



MEET THE CANDIDATES



Scott Johnson Board Member

Sweet Home District

After graduating from Kenmore West High School in 1977, I studied civil engineering at Erie Community College and the University at Buffalo. My career has mainly been with the state Department of Transportation, where a portion of

my duties includes teaching and supporting employees in the use of engineering software.

I care deeply about the educational needs of our children. The past five years I have served on the district's Comprehensive District Education Planning Team, along with the Professional Learning Community Team at Glendale.

Last summer I was appointed to the spot vacated when Heidi Dizer moved out of the district. Since then, I have taken an active position on the board and attended many classes to become a better representative of you. I am a member of the audit committee and have completed all of the state-mandated training for fiscal responsibility. I also attended the 2006 Academy for Public School Governance, where I completed four of the eight "School Board Institute" classes.

My main goals as your voice on the School Board are to continue to create good fiscally responsible budgets, while striving to meet all of our students' educational needs. Those two items can co-exist, and I think our results bear it out.

I have held several officer positions in the Glendale PTA, Sweet Home PTA Council and Western Region PTA. I am also a den leader for the Cub Scouts, local president of a statewide engineering organization, and active in numerous other volunteer capacities including Habitat for Humanity.

My wife, Bonnie Jan Johnson, and I are the proud parents of two children. Our daughter is in seventh grade at the middle school, while our son is in fourth grade at Glendale Elementary.



Dawn Cerra Board Member

Williamsville District

I am a stay-at-home mother, active in my children's education. I am running because it's time for those who are involved at building level with the issues facing families and educators to bring that point of view to the district's governance. My priorities will be, No. 1, sustaining and enhancing the strength and breadth of programming; No. 2, maintaining a safe educational environment; No. 3, providing students the support they need to mature emotionally and socially; and No. 4, spending responsibly within the community's limits.

My husband, Ken, and I have two children who attend Heim Middle. I attended Villa Maria College and completed a certificate program in interior design and the associate degree program.

While at home for my children, I have not sat idle. Since my children entered kindergarten, I have served in the PTA and on executive boards and committees and have helped in classrooms. I have been a leader in Scouting as well as a manager for an Amherst skating club team.

Through this involvement, I understand that today's challenges are far different from those of a few years ago. Teachers and students juggle heavier workloads, trying to balance core curriculum with home and careers, art, music, health and technology. My involvement has also taught me the importance of student wellness. I took the lead in instituting a recess program at Heim, currently the only district middle school with a recess program.

Only someone with children in school today, who is active in their education and who is partnering closely with educators at the building level, will have the perspective needed to drive forward the student-centered work of the board. I am not running to build a resume or to micromanage our professional educators, only to see that the traditions that have made Williamsville the area's premier school district continue well into the future.



Carolyn Giambra Board Member

Williamsville District

Community service and civic responsibility motivate me to run for a second term on the board. I want to sustain the excellent educational system that serves this community and preserve a nurturing, challenging environment for my grandchild. My goal has been to maintain and enhance the excellence of the school district, always No. 1 in my mind, and an excellent return on our tax dollars that keeps property values high.

The first issue facing the district is doing what's best for students in an economic environment with many competing demands for diminishing resources. I will continue to make informed decisions in a fiscally responsible manner, working with my colleagues to reach consensus on the issues.

The district is facing dynamic changes, with changes in administration, a stable but shifting population and a region considering many new ideas. I will honor the outstanding programs, highly qualified staff members and time-honored traditions that have provided the foundation for excellence that the community respects.

Another issue facing the district today is responding to the decisions made by our local, county, state and federal governments that impact on the district's ability to deliver a high-quality program. I will advocate for sound policy decisions by others to minimize any adverse effects on the school district.

I believe that I am an asset to the district and am responsive to the needs of the students, parents, educators and taxpayers in the community. A second term, now that I am experienced and well-informed, will pay dividends to these stakeholders, as I volunteer to conduct the important professional job of educating future generations.



Carrie Kahn Board Member

Williamsville District

I am fortunate to live in Western New York. I graduated from both Canisius College and the University at Buffalo. I hold two baccalaureate degrees, biology from Canisius and pharmacy from UB, and a master's degree in business administration and Center of Entrepreneurial Leadership certificate from UB.

During the past two years, I began speaking with community leaders regarding my interest in assuming a leadership role in the district. My husband, Dennis, and I became actively engaged when our son Max continued to academically grow.

This summer, I begin my ninth year as executive dean of workforce development at Erie Community College. I began there as a faculty member. In my present position, I also manage personnel and am involved in budgeting and fiscal planning. Our mission has been to successfully provide educational programs and partnerships for our local workforce, to keep jobs in our area and to create new future employment opportunities for our K-12 students, future college graduates and residents. It will be a privilege to become part of the board, sharing my resources and becoming a strategic asset. I have developed a strong track record creating sustainable educational learning programs, creating multidimensional teams, fundraising, working with government leaders for new education initiatives and implementing their use across the community. One of my main goals is to ensure the safety of our children at school. At ECC, I championed the Community Emergency Response Team serving the State Emergency Management Office through Albany.

It would be an honor to share my knowledge and background with the Williamsville community. There is nothing more rewarding than fostering academic growth and educational programs. I possess the visionary leadership goals needed to join the board.



Ramona Popowich Board Member

Williamsville District

Serving in leadership positions as president and vice president during my six-year tenure on the board, my goal has been to keep "ahead of the curve" by working in partnership with the superintendent, staff and parents. I hope to continue to advocate for our children and school district.

I will continue to insist on fiscal integrity during uncertain financial times. Since 1983, state aid to our district has declined from 38 percent to 20 percent while unfunded mandates continue to increase district expenditures. These expenditures continue to divert money from our top priority of student learning. In response, I wrote a resolution prohibiting any new state unfunded mandates. It received overwhelming support at the State School Boards Association convention and is now part of its lobbying agenda.

I organized a joint board meeting with Sweet Home, where the best practices of our school districts were shared. As the board's legislative liaison, I organized our legislative forums and lobbied our state legislators. I have been president of the PTSA Council, chairperson of the Williamsville Coalition for Public Education, president of Dodge Elementary PTA, and an active PTSA member at Heim, Casey and North High schools. I am a recipient of the PTA American Education Service to Youth Award, and I am a PTA honorary life member.

I have a Bachelor of Arts in history and a master's in education from the University at Albany. I am presently a D'Youville College supervisor of student teachers. My leadership experience as president of the board, my knowledge of the issues, my training as an educator and my advocacy skills will help ensure that the next generation of students will receive the same excellent education as my three children, who graduated from North High School.

District election to be held May 15

On Tuesday, May 15 residents in Amherst's three school districts will vote on their district budgets, board of education candidates and other propositions.

Amherst Central

Besides School Board candidates, Amherst Central School District residents will vote on:

- The \$40.39 million budget, with the tax levy expected to increase 1.53 percent.
- A districtwide \$16.8 million capital construction project.

Voting is from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the south gymnasium of the high school, 4301 Main St., Amherst.

Sweet Home Central

Besides School Board candidates, Sweet Home Central School District residents will vote on:

- The \$60.3 million budget, which represents a tax levy increase of 1.81 percent.
- A proposition to spend \$428,100 for six school buses.
- A second proposition to spend \$3.6 million of New York State EXCEL aid for renovations to five buildings.

Voting is from noon to 9 p.m. at Sweet Home High School, 1901 Sweet Home Road.

Williamsville Central

Besides School Board candidates, Williamsville Central School District residents will vote on:

- The \$145 million budget, with a projected tax increase of .84 percent.
- A Mill Street campus bond proposition for renovations not to exceed \$4,532,000.
- A support services facility proposition to purchase a structure at 480 Lawrence Bell Drive.
- A proposition to create a capital reserve fund.

Voting is from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. at Williamsville North High School, 1595 Hopkins Road.

