

DA Spotlight on Dr. Bill

By Bruce Taub

August 24, 2007, Laguna Hills, CA

Bill Honigman, but everyone knows him as "Doctor Bill."



He's a 54-year-old emergency room physician, a long time progressive activist, the California Progressive Democrats of America (PDA) "chair," It's people like Bill who make Progressive Democrats of America (PDA) the vibrant progressive organization it is, people who actively organize for PDA at Democratic Club meetings, on the street, at the water cooler at work, and in the offices of their elected representatives.

Because of people like Bill, PDA has grown in California from 7 chapters in 2006 to over 20 chapters in 2007. "It's about my passion and values of course," says Bill, "but it's also about the fundamental goodness of the American people, as well as living out my belief in the American democratic ideal. Everywhere I go I see that people are on our side. Our job as PDA, and as the voice of the progressive grassroots, is to remind our leaders that the will and wisdom of the people is paramount in a democracy."

And while Bill is testament to the fact the "Progressive Democratic Movement" is growing across the country, he is also quick to acknowledge that there is a long road to travel if the work of PDA chapters is to complement and in some instances supplant local Democratic clubs and caucuses. "I think of it all as one huge lump of clay," says Bill, "and what I'm really doing is working on my corner of the mound. Our chapter meets monthly: we work on the war in Iraq, single-payer health care, immigrant rights, and other cornerstone progressive issues. We get out to organize when we can, and to protest when necessary, including a recent sit-in by PDAers at our local Congresswoman's office. Yet California has 53 congressional districts, and PDA has liaisons in only 20 of them. We need to cover them all."

So how do you work to grow PDA, Bill was asked. "We seek more people who are willing to step up to leadership positions. We can provide them with lots of support, but someone has got to do the actual work. We need people who promote PDA, people who go to meetings and make announcements about PDA, people who tell others that PDA is the 'Democratic Wing' of the Democratic Party. We need people who are simply passing around clipboards at meetings and telling everyone who will listen that if they want to learn more about where the spirit of Bobby Kennedy, Paul Wellstone, and Gene McCarthy live all they have to do is find out more about or join PDA."