



50 Year Recognition 2021 Peggy Glassford

The League has a tradition of recognizing individuals who have been members for 50 years. Each year, we honor these long-time members, many of whom joined a local League elsewhere, but who are celebrating their 50th year of membership with the Dane County League. We are grateful for the dedication of our 50 Year Members.

My Life Before LWV

I was born in Detroit, MI, the last of three children and a bit of a surprise to my Mom and Dad. It was a city life: no car, no tv, small houses crowded together on a block and the milk delivered by horse and wagon. My mother was a secretary until she was asked to move to the factory floor to become a "Rosie The Riveter" as a drill press operator. My father worked in a hardware store and was always, "the hardware guy" whom everyone sought out because of his knowledge and helpful ways. My mother worked afternoons, and my grandfather took care of me.



When I was 10, we moved to Canton Township, MI, and I went to school in Plymouth MI where I was to meet my future husband when I was in 10th grade and he was a senior. Plymouth High provided a good education and I was fortunate to be accepted at the University of Michigan where I studied and graduated with a degree in English and Social Studies along with a teaching certificate.

By 21, I was married and my husband, Carl, who had been in ROTC, was assigned to duty in Germany so off we went for a wonderful experience. We loved being in Europe, but the Army life not so much. We returned home in 1965. Carl became a manufacturer's representative for materials handling equipment and I tried my hand at teaching. At that time, it was either teaching or nursing for women with a degree. I was not destined to be a teacher and only spent a year figuring it out.

Carl and I moved twice with me at home and him changing jobs until we landed in Park Forest, IL in 1969 with our three-year-old, Kate, and our one-year-old, Jennifer. It was a big move away from family and I spent a couple of years feeling a little lost and quite bored. That was until my sister-in-law suggested that I look up this organization called the League of Women Voters. That suggestion changed my life forever.

My Life With The League

I was warmly welcomed by the Park Forest Leaguers and so pleased to be involved with smart women who studied fascinating topics. Mine was a very typical story at the time; women stayed home and raised children but often needed an intellectual challenge and the company of like minded and interesting people. The League of Women Voters was the answer for many of us.

I was quickly involved with the various local, state and national studies and soon found myself chairing the state election laws study group. Illinois had an unusual system of electing three House members in each district. This was intended to give the minority party a voice. The League took a position for single member districts and that

was eventually approved. For me, chairing the study group meant an opportunity for leadership as well as public speaking, as I was asked to testify before the State Legislature.

In 1973, I became the chair of our League and in that capacity, I helped nominate our village as an All America City, an honor that is given each year by the National Municipal League to recognize communities that have strong citizen involvement. League members prepared the application and represented the village at the annual conference where I am pleased to say our village was awarded the honor.

My interest in local government and my League training led me to run for office on the Park Forest Board of Trustees. I served on the Board for three years. Following that, I was awarded a fellowship at Governors State University where I received a master's in public administration.

Following graduation, I was hired as an administrative assistant/zoning administrator for the Village of Flossmoor, IL. In 1985, I was appointed Flossmoor's City Manager. I kept that position for 20 years and retired in 2005.

So much of my career was a result of my League experiences and the friendships that encouraged me to take each next step. I credit the League with any successes that I have had along the way.

One more happy thing—my husband and I are happily retired near our grandchildren. We are fortunate to have financial security earned in great part through my work. So, when I say that the League changed my life forever, I really mean it!

In thinking about the League's future, I continue to strongly recommend the League to others. When we moved to Lake Mills, WI, I encouraged new friends there to join the League. One concern that I recognize, from personal experience is that it is difficult for young women to be active participants in the League when they are busy with careers and young children. Nevertheless, membership in the League supports the League's activities and also provides access to the League's materials, which are very helpful!

I am very concerned about climate change and conservation. These matters are pressing and it is important that the League continue to address them. I'm so appreciative that the League continues to focus on Voter Services. I find the online information provided by Vote 411 just fantastic.

I'm also strongly supportive of the efforts of the League in the area of DEI. (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion) I feel that the League has always been a very accepting organization, but reaching out to the community as it diversifies is important. I have seen the Leagues in Park Forest and other communities become increasingly diverse as their demographics have changed. This is great!

When I reflect on the League's past, I recognize that even when our efforts were not successful in achieving the desired end, the work was very helpful in educating our members and others about these issues. So, for example, even though the efforts to pass the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) fell short, our effort was certainly worthwhile.

At this time in history, when we are recognizing the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, I am so grateful for the women who marched, went to jail and fought for women to get the right to vote. The League was, after all, born through that movement and has worked for the rights of all citizens ever since. I am so proud to be a Leaguer!

