

Challenger says board tends to 'rubber stamp' recommendations

On June 12, Oakland County voters will elect two people from a field of six to the Board of Trustees of Oakland Community College, which has about 24,000 students on five campuses. This is one of a series of brief profiles of the candidates.

By PAT MURPHY
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His first encounter with Oakland Community College was as a student in 1966. Richard J. Akehurst had recently graduated from Kimball High School in Royal Oak, and he was one of the original 4,000 students when OCC opened its doors.

Since then, Akehurst has earned two associate degrees from OCC, one in general studies and another in business administration. Some of the courses he took in computer aided design helped Akehurst learn to design automotive dies, which he currently does at CKC Engineering in Southfield.

"I know how important OCC is to people who want to get an education," Akehurst said when asked why he wants to be on the

ELECTION

OCC board of trustees. "I want OCC to continue as a low-cost alternative to a four-year institution."

Being a student at OCC has given him a different take on the school, Akehurst said. "So has having a wife who is both a classified employee at the Royal Oak campus and a part-time faculty member. His wife Janet is an administrative assistant to the academic dean of the Royal Oak campus. She also teaches American history.

That perspective — coupled with his business and management background — should persuade voters he has the qualifications to be an excellent trustee, Akehurst said. "I've been an assistant plant engineer at Whitehead & Kales until the River Rouge company was sold and liquidated, and I've supervised union and nonunion workers."

That background is particularly helpful, Akehurst said, in light of the sometimes con-

tentious labor negotiations OCC experiences with the six bargaining units that represent 749 employees. The school has 45 exempt employees, bringing the total to 794 full timers.

Akehurst has made a point of attending recent board meetings, after which he concluded that trustees tend to "rubber stamp" too many recommendations without asking enough questions.

The board does a decent job in terms of exercising fiscal responsibility, he said. "We've had minimal tuition increases over the last three years, or so," he noted.

"But the board could do a better job," he said, particularly next year when the board is expected to ask voters to renew OCC's operating millage. The board needs a complete and accurate assessment of what needs to be done and how the money would be used, he said.

"That's the best way to approach voters," said Akehurst, who added that he willing to go out into the community to lobby on behalf of the millage. "I'd particularly like to talk to parent-teacher organizations because

they should be concerned about OCC," he said. The important thing, he continued, is getting OCC's message to the voters.

Akehurst said he is not particularly concerned about enrollment at OCC — which has dropped to about 24,000 students, compared with the peak of 30,000 in 1992. OCC is still the largest community college in Michigan, he said, and the 12th largest in the nation. "And it's still a bargain," he added.

Distance learning — or the use of telecommunications or the Internet to teach classes — is very likely "the wave of the future," according to Akehurst. "But it's not for everybody. Some students need more direction than others."

Akehurst has been on the Citizens Advisory Committee in Royal Oak for 16 years, and he's currently vice chair of the organization — that oversees the use of federal block grants.

He and his wife have two children.



Richard Akehurst

OBITUARIES

OCEO KENT WALTHALL
Oceo Kent Walthall, 80, of Farmington Hills died May 19 at Danto Health Care Center. He was born July 28, 1919.

He served in the Navy during World War II as the chief engineer of his ship. He held the position of executive engineer at Ford Motor Co. until 1975.

He is survived by wife Lorraine; sons Glen, Alan and Thomas; daughters-in-law, Linda, Susan and Anje; brother Larry; sister Aime Wynne; and three grand-

children.

LORETTA E. BREAUULT
Services for Loretta Emily Breault, 81, formerly of Farmington, were held May 27 at St. Gerald Catholic Church in Farmington with the Rev. Gerald McEnhill officiating. Burial took place at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Southfield.

Mrs. Breault was born March 8, 1919 in Detroit and died May 25 in Novi. She worked as a bookkeeper for General Motors until her retirement and was a

member of St. Gerald Catholic Church. She was a former member of St. Mary's of Redford.

She is survived by nephew, Michael McCarthy and several other nieces and nephews; and brother, Robert Kelley. She was preceded in death by her husband, Charles; brother, David; and three sisters.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Capuchins, 1740 Mt. Elliott Ave., Detroit 48207.

Touring version of Vietnam Memorial arrives in Canton June 21-26

Farmington High School students raised awareness about the Vietnam War and \$620, during a successful penny collection drive. Students collected one penny for each American man and woman who died in Viet-

nam. But soon will be another opportunity to reflect upon the sacrifice made by Vietnam veterans. From June 21-26, "The Moving Wall," a touring version of the Vietnam Memorial in

Washington, D.C., will be on display in Canton. The Moving Wall will be located on the north side of Heritage Park, off Heritage Road, west of Canton Center Road.

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