

WESTFIELD SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE

Drug Prevention, Intervention Discussed by Steven Dorry

WESTFIELD — "In recent years, schools around the nation have been required to confront a growing problem of violence, drugs and alcohol in their schools," said Westfield Board of Education candidate Steven Dorry.

Incidents involving students attacking other students or teachers are becoming an all-too-familiar story. Use of alcohol and drugs by teenagers is certainly not a new problem and Westfield is no exception.

School districts around the country debate about the appropriate means of confronting violence, drugs and alcohol in the schools. Some schools have adopted strict zero-tolerance policies effectively imposing the same penalty for any infraction no matter the degree. But are zero-tolerance policies truly effective in reducing or eliminating violence, drug or alcohol use? Debates have been waged for years over this very issue.

There is a lack of evidence to support that zero-tolerance policies are truly effective in reducing violence and drugs in the schools. In fact, many school districts in urban areas with significant problems with violence and drugs have adopted zero-tolerance policies with little effect.

Such policies frequently have the effect of disparate punishment for vastly different degrees of offenses. Imposing harsh and extreme measures such as expulsion for minor infractions can have an overall negative effect on the entire population of students diminishing the fundamental belief by most Americans that the punishment should fit the crime.

The key to eliminating violence, drugs and alcohol in our schools is a comprehensive community-based

program of prevention and planning. Students receive some level of education on abuse of alcohol and drugs as part of the health curriculum.

However, we need to do more. Stronger and earlier emphasis on the negative impact of drug and alcohol use needs to be introduced in our schools. Behavior management needs to be addressed as well.

Conflict resolution is a critical element of any comprehensive prevention plan. Teachers and administrators must be trained to have a consistent philosophy on their approach to emphasizing prevention.

Early screening and detection of troubled young people is also critical to preventing violence as well as drug and alcohol abuse. Teachers need effective training on identifying the signs of troubled children and children that may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Upon identifying such a child, school officials need to follow a consistent intervention strategy that involves the student, administrators and the parents. Each school should designate a safety and behavior support team made up of counselors with the goal of assisting a troubled student. This approach ensures a consistent and individualized response to disruptive or troubled students.

Long-term comprehensive planning and prevention can build a safe and responsive school over time by emphasizing teaching from an early age. This, coupled with early identification of troubled students, with a comprehensive, consistent program for intervention are critical to fostering an educational environment conducive to learning.

CONCEPTS & THOUGHT

SCOTCH PLAINS-FANWOOD BOE CANDIDATE

Warren McFall Announces Candidacy for SP-F BOE

SCOTCH PLAINS — Warren McFall, a resident of Scotch Plains for over 25 years, has announced his candidacy for the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Board of Education.

The father of three children, all beneficiaries of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood public school system, Mr. McFall noted that they enjoy successful careers having had the foundation of solid education values instilled in them through their parents and public schools.

Mr. McFall is a graduate of Lehigh University and has had an extensive career in the corporate world as a Vice President of a Performing Rights Organization and consultant with Ernst & Whinney.

Currently, he is a member of technical staff with Bell Labs, Lucent Technologies, and has been responsible for a staff of over 200 working with corporate budget and compensation issues.

Mr. McFall believes that involvement in his children's education as both a caring and informed father and coach with over 16 years experience in coaching girls high school intercity soccer teams, has given him a unique perspective of the elements necessary for successful students, as well as accountability from the public school system.

"The understanding of public school issues at a local, state and federal level, as a result of two educations in my family, gives me an additional perspective on what works and what doesn't," said Mr. McFall.

"My wife, Pat, is currently a principal in another district, and one of my daughters teaches in our district, so I have the opportunity to see all levels of concerns, frustrations and accomplishments from an administrator's position as well as a classroom teacher's outlook," he noted.

"Why am I running?" asked Mr. McFall. "Because I strongly believe in public education and wholeheartedly support the professional teaching staff while appreciating their expertise and commitment."

He added, "I understand the frustrations of taxpayers, especially our community members on fixed incomes dealing with the escalating amount of money necessary to support our schools. I also recognize the importance of strong schools and the impact they have on the value of our properties."

Mr. McFall noted, "State S1701 will present financial challenges in maintaining our current school system, let alone advancing them to more challenging curriculums and technology."

"My experience in the budget process, both in business and non-profit arenas, allows me to bring a special expertise to the school board that is necessary for a sound commitment to serve on the board of education and hope that voters will give me the opportunity to bring their concerns and questions to the table," he concluded.

For more information on Mr. McFall, or to present questions directly to the candidate, please visit www.WarrenMcFall.com.

WESTFIELD SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE

Basic Budget Questions Answered by Gary McCready

WESTFIELD — The final exam for school board members is the yearly vote on the budget, according to Westfield School Board candidate Gary McCready. After several months of intense preparation, cram sessions with the district's administrators, and tax rate calculations that make everyday math look easy, the board will receive their grade on Tuesday, April 19.

To help you understand the process, I've got the answers to some frequently asked questions below.

Does anyone really understand the school budget as it appears in the Leader's "Public Notice" section? It's rumored that Bob Berman, the district's business administrator, knows it by heart. However, the Board of Education members typically use a "program budget," which breaks down the costs into categories much easier to understand. You'll be seeing that in presentations and on Channel 36.

How much will my taxes increase? Well, that depends on your assessment - for the average Westfield home assessed at \$180,000, the proposed increase will be \$324.

Can't the board save some money somewhere? Yes, this year the board has reduced spending by consolidating the technology department, by negotiating a "managed care" health plan option for most of the teachers, and by contracting for lower utility costs, to name a few areas. The board is also planning to teach more special education classes within the district, reducing out of district costs that can reach \$100,000 per child.

Isn't the state helping out with some funds? Yes, to the tune of about 10 percent of Westfield's budget, com-

pared to 50 percent on average for other districts statewide. The state also regulates how Westfield and other school districts can budget for education.

Districts that are primarily state-funded on average spend more per child than Westfield does.

What happens if the budget is not passed? Then the town council gets to decide what amount or line items are cut or reduced from budget. The cuts can be made without considering the Board of Education's priorities or strategic plan. The risk of a budget not passing is approaching a reality because even though more people move into town for our great schools, fewer are turning out to vote for the budget that supports the schools, while the number voting against the budget stays fairly constant.

Do you have any ideas? Glad you asked. If elected, I, Gary McCready, would use my years of experience personally managing millions in technology budgets to help craft a budget that will produce the best educational value for Westfield's tax dollars.

I would also invite community members to budget discussions that match their interests to increase support for the budget. Lastly, I would also like to see price tags applied to the goals of the district's strategic plan for better long range planning. Of course, visit www.mccready.com for more details.

See it all on the Web!
www.goleader.com

Four Candidates Running For Five Seats on Bd. of Ed

By ANNA GITHENS
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

GARWOOD- The Garwood Board of Education has received nominating petitions from four candidates who plan to run for a seat on the board in the upcoming election on Tuesday, April 19.

This year, however, there are five vacant seats, which constitute the most vacancies the board has had on ballot since 1992. The board is short one petition and is hoping for a write-in candidate. Ten votes are needed to validate a write-in on school board elections. If a write-in candidate is not submitted, Superintendent Dr. Carmen Centuolo of the Union County Department of Education will appoint someone to the vacant seat.

There are three, three-year seats available that were previously served by Monty Brown, Gary Maher and former Board President Juanita Austin, who resigned last fall. Mr. Brown and Mr. Maher are running again for their second three-year terms.

Raymond Grimes temporarily filled Ms. Austin's seat after her resignation but will not be running in this election.

There are also two, two-year seats available that were previously served by Borough Councilman Victor DeFilippo and Borough Clerk Christina Ariemma. Both resigned this past fall. Anthony Sytko stepped in to fill Councilman DeFilippo's seat in the interim. Tracy Schadewald took Ms. Ariemma's position.

Mr. Sytko is not running in the election, however, Ms. Schadewald is now running for a two-year term. *The Westfield Leader* and *The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Times* were unable to reach Ms. Schadewald for comment.

In addition, Debbie Courtney has filed as a first-time candidate running for the other two-year term. Mrs. Courtney has three children

in the Garwood school system, Sean in sixth grade, Meghan in third grade, and Danny in second grade. She is currently a teacher with the Elizabeth Board of Education.

"I have experience with teaching, the 'No Child Left Behind Act', testing and curriculums," said Mrs. Courtney. "I've been on the PTA Executive Board for two years and I am currently the treasurer. I'm also on the education committee."

Mrs. Courtney also noted that she has been attending the board of education meetings in Garwood for years. She felt that running for a seat would suitably be the next step for her and she is prepared to serve it well.

Mr. Brown has been on the board for three years and is running for his second three-year term.

"I am currently the chairperson for the Buildings and Grounds Committee and the Policy and Personal Relations Committee. I have also sat on the Negotiations Committee."

Mr. Brown has lived in Garwood for six years and has three children. Two are in second and fourth grade at Lincoln School and one is in Pre-kindergarten at Washington School.

Mr. Maher has also just finished up his first three-year term on the school board, and is running for a second three-year term. He has been a resident of Garwood for about seven and a half years.

"I am married with two children, one in school in Garwood, the other starting out in Pre-K here in Garwood next year. My wife and I are partners in Maher & Maher LLC, the only law firm in Garwood," said Mr. Maher.

The new members will be sworn-in at the Tuesday, April 26, re-organization meeting. Officers will be decided on at this time as well. Adelle Lewis is currently serving as board president and could be reappointed at that meeting.

Optimist Club of Westfield Seeks Award Nominations

WESTFIELD — For the ninth consecutive year, the Optimist Club of Westfield is seeking nominations for its annual Youth Volunteer Award, which is given to a senior at Westfield High School (WHS) who has distinguished himself or herself through volunteer service in the community.

"As an organization that is itself founded on the principals of volunteerism, the Optimist Club is

pleased to recognize young men and women who have embraced these values at an early age," said Youth Volunteer Award Chairman Marty Silverman.

The award includes a cash grant and will be presented at the Awards Night ceremony at WHS on Thursday, May 26.

To nominate a WHS senior for the Youth Volunteer Award, please call Mr. Silverman at (908) 654-0825 to receive a nomination form.



POWERFUL ESSAY... On March 9, Westfield High School (WHS) junior Ally Psychojos was honored by the Optimist Club of Westfield for her winning entry in its annual essay contest, which was organized around the theme, "The Power of One." She received a cash award of \$250 for her well-crafted essay about her experience helping the needy last summer in Mexico. A gymnast and WHS' only diver, Ally is interested in pursuing a career in broadcast journalism. Pictured, left to right, are: Optimist President Mike Walsh, Ally, and New Jersey District Governor Carol Eschmann.

Westfield BOE Candidates To Participate in Forum

WESTFIELD — The candidates for the Westfield Board of Education will have an opportunity to answer public questions at a forum that will take place in the Westfield High School (WHS) Cafeteria on Wednesday, March 30, at 7:30 p.m.

The Westfield Parent-Teacher Council is sponsoring the Candidates Night and the Westfield Area League of Women Voters will provide a moderator.

The program will adhere to the traditional criteria of discussion of the issues.

The five candidates vying for three seats on the Westfield Board of Education include incumbents Alice Hunnicutt and William Ziff and newcomers Ann Ormsby Cary, Steven Dorry and Gary McCready.

The Candidates Night will also be taped by WHS-TV36 and broadcast on Channel 36 from early April through the election date, April 19.

Raider Athletic Booster Club Will Host First 50/50 Raffle

SCOTCH PLAINS — The first annual Scotch Plains-Fanwood Blue Raider Athletic Booster Club 50/50 Raffle will be held on Friday, April 1, at the Italian-American Club in Scotch Plains to benefit athletic programs at Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School.

Only 250 tickets will be available at \$100 each, which includes dinner and entertainment. The first ticket drawn will be a winner, followed by the 50th, 100th, 150th, 200th, and the last ticket, which will be for the grand prize of \$10,000.

There will also be three \$1,000 prizewinners and two winners of 32-inch flat screen televisions.

To obtain tickets, please call Jane Giannaci of the Scotch Plains Recreation Department at (908) 322-6700, Barbara Gates at the Baseball School at (908) 756-6868, Rob Harmer at the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Athletic Office at (908) 889-6500 or Russell Wells at (908) 654-5923.

The Athletic Boosters Club is an organization of over 200 parents and friends of past, present and future Raider athletes. While the vast majority of athletic support comes from the school board, the Boosters contribute equipment, logistical support, scholarships, and recognition awards.

The organization is an all-volunteer, non-profit club and part of the costs of tickets is tax-deductible.

Kristen Gundrum Earns Dean's List Recognition; Graduates West Chester

WESTFIELD — Kristen Gundrum, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Gundrum of Westfield, graduated West Chester University of Pennsylvania in December of 2004 with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education.

A 2000 graduate of Westfield High School, Kristen was named to the dean's list at West Chester University during the last term of her senior year.

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