

Looking Back: Local League of Women Voters celebrates 35th anniversary

Sandy Parker / Naples / President, League of Women Voters of Collier County

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The League of Women Voters of Collier County marks its 35th anniversary this year in conjunction with the national league's 90th anniversary.

In 1975, Virginia Corkran founded the local Collier County League. She gathered 54 founding women — and she remains active to this day. Corkran came to Naples after living in Fargo, N.D., and founding a league there, and participating in league activities in every state in which she lived.

Corkran was also the first woman elected to Naples City Council. Her comment: "The league has been an important part of my life. I was very happy to work on the league in Naples and establish the voice of the league here."

Other founding members included Ruth Van Doren and Betty Peterson. Virginia Grant Russell was elected as the first president and her officers were Florence Bischel, Emily Jaffer, Onnie Herrup, Marie Mueller and Vi Barclay.

The Collier County league now has 145 women and men members who follow an ongoing goal to be a trusted force for change and good government.

Entering a new era, the Collier County league continues to do what it has been trusted to do: discuss the important issues, ask the difficult questions and demand accountability from our government. The league is the organization where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.

This year the Collier County league has held programs on topics such as the changing face of Everglades restoration and Hometown Democracy, and has participated with the Collier County Public Schools and the 4-H in the Know Your County Government Teen Citizenship Program.

Also this year, the league, led by members Joyce Fletcher and Kathleen Slebodnik, helped gather petitions for redistricting reform, resulting in the inclusion of Amendments 5 and 6 on the November 2010 ballot. These amendments further clarify the standards for fairly drawing the voting districts for state and congressional representatives following compilation of the 2010 census figures.