**Democratic Club of Willow Valley**

**General Meeting**

**April 29, 2025**

Attendance: 53

Education Chair Jerry Henige opened the meeting at 1p.m. and introduced members Ted Borek and Terry Webb to speak of their experiences in working with the Braver Angels organization.

**Ted Borek and Terry Webb:**

Mr. Borek, an ambassador for Braver Angels for five years, began with information about its origin in December 2016 following the November election of Donald Trump. Ten Democrats and ten Republicans gathered in Lebanon, Ohio, for discussion about the growing polarization in the U.S. Since that date, Braver Angels has spread to other states and now has 116 alliances. Lancaster County belongs to the Braver Angels Lower Susquehanna Alliance (BALSA) along with the counties of Dauphin, York, Lebanon, and Cumberland.

Ms. Webb spoke of her work in establishing a Braver Angels presence in Lancaster in 2020, concerned particularly with the growing polarization in society. A major goal of Braver Angels is to confront the challenges found in families, at work, and in schools by bringing members of opposing views into respectful and engaging discussion. Membership continues to grow, especially among younger citizens.

Some points highlighted:

* Key words in discussions with those of opposing views are *honesty, dignity, respect.*
* Core values are respect, humility, honesty. responsible citizenship.
* Programs include debates, podcasts, and workshops among others, online or in person.
* Debates are always comprised of equal distribution between opposing sides, the same number of Republican and Democratic members.
* Topics cover issues such as gun laws, immigration laws, book bans, and fair elections, among many others.
* To learn more about Braver Angels and its upcoming events, check their website https://braverangels.org.

Following a Q&A session with the speakers, President Porter thanked them both for their informative talk and reminded attendees that handouts with more information were available.

**Business Meeting**

President Porter opened the business meeting with a sample of possible thank you notes to be written for donors and new members by volunteers who will be recruited. She also reminded attendees to turn in their legislator contacts. Those contacts for April totaled 252.

**Treasury/Membership:** The balance stands at $2,522.22 with $3,432.00 to be set aside for scholarships. The deficit will be covered once 2025 membership enrollment begins. Membership stands at 284.

**Scholarship:** Two scholarships of $1,000 will be awarded in May with the announcement made in June. For the first time, a scholarship will be awarded to a student attending a technical school.

**Website:** Vice President Ross Fairweather met with the provider on April 25 and will make changes as needed. A demo to members is planned for mid or late May at a General Meeting.

**Advocacy:** Barbara Bonanno and Jen Porter

* President Porter highlighted the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to former President Jimmy Carter for his work in spreading peace throughout the world. At this time there are over 100 armed conflicts around the world, and men and women are needed more than ever for peace efforts.
* She also described the work of VoteRiders, an organization that provides voter ID information to assist voters who do not have access to proof of citizenship documents. Members may volunteer to assist as well as to financially support by contacting [www.VoteRiders.org](http://www.VoteRiders.org).
* Advocacy chair Barbara Bonanno made several reports
* Volunteers are needed for the Letters to the Editor campaign. Signup sheets are in the back.
* Signup sheets are available for those interested in visitations to U.S. Congressman Lloyd Smucker’s office.
* A list of eleven recent local events was presented, including rallies and town halls.
* A list of local upcoming advocacy events in May is **attached.**

**May 20 Primary Elections:** Jerry Henige.

Greeters are needed at both Willow Valley campuses as well as at eight other precincts in the district. Volunteers may contact Jerry to sign up. Sample ballots are available for both Lakes and Locust. Jerry stressed the importance of voter turnout in this primary.

**Upcoming *Understanding Our Democracy* forums:** Cultural Center Education Room

**Thursday, May 22**, 10 a.m. Susan Spica (Education Voters PA) and Erin Small (Hempfield School Board candidate) will speak on federal and state education funding.

**Thursday, June 12, 1:30 p.m.** Members of the Lancaster Quaker Meeting will share their advocacy efforts with elected officials. **Note the change of day and time for May and June meetings.**

**Upcoming General Meeting Speakers:**

May 27 Chris Baxter. CEO and President of SpotlightPA

June 24 Rep. Ismail Smith-Wade-El

July 16&22 Milagro House Tour

August 26 School Board candidates Sarah Cook and Kirk Williard, West Lampeter Supervisor Board candidate Tracy Arnold (not confirmed)

September 30 Jerry Henige, the importance of Judiciary elections

October 28 open

Next General Meeting: Tuesday May 27, 1p.m. Cultural Center Education Room

Lucy Painter

Secretary

