

Our League has lost a shining star. Mary Ellen Matthies recently passed away, but her unselfish efforts on behalf of the League of Women Voters will long be remembered. Mary Ellen began her League career in 1981 as a member of the Oak Park-River Forest League. She served as League President from 1985-86 and again from 1997-2001. In 2002 the Illinois League recruited Mary Ellen, along with four members from other Leagues, to serve as an Executive Committee to work on reviving the Cook County League. At that time the County League had essentially become dormant, so for the next four years the Executive Committee ran the local League, with Mary Ellen serving as co-chair. In 2006, after completing its work, the Executive Committee was disbanded and the renewed County League picked up where it had left off. It is still thriving today

In 2000 Mary Ellen and her husband, Rich, moved to Downers Grove. Both of them joined the Downers Grove-Woodridge-Lisle League (DGWL). At that time, the DGWL League, similar to the Cook County League Mary Ellen had worked for, was beset by declining membership. Nevertheless, Mary Ellen and Rich were faithful attendees at LWV meetings and events. Despite all efforts, however, the organization seemed to be drifting toward dissolution. In 2010 Mary Ellen was elected president of the DGWL League. She did not shy away from the challenge. Rather, she seemed to welcome it. She inspired the organization with determination and dedication. Slowly, the membership numbers began to improve. After completing her term as President, she became the Membership chair. In that capacity, she focused steadily on growing the League. She wrote letters, made phone calls, and sent emails to prospective members. She held gatherings in her home to reach out to prospects, to welcome and orientate new members, and hopefully, to engage them in one of League's many activities. She encouraged and facilitated very successful social events for the benefit of all League members, old and new. She advocated for a scholarship fund to encourage prospects who otherwise might not be able to afford the membership fee. And, perhaps most significantly, she consistently was a warm and welcoming presence, making others feel positive about the LWV. Mary Ellen's efforts soon started to pay off. By 2012 membership had increased by 17 percent and the League received a certificate from the U.S. League recognizing this achievement. Mary Ellen freely shared all her experience, her enthusiasm, and her energy in the effort to revitalize the DGWL League. Much like the Cook County League, DGWL is also thriving today.

The Downers Grove-Woodridge-Lisle League will always be grateful to Mary Ellen. She was a very special person, and she will be missed. If you would like to send condolences to her children, the addresses are:

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