

## COUNTY

## Femmes vital

*Ulster County Democratic Women gather ideas for agenda*

On the night that President George W. Bush nominated John Roberts for Supreme Justice, the fledgling Ulster County Democratic Women held their inaugural meeting at the new Ulster County Democratic Headquarters on Fair Street in Kingston. It wasn't planned that way. In fact, UCDW Vice President March Gallagher jokes that Bush had scheduled his announcement to deliberately interfere with their meeting. After all, as Ulster County Democratic Chairman John Parete of said when he addressed the more than 50 people who turned out, "Women are the future of the Democratic Party."

It was their very first meeting and the UCDW (a.k.a. Dem Women) already had a logo, a banner with their logo, name tags with their logo and a fully functional website. More importantly for an organization motivated by political activism, they had ideas. Lots and lots of ideas.

Julie McQuain, president of UCDW, gave a rousing call to action, especially to those who were dejected enough to consider a move up north after the last election. "I have some choice words for people who have decided that this would be a good time to move to Canada or France or somewhere else: *I don't think so.*"

"We're very excited," she continued. "We need this group."

McQuain, from the Town of Hardenburgh, got down to her particular motivations for helping found an activist local women's Democratic organization. "I'm concerned about what I like to call creeping theocracy and intolerance," she said. "I want my country back. I know all of you do too, and I'm sure that's why you're here tonight."

According to McQuain, getting the country back needs to involve a grassroots effort. "This has to be done town by town, county by county," she said. "It can't just happen on a national level. *This fight has many fronts, but the most important ones may well be the grocery store, the PTA and your own block. We need all of you and all of your friends.*"

McQuain introduced Parete by saying, "We need his help, and by God, he needs our help. I'm here to ask John Parete to step forward and ask, 'What do you need from us, John?'"

"My mama didn't raise no fool, you know?" answered the colorful politician, resplendent in a Hawaiian print shirt. "I believe the values of the Democratic Party — which really reflects the values of women — are really what is right and just in America."

Parete referred to the voter enrollment in Ulster County, which in the past year has seen Democrats in the county pass and begin to pull away from Republicans and others in numbers. As of July 19 there were 35,287 registered Democrats in Ulster County, compared to 34,830 non-affiliated voters



A packed house crowds the new Ulster County Democratic Headquarters in Kingston for the first meeting of Ulster County Democratic Women (and a smattering of men). That's fundraising chairwoman Allison Lee on the phone at left.



Ulster County Democratic Chairman John Parete talks animatedly to a group he couldn't help from referring to as "the ladies."



Edna Hoyt of Shandaken looks for an issue she can support.

and 32,994 Republicans. "Our climb to overcome the enrollment deficit that we had over the years was primarily because of women," said Parete.

Edna Hoyt, one of two Democrats on the Shandaken Town Board, was honored as a co-host. She came to the area in 1946 following her marriage. When she went to register as a Democrat, she found, much to her great surprise, that someone had already registered her as a Republican. "Well, I got that fixed up," she said.

Hoyt spoke about her experiences in the Democratic Party, and as she finished, she looked around the room. "We've come a long way," she said.

The meeting turned interactive when attendees were asked to add their concerns to a series of lists tacked to the walls. If a point had already been raised, they were asked to put a sticker of agreement next to it. The more stickers, the more it was clear that an issue should be addressed by UCDW. "We want to know what you think is important," said

McQuain.

Among the local issues receiving attention were the presence of the military in schools, the possibility of a casino, voting machines, domestic violence and jobs.

The most heavily-stickered national issue was the war in Iraq, but the environment, universal health care, social security, the Patriot Act and media censorship also proved popular issues. Not surprisingly, so was the Supreme Court.

On the horizon for the UCDW is an Aug. 5 fundraiser at Le Canard Enchaîné, a few doors down on Fair St. from county Democratic headquarters. The guest speaker will be U.S. Rep. Maurice Hinchey.

The UCDW is also looking ahead, and hopes to entice U.S. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton to speak at a future fundraiser.

More information on UCDW can be found at its website: [www.ucdw.org](http://www.ucdw.org).