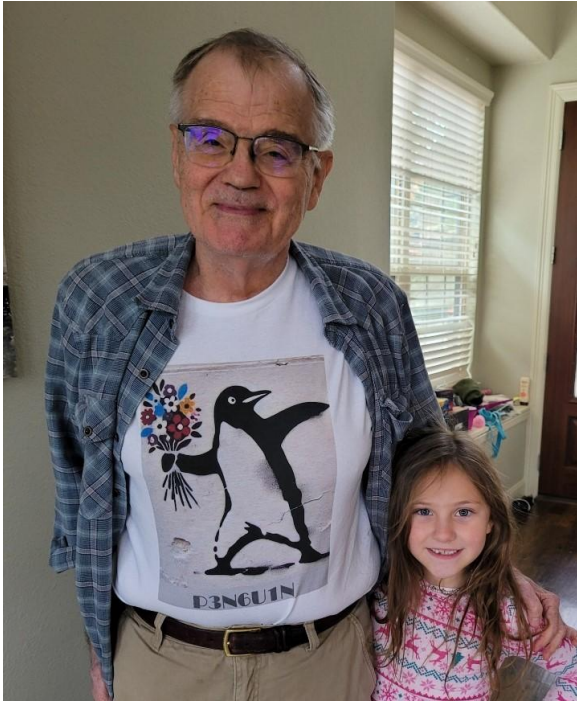




Webinar 5 – The Path Forward for Progressives

Thursday, November 20th, 3:30 Central



**Charlie Bruner,
Originator
Values to Votes Project**



The New Media Firm
Progressive • Strategic • Creative



**Will Robinson,
Founding Partner
The New Media Firm**

Reclaiming Connections

Condensed Version

Values to Votes is a project of the Grassroots Iowa Network

www.valuestovotes.com

Agenda

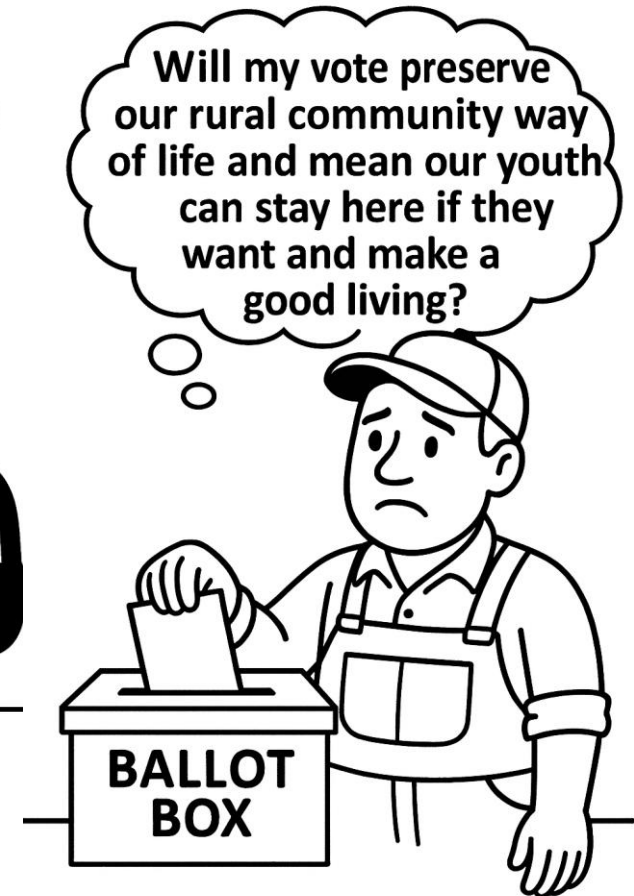
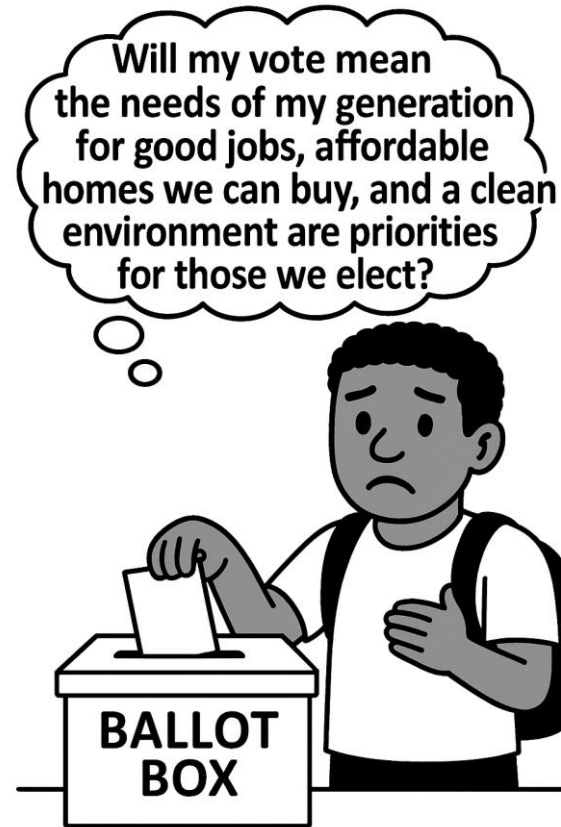
1. Key Takeaways from First Four VtV Webinars – Charlie Bruner
2. The Path Forward for Progressives – Will Robinson

Key Takeaways from Values to Votes Webinars and the Need for Grassroots Advocacy

1. People vote their values and not just their pocketbooks (but different people have different values most important to them).
2. People listen to those they respect and trust.
3. People need to hear things more than once and process what they hear.
4. Persuadable voters decide elections.
5. Persuadable voters are persuadable around different values and issues but often frustrated with partisan campaigns, suspicious of politicians, and worried government doesn't support them.
6. Grassroots leaders have superpowers in engaging, educating, energizing, and persuading such voters in their communities.

Grassroots advocacy (not partisan campaigning) is key to persuading persuadable voters. VtV/GIN can help provide resources and support.

1. People Vote Their Values ... Not Just Their Pocketbooks (as best as they can discern which candidates represent those values)



Rhetorical Questions Number One

Will ads and campaigns that speak continuously to select values issues – e.g. preserving social security, ensuring women's rights to choose, and legalizing marijuana – address persuadable voters' values and concerns or just be campaign noise?

Will media blasts depicting opponents as dangerous politicians pursuing a devious agenda lead to answers to their questions?

2. People Listen to Those They Respect and Trust (but amidst a lot of other noise)

Grassroots Campaigning

People power: Engagement, education, dialogue, persuasion



Partisan Campaigning

Money power: Messaging and Branding

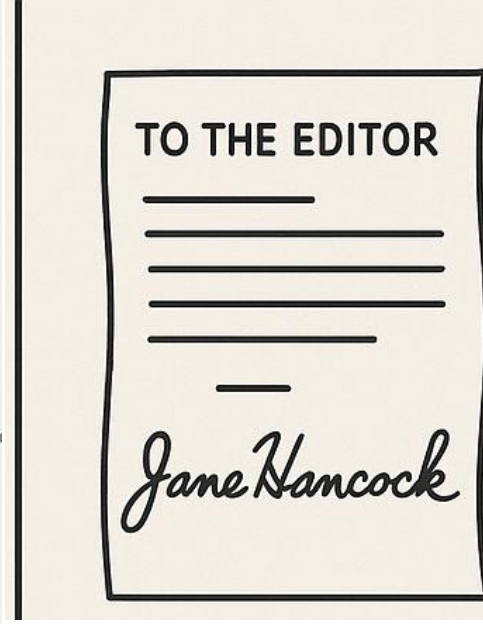


3. People Need to Hear Things More Than Once and Process What They Hear

(the redundancy value of redundancy and core community-level roles)



RALLIES



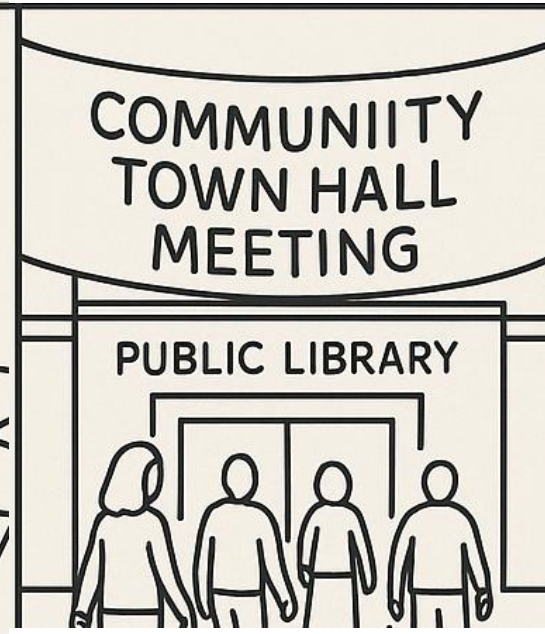
LTE'S



CONVERSATIONS



POSTCARDS



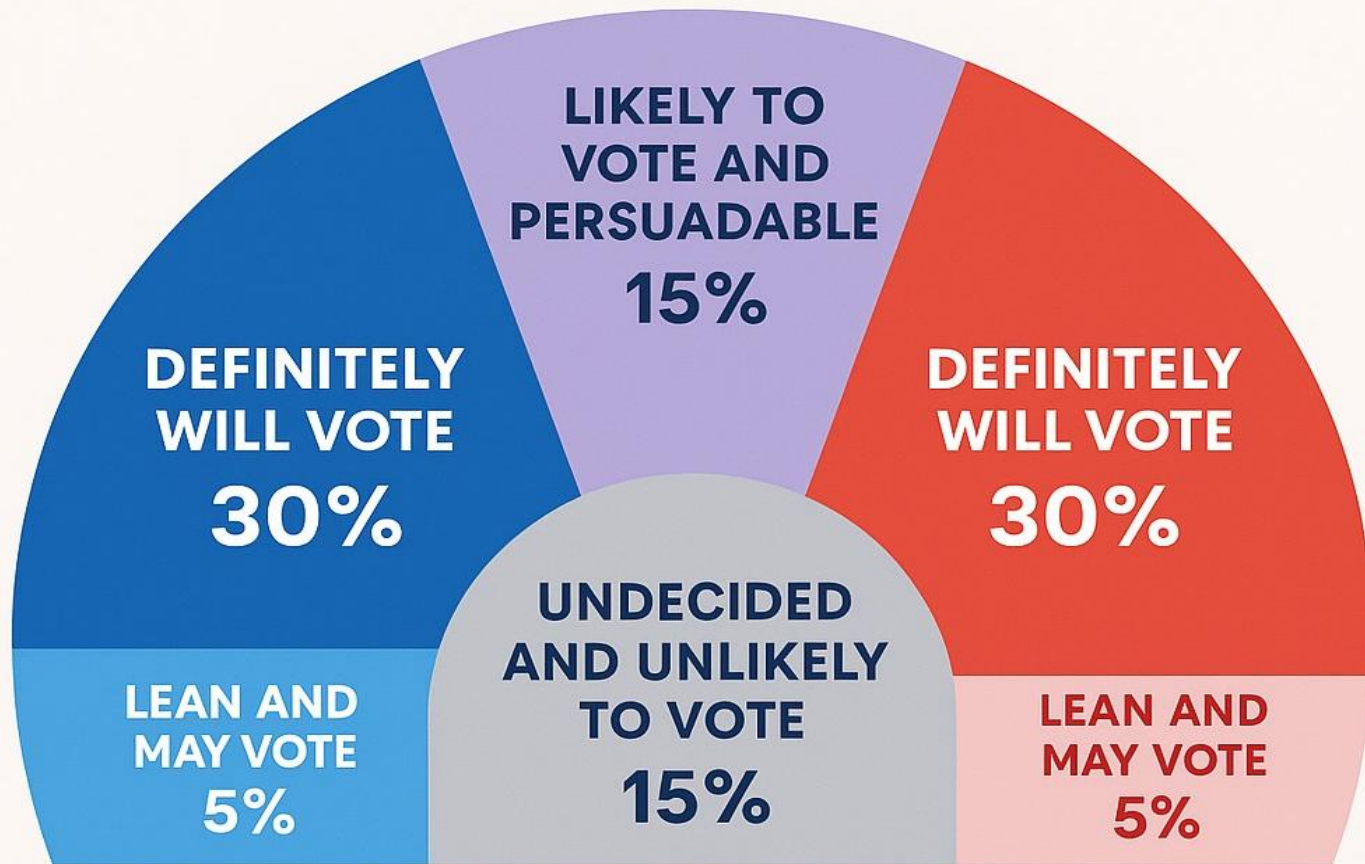
FORUMS



TESTIMONY

4. Persuadable Voters Decide Elections (getting out the vote is important but not enough)

THE AMERICAN ELECTORATE



Get out the Vote: Identify and energize supporters who may not vote.

**Persuade the Persuadables:
Move likely voters to be supporters
(each change counts 2)**

5. Persuadable Voters are Persuadable on Different Values and From Different Grassroots Leaders (but must ring true and be credible/not political noise)

Awareness and Presence (Calling the question and being visible)

- Progressive activists
- Bullhorn holders and mobilizers
- Political speakers and strategists/organizers



Messages and Testimonials (Presenting a positive message)

- Progressives recognized by colleagues and peers as credible value-based experts on issue
- Credible spokespeople on community impact (personal stories)



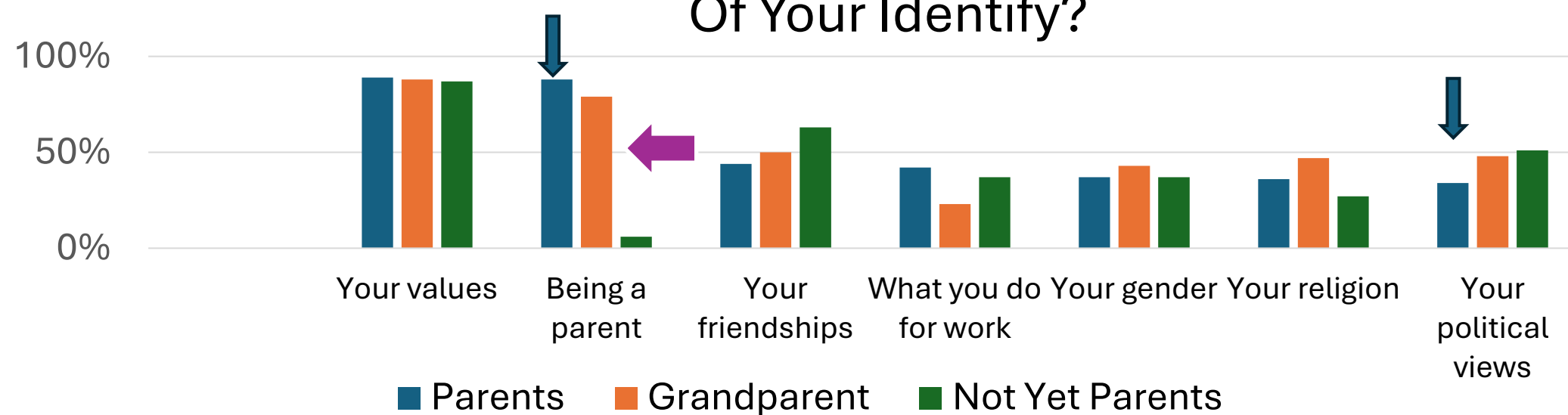
Safe Opportunity for Learning (Convening persuadables)

- Local civic leaders as presenters and panelists
- Persons recognized as civic and not partisan leaders
- Good moderators and facilitators of dialogues



Webinar One: Parents as Persuadable Voters

To What Extent are Each of These A Big Part Of Your Identify?



Parents
Together

Of all voters, parents say they are most likely to change their votes and party preferences based upon their values and what candidates say.

Parents were much bigger “swing voters” than nonparents in their choices for President from 2020 and 2024. ABC Exit Polls of Shift – Men with children 10% swing to R, Women with children 9% swing to R; Men without children 6% swing to R, Women without children 0% swing.

Reaching Parents Involves Recognizing and Addressing the Challenges of Parenting

Getting by in early earning years when time demands on children are greatest (e.g. dual breadwinning and caregiving roles)

- Fair tax system that recognizes costs (\$3000+ refundable child tax credit)
- Affordable health care (Medicaid/CHIP and ACA subsidies)
- Affordable quality child care
- Paid family leave

Providing high quality education for all children, particularly their own

- Strong foundation in community public education
- Post-secondary education/training that paves way for family sustaining jobs

Honoring parents as child's first teacher, nurse, and guide to the world

- Community schools that reflect community and parent values
- Opportunities for parents to participate and hold systems accountable

Webinar Two: Rural and Small Town Voters as Persuadable Voters

The Rural Iowa Vote Shift and Addressing Rural Values to Shift it Back

19 percent shift in voting from 2012 to 2024 Presidential election in 89 rural counties, compared to 5 percent in 10 urban counties

One in five rural-small town voters swung and turned Iowa from bluish purple to red (rural-small town voters are about half the state's population)

Polls and surveys indicate beliefs among rural voters are that (1) rural areas are ignored by decision makers, (2) rural areas do not get their fair share of resources, (3) rural folks have fundamentally distinct values and lifestyles, which are misunderstood and disrespected by city folks, and (4) only one party speaks to rural values.

Webinar Two: Grassroots Actions to Engage Rural Voters

- Enlist and support rural activists – dirt road democrats, pick-up truck progressives, frustrated family farmers
- Recognize rural values and speak to strengthening supports for rural communities
- Fill the ballot and field progressive rural candidates even if they aren't expected to win
- Continually grow the base and show rural community progressives they are not alone
- Insist on examining policies through a rural community lens

Rhetorical Question Number Two

*Which party emphasizes family values and parental rights and making working **rural** America great again (in us-them ways) – and is on the ground doing so?*

Which party advances policies that support all families and parents and rural communities but doesn't speak about them or with their constituencies?

Webinar Three: Health Care as Core Value for Convening, Educating, Dialogue, and Persuasion

- **Regardless of specific events of the day, federal health care policy is ongoing and should be a high priority and visibility issue for Congress.**
- Just because government's role to ensure our nation's health is complicated doesn't mean:
 - Congress should not learn about it
 - It doesn't need to be done
 - It's not worth fighting for.
- Unpacking the current choices faced in Congress is possible and voters want candidates and office holders to speak to them.

Need for community dialogue on health care – with trusted presenters from community and state to make it understandable

Being Nonpartisan Means Being Value-Based and Does Not Always Mean Being Bipartisan – Congress at Crossroads

Progressive health values – government has major role in financing and oversight of nation's needed medical & public/preventive/environmental health systems

--- e.g.

Maintain ACA subsidies

Provide home and community-based services

Strengthen public health responses

Regulate health care industries to avoid abuses

Expand primary and preventive services

Support health-related services such as nutrition, healthy housing, and parenting supports (incl. child care)

Regressive health values – free market determines and government's current role should be reduced and only to demonstrably deserving

--- e.g.

End ACA subsidies, cut SNAP benefits, and limit eligibility to only those working or seeking work

Reduce funding for public health, health research under NHI

Reduce health, education, and human service staffing and services

Reduce regulatory oversight and focus only on consumer abuse

Reduce commitments to states in their role in supporting health and health care

Webinar Four: Organizing to Build Grassroots Advocates and Influencers - Opportunities to Volunteer/ Contribute

Partisan Campaigns

- Give money
- Raise money
- Canvass
- Phone bank
- Be partisan

Grassroots Campaigns

- Help organize and publicize events
- Bring friends
- Share story at meetings
- Make a personal sign
- Host planning meeting at home
- Recruit others to join (formal/informal)
- Dialogue with persuadables you know
- Use special talents and own ideas

Grassroots campaigns provide many more opportunities to say “Yes”

Organizing is About Relationships: Grow Your Followers

Ladder of Engagement



Types of Leadership

- Mobilizer
- Connector
- Nonpartisan resource
- Moderator/convenor
- Influencer of particular persuadable voters

6. Enlisting Grassroots Peoples' Superpowers (when they talk, people listen; when they ask, people say yes)

Mental Health Maven

School Field Trip Organizer

Passionate Orator

Event Planner

Soft-Spoken Consensus Builder

Grandmother to Most Everyone

Soil conservation officer

Beloved Former Councilperson

Retirement Community Social Organizer

Primary Care Community Health Nurse

Data Base Techie

Student blogger

Rally Mobilizer

Envelop Stuffer

Gracious Host for Neighborhood Coffee

New Media: A Path Forward for Progressives



**WILL
ROBINSON**

- Founding partner of The New Media Firm and nationally recognized media consultant and champion of integrating digital and traditional advertising for progressive campaigns.
- Over four-decade career starting as Iowa organizer for AFSCME and building deep relationships with labor and Presidential caucuses.
- Recent writing and Substack columns stressing progressives must move from episodic campaigns to permanent media and organizing ecosystems, centering trust, emotion, and everyday lived experience
- Named AAPS *Democratic Campaign Strategist of the Year* in 2012 and the 2025 GAIN Power's *Living Legend* Award—on top of dozens of Pollie, Reed, and Telly awards.

Will Robinson's 12 Rules for Communicating in 2025

1. Culture beats credentials. People follow people they *like*—not experts they don't trust.

2. Media is always on.

3. TV is no longer the 800 pound gorilla.

4. We don't just have a message problem - we have a media structure problem.

Progressives must stop thinking in bursts and start media ecosystems - trusted messengers, local voices & presence.

5. Cooperate. Stop attacking or ignoring your allies. Start amplifying them.

6. We need more than a message, a podcast, or a piece of tech. No magic bullet.

7. Voters have broken up with us. They didn't ghost us. We ghosted them.

8. Progressives don't need a new message. We need new behavior.

9. Break down message silos. Our messages should reinforce, not cancel, each other.

10. Audience first. Always. Start where people *are* - not where you think they should be.

11. It's about communications and organizing. Content is a tactic. Community is the strategy.

12. Lead with emotion, not just information. If it doesn't connect, it disappears.

**Don't just say what you want to say. Say what people need to hear—
from someone they trust—in a format they can feel.**

Select Will Robinson Newsletters and Slides

Will Robinson Newsletter Sampler
available on Values to Votes
website

1. People are Our Power. Swo
Why Aren't We Training Them?
2. Stop Measuring Marches. Start
Building Power
3. 30 Years Later: What I Told
Campaign Staff Then—and
What We All Need to Hear Now

Will Robinson “Combating the
Disinformation Media” Slides used
in Values to Votes live webinar

Available on Values to Votes
website

Contact information for Will
Robinson: New Media Firm

www.valuestovotes.com

The Path Forward for Progressives



*The progressive movement doesn't have a people problem.
We have a training problem.*

*We need to equip the people and communities most
harmed by Trump's attacks with the tools to fight back—on
their terms, in their voices.*

*Most importantly, it's about letting go of top-down control.
The future of organizing is bottom-up, networked, and
noisy. That's where our power lives.*

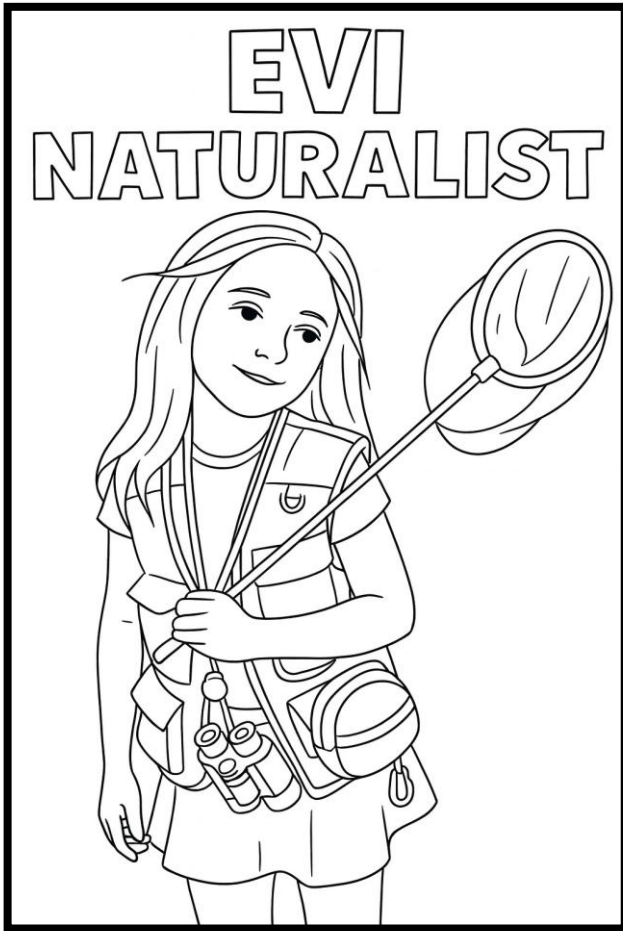
**-- WR "People Are Our Power. So Why Aren't We Using
Them?" July Newsletter**

I've learned that
people will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did,
but people will never forget how
you made them feel.

– Maya Angelou



Final Takeaway



**We can
make
sure her
future is
bright.**



VALUES^{to} VOTES

Grassroots
Advocacy to
Strengthen
Democracy



VtV – a
Project
of GIN



www.valuestovotes.com

What's Next?

Values to Votes:

Sharing resources, particularly those that are action-ready.

Connecting advocates with peers for joint learning, support, and innovation.

Getting more people to do more things in their superpower wheelhouses.

You:

Sharing with us what you are doing.

Giving us advice on what we should do.