

Wilberforce Resident Puts Dark Money Under Spotlight

By Deborah Hogshead

Wanda Kelley Jameson wants her \$300 to put dark money under the spotlight.

Jameson is talking about the unlimited amounts of money contributed by undisclosed individuals and corporations to influence elections, a practice made easy by the 2010 Supreme Court ruling on *Citizens United v. Federal Elections Commission*.

"The more people know about dark money, the better choices we could make," says Jameson.

Jameson feels so strongly about this issue that she offered \$300 on the spot to rent the Little Art Theatre in Yellow Springs for a free screening of *Dark Money* at 1 p.m. on April 13.

The Wilberforce resident had seen the award-winning documentary in January when Greater Dayton Move to Amend hosted a free screening at the Xenia Community Library.

Her donation made it possible for Greater Dayton Move to Amend to rent the Little Art Theatre for yet another free screening.

"It was just intuitive," Jameson said of her contribution. "It wasn't a lot of money. I think I would've done it even if it was \$1,000."

Jameson said the film opened her eyes to how politics works in the United States, and it left her feeling betrayed.

The documentary by Kimberly Reed follows a Montana journalist as he investigates the sources of funding behind political campaigns in that state's elections. It examines dark money from multiple perspectives and illustrates how unlimited funding from undisclosed donors influences political campaigns and government decisions. It's told against the backdrop of the Berkeley Pit left behind by the Anaconda Company that controlled much of Montana for close to 100 years. The former copper mining pit is now the largest Superfund site in the country, and it threatens the citizens of Butte with toxic water.

"Oh, this is how things happen," Jameson said. "I could not believe it. I was so floored about how the money was traced."

Jean Burdeshaw, a Greater Dayton Move to Amend volunteer, led the discussion following the film. When she announced that *Dark Money* would be shown again in February at the Yellow Springs Community Library, Jameson spoke up.

"I asked, 'Can we get a broader audience and show it at the theater?'"

On learning it would cost \$300 to rent the theater for a free showing, Jameson pulled out her checkbook.

"I'll write a check," she said.

The donation surprised Burdeshaw, a Beavercreek Township resident who has played a large role in bringing *Dark Money* to the Dayton area.

"I thought she was just throwing out ideas. I didn't know she was serious," Burdeshaw said. "When she said, 'Come right over here, and I'll write you a check,' I realized she was serious."

The offer also surprised Mary Sue Gmeiner, affiliate coordinator for Greater Dayton Move to Amend.

"That's extremely generous, and it showed me just how important this issue is, how closely it cuts into people's feelings," said Gmeiner of Dayton.

"These types of things are affecting our lives every day," Jameson said, referring to the topics covered in the documentary. "We've got to take back things that affect our lives. And we're not going to be able to do this unless we do it on a wider scale. It's not a problem that's going to be solved one vote at a time."

According to Gmeiner, people feel frustrated about issues over which they seem to have no control, but the democracy movement will give people back their voice.

"People feel hopeless," Gmeiner said. "They feel like change will never happen. But they should have hope. They should roll up their sleeves and get to work because we can do this."

"Democracy is not a spectator sport," Burdeshaw said, noting that's one of the things people will learn from the documentary.

Gmeiner and Catherine Turcer, executive director of Common Cause Ohio, will provide comments immediately after the documentary. A longer discussion will begin at 3:45 p.m. at Antioch College's McGregor Hall. This discussion will explore the impact of dark money on democracy and possible solutions to the problem, which include a resolution now in Congress, H.J.Res. 48, proposing an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that says the rights extended by the Constitution are the rights of natural persons only.

The Little Art Theatre is located at 247 Xenia Avenue. The box office opens at 12:30.

Active since 2013, Greater Dayton Move to Amend is one of 8 Ohio affiliates and 45 affiliates nationwide promoting H.J.R. 48, the We the People Amendment. The free screening at the Little Art Theatre is the sixth hosted by Greater Dayton Move to Amend in a collaboration with the award-winning documentary series POV (www.pbs.org/pov).

For more information, contact Greater Dayton Move to Amend at dayton-oh@movetoamend.org.