

Two Organizations Celebrate 101 Years of Women's Right to Vote

More than 100 people gathered at Rohan Regional Recreation Complex for the event.

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Women fought for the right to vote in America, and on Aug. 26, 1920, they achieved it.

Thursday, 101 years later, the League of Women Voters of The Villages/Tri-County celebrated that achievement at Rohan Regional Recreation Complex when dozens of people dressed in vintage suffragist clothes met for a celebration.

The League welcomed more than 120 participants to honor what it took for women to win the right to vote. League Co-President Gail Formanack, of the Village of Hemingway, was the master of ceremonies for the event and began with how excited she was to finally be meeting.

"It's true what they say about third time's the charm because I've planned and canceled this event twice already over the last year and a half," she said. "We



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Nancy Hurlbert, of Leesburg, poses next to a mannequin dressed in period clothing with a "votes for women" sash during the League of Women Voters of The Villages/Tri-County Area's celebration of 101 years of women's suffrage at Rohan Regional Recreation Complex.

are still celebrating 100 years, but were also celebrating 101 years."

The afternoon began with a viewing of PBS' American Experience "The Vote" which discusses notable women who were pivotal in taking the right to vote for women.

"We were approached by PBS, and they said they wanted to

do some community outreach," Formanack said. "They appreciated what we do, and they wanted to show gratitude by allowing us to view the documentary for free."

Because PBS couldn't send representatives this year, the group watched the documentary on a DVD.

As she got on stage

Formanack's yellow rose pinned to her shirt and yellow, white and purple sash stood out. Formanack and most others in attendance dressed in suffragist-inspired clothing, including vintage hats and blouses, yellow roses, sashes and buttons advocating for women's suffrage.

Co-President Mary Kay Rosinski said the league's purpose is to encourage communities to participate in local and national government through education and advocacy.

"We go to schools and community programs and teach about the importance of voting and knowing what is happening in your neighborhood's local government as well as the federal government," she said.

Rosinski said one tool they use is the website vote411.org, which is an up-to-date database of who is on your voting ballot and what their platforms are as well as ways to check if your voter registration status.

"We really make a big push to make sure people register," she said. "That's one of the first things we do, is see if someone is registered and update

it or get that started.”

Jill Moss Greenberg, of the Village La Zamora, is the founder and coordinator for Sisters of Suffrage, or SOS, and celebrated at the event with her organization alongside the league.

Moss Greenberg was the first panelist who spoke about the famous suffragists, including Black journalist Ida B. Wells, who marched with fellow suffragists at the very front of the parade in Washington.

“This day is so important because it’s proof of what we are capable of,” she said. “We can’t wait for things to be given to us. You can’t just ask for equality and always expect it. Sometimes you have to fight for

it and take it for yourself.”

Moss Greenberg was glad the audience was together to honor the persistence of the men and women involved in the women’s suffrage movement, and she acknowledged that although Aug. 26 was an important day 101 years ago, it didn’t mean the fight was over for everyone, and the 19th Amendment didn’t automatically include Black women, who were still excluded from voting polls.

Formanack said one of the most interesting points of the event was that during the time period of suffrage, women were also dealing with the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 in the same way we’re currently experiencing the coronavirus pandemic.