

Science curriculum piqued Silye's interest in schools

BY MARIE CHESTNEY
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As an engineer, steeped in the ways of things mechanical, Ronald Silye has a natural interest in the world of science.

So when the Clarenceville School District, in which Silye, his wife Evelyn and two children live, decided to change its science curriculum, Silye's interest was piqued. What topics would be covered? At what age would a subject be taught?

To get answers, Silye ventured down to the district's offices at 20230 Middlebelt Road.

"That's how I got involved with this school district," said Silye, who lives on Osmus Street, works as an engineering supervisor for Trico Products Corp., and is now seeking a second four-year term on the Clarenceville Board of Education.

"I was an interested parent. I got a stack of information and looked at the stuff. One of my concerns was that students not just read about science; they need to do hands-on work."

As a professional engineer working with school administra-



Ron Silye

tors, Silye saw some of his ideas take root. He then got interested in the operations of the district itself, and began attending school board meetings on a regular basis.

In January, 1995, he was appointed to a six-month term on the board. In June 1995 Clarenceville residents elected him to a four-year term.

Silye is one of three Clarenceville school district resi-

dents seeking two, four-year terms on the Clarenceville board in the June 14 school election. The other two candidates are incumbent Matthew Boettcher, who lives on Milburn Street, and challenger Sharon Simpson, who lives on Hugo in Farmington Hills.

The Silyes and children Jessica and Kevin, both Clarenceville High students, moved from Dearborn to the district in 1991.

Like fellow board member Matthew Boettcher, the Silyes didn't know when they bought their Livonia home that their children would attend Clarenceville schools and not Livonia Public Schools.

"It came as a surprise," Silye said. "For several hours I talked to (former school board trustee) Linda Brandemuhl. She convinced me, and I found it to be a good school system."

Silye, a 1968 graduate of Grosse Ile High, earned his associate in science degree from Henry Ford Community College in 1972 and his mechanical engineering degree from the University of Michigan-Dearborn in 1978.

He is a member of the Society of Automotive Engineers and the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.

In seeking re-election, Silye said he wants to continue to be a part of the district's pursuit of "continued improvement" that has taken place over the last several years.

Improvements he cited were new school administrators, major renovations to school buildings by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA), new computer labs, new reading curriculum and even new school buses and a new phone system.

"We want to make a school district that people will want to come to," said Silye. "We offer a small class size, where administrators know every student in the building; good student-teacher ratio; paraprofessionals; and a good curriculum. We've been putting the tools in place."

He also supports the two tax questions on the June 14 school ballot.

Silye believes that the most significant change leading to

CLARENCEVILLE SCHOOLS ELECTION

improvements in the district's four schools was the NCA accreditation.

Schools that seek accreditation agree to follow certain steps to excellence. They face continuous evaluation by the NCA as to how well they have done.

"The NCA is a respected organization in the Midwest. If it is willing to back our school district, it tells other people that this is a good school system."

"Clarenceville is not a top-down type of management. Teachers are part of the decision-making process."

The biggest complaint he hears now about the district, Silye said, is in the area of job descriptions. Employees' tasks are not specifically spelled out, and sometimes work doesn't get done, especially in the area of maintenance, he said.

He also believes that administrative employee raises shouldn't

all be lumped together for one board vote. He cited that as one of the times he disagreed with the administration.

"I didn't like the ways they were being lumped together; we shouldn't give them blanket approval."

Like most public school proponents, Silye does not support tax credits or vouchers to be used to pay tuition in private schools. They siphon money from public schools, yet private schools don't have to live by the same enrollment rules, he said.

"We are mandated to do certain things, such as take any student that comes to public schools. Private schools can make the decision whether to accept. So do public schools just wind up with kids with problems? There's an inequity here."

Hills clerk helps work out bugs in state elections file

BY JOANNE MALISZEWSKI
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You may get a quizzical look on your face when you hear the words Qualified Voter File, but ask Farmington Hills City Clerk Kathy Dorman what it is and she'll fill you in with the details.

The concept of QVF has accompanied Dorman through life in the past couple years. She in fact is a member of the state's QVF Advisory Committee, representing the city.

"There was nothing like this before," said Dorman. "The locals did their own elections. We have 630 cities and villages and more than 1,300 townships."

'We went out and looked up and found out why they didn't match. Sometimes it was just a typo. Other times it was a misspelled name. Now we have matched all our files.'

Kathy Dorman
—Hills city clerk

Before QVF, which is a computerized system, you could register to vote in a city in lower Michigan, move and then register in the Upper Peninsula, for example. And clerks in either community wouldn't have a clue — unless you called and told your former clerk you had moved.

In addition to conducting their own elections, clerks in cities, villages, townships and counties, also had their own particular type of computer equipment. Communication therefore was difficult.

"So the clerks said, 'We need to develop a statewide system,'" Dorman said.

To do that, approval was needed and eventually received from the state Legislature.

What QVF will do for the state is match clerk's voter registration files with the state of Michigan driver's license files.

The city of Farmington Hills alone had 30,000 names that didn't match.

"We went out and looked up and found out why they didn't match. Sometimes it was just a typo. Other times it was a misspelled name."

"Now we have matched all our files," Dorman said.

In the process of switching to QVF, Farmington Hills has abandoned its former system. "We are finally running solo on QVF. A lot of communities aren't on it yet."

Now when you register to vote you will be entered into the statewide computer system and it can tell the local clerk if you recently moved and whether you were registered at your former address.

"It will remove the dual-ity we have had in the past," Dorman said.

Communities with populations of 6,000 and less are not required to jump onto the system. Those with populations of 6,000 or more are required to participate, Dorman said.

Dorman was appointed to the advisory committee by Secretary of State Candice Miller. The committee comprises nine clerks, three representing counties, three from townships and three from cities. It is charged with working out kinks in software for the statewide QVF.

"There are some problems and we have to work them out," Dorman said.

"It's got to be workable for big cities and the volume. I

think the committee will set standards the election community can follow."

In addition, Dorman is heading up a subcommittee for big cities. "Right now, the system is written and geared for smaller communities. I'm excited to head up this group."

The presidential election in 2000 will be the first big election under the QVF system. But clerks will have some practice with smaller elections, such as this November with the Farmington Hills City Council, and two primaries, in February 2000 and August 2000.

"Hopefully, with two smaller ones we can work out the bugs," Dorman said.

"In the long run this will be a great tool."



Farmington Hills City Clerk Kathy Dorman

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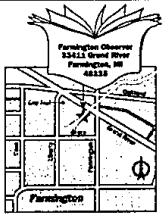
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