

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Ann Hellmuth

For months now whenever I want to get together with friends or hold informal League meetings, I tell everyone to meet me at Panera Bread on Lake Eola. I live out in Dr. Phillips, which for many people is a long haul. This way we have a convenient place to meet and the Panera folks never mind how long you stay or how little you order.

Over the weeks, I've often smiled and said hello to a pleasant young woman who clears the tables and refills the coffee urns. Nothing personal, just business.

But this week something happened that made me stop and realize how we take so many things for granted in life.

The woman and I started talking after she said she was from London. As I too am originally from London, I asked her where in the sprawling capital she had lived. One thing led to another and she told me she was so excited because on Saturday she will be moving into an apartment. I thought she meant she was moving from one apartment to a more convenient location. But then she told me that she and her three children, ages 9, 7 and 3, had been living at the Orlando Rescue Mission for more than two years and through the help of a charity they were going to be able to move into an apartment out near the airport.

Like so many of us I never stopped to think about the back-story of the hard-working people we encounter during a day. I just assumed they all have homes and cars and well-ordered lives. But if I had really had my wits about me, I would have realized there are many people like my friend from Panera, struggling to get by on minimum wage.

As I drove home afterward I felt like Marie Antoinette - oblivious to the realities of the world we live in today. It brought home to me what a wonderful organization the League of Women Voters is and the opportunities it provides for us to do good things by fighting to achieve good government and sound legislation that will benefit all Americans. If I start flagging in my work for the League, all I have to do is kick myself and remember the woman at Panera Bread.

..... Odds and Ends. Don't forget Women's Suffrage Day, Friday, Aug. 26. The students are organizing a march at UCF and former U.S. Rep. Pat Schroeder and I will be speaking... Set your DVRs for 8 p.m. Sept. 14, WFTV-Channel 9. The Central Florida Spotlight focusing on the environment will air that evening and again at 12.30 p.m. on the Saturday....The Hot Topics on Wednesday, Sept. 14, will focus on education with Orange County School Board Chair Bill Sublette as one of the speakers...The First Amendment Foundation will hold a seminar on Florida's Sunshine Law on Monday, Sept. 26, starting at 8:30 a.m. at the Orlando Sentinel. Cost is \$15 for members. The Orange County Redistricting Advisory Board is set to complete its mission on Sept. 28....

And once again a final plea. Please check out the LWVOC blog (<http://leagueorangecounty.typepad.com/blog> and Facebook (www.Facebook.com/LWVOC) pages. They are being updated regularly with the Facebook page getting as many as seven or eight postings a day. If you have any items you want to have considered for either page, send me an email at abhellmuth@gmail.com.

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