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Four Contenders for Two Lafayette School Board Seats

By Cathy Tyson

After a combined quarter century of volunteer service to the Lafayette School District Governing Board, Shayne Silva and Stephenie Teichman have chosen not to run for another four year term. Four candidates are vying for those two empty seats on the November 6 ballot. Job responsibilities for the volunteer position include being available every second Wednesday of the month for board meetings and finding the time to serve on lots of committees - from the curriculum council to technology.

Candidates are, in alphabetical order, Jean Follmer, Quinlan Tom, Nancy Wallace and Don Wolff. Their official role will be to represent the community and provide leadership in addressing community issues related to education. All four have children attending schools in the Lafayette School District and all mention financial pressures facing the district as a key concern, but they have different motivations for wanting to be on the school board.

Each of the candidates was asked to respond to three questions (due to space constraints, we asked them keep their responses brief): Why are you running for School Board, do you have kids attending Lafayette public schools, and what do you think are the key issues facing the District?

Jean Follmer is the Springhill Parent Faculty Club President, a former education reporter, and works with organizations Lafayette for Education and Educate our State.

I am running for the Lafayette School District Governing Board because I moved to Lafayette in 2007 for the excellent schools. Since then, the District has implemented \$3,000,000 in cuts. These cuts have resulted in increased class sizes and reductions that include teaching, aide, counseling and janitorial staff. Along with many parents, I am disappointed by these reductions. We must restore our programs through thoughtful financial planning and spending as well as expand our programs to include full-day kindergarten and foreign language as do some of our neighboring districts. Further, I believe that all students in Lafayette should be challenged daily through the effective use of differentiation and ability grouping. I have become keenly aware of the challenges that the Lafayette School District and other California school districts currently face. I believe that my experience, my collaborative nature, my sense of financial responsibility and my desire to work on behalf of the Lafayette community will enable me to be an effective school board member.

I have two children; both are school-aged and have attended school in the Lafayette School District since kindergarten. My daughter is in the 6th grade at Stanley Middle School and my son is in the 4th grade at Springhill Elementary School.

The key issue facing our District is the lack of a stable funding source. Reductions in Average Daily Attendance revenue from the State of California combined with a dependence upon uncertain revenue streams that include parcel tax renewals and parent and community donation requests make reliable financial planning difficult for the District. The District has also faced recent and unexpected increases in the cost of administering some of its programs.

Quinlan Tom is an attorney with the Oakland law firm McNerney & Dillon, and was also school site supervisor for the Measure B campaign.

Serving on the Lafayette School Board will allow me to apply my experience, as a past PTA President for Lafayette Elementary and a current Lafayette Partners in Education (LPIE) Executive Board member, for the benefit of all of the children in our district.

My two sons, Zach and Nate, are now at Stanley Middle School after attending Lafayette Elementary. For the past six years, I have seen the excellent education that the Lafayette District provides to its students on a day to day basis.

The number one issue we face is how to maintain and improve educational excellence in Lafayette schools in this time of extremely limited financial resources. There is no single answer. We must use existing resources efficiently. We have to hold our teachers to high standards and provide them with the tools they need to meet those standards. We must look to our community for support and sometimes, as we have seen recently, we must make difficult choices. Our current Board has set a great example of how to maintain the quality of Lafayette education while balance competing interests, and I intend to follow that example.

Nancy Wallace served on the Director of Student Services' Parent Advisory Committee; served on the Board of the Springhill Parent Faculty Club; she's the Founder and President for the past four years of SEED (the Special Education Enrichment and Development Foundation of Lafayette); and has volunteered at school and on parcel tax campaigns. For more information, visit her website, www.NancyWallace2012.com.

I am running for the Lafayette School Board because I want to help our District ensure a world-class education for all of its students - gifted, typically developing and those with special needs. Providing a world-class education for all students in these economic times requires proven leadership and experience. Through my volunteer experience in this community, I have exhibited this leadership. These experiences have helped me understand the issues involved in governing this District. Before leaving my practice at a large international law firm to care for my children, I practiced law for eleven years and worked in the actuarial field for several years. As an attorney and an actuary, I dealt with complex legal and financial issues. This experience will be invaluable in navigating the complex issues involved in the continuing struggle with tough budgetary issues.

I have three children who attend or have attended school in the Lafayette School District - two typically

developing daughters and a son with special needs. As part of supporting their education, I have been an active member and leader in both the general education and special needs communities in Lafayette.

The most significant issue facing the District is insufficient funding. While fundraising is critical, the state budget crisis will continue to force us to make tough budgetary decisions too. Continuing to provide world-class education with less money is our biggest challenge.

Other issues we face include the need to remain technologically current, maintain differentiation with fewer resources, develop a more coordinated curriculum from K-8, introduce a foreign language program starting in kindergarten, strengthen our science and math programs, and continue our excellent music programs.

The District also needs to continue to provide world-class education for children with special needs and learning differences.

Don Wolff graduated from the Stanford University School of Medicine, and is currently a practicing ophthalmologist in Walnut Creek. He's been actively involved in Boy Scouts for years.

I am a candidate for school board to bring fresh ideas that complement the "character and wellness" initiatives. Specifically, as a medical doctor and small business owner with ten years experience, I want to see a strengthening of programs for diet-nutrition awareness, anti-obesity, vision screening, bike and sport safety.

Our son attended Springhill for kindergarten through fifth grade. His mom and I were impressed with the high quality of teachers and curriculum there. Our son thrived under their creative instruction. Ms. Heather Duncan has done an amazing job in bringing new programs such as student government. While our son was at Springhill, I was a Cub Scout leader and school dad volunteer. Our son is now eleven years old and starting Stanley this year. I am active as a Boy Scout leader and our son is working on his "tenderfoot" rank.

There will continue to be external financial pressures on the district, especially with increasing enrollment and requests from students outside the district to join. The drive for excellence will push us to continue to seek out and implement the cutting edge developments in education that will enable us to far exceed state guidelines, while keeping class sizes at levels that promote the best learning for our children.



Jean Follmer



Quinlan Tom



Nancy Wallace



Don Wolff

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