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funded and the Farmington district as well as others have tightened its belt to balance the budget.

"Local funding has become disproportionate to the whole as mandated services have been long underfunded by the state and federal governments, forcing local school districts to use general funds to pay for special education services," Oakland School officials said. "The proposed millage enhancement would restore local funding back to 25 percent of the total amount required to provide special education services to Oakland County students."

If the millages fail, school districts would have to continue to subsidize mandated special education programs from their general operations fund.

For some districts, this can amount to up to 50 percent of their special education costs, Rose said.

Officials say that without a vocational education millage enhancement, some of the four Oakland Technical Centers might have to close, transportation costs for sending districts could increase and local districts

might be billed for students attending the remaining centers.

Students chosen to attend one of four existing career technical centers in Clarkston, Pontiac, Walled Lake and Royal Oak.

Last year, the Farmington school district sent 52 students, which is less than the average, according to Rose. Maxfield thought the number was closer to 75-80 students. In comparison, the Clarkston district sent 244 students to the center which is located in Clarkston. West Bloomfield sent 14 students.

Maxfield referred to this as the "equity piece." He explained that Farmington district students may not feel an incentive to attend these technical centers because of many comprehensive vocational courses already offered in their home district.

"However, that's not the case in every school district. This allows us to begin thinking about new programs which might be multi-district programs," Maxfield said. "This increases opportunities."

This is the first request for a regional millage enhancement since 1967 for vocational education and since 1985 for special

education, according to Oakland Schools information.

"It would generate an estimated \$50 million for special education and \$10 million for vocational education," Rose said.

In a May 17 letter to Oakland County Schools Superintendent James Redmond, Farmington School Board President Frank Reid, wrote that the board was supportive following discussions with Maxfield.

Reid added that the board decided to delay formal action of its support until after the June 11 school election when voters were asked to approve local and Oakland County Community College millage renewals.

"I assure you that following the vote our board members will be enthusiastic supporters of the proposal," Reid said.

His aid support was based on two factors. The special education proposal will generate more than \$3 million to reimburse Farmington for ongoing special education costs.

"This will go a long way" in making up the shortfall which has resulted in significant reductions in the 2001-2002 budget, he said.

# Newcomer from page A1



Pam Christian

day," Christian said. "June 11 happened to have been my father's birthday. That was the deciding factor. On June 11, he would have been 60 years old."

Amid the heart tug, Christian recalled with a laugh the uniqueness of both her father's and uncle's names. Her uncle is Grant Buck. Her 96-year-old grandmother will attend her swearing in.

"Through the guidance of Cathy Webb" whom Christian hadn't known beforehand, Christian gained political knowledge. Voullets introduced Christian to Webb and they talked over coffee.

"She said: 'I will help you out. I will mentor you through this process.'"

Webb helped with timelines, when to put out brochures, where to put up signs. "She helped with the tools that you need to market yourself," Christian said. "She also helped me emotionally during the month of May."

Christian read more than a year's worth of Farmington Observer newspaper clippings to get a history and Webb helped her understand different issues. "I had to do a lot of reading," she said.

Planning now turns to action. Her first goal is to become abreast of the issues. She registered for the first of many board classes. On Tuesday she will

attend a teleconference at Oakland Schools for board members which will introduce her to what it is like to be a board member.

At last Tuesday's school board meeting Webb told everyone she will attend the teleconference with Christian. "We will learn together," she said.

In July Christian heads for a summer academy in Frankentum. She will spend the weekend with her mother in Flint.

"Board members need to be approachable and accessible," Christian said.

She's adamant that just because someone is mentoring her doesn't mean she doesn't make her own decisions. "I've always walked by my own beat. Christian said, 'I'd like to think that I would do the right thing by the kids.'"

If she feels strongly about something, she is willing to stand alone.

Another goal is to help students achieve all they can.

She commented on the ending of the Gill Year Round program. "Parents put up a solid and emotional fight," she said.

She will focus on what's best for the greater number of the kids in the school system and she will listen to teachers. "I won't make it a practice to talk for the sake of talking," she said.

She commented on personal letters sent by Brouillette and Webb to friends and supporters which lambasted candidate Phil Neuman for his method of taking issue with platoon/team teaching at Forest Elementary.

"I couldn't tell Webb or Brouillette what to write to their personal friends," Christian said. "Apparently that's a technique they have used for awhile. I was floored when the negative letters started coming in about Mr. Neuman. It isn't something I would have done. Would I have written it? No, I wouldn't have written it. It was a bit charged. Some of it couldn't have been controlled because the people who wrote letters, I didn't know."

People will say what they are going to say, Christian said. "I was not handpicked or the appointed one. I'm certainly not a yes, yes, yes person. It got real emotional at the end. ... Even with Cathy's input on certain issues she certainly couldn't have cast 1,900 votes."

As she starts her political career, Christian plans to pay regular visits to buildings. "I know (Superintendent) Dr. Maxfield does them," she said.

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