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Women's Council set for Suffragist program

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Judy Baker

featuring storyteller Judy Baker.

Casting a vote in the November 2012 presidential election is a right most Bradley County women will take for granted.

“A look at history lets us know that it took activists and reformers nearly a hundred years to win that right in a campaign sometimes fraught with disagreements that often threatened to cripple what we know as the Suffragist Movement,” according to Nancy Neal, vice president for communications of the Cleveland/Bradley Chamber of Commerce. “But persistence paid, and on Election Day in 1920, millions of American women exercised their right to vote for the first time.”

The Women's Council of the Cleveland/Bradley Chamber of Commerce will look at the importance of continuing to exercise that right at their July 23 lunch-and-learn program, “A History of Women's Right to Vote,”

The “history lesson” will take place at noon in the conference center of the Chamber of Commerce. Cost of the session is \$10 for Chamber members and \$15 for non-members and includes a buffet luncheon.

Portraying a woman Suffragist in period costume, Judy Baker, a native Tennessean, will speak about the historical significance of Tennessee in the fight to give women the right to vote and the struggle in the Suffragist Movement in general. As part of her presentation, Baker will emphasize the importance of voting, especially since women struggled and braved hostile crowds to secure that right. She also will display pictures and editorial cartoons that appeared in publication during that period.

A storyteller since 1999, Baker has been featured at several regional festivals, including the Cumberland Mountain Storytelling Festival, Cornfest in Obion County, the Marble Springs Storytelling Festival, Mountain Makins Festival and as a Featured New Voice at the Storytelling Festival of Carolina. She is a member and past president of the Cleveland Storytelling Guild and co-chairman of their annual Ocoee Story Fest, now in its 17th year. She also serves on the Allied Arts Council of the Cleveland/Bradley County Chamber of Commerce and is an education docent at the Museum Center at Five Points.

Twenty-four-year-old Harry Burn is remembered best for casting the deciding vote to ratify the 19th Amendment during his first term in the legislature.

McMinn County Sheriff and historian Joe Guy will talk briefly to the Women's Council about Burn's vote and its impact on the Suffrage Movement.

To register for the session, call 423-472-6587 by noon on Friday. Chamber members also may register online at www.clevelandchamber.com on the community calendar (<http://clevelandbradleychamber.chambermaster.com/Events/details/women-s-council-program-the-right-to-vote-3380>).

"Join us for this fun and informative history lesson," Neal encouraged. "Women's Council is a wonderful opportunity for businesswomen, those who are Chamber members and those who are interested in the program, to network and to learn about topics of interest to women."

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