

MCGOVERN

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DK: What about the district's needs?

JM: "When I started here, I thought the biggest need was the climate. Sometimes when people in a community care so much, they don't accept other views. That can become divisive. I think the district needs a voice to come in and put the voices together. There needs to be a healthy compromise and get that feeling of optimism back."

"Don't get me wrong, it's OK to express yourself. But I think the district needs a shot of optimism. We have great kids, great families and great teachers. All of the ingredients are there."

DK: Do Crestwood, Dallas and Lake-Lehman have any similarities?

JM: "Well for one, they're all in suburban areas. And all three of the areas have a strong sense of community with great kids. They also have strong educational backgrounds. I believe the key to any successful administration is keeping consistency within the walls. At Crestwood,

we had teachers who were there for 35 years. All schools go through changes, but the core needs to remain the same."

DK: Did you ever imagine you'd be a school superintendent before age 40?

JM: "Colgate is not renowned as a teacher's college. It's known as a breeding ground for upper management personnel. Big corporations would come in and bid for certain seniors. I didn't want to travel. I wanted to come home and my parents, knowing my makeup, encouraged me to come back. I didn't expect the Lake-Lehman position to come open. But there were only a few school districts I would consider and Lake-Lehman was one of them."

DK: Do you miss being around the students on a daily basis?

JM: "Actually, I am around the kids a lot. One of the things about being a superintendent is you define what your role is. I try to get out to the schools as much as possible. Because of my background, I'm drawn to the high school students. And let me tell you, if you want to hear how a district is doing, just ask the students. They'll tell you. Be you'd better be prepared for the answer. They'll be honest."

DK: Lake-Lehman has a

strong athletic tradition. What role did athletics play in your life?

JM: "If it wasn't for athletics, I don't think I'd be as strong (professionally) as I am. It exposed me to great people. But it's not just athletics. It's all school activities in general. You can be successful individually, but also as a team. You learn about establishing individual goals, but working as a team. You learn

about hard work and discipline. Those things really prepare you for adulthood."

DK: Do you enjoy going to work every day?

JM: I love it. And I think my wife enjoys me going to work (laughs). I like the people I work with. One of the things I enjoy about Lake-Lehman is the people are fun to be with. (A good attitude) becomes infectious. If people see the superintendent

having a good time and smiling, they'll do the same.

"In my job, I can go to lunch and watch kids playing at recess. I can also hear them sing from my office. How great is that? Not many people have that kind of opportunity."

DK: If you could wave a magic wand, what would you wish for the district?

JM: "I think Lake-Lehman has to find its roots again. Some-

times you have to go back to go forward. We were just talking about athletics and academics. Well, I want to bring that philosophy of a hard-nosed work ethic to the field and to the classroom. Our goal is to be the best district we can be. But if you don't have the right attitude, desire or intensity, it can't happen. Those things are extremely valuable to the human element of education."

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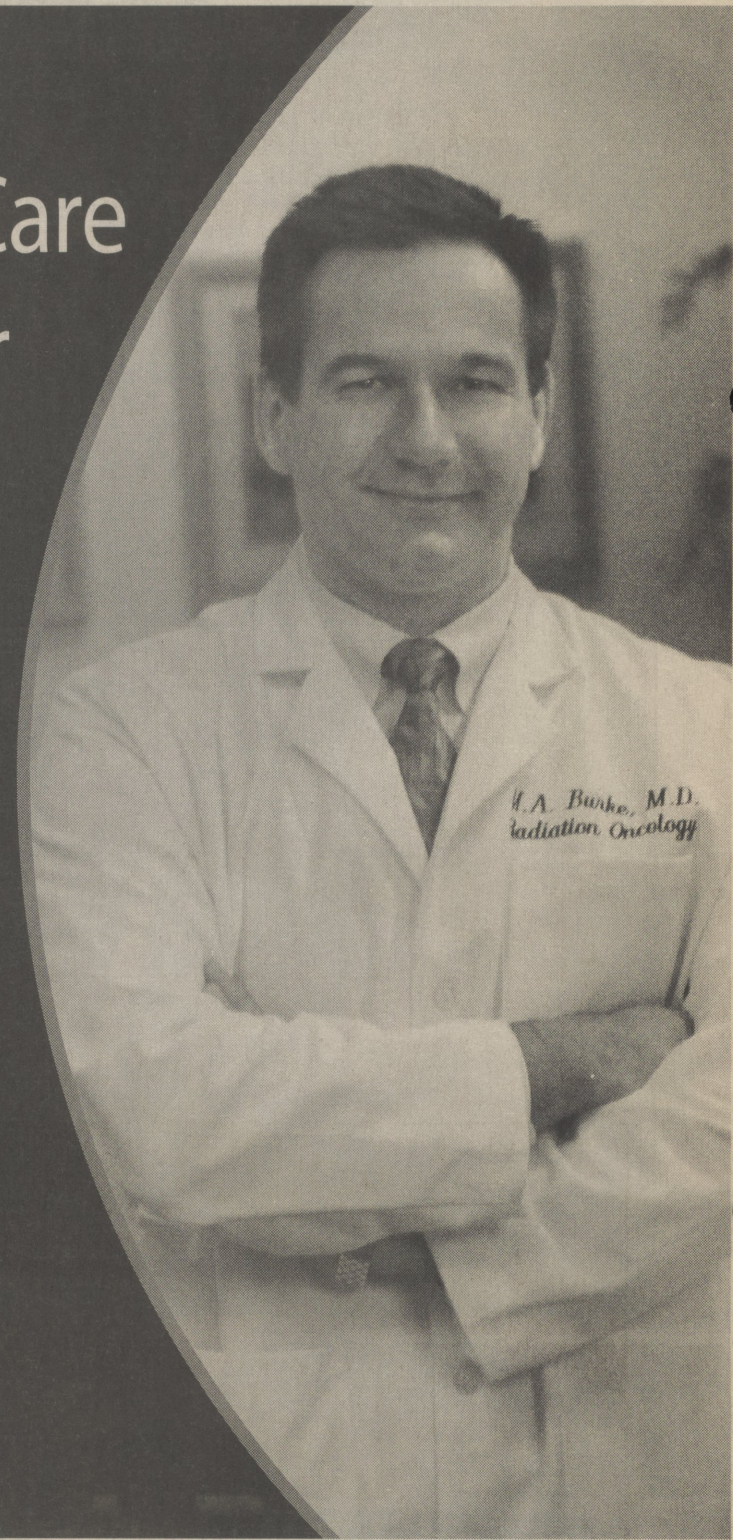
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