

**League of Women Voters of Mountain Lakes**  
**Educational Resources Consensus**  
**April 2005**

The League of Women Voters recognizes that a strong public education system is an important asset for the Mountain Lakes Community. In light of the high level of property taxes in the community and funding restrictions placed on school districts through recent state legislation, the League recommends that the Board of Education vigorously pursue educational resources that can be accessed without increasing taxes to residents. Specifically, the League recommends that the Board of Education work with the local community to explore the following options:

•**The Creation of a Development Program** – The League urges the Board of Education to create a comprehensive Development Program. This program should provide a long term strategic vision for the accessing of educational resources; pair needs with identified resources; and work as an umbrella organization to coordinate fundraising within the community, grant writing, corporate outreach, alumni relations, the marketing of our school district to the outside community, the management of a volunteer database, and other related activities. The Development Program should be structured in such a way that it follows Board of Education policies and works in tandem with the Long Range Education Plan. Efforts to establish this program should include the Board of Education, the Education Foundation, the Grant Action Committee, the Home and School Association, the School Superintendent and others as may be appropriate.

•**The Establishment of a Human Resource Bank** – The League recognizes that one great resource for Mountain Lakes schools is the many skilled and talented individuals who desire to volunteer. The schools must be able to control the intake of volunteers to match their needs and guidelines. There is also a need for volunteers for other community organizations. To take better advantage of this resource the League recommends that volunteers be managed through a Human Resource Data Bank which would match volunteers with jobs. This could be organized through internet programs like “Project Appleseed” or that used by the Office of Volunteers in Morristown. The Home and School Bulletin could also be used to communicate needs and opportunities for volunteers.

•**The Establishment of a Community Round Table Planning Meeting** – The League recognizes that numerous independent special interest groups and clubs in Mountain Lakes have highly effective organizations as a result of their members’ passion and enthusiasm. We also recognize that overlap and duplication between these groups can lead to inefficient use of resources and a lack of communication. As such, the League encourages the Board of Education to continue its initiative to build dialogue, communication and event coordination between these groups without hindering their autonomy in any way. In the future, the groups themselves may wish to schedule and manage this process.

•**The Solicitation of Funds for Endowments to the Schools** – In a 1998 Consensus, the League stated that the majority of funds raised by the Education Foundation should be used towards an endowment fund. However, to date, an endowment fund has not been established. While support for the establishment of endowment funds was reaffirmed, it is recognized that it may be difficult to establish an effective fund in a town the size of Mountain Lakes. To further this cause, it was suggested that local families could be encouraged to fund endowment through Financial and Estate Trust planning strategies.

•**The Use of Wish Lists** – While the League recognizes that it is essential that all the tools that students and teachers need to meet the requirements of the core curriculum be funded within the school budget, we support the use of Wish Lists by teachers and Principals to solicit the donation of items or services. Wish Lists should include items that will enhance students’ educational experience in ways that cannot be met by ordinary education funding. It was further suggested that an “adoption” program might be implemented for larger items, whereby a family or group of families might assume the responsibility to fund or maintain a particular extraordinary item or program.

•**The Use of New Fund Raising Techniques to Elicit Community Financial Commitment to Educational Resources** -The League supports the creation of targeted fundraising programs. Consideration should be given to fundraisers that: allow individuals to financially support specific projects; allow for the donation of funds in tribute to individuals within the school system; or allow for public recognition of a family or individual. Specific ideas that might be considered are the purchase of “recognition” bricks in the high school renovation and the dedication of auditorium seats by local families or alumni.