

Challenger believes mothers under-represented

BY MARIE CHESTNEY
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If the Clarenceville School District needs an adult cheerleader, Sharon Simpson would be the perfect candidate.

In the June 14 school election, the Farmington Hills resident is challenging two incumbents for a seat on the Clarenceville Board of Education. Yet Simpson voices just one complaint against the district, and it deals not with educational issues, but with how often school lawns are cut. She thinks it's not often enough.

"I'm perfectly happy with the education our kids are getting at every level," says the part-time pediatric nurse for Children's Hospital in Detroit. "We have teachers, administrators who care. There's been real, positive things in the district the last couple of years, since (Superintendent Tom) Tattan came."

"I have no criticisms, except for upkeep outside the buildings. What's the first thing you see? It's the outside maintenance."

Then she adds: "There's always room for improvement."

So why has this mother of three children taken on the

CLARENCEVILLE ELECTION

tough task of trying to unseat an incumbent to win one of two open, four-year terms on the board?

The answer is twofold. First, she sees it as a natural extension of all the volunteer work she already does for the district and other local groups.

"I'm a doer," she says. "I constantly ask myself, 'What can I do next?'"

And second, Simpson looks at the current seven-member, all-male school board, and believes the mothers of the district are vastly under-represented.

"We need to have a woman's voice there," she says. "I think some people are frustrated. They seek their voices are not being heard. They feel they can come to me, that I'm accessible. But I tell them, you're not talking to the right person." They have a complaint but don't take it to the board members.

Simpson, who lives on Hugo Street, just across from Matt Boettcher of Milburn Street and Ronald Silby of Osma Street in

the June 14 school election. Like the incumbents, she supports the two tax questions on the ballot.

"At first, I had trepidation. But then I read the information. The district needs more money for building improvements, and I don't want to see it taken from the money meant for education."

Simpson is a graduate of Wayne Memorial High School. A 17-year nursing veteran, she earned a degree in nursing in 1981 from Madonna College.

Nine years ago, Sharon and Robert Simpson moved into the Clarenceville district, located in small parts of southeast Farmington Hills, northeast Livonia and northwest Redford Township.

The Simpsons knew exactly what district they were moving into and believed they had made the right move.

"A neighbor came and asked us, 'Do you know what school district you are in?' We knew, and we felt it was a good district. It's small, where the kids are known, and where class size is



Sharon Simpson

small. It's just what we wanted."

The Simpsons have children in all three school levels of the district. Daughter Rebecca is a fourth grader at Grandview Elementary; son Marc is a seventh grader at Clarenceville Middle; and son Rob is a 10th grader at Clarenceville High.

Simpson divides her volunteer time between professional groups, school groups, youth groups and her church, St. Aidan's Catholic Church, where she is a teacher.

As a nurse, she is a member of the patient/parent education committee at Children's Hospital. She also has worked as a pediatric instructor for Wayne County and Oakland community colleges.

In the school district, she is involved in each of her children's schools. At Grandview, she has served as president of the Friends of Grandview for the last two years. For five years, she's also been a softball coach at the school.

At Clarenceville Middle School, she is past secretary of the school parent group.

At Clarenceville High, son Rob plays the drums with the Clarenceville Band which performed at Disneyland recently. As band supporters, the Simpsons visited Florida to watch.

For seven years, she also served as cub scout leader; the family is now active in Boy Scout Troop 45.

She's especially pleased with the hiring of Pam Swert as Clarenceville Middle School principal. In the past, when Clarenceville lost students, she says, it often was at the middle school level.

"The elementaries are good, but we'd lose them there. There was not a lot of consistency. That's not happening anymore."

Simpson balances her part-time nursing job with her duties as mother and wife.

"I'm not so involved that I'm not home in the afternoon," she says. "It was my choice to be home with the kids. My family comes first."

She believes those skills she has mastered in her profession—time management, communication, self-confidence, working with families in crisis—would be an asset at the board table.

"I don't back down from situations," she says. "I'm flexible, but I also know there are certain rules you have to follow. I'm an enforcer, and can be hard-nosed. But I'm also an approachable person."

As for the school lawns and how often they're cut... the Clarenceville Board of Education Thursday decided to tackle the outside maintenance problem head-on. They agreed to pay \$11,525 to a private lawn service to cut school lawns 25 times this year. The cuttings will start immediately, said Tattan.

OBITUARIES

MARGARET A. THIBIDEAU

Margaret A. Thibideau, 86, of Novi, died May 18.

Mrs. Thibideau graduated from Wayne State University with a B.A. in music and served on the Walled Lake City Council and the Walled Lake City Planning Council. She was also Mayor Pro-Tem and an organist for Roseland United Methodist Church.

She is survived by children, Robert (Carolyn), Martha (Stephen) Franchi, Charles (Janet), Nancy (James) Wilking, David (Patricia), and sister, Mary Morrison.

Funeral services were held May 21 at North Cornerstone Church in Farmington Hills. Arrangements made by O'Brien Chapel/Ted C. Sullivan Funeral Home in Novi.

Memorial contributions can be

sent to Senior Variety Series, c/o Friends of Novi Theater, 45175 West 10 Mile Road, Novi 48376.

VIRGINIA M. JUNE

Virginia M. June, 77, of Farmington Hills, died May 18.

She is survived by husband, Robert; daughters, Judith (Robert) Fussell and Virginia (Robert) Hawkes; June; son, Robert Jr.; sisters, Margo Ducoy, Josephine Dalton, Dorothy Buckwalter, Gloria LaBo, Bernice Bonarek and Barbara Bondy; seven grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

Funeral services were held May 20 at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church in Farmington with the Rev. Loren O'Dea officiating. Arrangements made by Heeney-Sundquist Funeral Home in Farmington.

Memorial contributions can be sent to Iron Overload Disease

Association Inc.

HENRY C. LAWRENCE

Henry Carr Lawrence, 76, formerly of Farmington, died May 18 at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak.

Mr. Lawrence was vice president of investments and a stock broker for Dean Whittier. He was also a U.S. Navy veteran. Henry and his brother Ford were the first set of twins born at Henry Ford Hospital.

He is survived by brother, Ford (Joan) Lawrence.

Funeral services were held May 22 at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Livonia with the Rev. Dr. Thomas Eggbeen officiating. Memorial contributions may be sent to the American Diabetes Association, 30600 Telegraph Road, Suite 2255, Birmingham Farms 48026-4632.

Chamber hosts roundtable

The Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce will host a Local Leadership Roundtable at 6 p.m. Wednesday, May 26, at the Farmington Training Center, 33000 Thomas Street. This program will include participation from the city councils and administration of the cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills as well as key business speakers.

Business leaders from the community are encouraged to attend this forum to discuss critical local issues which impact business and economic growth. This program is sponsored by the Chamber's Governmental Affairs Division which includes representation from diverse local companies including Metrobank, Target Equipment Leasing, Time Warner, L&G Insurance, and Hali, Siciliano & Mychalowycz, P.C.

The Governmental Affairs Division of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Com-

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merce is responsible for studying and analyzing issues of interest to the community and its business community of the local, state and federal level. It is one of the division's primary goals to promote communication between the business community and key decision makers. The Local Leadership Roundtable allows business leaders and local legislators to address issues of importance to the business and residential communities so that the two sectors may work to achieve mutually beneficial objectives.

Those interested in attending must contact the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce no later than Tuesday, May 25, at 474-3440.

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