

## QUAD STATES TRAINING A GREAT SUCCESS

League members from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Rhode Island attended the annual Quad State Leadership Training Workshop in Saco, Maine, June 2 and 3.

A Workshop on **An Alternative Structure for a Non-Profit Board** was led by LWVUS national board member Judith Davis and featured a case study of the Acton Area, Massachusetts league which, in 2003, was faced with an aging membership and few members willing to accept positions on the Board, or to chair committees. After reviewing what worked in the current structure, what could be improved, and what changes might make it easier to attract people to key leadership positions, a new structure was proposed and accepted.

The key concept of the new structure can be summed up, as “Work that is not done by the group does not automatically flow to the chair!” This approach limits the responsibility of the committee chairs, making it easier for members with busy professional and family lives to take on a leadership role. By giving responsibility for specific tasks to committee members, newer members are able to participate in committees without being overwhelmed by lack of knowledge about how the League functions. Since instituting these changes, the Acton Area League has become much more active and visible in the community and has been able to take on new functions, while maintaining a stable membership size, replacing members who leave through attrition with younger, more active members.

Kate Rader, President, LWVVT and Deborah Macmillan, LWVUS, presented a workshop on **Conducting a League Study** that covered the different processes for a national study and a state study. The importance of forming consensus questions and having consensus discussions were thoroughly discussed and participants were presented with many helpful suggestions for both processes.

Ann Luther, President, LWVME and Barbara Bartoletti, LWVNY, gave a dynamic workshop on **Speaking for the League**. Barbara, a League lobbyist for 20 years in Albany, N.Y., stressed the importance of nonpartisanship in maintaining the League’s credibility. Discussions about actions a member may take as a private citizen versus actions as a League member revealed some interesting dilemmas: bumper stickers on the family car supporting a political candidate; bad-mouthing a national or local office holder in public; states where a voter is required to register as a Democrat, Republican or Independent. General agreement was that Board members and members well-known in their communities as League members should be extremely careful about any action that could be construed as supporting a particular candidate or party – and that means nobody gets to put political bumper stickers on the family car if a prominent League officer drives it!

Cheryl Graeve, LWVUS, conducted a workshop on **Membership Strategies**. Cheryl identified a number of strategies that can help local leagues attract more members including identifying the ‘easing into retirement’ 50 – 65 age group and listening to women’s concerns and showing them how joining the League can help them address those concerns. LWVRI member, Hollie Courage, brought up the importance of outreach to immigrant and non-English speaking communities as a way of attracting members.

Workshops were filmed by Cheryl Graeve, LWVUS, and will be available to interested state and local leagues from the National Office.

- *Diana von Hallett*