

Sisters of Suffrage hold celebration of women's right to vote in The Villages

By **David Towns**

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More than 115 people from several organizations in the tri-county area came together Thursday at the Rohan Recreation Center in The Villages to celebrate the 101st anniversary of the passage of the Constitutional amendment which guaranteed a woman's right to vote.

To honor those who fought and continue this fight, Sisters of Suffrage, an ad hoc group of organizations was formed by Villager Jill Moss Greenberg, former director of the Maryland Heritage Center. They include the League of Women Voters, the American Association of University Women and the Daughters of the American Revolution, who are coming together to celebrate and increase awareness of this hard won fight.

Many of the ladies who attended the anniversary luncheon were wearing period clothing from the days when their grandmothers secured the right to vote for themselves and their daughters. Villagers Cathy Hale and Noni Gauder wore period clothing and held a banner at the entrance to the Rohan Recreation Center.



Cathy Hale, left, and Noni Gauder greeted Villagers to the Sisters of Suffrage celebration.



Jeanie Hamilton, left, and Mary Schulz staffed the registration desk. All participants were careful to wear masks during the event.

The guest registration table was staffed by Villagers Jeanie Hamilton and Mary Schulz. Schulz said that she is a member of the League of Woman voters because the League helps to educate people about critical issues.

DAR Pug Puggy Chapter Regent Linda Marcotte said that the event was "exciting to remember what our grandmothers went through to get us the privilege to vote."



Local Daughters of the American Revolution were present, from left Jan Hancharick, Margie Steele, Linda Marcotte, Ann Fagan and Teri Gray.

After the luncheon, the audience watched the PBS documentary, "The American Experience: The Vote," and discussed the issues regarding the suffrage movement with a panel consisting of the founder of Sisters of Suffrage, Jill Moss Greenberg; Lisa French, a woman's history lecturer at The Enrichment Academy; and Katina Stephens of the Southern Christian Leadership Foundation.

The suffrage movement began at the 1848 Convention at Seneca Falls N.Y., where the resolution on women's suffrage barely passed because some thought it jeopardized other goals including property rights, education and divorce equity. Following the convention Susan B. Anthony, Ida B. Wells, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Carrie Chapman Catt, Alice Paul and Frances Watkins Harper were a few of the women who organized picket lines, parades and speeches. In 1917, 33 women were arrested and imprisoned in Virginia. There they were force-fed after staging a hunger strike to emphasize that they were political prisoners not criminals. Their stories horrified the nation and galvanized public support.

The 19th Amendment was approved by Congress in 1919 and Tennessee became the necessary 36th state to ratify it on Aug. 18, 1920. The COVID-19 pandemic delayed the local celebration of this historic event one year.