

The SCPD PAC Progressive Patriot

The Newsletter for Progressive Activists in NE Ohio

WHAT IS SCPD PAC?

Summit County Progressive Democrats PAC is a grass roots organization of dedicated people committed to social justice on the local, state, national, and international levels. We support efforts that better the lives of all citizens by working to promote human rights, equal economic opportunity, responsive government, a safe, sustainable environment, and a society built on compassion. Our goal is to expand grass roots participation in the political process and to return the federal government to the will of the people. SCPD PAC works to support progressive candidates through grassroots activism, contributions, coaching candidates, forums and events and the production of literature and sample ballots to educate the electorate. If you are interested in SCPD PAC, contact Ingrid Kunstel at ikunstel@neo.rr.com.

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"GRASSROOTS ACTION NOW!"

APRIL

2009

JOIN US AT OUR NEXT
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
MONDAY, APRIL 13 AT 6:30 P.M.
AKRON PUBLIC LIBRARY
MEETING ROOM 2



SCPD PAC TO ELECT 6 NEW OFFICERS

Our next General Membership meeting will be held on **Monday**, April 13 at 6:30 p.m. in Meeting Room 2 of the Main Public Library. This is the meeting at which we elect new officers, and all members are encouraged to attend. In addition to electing 6 members of our Executive Committee, we will also be hosting a panel discussion on the status of education legislation currently being debated in Columbus. On hand for that discussion will be some members of the Ohio House and at least one State Senator.

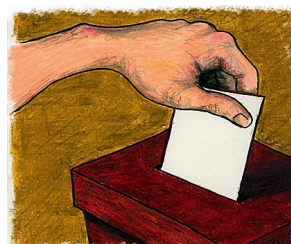
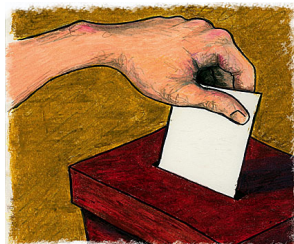
Members in good standing will vote near the end of this meeting and our new officers will then officially take office.

This is an exciting time of change and re-energizing for our organization. We have a great year of lobbying coming up and hope to persuade all the people we helped to elect to act on behalf of our progressive values.

So don't miss the meeting and the opportunity to be part of our organization's change.

Our slate of nominated Executive Committee candidates include:

- Denise Woods** for President
- Mary Lohman** for Vice-President
- Guy Marentette** for Executive Secretary (*incumbent*)
- Bobbie Carper** for Treasurer
- Sherrie Weitzenhof** for Member-At-Large
- Nancy Clem** for Member -At-Large



3rd ANNUAL SCPD PAC FUNDRAISER

You will all want to mark your calendars for Friday, May 8! On that evening the Summit County Progressive Democrats PAC will be holding its' 3rd Annual Awards Celebration and Fundraiser.

Many of you will remember what great events the previous celebrations were – our first keynote speaker was First Lady Frances Strickland, and last year, Senator Sherrod Brown. You will also remember the pleasure of spending an evening with like-minded people, discussing politics, eating, drinking, bidding on fantastic silent auction items and looking at pictorial retrospectives of SCPD PAC.



And of course, who can forget the long list of SCPD PAC sponsors whose generosity made our 'feet-on-the-street' activities possible and allowed us to make contributions to many candidates at crucial junctures in their campaigns.

So hold onto your hats! This year will be bigger and better than ever before. Our keynote speaker is Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner. In her two years in office, Jennifer has worked tire-

lessly to ensure that we have fair and honest elections in our state. She has been recognized nationally for this by being awarded the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award. A long-time friend of SCPD-PAC, it will be wonderful to be able to spend some relaxed time with her and to get her "take" on how our voting system is working and what still needs to be done to protect voters' rights.

Of course the other reason for getting together is to honor four of our own: members who have given to the organization, the community and the state above and beyond anyone's expectations. We will honor our Member of the Year, Committee Person of the Year, Unsung Hero/Heroine of the Year and our Progressive Patriot of the Year.

There will be a continuously looping slide show of SCPD activities and member participants projected onto the wall throughout the evening, as well as music. In addition, we will be having an expanded silent auction with a wide variety of attractive items, priced within a range we can all afford. We will be able to accept VISA, MasterCard and Discover cards for payment for the silent auction purchases, so come prepared to do some shopping.

The celebration will be held at St. Joseph's Family Center, 610 W. Exchange Street from 6-9 p.m. Tickets are \$25 and should be bought in advance. For more information, contact Ingrid Kunstel at 330-923-0732 or email: ikunstel@neo.rr.com.

SCPD PAC PATRIOTS OF THE MONTH - THE NEW WAVE

This month's Patriot of the Month couple represents the next wave of SCPD PAC activists. This group of members are motivated and are getting active in the everyday operations of the organization. Andrea and John Conti first met us when they came to last years' Awards Celebration and Fundraiser. John told me that they were so impressed by all the politicians that were there and how professionally our group handled the event that they joined that very night.

Since then they have come to our General Membership meetings, have come to some social events, have began asking questions of speakers and just recently have gotten involved in committee work. John is now a member of the Leadership Development Committee and has a special interest in labor and the Employee's Free Choice Act. While only having been to one meeting so far, John has jumped right in to the process. Andrea joined the Fundraising Committee and is a member of the Awards Celebration Committee. She is a real dynamo, calling politicians to get sponsorships for our event! She says she has done things for her children for a long time and this involvement is now for her as an adult. I guess this would be the classic win/win situation. She is getting

adult, political stimulation and we are getting one heck of a motivated worker!

John and Andrea have two sons, Zachary who is 13 and Anthony who is

11. John works for YRC (formerly Roadway) as a dock worker and union member. His only previous political activity was going door-to-door to help elect his friend Don Walters, Cuyahoga Falls City Council Member. It was Don who told John about Summit County Progressive Democrats and our 2008 Awards Celebration.

Andrea works for John Donofrio in the Auditors office. She is a clerical specialist and does the real estate property tax exemptions. Andrea has a degree in political



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science and criminal justice. She says that the legal part always was the most interesting to her but as she gets involved more in politics she is learning about political history and the political process. She has been looking for a place to be actively involved and a place where her voice would be heard. SCPD PAC seems to fit the bill.

There are also other new members of SCPD PAC who are now coming into their own and we hope to feature them in the coming months. We "old-timers" need to support and encourage members like John and Andrea. They are our future in Summit County. If this young couple is any example, our future should be golden.

INCOME INEQUALITY

The impact on Summit County of the income inequality fostered over the past eight years was highlighted for SCPD PAC members at two of our recent meetings.

In January, a panel of local activists and officials described what is happening to lower and middle income residents in the county. Dan Flowers, CEO of the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank told us how they are seeing an influx of people who have never used foodbank services previously, as jobs are lost and incomes decline. Over 58,000 people in Summit County live under the federal poverty level and many families with children are experiencing food shortages. The Akron-Canton foodbank supplies food to over 370 local agencies and foodbanks in the eight-county area. Its total food distribution increased from 12 million pounds in 2007 to over 16 million pounds in 2008. Dan noted that one thing we can do to help is to lobby the state government to ensure inclusion in the next biennial budget of a grant to their association for food purchase and distribution.

Malcolm Costa, CEO of the Akron-Summit Community Action Council, described how his agency provides critical services to people struggling to get out or stay out of poverty. His agency supports a Head Start program, educates people about how to obtain the Earned Income Tax Credit, and provides free tax preparation services. He stressed that we should lobby for a more realistic determination of the poverty level because that determines how many people can obtain government help.



Dr. Malcolm Costa

Common Pleas Judge Bob Gippin told us how his court

tries to help people in home foreclosure. The number of foreclosures in Summit County has stayed relatively constant at around 4500 per year. Judge Gippin explained that the county never had a lot of sub-prime loans, but that local foreclosures are due more to people losing income and not being able to afford their legitimate mortgages. He also described how judges have some latitude in promoting negotiations and agreements between banks and homeowners to try to help homeowners remain in their homes.

And Bob Dirgo, co-founder of Gennesaret, explained that his organization is an all-volunteer group in Akron that runs a soup kitchen and a small shelter. One of their hallmarks is to establish a culture of family for those who use their services. They currently serve 200-300 lunches on Saturday and about 100 on Tuesday. Over 350 volunteers staff the services.

At our March meeting Charles Berry of the Knight Center of Digital Excellence told us how the Knight Foundation has funded a \$25 million project to bring broad-band internet services to urban areas, connecting residents, universities, libraries and businesses to help develop the community. In Akron this will include free internet access to residents in the core city and will make it easier for low-income people to utilize the internet. A focus of the project is to address social priorities such as education and healthcare and lessen the burden on government to provide internet access to such services.



Charles Berry

SCPD PAC AT OHIO LOBBY DAY

By Denise Woods

SCPD's campaign efforts paid huge dividends when lobbying for environmental concerns on March 31st. SCPD and Sierra Club members Eileen Matias and Denise Woods were familiar faces for Representatives Mike

Moran and Brian Williams who know we marched in parades and canvassed for their campaigns.

Eileen and Denise joined over 200 citizen lobbyists at the Ohio Lobby Day sponsored by the Ohio Environ-

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(Lobby Day - continued from page 3)

mental Council and Sierra Club to press our legislators to be mindful of environmental concerns, such as prohibiting oil and gas drilling in our state parks and Lake Erie and improving home energy efficiency standards and funding. The well-organized event and some of the skilled citizen lobbyists taught us much about how to lobby effectively for our issues.



Mike Moran & Denise Woods

Governor, Ted Strickland, for whom SCPD also worked hard, honored the attendees with a visit, beaming with pride at the final passage of the state transportation bill he was eager to sign, finally taking the first steps toward a rail system connecting Ohio's largest cities: a big boost to environmental protections.

Especially gratifying was the opportunity to meet with Representatives Brian Williams and Mike Moran. Representative Williams, now the hard

working Chair of the House Committee on Education, though extremely pressed for time between floor votes and committee work, made a special point of greeting us and hearing our concerns.

Mike Moran, who previously worked in the field of environmental protection, also met us for lunch and then again in his new office. His warm and winning smile greeting his familiar friends and his serious attention to the details in our proposals convinced us of the value of helping to elect our candidates and then communicating our positions on important issues.



Eileen Matias & Gov. Ted Strickland

Thanks goes to all SCPD members for their hard work helping build good relationships with our state legislators.

EDITORIAL - THOUGHTS ON THE APRIL 13 MEETING

If you're a member of SCPD-PAC, but haven't attended our monthly meetings on a regular basis, you might want to consider making it a point to be on hand on April 13. There are two good reasons for this.

First of all, we will be having a panel discussion of the latest developments in Columbus regarding education in Ohio. Legislation is presently being crafted that would begin much-needed change in the way the state does business in terms of funding education. This has always been a high priority issue with SCPD. On hand to explain some of the proposals being made in the state legislature will be State Senator, Tom Sawyer, and House members Mike Moran. This is an excellent opportunity to become fully informed on this critical issue, and to have your questions answered by the "experts."

There is also an election to be held, and the installation

of new officers on the SCPD-PAC Executive Committee. This is an exercise that rightfully deserves the participation of as many of our members as possible, and so we present 'reason number two' for attending the April 13 meeting.

Since one of the offices being filled is that of president, the meeting will mark the end of Ingrid Kunstel's tenure in that position. She has chosen not to run again. From SCPD's inception four years ago, Ingrid has provided the creative energy necessary to make us one of the most successful grassroots organizations in the state. No one who has worked with her or been inspired by her dedication will harbor any doubt that we are who we are largely as a result of her leadership. The April 13 meeting will provide a perfect opportunity for us to thank her for all she has done, and to wish her the best of some much deserved "time off."

SCPD PAC Executive Committee

President: Ingrid Kunstel
Vice President: Sandra Kurt
Executive Secretary: Guy Marentette
At Large: John Cross
 Mary Lohman
 Todd Schneider

Recording Secretary: Janet Dando
Treasurer: Tamela Lee
Assistant Treasurer: Jim Laurenson

The **SCPD PAC Progressive Patriot** is edited by the SCPD PAC Communications Committee. To submit an article or a comment contact Tom Liston at maxepr@mac.com or Ingrid Kunstel at ikunstel@neo.rr.com