



# Civic Engagement Newsletter

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Issue 6

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## SUNY Oswego Votes

### Midterm Election Turnout in 2010

Although enthusiasm for mid-term elections is often low, especially on college campuses, members of the SUNY Oswego community responded to this year's election with interest and an improved turnout at the polls.

A number of organizations worked to encourage voting and educate the college community about the electoral contests. Residence Life and Housing, Civic Engagement, and S.A. Civic Engagement all worked to register students and organize registration. They were assisted by The Women's Center, Compass Navigators, and Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity at tables in the Campus Center.



Voter Registration Poster

Kappa Delta Pi, the Education Honor Society and Lambda Pi Eta, the Communication Studies Honorary, registered students in Wilbur and Lanigan respectively. In addition, UUP, Secular Student Alliance, and College Republicans set up tables in the Campus Center to register voters. Articles in the *Laker* and the *Oswegonian* also encouraged

registration. These combined efforts resulted in more than 220 new registrations, although Residence Life discovered that many students—650 among their residents—had already registered at home. It is difficult to trace the number of



Voter Registration Table

off-campus students already registered at their off-campus addresses. Members of the college community also created or took advantage of opportunities to become better informed about the candidates. The Political Science Club invited a number of candidates for statewide office to speak on campus, and four came. College Republicans also hosted local Republican candidates.

Civic Engagement developed and made available a Power Point presentation on some of the major candidates, which we offered to faculty to show themselves or have us present in their classes. As election day grew closer, we sponsored tables in the Campus Center with similar information. SA also developed a map of the voting wards in the town and city in order to assist off-campus students; this was a very useful contribution. We

continued to hand out "I Will Vote on November 2" buttons, which were designed by intern Melody Osterstuck for Constitution Week. The *Oswegonian* published an editorial opposing voter apathy, and we solicited help from other campus media in delivering PSA's about voting. Graduate students in the art department created terrific, eye



Mid-Term Election Voting

catching posters urging people to vote, and we distributed those in the residence halls and the Campus Center. Student Association assisted students in applying for absentee ballots.

On November 2, traffic at the polling place in the Campus Center was steady. Poll workers were pleased to report that 77 students voted there, and that a good number of others stopped to find out where their off campus polling places were. Although this number falls well short of the number voting in presidential elections, and leaves us room for improvement in the next years, it shows considerable growth from other recent off-year elections.

# Oswego's CarrotMob at Canale's

SUNY Oswego's Green Team, in partnership with the Oswego Center for Sustainable Living, sponsored the first CarrotMob in upstate New York; it was a great success!

CarrotMobs are the opposite of protest demonstrations, and are especially directed toward environmental matters. Rather than gathering at a place of business to demonstrate against its practices, CarrotMob participants gather in large numbers to patronize businesses whose practices should be rewarded. Just as leaders of any demonstration do, CarrotMob leaders work to secure media coverage about the business. "A Carrot, Not a Stick" is the CarrotMob motto. For more information about CarrotMobs, see the website, <http://carrotmob.org/about/>.

In Oswego, the student-run Green Team organized a competition among area restaurants. After hearing an explanation of the CarrotMob project, restaurant owners bid on an opportunity to be "mobbed" by SUNY Oswego students on a specific evening. Each restaurant suggested a percentage of the evening's revenue that they would be willing to put toward improvements in energy efficiency. The

restaurant committing to the greatest percentage would receive a free energy audit, paid for through Green Team fund raising, as well as the well publicized "mobbing" itself.

The winner of the competition was Canale's Restaurant, which pledged 30% of their CarrotMob revenues for energy improvements. On Monday evening, December 6, members of the SUNY Oswego community descended upon Canale's to enjoy an \$8.00 buffet. The first 100 customers also received a CarrotMob t-shirt (made of recycled cotton). Despite an early episode of Oswego's notorious winter weather, more than 230 people participated in the CarrotMob, providing revenues of \$1858.17. Canale's also provided a take-out option, which garnered another \$451.46, also counted toward the CarrotMob's total. Nick Canale, Jr. says he is looking forward to working with the auditor to determine what he will do with the money that will go toward improving energy efficiency.

The Green Team, led by chair and sustainability intern Alisia Engle, learned a great deal through cooperating with area businesses and working with the media. The team had initially specified the size and date of the proposed mob. After working with Canale's size and date were re-negotiated for maximum impact

and manageability. Canale's also agreed, for ease of service, to offer a one-price buffet for the evening; they also suggested the take-out option. Media coverage was well handled to benefit not only Canale's but also the shared purpose of the Green Team and the Oswego Center for Sustainable Living to encourage a more environmentally sustainable community.

This first upstate New York CarrotMob was a successful effort for sustainability activists, and a fun evening. Everyone there knew that as they enjoyed a great Canale's buffet they had also contributed to making the community a little greener and considerably more aware. The effort also represented an excellent collaboration between activist groups in the college and in the community.



Oswego CarrotMob at Canale's

## Hydrofracking Panel & Film

On November 11th, Civic Engagement, the SUNY Oswego Green Team, and Students for Global Change, assisted by the Office of Business and Community Relations, hosted a panel discussion on natural gas hydrofracking in Central New York. About 200 community members, faculty, staff, and students gathered to fill the Campus Center Auditorium and hear panelists discuss the science behind hydrofracking. Panelists included Dr. Anthony Ingraffea, Dwight C. Baum Professor of Civil and Environmental engineering at Cornell; Mr. William Kappel, a hydrogeologist with the US Geological Survey in Ithaca; and Dr. Carl Pierce, Visiting Professor of Geophysics/Geology at SUNY-Oswego. Each panelist discussed different aspects of the question. Responses to the panel were very positive. Those in attendance reported that they found the ses-

sion elucidating, and were able to specify points about hydrofracking that they had learned.

Because we realized early in our planning that we would not be able to accommodate everyone who wanted to attend the session, we had it videotaped by WTOP. Tapes were made available before the end of the semester to two different professors for use in their classes. A copy will be put on reserve in the library, and the recording will be streamed from the civic engagement website, and probably shown on public access television.

Interest in this issue is very strong on the SUNY Oswego campus and in the community. On the evening of December 1, the Green Team sponsored a showing of the Gasland, an HBO documentary on hydrofracking. We participated along with other colleges and univer-



Hydrofracking Panel

sities in the nation-wide screening, followed by an interactive webcast conversation with the director of the documentary, Josh Fox. We still have a DVD of the documentary, currently housed in the Civic Engagement office, and the college's licensing agreement with the producers allows two more public screenings (with unlimited screenings for classes under 25). If you have an interest in using the DVD, please contact [civic@oswego.edu](mailto:civic@oswego.edu).

# SUNY Oswego's Annual Constitution Week

This year's annual celebration of Constitution Week involved activities ranging from the serious to the festive.

Constitution Week on the SUNY Oswego campus is convened annually to recognize themes of citizen privileges and responsibilities, and to celebrate the anniversary of the signing of the Constitution on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1787 during the Constitutional Convention. One year, our celebration focused on voting rights. Last year's Constitution Week included a free speech film festival that extended through the semester. This year, a team of students, faculty, and administrators, working through the Civic Engagement Coalition, planned a variety of activities that involved the whole college community from September 13<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>.



Constitution Panel Discussion

Monday's activity was a panel discussion, "The Constitution in the News," which featured faculty experts talking about current issues influencing--and influenced by--interpretations of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> amendments. We learned that the rights and responsibilities outlined in those amendments re-

quire interpretation in order for us to understand and respond to constitutional issues vigilantly.

On Wednesday, we enjoyed the college's annual reading of the Constitution in the quad. The platform party included the Student Association's director of civic engagement, the college president, the provost, and the assistant director of student life. President Deborah F. Stanley led us in a reading of the Preamble. Enthusiastic



"Rock the Constitution" Reading

groups from Blackfriars, the student theatre group, and the faculty provided us with a "rockin'" reading of the Constitution, adapted and directed by theatre chair Jessica Hester. The Oswego State Cheerleaders helped generate excitement as listeners cheered the sections that were particularly meaningful to them.

Thursday evening the Women's Center, in commemoration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment, sponsored the film, "Iron Jawed Angels," a dramatization of the struggles of young activists Alice Paul and Lucy Burns to get the amendment passed. Viewers broke into applause at the conclusion of the film when the announcement of

the amendment's passage was made.

Finally, on Sunday afternoon, the Political Science Club sponsored a visit from Canadian Member of Parliament Gord Brown, who spoke to us about the differences between the constitutional governments of Canada and the US. Mr. Brown also talked about the differences he had observed between running for office in Canada and running in the US.



Gord Brown,  
Member of  
the Canadian  
Parliament

Voter registration was available at all events, and mini-Constitutions and "I Will Vote on November 2" buttons were handed out. Twice during the week we also had tables set up in our campus center with voter registration as the specific theme. On Friday, Constitution Day, we also exhibited a large replica of the Constitution at our table.

Constitution Week is an excellent opportunity for all members of the campus to consider their citizenship commitments, and begin early in the semester to become more engaged.

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## Greg Mortenson In Oswego

On the evening of October 28th, hundreds of audience members filled Oswego's hockey arena to hear a talk by Greg Mortenson, co-author of the #1 New York Times best selling memoir, *Three Cups of Tea*. Those in attendance ranged in age from elementary school on up, and came from as far away as Binghamton. Mortenson's lecture was part of the city school district's first "Oswego Reads" experiment, in which SUNY Oswego participated. The goal was for all the city to read a version of *Three Cups of Tea* by the time of Mortenson's visit.

Greg Mortenson's story should inspire activists, would-be activists, and those of us just interested in seeing the world a better place. His adventure started when, as a mountain climber in Pakistan, he impulsively made a promise to build a school in a remote village where the residents had befriended him--and then he decided it was worth doing what

ever he had to do to keep that promise. Mortenson was hardly a wealthy man, and "doing what he had to do" entailed years of going without, including a time when he had to live in his car.



Greg Mortenson Signing Books

Since that first school was built, he has raised money to help found many schools throughout Pakistan and Afghanistan, building bridges for peace in ways that only

ordinary people can do, often spending months away from home, and sometimes even risking his life negotiating the unpredictable politics of the region. Mortenson continued his efforts and has also gone on to act as a consultant to the US State Department about our relationships with Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Audience members responded with enthusiasm to Mortenson's talk and slide show, which focused not only on what he had learned from his efforts but also what the future would likely hold, especially for the children of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Members of the audience were able to ask questions of Mortenson after his presentation, and he remained later to sign copies of his books. Students and other from the Oswego City schools also presented Mortenson with a sizeable check from their "Pennies for Peace" campaign, undertaken to support Mortenson's efforts to build more schools.