

6 questions with Keizer's school board candidates

Keizer will have a choice when it comes to who represents the city on the Salem-Keizer School Board this May.

Longtime Board member Chuck Lee is seeking re-election to the post he's held since 2007. His contender this time around will be Danielle Bethell, executive director of the Keizer Chamber of Commerce.

Keizertimes sent both candidates the same questions and asked for their responses. We are presenting them here in a question-and-answer format so voters can get to know them and the issues they are contemplating in the run-up to the election.

Keizertimes (KT): What skills and expertise do you bring to the role of school board director?

Danielle Bethell (DB): As a current Keizer/Salem parent I have a proven record showing my commitment to bettering my community. As a graduate of McKay High School, and a current parent of a Keizer area junior, seventh

grader and fifth grader I am invested in the daily needs and opportunities our students and educators face and deserve. As an active, tenured, community volunteer I feel the present and constant need for support. With more than 15 years of community, business and policy experience, I bring a level of comfort in knowing my community, the challenges we are facing and the desire to charge on for greater opportunity.

“Mental health instability is a serious issue we are facing at all levels of our educational system.”

— Danielle Bethell



Chuck Lee (CL): I bring to the School Board 48 years of experience and expertise at the elementary, secondary and Career Technical Education levels. I

bring 12 years of commitment to the Board that has touched every aspect of our District and students. I was a leader in the fundraising and passage of two successful bond measures. I was the leader in the creation of the Career and Technical Education Center (CTEC), a national model of a public/private partnership that has a 98 percent graduation rate and grows a workforce for our region. I have demonstrated my

commitment to Keizer and public service as an elected public official for 19 years.

KT: What motivated you to seek election/re-election?

DB: I want to bring the voice of my fellow parents and our current educators to the forefront, highlight their challenges and work towards solutions. I want to shout their successes and praise a community committed to every child's successes. I believe waiting for the problem to reach the top, through the filters of the system, often fail those calling out for help. Being on the ground level, as a parent, business owner and community voice. I have the necessary feet on the ground to hear firsthand what is needed; and work with the systems in place or work to build new systems to solve the problems our classrooms are facing today.

CL: I'm motivated to seek re-election because over the years I've become committed to the success of every student in Oregon's second

largest school district. I have a deep and sincere passion for the work of the Board and we have important unfinished work to do.

KT: What do you feel are the top three issues facing the school district as a whole?

DB: Only three! Aside from the fact that I love this district and all who are working their tails off to build the best minds around, we do face some challenges, and some far outweigh others. As a mom I am pained almost daily by the reports I hear or the interactions myself or my children face with others who are struggling within. Mental health instability is a serious issue we are facing at all levels of our educational system.

CL: Budget, budget, budget – Oregon's process for budgeting and budgets so closely tied to the economy, makes school funding very unpredictable. With this extreme volatility, it makes long term planning for improvement difficult. Achievement Gap – While our

framework will take time and focus.

KT: What can be done at the school board level to address those issues?

DB: We need to bring more love into our schools and our communities. We need to meet parents at the doors with welcoming arms, not interrogations and frustrations of their interruptions. We need to ask them back into our classrooms, and to be a part of the process. We need community in our schools and our schools out in our communities. The school board is excellent at making and navigating policies. It's time we create some policies that promote outside-the-box thinking.

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