

Local control advocate runs for state school board seat

By Tim Richard
Staff writer

"I'm a local control person," said Cherry Jacobus.

It's the theme of her Republican candidacy for the State Board of Education. It's the answer she gives to many questions, such as teacher evaluation, merit pay, curriculum and reducing the number of school districts.

Like GOP running mate Dorothy Beardmore of Rochester, Jacobus points out that she has two terms of experience on a local kindergarten-through-12th-grade school board.

In contrast, the Democratic incumbents are a Michigan State University administrator (Gumelindo Salas) and a Northern Michigan University professor (John Watanen Jr.).

BORN IN BIRMINGHAM 48 years ago, Cherry Jacobus, daughter of a Presbyterian minister, earned a nursing degree from the University of Michigan, married lawyer Phil Jacobus of Plymouth and settled with him in western Michigan to raise four children.

She spent eight years on the East Grand Rapids Board of Education, two as president. She got acquainted with the legislative process through the Michigan Association of School Boards and the Governor's Educational Block Grant Committee.

Mary Jane Schildberg, a former Garden City school board president who is supporting her, thinks Jacobus' experience is needed in Lansing. Hosting a coffee in her home recently, Schildberg said:

"My feeling is that a lot of problems of K-12 education would have been put on the front burner if there had been a person on the State Board with K-12 background."

"WE WENT through the declining enrollment crisis where we closed schools," said Jacobus. "We negotiated contracts with teachers six times. We went through buying computers. We dealt with the financial crisis (state aid cuts during the recession)."

At the September Republican State Convention, she easily won a nomination with strong support from the western Michigan contingent.

"Geographically," she said, "we would like to have one member from western Michigan, even though we (State Board members) don't vote regionally. There are two from the Upper Peninsula, two from Lansing and four from this area (metropolitan Detroit)."

The Republican team argues that only one of the eight current State Board members has any kindergarten through 12th grade board experience, and that isn't recent.

HER GARDEN City audience was made up largely of board members, administrators and teachers from the suburban schools. Sample questions and answers:

• On the Reagan Administration's push for income tax credits for tuition paid at private schools: "I am opposed to tuition tax credits. If that income is lost, if the money comes out of someplace, it's going to come out of public education. Tuition tax credits are the tip of the iceberg."

• On consolidating school districts: She would hesitate to mandate such a policy, preferring other methods of helping school districts too small to offer full curriculums. "We're doing more program sharing — in languages, vocational center. We're finding some good results."

• On merit pay for teachers: "Teachers are very uncomfortable with it. Who does it (evaluating)? How? They're very skittish. . . Merit pay means you have the money to give merit pay."

• On whether the State Board should set guidelines for merit pay: "I don't want to see a lot of lines that bind from the top. The state should set policy but not mandate."

Aging can be easier

To promote understanding of the aging process, Sinai Hospital of Detroit and the Jewish Home for the Aged will present "Accent on Aging." The free program will be from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 21, in the Jewish Community Center, 6600 W. Maple, West Bloomfield.

Dr. Paul Pearsall, director of Sinai's Problems of Daily Living Clinic, will give the keynote address on "Ageless Aging: How to Grow Old Without Getting Older."

In conjunction with the Genetic Counseling Clinic of Henry Ford Hospital, screening for Tay-Sachs disease will also be available. A donation of \$15 is requested, though no one will be turned away for lack of funds.

For more information call, Sinai Hospital at 493-5098 or the Jewish Home for the Aged at 532-7112.

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SEVERAL QUESTIONS from teachers revolved around those who had lost their jobs through enrollment shrinkage but had enough seniority to "bump" younger teachers in other subject areas. Should they have to be re-certified?

"In our small district," Jacobus said, "We found in a middle school a physical ed teacher who had to be reassigned. He 'bumped' someone and found himself in science, where he hadn't been in 25 years. This teacher had had a science minor in college."

"I have no problem with released time (for teacher retraining). They should be willing to take

some courses. I'm not wed to any one proposal."

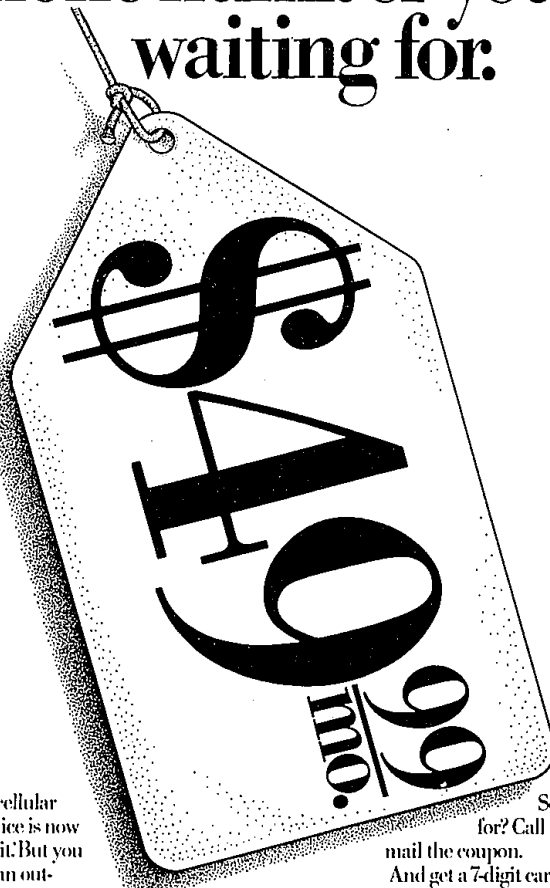
Jacobus was asked about the desire of the "higher education lobby" to see those displaced teachers go back to college for retraining.

"I have to prove to the hospital (where she works part time in the emergency room) all the time that I can do CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) — every six months. I'm not going to lay on someone else what I'm not willing to do myself," she said.

"But I'm very concerned about state mandates. I'm a local control person. Re-training could be in-service. It doesn't have to be higher education."



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