
IN MY VIEW: The art of democracy

May 23, 2024

The Del Norte County Democratic Party was recently awarded a grant from the California Democratic Party. This grant is dedicated to the mission of amplifying the voices of young voters, nurturing civic engagement, and highlighting the accomplishments of young individuals. This grant does not require a partisan approach.

Inspired by the annual Crescent City Art Walk, Democratic Central Committee member and re-tired educator, Lupe Gutierrez wrote a proposal to develop a program that will engage students at the Del Norte High School and College of the Redwoods to participate in an art contest that we are calling, “The Art of Democracy.”

Lupe partnered with the True North Organizing Network, a non-partisan, apolitical organization that generously contributed cash prizes of \$750 for first place, \$500 for second and \$250 for third. True North provided a presentation to high school students on May 9 and anticipates providing a second presentation on May 29.

More Than Art

This voluntary program will have students from Art, English, History, Marketing and Communication classes participate in creating political art posters with non-offensive and persuasive messaging. Along with the art project we will provide information tied to the common core standards of education.

For example, look at the history of messaging among winning or losing candidates. What influenced the population of that time period? (Communication). In Art, how do artists and designers determine whether a particular direction in their work is effective?

In Marketing, once you have created a product how do you create a demand for the goods or services produced? In English, how do style, tone and phrase structure capture the audience? Each subject is intertwined to provide a valuable lesson.

Judge the Art

The art will be displayed at the Democratic Headquarters during the annual Art Walk on Saturday July 5 so that the community can view the art and vote to select the top 3 winners. The lo-cal republican party was invited but chose not to participate.

If you know of a student that may be interested in submitting art for this contest, they can pick up an application packet at the Democratic Party headquarters at 285 L Street, Crescent City. The office is open 11 AM to 3 PM every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. The deadline for submittal is 2 PM Saturday, June 15.

The Del Norte Democrats also plan to pay an extra stipend for the right to use selected art to produce magnets, stickers, decals, and postcards that promote democracy. Art will be selected based on whether the art highlights the principles of justice, equity, diversity, inclusion and democracy in our community.

Young Voters

The bottom-line objective is to inspire and motivate young people to vote. Historically the turn out of voters younger than thirty is tragically low. In our county there is a higher turn out of voters who are older and predominantly white. The low participation by young people means their interests are not as well represented.

Ironically the impacts of bad policy decisions are felt the most by younger people who are less affluent than their elders. The lack of affordable housing and good paying jobs are major issues for our younger generation. The long-term effects of climate change will impact young people long after older voters have passed.

It is critical that we do whatever we can to help inform young voters of the social imperative of voting and engaging with the government that results from our collective choices. Democracy is not a spectator sport. It is not a viable strategy to sit back and hope that it all works out. We must all fight for the change we want.

Run for Something

It is also worth pointing out that any local young person who is at least 18 years old can run for local office. This November there will be many positions that are open for candidates to run for public office. There are three city council seats that are open. Candidates must reside in Crescent City.

There will also be vacancies for three Commissioners to the Crescent City Harbor District, three positions on the Library District and two positions on the Health Care District. Candidates for these offices can be a resident that lives anywhere in Del Norte County. These positions are elected by all voters county-wide.

There are also openings for two Trustees for the Del Norte County Unified School District. These candidates must live in either District 3 or District 4. Only voters that live in District 3 and 4 will be able to vote for these candidates. I think the School Board would especially benefit from a younger perspective.

Thank My Editor

It has been a while since I have thanked my wife and senior editor, Jill Dovre. Without her advice and assistance my columns would not be nearly as good. In addition to catching typos and grammatical errors, Jill also provides suggestions for changes that improve clarity and readability.

Once I submit my column to the Triplicate for publication, I have asked them not to edit what I write. This leaves the responsibility to me to avoid errors and typos. I am grateful to Jill for her help with this.

Kevin Hendrick is a 31-year resident of Del Norte County. kevinjameshendrick@gmail.com