

# Two seats on BOE to be filled

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Associate Editor

In an unusually competitive election for the Rockwood School District Board of Education, seven candidates, including two incumbents, are vying to get elected to one of two seats that have three-year terms. The election will be held on Tuesday, April 6, and is expected to have higher turnout than usual for a school board race.

## Jaime Bayes (Incumbent)

Bayes was first elected to the Board in 2015. She lives in Fenton and is married with three children. Bayes has spent much of her time volunteering with the Rockwood Gives Back Program. Bayes said that the things accomplished by the Board during her tenure are a reason that she deserves re-election.

"During my time on the Board, we passed two bond issues. A sample of the things that those bond issues have purchased include turf fields and new tracks at all four high schools, STEM additions in all four high schools, cafeteria and nurse expansions, innovation rooms in elementary schools, theater upgrades, a new elementary school, and technology improvements. We are a Board who listen and communicate well. I think maintaining this kind of unified outlook, even if we do not all agree or vote in the same way, is crucial to the continued success of our district," Bayes said.

## Tamara Jo Rhomberg (Incumbent)

Rhomberg has lived in the Rockwood School District for over 40 years. She has been on the Board for four years. Rhomberg said that the challenges created by the pandemic show the need for experience.

"I have made the decision to run for a second term because I believe that at this time the district needs a cohesive working school board who know and understand the

challenges presented. One of the attributes that I bring to the board is my ability to listen objectively. I also have leadership experience through the organizations that I have chaired, which provide me with a strong working knowledge of how to engage effectively with people," Rhomberg said.

Rhomberg said that the successes of the Board during her time serving are a reason why she deserves to remain in office.

"We were recognized as an outstanding school board in the area of finances by the Missouri School Board Association, hired an outstanding superintendent and implemented a rigorous strategic plan that will move Rockwood ahead for years to come," Rhomberg said.

## Charles Keith Messmer

Messmer has been a police officer for the past 15 years, and lives in Eureka. He is married and has three children. Messmer said his background makes him qualified to be on the Board.

"I'm a regular parent. I have had to work long hours, miss concerts, activities, and holidays, and can't find the time to volunteer for the PTO due to work and life commitments, and I believe that's 90 percent of the parents in Rockwood," Messmer said. "They deserve to have someone on the Board who understands what that is like and represents them and their interests."

Messmer said that he believes that the district has handled COVID-19 extremely poorly by being untransparent and ignorant of community concerns. Messmer said this is his main motivation for running.

## Jackie Koerner

Koerner lives in Fenton and is married with two daughters. She has a master's degree and a PhD, both from Saint Louis University. Koerner has spoken at events around the world about her research on different subjects relating to equity and inclusion. Koerner also volunteers at the Rockwood Helping Hands Pantry. Koerner

said that if elected, one of her top priorities would be looking at problems students are having with mental health.

"The biggest issue facing students in Rockwood is a sense of belonging. Students are experiencing mental health challenges and feel suicide is the answer. These situations are terrifying and tragic. I want to look into the experiences of students and find out what is happening," Koerner said. "I'd like to support students and educators in developing solutions for these issues our community continues to face at alarming rates."

## Sean Patrick Conover

Conover is a graduate of Western Kentucky University, and works in the sales field. He is married and has two daughters. Conover said improving the quality of education is a reason he is running.

"I have chosen to run to be a Director on the Rockwood School District Board of Education for improvement of our children within the community," Conover said. "The pandemic has taught us that the world we live in is dynamic. We must work to improve our current state, give students equal opportunities, and embrace curiosity."

Conover said that his background in sales qualifies him to be an effective member of the Board.

"I have learned in my sales career to lean into differences of opinions, to understand, and then develop an action plan," Conover said.

## Tamarah Wagner

Wagner has lived in Chesterfield for the past 10 years and is married with eight children. She has been heavily involved in programs at her children's schools. She graduated from Bradley University. Wagner said that her own personal experiences can enable her to be successful on the Board.

"As a Director, I will bring the perspective of a primary educator, the mother of eight children. I am dedicated to ensuring that all children are getting everything they can

out of the opportunities afforded them by the Rockwood School District," Wagner said. "As a mother, volunteer, and former human resource manager, I am skilled at consensus building and mediation to promote beneficial change."

Wagner said that she believes the district's approach to COVID-19 was ineffective, and that it should have went in a different direction.

"I believe I can bring a fresh perspective and a voice for those parents whose voices were left out of the conversation on how we could help students reach their potential in this difficult time," Wagner said.

## Terrie Desloge

Desloge has been married for 30 years, and is a graduate of Belmont University. She has three children. Desloge founded The Synapsory, a nonprofit that helps special needs children find sensory and motor spaces. Desloge said helping the district move past the pandemic is a key reason she is running.

"The reason I am running for school board is because our children need to heal, grow, and thrive again after the trauma of the past year. I want to help lead that healing for them, and for our community," Desloge said. "I am qualified because I worked as an instructor and program director in the prison system where I developed an openness and understanding to diverse backgrounds and perspectives. I have experience helping children with diverse learning needs find the educational tools and support that help them flourish."

Desloge said that she will also be focused on student mental health if elected.

"I'm a mom of children with serious physical and learning challenges," Desloge said. "I've served as an advocate for my own children in education for more than 20 years. The biggest issue facing our district is the mental health of our students after the trauma of Covid. I will advocate to make resources available to students suffering from depression and anxiety."

# Winter percussion starts with a bang

Siri Mandava  
Of The Talon staff

Winter percussion, a new program introduced to the band department this year, was brought about due to changes caused by COVID-19.

The new band program is similar to marching band except only percussion instruments, led by percussion teacher Peter Repp.

"We have a 'front ensemble' full of melodic instruments, and a marching drumline that does movement and choreography. Just like in marching band, the ultimate goal is to tell a story or relay a conceptual idea through a combination of elements," Repp said.

The group consists of 31 students from all four Rockwood schools and they practice from 6 to 9 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Although it is a lot of hours, junior Grace Bailey said that she enjoys both the experience and the people she performs with.

"We also have full-day camps over winter break and spring break," Bailey said. "We spend so much time rehearsing that it really feels like a family."

Repp said his inspiration for creating the program was this year's senior class.

"The group was created with the intent of being competitive, taking things seriously, and honestly trying to recreate the rather

intense experience the students get in marching band every fall," Repp said. "I'm so happy that students of all ages are able to participate, but my heart really hurts for our seniors who didn't get to have the competitive marching band season that they were used to this past fall. Those seniors have done so much for our program and worked so hard in percussion class for the last six and a half years."

Repp said he enjoyed seeing his students interact and form friendships with students from other schools.

"Another fantastic benefit of this program has been getting to know students from other schools and watching Summit students build friendships with those students who may go to a different school, but who share their passion for music. Music has an uncanny ability to bring people together," Repp said.

Additionally, the program can help students better their skills. Senior Sydney Tang said that one of her favorite things was that she improved through all of the extra practice.

"Being able to play at a level that I couldn't before motivates me to do better, especially for this group, where for some of us, this will be the last high school marching band experience we get to have. I also just love being able to play in a group, and this might be my last time ever playing with this many people," Tang said.

The program will have several contests through April and March, with some being virtual and some in-person. This year's



Wearing the newly purchased Winter Percussion uniform, junior Grace Bailey plays the vibraphone. Winter Percussion's first competition was held in the Field House on Feb. 6. (Photo by Ruth Vogel)

show is called "Ripple Effect" and the first contest was held on Feb. 27, where they made it to the semifinals. The competition was held in a virtual format and they had a videographer record the video a week prior to the contest and submitted it, where the judges scored it.

Senior Samhi Mitra said that the work they put into the show paid off.

"Everything we were working on came through in the show and it's a really good performance for where we are right now,"

Mitra said.

Repp said that while he enjoyed the time doing the program this year, he does not plan on offering this option in the program in the future.

"In a 'normal' year, the spring is packed full of events like large-ensemble festivals, concerts, solo and ensemble competitions, middle school drumline rehearsals, blacklight drumline rehearsals, jazz band competitions, and percussion concerts," Repp said.