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## Dallas School Board could have five retired teachers

By REBECCA BRIA  
rbria@timesleader.com

If the three challengers running for Dallas School Board are elected, the majority of the board will be comprised of five retired teachers.

And, depending on which candidate you talk to, that's either a really good thing or a terribly bad thing.

Seven candidates are running for four open seats on the school board and all have cross-filed on both the Democratic and Republican parties. The open seats for school director are currently occupied by board president Karen Kyle, vice-president Dick Orlowski, Dr. Richard Coslett and Maureen Banks Matiska. All are running for re-election in the upcoming election.

The contenders for those seats are Charlie Preece, Larry Schuler and Tho-

mas Stitzer. The three are retired teachers and, if all are elected to the board, five out of the nine board members will be former educators. Current board members Gary Mathers and Catherine Wega are also former teachers.

That's a concern for some of the incumbents, especially because the teachers' contracts expire at the end of the 2009-10 school year.

Matiska, who has served on the board for 16 years, says former teachers on the board are not allowed to serve on the teachers' contracts negotiations committee. She says the committee is extremely time-consuming and that it would not be fair for the majority of the board to automatically be exempt.

"I think that we're very fortunate in that, right now, we have a very diversified board," said Matiska, a 57-year-old Kingston Township resident who works as a

nurse practitioner at Retreat State Prison. "Everybody brings something to the table because we all have different experience."

Attorney John Audi of Sweet, Stevens, Katz & Williams LLC says that retired teachers on a school board are not automatically exempt from sitting on a negotiations committee. Instead, it depends on whether or not the former teacher is still a member of the teachers' union.

Audi says, according to Act 195, the public sector bargaining law, past educators who are no longer in the union may be on a school board negotiation committee as long as their participation does not directly affect any immediate family members who work in the school district.

"The ethics commission never addressed this law and there's never been a case interpreting that law," Audi added.

But to Schuler, being a teacher in the district has given him inside experience. He spent 35 years as an educator, with 32 of those years teaching wellness at Dallas High School.

"I just wanted to be an advocate for kids," Schuler said of his decision to run for school director. "I think over a number of years, I've noticed there's been many decisions made when at times I felt kids weren't considered."

The 63-year-old Dallas Township resident is most concerned about the best interest of students, financial responsibility and wasteful spending. He thinks the biggest current issues in the district are overseeing finances involved with construction of the new high school and aging buildings, including eventual demolition of the old Dallas Township High School and remodeling of Dallas Elementary School.

Orlowski, who has spent four years on the school board, is a former U.S. Army Reserves captain and retired after 30 years in sales and management. He is most concerned that this election could potentially bring the total number of educators on the board to five, which would be the majority.

"Personally, I think the issue for this particular election is they want a school board composed of five former teachers," Orlowski said. "What objectivity and connectivity issues will face the board?"

Orlowski, 68, has spent two years as chairman of the personnel committee, two years as chairman of the finance committee and the past year as vice-president of the board. He has also been a member of the West Side Career and



Preece



Schuler



Orlowski



Matiska



Coslett



Kyle



Stitzer

See BOARD, Page 10

### EARTH DAY



Students from Lake-Lehman Senior High School work to clean up Hillside Road from Route 309 to Huntsville Dam. Clean up of the area has been an annual project for the senior class and student council and is part of the national Adopt-A-Highway Program.

CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK PHOTOS/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

## Cleaning their Earth

By REBECCA BRIA  
rbria@timesleader.com

Lake-Lehman students never know what they'll find along Hillside Road.

They've come across tires, radios, diapers, packing peanuts and even a broken calculator. That's in addition to the hundreds of beer bottles, soda cans, cigarette butts, wrappers and empty cigarette packages.

Seventeen Lake-Lehman Junior/Senior High School students from the student council and yearbook club set out on April 22 to pick up trash on Hillside Road in Jackson Township in celebration of Earth Day.

According to student council adviser Cathy Wolfe, the clubs have been responsible for litter cleanup on Hillside Road for about 10 years through the Pennsylvania Adopt-A-Highway litter control program. Wolfe says the clubs collect litter twice a year, usually in May and October, and this was the first time they did their spring cleanup on Earth Day.

"It is just incredible the amount of trash people throw away," Wolfe said. "It's unconscionable."

Wolfe says litter control signs and orange flags and vests were provided to the students by Luzerne County and county workers picked up the bags of trash after the cleanup.

The students, along with Wolfe and yearbook club adviser Susan Ferentino, split up into two groups to tackle the project. The



Leigh Hillman, left, and Sara Casterline don plastic gloves before starting the roadside clean-up.

yearbook club began where Hillside Road meets Old Route 115 and Huntsville Road and the student council started at the intersection of Hillside Road and Route 309. The groups met up halfway to finish.

"They're all such good kids that are here today," Ferentino said. "We do a lot of community service."

Erica Johnson, an 11th-grade student, said the group found several McDonald's and Sheetz cups and wrappers, which she believes is because those restaurants are located nearest to the area where the students were working.

"There was a lot from Sheetz," said Leigh Mulhern, a 12th-grader and vice-president of student council.

Mulhern says a woman pulled over in her car to advise the group that if they found soda bottles with a brown lining inside that

they may contain methamphetamine and could explode. The group didn't believe they found any such containers.

Not everybody was pleased to see the litter crew. Eleventh-grader Brandon Coletti, who offered to be a traffic flagger because he has an injured knee, said some people were not careful as they passed.

"Some people are just in a hurry," Coletti said. "Others wave as they pass and slow down. We got a couple of honks before. It's the bigger cars that I'm worried about like an 18-wheeler. They take longer to stop."

Despite a few incautious drivers, the students prevailed. Ferentino's group estimated they collected two bags of trash in just the first quarter mile.

"We want to make it cleaner," said 11th-grader Leigh Hillman. "It's really gross and we want to give back."

## Small business workers struggle with the economy

By DAWN DRUMIN  
For The Dallas Post

William Craze, owner of DC Plumbing & Electric in Harvey's Lake, recently had to drop his health insurance so he could cover other bills.

"I'm not making enough to keep it up. Right now, there's very little work," he said.

These days, customers are leery of paying money to have minor plumbing problems fixed and, instead, wait until they have a plumbing emergency before they call Craze.

Stories like this are becoming increasingly common as the nationwide economic recession has slashed the incomes of many local small-business workers and their ability to afford both necessities and luxuries.

Wayne Sutton, an auto mechanic at Back Mountain Auto in Shavertown, says fewer customers getting their cars serviced means less money and he has trouble paying for utilities.

Restaurant servers are also feeling the pinch. Carissa Donahue is waiting fewer tables at the Villa Roma at Harvey's Lake. Less tips means Donahue has no discretionary income and she is barely able to pay her bills.

Of course, some businesses and workers experience fewer repercussions from the recession than others.

Dr. James DeFinnis, a dentist at Back Mountain Dental in Trucksville, has recently noticed a change in the type of care sought, but not in the number of his clients.

"There's more pain-driven and more emergency care," he said. "Many need more intensive work."

DeFinnis is an exception. He works in healthcare, a field largely resistant to the effects of recession because medical needs do not become less pressing when the economy gets worse. However, most small-business workers in the area must worry about fewer customers, less income and possible layoffs.

The unemployment rate in Northeastern Pennsylvania is rising rapidly. Statistics specific to the Back Mountain do not exist but, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics,

See WORKERS, Page 10



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Wayne Sutton, a mechanic at Back Mountain Auto Specialists in Shavertown, has been working on less cars during the economic recession.



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