

Conversations With Candidates

At the August 7, 2010 St. Lawrence County Branch annual meeting, we brainstormed with leaders from the Jefferson County Branch and the SLC League of Women Voters about how to do a meaningful series of voter education pieces for the fall election season that would circumvent the problems we had the previous year with candidate unwilling to come before the voters for non-partisan forums. In consultation with Dan Dullea of Clarkson University's Center for Excellence in Communication at Clarkson University, we determined to create a video series of Conversations With Candidates. Other partners joined in: the North Country Region of NYS-PTA, WPBS-TV, and North Country Public Radio.

The purpose of the series was educating voters without having them held hostage to the needs of the campaigns and their managements. We opened up 10 half-hour slots for filming on a first-come basis to any candidate for election in the two-county area; two every Friday during the month of October at the studio of WCKN, the student-run public access station located at Clarkson. In addition to weekend broadcasts on WCKN, each was also run on WPBS, the Public TV station in Watertown (home of the Jefferson Co. Branch) and on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/danieledullea>. Using the video format means that every voter can access the material rather than limiting it to those who can attend a specific program.

Each conversation featured a free-flowing conversation with a candidate and 2-3 people from that person's district to discuss the issue of the race and the needs of the people of the district. The candidate was not briefed beforehand and the citizens came to the table with the kinds of questions that the media often do not ask.

In total, we did 11 Conversations; three with candidates for the NYS Assembly, and 8 candidates for the SLC Legislature. In addition, we tried to organize four candidate forums for the two Assembly seats and one NY Senate seat and the House seat for the two-county area. Only one was actually held because one or more candidates in three of the races refused to meet in open debate front of a mixed audience of voters. This continues to be a problem and seems to be a growing one, at least in our region.

An informed electorate is a critical component for AAUW to achieve its public policy goals. This series helped to inform voters about the candidates and the issues. Working with other community partners – and college students – was an effective way to make sure the message is heard by all and that the next generation was included in a groundbreaking series. We believe our candidate series is a way to bring back civic and civil journalism to the process of educating voters.

Attached are a few media samples; the bulk of everything and the links to the YouTube videos is available on the internet from:

<http://www.northnet.org/stlawrenceaauw/aauwnews.htm>.

TALKING POINTS

By Jude Seymour



To read breaking political news, go to Jude Seymour's blog, "All Politics Is Local," at www.watertowndailytimes.com/section/blogs09

To read candidate profiles and issue stories, go to www.watertowndailytimes.com/section/election2010

118th Assembly District
 Republican David W. Forsythe and Assemblywoman Addie J. Russell, D-Theresa, will debate from 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday in B.H. Snell Room 213, Clarkson University, Potsdam. The event is sponsored by the Jefferson and St. Lawrence County branches of

the American Association of University Women, the St. Lawrence County League of Women Voters, the state Parent-Teacher Association (North Country region), WPBS-TV, the American Cancer Society Action Network, the college's Center for Excellence in Communication and North Country Public Radio.

TALKING POINTS

By Jude Seymour



To read breaking political news, go to Jude Seymour's blog, "All Politics Is Local," at

www.watertowndailytimes.com/section/blogs09

To read candidate profiles and issue stories, go to www.watertowndailytimes.com/election

St. Lawrence County Legislature

"North Country Matters Presents: Conversation with Candidates" continues at 10 tonight with a conversation with Karl T. Ortmeyer, a Republican seeking the District 10 seat, followed by a discussion with Legislator Alex A. MacKinnon, R-Fowler, at 10:30 p.m. Both interviews will air on WCKN, which is channel 30 in Potsdam.

Conversations with Legislator J. Patrick Turbett, D-Potsdam; David W. Forsythe, a Republican seeking the 118th Assembly District seat, and Brian S. McGrath, a Democrat seeking the 122nd Assembly District seat, will air Friday, starting at 10 p.m. on the station.

All conversations taped so far will air at 11 a.m. Sunday on WCKN.

Four of the shows also are now available on the Internet at www.youtube.com/user/danielledullea

Gavin M. Regan, a Potsdam Democrat seeking the District 11 seat, and Russell J. Finley, a Conservative Party candidate seeking the District 8 seat, will tape their conversations Oct. 29.

Russell, Forsythe Forum Can Be Seen On Net, WCKN

POTSDAM - The 90-minute candidate forum held on Oct. 20 for the 118th Assembly race between Democrat incumbent Addie J. Russell and challenger Republican David Forsythe is now available for viewing on YouTube and will soon be aired on WCKN, Time Warner Channel 30 in Potsdam.

The YouTube site is www.youtube.com/user/danielledullea.

Also available are the nine Conversations with Candidates taped so far by the community groups hosting the voter education discussions.

They include the St. Lawrence County Branch AAUW, the Jefferson County

Branch AAUW, St. Lawrence County League of Women Voters, the North Country Region NYS-PTA, WPBS-TV, the American Cancer Society Action Network, the Center for Excellence in Communication and North Country Public Radio.

The most recent North Country Matters Presents: Conversation with Candidates were filmed with Pat Turbett, St. Lawrence County Legislature District 10, 118th Assembly candidate David Forsythe and 122nd Assembly Candidate Brian McGrath.

On Sunday, all of the current Conversations will air starting at 11 a.m. on WCKN,

one very half hour until all have been screened. Anyone with Internet access may watch the shows on YouTube. They are uploaded at www.youtube.com/user/danielledullea.

In addition, they can be heard as podcasts from <http://wckn.com/Cablecast/Podcasts/17.rss> or on iTunes at itpc://wckn.com/Cablecast/Podcasts/17.rss if you have iTunes installed.

The remaining two Conversations in the series will be taped on Oct. 29 with Gavin Regan, St. Lawrence County District 11, and Russell Finley, St. Lawrence County District 8.

See Conversations With Candidates

POTSDAM - The inaugural North Country Matters Presents: Conversation with Candidates kicks off today with two conversations. The first conversation is with Assemblywoman Addie Russell, running again for her seat in the 118th Assembly district.

Filmed at the WCKN studio in the new Student Center at Clarkson University, Russell sat down with three district citizens. Sue Rice, Potsdam, of the Good Neighbor Network; Karen Carr, president of the Jefferson County AAUW from Watertown; and Sue Cypert, Canton, with the St. Lawrence County League of Women Voters, to discuss issues.

The conversations are an exercise in civic and civil engagement to restore our political process, which has become dominated by big money, special interest organizations and the political parties who have swamped the system beneath a tidal wave of money, pressure, advertising and political calculation designed to manipulate rather than inform voters.

The civic partners for the Conversations include AAUW-St. Lawrence County and AAUW-Jefferson County, the League of Women Voters of St. Lawrence County, North Country Public Radio, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, WPBS-TV, the North Country Region of NYS-PTA and the Center for Excellence in Communication at Clarkson University. Other interested groups are invited to inquire about becoming partners.

The second Conversation is with Dan Parker, a candidate for District 11 on the St. Lawrence County Legislature.

He sat down with three West Stockholm residents, Robin McClellan, Natalia Stahl and Bob Jewett, to talk about the race, the issues and the concerns of the residents of the district.

The conversations to be taped on Oct. 8 include Brett Grandaw, candidate for St. Lawrence County coroner, and Mike Morgan, running for Canton Town Board.

Ten Conversations will be taped and aired before Election Day. Any candidate for political office in the north country willing to abide by the rules of civil society to discuss the issues of the day with your fellow citizens is welcome to inquire about the six remaining open dates.

Two one-half hour conversations a week are taped on Friday afternoons in the studios of WCKN, the public access station located at Clarkson University (Time Warner Channel 30). Open dates include Oct. 15, 22 and 29.

Interested candidates can contact Dan Dullea at the Center for Excellence in Communication at Clarkson University to get on the conversations schedule. Call him at 268-6428 or e-mail ded@clarkson.edu.

The dates will be filled on a first-come basis. Citizens interested in participating on the panels may also contact Dullea.

The half-hour segments will be broadcast on a rotating basis between filming and Election Day, Nov. 2. In addition to WCKN, the WPBS-TV station in Watertown will also broadcast the series. Tune in to WCKN starting this weekend to watch the conversations.

Candidate Talks Continue Friday

POTSDAM - The fourth set of North Country Matters Presents: Conversation with Candidates continues on Friday with three more interviews.

The first is with Pat Turbett, running for the St. Lawrence County Legislature from District 10. The second is 118th Assembly candidate David Forsythe, and the third is with 122nd Assembly candidate Brian McGraff.

The voter education partnership sponsoring the Conversations contacted Mr. McGraff's campaign to offer him a Conversation slot after his opponent, Ken Blankenbush, refused to agree to a public candidate forum for the 122nd seat in St. Lawrence County.

Voters in all areas of the district deserve an opportunity to hear from the candidates vying for an open seat. One candidate's refusal to debate should not hold the voting public or an open process hostage.

The broadcast schedule for this week on WCKN, Time Warner Cable Channel 30 in Potsdam, is a 10 p.m. airing of the the Karl Ortmeyer Conversation followed by the 10:30 p.m. conversation with the Alex McKinnon.

The Turbett Conversation

airs at 10 p.m. Friday, followed by the Forsythe Conversation at 10:30 p.m. and the McGraff Conversation at 11 p.m.

All of the current Conversations will air starting at 11 am, one very half hour, on Sunday.

In addition, anyone with Internet access may watch the shows on YouTube. They are uploaded at <http://www.youtube.com/user/danieledullea>. In addition, they can be heard as podcasts from <http://wckn.com/Cablecast/Podcasts/17.rss> or on iTunes at [itpc://wckn.com/Cablecast/Podcasts/17.rss](http://wckn.com/Cablecast/Podcasts/17.rss) if you have iTunes installed.

The remaining two will be taped on Oct. 29 with Gavin Regan, SLC District 11; and Russell Finley, SLC District 8.

The civic partners for the Conversations include AAUW-St. Lawrence County and AAUW-Jefferson County, the League of Women Voters of St. Lawrence County, North Country Public Radio (NCPR), the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, WPBS-TV, the North Country Region of NYS-PTA, and the Center for Excellence in Communication at Clarkson University.