

Candidate finds nothing unusual in GOP affiliation

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
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"She's African American and, yes, she belongs to the GOP," Vernice Davis Anthony, 53, finds nothing unusual in her Republican affiliation, especially seeking a seat on an urban university's governing board.

The Farmington Hills resident is seeking a seat on the Wayne State University Board of Governors in the Nov. 3 election.

Her GOP background is not a liability in the partisan campaign. She also disputes the pre-

conceived notion that if you're black, you're automatically a Democrat.

"There are many African Americans who are not active in the party but who actively work for and vote for Republican candidates," Davis Anthony said. "Many African Americans vote for issues and people and not necessarily for the party."

Her party involvement is longstanding. Davis Anthony, a registered nurse, campaigned for then-Gov. William Milliken in Detroit in the late 1970s.

Then Davis Anthony went to Lansing where she worked as

chief of the state health department's policy and planning division.

After voters put in James Blanchard — a Democrat — as governor, Davis Anthony returned to Wayne County to work for County Executive Bill Lucas, who switched from being a Democrat to a Republican.

Coincidentally, Lucas ran unsuccessfully against Blanchard in 1986.

"I don't believe the state was ready for an African-American governor at the time," she said.

"I think that was one of the issues."

Current County Executive Ed McNamara looked beyond partisan politics, appointing Davis Anthony to work with the health department. Gov. John Engler later hired her as director of the state health department.

When she left to become vice president of Urban and Community Health at St. John Health System, the governor appointed her to fill a vacated term on the Wayne State board.

Davis Anthony, who has her bachelor's degree from WSU, lost

the ensuing election in 1996. She attributes the setback on Democrat Bill Clinton's landslide win.

"It's very difficult to go against the tide when there is a wide margin of victory for a particular political party," she said. "You can't really campaign statewide. I worked with the ticket."

When another WSU governor stepped down, Engler appointed her again. She's back to win the seat outright at the university where she left her native Chester, Pa., to attend in 1965.

"It felt good," she said about Engler's endorsement. "I respect

John Engler very much, what he brings to politics in the state and I think he respects what I bring to the team, whether it's as a department head or on the university board."

Her role with eastside Detroit-based St. John Health System mirrors the elected office. She is heavily involved in urban affairs, getting the 15,000-member organization more visible in the Detroit community.

That's hard, she said. Managed care is cutting reimbursements, which indirectly help pay for care given to the uninsured and poor.

"We're trying to be more creative," she said.

The juggling act is not unlike the one she's encountered in her personal life. Her husband, Eddie Anthony, died in October 1994 of colon cancer.

Suddenly, she became a single mother to a teenage son. Todd Anthony, 16, attends Farmington High where he plays football and basketball.

She has two grown daughters who are both married. She recently became a grandmother, too.

"To have that sudden loss and learn how to redouble your career and figure how to be a single parent when you've never been a single parent ... you kind of feel like a table with a leg missing," she said. "It's very hard to rebalance yourself. It was a very difficult transition."



Vernice Anthony Davis

CAMPUS NOTES

Fifteen Farmington Harrison High School students have been named AP Scholars by the College Board in recognition of their exceptional achievement on the college-level Advanced Placement exams.

Approximately 23 percent of America's graduating seniors have taken one or more AP exams. Only about 13 percent of the more than 635,000 students who took AP exams in May 1998 performed at a sufficiently high level to merit such recognition.

The College Board recognizes several levels of achievement based on the number of year-long courses and exams, or their equivalent semester-long courses and exams.

At Harrison:
■ Students Alex Israel and David Weidendorf qualified for the AP Scholar with Distinction Award by earning an average grade of at least 3.5 on all AP exams taken, and grade three or higher on five or more of these exams.

■ Students Eric Allen, Carrie Cox, Joe Walts, Theresa White and Alan Yee qualified for the AP Scholar with Honor Award by earning an average grade of at least 3.5 on all AP exams taken, and grades of three or higher on four or more of these exams.

■ Students Muhammad Alam, Cara Bovee, Matt Burt, Natalie Capina, Jennifer Fogel, Dan Fuchs, Christine Melissa and Kristin Schleicher qualified for the AP Scholar Award by completing three or more AP Exams, with grades of three or higher.

AP exams, which students take in May after completing challenging college-level courses at their high school, are graded on a five-point scale, with five being the highest grade.

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