

Words From the President

Joyce Weissbach

In your wildest dreams, could you have imagined President Obama would visit Fort Myers after so recently being elected to office? I believe the enthusiastic and well-managed receptions given to Michelle Obama and Vice President Joseph Biden on their visits contributed to our city's selection, in addition to the high unemployment figures for our state.

Beginning early Friday prior to his visit, I fielded and returned over 100 phone calls and e-mails from local and state citizens requesting where to obtain tickets. Some callers simply wanted a live person to listen and to understand the terrible financial problems they were experiencing.

I am told by Will Prather, Chairman of the DEC, that the choice of the site for the visit was made by the White House as was the method of distribution of tickets. For those who stood in line, I am assured ticket availability was 450, not the 1,500 predicted by the press. Volunteers, under the tireless coordination of Kathleen Duffy, took tickets, manned lines, and distributed water donated by the DEC to the ticket holders. Efforts of the DEC, the Coalition for Change, the DWC, and the Democratic Clubs of Lee County were outstanding. I drove my car with DWC passengers to and from Fort Myers on the day of the President's visit and, I believe, the City of Fort Myers and the Police Department should be congratulated for their excellent management of the crowds and traffic on the day of the event. It was a beautiful, breathtaking day and one we shall never forget.

We have been working diligently on plans for our retreat, which will take place at the Fort Myers Royal Palm Yacht Club on March



14, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. There will be a full breakfast buffet (\$15.00). Please help yourself when you arrive. After, a short business meeting will follow and the retreat will begin at 11:00 a.m. closing promptly at 3:00 p.m. An afternoon break is scheduled. Jane Kuckel, Chairwoman of the Lee School Board, will open the meeting for us with an introduction and review of the Mission Statement of the DWC. Bob Schaeffer, distinguished political lecturer, will serve as our moderator. A program schedule will be provided.

"... being here in Fort Myers with all of you, I am more confident than ever before that we can and will set our differences aside, commit ourselves to the work ahead, and come together to meet the great test of our time."

— President Barack Obama, Fort Myers, February 9th 2009



To reserve for the
March 14th Meeting:

- Send e-mail to:
DWC@dwc-lee.com
or
- Click on link on our
website: www.dwc-lee.com
or
- Call:
* Pat Fish: 466-8381
* Vi Niggel: 768-6511

President
Barack Obama

Vice-President
Joe Biden

www.whitehouse.gov



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Preview: DWC Retreat

by Pat Fish

The March 14, 2009 meeting will be a full-day retreat, which will take place at the Royal Palm Yacht Club, 2360 West First Street, Fort Myers from 10:00 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will be a \$15-buffet breakfast served at 10:00 a.m. followed by a short business meeting. An afternoon break is also scheduled.

Jane Kuckel, Lee County School Board, will

give the opening presentation and a review of the DWC Mission Statement. The members will attend one of the four sessions: ERA, redistricting, leasing of Alligator Alley or education.

Bob Schaeffer, distinguished political lecturer, will serve as the moderator. A program schedule will be provided.

QLC Kids Stars of Annual Reception

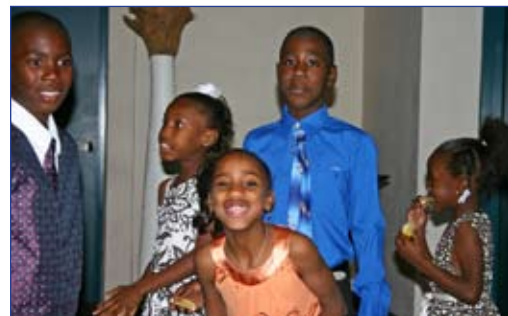


by Annie Estlund

Anyone who has ever wondered about the value of Quality Life Center's activities need only attend an annual "show," given each year to thank supporters.

When the children march on stage to tell the QLC story in song and dance, you can see blossoming talent everywhere. You also can see that these children are disciplined, happy and so very proud. Their faces gleam with love and respect for their teachers, their parents and Mr. Muhammed, who have given them invaluable tools to lead happy and successful lives.

Always a delight, the show's stars glowed with extra pride and joy this year, as they paid homage to Obama! He holds for them the promise of brighter tomorrows. There was a glow of "change" in the air.



Review: Joyce Ramay on Pakistan and Afghanistan



Joyce enthalls us all with her presentation.

by Pat Fish

The DWC speaker at the February meeting was our own Joyce Ramay discussing what led up to the current crisis in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Joyce gave 1979 as the pivotal year; the Iranian revolution against the American-installed Shah and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan occurred then.

Visiting Pakistan, Joyce recalled the Khyber Pass as a 'desolate, barren area, traversed by camels, donkeys and colorfully-painted Pathan trucks'. Today 'it is a Taliban-infested route used by the U.S. military convoys to take supplies to Afghanistan, and may soon be our only one after our last central Asian air base in Kyrgyzstan is closed'.

Joyce reported that there was a brutal war between Russia and Afghanistan for the next ten years; 1.5 million Afghans were killed, the Soviets were defeated, their empire collapsed and the Central Asian states declared their independence from Russia. This resulted in more than three million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and another 1.5 million in Iran.

During the Soviet war, the U.S. working with the CIA and Pakistan's ISI, collaborated with the Saudis to indoctrinate, train and

arm mujahideen, Afghan tribesmen, to fight the Russians. Once the Soviets were defeated, the U.S. no longer had a strategic interest in Pakistan and stopped sending AID money. Up until that time, Pakistan had been a strong ally of America and had a pro-American attitude with democratically-elected Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. This was the beginning of the resentment toward the U.S.

In 1994, Afghan tribal warlords engaged in a civil war, the Taliban succeeding in 1996. After 9/11, when Mullah Omar and the Taliban refused to give up Osama bin Laden, the U.S. sought the help of the Northern Alliance, 'the same old cocaine-smuggling, gun-running civil warlords', to take out Al Qaeda. At this time Pakistan provided several airfields for the U.S. attack on Afghanistan; their dictator, General Pervez Musharraf, receiving military aid from us.

During his reign, Musharraf allowed extremist Islamic parties to run the governments in the two provinces sharing the mountainous border with Afghanistan. After Musharraf was defeated by a democratically elected government, the U.S. belatedly started bombing villages in northwest Pakistan. America, now, plans to train and arm tribal militias in the border regions to fight Al Qaeda and the Taliban.

Afghanistan and Pakistan, according to Joyce, still suffer from problems of integration of peoples living within arbitrary borders set by colonial powers. After 9/11, the U.S. also experienced terrible trauma caused by an attack of our homeland. This attack became the justification for our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, although no Afghan or Iraqi was involved in the attack.



To Contact Our Democratic Officials

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Suggestion: Use postcards rather than letters in envelopes since these are delayed in order to check for poison.

Upcoming 2009 Electoral Races in Lee County

Cape Coral Council Election on 9/15/09

Jim Burch	District 1
Dolores Bertolini	District 4
Tim Day	District 6

City of Fort Myers Election on 9/8/09

Jim Humphrey	Mayor
Warren Wright	District 1
Levon Simms	District 3
Randy Henderson	District 5

Meet & Greet U.S. Congressman Kendrick Meeks

by Pat Fish

U.S. Congressman Kendrick Meeks (D-FL) announced at a 'Meet & Greet' at the Broadway Palms that he plans to run for the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Senator Mel Martinez (R-FL), who recently announced that he would not run for reelection in 2010.

Meeks said that "never in my lifetime, have the people of Florida been faced with so many big problems". He promised to be "a fighter for Florida with a strong voice that won't let special interests stand in the way of what's right."

Meeks, a four-term congressman serving as the only Democrat on the powerful Ways and Means Committee, is a member of the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee, and also serves on the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

Meeks was elected at the age of 27, having previously served in the Florida House and Senate. If elected, Meeks would be the second African American in the U.S. Senate.



U.S. Congressman Kendrick Meeks.



Guests packed the room to meet and greet Congressman Kendrick Meeks.

Cooper's Corner

Have you ever seen a building erected from the top down? They are always constructed from the foundation to the roof. This is true in politics also, even if the election of Barack Obama seems an aberration. We have to build a base, however, on which we can support him on what he hopes to achieve. Unfortunately, in Florida at least, the President did not carry many other Democratic candidates along on his coattails.

We need to start at the lowest levels of government to find candidates whose interests in issues are the same as ours and which are important to the voters. It is necessary to identify an issue with a candidate. This would be somewhat like Obama whose message was CHANGE and his issue was change in Washington, its ways and practices.

So, as we approach the retreat, let's remember that our foremost job is to elect more Democrats who support us in pursuing our issues.

Lynne Cooper

March Food Donations

Don't forget to bring a donation of non-perishable food or a small check made out to the Harry Chapin Food Bank. They can purchase \$5-worth of food for every dollar we donate.

About Our Members

- ✓ Our deepest sympathies to Judy Allen for the passing of her mother in February 2009.
- ✓ We're are pleased to announce that Vi Niggel's eye surgeries were successful. We wish you, Vi, a fast and full recovery.
- ✓ Our wishes of full recovery as well to Claire de Elizalde's husband who has had a double bypass heart surgery.



DWC Minutes of the Meeting, Feb. 14th, 2009

President Joyce Weissbach called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. After her invocation and a moment of silence, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Many new guests were introduced; some had worked in the local Obama campaign. Joyce asked that they join us next month for our Retreat meeting.

On motion of Donalie Benyak, seconded by Charlotte Kowitch, the Minutes, as printed in the Newsletter, were unanimously approved.

Patti Duffy gave a positive Treasurer's Report.

Vice President Pat Carnavale reported for the Membership Committee. She is announcing meetings in the local papers, on the web-site and through e-mail invitations.

Joan Patterson reported for the Issues Committee and gave a comparison between the Obama administration and the Bush administration on foreign policy.

The March meeting will be a Retreat meeting. The topics voted by the Board for discussion are: Education/Schools; State re-districting; the ERA amendment which Florida has not yet ratified; the issue of leasing toll roads like Alligator Alley; single member districts in Lee County; and setting up a bank of information on agencies needing volunteers. Ellis Robinson requested time for discussing the issue of electing Democrats in upcoming local and state elections. Members were asked to write the topics they would be interested in discussing on note cards provided at each table. Robert Schaeffer has been asked to facilitate the discussions. On motion of Carolyn Helms, seconded by Joan Patterson, members unanimously agreed to pay him an honorarium of \$250. The agenda for the Retreat meeting will start with breakfast at 10 a.m., followed by a short business meeting. Discussion group meetings will start at 11 a.m. There will be a mid-afternoon break at 1:30 p.m. The Retreat will end 3 p.m.

State Committee Member, Ellis Robinson reported on the President Barack Obama in Ft. Myers event and complimented Will Prather, Chair of the Democratic Executive Committee

(DEC), for all his efforts on behalf of Democrats. She said that Florida is a pivotal state and needs three more Democratic senators in the State legislature. She recommended electing Democrats in non-partisan races when possible.

Discussion was held on the increase in the price of luncheons from \$15.00 to \$16.75. The cost would remain the same at \$15 for breakfast. Charlotte Blitt said the The Landings offers a lunch with dessert for \$15. Frankie Jennings offered a recommendation for a breakfast/brunch. On motion of Ellis Robinson, seconded by Joan Patterson, it was decided for a breakfast/brunch menu at \$15.00. Motion passed with five nays.

The DEC is holding a Jefferson-Jackson dinner Saturday, March 28. Florida's Chief Financial Officer, Alex Sink, will be the speaker. Will Prather is asking for help on the J-J committee. Carolyn Helms and Joyce Weissbach have already volunteered. More details will be forthcoming.

Joan Patterson announced that the LeHigh Parade is also March 28th in the morning.

Charlotte Kowitch is collecting signatures at the Lakes Regional Library for re-districting and the ERA amendment. She asked for volunteers.

Gayle Mullins spoke on the educational funding rally in Orlando and locally in Lee County on February 21. She circulated papers about the rallies and the funding issues.

Joyce Ramay, a long-standing member of the Club, was the speaker on US relations with Pakistan and Afghanistan. Joyce had lived in Pakistan from 1988-1998, and part-time from 1998-2006. She was married to a renowned Pakistani politician until his death in 2006; she founded a university in Lahore and was a political opinion columnist for an English newspaper. Joyce received a standing ovation and it was requested that her talk be put on the Club's website (see Review, page 3).

There being no further business, on motion of Pat Carnavale, seconded by Annie Estlund, the meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m. for lunch.

"Nobody's free until everybody's free." — Fanny Lou Hamer



Letters and Calls for a Better Democracy

Make your voice heard and keep our representatives working on our Democratic issues:

Speaker-of-the-House Nancy Pelosi

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<http://mack.house.gov>

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Getting to Know You



Annie Estlund

Annie began a writing career at the age of 5 or 6, submitting gripping stories about the neighbors' new kittens to her big brother's "Saturday Review."

Then she peddled the "penny per copy" sheets to the neighbors for blocks around. She did not know at the time that this foreshadowed her future.

Annie graduated from Cottey College in Missouri and the University of Wisconsin, majoring in journalism, of course.

She married Bruce, a fellow journalist, and served as co-owner with him of a very small weekly newspaper in Muscoda, Wisconsin, until just before their second child was born. They moved to Clintonville and then Wisconsin Rapids, with Bruce working on newspapers and Annie raising kids. The family grew by one more before moving to Milwaukee, where Bruce was in Public Relations at the telephone company.

When their youngest went off to college, Annie finished her Journalism degree and took a job as PR writer for the Milwaukee Art Museum. After a few years, she gave up the lure of the big city and went back to their Waukesha home (and then Door County, WI) to pursue her career as a free-lance writer.

Widowed in 1991, Annie eventually settled in Fort Myers, where she finished and published her only book so far... "*For Widows Only!*" She says the royalties are dribbling in, surpassing the penny per copy she earned on her first job, but just barely.

Annie came out of the womb a Democrat and started licking Dem envelopes in the early 40s, when her Mom was secretary of the county party. Democrats continue to demand a lot of Annie's time and attention, and always will. If she goes to Heaven, she says, she'll probably round up the angels for a meeting to be sure all is perfect; if she ends up in "the other place", she'll work as hard as she can to reform all the Republicans down there.



Rana Ross

After graduating from nursing school, Rana obtained a BS and MS in Nursing Administration. She came to Fort Myers after retiring from work as a Nurse

Consultant for the N.Y. State Dept. of Health. "Now they are paying me to stay home", she jokes.

Rana grew up in Connecticut, and is an avid Red Sox fan. Her last 24 years, while working for NY State, she lived in Rochester, NY, which is why she wanted to spend her retirement in Florida. "I don't care how hot it is; I don't have to shovel it" she said. Spending that many years in Rochester, resulted in her becoming a Buffalo Bills fan. She, and many of her friends, spend Sunday afternoons at Ron Dao's Sports Bar watching their team play. "We're 5 & 3", she brags.

The past 11 years here in Florida have been wonderful for Rana, although she was here four years before she found an admitted Democrat, Marian Kestler, who said Rana sounded like a Democrat. After she admitted it, Marian got her to come to the DWC luncheon, and the rest is history. Rana had a short term as President of the DWC, but her health interfered. She is still a member, and also attends the Greater Ft. Myers Democratic Club meetings.

Any other skeletons in her closet some of you know, some don't. But the most important outcome of her life here was getting involved in the election campaign activities as far as she could.

Her current interest is working with a motion program at the County Health Center for people with Parkinson's disease.

"It's time for us to ask ourselves, what is the price of our empire? What is the price of our fear? What is the price of our paranoia? Is it time to make friends instead of enemies? Is it time to hold out the olive branch, and to release the dove of peace around the world? Is it time to devote our resources to education, health, and construction, instead of death and destruction? We must choose wisely." — Joyce Ramay on Afghanistan/Pakistan

Barack Obama on Women's Rights

by Pat Fish

Some of the principles stated by now President Obama when campaigning:

Pay Equity

Despite decades of progress, women still make only 77 cents for every dollar men make. Obama believes that the government needs to better enforce the 'Equal Pay Act', fight job discrimination, and improve child care options and family medical leave to give women equal footing in the workplace.

Small Business

Women are majority owners of more than 28% of U.S. businesses, but head less than 4% of venture-capital-backed firms. Obama encourages investing in women-owned businesses, providing more support to women business owners and reducing discriminations in lending.

Reproductive Rights

Obama supports a woman's right to choose. He has been a consistent champion of reproductive choice and will make preserving women's rights under Roe vs. Wade a priority as President. Obama also supports expanded access to contraception, health information and preventive services to reduce unintended pregnancies.

Preventing Violence Against Women

Obama, in the Senate, introduced legislation to combat domestic violence by providing \$25 million a year for partnerships between domestic violence prevention organizations and fatherhood or marriage programs. He co-sponsored and helped reauthorize the 'Violence Against Women Act'.

Education

Obama will fight to protect Title IX and make sure that women have equal educational opportunities from pre-kindergarten through college.

Fixing the Nation's Health Care System

Obama is committed to ensuring that all Americans, including the 19 million women who do not have insurance now, will have health care coverage by the end of his first term in office. He was an original co-sponsor of 'Johanna's Law', which will educate women and increase awareness of ovarian cancer, and has supported efforts to combat breast cancer. He has also introduced the 'Microbicide Development Act' which will accelerate the development of products to help women battle against HIV/AIDS."

Outstanding Women of Our History: Fanny Lou Hammer



Fannie Lou Hamer was born in rural Mississippi October 6, 1917. Forty-seven years earlier, the 15th amendment had given African-Americans the right to vote. In 1920, the 19th amendment granted suffrage to American women. Yet, it wasn't until 1962, when she was 45, that Fannie Lou learned that she had the right to vote. She then became a leader in the struggle for civil rights.

Fannie Lou married Perry Hamer in 1944 and the couple worked in the fields of Mississippi landowner B. D. Marlowe. She was also the plantation timekeeper because she was the only worker who could read and write.

In 1962, Fannie Lou had surgery to remove a small uterine tumor and later discovered

that the surgeon had performed a hysterectomy without her consent. Enraged, she attended a meeting of civil rights activists and was inspired to register voters.

Eighteen courageous African-Americans marched to the Indianola County Courthouse, but were refused the right to register, having failed an unreasonable literacy test. On the way home, the group's bus was stopped by police and fined \$100 for the "crime" of driving a bus of "the wrong color". That night Fannie Lou was forced off of the Marlowe plantation and shot at 17 times.

Fannie Lou drew international attention at the 1964 Democratic National Convention when she called for racially integrated state delegations. Her testimony was a major factor in the passage of the 1965 Civil Rights Act. With that and other laws, Fannie Lou helped make a lot of progress before her death in 1977.

Newsletter

If you are receiving the Newsletter by regular mail but would like to receive it now by e-mail (and in color!), please contact Pat Fish and Jan Guardiano to make the change. You will be saving money for the DWC and trees for our planet!

Log on to www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html for instructions on how to download and install the FREE Adobe Reader program that will allow you to read any .pdf file.



Coming DWC/Democratic Events

Sat., Mar. 14th, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. . . .DWC Meeting — DWC Retreat, at the Royal Palm Yacht Club, 2360 West First Street, Ft. Myers
(one block north of the Edison & Ford Estates on McGregor, left on Larchmont Ave.)

To Reserve for Meetings:

- E-mail DWC@dwc-lee.com • Or call Pat Fish or Vi Niggel (See page 1)



ON THE WEB

DWC – our own Lee County Democratic Women’s Club site:
www.dwc-lee.com

DWCF, Inc. – Democratic Women’s Club of Florida
<http://democratic-women.org>

DEC – Democratic Party of Lee County
<http://leecountydems.org>