

January 2019



MANATEE MATTERS

NEWSLETTER OF THE MANATEE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Meet Our New Leaders



Newly elected Chair of the Manatee County Democratic Party is Tracy Pratt, 2018 Democratic candidate for State House District 71. Tracy has a long history of community involvement, including environmental protection and affordable housing. Her legal career focus has included legal aid and civil rights. She is a Bradenton attorney with her own legal practice specializing in criminal appeals and post-conviction matters.

“I am looking forward to expanding the energy and momentum our party has achieved since the 2016 elections,” says Pratt. “Democrats are not only the guardians of politics which seek to give everyone equal opportunity, but we are on the frontlines of protecting our democracy. My vision for our party utilizes our growth to carry our message, to increase our visibility, and to reach out to disenfranchised communities. I know that together we will increase our success in 2020. History is made by those who show up!”

Manatee County Democratic Executive Committee

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UPCOMING EVENTS:

ManateeCountyDemocrats.com

César (CJ) García, newly elected Vice Chair, has actively participated in several local campaigns and was secretary of the Young Democrats of Sarasota-Manatee. He is a member of the Manatee Hispanic Caucus and the NAACP and re-established the Black and Brown Coalition in Manatee to unify communities and encourage voting. He serves on the board of Amigos Now, a nonprofit helping first-generation students achieve a college education. CJ runs a marketing and consulting group to help small businesses expand, and he partners with area universities providing internships in his company for political science majors. “The party has done a great job in growing its base in Manatee,” he says. “I want to help the Chair as much as possible in engaging with the local population and in earlier recruiting of candidates for office.” - *Barbara Hyde*

Thank You, Sheryl Wilson

Outgoing Manatee Democratic Party Chair Sheryl Wilson guided the party through a period of record growth and grassroots support.

Local people know Sheryl Wilson from her appearances on ABC 7 news roundtables, her statements at Manatee County Commission meetings and quotes in the news media. But there is much more to know and celebrate about her four-year tenure as Manatee County Democratic Party Chair, a volunteer position nearly equal in time and responsibility to a regular full-time job. *(Continued)*



Sheryl Wilson (Continued)

Sheryl has worked to build an inclusive party where multiple interest affiliations and constituencies are welcome, and several new clubs and caucuses were established under her tenure. She reached out to bring younger Democrats into the party by building ties to local high school clubs and facilitated the move to a new headquarters that offers a space easily accessible to the community.

The Manatee Democrats' annual spring fundraising dinner reflected the enormous growth of enthusiasm channeled into the party, with record turnouts several years in a row now. Two years ago, Sheryl arranged to have all the declared Democratic gubernatorial candidates speak at the dinner. Tallahassee Mayor Andrew Gillum brought down the house with an inspiring speech capped off with a standing ovation. Afterward, Chris King, who became Gillum's running mate, spoke about his positive experience at the Manatee County dinner in his stump speeches. In 2018, keynote speaker, former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley, attracted another record crowd, who were inspired by his message to "Take Back Your State."



In 2018, Rev. James Golden, a Manatee County Democratic Party state committeeman, won a seat on the Manatee County School Board in August. In November, the party fielded two first-time female candidates, Tracy Pratt and myself, for Florida State Representative. The party also backed two Manatee County Commission candidates, Melton Little and Reggie Bellamy, who performed well, with Bellamy picking up a seat. Manatee County Democratic Party's coordinated outreach to voters was among the top in the state of Florida, with over 10,000 county voters reached immediately prior to the election through canvassing and phone-banking.

Sheryl improved the visibility of the party in the community and statewide through branding campaigns. She emphasized that even though Democrats trail the opposition in voter registrations, #ManateeMatters because of the rich trove of votes and local talent here that contribute to important state and national efforts. Before the mid-terms, Sheryl introduced the party and its new dynamism to hundreds, if not thousands, of local Democrats through countless meet & greets, candidate forums, and canvassing events, demonstrating our second slogan: #ManateeMomentum.

Kudos, Sheryl Wilson. Thanks for your leadership and dedication. Our community is grateful for your inspiring record of service. - *Liv Coleman*

New Leadership in the Democratic Women's Club of Manatee County



The Democratic Women's Club of Manatee starts 2019 with a new President, Erika Lundquist, and a new Board. What hasn't changed is our great community of like-minded women working to turn every town, county, city, and region in Florida Blue. We are seeking new members who will be trained in leadership and campaign skills so they are ready to run for political office and manage campaigns. Members monitor and lobby legislation that will affect Floridians, especially women. Our members also participate in candidate debates, enjoy a political discussions, volunteer and contribute in many ways and advocate for causes they believe in. The Democratic Women's Club of Manatee is devoted to furthering women's Democratic values. Contact: Mary Young, 941-264-5355. - *Mary Young*

2018 Manatee County Elections in Three Numbers

2018 was an incredible year for the Manatee Democratic party with great candidates in both state and local elections, supported by an unprecedented level of volunteer activity. Three numbers highlight what we accomplished together in 2018 and why we should be optimistic about the future of Manatee County.

52 Precincts: In 52 out of Manatee County's 70 precincts, voters preferred a prominent Manatee Democrat, Rev. James Golden, over a Rick Scott appointee, John Colon, in the District 5 School Board race. Unsurprisingly, Rev. Golden's best performances were in heavily democratic precincts in central Bradenton and Palmetto, but he also won in precincts such as Lakewood Ranch, Myakka City, Parish and Anna Maria Island where Republicans have a registration advantage. School Board elections are non-partisan, but where there was a clear choice between a Democratic and a Republican vision for our schools, Manatee voters throughout the county were willing to support a Democratic candidate who challenged the status quo.

1.5 percentage points: The average margin by which Tracy Pratt and Liv Coleman over-performed in their precincts relative to the Republican registration advantage. By contrast, in 2014 in Manatee County, every single Democratic candidate performed more than 1.5 points WORSE than the registration advantage would predict, a trend that had been typical up until 2018. Clearly, we need to work to reduce the Republican registration gap in Manatee County, however, it is encouraging to see that even in a year without a presidential candidate at the top of the ticket, strong local candidates with the support of the local party can overcome at least part of that registration advantage by turning out their base and appealing to non-party voters.

18,100 votes: The number of additional votes that Andrew Gillum received in Manatee County as compared to Charlie Crist in 2014. Some of this was due to population growth, but over 10,000 additional votes can be attributed to efforts by the candidates and the local Democratic Party. Unfortunately, turn-out on the other side was also very high. Nonetheless, our voter turnout efforts were dramatically more effective than they have been in past off-year elections. We have also learned in which parts of the county we have opportunities for even better turnout in 2020. - *Matt Lepinski*



Meet Rev. James T. Golden, Esq., Manatee County School Board, District 5



The Reverend James T. Golden, sworn into the Manatee County School Board on November 20, 2018, says he follows the principle of "Every day, something must be done. Everything must move forward." One of his immediate priorities is the offer of an employment contract to the interim superintendent. He asserts that while he has some reservations, he feels that the district must move forward. Literacy is one of his most pressing educational concerns, citing that half of Manatee County children can't read by third grade, a statistic he feels that should concern everyone.

In one of his most inclusive steps, Golden is holding meetings with his constituents at the Lakewood Ranch YMCA from 6:00 - 8:00 PM on the Thursday before each School Board meeting. Golden hopes attendance will continue to grow and that these meetings provide a meaningful platform for people to voice their concerns about issues and operations. The School Board meets the second and fourth Tuesday each month. Their upcoming agenda are provided at:

<http://manateecountyschoolfl.iqm2.com/Citizens/Default.aspx>

Golden has been married to Mildred for 26 years. They have six children and 13 grandchildren.

Contact: golden2j@manateeschools.net - *Nancy Hadley*

2018 Manatee Democrats Recap - We Have Come So Far

Anybody who stepped into the Manatee County Democratic Party office from January to November last year saw a wave of activity, excitement and sense of urgency. The year kicked off with our **Mid-Term Initiative Workshop** where over 150 attendees learned about our goals and operations, and brainstormed ideas for voter outreach. In June, our leadership attended the Florida Democratic Party's *Leadership Blue* conference and Democratic County Chair Association meeting.

Office Operations continued strong with the Cortez Road office open, staffed and active every weekday throughout the year with a steadily growing office volunteer base. We showed off our presence with a new lighted overhead sign and leased a commercial printer, using it for an unprecedented amount of printed materials.

Precinct Development buzzed with dozens of meet-and-greets, candidate forums and candidate fundraisers. We recruited more precinct leaders, led or assisted in canvassing for every almost county precinct and expanded our expertise in voter targeting software.

Our **Annual Fundraising Dinner** was the most successful ever with a capacity crowd, generous silent/live auctions and program book, wonderful local candidates and guest speaker Governor Martin O'Malley.

Communications kicked up several notches with a robust, informative website, a monthly/quarterly newsletter and email event reminders to our expanding list of interested Democrats.

Clubs and Caucus activities soared. To name a few: Introductory letters/voting information mailed to all newly registered Democrats and No-Party-Affiliations (AMI Club), Coastal Rainbow Forum radio interviews (LGTBA Caucus), voter registration canvassing (Democratic Women's Club), precinct support (Lakewood Ranch Club), voter outreach postcards (Manatee Democratic Club) and endorsement/support for Andrew Gillum (Manatee-Sarasota Black Caucus). The Progressive Caucus became chartered and immediately began voter outreach activities. The Manasota Young Democrats elected new leadership, a new Veterans Club formed and the newly-forming North River Democratic Club held their first meeting.

Candidate Support remained up-front and center. A highlight was a visit by Andrew Gillum, resulting in Sheryl Wilson being invited to participate in state-wide conference calls and promote #ManateeMomentum. Manatee County Democrats teamed up with the candidates for a huge Get-Out-the-Vote initiative. We reached over 10,000 voters and ranked 1st, 2nd or 3rd in the state each day during the final few days leading up to the election. - *Bev Pannee*

Saturday, April 13 Annual Dinner - Save the Date!

Mark your calendars and look for more information on the fun and fabulous annual Manatee County Democratic Dinner, our primary fundraising event to keep operations going. The organizers are already working to make an exciting 2019 event!

We are looking for silent and live auction items (anticipated event highlights). If you or a business you know would like to donate items, please contact Peggie Ward, drpeggiewardphd@gmail.com, or Mary Jo Kline, mjkline@visi.com.

We are also seeking advertisers for our dinner program book. Attendees often take this book home and refer to it when seeking businesses that support our Democratic values. If you or a business you know would like to advertise, please contact Barbara Hyde, bhyde@bhyde.net.

