

# 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](mailto:ikunstel@neo.rr.com).

### In this issue:

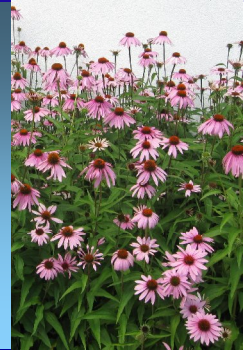
Rich Get Richer	2
Patriot of the Month	3
Awards Celebration	4
Living Downstream	6
Middle Class	6
FDR Dinner	7
Messaging	7
Thanks Sponsors	8

"GRASSROOTS ACTION NOW!"

JULY

2011

Join us at our next  
General Membership Meeting  
August 9 at 6:30 p.m.  
Akron Public Library  
Meeting Room 2



## 5TH ANNUAL FUNDRAISER A HUGE SUCCESS

With the room aglow in candlelight, balloons everywhere and a giant SCPD PAC ice sculpture gracing the food table, 150 progressive Democrats celebrated the achievements of the hardworking members of our grassroots activism group.

This event has always been designed to single out a few members who have given of their time and energy above and beyond the call of duty. It is also an evening in which Summit County Progressive Democrats raise the money to help get progressive candidates elected, to lobby for progressive issues and to educate the electorate. As in years past, we had many generous sponsors who helped make the evening a huge success.



The keynote speaker was **Janetta King**, who is the President and CEO of recently founded InnovationOhio, a progressive think tank based in Columbus. Its mission is to develop and promote progressive policies in the state. Her speech focused on the importance of grassroots activism

and awareness of issues, and she discussed the natural connection between the work of our two organizations. During the course of the evening she and **Janet Dando**, the Chair of our Messaging Committee, and Congresswoman **Betty Sutton** explored ways we could work together to help create clear progressive messages.

**Liz Walters**, NEO Coordinator for We Are Ohio, talked about the S.B. 5 referendum petition drive. Many of our members have been very active going door-to-door to collect the needed signatures to place this issue on the ballot this fall.

President **Denise Woods** presented the awards for 2011. **Mary Louise McMahon** received the Unsung Heroine Award for all the work she's done on a wide variety of projects. She is one of our most dependable volunteers, always generous with her time, never seeking the spotlight. She was recently elected Vice President of SCPD PAC.

Our Committee Person of the Year was **Steve Cochran**, honored for the energy

(Continued on page 2)

(Fundraiser—continued from page 1)

and creativity he demonstrated in developing the Issues and Education Committee. Steve has trained and directed Issues Leaders to prepare mission statements and then to track what lobbying activities the SCPD PAC members do to promote those progressive issues. His work is central to the SCPD mission.

The SCPD PAC Progressive Patriot of the Year award was **Dick King**. Dick has been with our group from the early days, working as the Chair of the Finance Committee and developing and spearheading our fundraising activities. Through his business he has helped us find the materials we need to operate. His values and actions are that of a true patriot. Congratulations to all three of our winners!

We wish also to recognize **Ted Lewis**, Manager of

Catering Services at the St. Joseph Family Center, the host site of all our annual fundraisers. Without his advice and expertise – not to mention his wonderful staff – these annual events would never achieve the kind of success they've enjoyed. His support has been crucial and we deeply appreciate all he's done for us. Kudos also to **Mickey Stefanik** and **Guy Marentette** for capturing the evening in photos (see pages 4 and 5).

Had you taken the opportunity to wander outside as dusk was settling, you would have enjoyed another amazing feature of the night. There had been a storm, which had ended just as the sun was setting in the west. The slanting light made the Akron skyline look as if it were on fire. Up above was a vivid rainbow. Seems like an auspicious sign heading into the 2012 election cycle!

## THE RICH GET RICHER

By Frank Kunstel

Income inequality in America has reached levels not seen since the Great Depression.

What's wrong with that? In June a Washington Post article noted that such extremes of wealth can unfairly reduce economic opportunity and political rights of those that aren't rich. And in May economist Joseph Stiglitz wrote that the more a society becomes lopsided in terms of wealth the more reluctant the rich are to support government investment in common needs—bridges, roads, research, education, medical care all get neglected.

What are the facts? Political scientists Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson, in their book *Winner-Take-All Politics*, report the following:

- In the past 30 years the top 1% of earners has seen their share of national income rise from 8% to 18
- In that same time frame, average household income increased 50%. But for the lowest quintile of earners the increase was only 10%, for the middle quintile it was 21%, and for the richest 1% it was 260%.

The Post article notes that the top 0.01% of earners is composed of 27,000 families and their average yearly income now stands at \$27 million each.

How did things get this way in the land of opportunity? Hacker and Pierson present a compelling case that it is due to purposeful government policies. It's not due to

those at the top "working harder". It's not due to technology creating a bias for knowledge-based workers. It's not due to globalization.

Rather, government has tilted the playing field.

- Tax rates have lost much of their progressive structure so that now the rich pay an effective tax rate not much higher than the middle class.
- Unions have been diminished as government has allowed corporations to attack aggressively. The National Labor Relations Board has become ineffectual in protecting labor.
- Political leaders have granted enormous autonomy to managers over their own executive compensation, through both changes in policy and failure to update government regulations.
- Money has flowed into the pockets of the rich on Wall Street because government deregulated banking and neglected to update existing rules to address new financial instruments.



(Continued on page 3)

*(Richer—Continued from page 2)*

Perhaps most importantly, Hacker and Pierson write that politics has become “organized combat” and business has been highly successful in organizing itself for the fight. So, corporations have expanded their influence over government through lobbying, through campaign donations, and through activism. At the same time, groups representing the middle class have become fragmented into single-interest focus and now there is less organized power fighting for government to take on its

responsibilities to serve the middle and lower classes.

Seems like SCPD PAC is following the right formula to address this. We take a broad approach, not single issue. We are committed to serving as a counterweight to corporate power. And we take an activist approach to getting government engaged in such issues.

## SCPD PAC PATRIOT OF THE MONTH

*By Denise Woods*

Our Patriot for this Newsletter cycle stands out for her devotion to progressive principles and legislative causes, serving as our Issues Director for health insurance reform and the Senate Bill 5 repeal, and in our Military Interventions Issue Team. So how did this patriot become so passionate, and how are we so lucky to have her with us?

Diana Orendi grew up in impoverished post-war Germany, where U. S. soldiers impressed her by donating bread and chocolate milk to her school so children there would have at least one good meal a day. Henry Kissinger directed the de-Nazification program in her portion of Germany, and she felt lucky to escape the brutality of the Russian sector.

After college, Diana came to the United States to study English and teach German. Here, she earned her Ph. D. and in 1972 became a US citizen. She met her German husband here and raised their two children. She now teaches German language and literature, translation, and comparative literature at Cleveland State University.

Diana made a specialty of studying and teaching the German literature that arose as “the citizens of Germany attempted to digest the horrors committed in their name and work through their grief.” Astonishingly, many of her students know nothing of the German holocaust. Many appreciate learning about it, but others simply don’t want to hear it or flatly refuse to believe it.

With her children grown, Diana channeled her free time toward other meaningful work. Her strong sense of fairness led her to organize the CSU faculty union. Though many members initially resisted, they soon supported her efforts and later expressed enthusiastic appreciation for their union.

During that time, Diana often visited Washington, D. C. and became fascinated with and energized by national politics. Comparing her two nations, she thinks Germans focus on policy, while the US focuses unwisely on candidates and personalities. She calls herself an “issues person,” preferring to look at what a party stands for, because, after all, office-holders come and go, and one can only trust an individual so far, but a party continues to work for its principles. Her primary political principle is compassion for those who need help, providing security and safety for people who are falling through the cracks.



After working for the Kerry campaign Diana persisted in political activism and organized the Akron Democracy for America group; but when visited by two members of SCPD, Tom Liston and Denise Woods, she decided to fold DFA into SCPD and has been an active member ever since. She calls SCPD her political home, where she enjoys being with like-minded people, exchanging information, and working as a team. She organized a petition event during the summer of health insurance reform and traveled to Washington, D. C. to participate in the HCAN demonstration and lobby day. She feels “bittersweet” about the final bill: grateful for improved health care accessibility, but hopeful it will

evolve to a better system. Republican attempts to dismantle Social Security, Medicare, and unions keeps her energized.

We are fortunate because Diana's leadership, commitment, and patriotism help make SCPD a political home for all our members.



# 5th Annual SCPD PAC Fundraiser





# 5th Annual SCPD PAC Fundraiser



## "LIVING DOWNSTREAM" MOVIE NIGHT



night was fascinating and enlightening.

The film, *Living Downstream* is a documentary created by Sandra Steingraber, Ph.D, who is a cancer survivor. Her work traces a year of her attempts to break the silence about the environmental links to cancer. She tells a very intimate story of what is known as a "geographical cancer cluster," a small area in which numerous people in the community (and numerous members of her actual family) have contracted cancers.

One of the valuable activities that the Issues and Education Committee provides is to show movies that highlight progressive issues in order to educate our members and the public. The most recent movie

The film shows the emotional rollercoaster upon which Dr. Steingraber lives. She is a wife and mother as well as an academic and filmmaker. Her cancer requires yearly testing to make sure that she is still in remission. We watch as she receives a call from her doctor telling her that there are abnormal cells that have been found in her last checkup.

She makes a persuasive argument that environmental factors contribute to many forms of cancer, and her message is clear: we must work to support public and private policies to prevent the pollution of our air, land and waterways.

Following the movie, a panel of women who are active in protecting the environment spoke and engaged in a discussion with the audience.

Watch our website for upcoming movie nights and please plan to attend. You will be glad you did.

## FIGHT FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS

On June 29<sup>th</sup> thousands of opponents of Ohio's new collective bargaining law came together in Columbus and delivered nearly 1.3 million signatures to the Ohio Secretary of State. These were the signatures collected to put a repeal referendum of Senate Bill 5 on the ballot this November. All that was required for this to be on the ballot is 231,000 valid signatures, which pretty well assures that we will have a chance to vote on this in the fall. This is a signature drive record, exceeding the minimum requirement by over a million.

This law was signed by Governor John Kasich in March and bans public employees from striking, from collective bargaining for anything other than salary and prohibits unions from negotiating on health care, sick time or pension benefits. This bill has been labeled a blatant attack on the middle class and affects teachers, firefighters, policemen and others who support our community. The signature drive was carried out by public employee union mem-

bers, non-public union members, Democrats, Republicans, Independents, and grassroots activist organizations like ours.

SCPD PAC members were very active in the drive. We had several people go to Columbus to lobby and many members went door-to-door to collect signatures on the petitions.

SCPD PAC paid for a table at Rockin' On The River in Cuyahoga Falls where signatures for the petition were collected.

Now it is time to hone the messaging about the repeal, get our feet on the street and work to get out the vote so we can defeat this assault on the middle class and poor.



## SCPD PAC MEMBERS ATTEND FDR DINNER

The Democratic Party held its' annual FDR dinner and fundraiser on June 1. Once again, SCPD PAC had a table at the event. We invited two members to be our guests. **Bob Isaak**, who was the top VU earner in the last campaign cycle and **Steve Bellman**, who has had numerous letters to the editor regarding progressive issues, joined 10 other members for the festivities.

As usual, there was a big crowd and many local VIPs. Steve and Bob seemed to enjoy the opportunity to meet and talk with people like Mayor Plusquellic, City Council President Marco Sommerville and Congresswoman Betty Sutton.

Before the actual program began, member **Joel Bednar**, who was in his military dress blues and looking mighty handsome, led the Pledge of Allegiance. Then **Wendy Bednar** read a Tribute to the Fallen Soldier. Set before the dais was a single table with white tablecloth and single red rose. Wendy told the audience about the significance of each item on the table. It was a very moving experience.

We are extremely proud of Joel's and Wendy's presentations and their membership in SCPD. We would also like to wish them and their son and our youngest member, **Cesar**, health and love as they move to Fort Bragg. Joel may very well be redeployed to Afghanistan once he finishes his training in North Carolina. The Bednars have all been active and dedicated members of SCPD PAC. We will miss them and will keep them in our memories and hearts.



## SCPD PAC MESSAGING GROUP

By Janet Dando

Since last February, the SCPD Messaging Group has been working hard to craft a clear, understandable, and repeatable message for use by our canvassers, phone bankers, and, if they choose, candidates. So far, we've analyzed the Republican narrative in considerable detail, identified the conflict, characters and messengers of our own story, and will next discuss the imagery to be used in our story.



During this process, we've met with Fred Strahorn,

former state senator and now Senior Advisor to the Ohio Democratic Party. He's meeting with groups concerned about messaging around the state. We were the first, and he says, the furthest along in the process of creating a Democratic narrative. We're also keeping in touch with Representative Betty Sutton, who is working with the House Democratic Caucus to create a message, and with Janetta King of Innovation Ohio, the Progressive think tank.

## Thank You to All of Our Sponsors for the 2011 Fundraiser

### Gold Sponsors

Carl Haefling & Pam Johnson  
Ingrid & Frank Kunstel

### Silver Sponsors

Summit County Democratic Party

### Bronze Sponsors

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State Representative, Vernon Sykes  
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Mary & Larry Lohman  
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Tim Gorbach, First Vice Chair of the S.C. Democratic Party  
John Schmidt, Summit County Council  
Nancy Clem & John Lowenfeld  
Eileen & George Goldman  
Mary Louise & Bill McMahon  
Sharon & Chuck Pervo

### SCPD PAC Executive Committee

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