

Raymond Voter Information Project Receives Grant

Raymond--The Board of Directors of the Raymond Voter Information Project is pleased to announce that the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation has awarded a 2012 Community Grant of \$3,500 to support Strategic Planning to Promote and Sustain Citizen Involvement in Raymond VIP.

“Our primary goal during the grant period is to develop a strategic plan for membership development and funding that can be sustained into the future,” says board member and grant administrator, Carolyn Matthews. “Our goal is to build an active membership qualified to participate in each phase of our editorial process, from reporter, to citizen reader, to editorial committee member. Each election cycle requires involvement from (ideally) fifteen different citizens, with at least five new citizens rotating into the process every year,” Matthews says. “Every citizen who participates promotes nonpartisan support for voter participation.”

According to its Articles of Agreement, the object of the Raymond Voter Information Project is the advancement of education that enables students and community members to prepare to exercise their civil right to vote. The group provides a fall speaker, a writing challenge for 7th and 8th grade Raymond students, and a local election guide, mailed to every Raymond household in March, with a pre-Deliberative Session edition and updates posted at www.raymondvip.org.

Students are currently researching and writing a persuasive article arguing either for or against Voter Identification Laws. The group’s Fall Speaker Program featured town officials who gave the facts about the new law. “Now our students will examine both sides of the legislation and present their views to the public,” says Raymond VIP Treasurer Marilyn Elliott who has helped present the contest’s school assembly for the last two years. Winning essays ‘for’ and ‘against’ will be published in Raymond VIP’s 2013 voting guide.

Raymond VIP is also dedicated to increasing voter participation in Raymond. “The New Hampshire Charitable Foundation seeks to build strong, just, and resilient communities, where citizens participate meaningfully in civic life,” says Matthews. “There can be no strength and no lasting justice when only 18% of the people vote in local elections, many with little knowledge of the issues. Our guide promotes a method of examining both sides of issues by offering comprehensive, objective, factual ‘reasons to vote no’ and ‘reasons to vote yes’ on every warrant article. Learning about both sides of an election issue can help build a bridge of understanding and support for the eventual outcome of any election. In today’s atmosphere of national, state and local divisiveness, mutual understanding can help us heal.”

Members of the Raymond Voter Information Project come from a broad range of careers and municipal experience, and have many personal viewpoints. However, as they work within Raymond VIP, they are committed to neither support nor oppose any political party, candidate or warrant article and to focus on providing objective voter information. Raymond VIP is registered with the State of New Hampshire and with the Town Of Raymond as a nonprofit corporation and a charitable trust. Raymond VIP is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are fully tax deductible.