

New leaders for island schools, some are still unknown

By Donna K. Drago

There are just five weeks to go before the start of the new school year and the island's school district has found itself in the process of completely overhauling the administrative staff. The sole constant figure who will return to her desk next year will be principal Kathy Almanzor.

Special education director Beth Pinto gave her resignation in May to take a similar position with the Narragansett school department. The first round of interviews for her replacement are scheduled for today and the second round will be tomorrow, according to school committee chairwoman Cathy Kaiser.

Assistant principal Mike Franco tendered his resignation just this week, Kaiser said. Franco has accepted a job as principal in the Newport school district, Kaiser added.

Additionally, the school board has just approved the hiring of a new superintendent, who is scheduled to begin a two-year contract on Aug. 1.

There was no plan in place to hire a new superintendent, Kaiser said, but she explained that in order to comply with regulations of the Rhode Island State Retirement Board, the school committee

has to advertise the position each year. Supt. Robert Power, who was hired just a year ago as a part time administrator, is a Rhode Island retiree, Kaiser said, and subject to the rigid regulations.

Marcia Lukon, who retired in June as the superintendent of the regional Boylston-Berlin school district in Massachusetts, answered the job posting.

Kaiser said that Lukon was a stranger to the school committee and was discovered as a result of the required advertising.

She was interviewed in executive session on July 3 and appointed at the school committee's July 12 meeting.

Kaiser said that Lukon is a good fit for Jamestown because she comes from a small district and has broad experience in the education field. She has been a teacher, a curriculum director, a principal and a superintendent, which makes her a well-rounded candidate.

The district that Lukon most recently served has a total of 460 students and 36 teachers. The towns are suburbs of Worcester, Mass., in the central part of the state.

Kaiser also learned "from a Google search," during the interview process that Lukon was a finalist for the superintendency in Barrington. "She passed that vig-

orous search process," Kaiser said, adding that she discussed Lukon with one of her colleagues on the Barrington School Committee, and "they just raved about her."

Kaiser said that Lukon has recently purchased a home in Charlestown and had been planning to come to Rhode Island for some time.

Lukon's salary will be the same as was set for Supt. Power. She will receive \$500 per day for 90 days per year, Kaiser said, but noted that because she is not limited by retirement board rules to just 90 days, Lukon's contract says her term is "90 days or more if mutually agreeable."

Kaiser said Power's official last day on the job is July 31, but that

he will stay on at his present per diem rate to finish up negotiations with the Jamestown Teachers Association, which, Kaiser noted, should take a few more sessions.

About the flux the district is experiencing, Kaiser said "Clearly it's not ideal," to have the change come all at once, but she noted that she is encouraged by some "very good," special education director candidates, and said that there is already a teacher in the Jamestown school district who has expressed an interest in being "an aspiring principal."

"We have Kathy (Almanzor)," Kaiser said, "and we will build a strong team around her."

The next meeting of the school committee is not until Aug. 23.


Kaiser said she expects to have all the administrative positions appointed at that meeting.

Concerts this week in Wickford

Tonight's family concert at the town beach in North Kingstown will feature Johnny the K, who returns to town with his hats, masks, and dynamic songs. The free performance begins at 6:30 p.m.

On Thursday, July 31, at 7 p.m., Bandstand Review, with songs of the 1950s, will perform at the town dock. The program begins at 7 p.m.

For a complete list of North Kingstown concerts, visit www.NKArtsCouncil.org, or call 294-3331 ext. 241.



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