

Mark your calendar!

## Next Membership Meeting

Wednesday, September 28, 6pm

Hawthorne Branch Library, East Washington near Milwaukee

**County Budget Update:** PD signs on to Alternative to Drastic Human Services Cuts letter  
**City Budget Update**

**Report on MMSD proceedings** regarding Madison Prep by School Board Member  
Arlene Siveira — **VOTE** on PD's position re Madison Prep

**Poverty Coalition Report**

**Call for Steering Committee Nominations**

**Announcements**

If you need an interpreter, materials in alternative formats, or other accommodations, please contact the PD office at 257-4985 one week in advance of the meeting.



# FORWARD!

VOLUME 19, NUMBER 8 • SEPTEMBER 2011

Rebuilding Politics in Dane County from the Grassroots

## Last Month's GMM

THE AUGUST GENERAL MEMBERSHIP Meeting convened in the well appointed Assembly Room at the Madison Concourse Hotel. We had a good turnout despite competing with the kick-off of the Democracy Convention with keynote speaker Tom Hayden.

County Supervisor Kyle Richmond spoke about the need for a vehicle registration fee to alleviate the budget deficit. There are 300,000 vehicles in Dane County, and at \$20 per car this would amount to \$6 million. For the cost of a few beers, we could help Dane County's neediest. Kyle said it would be difficult and support must be elicited from his colleagues and the fee made as progressive as possible.

Don and Marj Passman were at the meeting and School Board member Marj spoke about police and dogs in the schools. The police say that drug use, particularly heroin, is up in the schools and other area schools are using these tactics. Some parents, especially minorities, object to this loss of student privacy. The board wants to review police statistics from other schools before making its decision.

Susan Pastor asked for Progressive Dane's support of the Food is a Human Right resolution. This was an impressive and illuminating document and after discussion received the PD endorsement.

Brenda Konkel spoke to us about the amazing response to PD's fledgling Fighting Poverty Coalition. The Southside Madison Library's conference room was crowded with people, ideas, and energy for the first meeting. She also urged us to attend Mayor Soglin's final Community Budget Meeting and lobby for badly needed community human services.

Heidi Wegleitner brought us up to date on the Affordable Housing Action Alliance (AHAA) and the Housing is a

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## Madison Prep and the Attack on Public Education

By Thomas J. Mertz  
Chair, Progressive Dane Education Task Force  
FOR DECADES FREE MARKET ADVOCATES such as the Bradley Foundation, the Walton Foundation and the Koch brothers have waged a multi-front campaign against the public sector and the idea of the common good. Public education has been one of the key battlegrounds. In the coming weeks the Madison Metropolitan School District Board of Education will decide whether to approve a proposal for the Madison Prep Charter School.

This proposal and the chief advocate for it—Kaleem Caire of the Urban League of Greater Madison—have their roots in the Bradley/Walton/Koch movement, and like much of that movement they offer false promises of educational progress in order to obscure the damage being done to every child in our public schools.

A public hearing on the Madison Prep proposal has been scheduled for Monday October 3, at 6pm in the Doyle Building Auditorium, 545 W. Dayton St. Board Member Arlene Silveira will be at the September PD General Membership Meeting to discuss this and other MMSD issues (*see GMM agenda on the back*). Progressive Dane has not yet taken a position on this proposal, but may do so then.

The campaign to undermine public education, nationally and in Madison, has been very sophisticated politically and simplistic educationally. Caire and other "choice" advocates zero in on the failings of public schools, while dismissing the successes or often even the possibility of success within a public school context. This attention to the failings of public schools, especially for poor and minority students, is welcome.

However, instead of supporting the difficult and uncertain work of finding ways to expand educational opportunities and improve attainment for those being

left behind, the self-proclaimed "reformers" offer only unfounded market-based panaceas.

This not only ignores the essential educational work that is needed, it obscures the growing inequalities of wealth and power that are at the core of many of educational struggles.

**Madison Prep is a classic case.** The proposals (there have been multiple versions) and the extensive media campaign have centered on a narrative based on selected statistics illustrating gaps in achievement between African American (and to a lesser extent Hispanic) males and other students.

No attempt is made to locate the sources of those gaps, no attention is given to student-related factors such as poverty (Madison Prep advocates prefer to talk about race, not poverty), or mobility (in 2009, 173 of the 435 African American tenth graders were in their first year at the school they attended), or to school-based factors such as curriculum, pedagogy, grouping practices, class-size, resource allocations. Instead the one and only "solution" offered is the ill-conceived Madison Prep Charter School.

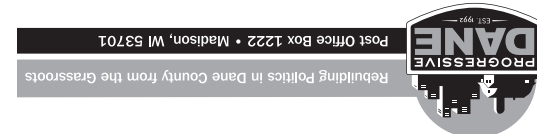
A big part of this campaign has been directed at unionized public school teachers who are blamed for all the ills of schools. Charters like Madison Prep promise to address these ills by stripping teachers of their rights and job security, forcing them to work longer hours for less pay and fewer benefits, while expanding administrative supervision via a top

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**Sign on ... to the letter to the Dane County Board advocating alternatives to drastic cuts in the county budget!**  
E-mail: [tjmertz@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tjmertz@sbcglobal.net)

**VOLUNTEER NIGHT!**  
Meet great people and help with labeling our newsletter and other easy tasks.  
Tuesday, October 18, 5:30pm  
PD Office, 1202 Williamson Street  
(Social Justice Center—conference room)  
As always, refreshments are provided!

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I support the principles and purpose of Progressive Dane. **Sign me up!**

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Mail to: Progressive Dane, P.O. Box 1222, Madison, WI 53701 • For more information: (608) 257-4985

You can also join Progressive Dane at [www.prodane.org](http://www.prodane.org)!



Forward! is the newsletter of Progressive Dane in Dane County, Wisconsin.

Progressive Dane is affiliated with the Independent Progressive Politics Network.

Progressive Dane is a democratic, membership-run organization. The following committees and task forces meet in the main conference room at the Social Justice Center, 1202 Williamson Street, unless otherwise noted.

Meeting announcements made on PDComm; also see www.prodane.org for listings, and watch PDannounce and PDdiscuss.

OCTOBER MEETINGS

Steering Committee: coordinates major activities, oversees the progress of other committees, sets the agenda for general membership meetings. Meetings are open to all PD members.

Chair: Michael Johnson, theidealvoice@gmail.com; 414 704 5811

Next meeting: Monday, October 10, 7pm Economic Issues Task Force

Contact: Rick Richards, syzygy1@charter.net; 255-5023

Elections Task Force Contact: TJ Mertz, tjmertz@sbcglobal.net; 215-1942

Elections Committee Wednesday, October 5, 8pm Contact: Michael Johnson, theidealvoice@gmail.com; 414 704 5811

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING Wednesday, October 26, 6pm

Hawthorne Branch Library, East Washington near Milwaukee; contact Dace Zeps at office@pd.org, 608 358 2940

Beer Caucus afterward, The Malt House, East Washington at Milwaukee

Housing Task Force Monday, October 3, noon; meets jointly with AHAA (Affordable Housing Action Alliance)

Contact: Heidi Wegleitner, heidimayree@gmail.com; 608 333 3676

Newsletter Consortium Articles are always accepted from PD members. Contact: office@prodane.org; 358 2940

Outreach & Fundraising Committee Monday, October 17, 6:30pm Contact: Dace Zeps, office@prodane.org; 358 2940

Policy Committee Sunday, October 9, 4pm Contact: Brenda Konkel, brendakonkel@gmail.com; 345 8720

Transportation Task Force Contact: Aaron Crandall, aaron.crandall@yahoo.com; 294 9505

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Send all correspondence to: Progressive Dane, P.O. Box 1222, Madison, WI 53701 Visit Progressive Dane on the web at www.prodane.org

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Poverty Coalition Pushes Forward

By Heidi Wegleitner

THE PD-LED FIGHTING POVERTY Coalition convened for its second large group meeting Thursday, September 15 at Edgewood College. Taking my turn as chair, I did my best to move us through a packed agenda.

After some introductions, we received reports from the three small working group meetings that took place since our last large group meeting at the end of July. Brenda Konkel spoke for the Structure/Organization committee and gave us their recommendations for a mission statement, organizational structure and membership. We have a great start on the mission statement, but coalition members will continue to provide input via email and the statement will continue to be refined.

TJ Mertz gave us a report on behalf of the Political/Advocacy working group and gained coalition approval for three action items, including endorsement of the County Budget Alternatives Letter, the Housing as a Human Right Resolution and the Food as a Human Right Resolution.

Jeanne Erickson reported that the Outreach/Mobilizing working group was

making contacts to groups we identified as potential coalition members at our first large group meeting.

A triage group was formed and was planning to meet on Sunday, September 18 to discuss addressing the immediate needs of those most vulnerable.

We spent quite a bit of time discussing how we should roll out our group to the community—press conference, direct action events—and we will have another meeting before the end of the month to start working on that piece.

It was a productive meeting, but it is obvious that we will need to continue to expand our coalition, schedule regular monthly meetings in neighborhoods directly impacted by poverty, and hopefully get some money to pay a support staff person, to sustain this ambitious organizing effort.

If you haven't already, please get informed and involved by joining our facebook group, Fighting Poverty Coalition-Dane County; and our email list, fightingpovertyindane@googlegroups.com. You can email fightingpovertyindane@gmail.com to be added to the list.

Join Progressive Dane's Steering Committee!

IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO STEP UP AND join the Steering Committee

Progressive Dane Steering Committee (SC) elections are coming up in October, and nominations will be accepted at this month's GMM. Those who join the SC find it a very rewarding experience, helping to shape the future of PD with the trust given by the membership to make important decisions.

Since PD is a member driven organization, volunteers do most of the work. Being on the SC gives you a chance to plan issue campaigns, to write newsletter and web articles and a whole bunch in between; the SC does a little bit of everything. New ideas are encouraged, and the SC is very receptive to giving new members opportunities to take leadership positions.

To join the SC, come to the September or October General Membership Meeting (GMM) for nomination. You can either nominate yourself or nudge the person next to you and ask them to nominate you. We then have elections at the October GMM. There are ten SC members and PD strives for gender balance so women

fill at least five of these positions.

There is one SC meeting per month and the work that comes out of that. SC members are also expected to attend the GMM, and you'll be expected to be the liaison to at least one other committee or task force as your schedule permits.

PD is growing right now and members are expecting action. The primary issue work is generated from the Fighting Poverty Coalition, of which Progressive Dane is the lead organization. The SC will play an important role over these next few years and we need your help to create a more equitable community and increase the quality of life for all in Dane County.

Please consider joining the Progressive Dane Steering Committee.

Madison Prep

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heavy structure peopled by multiple well-compensated "Presidents" and "Heads of School" and "Development Directors." The transfer of wealth and power of the market based economy is mirrored in the structure of the school.

The Madison Prep educational plan itself is an incoherent and contradictory mélange of trendy and unproven elements. Some of what is being proposed is promising (intensive tutoring, perhaps longer school days and years), some of it educationally empty (uniforms), and some of it likely damaging to creativity and authentic learning (the militaristic discipline of the "No Excuses" models).

None of the elements in and of themselves have been shown to make a significant impact on academic achievement and because of the contradictions there is a good chance that the whole will be less than the sum of the parts.

One model held up by Madison Prep advocates is the "No Excuses" disciplinary approach of schools such as Chicago's Urban Prep and the KIPP chain. These schools often have high attrition rates and/or test scores appreciably lower than schools serving similar students. For instance, despite spending more per student, requiring a longer school day, and serving a less impoverished population than the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) as a whole, on the most recent tests only 11 percent of Urban Prep's eleventh graders met state standards in mathematics, well below the (still unacceptable) 29% for CPS.

Serious abusive disciplinary practices have characterized some KIPP schools and when these have come to light, because of their charter status, local Boards of Education have been frustrated

in their efforts to intervene. Some would say the entire KIPP model is abusive and these are not anomalies, but simply "No Excuses" taken to its logical conclusion.

Aligned with the "No Excuses" model is a reactionary and discriminatory call for single-sex education and an implicit rejection of the theory and practice of special education services designed to address the needs of a significant portion of our students. The initial exclusion of young women from Madison Prep has been addressed, but the issues concerning potential discrimination against gay and transgender students have not been part of the discussion thus far, and the outdated models of masculinity and femininity reinforced by this version of single sex education have not been examined. Like all Charter Schools, Madison Prep will be required to admit special education students, but the "No Excuses" model is antithetical to best practices in this area.

Madison Prep also promises to offer the rigorous International Baccalaureate (IB) program and employ the "Harkness Method" of Phillip Exeter Academy to cultivate creative thinking and collaborative learning. As attractive as these are in theory, they hold little promise as a means of addressing the needs of those students featured in the Madison Prep media blitz and call for practices that are at the opposite end of the pedagogical spectrum from the KIPP model.

The presence of IB and the "Harkness Method" in the proposal also highlights an important disconnect between the problem identified—MMSD is failing minority students—and the solution offered: a charter school. By law, charter schools cannot discriminate in admissions (on the basis of race, poverty, academic achievement, or anything else). Madison Prep cannot target those who are failing

or being failed.

IB and Harkness style teaching will likely be very attractive to the families of students who are thriving in MMSD, the top 10 percent, meaning that if this proposal goes through the majority of the applications may come from students who are about as far from those featured in the sales pitch as possible.

In contrast, the school district and district schools can and do target programs and services to students who are failing and being failed. That the district needs to be doing more of this and a better job of it is beyond question, but the expense of the Madison Prep proposal will force cuts to all district programs and services, including these.

According to the latest figures available, the five-year cost of Madison Prep will be about \$27 million, and the cost per student to the district will be about \$15,000 (MMSD's marginal cost per student is a little below \$11,000). The district will experience some savings because students in Madison Prep will mean fewer students in district schools, but because of the distributed nature educational budgeting, these savings—mostly in the form of fewer teachers—will be minimal (about \$500,000 annually) and also come at the cost of more limited course and schedule choices in district schools.

Estimates are that funding Madison Prep for the hundreds of students who will enroll will require cutting an additional \$1.5 to \$2 million annually from the programs and services that serve 24,000 district students, 12,000 of whom live in poverty.

This will make it harder, if not impossible, for public schools to meet the needs of the students in their charge by offering the opportunities for learning that they deserve, which will further undermine support for public schools and make market-based solutions and privatization appear superficially more attractive. This vicious cycle is exactly what the Bradleys, the Waltons and the Kochs want.

Show up at the hearing or write the Board of Education (board@madison.k12.wi.us;) and let them know that you don't want this happening in Madison.

The hearing is at 6pm on Monday, October 3, at the MMSD's Doyle Building Auditorium, 545 W. Dayton St.

Last Month's GMM

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Human Right resolution that will be presented to the Dane County Board soon. Some tweaking of the language may be done.

Brenda announced the Tenants' Rights Rally on September 13 in opposition to the state legislation that undercuts city and county ordinances and takes away rights from tenants. The members voted in support of this action.

We were reminded that Brenda, Heidi, and Michael were to be part of a panel that discusses the history and role of a local progressive independent political party at the Democracy Convention. Heidi was also part of a program centering on housing issues. Brenda served on the participatory budgeting panel. And Leland Pan was on the How We Stopped the New Badger Partnership panel.

It was nice to welcome the Smalleys back after Connie's illness. She is feeling much better and becoming active again. — Dave Carrig

Beer Caucus The Malt House 2609 E. Washington at Milwaukee after GMM (8pm) Wednesday October 26