

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Barikmo understands what it is to be in a classroom

To the editor:
I encourage you to vote for Kate Barikmo for M-TSD School Board. She is a well-qualified public servant. As a parent, educator and friend of Kate, she is the best candidate.

I am a Mequon mom. My three girls attend M-TSD schools. I am also a veteran teacher with nearly 15 years' experience. I know, as a teacher and a mom, that the greatest asset of our schools is our staff. My kids come home beaming with stories from school, or news of an upcoming project that piques their interest. Our M-TSD staff pour their time and expertise into creating these experiences for our kids. The result is a sense of joy in learning. Our kids succeed in environments that are consciously created so all can thrive. Kate Barikmo deeply understands what it takes to create these experiences. She also understands how to best support our staff, who are doing this important work.

No other candidate nor current board member understands what it's like being in the classroom today. Kate Barikmo does. Her experience and down-to-earth demeanor would create a bridge between the board, the staff and community members wanting to better understand our schools.

I've known Kate and her family for years. They "walk the talk" of public service; her dad is a Vietnam veteran who instilled in her a deep sense of community. Kate serves our community with pride as an EMT and an educator.

My children attend M-TSD, so I am invested in the future of our schools. I value the education that is the springboard for my daughters for the rest of their lives. I trust Kate Barikmo with my kids' education. Vote for Kate Barikmo on April 4, and visit her website, <https://katebarikmoformsd.com> to learn more.

Sara Kitzinger Anton
Mequon

Gierl is a voice for the people

To the editor:
Being in public office isn't for the faint of heart. Community members who decide to run for office are in a unique and small class of their own because we all know it is a thankless job or more of you out there would do it, but don't. Personal and business friendships are put at risk because of the tough impartial votes that need to be taken for the good of all instead of one.

Alderman Gierl is an example of a community member who stepped up because he personally expects the best from those that made him go through the local government system. He is truly a voice and not a bystander. He has walked in your shoes and can relate to the local government which needs to serve and not rule over its citizens. Gierl will continue to represent in the next term.

Re-Elect Mark Gierl April 4

Cheryle Rehbohl
Mequon

Why I'm supporting Connie Kincaide for Cedarburg School Board

To the editor:
There are two seats up on the Cedarburg School Board on April 4. I am incredibly proud and excited to share that I will be supporting Connie Kincaide in this election.

Like me, Connie has regularly attended our school board meetings throughout the past three years. She has provided much-needed input during public comment, addressing a variety of issues facing our district in a thoughtful and collaborative way. Connie always comes prepared for anything she engages with, and gives careful consideration in how best to support students in the district. This dedication is exactly what we should expect of someone seeking to serve on our board.

Connie also has experience to effectively serve in this role. As a weekly classroom volunteer for several years and board member of the Parkview PTO since 2019, she's seen first-hand how hard our educators and staff work every single day. She understands what it takes to truly provide every student with the tools, resources, and support that they need to excel.

Connie's volunteerism goes well beyond our school system. Connie serves as secretary on a city of Cedarburg committee, regularly attends and participates in Common Council and County Board meetings, and volunteers with several nonprofits throughout Ozaukee County. Her level of involvement in working to make our community a better place is virtually unmatched. She is a public servant in every sense.

While we may not always agree on policy when serving on the school board, Connie and I do share common values and this core commitment: That we will always work to put our students and community first.

That's why I will be proudly casting my vote for Connie on April 4 and I ask that you do too.

Kate Erickson
Cedarburg

Erickson and Kincaide lack judgment for public office

To the editor:
I suspect many in Cedarburg are unaware that at a forum held at the library in March 2022 streamed live on Facebook during the last school board election candidate Erickson publicly accused the Cedarburg Police Department of engaging in racial profiling. She made this defamatory and incendiary allegation as an off-the-cuff flippant remark without any substantiation. Now candidate Kincaide later published a letter in this paper vaguely referencing and minimizing

Erickson's comment and framing it to the effect of "providing an opportunity for discussion."

A video of this event can be found in a March 9, 2022 posting on Erickson's Facebook page and her outrageous comment is at the 34:12 mark. I'm sure this paper has an archived copy of Kincaide's letter that can be provided to those interested.

In my 25 years raising a family in this wonderful community I have never heard a candidate for public office make a more irresponsible statement than Erickson did that night. Her lack of judgment disparaging our dedicated and highly professional police department in a public forum was dangerously divisive and makes her unfit to represent the people of Cedarburg. Kincaide's support of Erickson makes her equally unfit for public office.

These candidates seek to sow discord and disrupt a school district that has consistently been one of the jewels of our community and continues to develop students who are well equipped to take on the world. Don't put that at risk with candidates who reflect their own personal agendas that don't reflect the values of this community as already demonstrated by the results of the School Board election last spring.

Steve White
Cedarburg

Kincaide and Erickson have demonstrated commitment to Cedarburg School District

To the editor:
Connie Kincaide and Kate Erickson would be stellar additions to the Cedarburg School Board. Both candidates are dedicated to this district and familiar with school district operations as parents of CSD students. I appreciate their interest in improving board transparency.

Connie has continually advocated for allowing public comment at school board committee meetings, which the board does not currently allow. Kate has livestreamed general school board meetings as well as committee meetings, which the board does not do, for over a year. I frequently attend school board meetings and can honestly say that both Connie and Kate attend more school board meetings than some of our current board members. They know what issues are important in our school district. Connie and Kate are also knowledgeable about board policies and the school district budget and can hit the ground running if elected.

Both Connie and Kate have viewpoints and expertise that are missing from the current board. Connie is more active volunteering in our schools and community than any one I know. Her leadership positions on the Parkview Elementary PTO and in the community as well as her advocacy for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities will be an asset on the board. Kate is a college professor and can apply her expertise towards improving student achievement and supporting our teachers.

She also serves on the Milwaukee FBI Community Roundtable and believes the safety of our students and teachers is critical. Connie and Kate aren't afraid to answer tough questions and to reach out to others who have different viewpoints.

If you want to elect the two most qualified candidates on the ballot, please vote for Connie and Kate. Their commitment to our school district is unparalleled.

Suzy McManus
Cedarburg

Not enough space to list all that is good about Bach

To the editor:
I have to admit I've been procrastinating about writing this endorsement of Greg Bach as he runs for alderman in District Five.

It's not what you may be thinking. My hesitation is not about Greg being the best possible candidate. There's not a single doubt in my mind about that. No, my hesitation is which words to use to describe him. As a former colleague, I have seen him in action and there are just too many accomplishments to convey in this space. Certainly I must include the adjectives genuine, trust-worthy, collaborative and fair. Greg listens to all sides of an issue and then moves ahead to do what he believes is correct, undeterred by any personal or partisan considerations.

I've also had the opportunity to know of Greg's involvement with the Lymphoma & Leukemia Society. He recently completed a six-year board term and for several years has participated in the Society's Scenic Shore 150 Bike Tour to help raise funds for the cause. He is a committed and caring advocate who rides on behalf of family and friends affected by blood cancer.

Greg's record and achievements as a community leader speak for themselves. Please consider voting for Greg for 5th District alderman. Let's put his experience and skills to work on our behalf.

Elaine C. Sweet
Mequon

Barikmo's views are concerning

To the editor:
As a 10-year M-TSD parent, volunteer and substitute teacher, I believe that our school board members should be partners with the parents, grandparents and taxpayers they represent.

Last weekend I met with M-TSD board candidate Kate Barikmo at one of her public events as she hadn't responded to my questions through her social media campaign site. This young Shorewood teacher did not know us in Mequon or Thiensville, never taught in M-TSD, doesn't have children in the district and has only lived as a renter in Thiensville for a short time. I walked away seeing red flags and found that she has gaps

in her knowledge of our community, school district and district outcomes.

A bigger red flag rose the next day when I read her responses from the Forward Ozaukee Candidate Questionnaire. She indicated her belief that the schools should be able to withhold/hide student health and mental health information from their parents.

Schools/School boards don't have the right to override parents' rights and beliefs. I question this candidate's knowledge of child development if she believes children and teens should make adult-level decisions at a challenging and rapidly changing point in their lives without the guidance of parents or guardians. Finally, I wonder if she has considered the legal risks/liabilities that this would put on our public schools which are funded by taxpayer dollars.

Because of these things, I urge Mequon and Thiensville residents to say no to this candidate and to take a few minutes to read all the candidate responses including those of candidates Megan Heinzelman and Sergey Babakhanov at <https://www.forwardozaukee.com/education/mtsds23>. (Note: candidate and sitting school board VP Wendy Francoeur declined to participate in this questionnaire.)

Jill Chromy
Mequon

Francoeur always cares about what's best for students

To the editor:
This is a letter supporting the candidacy of Wendy Francoeur including those to the Mequon Thiensville School Board. For over 20 years I have witnessed Wendy in a wide range of leadership roles as an advocate for children and those who serve them. As principal Lake Shore Middle School, I worked with her when she served as co-president of the PTA. She led a PTA, now called PTO, board of over 20 committees that focused on improving teaching and learning for all students. She formed a committee focused on creating after-school activities for Lake Shore students. Whether it was being on advisory committees, the District Middle Level Task Force that evaluated middle school programs, developing PALS, a parent-assisted tutoring program or working to initiate a Lake Shore-Japan family exchange and travel, Wendy always had the welfare of kids uppermost in her mind.

Though no longer a district resident, I have served as a program director and adjunct professor at Concordia University in Mequon since 1998 until the present. I have continued to keenly observe Wendy's ongoing engagement with the Mequon-Thiensville community, especially her nine years of service on the school board. She brings thoughtful, well-reasoned leadership to the board, advocacy for all district students and teachers and truly listens to all community citizens and stakeholders. Wendy Francoeur deserves your vote and re-election to the Mequon-Thiensville School Board.

Michael J. Dietz
Hancock

Hani Malek Endorsing Connie Kincaide and Kate Erickson

To the editor:
Although I will not be running for re-election this spring, I am excited to announce my full support for two candidates who I believe bring the experience, quality and values that we need on our school board: Connie Kincaide and Kate Erickson.

Connie and Kate understand that our board's core focus should be putting our students and our community first.

From actively attending board meetings, running for elected offices, volunteerism in the school district, to the city and with the county, Connie and Kate are two individuals that are public servants in every sense and deserve your vote.

We need people on our school board who recognize and support the incredible work that our educators and staff do every day in our schools. We need people who understand the importance of uplifting our public education system and who bring integrity, honesty and transparency to this position. Connie and Kate are those candidates.

I have full confidence that, if elected, they will do everything they can to make sure that everyone's voice is heard and respected, and that they'll do what's best for our children and our community. Thank you neighbors for your vote last spring and for giving your full consideration of my endorsements of Connie Kincaide and Kate Erickson in this election cycle. Vote Connie and Kate on or before April 4.

Hani Malek
Cedarburg

Francoeur is needed on the M-T School Board

To the editor:
The governance of the Mequon Thiensville School District is not easy work. Its excellence is hard-earned and has been years in the making. While the authors of that excellence are many, the tenacity of our school board has been fundamental to all that has been achieved. In particular, the board has been steadfast in maintaining the strategic focus needed to recover from the impact of COVID. The board has also been a steward of the pivotal "Seven Milestones for Post-Secondary Success," which is the district's strategy to ensure constant improvement in student learning.

Wendy Francoeur has been serving our community as a board member for nine-plus years and is running for re-election. As the timeless maxim says: "there's no substitute for experience." The institutional knowledge that she has gained is an invaluable resource for all of us. We can be grateful that she's volunteering to apply that knowledge in another term of duty. Board service

requires selflessness and thick skin. Wendy has proven to possess both, in abundance. We are blessed to have her doing the hard work of M-TSD governance. Please join me in voting to re-elect Wendy Francoeur to the M-TSD board on April 4th.

Jack Rooney
Mequon

Barikmo's expertise needed on M-T School Board

To the editor:
I had a chance to meet Mequon-Thiensville school board candidate Kate Barikmo at her public event on Feb. 28. I've had some challenges recently in the district, and asked for her insight and opinions on what she could do for my situation should she have a spot on the School Board. Kate was able to answer clearly and succinctly, from the position of creating and reviewing accurate, up-to-date policy. She understands the role of a governance board, and that it does not get involved in administrative decisions. However, she also promised to research the current policies for my situation and give her opinion about changing them if needed. This guidance would help in my own discussions with administration.

Kate currently teaches in a public school, and her perspective is greatly needed on our school board. We do not have a school board member that has made teaching their life's career: She has a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and is up to date on current best practices. Kate Barikmo is an asset to our community and deserves your vote on April 4.

Amanda Sherman
Mequon

Heinzelman and Babakhanov most qualified for M-T School Board

To the editor:
As a parent of four children, three of whom have graduated or are in M-TSD, I have been paying attention to the school board and Homestead over the last eight years. After the last few years, our students deserve the best we can give them in terms of education. A big part of that is the direction provided by the elected M-TSD school board. Kate Barikmo, as a young, highly politicized teacher, left her education to engage in partisan political organizing during the 2016 presidential campaign. She has had no experience with a large complicated budget and has never paid property taxes, and is highly unqualified for the M-TSD board.

As a union member, I think she has a conflict of interest related to judgment of personnel issues. Wendy Francoeur, in my opinion, is working to the best of her abilities and has the students' interests in mind. However, the issues facing our district including declining academic achievement and a complicated budget, seem to be beyond Wendy's comfort level.

Megan Heinzelman's background in finance and as an attorney, makes her an ideal candidate to review the district's budget and provide constructive solutions. Sergey Babakhanov, as an immigrant and small business owner, provides a great perspective. We have many local immigrants from former Soviet-bloc countries and their perspective embracing freedoms that they escaped communism to find can be valuable on the board. Sergey's budgetary experience will be an asset, as well as his perspective as a parent.

To sum, Kate is clearly unqualified. While I appreciate Wendy's dedication and past service, I find the current circumstances to require more fiscal experience and experience with the modern challenges our children face. Megan and Sergey are therefore the best candidates due to their history with our community, their educational background, budgetary experience, and unique perspectives.

Andrea Lorenz
Mequon



Election letters deadline

The deadline for receiving letters and Sound Offs, related to the April 4 election is Monday, March 27.

Please keep letters to 300 words.
Email: letters@conley.net

LETTERS POLICY: Letters should be signed and include phone number and address so that we may verify authenticity. Neither phone number nor address will be printed when letters appear. We reserve the right to edit letters. Please keep letters to no more than 300 words. Generally, letter writers are limited to one letter every 30 days. Letters might appear in multiple Conley Media publications.
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