service activities and was the moderator for many of the Voter Forums. When Wil Walkoe asked for help processing the data from the Workforce Housing study she willingly stepped in. She helped organize several of the Unit meetings dealing with the difficult issues facing Curry County.

Behind the scenes Milt and Shirley provided invaluable support. Both Milt and Shirley were the source of guidance for me and for the entire Board. I speak for the entire League in thanking both of them for their continued dedication.

I also want to thank Kathleen Tomko, Jan Krick and June Whitehead for stepping in to take over running of our Secret Garden Tour. Hopefully this year's Tour will be as successful as those in the past.

Lastly I want to thank Wil Walkoe for his efforts on the Workforce Housing study. The report should be published later this year. Due to the loss of important committee members Wil Was left to do much of the work himself. His efforts will benefit all of Curry County.

Our little League has done a lot. Thanks everyone.

League can make a difference,

*Al*

## The League of Women Voters of Curry County



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### *Coast Lines*

*A publication of the League  
of Women Voters ® of Curry  
County*

*Coast Lines is produced 11  
times a year by the League of  
Women Voters of Curry County.  
We welcome your comments,  
suggestions, story ideas and  
submissions. Submissions  
must be received no later than  
the day of the board meeting  
each month. That date is  
available on our web site.*

Web site: [lwvcurry.org](http://lwvcurry.org)  
Email: [league@lwvcurry.org](mailto:league@lwvcurry.org)

## Farewell Dorthea

It is with mixed emotions that we learned that Dorthea Petersen will soon be moving to the Portland area. Dorthea has been a loyal member of the League of Women Voters of Curry County for many years. She has served numerous terms on our Board of Directors and has served on the Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Oregon and as a Trustee of the League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund.

Dorthea has been the leader of the Gold Beach Unit for years. She has helped with the organization of the Voter Forums in Gold Beach and with the scheduling of the Gold Beach Unit meetings.

Perhaps her greatest contribution has been selling tickets for the biannual lottery of the League of Women Voters of Oregon. This year was no exception. Members of the League of Women Voters of Curry County sold 72 tickets. Dorthea sold 57 of those 72 tickets. This brought a badly needed \$112.00 into our Treasury.

We wish Dorthea the best. We hope that the Curry County League's loss will be the Portland League's gain.

## ITAC

This will probably be the last note in *Coast Lines* about the Curry County Information Technology Advisory Committee (ITAC). In the first several months of 2011, ITAC sponsored a well-attended conference on Electronic Health Records (EHR), bringing together users (health care providers), suppliers (Developers of EHR systems, a major data center provider from the Rogue Valley considering the establishment of a branch center in Curry County), and experts on government support and requirements in the EHR field.

ITAC's next major project was to have been to work with the Information Technology professionals across Curry County businesses in general. ITAC had identified as the two key barriers to local economic growth based on light, telecom-intensive industries:

1. The lack of coordination and standard interconnection methods among commercial information technology users
2. The vulnerability of our area to major telecom outages – which was cited as an absolute show-stopper by a number of outside businesses who would otherwise have been considering some degree of expansion into Curry and Coos Counties.

The work with local information technology users was planned to dovetail with the upcoming completion of a self-healing telecommunication that will finally provide local telephone and data communication users with an automatic route around the service outages that we have frequently experienced whenever, say, a main cable is cut during road construction. In other words, it seemed that we were coming within reach of addressing both of the things that were preventing the County from expanding economically beyond the current base of fishing, lumber, and tourism industries that have proven inadequate to keep the County economically sound.

We were recently informed, however, that the County Commissioners have decided to close Curry County's Community and Economic Development department, as part of the latest round of cost cutting – even though the department had been funded by the state. Presumably there will eventually be some new form of economic development function within the County government, which will apply for the state funding of the old department. Most of the current ITAC members will be resigning, and it appears that ITAC has come to an end.

## **MAY UNIT MEETINGS CURRY COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

On May 12 Jan Kaplan, Director of the Curry County Health and Human Services Department, gave us a presentation summarizing the status of his Department and what the future holds. His Department provides mental health and addiction treatment as well as violence prevention training for the citizens of Curry County. It is Jan's opinion that the Department has responded in creative ways to expand the service it is delivering in spite of the severe economic pressure Oregon and Curry County are under. The Oregon Legislature is trying to do more with less by spending more of its money locally and organizing local Departments to get more and better service for the people who need it.

Central to this goal is the Oregon Health Plan. This plan has three components: mental health, medical care and dental care. They are trying to create a coordinated care organization in each community, including Curry County, that provides all three types of care. By providing coordinated care it is believed that clients will receive better care at lower cost. Creating each organization is a challenging task and the effort in Curry County is in its beginning stages.

Dental care is badly neglected in Curry County. It is known that poor dental health leads to both long and short term mental and physical problems. Heart problems, obesity, diabetes and other complications decrease quality of life, shorten lives and create huge costs for the health care system. It is felt that providing basic dental care for children will create healthier citizens while saving Oregon and Curry County large medical costs in the future.

The Department's addiction treatment program is part of its mental health care program. They currently have two full time staff members but their case load is far too high to allow the staff to give all of the patients the attention they deserve. The program needs additional funding badly so that addicts can receive the care that they need for current problems as well as creating preventive care. The Department is currently cross-training its mental health staff to allow all staff members to provide addiction treatment.

The Department receives funding from the State and from various Federal sources. It receives no funds from Curry County. The County is responsible for any deficits but in recent years the Department has been able to cover its costs using State and Federal funds as well as grants from private sources. Decreasing support from both the State and Federal Government along with increasing case loads makes the Department financially unsustainable in the long term.

An important way of achieving better outcomes while reducing costs is the creation of Mental Health and Drug Courts. These Courts are staffed by judges but rather than treating the offenders as criminals it works with clinicians and the District Attorney's office to get the treatment regimens in place to cure the offenders. They offer a specialized probation program that requires the offenders to fulfill their obligations at the risk of going to jail. The result is better outcomes at reduced cost compared to jail. The recidivism rate for people going through this program is far less than the rate for those who are incarcerated. The program needs additional funding for adequate housing for mental health clients. Mr. Kaplan urges League members to contact our legislators, both State and Federal, to urge support for the programs that he described.

### **Work Force Housing**

The interviews from our Work Force Housing project have all been organized into summary sheets, and we have developed some preliminary summary information from this data. Specifically:

***From the interview questions that we asked of employers regarding the pay scales in the lower half of their payrolls:***

- Based on the actual wages and salaries paid to WFH employees of the employers we interviewed, the housing budgets of more than half of them (i.e. the lowest 25% of the payroll) is less than \$500 per month – in many cases, considerably less. The actual range of these budgets runs from \$39 per month to \$492 per month
- Adding 10% to the pay scale of employees who receive some benefits in addition to their base pay, the housing budgets of the lowest 25% of the payroll barely tops \$500 per month, with an overall range of \$43 per month to \$574 per month.
- If job benefits (where available) are valued at an additional 30% of base pay, the housing budgets of the lowest 25% of the payroll ranges from \$43 per month to a high of \$73 per month.

***From the qualitative interviews with representatives of different “players” in the local housing, business associations, and the public sector:***

In Building/ Construction:

- One representative of the Building and Construction group said that the next construction that they planned to do was for apartments targeted to rent for \$500 to \$800 per month.
- One representative said that their plan is to build “custom homes,” but that there is presently no market for this type of new housing.
- None of the other comments had direct implications on the affordability of housing they plan to build in the future.

Comments from Public Sector and Business Association Interviewees:

- The appropriate cost of WFH is \$500 to \$800 in rent. For purchased housing, the price range is \$110,000 to \$200,000 [which would appear to require a down payment from around \$25,000 to over \$50,000 and a monthly housing budget around \$800 to \$1,300].
- Most said that area’s current supply of WFH can support either no business growth or only limited growth. The most optimistic interviewee in this respect said that we might see 35 to 60 new units appropriate for WFH.
- There was widespread agreement that greater availability of WFH would be an asset to economic development in Curry County.
- One interviewee said that the high current cost of WHF is forcing employers to pay unusually high wages, relative to other locations, in order to fill critical positions

Comments from Interviewees in Real Estate and Property Management:

- The only response that mentioned the price range of WFH that they track said that the rental range is \$550 to \$725 per unit. [Purchased housing was not mentioned.]
- Two interviewees said that they have very few (2 to 5) vacancies in WFH units. One said that 20% of their WFH units are vacant (but didn’t give an exact number).
- Purchasing housing is difficult for employees in the lower half of the payrolls of local companies, with the need for a good credit rating being a major barrier.
- The County’s current supply of WFH could not support much business growth here.
- Rents *per se* are only a partial measure of the cost of rental housing, because the high cost of local utilities and the need for deposits are also significant considerations.

### ***Preliminary Indications***

Although our interview responses contain other useful information related to work force housing, the above material touches most directly on the balance between the affordable housing needs of half of the local workers and both the available housing supply and some indicators of planned future construction. Regarding the key question addressed in the study: “*Does Curry County have adequate WFH to support economic growth?*” The indications from these interview responses are that the county already has a shortage of WFH (particularly for a sizeable group of employees with a sustainable housing budget well under \$500), and that additional WFH would be an asset for any economic development in the area. Current plans for WFH construction do not seem adequate to change this situation. On the other hand, the demand vs. supply imbalance for WFH would appear to present an opportunity for builders and others to address this market.

**CURRY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING**

*Dorthea Petersen is LWVCC's observer at the Curry County Board of Commissioners meetings.*

May 2, 2011

Administrative actions included:

- Unanimous approval of a contract with FEMA to gain public assistance funding for the property losses resulting from the March 11, 2011 tsunami.
- Unanimous denial of Tidewater Contractors renewal request for a conditional use permit to mine rock near the Old Mill site on Jerry's Flat Road by the Rogue River near Gold Beach.
- Unanimous approval of a contract with Tresis Consulting for grant writing.

May 16, 2011

Administrative actions included:

- Unanimous approval of the purchase of two emergency shelter systems and a 28 foot storage trailer which are funded by two Homeland Security grants.
- Unanimous approval of an application for Oregon Youth Employment Grant to fund eight weeks of work in Forest Service land.

## ANNUAL MEETING JUNE 4, 2011 AT 9:30 AM

The Annual Meeting will be at the Y Knot Cafe at 29844 Ellensburg Ave (Hwy 101) in Gold Beach. Menus. We will gather at 9:30 AM. The business meeting will start at 10:00. We will have elections and approve next year's budget. Lunch will be at Noon followed by our speaker, Georgia Nowlin. Our recent Unit Meetings have focused on issues within Curry County and Georgia, a former County Commissioner, will give us an informed perspective on Curry County's future. Brookings members who wish to car pool will be gathering at the Chetco Community Library overflow parking lot and leaving for Gold Beach at 8:45AM.



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703 Chetco Avenue  
Brookings (541) 469-7755  
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## *Coast Lines*

League of Women Voters of Curry County

P O Box 8039

Brookings, OR 97415

June 2011		
LWVCC Annual Meeting	June 4; 9:30 AM	Y Knot Cafe; Gold Beach
Secret Garden Tour	June 26; 1PM	Locations printed on tickets

# Membership Application

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\_\_\_\_\_ YES, I would like to receive *CoastLines* by email, saving LWVCC over \$10 a year in postage and printing.

Please make your dues checks payable LWVCC, listing the year (2010-2011) on your check, and return with an application form to: LWVCC Treasurer

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Contributions - checks made out to League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund (LWVOREF) and mailed to the LWVCC Treasurer are tax deductible.