



YosemiteDems.net

**The Mountain Democrat
Newsletter Editor
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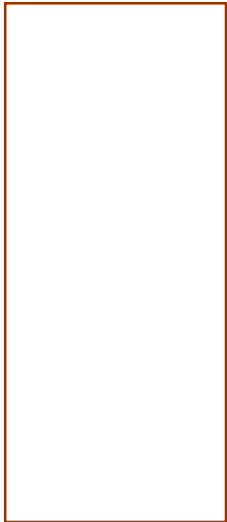


The Mountain Democrat

April - May 2007

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The Mountain Democrat is published bimonthly by the Democratic Clubs of Eastern Madera and Mariposa Counties which are affiliated with the California Democratic Council, and is distributed to all current members of those clubs. For a membership application see the inside back cover of this newsletter.

COMING EVENTS

April 2007

Apr 7: Oakhurst Club Meeting

Apr 14: Mariposa Club Meeting

May 2007

May 5: Oakhurst Club Meeting

May 12 Mariposa Club Meeting

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For more information about our Democratic Clubs and Democratic happenings around the state and nation open your trusty web browser and visit our web page at:

YosemiteDems.net



Alex Gisler
Winner of the 2007
Thomas Jefferson Service Award

CDC Report

By Jerry Lacayo

The keynote speaker at the Mariposa County Annual Dinner, Henry Vandermeir, spoke at some length about the importance of our INVOLVEMENT as we attempt to influence the directions and priorities of our government. Picking up where he left off I'd like to talk a bit about the value of participation in statewide organizations such as the California State Democratic Party and the California Democratic Council. I think many Democratic Club members either are not clear on the differences between the two organizations or are largely unaware of their importance, and, in some cases, their existence.

The California State Party convention will be held in San Diego on the last weekend in April. Both the Madera and Mariposa County Central Committees will be represented there. County Central Committees are the legal and official arm of the State Party in each respective county. Central Committees are charged with providing a voice and face for Democrats within the county. There is a lot of activity right now in the rural areas and I expect to see several resolutions submitted to insist that the State Party provide more support in the form of training and financial assistance to the rural counties.

Last year, Mariposa received money from the State Party which was used to help fund our slate mailer. We were part of a pilot program which included only 5 counties in the state. Our involvement will ensure that we remain a part of any future funds to be distributed. We will never achieve the recognition, support and other changes needed from the State Party from the outside. It is necessary and important that we attend, speak and participate. Until our Democratic Party leaders get to know us, learn from us, and begin to understand the unique problems we face in these very rural and very red counties, they will remain unable to serve our needs. Let us thank those delegates heading for San Diego and wish them well.

CDC Report (Continued)

The primary function of the California Democratic Council is to provide a network for all the Democratic Clubs within the State. The council promotes the growth of clubs and hopes to develop new clubs in areas which are not currently served by a Democratic club. The CDC convention will be held in August this year in the Los Angeles area. Each club in our area will be entitled to send delegates based on the size of the club. This will be an important convention and I hope that many of you will plan your schedule to attend. We may be entitled to 20 votes, but if we only send three people, we will exercise only three votes. The future of CDC will have a lot to do with the success of the club movement within California. The success of the club movement will greatly impact the success of the Democratic Party in working to insure that California remains a blue state.

More and more areas of this state are turning red. It is one thing for our county to be red, while we live in a blue state, but we could find ourselves living in a red county in a red state. CDC has a long and proud history of fighting for US, our issues, our security.

Out of each new club that succeeds will come several new activists. When we build 100 new clubs, we will have developed at least 500 new activists. Please check your calendar and mark Aug. 10, 11, and 12 for a trip to the L.A. area. You will help to build something important and powerful!

Mortimer Mouse Sez...

**I'm going to the convention!!
I just love seeing all the people
(and the food is sooo good).**



From the Wilds of Mariposa

By Les Marsden

Yet another year's highly successful Thomas Jefferson dinner has come and gone, to my great relief. It's not that I don't look forward to all the hard work, but that I....I....well, okay: I do hate all the work. But, it's worth it when we have such a great turnout and a wonderful evening of fun, food, inspiration and camaraderie.

This year's event (co-sponsored as in years past by the Mariposa Democratic Club and the Mariposa County Democratic Central Committee) featured guest speaker Henry Vandermeir. Henry is Secretary of the California Democratic Council, Chair of the State Party Computer and Internet Caucus, President of the Big Bear Valley Democratic Club and (since 1990) President of his own company: EZ-REF Courseware, with wife Lori (as 'boss' in Henry's own words).

Henry and I chatted before dinner; though Lori and I speak once a week on the phone (she's CDC Trustee for Southern California, I'm Trustee for Central) I had never had the chance to sit down for an involved conversation with her husband and we quickly found ourselves on the same page, philosophically. As Henry elaborated during his well-received remarks, we believe that while the Democratic Party has been high-jacked by more conservative philosophy, the solution is not to flee the party but rather to progressively reform it by working from within. Henry emphatically stated the great importance of becoming involved in the California Democratic Council, our umbrella organization with which Democratic Clubs in the state are affiliated. He also commented on the great work being performed by Democratic National Committee Chairman (former Governor) Howard Dean, and especially the profound lesson to be learned from Dean's successful 50-state strategy for the last election and its implications for the red counties of California. And pointed out, as well, the facts and evidence for his premise that California is not so safely blue overall as we may wish. Henry answered numerous

From the Wilds of Mariposa (Continued)

questions, enthused the crowd and in all, made for a truly great post-dinner speaker.

Among this year's innovations to our usual dinner, Heather Bernikoff came up with the concept (initially for gift baskets but subsequently expanded) of a silent auction and then gently cajoled that concept into reality, with fantastic tangible results. Sharon Robbins won many items and we were delighted to accept her money! Another great idea: Sally Punte this year tried out a non-alcoholic bar of healthy drinks which beautifully complemented the meal. Our Club and Central Committee members all jumped in to work and work hard to make this year's dinner a great success and to prove, again: there are DEMOCRATS in these mountains!

In attendance (among many others) were current (outgoing) California Democratic Party District 7 Director Sandy Lucas and candidate for the same job Garry Robbins; Shanie Scott, Director of Public Affairs for Planned Parenthood; Ginny Terrell—who is not only Yosemite Gateway Regional Vice-President of the CDC but also (of course!) President of the Oakhurst Democratic Club; long-time Mariposa Club member Tom Aja from Stockton/Modesto, representing Operating Engineers, District 3; Donna Patterson, Chair of the Stanislaus County Democratic Central Committee; Mike Birch, President of the Turlock Democratic Club; of course our own John Stewart of the Mariposa/Merced Central Labor Council and many more. And if you'll excuse me, I now have to go wash more pots and pans.....



Oakhurst Democratic Club Report

By Ginny Terrell

There's plenty of buzz in the foothills these days. Now seems to be the time for all of you who are looking for something to get involved with, to get off our backsides and "just do it"!

We have the Madera Board of Supervisors who are trying to take over where they don't need to. Here's a brief overview of some of their latest actions:

* They recently transferred \$3.2 million from the county Measure "A" funds to the city of Madera. Questions: Why are county funds going to the city?

* They're suddenly interested in disbanding the Coarsegold Area Plan Association (CAPA), hopefully to fill the slots with people more to their liking. Question: Why is a plan seven years in the making no longer relevant, when it was the local residents who were involved in drawing it up?

* The Board is ready to ramrod through the gravel pit on Rd. 416 without further discussion. Question: Where are the environmental impact studies on this fiasco? What about the surrounding property owners' rights? What about all those gravel trucks running on Hwy. 41 day and night? It's already a dangerous enough road without having to contend with more gravel trucks.

* The Board is also looking into Chukchansi's application to discharge treated sewage into the local creek (Fresno River) which is pretty much seasonal, and the county's settlement with Chukchansi. Question: How much is the tribe willing to bribe the county for a favorable decision? And again, how about the environmental impact, property owners who are on the creek, etc? And why wasn't this considered in the original agreement with Chukchansi? It seems to me that if the treated water is no problem for the public, the tribe should be happy to re-use it for watering

Oakhurst Democratic Club Report (Continued)

their local flora, using it in their toilets, etc. Why on earth do we want to do possible irreversible damage to our streams?

Yep! It all looks pretty fishy - all this activity without more oversight from the public. Fortunately, the good citizens of our local area have banded together to form an oversight committee to hold our elected officials' feet to the fire.

Do any of these issues make you mad? Upset you? Cause you to wonder about our county representation? If so, please contact the people at the newly formed Madera Oversight Committee to get information or get involved. Email riversong@sti.net and do something about it!

These are serious times for the foothills, my friends. We can let the area become overgrown and mismanaged, or we can take action to be sure that our communities have a plan for steady progress with thoughtful planning. YOU can make a difference.



Mortimer Mouse Sez...

**Looks pretty fishy to me too
Ginny, I think I will go to the
meetings myself!**



Mariposa Thomas Jefferson Service Award

By Jim Archer

In an effort to identify and reward Mariposa's graduating seniors for their services to the community, the Mariposa Democratic Club used an essay contest to determine outstanding achievements in these areas. Eligible seniors had to be enrolled in a high school in the Mariposa County Unified School District, be in good standing with at least a 2.0 grade point average, demonstrate a history of service to their community and have a letter of reference from a community member.

Essays were limited to 600 words or less and had to address the community services the student had performed to date and how they would use their chosen vocation to continue to serve their communities in the future. The winning essay was written by Alex Gisler. Alex is a senior at Mariposa County High School and he submitted the following essay:

Over the past four years, I have been involved in a variety of community service projects, from standing in front of the supermarket ringing a bell and collecting donations for the Salvation Army, to spending 3 - 4 hours on Saturdays helping the Special Olympics bowling league in Oakhurst, to building a variety of projects for our local Future Farmers of America for their fundraiser. But I have to say the one thing that I feel was the most rewarding was to organize and lead the construction of the Tot-Playground at Darrah School for my Eagle Project through Boy Scouts of America. This project helped me realize that if you want to accomplish anything you have to have sheer determination and the willpower to succeed. The project consisted of 50+ volunteers and over 700+ combined volunteer hours, of which my personal hours totaled 100+ hours. This project taught me to lead my peers and adults to accomplish tasks in a timely manner. Overall, volunteering has helped me

Mariposa Thomas Jefferson Service Award (Continued)

realize how important it is to give, help and share.

While attending college in Idaho, I plan on volunteering for a variety of organizations. I would love to give back to Boy Scouts and become a leader and help the scouts excel in scouting, by learning a variety of skills. I also would like to volunteer for Habitat for Humanity and assist in the construction of homes. I would also like to continue helping Special Olympics and share my passion for disabled individuals. After earning my degree in Mechanical Engineering, I plan on finding a job and settling down in the community. My goals will still be to volunteer with a variety of organizations and hopefully with my degree I will be able to design new technology to make it easier for my community. I plan on helping organizations come up with new design concepts and develop useful and creative ideas. I would also love to help individuals visualize, design, draw and create prototypes of their drawing. Eventually, I would like to share my enjoyment of Mechanical Engineering with the next generation

The Mariposa Democratic club wishes to express appreciation to those who donated the \$500.00 prize for the winning essay. They are: Landis Reality, Starchman Law Offices, Chocolate Soup, Take N' Bake Pizza, Judy Eppler and Jim Archer. These donors have committed participation for the next 4 years in order to assure support of this program in the future.



PFLAG Advocates Address Oakhurst Club

By Ellie Schermerhorn

At the March meeting, Lee Todd and his partner, David Vanier, told us about the organization **Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays**. Lee and David relocated to the Mudge Ranch area from Michigan in 1992. As a gay couple, they've felt quite comfortable in Oakhurst, and encountered little discrimination.

PFLAG was formed to support lesbians, gays, and their friends and families, and has been extended to support transgender and bisexual people. The leadership generally consists of parents who have gay and lesbian children, but others are active, too.

Lee and David have been active in both the Detroit and Fresno chapters. They have had trouble establishing a chapter in the mountains because it takes "passion on the part of some parents to get it going". For example, the Fresno organizers met every second Sunday for two years and only one person showed up, but they kept on keeping on, and finally people started coming. The chapter is now 15 to 20 people strong at their meetings.

PFLAG began in 1972 and was started by Jeanne Manford who decided to march in the Gay Pride Parade in New York carrying a sign that said, "Parents Unite! Support Your Gay Children!". She was met with great enthusiasm, and began to meet with people of like mind in informal settings. **PFLAG** now has 500 chapters around the world, 200,000 members, and offices in Washington, DC and New York. It is not associated with any faith or church, but often meets in church facilities.

In many chapters, there is a network of straight spouses of gay people because many gays marry due to societal pressures. Lee himself did that and now has a 54-year-old son of whom he is very proud.

PFLAG Advocates Address Oakhurst Club (Continued)

Lee has encountered those in his church who are strongly against gay relationships, but after becoming familiar with Lee, David and their lifestyles, they became comfortable with the situation, at least to some degree.

PFLAG estimates that one in four families has a gay relative, perhaps not a son or daughter, but a nephew or niece.

At *Yosemite High School*, there is a *Gay-Straight Alliance* which requires two faculty sponsors and a student leader. Last year, there was a student who was willing to "do the work and take the abuse" of rocks being thrown at him and name-calling. This year there isn't anyone willing to take on that mantle. By law, the school must allow the alliance to exist, and the superintendent is following the law, although there are parents who want it shut down.



LeeTodd

Poli-Sci Professor Addresses Oakhurst Club (Part 2)

By Ellie Schermerhorn

We told you in the last issue the "good news" about the election David Schecter, Ph.D. of political science at CSU-Fresno shared with us in December. As promised, here is a summary of the "bad news".

1. We lacked strong candidates at all levels. David was careful to say he was not referring to TJ Cox whom he did feel was a strong candidate. "Elections are won 2 years out when the candidate gets groomed for the seat and is introduced to the interest groups. It starts now for '08". However, David believes no one's first real run for office should be for Congress. These races are simply too tough. In order to succeed, the interest groups in Washington and party leadership have to "anoint you" and get the structural benefits that flow from that.

2. Republicans are much more active in voter registration than Democrats. Democrats need to improve here!

3. Democrats need to appeal to more young people. Once you hook a young person into a party, they'll usually stay that way. Most 18 - 24 year olds don't think their vote counts. We need to be more positive about that. David said he's had the most insightful conversations with undergraduate students these last few years on Iraq as he's ever had in his years of teaching. He encouraged us to go into high schools or community colleges. Take an "honest discussion" and non-indoctrinating approach.

To give them encouragement when their candidate loses, young Democrats have to understand that this is a process, and that people who lose can come back very strong. Let them know it's just one election, and many times you have to face the dragon again and again and again.

Poli-Sci Professor Addresses Oakhurst Club (Continued)

4. "As Democrats, can we please stop the conspiracy stuff about elections? Could we please stop saying George Bush stole the election in '04?" He felt it was very important not to spread cynicism. Yes, there are problems, but overall the system works pretty well. "When we bash the system, we are playing into the conservative game plan to keep turnout depressed and people confused." There are 3,000 counties in America. For there to be a 1/2 dozen with problems is not a major threat to our democracy.

5. The party needs to do a better job over the next few years of "cleansing its own ranks." For example, if Republicans had purged Foley a year ago, they could have minimized the damage. On the Democratic side, we have William Jefferson in Louisiana who did well in the election. He could sit as a member of Congress next year, and Democrats should have gotten rid of him by now. It's a disaster for the party not to do a better job in that arena.

6. At the point he gave this talk, David didn't think we have a viable candidate for '08. "McCain looks like America right now. He's conservative, but a moderate conservative." At that point, he saw McCain as almost unbeatable, and believed there are too many people Hillary doesn't appeal to. David liked Obama very much, but didn't think he could beat McCain.



David Schecter

Chamber Officer Gives the Scoop on Oakhurst

By Ellie Schermerhorn

Although she'd never describe herself this way, hearing from Kathy McCorry, Executive Director of the Oakhurst Area Chamber of Commerce, is akin to hearing from a city manager. Given that Oakhurst isn't incorporated, the Chamber is the closest thing to a local government that we have, and she knows better than anyone what's happening in the mountain area, a good deal of it behind the scenes and very interesting. Her presentation to the Oakhurst club on February 3rd was indeed a revelation.

The Chamber has a number of committees working to make us not just a Yosemite gateway community, but a destination. Two of these committees raise funds and operate the Oakhurst Community Park and are responsible for the new sidewalks on Hwy 41. Water, sewer, emergency preparedness committees are not the kinds of activities we envision a Chamber doing, but ours does. The Chamber lobbied the state for loans to expand Oakhurst's sewer and water system (including the improvements that will remove all uranium from Hillview water), and has been integral in recent progress there. Now that infrastructure is on track, the Chamber can turn its sites to new community development.

The most impressive plans have to do with the new Oakhurst Area Plan approved in 2005, and part of which calls for new downtown development along the Fresno River. For eight months, Kathy has participated in a committee that meets with Madera County. They are working on the ordinances that need to be in place to allow for streetlights, sidewalks, and parking that will be needed. The project will be mixed use with homes, town homes, and pedestrian trails. All the businesses will be "dual front" businesses so there is no "back" to the building and they can be entered from either side. The development will be for small businesses, galleries, boutiques, gift shops, bistros, cafes, and allow for owners to be able to live upstairs from their businesses. This development sounds very forward thinking and quality-of-life enhancing for our community

Chamber Officer Gives the Scoop on Oakhurst (Continued)

Two new hotels, a Hampton Inn and Holiday Inn Express, will come on-line in the next two years, with 60 town homes and new office buildings built behind the Hampton Inn.

The Chamber continues to do surveys to see what kinds of businesses and retailers are desired in the community. Number One on the top ten is a hospital. She also pointed to the new bookstore as one that was solicited by the Chamber. Next on the list is a toy store. "When we talk about box retailers, about what you need, it's not always Wal-Mart." An example of a box retailer that people would like to see is Trader Joe's. Mid-size box retailers (excluding grocery stores) look for 50 - 60 thousand people within a 20-mile radius, and Oakhurst is now at 48 thousand. "Retailers don't look at county lines. They look at shopping districts".

So, if you find yourself feeling like Oakhurst doesn't do justice to its beautiful environs, don't be discouraged. You may not see it all the time, but both dreamers and practical planners are working to make this a city we can all be proud of.



Kathy McCorry



John Stewart and Koki Moretti
Were part of the great Jefferson Dinner kitchen staff



Les Marsden looks on as Jim Archer presents the
Thomas Jefferson Service Award to Alex Gisler

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Annual Dues are \$5.00 per person
(Mariposa lifetime membership is \$100)

Today's Date: _____

Mariposa Club: _____ or Oakhurst Club: _____

New Member: _____ or Renewal: _____

How did you find out about us? _____

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Telephone: (_____) _____

E-Mail: _____ Fax: _____

Supervisorial District (if known): _____

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

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Telephone: (_____) _____

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Supervisorial District (if known): _____

Total Amount Enclosed: \$_____

Please mail form and check payable to:

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