

# DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Washington County

## *The Grass Roots*

A Newsletter for Washington County Democrats

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### *2009 Is Becoming An 'Exciting' Year*

By Karen Packer

Chair, Washington County Democrats

For an off-year election year, 2009 is turning out to be a bit more exciting than we ever expected



Over the past months, our Executive Board decided to endorse Democratic candidates in nonpartisan races. I appointed a committee led by Veronica Williams that

(See "Karen" on back page)

### **Blue Horizon Fund Is Critical to Party's Success**

By Lakshmi Jagannathan

*Communications & Publicity Committee*

The sweet smell of success radiated throughout Washington County on Nov. 4th last year for Democrats. Much of this was possible because of a humble office on Farmington Road that served as a meeting place, get-out-the-vote call center and place for grassroots volunteers to connect with the Democratic Party.

The office was established after the surge in membership following the 2004 election helped move the party forward. It became obvious that in order to increase visibility and wage a continuous cam-

paign to elect Democrats at all levels, a permanent gathering place was essential. In 2005, the Blue Horizon Fund -- under the guidance of then-Finance Committee Chair Karen Packer (currently county chair) -- was created with the help of 112 contributing members to provide a steady stream of income that would be needed to maintain an office: pay rent, utilities, insurance.

Today, the Democrats' office in downtown Beaverton is staffed by volunteers and open five days a week and seven days during the election season. Currently, some 62 people contribute to the Blue Horizon Fund on a recurring monthly basis and more than 50 on an annual basis.

Veronica Williams, chair of the Blue Horizon Fund, says: The poor economy has put a strain on donations, but "we appreciate" that the success of the county party is important enough to some that they continue their financial support, even in these hard times.

Due to increased costs, the Democrats have had to set a goal of increasing both the total income from donations to the Fund and the number of donors. "This year, we need to raise approximately \$5,000 more to insure we cover all of our annual expenses from the ... Fund," Veronica added.

All Washington County Democrats are encouraged to participate in the Blue Horizon Fund. Membership starts at only \$10 a month or a one-time annual contribution of \$120. For further information, go to the Democrats' web site at [www.WashCoDems.org](http://www.WashCoDems.org) and click on "Contribute."

### ***Blue Frontier Fundraiser: A Sold-Out Event***

Former Gov. Barbara Roberts (left in photo at far right), keynote speaker at the Washington County Democrats' fundraiser, *The Blue Frontier*, greets Meredith Wood Smith, chair of the Democratic Party of Oregon. The event was held in May at the King City Town Hall. In bottom right photo, Bill Bradbury, former Oregon secretary of state, pauses for a moment with Karen Packer, chair of the Washington County Democrats. In left photo at bottom, State Rep. Tobias Read, his wife, Heidi Eggert, left, and Linda Erickson, *Blue Frontier* committee chair, enjoy the fundraiser. Linda Erick-

son and her husband, Paul Erickson, both won the contest for "best hat." In the top left photo, Mitch Greenlick shows off his winning beard, which took first place.

State Rep. Jeff Barker, in top center photo, greets Mary O'Donnell of the county Democrats. Best costumes went to Karin Olson and Jack Timmons (not pictured).



## Leah Craft: Secretary

# Meet Your Washington County Elected Officers

Leah Craft loves politics and knows this is what she wants to do. Politics consume her work, her off time -- she just can't get enough.

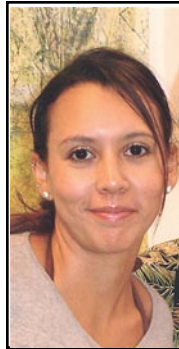
Born in Mexico, her parents moved to California when she was a baby. At age 13, her parents moved again, this time to Hilo, Hawaii, where Leah graduated from high school.

She enrolled at the University of Hawaii and earned a bachelor's degree in -- you guessed it -- political science.

Currently, she's working on a master's degree in economic development and entrepreneurship.

Following graduation, Leah landed a job with the Small Business Development Center in Hilo for eight years, doing much of the organization's financial management and coordinating their legislative activity. During this time, she was married for three years and had a daughter, Chloe, 11.

Leah also worked part time for Rep. Mazie Hirono (D-HI) as the congresswoman's east Hawaii field representative, meeting with constituents, dealing with their concerns and representing Hirono at



events when the congresswoman was in Washington, DC.

Leah joined the Democratic Party in Hawaii County and went to work for them as a volunteer, getting elected treasurer of the county party and also to the state central committee, "which involved a tremendous amount of travel," she said. Leah also worked on numerous local political campaigns.

In 2007, Leah was looking for a change and visited her parents in Oregon, who earlier had moved here. She liked it and moved to Tigard, where she lives today. She also has a brother living in the area.

After one week in Oregon, and while she was looking for work, Leah went to the Washington County Democrats' office in Beaverton and volunteered. She became the office scheduler and joined the Office Committee and then the Finance Committee. Last fall she was elected secretary of the county party. Leah also

## ***Karen: Office, Staff Provide a Stable Presence***

*(Continued from front page)*

prepared and sent out an application form, interviewed interested candidates and subsequently brought forth a total of eight candidates to the Central Committee for endorsement. For years, the Republican Party has backed its nonpartisan candidates in a similar manner.

Support for all Democratic candidates, including those in nonpartisan races, is enabled by a clear sense of direction that comes, in part, from doing a strategic plan each year. This year Ron Morgan led the efforts, and we have an amazing 22-page document, with input from a wide variety of our members, that will provide the impetus and direction we need for our efforts in 2009 and into the 2010 election cycle.

Many of our members have been lobbying at the state legislature in favor of or against a variety of pending legislation, including the Vehicular Homicide bill, the Save our Salmon bill, Marine Reserves, and LNG legislation. In every case, we hear from our legislators that they are so happy to have Washington County Dems, as citizen lobbyists and constituents, pay a visit and express their viewpoints. It has been a lot of fun and a great payoff for working so hard on those legislative races.

worked as the field director for a Portland city council candidate who was unsuccessful in his bid.

After several months in Oregon, Leah landed a job as the statewide coordinator for developmental disabilities quality assurance for the Department of Human Services (DHS) in Salem. In her position, she monitored programs around the state and found herself in Eastern Oregon during the 2008 election. "I spent election night in Gordon Smith territory wearing a Jeff Merkley button," she says with a chuckle.

Last December, Leah was promoted at DHS to the position of legislative and policy coordinator for the Administrative Services Division. She spends a lot of time at the Legislature these days, a job she is familiar with from her Hawaii days. Comparing the two legislatures, she says Hawaii "is more laid back but also operates on a tighter schedule."

In all our activities, the office and its dedicated volunteer staff provide a stable Democratic presence in the community, as well as a convenient and popular meeting place for our busy committees and Executive Board. I encourage you to volunteer in the office. Aside from attending our monthly Central Committee meetings, it's perhaps the best way to get to know other activists in the county, as well as taking an active role in supporting our partisan efforts. You'll receive training and support and with time may even become a "MOD" (Manager of the Day).

As you can see, the efforts of the Democratic Party of Washington County in 2009 are many, even in an off election year. I urge you to get involved and become a part of our organization so we all can be better prepared for the critical races coming up in election year 2010.

## ***Executive Committee Meets***



Members of the Executive Committee of the Washington County Democrats (shown here in April) gather once a month at the Democrats' office at 12250 SW Broadway in downtown Beaverton. The meetings are on the third Wednesdays at 7 p.m. Members of the Executive Committee include the party officers and chairs of the various committees.

**Editor: Bill Kroger, Chair  
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## **Attend a Meeting**

*The Washington County Democrats meet once a month on the fourth Wednesdays at 7 p.m. Many state legislators attend as well as other elected officials. Plan on joining fellow Democrats at their next meeting. To learn the location, go to the web site: [www.WashCoDems.org](http://www.WashCoDems.org).*