



JOURNAL

Expanding the Civic Imagination

 **Citizens
League**

Common ground. Common good.

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How well have we prepared?

When it comes to long-term care financing, that's the question.

By Stacy Becker

Imagine yourself in your later years; you've grown elderly and disabled. How much money are you willing to set aside *today* to pay for the care you'll need then?

The *Minnesota Journal* has featured a number of stories and commentaries about long-term care over the past few years. About 18 months ago, the Citizens League convened a steering team to develop options for financing long-term care. Their work, funded by a consortium of 18 organizations, followed on the heels of previous Citizens League work on this issue, along with a substantial body of work by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, all of which made clear that current methods of financing long-term care are not fiscally sustainable.

After months of study, discussion and community conversations, the Citizens League steering team has issued policy recommendations for financing long-term care. The team also found that the most relevant policy question is actually the personal question stated at the beginning of this article: *How much money are you willing to set aside today to pay for the care you'll need then?* Because when it comes to long-term care, everyone's a policy maker!

Each of our individual decisions, sometimes large and often small, contributes to a collective societal result. While the future price tag for long-term care for the elderly will be enormous, confronting those costs looks far less daunting when we as individuals seek to understand and fulfill our personal financial responsibility.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

For many of us, long-term care will be both expensive and likely. At age 65, a person has about a 60 percent chance of needing some type of future long-term care. The average per person cost of long-term care is \$48,000, and there is a 6 percent chance that costs will exceed \$100,000. Despite the statistical realities, many

people fail to prepare for financing long-term care. The financial challenges are significant, while preparation remains tenuous:

- As life expectancy has risen, retirees must spread their retirement savings out over longer periods of time. But over time Social Security will replace less and less pre-retirement income for the average earner (from 41 percent in 2002 to a projected 36 percent in 2030).
- Out-of-pocket medical costs are rising, from 7 percent of the average Social Security benefit in 1980 to a projected 39 percent in 2030.
- In 2001 in Minnesota, 56 percent of senior couples had assets, excluding their home equity, of less than \$50,000.
- In 2007, 29 percent of Minnesotans aged 42 to 60 said they plan to rely on Medicare to cover their long-term care costs, yet Medicare's coverage is limited to certain types of care for short periods of time.
- Use of long-term care insurance is low—an estimated 10 percent of Minnesotans age 50 to 84 carry long-term care insurance.
- And while informal (unpaid) care is by far the largest single source of support (providing about two-thirds of the dollar value of long-term care in Minnesota), its share as a percentage of total care has been declining in recent years.

Because so few people are prepared to finance their own long-term care, and because long-term care falls



INSIDE

This issue focuses on the twin themes of advancement and engagement: How the Citizens League is advancing policy recommendations for projects on long-term care, prosperity and clean water, and how Citizens League members are engaging in that work and in building Minnesota's civic infrastructure.

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CONNECTIONS

Building a League of Citizens

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

This issue we focus our Member Spotlight on two members of the Energy Advancement Group: Sheri Hansen and Bill Bushnell.

SHERI HANSEN

Sheri Hansen is a senior account executive at Padilla Speer Beardsley Public Relations. She has been a Citizens League member for 10 years.

Why she joined:

The Citizens League creates a forum for meaningful dialogue on policy, not just politics. Minnesota needs a place where experts can come together to talk about the most challenging public policy problems and build sound policy solutions separately from the legislative process and the Citizens League provides just that. The informed perspectives of Citizens League leadership and invited speakers and the compelling dialogues I have participated in at events have provoked new thoughts, stirred new ideas and energized me.

How she practices civic leadership:

As anyone at Padilla will tell you, I am the "get out the vote" company reminder. For each election, I send out an email with links to help individuals find their polling place, and I try my best to answer questions about eligibility and registration. It's a personal goal of mine to have everyone I know wearing an "I voted" sticker on Election Day, even if they don't vote the same way I do! I also serve on Padilla's green team, which is working with our building on LEED certification and with our company to reduce waste and operate in a more sustainable way.

Why she recommends membership in the Citizens League to others:

It is a great opportunity to learn about the drivers and shapers of public policy change and to meet people who are leading the charge to make our state a great place to live.



BILL BUSHNELL

Bill Bushnell is a systems design consultant at Adventium Labs. He joined the Citizens League this year.

Why he joined:

I believe there are some important problems that are falling through the cracks, mainly because they are difficult to solve quickly or easily, or the business or political case for moving forward is too risky, multifaceted or long term. The design and development of efficient, affordable and sustainable energy systems fits into this category. If the problems or challenges in this area are not addressed, or at least helped along, by citizens or community groups, it is likely they will remain unsolved.

How he practices civic leadership:

For the most part I tend to be a fairly quiet and reserved person, but when I see a possible solution to something, I enjoy being part of an effort to make it happen. This year has been extremely enjoyable working with the Energy Advancement Group. While it is a relatively small group (nine members), we seem to have a nice mix of knowledge, experience and viewpoints, and everyone has pitched in well to get things done.

Why he recommends membership in the Citizens League to others:

I would encourage anyone who is solution-oriented and is willing to share some of their time to get involved in Citizens League activities. While I initially joined for the opportunity to be involved in the development of policy for sustainable energy solutions, a great side benefit was that I met some incredible people in the process.



New and rejoining members, contributing organizations, and recruiters

Individual members

Tim Adelmann
Amy Anderson
Kaitlin Andreason
Marcia F. Appel
Patrick Arling
George Ashenmacher
Candace Baker
Nicholas Baker
Mike Bates
John Blackburn
Jenna Bowman
Fran Bradley
Liz Bradley
Carmen Buhlet
Debra Christensen
Spencer Cronk

Stephanie DaSilveira
Lois Dlouhy-Arling
Richard Dornfeld
Joseph Dragich
Julitta Dragich
Robert Erickson
Shelley Erickson
Dustin Evans
Adam Faitek
Joni Fisher
Arvonne Fraser
Donald Fraser
Jon Fure
Michelle Fure
Vince Giorgi
Judith Healey
Kate Hinely
Steve Hunter
Eric Paul Jackobsen

Burt Jackson
Berit Johnson
C. Theodore Johnson
Jennifer Johnson
Thomas Johnson
Tim Johnson
Foster Klima
Steve Koeln
Andy Kopstein
Cary Kopstein
Manny Kopstein
Jennifer Lange
Kent D. Laugen
Joseph Marver
Monica Marx
Tim Marx
Connie McDermott
David McFarland
Jackie McFarland

Janet McFarland
Jim McFarland
Cathy McLane
Matt McLane
Dick Moberg
Lila Moberg
Brad Neal
Brock Noland
Amanda Nonnemacher
Sean O'Neil
Kirsten Olsen
Allen I Olson
Barbara Olson
Erin O'Neill
Daniel Perelstein
Roz Peterson
Tim Peterson
Daniel Ryan Jr.
Ray Schoch

Wanda Schumacher
Michael Schweyen
Russ Settevig
Jim Shatek
Douglas Silverman
Joy Sorensen Nauarre
Rick Spielman
Zach Stabenow
Peter Stahl
Stacey Stahl
Mike Swirnoff
Sandy Swirnoff
Bill Wilson
Douglas Wunderlich
Linda Wunderlich
Aron Yngve
Hal Yngve
Edie Zidel
Larry Zidel

Firms and organizations

Andersen Corporation
Leonard, Street, and Deinard
Kowalski's Grand Market
Presbyterian Homes & Services
Minnesota Medical Association
Kowalski's Oak Park Heights Market
Kowalski's Parkview Market
Kowalski's Uptown Market
ADC Foundation
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Securian
Target

Recruiters

Cal Clark
Dick McFarland
Noreen Fisher
John Yngve
Robbin Johnson
Kristine Johnson
Wallace Neal
Judith Blackburn
Bruce Blackburn
Steve Dornfeld
Lisa Piskor
Anna Schumacher
Adam Arling
Scott Burns

BECOME A SUSTAINING MEMBER TODAY

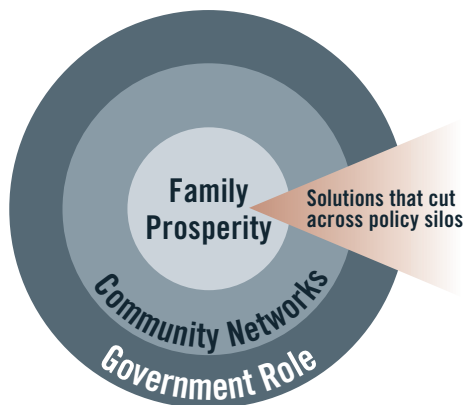
Sign up to have your membership contribution deducted automatically from your credit card each month (until you tell us to stop). Sustaining members help the Citizens League by ensuring a consistent cash flow and reducing postage and processing costs so that more of your membership dollars go toward accomplishing our mission. It's also easier on your budget! Become a sustaining member at any level. Sign up at <http://givemn.razoo.com/story/Citizens-League> or call us at 651-293-0575.

Thank you to our newest sustaining members: Wallace Neal, Victoria Ford, David Hutcheson & Elizabeth Stoltz, David Schaaf, Matthew Steele

ENGAGEMENT

What We're Doing and How You Can Get Involved

Help advance solutions to create **Pathways to Prosperity**. The Citizens League is putting together a steering committee to guide in the selection and formation of strategic advancement groups and workshops focused on recommendations from the Pathways to Prosperity committee.



- Proposals for immediate action: policy changes and tools ready for implementation or expansion that can serve as examples for future policy efforts.
- Policies to test and develop: good ideas that have the potential to be the building blocks for systemic change but need further examination and development to be applied in Minnesota.
- Mindset changes: ideas that begin to change public perceptions and institutional behavior and that can drive major systems change.

See page 6 for details.

- ▶ Contact us if you are interested in taking part in workshops and developing policy related to this project..

Help demonstrate how a citizen-centered approach can better **protect Minnesota's lakes, rivers and streams**. (See page 9 for more information about our work on water policy.)

- ▶ Interested in learning how our approach to valuing clean water can achieve better results in agricultural communities, or how the Como Lake Neighbor Network engages residents to reduce urban water pollution? Do you see a role for yourself, your business, your farm, or another organization? Let us know.

The Health and Medical Care Action Group achieved its goal of having questions about the health care needs of rural Minnesotans included in the gubernatorial debate at Farmfest on August 4th. Now re-formed as the **Policy Advancement Group on Rural Health Care Access**, the group will advance the Citizens League health care positions on access and quality. It will work with partners to identify how to maximize access to affordable, quality health care for the Minnesota agricultural community, both now and as new federal policy is implemented.

- ▶ Contact us to join the group.

Help us earn a **\$10,000 challenge grant** from the Pohlad Family Foundation and reach our end-of-year membership goal of 2,600 members. We have a few hundred members to go. Consider giving a gift membership to friends, family or colleagues.

- ▶ Add a spouse or housemate to your current membership for free.
- ▶ Give a gift membership online at <http://bit.ly/9nZbqo> or contact us.

Participate in Phase II of our work with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources on the **Parks and Trails Legacy Project**. We need your help to create and finalize recommendations for spending \$35 million in annual funding authorized by the 2008 Clean Land, Water and Legacy Amendment as well as traditional funds.

- ▶ Log on to www.citizing.org to participate online and view the results of the work to date.
- ▶ Attend an in-person meeting near you. Dates and locations are available at www.citizing.org.
- ▶ Contact us with questions or ideas.

The **Health and Medical Care Advancement Group** will look at the implementation of the federal health care reform in Minnesota. The group will look for opportunities to advance the principles and policy positions of the Citizens League, such as an emphasis on access to quality care.

- ▶ Contact us to join the group.

The Citizens League is a **non-partisan, member-based** organization working to build civic imagination and capacity in Minnesota.



The Citizens League's model for policymaking—the **civic policy agenda**—is based on the belief that all people and organizations have essential roles in developing the ideas, skills and resources to govern for the common good. Visit www.citizensleague.org/who/identity to find out more.

WELCOME COZZETTA ABDURRAHMAN

Cozzetta AbdurRahman joined the staff in August as administrative assistant. She is the mother to three wonderful children. Cozzetta is the staff contact for membership. She can be reached at cabdurrahman@citizensleague.org or 651-293-0575, ext. 15. Please welcome her if you see her at an upcoming event!



To get involved or find out more about any of these projects, contact Catherine Beltmann at

cbeltmann@citizensleague.org or 651-293-0575 ext. 10.

Get more information about all of our work at www.citizensleague.org.

TAKE NOTE

Innovation Spotlight

BEER BY-PRODUCTS TURN DIRTY WATER CLEAN

Bacteria discovered nearly 25 years ago in brewery wastewater may soon be used to improve the efficiency of wastewater recycling, reports [Forbes.com](#). The anammox bacteria is able to transform hazardous ammonium into nitrogen gas, a harmless substance that makes up the majority of the air we breathe. Worrell Water Technologies is hoping to use the microbe in its Living Machines water filtration systems to transform ammonia into nitrogen. The process would require fewer steps than the bacteria currently used for filtration, and use less oxygen and energy. Living Machine filtration systems currently produce water clean enough to flush toilets and water yards and gardens. The company hopes the anammox bacteria will allow it to filter more concentrated waste streams, such as waste from pig and dairy farms.



POLYMER FILM INCREASES SOLAR PANEL OUTPUT



Improving the output from a solar panel may be as simple as applying a big transparent sticker to the front of it, reports MIT's [Technology Review](#) website. Applying a thin polymer film embossed with microstructures that bend incoming sunlight can boost the efficiency of solar panels by as much as 12.5 percent, according to the maker, Genie Lens Technologies of Colorado. The film can be added at the factory or to already-installed panels. The long-term benefit of the film will depend on its durability, however. If the film becomes scratched, coated with dust or discolored by the sun it could actually reduce energy output.

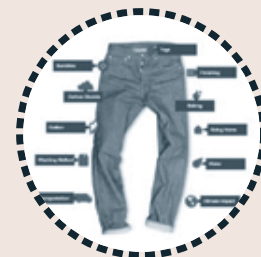
EAT YOUR VEGETABLES, DOCTOR'S ORDERS

In an effort to fight childhood obesity in low-income families, doctors at three Massachusetts health centers have started writing prescriptions for produce from local farmers' markets, the *New York Times* reports. These "veggie vouchers" are the equivalent of a dollar per day for each family member. The intention is to promote healthy meals and help farmers compete with fast-food dollar menu items. Massachusetts is one of the first states to promote farmers' markets as hubs of health.



ECO-GNIZABLE APPAREL

Looking to address eco-minded consumers' concerns, some 100 apparel brands and retailers have banded together to develop a new software tool to measure the environmental impact of their wares. The Eco Index asks manufactures to answer questions about their entire process, from raw material production to manufacturing labor practices to waste disposal, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. Ultimately, companies like Target and Nike hope to display an eco-value on a tag or packaging to help consumers to make informed purchasing decisions.



COLLEGE ON THE GO

A world class education is now available at the click of a button with Apple's flourishing iTunes® U program. Created in collaboration with colleges and universities, iTunes U extends learning beyond the classroom by giving users access to video and audio lectures, lab demonstrations, and even campus tours on their home computers or portable devices.

According to [Apple](#), in just three years the online catalog has commanded more than 300 million downloads of instructional content, making it the world's most popular online educational alternative. iTunes users have access to more than 350,000 audio and video files from educational institutions in Mexico, Singapore, China and Japan, as well as from professors at prestigious institutions like Harvard, Oxford, MIT, and the University of Minnesota.

AGING AT HOME IN "VILLAGES"

Helping seniors age in their homes is the goal of a growing national network of "villages," reports [National Public Radio](#). For a modest annual fee, typically \$500 to \$800, seniors can have access to a 24-hour help line and a staff-coordinated list of volunteers to assist with transportation, snow shoveling and other household tasks—even a companion to play Wii with to help improve fitness. There are already approximately 50 such nonprofit networks around the country and more in the works.



Take Note compiled by Adam Arling.



Fishing for better policy solutions

Honor our past with a new generation of policy strategies and choices

by Sean Kershaw

No picture is more emblematic of a generation of policy leadership in Minnesota than the famous 1973 *Time* magazine cover of a triumphant Governor Wendell Anderson holding up a northern pike for the world to see. Minnesota was “the good life” and “a state that works.”

The dock where Governor Anderson stood is getting crowded—and it should be.

The attention was deserved. A generation of governors, working with a non-partisan legislature and a generation of home-grown executives, took a buggy, cold, isolated state and made it *work*. They developed a virtuous cycle of good ideas (civic imagination) and good governance (civic capacity) that made policy “miracles” happen.

But for a new generation of Minnesotans this image is unknown, or a reminder of a model of policy leadership and governance that no longer works.

So where is the model of civic leadership we need to create the good life today, and to hold up for a very different world to see? No matter whom the next governor is, Minnesota can no longer rely on heroic gubernatorial leadership or government-based solutions alone to solve our state's challenges. The dock where Governor Anderson stood is getting crowded—and it should be.

Good public policy requires all of us to govern for the common good wherever we are: at school, at work, at home, or at the capitol. This is what we mean when we talk about a civic policy agenda—the often-overlooked role that all individuals and organizations must play in public policy, and the policies, practices and capacities that support this role. Public policy must tap into people's motivations to do what is

right, for themselves and for Minnesota, in our everyday lives.

And as the Citizens League turns 60 in 2012, we need a new image of civic and policy leadership to maintain our good life in Minnesota. Honoring Choices Minnesota is one example.

HONORING CHOICES MINNESOTA

The Citizens League is partnering with the Twin Cities Medical Society and Twin Cities Public Television to expand **Honoring Choices Minnesota**, a collaborative, community-wide public health initiative to promote advanced care planning.

Based on the program **Respecting Choices®**, developed by the Gunderson Lutheran Medical Foundation in LaCrosse, Wisc., Honoring Choices will bring together health care organizations, community partners and families to encourage Minnesotans to talk about and complete advance care directives to improve end-of-life care for individuals.

The program isn't a set of mandates that determine these choices. Instead, it offers a structured way to ensure individual choices are honored. Talking about end-of-life care is extremely difficult for all of the obvious reasons, but the cost to individuals, families and society of not talking are tremendous. (Read Atul Gawande's **August 2, 2010 *New Yorker* piece!**)

Controlled studies have demonstrated that the approach of Respecting Choices improves the quality of life for individuals at the end of life—and the health of survivors—by reducing the stress and trauma of a poorly-planned death. And it has reduced unnecessary medical spending by matching the delivery of medical care with individual and family wishes.

This program illustrates the role we all have as policymakers, and how practical skills, such as knowing how to have a tough conversation, can help us in this role. Participants in this program see that

their decisions have consequences, both immediately (for those they care about) and in the bigger picture (by improving medical care). They even develop a new imagination about their role in the community as they realize how much they still have to contribute to the world.

On one of our most important policy issues, addressing the cost and quality of care as we age, one critical element is the imagination and capacity we have as individuals to have a conversation where we are, with the people around us. By taking individual actions that benefit ourselves and our families we are also setting a principled course of action (making policy) that benefits our state and improves our collective quality of life.

HONORING THE FUTURE

On my desk I've got another Minnesota fishing picture. It's of my son Aidan after he caught his first northern with his uncle Jeremy.

This picture has public and private symbolic value for me. Government allowed my spouse and me to adopt Aidan, and government helped to preserve the lake where they caught the fish. And it was Minnesota's quality of life that lured Jeremy and his wife Avesa to Duluth from San Francisco.

But Aidan's future success as a Minnesota citizen and Minnesota's civic success can't depend on waiting for a governor or any other heroic leader to fix our problems or catch fish for us. Aidan's success and ours depends on our ability to create the civic imagination and capacity to solve problems everywhere—and the good politics and policies needed to sustain this work. Or, as the saying goes, to teach each other to fish.

Welcome to the dock! ●

Sean Kershaw is the Citizens League's executive director. He can be reached at skershaw@citizensleague.org, [@seankershaw](https://twitter.com/seankershaw) (Twitter), Facebook, or his blog at citizensleague.org/blogs/sean/.



Pathways to Prosperity: advancing solutions

Creating a system that supports family prosperity and builds community networks

By Bob DeBoer

The Citizens League is entering a new phase in the Pathways to Prosperity project that will further develop and advance policy solutions that support prosperity, and move away from current policies that react to poverty but do little to build decision-making capacity in families or build effective networks in communities across the state.

Since 2008, the Citizens League has engaged hundreds of Minnesotans in the Pathways to Prosperity project. Our efforts have found that the poverty reduction policies in the United States over the last 50 years have resulted in the expenditure of an extraordinary amount of time and resources directed toward drawing and navigating the “lines” of income and wealth that determine eligibility for public assistance.

Drawing these lines has created a different set of rules for some in our society based on the identification of deficits. Asset limits on families that receive public assistance is a prime example of this. Not only does this policy provide no incentive for families to save, having no savings (a deficit) becomes an asset (access to public assistance) for families. One of the ironies of this deficit-based approach is that once a family falls below the poverty line, their neediness becomes a very significant asset. By designing our systems in this way, we have created a paradox—we have aligned incentives with continued poverty.

In many cases, the system we’ve created traps people in a closed loop of connections, forcing them to continually navigate these lines (the varying eligibilities and requirements necessary to access a myriad of programs and resources) in order to prove their deficits. Navigating these lines wastes human capacity and creates barriers that prevent families and individuals from accessing pathways to prosperity.

The rules of the current welfare system are based on proof of eligibility and sanctions designed to control individual behavior; they do little to foster independence or build capacity, which, in turn, has led to a large government investment in “policing the line.”

The Pathways to Prosperity Committee has concluded that:

- Prosperity isn’t produced with a series of well-guarded lines; it is produced through a continuum of access.
- Health, education and access to services, resources and opportunities are the foundation of prosperity.
- Minnesota must move toward policies that tap individual capacity for independence and rely less on control.

General recommendations from the committee fall into three areas: family prosperity, community networks and changing government’s role

SUPPORTING FAMILY PROSPERITY (DECISION MAKING AND INDEPENDENCE)

New approaches must begin at the family level. The Citizens League recommends that we replace the “lines” with family pros-

perity goals. Some of the ideas we are pursuing include:

- Removing current asset limits. Rather than restricting assets, shift the focus to saving and asset-building and define policy, program and individual success in those terms. The five-year lifetime limit on public assistance, coupled with asset limits, creates a policy that essentially tells people to prepare for independence but not to save any money. Spending to stay poor should no longer be an “asset.”
- Exploring conditional cash transfers directly to families as a more straightforward way to demonstrate targeted results. Mexico’s *Oportunidades* program expends nearly half of the national poverty prevention budget in direct cash payments to families that engage in three critical activities: education, nutrition and health. Twenty five other countries and parts of New York City are now developing programs based on this model. What are the opportunities for conditional cash transfers in Minnesota? At least one foundation in Minnesota is picking up the expenses of low-income college students who stay in college.
- Using prize-linked (or prize-rewarded) savings and other tools to get more families on a path to financial stability and to encourage the “unbanked” to utilize the financial system.
- Focus on the unique nature of each family by addressing the root problems of disability, including mental health and chemical dependency, and break down the policy “silos” that require individuals and families to expend so much capacity navigating the line.



BUILDING COMMUNITY NETWORKS (CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE)

Developing the capacity for family decision making leads directly to the creation of more functional community networks—what the Citizens League calls civic infrastructure. Despite all the good work done in our communities, the plethora of non-governmental organizations working in conjunction with government services to address poverty has created additional barriers to accessing assistance and resources.

The Citizens League recommends that the traditional service-delivery model be replaced by integrated community resource hubs.

These hubs must be unique to the needs and resources of each community and should aim to significantly reduce the amount of time and resources families expend navigating the line. Existing institutions—schools, houses of faith, community centers and clinics—must become greater connectors that integrate and manage current resources in a more additive way. An approach that

views government and community resources as co-producers of the common good must prevail. Examples and tools include:

- Circles of Support, an ongoing effort in Itasca and Koochiching counties by community-action organizations to connect families with larger support networks. At the center of the circle is a person or family seeking community support in achieving a set of goals. They are surrounded by a network of friends and neighbors, family members, and in some cases community professionals who help them identify goals and develop a plan to achieve those goals. Goals might relate to income and budgeting, education and training, and developing stronger relationships. Circles are deliberately diverse, often crossing lines of race, class and culture. The intent is to broaden a family's network of associations and connections that can lead to broader opportunities.
- Community-centered schools that provide access to health care and other community resources. A recent partnership between Brooklyn Center High School, Park Nicollet Health Services and Portico Healthnet offers one example.
- Complementary currencies and time banks. Sometimes called secondary currencies or community currencies, their purpose is typically to rebuild local economies in areas suffering from a shortage of cash where untapped capacity is accompanied by unmet needs. Complementary currencies act as a supplemental medium of exchange to be used alongside conventional money exclusively within a defined area (a neighborhood or city, for example), to allow people to trade with each other for goods and services. Complementary currencies have been identified as a tool for alleviating the worst impacts of recession, strengthening the local economy, and developing skills and employability among the unemployed, perhaps providing a steppingstone to formal employment.

CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT ROLE TO SUPPORT PROSPERITY

In our current system, government plays a dominant role not only in determining who is poor and who deserves assistance, but also in the delivery of benefits, services and programs. While there are many other organizations—including nonprofits, businesses, and the faith community—that address a range of family and community needs, these efforts can often be fragmented, overlapping and duplicative. A government service delivery model does not provide the general alignment necessary to build family capacity and community infrastructure on a broad scale. Maintaining this government-centric role can have the unintended effect of devaluing the role of communities and families.

Our system needs the flexibility to pool funding streams into integrated approaches that help families as they really live. Current literature from social service fields recommends treating the whole person or the person in their environment, yet we operate a service delivery system that sends families to different offices for different needs.

Various policy silos are aligned with funding streams and committees at the legislature. Policymakers, along with the organizations and agencies that receive funding, tend to defend their turf and to protect funding. It will take extraordinary leadership and restructuring to move beyond the committee and funding structure and significantly reallocate resources.

Our system needs the flexibility to pool funding streams into integrated approaches that help families as they really live.

2010 AND BEYOND

In the next stage of the Pathways to Prosperity Project, the Citizens League will work to develop and advance solutions. From now through June 2011, we will proceed on three levels to build human capacity and civic infrastructure. Our efforts will focus on producing solutions that endure beyond our direct involvement.

- **Proposals for immediate action:** policy changes and tools ready for implementation or expansion that can serve as examples for future policy efforts.
- **Policies to test and develop:** good ideas that have the potential to be the building blocks for systemic change but need further examination and development to be applied in Minnesota.
- **Mindset changes:** ideas that begin to change public perceptions and institutional behavior and that can spur major systems change.

The Citizens League is in the process of assembling a broad-based steering committee to oversee the next stage of the project. To develop and test our ideas we will assemble small groups and workshops in various locations around the state so that we can engage a significant number of citizens and stakeholders.

Over the next several months there will opportunities to join working groups and attend workshops as we advance this work. Watch for details on the website and in our email newsletters. ●

Bob DeBoer is the Citizens League's director of policy development. He can be reached at bdeboer@citizensleague.org or 651-293-0575 ext. 13.

Member-organized advancement groups

Members' valuable efforts put existing Citizens League work into current policy contexts

By Bob DeBoer

Since 1952, the Citizens League has published more than 400 policy reports containing a wealth of information and ideas on almost any policy issue relevant to the state of Minnesota. This past year, members organized policy advancement groups to better take advantage of this resource.

Advancement groups convene to re-examine and advance conclusions and recommendations from past reports. Advancement groups typically have between five and 15 members and any Citizens League member can join. The Policy Advisory Committee oversees the advancement groups and decides whether to recommend the finished work to the board of directors.

Advancement groups begin by reviewing relevant Citizens League reports to identify conclusions or recommendations members can act upon. Advancement groups look at the current policy context, explore partnerships, assess the available resources (their time, knowledge, skills, and interests), and select a discrete project to take on that will help to implement the conclusions and recommendations of past reports.

While this may sound simple, it takes a great deal of effort on the part of member-volunteers. It can be very difficult to find the right balance between learning about an issue and deciding when to narrow a group's scope and take action, and it is rarely easy for newly formed groups to agree upon a direction. Based on the experience of these groups, the Citizens League is developing a guide for member-organized groups, but each case is different, and these efforts demand a lot of members' time, effort and patience.

Member leadership is critical to accomplishing the Citizens League mission. With a small paid staff and more than 2,000 members, member-organized advancement groups greatly increase the Citizens League's capacity by examining the wealth of Citizens League policy work in today's policy context. ●



Education Advancement Group

By Alberto Monserrate

Twenty years ago, the Citizens League was instrumental in the development and passage of enabling legislation for chartered schools in Minnesota. In 2009, the Citizens League formed a policy review group to look at the current state of charter schools.

Based on their recommendations, last January the Citizens League convened an Education Advancement Group. The first meeting in March was attended by Citizens League members who had participated on the charter school policy review group and new members with a broad and diverse experience in K-12 education. This group has met eight times over four months and had extensive online discussions.

The process around Minnesota's Race to The Top application and the debate in the legislature over alternative teacher licensure show how polarized things have become between "education reformers" and those who align themselves with the states teachers unions. Both perspectives are represented on the Education Advancement Group. The groups agreed to focus on improving teacher quality and the teaching profession as a way to improve equity in K-12 education and to try to find a "third way" that might help break the current education debate impasse in Minnesota. The group has almost completed a proposal to send to the Citizens League's Policy Advisory Committee.

Alberto Monserrate is President and CEO of the Latino Communications Network (LCN Media), a convener of the Education Advancement Group and a member of the Citizens League Board of Directors.



Transportation Advancement Group

By Tim Huebsch

The Transportation Advancement Group is focusing on three main areas of policy review: the 2005 Citizens League report, "**Driving Blind**," the Urban Partnership Agreement, and value capture.

"Driving Blind" highlights Minnesota's lack of transparency and awareness of the costs associated with transportation—from initial road construction to transit to the increase in costs of goods due to the massive parking lots retailers build to attract customers. The report reviews transportation funding sources and suggests ways to improve transparency.

The Urban Partnership Agreement is a competitive federal grant awarded to Minnesota and four other states. The grant is helping transform I-35W south of downtown Minneapolis with the addition of a new MnPass lane and the development of a new bus rapid transit (BRT) option in the corridor. This effort also includes increased opportunities for telecommuting and greater use of technology.

Value capture focuses on transportation funding and looks to evaluate the economic benefit to private developers and land owners adjacent to major capital transportation investments (new interstate highway intersections or additional light-rail corridors, for example). The discussion is around recapturing part of these benefits (similar to the process when a sewer is extended) to raise additional revenue to improve transportation infrastructure.

The goal of the Transportation Advancement Group is to identify two to three actions the Citizens League can advocate to make incremental policy improvements in the area of transportation.

Tim Huebsch is a Citizens League member and convener of the Transportation Advancement Group.



Partners help test new models of water governance

Demonstration projects on tap to address water issues from farm fields to Como Lake to mobile apps

By Annie Levenson-Falk

Between 2008 and 2009, a Citizens League *study committee* met to consider how to improve management of Minnesota's waters for the public good. The committee's conclusions and recommendations were published in the November 2009 report, *"To the Source: Moving Minnesota's Water Governance Upstream."*

FROM THE REPORT

The problem

- An estimated 40 percent of Minnesota's lakes, rivers, and streams are classified as impaired—polluted to the extent that they don't meet the state's standards for clean water.
- Evidence does not indicate that water quality is improving overall.
- Most of our current pollution problem comes from nonpoint sources; it's carried by rainwater and snowmelt off of roofs, roadways, parking lots, construction sites and farm fields into water bodies.
- Our governmental systems to address water pollution were set up primarily to address point sources, like discharges from industrial plants and wastewater treatment facilities. These systems evolved when our biggest problems were relatively easy-to-identify and easy-to-regulate point sources and have been quite successful in reducing pollution from these sources. Our waters are healthier as a result. However, that approach is not effective for today's greatest water quality problems.

Key findings and recommendations

- Minnesota cannot achieve its clean water goals through government programs and regulation alone. Minnesota needs a system of governance that motivates and supports individuals, businesses, farms, and other organizations to work in the interest of clean water so that they meet their own interests in the process. Government's primary role should be to set up environments in which this is the case.
- The public's role within today's government-centric approach is often limited to providing input on government plans through traditional citizen engagement processes. These processes offer the public a limited role and are not sufficient to address today's challenges. Minnesotans must be authentically involved in the many aspects of water management: framing issues and setting priorities, devising solutions, and working collaboratively with all stakeholders to address the challenges.
- Minnesotans lack the necessary data and analysis to make effective decisions on water policy. Much of this information is available today, but it should be better organized and presented in a way that promotes public understanding and involvement.

ADVANCING THE WORK

The Citizens League report concluded that Minnesota must develop new models of water governance that motivate and support all Minnesotans to work in the interest of clean water.

The nature of this recommendation means that there is no legislative solution, no easily definable, step-by-step path to implementation. Instead, this year the Citizens League is working with partners to create demonstration projects in urban and agricultural settings that test new ways of governing collaboratively for clean water. Members are encouraged to participate by contributing their time, relationships and resources to these efforts.



Valuing clean water in agriculture

The Citizens League is working with *Ag Resource Strategies* to scale up a model of governance based on assessing individual farms' total water quality impact. (This proposal was described in detail in the *July-August 2010 Minnesota Journal*.)

Currently, government provides funding and some recognition to farmers who put land into conservation and implement certain best management practices on particular parcels of land. This demonstration project goes further by evaluating the impact of

the whole farm on water quality, highlighting areas of concern, and giving credit for the benefits of good management. This approach, developed by Citizens League member Tim Gieseke, founder and president of Ag Resource Strategies, considers *all* of the management of the land, not just practices associated with the government pollution abatement programs.

The Citizens League is working with partners to create demonstration projects in urban and agricultural settings that test new ways of governing collaboratively for clean water.

Using management indices, Ag Resource Strategies will conduct a comprehensive assessment of a farm's practices and assign an overall "water quality score" based on a host of factors. The assessment reflects a best estimate of the farm's impact on water quality—positive or negative—as well as other environmental impacts.

By having an overall water quality score, farmers can work in concert with state government, local government, and private organizations on ways to further improve water quality.

For example, agricultural purchasers could require that suppliers achieve a minimum score to demonstrate that they are an ecologically responsible company. The Pollution Control Agency can more easily identify improvements necessary to meet mitigation plan requirements. Local conservation districts can use the

farm scores in their district to target limited funding for conservation programs where it is most needed. Farmers and land managers will be able to see if they're meeting goals and have the information they need to determine what measures will improve their water quality score.

This type of assessment has been tested as part of the Department of Agriculture's Livestock Environmental Quality Assurance (LEQA) pilot program, and it seems to be a helpful tool for land managers.

More than a tool for managing single parcels of land, however, this assessment system can be used to build a system of governance where everyone involved in a farm participates in water governance. It sets up an environment in which all parties achieve their own interests by working towards clean water.

The Citizens League is working to identify partners to test and evaluate this idea. We are looking to build the case with:

- Empirical evidence. Does an assessment-based system like this help partners achieve their goals more effectively and efficiently?
- Policy implications. Are law or administrative changes necessary to make this possible?
- Practice implications. What changes are necessary within or among partner organizations?

Collaborating to take on urban stormwater runoff

Citizens League member Janna Caywood formed the **Como Lake Neighbor Network** (CLNN), bringing together a group of residents interested in improving St. Paul's Como Lake, the focal point of their neighborhood. The group will be working this year to advance the study's recommendation to improve the ways that government and citizens together frame issues, set priorities and address challenges like nonpoint-source pollution.

A civic policy approach

A Citizens League member proposed the idea for a water policy study and the regular review of members' proposals. The Policy Advisory Committee recommended water policy as the top issue for study.

As in all Citizens League work, we were very deliberate in involving individuals with a broad range of experiences and backgrounds. The civic operating guidelines, the basis for all Citizens League work, state that people impacted by a policy problem must help define the problem and identify and advance solutions. We intentionally sought out committee members with varying levels of experience with water policy – from co-chair Gene Merriam, a state senator for 22 years and former commissioner of the state Department of Natural Resources, to citizens who simply enjoy a walk around their local lake. The committee included members with backgrounds in science, engineering, law, government, and sustainable communities, as well as "citizen generalists." In addition, we worked with hundreds of individuals personally or professionally interested in water policy.

The committee's makeup set this study apart from the beginning. Minnesota's water policy issues have been studied extensively in the past and the committee reviewed dozens of reports released since 1970. Most studies were done by those within government, identified problems within a governmental structure and envisioned governmental solutions.

As a result of committee members' varied backgrounds, especially those without typical policy experience, the committee came to view governance as something larger than government. This study confirmed what the Citizens League has learned so often throughout its history: Involving citizens with a broad range of backgrounds and experiences is key to getting creative and effective solutions to policy problems.





Como Lake was placed on the state's impaired waters list in 2002 because of excess nutrients, particularly phosphorus. Phosphorus causes an ugly, smelly and potentially hazardous layer of algae to grow over the lake every summer. Leaves, grass clippings and other organic debris that flow into the lake through the storm sewers are major contributors to the phosphorus problem.

As the Citizens League study found, responsibility for ensuring water quality is placed largely on government. Agencies and technical staff are expected to keep lakes clean, largely through engineered solutions that filter out pollutants. But nonpoint-source pollution is too widespread for government to take on alone, and removing pollutants through expensive engineered structures is not the only option.

The CLNN is engaging residents in efforts to prevent pollution before it enters Como Lake and collaborating with government agencies in the process. Members recognize the social context and community-wide impacts of their practices and are attempting to build sustainable change in that context.

In April 2010, working together with the Capitol Region Watershed District and others, the CLNN organized a neighborhood Curbside Cleanup. Using a toolkit provided by the **Freshwater Society** and the **Friends of the Minnesota Valley**, the CLNN asked residents to rake and bag debris that had settled against street curbs to prevent it from going down storm drains with the next rainfall. The City of St. Paul transported the debris to the county composting site. The project area involved roughly 30 blocks and about 750 households. The effort removed about 30 pounds of phosphorus from the storm water system.

The CLNN is preparing another community clean up this fall, this time as a part of a metro-wide effort organized by the Freshwater Society. The vision of the CLNN is to serve as a model for connected communities of water stewards.

"We are the ones with the emotional attachment to our local waters, and we are the ones who can organize each other to act," Caywood says. "We also can come up with some pretty creative thinking if you get us thinking about these problems together. We just need to have the right civic and social structures in place so we can collaborate with each other, and with government, on this critically important work."

Water quality mobile phone app

From individual citizens to policy makers at the state capitol, Minnesotans lack the necessary data and analysis to make effective water policy decisions. In some cases, the data does not yet exist. But in many other cases we have a lot of information about the health and trends of lakes, rivers and streams, and much of the problem could be solved by better communicating what we do know. But the information is gathered and disseminated by multiple organizations in multiple places, often in ways that are hard to find and in terms that are difficult for most people to understand.

The Citizens League is exploring the development of a smart-phone app that would make easily accessible a "mash-up" of information and data about Minnesota lakes. Anyone with an iPhone, Droid, or similar phone could take a picture of a lake and quickly find information on water quality, fish populations and the government and civic organizations working on the lake, and connect to conversations that people are having about the lake. The app would depend on users to generate content, for example, reporting sightings of invasive species. The millions of Minnesotans who use and care about our lakes have a wealth of knowledge, and we can collect a lot of new information using the technology they already carry in their pockets. ●

Annie Levenson-Falk is the Citizens League's policy manager. Janna Caywood, Citizens League member and convener of the Como Lake Neighbor Network, also contributed to this article.

Get involved

Help the Citizens League demonstrate how a citizen-centered approach can better protect Minnesota's lakes, rivers and streams. Do you see a role for yourself, your business, your farm or other organization in the demonstration projects described above? Are you interested in contributing time, connections or other resources to help advance these projects? Contact Annie Levenson-Falk at alevensonfalk@citizensleague.org or 651-293-0575 ext. 16.

Long-term care

continued from page 1

between the cracks of multiple systems designed for other purposes (such as Social Security, Medicare, health insurance and disability insurance) the default financing source has become Medicaid. Whereas Medicare provides health insurance for the elderly, Medicaid was originally created to provide publicly funded health care for those in poverty. In order to qualify for Medicaid, a person must relinquish virtually all of her assets, spending her last days in poverty. Yet 40 percent of long-term care expenditures for the elderly in Minnesota in 2004 were paid through Medicaid.

If other forms of financing are not put in place, Medicaid funding for long-term care for the elderly could grow nearly fivefold in

Unless we are willing to raise taxes by \$4 billion just for Medicaid's support of long-term care for the elderly, our current path is simply not sustainable.

Minnesota by 2050, from \$1.1 billion in 2010 to \$5 billion in 2035. That growth is simply the result of the growing number of baby boomers entering their senior years financially unprepared, and it is irrespective of cost-control measures that the state has already implemented.

Unless we are willing to raise taxes by \$4 billion just for Medicaid's support of long-term care for the elderly, our current path is simply not sustainable.

PERSONAL ACTION AS PUBLIC POLICY

To address this growing financial crisis, the steering team recommends the following goals:

- By 2015, 50 percent of Minnesotans aged 45 to 65 will have some financial planning in place for their long-term care.
- By 2020, 85 percent of Minnesotans aged 45 to 65 will have some financial planning in place for their long-term care.

These goals highlight the role of individuals in reaching a collective outcome that is fiscally responsible for the state and retains our ability to provide a safety net for those in need. They do not speak directly to the role of government and other institutions, but clearly, institutional reform and support will be necessary to meet these goals. Furthermore, these goals suggest that we begin to measure these very important outcomes, because right now we do not know how many individuals have begun financial preparations for long-term care!

More and more Minnesotans are becoming aware of the need to prepare for the possibility of long-term care. But too many don't

really know how to prepare, or don't feel that they have the capacity to prepare. Or they feel they can put it off until a later time. The steering team's recommendations consist of a three-part framework; each part is equally necessary to encourage and support personal action. If we are to meet our goals, none of the three parts can be ignored.

The three-part framework consists of the following:

- A strong reason to become financially prepared for long-term care (i.e., Medicaid reform).
- A mix of financial products that provide families the opportunities to financially prepare, appropriate for varying situations and financial capacities.
- The knowledge and information to make sound choices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The steering team's recommendations provide actionable, minimal cost, first steps for each plank of the framework. By leading with basic measures, we begin to draw attention to the need for financial planning for long-term care, and to provide Minnesotans the wherewithal to take personal responsibility. Over time, we will learn as a state whether or not these steps are sufficient and what gaps remain, both personal and public. The full report and complete recommendations will be available online at www.citizensleague.org upon approval by the Citizens League Board of Directors.

Incentives for personal responsibility

Medicaid reform is necessary in order to provide incentives for individuals to become financially prepared. Research clearly shows that the current Medicaid structure contains disincentives for personal responsibility. For example, if an individual has \$50,000 saved but nursing home care costs \$60,000, that individual will end up on Medicaid anyway, so why spend the \$50,000 on long-term care?

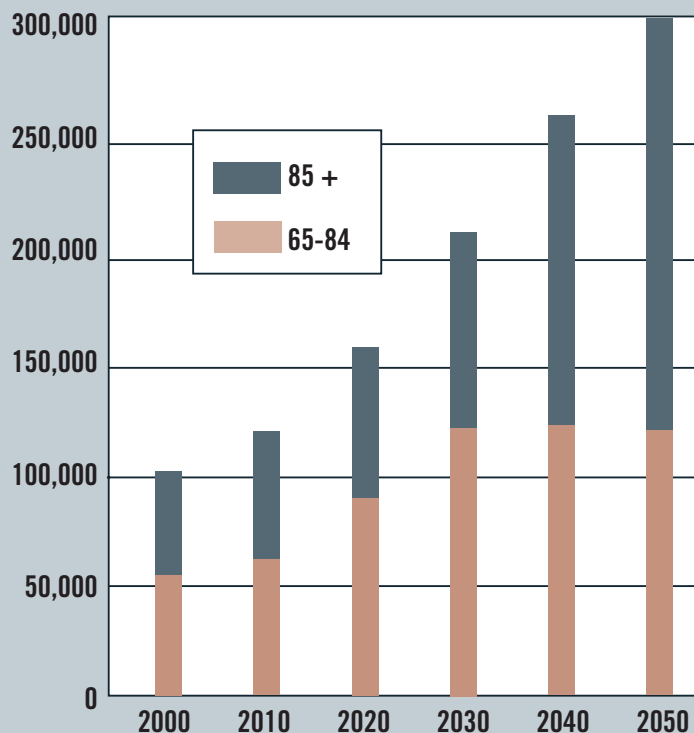
Consequently, Medicaid's function as a safety-net for long-term care for the elderly poor has been distorted. It has been dubbed "public insurance with an extremely high deductible"—virtually all of one's assets.

The steering team recommends that Medicaid for long-term care for the elderly become a type of co-insurance, with eligibility contingent on two factors: privately purchased long-term care insurance and/or savings for long-term care and income.

New financial products

New financial products will provide opportunities for families to prepare. A variety of savings and insurance products already exist to help families save for their retirement and long-term care: IRAs, 401k's, long-term care insurance, health savings accounts (HSAs), and, very recently, public insurance through the federal Community Living Assistance Services and Supports Act (CLASS), which will take effect in the coming years. While these vehicles have had some success, they are insufficient for a number of reasons. This is especially true of tax incentives, which offer limited assistance to middle income families because they are less likely to itemize and their incomes fall in lower tax brackets.

Minnesota's age 65 to 84 and 85+ in need of long-term care (2000–2050)



Source: CBO, April 2004

The steering team recommends three very specific products to quickly increase personal resources for long-term care: prize-rewarded savings (cash prizes for those who save); more affordable long-term care insurance products; and a new loan product to help seniors tap their home equity. When these product ideas were tested with Minnesotans in three focus groups and two presentations, it was clear that a variety of products are needed to address financial situations, financial preferences and various levels of risk-tolerance. Opportunities for financial preparation also differ with age.

Unbiased, easy to understand information

A website coupled with employer-based education will improve Minnesotans' knowledge about the need for long-term care and the options available to start preparing for it. Our current system of providing and financing long-term care is fragmented and confusing. Finding useful, unbiased information that leads to good decision-making can be an overwhelming task. Yet good information is critical to making sound decisions. A national survey found that 40 percent of those who considered purchasing long-term care decided not to because it was too confusing to figure out which policy was right for them.

Employers have an enormous stake in long-term care financing. Care for a loved one while employed can be extremely difficult to juggle. As a consequence, U.S. businesses lose an estimated \$33.6

billion a year in productivity from full-time employees who serve as caregivers, an average of \$2,110 per employee per year. Research has also shown that employers are a highly effective source for education about financial options. Annual benefits enrollment offers an excellent opportunity to start talking about financial options for long-term care.

To ensure that information is unbiased and useful to the diverse needs of Minnesotans, the steering team proposes a consortium be created to develop and sponsor an educational website. Participants might include the state, employers, senior and civic organizations. The website should encourage and help people to prepare for their long-term care needs. It can also help track our collective progress. How many Minnesotans have purchased long-term care insurance? How many have a prize-rewarded savings account?

WILL MINNESOTANS RESPOND?

Minnesotans may well be ahead of policymakers in recognizing the need for action in long-term care financing. A survey of Minnesotans age 42–60, conducted in 2006–07, showed that 61 percent felt that they were very likely or somewhat likely to require long-term services. That percentage is fairly accurate. Two-thirds of Minnesotans are concerned about their ability to pay for long-term care. Eighty-six percent said that developing new ways for helping people to meet the costs of long-term care should be a top priority (49%) or a very important priority (37%) for government.

Minnesotans also believe that responsibility for long-term care should be shared between individuals and the government: 86 percent think that individuals bear some responsibility for their long-term care (9 percent think that individuals should bear no responsibility). And 92 percent set a higher priority on financing their retirement needs than leaving an inheritance.

So, what does personal responsibility mean to you? How much money are you willing to set aside today for your care in your later years? Helping Minnesotans explore and answer these questions will be the centerpiece of the next phase of this work.

The end of the report provides a list of next steps that addresses the role of government, business, social and civic institutions and individuals. The Citizens League will be working on several fronts: helping to promote a broader public understanding of the need to prepare for long-term care; supporting the work of institutions in providing the knowledge, financial products and Medicaid reform needed to underpin individual action; and working with our partners to pass legislation that will enable the development of new financial products and support Medicaid reform. ●

Stacy Becker is a public policy consultant. She directed the Citizen League's Minnesota Anniversary Project (MAP 150) and staffed the Long-Term Care Financing Project.

PERSPECTIVES

Expanding Minnesota's Conversation

Passion, information and drive

are the main words to describe what piqued my curiosity in the Citizens League and what keeps me coming back for more.

In my search for an organization where I could gain more knowledge, participate in meaningful dialogue around issues that are important to me and have opportunities to inspire others to learn more, I looked closely at my own personal network. Here I found two individuals, a friend and a colleague, whose passion and involvement in the Citizens League intrigued me. I wanted to learn more.

With my insatiable curiosity for information, I signed up to receive the *Minnesota Journal* to learn more about the organization. After the first issue, I soon felt the fire in my belly for a variety of topics and quickly attended my first Policy and a Pint® event. Sold! Having been labeled a "doer" by my older brother, I quickly registered for the Quantum Civics course to learn how I could apply more civic engagement principles in my professional and personal life.

What keeps me coming back to events such as Inter-Generational Roundtable and Policy and a Pint is the inspiration I gain from the people. I see and feel a personal drive in these people I meet to make a difference in the community. I am

engaged by the insights I gain through engaging conversations and I leave with a passion to do more.



Jean Nitchals



In the last year I have had the pleasure of being a participant at several Citizens League events, primarily through a program at General Mills called Pizza and Politics. As a 27-year employee of General Mills, I have a great appreciation for how the political landscape can impact how we look at our business. Pizza and Politics is a program where the General Mills PAC, in partnership with the Citizens League, brings speakers to our campus to talk on a variety of issues, such as Minnesota Legislative updates, election previews and state budget updates.

I joined the Citizens League officially a few months ago and plan to become more active. Recently two of my favorite pastimes were combined in a great Citizens League event: political discourse and happy hour. I didn't know anyone when I got to the happy hour for new members, but I met several interesting

people with diverse interests and political leanings. Unlike what we see in the age of the 24/7 news cycle, at a Citizens League event people can discuss their differences, share their opinions and leave with a bit better understanding of the world. As a vocal critic of the decisions being made on my behalf at the city, county, state and national level, I never want it said that my criticisms were empty rhetoric; talk without action. If you or I are going to criticize (which I find myself doing more often in the last several years), we need to be willing to add actions to the words. We have plenty of the alternative already.

Wherever you reside on the political spectrum, knowledge of the events of the day, of the opinions and positions of our elected officials, and how as citizens we have a voice in the process is incredibly important. Take a step to making a difference by attending a Citizens League event!



Bob Branham

My birthday is January 24th. I joined the Citizens League in part because of that particular date.

On January 24, 2005, I received the best birthday present ever: Minnesota Public Radio launched The Current radio station on that day. Since then, my radio has stayed tuned to the Current most of the time.

In 2008 I began to notice announcements about Policy and a Pint® events on the Current. I became intrigued: Such serious topics in such lively and casual format? I had to take a look!

Soon, attending all of the Policy and a Pint sessions that fit my schedule became a ritual. I enjoyed the cheerful mixture of public policy and social gathering, often with beer chaser. I wanted the Citizens League to grow so that I could participate in more events like these. Signing up for the membership became the logical thing to do.

I first became a member in 2009. These days, I offer my apartment as a meeting location for an action group, hoping that our ideas can thrive.

Overall, my experience with Citizens League has always been positive. I dare say that participants of Policy and a Pint are very capable of turning brainy, weighty, and challenging issues into fun, accessible and leisurely discussions.

I know the efforts of Citizens League are successful when I see Skinnyski.com, an informational website for cross-country skiers in Minnesota and Wisconsin, urge its readers to participate in CitiZing™ to voice their opinions on parks and trails. I hope the Citizens League can expand its reach in this manner. Of course, this much talking makes me thirsty—so another pint please!

**Gene
C. Tsao**



I've known about the Citizens League for years, but always had a ready reason for not attending one of its events or getting involved. The reasons weren't original, but I'm sure are familiar to many.

"I'm too busy."

"I'll go to the next event."

"Sounds interesting, but it's just not for me."

Finally, I ran out of excuses. A friend asked if I was interested in attending the 2009 Annual Meeting and instead of one of my patented responses, I said, "Sure."

Upon arriving at the annual meeting I could immediately tell that I was among a like-minded group of people; people who care about their community and are interested in making it stronger by working together. I was intrigued and inspired that so many people would turn out for an event to talk about how we could move our political discourse from divisiveness to a focus on common values.

Shortly after the annual meeting, I went to an Inter-Generational Roundtable. Unlike the annual meeting, the roundtable was a smaller group that allowed for more conversation and sharing of ideas. But what remained the same was the diversity of people there, not only in terms of age and background, but also political stripes and points of view.

After these first two events I was convinced that if the state of Minnesota is to move beyond the gridlock that has defined its politics the past few years, it will be organizations like the Citizen's League that help move it forward. And if that's the case, I want to be part of that solution. This past spring, I joined an Action Group focused on the League's work around Pathways to Prosperity, and I look forward to continuing my involvement with the Citizens League.

**Martin
Wera**



11/10

Citizens League Annual Meeting

Doors open 5:15 pm,
program 6:30 pm–7:45 pm
Minneapolis Hilton.

Register now at
www.surveymonkey.com/s/clmeeting

For more information go to
www.citizensleague.org

PERIODICALS



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