

Odyssey



First place: Five girls from Power Middle School - inspired by William Shakespeare's "Macbeth" - won first place in the Division II Classics problem at the Odyssey of the Mind tournament held March 6 in Birmingham. On the team were Lauren Allmayer, Ellen Cappel, Emily Cappel, Karla Stricker and Andrea Tartaglia; coached by Nan Cappel, finished first from a field of 19 teams by performing their own play inspired by the witches scene in MacBeth. During the eight-minute skit they played an oboe, clarinet, two violins and cello, and recited 10 lines from MacBeth, while acting out their version of the Boston Tea party in which a pompous advisor to King George is tricked by Paul Revere, Sam Adams and Betsy Ross into catapulting his own tea into Boston Harbor. They will advance to the state finals in Mount Pleasant.

# Wife of former trustee vows to fight tax issues

BY MARIE CHESTNEY  
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Annette Bowden, the wife of former Clarenceville school board trustee Wilson "Butch" Bowden, campaigned in 1995 for two school district tax increases that were approved by voters. But she vows to fight the two tax questions on the June 14 school ballot.

Three times now, Bowden, accompanied by supporters, has appeared before Clarenceville trustees to voice her displeasure with what she calls a "broken promise" made by the district when it sought voter approval in 1995 for a special 10-year tax for building repairs and maintenance.

Accompanied by her husband, her latest appearance came Thursday. Back in 1995, Wilson Bowden was one of two school board trustees on the 21-member steering committee that promoted the passage of two tax questions - a \$4.5 million bond issue that would last for 10 years, and a 0.75-mill "sinking fund" tax that would raise about \$2.1 million, or about \$200,000 a year, for the same 10 years.

With the sinking fund, the district each year spends the money generated by the special tax for specific improvements, and pays no interest charges.

Annette Bowden criticizes the school board's recent decision to seek voter approval to raise the 0.75-mills to 2 mills, and to also extend the length of the fund millage through 2008.

"Why are they asking for more money when we still have six years to go?" Bowden asked in a telephone interview. "This is a broken promise. They told the voters, 'This will take us for 10 years. We won't dip into your pockets for 10 years.' They should get out of our pockets for a while."

"Let's wait until we absolutely have to have the money."

## Committee plans

Bowden said a committee was being formed to oppose the proposed tax hike.

In late 1998, a 26-member Clarenceville task force studied the question of whether the district should seek an increase in the sinking fund for building repairs. It recently recommended the district ask for it to keep the building fixup momentum going.

"No one told me when I took this job that I couldn't do anything until 2004, that I should sit around and not do much until then," said Superintendent Tom Tattan. "If we stop making Clarenceville attractive, people will go elsewhere. We need to put our best foot forward."

"When we looked at our needs, we saw significant things that need to be addressed. If the com-

## CLARENCEVILLE SCHOOLS

munity wants us to address these needs, we need the additional mills."

By April 30, Tattan will have held meetings at all four district schools to tell residents how the money will be spent. Residents will be given a detailed list of improvements that will be made with the additional money, Tattan said.

Back in 1995, Clarenceville resident Debbie McWhinnie also was a member of the 21-member bond issue/sinking fund steering committee. She, too, recently appeared before the board to speak in favor of the tax proposals.

"How can you say schools won't ask you for money again?" said McWhinnie in a telephone interview. "That's a ridiculous thing to say. Schools are always coming back to ask for more money. I will support this tax question."

## Family togetherness

Annette Bowden started the campaign against the proposed tax hike, but her husband said he backs her in it.

"When they make a promise, they should keep it," he said. "That upsets me. We made this commitment to the people. We should stick to the promise we made."

In June, residents will be asked to approve both a tax increase and an extension of the time the current tax stays in effect.

If approved, a Clarenceville resident with a home valued at \$100,000 would pay an extra \$60 a year in taxes. The 1995 tax increases added an extra \$100 a year in taxes for a home of the same value.

The two ballot questions will ask residents to:

- 1. Extend the sinking fund tax for four years, through 2008.
- 2. Tack an extra 1.25 mills onto the 0.75 mills now levied through the sinking fund tax. If passed, the total yearly tax from the fund would be 2 mills. The 0.75 mills now generates about \$200,000 yearly; the new millage, if passed, would generate \$560,000 every year.

Altogether, the extra tax and extra time would bring \$5.6 million into the district coffers until the proposed extended sinking fund tax expires in 2008.

Annette Bowden said she worked hard in 1995 to ensure passage of the two tax questions. In 1995, Clarenceville residents approved two methods to update and renovate buildings in the district: a 2.10-mill bond issue set to expire in 2005, and a 0.75-mill sinking fund tax slated to expire in 2004.

Both taxes are slated to raise about \$6.5 million for the district over the 10-year period.

Back in 1995, Bowden said she remembers making phone calls to residents, telling them the district wouldn't seek a tax increase until this one expired.

"I feel like I was used," she said. "People come up to me and say they remember the phone calls the committee members made back in 1995."

Bowden said the district has about \$800,000 now tucked away in its rainy day fund that could be used to pay for building repairs.

The school district also received about \$1 million in its so-called settlement of the Durant case, she said.

The purpose of the committee now being formed, Bowden said, is to "educate voters."

"It will be up to them to draw their own conclusions," she said.

## SMART rides are available

Statistics show that almost half of the traffic fatalities on St. Patrick's Day are alcohol-related, and the worst day for traffic deaths, according to Mothers Against Drunk Drivers.

That's why the Wayne, Oakland and Macomb county branches of MADD and the Suburban Mobility for Regional Transportation have announced that SMART will offer free bus rides after 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 17, to make St. Patrick's Day a safer holiday. Call SMART at (313) 962-5515.

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## Harrison joins partnership

Harrison High School students will be among those getting a first-hand look at the retail business when a partnership between Staples and Junior Achievement of Southeastern Michigan kicks off next week.

The partnership is now in full swing and 50 high school classes participating in the program will begin next week.

Staples' office supply stores, its associates and some of its small business customers have teamed up with Junior Achievement.

The partnership will match 14 participating Staples retail stores with local high schools and will afford students a chance to get a first-hand look at how a retail operation works when each class of students visits their mentor Staples store.

At JA Connections classrooms will be invited to participate in field trips to local Staples stores. Laimbeer, a business owner, will address the students at the Rochester Hills and Farmington Hills stores. The students will learn retailing, interpersonal skills, employee relations and marketing in their classes and these field trips will reinforce those lessons.