

League of Women Voters protects democracy, educates

Posted November 3, 2023



Helen Kotzky has been volunteering with the League of Women Voters since 2018. As part of her responsibilities, she visits North Shore communities to help register eligible voters at events.

COURTESY HELEN KOTZKY

By [Roksana Amid](#)

Election season is a time when you'll see canvassers at your door, lots of political literature in your mailbox, robocalls, text messages and campaign videos spilling across social media. As Election Day approaches, it can be hard to make sense of the information overload.

The League of Women Voters can certainly help. The nonpartisan, grass-roots nonprofit is dedicated to empowering people to participate in democracy. The league plays a vital, and practical, role in the realm of politics, tending to the informational needs of voters by conducting candidate surveys and hosting debates. Most recently, LWV representatives visited Glen Cove to moderate mayoral and City Council forums.

The league relies on dedicated volunteers like Glen Cove resident Helen Kotzky to reach the 700 communities across the United States in which it is active.

"People who join the league are a select group of people who are interested in certain things, but they're serious, and are focused on trying to solve problems and make things better," Kotzky said, "and getting more people to

participate by registering voters and more different kinds of voters. That's one of the most basic things you can do." Kotzky, a music teacher, joined the league after retiring from the Cold Spring Harbor Central School District in 2018. She had known about the league since her mother, Dorothy Hill, was a volunteer in Columbia, South Carolina. Kotzky has fond childhood memories of helping her mother hand out flyers at local gas stations, and listening as she led discussions about voter rights in her daughter's Girl Scout troop in the 1960s.

"It's formative when you're a kid, and you get exposed to it, you see that it's valuable," Kotzky said. "I was proud of her, so I figured I'd carry that on."

Kotzky has been involved in league activities for the past five years, giving a virtual presentation on redistricting for the Glen Cove Public Library in 2022 that attracted almost 600 views, serving on candidate forum teams, providing tech support for virtual board meetings, canvassing in low-turnout areas to encourage registration and voting, and helping the league distribute information in multiple languages to libraries, houses of worship and community service organizations. When she joined the board of directors for the league's Port Washington and Manhasset, she agreed to chair voter outreach, help direct deputy chairs in Port Washington and Manhasset and lead the organization's efforts in Glen Cove.

Kotzky became the chair of the league's voter outreach initiative in 2022, and last summer and fall she led a several-months-long effort to build relationships in an area that has previously had minimal league presence or visibility. While the initial objective was a get-out-the-vote project among Spanish speakers in Glen Cove, Kotzky's work has developed sustainable relationships in the city and spurred league involvement elsewhere on the North Shore.

She opened doors and made the league more visible by building a partnership with La Fuerza Unida, a Hispanic social service organization based in Glen Cove that has operated for more than 40 years and now runs food banks, youth programs, housing initiatives and Department of Homeland Security approved immigration appeals. That partnership, and Kotzky's leadership of get-out-the-vote efforts in Glen Cove, earned her a place on the city's Inter-Agency Council, which includes more than 50 service agencies. As a member of both organizations, the league can now build relationships with leaders of community groups working with under-served populations in Glen Cove. Soon after accepting the board position, Kotzky applied for and received a League of Women Voters of New York Making Democracy Work grant of \$500 for voter outreach in Glen Cove, where Hispanics make up over 30 percent of the population. After receiving the grant in August, Kotzky approached La Fuerza Unida, Glen Cove's premier Hispanic organization, to discuss how they might work together on getting out the vote this fall.

"Helen's success should be measured not simply by how many people her team registered or caused to vote, or how many people viewed the league's name and logo multiple times," Regina Goutevenier, president of the league's Port Washington and Manhasset chapter said. "But rather in terms of creating and strengthening new league partnerships."