

## Your Vote Counts, but How is it Counted?

On September 10 the League of Women Voters of the Cooperstown Area (LWVCA) held “An Evening in Defense of Democracy,” its kick-off event for “Unite & Rise 8.5” The focus was a timely topic: the security of our votes. More than 60 area residents were on hand to hear Otsego County Election Commissioners, Michael Henrici and Lori Lehenbauer, speak on how registration, voting, and ballot counting are carried out by the Board of Elections (BOE). The Commissioners’ talk explained how the BOE staff work to assure that every vote is properly cast and accurately counted.

“In conversations with other Leagues throughout the state, we realized that Otsego County is indeed fortunate,” noted LWVCA co-president Christina Bourgeois. “Our election commissioners have always been forthcoming and helpful as we carry out our work and we have learned much over the years working with them. We are so pleased that our election commissioners agreed to explain how this important work is accomplished.”

After the commissioners’ presentation, Christina and co-president Hudi Podolsky spoke about the LWVUS’s declaration that our country was in a constitutional crisis and the League’s response—“Unite & Rise 8.5.” The Cooperstown League’s local work will focus on three aspects of Unite & Rise: Public Mobilization and Coalition Building, Civic Education and Engagement, and Democracy Resilience.

“Many groups in our community are concerned about current actions of the federal government as some of those actions affect these groups’ ability to help others in our community and protect our local environment,” noted Hudi. “Unite and Rise is the League’s effort to help our community speak up and strengthen our democracy.

The Cooperstown League worked to engage co-sponsors for the event, especially those involved in programs that were affected by current changes. Among them were the Community Foundation of Otsego County, Connections at the Clark Sports Center (who work with senior citizens), the Cooperstown Food Pantry, the Oneonta Area NAACP, and Otsego 2000 (an environmental organization).

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*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.*