



# Portage County Democrat

April 2007

Getting Together, Moving Forward

## MESSAGE from our CO-CHAIRS



Dear Friends,

**A**fter the election on April 3, we

Dems will gear up for the 7<sup>th</sup> CD Democratic Convention on April 28 in Marshfield. Because the 7<sup>th</sup> Congressional District is comprised of 17 counties in the northwestern and central part of the state, we consider ourselves very lucky not to have to travel four hours to get to the Convention.

**I**f you are dissatisfied with the direction of our country, consider your own grassroots local party participation as one way to make a change. Politics starts at the local level. Here in Portage County we have opportunities for party members to attend the Convention as delegates. Contact me (Gary) at 321-0111 if you are interested.

At the Convention, we will contribute to the State Party Platform by passing resolutions for the State Platform

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## TRIVIA RETURNS AND SO DO THE DEMOCRATS

**Help celebrate the world's largest trivia contest with the Democratic Party.**

- Friday, April 20<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 pm: Be a part of our presence at the trivia parade.
- Saturday, Apr. 21<sup>st</sup> 6-10 pm: Answer phones with the Portage County Dems at Trivia HQ
- All weekend, Apr. 20<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>, join our trivia team for a weekend of fun.

Contact Corey Ladick ■ [corey@legislator.com](mailto:corey@legislator.com) ■ 344-2724

Resolution Committee to consider, revise, and present to the State delegates for affirmation. Delegates to the 7<sup>th</sup> CD are also delegates to this (the State) Convention in Milwaukee June 29-30.

We can help set up car pools to both of these conventions for those interested in attending. Remember, the effectiveness of a democracy is proportional to the involvement of its citizens!

**A**lso, we're delighted to announce that our Party has a new Web Site! A big "thanks" to the members of the Communications Committee, especially Collene Ottum, for their efforts. Check out our "new site" on the Internet by going to: [www.PortageCountyDems.org](http://www.PortageCountyDems.org)

Finally, you won't want to miss our next General Meeting — our Annual Member Appreciation Event, including hors d'oeuvres, refreshments, and an excellent presentation by Karl S. Pnizek from CAP Services.

See you on April 10<sup>th</sup>!

*Gary Hawley Lois Lawler*

Gary Hawley Lois Lawler  
Co-Chairs, Portage County Democratic Party

## Inside this issue...

page 5 —

**State Senator Julie Lassa** shares with us why she supports **Wisconsin Families First** agenda.

*"I think it's time more of our political leaders show that they truly value families..."*



# Resolutions

As part of the grassroots process of developing the Wisconsin Democratic Party Platform, we are creating a set of 10 resolutions to be sent on to the 7th Congressional District (7<sup>th</sup> CD).

Below are the resolutions from which we will choose the ten that will go to the 7<sup>th</sup> CD Convention.

- R01. Establish Universal Health Care
- R02. Effectively Improve Homeland Security
- R03. Enable Employees to Organize
- R04. Preserve The Peace
- R05. Foster Renewable Energy
- R06. Support Public K-12 Schools
- R07. Assure Honest Elections
- R08. Balance Taxation Laws
- R09. Support Reproductive Rights
- R10. Protect Social Security and Medicare
- R11. Eliminate Subsidies for Outsourcing
- R12. Reform Campaign Finance
- R13. Regulate Payday Loan Profits

Come to the April 10<sup>th</sup> General Meeting and vote for the 10 Resolutions you want sent on to the 7<sup>th</sup> CD Convention in Marshfield on April 28, 2007.

Also, if you would like to be a delegate at the 7<sup>th</sup> CD Convention, please let me or Gary Hawley know. Rides can be arranged.

— Lois Lawler  
Co-Chair of PCDP



**SPRING ELECTIONS are  
Tuesday, April 3, 2007.**

Remember to VOTE !



### **From the Editor —**

We want to hear from YOU. If you have something you would like included in a future newsletter, contact me at [cfgge@charter.net](mailto:cfgge@charter.net) or call 345-1371.

The due date for sending items for our May issue is April 20<sup>th</sup>.

— Charlene Figge

## Calendar

2007

- Sun, Apr 1 Resolutions Meeting: 1:00 p.m. at the Library
- Mon, Apr 2 **Executive Board Meeting** at the Court House Building, 1515 Strongs Ave., at 6:30 p.m.
- Tues, Apr 3 **Election Day...** Remember to VOTE!
- Wed, Apr 4 Conversation with **Congressman Dave Obey** at the Lincoln Center, 1519 Water St., 3-4 p.m.
- Tues, April 10 **General Meeting** at Little Chubbies (Former Blue Top) at 7:00 p.m.
  - **Membership Appreciation Event** (hors d'ouerves and drinks)
  - General Meeting/Updates from Officials
  - TOPIC: "*Public Policies Gone Wild-Failure of Common Sense*" a presentation by Karl Pnazek, President/CEO of CAP Services, Inc
- Tues, May 1 **Executive Board Meeting** at the City County Building, 1515 Strongs Ave., at 6:30 p.m.
- Tues, May 8 **General Meeting** at Little Chubbies (Former Blue Top) at 7:00 p.m.
  - General Meeting/Updates from Officials
  - Presentation by Jo Seiser, newly appointed Executive Director of the North Central Conservancy Trust

**Molly Ivens**, newspaper columnist, political commentator and best-selling author, passed away January 31, 2007. Occasionally, in her memory, we will publish one of her quotes.

**"Maybe we should add a rule that we can't invade any country the President can't pronounce."**

— Molly Ivens, from June 2001 issue of *The Progressive*

### *Public Forum*

## **Global Warming/Peak Oil**

April 25 at 6:30 p.m.

Portage County Public Library  
Pinery Room

Concerns about energy and resource availability and use lead us to re-examine the ways in which we plan our communities.

### Featuring Presentations by:

- UWSP Center for Land Use Education director, **Anna Haines**
- Former UWSP CNR Dean, **Alan Haney**
- Environmental educator, **Jeremy Solin**
- ... and more

*Sponsored by Concerned Citizens of Stevens Point and others.*

*Mr. Jim Vang, former refugee and currently the Coordinator for Hmong Programs at CAP Services, Inc., was Guest Presenter at our March 13, 2007 General Meeting. Below is information on a handout he shared with participants at the meeting.*



## A Brief Hmong History

### Where did the Hmong originally come from?

The Hmong had lived in China for centuries. In the nineteenth century, unresolvable issues between the Hmong and the Chinese led to

numerous battles from 1800-1900. After the Hmong resistance failed, they migrated to Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, and Burma.

### Life in Laos

The Hmong resettled on the beautiful mountains of northern Laos. They enjoyed their peaceful lives of farming and raising animals, and hoped to continue that lifestyle for many more generations.

### Why did the Hmong come to the United States?

In the early 1960s, the American CIA came to Laos, seeking help from the Hmong in the Vietnam war. A young man named Vang Pao was asked to recruit his people and assist the Americans. The CIA promised to build schools, clinics, hospitals, provide running water, electricity and other benefits for the Hmong if the war was won. If the war was lost, the Hmong would be taken to the United States for safety, away from the communist retaliation for siding with the Americans. Mr. Vang Pao agreed to the conditions and signed the contract.

Mr. Vang Pao recruited thousands of Hmong men to fight North Vietnam. Every Hmong man aged 12 and older was recruited to join the secret army for the CIA. From 1960 to 1975 an estimated 40,000 Hmong men died from the fighting. Thousands of civilians also died from enemy attacks.

After losing the Vietnam war, the CIA and General Vang Pao left Laos, but the North Vietnamese continued punishing and killing the remaining Hmong involved with the CIA. After the war, from 1975 to 1985, an estimated 75,000 Hmong died at the hands of the communists. Some died from chemical poisoning, some died from starvation, and some were killed on the way to the refugee camps in Thailand.

Of the Hmong escaping to Thailand, only 50% actually made it to the refugee camps. Hundreds of thousands of Hmong people arrived in the refugee camps. In 1992 the United Nations decided to close the refugee camps and the remaining refugees had to resettle elsewhere. Thousands immigrated to the United States, France, Canada, Australia, and Argentina. Some returned to Laos; others settled in Thai villages and thousands went to the Buddha temple and have lived there from 1992 to 2004. The 15,000 Hmong in the Buddha temple had an opportunity to come to the United States between June 2004 and September 2005.

144 of the 15,000 Hmong have arrived in Portage County between June 2004 and September 2005.



This past month, Saul Newton and I attended the College Democrat of Wisconsin Convention held in Eau Claire. State Rep. Jeff Smith talked at the event, keying in on local issues. The new board was voted in for the next school year as well. And as with any College Democrat Event, Saul and I got turned around leaving Eau Claire, and found ourselves in the middle of a detour (see Iowa Democratic Caucus trip). Fortunately, I was able to interpret a map correctly for the first time, and after weaving off on some county roads, we were again on the main highways and eventually found ourselves back in Point.

As we are in a rebuilding year, we held a movie night in hopes of bringing in new members. The movie shown was "Iraq for Sale," a Robert Greenwald film. We did our biggest promotion blitz of the semester and brought in twenty people, pleasing both Saul and myself. A few that attended were even interested in board positions for next year. As this event was held on March 15th, it left us with a feeling of hope on entering Spring Break. Our next event, our Spring Break trip to Washington D.C., will be reported on in some length in due time.

Michael E Baumann  
UWSP College Democrat Chairman

### Items Needed for Auction at the Portage County Democratic Party Picnic Sunday, August 26th

As you do your spring cleaning, keep the Portage County Democratic Party in mind for those "white elephant" items (i.e., an item that has value but that you no longer want) for our auction.

Don't wait till the last moment as it gets quite busy right before the picnic. Help us help *you* clean out the unwanted, but useful, stuff from your house, garage or basement. The Democratic Party needs your items to make our auction and picnic a success!

Arrange for a donation pickup or dropoff. Call either Wes Halverson (344-6877) or Will Stites (345-7065).

### NEW PCDP WEB SITE

Thanks to **Collene Ottum** for setting up a new Web Site for the Party. Please check out this site by going to:

[www.PortageCountyDems.org](http://www.PortageCountyDems.org)

Let us know what you think.



*This is the third in our Interview Series: Meet Portage County Democratic Party Leaders. Each month we'll focus on members of our PCDP Executive Board or other County Dems. Our March issue focuses on Executive Board Member, Carol Gawlik, PCDP Secretary.*

***PCDP: Carol, what is your background with the Democratic Party?***

My family was always Democratic, and I followed right along. I didn't decide to become a registered Democrat until about 5 years ago when I decided I had just about had enough of Bush's policies. I vowed to join the party and try in any way I could to dislodge them and install a Democratic leadership. While I am not aggressive and more comfortable behind the scenes, I feel any small thing I do will ultimately help the working class achieve a better share of the pie, a better standard of living.

***PCDP: Please share some of your personal background.***

I am a Portage County native who grew up in a working-class family. My dad was a Railroad man for 50 years, raising five kids in Stevens Point. I'm married with two children, and four grandchildren. I worked for 22 years as a secretary in a vet clinic, part time, and my husband, Louie, is a retired pipefitter, working at Consolidated for 40 years. Our son Dale is a college professor in West Palm Beach, his wife Robin is an oncology nurse, and they have two daughters. Our daughter Sue lives near the Eau Pleine and is a veterinary technician. Her husband is a fraud investigator at Sentry and they have two teenage sons. I have my own horse I keep out there with her horse and do a lot of riding, 12 months out of the year.



***PCDP: Other than politics, what are your interests?***

Anything outdoors!!!! I have my own Kawasaki motorcycle, and use it a lot during the summer. And we bicycle extensively, using the Green circle bike trail and biking all around the county. I am an avid bow and gun deer hunter, and we use the 200 acres we own in Buena Vista for that. Also, managing that land, forestry, wildlife habitat protection, stream improvement, etc. takes much time. We cross-country ski almost daily in winter and in addition spend several weeks in Wyoming and Montana snowmobiling the national forests in February. We also take 2-week camping trips to the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming in the summer to help friends out with ranch work and

just enjoy the breathtaking scenery. April finds us in Florida for 6 weeks, deep-sea fishing and helping out our son and family for awhile. (My biggest trophy was a 7 1/2 foot sailfish I had to release... Louie wouldn't let the big thing in the boat!)

***PCDP: What are your hopes for the Portage County Democratic Party?***

I am hopeful that the current Democratic movement will snowball and include many disenchanting Republicans, to help get this country on track. There are many good people in the party, many right here in Wisconsin, that are accomplishing worthwhile goals.

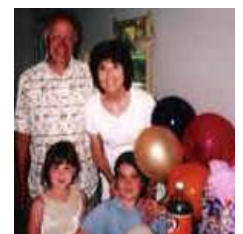
People like Julie and Louie and Amy Sue are making a real difference. The PCDP will continue to provide a platform for, and much support of, these candidates. We have so much talent now in the party; compared to when I joined five years ago; we have had a virtual flood of new and eager people, willing to put in time and effort to ensure these politicians continue to produce good legislation.



***PCDP: What else would you like us to know about you; what else would you like to share?***

I enjoy taking classes. My latest one was stained glass. I also enjoy our outdoor activities with our grandsons; we have taken them camping to Wyoming several times, and enjoy seeing the world through their fresh, young eyes. I have enjoyed the activities connected with the PCDP through the years, and especially the wonderful, dedicated people I have met there.

I hope to continue in this worthy organization in one way or another, for a long time. ■



# Consumer Protections Put Families First

by State Senator Julie Lassa

We often hear elected officials talk about “family values.” I think it’s time more of our political leaders show that they truly value families, by enacting policies that protect working families from unfair business practices and help them build a strong foundation for the future.

To that end, I’m pleased to support the **Wisconsin Families First agenda** which includes a series of initiatives to help the legislature focus its priorities on the real needs of Wisconsin’s middle class.

A key aspect of **Wisconsin Families First** is a series of consumer protection legislation to end practices that hit families in the pocketbook and invade their privacy.

Wisconsin’s popular “Do Not Call” list protects consumers from unwanted telephone solicitation. But there are whole categories of consumers who are currently unprotected—including the growing number of people who use cell phones. It’s bad enough to be hassled by a sales call you don’t want to receive; it’s even worse when you’re paying for the call, which is often the case with cell phone plans. A new bill will extend “Do Not Call” protection to cell phone users. The bill also lets small business phone customers request inclusion in the “Do Not Call” directory, and makes it easier for other non-residential phone customers to avoid unwanted telephone and fax solicitations.

Currently, a violation of the “Do Not Call” law brings a fine of not more than \$100. That’s not nearly enough to deter violators, which is one reason that complaints about “Do Not Call” violations are on the rise. The new bill will increase the penalty for violations to between \$1,000 and \$10,000. And individuals who suffer damages as a result of a violation will be permitted to seek an injunction against the violator or sue for damages of up to \$500 per violation. These provisions will put teeth into the “Do Not Call” law and provide a real deterrent to telemarketers who are ignoring it.

Another area that we are turning our attention to is the “payday loan” industry. These lenders offer easy credit—anyone with a job can post-date a check as collateral for a short-term loan. For cash-strapped families, payday lenders appear to offer a way to make it from one paycheck to the next. But by charging extraordinarily high interest rates, many borrowers are pulled into a spiral of debt. Shockingly,

Wisconsin families borrowed more than \$640 million in 2005 from these storefront lenders.

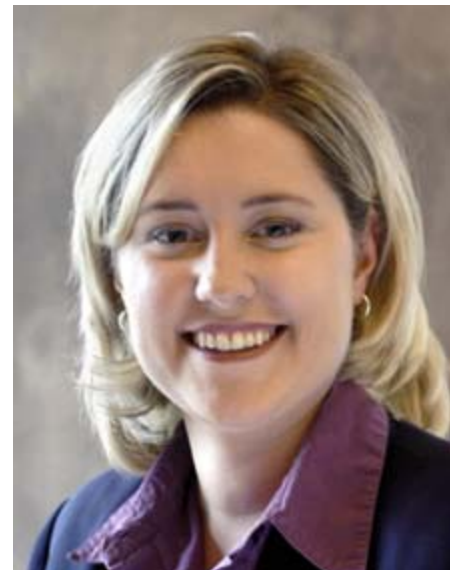
This session, I will support legislation to regulate this industry and put an end to predatory lending practices.

Privacy protection has become a growing concern. Many of us use tax preparation services; but while we enjoy the convenience and savings tax services offer, few people are aware that the personal information they provide to the preparer is not protected. The fine print in many tax service contracts permits the preparer to share and sell your information to third parties: When you sign your return, you’re signing your privacy away.

New legislation I will support will protect consumer privacy by requiring tax preparation services to disclose the third parties they intend to share personal information with; customers must approve those disclosures in writing. This kind of informed consent will protect privacy and give consumers more control over their personal information.

Email spam is another growing invasion of privacy. There’s not much that state government can do to stop spam—but we can avoid being part of the problem. For instance, the DNR provides a listserve that consumers can sign up for when they apply for hunting and fishing licenses.

Although consumers can request that other information they provide on a license application be kept private, the email address they provide for the listserve is not exempt from the state’s open records law. This session, we propose to change the law so that email addresses on the DNR listserve will be protected. There’s no reason that the state should leave your email address open to potential abuse by spammers.



With these and other proposals, the **Wisconsin Families First** initiative will take important steps to fulfill government’s most important role: defending the families that are the cornerstone of our society. To me, that’s what real family values are all about.

**Portage County Democratic Party**  
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**Mark your Calendar**  
**General Meeting — Apr. 10, 2007**  
*Membership Appreciation Event*



**Democratic Party**  
**APRIL**  
**General Meeting**

**Date:** Tuesday, April 10, 2007  
**Time:** 7:00 p.m.  
**Location:** *“Little Chubbies Vintage Blues and Chop House”* (formerly known as the Blue Top)  
3425 Church Street, Stevens Point  
**Speaker:** **Karl S. Pnazek**  
**President/CEO of Cap Services, Inc.**  
**Topic:** In his presentation, **“Public Policies Gone Wild — Failure of Common Sense,”** Mr. Pnazek will speak on the increasing disconnect between common sense and public policy at the federal, state, and local levels.

**Karl S. Pnazek** is a 1971 graduate of the University of Illinois and has lived in Stevens Point since 1976. Since moving to Stevens Point he has been President/CEO of CAP Services, Inc. Under Mr. Pnazek's leadership, CAP has developed a national reputation as an innovator in developing human and community development programs designed to assist low-income households attain economic and emotional self-sufficiency.

Mr. Pnazek also has a wide spectrum of experience outside of CAP. He has testified numerous times before Congress and the WI Legislature.



**Open to the Public.**  
**Join us!**