



# GRATIOT COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

# THE NEXT CHAPTER

MAY/JUNE 2023 EDITION

A Democratic Party Newsletter Made for and by Gratiot County Members  
Chief Editors, Nancy O'Brien & Lisa Gregory



## Chair Chat

By Christie Freestone

*"The clearest way to show what the rule of law means to us in everyday life is to recall what has happened when there is no rule of law."  
--President Dwight D. Eisenhower*

The rule of law is a political ideal that all citizens and institutions within a country, state, or community are accountable to the same laws, including lawmakers and leaders. This foundational principle of democracy is so important to our nation. We teach about the rule of law to our children throughout their public school education.

According to the Michigan K-12 State Standards for Social Studies Education, kindergartners in our state begin learning about the rule of law by identifying and explaining the reasons for rules at home and at school. 1st Graders learn that governments need rules to keep people safe, organized and fair. 2nd Graders learn that following laws promotes the common good for a community. 3rd Graders learn that government rules protect individual rights and ensure equal treatment under the law. 4th Graders learn how the principles of popular sovereignty, rule of law, checks and balances, separation of

powers, and individual rights serve to limit the powers of the federal government as reflected in the Constitution and Bill of Rights. 5th and 6th Graders are taught to act out the rule of law and hold others to the same standard.

It appears that many adults in our country would benefit from a refresher course about democracy as taught in their children's classrooms at their local elementary school.

*--Continued on page 2*

### IN THIS EDITION

- [Chair Chat](#)
- [Alma Highland Festival Parade](#)
- [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#)
- [The Next Chapter Book Club](#)
- [Second Congressional District Ice Cream Social](#)
- [GCDP Volunteer Recognition](#)
- [PBB at 50 Synopsis](#)
- [Dems at Work](#)
- [Coffee With the Dems](#)

## Chair Chat - Continued from page 1

In the upper grade levels, our children learn about other forms of governing unlike our own democracy. Our children learn that a dictatorship is a country where one person or political party has the power to do whatever they want. The ruler is called a dictator. In a dictatorship, citizens usually do not have equal rights or freedoms. Dictators normally need to do a number of things to put in place their dictatorships: they need to get rid of their opponents and then need to prohibit political parties that oppose their rule. Dictators will also need to undo or close down democratic institutions such as a parliament or a congress. Some social organizations, such as civil rights groups, human rights organizations, legal aid centers, teachers' federations and trade unions are discredited. Some dictatorships create a non-existent internal enemy which they claim to be at war with to justify their use of violence. Can we not see the actions of our former president as those of a dictator?

If there are no consequences for Donald Trump . . . there is no longer a rule of law in the United States. A twice impeached former president, now twice indicted and facing felony charges, cannot be the political leader of our nation. He is not the role model that our children deserve and we are irresponsible adults if we do not fight for our democracy at the ballot box.

### Gratiot County Democratic Party - 2023 Goals

- 1 Continue to grow party membership in the county with an emphasis on attracting varied members
- 2 Become more of a presence in the townships and villages of Gratiot County
- 3 Attract more voters and candidates as well as provide support for elected Democrats

## Membership Reminder

If you have not updated your membership information in 2023, we are asking you to fill out a new membership form. You can do this online or by mailing your form. There is no cost for membership but donations are always welcomed.

If you have any questions, please contact us at: [gratiotdems@gmail.com](mailto:gratiotdems@gmail.com).  
989-285-1212

[Click here for the Membership Form](#)

[Click here to register online](#)

# Alma Highland Festival Parade



It was a picture perfect day for a parade. The sun was shining and the sidewalks were filled with spectators as floats made their way down the streets of Alma for the Highland Festival Parade. The spectators (adults and children) were very courteous with a number of high fives and cheers of support for the Gratiot County Democrats' float. The day was a very positive experience for everyone.

We would like to offer a big "thanks" to everyone who either donated candy for the parade, rode on the float, or walked alongside the float to throw candy. Also, a special "Thanks" to Marc Raycraft for driving the wagon and getting decorations and candy to the starting point.



# Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Benefits Gratiot County

In 2021, President Biden signed the historic \$1 trillion infrastructure bill into law, delivering on a key piece of his economic agenda. This bipartisan bill is affecting positive change in our community. A portion of the funding from this legislation is being put to use at the Vesicol Superfund site right here in Gratiot County. The Gratiot County Democratic Party applauds President Biden and all of our elected officials who supported this legislation.



*Looking for a place to host your event?*

*Our GCDP office is available  
Contact us at: 989-285-1212 or  
gratiotdems@gmail.com  
for more information!*

# The Next Chapter: A Book Club

## *The Cold Vanish* By Jon Billman

Our book club met on May 6 to discuss *The Cold Vanish* with its Michigan author (on Zoom) Jon Billman. This book is about the thousands of people that go missing each year in our wilderness areas in the USA. The author began with one case of a young man who left his camping supplies on the side of the road in Olympic National Park and vanished. Jon Billman contacted the young man's family and joined his father on a long search for his son. Along the way, Billman writes of other missing persons cases all over the country, and meets up with search and rescue experts, volunteers and family members of missing persons, and explores various other explanations for the missing (Bigfoot experts, psychics, alien abductions, cults). Billman discussed the inequities in the use of resources for different cases based on the circumstances, publicity, available funding, and places where persons go missing: National Park vs National Forest vs state park or wilderness area. Ultimately, Billman has concluded that a national system or funded office to deal with the missing, or even a national database would be a good starting point.

This nonfiction book was an eye-opening look into what happens when a loved one goes missing in wilderness areas in America. Billman was generous with his time in discussing his book with us. Book club members enjoyed the visit! Our book club gave it a rating of 4.6 out of 5 stars.

## *The Living Great Lakes* By Jerry Dennis

On June 3 our club met to discuss another book by a Michigan author, *The Living Great Lakes*, by Jerry Dennis. This nonfiction book includes history, biology, ecology, geography, as well as a personal narrative of the author's experiences living, hiking, swimming, and boating on and around the Great Lakes. Dennis spent four weeks as a crewmember on a tall-masted schooner traveling from Lake Michigan through the lakes to the Atlantic Ocean. Many of us felt like we traveled this journey with him.

Even though most of the book club members have lived in Michigan for many years, we all learned information we were not aware of about the lakes. This is a cautionary tale of where the lakes have evolved from and what the future holds for our water resources. The author emphasizes that what affects one lake will ultimately affect them all. We discussed how fortunate we are to live near such remarkable, yet fragile lakes.

We unanimously rated this book a 5 out of 5 stars. We highly recommend this book.

### UPCOMING BOOK CLUB MEETINGS

**July 8**  
*The Silent Patient*  
by Alex Michaelides

**August 5**  
*Going West With Giraffes*  
by Lynda Rutledge

**September 9**  
*Read Dangerously*  
by Azar Nafisi

**October 7**  
*Wild, Beautiful, and Free*  
by Sophronia Scott

**November 11**  
*Allow Me to Retort*  
by Elie Mystal

**December 2**  
*Beartown*  
by Fredrik Backman

# Second Congressional District Ice Cream Social

Michigan's 2nd Congressional District ice cream social, held on May 13, featured U.S. Senate Candidate Hill Harper and 2nd CD Congressman Candidate Michael Lynch!

Hill Harper is a potential candidate for Debbie Stabenow's Michigan Senate seat. In addition to being an award-winning actor with roles on *The Good Doctor* and *CSI:NY*, Harper is also a best-selling author, health and wellness ambassador, philanthropist and humanitarian, and the founder of the Manifest Your Destiny Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to empowering underserved youth through mentorship, scholarships, and grant programs. He was appointed by President Obama to serve on the President's Cancer Panel in 2011.

Michael Lynch is a Michigan 2nd Congressional candidate. He holds degrees in Economics and Finance, as well as a PhD in Hospitality Management. He has a history of professorship at DePaul University, Driehaus College of Business, West Virginia University, Georgetown University and Louisiana State University.



**Michael Lynch, Christie Freestone and Hill Harper**



**Michael Lynch and Hill Harper discuss strategy**



**Michael Lynch proving the political speeches can be entertaining**



**Christie Freestone, GCDP President, addresses the group**

# GCDP Recognizes Volunteers



Christie Freestone and Ed Lorenz were nominated for the Second Michigan Congressional District Volunteer Appreciation Award. They were chosen to represent our county based on their outstanding service. We want to thank Christie and Ed for all they do for the Gratiot County Democratic Party and our community.




## SAVE YOUR STUFF!

GCDP will be having a garage sale this summer. Before you throw away or give away your treasures, consider saving them to donate to our sale.

# The PBB Disaster at 50

## A conference to commemorate and learn from the poisoning of Michigan Conference Synopsis



From May 18-20 a coalition of local, regional and national organizations hosted a conference reviewing the history and lessons for the future of the Michigan PBB Crisis. They selected May 2023 for the conference because it is the likely 50th Anniversary of the mistake that caused the crisis. Sometime in mid-spring 1973, the old Michigan Chemical-Velsicol Chemical company in St. Louis, made a catastrophic shipping error, sending a large quantity of a flame retardant composed of polybrominated biphenyls to an animal feed facility near Battle Creek instead of an animal feed supplement. Without knowledge to anyone for a year, animal feed from the Farm Bureau facility was delivered to farmers introducing the PBB into the diet of cattle, chickens and other farm animals and in-turn consumed by at least 8 million consumers across the state.

The conference brought together over 200 attendees and over 600 on-line viewers with an interdisciplinary team of presenters ranging from human health and environmental experts to philosophers, economists, historians and artists. While Alma College hosted most events on-campus, the college was only one of many co-sponsors. In alphabetical order, in addition to the college, the sponsors were Central Michigan University, the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University, the Mid-Michigan District Health Department, the PBB Citizens Advisory Board, the Pine River Superfund Task Force, the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Politically, the conference began with a welcoming message from Senator Gary Peters, who had been a student at Alma College when Velsicol shut-down operations in St. Louis as a result of the crisis. During field trips by bus to the Superfund sites in St. Louis where contaminants dumped by Velsicol still are being contained, destroyed and made harmless, participants learned how a much need accelerated clean-up has resulted from President Biden's Bi-partisan Infrastructure Act. Not only did that law provide direct funding for EPA clean-ups, it also reinstated the Superfund tax that assures continuing resources for clean-ups at sites with no surviving company responsible for contamination. That tax foolishly was repealed in 1995 by the Newt Gingrich Republicans elected to control the Congress in 1995.

The conference brought much regional media attention to the importance of the conference teaching lessons about public policy to protect human health and the environment and even general lessons about effective policy making in any field. Before the conference, Channels 9 and 10 in northern Michigan reported on multiple evenings on the coming conference. Public radio did a major story on the event. Even before these stories, the New York Times, CNN and NPRs Morning Edition covered the lessons for the country in the wake of the East Palestine, Ohio train wreck and contamination. Since the conference's end, Channel 8 in Grand Rapids launched a multi-week review during June 2023 of the conference's lessons.

In addition to the welcome by Senator Peters, among the presenters was University of California professor Elena Conis, author of *How to Sell a Poison* reviewing how the local community's resistance to business as usual provides lessons for more recent and future threats to community health and the environment.

*--Continued on next page*



# The PBB Disaster at 50 –

## A conference to commemorate and learn from the poisoning of Michigan Conference Synopsis, continued

--Continued from previous page

On Friday evening there was a screening of the 1997 BBC documentary about the crisis, *The Poisoning of Michigan*. Following the film, we had a panel discussion by two of the leaders in the 1970s attempting to respond to the human health consequences. Former Democratic state house member, "Buz" Spaniola, fought for aid to farmers and state funding for a human health study. He was joined by Dr. Tom Corbett, featured as a young physician in the film, who discussed the continuing need for human health follow-up. Joining these two pioneers, was Dr. Michele Marcus who leads the on-going human health research team from Emory University in Atlanta.

Highlights of Saturday included celebrating what conference organizers called "PBB Heroes." In addition, the day ended when the team from Emory conducted an actual orientation for those interested in participating in their on-going PBB research. Saturday morning also included multiple panels including perspectives from philosophy, art, history and law. There was also a discussion of the PBB Oral History Project led by Professor Brittney Fremion from Central Michigan University.

While much attention in the past has been given to the PBB mistake's impact on farm families, the conference did not ignore the wider population impacted by the accident. There was a session focused on new findings related to the high exposures of women in Detroit to PBB, apparently coming from some use of PBB contaminated surplus dairy products in food programs for the poor. Also, the conference included a presentation by the Saginaw Chippewa tribe on indigenous traditions of intergenerational responsibility.

In general presenters raised different perspectives on three lessons the Pine River Task Force has raised repeatedly. First, there is the need to observe the "precautionary principle," checking thoroughly the safety of new products and practices before damage is done to human health or the environment. Second to reject short-run foolish economics. Erik Nordman's presentation on Saturday morning related to the lessons for us of the work of Elinor Ostrom is especially in need of future attention. [The Pine River Task Force and the PBB Citizens Advisory Board are good examples of Ostrom's recommendations.] Repeatedly, related to Michigan Chemical we have been reminded that the former plant site has been in remediation longer than the company operated, with clean-up and human health costs far greater than the profits, wages and taxes the company ever contributed to the community. Third, we urgently need to begin demanding people be 'good ancestors,' committed to leaving the world in better condition than they found it.

As the conference ended, the community began to learn the good news that a grant for follow-up of the conference has been approved by U.S EPA. Over the next few months there will be an opportunity to plan future projects to correct the mistakes of the past. All are welcomed to join in this planning process.

# Dems at Work in Our Community

by Betty Apple

Since November 2021, members of the Gratiot County Democratic Party have been volunteering each month at the Community Cafe at the Alma Presbyterian Church. The Community Cafe serves a free meal each Thursday.

We have a wonderful group of loyal volunteers, and the folks at the church are happy to see us each month. It's a great way to let the community know we are here.

I would just like to say a big "Thank You" to all of our volunteers: Nancy O'Brien, Jeannine Haag, Marie Green, Marilyn Lorenz, Carole Moore, Susan Hunter and Gary Rayburn, Brian and Susan Dinwoody, Reg Fluery, Jennifer and Diane Siefker, Kandi Rockafellow, and Nancy Gott.



**Nancy O'Brien, Reg Fluery, Carole Moore and Jeannine Haag  
volunteering at The Community Cafe**

## Michigan's New 2nd Congressional District Democratic Party

[CLICK HERE TO  
LEARN MORE](#)



**MICHIGAN 2ND  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
DEMOCRATIC PARTY**  
michigan2nddemocrats.com

# Voting Does Matter

After winning full control of government for the first time in 40 years, Michigan Democrats have passed universal background checks on all gun sales, safe storage requirements, and a red flag law.

Don't let anyone tell you voting doesn't matter.

@NoLieWithBTC

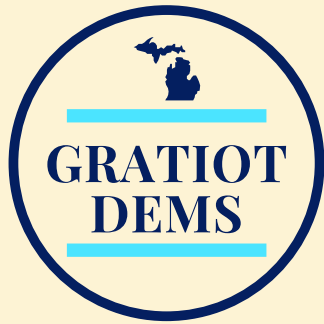


## POP CAN DRIVE

**We are collecting returnable cans and bottles to raise funds, and your donations are appreciated! Please drop your cans and bottles off in the office.**

*You're  
Invited!*

# Have coffee with us!



## Coffee with the Dems

**June 6 - 9AM - Ballyhoo Books and Brew | Alma**

**July 5 (Wednesday) - 9AM - JJRubys | Ithaca**

**August 1 - 10AM - Anschutz Cafe | Breckenridge**

**September 5 - 9AM - River Rock | St. Louis**

**October 3 - 9 AM - Ballyhoo Books and Brew | Alma**

**November 7 - 9AM - JJRubys | Ithaca**

**December 5 - 10AM - Anschutz Cafe | Breckenridge**





# GRATIOT COUNTY DEMOCRATS

## EVENTS AND INFORMATION

Gratiot County Democratic Office  
1686 Wright Ave. Alma, MI

### STOP IN!

#### OFFICE HOURS:

Wednesdays | 4 p.m.-6 p.m.

Saturdays | 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

CONTACT: 989-285-1212

[gratiotdems@gmail.com](mailto:gratiotdems@gmail.com)

[gratiotdems.net](http://gratiotdems.net)

## EVENTS

- **June 19** - Juneteenth
- **June 19** - Gratiot Democratic Party General Membership Meeting  
7 p.m. - Gratiot Dems office
- **July 5** - Coffee with the Dems  
9 a.m. - JJ Rubys - Ithaca
- **July 8** - The Next Chapter Book Club  
10 a.m. - Gratiot Dems office  
*The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides
- **July 17** - Gratiot Democratic Party General Membership Meeting  
7 p.m. - Gratiot Dems office
- **August 1** - Coffee with the Dems  
10 a.m. - Anschutz Cafe - Breckenridge
- **August 5** - The Next Chapter Book Club  
10 a.m. - Gratiot Dems office  
*Going West With Giraffes* by Lynda Rutledge
- **August 21** - Gratiot Democratic Party General Membership Meeting  
7 p.m. - Gratiot Dems office

We need volunteers to work at the Gratiot Dems office on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Click here to follow the link to sign up.

[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER](#)

### GRATIOT DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Executive Committee and Committee Chairpersons

Chairperson: Christie Freestone

Vice-Chairperson: Al Bartholomew

Secretary: Lisa Gregory

Treasurer: Brent DeVries

Parliamentarian/Governance: Nancy O'Brien

Candidates/Elections: Bobbie Renshaw

Event Logistics: Renee Faustmann

Finance: Brent DeVries

Fundraising: Liz Weaver

Membership: Caroline DeGraaf

Public Relations: Michael Lynch

Community Outreach: Nancy Gott

Reid-Knox Forums: Ed Lorenz

Resolutions and Petitions: Betty Apple

CLICK OR SCAN  
TO VISIT OUR  
CALENDAR!



FOLLOW, SHARE, AND LIKE US  
ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA  
NETWORKS



CLICK OR SCAN  
TO CHECK OUT  
OUR WEBSITE!

