

from the front page



George Horsford | Daily Sun

Democratic gubernatorial candidate Philip Levine speaks to the crowd gathered at Sumter County Democratic Party Headquarters on Thursday in Wildwood.

## Democratic Gubernatorial Candidate Philip Levine Returns to The Villages

By SAMANTHA DUNNE  
Daily Sun Staff Writer

Florida's a purple state for a reason, and Democratic gubernatorial candidate Philip Levine's visit to The Villages shows even this famously conservative community has both red and blue.

Levine, former Miami Beach mayor, and Ed Rendell, former Democratic National Committee chair, hosted a meet-and-greet Thursday at Sumter County Democratic Party Headquarters as candidates rally for support in the closing days of early voting ahead of Tuesday's primary election.

Rendell, former governor of Pennsylvania, introduced Levine as a candidate who is "exactly what he seems like."

"I've been to towns that you haven't heard of, let alone been to, in Florida," Levine told the crowd of about 70 people. "And what I find is that the people of Florida all want the same things."

Levine said he has yet to meet the Floridian who doesn't want clean water, doesn't want higher pay for teachers, and doesn't want to shorten their time sitting in traffic.

"We have so many things in common. We're not that divided," Levine said. "I tell everybody, I'm not right. I'm not left. I'm forward."

Levine emphasized his willingness to work across the party aisle to get the job done, highlighting his frequent appearances on Fox News as Miami Beach mayor. Levine described himself as a pro-business and pro-people Democrat.

"There are so many ways we can derive revenue without raising taxes, but we need to be smart about it and we need to get started," Levine said.

Arline Bonner, of the Village of Duval, said she liked what Levine said about education and transportation initiatives.

"We cannot become a 21st century economy unless we connect our cities in Florida," Levine said. "I'm in favor of all forms of transportation. High-speed rail is something that we need."

Levine later talked about wanting to retain talent in Florida by sending students to Florida universities debt-free on the condition they stay in the Florida workforce for a certain number of years after graduation.

"I wanted to meet the candidate," said Ellen Dugan, of the Village of Pine Hills. "I was impressed by him when he organized Rally in Tally. It rained and they all still went. His organization alone was absolutely perfect."

Helen Kelly, a member of the county party's executive committee, is excited to see any candidate coming through The Villages.

"We need information from the people themselves. Levine show(ed) us what he'll do, what he believes in, how he'll do it. And that's important to us," said Kelly, of the Village of Winifred. "I liked his ability to communicate with people, his ability to respond and I thought his answers were right on target."

## 'Don't Tell Nonnie' Provides a Space to Express Yourself

Community members gathered in the lobby of the Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center for the open mic Thursday night.

By KRISTEN FIORE  
Daily Sun Senior Staff Writer

"Shh!"

The lobby of the Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center erupted in animated shushes after The Sharon artistic director Whitney Morse performed "Don't Tell Mama" from "Cabaret."

Morse opened "Don't Tell Nonnie" with the song because the open mic and piano bar event is inspired by the famous New York piano bar, Don't Tell Mama.

"Nonnie," was Morse's grandmother, Sharon Morse.

But despite the shushes, "Don't Tell Nonnie" is an amiable and supportive space that invites its participants to be themselves.

"We open up this night to all of you," Morse said. "It's a really good time."

And it was. Community members performed songs of a number of genres, from opera to musicals to rock and roll.

When asked if she has

a performing background, participant Anne Cit, of the Village of Silver Lake, said, "Only in my kitchen."

"Yeah, and in the living room," joked her daughter, Diane Compton, of Lady Lake. "She has always loved to sing."

Cit does karaoke a few times a week and frequents "Don't Tell Nonnie." This time around, she performed Frank Sinatra's "Embraceable You."

The LaLiPops, an Andrews Sisters-style group made up of Villagers B.J. Odendahl, Melody Gardner and Donna Francis, were another big hit.

The audience clapped along during their performance of "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy."

The LaLiPops is a fairly new group hoping to gain exposure at the event.

"What a great opportunity this is, and a beautiful venue," Francis said.

The three met in The Villages Pops Chorus and realized they harmonized well together.



Michael Johnson | Daily Sun

From left: LaLiPops performers B.J. Odendahl, of the Village of Glenbrook; Melody Gardner, of the Village of Charlotte; and Donna Francis, of the Village of Charlotte, perform "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" during "Don't Tell Nonnie" open mic night Thursday at The Sharon.

"We have a good blend," Gardner said. "You can sing with a lot of groups, but our voices blend very well, for some reason."

Village of Springdale resident Billie Thatcher, another "Don't Tell Nonnie" regular, sang "I Am What I Am" from the musical "La Cage aux

Folles." "Be true to yourself," she told the audience.

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