

The Democrat

A roundup of events, ideas, and opportunities for area Democrats and their friends.

A Monthly Newsletter

Issue #3 — March 2011

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A Word from the Club President

By Jeff Shepherd

The Democratic Club of Northwest Volusia County was very well represented at a recent countywide Democratic Party planning and training session at *Bethune Cookman University*.

Friends and members of the Volusia County Democratic Party (Democratic Executive Committee) attended this rare Saturday workshop designed



to get our volunteers and political activists prepared for the 2012 elections.

Volusia County Council Chairman Frank Bruno addressed the 100-plus crowd

with a message that stressed the need to work together.

Local party officials and precinct committeemen and committeewomen, club and caucus leaders and members, and others have often struggled to cooperate, sometimes causing significant time and energy to be wasted arguing and not campaigning. Bruno urged everyone to focus on the future, and leave behind the baggage of old grievances as we approach the 2012 campaign.

About 20 of the workshop participants were DeLand area residents, including some

members of the Volusia County firefighters, and members of our Democratic Club.

Democratic Club Board member and Assistant Professor at *Stetson University* Paul Lachelier was among those who addressed the audience.

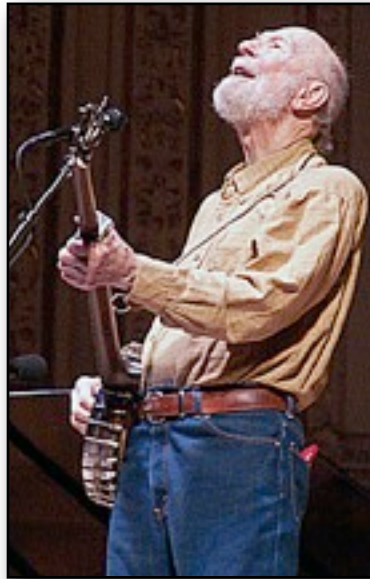
Lachelier (his speech is included below) challenged our concept of the formula for success. He addressed what he considers the myth that Democrats lose elections because they are too centrist or conservative, what some might call "Republican Light." Lachelier also urged that, as activists, we do less preaching and more listening. Finally, he challenged Democrats to take action. In doing so, he cited sociologist Herbert Gans, who once said we must bring democracy to people, and not expect people to come to democracy.

"Too often, we hold meetings and rallies and expect people to come. Usually, the only people who come are the already converted. Instead, I'd like to suggest less talk, more action, shorter meetings and more calls to voters, more door-knocking, and active tabling at fairs and markets – going where people go, rather than expecting them to come to us," Lachelier said.

Businessman and former Democratic Club President

Steve Oxier also addressed the crowd. He told how he had decided to stop devoting so many hours to helping Democrats. He recalled how he was listening to a radio talk show when he heard words he felt were spoken directly to him. What he heard inspired him, not only to stay involved, but to redouble his effort to work hard to support the local Democratic Party, its principles, and its candidates.

Subsequently, he and his partner Marshal Hoerl agreed to take on an important role in the Volusia County Democratic Executive Committee (VCDEC). They are the new cochairmen of the Club Coordinating Committee.



Pete Seeger at Carnegie Hall

Oxier inspired the partisan crowd with his story and with music he played from his mp3

player! Steve played Pete Seeger singing "We Shall Overcome," and had everyone singing along, and believing every word of the lyrics.

It is work like Lachelier's and Oxier's that makes the Democratic Club of Northwest Volusia County well-recognized among Democratic leaders and our peers across the county, as a club whose members meet the challenges of volunteerism. We are known for operating a vibrant campaign headquarters each election season, as well as for our cooperation with the VCDEC and other clubs and caucuses, and candidates.

The club's leadership has made it a priority to build on these accomplishments, making the year 2011 one in which we rebuild our treasury, our volunteer base and our organizational strength.

This, we believe, is the best way to plan for success in 2012 and beyond!

Jeff Shepherd is President of the Democratic Club of Northwest Volusia County.

Precinct in the Spotlight



Precinct 217

Geographic Location – Southwestern DeLand
 Polling Location – Chisholm Center
 520 S. Clara Avenue 32720

Demographics

Race/Gender	Democrats	Republicans	Other	Total
White total	130	198	108	436
Black total	815	19	110	944
Hispanic total	25	6	24	55
Other race total	34	7	22	63
Male total	386	83	124	593
Female total	603	145	126	874
Other gender total	15	2	14	31
Grand total	1004	230	264	1498

Turnout

Election	County Turnout	Precinct Turnout	Dem. Candidate	Rep. Candidate
2010 Governor	0.40	0.26	338 votes (87.79%)	40 votes (10.39%)
2008 President	0.59	0.70	967 votes (81.95%)	205 votes (17.37%)
2006 Governor	0.38	0.27	392 votes (80.82%)	84 votes (17.32%)
2004 President	0.60	0.38	555 votes (85.91%)	90 votes (13.93%)

Conclusions

Precinct 217 is located in the Spring Hill community of southwestern DeLand. Spring Hill is a predominantly black community (accounting for 63% of the population). It is commonly known that black citizens vote more often for Democrats than white, hispanic or other citizens do; in Precinct 217, indeed, 815 of the 944 registered voters who are black are registered Democrats. It is for that reason that Democrats consider Precinct 217 as part of our "home turf" when elections come around: turnout in Precinct 217 typically favors Democrats over Republicans by a 5-to-1 ratio.

However, one problem with turnout in this precinct is that, while it vastly favors Democrats, it is also usually much lower than the overall county turnout: in 2010, the county turnout was above 40%, while Precinct 217 was barely at 25%; same in 2006 (38% v. 27%) and 2004 (59% v. 37%).

Thankfully, when President Obama ran in 2008, turnout soared to almost 70% compared to just above 59% county-wide - indicating that Obama's re-election in 2012 may make turnout soar once again.

Knowing that Obama's re-election will likely drum up turnout in this precinct again, it will be important for us to develop a very strong get-out-the-vote program for this small but incredibly important community - including voter registration and both mail-in (absentee) voting and early voting. Due to the high density of Democratic voters, it makes sense for us to focus our club's resources on this community because we'll be able to get the most "bang for our buck".

Besides the GOTV program, it will be important for us to attach as many local candidates to Obama's coattails as possible in this

precinct, as Obama's effect on turnout can likewise benefit city, county and state candidates (where another hundred votes can have a huge effect on their races). So, producing and distributing palm cards that show the Democratic candidates - from the Presidency to Tallahassee to DeLand - will be of the utmost importance for a down-the-ballot Democratic victory.

SOURCES

http://www.voterfocus.com/ws/Pfinder/Pl_county.php?op=stat&p=20&s=1&county=VOLUSIA&suppr=1&name_and_zip=N

<http://www.volusia.org/elections/results.htm>

Kevin Winchell is Vice-President of the Democratic Club of Northwest Volusia County.

Member's Opinions



The Problem with Democrats

William (Bill) Hall – January 2011

The problem with Democrats is parochialism!

The Democratic Party gets good candidates at the Federal level and many not quite so good at the state level and, with a few notable exceptions, some real dolts at the local (county and municipal) government levels from whence come the future state and federal office candidates.

There are many reasons for this anomaly, and it is an anomaly, because we are not the party of fear mongering, bigoted rednecks. Generally, Democrats are well educated folks but we too often and to too great an extent, define ourselves as conservationists and civil libertarians and thus are too easily caricatured as Audubon

chirping, Sierra Clubbing, tree hugging, reptile loving hippies and academic provincials!

Not that those are bad things! ☺



We simply abandon large and influential segments of society to “conservatives” who aren’t at all conservative in their Founding Father worship of the great political radicals of the 18th Century.

The remedy to ineffective leadership (candidates) at the local level is to confront the Republican opposition where they work and play. That means hanging out at “The Grape”

and participating in the local Chamber of Commerce where there is good natured interaction with local business people who are our neighbors and who have many perfectly legitimate complaints about over-reaching government. For the most part, we don’t engage with our opposition. Indeed, we abandon the local playing field to the Republicans.

I learned early on that I couldn’t engage the people I wanted to engage when I called my weekly column *From a Liberal Viewpoint*. When I changed the name to *Veritas* and largely abandoned partisan characterizations, I began to engage people intellectually. That is not to say that I have made scores of converts to liberalism. I haven’t! But I have made many reconsider some of their narrowest views. I know this because my Republican friends say things such as: “I’ll never be a liberal like you, but I liked that last column. You made some good points!”

Another frequent comment is “You’re my favorite liberal.” At some level, some of the time, I have made inroads into Republican parochialism. That couldn’t happen if I were the liberal equivalent of David Rauchenberg

Hearts and minds are changed over time and that comes about with the fellowship resulting from social interaction where both sides begin to see the other

as good neighbors with different but hospitable views.

I encourage all Democrats to get involved in our Chamber of Commerce. The State and Federal Chambers are indeed playpens for the biggest, greediest corporations in the land, but the local chambers are striving to help local small business guys and gals to prosper and government can be woefully bureaucratic and often

impede the growth and prosperity of many hard working small business owners.

See y’all at *The Grape* on Friday night!

Bill Hall is a member of the DCNWVC, and author of the Veritas column in the DeLand-Deltona Beacon.

Member’s Opinions



Ideas for Building Our Party, and Winning Elections

A speech delivered by Paul Lachelier at the Volusia County Democratic Party Meeting on February 26, 2011.

Wayne Bailey kindly asked me to speak with you for a few minutes about the importance and challenges of civic engagement, and how we

might increase turnout for Democratic candidates.

Rather than bore you with abstract platitudes about the importance of democracy and citizenship, I thought I’d offer some challenges for us all. I should warn you though that what I am about to say goes against what many of us, as Democrats, think and do.

Two days ago, I attended the monthly meeting of my local, the Democratic Club of Northwest Volusia. At the meeting, I heard two ideas I’ve often heard Democrats speak, two ideas I would like to challenge.

The first was that the reason why Democrats lose elections is because they are too centrist or even conservative, not

passionately Democratic enough.

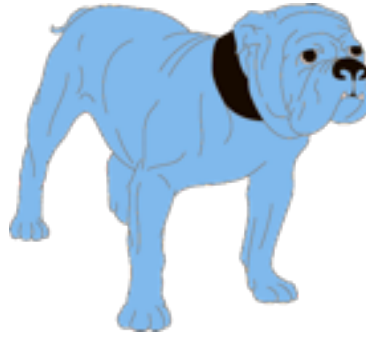
The second idea was that we need to “educate” voters that what they think (if it’s conservative) is wrong.

Now lest you think I’m about to appeal for a Blue Dog Democratic politics...I am not. To the idea that we lose because we’re too moderate, I think this notion is wrong. First of all, most candidates probably lose for a variety of reasons, not one reason alone.

Second, I suspect that whether Democrats win or lose depends on their constituency more than their ideas. At our club meeting, the fact that more Blue Dog Democrats suffered defeat than progressive Democrats in the 2010 election was offered as evidence for the winning strategy of a more progressive, less moderate Democratic politics. I haven’t looked at the data, but my hunch is that most solidly progressive Democrats have solidly progressive constituencies, so one reason why they stay in office (aside from the advantage of incumbency) is that they don’t face the politically divided constituencies that I suspect many Blue Dog Democrats face.

In other words, candidates win or lose less because of their beliefs per se, than whether

their beliefs cohere with their constituency’s beliefs.



This is not a popular message with strong Democrats, or any partisan for that matter, because partisans like us want to believe that if we just speak our convictions frequently and passionately enough, we will win. But the reality is that it depends on whether voters in any given district are open to our beliefs.

This brings me to the second idea voiced at my club’s meeting on Thursday: that we need to “educate” voters that the conservative beliefs they have are wrong.

One of the things I love about Democrats is that many of us want to know the facts, and uphold the importance of science and hard evidence. But we sometimes forget that people – not only Republicans and independents, but Democrats too – are social creatures as much if not more than reasoning creatures. To be sure, some people are more emotional, others more

cerebral...and some just prefer to keep their head in the sand. But most people don’t take too well to being “educated.” If we think we’re more informed or worse still, more intelligent, than the voter we’re trying to convince – and this becomes apparent through our words, tone of voice, or facial expressions – then we probably won’t win over that voter.

We aren’t going to win over voters by “educating” them, let alone berating them for having opinions we disagree with. Just because they disagree with us, doesn’t mean they’re ignorant or stupid.

If we want to win over voters – even some Republicans – my sense, judging from experience as a political sociologist and a political activist, is that we win voters over by (1) listening to them, (2) empathizing with their experiences if not their beliefs, and (3) gently highlighting the things they say that cohere with our own beliefs and experiences.

On Thursday night, before our local’s meeting, I made some calls to Democrats on our membership list to help build our club and prepare us for the 2012 elections. I spent 24 minutes on the phone (probably too long) with one woman, but her story bears repeating here. This woman,

whom I'll call Jane, told me she used to be a Democrat but she was tired of both parties, and is now leaning independent. I asked her to tell me why she was leaning independent nowadays. You know what Jane told me? She went to hear some candidates speak last year, and one candidate, who didn't identify their party affiliation, impressed her. So Jane emailed some of her friends to share that she was impressed with this candidate. And guess what? Two of her friends, both Democrats, "attacked" her ("attack" was Jane's own word) for being impressed with this candidate, who turned out to be a Republican, and sent the attack to all the friends Jane emailed. Jane was clearly shocked and hurt, and this social interaction – not Democratic ideas – was what turned her off to the Democratic Party.

That's a shame. That's a loss for us because Jane, a retiree, had not only previously donated money and supplies to our Democratic club, she had repeatedly volunteered. Fortunately, by listening to Jane, empathizing with her hurt, and pointing out that many of the issues she told me she cared about – including global warming, and getting light rail in Central Florida – are Democratic issues, I was able to get Jane to agree to

renew her dues to our Democratic club. She also asked me if I'm married, and when I told her I'm single, she told me she'd "be on the lookout" for me.

So, I'd like to conclude with some ideas for how we might win more elections. The first two ideas are about political ethics, that is, our personal conduct as Democrats:

Preach less, and listen more. Most people like good listeners, and dislike preaching, or condescending "education." We need to empathize more than criticize.



We need passion, but not intolerance. We need to stop thinking that people who disagree with us on some things are stupid or ignorant because that only drives voters to the Republicans, who generally do at least one thing right – they don't condescend. We will invariably encounter voters who don't agree with everything we think. (Lord

knows, Democrats don't agree on everything, and we should be ok with that!) The challenge is to find common ground, and build a shared passion for common issues.

Beyond these two political ethics, there are some brass tacks:

First and foremost, as the sociologist Herbert Gans once said, bring democracy to people, don't expect people to come to democracy. Too often, we hold meetings and rallies and expect people to come. Usually, the only people who come are the already converted. Instead, I'd like to suggest less talk, more action, shorter meetings and more calls to voters, more door knocking, and active tabling at fairs and markets – going where people go, rather than expecting them to come to us, as Herbert Gans wisely urges.

To do this, we need to get out of our comfort zones. As social scientists have learned, people love to be with their own kind. As the saying goes, "birds of a feather flock together." Opposites do not attract. Practically, this explains why we prefer to attend a long club meeting or political lecture than make calls, table, or knock on the doors of strangers. It's safer, easier, more comfortable. Yet in a diverse democratic society like ours, the only way

we can win elections is by connecting with diverse strangers, including people who don't agree with us on all issues, or even dress, look and talk like us. That's not easy, but it's absolutely necessary if we want to win.

So I'll end with two challenging questions. Ask yourself:

How much time exactly do you spend per month going to

Democratic club meetings and political lectures, and compare that to how much time you spend making calls, door knocking, or otherwise connecting with voters to systematically build our party?

How much money do you spend on restaurant meals and drinks per month, and how much money do you invest in our party, in making our world a better place?

I'm not innocent. These questions are challenging for me too. So as our governor likes to say, "Let's get to work."

Paul Lachelier is a member of the Executive Board of the DCNWVC, and a political sociologist at Stetson University.

Member's Opinions



An Additional Perspective:

A Brief Response to Paul's Speech from Wayne Dickson

In the midst of a warm discussion it's easy to overgeneralize, or at least seem to. Either way, regardless of the exact words spoken at the Club's last meeting, I doubt that many of us really do

believe that elections are won or lost for a single reason, including those like me who think Democratic candidates should be more assertively true to the party's liberal heritage.

The real issue has three dimensions: (1) *Analytically*, which factors –plural– are most important? (2) *Strategically*, which of those factors can we hope to affect, and how? (3)

Tactically, how can we implement our strategy in real-world situations we're likely to encounter?

As Paul says, the actual ideology of both candidate and constituency, respectively, is important. But this is one of those instances where, in respect to voting, perception *becomes* what one accepts as reality. Just think of Wisconsin,

where efforts to recall Republican legislators are based on the proposition that they hid their true ideology and intent during the last campaign. Wisconsinites voted for a perception that turned out to be an illusion.

Morally, a candidate might choose what to emphasize and what to deemphasize, so to speak, but she shouldn't hide her true ideology. Strategically, she should try to discover the *true* ideology of her opponent and potential constituency. For example, I bet we all know persons whose beliefs if checked on a list show them to be liberal, but who insist that they are conservative. Both the candidates and their supporters should focus on what voters actually believe, not on how they label either their beliefs or themselves.

In respect to constituency, what matters is the ideology of those who will actually be voting. Among them, a large fraction will vote Democratic, regardless. A large fraction will vote Republican, regardless. It's the remaining small fraction that might be swayed by persuasion.

In trying to persuade someone who's either wavering or moderately conservative in

genuine ideology it's wise to remember what's called "confirmation bias." Here's Michael Schermer:

"Rarely do any of us sit down before a table of facts, weigh them pro and con, and choose the most logical and rational explanation, regardless of what we previously believed.... [Rather, we] sort through the body of data and select those that most confirm what we already believe, and ignore or rationalize away those that do not."

This is not hypocrisy! It's a result of what George Lakoff taught us to call *framing*:

"Frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world. [T]hey shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, and what counts as a good or bad outcome of our actions." In other words, quite literally, they shape the way we actually perceive and experience the world.

Liberals and conservatives literally see the world differently. If we argue or debate with conservatives, we need to remember that facts, figures, events, quotations, etc. really do mean something different to them than they do to us. No point in getting

torqued. They're not just being obdurate or deliberately contrary, and fussing and fuming about it won't be constructive.

Final thought: a suggested amendment to Gans's analogy. Sometimes it's very important to preach to the choir. You won't win any converts, but you might very well fire up enthusiasm and send out a whole bunch of evangelizers, greatly extending your influence.

For example, returning to an earlier point, if as a candidate you show your liberal colors proudly, you'll quite possibly (probably in my opinion) increase the number of Democrats who become active in a campaign ... or at least who bother to vote.

Remember, if the same number of supporters who went to the polls in his previous run had bothered to turn out in this run, Russ Feingold would still be a senator.

Wayne Dickson is editor of the newsletter of the DCNWVC, and a retired Stetson University Humanities Professor.

Member Profile

Sylvia Perkins



Sylvia Perkins is a retired professor of philosophy. She along with her husband Bob, also a member of our Club, spent the last part of career teaching in the Philosophy Department at Stetson.

Sylvia was roused to become active in politics by what she and many others consider the virtual *coup d'état* by the Supreme Court that put Bush/Cheney in the White House.

As a prime example of why **everyone** should be active she cites the current situation in the Middle East, where hundreds of thousands of people are putting their lives on the line to try to win the freedoms we take for granted in our own nation. We too should be willing to stand up and work to achieve positive change.

As for why she is a Democrat, Sylvia puts it quite simply: "Democrats care about people. Republicans care about money." She notes that just as Roosevelt was her parents' president, Obama is hers.

She observes that, while most people cannot participate directly in national politics because of work and other

obligations, almost everyone can participate locally. We all should work together to do what we can to make a difference.

To show that she practices what she preaches, Sylvia herself attends Club meetings; helped run the Headquarters during the 2004-2010 campaigns; serves as a precinct committeewoman; has delivered palm cards in her precinct, at early voting, and downtown; has attended canvassing board meetings; and more.

Among her inspirations are Barack Obama, a president who is intelligent, well educated, and not ashamed to show it; and Alan Grayson, a former congressman who has the courage to "tell it like it is."

Looking forward, what she wishes she would see is a lot more of our fellow Democrats rising up and getting active in the difficult struggle "to take back this country from the Republican tea party!"



Did you know?

What's your knowledge of American history and government?

This month's quiz is drawn from the exam one must pass in order to become a naturalized U.S. citizen. Could you qualify? Try the questions on others, just for fun.

[Take the Quiz!](#)

Sample Question

Can you name the 13 original states? (There's a hint below.)



Coming Events

Be sure to attend the Democratic Women's Club of Volusia County's 3rd Annual *Picnic & Politics* gathering: Saturday, April 30, 11 a.m. 'til 3 p.m. At Cracker Creek, 1795 Taylor Rd., Port Orange, FL 32128 - Tickets costs \$18 each.

Mouth-watering BBQ and the fixin's and a healthy portion of stump speeches will be served!

For further information contact Lisa Walker: ph. 386 956-6926; email lisa@paraproductions.com.

Links

- [Northwest Volusia Democratic Club](#)
- [National Democratic Party](#)
- [Florida Democrats](#)

Join the Conversation!

Responses to the newsletter are always welcome. (For practical reasons we ask that you restrict submissions to 400 words or fewer.) In addition to submissions for inclusion in the next edition, however, readers are also encouraged to email the [editor](#) directly. Furthermore, email addresses of contributors are always published.

