

Joint NFRW Regional Conference Regions 5, 6 and 7

June 20, 2008

*The Oaks Hotel and Conference Center
Burr Ridge, Illinois*

By Joyce Smith, Region 7 Director, and Jeannine Long, Region 5 Director

We are pleased to report that the Joint Regional Conference for Regions 5, 6 and 7 was well attended and a big success. Ladies began arriving early on Thursday and found a welcome bag in their rooms filled with coupons from local merchants. An afternoon hospitality room with appetizers, wine and soft drinks provided an opportunity to visit. Dinner in the hotel lounge was followed by an excursion to local specialty shops, including Coldwater Creek, where the store had refreshments and a special discount for our group. Everyone shopped till they dropped and later found a special “Sweet Dreams” gift – chocolate, of course – on their pillow at bedtime!

Friday morning, following a hearty breakfast, each attendee registered and received a colorful beach tote bag with conference logo filled with goodies from state federations and the conference.

The program was packed with lively presentations, including a special motivational workshop presented by Tonya Stiel on Fundraising and Membership. Tonya, a new local club president, led her club to increase membership from 27 to 167 in less than a year and it’s still growing! They also successfully raised over \$100,000 in less than 18 months. No wonder everyone was busy taking notes! Tonya, who lives in a small Parish of 8,000 residents, exemplifies what we can accomplish with a “can do” attitude!

Indiana Secretary of State Todd Rokita spoke on protecting the ballot box, and shared his experience of being a defendant before the Supreme Court. Secretary Rokita implements a law in Indiana requiring everyone who votes to present a photo ID at the polls. The Democrats challenged the law in the Supreme Court, but Secretary Rokita prevailed! NFRW Legislative Chairman Jessie Morton was thrilled with the presentation, and Secretary Rokita promised to share his expertise with her committee as they formulate a “protecting the ballot box” initiative for NFRW. (An interesting handout from Secretary Rokita is “*The Case for Regional Presidential Primaries in 2012 and Beyond.*”)

Patt Parker, President of the Maryland Federation, gave an interesting presentation on grassroots energy and preparing and organizing our local clubs and members for the campaign trail this summer and fall. Her lively presentation motivated us to roll up our sleeves and begin working to assure John McCain’s victory and a majority on Capitol Hill.

Jennifer Ping’s Public Relations segment provided no-nonsense approaches to working with the press, writing effective press releases *that will be printed*, letters to the editor and what clubs can do – know the issues, volunteer to write letters, and SHOW UP at rallies and events. Jennifer is First Vice President of the Indiana Federation and a member of the NFRW Public Relations Committee.

Frank Donatelli, Deputy Chairman of the RNC, keynote speaker for the conference luncheon, praised our organization and members for being the true heartbeat of the Republican Party. He

expressed the profound gratitude of the RNC for our grassroots efforts and explained the importance of our participation in this critical election year.

During the luncheon, a \$100 prize was awarded the state with the most attendees (*Indiana*) and to the region with the most attendees (*Region 5 -- CO, MI, MO, MN, WI*). Following a flurry of drawings for door prizes and the announcement of the winner of the 50-50 drawing, the conference resumed in an afternoon session.

Zac Moffatt, Educational Director of the RNC, gave a very informative presentation on new technology at the RNC. GOTV calls made from special phones can now update Voter Vault automatically as calls are made, eliminating repeated calls to voters that have already cast their ballot. This will save countless hours of volunteer time and voters will not feel harassed. Isn't technology GREAT!

It was interesting to hear from someone in the trenches, so to speak, in the educational system, as is Dr. Debora Scheffel from Colorado. Her presentation titled "Paradigms and Pretenses, Demystifying Our Nation's Education Challenges" examined what works, what doesn't, and how we can better serve our young people. We're proud to have such an articulate young Republican educator.

Michelle Keegan, spoke to us about the Lincoln Bicentennial Campaign, the renovation of Ford's Theater in Washington. The NFRW Americanism Committee is especially interested in this campaign and we will hear more about it from them soon. Ms. Keegan donated three books to our silent auction, two of which were "*April 1865 – The Month That Saved America*," by Jay Winik, and "*Manhunt, The 12-day chase for Lincoln's Killer*," signed by the author, James L. Swanson, both New York Times Bestsellers.

When the conference concluded, some of our members left for home, some went to Chicago for an "*Untouchables*" tour, while others relaxed before enjoying dinner at the hotel or a local restaurant.

Saturday morning a couple of hotel shuttle loads and a taxi or two traveled to the Palmer House in downtown Chicago for the NFRW 70th Anniversary Luncheon. We made history! It was an outstanding event we shall always remember, with four past national presidents telling us highlights of their terms. After the luncheon, some stayed in Chicago for a dinner cruise on Lake Michigan, others went directly to the airport, and some traveled back to The Oaks Conference Center to relax, shop a little and end their trip with a lovely dinner.

It was a pleasure to host the Joint Regional Conference. The marvelous feedback made the many months of planning even more worthwhile. We couldn't have done it without the help of our special elves – and you know who you are – so we thank each of you! You're terrific.

We also thank the state federations and individuals who contributed the 35 items in the silent auction and all those wonderful bidders. We were pleased to be able to contribute \$1,000 to the NFRW window replacement fund.

Finally, a very special thank you to the sponsoring federations:

Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee and Wisconsin