



# The Lancaster County Democrat

November 2013



**Lincoln City Council President Carl Eskridge Wins the Inaugural “Being the Change” award.**

Lancaster County Democratic Party Chair John Yoakum (left) congratulates City Council President Carl Eskridge (right) for being the first recipient of the “Being the Change Award” during the LGBT History Month Banquet on October 17, 2013. Councilman Eskridge received the award for his work toward ending discrimination in Lincoln.

The annual History Month Dinner is one of many programs hosted by the LGBTQA Resource Center at UNL. This year marks the 11th annual dinner celebration for the UNL and Lincoln LGBTQA Community. To learn more about the Resource Center, go to <http://involved.unl.edu/lgbtqa-101>.

The Lancaster County Democratic Party is proud of the work of Councilman Eskridge and proud to be a sponsor of this event.

***Memories of the Lancaster County Democratic Party***  
***By Marlene Cupp***

My husband Bob and I walked into the Malone Center and were greeted by Coleen Seng<sup>i</sup> who was selling tickets for a spaghetti feed sponsored by the Lancaster County Democrats. We had moved out to Lexington, Nebraska, and I had become involved in the Dawson County Democrats in 1976 and helped organize a terrific county party out there. Then I became involved in state Democratic politics. Lancaster County had become the template for county parties in Nebraska at that time. It was big, it was strong and it elected Democrats—and in Nebraska that is quite an achievement! I was excited to learn more about Lancaster Democrats so we drove to Lincoln for the annual Spaghetti Feed. We met all these friendly and enthusiastic folks and thus began what has been one of my most cherished relationships.

We moved to Lincoln when I was hired as Executive Director of the State Democratic Party and I got to know Lancaster County Democrats even better. Here was this very politically successful group right on the doorstep of the State Party offices. However, my reception by Tim Rinne, the County Coordinator at the time, wasn't very warm—in fact, it was downright cool. I learned that there had not been a very good relationship between the county and state parties up to that time and decided that was going to change. Democrats in Nebraska cannot and should not squander any resources and I wasn't about to ignore the treasure of the Lancaster County Democrats while I was in charge of the state party. I was the First Associate Chair of the state party and Chairman of the County Chairs Association at that time, so I was well aware of the assets and liabilities of the state party and we needed every bit of help we could get if we were to elect Bob Kerrey to the Senate.

Ken Haar was Chair of the Lancaster County Democrats at that time and the office was in an old building on 11th Street. Tim Rinne's office was in a dungeon of a basement in that building. The Central Committee meetings were held in one of the upstairs rooms. The meetings were very open and intense at times. People felt strongly about issues and ideas and that led to heated discussions. David Hunter<sup>ii</sup> was involved actively at that time and had strong opinions. Since he donated a lot of money to the party he assumed he had more power than other folks and, of course, that led to “extraordinary” discussions.

The party recruited, trained and supported candidates and was innovative in many ways. Doorknob hangers that volunteers left at houses as they canvassed neighborhoods at election time became a hallmark of the Lancaster County Democrats. Ken Haar and Tim Rinne researched voter records to pinpoint Democratic precincts for candidates to garner Democratic votes. This was years before the practice became the norm for elections. Voter turnout was another important element as far as the Lancaster County Democrats were concerned and that push for turnout remains to this day.

Another strong element of the county party was yard signs. Frank Eman and the unions put the signs together and then set them out. Herb Schimek did the research to know where the signs would be welcome, legal and most effective.

Beatty Brasch was the Lancaster County Election Commissioner at that time and had published a wonderful booklet about the legal aspects of voting. That guide was a valuable asset to County Chairs. DiAnna Schimek was the Chairman of the Nebraska Democratic Party and she crisscrossed the state educating Democrats about how to organize and how to elect Democrats. DiAnna and I met in Kearney when she hosted one these organizational meetings and a treasured friendship grew out of that long ago meeting.

One of the Lancaster County Party traditions that I especially endorse is the annual Patriots' Dinner where local Democrats are recognized for their contributions to the county party. The value of volunteers is the basic tenet of the Lancaster County Democratic Party and the Patriots' Dinner is the night when those valuable members are recognized. Awards are given to volunteers, young Democrats and to Patriots—those special members who served above and beyond duty. It is an important dinner. The financial contribution to the county party by auctioning political memorabilia as well as cakes and other desserts prepared by candidates has become a tradition at the dinners.

The Lancaster County Democratic Party's success can be attributed to several qualities but the core

***Marlene Cupp – Continued from page 2***

membership's value and commitment are the strongest elements. Volunteers from this core membership were and are the lifeblood of the county party. That membership has elected leaders who match the values and the commitment of the membership. Leaders such as Patty Hanson, Ken Haar, Barbara Steinheider, Mike Donlan, Justin Carlson, Becki Gaston-Wise, John Yoakum and all others have had the exciting experience of leading this outstanding Democratic Party in Lancaster County.

The Lancaster County Democratic Party has been a very important part of my political life experiences and has garnered for me some treasured personal friendships. It is wonderful to feel so comfortable with a group of folks who share your ideas, values and dreams and will work so hard to achieve shared goals. I am fortunate that I have had the opportunity to be a part of such a glorious group. I am sure that the history of this remarkable political group strikes many members in the same way and I hope that you will share your memories and experiences with the History Committee. Who knows—there might be a book here!

<sup>i</sup>Coleen Seng was Lincoln's Mayor from May 19, 2003-May 19, 2007.

<sup>ii</sup>At the time, David Hunter was a prominent Lincoln businessman.

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***Is Timing Everything? Is There a Season for All Things? Is There Anything New Under the Sun?***  
**by Rick Boucher**

The last weekend before the election is usually reserved for Get Out the Vote when the effort kicks into high gear. Does it need to start earlier? Should we make a modest contact or connection—by e-mail if we can—with registered Democrats across the State to see what's necessary to get them to vote in the primary and general: a single phone call, one e-mail, campaign information?

Voters who stay home tend to lean Democratic. Volunteers are encouraged when they know adequate resources are there for a viable campaign. They are discouraged if financial resources are scarce.

How and when do we begin the push for the 2014 general election? We know key volunteers are needed in every corner of Nebraska working ninety (90) minutes a day (i.e. some calls, some e-mails, talking it up at the local bakery or coffee shop) so that support translates to votes on Election Day. Are contributors and volunteers waiting to be asked to help or told they are needed? Admittedly, getting a person to vote may require a neighbor talking to them one-on-one. Do the County or State Parties need more resources to organize the volunteers? Is the generosity of supporters now dependent on knowing a game plan is in place to elect Chuck or Annette in November 2014?

I know the primary election is next year. It's football season now. Basketball follows and before you know it: March Madness. But the primary is around the corner. We need a handful of volunteers now and we need a \$12,500 budget to lay the groundwork to win in November 2014.

To finish strong in November, we need to get Chuck and Annette supporters to the poll. The foundation for GOTV is now.

"I recall my Sunday school lesson: God created the world and on the seventh day, he/she rested. I think it went on to say that on the eighth day, seeing the earth lacked wisdom and compassion, he/she sprinkled a few Democrats around the U.S. and some landed in Nebraska."

— Bob Hans

## ANNOUNCING THE NEW HISTORY COMMITTEE

Have you ever wondered how and why the Lancaster Democratic County Party began? Do you remember when . . . ? Do you have stories and anecdotes to share? Then the new Lancaster County Democratic Party History Committee is the place for you.

OK, you don't have to attend yet another meeting if you don't want to, but we'll welcome you enthusiastically if you do. Our next meeting is Tuesday, February 25, 2014, 7:00 p.m. at the County Party office, 2215 C Street.

Even if you can't attend a meeting, please send us your ideas and names of people you think we should reach along with contact information if possible. What we want is your knowledge and remembrances. We will publish them in the Newsletter as a regular monthly feature and later compile them into something lasting yet to be determined. To begin, read Marlene Cupp's article in this issue.

You might consider what issues were paramount. How were they resolved and what part did we play? The Lancaster Democratic County Party's heritage and accomplishments are worth preserving. Don't be surprised if we contact you because we have a fairly long list of fascinating past and present activists we'd love to interview.

Please contact us:

Jean Sanders, [jsanders@neb.rr.com](mailto:jsanders@neb.rr.com)

Marlene Cupp, [rc34712@windstream.net](mailto:rc34712@windstream.net)

Co-chairs



### *From the Chair*

*By County Party Chair John Yoakum*

As a Fire Chief I used to recruit volunteers to run into burning buildings. It was easy after teaching about working as a team. They understood that as a team they could do more.

Think of the Lancaster County Democratic Party as a team. You can do your part. As a kid I helped my mom walk precincts. As a young father we covered precincts with our sons. When our sons were older I started attending the central committee meetings and helped with some committees. Then I became Associate Chair and now serve as your Chair.

There are many small roles and some larger roles that the party needs to have filled. There are small roles like helping find yard sign locations or helping with parades and larger roles like organizing your neighborhood as President Obama did in his younger years.

We are the big tent party for a reason. We know that the more teammates you have the stronger you are.

Step up! We are on the move. Help us become even more active in making Lancaster County Democratic Party the best it can be.

John Yoakum, Chair

Lancaster County Democratic Party

## *The Global Context*

*By Bob Haller*

Why should Lancaster County Democrats be engaged with global policies?

The County Party, of course, focuses on county issues and the immediate Nebraska context. But the deeper our attention grows into these local issues, the more we see them in a global context.

The city of Lincoln, we know, is a center for Refugee resettlement.

Our centrality started when the Vietnamese came here after our country ended its fruitless attempt to stop the Viet Cong. The Vietnamese have been followed more recently by Somalis, Sudanese, Iraqis, Hmong, Russians and smaller contingents from other countries. We can rightly be proud of the way that Lincoln has accepted these newcomers, through state and county agencies, by such cooperative groups as the New American Task Force, through the churches, and by individuals. We can be pleased to see how cosmopolitan our city has become and happily note how local groups have been organized by these internationals.

The arrival of refugees is, however, not a natural phenomenon like the appearance of spring flowers or the return of the Sandhill Cranes. Refugees are created by events around the world. For the past two years, for instance, the civil war in Syria has produced what we hear are more than 2,000,000 refugees, spilling over into Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq and elsewhere, and some 5,000,000 others requiring humanitarian aid. We will doubtless see some of them coming to Lincoln.

Thus, we owe a great deal to the United Nations and its High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The UNHCR has learned the hard way how to care for refugees. We can see pictures of the huge refugee camps, and read stories about the community life that develops within these camps: children are educated, families are reunited, small businesses assure the availability of necessary goods, news is disseminated, and life has some semblance of normality. The UNHCR organizes the international effort to supply tents, food and water, and to carry out an orderly process of identification and relocation.

We in Lincoln thus come to realize our obligation to support this Agency of the UN and its NGO<sup>iii</sup> friends such as the International Rescue Committee, and to acknowledge our obligation to make certain that our Congress allocates our country's share to the humanitarian effort. However much we appreciate the cultural richness refugees bring to our community life, we need to recognize how important it is to influence our country's foreign policy, so that we do not initiate adventures in foreign lands where those who assist us become *personae non gratae* to their own countrymen.

We in Lincoln also have come to appreciate and welcome the other foreign-born who are not refugees, especially those from our own hemisphere (and in smaller numbers from other impoverished parts of the world) who primarily seek a quality of life which they had been unable to find in the country of their birth.

We know that not all of these seekers are here legally, and we are currently arguing among ourselves as to how to solve the "problem" with our immigration laws, which leads to the presence of the "undocumented" regarded by many as criminals or dependents doing us harm. "Reform" focuses on how to deal with those already in the country too numerous to deport and how to lock out the hordes along our southern border. Seldom does the discussion question the justice and advantages to our country of our immigration policies that create the "undocumented" nor does it address fact that our own policies have a world context.

The United States signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR),<sup>iv</sup> recognizing in it an extension of our own founding "self-evident" truth that governments are formed to "secure the inalienable rights" of human persons. Of persons, not just citizens, which includes the "undocumented" in our country.

Article 13 of the UDHR, asserting the right of everyone to free movement and residence within the border of each state, and the right to leave and return to his or her country, by implication grants to every sovereign nation

the freedom to establish its own legal conditions on those who come to the country, whether for tourism, study, work, long-term residence or a path to citizenship.

Article 2 asserts that “everyone” is “entitled to all the rights and freedoms” in the Declaration, and Article 6 says that everyone is entitled to be recognized as “a person before the law.” A convicted criminal has been granted this recognition, but persons who have done no harm cannot simply be left standing outside of the law. We in the U.S. undermine our founding principles when we discuss the issue as if we had not learned from Standing Bear,<sup>v</sup> among others, that our denial of personhood to anyone is a betrayal of our underlying values.

Beyond the question of what rights belong to the “undocumented,” the presence of these persons in our country impacts our relationships with those countries from which they emigrated without the correct papers. With respect to Mexico, for instance, we have to ask how our “war against drugs” affects life within that country, how our creation of open markets impacts the workers and farmers of that country as well as our own, how our inattention to our neighbors while we pursue entanglements in the Middle East or South China Seas means that ways working with our neighbors hardly comes onto our radar screen.

Of course there is the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), passed with much fanfare and still in effect. The problem with such treaties is that they isolate the “market” from other media of exchange, lower customs barriers with the only other considerations being that those practices unfairly affect competition. But suppose we were to reframe this treaty, taking as its object the creation of a North American community of nations where the three signatories had as their shared mission the creation of equal dignity and equal access to all the elements belonging to that dignity for all citizens? We take it for granted that Canadians are, on the whole, our economic equals, and find it only a minor inconvenience to hire a Canadian. And we accept as the right outcome of the treaty the fact that Mexico exports to us much more than we export to them, because that excess includes the goods their lower levels of compensation makes cheaper for us.

In fact, we don’t need a new treaty to start on a new path. Remember the Organization of American States? Its mission is to promote Democracy, Defend Human Rights, ensure a multidimensional Approach to Security, Foster Integral Development and Prosperity and support inter-American legal cooperation. Go to its website, <http://www.oas.org/en/default.asp> and you will see that it is busy in all of these directions, but not in any way that seems to be reflected in media reports of U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. has regularly gone to the OAS to veto Cuban membership and dismiss the carping complaints from those nations whose leaders gain popularity by objecting to U.S. dominating interference in hemisphere affairs, but in fact it has the potential to raise the quality of life for our neighbors—and ourselves.

Seeing the global implications of local conditions and issues leads us to understand that our parochial squabbles as well as our local self-congratulations—we are the “middle of everywhere,” we say (thanks to psychologist and author Mary Pipher)—can mask the fact that world conditions require us to look at our own core values and see in them, as taken over by the world, the means to deal with our own problems and, in turn, to create a world in which we can be at peace without a huge military complex and prosper without simply contributing to world and national inequality. To some degree, many parts of the world have taken our principles and built on them while we are distracted from them into thinking that our own little world does not need them.

<sup>iii</sup> The NGO Branch of the United Nations Department Economic and Social Affairs “is the focal point within the United Nations for Non-Governmental Organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and NGOs seeking status.” For more information see <http://esango.un.org/paperless/Web>.

<sup>iv</sup> To read the entire Declaration, go to <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>.

<sup>v</sup> Prior to 1879, the U.S. government had not treated Native Americans as citizens or “people” under the law. Ponca tribesman Standing Bear disputed this status and won during a landmark case that was argued before the U.S. District Court.

## **What's in the Cards for the Candidates?**

**By Rick Boucher**

Best wishes for the holiday season! The holidays can be special if approached with a generous heart, kindness and simplicity.

Will the money primary happen as 2013 ends? Will a candidate for Senate or Governor lose before a single vote is cast? When a candidate proclaims, "Count me in. I have received tremendous support," do you wonder if the "support" is a handshake, encouragement, or financial support? Yes, money is not the end all or be all, even after the Supreme Court's opinion in Citizens United.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the race to succeed Senator Bill Avery in District 28 could exceed a million dollars.

In 2010, the longtime Republican Lancaster County Attorney decided to retire. Although no Democrat had ever been elected or appointed Lancaster County Attorney County, I gave it a go and tallied more than 25,000 votes in the general election. I had a wonderful time campaigning, a curiosity—now satisfied—about polling results that show the gap cannot be covered due to robocalls, media buys, signs, fundraising, the dynamic of messaging, campaign candor (aka negative ads and more). No regrets, except not winning. Would I do anything different? Of course, but hindsight is always 20/20 with laser-like accuracy.

A statewide candidate with a winning smile, a splendid message, but without adequate funds, is probably heading home. On the Republican side for Senate and Governor, it will be challenging to raise enough money when there are so many ambitious people running. It is difficult for donors, too, who want to help future officeholders more than they want to help good candidates who will likely lose in the primary. A donor can always sign up later, after the primary, when candidates are trying to stockpile cash for the general election.

Candidates must vie for attention, trying to make sure their names appear in the weekly news cycle and throw their elbows so donors will think them strong enough to merit support or to make a contributor reconsider before backing someone else. When do the candidates have to show their hands (cash) again?

The general public will not know how the candidates are doing financially until the mandatory disclosure deadline. Will it be too late for some candidates to change their minds and switch races? All the candidates will try to show they're ahead in other ways—crowds, Facebook friends, Twitter followers, YouTube, town hall appearances, neighborhood coffees—not only to secure votes, but to move the contributor class to write another check or another PayPal transaction with Facebook notoriety.

Let's hope voters and donors are so interested in the race for Governor that Chuck Hassebrook and Annette Dubas both have enough money to run a good primary campaign that will carry over into the general election. At that point, Democrats need to pull out all the stops for our candidate by way of money, volunteering and doing something each day to advance the cause of good, just and fair government. Daily we need to ask friends, family, co-workers and others, "Who do you like in the governor's race?" or "Are you curious about who I like in the governor's race?" just to keep the conversation going.

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<sup>1</sup>For more information, go to <http://www.publicintegrity.org/2012/10/18/11527/citizens-united-decision-and-why-it-matters>



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