

# The VOTER

League of Women Voters  
of Greater Las Cruces  
(575) 524-VOTE (8683)  
Web Site: [www.lwvglc.org](http://www.lwvglc.org)  
October 2013



## Reflections on Quality as an Issue in Public Education

**Bonnie Votaw, Ed.D, Member, Board of Education  
Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS)**

**Monday, October 14, 2013, 11:30 a.m., Good Samaritan Social Center  
Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle**

Dr. Votaw will talk about the present and future of quality education in the local schools and discuss prospective dangers to public education. Issues to be covered include:

- A local perspective of the history and the future of quality public education such as whether or not quality of education is increasing at a demonstrable and measurable standard in the local schools.
- How the local public schools could be impacted by a loss of political leverage and funding due to a potential increase in school privatization and funding being diverted to support for private charter schools.
- The status of efforts to increase Pre-K education in LCPS and the chances of getting state and federal funding given the current political climate in New Mexico.
- Impressions of the course and direction our elected officials in Santa Fe seem to be taking regarding the reduction in funding for our public schools, and her opinion as to why this may be happening.

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## CALENDAR

**September 30 (Monday) - 10:00 - 11:30 a.m., Unit Meeting, LWVNM Study of Alcohol: Ways to reduce alcohol-related deaths and damage in New Mexico, Good Samaritan Social Center, Conference Room (near Main Auditorium), 3011 Buena Vida Circle**

**October 7 (Monday) - Deadline for Reservations for Lunch with a Leader. RSVP Roberta Gran, Email: [robertagran@q.com](mailto:robertagran@q.com), Tel: 373-8490**

**October 7 (Monday) - 1:30-3:30 p.m., Board Meeting, Las Cruces City Hall, Room 2007. All are welcome!**

**October 14 (Monday) - 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., Lunch with a Leader, Bonnie Votaw, Ed.D, Reflections on Quality as an Issue in Public Education. Good Samaritan Social Center, Creative Arts Room, 3011 Buena Vida Circle. \$10. Reservations Required. If reservations are not cancelled, you will be charged for lunch.**

**October 17 (Thursday) - 2-4 p.m., Third Thursday Book Club, Selection: *This Town* by Mark Leibovich at the home of Dale Yeo, Tel: 405-7530**

**Notable Dates:** October 14 is Columbus Day. October is United Nations Month and October 24 is United Nations Day. October 31 is Halloween.



**The VOTER**

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**The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces**

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Roberta Gran

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**Co-Director, Voter Services**  
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**Affordable Housing**  
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**Lunch with a Leader** *(Continued from page 1)*

Dr. Bonnie Votaw, a native New Mexican, was elected to the Board of Education, District 4, in February 2007 and was re-elected for a second, four-year term in 2011 that ends in 2015. She is currently serving a second year as Board Secretary and has served as President and Vice President.

She is a retired educator with more than 30 years experience as a teacher, staff developer, and public school administrator. Her many duties included oversight of Title 1, reading, curriculum and instruction. She was instrumental in developing and implementing the middle school concept. She helped to create the district's first magnet program. She has pushed for implementation of a rigorous science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) curriculum.

Dr. Votaw received her bachelor's degree in English; a master's degree in English, and doctorate in curriculum and instruction from New Mexico State University.

*We invite you to join us for lunch.*

**Board Highlights - September 5, 2013** - *Bonnie Burn on behalf of Christina Little, Secretary*

Roberta Gran, Vice President for Program, will be leading the League during the absence of Erika Graf-Webster, who is on medical leave. To accommodate Erika's absence, the Board Retreat has been rescheduled for November 6 at Gwen Hanson's home.

Board members listened to a presentation by Sue Cain, Co-Chair, Education Committee, and approved plans for meeting with local NM legislators about early childhood education, grading of schools, funding K-12, teacher evaluation and professional development, as priority legislation for the committee. A public forum about education is planned for fall 2014 preceding the 2015 NM legislative session.

The Board also agreed that absent written instructions from the donor, the principal and interest of the member scholarship will be used, if circumstances warrant.

Programs for the next few months include:

- November 11, Social Event, 4:30 - 6:00 p.m, at Sunset Grill, Sonoma Golf Course, NM Senator William Soules, Guest Speaker.
- December 7, Legislative Breakfast. In place of a League's Holiday Social, a celebration of the League's birthday is being planned for February 15.

Priority Advocacy Issues will be identified at the League's Program Planning meeting scheduled for January 13.

**Look Back - Confronting Water Scarcity in New Mexico's Future, Sam Fernald, Ph.D., Director, New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute, September 9, 2013**

*Bob Burn, Reporting*

The New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute at New Mexico State University was established as a result of the severe New Mexico drought in the 1950s. In 1964, the Institute served as a national model for the establishment of similar organizations throughout the United States.

The history of New Mexico and the Southwest United States has recorded continuous cycles of dry periods and wet periods. These cycles from the distant past have been measured by the size of growth rings in tree trunks. In about 200 A.D., a drought lasted for 150 years; in the 1600s, a 75-year drought was recorded. Recently, from 1950 through 1970, drought caused a severe drop in Elephant Butte Reservoir (EBR) levels with minimal water release into the Rio Grande. From 1980 to 2000, a wet period occurred that necessitated extra water releases to prevent spillage over the EBR and Caballo Reservoir dams. Historically, hydrologists had to go back over 2,000 years to observe a comparable wet period. Now we are in another period of severe drought with the EBR at about 3% of capacity. While it would be desirable to be able to accurately predict dry and wet periods, scientists have been unable to do so.

Water inventory in New Mexico is measured in acre-feet (AF). An acre-foot is the amount of water that would cover one acre of land to a depth of one foot. The single greatest source of water in the state is precipitation, that is, rain fall, which amounts to about 85 million AF annually. Unfortunately, evaporation is the largest loss of water, about 82 million AF annually. And, as global temperatures rise, the evaporation rate will increase dramatically so the ratio of precipitation to evaporation decreases resulting in an ever increasing loss of good water. Inflow of water from snow melt is about 2.4 million AF while net outflow to Texas, Mexico, and elsewhere is greater at about 3.4 million AF. When these and all other sources and losses of surface water are tabulated, New Mexico consumes more water than is available. The difference is made up by pumping ground water, that is, underground water, via wells.

Eighty percent of Rio Grande water is snow melt runoff from Colorado and New Mexico. The historical mountain snowpack average is 37 inches. In 2013, the snowpack was 22 inches. Typically, the runoff peaks in June. This year, it peaked in March which is why so little Rio Grande water was available to farmers.

Agriculture in New Mexico consumes about 3 million AF annually (1.7 million from surface water and 1.3 million from wells) which is

*(Continued on page 8)*



### **New Members**

Joanne & Richard Ferrary  
6100 Morning Sun Way  
Las Cruces, NM 88012  
Tel: (575) 649-1231  
Email: rjferrary53@gmail.com

Carolyn Wolin  
3918 Aegean Rd.  
Las Cruces, NM 88012  
Tel: (575) 520-5749  
Email: carolynw@isp.com

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### *Friends of the League*

John Ameriks, M.D.  
Anonymous  
Robert Buggert  
Sharon Burbano  
Reed R. Burn  
Joseph P. Camunez, D.D.S.  
Dental Associates PA,  
David Sudimack, D.D.S.  
Donald Dresp  
Edward Jones - Connie Lee  
Roberta Gran  
Nancy & Ken Hall  
Win Jacobs  
Keller Williams Realty, Laura Szalay  
Al Kissling  
Pat Kratz  
Marlene Lavetts  
Lilley & O'Connell Law Offices  
Louise P. Lockhart  
Barbara Myers  
Jean Ossorio  
Clifford Pelton  
Nancy Phillips  
Kathryn Schultz  
Sunspot Solar Energy  
Donna Tate  
Williams Design Group, Inc.  
Zia Engineering & Environment  
Consultants

*Thank You*



# League News



## League of Women Voters of New

**Mexico** testified before the Public Regulation Commissioners at its hearing on September 10 concerning Rule 17.9.572, a rule that requires a diverse mix of renewable energy sources for electric utilities. Since its adoption in December 2013, electric utilities have been trying to amend or overturn it.

In support of the LWVNM's advocacy efforts, the Greater Las Cruces League forwarded a letter to the commissioners.

September 8, 2013

Commissioner Ben Hall, District 5  
Public Regulation Commission  
PERA Building - 1120 Paseo de Peralta  
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Re: Utilities Matters, 13-00286-UT, Rule 17.9.572

Dear Commissioner Hall:

We are asking you to oppose any changes to the current rule.

This rule was approved in December 2012 after considerable vetting and testimony from the public. In the succeeding nine months, changes have not occurred that would necessitate further action on the rule. The length of time since enactment is too short to allow for analysis of the impact of the rule. If a utility is not able to meet the Reasonable Cost Threshold and the Diversity Rule, the Renewable Energy Act does allow for exemptions.

Since its enactment, the diversity requirement enabled installation of solar power in more homes and a job-creation solar industry has developed. We believe that removing the diversity requirement would allow utilities to buy credits from out-of-state wind farms, an effort that neither creates renewable energy sources in New

Mexico nor adds jobs to an economy in need of work.

It is important that we move forward with renewable energy sources so that use of coal and fossil fuels can be minimized and eventually eliminated. Removing the avoided costs may result in an increase in the cost of renewable energy. However, hidden costs such as medical bills and increased employee absenteeism due to health issues may be reduced.

Therefore, we stand in support of retaining the current Reasonable Cost Threshold and the Diversity Rule.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Erika Graf-Webster, President

cc: Commissioners Karen Montoya, Patrick Lyons, Valerie Espinoza, and Theresa Becenti-Aguilar

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## League of Women Voters of the United States

celebrated the signing of the U.S. Constitution (September 17) by focusing on restoring the Voting Rights Act of 1965. President Elisabeth McNamara participated in a panel discussion sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Maryland. She spoke about the impact of the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder*, and urged vigilance by all of us in continuing to move the country toward greater equality, fairness and civic participation.

The League submitted a letter to the Presidential Commission on Election Administration outlining its suggestions for improving the election process: secure online voter registration, permanent and portable statewide voter registration, expanded early voting, and improved polling place management.

## LEAGUE ABOUT TOWN

League members participated in several important events held in Las Cruces during September.

On September 13, at the Unitarian Universalist Church, Kaithlin Sopoci-Belknap spoke about efforts by the **Move to Amend** organization to remove Corporate personhood through an amendment process to the U.S. Constitution. Her lively presentation discussed the origins of corporations and then traced the case-by-case decisions that granted personhood to corporations although this artificial entity is not mentioned in the U.S. Constitution. Move to Amend is building a grass roots organization and expects to proceed toward an amendment following the model of the abolition and women's suffrage movements.

The **Public Deliberative Center of NM** conducted a public forum entitled, "What Should Be New Mexico's Policy Toward Recreational Marijuana Uses" on September 17 at the New Enterprise Center. Sponsored by the Kettering Foundation, the discussion focused on three issues:

1. Enforcing state laws more strongly.
2. Or reducing penalties for possession of small amounts of marijuana and increasing incentives and opportunities for people to enter treatment programs if an addiction is present. This approach would substitute simple citations and fines, like traffic tickets, in place of jail terms and criminal fines.
3. Or the state could legalize, tax and regulate marijuana, letting any adult buy and possess small amounts for personal use, but with a regulatory system in place to provide control over quality and distribution.

The program is being offered in five places in NM. Results of the discussions will be compiled in a final report that will be offered to legislators and others who work with public policy.

The annual **Domenici Public Policy Conference** was held on September 18-19 at the Las Cruces Convention Center. The topics and speakers attracted about 900 people, including some League members. Included in the ten sessions: U.S. China Relations; U.S. energy policy, including an interesting session on the pros and cons of fracking; health care; policy challenges in the Middle East; and White Sands Missile Range sustainable test and evaluation mission were covered. NM Governor Susana Martinez's address concluded the program. The Convention Center provided a more than adequate venue for the event, and good food was served both days.

### League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces

#### VOTER SERVICES CALENDAR Las Cruces Municipal Election

November 5, 2013

**September 24** - Candidate Filing Deadline.

**October 1** - Certification of candidates by the Las Cruces City Clerk.

**October 7** - **Voters Guide** published in Las Cruces Sun-News

**October 8** - Voter Registration Closes

#### October 8

**Candidates Forum**, 6-8 p.m.,  
City Hall Council Chamber  
Councilors for Districts 3, 5, & 6  
Municipal Judge, Div. II

**October 9** - Absentee Voting Begins

**October 16** - In-Person Voting Begins

**November 2** - Early and Absentee Voting Ends

#### November 5

Municipal Election using  
Voting Convenience Centers

**NM Legislative Behavioral Health Subcommittee Meeting**, September 3, 2013,  
NMSU Barbara Hubbard Room, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. - *Bonnie Burn, Reporting*

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**Subcommittee Membership**

Senator Benny Shendo, Jr, Chair

**Members:**

Representative Phillip Archuleta  
 Senator Sue Wilson Beffort  
 Senator Craig W. Brandt  
 Representative Sandra D. Jeff  
 Senator Howie C. Morales  
 Senator Bill B. O'Neill  
 Senator Gerald Ortiz y Pino  
 Representative Paul A. Pacheco  
 Senator Mary Kay Papen  
 Senator Sander Rue  
 Representative Edward C. Sandoval

All 12 members of the subcommittee were present. Senate President Pro-tem Mary Kay Papen and Representative Phillip Archuleta, co-chair, replacing Representative Stephen Easley, who passed away in August, are members of the subcommittee. Additionally, Senator William Soules and Representative Mary Helen Garcia from the Doña Ana delegation sat at the table.

Dr. Tilahun Adera, Dean and Professor, College of Health and Social Services, and Dr. Pamela Schultz, School of Nursing, welcomed members of the subcommittee and the audience to NMSU.

The main focus of this subcommittee hearing was current changes in provider service for people who need mental health services in New Mexico. Through an audit conducted by Public Consulting Services (PCS), a Boston-based company, \$36 million in Medicaid fraud is alleged

among 15 New Mexico behavioral health providers whose Medicaid funding was immediately frozen and whose services were taken over by providers from the State of Arizona. The audit is currently being reviewed by the NM Attorney General and a gag order prevents information about the alleged charges from being released.

The meeting opened with a panel discussion of the status of behavioral health service. Presenters were:

- Brent Earnest, Deputy Secretary, Human Services Department (HSD), who came instead of Secretary Sidonie Squier who was recovering from a medical problem.
- Larry Heyeck, Deputy General Counsel, HSD, and
- Diana McWilliams, Chief Executive Officer, Interagency Behavioral Health Purchasing Collaborative and Director, Behavioral Health Services Division, HSD

Mr. Earnest provided an overview of events that led to the audit and further actions. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) provides new tools to detect billing fraud. When fraud is detected, reimbursement payment is stopped, whether warranted or not. This occurs in Medicare as well as Medicaid. This provision of the federal guidelines went into effect in March, 2011. Using this tool, HSD acted upon referrals received from OptumHealth, a company that manages mental health, substance abuse, and recovery resources for all New Mexicans. HSD then entered into a contract with Public Consulting Group (PCG) to conduct a claims audit based on referrals from OptumHealth. When the audit results became available, HSD contacted the NM Attorney General and other agencies that should be involved with fraud.

Mr. Heyeck opened his remarks with an overview chart that showed the conflicts of interest that could occur among the providers. Because of the gag order, information could not be revealed related to the audit; however, through web site searches of information that is in the public domain, Mr. Heyeck suggested connections between ownership and leasing

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**Subcommittee** *(Continued from page 6)*

agreements and relationships with other agencies that could result in fraud.

Ms. McWilliams gave a report on the status of behavioral health service in the transition to Arizona companies. Eighty-eight percent of the staff of the 15 providers involved has been retained. Consumers have come in and signed required releases and other papers related to their treatment. Medical records have been photocopied or released or new assessments and treatment plans have been developed. There may be some problems such as behavioral health services provided in schools. HSD is handling individual inquiries and concerns. Some positive stories were related.

Mr. Earnest provided information about payment of services while Medicaid funds are frozen. To ensure no disruption in service, HSD transferred \$17.8 million within its department budget to cover payment of salaries of those employees who remained on the job. Approximately \$6.23 million has been spent; \$4 million on payroll, and \$1.4 million on professional services. About \$600,000 has been spent on operations.

OptumHealth has been the oversight contractor since

2009. Its contract ends on December 31, 2013. OptumHealth receives \$43 million in payment for services. The contracts with the Arizona companies expire on December 31, 2013.

Legislators carried on the discussion with the panel for about four hours, working through lunch hour. During that time, issues were raised about the role of whistleblowers (and there were some) in initiating the audit; the length of time it took for OptumHealth to initiate a claims audit when OptumHealth has been the oversight agency since 2009; and the impact of provider change to Centennial Care and full implementation of the Affordable Health Care Act were brought up.

The next item on the agenda was a presentation by Knicole Emanuel, Partner in Williams Mullens law firm. Using a PowerPoint presentation, Ms. Emanuel described North Carolina's Medicaid audit experience that was conducted by the Public Consulting Group (PCG). Ms. Emanuel introduced the term, Recovery Audit Contractor (RAC) Program, that was created through the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 to identify and recover improper Medicare payments paid to healthcare providers under the fee-for-service Medicare plan. This requirement now

has been mandated for the Medicaid program, and resulted in the North Carolina audit.

Ms. Emanuel questioned the accuracy of PCG's audit. Each audit looks at a small number of cases, 100-150, and extrapolates a recoverable amount based on the findings of the audit. In the case of North Carolina, the extrapolation figure was \$702,000 in recoverable costs. When challenged, the amount of recoverable costs was reduced to \$336.

How accurate is the audit was the major challenge Ms. Emanuel raised for other states that might be undergoing Medicaid audits. She shared a list of "bloopers" that she identified related to PCG's audit such as policy number changes that occurred each year making matching data to data from previous years difficult; education and training of PCG employees to conduct an accurate audit; questions bring referred to a web site rather a human contact; prior authorization not required; no medical necessity; and accuracy of extrapolation. Her recommendation was that audit results be appealed; her experience with appeals is very successful.

Thomas Aldridge, a manager of PCG who has been with PCG for 15 years, joined Ms. Emanuel at the panel table

*(Continued on page 8)*

**Subcommittee** *(Continued from page 7)*

and gave testimony about PCG's credentials and involvement with the North Carolina and New Mexico claims audits. He noted, as did Mr. Earnest, that PCG was on the approved Government Services Agency (GSA) list of suggested Recovery Audit Contractors. With regard to the reduction of extrapolated recovered costs in North Carolina, Mr. Aldridge said that an additional 159 documents were examined that resulted in the reduction. This called into question a claims audit done by computer software that demands an exact match of information requested by the computer and that shown on the documents under examination. In the New Mexico audit, 150 documents from providers were examined. The PCG auditors did go on site during an unscheduled visit and stayed on site until the documents were produced.

Senate President Pro-Tem Mary Kay Papen asked about the involvement of PCG in the vetting of the Arizona companies. Mr. Aldridge did accompany HSD officials to Arizona to meet with prospective companies. Senator Papen raised the issue of whether this was a conflict of interest; Mr. Aldridge did not see this as a conflict of interest because this travel was undertaken before the audit contract was awarded.

The final presentation of the day was about NM Quality Audits of Managed Care Organizations for Medicaid Requirements. Three panelists discussed the quality audits conducted on OptumHealth, the coordinating company of the NM regional support network for behavioral health providers. The panel members were:

- Greg Lujan, Project Manager, Behavioral Health, HealthInsight New Mexico.
- Margaret A. White, Director, External Quality Review, HealthInsight New Mexico
- William Boyd Kleefisch, Executive Director, HealthInsight New Mexico

The panelists were clear in differentiating between quality audits that ensure that the state is "getting what it is paying for," and claims audits that review billing accuracy. OptumHealth has been in compliance. OptumHealth does the claims audits for the behavioral health providers in NM.

The public had an opportunity to speak before the meeting was adjourned. One issue raised was due process for the organizations that had their funding frozen and were essentially put out of business. Although they may be exonerated in the future, it will be hard or impossible to begin anew. Concern was expressed about the future of behavioral health care in New Mexico. The contracts with the Arizona companies expire on December 31, 2013. What happens after that date was an issue not only raised during public comment but throughout the day.

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**Dr. Fernald** *(Continued from page 3)*

78% of state water consumption. Public municipalities and facilities consume about 322,000 AF (280,000 surface and 42,000 wells) which is only 8% of state water consumption. There are about 20 billion AF of ground water available in the state, but only about 3 billion AF are good fresh water and 1.4 billion AF are slightly saline that can be converted to fresh water. Our Mesilla Bolson is about 3,000 feet deep at its deepest point, but only the first 300 to 600 feet are good, fresh water. We are consuming a net of about 10 feet every year, more in drought years and less in wet years, so it would seem that we have 30 to 60 years of good water remaining. It appears that the new normal for the next 200 years in New Mexico will be excessive drought.



**Education Update Luncheon**, Greater Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce,  
August 29, 2013, 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 -p.m. - *Erika Graf-Webster and Bonnie Burn, Reporting*

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This meeting was organized by the Las Cruces Chamber of Commerce Education Committee headed by Leslie Cervantes. The purpose of the meeting was to bring the community up to date about new approaches and activities at NMSU, DACC and the Las Cruces School System.

The meeting started with recognition of local business leaders with regard to their support of education. The committee also gave the Team Citizenship Award to the Children's Reading Foundation of Doña Ana County for its program, "Ready for Kindergarten." This program focuses primarily on the parents' role in getting their children ready to enter the formal school system. The Children's Reading Foundation has distributed 27,000 books within Doña Ana County as part of this effort.

**Garrey Carruthers, president, New Mexico State University (NMSU)**, spoke about the university's efforts to better serve the student body. Although it is said that it can't be done, he is bringing a business model to an educational institution. A newly adopted motto, *transforming lives through discovery*, is more representative of the university's education process. A strategic plan, Vision 2020, consisting of priorities that are anchored to points of achievement, was adopted. The priority issues for 2013 are:

- Decrease time to graduation.
- Increase graduate student enrollment.
- Enhance the diversity of faculty, staff, and students.
- Expand research activity.
- Increase employee compensation.

Dr. Carruthers opened his remarks with a poignant story about Brad Gordon who found his success later in life through his studies at NMSU. Mr. Gordon's story reveals two important points: (1) don't be afraid to fail and (2) individuals are born twice--once at birth and again when discovering themselves.

**Andy Burke, Interim President, Doña Ana Community College (DACC)**, described DACC as a typical community college that primarily serves the adult learner. In addition to the NMSU and East Mesa campuses, there are six other centers located in Gadsden, Sunland Park, Mesquite, Chaparral, and Hatch along with the Workforce Center. DACC is actually the largest community college in the state. More of DACC's administrative operations are moving from the NMSU to the East Mesa campus. The student population reflects the poverty and low educational achievement in the current local population. Between three and ten percent of the students go on to achieve bachelor degrees. The average age of students is about mid-20s, 56% of the student population are females and 72% are of Hispanic ethnicity. Many students are studying to complete a general education diploma (GED). In addition to associate degree programs, there are many programs in which certification can be gained.

DACC is making progress in recovering accreditation for its Nursing School. At present, six full-time faculty have been hired and approximately 35 students are enrolled in the program. Appropriate reports are being submitted as required during this two-year period as DACC moves toward regaining accreditation.

DACC seeks to increase student enrollment and to increase performance practices that enable students to complete academic and degree programs on time. The curriculum has a strong focus on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), and the health field.

This year DACC is celebrating its 40th anniversary, having started in a small building on S. Espina Street in the current location occupied by Starbuck's Coffee Shop. Watch the local newspapers for

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## Education *(Continued from page 9)*

announcements of activities during homecoming, October 25 and 26.

**Stan Rounds, Superintendent, Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS)** distributed the 2013 Annual Community Report, Children Come First. Like President Carruthers, Superintendent Rounds reiterated that failure is not an option for students in the LCPS system. He went on to describe the success of the Early College High School that now has 500 students with zero drop outs. The graduation rate in the district has risen from 54.6% six years ago to 72% in 2013. The new goal is 85% graduation and 85% proficiency by May 2016.

Some of the initiatives underway to achieve these goals are:

- JUMP Program (Joint Ungraded Multiage Primary) that involves kindergarten through grade 2 students (ages five-eight) seeking to achieve proficiency in reading. The program is two years old, involves seven elementary schools, 14 teachers, and 280 students. Proficiency goal is 85%.
- Turnaround Program is a new approach to school improvement. Turnaround specialists at the University of Virginia developed a new approach for school improvement in low performing schools. Adopted by LCPS (2012/13) in several elementary schools, the program now includes some middle schools. The program includes high expectations, ongoing rigorous assessments that help to guide and refine instruction, analyzing student performance and urgent commitment to action. The Institute for Parent Engagement (IPE) is creating a stronger relationship between parents and the school system, a necessary component for success for the program.
- Middle School Redesign focuses on project-based instruction. This enables students to associate what they are

learning with application to concrete problem-solving, and is helping students learn more quickly and thoroughly.

- Leading Edge Alternative Program (LEAP) is a program designed for students in grades 6 through 8 who are in danger of dropping out of school due to poor attendance, not responding to a more traditional school environment or needing a smaller school setting to be successful. Admission to the new school named Mesilla Valley Alternative Middle School (MVAMS) is based on three criteria: (1) referred by their current school counselor (2) approved by their parents to attend MVAMS; and (3) interviewed by MVAMS staff. The interviews are conducted with parents and the student to share information about placement, gain an understanding of the student's physical and social needs prior to placement, and determine the students behavior and program expectations. Prior to this school year, the school has been operating as Mesilla Valley Training Center. Students at MVAMS will spend their school day studying and actively participating in an interdisciplinary curriculum that focuses on the core curriculum (math, English, science, and social studies) while blending with technical studies such as culinary arts, horticulture, and woodworking.
- San Andres High School has a new name, Rio Grande Preparatory Institute. A newly designed curriculum will partner students with business. The goal is to have the student graduate with a diploma, an industry certification, and a job offer.

Superintendent Rounds mentioned the renovation that is taking place at Las Cruces High School. He also invited everyone to visit the schools.

## LEAGUE OBSERVER REPORTS

*The League's Observer Corps can enable greater coverage and information gathering, provide early warning of upcoming issues of concern, increase League's visibility, and assist in networking with other groups. We appreciate the reports that are submitted by Observers. Following the League practice of publishing nonpartisan, objective reports, the information submitted may be edited for content and brevity.*

### **Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS) Board Meeting**, Tuesday, September 17, 2013, 6:30 p.m. - *Sue Cain, Observer*

All members of the board except Barbara Hall were present.

Superintendent Rounds recognized Project Link which was organized to provide essential services to homeless children in our LCPS. Approximately 3% of all students in our public schools, K-12 are homeless. This translates into 750+ students who lack a permanent home base. Services include supplies needed for school (backpacks, notebooks, etc.), food, clothing, medical needs and other essentials.

The Superintendent's Report included the following:

- An update on the Court Youth Center Project on Del Rey that is expanding its physical facilities.
- Dr. Elizabeth Marrufo, Associate Superintendent, reported on the Human Resources Development Administrators Academy that helps administrators increase their knowledge and skills in effective leadership.
- LCPS's Turnaround School Initiative involved an intensive week's training at University of Virginia to teach administrators and teachers how to improve and provide educational success for all students. Tiffany Gomez, Principal at Columbia Elementary School, shared what the training included and made a dynamic presentation that describes the activities and work that is being done by teachers and administrators at her school to "Turnaround" Columbia. The goal is an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for success for every student, not just special education

students. The Turnaround Initiative is to complete a 90-day plan that includes instructional goals, a positive school learning environment, and data-driven instruction. An important goal is to develop "seven habits of happy kids."

Dr. Steven Sanchez, Deputy Superintendent for Instruction

- Reviewed the District's Educational Plan for Student Success, an individualized student plan that is reviewed, updated, and involves parents.
- Discussed a Head Start Program grant, approximately \$4 million, that will serve 413 three- and four-year-old students. \$2.7 million will be used for school readiness and the remainder for staffing, organization, and budget. This is the most we can request for funding of Head Start at this time.

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### **Mesilla Valley Public Housing Authority Tuesday**, September 17, 2013 - *Vicki Simons, Observer*

The regular monthly Board meeting of MVPHA began at noon, chaired by Arturo Marrujo, Vice-Chair. Art Jiron ex-Chair resigned in August. Commissioners Cordero and Olguin-Fisher also were present.

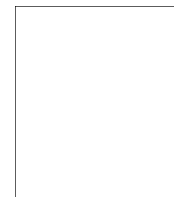
The public was dismissed as the Board went into Executive session to receive the audit report.

On completion of the Executive session, the Board heard regular staff reports and the meeting was adjourned.



League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces  
 P.O. Box 8322  
 Las Cruces, NM 88006-8322

(575) 524-VOTE (8683)  
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**FIRST CLASS**



**October 2013**  
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**Membership Application**



**Membership:** Individual (\$60), 2nd Household Member (\$30), and Students (\$30)  
**New Members joining after November 1 pay half-dues.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**2nd Household:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **City/State/Zip:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Cell:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Contribution to the League Make Check payable to LWV of Greater Las Cruces

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Contribution to the Education Fund (Tax Deductible) Make check payable to  
 League of Women Voters Education Fund

**All checks should be mailed to**

League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces, P.O. Box 8322, Las Cruces, NM 88006-8322

The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces, 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.