

Candidates for unified board seek one of five positions

By **Irene Thirlwall**

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On Tuesday Nov. 8, certain people who live in Eastern Madera County will have the opportunity to vote on Measure P, which needs a simple majority to pass. Measure P, if passed, would combine the Yosemite Joint Union High School District with the Coarsegold Union School District.

Yosemite Joint Union High School District includes: Yosemite High School, Ahwahnee High School, Evergreen High School, Foothill High School, Mountain View High School, Raymond Granite High School and 10 feeder schools plus the Golden Valley Unified School District in Madera.

Coarsegold Unified School District includes: Coarsegold Elementary School, Rivergold Elementary School, Meadowbrook Community Day School and CUSD Home School.

Currently both districts have a five member board and if Measure P passes, the district's will unify, creating only one board of five members. This will be a new board comprised of five out of the 11 candidates for the new unified district school board.



Thomas Allcock

The candidates receiving the three highest amount of votes will earn three-year terms, while the other two candidates will receive one year terms.

The candidates are as follows:

Thomas Allcock, 54, of Ahwahnee. Allcock was raised in the Mountain Area, living in Yosemite Valley for 12 years. He graduated from Yosemite Elementary School and from Mariposa High.

"I have been married to my wife Tami for 23 years," Allcock said. "We have raised three terrific children, all of whom attended our local public schools and are leading successful adult lives."

His reason for running in this election is because he believes he can make a difference.

"I can make a difference in the transition of these two distinguished districts," Allcock said, "Into a new, vibrant and exemplary district."

Allcock said he felt it was important for a candidate to have experience and he said he possessed that experience.

"My experience is in the field of education," Allcock said, having taught at Wasuma Elementary School, Oak Creek Intermediate and is currently Superintendent/Principal in Raymond. "I believe (this) makes me uniquely qualified for this position."

Allcock said he has attended numerous California School Board Association trainings and seminars to improve his board member skills.

"I am an expert on inter-personal relationships," Allcock said. "This trait enabled me to help facilitate highly charged, emotional circumstances that arise at board meetings, with skill and reason. I listen to all who speak with respect and interest and yet make decisions based on what I believe is best for all children and their future. I would truly appreciate your vote in the upcoming election. A vote for me will bring a voice of informed reason to the board."

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Ron Bucheger, 57, of Oakhurst. Bucheger is a retired manager and business person. He said his reasons for running are his beliefs in increased spending in the classroom where it directly affects students, greater parent involvement in decision making, coordinated curriculum from elementary through high schools, better decisions from trustees who have children in school and in creating an effective and objective decision making environment.

He and his wife Ruth have two children in the school district.

"My family has a deep commitment to youth and education in the community," Bucheger said. "I have been involved with the Site Advisory Council, the Parent Teacher Club as well as coaching in the Youth Soccer League.

Bucheger's background includes a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering. A master's degree in business administration, with more than 25 years of business experience in general management, strategic planning, operations, marketing, training and technology development.

Dan Burrow, 56, of Oakhurst. Burrow has been an active community participant in numerous school board meetings and he said now he would like to have his voice count instead of just being heard.

"It's time for the school districts of the area to be financially responsible," he said. "I am running for the school board because seven of my nine children have graduated from YHS.

"I have attended a series of classes put on by the Madera County Office of Education for prospective board members," he said. "I have attended numerous seminars on various subjects including finance labor relations, time management, goal setting and management productivity, sponsored by the National Electrical Contractors Association. I graduated from the Non Commissioned Officer Leadership School in the Alaska Air Command."

Burrows added he is also experienced as an Eagle Scout.

Karen Hutchings, 58, of Raymond. Hutchings was born and raised in Sonora and has been a resident of Madera County for the past 36 years.

"I'm married to a wonderful person," Hutchings said adding she has been married for 36 years. "We have two children and two grandchildren. Both of my children are graduates of Yosemite High School."

Hutchings said she is running for a position on the school board to maintain the programs and small class sizes as well as make sure the programs remain strong and that children are provided with the instructional materials necessary.

"I've been on the school board for 15 years for Yosemite High School and I'm also employed by an elementary school district," she said. "So I feel that I have the background needed for an elementary school district as well."

Hutchings is currently employed as an administrative assistant for the Raymond-Knowles School District.

"I deal with budgets on a daily basis," she said. "I think it is critical for both types of districts so I understand the budget process. I'm very committed to excellence in education and providing quality in education for all students. I'd like to continue to see the programs follow through that I've been working on for that amount of time."

She said her role as trustee has been extremely rewarding and also challenging.

"During the past 15 years I have served as president, clerk and have also been the representative to the Madera County School Boards Association several times. I have attended conferences, workshops and seminars to strengthen my roll as a trustee. I'm very honest, take responsibility seriously, provide leadership and spend a significance amount of time dealing with

public relations," she said.

Burt McSwain, 81, of Wishon. McSwain has had a daughter attend and graduate from Yosemite High School. He been a YHS board member for 18 years and feels this has brought him the experience and desire to run for a position on this new school board.

"It has brought experience that has been very important in the direction that we have made to bring the school to where it is today," he said. "I would like to complete the project that has been planned for the future."

McSwain has a background which he feels qualifies him as a candidate in this election.

"Forty-three years with Pacific Gas and Electric," he said. "Twenty-two years of that time as a member of the Electric Operation Division Staff as division analyst. Being involved with people and budgets and general operation; along with being a resident and property owner since 1986."

McSwain is a past president of the board of education and he discussed how this assists in his qualifications.

"I was very active with the bond issue for the high school," he said. "Acquired the property at Quartz Mountain for possible school expansion, which is now given to Coarsegold Elementary, music department, ag department, adult school etc.

"I have worked very hard for unification of our schools," he said.

Monika Moulin, 53, of Ahwahnee. Moulin said she is running because she is interested in playing a significant part in keeping the district's emphasis where it should be.

"On the fundamentals of a sound and well-rounded education," she said. "We can't be too diligent in making sure that our students don't miss out on the important things that really prepare them to compete in tomorrow's world."

Moulin has extensive experience, qualifications and background. In 2004 she completed a special eight-hour intensive course for school board trustees given at the Madera County Office of Education under its director, Dr. Sally Frazier, covering in detail such topics as the Brown Act and open meeting laws, budgets and accountability, personnel issues, curriculum and instruction and standards.

"While I'm presently well-known as Oakhurst's former honorary mayor and as a musician and performer in and around the area," she said, "and I currently serve as director of music at Oakhurst's New Community United Methodist Church. Additionally I have more than two decades worth of experience in senior positions with leading firms in the marketing communications and public relations field. In those positions, I analyzed situations, found creative ways to address issues and communicated key messages, all with prudent budget planning in mind."

Moulin also has an educational background to contribute to this new position.

"I trained in music at Southern Methodist University," she said, "and the University of Texas and at the American Institute of Musical Studies in Freiburg, Germany."

Moulin added a fun fact from her background.

"Possibly the least-known 'factoid' about candidate me," she said, "is that I was the record-holding money-winner on the television game show, 'The \$25,000 Pyramid,' when my nearly \$50,000 in winnings in a single week helped pave the way for the show's being re-designed and re-named, 'The \$100,000 Pyramid.' "

Linda Olson, 58, of Coarsegold. Olson grew up in New Jersey, and moved to the Mountain Area with her husband Jim in January of 2001.

She said she is running for a number of reasons.

"My vision for the district is a highly articulated, living evolving educational program that keeps current with our changing world," Olson said. "I will continue to be fiscally responsible. I will be vigilant in seeing that the board receives not only monthly statements and quarterly reports but that I understand them and that they jive with our independent audit. I will not approve not only spending below our required reserve. I believe in local control, a board member's role is to see that the district is well run and be the public's resource. Learning is a life long pursuit and a joy. A strong public education system is mandatory for the survival of our civilization. Introduction to the arts and humanities must be part of every student's educational experience. A strong home, school partnership greatly enhances the students learning experience."

Olson has spent her entire professional career in education.

"Beginning as a permanent substitute in an inner-city school," she said. "Two national education lobbies/organizations while in grad school. Thirteen years with the New Jersey School Board Association, while there created the policy development services provided to all New Jersey school districts, 12 years with California School Board Association as assistant executive director, and four years as executive director of the CSBA finance Corporation ."

Olson said she received an undergraduate degree at Rutgers University, and completed graduate work at George Washington University in Washington D.C.

"I was appointed to the Yosemite High School board in August 2003 to fill a vacant seat," she said, "and was elected to full term last November."

Priscilla Pike, 74, of Oakhurst. Pike is a present member of the YHS Governing board of trustees.

She says her deep concern and love for her community may be identified in her active involvement in bringing the community college to Oakhurst, founding the El Capitan Educational Foundation, serving on the governing boards of Eastern Madera County Junior Livestock Association, Oakhurst Sierra Rotary Club, the Sierra Foothills Conservancy .

"My business acumen comes from owning my own court reporting agency for more than 25 years, in which I am still active," Pike said. "I have had the opportunity to focus my efforts on the recent \$30 million redevelopment of the school campus," she said. "While guiding and maintaining the school's high standards of excellence in education so necessary for our young people today.

"I am devoted to holding a budget that is maintaining our performing arts and music departments," she said, "when many other districts in the state have dropped them from their schools. You can view our students magnificent sports skills in their ongoing Sierra Star published student newspaper. Our vocational and technical career study classes are of my primary concern, reflecting our emphases on a comprehensive training program for the whole student, in whatever educational direction they may pursue."

John Reynolds, 52, of Coarsegold. Reynolds is employed as a civil engineer with Integrated Designs. Reynolds said he is running for three reasons.

"I hope to continue my advocacy in Sacramento fighting for the necessary resources to allow the children of our districts to achieve success," he said. "I'm running because I hope to continue to develop the third elementary school in Coarsegold. I am a fair and and consistent disciplinarian."

Reynolds is a member of the Coarsegold Elementary School district and has been since 1987.

"In 1989, I was elected by school districts of Madera County to represent all the students of Madera County," he said. "I have served on numerous state-wide commissions, task forces and committees. I currently serve in the California School Board Association's (CSBA) small school district council. I have earned my master's degree in boardsmanship from CSBA and I have also earned my governance from CSBA. I have negotiated agreements with Fortune 500 companies. I have negotiated contracts with labor unions. I have managerial skills in property management. I

have entrepreneurial experience in financial investments. I have been a past member of Oakhurst Sierra Rotary Club and I am a Paul Harris Fellow."

Reynolds is a graduate of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and has been a husband for 29 years and is the father of a son and daughter.

Gregory Schoonard, 44, of Coarsegold. Schoonard is running for a number of reasons.

"I have a vision for the future of education in our community," he said. "I have a passion for education and learning. I want to pass this love on to the next generation. I want to help instill a love for lifelong learning into the lives of the young men and women of our community. I want to help them build a foundation for success in life by providing them with educational opportunities that prepare them for adulthood.

"I have a vested interest in the success of our local school district because my two children both attend school in the proposed unified district. I am fulfilling my role and responsibility as a father and community member, by using time, talents and treasures to actively participate in the education of my children and the children of our community."

Schoonard has experience in education. He has been a rank-and-file, supervisory and management employee of a public law enforcement agency, and experience as a school board trustee.

"(These roles) have prepared me to effectively serve our community as a member of the new board of trustees for the new unified district," he said. "I will provide the leadership and sound decision making that is required to effectively serve the needs of our students, district employees and the community because I have developed these skills through my own education, career and school board experience."

Christine Wilder, 45, of Coarsegold. Wilder has been a resident of Coarsegold for 16 years. She has been married to her husband Robert for 27 years. They have two sons, both of whom have attended and graduated from Coarsegold Elementary and YHS.

Wilder said she is running for the new school board position because she wants to continue to be a strong advocate for the children of the community.

"The new unified board will have a tremendous amount of work ahead with new policies, budget, facilities and transportation just to name a few," she said. "I have been trustee for the Coarsegold District for the past 12 years. During my time, I have worked diligently with the board and administration to continue to build on the district's success. As a parent and trustee, I have participated in a wide variety of committees from facilities issues to budgets. I have attended courses held by California School Boards Association (CSBA). I have attained my masters in governance and masters in boardmanship from CSBA. The CSBA program provides comprehensive knowledge and skills to enable trustees to function effectively. These courses help trustees to govern the district and participate with the superintendent as productive members of the districts governance team."

Wilder said she also participates in Eastern Madera County School Board Association workshop events.

"I believe that training is a vital part of the trustee's role if the board expects to be effective," she said. "The board must be in communication with its staff to stay current with educational needs of the district. I am very proud of what the Coarsegold district has become. The Coarsegold district has a sound educational curriculum for our students with high expectations for students and staff. We continue to work on programs to make every student successful. If elected to the new unified board I will continue to build on this strong foundation. I ask for your support on Nov. 8."





Ron Bucheger



Dan Burrow



Karen Hutchings



Bert McSwain





Monika Moulin



Linda Olson



Priscilla Pike



John Reynolds



Gregory Schoonard



Christine Wilder



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