

# The Benzie Kicker

Newsletter of the Benzie County Democratic Party



Volume 13, No. 3  
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*Benzie County Democrats: working inclusively and creatively for the betterment all*

## Support School Millages

The Executive Board urges everyone to **vote November 3** to support the two tax renewals for the county schools. Both Benzie County Central Schools and Frankfort-Elberta Area Schools are seeking renewals of the 18 mills Non-Homestead tax and the 2.5 mills Headlee Override. Supporting the public schools is not a partisan issue. The children of both Republicans and Democrats need and deserve the best preparation we can give them: the skills to compete and prosper in the economy of the 21st century. Although supporting these measures will not solve the financial shortfalls that the two districts are facing, without the renewal of the non-homestead millage, neither district can operate. BCCS relies on this funding source for 52% of its operations; FEAS depends on non-homestead millage for 99%. Though these measures cannot replace the state funding cuts planned in Lansing, the voters of Benzie County can make their voices heard: the students of Benzie County need all registered voters to come out on November 3 and speak clearly in support of our county and state's future leaders.

### **2010 is an election year!**

## Hopefuls visit Benzie Dems

Nominations of Democratic candidates secretary of state and attorney general will take place at the Democratic state convention August 28 and 29, 2010 at Cobo Center in Detroit. State party members from each county and district organization receive proportional votes.

Two candidates spoke at our Oct. 3 monthly Democratic meeting, Jocelyn Benson and Roger Dunigan. Benson, who is seeking the Democratic nomination for secretary of state, is a fulltime assistant professor of law at Wayne State University Law School, where she teaches election law. After undergraduate school at Wellesly, she did her graduate work at Harvard and Oxford universities.

Expressing her strong commitment to ensuring voting rights for all Michigan citizens, Benson said that equal access for all was her number one priority. "Michigan could lead the way for the nation in ensuring voter access," she said, citing long lines on election day in 2008. She mentioned the crucial stolen elections (Florida in 2000) and Ohio (in 2004) as examples of why the Secretary of State is an important position. She also said that the technology for secure electronic voting has not yet been accomplished.

Benson also has been active with the Southern Poverty Law Center, tracking the activities of white supremacists. For more information, you can visit her website: [www.votebenson.com](http://www.votebenson.com).

Dunigan, a 35-year resident of Leelanau County, is a candidate for the 35 district state senate seat in the

## You're Invited!

**Please join us for our  
Winter Holiday Party**

**Friday, December 4**

Assembly at 5 p.m.  
Dinner at 6



Visit with your Democratic neighbors and enjoy some food and music. Know a new Democrat? Bring them along!

**New Venue:** This year's party is at the **Platte River Association Hall** outside of Honor as you go east toward Traverse City on US 31.

Coffee, tea and milk will be provided by the Democratic Party, as well as some meat (ham and Swedish meatballs). Please bring a dish to share. You also may bring your own alcoholic beverage or other drinks as desired.

State Representative Dan Scripps has again been invited along with Jocelyn Benson, candidate for Secretary of State; John Cherry, candidate for Governor, and Roger, Dunigan, candidate of State Senate.

Kay Boyne-Mead, Joyce Skinner and Mary Robling make up the holiday party committee. For more info, call Kay at 882-4630.

primary election, August 3, 2010. The seat is now held by Republican Michelle McManus.

Roger was born in 1940 in Ionia, Michigan, where he grew up. He received an STB degree in theology from Catholic University, Washington, DC, in 1965 and was ordained as a priest. In 1968 he earned a master's degree in counseling from the University of Detroit and holds professional licenses in social work and in counseling. In 1974, he was hired as the first Executive Director of the newly formed Grand Traverse County Community Mental Health Board, in Traverse City. In 1997, he became the Chief Executive Officer of the Great Lakes Community Mental Health Authority, a position held until his retirement in 2003. Since 2005, Roger has provided research, consultation and legal assistant services to a number of different law firms, through Dunigan Consulting Services. In his retirement, Roger has been active in a variety of volunteer activities. For more information, visit his website at: <http://duniganforsenate.com>.

# '09 fundraising on target thanks to our volunteers!

The fundraising goal for 2009 has been met, thanks to the volunteer organizers and their volunteer help. Special events and individual contributions have netted enough to cover projected expenses, excluding an additional \$9,000 needed for the 2010 campaign. Special events have included the May yard sale, June chicken barbecue and flea market, and a garden party for state representative Dan Scripps. A letter writing campaign called, "2009 and beyond," contributed greatly to our fundraising goal for this year, thanks to Ted Curran and Jon Armstrong.

Chloe McGehee reports that the two-day yard sale proceeds were \$2405 and extends her thanks to all who generously donated items and those who worked the sale. "I want to give everyone a huge thank you for helping make the yard sale a success again this year," McGehee said. "I especially want to thank Jim Sheets for providing the space, Dave Green for coordinating the transporters, Carroll Volpe, Sue Lemon, Sarah Meachum and her children for the lemonade stand at the sale, and Doreen Fitzgerald for catchy posters. I would also like to thank all the others who helped with the presale activities and the sale itself."

Volunteer transporters were Doug and Margaret Wozniak, Tim Schwerin, Eric Pyne, Peg Lawrenson, Ron Dykstra, Rod Scowden, Phil Kiteley, and Dave Green. Presale and sale helpers were Peg Lawrenson, Joyce Skinner, Susy Green, Val DeGroot, Doreen Fitzgerald, Linda Jamison, Karen Roberts, Carroll Volpe and Sue Lemon; Kay Boyne,

Diane Wilbur, Delores Berta, Ted and Marcia Curran, Sarah Meachum, Kathy and Mike Ross, Susan Bruer, Shauna Fite, Ray Nichols, and Charlie Kinzel. Thanks again for all your help and I apologize if I left anyone out," McGehee said.

The sale, held every other year, has been organized by McGehee three times, and this year she steps down from the project. Sue Lemon has agreed to organize the 2011 sale.

## ***Chicken Barbecue & Flea Market***

The chicken barbecue on June 27 raised \$1,619. The event was organized by Sara Meachum. Assisting were the cooks, servers, and the setup and cleanup crews. The barbecue is an annual event held in Manley Park in Honor. This year a flea market organized by Sue Lemon was held at the same time. Vendor spaces were sold and one booth contained leftovers from the yard sale.

## ***July garden party honoring Dan Scripps***

On July 19 Benzie Dems hosted an event to support our Democratic representative Dan Scripps at the Betzie River Centennial Lily Farm, courtesy of owners Di and Don Rau. Diane Wilbur organized the event with support from volunteers. At the fund raiser, Scripps was presented with a check to help support his coming bid for reelection. Guests at the reception included Michigan Democratic Party Chairman, Mark Brewer.



*About 300 people attended this year's Summerfest in Thompsonville, an event that brings together people that community with various community service agencies in a setting aimed at providing family fun for all. For three years, the the Benzie Dems Blue Tigers have helped with the project, transporting, setting up, and taking down the necessary tables, chairs and tents. Photos by Gordy Kells.*



## **Blue Tigers plan local service**

In the spirit of President Obama's call to serve, our local party's Blue Tiger Committee continues to work on organizing community service projects. In June, Benzie Blue Tigers helped out with the Thompsonville Summerfest and since last winter have conducted two food drives to help alleviate hunger in Benzie County.

At their October meeting, the Blue Tiger Committee decided that the Garden Theater fund raiser they are planning will be held next May. The event will include a screening of a politically progressive film at the Frankfort theater. Proceeds will be donated to the local Youth Corp program, which has the mission of helping young people develop skills leading to self-reliance. Since there is no lack of worthy community organizations, the decision on which group to support with this event wasn't easy. Doing their homework, committee members spoke to human service leaders in our county during the decision process.

The Benzie Dem Blue Tigers are committed to having fun while serving and to the idea that the two are not mutually exclusive. Our activist neighbors are invited to join them in planning community building projects. The next Blue Tigers meeting is **Wednesday, November 4**, 6:30 p.m. at the Cabbage Shed in Elberta. For more information, contact Diane Wilbur by phone (378-4362) or email (dwilbur46@gmail.com).

For general information on Blue Tiger community service projects across Michigan, see the Michigan Democratic Party website at [www.michigandems.com/content/bluetiger](http://www.michigandems.com/content/bluetiger).



## From the chair...

Dear Benzie Democrats:

It's hard to believe that already one year has passed since November 4, 2008. On that day, we all witnessed and participated in the most historically remarkable election of our time. Hang on tight my fellow Democrats. In less than a year, Michigan will be in the midst of election 2010. It cannot be overstated how much is at stake as candidates for governor on down to county commissioner prepare for the challenge.

As reported in this edition of the *Kicker*, there have been changes in the Benzie Dems officer personnel. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to those individuals who stepped forward to assume leadership positions.

In Benzie County's recent elections, we have seen an increase in the Democratic vote. This is due, in no small part, to our dedicated group of volunteers who never stop working, despite living in a historically Republican county. That situation is now changing and we have more Democratic representation than any time in recent memory. During an extraordinarily challenging time for Michigan, our superb State Representative Dan Scripps fights daily for the residents of the 101st District. Closer to home, state challenges are mirrored at the county level. As revenue sources decrease, our three exceptional Democratic County Commissioners (Don Tanner, Anne Damm, and Kristen Hollenbeck) strive to maintain county programs that will strengthen Benzie's economy for the long run.

Our outstanding Democratic elected officials need more company. In 2010, Democrats need to maintain the Governor's seat, win the U.S. 2nd Congressional seat, win the 35th State Senate seat, keep Dan Scripps in office and increase our representation on the board of County Commissioners. Continued success must not be taken for granted.

Our experience shows that strategic organization is the key to victory at the polls. Thanks to our committees, the Benzie Dems maintain a strong presence in the community between elections. Through projects that help our neighbors right here in Benzie County, the Blue Tigers demonstrate our values as Democrats. The communication committee is our voice to the world. The fund raising committee allows us to support our candidates enabling them to win on Election Day.

To keep this ball rolling, we need to maximize the Benzie Democratic talent pool. We welcome your participation. Stop by one of the committee meetings, or our next regular meeting on Saturday November 7, 9 a.m. at the Benzonia Township Hall. You can make a valuable contribution even if you only have only a small amount of time to devote. What are your skills or hobbies? Would you be able to teach a skill to one or two other people? Passing on skills and knowledge requires only a short-term commitment but is a huge contribution to our candidates.

A group of Benzie Dem leaders including current and former officers have formed a steering committee to organize election 2010. As a new officer, I have the benefit of being able to draw on the experience of the seasoned vets who know the ropes. Stay tuned to coming editions of the *Kicker* and to our website-[www.benziedemocrats.com](http://www.benziedemocrats.com) for further developments.

Best to all Kicker Readers. Until Next Time!

—Kathy Ralston

## Insurance reform endorsed

On Sept. 5, the Benzie Executive Board voted to "strongly endorse" the inclusion of a publicly funded option for all in the national health care legislation currently under consideration in Washington. During their discussion of the issue prior to their Sept. 5 vote, party board members called attention to various aspects of the current debate, including the scare tactics used by opponents of insurance reform, and the misinformation that has flooded conservative media broadcasting. The point was also made that as proposed, the option for enrolling in a publicly funded insurance program does not prevent people from participating in private or employer-related insurance programs, or from privately obtaining medical services. Benzie Dems are encouraged to continue working toward meaningful reform and coverage for all.

## Email newsletters reduce costs

All board members and others who can receive the *Kicker* by email are asked to do so; this will save postage and printing costs, making the money available for other uses. We will still send a hard copy to people with no email or who for other reasons prefer the printed version. Doreen Fitzgerald is maintaining the newsletter email list, so if you can receive an email version, contact her via email: [dodie.fitz@gmail.com](mailto:dodie.fitz@gmail.com) or phone: 352-7876. Send new or changed email addresses to her.

All new or changed email and postal service addresses also should be sent to secretary Lori Cota. Contact Cota by phone (231-944-3594), email ([benziedemsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:benziedemsecretary@gmail.com)), or mail (Benzie County Democratic Committee, PO Box 44, Honor, MI 49640).

## Membership drive continues

There are two ways you can help sustain our local Democratic Party effort. When you join the Michigan Democratic Party, Benzie Dems receive a portion of the dues back from the state party. This revenue helps fund our activities. If you haven't already done so, please join today. The Michigan Democratic Party is located at 606 Townsend St., Lansing, MI 48933. Telephone: 517-371-5410; Email: [midemparty@michigandems.com](mailto:midemparty@michigandems.com). Website: [michigandems.com](http://michigandems.com).

Locally, you can directly support the Benzie Democratic Party through a donation, which can be mailed to Benzie County Democratic Committee, PO Box 44, Honor, MI 49640. A donation of just five dollars will help cover the production and distribution costs of the newsletter. A larger donation will provide for party development and our campaign efforts. Please make your affordable contribution now to keep Benzie moving in a positive direction.

**The effort to update our local contact information for members and other interested individuals continues.** If you volunteer to make phone calls to check information, please contact Carroll Volpe by phone (231-651-0413) or email ([mcarrollvolpe@gmail.com](mailto:mcarrollvolpe@gmail.com)).

Thanks for all your support!

Benzie County Democratic Committee  
PO Box 44  
Honor, MI 49640

BULK RATE  
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HONOR, MI 49640

## New leadership volunteers

Treasurer Sally Smeltzer resigned in May due to other responsibilities; Sara Meachum is now treasurer. Elara Coleman resigned from the board and was replaced by Kathy Ross. First Vice Chair Ted Curran resigned, but is still an active member of the board.

Vice Chair Brant Downing resigned after accepting a commission in the U.S. Army. Diane Wilbur and Kathy Ross have agreed to participate as second and third vice chairs and are now serving the party.

Wilbur moved to Benzie County six years ago, after living in the Detroit area since birth. She was a high school social studies teacher for 11 years before changing careers and becoming a State Farm Insurance agent in Bloomfield Hills. She is married to Jim Szalay, who was an educator for 39 years.

Ross was born and raised in Benzie County and has been a Democrat since the days of Richard Nixon. She spent her teaching career in northern Indiana, but retired and joined husband Mike in Beulah in 2003. Since then, she has served as a county Planning Commissioner, Darcy Library Trustee, and is beginning her second term on the Benzie County Central Board of Education. Education is a passion for Kathy, who views the current state fiscal crisis as a challenge to every citizen.

*The Benzie Kicker* is published by the Benzie County Democratic Party. Editor, Doreen Fitzgerald.

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### Executive Board Officers

Kathy Ralston, Chair, 342-2155, [kathy@kathyralston.com](mailto:kathy@kathyralston.com)

Phil Kiteley, 1st Vice Chair, 882-0594, [phillipkiteley@charter.net](mailto:phillipkiteley@charter.net)

Diane Wilbur, 2nd Vice Chair, 378-4362, [dwilbur46@gmail.com](mailto:dwilbur46@gmail.com)

Kathy Ross, 3rd Vice Chair, 882-5913, [kjf49617@hotmail.com](mailto:kjf49617@hotmail.com)

Lori Cota, Secretary, 944-3594, [benziedemsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:benziedemsecretary@gmail.com)

Sara Meachum, Treasurer, 360-4184, [smeachum@yahoo.com](mailto:smeachum@yahoo.com)

### Board Members

Board members and their contact numbers can be found on the Benzie Dems website ([www.benziedemocrats.com](http://www.benziedemocrats.com)).

### Calendar

Visit [www.benziedemocrats.com](http://www.benziedemocrats.com) for events scheduled between newsletters.

### Your State Rep—

*You can meet with State Rep. Dan Scripps the first Monday of each month, 11 a.m.–Noon at the Beulah Public Library, 7238 Commercial St. in Beulah. (231) 882-4037. Contact him by Toll-free phone: (888) MICH101; E-mail: [danscripps@house.mi.gov](mailto:danscripps@house.mi.gov); or through his website ([house.mi.gov/dscripps](http://house.mi.gov/dscripps))*