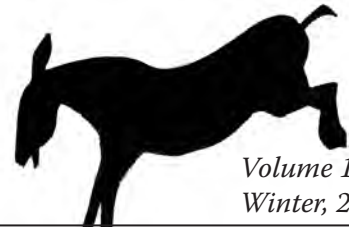


The Benzie Kicker

Newsletter of the Benzie County Democratic Party



Volume 13, No. 1
Winter, 2008-2009

Benzie County Democrats: working inclusively and creatively for the betterment all

New officers and board elected

Benzie County Democrat Party precinct delegates convened Nov. 8 for their convention to elect a new executive board. The board then selected the party's new executive officers. Planning commission chair and 2008 county commission candidate Kathy Ralston of Beulah was elected party chair. She will be assisted by vice chair Ted Curran of Frankfort, an active Democrat who is a retired educator and government servant.



Kathy Ralston



Ted Curran



Phil Kiteley



Brant Downing

Two countywide candidates in the recent election were elected second and third vice chair: builder Phillip Kiteley of Beulah and Brant Downing, who is trained in public administration. In the 2008 election, Downing was candidate for sheriff; Kiteley ran for the county commission. Renee Osgood of Honor was elected Secretary, replacing long-time party worker Carroll Volpe, who declined to run for another term, but will continue contributing to the party organization. Former party records keeper Sally Smeltzer of Benzonia was elected treasurer, and Sara Meachum of Frankfort was elected recordkeeper. All of the officers are responsible for chairing or participating in the various party committees.

The outgoing officers are Ray Nichols, chair; Susan Pyne, vice chair; Carroll Volpe, Secretary; Bob Sauer, treasurer; and Sally Smeltzer, recordkeeper. Pyne recognized our many local volunteers, more than 300 people, for their contributions to the 2008 campaign.

The first party meeting in 2009 was held on Jan. 10. Former chair Ray Nichols greeted attendees and Kathy Ralston called the meeting to order. Carroll Volpe served as acting secretary due to the resignation of Renee Osgood, who cited new commitments in her resignation.

Kiteley took the vice-chairs' seat. Later in the meeting Lori Cota of Benzonia was elected party secretary to replace Osgood.

The most important agenda item was to amend the quorum requirements for the executive board to facilitate voting. The board amended the by-laws so that now one-quarter of the thirty-six board members need to be present for voting to occur.

The Michigan Democratic Party state convention is at Cobo Hall in Detroit on February 21. Due to an increase in local Democratic voting, Benzie County will be represented by six votes at the convention instead of four. Delegates will cast 3125 votes to elect the state party's new leadership. Our Benzie party has set up a resolution committee to contribute to the state platform.

Wendy Olson and Judy Hallan of the Multijurisdictional Drill Team and Color Guard attended the meeting because their mounted unit, based at the Manistee Sheriff's Department, was scheduled to travel to the presidential inauguration and participate in the parade. Their horses, Missy and Banjo, were getting special shoes for the streets of D. C. The board voted to make a small donation to help cover their costs.

Blue Tiger Democrats statewide participate in civic engagement projects. At the meeting they discussed a plan to participate in the January 19 Martin Luther King Day of Service by organizing a food drive, which was subsequently accomplished.

The next party meeting will be Sat., Feb. 7 at Benzonia Township Hall. The County Convention of the August 2008 elected Precinct Delegates will begin at 9:00 a.m. The regular meeting will follow after they adjourn.

Calendar

State Democratic Convention

Detroit, February 21

Regular meetings first Saturday monthly

(No meetings in July and December.)

Big Fund-raising Yard Sale

May 22, 23, & 24

(Start saving unwanted & reusable items!)

Summer Chicken Barbecue

(To be determined.)

Fruitful volunteer effort sets stage for future

During the campaign, more than 300 Benzie County Democrats contributed their time and energy to identify likely Democrat voters, campaign, staff the office, get out the vote, and serve as poll watchers for the 2008 election.

At the time of the 2004 election, the party preference of 6000 Benzie voters was unknown. The effort to identify those who are favorable to our party ideals and candidates started in late summer 2007, when a relatively small group of Benzie Dems started going door-to-door in our various townships to ask. Before the 2008 election, more than 300 people had worked as canvassers. Dick Robb coordinated volunteers to communicate with small groups of identified voters, and the ongoing door-to-door effort. One focus of the door-to-door effort was to promote the candidacy of Dan Scripps for state representative, which was successful. Once the national candidate was known, visits included a persuasive message, as well as a reminder to vote. In the last four days before the election, 171 volunteers knocked on 2,000 doors!

From July 4 through election day about 50 volunteers a week staffed our Democratic headquarters, greeting people, making phone calls, and otherwise contributing to the election effort. Others contributing to the 2008 effort included all those



County voter turnout at 75 percent!

The Benzie voter turnout was the sixth highest in Michigan. The cake was made for the our December potluck.

who collected and displayed candidate's signs on their property, button buyers, parade marchers—all Democrat boosters, and 85 election challengers. We had our say in November; now let's set sights on maintaining our gains and improving our performance!

Thanks candidates, volunteers, voters!

From the campaign coordinator...

I want to thank all of you for all your support in this past year. Because of you, Dan Scripps won Benzie by a large margin. Obama and Levin won in Benzie, and we also added Don Tanner to the county commission in District 7, kept District 3 with the election of Kris Hollenbeck, and re-elected Anne Damm in District 4. Many thanks to candidates Brant Downing, Mike Smith, Eric Pyne, Delores Duddles-Berta, Phil Kiteley, and Kathy Ralston for running great campaigns. Overall the work was worth the effort.

The start the new election cycle we are asking everyone to join the **Michigan Democratic Party**. Our county party receives a portion of the dues back from the State Party and this helps with our fund-raising effort. There is a membership form inserted in this issue of the Kicker. **Please take the time to fill it out; include a check made out to the Michigan Democratic Party and send it today to 606 Townsend St., Lansing, MI 48933.**

Thanks for everything.

Carroll Volpe, 2008 campaign coordinator



On Martin Luther King Day, President Obama's call to service was answered with a collection effort for the food bank, Benzie Area Christian Neighbors. Many of our members helped out, and this "Blue Tiger Democrat" project was a big success. Our new treasurer, Sally Smeltzer was happy to load her car donations for BACN. Donations of groceries and money were collected at the Shop & Save in Benzonia and at the Honor Market.

Notes from the chair. . .

Noon on January 20, 2009, is a moment none of us will soon forget. Barack Obama became our new President, ushering in a new era of "hope over fear." This is a time to celebrate and reflect on our historic and monumental accomplishments. Along with helping Obama win Benzie county, we Benzie Democrats can take enormous pride in knowing the key role played by our organization in Dan Scripps' election as the freshman state representative for Michigan's 101st district. Democrats gained two more seats on our own county board of commissioners. To our delight, on January 6, Democrat Don Tanner, representing county district 7, was elected chair of the county board. Serving along with chairman Tanner are commissioner Anne Damm of district 4 and Kris Hollenbeck of district 3. The face of the board of commissioners is changing. Each of you, in your unique way, has ushered in this change through your dedication and diligence.

The current economic hardships facing the nation are nothing new to Benzie County and Michigan residents. Now is the time, as we are confronted with these challenges, to answer the call to service. There's a brand new group of Benzie Democrats that embodies that spirit of community commitment. The **Blue Tiger Committee**, led by Benzie Democrat Vice Chair Phil Kiteley, is committed to making a difference in the lives of our neighbors during this challenging time. Formed during our Jan. 10 meeting, the group quickly organized a day of service in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King. On Saturday January 17, Benzie Blue Tigers collected enough food at the Honor Market and Shop n' Save to fill the almost empty shelves of the Benzie Area Christian Neighbors (BACN) food bank. On behalf of the Benzie Democrats, I extend my utmost gratitude to the generous people who contributed to the food drive and the Blue Tiger volunteers who organized the event. There will be a meeting of the Benzie Blue Tigers in the near future to plan community service activities for the year. Please send your contact information to Phil Kiteley at 882-0594 or email phillipkiteley@gmail.com participate in this positive change.

Treasurer Sally Smeltzer is compiling a 2009 budget that will provide the framework for our fund-raising goals and activities. She also chairs the **Finance Committee** and oversees fund-raising. Due to the workload of those combined tasks, she is seeking a co-chair to work with the **Fund-raising Committee**. Those of you who have already signed up know who you are. You and anyone else interested or experienced at fund-raising, please contact Sally at 882-9367 or email sallysmeltzer@excite.com.

Lucky for us, Carroll Volpe is contributing her *November, 2008*

organizational skills and experience as chair of the **Membership Committee**. See her note on page 2 about state party membership and the newsletter insert. Revenue from membership fees goes directly toward our campaign efforts. Carroll will be working closely with the state party membership chair manager to develop a plan for reaching our membership goals. Anyone who is detail oriented and has an interest in helping Carroll, please contact her at 231-325-6692 or email at mcvolpe@centurytel.net.

We scored big again with our new **Communications Committee** chair. Doreen Fitzgerald, who has 30 years of experience in journalism and public relations, has agreed to contribute to our vital communication projects (news releases, newsletter, website). She will soon meet

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Executive Board Officers

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From the chair, continued from 3
with committee volunteers to discuss the organization and overall strategic communications plan. Those who signed up will soon be hearing from her. Anyone else who contribute to this effort, including public speakers, should contact Doreen at 231-352-7876 or email at dodie.fitz@gmail.com.

Dick Robb effectively headed up our **Campaign and Candidate Recruitment Committee** for the 2008 election. Many thanks to him for his tireless efforts to organize our *Note* volunteers into a force to be reckoned with on election day! Precinct delegates are the grass roots of our party organization, as they campaign and win elections neighborhood by neighborhood. As Dick deals with recent knee surgery, I'll be working with our delegates and precinct captains on a comprehensive plan to strengthen our already solid volunteer program. Together, we will build on our success for coming elections. Through our delegates and volunteers, we also can take a more active role in all levels of Benzie County local government. In this way, we'll have the knowledge and information to recruit local candidates and get them elected in 2010 and 2012. Dick

will help guide my efforts. Best wishes go to him for a speedy recovery.

At the spring state Democratic convention in Detroit on February 21, the state chair and vice chair will be elected and resolutions will be adopted for the state party platform. U.S. congressional district caucuses will be held to elect officers for those organizations as well as delegates and alternates to the MDP State Central Committee. A \$30 stipend is available for up to six Benzie Dem party members who choose to attend the state convention.

Our elected precinct delegates will convene Feb. 7 at 9 to elect members and alternates for state convention committees and consider resolutions for forwarding to the MDP. A regular party meeting will follow. Those who wish to attend the State Convention on the 21st should attend the county convention on the 7th to request the stipend.

On a personal note, I am honored by your show of faith in electing me as party chair. I was touched by the rousing chorus of Jingle Bells at the Christmas Party, complete with special creative Democrat lyrics. It will be no easy task to fill the shoes of our beloved departing Chair Ray Nichols. I will, however,

endeavor to do my utmost to lead this organization competently. You deserve nothing less. If you're new to our party organization, welcome aboard! If you're an old hand, please welcome our new members and join together to keep us moving toward positive change for our communities.

—Kathy Ralston

Representative Dan Scripps

Dan has invited his Benzie constituents to share their thoughts and concerns with him on the first Monday of each month, 11 a.m. – Noon at the Beulah Public Library, 7238 Commercial St. in Beulah. (231) 882-4037. On the same day He'll also hold coffee hours in Suttons Bay, Manistee, and Ludington. You may also contact him by Toll-free phone: (888) MICH101; E-mail: danscripps@house.mi.gov; or through his website (house.mi.gov/dscripps)

The Benzie Kicker is published by the Benzie County Democratic Party. Contact editor Doreen Fitzgerald with comments, suggestions, or corrections by email: dodie.fitz@gmail.com or phone: 352-7876.