



Lydia Galton  
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## Watching local government

League of Women Voters

sunshine; and I monitor a plant's growth and move quickly to arrest a problem but, most importantly, I know when to give up and chuck a plant that is too rotted, too diseased or too infested to keep.

Members of the League of Women Voters are also good gardeners:

**We watch.** Whether at School Board Meetings, Board of County Commissioners meetings, or advisory committee meetings, we make sure that all the "Sunshine Laws" are obeyed.

**We dig.** We read meeting agendas to make sure due notice has been given and all the facts are revealed.

**We weed.** We examine the bills that our local legislators sponsor in Tallahassee and, along with other leagues statewide, we research major legislation produced by our legislators. When we have good reasons to object to or promote a bill, we intercede as quickly as possible.

**We cultivate.** We communicate with our elected officials so that they know which direction we think they should take.

**We amend the soil.** We research the state Constitution and its many statutes to make sure the fundamentals outlined there are followed and relevant and propose changes that will better meet the people's needs.

Join the League or do it on your own, but watch what your elected officials are doing as carefully as you inspect your favorite bromeliad or African violet. Given the gravity of the issues facing our county, the need for public access to governmental decisions and policies is greater than ever. This raw information allows citizens to hold their government accountable. It is not a television personality's opinion nor a reporter's synopsis, but the actual words of a decision or statement that provide clarity and insight.

You may watch past Board of County Commissioners meetings as well as Advisory Board meetings and also find the schedule for future meetings on line at <http://www.colliergov.net/Index.aspx?page=2280>. BCC meetings can be watched "live" on Channel 97. All regular School Board Meetings, Town Hall Meetings, Subcommittee Meetings and School Board Workshops are televised "live" on Channel 99 and then replayed on the following weekend at 12:00 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday. Meeting schedules can be accessed at The Education Channel.

For more information about the League of Women Voters of Collier County: <http://www.lwvcolliercounty.org/> or call 239.263.4656.

**F**unny how life experiences often are serendipitous. My former tenure as the president of the Naples Garden Club seems to synchronize very well with my new post as the president of the League of Women Voters. Both activities require careful monitoring for the highest yield. Like Thomas Jefferson, I believe "no occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of the garden."

Like Jefferson, and all good gardeners, I know how to cultivate the soil for different plant types; I measure carefully when I water or feed a plant; I make sure light is available in the right amount because no plant can thrive without

## Neighborhood Health Clinic receives Charity Navigator's highest rank

**C**harity Navigator, a premier independent charity evaluator, has awarded the Neighborhood Health Clinic with its highest four-star rating for sound fiscal management for a second consecutive year. According to the evaluation group, this organization executes its mission in a fiscally responsible way that outperforms most other charities in America.

Charity Navigator is based in New Jersey and evaluates

over 5,000 nonprofit organizations throughout the United States. Only 20 percent of the charities rated by the group have received the distinction consecutively.

To learn more about how Charity Navigator helps promote transparency and accountability, and gives the general public a chance to learn about nonprofit best practices, visit [www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org).

The Neighborhood Health Clinic, a medical home

for the working poor in Collier County, provides quality medical care using a volunteer professional staff. The Neighborhood Health Clinic just celebrated its 11th anniversary. The organization maintains a cost-effective status through the work of 500 volunteers and only five full time paid staff. To volunteer or donate, visit [www.neighborhoodhealthclinic.org](http://www.neighborhoodhealthclinic.org) or call 239.261.6600.



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