

School board candidates differentiate how they advocate for students

October 16, 2020



Incumbent Frank Magarino, current President of the Del Norte Unified School District Board of Trustees, is facing off against challenger Sheryl Steinruck to represent Area 3.

Billy Hartwick has informed the county elections office he's withdrawn his candidacy due to his intention to move away from the area.

Because Charlaine Mazzei is running unopposed in Area 4, we only asked Magarino and Steinruck the same four questions to help voters decide how to cast their ballot in the Nov. 3 election.

First, introduce yourself to the voters.

Magarino: My wife, Paula was born and raised in Crescent City, we met in Santa Rosa while attending college. In 2006, we moved to Crescent City to be close to family and raise our kids, in an amazing community. We started a business over 21 years ago and currently own a few businesses with over thirty employees.

Steinruck: I am a Del Norte community stakeholder. I will be the first American Indian woman elected to serve as the DNUSD School Board, District 3 Trustee. I was born and raised in Del Norte County. I am a traditional knowledge practitioner and an elder of the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation.

Why are you running for County Supervisor (or running again)?

Magarino: There is no question that the past four years have been incredibly challenging, as well as rewarding. During that period as a board member I have been a part of a board that has accomplished many things on many fronts. We have invested in projects in our infrastructure; Technologies, renovation to many of our schools, creating transparency, seeking grants where possible, and representing students, parents and taxpayers to the best of my ability.

I am running for re-election, because, in today's environment there are many exceedingly difficult decisions that will come before the board. And I feel that I have an obligation to follow through and build on the accomplishments that as a board we have forged.

Steinruck: Unanswered.

What are your top three issues facing the school district?

Magarino: 1) Without question, COVID-19 — it has thrown a jarring wrench on our community and the entire world, to the likes that it is historically unprecedented, with no blueprint to follow. Therefore, we will need to be cautious and prudent with making our decisions.

2) Funding has always been, and I believe will continue to be a big issue for our district, especially in consideration of the COVID-19 shutdown and with an expectation of an enormous tax revenue shortfall. So, as a result, the best we can do is be frugal, seek grants that are out there and come together as a community with community volunteers to mitigate those short comings.

Our facilities. It has been made clear by our facilities director that our schools are in serious need of continued upgrades and renovations.

Steinruck: 1. Advocacy: I will visit schools, facilities and offices. I will listen and share with every community stakeholders, from educators to students and from administrators to parents, to gather valuable input for the Board's decision-making processes. I seek to improve the quality of every student's educational experience and to satisfactorily remedy the longstanding student achievement gap, poor school attendance and lower academic performance level inequities ensuring every school-age child receives a world-class education regardless of his or her zip code, cultural heritage, racial background, socio-economic status or student achievement level.

2. School Board Oversight and Accountability: The School Board is the heart of the district and supplies the lifeblood necessary for the district to function properly in every way from progressive leadership, fiscal oversight and accountability to the shared responsibility of equity and equality shared amongst all district schools. Unified, we stand. Therefore, every culturally diverse neighborhood shall have equal and uniform

delivery of educational services and programs. Annual performance evaluations will be conducted to hold the Superintendent and the School Board accountable.

3. Curriculum: Every student must be taught adaptation and adjustment skills for future Earth survival. This innovative curricula design teaches students to be active learners, family providers and productive citizens in the ideals of kinship and a sense of belonging capable of contributing to the whole of our culturally diverse society reflected in a positive worldview. The curriculum must incorporate natural resources, land and forest management practices proven successful in traditional indigenous knowledge, bio-diverse environments and regenerative gardening techniques. This includes the growth of food forests to sustain clean air and protecting our clean water supply, incorporating nutritious food production and self-reliance by reducing dependency on consumerism for the health of all humanity and our Mother Earth.

In light of the two recent students testing positive for COVID-19, how safe do you feel it is to send students back to learning in the classroom this far into the coronavirus pandemic?

Magarino: COVID-19 cases in our community is certainly something that needs to be followed closely and adhere to with the safety protocols by our public health department. Our schools have developed and implemented a protocol and plan to keep our students and staff safe. The fact of the matter is, that our teachers are an essential part in the fabric of the community.

With that said, we are seven months into this pandemic, our students need to have an interaction on a personal level with their peers and teachers. Students have myriad learning styles and by reopening our schools we can reach all of our students.

Steinruck: Keep our schools closed to allow serious examination of our resources by implementing necessary steps to prevent an inevitable COVID-19 outbreak. Let's take the time to re-design and improve our curriculum of what we teach, how we teach and the way we teach here in Del Norte County.