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Meet the Candidates for the OUSD Board of Trustees

By Andrea A. Firth



Sarah Butler



Tyson Krumholz



Julie Rossiter



Christopher
Severson



Rebecca "Bekki" Van
Voorhis-Gilbert

The Orinda Union School District (OUSD) has five candidates running to fill the three seats on the Board of Trustees which will open as Riki Sorenson, Jack Bontemps and Pam West complete their terms. This will be the first time serving on the District's Board for any of the candidates. In this issue, we provide you a brief look at who they are, why they are running, and what they hope to bring to the school board process.

Sarah Butler

Since moving to Orinda 12 years ago, Butler has volunteered extensively for the OUSD schools serving on the Board of the Educational Foundation of Orinda, the Glorietta and Orinda Intermediate Schools (OIS) Site Councils, and the Parent Club Boards of Glorietta, OIS, and Miramonte High School. She has co-chaired the area PTA legislative team and helped to coordinate the school parcel tax Measures A and B. She has two children, a son in 8th grade at OIS and a daughter who is senior at Miramonte. "I would appreciate the opportunity to serve on the OUSD Board of Trustees so that I can give back to the community in an area that I have developed a lot of knowledge about, and that I really care about, and am personally invested in," says Butler adding, "I feel that with my experience, I have a lot to offer by serving on the school board." Butler believes maintaining OUSD's top-rated schools with the limited available resources is the most important issue facing the District. To address this challenge she feels it will be important for the Board to have open communication and collaboration with parents and the community, and to plan strategically for the best use of financial resources.

Tyson Krumholz

Krumholz has two children, in kindergarten and third grade, attending Wagner Ranch Elementary School. His extended family has lived in Orinda for over forty years, and his mother and wife both taught at Orinda Intermediate School. Krumholz and his family moved back to Orinda when his eldest child started school, and he began attending the OUSD Board of Trustees Meetings to understand the current issues and dynamics facing the District. "I believe that I have valuable insight into the educational needs of our children and feel this is a prime opportunity to volunteer my time and effort for the benefit of Orinda's children," says Krumholz. Working as a civil engineer, he feels he brings valuable experience working within governmental agency constraints to make a positive difference. He supports Orinda Scouting, has facilitated Miramonte students to visit construction projects, and is involved with Rebuilding Together and Habitat for Humanity. "As for the budget issues, the Board has a unique opportunity to motivate the community, teachers, parents and administration in a variety of ways to further alliances and strengthen relationships," says Krumholz adding, "Continued accessibility of the Board for all Orinda parents and community members is key to success in balancing the dynamic list of priorities facing the OUSD."

Julie Rossiter

Rossiter has lived in Orinda for six years. She has three children; one attends OIS, one attends Del Rey Elementary School, and the third is in preschool. Rossiter has actively volunteered at Del Rey serving as treasurer of the school fundraising drive for two years and representative for the parcel tax campaign, chairing committees for the Parent Club and auction, and working in the classroom. She is currently the school's legislative representative to the Las Trampas Creek Council (PTA). "I want to use my knowledge and skills to help Orinda maintain [OUSD's] high standard of excellence," says Rossiter adding, "I will focus on maximizing public and private sources of school funding, continuing to improve the curriculum, and providing students and teachers with the resources they need to excel in today's competitive society." She feels procuring sufficient funding and maintaining and building academic success are two important issues facing the District. Rossiter says the Board must ensure that available funds are used wisely and must continue to look for ways to maximize funding sources. "To maintain academic success, the Board must continually review and modify the strategic plan for the District. Through careful planning and prudent changes, Orinda will continue to maintain its standard of excellence."

Christopher Severson

Severson grew up in Orinda and attended OUSD schools from kindergarten through 8th grade including Del Rey, Glorietta, and OIS and graduated from Miramonte High School. He moved back to Orinda five years ago. He has five

children; one attends OIS, three go to Glorietta, and one is still at home. Severson is a physician specializing in emergency medicine and works in the emergency rooms of several area hospitals. He has chaired Family Science Night at OIS and has worked at the Glorietta auction. He has also served as a Boy Scout adult leader for the past two years. "Orinda needs a voice to represent all of our children, current and future," says Severson. "I will help the Board communicate more thoughtfully with the parents and community." He acknowledges that the California budget crisis and trickle down effect to the District's finances has been, and will continue to be, a huge hurdle for the Board of Trustees to manage. Severson says the Board must ask themselves "How will this affect our kids" and "Where can we improve" with every tough decision they make.

Rebecca "Bekki" Van Voorhis-Gilbert

Van Voorhis-Gilbert and her family have lived in Orinda for eight years. She has a son entering 6th grade at OIS and a daughter who goes to Wagner Ranch. She has volunteered at Wagner Ranch in a variety of capacities including as room parent, Think First Instructor, Parent Education Chair, Monster Mash Chair, and Technology Committee member. Van Voorhis-Gilbert has also volunteered for local community projects including Measures A, B, and E and as a founder of Save Environmental Education in Orinda. She has worked as a tenured professor at California State University Hayward and as a litigation lawyer in San Francisco. She believes that her volunteer and work experiences combined with her educational background make her well qualified to serve on the OUSD Board. Given the State's bleak financial picture, she says, "It is essential that the OUSD develop a strategic district plan to weather these years rather than continue to engage in ad-hoc annual decision-making...I have talked with hundreds of parents, educators, community members and concerned citizens about what is and what is not working in the OUSD presently." Van Voorhis-Gilbert promises fiscal integrity; academic excellence; responsiveness to parents, teachers, and the community; transparency in process; and the advancement of 21st century skills.

Reach the reporter at: andrea@lamorindaweekly.com

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