

Communication key to new WL superintendent

By Carolyn DeMarco
staff writer

A Royal Oak assistant superintendent is the new superintendent of the Walled Lake Schools.

The Walled Lake school board recently approved the contract of James R. Geisler as superintendent of schools. Geisler's three-year contract goes into effect July 1.

Geisler said he hopes to bring better communication, internal and external, to the district. "One of the needs here centers around communication. There are nine communities and no central focus. It will be a challenge to look at that."

"If the school district is to become the focus then we need to market the school district to form that alliance with the community."

The school district has been headed by interim superintendent Barry Houghborough since the departure 10 months ago of Superintendent Leroy Bartman, whose final year of a three-year contract was bought out by the board. Bartman was often at odds with the board.



James Geisler
new WL superintendent

"IF IT WEREN'T for problems, we wouldn't need administration," Geisler told the audience after the approval. "This is a tremendous opportunity. If there is one word which

characterizes this district it is 'potential'."

Geisler comes to Walled Lake from the Royal Oak Public Schools, a district of 8,000 students, comparable in size and structure to the Walled Lake Schools.

At Royal Oak, Geisler was assistant superintendent of schools and supervised all secondary principals, the Southeast Oakland Vocational Education Center and was director of personnel and administrative services, director of continuing education and director of physical education and athletics. He was chief negotiator for five bargaining units.

"The two districts are strikingly similar," Geisler said in an interview Friday. "Both have junior high schools and a vocational center. . . The big difference is Royal Oak is an older community. Walled Lake is a growing community."

Geisler said his first tasks as superintendent will be to get to know the buildings of the district, assess the reports by the Facilities Needs Task Force and analyze the proposals which will need to go to the vot-

ers. "Everyone agrees we need expansion but there is always a fear that in 10 years we won't need the schools," Geisler said. "Projecting the future is always difficult."

Geisler said he is aware that observers have felt it was often the board and not the superintendent running the schools. "The board needs to be a policy maker. Running the schools is what they hire administrators to do. There has to be trust. When there is, things work well."

"WHEN THE ROLES are reversed or not complementary we have a place that has been troubled. It takes time to grow out of it. My

goal is to earn their trust and confidence so that they can return to policy-making."

The 42-year-old superintendent joined the Royal Oak system in 1983 after nine years as principal of North Muskegon High School. Prior to that he was assistant principal of Notre Dame High School in Chicago.

Geisler earned a master's degree in education from Loyola University of Chicago and a doctorate from the University of Chicago.

He is married to Susan Wilke Geisler, a substitute teacher in area school districts. They are the parents

of three daughters and a son ranging from a first- to a 10th-grader. The Royal Oak residents plan to eventually move into a community served by the Walled Lake district.

Geisler has served on the education committee for the Royal Oak Chamber of Commerce and the education committee of Shrine of the Little Flower.

"I will miss Royal Oak," he said. "It's been a wonderful place to work. I was on the early edge of a longtime plan to be a superintendent, but when opportunity knocks you pursue it."

Dolan says she's ready for shot at House seat

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She currently works as a church administrator. "I'm just a product of my entire background," she added. "And I'm not an unknown quantity."

DOLAN HAS lived in the district 22 years, serving 13 of those on the Farmington Hills City Council. Including two terms as mayor. She is active in other civic and community groups, including the Farmington Community Center, the Farmington Area YMCA Board of Directors and the Farmington Art Foundation.

With many years of moving before coming to the Farmington area, she learned to join in, participate and get involved. "I care very much about people. I'm people-oriented," she said. "And if I don't like something, I'll get in and change it."

"When I jump in, it's usually over my head, but I'm a good swimmer," she added.

Dolan decided to run for the state House seat when seven-term incumbent

Rep. Wilbur "Sandy" Brotherton announced last January he would not run for another term. "I never had any goals in politics," she said, "but when Sandy retired, I thought, 'Who knows this community?' I have been so involved."

She is attacking her campaign with a grass-roots effort, speaking to church and community groups, many of which she belongs to. Dolan is also holding traditional fundraisers, going door-to-door to meet people and sending personal mailings.

DOLAN HAS held a seat on the Botsford General Hospital Board of Directors since 1977, where she has developed a concern with health care issues — something she puts at the top of her list for Lansing, if elected. "It's a true crisis," she said. "You're much sicker now when you go into the hospital."

Getting a handle on the malpractice crisis is key, in order to keep young doctors from getting an edu-

cation here, then leaving the state, she said. She is also concerned about the nursing shortage and the issue of "spousal impoverishment," where life savings can be eroded when a partner dies.

"As this area ages, that's a very important issue," she said.

She also lists property tax reform and small business concerns as key legislative issues in coming years.

Jan Dolan is not related to Democratic candidate John E. Dolan of Birmingham Farms.

She faces three Republican challengers in the Tuesday, Aug. 2 primary: Beverly Hills Village Council president Michael Bouchard, Farmington Hills planning commissioner Paul Welday and Farmington Hills resident Mike Sarafa. The 60th District seat has been held for the past 14 years by Brotherton.

The 60th District covers an area encompassing Farmington, Farmington Hills, and the Southfield Township villages of Beverly Hills, Birmingham Farms and Franklin.

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