

Boettcher: Financial challenges ahead Fun with Plaster helps families with war stress

BY JOHN HUBBED
STAFF WRITER

Clarenceville School Board member Matthew Boettcher will run for re-election unopposed in June.

He and board member Sharon Simpson are on the ballot for four-year terms. (Simpson couldn't be reached as the Observer went to press; she will be profiled in a future edition.)

Boettcher, an attorney, currently serves as board president and is in his sixth year of service. He and his wife, Heidi, have three children who attend Clarenceville Schools.

"The biggest challenges we face," Boettcher said, "are financial ones, given the state of the economy and the allowance cuts that were made by the state."

"The district, he says, is "pretty much behind the 8-ball" every time funding is cut, because staffing costs continue to go up through negotiated contracts. Taking care of faculty and staff, he stressed, is very

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Matthew Boettcher
Clarenceville School Board member

important to the district. Boettcher also sees the Schools of Choice issue looming in Clarenceville's future, which is also a financial concern. A district committee last week and is expected to recommend re-visiting the issue of opening Clarenceville enrollment to students outside the district.

Neighboring Farmington School District will launch a pilot program this fall, opening about 21 K-3 slots at William Grace and Flanders elementary schools.

The decision to run for a third term wasn't a tough one for Boettcher. Because of his work responsibilities, he said, he isn't able to devote a lot of time to civic and other charitable organizations.

"I see this as my opportunity to contribute," he said. "It sounds altruistic, but it's true. I can use my background to the benefit of the district in a way that's somewhat unique."

Boettcher was elected just as the district was implementing a bond issue for capital improvements. Since then, the district has made significant improvements to Clarenceville High School, Middle School and Botsford and Elementary Schools.

"We've put a lot of money into updating the buildings," he said. "In turn, we've seen a change in attitude of our students and parents."

Buildings in better condition also builds pride in the district, he added.

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BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

Bella Imas, who owns Fun With Plaster on Grand River in downtown Farmington, has long overheard the conversations of children and families who come to paint molds at the store.

As they choose the proper colors and apply paint, worries seem to slip away and they enjoy the relaxed setting.

Now, for about a two-month time period, Imas wants to offer a special promotion, straight from her heart.

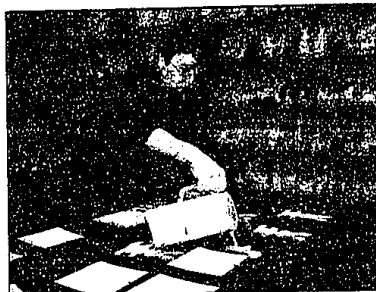
For those who have immediate relatives in the armed services — a mother, father, brother or sister — who can show proof through a photo or other means, she will provide a free item to be painted, from a special collection.

She's considering a gentle, graceful butterfly, for example, and perhaps a flag-related item to promote patriotism.

"People look for an activity to get out and relax," said Imas, a West Bloomfield resident. "They need a break. A lot of families are going through a sad time."

Human interaction is part of the atmosphere at Fun with Plaster. Imas and artist Karen Broudecker of Farmington Hills, who has a studio there, know art work has multidimensional value.

"It's therapeutic," Imas said.



BILL BRISLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Bella Imas pours plaster into Easter molds at Fun With Plaster.

Broudecker calls time spent with art "quality time."

The women hope to create a photo board of the armed services families who participate. Though Imas has a regular stream of customers, she usually doesn't know who will come every day to the business she's owned for five years.

Besides parents and children, there are Brownie and Girl Scout Troops, group home residents and a psychiatrist who uses the molds and paints during counseling sessions with patients at her office, Imas said.

Imas came to this country 25

years ago from Romania, where she was a bookkeeper and economist for government-owned dining halls. She emigrated with her husband, Michael, an engineer, her son who is now a physician specializing in pain management, her parents, brother and sister-in-law.

"It was the right time to leave," Imas said.

Daughter, Jessica, 17, will graduate this year from West Bloomfield High School and attend the University of Michigan next year.

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PARK WEST

City names 10 to Civic Theater board

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

Farmington City Council Monday appointed 11 people to the new Farmington Civic Theatre Committee, which will work towards enhancing usage of the theatre and expanding its patronage.

The historic, city-owned Civic Theatre is located on

Grand River east of Farmington Road.

The idea for a committee came out of a goals session about 18 months ago, said Bill Richards, assistant Farmington City Manager.

Richards, who was also named to the committee, met with all of the applicants.

"I was very pleased with the enthusiasm and the range of

knowledge and skills of the 10 individuals," Richards said. "They will insure and exceed the Council's original expectations."

Also named to the committee were Brian Belesky, Tom Buck, Kristine Franko, Valerie Knol, Jim Laska, Deborah Nussbaum, Charles Paul, Skip Rosenthal, Megan Sanders and Ara Topouzian.

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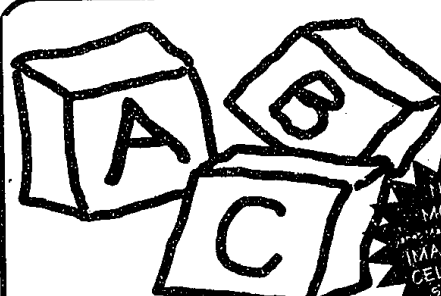
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