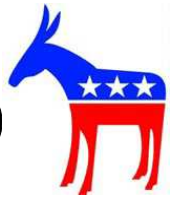




VOICES



A Publication of the Venice Area Democratic Club ~ Venice, FL

Volume 7, Number 8

April 15, 2009

The Venice Area Democratic Club is an affiliated club of the Democratic Executive Committee of Sarasota County - and chartered by the Florida Democratic Party.

We meet the 4th Saturday of every month at 12:30 PM in Naar Hall of the Venice United Church of Christ, located at 620 Shamrock Blvd. in Venice, FL.

Please join us at our next meeting to join like-minded individuals for a stimulating, progressive and enlightened afternoon!

President's Message

Florida has tried to protect and conserve its natural beauty since the mid 19th Century. It is one of the few states in the eastern United States with large tracts of natural areas remaining. Florida today practices conservation through the Florida Forever Program begun in 2000. Many people do not know that Florida is the home of the nation's first wildlife refuge, Pelican Island, and Ocala National Forest, the first national forest in the eastern U.S.

Still, conservation has not always been a priority in Florida. Drainage of the Everglades in the 1930s began a tremendous growth spurt in the state. Since the 1950s, the state has experienced the loss of more than eight million acres of forest and wetlands habitat. However, land preservation began seriously in the 1960s, followed by programs to save the coasts and the rivers.

In 1989 there was significant public support for an expanded land acquisition program.

As a result, then Governor Bob Martinez estab-

lished a blue-ribbon commission to evaluate Florida's environment. The commission estimated that if development continued at the same rate as was occurring then, by 2020 there would be a serious decline in animal and plant species as well as serious losses of open spaces.

Governor Martinez proposed a \$3 billion land preservation fund based on \$300M in yearly bonded funds over ten years. Lawmakers agreed, and Preservation 2000 (P2000) -- the biggest land acquisition program in the US -- was born.

Funds were divided into seven segments, with conservation and recreation lands and water resources receiving the majority of the money. The program preserved nearly two million acres of land throughout the state. These natural areas have protected wildlife, prevented urban sprawl, and will allow future generations to experience some of the "old" Florida that continues to slip away.

Governor Bush and the Florida Legislature created the (see President, p.3)

This Month's Meeting

Guest Speaker:

Rob Lorei

Managing Editor of "Florida This Week" seen on WEDU-TV (PBS) and co-founder of WMNF Radio.

Lunch Catered by

GOLD RUSH BBQ

Tickets: \$15 ea. must be purchased no later than April 20th

(tickets will NOT be sold the day of the event)

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Special Events Maria Reba

Precinct Organization

WEBMASTER

Jon Fotos

Celebrate Earth Day 2009

Glenn Compton, Chair Manasota 88

Earth Day 2009 holds the promise that past Neanderthal attitudes - favoring short-term corporate interest to the exclusion of broad public health and the environment - are about to change. Environmental protection is not going to go away.

Despite the many pressures, the American people still care deeply about the quality of their environment. They care about air pollution, noise and trash in their cities. They care about having areas where they can fish and hike. They worry about the toxic chemicals in the factories and fields in which they work, and about global warming.

“More than ever before, we are faced with many environmental challenges.”

More than ever before, people appreciate that this is the only planet we have. More than ever before, we are faced with many environmental challenges. There are many ways each of us can make a difference.

Energy conservation is an easy, cheap and healthy way for us to help America buy time to develop renewable energy sources. Some viable means of conserving energy include retrofitting homes to correct air conditioning and heating losses, insulating and re-equipping existing buildings, and developing pedestrian paths to encourage bicycle transportation.

Industry representatives, politicians and individuals have the responsibility of reducing our impacts on the environment. It is up to all of us to conserve energy; otherwise, the healthy environment we currently enjoy could be in jeopardy in the future. ■

Welcome New Members !

**Beverly & Arthur Schreiner
 Precinct 58**

President (cont.)

Florida Forever (FF) program in 1999, designated to add another \$300M to conservation efforts each year for ten years. The money has been allocated from a tax on real estate transactions known as the Documentary Stamp Act (DSA). This program places greater emphasis on urban and community parks and includes measures to safeguard our water supply. Since its inception, more than 600,000 acres have been protected from development.

Approximately 20 local governments, including Sarasota County, have provided matching funds to purchase even more environmentally sensitive lands. With the assistance of these funds nearly one quarter of our county currently is protected in this way. The vision of our county leaders and residents has motivated them to vote twice for an increase in taxes to purchase landmasses.

Such conservation efforts throughout Florida improve our quality of life by providing clean air and water;

protecting open spaces such as greenway corridors, parks, forest lands, public beaches; and allowing for healthy fisheries and wildlife habitat. Protecting these critical places provides the foundation for our \$3 billion tourism industry that attracts 65-70 million visitors each year.

With plummeting land prices, one would think the state legislature would see this as a perfect time to renew its commitment to land acquisition and preservation. Our dollars would go further in such an economic downturn. Unfortunately, neither branch of the state legislature has put any funding into the state budget for Florida Forever. Our representatives want to divert the money for other purposes and avoid their fiscal responsibility. The pattern in recent years has been to drain the fund to balance the state budget rather than to act responsibly.

Last July Governor Crist avowed support for Florida Forever, but in the special session earlier this year

money was removed from the program. The governor reinstated the funding but one wonders if he will fight for the program once the final budget reaches his desk.

Florida Forever provides the foundation for protecting Florida's natural environment for future generations. We must act now so that future generations will have access to the same lands, water, and wildlife we currently enjoy.

If you have a love and respect for nature in the wild and not so wild places of Florida, please call, write, or e-mail Governor Crist. Phone: 850-488-7146, write: Gov. Charlie Crist, Office of the Governor, The Capitol, 400 S. Monroe St., Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001, or e-mail: Charlie.Crist@myflorida.com.

To contact Representative Doug Holder and Senator Nancy Detert please refer to the list of representatives on page 7 of this newsletter. ■

Upcoming Events

Please join the VADC at these upcoming events. We have rented space at all three venues. If you would like to volunteer at any of these events, please contact Norma Dayton today!

Friday, April 17th
Saturday, April 18th
Sunday, April 19th



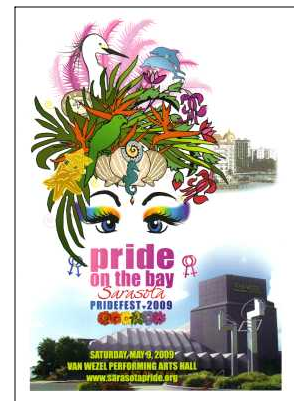
Located at the
Airport Festival Grounds
of the
Venice Municipal Airport

Sunday, April 19th



10 am - 5 pm
Located at
Oscar Scherer State Park

Saturday, May 9th



12 noon - 6 pm
Located at Van Wezel
Performing Arts Hall

Nola Theiss: A Passion to Reroute Traffic

by Madeleine Havlick, VADC Member

We in Florida don't feel much connection to the despicable modern day slavery, but it does happen here. In fact, Florida ranks among the top states for human trafficking. The others include California, Texas, and New York. There is a difference between smuggling and trafficking. The first is transportation based, and trafficking is exploitation based.

Startling Statistics. Listen to Nola Theiss; Executive Director of Human Trafficking Awareness Partnerships Inc., as we VADC members and guests did at our March meeting when she related some grim numbers. Of the trafficking victims, 80% are female, and of those 50% are children. The average cost of a person sold to traffickers varies: in Asia it is \$114, Haiti, \$150, South America \$250, and Europe \$3,500. Smuggling and Trafficking is a 32 billion dollar international crime. In Florida over 80% of the victims are from Guatemala.

Esmerelda's Story. Theiss

showed a video featuring Esmerelda, an 11 year-old bought from her mother for \$258 in Guatemala. Two men buyers then smuggled Esmerelda to Cape Coral, FL. She worked as a domestic, and when not working, was locked in a plywood room and raped.

"There are three kinds of trafficking: forced labor in agriculture or some other service, forced commercial sex, and domestic servitude."

Nola Theiss

14% are black. Theiss shared with the audience a surprising piece of personal information: Theiss's daughter in her years between age 13 and 16 ran away five times.

There are three kinds of trafficking: forced labor in agriculture or some other service, forced commercial sex, and domestic servitude. Theiss said human trafficking is a violation of the 13th Amendment of the US Constitution, and until 2000, we had only a few laws to prosecute violators and protect people from being enslaved. The Democratic Party feels human trafficking should be addressed and it was -- the Trafficking Victims Protection Act was signed during the Clinton administration. The Act had been reauthorized and supported during the Bush administration. Obama called human trafficking, "a debasement of our common humanity."

Theiss, with her knowledge and experience in trafficking and smuggling, said she is always on the lookout for would-be victims. She told of an occasion in a restaurant where she noticed a waitress who never had eye contact with anyone, and looked down a lot. However, Theiss didn't broach the subject of trafficking with the waitress because of being unsure. Theiss did urge all of us to watch for what might be victims and to call any suspicions to the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency: toll-free 866/347-2423.

Nola Theiss can be reached at her organization on Sanibel at 239/395-2635. For more information contact info@humantraffickingawareness.org. The website is located at www.humantraffickingawareness.org.

Please review the **Human Trafficking Indicators** on the following page that will aid in detecting victims of smuggling or human trafficking. ■

"Jail would be better," Esmerelda, said in an interview, "... because they feed you there." One of her captors, who owed the other money, gave him the girl. Another girl in the video, Sara, was kidnapped and sold into prostitution. She lived in continuous fear and was led to believe by her captors no one would help her. Theiss said the victims don't go to authorities because the captors tell them harm will come to their families. Also, victims also are afraid of being arrested and jailed.

Many runaways also become victims of trafficking. Theiss said in Florida 68% of the runaways are 15 years old or younger. Of the chronic runaways, 37% are white females, 23% are black; of the males, 18% are white and

Next Month's Meeting:

Jennifer Cohen

"How Long Must We Wait for Equal Rights?"

Jennifer is President of the National Organization of Women in Venice/North Port, Vice-President of the Sarasota County Democratic Women's Club, and member of the board of the Commission on the Status of Women in Sarasota.

Saturday, May 23, 2009

At our March meeting, Carol Anderson won the 50/50 raffle with money loaned to her from her friend, Rosemary Waters. Carol donated her ticket winnings back to the **Maxine Barritt Scholarship Fund**. Both Carol and Rosemary were personal friends of Maxine - her goodwill continues on!

Can Somebody Turn On the Lights?

by Sam Rosenfeld, Director of Better Government Association of Sarasota County

The Renewable Energy Conference, "Solar Power's Future... Myth vs. Reality," held Saturday, March 28, 2009 at the Osprey Inn was a huge success. Over 120 Sarasota residents attended the conference.

Our speakers included Representative Keith Fitzgerald; John Burges, organizer of Florida Alliance for Renewable Energy (FARE); Jerry Karnas, Climate Control Manager for Environmental Defense Fund; and Lauren Poe, Gainesville, Florida City Commissioner --who is part of what is happening to renewable energy in Gainesville, FL today.

The purpose of the event was to raise awareness and motivate citizens of Sarasota County to help Representative Fitzgerald and others garner the necessary public support to push HB1317, Florida Renewable Energy Freedom Act (FREFA) through the legislature this session.

Tired of paying money to unfriendly oil governments around the world? Want to improve our national security? Wish our community were greener? Interested in creating jobs right here in our own community?

For all these reasons, and more, get up off the couch and get involved. Ask how you can help make renewable energy a reality in Sarasota County. The

question for the citizens of Sarasota County quite simply is how to collectively apply pressure on Florida Power & Light (FPL) to force the utility company to surrender power for the greater good.

Do we support Feed In Tariffs

"Florida is known as the Sunshine State, and we cannot afford to squander a golden opportunity to show leadership on the important issue of renewable energy."

Sam Rosenfeld

(FITs) such as Gainesville instituted this month? FITs place a legal obligation on utilities to purchase electricity from renewable energy installations; e.g., mainly excess energy generated by homeowners, businesses, and farmers. This decentralized citizen-initiated model is working successfully in over 40 countries around the world. The

alternative, Renewable Energy Credits (RECs), keep control centralized with the large utility companies.

This method will cost consumers more, produce less clean energy, and will generate fewer local jobs. RECs have been adopted in New Jersey and Maryland, where the large utility interests have lobbied hard to remain in control of power sources. It does not provide any mechanism to help homeowners, businesses or farmers purchase solar panels.

Both systems will cost consumers more money initially, but over time the FIT method will drive down costs for consumers. It will also help Florida meet its renewable- portfolio standard of supplying 20% of our electrical needs from renewable sources by the year 2020.

In an effort to help Sarasota County move forward we must exert pressure on the Republican leadership in Tallahassee. After all, Florida is known as the Sunshine State, and we cannot afford to squander a golden opportunity to show leadership on the important issue of renewable energy.

The choice is up to each of us. We hold our fate in our own hands. Contact Representative Doug Holder at 941-918-4028 or e-mail him at doug-holder@myfloridahouse.gov. and ask him to get on board! ■

Human Trafficking Indicators

Here is a list of signals that will aid in detecting victims of smuggling or trafficking:

1. Is the victim in possession of identification and travel documents; if not, who has control of the documents?
2. Is the victim coached on what to say to law enforcement and immigration officials?
3. Was the victim recruited for one purpose and forced to engage in some other job?
4. Is the victim's salary being garnished to pay off a smuggling fee?
5. Was the victim forced to perform sexual acts?
6. Does the victim have freedom of movement?
7. Has the victim or family been threatened with harm or deportation if the victim attempts to escape?
8. Has the victim been deprived of food, water, or other necessities?
9. Can the victim contact friends or family?
10. Is the victim allowed to socialize or attend religious services?

Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW)

by Maria Reba, VADC Board Member

The CIW campaigns for fair wages, human rights, improved worker conditions, and an end to modern day slavery in the fields. Together with Interfaith Action of South Florida (IA), the CIW has successfully brought about landmark agreements with Yum Brands (owner of Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, KFC), McDonalds, Burger King and Whole Foods to:

- Directly improve the sub-poverty wages of the tomato pickers in their supply chains by one penny more per pound of tomatoes an approximately 75% increase in tomato pickers' pay

- Develop, implement and enforce codes of conduct to ensure an end to human rights abuses in their supply chains, including zero tolerance for modern day slavery

- Ensure a voice for farm workers in monitoring and enforcing improved conditions and wages.

Although the companies have agreed to pay the additional penny per pound (under the CIW campaign called "Fair Food") the Florida Tomato Grow-

ers Exchange (FTGE) -- to which 90% of the state's tomato producers belong - refuses to pass it along, citing legal concerns. Instead, the companies pay the extra wages into an escrow account where it accumulates without reaching the workers.

After two years of trying, the CIW finally managed the meet with governor Crist. On the table: slavery and the labor conditions of Southwest Florida tomato harvesters as well as the refusal of the FTGE to pass along the agreed-upon penny per pound.

After the meeting, governor Crist expressed his support for the plight of the farm workers. The following are some excerpts of his comments to the press:

- "I'm not a man driven by anger much, but two things will [cause me to be]: injustice and arrogance. I detect from the briefings I've had and the meeting I just had that there may be a bit of both at work here and that concerns me greatly. We want to be a continuing party to try to help with their plight."

- "I support the Coalition's campaign for Fair Food, whereby corporate purchasers of tomatoes have agreed to contribute monies for the benefit of the tomato field workers. I commend these purchasers for their participation, and I encourage the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange and its members to participate in the campaign so that these monies can reach and provide assistance to these workers."

Governor Crist's support will go a long way towards helping the CIW reach their goal but there is still a lot of work to be done. Meanwhile CIW is continuing its campaign for Fair Food and has begun talks with Publix in an attempt to reach a similar agreement with them.

VADC is supportive of CIW's efforts, and will provide to individuals or groups, postcards with a pre-printed message to mail to Publix to show them that its customers are supportive of this effort. To obtain postcards please contact COALITION OF IMMOKALEE WORKERS (CIW). ■

Democratic Women's Club of Sarasota County

Chris Carroll, President DWCS

After a long hiatus, Sarasota County has revitalized a Democratic Women's Club. On March 7, 2009, twelve women Democrats met with Carolyn Helms, the Region VII Chair of the Democratic Women's Club of Florida, to organize the Democratic Women's Club of Sarasota County.

Elected officers are: Chris Carroll, President; Jennifer Cohen, 1st Vice President; Rhonda DiFranco, 2nd Vice President; Joy George, Treasurer; and Christina Farnsworth, Secretary. As the membership grows, more positions will be filled and committees formed.

The idea of restoring a women's club arose during a meeting between Jennifer Cohen, former candidate for County Commission, and Chris Carroll, her campaign manager. Jennifer had to withdraw her candidacy from the fall 2008 campaign, and she and Chris discussed the pitfalls of running for elected office.

Most obvious were the steps a potential candidate should take when considering running for office, as well as the elements necessary for a successful campaign. Women often lack the "how-to" knowledge and necessary support to start a campaign. While other organizations help women once they be-

come successful candidates, Chris and Jennifer identified a need for an organization to help women in getting to that point, which, for some women candidates, may be difficult and often perceived as impossible.

The main purpose of the Club is to help Democratic women take those first steps toward elected office. The Democratic Women's Club will also ensure women's voices are heard and their issues promoted. As with all our Democratic clubs, all Democratic candidates are supported and assisted in their campaigns regardless of gender.

Membership is open to all Democrats (including those of the male persuasion) registered in Sarasota County and is \$25 per year. Meetings are on the first Saturday of the month at 9:30am. During its developmental phase the club's meeting location will not be fixed, but will move monthly within Sarasota County, alternating between venues in the north and south.

We are pleased to have Norma Dayton, president of the Venice Area Democratic Club, as one of our founding members along with Susette Bryan, Barbara Desmond, and Carol Newnam. ■

How to Contact Your Elected Officials

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Website: www.firstgov.gov

U.S. President

Barack Obama

www.WhiteHouse.gov

Phone: 202-456-1414

Fax: 202-456-2461

Email: President@WhiteHouse.gov

U.S. Senators

Bill Nelson

www.BillNelson.Senate.gov

Phone: 888-671-4091

Fax: 202-228-2183

Mel Martinez

www.Martinez.Senate.Gov

Phone: 202-224-3041

Fax: 202-228-5171

US Representative—District 13

Vern Buchanan

www.buchanan.house.gov

Phone: 941-951-6643

Fax: 941-951-2972

DC Office: 202-225-5015

STATE GOVERNMENT

Website: www.MyFlorida.com

Governor

Charlie Crist

Phone: 850-488-7146

Fax: 850-487-0801

Email: Charlie.Crist@myflorida.com

Attorney General

Bill McCullom

Phone: 850-414-3300

Chief Financial Officer

Alex Sink

Consumer Hotline: 800-342-2762

Email: cfo@fldfs.com

STATE GOVERNMENT (cont.)

Commissioner of Agriculture

Charles Bronson

Phone: 850-488-3022

Email: Commissioner@doacs.state.fl.us

State Senator - District 23

Nancy Detert

Phone: 941-480-3547

Fax: 941-480-3549

Email: Detert.Nancy.web@FLSenate.gov

State Representative - District 70

Doug Holder

Phone: 941-918-4028

Email: Doug.Holder@myfloridahouse.gov

SARASOTA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Website: www.SCGov.net

Board of County Commissioners

Phone: 941-861-5344

District #1: Carolyn Mason

Email: CMason@scgov.net

District #2: Joe Barbeta

Email: JBarbett@scgov.net

District #3: Shannon Staub

Email: SStaub@scgov.net

District #4: Nora Patterson

Email: NPatters@scgov.net

District #5: Jon Thaxton

Email: JThaxton@scgov.net

Clerk of the Circuit Court

Karen Rushing

Phone: 941-861-7400

Email: ClkInfo@scgov.net

Property Appraiser

Bill Furst

Phone: 941-861-8200

Email: Appraiser@sarasotaproperty.org

SARASOTA COUNTY GOV'T (cont.)

Sheriff

Tom Knight

Phone: 941-861-5800

Email: SrqSher@scgov.net

Supervisor of Elections

Kathy Dent

Phone: 941-861-8600

Email: KDent@scgov.net

Tax Collector

Barbara Ford-Coates

Phone: 941-861-8300

Email: info@SarasotaTaxCollector.com

VENICE CITY GOVERNMENT

Website: www.VeniceGov.com

Venice City Council

Phone: 941-486-2626

EdMartin, Mayor

EMartin@ci.venice.fl.us

Sue Lang, Vice Mayor

SLang@ci.venice.fl.us

Kit McKeon

KMckeon@ci.venice.fl.us

John Moore

JMoore@ci.venice.fl.us

John Simmonds

JSimmon@ci.venice.fl.us

Vicki Noren Taylor

VTaylor@ci.venice.fl.us

Ernie Zavodnyik

EZavodn@ci.venice.fl.us

Venice City Manager

Isaac D. Turner

Phone: 941-486-2626, Ext. 24006

Email: ITurner@ci.venice.fl.us

Reminder:

PLEASE bring canned and dried goods to the next VADC meeting for the local food bank.

Their needs far outweigh ours!



Bruce Brunette

941-223-6373

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