

THE NEXT CHAPTER NEWSLETTER | AUGUST 2025

A Democratic Party Newsletter Made for and by Gratiot County Members
Chief Editors, Nancy O'Brien & Lisa Gregory



Chair Chat By Christie Freestone

When we acknowledge that “the ball is in our court,” it reminds us that we have a role to play in democracy. We need to take action, make decisions, and engage with our fellow citizens. The heart of democracy relies on our willingness to participate and respond to the challenges that arise. We can be the change-makers. --Author Unknown

We are living in a time when our democracy feels fragile, and every decision made at the local, state, and national levels ripples into our daily lives. Here in Gratiot County, we know the challenges are real. We live in a Republican stronghold where far too many folks rely only on Fox News for their information, where straight-ticket red votes are cast without ever listening to the other side of the story. That reality can feel discouraging—but it is also why our work as Democrats is more important than ever.

Our mission as the Gratiot County Democratic Party isn't just about elections—it's about building stronger, more connected communities. We are working to grow local leaders, to show up at community events, to be active in civic groups, and to create personal relationships that open doors for meaningful conversations. Real change doesn't come from shouting across the divide. It comes from showing our neighbors who we are—people who care about schools, farmers, workers, healthcare, and democracy itself.

To do this effectively, we need to be visible, active, and steady. That's why keeping our Democratic office open year-round is so critical. It's not just a building—it's a beacon of hope, a hub for organizing, and a place where our values of fairness, compassion, and justice are put into action. But keeping the lights on takes resources. Rent, utilities, outreach, and event expenses add up quickly. That's where you come in.

We're asking our supporters to join our Lights On for Democracy monthly giving campaign. Your recurring donation—whether it's \$10, \$25, \$50, or more—helps us maintain a strong presence right here in Gratiot County. Every dollar keeps us on the map as a force for good in our community. And **right now, your impact can be doubled**. Thanks to the generosity of Dan Greening, any yearly donation of \$1,000 (that's just \$84 a month) made by October 31, 2025, will be matched up to \$5,000. If just five or more folks step forward to meet this challenge, we'll be well on our way to fully funding our office for 2026. That means other fundraising efforts can go directly toward supporting Democratic candidates and community programs.

We know these are chaotic and uncertain times. The federal and state governments are mired in dysfunction, and too many policies are being written without everyday people in mind. But right here at home, we can be a steady, reliable voice for progress. We can ensure that our neighbors know Democrats aren't just about politics—we're about people.

The road isn't easy. But with your help, we can shine a light that cuts through the noise, the misinformation, and the hopelessness. Let's keep the lights on for democracy in Gratiot County. Let's show our community what it looks like to care, to act, and to believe in a better future—together.



Lights On for Democracy

Help us keep the heart of local democracy shining bright! Join our "Lights On for Democracy" **monthly giving campaign** to support the Gratiot County Democratic Party office. Your recurring donation—no matter the size—helps cover rent, utilities, outreach, and events that keep our movement strong and visible. **And right now, your impact can be doubled.** Thanks to the generosity of Dan Greening, any yearly donation of \$1,000 (that's just \$84 a month) made by October 31, 2025, will be matched up to \$5,000. Together, we can keep the lights on, the doors open, and the energy high for progress in Gratiot County!



Click [here](#) or
scan to donate.

The Future of Our Schools: Funding Changes and Their Local Impact

The Gratiot County Democrats would like to thank Paul Hungerford, Superintendent of the Gratiot-Isabella RESD, for his engaging and informative presentation on school funding.

Paul helped us better understand how our RESD operates, the basics of school finance, and what it takes to run a school district. He explained how schools are financed, who is responsible for funding decisions, and the real-world impact of these choices. Paul also shared the history of funding cuts our districts have faced and what future cuts could mean for vital services. His presentation gave us valuable insight into the challenges and responsibilities of keeping our schools strong for every student.



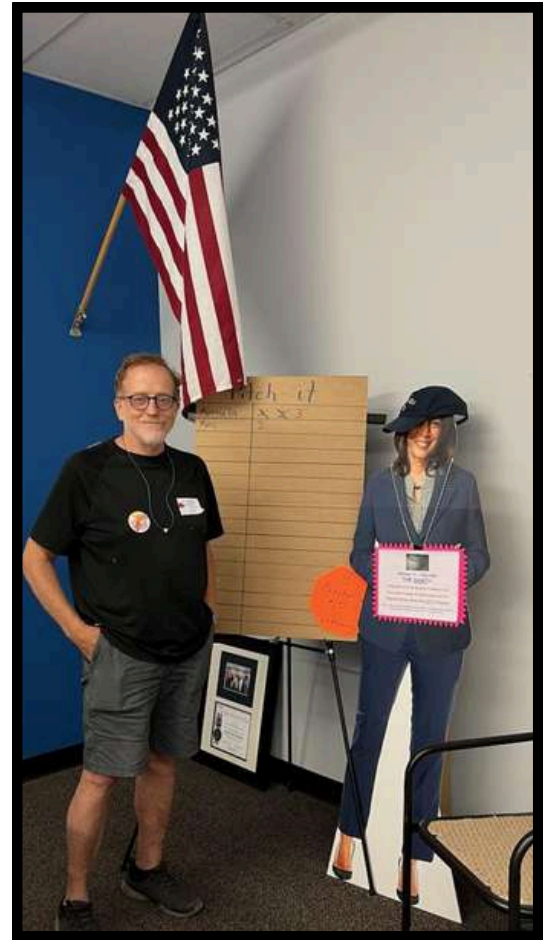
Gratiot County Democrats Volunteer at Rural Urban Days

The Gratiot County Democrats were proud to lend a hand at this year's Rural Urban Days steak dinner, an annual event celebrating our community's rich agricultural heritage. Volunteers helped serve delicious meals and enjoyed friendly conversation with other volunteers and those who came to eat. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect with neighbors, support a local tradition, and honor the hard work and dedication of our farming community.



Mystery Movie Night

Our Gratiot County Democratic Party held a mystery movie night (it was a great show!) and at the same time raised over \$325.00 for Brad Ryckman's Relay for Life Team, The Hope Hunters. Our trivia winner (the Greatest of All Time) was Michael Lynch - he knows his baseball. Our "guess the baseball game" was Michele Ringle (also Greatest of All Time) - she is a great estimator! Thank you to all our wonderful helpers: Brad Ryckman, Al Bartholomew, Pam Babcock, Michele Ringle, Carolyn Studley, Christie Freestone, Lisa Gregory, Liz Weaver, and Nancy Gott. Thank you to all the supporters for the Hope Hunters Team - your donations were greatly appreciated.



Gratiot Dems Help Out Relay For Life

by Helen Soderberg

Several GCDP members participated in the Relay for Life held at Alma College on Saturday August 9th.

Bradley Ryckman did a fantastic job as team leader of The Hope Hunters. In addition to walking laps, there were many activities such as karaoke, cardio drumming, a silent auction and even ax throwing.

Members also helped with the setup and take-down of the booth. Bradley had challenging games for attendees as well as homemade treats and quite an assortment of Ty Bears for sale.



Our Relay for Life booth: reminding all that hope is louder than cancer



Bradley Ryckman, Al Bartholomew & Dan Greening

MARCH TO SAVE EDUCATION HEALTHCARE DEMOCRACY

On August 6, the Gratiot County Democrats and friends marched to save education, healthcare, and democracy. We remain committed to raising our voices, sharing our concerns, and encouraging others to join us in standing up for these essential values.



Please save THE DATE TO JOIN
THE MEMBERS & FRIENDS OF THE
GRATIOT COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY FOR THEIR...

ANNUAL

picnic

THURSDAY AUGUST 21, 2025

6:00 P.M. - DUSK

**Pie Auction (To Benefit the Dems!)
Best Burger Cookoff Contest
Door prize Give-Aways and More!**



- WE WILL BE GRILLING UP HOTDOGS, & SERVING POP/LEMONADE •
- PLEASE BRING A DISH TO SHARE & A CHAIR

Let's Grill & Chill!

*Raycraft Farm ~ 5652 West Adams Road ~ Alma
Call Renee @ 989-463-8530 to RSVP*

FEEL FREE TO BYOB OR PREFERRED BEVERAGES





DONATE YOUR UNWANTED ITEMS

ALL PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT THE ANNUAL OPERATIONS OF
THE GRATIOT COUNTY DEMOCRATIC HEADQUARTERS

ITEMS WANTED:

BOOKS

HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

GAMES & TOYS

FURNITURE/APPLIANCES/TOOLS, ETC.

CLOTHING

SPORTS EQUIPMENT/MISC. AND MORE...**EVEN THE KITCHEN SINK!**

VOLUNTEERS...gladly accepted!

Saturday ~ September 6, 2025 ~ 9 am - 5 pm
221 Hastings Street Alma

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL:
RENÉE/ARTHUR 989-463-8530 or CAROLINE 989-560-1349

The Next Chapter: A Book Club By Nancy O'Brien

The Briar Club By Kate Quinn

Our book club met on August 2 at the Lincoln Road Methodist Church to discuss *The Briar Club* by Kate Quinn. We had a very small group. This story centers around a rooming house called Briarwood House, in Washington D.C. during the Red Scare in 1950. The main characters are a group of women living there who grow a friendship during weekly dinner parties instituted by a mysterious widow who lives on the top floor of the house. Each chapter is told in the voice of a different character who lives in the house and it all culminates in a shocking night of violence on Thanksgiving.

We liked the inclusion of recipes that reflected each character's background and enjoyed the twists and turns of the story as more back story on each character was revealed. We rated this book 4.5 stars out of 5.

We were going to discuss 2 books at that book club but decided instead to discuss *Wrong Place, Wrong Time* by Gillian McAllister and *The Woman With the Cure* by Lynn Cullen at our next book club on September 6. The latter book by Lynn Cullen is an historical fiction novel about Dr. Dorothy Horstmann who played a crucial role in developing the polio vaccine. This book echoes some of the current vaccine fears and misconceptions fueled by our current Secretary of Health and Human Services, RFK Jr. Both books are available at Ballyhoo Books in Alma.

2025 BOOK CLUB CHOICES

SEPTEMBER 6

The Woman with the Cure

Lynn Cullen

OCTOBER 4

The Giver of Stars

Jojo Moyes

NOVEMBER 1

The Ballerina of Auschwitz

Edith Eger

DECEMBER 6

Christmas Bells

Jennifer Chiaverini

**You're
Invited!**

Have coffee with us!



Coffee with the Dems

**Join us the first
Tuesday
of each month**

August 5 | Sept 2 | Oct 7

9AM

**Ballyhoo Books
Alma**



Drinks with Dems

Stop in to share a beverage and chat about current issues.

AUG 26 | SEPT 16 | OCT 21

**ALMA BREWING
COMPANY**

7:00 PM



All are welcome!

Office Volunteers Needed

**[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP TO
VOLUNTEER AS AN OFFICE WORKER](#)**

We are seeking volunteers to staff our office Wednesdays from 4-6 and Saturdays from 10-12. Even committing to one shift per month will be a great help. In the difficult times ahead, we want to be available.

Sign up using the link, or contact us at 989-285-1212.

Gratiot Dems Are On Bluesky!

The Gratiot County Democrats are now on Bluesky! If you're looking for another way to connect with like-minded folks, share ideas, and keep up with what's happening locally and beyond, Bluesky is a great place to be. Join the conversation, see what others are saying, and check out Gratiot Dems on Bluesky for updates, events, and community news. Let's keep building connections and spreading our message—one post at a time!



Report Social Security Disruptions

Attorney General Dana Nessel is increasingly concerned about any disruption in social security for Michiganders. If you have experienced any unusual disruption in your social security services or you have been prevented from accessing your earned benefits, we urge you to report these issues here.

The Department of Attorney General may use the information collected for future federal actions and will not share personal identifying information without consent. Residents who seek assistance with their Social Security claims or benefits should contact their representative in the U.S. House of Representatives or Michigan's U.S. Senators for assistance.

The Department of Attorney General is a state agency and is unable to provide direct assistance.

How is the Trump Administration affecting
You • Your family • Your community

Tell us
**YOUR
STORY**

Go to michigandems.com/mystory

MI DEMS

What Can I Do?

Stay Informed



-  Check your registration status
-  Connect with your county party
-  Find your local representatives
-  Keep up with local events like town halls and protests

CHECK OUT 

Join Protests and Marches Near You



Contact Your Representatives



Spend 5 minutes, make 5 calls

Make your voice heard

5calls.org

Learn About Petitions Before You Sign



EVENTS



- **August 21** - GCDP Picnic
5:00 PM - Marc Raycraft Farm
 - **August 26** - Drinks with the Dems
7:00 PM - Alma Brewing Company
 - **September 2** - Coffee with the Dems
9:00 AM - Ballyhoo Books and Brew | Alma
 - **September 6** - GCDP Garage Sale
9:00AM-5:00PM - 221 Hastings Street | Alma
 - **September 6** - The Next Chapter Book Club
10:00 AM - GCDP Office
 - **September 15** - GCDP General Membership Meeting
7:00 PM - Gratiot Dems office
 - **September 16** - Drinks with the Dems
7:00 PM - Alma Brewing Company
 - **September 21 and 28** - Adopt-a-Highway
 - **October 4** - The Next Chapter Book Club
10:00 AM - GCDP Office
 - **October 7** - Coffee with the Dems
9:00 AM - Ballyhoo Books and Brew | Alma
 - **October 20** - GCDP General Membership Meeting
7:00 PM - Gratiot Dems office
 - **October 21** - Drinks with the Dems
7:00 PM - Alma Brewing Company
- *Trivia Every Wednesday | 7PM - The Block House in Alma**

[CLICK HERE OR
SCAN THE CODE
TO VISIT OUR
CALENDAR!](#)



FOLLOW, SHARE, AND LIKE US
ON SOCIAL MEDIA



[CLICK HERE OR
SCAN THE CODE
TO VISIT OUR
WEBSITE](#)



OFFICE HOURS:
Wednesday | 4 p.m.-6 p.m.
Saturdays | 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Gratiot County Democratic Office
1686 Wright Ave.
P.O. Box 154
Alma, MI

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gratiotdems@gmail.com
gratiotdems.net