

INSIDE THE LEAGUE



Summer 2019

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Centennial Celebration Makes Monumental Memories

By Barbara Ettington

The “Happy 100th” cake rolled into the Roosevelt Hotel’s ballroom while 225 guests waved lighted wands to fill the night with jubilation. On May 21, 2019 the League celebrated its 100th Anniversary, paying tribute to suffragists before us and honoring two New York women who have broken barriers in their fields: Stacey Cunningham, the first woman to be President of the New York Stock Exchange in its 226 years, and Billie Jean King, tennis champion and social activist, Founder of the Billie Jean King Leadership Initiative.

The evening began with a party of food tasting stations, signature cocktails and guests mingling with our honorees and noted guests, including Mayor David Dinkins, Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, Debra O’Connell, President of WABC-TV, Sade Baderinwa, WABC News Anchor, Kathryn Wylde, President of Partnership for New York City, and Dare Thompson, President of League of Women Voters of New York State.

“We’re looking pretty darn good for being 100, right?” asked Co-President Ruth S. Altman as she and Co-President Catherine T. Gray opened the program with highlights of the League’s accomplishments. Jennifer J. Raab, President of Hunter College and Chair of the Event, shared her high regard for the League’s mission before introducing our honorees. Receiving her beautifully engraved “Breaking Barriers” award provided by Tiffany & Co., Ms. Cunningham humbly stated that she was not aware of her own impact as she rose through the ranks of a male dominated industry to become the NYSE President. She did recognize that it took 226 years. Honoree Billie Jean King, lauded for her unstoppable efforts to fight for equality, accepted her award saying, “Voting is the one time when we are all equal.”



Co-Presidents cutting the celebratory cake

The event was also a fundraising success for the League. “It surpassed our goals. We are so grateful to our guests, our Advisory Board and our sponsors,” said Co-President Gray. Guests bid on exciting outings in a silent auction, and following a video produced by WABC-TV featuring LWVNYC past presidents, guests raised their lighted wands to make pledges of support during a very lively appeal. Special thanks to our sponsors, including Alston & Bird, BlackRock, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Cadwalader,

ConEd, E&Y, Hunter College, Manhattan Neighborhood Network, Nielsen, Partnership for New York City, REBNY, WABC-TV, WeWork and Xandr.



Gala Chair, Barb Ettington, Honorees Stacey Cunningham and Billie Jean King, League Secretary, Amy Matthews, and former NYC Mayor, David Dinkins

Happy 100th Anniversary LWVNYC!

By Beth Kelley

The League's Annual Meeting on June 6th followed the Centennial celebration and fundraiser in May. League members approved last year's minutes, the proposed budget, board nominations, and bylaws changes. Additionally, members voted to approve the merger of the two city league entities [the 501(c)(3) and the 501(c)(4)] into one 501(c)(3) organization. The merger will simplify accounting, reduce expenses, and make all membership dues and donations qualify as tax deductible. Furthermore, the change will not reduce the League's ability to lobby, as the IRS cap for the percentage of our budget spent on lobbying is many multiples of the amount we usually spend annually. Many thanks to Jane Colvin, who, along with our pro bono lawyer, Julian Cardona of Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton, and Co-President Cathy Gray, worked tirelessly on this issue.



Celebrating 100 Years

We also bid a bittersweet goodbye to Barb Ettington, whose steadfast leadership of the Voter Services Committee and two successful fundraisers will be challenging to replicate. We will miss her joyful and can-do presence. We wish her all the best.



Former Voter Services Committee Chair, Barb Ettington with 2nd Vice President, Diane Burrows



Past Presidents Mary Jenkins, Laura Altschuler and Miriam Adelman



Program Chair, Joanna Leefer and Education Committee Member, Nancy Seng



Past President, Gladys Krasner and newly elected LWVNYC President, Suzanne Stassevitch



2nd Vice President, Diane Burrows and Board Member, Lesley Sigall



Voting Reform Initiative Chair, Bella Wang and Board Secretary, Amy Matthews



Students Inside Albany coordinators Beth Kelley and Sheila Hosni



Past Presidents Robin Bahr and Phyllis Wells

From Our New LWVNYS Board President – Suzanne Stassevitch

Just a heads up from your new LWVNYS President and LWVNYC member, that you are going to be hearing a lot more from me about state initiatives that need your involvement. There are also many opportunities for the LWV's across the state to partner in their communities to inform people about changes to election laws, especially early voting. We will be looking to all of the local Leagues to share their strategies to GOTV.



Programs were approved at the state convention in Albany, June 7-9, to update the Constitutional Convention position and the Health Care Financing positions. We will also begin the enormous task of updating the state Public Policy positions. One major goal is to make it easier to read our positions without extensive reference to the historical parts of Impact on Issues. The first five sections to be updated are Election Law, Government, Judicial, Natural Resources, and Women's Issues. Health Care will be updated after the Health Care Financing update is completed along with Social Policies and State Finances. If you are interested in participating in the update committees, please notify the LWVNYS office, laura@lwvnys.org. We will be putting together a calendar for the update committees over the summer. These updates will be easier to accomplish by using the new **streamlined process** for updating positions approved by the LWVNYS Board in March 2019.



Thank you, May!

The LWVNYC Newsletter staff and the Centennial Celebration Journal staff would like to extend a special thank you to Content Coordinator May Takahashi, without whom the creation of the journal and this year's newsletters would not have been possible!

Amy Matthews – LWVNYC Board Secretary

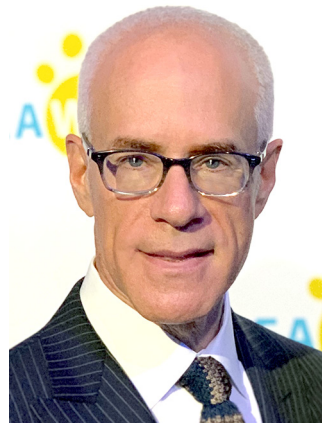
When I retired from the reinsurance industry in 2017, I joined the LWVNYC as the Board Secretary. My mother had been a League member when I was growing up and the League's mission still resonates with me today.

As Board Secretary, I take the meeting notes at every Board Meeting and at the Annual Meeting. This has given me a view into the League's work and activities throughout the year. I have helped develop the League's Strategic Plan and assist where I can with projects to update back office functions and fundraising event planning. But the most rewarding work, at least for me, is in registering voters: first time voters, people new to the city, new citizens, and people who now recognize the importance and value of their vote.

I had the opportunity last September to help the Voter Services Committee set up some voter registration drives with groups such as the New York Public Library, Bushwick Open Studios, Riverside Church, and the store Fishs Eddy. They knew that the League's expertise and non-partisan approach would make their events meaningful and successful.

What else? I keep honey bees, make pottery, and enjoy my family.

Meet Our New Communications Consultant



Neil Parker has come onboard to lend communications assistance to the LWVNYC. Neil has worked in the field for decades, and his experience includes public relations, marketing, advertising, journalism and special events. He's worked primarily in the nonprofit sector, at various arts organizations and NGOs, as well as at magazines here and abroad. Neil is pleased to join with the tireless members of the League, and to help promote their efforts.

Our Summer Interns

Katie Foley is a rising junior at The George Washington University, studying International Affairs and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies. She is the League's Social Media and Website Intern for the summer, assisting with content creation for the League's social media accounts. Also, she researched and compiled information on the candidates running for various positions in the June 25th New York City primary election to educate League members and other NYC voters. Katie is enjoying getting to know League members and volunteers, as well as learning about all the work they do for New York!



Lucinda Murray is a rising junior at The George Washington University Columbia College for Arts and Sciences, majoring in Neuroscience and minoring in GWTeach. This summer she interned at the League of Women Voters of the City of New York. During her freshman year at GW, Lucinda was part of the Women's Leadership Program's (WLP) Science Health and Medicine cohort (SHM), which gave her confidence in her ability to make changes in society. Working for the League has helped her to not only make a change in the nation, it has also expanded her leadership skills. While at the League, she attended Voter Registration Training. Lucinda's primary tasks as an intern were answering phone calls, entering new data into Salesforce, sending emails to members of committees, attending meetings, making edits to the Voter's Reform flyer, and even taking out the trash!

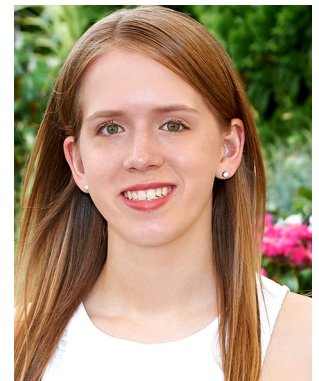


Hola! My name is **Tayra Vionette** and I recently graduated summa cum laude from the City College of New York with a B.A in Theater Arts. This summer, thanks to the S&P Global internship program, I had the opportunity to intern with the League. I have always liked to instigate social change using my art, and I thought it would be a good idea to be part of an organization that has done it for more than 100 years. During my epic stay I had various tasks: I attended a Voter Registration Training!!! If you're reading this, sign up for one! I also worked with the Voter & Information Services Committee, updating all the



contact information of those who have volunteered with the League. I've answered many calls, helped take out the trash, posted on the League's Instagram and designed some art for this newsletter! At last, it has been an adventure getting to know my fellow interns and everyone at the League!!!

Katie Zimmermann is a rising sophomore at Elon University, studying Political Science, Policy Studies, and Middle East Studies. She is one of the League's interns for the summer. Her primary tasks have been to assist New Yorkers in navigating the voting process and updating the League's volunteer database. Katie is thoroughly enjoying interacting with the voters and citizens of New York City, as well as her overall experience with the League!



Volunteer Opportunities

Grant Writing: LWVNYC seeks a nonprofit grant writer to help secure funding. The position requires extensive research, assessing the goals and financial needs of our organization, analyzing competitors' work, and writing and tracking proposals.

Public Relations: LWVNYC seeks a public relations volunteer to assist our communications consultant. The position will entail developing and executing a brand strategy, creating publicity campaigns, writing press releases, and developing relationships with journalists. Familiarity with social media platforms preferred.

Please email office@lwnyc.org for more information.

Census Committee Update

By Ashmi Sheth, Census Committee Co-Chair

Our vision at the LWVNYC Census Committee is to ensure every person living in NYC is counted by the 2020 Census, which begins April 1, 2020. The committee will work to increase city-wide participation in hard-to-count communities to avoid the problem in 2010 when nearly one million children were not counted.

It takes grassroots action and forward planning to count everyone. Some strategies the Census Committee has already begun to consider are reaching out to universities, working with pediatricians and health networks, building trust in communities and reminding everyone that the census is a confidential document and will not be shared with other agencies.

Since March, we've built a core leadership team to help drive Census training and set short-term and long-term goals. We've attended Community Board meetings all over the city. We'd like to invite members to our monthly meetings to share what we've learned and mobilize. Please email census@lwnyc.org if you'd like to volunteer.

Happy Anniversary!

By Beth Dougherty, Women's Rights Committee Co-Chair

The Women's Rights Committee of the LWVNYC is celebrating its first anniversary this summer. We have had a busy year.

- Committee members researched various issues related to women. We decided to focus on reproductive rights and domestic violence, concentrating our efforts on legislation at the city and state levels. With the passage of the Reproductive Health Care Act on January 22, 2019, we began focusing on domestic violence.
- Committee members have been researching state bills dealing with domestic violence, choosing which ones to support. Contact has been made with state legislators, in particular sponsors and cosponsors, to gain more in-depth information about the bills and how our committee can support passage of legislation.
- We worked with the New York State League of Women Voters to help ensure passage of the Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act which came up for a vote earlier this year. We are happy to report that Governor Cuomo signed the bill into law in May.

- Sally Robinson, LWVNYC 2nd VP/Issues & Advocacy, presented Advocacy Training at a monthly meeting.
- We met with New York City Council Member Helen Rosenthal, who chairs the Committee on Women and Gender Equity. We look forward to working with Ms. Rosenthal and her committee to advance women's issues on the city level. We also plan to reach out to the Mayor's Office to End Domestic and Gender-Based Violence.

Please email office@lwnyc.org if you would like to work with us on these important issues.

New Criminal Justice Reform Committee

By Zuha Jamil, Criminal Justice Reform Committee Co-Chair

The newly-formed Committee for Criminal Justice Reform's vision is to establish the NYC chapter of the LWV as an influencer around issues of criminal justice. The Committee's mission is to provide individuals vulnerable to justice system involvement, as well as those formerly or currently incarcerated, with the resources to become fully enfranchised citizens. Recognizing the transformational power of education, our efforts will be focused on legislation that will expand access to higher education opportunities for those currently and formerly incarcerated. To this end, the committee will help state and local legislators to develop and implement policies that facilitate such opportunities in the prison system, including greater opportunities to acquire:

- High School Equivalency degree (GED)
- Vocational training
- Paralegal training
- Technical education
- Bachelor's and Master's degrees

Additionally, the committee anticipates partnering with organizations that work directly with youth and young adults in communities heavily impacted by criminal justice related issues. The committee's primary interest will be to engage these partners in actively encouraging the young people they work with to participate in the political process. Finally, we are deeply committed to promoting police training that focuses on developing a more equitable justice delivery system. Please join us on the Committee for Criminal Justice Reform as we move forward with this important work. For more information about future meetings, please contact office@lwnyc.org.

Civic Engagement in Albany

By Crystal Joseph, Vice-President, LWVNYC and Director of Youth Education and Civics, LWVNYC

In leadership, we are taught to lead by both creating community and working well with others. The League of Women Voters of NYS is setting the example each year through hosting Students Inside Albany (SIA). As a welcomed SIA 2019 guest, I had the opportunity to meet a wonderful group of civically engaged students with a passion for community involvement and change. Under the direction of Laura Bierman, we shared in three days of training, tours and learning at the State Capital. SIA participants had a fervent reverence for understanding the political process and presented challenging questions for their legislative representatives about concerns in their local communities. I learned about issues relevant to Nassau County,



Students Inside Albany attendees in front of the state capitol

Western New York and even about our very own Queens County. The passion in our next generation of voters was indicative of future civic leaders who are eager to listen to one another. As the incoming Director of Youth Education and Civics for the State Board, I was honored to learn from SIA students who shared in a mutual responsibility to educate each other and themselves to be better voters for issues that matter to them. We bonded over countless walks, pizza and bowling and talks about how inclusivity and diversity in classroom education matters as a legislative agenda item for NYS's education

curriculum. I would like to give a special acknowledgement to Beth Kelley and Sheila Hosni for selecting our two exceptional NYC students who represented our league wonderfully. Many thanks are also due to Betty Ann King and Judie Gorenstein of the NYS Youth Programs Committee, for sharing their knowledge and time with me during my stay in Albany. To learn more about the League's youth activities, contact campus@lwwnyc.org.

Building Democracy through Ranked-Choice Voting

By Bella Wang, LWVNYC Voting Reform Initiative Chair

In May, the League testified for the third time in nine months before the Charter Revision Commission to argue for a shift

to ranked-choice voting (RCV) in NYC primary and special elections. The Charter Commission, which is empowered to suggest changes in the NYC Charter about city governance, has agreed to put RCV up for public referendum on the ballot this November.

What is Ranked-Choice Voting?

RCV allows voters to rank more than one candidate on the ballot, and vote tabulation occurs in rounds. If a voter's first-choice candidate is the least popular candidate in the first round, then their second-choice candidate is counted as their preference in the second round. Otherwise, their first-choice candidate continues to be counted as their preference. Rounds continue down voters' preference

rankings until a single candidate receives at least 50% of the vote.

Why Does the League Support RCV? First, ranked-choice voting allows voters to share more information about their preferences, thus allowing a consensus candidate to arise even when there are many candidates. This is particularly relevant in primary elections, where there may be as many as a dozen candidates vying for a seat. Second, ranked-choice voting saves money, by avoiding the need for a runoff election that may cost millions of dollars despite very low turnout.

58th Convention of the League of Women Voters of New York State – Albany, NY

By Mary Jenkins and Nancy Seng

Everyone was up early and stayed up late for a wide range of programs and activities, including a tour of the capitol building. Cathy Gray, our LWVNYC Co-President, shared information and pictures of NYC league activities with other leagues while also managing merchandise sales and coordinating our activities.

In addition to catching up with old friends and meeting new ones, Education Committee Chair, Mary Jenkins, new member Nancy Seng, and our other members attended a wide variety of presentations that sparked new ideas for our local efforts. These sessions provided a broad demonstration for both new and experienced attendees of how our efforts make a difference.

We especially enjoyed:

- Civics Education and Youth Programs from multiple leagues
- River Cities Media Literacy presentation where they used their local town libraries to discuss a critical approach to information available from both news and social media
- Role of Media in Politics with Westchester County’s civics workshop program
- Social Media and Technology session demonstrating the wide variety of approaches and content focus different leagues had with their websites/Facebook pages
- Generation Citizen’s executive interview of an outstanding NYC student and her participation with local government concerning homeless people
- NY State Association of Social Studies Supervisors review of lesson plans developed by League Social Studies teachers that address goals required by the State framework

We’re already looking forward to next year’s June 2020 National Convention in Washington DC to broaden our contacts and our knowledge of national level LWV programs and plans.

Meetup with Senator Krueger

By Marie Botticelli, Voting Reform Initiative Member

Meeting in-person with legislators provides an ideal opportunity for us to inform them of issues supported by the League, and to hear their views on those key issues.

So it was with our meeting with New York State Senator Liz Krueger. Bella Wang, Chair of the Voting Reform Initiative, and Marie Botticelli met with the Senator on April 24th in her New York office. Senator Krueger spent more than 30 minutes with us as we discussed the three voting reform priorities for the League: Automatic Voter Registration; restoring voting rights for individuals on parole with bills S.1931/A.4987; and lowering campaign contribution limits. The Senator spoke at length about her support for these issues and provided insights into whether they would make their way into NY laws.



Marie Botticelli, Bella Wang, Senator Krueger

Senator Krueger described two major issues with Automatic Voter Registration: the handling of registration at locations other than the DMV, and when to allow a potential voter to reject voter registration, often called “front end” or “back end” opt out. She was willing to compromise with either option, saying it was better to have the bill pass the legislature than having it fail over a disagreement of the opt out issue.

Additionally, Senator Krueger supports restoring voting rights to those on parole. She also supports a limit on campaign contributions and believes the best solution is for the legislature to decide on the limits rather than handing it off to a commission.

If you’re interested in learning more the Voter Reform Initiative, contact us at office@lwnyc.org.

NYS LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

By Katie Foley

New York State lawmakers passed significant bills during the legislative session that ended this past June.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Although legislators failed to legalize recreational marijuana use for adults, the possession of small amounts of marijuana was decriminalized. In addition, the system of cash bail will no longer be used for non-violent crimes.



TENANT PROTECTIONS

Legislators passed broad tenant protections, including limits on landlords' ability to raise rents, protections for mobile and manufactured home tenants, and a standardized process for local communities to implement rent stabilization systems.



IMMIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Undocumented immigrants will be able to earn and receive driver's licenses starting in December 2019. Supporters expect this will increase the number of insured drivers and improve road safety. Furthermore, the legislature legalized the use of e-bikes and e-scooters (as regulated by municipalities), which are commonly used by low-wage delivery workers.



REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The federal protections on abortion outlined in Roe v. Wade will be codified into NYS law. Moreover, NYS insurers will be required to cover the cost of contraception.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT CASES

Victims of sexual harassment will no longer have to prove "severe or pervasive" treatment, but rather prove "inferior terms," conditions, or privileges of employment, which could be easier to demonstrate.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTIONS

NYS established ambitious goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, invest in renewable energy, support "green jobs," and flow resources to communities that have been most vulnerable to the consequences of climate change.



LGBTQ RIGHTS

NYS courts will no longer allow the "gay and trans panic" defense, or claims that extreme emotional distress in reaction to an individual's gender expression and/or sexuality justified an act of homicide. Additionally, legislators banned conversion therapy for minors.



END OF EXEMPTIONS FOR VACCINATIONS

Children without required vaccinations will not be able to attend daycare or school, regardless of their religious or other nonmedical reasons for abstaining from vaccinations.

All illustrations by Tayra Vionette, 2019

Celebrations!

By Suzanne Surbeck

When League members gathered at the Roosevelt Hotel on May 21st for the 100th Anniversary gala “Celebrating a Century of Breaking Barriers” many were celebrating both the League’s political heritage and its social traditions. During the last century, the League of Women Voters of the City of New York has celebrated its members’ serious commitment to voting, along with their serious commitment to having fun at teas, luncheons, dinners, picnics, garden parties and everything in between. Fashions have changed, but the importance of these events has not.

This connection was reflected in the juniper drink served at the Gala. In June 1921, Carrie Chapman Catt, leader of the national suffragist movement and a founder of the League of Women Voters, hosted a picnic for 100 New York City members who had traveled to her home, Juniper Ledge, in Briarcliff, New York. Brooklyn members presented her with an academic cap and gown in honor of her receiving a LL.D. from the University of Wyoming in honor of her work in helping the women of Wyoming win the vote. Such was Ms. Catt’s fame that the *New York Times* covered the event, noting the reason why she had bought this specific location, home to a large number of juniper trees. “They arrived in big electric buses, bringing their lunches,” the *Times* said of the attendees. “If any of the league members belonged to the anti-dry party and had expected from the

name of the farm that the liquid refreshments would be more exhilarating, they were disillusioned by Mrs. Catt immediately.” “‘I know,’ said Mrs. Catt, ‘that the juniper is useful in making liquor, and that is why I bought the place – so that no one else would have opportunity to use the trees for that purpose.’” Times and tastes have apparently changed.

Other events honored groups that shared the League’s mission. In June 1925, Mrs. Casper Whitney, also a founder, hosted a group of New York City teachers. The First Region Committee’s June 29th minutes attest to its success. “A report on the Garden Party given to the teachers of civics of New York City held at Mrs. Caspar Whitney’s place at Tarrytown was given by the executive secretary. She reported its great success and the appreciation of the teachers.”

The importance of the League celebrations has remained unchanged for a century. Whether it’s a celebration of women achieving the right to vote or a celebration of the League’s work for the last 100 years, the purpose and yes, the fun, have remained the same. The prices, alas, have not. The November 1921 Board of Directors minutes reflect a discussion about the logistics of the planned 1922 City Convention. “The Chair stated that the meeting had been called together to consider the time and place for the City Convention which the City Committee at its last meeting voted to hold. She further reported that the Hotel Pennsylvania had given us the best rates, namely, \$1.75 for the buffet supper.” The prices charged this year for the Roosevelt were undoubtedly a little bit higher.



Carrie Chapman Catt House (Juniper Ledge), Briarcliff Manor, NY

Upcoming Events

All meetings are held at the LWVNYC office unless otherwise specified.
For more information, please visit our website, www.lwvnyc.org,
or call the office at 212-725-3541.

- August 13 – Voter Registration Bootcamp*, 6:00–7:30pm, Park Slope Library
(Additional Voter Registration Bootcamp dates and locations TBA)
- August 14 – Education Committee Meeting, 5:30–7:30pm
- August 17 – Voter Registration Training Workshop, 10:30am–12:30pm
- August 19 – Women’s Rights Committee Meeting, 6:30–8:00pm
- August 21 – Voter and Telephone Information Services Meeting, 6:00–7:30pm**
- August 28 – Census Committee Meeting, 6:30–8:00pm
- September 11 – Education Committee Meeting, 5:30–7:30pm
- September 17 – Evening with the League: Early Voting Implementation &
Other New Election Programs, 6:00–8:00pm
- September 18 – Voter and Telephone Information Services Meeting, 6:00–7:30pm**
- September 23 – Voting Reform Initiative Meeting, 6:30–8:00pm
- September 24 – National Voter Registration Day
- September 25 – Census Committee Meeting, 6:30–8:00pm
- September 26 – Criminal Justice Reform Committee Meeting, 6:30–8:00pm
- October 2 – Voter Registration Training Workshop, 6:00–7:30pm
- October 5 – Voter Registration Training Workshop, 2:30–4:00pm
- October 9 – Education Committee Meeting, 5:30–7:30pm

* Instruction on recently enacted voting changes for NYS; those previously trained are encouraged to attend.

**Meet & Greet at 6:00pm; Meeting begins at 6:30pm

DEMOCRACY IS NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT

Employment Opportunity

LWVNYC is hiring a part-time administrative assistant!

If you are interested, please visit our website or email [hiring@lwvnyc.org](mailto: hiring@lwvnyc.org) for more information.

Newsletter Staff

Ruth S. Altman
Diane Burrows
Susan B. Glattstein
Beth Kelley
Lesley Sigall
May Takahashi
Andrea Zuckerman

*Thank you to all of our
newsletter contributors!*

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4 West 43rd Street, Suite 615, New York, NY 10036
212-725-3541 office@lwvnyc.org

