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Civic News Lamorinda

Meet the Candidates for High School Governing Board

By Cathy Tyson

Four candidates are seeking three available seats on the Acalanes Union High School District governing board. It will be up to voters in Lafayette, Moraga, Orinda, and Walnut Creek to decide who will win the non-paid, non-partisan four-year positions. Watching over 5,416 students in grades 9-12 at Acalanes, Campolindo, Las Lomas, and Miramonte high schools, along with the adult education and alternative schools, isn't easy. The board acts as the legislative body for the district, establishing policies and goals. Some of the issues board members deal with include conference with legal counsel about existing litigation in closed session, field trip requests, textbook adoption and discussion with union representatives, use of pesticides on campus, staff development and the budget. The district ranks in the top 4 percent of all high schools in the U.S.

The lucky winners will get to donate their time on the first and third Wednesdays of each month at the district office in Lafayette, where the public is always welcome to attend and weigh in on issues of concern. The next board meeting will be on Sept. 17. The agenda is always available online three days prior to the meeting.

There are two incumbents, Susie Epstein and Nancy Kendzierski, running, and two new contenders, Kristen Correll and Robert Hockett; the candidates are presented here in alphabetical order.



Photo provided

Kristen Correll and her family moved to Moraga from Texas six years ago; she's been very involved in her kids' education since her arrival. She and her husband Charles have four children, two have graduated from Miramonte, one is currently a senior there and one is a sophomore at Campolindo. She has a background in education, with a doctorate in curriculum from the University of Houston. The family has been busy with a variety of sports teams during their tenure. Her board service credits include Town Hall Theatre Company and Miramonte High School, and she is a special education parent representative for the Moraga School District.

When asked about the biggest issues facing the AUHSD governing board, she cited two main concerns. First is Common Core and how that is implemented. The second is the budget, "Obviously there is a limited amount of money, I want to look carefully at how we are spending it." She wants to continue to provide in the fu-

ture the great education that her kids received, and stressed the need to provide professional development for teachers.



Photo provided

Susie Epstein has served on the governing board since 2010. She was a board member of the Miramonte Parents Club from 2010 to 2013 and has held a variety of positions supporting Orinda schools – funding campaigns for Del Rey, Orinda Intermediate School and for Miramonte High School; she was also a classroom volunteer. She has two kids who have gone through our public school system. She says her favorite day of the year is graduation day, when she has had the privilege of handing diplomas to hundreds of graduating seniors for each of the past four years. She was awarded the Su Stauffer Friends of Education award, Acalanes Union High School District in 2010. She attended the University of Colorado, Boulder. For more information, see her website at www.susieepstein.com.

When asked about the biggest issue that's facing the district, she replied, "The biggest issue we face right now is implementing the transition to Common Core. In addition to curriculum changes, we will be moving to a new set of assessments and we'll need to communicate to students and parents how these differ from previous tests and scores." She added, "While Common Core is a challenge, it is also an exciting time as we are on the verge of delivering 21st century instruction. Teachers are integrating Common Core into their curriculum, working collaboratively and using technology to make the courses come alive for the students."



Photo Cathy Tyson

Robert Hockett is a retired teacher who now lives in Walnut Creek. He was born and raised in Lafayette and graduated from Acalanes High School. For 33 years he was a dedicated teacher of U.S. History and American Government in

Yucca Valley, which is about 30 miles north of Palm Springs. He also served on the city council for Yucca Valley. Upon his retirement in 2007 he came back to the area. He says he loved teaching and the opportunity to impact young people's lives; he's a big believer in public education, enjoys reading and jogs every day. He graduated and received his teaching credential from Chico State University.

He believes the biggest issue facing the district is providing a quality education within the existing budget framework. He feels that should include music, the arts and sports. As a teacher with years of hands-on experience, he believes maintaining high quality staff is also critically important. He has realized through his many years of teaching and dealing directly with students, that they need an advocate.



Photo Cathy Tyson

Nancy Kendzierski was appointed to the governing board last September. She's married and has two sons; the elder has graduated from Campolindo, and her younger son is a junior. She received a computer science degree, summa cum laude from Iowa State University. She currently is serving on the executive board of the Moraga Education Foundation, and is the auditor of the Las Trampas Creek Council of PTAs. She was also the treasurer of the AUHSD Measure A parcel tax campaign for the May, 2014 election. She has a long history of donating her time at a wide variety of volunteer positions at Los Perales, Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School, the Moraga School District and Campolindo High School.

Kendzierski feels the most important thing for the district is to continue "our strong academic performance with the move to Common Core and new assessments. The district is well-positioned to carry out this multi-year process given our excellent teachers, staff, and administration, plus our invaluable supportive community."

She added, "However, I believe the biggest issue facing the district is to maintain fiscal stability through this process, given the state's current level of funding for education, the many changes with the move to the Local Control Funding Formula, and the significant pension cost increases to school districts recently passed by the legislature. In addition to state funding, we must explore and be open to identifying additional funding opportunities and especially cost improvements."

Election Day is Tuesday, Nov. 4.

From Front Page

Film Festival Opens in Lamorinda This Weekend

... continued from page A1

The casts and crews of films featured in the festival include many people who are well-known in the film industry, says Zemrak. "The independent films attract young professionals on their way up, as well as well-recognized professionals who want to support stories they believe in," he explains.

The film "Cas & Dylan" illustrates that idea perfectly, showcasing seasoned actor Richard Dreyfuss with talented young actress Tatiana Maslany. The two embark on an improbable and unexpected road trip across Canada that will make viewers feel better about humanity. The closing movie, "Putzel," is a sweet Jewish comedy that hints at Woody Allen's world. "Mom, Murder and Me" has action, mystery and is beautifully filmed in San Francisco.

But a film festival is about more

than main feature films. Once again the CAIFF will feature thought provoking documentaries, some of them by our Lamorinda neighbors. Lafayette's Ellie Marks is the associate producer of "Mobilize," which presents the science, the facts and the debate regarding the link between cell phone use and brain tumors. Also showing is "Breathe in Life," the story of Laura Cryan Zellmer, a Moraga mom who was diagnosed as an infant with Cystic Fibrosis. The film is her letter to her son. (Read the related article in our archive, <http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0813/pdf/Two-Extraordinary-Lamorinda-Women-Direct-and-Produce-Two-CAIFF-Films.pdf>.)

Other documentaries include "Liv and Ingmar," the love story encompassing the 42-year and 12-film-long relationship between actress Liv

Ullmann and master filmmaker Ingmar Bergman. Told entirely from Ullmann's point of view, this biopic of an extraordinary relationship is constructed as a collage of images and sounds from the timeless Ullmann-Bergman films, including behind-the-scenes footage, still photographs, passages from Ullmann's book "Changing," and Bergman's love letters to Ullmann.

In this election year, you will also want to see "True Son," the story of 22-year-old Michael Tubbs who decided in 2012 to run for the Stockton City Council to reinvent his hometown, building his campaign from the ground up. Also a beautiful documentary is "Thrown for a Loss: The Story of the 1963 Mallards," about the Pittsburg, Calif., Pop Warner football team headed to play in the 1963 national championships for the 12-14

age group, and have a pre-game breakfast with President John F. Kennedy at the White House. His assassination changed those plans. Team members attended Kennedy's funeral instead before going on to win the championship. Zemrak said that some of the players, as well as the director, plan to come to the showing of the movie.

"Citizen Hearst" tells the story of William Randolph Hearst, his empire and his impact on today's media – a fitting documentary for the Rheem Theatre since rumor has it that Donald Rheem, who was friends with Hearst, built this theater to rival his friend's in Hearst Castle. "Starring Adam West" will be a hit with anyone who loved him in "Batman." The eye-opening documentary focuses on the cruelty of Hollywood and the actor's real character.

And of course, a festival would not be a festival without shorts. Shorts are often the first films of young filmmakers who don't have budgets for full-length features. A short is an art form in its own right. In a few minutes, you have to tell a story, send a message, express a thought, and transmit a vision. It's like a short poem, the quintessence of a new talent. CAIFF presents the shorts in different categories: Relationships, Drama, Celebrity Shorts (celebrities often give a few days to young talent they believe in), Comedy, and East Bay Showcase. Each showing presents five to eight movies that are three minutes to a half-hour long.

Tickets and a complete program are available online at caiff.org. For those shows that might be sold out, up to 20 tickets will be available in the 'rush line' just before the start.