

FOCUS

Democratic Club of Sarasota

An Informed Member is Our Best Voter



Volume 18, Issue 6

June, 2012

JUNE LUNCHEON PROGRAM

Florida Veterans for Common Sense present American Patriot Thomas Paine—Live!

Do you know who Thomas Paine was?

Paine was the first thinker to set forth cogent reasons for independence from England in his political pamphlet, *Common Sense*. It became a best seller, and convinced many colonists to support the independence movement.

Thomas Paine's thinking was years, if not centuries, ahead of his time. Paine argued for social security, higher education, and women's rights. He was an abolitionist and recognized that unnecessary war opens a vein that can bleed a nation to death.

How appropriate that a group formed in 2002 to protest the run-up to war in Iraq would honor Thomas Paine and *Common Sense* in its name. Since its founding, Florida Veterans for Common Sense has dedicated its actions towards informing the community on matters affecting national defense, active duty military and veterans' issues. An ongoing effort is to obtain Veterans Diversion Courts in Florida which could divert veterans, as appropriate, from criminal prosecution to employment, psychological counseling, and drug or alcohol abuse treatment.

On Sat., June 9, Gene Jones will introduce the work of Florida Veterans for Common Sense and a short dramatization of Thomas Paine's relevance to modern America. Actor Barry Look plays the role of Thomas Paine and the American Troubadour Bill Schustik performs revolutionary and patriotic songs. They present this program in honor of Paine's birthday every January for the FLVCS, and now, for the first time, they are bringing it to the Democratic Club of Sarasota.

This special event will be at a special location — the Sarasota Yacht Club. Exercise your common sense and be there on June 9.

LUNCHEON DETAILS: See back page

NOTE: The luncheon is at the **Sarasota Yacht Club**.

Servers at the Yacht Club are unable to handle cash or credit card purchases. All luncheon attendees who want to purchase alcoholic beverages or soft drinks must purchase tickets at the Democratic Club's check-in table and give the drink tickets to the bartender.

Last Month: Innocence Project of Florida's Seth Miller: Poverty Leads to Injustice

"The opposite of poverty is justice." May luncheon speaker Seth Miller, Executive Director of the Innocence Project of Florida (IPF), explained that poverty is the cause of much injustice. The main reason innocent people are convicted is that they can't afford the kind of legal representation they need.

IPF's mission is to free wrongly-convicted Florida prisoners using DNA. Because only about 10% of all cases involve biological evidence and IPF's resources are limited, they can help very few of the innocent.

DNA testing has been around only about 25 years. One of the

challenges the innocent face is getting the state to test the DNA evidence. Five times over an 8 year period, Florida denied requests from James Bain to test the DNA evidence from the rape for which he was given a life sentence. After IPF took his case, he was exonerated after spending 35 years in prison. Even dealing with IPF, law enforcement has sometimes been uncooperative, denying the existence of evidence or failing to locate it.

Until 2008, exonerated prisoners were not compensated for time served under Florida law. Miller challenged his audience to consider the plight of someone who spent 35

years in prison, who was unable to continue his education, have a career or family — or even qualify for Social Security or Medicare because he didn't pay into the system.

(Continued on page 3)

INSIDE

Membership.....	2
June Calendar	2
President's Column.....	3
Luncheon Details.....	Back Cover

From Your Membership Co-Chairs

Dear Democratic Club Members and Friends,

Increasing membership is an important and necessary part of our organization. Why? Bringing in new members to the Democratic Club of Sarasota means:

- additional funds to conduct Outreach events in our community
- more connections and opportunities to spread our Democratic message and support our candidates.

This past month continued to be a whirlwind of activity for our Club. We supported numerous events — Earth Day, Cinco de Mayo Celebration and Harvey Milk Festival — by sponsoring and staffing booths where we brought the Democratic message to diverse groups. We collaborated with Organizing/Obama for American (OFA) and the Sarasota County Democratic Party (SCDP) on our important Voter Registration and Vote By Mail efforts.

A HUGE thank you goes out to all the volunteers who contributed their time at these events.

We continue to look for Outreach events where we can have a Democratic presence. Please, please, let us know if anything is happening in your area where we could spread our message.

It was also a great pleasure for the Club to host a group of

New College students and Dr. Brooke Butler at our May luncheon. A few years ago, the Club created a special “Student” program funded by special contributions from our members and friends. This program enables us to invite high school and college students to our luncheons at no charge. We also offer those who are eligible free one year memberships in the Club.

We need your help — and donations — to continue this program. Please contribute to the “Student” program so we can continue engaging younger Democrats in the political process.

If you have any questions regarding membership, would like to contribute to the “Student” program, or are aware of Outreach opportunities our Club should participate in, please contact us.

Your Membership Co-Chairs,

JoAnne DeVries: joanne@sarasotadems.com or 320-8825
Georgia Blotzer: georgia@sarasotadems.com

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New & Reinstated Club Members and Friends
(in April)

Dean Dye, Joan Fox, Jay S. Heyman, Judy King-Bechdolt, Mikael Reimbauer, Jeffrey Weinberger

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

This information is presented as a guide only. Please check with the event sponsor to confirm the details surrounding the event. Note: all telephone numbers are 941 Area Code, unless otherwise noted. To request that your event be listed, email Tom Cook at willardcook@mac.com.

DEMOCRATIC CLUB OF SARASOTA EVENTS

9 Jun (Sat): Democratic Club of Sarasota Luncheon

Gene Jones, President of Florida Veterans for Common Sense, will be the featured speaker at a special celebration of the life of *Common Sense* author and Founding Father, Thomas Paine. There will be a special appearance by Paine himself, accompanied by an 18th century bard. (Club elections will also be held if there is a quorum.) The luncheon meeting begins at 11:30 am at the Sarasota Yacht Club, 1100 John Ringling Blvd in Sarasota. **NOTE THE CHANGE OF VENUE FOR JUNE ONLY.** Cost: \$23 for members; \$25 for non-members and walk-ins. Reservations (due by June 6): 379-9233 or reserve@sarasotadems.com

CLUB-SPONSORED OUTREACH EVENTS

2 Jun (Sat): Joyful Noise Music Festival

Democrats will have a booth at this street festival fundraiser for Second Chance Last Opportunity 6:00–11:00 pm on Lemon Avenue in downtown Sarasota. Come visit our booth where we will be doing

Voter Registration and Vote By Mail. Info: 320-8825 or jdv.devries8@gmail.com

OTHER EVENTS

Sarasota-Manatee Democratic Meetups

Democrats Mean Business: www.meetup.com/Sarasota-Democrats-Mean-Business/
Also Search http://democrat.meetup.com

6 Jun (Wed): “Democrats Mean Business” Happy Hour

Come to a business networking event organized by the Sarasota County Democratic Party tentatively scheduled for 5:30–7:00 pm at the Sarasota Vineyard, 1528 Main Street in Sarasota. Confirm details: 904-273-6347 or jayfrankcastle@gmail.com

11 Jun (Mon): Newly Registered Democrats’ Meet & Greet

Sarasota County Democratic Party is hosting this opportunity to meet our leadership team and other volunteers at 5:30–7:00 pm at Party Headquarters,

(Continued on page 3)

President's Column

Dear Members and Friends,

With June approaching, Sarasotans anticipate the quieter summer season. No traffic jams or lines at restaurants, and fewer house guests from up north. But that doesn't mean we are slowing down politically!

As every day brings us closer to the November election, we can't afford to take a vacation. The Democratic Club of Sarasota will continue to participate in outreach events and present programs to keep our members in touch with what's happening on the local, state, and national political scene. Projects we are working on include an event with Senator Nelson, an Obama Birthday Party in August, our 2nd Annual Marina Jack II Luncheon Cruise in October, and the November 6th Victory Party.

And our Club isn't the only busy Democratic group. The Sarasota County Democratic Party headquarters is bustling every day with volunteer activities. So are the Obama for America (OFA) office on the corner of Fruitville and Gillespie and Keith Fitzgerald's campaign office on the Tamiami Trail. Several of us are heading to Tampa on June 1st for an FDP Convention where delegates will be elected for the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte in September. We are hard at work.

Monthly Calendar

(Continued from page 2)

7358 S Tamiami Trail (Coral Cove Mall) in central Sarasota County. Wine and light snacks will be provided. Info: 330-9400

13 Jun (Wed): Sarasota County Democratic Party (SCDP)

The Party will have a Meet & Greet Pizza Party 5:30–7:30 pm, hosted by the North Port Democratic Club, instead of its usual monthly meeting. All of our local candidates are invited to speak at the Morgan Family Community Center, 6207 West Price Blvd in North Port. Info: 275-9195, contact@northportdems.org, or www.northportdems.org.

15 Jun (Fri): SCDP Movie Fundraiser:

"Koch Brothers Exposed" shows how two of the world's richest men, Charles and David Koch, are polluting the environment and bankrolling a vast network of organizations dedicated to serving the interests of large corporations. Shown at 7:00–8:30 pm at SCDP Headquarters, 7358 S Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. Cost: \$10; \$15 for two. Info: 330-9400, headquarters@sarasotadems.org or www.sarasotadems.org/docs/koch-brothers-exposed-15jun12.pdf.

In May we witnessed an historic moment, when President Obama took a stand for gay marriage. Did Joe overstep his bounds once again and talk too much, or was it all strategically planned? We may never know for sure, but we can be proud of the result. Significant change seldom comes without hard-fought battles. Equality for the LGBT community will be no exception. Progressives hope to see it sooner rather than later, but I have no doubt we will see it come.

I was greatly encouraged when I heard that Fox News anchor, Shepherd Smith, praised President Obama saying that the president "is now in the 21st century" and criticized Republicans for being on the "wrong side of history." If we're hearing comments like this from Fox News, then change is **absolutely** inevitable.

We were happy to introduce a new candidate at the May luncheon. John Torracco is running for State Attorney in the 12th Judicial Circuit. This includes Sarasota, Manatee, and DeSoto Counties. We'll be seeing more of John in the next few months and are excited to have another Democrat seeking office.

Thank you for your continued support of the Democratic Club of Sarasota. Our presence truly makes a difference in our community. I look forward to seeing you on June 9th at the Sarasota Yacht Club. It will be a unique luncheon program that you won't want to miss. Consider inviting a friend or neighbor who has never come to one of our events. We are looking forward to a great turnout and want you to be a part of it.

Democratically yours,

Mary

Last Month: Innocence Project's Seth Miller

(Continued from page 1)

Florida denies exonerated prisoners transition services that it provides to guilty prisoners who are released at the end of their sentences. IPF tries to connect their freed clients with needed social services that are free or pro bono.

While in Law School at FSU, Miller was a student intern at IPF. Students are the "lifeblood of what we do," he said. Attending the May luncheon were New College Professor Dr. Brooke Butler and a group of her students who are Innocence Project volunteers.

When asked how Democratic Club members could help IPF, Miller responded that tax-deductible donations are appreciated (FloridaInnocence.org on the web), as are opportunities for him to make people aware of IPF's work.

—Debbie Trice



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**Luncheon at
Sarasota
Yacht Club**

SUSTAINING

- Suzanne Atwell
- Alice & Murray Blueglass
- John Clay
- JoAnne DeVries
- Marcella & Art Levin
- Mary Mc Enery
- Aileen & Bernard Schuman
- Joe Ziomek

MEMBERS



RESERVATIONS:
Call: 379-9233
Email: reserve@sarasotadems.com

Email reservations (only) will receive confirmation.
If no reply, please re-send.

MENU CHOICES:
***** No Substitutions *****

- Chef's Salad
 - Vegetable Primavera Lasagna
- Dessert: Carrot Cake with Cream Cheese Icing
Menu choice NOT guaranteed past noon

DEADLINE:
Wednesday evening, June 6

LATE FEE:
Late cancellations and no-shows will be billed.
Late reservations, if accepted, will be charged \$25.
Walk-ins will be charged \$25, if accommodated.

This Month's Luncheon Meeting

Gene Jones, FL Veterans for Common Sense
A Special Tribute to Thomas Paine & *Common Sense*

Saturday, June 9, 2012
11:30 Social Hour — 12:00 Lunch and Program
(check-in opens at 11:00)

Members: \$23
Non-Members \$25

(Please make out check in advance to DCS and show last names of everyone included in the check)

***** Special Location for June only *****
Sarasota Yacht Club
1100 John Ringling Blvd., Sarasota

Travel Directions:

Take the Ringling Bridge from Downtown Sarasota. Stay in the left lane. Drive over the bridge and past the traffic light for Bird Key. At the next opening, turn left into the Sarasota Yacht Club parking lot. (If you miss this turn, you can make a U-turn at the next traffic light, which is for Plymouth Harbor.)