

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TURNS 90

Group celebrates 90 years of voting activism, education

Clubs & Associations 2010

By CATHY KELLY

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CAPITOLA — The League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County will gather Saturday in Capitola to mark the national group's 90th birthday with stories, history and even raising voices for a few suffrage songs.

The celebration will include a talk by Santa Cruz Councilwoman Cynthia Mathews about her great-grandmother, poet Sara Bard Field, who was active in the West Coast suffrage movement. In a dramatic cross-country trek in 1915, after collecting signatures in San Francisco and other areas, Field traveled across the U.S. in an open

air Overland touring car, helping deliver an 18,000-foot-long petition to President Woodrow Wilson at the opening of Congress, Mathews said.

"It's quite an amazing saga," she said.

Field and her husband, Charles Erskine Scott Wood, an author, attorney and more, later built Cats Estate in Los Gatos.

The luncheon is open to all and tickets can be bought at the door.

The county league this month also rolled out a new Web site, www.lwvsc.org, giving a range of voting and election information as well as a way to identify and contact elected representatives.

Carrie Chapman Catt founded the league during the National American Woman Suffrage Association convention in February 1920, anticipating the August 1920 ratification of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote.

And though countless legislators and political issues have come and gone, the grassroots group's mission remains to help voters make informed decisions at the polls, said Ann Wise, the group's president.

They take stands on public policies, but not on candidates, said Wise, a 69-year-old Boulder Creek resident who served on the San Lorenzo Valley School

Board for 18 years.

"We never speak on anything until we have studied it, voted on it and reached a consensus," Wise said. "We feel that is one of the reasons elected officials listen to what we have to say."

The 45-year-old county league will participate in an estimated 20 election-related forums in April and May, leading up to the June 8 primary election, Wise said. There are five ballot measures slated for that election, she said, and area candidates can now post statements on the new Web site.

Longtime board member Jan Karwin of Santa Cruz worked on the site since summer and welcomes sug-

IF YOU GO

HATS OFF TO THE LEAGUE

WHEN: 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Saturday

WHERE: Marie Callender's restaurant, 3400 Clares St., Capitola

COST: \$20; tickets available at the door

INFORMATION: 462-8683, or the county league's new Web site, www.lwvsc.org.

gestions at jan@karwin.com.

"It's an ongoing project that fits our goal to help people find a way to get connected with the politi-

cal process," she said.

Karwin said she is pleased to help honor those who fought so hard for the right to vote.

"The women who started it, they and their mothers had been working on it for over 70 years," she said. "It took them that long; it was a bloody battle and they had a lot of courage."

The Saturday event will include a look at league history. Dubbed "Hats off to the League," many participants are expected to honor the hat-wearing custom more prevalent with woman of the 1920s. It is set for 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Marie Callender's restaurant, 3400 Clares St. Call 426-8683.