



5512 N. Kent Ave.
Whitefish Bay, WI 53217



Advocates *for* EDUCATION *of* Whitefish Bay, Inc.

March 2005

4 WHITEFISH BAY RESIDENTS 2 OPEN SCHOOL BOARD SEATS *Inside: Meet the Candidates*

School Board Candidates' Forum

Wednesday, March 16, 2005

Whitefish Bay Public Library
Second Floor Program Room
Program will begin promptly at
7 p.m.

On **Tuesday, April 5th**,
Whitefish Bay voters will cast
their ballots for two new
Whitefish Bay Public School
board members.

*Four residents representing a variety of
views are running for the positions.
Find out where they stand and become
an informed voter.*

MISSION *Statement*

*Advocates for Education is a
non-partisan, not-for-profit
organization that works to pro-
mote high quality public educa-
tion in Whitefish Bay by:*

- *Informing residents about edu-
cation issues and encouraging
public participation in matters
affecting the schools*
- *Fostering a social and political
climate favorable to public
education*
- *Advocating for public policies
that promote high quality pub-
lic education in Whitefish Bay*

Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay

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FOUR CANDIDATES

TWO SEATS OPEN ON WFB SCHOOL BOARD

Four village residents are seeking two open school board seats on the seven-member Whitefish Bay School Board. Following are brief profiles of the candidates, and their answers to questions about their qualifications for the posts. The election is April 5th.

4
PROFILES

MARTHA BERG is an educator who has lived in Whitefish Bay for 18 years. She has a bachelor's degree in sociology and a master's degree in education, both from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Berg is a gifted-and-talented coordinator and math and science resource teacher in the Shorewood School District. She has two children who attended Richards and Whitefish Bay Middle Schools and graduated from Whitefish Bay High School. Her son is currently attending law school, and her daughter is planning to attend medical school next fall.

Why are you running?

I believe the experiences I have gained through my professional life as an educator will allow me to bring a valuable perspective to the school board. I am passionate about education. I also know that I can give the community the time and energy necessary to be part of a board that is committed to "making an exceptional place to learn even better." (as stated in the Whitefish Bay School District Focus Plan).

What are the most important issues facing Whitefish Bay Schools?

Maintaining the quality of our schools in a climate of fiscal uncertainty is a major issue facing the Whitefish Bay School District. Enrollment trends are critical to the financial well-being of a school district. Whitefish Bay Schools must continue to provide a full range of quality educational programs and services in order to attract families to our community.

The other issue is one that our children face. They are growing up in a rapidly changing world, one in which they will be working in jobs that don't even exist right now. Our children must be equipped with both basic skills and intellectual skills. We must graduate life-long learners, students who will be able to solve problems when answers are not readily known.

What is the role of a school board member?

A board member is an advocate for all children. This may be accomplished by setting policy or by supporting educational initiatives brought to the board by teachers or administrators. A board member should be a visionary, and encourage others to do the same.

What qualifications, skills or talents would you bring to the board?

I have been in the educational field for over 20 years, directly involved in the curriculum, instruction, and assessment issues that face educators on a daily basis. I have ten years of classroom experience, have facilitated strategic planning, and have chaired curriculum selection committees. I have taught university-level education courses, and served on the WFB Library Board for the past six years as vice-president. These experiences have given me many qualifications and skills suitable for membership on a school board.

NICHOLAS CATALANO is a senior at Whitefish Bay High School who has lived in the village for 17 years. He plans to attend college at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee or Milwaukee Area Technical College before transferring to a larger university. Catalano attended Cumberland and Whitefish Bay Middle Schools. He has three siblings at the Middle and High Schools. He believes it is important to bring the perspectives of students to the board's attention.

Why are you running?

To bring about positive change in our community by providing a unique insight into our schools, with emphasis on the problems they face and programs that are effective in keeping the education in Whitefish Bay exceptional.

What are the most important issues facing Whitefish Bay Schools?

Diversity – Minority Population as compared to the Resident Primarily Caucasian population is cause for concern. Not only does this look poor for the district as a whole, it is leaving an entire group of students out of an exceptional education. Funding – A constant battle with no end in sight. With the so-called "Taxpayer's Bill of Rights" teetering in the state legislature I fear that the primary responsibility of the board and district staff will no longer be improving the quality of education but rather cutting costs in such a way as to not diminish it.

What is the role of a school board member?

Other than to ensure that the lights remain on and the

buildings keep warm (which is an exact science we can never seem to master on those especially chilly days) the role of the board is to oversee the development and consistent improvement of the instructional curriculum, environment, and experience. Working close with well versed district staff, it is the job of a board member to ensure the needs of each child in the district is met.

What qualifications, skills or talents would you bring to the board?

I have had the privilege to being directly involved in some of the best educational institutions in the country, while having a chance to analyze from the outside the problems that we as a district face. For example, I was invited by a coalition of non-profit organizations to take part in a project called "The Other America Tour." The project consisted of taking high school students of various backgrounds and go to area high schools giving first hand experiences of oppression (be that sexism, ageism, racism, discrimination based on religion, sexual orientation, or national origin). During the time I worked with these people I learned that there were serious diversity issues that were not being addressed in Whitefish Bay, and thus the institution was not preparing students for the true road ahead. During my tenure I will push for the district to invest more in diversity programs from an early age, teaching respect of all cultures, as well as providing district breaks during Jewish high holidays and Martin Luther King Jr. Day. I have extensive knowledge of the technology crisis our schools face, having worked in various capacities with the hardware and software the school uses on a daily basis. I have experience with these applications in "the real world" and I believe I can bring a strong knowledge base to one of the district's largest program in terms of funding.

MARIE GRECO is owner and vice president of Lexicom Corporate Services, Inc. She attended the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and has lived in Whitefish Bay for eight years. Greco has served as PTO president, Parent/Teacher Council member and member of the board of Advocates for Education. Her two children attend Cumberland and Whitefish Bay Middle Schools.

Why are you running?

I believe that quality education sets the foundation for our lives. I have lived in the North Shore community my entire life and care deeply about Whitefish Bay and its schools.

What are the most important issues facing Whitefish Bay Schools?

I believe the most important issue facing Whitefish Bay Schools is maintaining a high quality of education while managing changes in school funding.

What is the role of a school board member?

I believe that the role of a school board member is to work

with other board members to set policy. Also, it is important to facilitate communication between the school board and our community.

What qualifications, skills or talents would you bring to the board?

I am uniquely qualified because of my active parent involvement in the schools and day to day involvement in the classrooms. I bring years of experience as a PTO president, Parent/Teacher Council member and member of the board of Advocates for Education. As the owner of a small business, I am experienced in employee management and administration, contract negotiations, and business finance.

JIM PHILLIPS is a shareholder with the law firm of Godfrey & Kahn, S.C. His practice is concentrated in the tax and corporate areas. Phillips has a bachelor of arts degree in math and physics from the University of Iowa, where he also attended law school. He has lived in Whitefish Bay for 23 years. He has three children including a son in college, a daughter at Whitefish Bay High School and a son at the Middle School.

Why are you running?

- to serve the community
- to advocate for our village and children when decisions are made about our children's education
- to maintain our high standard of cost-effective education
- to preserve one of our most important resources – our schools

What are the most important issues facing Whitefish Bay Schools?

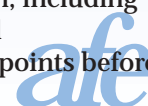
- funding
- infrastructure
- retaining excellent teachers

What is the role of a school board member?

- to listen (hear the concerns of residents, teachers and students)
- to advise (provide input into the decision-making process)
- to act (establish policy, procedures, academic standards and budgets)
- to provide oversight (keep administration on task and ensure that taxpayers get the most for their dollars)

What are the qualifications, skills and talents you would bring to the board?

- knowledge about many of the issues facing schools today, acquired in part through my participation on the board of Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay, Inc.
- extensive experience in advising profit and nonprofit organizations on many aspects of operation, including planning, structure, finance, and personnel
- a willingness to listen and consider all viewpoints before drawing conclusions



President

Okay, can you name all of our Whitefish Bay school board members? Did you know that there are seven of them? I have to admit that before I got involved in Advocates for Education a few years ago I don't think I could have answered yes to either one of those questions. Considering the importance of the job, being a school board member is not exactly a high profile position in our community. Not many of us make it to the twice-a-month meetings and, perhaps fortunately, the board's actions haven't been front-page reading in the local paper very often in recent years.

But luckily for all of us, we have seven dedicated fellow citizens who are willing to contribute their time and expertise to making the decisions necessary to keep our public school system one of the best in the state and the country. Two of those people are "retiring" from their positions this year after lengthy terms of service. Pam Woodard has served for twelve years, including terms as president (four years, including the current one), vice president and treasurer. Tim Somers has served for nine years, including terms as president and treasurer. Both will be sorely

missed, not only for their expertise, but also for the professional manner with which they have conducted themselves. They have contributed greatly to the atmosphere of civility that has prevailed on our school board throughout their tenures. I believe this atmosphere has allowed the board to function very effectively, making sound, student-centered decisions because everyone's views have been heard, respected and thoughtfully considered, while egos have taken a back seat.

Advocates for Education sincerely thanks Pam and Tim for their combined 21 years of service. We encourage all of our members to do likewise. Let them know we appreciate the time they've taken from their personal lives and devoted to our schools.

Oh, by the way, the other school board members are John Hainze, David Kern, Nancy LeGrand, Cheryl Maranto and Tom Scrivner. We also extend our sincere thanks to them, for their past and continuing service. Surprise them and say thanks next time you see them!

Sincerely,
Jim Schacht
AFE President

Absentee Voting

Before April 5th
Election

The spring election, which includes the contested race for two school board seats, is set for Tuesday, April 5th. This is the Tuesday following the end of spring break. If you'll be out of town or playing catch-up that week after break, voting absentee may be the way to go.

Any time before the election, you can vote in person at the Whitefish Bay Village Hall during regular business hours. It takes about five minutes. Or, you can complete an application for an absentee ballot, which then would be mailed to you.

If you would like to get a ballot for an out-of-town family member such as a college student, you can pick up an application. The student must complete the form, including signature. Plan ahead and encourage your college students to vote!

Freeze & Squeeze:

Understanding School Funding

Details of competing property tax “freezes” for Wisconsin are in the news nearly every day. There is the Republican proposal, the Governor’s proposal, and a variety of hybrids.

At the heart of all the plans are two facts of life in Wisconsin. First, taxes are high, and many homeowners and employers believe they hurt the economy of our state. Second, Wisconsin school districts are facing budget cuts. This is due to a number of factors, including a decade of state-imposed revenue caps and recent cutbacks in state aid, the result of a lagging economy.

Translation: High taxes are squeezing Wisconsin’s residents and businesses, and budget cuts are squeezing our schools.

Here are some common questions about school budgets:

How can my property taxes keep going up while my school district is facing budget cuts?

Wisconsin funds its public schools through a formula that few say they understand. The constitutionality of the formula has been upheld in court, but most who work with it say it is complicated and frustrating.

School districts get money from the state on a per-pupil basis. The more students enrolled, the more money the state gives the district. Poorer districts get more money from the state, but on average the state pays about two-thirds of the cost of K-12 education. The rest is covered by local property taxes. Communities with high property values get less money from the state.

Because of the high property values in Whitefish Bay, the state pays only about one-third of our costs. Our property taxes pay for about two-thirds.

In recent years, because of decreased state revenues from a lagging economy, the state has reduced the percentage of total cost it funds by approximately three percent. So, the aggregate of sixty-six percent paid by the state is now closer to sixty-three percent. In Whitefish Bay, the current school year budget includes 1.5% less state revenue than did the district budget for the previous school year. Local taxes must make up that reduction.

This is illustrated by the fact that in Whitefish Bay last year, school district spending increased by only 1.9%, but the levy increased by almost 6%, in significant part to cover the reductions in money formerly provided by the state.

Some tax “freeze” proposals do not allow local districts to raise taxes to fill the gap. In this way, the “freeze” becomes a cut in school funding.

Here’s how the numbers affected Whitefish Bay schools and taxpayers last year. School district spending

increased by 1.9%, but the tax levy went up by almost 6% to cover the cut in funding the state once provided.

So if we are paying more, how can the district be facing cuts?

State law controls both the source of money spent on schools and the amount that can be spent. Revenue caps, which have been in place for more than 10 years, require that a school district’s total revenue not increase by more than 2.8% per year. Effectively, that means that a school district’s operating budget cannot increase more than 2.8% per year.

However, another state law requires that union staff receive a minimum salary increase of 3.8% per year. Union staff salaries and benefits represent over three-fourths of the total district budget. As a result, it is difficult to increase that portion of the budget by at least 3.8% while increasing the total budget by only 2.8%. The result is that budget items other than salaries and benefits have been squeezed for ten years. At some point, Whitefish Bay administrators say, the only way to further pare costs is to reduce the number of people being paid, since the amount they are paid is required to increase annually. Eventually, reductions in staff result in larger class sizes or elimination of certain course offerings.

So what might a tax freeze mean for Whitefish Bay schools?

Since local property taxes cover the difference between the total cost of public education in a community and the amount paid by the state, the local levy fills the gap. If that levy is frozen and the state’s contribution drops, administrators here say the district would face serious shortfalls.



Arts Upgrades Take Creativity, Teamwork

While many school districts in Wisconsin are slashing arts programs and eliminating capital improvements due to budget cuts, Whitefish Bay has found a way to expand its art program, increase arts offerings for students and renovate the cramped, outdated space that has housed the high school art program for many years.

"Our ability to improve the art program for students is the result of an outstanding team effort involving the art faculty, administration, high school custodial staff, District Buildings and Grounds staff, students and parents," says Whitefish Bay High School principal Bill Henkle.

Finding Space

The current art space in the high school centers around three rooms, each too small and poorly configured for the growing art program. In the painting "studio," students currently cannot fit all their easels, so they often have to paint in the hall. The ceramics "studio" includes two kilns

in a closet, and the main art room is both a classroom and the thoroughfare into the two other spaces.

Renovation seemed nearly impossible financially until Art

Department Chair Melissa Cook and District Buildings and Grounds Director Gary Siegman put their heads together. Henkle served as liaison to all departments and staff who would be affected by the proposed changes.

Getting Creative

High School Head Custodian Al Kryszak volunteered to give up some office space assigned to his department. The School Board agreed to give up eight feet of the room in which they meet. Siegman designed a renovation plan on a shoestring, and the Buildings and Grounds staff fit the project into their summer work schedule to reduce the need for more expensive sub-contracted labor. The result: A \$50,000 price tag for a project most predicted would cost well into six figures.

Parent support, provided by the Friends of the Visual Arts, will complete the project. "The renovation plan is fairly bare bones at this time," says Siegman. "Without that extra \$10,000 or so from the Friends of the Visual Arts, this project might not have been possible."

"Friends of the Visual Arts will pay for finishing touches such as work tables, counters, or storage if it is needed," says the group's president, Tracy Lubber. "We are so appreciative of the art program and the tremendous value it represents for our high school students."

Friends of the Visual Arts raises \$2,000 each year from parent memberships in the organization. In addition, the group has raised more than \$10,000 each of the past two years from its Fine Art and Fine Rummage Sale, to be held this year at the high school on Friday, March 18 and

Saturday, March 19.

The sale will feature donations from community artists, student artists, parents and friends. Paintings, prints, wearable art, jewelry, photography, ceramics and virtually every art medium will be sold at the event. High school photography students will create note cards from their work, which last year were so popular that some designs sold out, netting a \$2,000 profit from note cards alone.

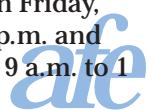
Current and former ceramics students once again worked over winter break to throw pots, vases and plates on the pottery wheel, and parent artists have pitched in to paint and glaze their work, since many of them returned to college or jobs right after the break.

Throwing Pots

"We love to come back and throw pots with Ms. Cook," says 2003 Bay grad Allison Scrivner. "We get to come back and see her, catch up with our friends, and throw pots. And it makes money for the art department. I'm really glad they are fixing up the art space. It needs it."

The Memorial Gym will overflow with Fine Rummage. "We will feature recycled art, household items, small furniture, antiques, collectibles, and other estate sale type merchandise...anything but clothes or football cleats, we tell people," says Lubber.

Donations of art and rummage are currently being accepted at 414-963-4001. The sale is open to the public and will be held at Whitefish Bay High School, 1200 E. Fairmount Avenue, Whitefish Bay, on Friday, March 18 from 7 to 9:30 p.m. and Saturday, March 19 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.



For Those in
the Know...

Did You Know?

- Teachers and administrators with a combined **279 years of service** to the Whitefish Bay School District are retiring at the end of the school year: George Hanneman, 37 years; Bob Chase, 35 years; Pat Kuzma, 35 years; Jack Bleier, 33 years; Pat Dillon, 29 years; Marcella Mathias, 21 years; Kay Caylor, 19 years; Sandy Broehm, 18 years; Elaine Gehring, 31 years and Pam Ryder, 21 years. A heartfelt thank you to each of these educators from Advocates for Education for working toward high quality public education in Whitefish Bay.
- Due to a quirk in the way **capital improvements** were funded before revenue caps were imposed on local school districts, there is no line item in the Whitefish Bay School District budget for capital improvements. As a result, the Whitefish Bay School Board uses excess funds from the operating reserve to make needed repairs each year. These are capital improvements approved for 2004-2005:
Lydell School: Asbestos abatement and tile replacement in the gym and kitchen areas and new accessible entrance doors from the parking lot. Cumberland and Richards Schools: New carpeting and tile in designated classrooms. Middle School: New entrance doors at the west playground area and floor tiles replaced. High School: Art classroom remodeled and expanded, masonry reconstructed on south elevation of tower, new carpet in designated classrooms, stage rigging repaired in auditorium. District: furniture replacement and reserve funds for stadium bleachers and press box, depending on fundraising.
- **Enrollment** for next year is steady throughout the school district, except at Cumberland School, where four-year-old kindergarten enrollment is down by about 20-30 students. Census data shows a sharp drop in potential K-4 students in the Cumberland attendance area. Administrators are seeking out students who may not be on the census list.
- Last year 167 Whitefish Bay High School students took 354 **advanced placement exams**, an all-time high for the school and twice the number of exams taken by WFB students as recently as 1998.
- Last year 63 Whitefish Bay students qualified as **AP Scholars** (3.0 or higher average, out of possible 5.0, on three or more exams) and National AP Scholars (4.0 or higher average on all AP exams taken and 4.0 or higher on eight or more exams).

JOIN TODAY

Advocates for Education of Whitefish Bay, Inc.

Join the team of voices speaking on behalf of children to provide the best public education possible.

- Active Member(s) (WFB resident or parent/guardian of WFB School District student) @ \$20 per household
- Supporting Member(s) @ \$20 per household
- I am interested in volunteering for AFE. Please call me.
- Enclosed is an additional donation to support AFE. Due to the lobbying mission of AFE, donations are not tax-deductible.

\$ _____ donation enclosed.

Total enclosed:

\$ _____

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