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Santa Cruz City Schools Board of Trustees, Area 1

1- Please tell us why you are interested in reaching out to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender community.

ANSWER:

The LGBT community is an integral part of Santa Cruz and of Santa Cruz City Schools. As such, I care very much what its members think, and feel, as these thoughts/feelings may dovetail into issues that I can help address on the School Board.

2 - Why do you want the endorsement of The GLBT Alliance, Santa Cruz County's grassroots progressive gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender political organization?

ANSWER:

All of my life, I have been involved in civil rights issues. Equal rights for the GLBT community within the context of Santa Cruz City Schools is, simply stated, a civil rights issue that I believe I am well suited to support. I have been a long-time union activist and have never shied away from supporting issues that protect and defend the needs of those who still do not have full access to protection under the law.

3 - Have there been any LGBT people who've had a significant impact on your life as role models, inspirations, mentors, friends, etc.? If so, please tell us a little bit about how they've influenced you.

ANSWER:

My mother and father's good friends in the LA area were a long-time gay couple, Ira and Joe, now both deceased, who were often over at our house. I met them when I was 11 years old and looked up to them like they were my "uncles". We had just moved to LA and we had no relatives for 3,000 miles, so having them over for dinner or going over to their house was like being at relatives. They were always very kind to me, and I felt close to them all the way through high school. After graduating and leaving LA we stayed in touch, mainly through my mom and dad, until their deaths in the 1990s.

4 - Please tell us about your history with the LGBT community, and your awareness of issues specific to our community.

My history with the LGBT community centers around my work, for 28 years, as a high school teacher. The main issue I believe I have had some impact on is the issue of acceptance of LGBT students and teachers by their fellow students and colleagues. Issues of language, and of course, harassment, have been issues that I have dealt with in attempting to educate students and colleagues about the need to rethink their old prejudices. As a history teacher, I have included units on the gay rights movement in my US and AP US history classes and of course in Global Issues and Government classes as well.

a - Have you had any opportunities to address LGBT issues in the course of your community service or professional life to date (i.e., have you helped formulate corporate non-discrimination standards, worked on the board of a non-profit that developed a LGBT outreach program, etc.)? Please tell us about this work.

ANSWER:

Again, the work that I have done has been around the issue of curriculum development and implementation. I believe that I was one of the first, if not the first history teacher in SCCS to teach about aspects of the gay rights movement—Stonewall, 1969 ...as part of the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

b - The queer community is diverse, and we work to represent all elements of it. In support of that objective, we'd like to ask, specifically, whether you know any self-identified bisexual or transgender people, and if you are familiar, at any level, with the issues faced by these specific communities?

ANSWER:

I know several bisexual people, through my three children and their friends, but I am only vaguely familiar with the issues that they face. I have overheard them discuss dating issues with my kids but that's about it. In my brief, casual conversations with my kids' friends who are bisexual they talk about being "tainted" by

their gay sexual contacts when it comes to pursuing heterosexual contacts, which seems to be a real issue for them. In terms of transgendered people, I have worked with two transgendered teachers. The issues we discussed however focused on teaching and on students.

c - As documented in the The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute publication, "Bisexual health: An introduction and model practices for HIV/STD prevention programming" (2007), which is available for download at the URL below, in many cases bisexual people face even greater health risks and obstacles to accessing effective health care and health information than their peers in the queer community, including higher levels of self-harm, suicide attempts and thoughts of suicide. What specific steps would you take to address the issues raised in this report, and elsewhere, that are specific to bisexuals, including "biphobia" and lack of service provider awareness of bisexuality?
http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/reports/reports/bi_health_5_07_b.pdf

A summary of the top ten health issues for the bisexual community, sourced from the above report, can be found here:
http://brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/lgbtq_health/bisexual_health/health_concerns_for_bisexuals.php

ANSWER:

First of all, thanks for connecting me to these interesting documents. I must admit that I had never really thought about the specific issues facing bisexual people before. Clearly, there is a role for the schools to play in educating young people about these issues and I think the start of that process is to put the age appropriate information out there so that it can be shared in health classes and in assemblies, as well as in GS Alliance meetings. So information is the first step. The second would be to work with counselors at the schools to clue them in to these issues. And the third, I think connects to the broader issue of sustaining both in schools and across the culture, a more nuanced and honest discussion of human sexuality.

5 - Please describe your philosophy for working with under-represented communities of which you are not a member and, specifically, how this would manifest itself in your tenure in office.

ANSWER:

I was raised by union organizers/political people, so the idea of working with under-represented communities is nothing new to me. My mom and dad were active in the civil rights movement, the nuclear disarmament movement, universal health care movement way back in the 1970s, and I have been involved in the American Indian Movement, and various civil rights movements—UFW, universal health care and others, as well as in solidarity with various support groups for Central America for a long time. So my philosophy is to be involved, be respectful and attempt to learn from those who are directly affected. The first step is always to show respect and to ask, "How can I help?" With that attitude, good things tend to happen.

6 - Are you aware of the various local organizations which serve the LGBT community; do you support any of these organizations, financially or as a volunteer? Would you like to know more?

ANSWER:

I must admit that, outside of the school groups—Gay Straight Alliance--I am not familiar with these local organizations and of course, I would like to know more.

7 - If elected, will you be willing to work with the GLBT Alliance, The Safe Schools Project of Santa Cruz County, and/or other appropriate organizations, to be sure that the schools in your district have a curriculum for awareness training for staff and faculty concerning LGBT issues?

ANSWER:

Yes.

8 - It is not unusual for a school district to have a relationship at some level, such as by providing subsidized services or access to district property, with otherwise meritorious organizations (such as the Boy Scouts and the Salvation Army) who have formal policies that discriminate against LGBT people, and a documented history of doing so. If it emerged that such a relationship existed or was proposed to exist in your district, how would you resolve the situation?

ANSWER:

I think the answer is simple. The district should insist that either the organization change its policy or the district should immediately cut off special relationships with that organization.

9 - What, in your opinion, is the most effective way for the school board to enforce the California Student Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000? What do you know about your district's policy concerning safety from harassment for LGBT students? (If you'd like to know more, see <http://www.cde.ca.gov/re/lr/sv/>)

ANSWER:

I really do believe that this issue connects to the very essence of my campaign which is based on open, honest and inclusive dialogue. In short, as a board member I would be visiting the sites and talking to the stakeholders about a wide variety of issues, including harrassment and safety issues for LGBT students as well as for other groups on campus.

10 - How would you encourage schools in your district to apply The California Student Civil Rights Act (<http://www.eqca.org/atf/cf/%7B687DF34F-6480-4BCD-9C2B-1F33FD8E1294%7D/SB%20777%20FACT%20SHEET.PDF>)?

ANSWER:

The first step is to require that all schools schedule faculty meetings to discuss various aspects of this Civil Rights Act so that all teachers, administrators and aides are familiar with it. The second step is to establish some sort of committee that can meet on a regular basis to address ongoing concerns/needs that arise throughout the school year. In short, I think you do more to educate and then address the specific issues that come up.

11 – How would you encourage schools in your district to implement The Safe Place to Learn Act (<http://casafeschools.org/SafePlacetoLearnLow.pdf>)?

ANSWER:

I would refer you back to my answer to number 10. I think that these two acts can be treated together during an in-service day to be held at all schools throughout the district. Saying that, I think it is crucial that there be qualified presenters who represent the LGBT community to speak to these issues.

12 – How would you encourage schools in your district to implement The California Comprehensive Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS Prevention Act (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/se/>)? Are you committed to ensuring that schools in your district are including LGBT sexuality in their sexual health education classes?

ANSWER:

The answer to part two of the question is a clear “Yes”! And I think that, along with implementing the California PTA resolution of 2008 which I support, we can go a long way in helping in this area.

13 - Do you support HR 1199/S 403, the Safe Schools Improvement Act, which would amend the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (part of the No Child Left Behind Act) to require schools and districts receiving federal funds to adopt codes of conduct specifically prohibiting bullying and harassment, including on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity? (You can find information at <http://www.hrc.org/laws-and-legislation/federal-legislation/safe-schools-improvement-act>)

ANSWER:

Absolutely.

14 – Do you support the California PTA's May, 2008 resolution calling for school districts to promote current, medically accurate, age-appropriate, comprehensive sexual health and HIV/STD prevention education in the schools, taught by instructors trained in the appropriate courses, and for districts to make available current medically accurate educational programs and materials to parents about comprehensive sexual health and HIV/STD prevention education (<http://www.capta.org/sections/advocacy/downloads/Resolution-2008-01-Adopted.pdf>)?

ANSWER:

Yes, I do.

15 - Do you support S. 1088, The Student Non-Discrimination Act, which would prohibit public schools from discriminating against any student on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, or because of the actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity of a person with whom a student associates or has associated?

(<http://www.hrc.org/laws-and-legislation/federal-legislation/student-non-discrimination-act>)

ANSWER:

Yes.

16 - Do your district's existing drug abuse prevention programs contain LGBT specific elements that address the high rate of drug and alcohol abuse among LGBT youth precipitated by stigmatization, bullying and other stress factors?

ANSWER:

Although SCCS has come a long way in addressing issues of concern to the LGBT community since the dark ages of the 1970s, this is an area where our district can do more outreach and education. While this issue is addressed, there is plenty of room for improvement.

17 - California contains the largest concentration of homeless youth in school in the nation, disproportionately queer and people of color; what is your district doing to serve these students, and do you have any ideas for improving and expanding existing programs?

ANSWER:

Clearly, one of the issues here is that parents as well as young people must be educated in this area. The acceptance of young people, by their families, their communities and their peers is an issue that can be addressed through education. One practical step the schools could take would be to do some outreach: holding community meetings where these issues can be addressed. Inviting and encouraging parents to share in this dialogue is a good first step.

b - What does your district do to serve students in foster care, and do you have any ideas for improving and expanding existing programs?

ANSWER:

The good news here is that, through LCFF (Local Control Funding Formula) more state money will be available to expand our services in this area: counseling, outreach programs, job training programs.

Between 2010 and 2011, alone, the number increased by 10 percent. The largest concentration of homeless youth in school are in California, which has about 35 percent of the national homeless youth population, followed by Florida, Texas and New York.

Studies show that LGBT youth are at particular risk of becoming homeless. In 2010 it was estimated that, although only five to seven percent of youth overall in the U.S. identify as LGBT, between nine and 40 percent of homeless youth identified as such. According to a new report from the Center for American Progress (CAP), that number is now as high as 45 percent. (<http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/lgbt/report/2013/09/26/75746/seeking-shelter-the-experiences-and-unmet-needs-of-lgbt-homeless-youth/>)

According to the Congressional Research Center, 32 percent of homeless youth are black, more than double the proportion of black youth in the total population.

http://colorlines.com/archives/2013/11/homeless_youth_in_focus.html

18 – Is Triangle Speakers (<http://www.trianglespeakers.org/>), the LGBT speakers bureau, consistently welcome in all level of schools throughout your district? If not, would you encourage administrators and teachers to invite panels of speakers as part of their diversity education? Would you support teachers who invite Triangle Speakers to their classes?

ANSWER:

Fortunately, Triangle speakers are consistently welcome throughout SCCS. And yes, I would certainly support teachers who invited them into their classrooms.

19 – Is diversity education (including LGBT culture) through lectures, speakers and/or the arts considered controversial in your district? Do you support diversity education, and would you take a leadership position in advancing it in your district?

ANSWER:

Once again, I'm pleased to say that diversity education is no longer considered controversial in SCCS. And yes, I support diversity education and would be willing to take a leadership role in this area.

20 - What kind of volunteer/outreach programs does your district have in place? Do they have LGBT specific elements? Does the training associated with these programs include LGBT specific cultural competency elements?

ANSWER:

SCCS has Gay/Straight Alliance clubs on every high school campus and we are in general a gay friendly school district, but I think that can do a lot more in terms of outreach programs, specifically with the Latino community in this area.

21 - Would you be willing to meet with the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) student clubs in your school district at least once a year? If the middle school in your district does not have a GSA, would you be supportive of attempts to start one as an additional support system for LGBT students and their allies? Please explain.

ANSWER:

Yes, I would be willing to meet with the GSA student clubs at least once a year. In terms of middle school GSA clubs, I would be supportive of their establishment. Middle school after all, is where we see young people first becoming aware of their own sexuality so it would be only natural to have a support system in place at those sites.

22 - Have you in the past, and will you in the future, attend LGBT events, such as LGBT Pride, Queer Youth Leadership Awards, or the BAYMEC dinner? If you have not attended, why not?

ANSWER:

I have attended LGBT Pride, but have not attended the Queer Youth Awards, an oversight that I apologize for.

23 - If you receive The GLBT Alliance's endorsement, will you display it in your campaign literature and on your website?

ANSWER:

Yes, with pride.

24 - Have you received endorsements which you think might be of interest to the LGBT community?

ANSWER:

I have been endorsed by the Greater Santa Cruz Federation of Teachers, The Council of Classified Employees, and the Monterey Bay Central Labor Council.

25 - Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

ANSWER:

Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to connect with you through this questionnaire.