

School committee candidates talk about their vision

By Michaela Kennedy

Melissa Burrows-Republican



Melissa Burrows is throwing her hat in the ring for the first time in a bid for a school committee seat. Burrows sees her experience as a fourth-generation native Jamestown resident and parent of two to be her strong qualifying points for office. "I'm not a teacher, but I have experience as a parent," Burrows said. "I think I can be more helpful on the committee."

Burrows talked about her two children, both with special education needs. "I've been here forever, and I have kids in the school system. I went through the school system here," she noted. Her son is currently in eighth grade at Lawn Avenue, and her daughter goes to North Kingstown High School.

Burrows was educated through the Jamestown school system. She graduated from North Kingstown High School, and has completed some college course work.

Getting money to support mandates is a priority that should be addressed right away, Burrows noted. "There are a lot of things mandated. We need to find a way to get funding for the things we need to do, as well as for the things we want to do for the children," she said.

Burrows would like to see the school committee obtain a vote for Jamestown on the North Kingstown School Committee. "We have a voice in North Kingstown, but we don't have a vote. Because we send a lot of kids over there, we should have some say in what goes on over there."

Burrows went on to say keeping an eye on fluctuations in population and staffing was important. "Balancing enrollment and staff-

ing, to keep that on an even keel so we don't have a glut of one or the other, I think that's a big deal at times," she said.

When asked for ideas on where to trim the next budget, Burrows responded honestly, "I really don't know. It's hard because there are so many things we have to deal with, like unions, contracts and healthcare." She suggested the possibility of sharing a D.A.R.E. officer with North Kingstown, or another community. "If we share something like that, we could save in expenses. I'd like to share some resources with other communities. Combining things like that would be one way of saving money," she said.

Burrows noted a well-run school system was one that balanced programming and budgeting along with well-educated, well cared-for students. "I hope we can keep a balance between the programs offered," she added.

Julie Kallfelz-Democrat



School committee member Julie Kallfelz has served on the school committee for the last four years, and is running for a second term. She has "a thorough understanding" of the educational issues in the district locally, at the state level and at the federal level. "I wouldn't require time to get up to speed," Kallfelz spoke confidently of her ability to contribute to the committee.

The school district's major challenges revolve around funding, which "limits our ability to handle cost in education," Kallfelz said. She made reference to property tax relief bill 3050, introduced by Sen. Teresa Paiva-Weed, that "ratchets down the levy cap." The quarter percent loss every

year until 4 percent is reached in fiscal 2013 "maxes out our ability to grow from year to year." Combined with a continual stream of state mandates without increases in funding, the district has a significant challenge in absorbing the increased expenses. "The challenge with a small district is that it's difficult to absorb small numbers when there's change."

Kallfelz holds a bachelor's degree from Cornell University. After being a commissioned naval officer for four years, she worked in technology at American Power Conversion Corporation (APC) in Kingston. Now, she runs her own marketing and recruiting firm. "As an employee and owner of my own business, I know how to take complex systems with not easy answers, put time and effort into them to get optimal results," she said. An incumbent with two daughters in the school system, Kallfelz is focused on preserving high academic rigor while faced with tough budget constraints. "We historically have lean budgets. A difficult question we're going to have to look at is where we might trim the budget the next time around," Kallfelz continued.

During her first term, many changes were made in the school system, including transitioning from a full-time to a part-time superintendent and adopting a number of initiatives. For example, students at Lawn Avenue School may do course work online. Also, a reorganized teaching structure now allows looping of the seventh and eighth grades, a new structure where students in the two grades will have the same teachers in the

two-year period.

"Because we're small, we need to be flexible," Kallfelz said. "In a small district you have to use your resources creatively, and you need flexibility on the part of the administration, teachers, parents, and everyone involved," she said.

Bruce J. Whitehouse-Democrat



Democratic candidate B.J. Whitehouse is running for a seat on the Jamestown School Committee. He remembered his father saying,

"I believe everyone needs to take their turn," when it came to community service.

Small school systems have to face the same challenges everywhere, he stressed.

Whitehouse's first bid for elected office comes after 23 years of teaching in small communities. He is currently director of the music program in Little Compton, kindergarten through eighth grade. "I think I understand the strengths and challenges of small schools, from taxation and cost issues to childhood advocacy," he said.

Whitehouse praised the "fine job" the present school committee has done recently, but quickly went on to address the school budget. "We are in a perfect storm of funding challenges," he commented.

Whitehouse named the three fronts of the storm: the No Child Left Behind Act that calls for mandates but lacks funding; the Paiva-Weed cap on local property taxes that will reduce the rate to 4 percent by 2013, and the lack of funds from the General Assembly. "That leaves it up to us to fund the most important aspect of our society," he noted.

He wants his neighbors to know that he is asking for a fair price to pay for education. "We're here to raise human beings that will bring greatness, insight and growth to our society," he said.

Whitehouse wants to be an advocate for children. He shows his support with strong words, "If you think it (the money) is too much, kneel down before a 5 year old and tell him he's not worth it."

Whitehouse graduated from Bowling Green State University in Ohio with a bachelor's degree in music education, a master's in teaching from Rhode Island College, and numerous units in continued education for professional development.

Whitehouse noted conversations he has had with present school committee members about demographics and its effect on education. "We need to stay current with the data we have available," he said. "We also need to be both reactive and proactive to trends."

When asked why Jamestown should vote for him, Whitehouse responded, "I don't lie. I have a really strong back, and I don't mind wading into dangerous territory to support the children of the district. You should vote for me, because kids can't vote."

Fill compost bins with 'Harvest Stew'

Here's a recipe for "Harvest Stew" using the season's leftovers: Gather all apple cores, potato peels, mushy Jack O'Lanterns, dead mums, coffee grinds, green bean snippings, dried out corn stalks, hay bales, and leaves. Place in compost bin. Add water. Toss for 30 seconds. Leave in compost bin until spring. Yield: dark soil terrific for enriching gardens and lawns.

If anyone is in need of a compost bin to complete the recipe, they are in luck. Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation will sell compost bins on Rhode Island Recycles Day, Saturday, Nov. 17, from 8 a.m. to noon at the Central Landfill on Shun Pike in Johnston. The special sale price is \$25 (a 50-percent discount off the regular price of \$50) while supplies last. Limit two bins per person, no rain

checks.

The bins are easy to assemble and will fit in any vehicle. They hold 12 cubic feet of material and help keep the compost pile neat, protect it from animals, and speed decomposition.

Since leaf and yard waste is the second largest component of waste at the Central Landfill, composting is a great way to reduce the amount land-filled.

"Composting transforms food and yard waste into a usable product," said Mike O'Connell, executive director of RIRRC. "You will create less waste, and the bonus is that you will no longer have to pay for expensive pesticides and fertilizers."

Rhode Island Recycles Day is a local celebration of America Recycles Day, a national effort to encourage Americans to recycle

more. On Nov. 17, RIRRC will also offer large-volume paper shredding and will collect household hazardous waste, computers, cell phones, and televisions. All are free except for a \$5 fee for recycling televisions, due to their cathode ray tubes.

For additional information on the bin sale, composting, and the Rhode Island Recycles Day event, go to www.rirrc.org or call 942-1430, ext. 775.

Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation is the quasi-state environmental agency dedicated to providing the public with environmentally sound programs and facilities to manage waste. The agency helps fund and promote the state's recycling program, and owns and operates the Materials Recycling Facility and Central Landfill in Johnston.

CONANICUT CLEANING

We clean homes, buildings, offices, rentals & boat interiors

**Weekly
Bi-Weekly
Monthly
Spring/Winter Cleaning
and Special Events**

Kevin & Sherri Deacon
Tel: 423-3836 • Cell: 368-3836

Licensed & Insured

KARN'S Law Group

LEGAL TIP

An insurance policy's cosmetic surgery exclusion does not bar coverage for the removal of a 17-year-old boy's enlarged breasts, the New York Appellate Division has ruled.

The plaintiff's son was suffering from a condition known as gynecomastia, or enlarged breasts. He underwent a bilateral mastectomy to have the breasts removed. The family's insurance policy contained an exclusion that denied reimbursement for "elective cosmetic surgery or treatment which is primarily intended to improve [the insured's] appearance."

However, the exclusion did not apply to "reconstructive surgery because of congenital disease or anomaly of a covered child which has resulted in a functional defect."

PERSONAL INJURY
LAW

- Motor Vehicle Accidents
- Traumatic Brain Injuries
- Product Liabilities
- Maritime Injuries
- Social Security Disability

No Fee Unless Successful

The Supreme Court licenses all lawyers in the general practice of law. The court does not license any lawyer as an expert or specialist in any field of practice.

6 VALLEY ROAD • MIDDLETOWN, R.I. 02842
401-841-5300 FAX 401-846-5999
www.karnslaw.com

BEGINNING THIS MONTH AT THE PORTUGUESE AMERICAN CLUB

EVERY TUESDAY NIGHT IS ITALIAN NIGHT!

Your Choice of: Chicken Parmesan, Eggplant Parmesan, Pasta & Meatballs, Baked Ziti, or Sausage and Peppers over Pasta. Served with Salad and Garlic Bread Stix. **ONLY \$9.95!**

EVERY SATURDAY NIGHT — STEAK FRY!

Rib-Eye Steak with Baked Potato and Vegetable. **ONLY \$11.95!**

11 Pemberton Avenue • Jamestown, R.I. • 423-9909

Concerned about the issues? Vote!