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done in our communities—she takes the initiative and does something. It's really easy to work for someone who has the passion and go-getter attitude that Lauren demonstrates: it makes my job easy. Lauren is an organizer and an extremely dedicated person. She cares. Without her, there would be no Tenth Dems. And the wonderful volunteers I get to work with also care. Everyone has the same mission, which is getting Democrats elected to office at all levels. It's amazing that all these people in our community want to contribute to getting Democrats elected to office. It's empowering!

What's the most challenging part of your job?

Organizing all the important day-to-day things with our volunteers in order to achieve the mission of the organization. To do that, first one must step back and assess what needs to be done. I try to see the big picture; it's important to keep abreast of everything. Fundraising is difficult—we cannot be successful without donations and membership fees. We need to make sure people are paying their membership fees. We need funds to support candidates, pay bills, and send mailings. Having volunteers is great, but we also need people to recognize the necessity of funding the organization.

What is the primary mission of the Tenth Dems?

Our mission is getting Democrats elected at all levels of government, and supporting the Democratic Party's mission.

What are your goals for 2009?

Raising money for Tenth Dems; organizing volunteers; helping all the Democratic candidates who are running for office in 2010. And defeating Mark Kirk.

What do you need help with?

We need volunteers for everything: the membership committee, web design, our online store, communications. I invite everyone to visit TenthDems.org and volunteer their skills and talents.

Who inspires you? Who are your role models?

State Representative Kathy Ryg, because she cares about her constituents and about the right things getting done, and because she's exceptionally honest. I've known her since she ran for Lake County Clerk in 1994. Lauren Beth Gash is also an inspiring figure to me because she took the initiative to run for state representative when there were no Democrats in our area, and that alone took a lot of chutzpah. And she was successful. Lauren is another person who cares and is honest. She didn't run just because she wanted to be in office; she wanted the right things to be done for the people of Illinois.

Even after Lauren lost by a very small margin to Mark Kirk in the 2000 race for 10th District U.S. Representative, she didn't just sit back. She launched the Tenth Dems with other interested parties and volunteers from the community. She saw the importance of electing Democrats to office and, because of that, built the Tenth Dems.

And there are others who have inspired me. The 10th District is blessed to have inspiring Democratic leaders from North to South and East to West.

Tell us about some important Tenth Dems events coming up.

We're planning an annual fundraiser for late summer. We always do our best to have a big name speaker for this event. In the past we've had U.S. Senators Russ Feingold and Evan Bayh, and Barack Obama before he was elected president. I would like to invite people to become part of the host committee for this important fundraising event. We'll also be sending out invitations to those on our mailing list.

What do you feel is the biggest issue facing the country today?

There are so many issues, but for me, it's healthcare reform. I urge everyone to get involved and become an activist. Do your research, and make sure you support a bill that helps the American people.

If It's Summer, There Must Be Interns

by David Mandel

Despite the weather trying to prove the calendar wrong, summer came to Illinois in May and June. That is, college students returned to their homes en masse. Many of the returning students were gearing up for their internships. The summer internship is an annual tradition in the life of any student. This year, one internship program has become a popular choice for local students: the Tenth Congressional District Democrats' summer internship.

This is the program's fifth summer, and it has seen an explosive growth in interest. Twenty-some students—ranging from high school juniors to



Interns Jennifer Bitoy, David Mandel, Chelsea Fesik, and Eliza Brown collaborate on tasks, learning how democracy works at the grassroots. photo by Ravi Ganapathy

college graduates—are participating in the program this year. According to the application, students taking part in the program have, in the past, “helped at Tenth Dems events featuring former Presidential nominee George McGovern, as well as Presidential hopefuls, Senators Evan Bayh of Indiana, Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, and Illinois’ Barack Obama” and current interns “may do research, walk door-to-door with candidates, work in campaign offices, staff events and issue forums, and get to meet many political figures.”

The internship program is essential to the Tenth Dems's efforts. Hon. Lauren Beth Gash, a founder and the Chair of the organization, notes, “Our interns are the backbone of our organization. Because of their dedication and the hours that they put in, they tend to be more aware of all that our organization does and, as a result, quickly become part of our leadership.” The progressive nature of the internship program is attracting a wide range of qualified and interested students.

Andy Bookman, a senior at Florida State University, expressed his desire to “get more experience in a political environment.” Moreover, he hopes to go above and beyond the minimum hours so that he can work on “as many different [projects] as possible.” This level of commitment and energy is not unique to Andy. The interns participating in the program are motivated by a personal desire to be politically active and become a part of the community.

While the internship offers plenty of opportunities to any student interested in politics, that is not what motivated many to seek the position. One intern, Jessica Werley, acknowledged the unique opportunities of the Tenth Dems internship in her decision to work here. “I worked at a non-profit grassroots before and it was very good experience, but I wanted something that was more engaging in the community,” she said. In the midst of the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression, there exists a great opportunity to revitalize our community. The historic 2008 presidential election has shown young people across the country that they can make a difference by becoming active in their communities. Werley is hoping to do more than just political work. As a resident of the 10th District and an active Democrat, she hopes to “make sure that things are going well for everyone and to watch out for when something happens that is unfair or disadvantageous to someone. It's caring. You take care of your community.”

The evident desire of the interns to effect change in their own

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Make sure a good bill gets passed. Once you do your research and familiarize yourself with the different issues on the table, you should contact your local elected officials. Just make sure the bill makes sense for the American people. It's important to get communities involved, educated, and talking about the issues. It's not about the power of one; it's the power of all. Together we can make a difference.

What would you say to someone who's never gotten involved in politics before?

Get involved. Otherwise, you can't complain if you're not involved. You can be upset, but if you don't exercise your right to have your voice heard as a citizen, you can't complain. You elect people to represent you in office; that's how government works. And even if someone gets elected whom you didn't vote for, it's still their job to represent their constituents.

The only way to know they're doing their job is to pay attention to the job they're doing. That means a little bit more than going by what you read in the papers. For example, let's say there's a bill that's introduced. And let's say, hypothetically, you're upset because a legislator didn't vote for that bill. However, there could be so much more in that bill, so it's important to know why or why not someone voted for that bill. Perhaps you find out it raises your taxes, which is why they didn't vote for the bill. It's easy to learn about bills: call the offices of elected officials; look up the bill online; visit websites. Even at the local level, you should go to village and township meetings and learn who's running for office. Perhaps these people are not being written about in the newspaper, but you should still be active and know what's going on as it affects your schools, libraries, and communities.

All politics are local. Some of these local elections could be the most important elections you vote in!

Congress Watch *continued from page 3*

We applaud 9th District Congresswoman Schakowsky's decision to put the interests of our nation and the American public above her own political aspirations. Sadly, we know we will never be able to say this about 10th District Congressman Mark Kirk.

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communities stems from a new perspective on the importance of local politics. Young people are realizing the value of local engagement because President Obama's own political career began as a community organizer on Chicago's South Side. Eliza Brown, recently graduated from Highland Park High School, remarked that "local politics are incredibly important because it means building up from the bottom."

One of the definitive features of the Tenth Dems internship is that it is open to high school students as well as college students. Some of the interns are under 18 and see this internship as their first foray into the political world. Among them is Francesca Moree, a high school student from Mundelein. She acknowledges that this internship is an important learning experience. "Not only do I want to have a better understanding of our government's functioning," said Francesca, "but I also want to be able to educate my peers." She continued, "While we're not yet of voting age, we're pretty darn close, and if we want a say in our government, then it's our responsibility to understand how it works. I'm looking at this as one of the greatest personal challenges that I could put myself up to; I don't know much, but every day that I work with the Tenth Dems is a day spent gaining more and more knowledge."

Stephen Ark, a high school student from Gurnee, sums up the desires of the interns: "I'm most excited to meet a bunch of new people, learn more about [the 10th District], maybe make a difference, and have fun in the process." So are we all.

The Tenth Dems is now taking applications for its Fall 2009 Internships.