

# THE LAMPLIGHTER

SPECIAL ELECTION ISSUE

APRIL 2008

## PASS THE BUDGET ! !



Tuesday, April 15 is a very important opportunity for the Association. Vineland has not faced a school tax increase in thirteen years. This year's tax increase will fund staffing and student programs. It is imperative that every V.E.A. member who lives in Vineland votes to approve this budget. More than anyone else, we understand the importance of quality education and the funding necessary to support it. If every Vineland resident votes in support of this budget and convinces their family and friends to do the same, we can sway the election. Many in the community are confusing raises given to Assistant Superintendents with this increase. This should not sabotage the necessary funding that we

need to maintain our current level of staffing and student programs. Please help spread the word. Approval would send the right message to Trenton; that Vineland can uphold its responsibility to its schools and make it more likely that any future appeal for additional funding is favorably reviewed. The Education Law Center estimates that within three years, the new school funding formula will reduce our State funding by tens of millions of dollars. It would be best to raise our local share slowly and more affordably, rather than a large, painfully expensive and possibly mandated increase in two years when the formula's guarantee of 2% increases ends.

The best way to protect our job security and quality educational programs is to VOTE TO APPROVE THE BUDGET ON APRIL 15!

## BOARD ELECTION

Seven candidates are running for three open seats on the Vineland Board of Education. The Screening Committee invited all candidates to an interview and to respond to a set of questions in writing for all members to read. After interviewing the available candidates, reading their written responses, and considering past voting records and electability, we confidently recommend:

**Amanda Nnachetam**

**Brian DeWinne**

**Ron Franceschini**

**Ms. Nnachetam** is a school psychologist with Abbott District experience in Trenton as well as a Ph.D. candidate in education who is informed on current educational and pedagogical issues.

<i>Inside this issue:</i>	
Budget and Board	1
Candidate Questionnaires::	
Amanda Nnachetam	2
Brian DeWinne	3
Ron Franceschini	4
Robert Petronglo	5
Diamaris Rios	6
Jimmie Lee Headen	7
Vote by Mail /	8

She will be a strong advocate for children and quality education. **Mr. DeWinne** has children in the district and has demonstrated his support of school programs by resurrecting the Red & Gray Gridiron Club and helping to fund student athletic opportunities. His background in accounting will help the Board navigate through the difficult financial waters ahead. **Mr. Franceschini** has been accessible to the VEA and was one of only two Board members to sit at contract negotiations. His voting record demonstrates his commitment to efficiency and quality education and that he is no rubber stamp for unnecessary or unwise recommendations.

*We hope we can count on your support for these candidates!*

**AMANDA NNACHETAM****SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE SCREENING FORM**

1. Please introduce yourself with a short biography and explain why you are seeking election to the board of education.

My name is Amanda Alexandria Nnachetam. I am 27 years old and currently single with no children. I attend Glory Tabernacle Church where I am a youth leader and mentor. I am completing my doctorate in School Psychology. In partial fulfillment of my program, I am working as a consultant School Psychologist in the Trenton Public Schools. I attended the Vineland Public Schools from grades 6-12. My interest in seeking a position on the school board stems from my love of this district and a passion for education. What I experienced here during my formative years inspired me to exceed my own expectations by becoming the best that I could be. I feel that it is my duty to do what is necessary so that this opportunity may be provided to every child in the district.

2. What do you see as the district's biggest and /or most difficult problem? How would you rectify that problem?

For the upcoming school year it seems that the district's major issue will revolve around the new school funding formula. I am convinced that this initiative will add tremendously to the plethora of concerns already plaguing the district such as staff shortages and student achievement.

To combat this issue I would advocate to have available funds allocated to areas that are most at risk including the abbot pre-school program and teacher retention. Also I would push for innovative fund raising efforts to supplement the loss of this vital resource.

3. What, in your opinion, is each board member's responsibility in preparing the annual school budget?

I feel each board member is responsible for advocating for the constituents that they represent. Because the board is a collective governing body it should be reflective of the community and therefore each student community member's best interest should be considered when creating the budget plan.

4. What sources of information would you consider in making board decision?

I would rely upon several sources in making decisions with the board. Input from school staff and the community members are invaluable. Also, being that I am trained as a researcher, I would want to make research based decisions that involve proven best practices in education both locally and nationally.

**BRIAN DEWINNE****SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE SCREENING FORM****1. Please introduce yourself with a short biography and explain why you are seeking election to the board of education.**

My name is Brian DeWinne and I am a product of the Vineland public schools from K-12 and a graduate of the Class of 1983. I graduated from Rider College (now Rider University) in 1987 with a bachelor's degree majoring in accounting. I am a licensed certified public accountant in the State of New Jersey and spent 20 years in working in public accounting. From 1997 until 2006 I owned my own successful CPA firm that I sold to a local company. I now work in Vineland in private industry for a great family owned operation as Chief Financial Officer. My wife is a VHS graduate and we have two children attending public elementary school in Vineland. I am running for school board because I care about our future, our children. I had a wonderful experience in school at Vineland and many teachers and coaches helped shape me to who I am today as they taught me to have a "can do" attitude. I want to give back to the system that gave so much to me and I truly feel I can help by putting the students first in any votes I have to make.

**2. A. What do you see as the district's biggest and/or most difficult problem?****B. How would you rectify that problem?**

The biggest problem we are currently faced is the changes we are faced with the new School Funding Reform Act replacing the Abbott funding. I don't know if this problem can be rectified totally, but I would focus on our costs. We need to reduce spending and eliminate excessive and unnecessary expenses. If elected, I will use my professional experience as an auditor and accountant to fully understand our expenditures so that decisions on cuts will be informed and will have as minimal direct impact on the students as possible.

**3. What, in your opinion, is each board member's responsibility in preparing the annual school budget?**

I believe, as a board in whole, that we should utilize our individual talents. I can tell you there is much that I do not know and many areas that I may not be qualified to serve. However, I do know budgeting and I am a team player willing to take a lead role on the budget/finance committee composed of other selected board members. After we analyze each and every line item in the budget we will have the data to report to the board as a whole so that we can make educated decisions. The budget/finance committee chosen needs to be qualified and also productive, not counter productive as there will be much work to do. We need to start planning now for future budgets so we can make educated decisions long before any budget deadlines.

**4. What sources of information would you consider in making board decisions?**

My focus will always be on the students. The more information I have to help make decisions, the better. I am willing to listen to parents of students, students, educators, fellow board members, past board members, personnel of the district, members of the community and whoever else that could help in providing information to make better decisions that will benefit the students. I am easy to contact and will return telephone calls and in many cases I will be reaching out with both questions and recommendations before questions and recommendations are asked to me.

**Ron Franceschini Jr.****1—Please introduce yourself with a short biography and explain why you are seeking election to the board of education.**

I am a Vineland High School graduate. I received an Associate's Degree from Gloucester County College, Bachelor's Degree from Rowan University, and a Master's Degree in Exercise Physiology from Temple University. I've taught two years in the public school setting, and eight years as a college adjunct instructor. I'm currently Director of Cardiovascular Services at Bacharach. The reason why I sought election on the Board of Education was because I wanted to be part of the most important institution in our city. During these past three years, I have learned so much about the processes, both good and bad. If re-elected, I want to ensure that all students receive the best education possible. I also will expect that all employees be treated fairly and with respect.

**2—A. What do you see as the district's biggest and/or most difficult problem?****B. How would you rectify the problem?**

Clearly the budget is the most difficult problem our district is facing. With the governor's new school funding formula, Vineland residents all need to come together to educate the governor on the severe effects his plan will have on our students. We must write letters, send faxes, e-mail, and call the governor and every NJ politician to get our voices heard.

In addition, we need to review every aspect of the budget, to cut all unwarranted expenditures, leaving no stone unturned. We must strive to keep teachers in the classrooms. Every dollar coming into the district needs to be maximized, with 75% being spent directly for the students. We need to explore options to increase revenue, including utilizing our central kitchen. If re-elected, I will work hard to put in place a policy establishing salary guidelines and caps for incoming top administrative positions, as our current superintendents retire. I'd also focus on offering incentives to encourage submitting more grant applications.

**3—What, in your opinion, is each board member's responsibility in preparing the annual school budget?**

In my opinion, each board member's responsibility in preparing the annual budget is fiscal accountability. The board is obligated to fairly assess the budget item by item, to effectively eliminate all wasteful spending. Through out the entire process, we must keep foremost, in our mind (s) that providing a quality education for all children is paramount.

**4—What sources of information would you consider in making board decisions?**

As a school board member, I have, and will continue to, consider all possible sources of information when making board decisions. I believe it to be imperative to seek out the

Opinions of the teachers and parents, as they know our students' needs the best. I inquire with administration for their concerns. I believe in reaching out for the community's input, as we are accountable to our taxpayers. I also frequently request data from the New Jersey School Board Association and neighboring districts to see how other NJ school districts address the issues at hand. I explore all avenues to ensure I am best informed in making board decisions.

## Robert Petronglo

Candidate for Vineland School Board

April, 2008

- 1) My name is Robert Petronglo and as a life-long Vinelander and student of Vineland Public School district, I feel obligated to run for the Vineland Board of Education. This community has given so much to me in the past, and I would be honored if they would let me give back to them.
- 2) The district's most difficult problem is the budget. Given the circumstances presented, I feel as though there truly is no way to simply rectify the budget problems. However, I do believe that it is important that as much money makes its way to the classroom as possible.
- 3) During the budget preparation process, each and every board member is responsible for bringing their own experience and values to the table. A business man would bring his or her knowledge of money, a parent would bring his or her sense of what's best for the children, and as a student, I would be responsible to bring knowledge, cares and concerns of students and teachers alike. It is important that in light of the current budget crisis, and the prospect of a tax hike, pay raises at rates between 2.5-4 are approved and funds to provide extra money for supplies like paper and pencils are not.
- 4) When making important board decisions, one must be open minded. As a member, I will consult not only the district superintendents, but fellow board members, tax paying citizens of Vineland, and, most importantly, teachers. We, as a board can not forget that teachers are educated professionals who are on the district's "front line." They are the people who are, more often than not, given nothing and are told to make it something. Vineland has seen many academic successes in recent years, with students ending up in universities like Yale, NYU and University of Penn, but we are struggling to make our Annual Yearly Progress. I believe that if the board were to consult teachers, Vineland would continue to see tremendous academic successes as well as improved test scores.

Diamaris Rios

VINELAND EDUCATION ASSOCIATION  
SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE SCREENING FORM

My name is Diamaris Rios and I am 29 years old. I am single and have no children. I am currently employed full-time as a Bilingual Receptionist/Telephone Operator at the Cumberland County Board of Social Services. I also am employed part-time at Colonial Bank FSB as a Customer Service Representative. I take on-line courses at Ashworth University where my major is Elementary Education.

I became highly involved with the community and the youth at the age of 16. While I was a member of various non-profit organizations I coordinated many positive activities for the youth. This volunteer work inspired me to become a Candidate for the Vineland Board of Education. I was a candidate to the Vineland Board of Education in 2005 and 2006. I have a sincere interest in becoming an active Board Member and this is why I decided to be a candidate once again this year.

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The districts biggest and most difficult issue that we are facing is the Annual School Budget. Every year, we face the same issues concerning the budget. The Abbott funding that is currently being received is at risk due to the deficit in the state. Once elected I would have to analyze the budget to determine what proper cuts need to be addressed. I also believe that we need to link the community with the school system. If our schools have more activities in the community not only would we be able to raise funds for the schools but it would encourage parents to take part in school functions.

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I believe that Board Members should always work continuously with administrators, teachers, and professionals concerning the Annual School Budget. As Board Members we may have ideas and recommendations, but since the administrators, teachers and professionals deal with the schools on a daily basis they know and can explain what is best and what is needed for our school system.

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In making a board decision I would make sure that I have all the proper information needed for that decision. I would make sure that decision is positive and that it will benefit our school system especially the children.

**Jimmie Lee Headen**

My name is Jimmie Lee Headen, age 53 with a 14 yr son and 16 yr special needs grandson in Vineland district, employed at Caesars Hotel and Casino as a Tablegames Supervisor. I seek election to the BOE out of concern for our students education now and in the future. My goals are to make sure the students remain top priority in decisions pertaining to program cuts and future financing. Our children deserve the best education we can provide and it begins at an elementary level so that they have a strong foundation to learn upon. Every program cut should be met with an alternative solution that will not hinder or stop the progress that's been set forth. I feel when a child begins their education that his or her goal should be to graduate college and we have an obligation to equip them with the ability to do so academically.

Funding at the State and Federal level is the biggest problem we're faced with and I believe everyone should sacrifice to make up the difference. As a taxpayer and homeowner for 25 yrs we haven't seen a school increase in recent yrs so this is small considering the upcoming yrs if the Supreme courts decision is not in our favor concerning Abbott funding. I would say we have to come up with creative financing including out of pocket expenses from parents and soliciting businesses to contribute back some of the money we (students, parents, and teachers) spend in clothing, electronics, school supplies and other monies spent patronizing their establishments.

I believe that each board member's responsibility in preparing the school budget should be students academics and their needs for a well rounded education. Children need clubs, athletics, and of course tutoring. It builds moral, gives them social abilities and prepares them for adulthood beyond high school and hopefully in college.. The board also has an obligation to be accountable to the parents and citizens of the district as well as the responsibility to equip our teachers with the resources to fulfill their jobs.

If elected, I would want all pertinent information in front of me to make informed decisions, and that would include info from students, teachers, and parents. I would like to attend classes (unannounced) and get an inside feel to issues in classrooms, as well as the teachers and students personal views. I want the parents to provide me with their concerns and the problems they feel aren't addressed by the board and try to engage all for positive solutions that need to be resolved. We can't keep doing the same things and expect different results.

Thank you very much for your time and interest in my candidacy. If elected I promise to do my very best for our children and community.

Respectfully submitted,

Jimmie Lee Headen

**Marilee Negron**

I would like to thank you for the opportunity of answering the following questions.

My name is Marilee Negron, I was born and raised in Vineland to Leonides and Felicita Negron. I am 19 years old and a Vineland High School Senior. I am currently employed part time at J.G. Finneran Associates Inc. The reason I am seeking election to the board of education is because I would like to bring a new perspective to the table. A vision that would only focus on the success of our students.

The district's biggest and most difficult problem being faced right now is the 2008-09 budget cut. I would rectify this problem by bringing different proposals to the table besides cutting home-school liasons, extracurricular programs and guidance counselors.

Board member's responsibility are analysing the years spending plan. Focus on the state's school funding formula. Focus on the percent increase's and decrease's coming federally and coming from the state.

The sources of information I would use in making board decisions is represent attitudes and views of parents and citizens. Also my views that i have as a student.

**VINELAND EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**

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Any NJ voter can now vote by absentee ballot in any election.

Don't feel like going to the polls? Simply vote by mail. *Now there is "no excuse" not to vote!* A voter may apply for an absentee ballot by completing an Absentee Ballot Application (see link below) and mailing the application to their County Clerk by mail up to seven days prior to the election. A voter may also apply in person to the County Clerk until 3:00pm the day before the election. The County Clerk cannot accept faxed copies of an Absentee Ballot Application since an original signature is required. Download and print your application here:

[http://www.nj.gov/oag/elections/absentee\\_doe.html](http://www.nj.gov/oag/elections/absentee_doe.html)

Mail your absentee ballot application to your County Clerk:

**Cumberland**

**County Clerk**

Hon. Gloria Noto  
P.O. Box 716,  
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**Atlantic**

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