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*The opinions expressed are those of the writers, and not necessarily endorsed by Tenth Dems*

# Poetry/Prose Slam Entrants Move and Inspire a First-Time Attendee

by Judith Bernstein

The Tenth Dems Community Connection holds an annual poetry and prose contest for high school students from the northern part of the 10th Congressional District. This year, students from high schools in Waukegan, North Chicago, and Zion were invited to enter. I attended the awards ceremony on May 16, and had the pleasure of being inspired by the words of young adults striving, successfully, to succeed.



Young writers pose for a photo with Laura Tomskey, event chair, Judith Tepfer, judge, Elizabeth Bloom Albert, event founder, and Frank Pettis, Tenth Dems intern. Many more photos from this event may be found on pages 9 and 10 of this issue.

This year's contest theme was Dreaming. Latino, African American, and Anglo 10th, 11th, and 12th graders turned out for the event, all beautifully dressed, all beautifully behaved. The emcee, Kevin Lampe, a

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# Tenth News

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JUNE 2013 Illinois Tenth Congressional District Democrats Newsletter Volume 10, Edition 6

## Let's Not Get Caught in the *Doldrums* Again

Former Congressman Robert Dold (R-Kenilworth) has announced that he will challenge Rep. Brad Schneider (D-Deerfield) in 2014. This would be Dold's third run for Congress in the 10th District.

During his single term in office (2010-12), *The Hill* listed Dold as one of John Boehner's "100 loyal soldiers." Dold voted with the Republicans more than 80 percent of the time. Most of these votes were aimed at thwarting the President's agenda. No one interested in good government should even consider returning another Republican to Congress to vote against anything President Obama supports.

If Dold runs again, he'll be a rare bird—a challenger with a record. Here are some of the reasons why voters rejected Dold's bid for a second term in 2012:

**Dold Voted to Allow Drilling in the Great Lakes.** On February 16, 2012, Dold joined House Republicans and voted against a measure that would have prevented oil and gas exploration in the Great Lakes and the Florida Everglades. [HR 3408, Vote #70, 2/16/12; *Congressional Record*, H884, 2/16/12]

**Dold Voted to defund Planned Parenthood.** Dold voted for a bill that would have "reinstated the D.C. abortion ban, eliminated the Title X family-planning program, defunded Planned Parenthood,

reinstated the global gag rule, and eliminated funding for the United Nations Population Fund." [HR 1, Vote #147, 2/19/11; *NARAL's Congressional Record on Choice*, 2011]

**Dold Opposed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act.** Dold filled out a questionnaire from the Illinois Family Institute indicating that he opposed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act of 2009 (ENDA), which "gives homosexual and transsexual individuals protected class status in the workplace," according to the Institute. [Illinois Family Institute Voter Guide for Illinois Primary Election, accessed 5/02/13; HR 317, introduced 6/24/09]

**Dold Opposed Marriage Equality.** In 2010, Dold said, "I believe

*continued on page 2*

See pages 2 and 3 for photos of the recent opening of Rep. Brad Schneider's district office in Lincolnshire, and read an interview with Brad about his first months in Washington.



**Summer Fun, June 23rd! See page 8 for details...**

marriage is between a man and a woman.” [Daily Herald, 10/26/10]

**Dold Voted for the Ryan Budget that “Would Essentially End Medicare.”** Dold twice voted for the Republican budget plan authored by Republican Congressman and failed vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan. *The Wall Street Journal* wrote, “The plan would essentially end Medicare, which now pays most of the healthcare bills for 48 million elderly and disabled Americans, as a program that directly pays those bills.” [H Con. Res. 34, Vote #277, 4/15/11; *The Wall Street Journal*, 4/04/11; H Con. Res. 112, Vote #151, 3/29/12]

Notably, Dold no longer even lives in the 10th Congressional District. In the past, Dold and his allies harped about how terrible it was that Dan Seals lived outside the 10th District, even though Dan’s kids went to school in the 10th District and one could throw a football from his backyard into the 10th District. Dold now lives much farther outside the district than Dan did, and Dold’s kids don’t go to school in our district.

Most important of all, the 10th Congressional District now has a representative in Congress who stands up for the values of his constituents.

**Brad Schneider is fighting for our agenda in Congress.** Brad serves on the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Small Business Committee. He’s only been in office for four months, but here’s some of what he’s done so far:

- Helped reintroduce the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which prohibits employers from firing, refusing to hire or discriminating against an employee based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

- Co-sponsored the Safe Schools Improvement Act.
- Joined his colleagues in calling on the Supreme Court to overturn the so-called Defense of Marriage Act.
- Voiced his support for the Illinois General Assembly’s marriage equality bill.
- Co-sponsored and voted for the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013.
- Co-sponsored and helped introduce the Nuclear Iran Prevention Act.
- Co-sponsored the United States Israel Strategic Partnership Act.
- Introduced the bipartisan American Manufacturing Efficiency and Retraining Investment Collaboration Achievement (AMERICA) Works Act to help build a skilled American workforce.
- Co-sponsored the Gun Trafficking Prevention Act, which would finally make gun trafficking a federal crime.
- Backed the President’s plan (1) to close the gun show loophole, extending basic background checks to all retail gun sales, (2) to enact a new Assault Weapons Ban, which will take deadly military-style weapons off the streets, (3) to outlaw the sale of high-capacity magazines that accommodate dozens of rounds of ammunition, and (4) to enhance the national system of background checks, combining information from all 50 states.
- Co-sponsored the Paycheck Fairness Act that helps uncover gender pay discrimination.

Congressman Schneider has earned our support. Robert Dold has earned our distrust. We must do all we can to re-elect Brad Schneider. **TD**

## **A Tenth Dems Check-In**

by Dave Rauen

*Tenth Dems checked in with Congressman Brad Schneider in April to see how his first few months in office are going. This is the second in a series of “check-ins.” Accompanying photos are from the opening of Cong. Schneider’s district office on April 3, 2013.*

**How has your time changed postelection? What was the transition like after November 6? Can you describe a given week now?**

I’ve often said that other than my role as a dad, representing the 10th District is the greatest responsibility and highest honor of my life. It’s been an incredible journey since November 6, and I’ve truly enjoyed every single day.

There really aren’t any typical weeks—each week brings new challenges and new opportunities. When I am in the district, my first priority is connecting with and listening to people. By regularly meeting with constituents and local businesses, by listening to their thoughts and concerns, their hopes and aspirations, I believe I am better able to represent their interests in Washington.



*An overflow crowd visits Cong. Schneider’s district office to celebrate its opening.*

My time in Washington is split between meeting with constituents in my office, committee hearings, and, of course, voting on the floor.

Whether working here at home or in Washington, the only consistent thing about my week is long days energized by meeting and working with wonderful people.

**What aspects of the job have been most enjoyable? What aspects of the job have you found interesting? Now that you are in office, has your idea of the job changed or expanded from when you first entered the race?**

*continued on page 3*

I truly do enjoy every day of my job. By far, meeting new people, hearing their perspective and unique insight, and learning directly from them has been the highlight. The stories that come from constituents – everyday families – are the ones that have stuck with me and inspire me to roll up my sleeves and get to work. Stories



like that of the 12-year-old boy who spoke to me about the need for continued diabetes research, the owners at Ludlow Manufacturing who spoke of the need for qualified workers, or the volunteers at A Safe Place in Waukegan who talked about the essential funding the Violence Against Women Act provides for domestic

violence victims in our communities. It's these stories that inspire me and stay with me as we work on addressing our challenges, from strengthening our middle class, helping small businesses grow, pro-



tecting our environment, and ensuring we're securing opportunities for the next generation.

**How are you building coalitions? Who are you working with? Are there any groups – nonprofits, councils of government, businesses or corporations, etc.– that you have worked with? On what issues have you worked with them?**



I've always said that I'm willing to work with anyone, regardless of party, who had a good idea, an open mind, and a willingness to work with me. So, in Congress I've been working to do just



that. As just one example, I've partnered with local businesses, the National Association of Manufacturers, and Congressman Lou Barletta to introduce the AMERICA Works Act, which would help bridge the growing skills gap our local businesses face. It's this commitment to working together to address our challenges that I look forward to continuing to build. Every day, I'm reaching out to schools, to businesses, to entrepreneurs, to my colleagues, and to anyone else who's interested in setting aside our differences and finding common ground.

**Is there something on the horizon that you are excited about? Is there a message you have for Tenth Dems members?**

My first message to the people of the 10th District is that we are at the very beginning of what I hope is a long and productive endeavor. Together we made history. Together, and only by working together, we can tackle the many challenges before us and do so in a way that reflects our values and priorities.



My second message is to keep reaching out to me and my staff, keep sharing with us your thoughts, your suggestions, and your concerns, because being a representative is both my title and my job



description. Hearing directly from you is the best way for me to be an effective voice for you in Washington. I look forward to continuing to work together and do whatever I can to help the district and expand opportunity and prosperity for the next generation. **TD**

# VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH: Karen Singer – *Empathy for Diversity*

by Eleonora di Liscia

To Tenth Dems volunteer Karen Singer, being a Democrat is all about the social issues, and that means respecting other people's cultures, choices, and values.

From her Jewish Eastern European roots to her experiences as a 4-foot 6-inch kid in middle school to her college study in Spain, her later teaching ESL and a 22-year career in travel, Karen's entire life has imbued her with an appreciation and empathy for what it means to be different.

Karen was born in Cincinnati, and her family moved to Skokie when she was eight years old. She was raised not to judge others. "Basically I never heard my parents say anything against someone's lifestyle choices. The 'anti' thoughts were never put in my head. We were always for people and for freedom that doesn't infringe on others," said Karen.

Karen's ancestors were Eastern European Jews. "I think it gives an experience that lends an openness toward diversity, because not so far back, you weren't the typical American either. We understood what being different was all about, and we were taught never to forget that," she said.

When she first moved to Skokie, Karen was considered "different" as the new kid in school. Later, she was teased because of her height, but she found the experience character-building. "I swore I would never turn that around. I would never be the bully," she said. "I'm short, and they make fun of you for it. But in the background, I had my family saying, 'You do whatever you want.'"

In high school, Karen found her niche in theater. Whether she was acting or helping with props, theater enabled her to see different worlds. She also belonged to the International and Spanish Clubs where she met a diverse group of people.

At Indiana University Bloomington, Karen studied Spanish language and culture. She spent her last year in Spain, again gaining new perspectives. At that time, Spain was coming out of the despotic Franco regime. Although her reception from the Spanish people was overwhelmingly warm, Karen did see some anti-American graffiti. "We got the 'You're Americans. You have so much. Why don't you appreciate what you've got? What are you afraid of?'—as opposed to them just wanting us to get out. It was a real mix of love/hate for and against Americans," she said.

For Karen, getting out of the United States was very positive, helping her to realize that the U.S. way of doing things wasn't the only game in town. For example, in Spain she was exposed to the concept of universal healthcare, something many Americans feared. "There's a lot of lessons about sharing things more universally. The world doesn't understand what our fear of that



Karen Singer (photo by Marlene Singer)

is," she said. "It's just part of getting a new perspective and at that point it wasn't political. At that point, I didn't know from political, believe me."

After Spain, Karen came back and pounded the pavement looking for a job. In her 20s, she focused on finding work and a place to live—in other words, making a life. Eventually, she began a career working for a travel agency, booking niche trips such as Apple or Disney vacations, answering phones, doing research, and working with the database. Many of these skills would later benefit Tenth Dems.

Once she settled down, Karen became increasingly socially aware. She began to volunteer teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) and literacy to immigrants. "I could get out of myself and think about my country at large," she explained. "I got to see people. I had students from India, Eastern Europe, Iraq, Iran. Talk about diversity: it was diversity to the nth degree in ESL and literacy."

Karen volunteered in ESL for four years. After a break, when she returned to volunteering, it was in politics. Karen became galvanized by Obama's 2007-2008 campaign. She began to work for a friend who was running against Dan Seals in the Democratic primary. Despite her friend's defeat, Karen met Seals and liked him, so she went on to volunteer for him and later Obama.

Karen believes Tenth Dems co-chair Lauren Beth Gash may have heard about her from Seals. "Lauren brought me in. Lauren is a force of nature you can't resist. I found something I could do—I could do the phones. I had enthusiasm. I may not know a fact here and there, but I know what I believe, and I got a lot of positive feedback for that," she said.

From phones, Karen began to help with major fundraisers, and eventually grew into volunteer coordinator. "Working with Karen has been an absolute pleasure," Lauren said. "We've worked together for many years now, and I can honestly say she is one of the best volunteer caller/managers we've ever had. Her demeanor and good spirits always perk up the office and motivate the volunteers. Tenth Dems relies on Karen's skills regularly. She is involved with so many aspects of Tenth Dems and is an incredibly valuable member of our team."

Karen's respect for diverse people and viewpoints fuels her support for Democrats. "There are a lot of issues that have to do with freedoms, like same-sex marriage. I may not be same-sex-oriented, but the heck I'm going to tell anybody how to live. Like abortion. Again, it doesn't matter if it's my choice to have a baby or not. It's the fact that I couldn't possibly tell another woman which way to go."

Karen elaborated. "I'm the golden rule girl: 'Do unto others what you would have them do unto you.' I would never have you limit me, and I will never limit you. Because I respect so many different cultures that carry so many different beliefs—I would never stand in the way of my friends' beliefs. I don't see an issue, I see a person." **TD**

# Melting Pot?

by Jack Altschuler

Since the first immigrants arrived this has always been a Euro-centric place. Surely that's understandable, since it was Europeans who were the primary immigrants for a very long time. Of course, after a while, we started importing Africans to be our slaves. But there was no need to change our orientation, since at the time, Africans weren't considered full human beings. Sometime later people began to arrive from Asia, Mexico, and Central America. But those of European descent made up the huge majority of the population and continued to dominate politics and culture.

These Euros were something else, too. They were mostly Protestant. The Founders and most of their descendants were Protestant, so that has been the dominant religious orientation of our country from the start. Notwithstanding the fact that the Founders inscribed freedom of religion into the Constitution ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."), white, European Protestants have been the dominant force in America.

In the early 1960s, I overheard a conversation between two men. One was saying with obvious concern, and perhaps even some anger, that Ernie Banks, the Chicago Cubs star, had purchased a house a couple of blocks from him. This was in Chicago, a starkly divided city of neighborhoods where Poles, Italians, blacks, Jews and others pretty much stayed in their own area. And here was good ol' Ernie, a black man, purchasing a house in a white area. So, I asked what seemed to me to be an obvious question: "Are you going to picket his house with your neighbors, or knock on his door and ask for an autograph?"

My question wasn't received well, as you might imagine, as my



irreverent attempt at humor was a poke in the eye to this fellow's quite serious, "He's not like us and I don't like him and don't want him living down the street from my children" attitude. His ignorance led to fear, which inevitably leads to hate.

Seema Jilani wrote a stunning and deeply disturbing piece for the *Huffington Post* about American racism today. Read this piece with the knowledge that your sense of right and wrong, fairness, and even simple courtesy are at risk of feeling violated. And know that hers is similar to the day-to-day experience of millions of other non-white or non-Protestant Americans.

If you're feeling really courageous, do a gut-check on your own prejudices. Unless you're somehow immune to the messages that bombard you daily, telling you to fear what is different from you, stoked continuously by political manipulators, you may find something there.

We humans do reasonably well with what is known to us and typically fear what is not known. It's a survival instinct, and it worked well when our ancestors were living in caves and every day brought another existential threat.

Now, almost on our doorstep is something that is not known – what American life will be like when white Protestants are a diminishing minority, incrementally losing power and control. Just imagine all that racism reversed – shoe on the other foot, so to speak – and having to endure the slicing and bleeding of discrimination a hundred times a day just to function in everyday life.

Did you say that you just want to be tolerated by those who are different from you? No, you did not say that. Nobody wants to be tolerated. Other than Dick Cheney, we all want acceptance. Toleration, by definition, suggests that others are willing to hold their noses in your presence, as though that is somehow better than beating you up.

So I'll tell you what: I won't tolerate you and you can stop trying to tolerate me. Let's instead pull a Rodney King: "Can we all just get along?" King didn't live long enough to see that happen. We haven't yet either, but perhaps we can do something about it now. **TD**

## Township Dems Honor Ram Villivalam

On May 19, at the Sixth Annual Patrick S. Botterman Memorial Breakfast, the Wheeling and Palatine Township Democratic Organizations honored local volunteer and dedicated campaigner Ram Villivalam with the Botterman Leadership Award. Patrick Botterman led the Wheeling Township Democratic Organization for many years before his unexpected passing in 2008.

This year's award breakfast featured 10th District Congressman Brad Schneider as keynote speaker. Many local dignitaries, as well as past award recipients, were among those who came to listen to Schneider's remarks and honor Ram Villivalam.

Villivalam has worked on the campaign staffs of Sen. Dan Kotowski, Congressional candidate Dan Seals, and Rep. Schneider. He regularly offers advice and volunteers his time for countless other campaigns and causes, maintaining active membership in several local civic organizations.

According to Rob Nesvacil, Wheeling Dems Committeeman, "Ram Villivalam is a compassionate and dedicated citizen who exemplifies Pat Botterman's philosophy of Integrity, Loyalty, Patriotism, Leadership, and Vision."



Botterman honoree Ram Villivalam with his mother, flanked by Wheeling Dems Committeeman Rob Nesvacil and Congressman Brad Schneider.

# One American's Experience with Japan's National Health Care System

by Steven Gan

As most Americans know, Obamacare is to be implemented on a full-scale basis in 2014. Although members of Tenth Dems are pleased about this wonderful legislation that will help to give all Americans the opportunity to be insured, there will still always be those individuals who are against this healthcare program.

I can understand that people may oppose a particular program because they had some direct negative experience with it. Or they tried it and, for whatever reason, they didn't like it. However, it confounds me when some people are completely against trying a program that they have no experience with and which, in the end, could actually benefit them directly.

Fortunately for me, I've had the experience of living and working in a country and within a society that provides universal healthcare. From 1989 to 2005 I lived and worked in Tokyo. For the first three years I was working at Nippon Motorola and for another 12 years I operated my own company.

Whether you work for someone else or are self-employed, everyone in Japan is obligated to contribute to the National Health Care System. What this means is that out of everyone's paycheck, a small percentage—call it a contribution or call it a tax—is deducted and paid into the healthcare system.

When I worked for Nippon Motorola, about two percent of my monthly paycheck was deducted. I didn't feel that a deduction of that size was an infringement on my economic security. The deduction can range from zero to five percent of pay; naturally, the more you earn, the more you are required to contribute.

I never heard any complaints about the insurance contribution rate from other people and so I presume that the Japanese people also accept this cost (just as we do Social Security taxes) as necessary.

Subsequently, when I had my own company and had a staff of 25 employees, I was required as the employer to match the total health insurance contribution paid by the employees. Whatever the total monthly or quarterly amount that was paid by the staff, I had to match and pay the same amount to the government. Is this fair? As a businessman, I was not happy about paying something that would affect my bottom line. But at the same time, the health insurance contribution was a cost built into the entire social and economic fabric of operating a well-developed society that protects and supports its citizens.

Then I experienced the value of this system firsthand. One day back in 2001, I went to have some sushi and other traditional



foods with some friends of mine. It was a great time of eating and drinking. However, when I got home I started feeling sick, and by the morning I was on the floor “tossing my cookies.” Not only was I sick to my stomach, but I also had to call an ambulance to get to the nearby hospital.

After I gave a little blood and was given several tests, it was determined that I had a very bad case of food poisoning. The doctor who was attending to me was not sure which of the foods I had eaten the night before was the cause, but the end result is that I was attached to a bag of intravenous fluids, fed rice gruel called Kayo (very nutritional), and kept hospitalized for two days and two nights until my symptoms cleared up.

The hospital was really nice, very clean, and had a warm decor. Actually the interior looked like one of those traditional Japanese-style inns and made patients feel less like they were in the hospital and more like they were on a short vacation. The overall care I received was excellent. Nurses were attentive and very polite, and the doctor smiled and told me, “You’ll live.”

As I was leaving the hospital, the check-out process was quite easy. I signed off on a couple of forms and paid my patient share, which came to about \$30. Yes, read that again. No missing decimal points. Thirty dollars.

How much do two nights and two days in a hospital room cost here in the US? According to the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, a leading health statistics and facts research publisher, the average cost per day in State/Local Government Hospitals is \$1,625. In non-profit and for-profit hospitals the average cost per day is \$2,025 and \$1,629, respectively. These costs only include the facility's charges and do not include medications, exams, procedures (like major and minor operations), etc., that are often provided to treat a patient. In other words, depending upon the reason for being admitted to a hospital in the US, it's not unreasonable to expect a two-day hospital bill to come to tens of thousands of dollars. For those without insurance who are struggling financially, this kind of cost would certainly break them.

So having participated in a national health insurance system that basically paid for all of my emergency medical needs, I can only say in retrospect that two percent out of my monthly paycheck was unquestionably well worth it.

I'm sure there will be a lot of bumps in the road in the implementation of Obamacare, but those bumps will seem very minor if all you need to pay on your way out of the hospital is some very marginal amount like \$30. **TD**

# Tenth Dems a Sizable Presence at Annual Power Lunch

by Ilya Sheyman

On May 3, scores of Tenth Dems members joined close to 1,600 other “powerful women and secure men” from across the Chicago area for Rep. Jan Schakowsky’s annual Power Lunch. This year’s event was co-hosted by Tenth Dems Chair Lauren Beth Gash.

Lauren helped kick off the festivities by welcoming attendees and introducing the audience to all the work Tenth Dems volunteers have been doing in support of Democratic candidates and Democratic values. She also highlighted Tenth Dems community activities, including last month’s third annual poetry/prose slam for highschoolers organized through the Community Connection.



Jan Schakowsky was impressive, as always. Her remarks made it clear that she believes women can do anything. As one of our most progressive congresswomen, she proves that point every day.

This year’s keynote speaker was Cecile Richards, the inspiring president of Planned Parenthood and daughter of trailblazing former Texas Governor Ann Richards. Cecile shared with us



the powerful role Planned Parenthood plays in so many women’s lives. She noted that one in four women in this country access Planned Parenthood’s services at some point in their lives—for everything from routine health screenings to family-planning services.



Among other things, Cecile reminded her audience of the importance of having pro-choice allies in the White House, in Congress, and in state legislatures across the country. She told the

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*Joining Rep. Schakowsky and Ms. Richards at the Power Lunch, clockwise from upper left: Hon. Lauren Beth Gash, Gregg Garmisa, and award-winning architect Jeanne Gang; Dr. Ashish Sen; Cook County Water Commissioner and frequent Tenth News contributor Debra Shore with Marj Halperin; Linda Sher, Marcia Balonick, and Joy Malkus; Tenth Dems co-founder Nancie Blatt and daughter Stephanie; Event Co-Chairs Grace Hou and Lauren Beth Gash.*

# Suddenly, It's Summer...

... or it will be soon. Save the date for the Tenth Dems Candidate and Volunteer Appreciation Reception.

**Sunday, June 23, 2013  
5:00 to 7:00PM**

**10th District location, to be announced**

We will be celebrating Democrats who stepped forward to run for office within the 10th Congressional District and the volunteers who supported them. 10th District residents are fortunate to have so many top-notch candidates to choose from.

Wisconsin Congresswoman Gwen Moore will be our Keynote Speaker, fresh off of a recent appearance on *The Colbert Report*. Rep. Moore verbally danced to Stephen Colbert's questions with nimbleness and verve and made the puckish talk show host scramble to find ways to dupe her, to no avail.

Rep. Moore serves the Milwaukee area, and she is the first African-American woman to be elected to Congress from Wisconsin. She worked on neighborhood development and economic opportunity programs for the City of Milwaukee and later held state-level positions addressing issues of health and social services, as well as housing. Since her election to Congress, her focus has been on budget, finance, trade, and international security. She is a strong supporter of women's rights, job creation, and economic and social programs benefiting lower income Americans.

All Democrats are welcome to attend. For more information, please visit our website, email [events@tenthdems.org](mailto:events@tenthdems.org), or call (847) 266-VOTE (8683).

## **Power Lunch** *continued from page 7*

story of a woman who came into a Planned Parenthood center in Texas for essential care. When asked how she'd learned about the healthcare services the Planned Parenthood clinic offered, the woman cited a recent speech by President Obama.

While we celebrate the presence of a champion of women's rights in the White House, Cecile warned us about the need to keep our guard up against the literally hundreds of radical anti-choice measures proposed this year by state legislators across the country. In Kansas, Nebraska, and dozens of other states, Tea Party Republicans have continued to enact restrictions that would make access to abortion all but impossible and to subject women to all sorts of degrading and



invasive procedures as a precondition to obtaining legal abortion services. Cecile regaled us with stories of brave women—young and old—who've stood up to the Right Wing's attacks on their ability to access basic healthcare services and how Planned Parenthood has used social media and grassroots organizing to roll back the tide.

After hearing Lauren, Jan, and Cecile, we all came away reinvigorated and committed to the long fight ahead for full equality for women in the work-

place and for the preservation of every woman's right to make her own decisions about her health, including whether and when to have a child. **TD**

# Tenth Dems Goes to the Theatre

by Adrienne Kirshbaum

Long before Hollywood made *Norma Rae*, Broadway staged a musical comedy that celebrated labor and labor unions—*The Pajama Game*. Saturday evening, April 27, was Tenth Dems Night at Highland Park's The Music Theatre Company's revival of this 1950s opus, but the drama began earlier for those gathered at a pre-show dinner. At Phoenicia, also in Highland Park, the star was the restaurant's chef, Joseph, who delivered a monologue on his healthy Mediterranean cuisine and held diners' attention with his mouth-watering descriptions of the specialties on that night's menu. All agreed the dishes lived up to expectations, but if Chef Joseph ever tires of creating delicious delicacies, he might have a future on the stage.

The Music Theatre Company served the evening's main course, *The Pajama Game*, which opened on Broadway on May 13, 1954, and ran for 1,063 performances. With book by George Abbott and Richard Bissell and music and lyrics by Richard Adler and Jerry Ross, *The Pajama Game* was based on Bissell's novel *7 ½ Cents*. A critical favorite that received three Tony awards, including Best Musical, *The Pajama Game* was later made into a hit movie starring Doris Day.

*The Pajama Game* is the story of a labor dispute at the Sleepytime Pajama Company in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The workers at the plant are members of the Associated Garment Workers of North America, Local 343 and are asking for a 7 ½-cent increase in their hourly wages. The showdown between labor and management is as important to the plot as the romantic complications between factory superintendent Sid Sorokin and Babe Williams, the union's one-woman grievance committee. Both situations are settled to everyone's satisfaction by play's end.

The cast of The Music Theatre Company's production of *The Pajama Game* made the story come alive. They lifted their voices in song after song that made audience members smile with recognition. They performed dance numbers with energy and expertise, elicited laughter at all the right places, and created a nostalgic trip to 1950s Iowa right here in 2013 Illinois. And without detracting from the fun and fluff, the production served as a vivid reminder of the important role unions played in mid-20th century America, protecting workers from exploitation and ensuring that they be paid a living wage.

As a special feature honoring Workers Memorial Day, a Talk-Back was held after the performance, moderated by Larry Spivak, Regional Director for AFSCME (American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees), Council 31. Spivak was joined by Sue Eberle of the Lake County Federation of Teachers, Local 504; Jessica Redish, Founding Artistic Director of The Music Theatre Company and choreographer of *The Pajama Game*; Jess McLeod, director, and Matt Deitchman, music director of the play.

From dinner to discussion, Tenth Dems Theatre Night was boffo. It was a banquet for our senses and our minds. **TD**

1. Ellie Sylvan greets moderator Larry Spivak. 2. Joe Dupuis. 3. Event organizers check in a new arrival. 4. Adrienne Kirshbaum and Marguerite Hampton. 5. Event co-chair Michelle Feldman introduces the panelists. 6. Joe Adler and Karen McCormick. 7. Carol Spielman and Moraine Township Supervisor Anne Flanigan Bassi. 8. Talk-Back panelists listen to a question. 9. Terry and Bill Jones. 10. Audience members enjoy the post-performance panel discussion.



## Third Annual Poetry (+Prose) Slam:

# Young Writers Step Up to the Microphone and Share their Dreams



“Throughout history dreams have inspired, alarmed and challenged us to become more than what we are; to act for change; and to make the world a more beautiful place. What are your dreams, where do they come from and where will they take you?” This was

the question posed to high school students from the northern sector of the 10th Congressional District who gathered for the Tenth Dems Community Connection’s Third Annual Poetry (+ Prose) Slam and Awards event on Thursday, May 16, at the Ramada Inn in Waukegan.

Reaching out to local high schoolers through their teachers, the Community Connection’s Annual Poetry (+ Prose) contest provides the opportunity for students to submit original works of poetry and prose and to compete for cash prizes. Contestants’ entries are judged without any identifying information so the judges have



no knowledge of a student’s school, age, sex, race, religion, or any other descriptive trait or characteristic. Following the judging process, all contestants

are invited to attend this Annual Poetry + Prose Slam with the option of publicly reading their own works.

Winners of the contest were announced during the evening. In addition to the awards for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in both the Poetry and Prose categories, this year featured an Audience Choice award where all in attendance had the chance to vote for their favorite. Hon. Lauren Beth Gash, Chair of the Tenth Dems, launched the evening. “As Democrats,” she said, “we highly value the arts. I cannot stress enough the importance of participation in creative expression, especially at a young age. I hope these students continue to share their gifts in the future.”

Kevin Lampe, who served as emcee, grew up in the area, and he quickly put the young contestants at ease with stories of his work as an internationally-recognized expert in political, media, and communications strategies. Lampe has consulted with such luminaries as Vice President Joe Biden, Second Lady Dr. Jill Biden, Vice President Al Gore, President Bill Clinton, *Hotel Rwanda*’s Paul Rusesabagina, President Barack Obama,



Rosa Parks, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Sr., and Erik Estrada.

Then students took their turns in front of the microphone and proudly shared their thoughts, hopes, and, yes,

dreams through their works of poetry and prose. Participants addressed “dreaming” from numerous perspectives. One student offered a vivid description of the coming of a nightmare, while another reminisced on the easy beauty of younger days. Yet another student shared her dream to be an actress and offered an arresting explanation of why she is justified in her desire. A

dream of a storybook wedding and another of making the world a better place were also shared. There were dreams of limitless determination or feelings of restriction, and ruminations on love and desire or the



lack thereof. Some shared dreams of fitting in, or of not wanting to at all. One student shared a story of his proving authority wrong and, more important, proving himself right. A real sense of community dominated the room as students expressed their candid emotions, desires, dreams, and nightmares.

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## Slam Entrants Inspire *continued from page 1*

Democratic political consultant whose credentials for emceeing this local poetry and prose reading included organizing four Democratic National Conventions, read brief biographies of each student who came to the microphone.

Oh my, the intensity of these kids. They loved school; they’ve been accepted to good colleges; they want to save the world. They gave me hope for our future.

The work they read was lovely. Some spoke boldly into the microphone; others barely whispered. A few wrote in traditional rhyming schemes; others wandered in free verse. There were moving essays that brought floods of applause. But the common theme was intelligence, serious thought applied to the topic, reflections on their lives, where they came from, and where they wanted to go.

It was beautiful. It gave me hope, and I was proud to have been there and proud to be a member of Tenth Dems.

Maybe the world won’t end when the kids take over, after all. **TD**

## Third Annual Slam *continued from page 10*

As the evening progressed, with the encouragement of Emcee Lampe, many students who at first had been reticent to read aloud stepped forward with newfound confidence, undoubtedly stirred by the works of their peers.

This year's award winners in the Poetry category included: Topiltzin Gomez, 1st place for "Red Eye Lullaby;" Nathali Ibarra, 2nd place for "Above My Head;" and Alejandro Martinez, 3rd place for "We Both Reached for the Gun." In the Prose category, winners were: Ulises Acosta, 1st place for "The Man in the Dark Corner;" Jennifer Coenejo, 2nd place for "Something Lovely Wicked and True;" and Josue Pasilla, 3rd place for "A Sunny Summer Day." The Audience Choice award went to Gilberto Colin for his prose piece, "Fitting In."

The audience and organizers alike were in awe of the talent displayed by the student readings. Organizer and Community Connection Executive Director Laura Tomsy commented, "The level of sophistication and artistic ability displayed by these young people was truly remarkable. I'm glad we were able to bring them all together, and we look forward to continuing this program in the coming years."

The contest and slam event was initially pioneered by Community Connection volunteer Elizabeth Bloom Albert in 2011. An accomplished writer in her own right, Elizabeth sought a way to share her love of writing and provide young authors with a more public and supportive way to express themselves.

We were honored to have this year's entries reviewed by guest judges Judith M.K. Tepfer, and Patrick Murfin, accomplished authors who volunteered their time in support of our young writers and this program. Ms. Tepfer has been Editor-in-Chief of *East on Central* since its inception in 2002. She is also a freelance literary editor and writer, primarily of poetry. Mr. Murfin is a poet, blogger, amateur historian, and social justice activist living in Crystal Lake, Illinois. His collection of poetry, *We Build Temples in the Heart*, was published in 2004. He blogs daily at *Heretic, Rebel, a Thing to Flout: An Eclectic Journal of History, Opinion, Poetry and General Bloviating*.

Please watch for the upcoming Special Literary Edition to see the extended list of winners, including Honorable Mention awards in both Poetry and Prose categories, as well as full reprints of the winning manuscripts.



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