



## MEDIA RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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October 28, 2016 is a significant date for the League of Women Voters of Greater Tucson (LWVGT). It is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first official meeting of the organization that took place at the historic YWCA in Tucson in 1941. Its founding members were women of the community whose overriding purpose was to “pursue every avenue that will help citizens **care**, encourage citizens to **learn**, and show he or she the many ways open for informal, constructive and effective **citizen participation**”, to quote from an early board report.

Among the 29 founding members (full list below), there is interesting background on several who were active in the League in its beginning and early years. Among them were: **Mary Jeffries Bruce** founded the popular Sunday Evening Forums and engaged distinguished speakers including Martin Luther King Jr, Ralph Nader, Barry Goldwater and David Brinkley; **Helen D’Autremont**, the first League President, was a philanthropist who helped found an interracial housing development in the city and in 1962 was named Tucson Woman of the Year; Arizona native **Ora DeConcini Martin**, was named Arizona Mother of the Year in 1978 and later honored as an outstanding philanthropist of the Tucson Symphony, University of Arizona and other community organizations; **Kathryn Maxwell**, a respected and tireless black educator, taught the first integrated class in the Marana School District; **Thelma McQuade**, a land appraiser, was active in the integration of local schools; **Bernice Porter** opened a nursery with her husband at Grant and Alvernon, now known as the Tucson Botanical Gardens; **Margaret Sanger Slee** is considered the founder of the modern birth control movement and Planned Parenthood who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and awarded the Presidential Medal of Honor in 1966 by President Johnson; **Grace Sternberg** served the League and also was a founder of the Tucson Museum of Art; and **Dr. Marguerite Steel Williams**, a medical doctor listed in *Arizona Women Who Made a Difference*.

Historical records of the League reveal the organization’s early efforts, many of which continue today:

- Voter Registration
- Created materials urging voter registration (distributed in bank statements, utility bills and grocery bags in the 1940’s)

- Developed handouts on voting requirements
- Involved in local civil defense efforts
- Successfully advocated employment of a policewoman to handle issues of minors/women
- Organized candidate meetings (precursor of candidate forums)
- Studied needs of minority groups in Tucson/ advocated for low cost housing for 'Negroes'
- Studied the issues of converting from a wartime to peacetime economy (mid-1940's)
- Published a directory of public officials biennially (today known as "The Citizen's Directory of Elected Officials")
- Studied state election laws
- Worked for a successful bond issue to establish a Juvenile Detention Home
- Offered a Speaker's Bureau program
- Studied soil and water conservation
- Advocated for and demonstrated voting machines in the county
- Successfully lobbied for a Tucson Master Plan to direct Tucson's growth (1960's)
- Supported urban renewal, low cost housing and minimum housing codes
- Initiated having observers attend and report on local government meetings

Many things in our community and in the League of Women Voters of Greater Tucson have changed since 1941. However, a constant for the League is we continue to be a grass roots and non-partisan organization (we do not support specific candidates or parties), and after careful study we take positions on issues important to the citizenry. To again quote from the minutes of an early meeting of the Tucson League, *"the success of the great American political system of self-government relies on the well-informed and responsible participation of all citizens in their own government."* This continues to be the core of the League of Women Voters of Greater Tucson mission as we honor the personal efforts of the women (and eventually men) that founded and fostered LWVGT over the course of 75 years.

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### Original Founders of the Current League of Women Voters of Greater Tucson

Mary Jeffries Bruce  
 Mrs. A.H. Chapin  
 Helen D'Autremont  
 Ora DeConcini Martin  
 Sybill Ellinwood  
 Mrs. L.W. Feezer  
 Mrs. Robert Forbes  
 Margaret Knight  
 Mrs. D. Lillibridge  
 Ethyl Lobban  
 Kathryn Maxwell  
 Mrs. F.C. McCormick  
 Thelma McQuade  
 Mrs. A.L. Muir  
 Mrs. Fred Newton Scott

Mrs. Stuart Patterson  
Mrs. Rutger Porter  
Marjorie Robinson  
Marion Rhodes Lovekin  
Margaret Sanger See  
Dr. Marguerite Steel Williams  
Grace Sternberg  
Mrs. Stanford Stevens  
Mrs. H.P. Stokes  
Mrs. Pat Timarsh  
Muriel Upham  
Mrs. C.T. Vorhies  
Fredericka Vossler  
Mrs. O.H. Wedel