

Brian Fillette, president — President@SolivitaDemocrats.org

Ellis Moose, editor — <u>Beacon@SolivitaDemocrats.org</u>

### **Happy New Year** Solivita Democratic Club!

ur Annual Membership Appreciation Dinner at the Ballroom held on Wednesday, December 13. 2023 was a festive occasion with 146 Club members attending. We recapped our 2023 accomplishments, previewed our 2024 plans, and recognized our

Pres. Brian Fillette

Member of the Year - Ron Motley. We also emphasized our Annual Club membership drive.

If you haven't already, please renew your Annual Club membership for 2024 asap to continue to receive Club news and information. Your dues of \$15 provides most of the financial resources that our Club needs for voter education, civic engagement, and contributions to help elect Democrats in Local, State, and National elections. Tell your Democrat and Democratic-leaning friends and neighbors in Solivita about our Club and invite them to join us too!

### You can renew your annual membership in 1 of 5 ways:

- Go to <u>https://solivitademocrats.org/club-mem-</u> bership/ to print the membership form and mail with your check (or see page 11 of this *Beacon*.)
- Or submit your payment via PayPal (click the Donate button)
- Or visit us at the Farmer's Market on Monday mornings from 9:00am – 11:30am
- Or join at our monthly membership meetings in the Ballroom
- Or see us at the Solivita Club Expo in the Starlite Ballroom on Saturday, January 13 from 10:00am -1:00pm

At our next membership meeting on Wednesday, January 10 we'll hear updates from SDC member and HOA Board candidate Lita Epstein about local issues of importance such as the Taylor Morrison - Solivita amenities lawsuit, and the Southport Connector project - SCAR efforts.

We'll also provide updates about the upcoming SDC Officer and Board of Director elections. The positions of Secretary, Hospitality, Membership, and Outreach Chair are scheduled to be voted on by the membership for 2-year terms in March 2024. Our Hospitality Chair Diane Jorio has decided to run for re-election. While Secretary Joan Sprain and Membership Chair Kate Kohout have decided not to run for re-election.

I'm pleased to report that we have 2 Club members who've expressed interest in running for election to our Board of Directors – they are **Rick** Ceresini as Membership Chair and Patty Whittle as Outreach Chair. No candidates for Secretary have expressed interest at this time.

If you're interested in learning more about these positions, please join us at the January membership meeting or contact me, any SDC Officer or Board member for more information.

**Brian Fillette**, President, Solivita Democratic Club president@solivitademocrats.org Visit our Website https://solivitademocrats.org/ Facebook https://www.facebook.com/solivitademocraticclub Nextdoor https://nextdoor.com/g/gikg82agv/



EPSTEIN **Starlite Ballroom** 

> Doors Open at 6:30PM Meeting at 7:00PM

In the

WEDNESDAY

10th

JANU/ARY

**TOPICS:** Taylor Morrison - Solivita amenities lawsuit, and the Southport Connector project & SCAR efforts.





By Joe Tobin, SDC Member and Beacon Contributor

In December 2007, the Great Recession was about to send the national economy into a tailspin that included high unemployment

for local Poinciana workers, especially those who worked at Disney. Families were knocking at the office door of St. Rose of Lima parish ("parish") and seeking food assistance. Seeing a need, a small group of volunteers started the Food Pantry at the church.

Jim and Martha Cusimano moved to Solivita in 2008. As parish members, this couple decided to help the Food Pantry by enlisting Solivita residents to volunteer at the Food Pantry. Their first step was to form a Solivita club that they named "DUO" or

shorthand for "Do Unto Others."

This couple believes their **interest in starting DUO** may stem from their Irish and Italian backgrounds: the Irish heritage of Martha always included an account of the great famine of the 1840s that caused so many Irish to migrate to America; and Jim remembered his Italian mother's motto that "nobody leaves the table hungry."

The early days of the Food **Pantry**, DUO and the parish were a learning experience for the volunteers. The operation of



any food bank includes the collection, distribution and storage of food, organization of workers, raising funds and public relations if it is to be successful. Thanks to persistence and hard work, the continued sponsorship of the parish and lots of dedicated volunteers, the Food Pantry has thrived and expanded for seventeen years.

When the new parish church on Pleasant Hill Road was opened, it made the food distribution easier and more convenient for families, thanks to the continued support of individual Solivita donors, Second Harvest of Central Florida and U.S. Representative Darren Soto. Over a sixteen-year period, DUO has raised more than \$500,000.00 on behalf of Food Pantry from donors.

From the experience of the Great Recession, the staff of the Food Pantry successfully met COVID-19 with efficiency, distributing over 310 tons of food to more than 80,000 people. In recent years, the Solivita administration has been most cooperative in supporting the organized collection of food and acceptance of checks on

Joe Tobin, continued on next page.

## REPRESENTATIVES

### Our elected representatives need your input

## Let them know your positions on issues!

Sen. Rick Scott (R) United States Senate Phone: 202-224-5274

#### Sen. Marco Rubio (R) United States Senate Phone: 202-224-3041

#### Rep. Darren Soto (D) US District 9 Office

804 Bryan Street Kissimmee, FL 34741 Phone: 202-225-9889

### Gov. Ron DeSantis (R)

The Capitol 400 S. Monroe St., Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001 Website: www.flgov.com

#### State Rep. Sam Killebrew (R)

FL House District 48 Office: Phone: 850-717-5041 Email: <u>sam.killebrew</u> @myfloridahouse.gov

### State Sen. Colleen Burton (R)

District 12 Office 100 South Kentucky Avenue Suite 260 Lakeland, FL 33801 Email: <u>Collleen.Burton.web@</u> <u>flsenate.gov</u>

## MEDIA

**The Orlando Sentinel** Editorial Dept. 633 N. Orange Avenue Orlando, FL 32801

#### **The Lakeland Ledger** Editorial Dept. P.O. Box 408 Lakeland, FL 33802

#### **SDC Beacon Newsletter** c/o Ellis Moose

217 Sorrento Road Poinciana, FL 34759-4065 Beacon@SolivitaDemocrats.org Joe Tobin, continued from previous page



designated days for St Rose's and St. Ann's food pantries.

At the request of Representative Soto, Martha testified before the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, invited representatives of congress and the Biden administration. Martha briefed Congress members on both the local program at St. Rose of Lima and the importance of the food banks in general. She also stressed the

necessity of federal financial assistance through the Farm Bill budget to maintain and update foodbank infrastructures across the country, such as the need for refrigerated storage.

**One goal of the parish is to build the Lima Center –** a 9000-square foot building that includes space for a parish meeting room and the Food Bank operation. Design plans are already in place and building permits were pulled in December 2023. Breaking ground is scheduled for late 2024.

As members of the Solivita Democratic Club, we salute the work of Martha and Jim – and all the volunteers, especially our Club members – who make the two local food banks a such a wonderful contribution to the communities of Poinciana and Haines City.

If you'd like to help as part of the DUO leadership team, volunteering at the pantry or in any other way, please contact <u>marthacus@icloud.com</u> or 610-737-2606.



So to recap: Ginni Thomas, the wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, conspired with the White House to overturn the election, then her husband voted to block investigators from seeing the evidence. If this isn't a judicial conflict of interest, then what is?



## REGISTRATIONS

#### Voter Registrations have dropped! Reg. Voters as of Dec. 20, 2023

Pct 411:	7/5/22	12/20/23	+/-
Dems	1535	1580	+45
Rep	1539	1663	+124
NPA	938	*1000	+62
Total	4,069	4,321	+252
Pct 412: 7/5/22		12/20/23	+/-
Dems	4,102	3,348	-754
Rep	1,297	1,291	-6
NPA	3200	*2,685	<u>-515</u>
Total	8,710	7,494	-1,216
Pct 425:	7/5/22	12/20/23	+/-
Dems	959	937	-22
Rep	868	904	+36
NPA	671	*653	<u>-18</u>
Total	2,536	2,536	0
Polk:	7/21/22	12/20/23	+/-
Dems	149,497	132,618	-16,879
Rep	172,220	173,592	+1,372
NPA <sup>·</sup>	126,391	*115,898	<u>-10,493</u>
Total	456.568	432,948	-23,620
Florida: 7/21/22		11/30/23	+/-
Dems 4,955,022		4,460,831	-494,191
Rep 5,217,343		5,158,753	-58,590
<u>NPA 3,</u>	887,406	*3,607,279	<u>-280,127</u>
Total: 14	,256,184	13,540,135	-716,049

**Note:** \*NPAs do not include minor party registrations that are not shown here. Florida numbers lag Polk Co. by 20 days.



#### Websites of interest: POLITICS:

www.FlaDems.com www.FlSenate.gov/topics/ppaca www.PolkDemocrats.org www.PolkElections.com www.Democrats.org www.DemocraticGovernors.org www.DemocraticGovernors.org www.BestOfTheLeft.com www.NPR.org www.Snopes.com www.FactCheck.org www.PolitiFact.com

### 2024 HOA BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

**I** accordance with the Association's Bylaws and Florida Statute 720, the Association's Annual Meeting of the Membership has been scheduled as follows: 10:00 AM, Tuesday, Feb. 20, 2024 in the Solivita Starlite Ballroom, 384 Village Drive.Members will vote to fill two open Board of Director positions, each with a two-year term. In accordance with the procedure for director nomination, the candidates must give the Association written notice of their intent to run for the office, along with a completed candidate certification form signed by the candidate, no later than Thursday, November 16, 2023.

No candidate nominations may be accepted from the floor at an Annual Members Meeting. All candidates must meet the eligibility requirements as stated in Florida Statute 720 at the time of the deadline for submitting the notice of intent to be a candidate.

**Members will also vote on the seven proposed amendments** to our governing documents

# Lita Epstein, one of our own SDC members, is running for the Solivita HOA Board

## As a resident of Solivita since 2005, she has worked on many projects to further the development of the community including:

**Save Our Solivita (2008/2009)**: helped to organize and participate in this working group to oppose the incorporation of the city of Poinciana and prevent Solivita from becoming a cash cow for the property taxes of the city.

**Beginning in Sept. 2015,** she worked diligently to prevent the amenities purchase for \$73 million, including serving on the CDD beginning in 2016 and becoming chair in 2018 to prevent the closing of the contract to purchase the amenities for \$73 million.

Organized the campaign in 2018 of five CDD members called the **Price is Too High** to help fight the purchase of the amenities for \$73 million. Won by more than 67% of the vote.

Organized and continue to coordinate the Southport Connector Alternative Routes (SCAR), to seek an alternative to the plan for building a Great Wall of Poinciana outside our gates.

**Filed a Title VI complaint** to slow the process for the Southport Connector and seek federal investigation of its planning.

Served on the Poinciana CDD for 7 years, including five as Chair.

### **Professional Training and Experience:**

Served on HOA boards, including as President, in 4 states.

Served Community Planning boards or Committees in 4 states, including the Polk County's Planning Commission and Board of Adjustments.

Business owner and author with 50 books on the market primarily in the areas of business and personal finance.

## Dear Democrats,

As we begin the New Year, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude. The remarkable efforts of our DECs, Clubs, and Caucuses have propelled our party to significant progress. Our victories in Jacksonville, the shift in HD 118, along with numerous municipal victories throughout the year, stand as testament to the dedication and hard work of each of you.

Your collective efforts have played a pivotal role in advancing the cause of making Florida a better place for all. As we come back in the new year, all eyes will be on HD 35 as our next opportunity to take our state back.

On January 16th, 2024, Florida Democrats have the opportunity to elect Tom Keen to the Florida State House. Joe Biden carried this seat by 5 points in 2020 and Democrats are going to Take Back HD-35 in 2024. Time is short to get out the vote and winning this seat is going to take all of us!

### Here are just a few things that we accomplished this year:

- Elected Donna Deegan as the first female Mayor in Jacksonville's history
- ✓ Launched the Party's first year-round Voter Registration Program
- Kicked off our Take Back Florida tour and mobilized over 2,000 Democrats across the state
- Swung a solid red House District in Miami-Dade by 30+ points

## JANUARY is...

- 1/3 Meet the HOA Candidates at the Palms, 11a-2p
- 1/7 Orthodox Christmas Day
- 1/8 War on Poverty Day
- 1/9 National Law Enforcement Day
- 1/15 Martin Luther King Day/Civil Rights Day
- 1/16 National Religious Freedom Day
- 1/22 Roe vs. Wade Day
- 1/24 Meet HOA Candidates at the Palms, 4p-7p
- 1/24 International Day of Education
- 1/25 National Florida Day
- 1/27 Holocaust Memorial Day
- 1/28 International Reducing CO2 Emissions Day
- 1/30 School Day of Non-violence and Peace
- 1/31 Appreciate Your Social Security Check Day

Find more fun January holidays at: <u>https://nationaltoday.com/january-holidays/</u>





Nikki Tried







### The conspiracy theory campaign of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is PolitiFact's Lie of the Year

As pundits and politicos spar over whether Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s presidential Campaign will factor into the outcome of the 2024 election, one thing is clear: Kennedy's political following is built on a movement that seeks to legitimize conspiracy theories.



Independent presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr. speaks at a voter raily. Wednesday, Dec. 20, 2023, in Phoenix.

**His claims decrying vaccines** have roiled scientists and medical experts and stoked anger over whether his work harms children. He has made suggestions about the cause of COVID-19 that he acknowledges sound racist and antisemitic.

Bolstered by his famous name and family's legacy, his campaign of conspiracy theories has gained an electoral and financial foothold. He is running as an independent — having

abandoned his pursuit of the Democratic Party nomination — and raised more than \$15 million. A political action committee pledged to spend between \$10 million and \$15 million to get his name on the ballot in 10 states.

**Even though he spent the past two decades** as a prominent leader of the anti-vaccine movement, Kennedy rejects a blanket "anti-vax" label that he told Fox News in July makes him "look crazy, like a conspiracy theorist."

**But Kennedy draws bogus conclusions** from scientific work. He employs "circumstantial evidence" as if it is proof. In TV, podcast and political appearances for his campaign in 2023, Kennedy steadfastly maintained:

### Kennedy claims vaccines cause autism.

No childhood vaccines "have ever been tested in a safety study pre-licensing."

**There is "tremendous circumstantial evidence"** that psychiatric drugs cause mass shootings, and the National Institutes of Health refuses to research the link out of deference to pharmaceutical companies.

Ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine were discredited as COVID-19 treatments

National Politics, continued on next page.

Florida Politics, continued from previous page.

so COVID-19 vaccines could be granted emergency use authorization, a win for Big Pharma.

**Exposure to the pesticide atrazine** contributes to gender dysphoria in children.

**COVID-19 is "targeted to attack Caucasians and black people.** The people who are most immune are Ashkenazi Jews and Chinese."

For Kennedy, the conspiracies aren't limited to public health. He claims"members of the CIA" were involved in the assassination of his uncle, John F. Kennedy. He doesn't "believe that (Sirhan) Sirhan's bullets ever hit my father," Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, D-N.Y. He insists the 2004 presidential election was stolen from Democratic candidate John Kerry.

**News organizations, including PolitiFact,** have documented why those claims, and many others, are false, speculative or conspiracy-minded.

**Kennedy has sat for numerous interviews** and dismissed the critics, not with the grievance and bluster of former President Donald Trump, but with a calm demeanor. He amplifies the alleged plot and repeats dubious scientific evidence and historical detail.

Will his approach translate to votes? According to polls since November of a threeway matchup between President Joe Biden, Trump and Kennedy, Kennedy pulled 16% to 22% of respondents.



**Kennedy's movement exemplifies the resonance of conspiratorial views.** Misinformers with organized efforts are rewarded with money and loyalty. But that doesn't make the claims true.

## Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s campaign is so based on false theories that it is PolitiFact's 2023 Lie of the Year.

When he's asked about his views, Kennedy calmly searches his rhetorical laboratory for recycled talking points, selective research findings, the impression of voluminous valid studies, speculation, and inarguable authority from his experience. He refers to institutions, researchers and reports, by name, in quick succession, shifting points before interviewers can note what was misleading or cherry-picked.

There is power in repetition. Take his persistent claim that vaccines are not safety tested.

In July, he told "Fox & Friends," "Vaccines are the only medical product that is not safety tested prior to licensure."

**On Nov. 7 on "PBS NewsHour,"** Kennedy said vaccines are "the only medical product or medical device that is allowed to get a license without engaging in safety tests."

National Politics, continued on next page.



#### National Politics, continued from previous page.

**On Dec. 15, he told CNN's Kasie Hunt** that no childhood vaccines have "ever been tested in a safety study pre-licensing."

All of this is false! Vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccines, are tested for safety and effectiveness before they are licensed. Researchers gather initial safety data and information about side effects during phase one clinical trials on groups of 20 to 100 people. If no safety concerns are identified, subsequent phases rely on studies of larger numbers of volunteers to evaluate a vaccine's effectiveness and monitor side effects.

**Kennedy sometimes says that some vaccines weren't tested** against inactive injections or placebos. That has an element of truth: If using a placebo would disadvantage or potentially endanger a patient, researchers might test new vaccines against older versions with known side effects.

**But vaccines are among "the most tested and vetted"** pharmaceutical products given to children, said Patricia Stinchfield, a pediatric nurse practitioner and the president of the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases.

Kennedy encourages parents to research questions on their own, because doctors and other experts are invariably compromised.

**"They are taking as gospel what the CDC tells them,"** Kennedy said on Bari Weiss' "Honestly" podcast in June.

**Public health agencies have been** "serving the mercantile interests of the pharmaceutical companies, and you cannot believe anything that they say," Kennedy said.

### Experts fret that the Kennedy name carries weight.

**"When he steps forward and he says the government's lying to you,** the FDA is lying to you, the CDC is lying to you, he has credence, because he's seen as someone who is a product of the government," said Dr. Paul Offit, a pediatrics professor in the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's infectious diseases division and the director of the Vaccine Education Center. "He's like a whistleblower in that sense. He's been behind the scenes, so he knows what it looks like, and he's telling you that you're being lied to."

who has consistantly demonstrated throughout the year the true spirit of our Democratic Ideals through the Education, Communication and Motivation of Solivita residents.

The SDC Board of Directors wishes to recognize the outstanding contributions of **Ron Motley.** 







Brian Fillette, President President@SolivitaDemocrats.org 704-641-2978

Ellis Moose, Vice President/ Beacon Editor/Webmaster Beacon@SolivitaDemocrats.org 515-778-0379

Rochelle Quinn, Treasurer RQuinn777@gmail.com 863-496-5313

Joan Sprain, Secretary Joan.Sprain@AOL.com 651-261-9166

Kate Kohout, Membership Chair KSquared1987@yahoo.com 863-496-0481

Valerie Williams, Ways and Means Chair <u>vpowell65@aol.com</u> 631-455-4036

Dorothy Schwartz, Publicity Chair SchwartzAPN@aol.com 732-207-3358

Diane Jorio, Hospitality Chair DDJorio@live.com 443-262-1053

The Board of Directors meets the first Tuesday of each month via ZOOM.

#### **Precinct Captains:**

Leonard Guminski, Pct. 425 MariaDLenG145@yahoo.com 586-321-4711

Celeste Williams, Pct. 411 CelestyneWilliams1@gmail.com 407-924-1766

Alan Harris, Pct. 411 <u>AMHarris1212@yahoo.com</u> 407-718-2525 Solivita west of Marigold Ave.

**Could Be You** (2 Female, 2 Male), Pct. 412 Solivita Bella Viana, Venezia and portions of Poinciana

Ellis Moose, At Large Beacon@SolivitaDemocrats.org 863-852-7294

## Check out these Senior Discounts\* YOU must ASK for your discount !

### **RESTAURANTS:**

**Applebee's:** 15% off with Golden Apple Card (60+) **Arby's:** 10% off (55 +) **Ben & Jerry's:** 10% off (60+) **Bennigan's:** discount varies by location (60+) **Bob's Big Boy:** discount varies by location (60+) Boston Market: 10% off (65+) **Burger King:** 10% off (60+) **Chick-Fil-A:** 10% off or free small drink or coffee (55+) **Chili's:** 10% off (55+) **CiCi's Pizza:** 10% off (60+) **Denny's:** 10% off, 20% off for AARP members (55 +) **Dunkin' Donuts:** 10% off or free coffee (55+) **Einstein's Bagels:** 10% off baker's dozen of bagels (60+) **Fuddrucker's:** 10% off any senior platter (55+) **Gatti's Pizza:** 10% off (60+) **Golden Corral:** 10% off (60+) Hardee's: \$0.33 beverages everyday (65+) **IHOP:** 10% off (55+) **Jack in the Box:** up to 20% off (55+) KFC: free small drink with any meal (55+) **Krispy Kreme:** 10% off (50+) Long John Silver's: various discounts at locations (55+) McDonald's: discounts on coffee everyday (55+) **Mrs. Fields:** 10% off at participating locations (60+) Shoney's: 10% off **Sonic:** 10% off or free beverage (60+) Steak 'n Shake: 10% off every Monday & Tuesday (50+) **Subway:** 10% off (60+) Sweet Tomatoes: 10% off (62+) **Taco Bell :** 5% off; free beverages for seniors (65+) **TCBY:** 10% off (55+) **Tea Room Cafe:** 10% off (50+) **Village Inn:** 10% off (60+) Waffle House: 10% off every Monday (60+) Wendy's: 10% off (55 +) **Whataburger:** 10% off (62+) White Castle: 10% off (62+)

\*NOT confirmed by the Editor or Staff of the Beacon.

Print out this Membership Application for your friends and bring them to our next meeting!





A chartered club of the Polk County Florida Democratic Executive Committee

## **Membership Application Form** Annual Membership dues are \$15/person

Please make checks payable to: Solivita Democratic Club

### Mail to: SDC Treasurer 586 Villa Park Rd. Poinciana, FL 34759

Date:	New Member	Renewing Member
First Name:	Last Name:	
Address:		
Home Phone:		
Email:		
Full Time Solivita Resident? (Check or	ne) 🗌 Yes 🗌 No	
I am registered as: Democrat INI	PA (No Party Affiliation)	Other Party Republican
I am NOT registered to vote in Polk	County, Florida	
de esta esta esta esta esta esta esta est	Membership Ir	ncludes

Monthly Beacon Newsletter — Informative Meetings — Fun Events

Meetings are held at 7 pm, on the 2nd Wednesday of each month

in the Solivita Starlite Ballroom and online via Zoom.

Visit <u>Solivitademocrats.org</u> for additional information.