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FROM THE COEUR D'ALENE PRESS

Businesses support Cd'A levy

Posted: Tuesday, May 06, 2008 - 10:32:07 pm PDT

Email this story Printer friendly version By MAUREEN DOLAN

Staff writer

School district trustees make commitment to use money for stated purpose

COEUR d'ALENE -- The Coeur d'Alene Area Chamber of Commerce supports the \$31.1 million school plant facility levy the Coeur d'Alene district is asking voters to approve May 20.

The chamber supports the levy, chamber president Jonathan Coe said, because it will alleviate overcrowding and because there is a correlation between the quality of an area's education and its economic stability.

"We supported the first levy for the Lakes Middle School and although we don't understand why it wasn't done at the time, we still think it's important," Coe said.

District trustees made a public commitment by passing a resolution at Monday's board meeting to spend taxpayers' levy dollars the way they say they will should voters approve the levy that includes funds to build a new Lakes Middle School at an estimated cost of \$23,656,309.

Hazel Bauman, assistant superintendent and incoming superintendent for the 2008-09 school year, proposed making the statement to trustees.

"We would commit to the community that if the bids came in beyond the \$23.6 million we would not borrow from the other three projects to finish Lakes but we would scale the Lakes project back to fit into the budget," Bauman said.

The other projects covered by the proposed levy include \$7.9 million for a new elementary school, \$1.6 million for technology upgrades and \$2.4 million for property acquisition.

"It is time to take a stance on a philosophical change and say we do need to live within the budget of the school plant facility levy and that each and every one of these projects will be completed at the dollar amounts they (district patrons) have," board trustee Vern Newby said. "Albeit land acquisition may be a little bit difficult to say it will be completed at the end of two years for the facility levy, but the funds will remain there as we have held on to funds for Lakes Middle School."

In 2002, voters approved a \$23 million levy to address several building projects, including \$7.7 million to remodel Lakes. Funds designated for the middle school were spent to complete other projects on the 2002 levy list after an unanticipated rise in the cost of building materials and labor.

Trustees made a decision in October 2004 to move Lakes from the 2002 levy project list and make it the first project in a 2006 levy.

From the 2002 levy, the district still has \$4.5 million, which will be used to build the new Lakes school if voters pass the proposed levy on May 20.

Voters rejected a \$40 million levy in 2006 to rebuild Lakes.

Jim Elder, president of Concerned Businesses of North Idaho, said his group's board of directors unanimously endorsed the levy at its March meeting.

He said CBNI believes the district has done a good job of justifying its numbers and applying due diligence.

CBNI routinely reviews the budgets of local taxing districts, including the school district.

The district brought its plans for a levy to CBNI in September launching a series of similar meetings about how to structure the levy, Elder said.

Discussions between the district and CBNI also included the feasibility of remodeling Lakes Middle School.

Elder said some of CBNI's members are contractors, like Dean Haagenson of Contractors Northwest and John Young of Polin & Young.

They looked at some of the inefficiencies of the middle school, Elder said, like small classrooms and windows that are not energy efficient.

"It was just a Pandora's box. Both contractors said you just do not want to do that," Elder said.

Two run for Post Falls school seat

Posted: Tuesday, May 06, 2008 - 10:32:07 pm PDT

Email this story Printer friendly version By BRIAN WALKER

Staff writer

No one challenges Turnbow for other board opening

POST FALLS -- Newcomers Julie Hunt and Aimee Gerome will seek the Post Falls School Board seat that represents the eastern part of the district during the May 20 election.

Current Zone 5 trustee Trudi Kuhn is not seeking re-election.

Tuesday was the deadline to declare as a write-in candidate.

In the other Post Falls School board opening, no one declared to challenge Zone 4 (central and north Post Falls) incumbent Donagene Turnbow. She will be declared the winner with board approval.

Turnbow is in her 13th year of serving on the board and is the current president of the Idaho School Board Association.

Terms of school board seats are for three years.

Both Hunt and Gerome have three children and have been involved in the district.

Hunt, 43, has served on parent-teacher organizations for eight years and is currently the treasurer for both Ponderosa Elementary and Post Falls Middle School.

"I saw this (school board seat) as a neat opportunity to make a difference," Hunt said. "I love kids and want them to have opportunities. My mom was always at the school doing things, so when I grew up I just assumed that was what people did."

Projects she has been involved with while on the Ponderosa PTO include fundraisers, bringing reading tables to the playground and yearbooks.

"Ponderosa has served as a model at times to other schools," Hunt said.

Hunt said she would join the board with an open mind and gather staff and parent input before proposing any ideas.

"I don't want to go in with any preconceived ideas," she said.

Hunt works part time as a counselor and accountant. Her family includes husband Michael, eighth-grader Shawn, seventh-grader Karen and fifth-grader Ryan.

Gerome, 41, formerly worked for the district as paraprofessional for special education. She is currently a Realtor.

"I have a flexible schedule and that's part of the reason I'm interested (in serving on the school board)," she said. "I feel a strong need to be involved in a greater capacity with the schools, especially considering the tremendous growth expected for this area.

"I care about the students' well-being and their futures."

Gerome has served as a volunteer in several sports while her children Brandon, a junior, Lexi, a sophomore, and Cassi, a seventh-grader, have gone to school. Her husband is Anthony.

"I've always been involved as a parent and I'm excited to get involved in a different way," she said. "Kids' self-esteem is very important to me so that they enjoy school."

Gerome said her experience in real estate and knowledge of growth issues would be an asset to the board.

"A lot of decisions are being made with new developments and we need to be prepared for that," she said.

The focus of her campaign is "Critical vision at a critical time."

The Zone 5 election will be at Ponderosa Elementary on May 20. Polls will be open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. However, voters may also vote during the absentee period, which is under way and runs until May 19 at the district office.

Residents must live in Zone 5 to vote. The zone is the area east of Greensferry and south of Mullan, including the Pine Villa, Hunter's Glen, Forest Glen, Highlands and Riverside Harbor neighborhoods, and east of Meyer Road, including Brickert Estates and Big Sky Estates.

The new trustee will start in July.

FROM THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

No new education news stories today.

FROM THE MOSCOW PULLMAN DAILY NEWS (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

OUR VIEW: Too much spent on unworkable program

By Murf Raquet, for the editorial board

Posted on: Tuesday, May 06, 2008

It looked good in theory, like a lot of things coming out of government lately.

The Reading First program was designed in 2002 by the Bush administration as part of the No Child Left Behind Act. It was meant to boost student performance in low-income elementary schools.

More than \$6 billion later, the highly touted program has been found to be no more effective than others already in place.

Wow! More money down the drain for a program with no positive results - so much for theory.

An Institute of Education Sciences study found "there was no difference in comprehension scores between students who participated in Reading First and those who did not," according to an Associated Press story.

The IES is part of the Education Department, the same agency administering the program, which was heavily promoted by Bush and Education Secretary Margaret Spellings.

In fact, Spellings declared the program a success last year but had erroneously neglected to compare schools using Reading First to those that don't. The IES study carried out those comparisons and found no student improvement.

Unfortunately, the program still has its cheerleaders in the administration and on Capitol Hill. Spellings is chief among them.

Reading First also came under fire last year, when it was revealed an earlier review of its effectiveness was carried out in part by a number of individuals and organizations that were instrumental in creating the program - a clear conflict of interest.

The program seems to be so mired in problems that it has little chance of success.

In theory Reading First makes sense. To achieve measurable success with such a program, folks at the Education Department should go back to square one.

Six billion dollars could be put to better use in a program that can demonstrate measurable results.

FROM THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Area students improve Idaho Reading Indicator scores

State test is given to children in kindergarten through third grade

By Jodi Walker

Wednesday, May 7, 2008

As students head back to the computers this spring to take the third round of the Idaho Reading Indicator, winter results show marked improvements in reading ability in the region.

But only area kindergarten students tested above the state average.

According to the results released this week by the Idaho Department of Education, more area students are reading at grade level than were in the fall. Also, a significant number of students who scored in the "intensive" category in the fall moved up to "strategic" on the winter test.

The test is scored as benchmark, meaning at grade level; strategic, meaning some help is needed; and intensive, meaning individual intervention is needed. The 10-minute test is given on computers to students in kindergarten through third grade.

Only nine of 64 classes tested in the region did not show an increase in proficiency.

Students at all four grade levels in Mountain View, Highland, Moscow, Nezperce, Potlatch and Troy showed improvement in the percentage of students reading at grade level.

The test was redesigned this year. The goal was to better flag students needing help.

The new test removes many of the former skills tests and bases reading skills mostly on speed.

Statewide, all grades showed improvement in proficiency. The second grade showed the least gain, moving from 62 percent reading on target to 65 percent. Kindergarten students went from 56 percent proficiency in the fall to 71 percent in the winter.

The state Legislature allocated \$2.8 million a year for the Idaho Reading Initiative, which includes more than \$1 million to students needing additional assistance.

Walker may be contacted at jodiw@lmtribune.com or (208) 848-2275.

FROM THE IDAHO-PRESS TRIBUNE, NAMPA

No new education news stories today.

FROM THE IDAHO STATESMAN

Idaho kids learn about farming

Ag Expo provides opportunity for Kuna High students to boost their leadership skills

The Idaho Statesman

Kuna High senior Erica Barker gives Desert Sage Elementary first-graders a tour of the KHS greenhouse. Barker has worked in the school greenhouse for the last two semesters, propagating flowers and tomatoes from seed.

The Idaho Statesman

Jessica Thorne and KayLynn Hawks, both Desert Sage Elementary School first-graders, get close to a newborn calf at the Kuna FFA Agricultural Exposition.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BRAD TALBUTT - btalbutt@idahostatesman.com

Edition Date: 05/07/08

With her Idaho Vandals cap pulled low on her forehead to shade her eyes from the morning sun, and her blonde braids falling out the sides, Karley Humphrey looks like she is ready to plow. But she's not really a farmgirl.

She has a pasture for a couple of horses and her brother's steer. But she says the small acreage her family owns near Kuna is not really a farm.

"More of a place where we could keep more animals," said the Kuna High senior, the co-chairwoman of the Kuna FFA's annual Agricultural Expo.

As she and her co-chair, junior Casey Zufelt, wandered through the expo Tuesday checking on exhibits, they talked about the experience of organizing an event for 4,000 school kids.

"It took a lot of after-school hours, and a lot of planning," Zufelt said.

The exposition runs through Friday, and is aimed at giving Treasure Valley grade-schoolers a look into Idaho's ag industry.

The public is invited to attend an open house Wednesday from 3 to 6 p.m. at the Kuna High School Ag Department.

The two teens started working on the project in September and had to coordinate the schedules of 33 grade schools, along with organizations like the United Dairymen and the Beef Council and agencies like Fish and Game and the Idaho Wheat Commission.

The girls said they've learned lessons they will use whether they stay on the farm or move into a corporate boardroom.

"I've gained so much confidence making something this big come together," said Humphrey. "I like having all the responsibility on my shoulders and then making it happen."

"Just leading these little kids through the program and talking about something they're passionate about does a lot for a young person's confidence," said Joe Blackstock, Kuna High ag teacher.

Although fewer than 10 percent of Kuna's students live on farms, even small ones, Blackstock says that 25 percent of KHS students participate in the ag program - including 130 who are members of the FFA.

Blackstock credits the diverse experience that the program provides for attracting students from all walks of life.

"We have so many opportunities in leadership, public speaking, and business, that most people who know about it get involved," he said.

While children from Boise, Nampa and Caldwell climb aboard tractors, take a tour of the greenhouse and learn about all the products made with cow parts, Humphrey says she intends to be a forester.

Like many non-farm kids, she will take advantage of experience she has gained in the ag program.

"I really want to work for the Forest Service," Humphrey said. She intends to take her horse and dog with her when she goes to the University of Idaho next year.

Brad Talbutt: 672-6737

FROM THE TWIN FALLS TIMES-NEWS

Reading tests on the rise

Magic Valley students show reading gains; improvements outpace the state

By Andrea Jackson

Staff writer

Elementary students in the Magic Valley improved on their Idaho Reading Indicator tests at a slightly higher rate between the fall and winter than did all students combined across the state.

But local students still fell slightly short of statewide reading proficiency levels.

The Idaho Reading Indicator is a test given to the state's public school students in kindergarten through third-grade, three times a year in the fall, winter and spring. The test tells teachers and parents if a child is reading at grade level, or near it, so instruction can be adjusted to promote learning.

The Idaho State Department of Education released the winter and fall results this week, and in 20 Magic Valley school districts students improved from fall to winter by about 25 percent.

Statewide, about 15 percent more students were reading at grade level on the winter test compared to the fall.

In the Magic Valley, about 65 percent, or 6,916 students, were reading at grade level on the most recent winter test. But in the fall, only about 52 percent of students, or 5,475 kids, tested in the Magic Valley read at grade level, according to numbers from the Idaho Department of Education.

Statewide, about 59 percent of students tested in the fall were reading at grade level, but that jumped to about 68 percent, or 56,864 students.

Most scores for Magic Valley students improved or stayed the same between the fall and winter - about 80 percent earned higher reading scores in the winter.

The Idaho Reading Indicator was revamped this year. The state introduced a new test in 2007 that "serves as a better measurement of student performance," according to the state Department of Education.

"The state adopted a new IRI that reflects more current research in reading education," according to a state news release.

The old IRI test tracked students on a scale to 1 to 3, with 3 being "at grade level," a 2 being "near grade level" and 1 was "below grade level." The new test establishes levels of "benchmark" for a 3 score, or at grade level. Students who are near grade level are "strategic" and those below are "intensive."

"This is the first year we have used the new IRI test, and I think it has proved to help classroom teachers identify those students who struggle and bring them up to grade level more quickly," said Tom Luna, state schools superintendent, in a press release.

The Legislature doles out \$2.8 million annually for the Idaho Reading Initiative, which puts \$1 million aside to help struggling students.

Other test results for children in fourth through ninth-grades were recently released by the state. Most Magic Valley students scored below the statewide results on Direct Reading and Math Assessment tests this academic year, and 14 percent more students were proficient in writing than in math.

These tests do not factor into Adequate Yearly Progress requirements mandated by the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Andrea Jackson can be reached at 735-3380 or Andrea.Jackson@lee.net

FROM THE IDAHO STATE JOURNAL (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Teen helps deliver message

MVHS 'Natural Helper' plays key role in DUI drill

BY CASEY SANTEE u ARIMO
csantee@journalnet.com

Marsh Valley High School senior Rhett Wilde, like his classmates, watched a mock DUI crash and the ensuing emergency response unfold in the school's parking lot Tuesday afternoon.

However, Wilde's perspective on the annual drill was unique. While most of the other students filed out of the school as spectators, Wilde and a handful of others were in the process of staging the head-on wreck. He played the role of a passenger in the front seat of a black sedan, which was struck by another vehicle driven by a drunken classmate.

Wilde, 18, was partially ejected through the windshield and died at the scene. The sedan's driver died later at a hospital. There were also two passengers in the back seat. One survived with no injuries and the other was paralyzed.

"There were a lot of kids who came out laughing and talking to the (mock casualties)," Wilde said. "Others were crying. It seemed to affect them more."

In the other vehicle, the intoxicated driver and his lone passenger survived.

In addition to the crash, an officer dressed as the Grim Reaper went from classroom to classroom removing a different student every 15 minutes to symbolize the frequency of teen DUI fatalities nationwide. To make the experience more realistic, the "victims" were separated from the rest of the student body and sequestered at a local motel Tuesday night.

Bannock County Deputy Jon Everson said the drill, which will continue today at the school, is part of the "Every 15 Minutes" law enforcement campaign against teenage drunken driving.

This morning, students will watch an edited video of Tuesday's event. Then the driver, who was mock arrested on DUI related charges after failing a staged field sobriety test Tuesday, will have a mock court hearing with a local judge and prosecutors.

"We do it right before the senior party," Everson said. "We want them to know what could happen if they go out and drink and drive."

Everson acknowledged that some of the students joke about the drill, but he said that if it keeps just one student from getting behind the wheel after consuming alcohol, then it is a success.

Last year, the mock DUI was done at Pocatello High School. Next year, it will rotate to another high school in the area.

Wilde was chosen to participate in the event because he is an MVHS "Natural Helper," who is a student other students can speak with about personal problems. Natural Helpers are selected by popular vote. In all, each class has four Natural Helpers, two boys and two girls.

Wilde is also vice president of the school's auto club and involved with Future Farmers of America's agricultural mechanics program.

After graduation, he plans to attend Idaho State University's College of Technology, where he has already enrolled in auto mechanics classes.

Marsh Valley maintenance levy passes

BY CASEY SANTEE
csantee@journalnet.com

ARIMO — Voters in the Marsh Valley School District approved a \$750,000 annual maintenance levy Tuesday.

The levy, which requires a super majority of two-thirds to pass, failed by 3 percent in a March. However, the district had better luck Tuesday, garnering 71 percent of the vote.

The previous levy amount of \$523,000 per year was approved in 1998.

Before polls closed Tuesday, Superintendent Marvin Hansen said the key to success was to get more voters to the polls. In March, 592 residents of Inkom, McCammon, Arimo and Downey voted. Tuesday, 1,083 people cast ballots.

“We’re elated,” Hansen said of the election results. “We were nervous, but we feel really good about this and we appreciate it.”

Hansen said there are several reasons the levy failed in March, including a lack of pre-election publicity, the increase in the levy amount, record fuel prices and the failure of the Holt Arena bond during a special election in Pocatello and Chubbuck that month.

The superintendent said he understands that it’s hard for property owners to approve a tax increase when they are struggling with inflation, but he said the school district is also dealing with rising prices.

All levy money is used for maintenance of school property, although Hansen said the district usually doesn’t take the full levy amount on any given year.

The next school maintenance levy for Marsh Valley is in 2018.

FROM THE IDAHO FALLS POST REGISTER (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

No new education news stories today.