

Special recognition for civic activist

League to honor Linda Henninger with award

By DANA FELSER

Although she never considered herself an activist, the League of Women Voters of Smithtown has distinguished Linda Henninger as just that—and have chosen her as its 2006 Citizen Activist.

The League will honor Mrs. Henninger at a luncheon Thursday, April 26 at the Nissequogue Golf Club from noon to 2 p.m.

"It was a very nice surprise and completely unexpected," said a humble Mrs. Henninger. "It's always wonderful to be recognized for the work you do. I have a great deal of respect for The League of Women Voters, and coming from them, it means a lot."

This year's Citizen Activist Award focuses on preserving the natural environment. "Linda Henninger has done so much which will benefit all of us far into the future," said Sondra Irvine, President of the League of Women Voters. "Each year those we honor make us realize anew just how much can be accomplished by a dedicated few."

The luncheon will also honor the elected officials of the Town of Smithtown. The afternoon's speaker will be Robert Freudenberg, of the Regional

Planning Association, and he will discuss the Nissequogue River Watershed Project.

Mrs. Henninger earned this honor in recognition of her unremitting effort, as part of the Kings Park Neighbors' Association, to secure the property of Kings Park Psychiatric Center.

Successfully, Mrs. Henninger, along with other Kings Park Neighbors' Association members, ceased the sale of the property to housing developers, who planned on building low-income housing on the land. In addition, she inspired the raising of \$25 million towards property clean-up, and the area is now protected as part of the Nissequogue Park—providing the community with a significant tax benefit.

"I actually met with Rob Trotta (Director of the Kings Park Neighbors' Association) and Carol Ash (the Nissequogue Park Supervisor) recently, and the group is committed to seeing that the property remains park land and only has a positive effect on the community."

Mrs. Henninger served as a key player in bringing the situation to the attention of Senator John Flanagan, who referred to her as "tenacious and passionate about her community," and said "she

works hard for the betterment of her local community."

In regards to those holding political positions, Mrs. Henninger believes "they are only as good as the people expect them to be." She went on to say, "Active citizens make our politicians better, therefore leading to a better community."

Mrs. Henninger currently resides in Fort Salonga with her husband, John, and her two children, Gregory, age 11, and Peter, age 9. She plans on having her two sons accompany her to the luncheon.

"It's good for children to see how local politics work and how individuals can be active in making a positive change for the community," said Mrs. Henninger.

To reserve a place at the luncheon, checks made payable to LWV Smithtown can be sent to Mary Zopf, 21 Greene Drive, Commack 11725. For additional information, Mrs. Zopf can be reached at (631) 499-0107. Tickets are \$30 per person paid in advance, or \$35 if paid at the door.

Although Mrs. Henninger appreciates the recognition, she knows she could not have produced the results she did without the people who assisted in her



CITIZEN OF THE YEAR: Linda Henninger, who is recognized by The League of Women Voters as the 2006 Citizen Activist, will be honored at a luncheon April 26 at noon at the Nissequogue Golf Club.

endeavors. "No one works in a bubble," Mrs. Henninger remarked. "I've been working with a great group of people who are committed to the community, and I am proud to know them and call them my friends."