

The Benzie Kicker

Newsletter of the Benzie County Democratic Party



Volume 14, No. 1
Winter 2010

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

Where we stand—

Our party's stance in 2009

Happy 2010 Benzie County Democrats! We've a lot to look forward to—the upcoming Nov. election and the challenge of improving local government. Although 2009 held no major elections, it was an eventful year. Benzie Democrats remained visible in our local county media, and we released several public statements on our positions on issues throughout the year. Here is a recap. We passed two resolutions and sent them to the State Party for the state platform.

Property Taxes and School Funding: A resolution that called for convening a committee to examine all aspects of Proposal A, the state constitutional amendment, in effect since 1994, that's designed to limit property tax increases using the Consumer Price Index until the property's ownership is transferred. Proposal A has a major effect on local school funding and other governmental units.

Medical Marijuana: We support such federal bills as HR 5842 that would end federal intervention in states allowing Medical Marijuana. We support such federal bills as HR 5843, and support legalizing, regulating and taxing marijuana like alcohol and tobacco.

We also issued statements on several other issues.

Health insurance reform: Benzie Democratic Committee Executive Board voted on Sept. 5 to “strongly endorse” the inclusion of a publicly funded option for all in the national health care legislation under consideration in Washington.

Financial Mess: We said “It is a disgrace to have Wall Street firms and the big banks handing out bonuses with the help of our bailout dollars. These banks were given huge infusions of U.S. government funds but are not making loans to help the struggling economy. The banks are not being socially responsible. It is time they acted in the public interest.”

School Millage Vote: We supported the two tax renewals for county schools. Both Benzie County Central Schools and Frankfort-Elberta Area Schools sought renewals of the 18 mills Non-Homestead tax and the 2.5 mills Headlee Override. Both passed in Nov. 2009.

Zoning: We urged that there be no gap in zoning anywhere in the county and opposed the county commission plan to rescind the its zoning ordinance and withdraw funding for the county planning program as of Jan. 2010. We noted that the decision “puts Benzie County at great risk.”

Jail Millage: The board supported renewal of the jail millage, which passed in Nov. 2009.

In the **community service** arena, we held to food drives for a local food bank and assisted with two Thompsonville events, Summerfest and a holiday party for kids and families.

— *Kathy Ralston, Chair*



Ray Nichols greets guests at the December holiday gathering for Benzie Dems.

— *Photo by Gordy Kells*

Local memberships, online payments now available

On the advice of the Membership Committee, the Executive Board has decided to request annual membership dues from members to help cover the cost of the newsletter and other party activities. If you want to formalize your relationship with the Benzie County Democratic Party, you can become a supporting member as either an individual or a couple.

Memberships are valid for the calendar year. You can join as a “Silver Supporter (\$5 to \$24); “Gold Supporter” (\$25 to \$49); or “Platinum Supporter (\$50 and above). Funds raised through these memberships are spent exclusively for county politics and will help with our campaigns, newsletter, and ongoing work for more progressive communities here at home.

You can obtain a membership form by downloading one from our website (benziedemocrats.com), attending our regular meeting, or requesting one from the Membership Committee at Benzie County Democratic Committee, PO Box 44, Honor, MI 49640. Forms will also be available at our regular meetings, or you can sign up on our website.

Whether you want to pay your dues or make an additional donation during the year, you can now do so online at our website (benziedemocrats.com). We have set up the mechanism for secure online payments using PayPal.

Note that if you want voting rights at the local and state levels, membership in the state party organization is required. A portion of state dues is subsequently returned to our local organization.

Thanks to the membership and finance committees for these developments, which should promote our efforts in the county and in this election year.

Six Hardworking Dems to be honored May 22

The Charlotte Robling Honoree Dinner is set for Saturday, **May 22** at the Crystal Mountain Resort. Please mark your calendar now for the event, which is named in memory of a dedicated Democratic activist.

This year's honorees are Ted Curran, Marcia Curran, Carroll Volpe and Joyce Skinner. A "Gratitude and Appreciation award is going to Dick Robb for his work on organizing the effort to identify voters. Our treasurer, Sara Meachum, will receive the "Rising Star" award.

The honoree dinner also is a fund raising event. Please keep in mind that items (goods or services) are still needed for the silent auction. Can you cook a meal for someone, fix their computer, paint their portrait, take a photo? Contact event chair Mary Robling with information on anything you can donate, donations you can solicit, or auction ideas. Phone: 231-882-9912; email: marylottie@gmail.com.

The cost of the dinner is \$40 per person. Because we don't want to leave any interested person out, a few lower-cost tickets are available. For more information, contact Robling. There will be seating for 100 people at tables for eight.

The event is 5:30-10 p.m. with the reception starting at 5:30. Visit with fellow Dems and participate in the the silent auction at that time. Cold hors d'oeuvres will be served and a cash bar available. The program starts at 8; dinner will be served at 8:15. For reservations: Mail request and payment to Benzie County Democratic Committee, PO Box 44, Honor, MI 49640 or contact Sarah Meachum: 231-930-7297, smeachum@yahoo.com. Although advance payment is preferred, you can pay at the door.

Menu Choices: ***Please indicate your choices at the time you make your reservations.***

Crispy Eggplant (vegetarian) is lightly breaded, browned eggplant served with roasted tomatoes and melted mozzarella cheese over linguini with fresh basil marinara sauce

Grilled Breast of Chicken with Morel Cream Sauce or,

Leelanau Roasted Pork Tenderloin with a cherry-apple-ginger chutney

(Both the pork and chicken will be served with a wild rice pilaf and vegetables (grilled zucchini, summer squash, bell peppers and onions).

All dinners include: baby spinach and pear salad; freshly baked rolls; New York style cheesecake with a praline crust, served with cherry topping and whipped cream; a non-alcoholic beverage.

We look forward to seeing you there!



GOOD FOOD & GOOD COMPANY—One of the highlights of our holiday party was the chow, and the attending Dems put a dent in it!
— Photo by Gordy Kells

Dems celebrate holidays

Our annual holiday party is an opportunity to get together when we're not working. On Dec. 6 more than 65 people took part in the festive evening of food, music, and a drawing for door prizes that were donated by party members.

As the master of ceremonies, Chair Kathy Ralston did a great job keeping the evening moving and introducing our guests. Dan Scripps, our 101st District representative attended for the fifth year and once again looked great in his red snowflake sweater. He gave us an overview of what was happening in Lansing and a hopeful vision for the state's future. He looks forward to our support and hard work for re-election campaign this year.

Roger Dungun of Leelanau, state senatorial candidate for the 35th District, also talked with us, asking for our support and allowing us get to know him better. He emphasized the importance of a victory for the 35th seat because the State Senate has so negatively affected the Democratic agenda.

The Finance/Fundraising Committee extends thanks to the many people who brought food, help set up, take down and clean up for the party. We would like to give a special thanks to Kay Boyne for chairing this event and making it successful, along with her committee, Joyce Skinner and Mary Robling. The party was at the Platte Valley Association Hall. Thanks from all go to Ray Nichols and Dick Robb for so precisely realigning the tables at evening's end!

Blue Tigers chip in for Thompsonville party

The Blue Tigers helped for the second year on the community holiday party held at the Thompsonville Village Hall in December. The Benzie Dems provided funds to help pay for the photo copying so the kids can have their picture taken with Santa. Volunteers also filled Christmas bags with

fruit and candy for the kids. Thanks to Mike Ross and his volunteers who lent a hand to the event sponsors, the Benzie Human Services Collaborative Committee.



The Benzie Kicker

Volunteer today

If you can volunteer to help our local party at any time, consider your special interests and talents, then contact the appropriate committee chair to get in the loop for these activities. See article at right for campaign opportunities.

2010 Election Steering Committee

Kathy Ralston
P.O. Box 618, Beulah, MI. 49617, 231-342-2155
kathy@kathyalston.com

Campaign Coordinator: Ray Nichols (see Finance below)

Blue Tiger Committee (community service)

Diane Wilbur
11555 Mountain Woods Dr, Thompsonville MI 49683
231-378-4362; dwilbur46@gmail.com

Joyce Skinner
15989 Wagner Road, Empire MI 49630
231-275-2553, jaskinner@centurytel.net

Communication Committee

Katherine Ross
6866 Crystal Ave, Beulah MI 49617
231-882-5913, kjf49617@gmail.com

Doreen Fitzgerald (Webmaster, Newsletter Editor)
299 Adams Rd, Frankfort MI 49635
231-352-7876, dodie.fitz@gmail.com

Issues Committee

Ted Curran
940 Crystal Downs Dr, Frankfort, MI. 49635
231-352-4159, curranted@hotmail.com

Finance and Fundraising Committee

Sarah Meachum
14578 Day Ave, Thompsonville, MI, 49683
231-930-7297, smeachum@yahoo.com

Ray Nichols
4455 Highland Dr, Beulah MI 49617
231-882-4790, raynick@charter.net

Membership Committee

Carroll Volpe
10963 Platte St, PO Box 63, Honor, MI. 49640
231-325-6692, mcarrollvolpe@gmail.com

Special Events Committee

Mary Robling (Honoree Dinner)
8737 Fairway Dr, Beulah MI 49617
231-882-9912, marylottie@gmail.com

Susan Koenig (Various events, parades etc.)
3844 Highland Dr., Beulah, MI. 49617
231-882-5722, koenig.esl@gmail.com

2010 in an Election Year! Campaign Crew Positions

The campaign crew for the 2010 election is taking shape. Thankfully, some familiar experienced campaigners have generously agreed to lead us in our efforts.

We are very pleased that Ray Nichols, our former Chair has agreed to head up the county campaign effort as our **Campaign Coordinator**. The coordinator serves as the liaison between all other campaign committee members and ensures they have the resources and information they need to be successful.

Dick Robb will be our **Precinct Delegate Coordinator**. As PDC, Dick will provide the needed linkage between the Precinct Captains and the Benzie Democratic Party officers and executive board. He will communicate directly to each Precinct Captain what information is needed and follow up to ensure that the outcomes are accomplished as directed by the party chair and the campaign coordinator.

Carroll Volpe will be the **Campaign Office Coordinator**. The COC oversees office operations and the training of office personnel.

We are exceedingly grateful to Ray, Dick and Carroll; once again, as they have done so many times over the years, they've agreed to share their experience and take on leadership roles in our campaign. Due to their tireless efforts and expertise, the Benzie Dems have grown in recent years. Along with that growth, our candidates have enjoyed increased success at the polls. At the same time, the sacrifice of these few individuals has been great.

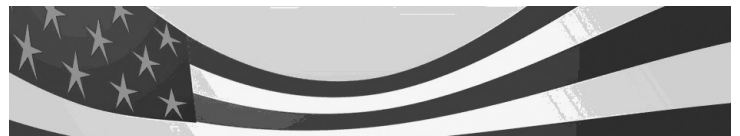
Our goal for this campaign is to improve and build on the support network for our leadership. This will strengthen the Benzie Dems and decrease the burden on these few individuals. Our need for solid organization and broad participation from our members, neighbors, and friends has never been greater.

If you can help out, please contact campaign coordinator Ray Nichols; his contact information is at left under the Finance and Fundraising Committee.

As we move toward the 2010 election, we will especially need the help of those with "people skills" to help locate our voters by canvassing our precincts and for office staffing. Some of the areas where help is needed are as follows:

- Door-to-door canvassing
- Door-to-door literature drop-off
- Office staffing
- Database entry
- Campaign sign organization

The Benzie Democratic Committee is also looking for a site for a campaign headquarters, which is expected to open around August 1.



Benzie County Democratic Committee
PO Box 44
Honor, MI 49640

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U.S. POSTAGE
PAID PERMIT #15
HONOR, MI 49640

Mark your calendar!

Regular meetings of the Benzie Dems are held at the Benzonia Township Hall the first Saturday of the month at 9 a.m. To be placed on the agenda, please call Chair Kathy Ralston at 231-342-2155 before the meeting.

Feb. 6: Regular Meeting

Feb. 13: Food Drive, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Call Joyce Skinner, 275-2553 to volunteer for a 2-hour shift.

March 6: Regular Meeting

April 3: Regular Meeting

April 17: State Jefferson-Jackson Dinner

May 1: Regular Meeting

May 22: Charlotte Robling Memorial Dinner

June 5: Regular Meeting

July 3: No Regular Meeting; Chicken BBQ at Maley Park, Honor

Aug. 3: Primary Election

Aug. 14: County & District Conventions

Aug. 28-29: State Convention at Cobo

Meet with State Rep Dan Scripps—

Representative Scripps visits Benzie County the first Monday of each month, 11 a.m.–noon at the Darcy Library of Beulah, 7238 Commercial St, Beulah (231) 882-4037.

You can contact Scripps by toll-free phone: **888-MICH101**;
E-mail: danscripps@house.mi.gov;
or through his website: house.mi.gov/dscripps.

Executive Board Officers

Kathy Ralston, Chair, 342-2155, kathy@kathyralston.com

Phil Kiteley, 1st Vice Chair, 882-0594, phillipkiteley@charter.net

Diane Wilbur, 2nd Vice Chair, 378-4362, dwilbur46@gmail.com

Kathy Ross, 3rd Vice Chair, 882-5913, kjf49617@hotmail.com

Lori Cota, Secretary, 944-3594, benziedemsecretary@gmail.com

Sara Meachum, Treasurer, 360-4184, smeachum@yahoo.com

Board Members

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