

My friend Geri sent me a message from a group of progressives in Shorewood and Whitefish Bay, here in Wisconsin, who are organizing on the neighborhood level. She asked me to pass this along to my rant list, so here it is...

Cheers,

-nic

If anyone wants to join Grassroots Shorewood, e-mail Keith saying Geri sent ya'...

Geri

Monday, September 27, 2004

Message From Milwaukee

Keith Schmitz is the state coordinator for Rapid Response Wisconsin.

I somewhat reluctantly went off to the July Democracyfest out in Pittsfield, MA at the urging of my wife. I expected to see the good friends I made during the Dean campaign and have a little fun.

What I didn't expect was to get charged up thanks to training in campaign organizing hosted by the folks from Latinos for Democracy. It was truly exciting to learn how a group of friends and neighbors could effectively pull together a grassroots political organization.

Getting back home to Shorewood, I quickly called some friends together. Our core group opened up our address books and called an organizing meeting at a local coffee shop.

We set up Grassroots Shorewood for us as neighbors to band together not just for this campaign, but also (as Governor Dean has urged) because we have to have the means in place to continue fighting for progressive values after the November election.

The other idea was to set up the logistics to get people out on the street to canvass without having to go downtown to get material and assignments. This is community values in action and would save everyone, including the professional campaign staffs, valuable time.

Five minutes before the event - no one in the place. Ten minutes later, close to 90 people streamed in and Grassroots Shorewood was off and running. A second meeting this Monday has brought the number of volunteers for the Consolidated Democratic campaign to 120. As like the

Dean campaign, we saw many people turn out who had never or seldom worked on a campaign before.

Up farther north Whitefish Bay has long been regarded as a GOP bastion. Deborah Hufford, an attendee at the Shorewood event, last night called a rally to be held in "The Bay."

The results were to say the least stunning. It was 500 people who couldn't believe they were seeing 500 people - at a Democratic event. Congressional candidate Bryan Kennedy was called away from fund raising activities to get up to Whitefish Bay immediately to address the crowd.

Representatives from the other campaigns were there as well, though there was no formal party participation in pulling this together.

We also launched a similar group in Port Washington and will be starting another in Fox Point.

The Grassroots Shorewood model of a community of citizens taking the initiative to pull themselves together and organize has spread throughout the Milwaukee North Shore. Thanks to my wife's insistence the Kerry campaign and others will have a pool of nearly 400 volunteers to

bring home victory and maybe even topple long time Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner. We have the power!

Keith