

June 2023 LWVNYS Awards Presentation
Presented by Jane Colvin, LWV of NYS

I am delighted to be presenting the League's inaugural award for Thinking Out of the Box.

This is the newest award we created this year to acknowledge and honor a league that created and implemented a program, or an activity, that is, well, outside of the box – something above and beyond traditional league activities.

And, as you may recall, this new award was included under the category of Strengthening Your League - because this is something we need to do in order to do everything else we need to do.

It was a difficult choice because we received excellent submissions from the St Lawrence County MAL, the League of the Hamptons, Shelter Island and the North Fork, and the League of the North Country. Each showed imagination and creativity as well as the promise to strengthen their League.

But of course, we had to decide on one.

So, please join me in congratulating the St. Lawrence County MAL for their innovative initiative in creating the League of Women Voters NYS Rural Caucus.

Here's why we selected them to receive the award:

As they explained in their application, "the original idea was to create a space where local Leagues in rural areas, or in counties that include large rural areas...could share their experiences of doing League work in rural communities."

By creating the Rural Caucus to share common problems and effective solutions, the St Lawrence County MAL not only strengthened its league but helped other rural leagues as well.

The influence and impact of the Rural Caucus have been and continue to be felt both locally AND nationally.

Locally, they have strength in numbers with 14 local leagues representing 19 counties across the State. At the State League, the Caucus has raised awareness of rural affairs and became an Issue Committee. And for the first time, rural issues were mentioned in the 2023 editions of the NYS Legislative Agenda and Pre-Budget Advocacy Packet.

Nationally, they have made an impactful impression as well.

- After learning of the NYS Rural Caucus, rural leagues in Texas formed a Rural Caucus for that state
- A fledgling National Rural Affairs Caucus has been started, and
- the Digital Equity Concurrence that dealt with affordable broadband access and was adopted at the National League convention in 2023 was a direct result of a survey initiated by the NYS Rural Caucus about the most pressing issues among leagues in rural areas.

Please join me in congratulating this year's winner of the Thinking Out of The Box Award.