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Educate! the weekly newsletter of
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PERSPECTIVES ON SCHOOL BOND VOTE

I was the daughter of a poor Arkansas farmer. We had no running water or indoor plumbing. In the early 1970s, the high school advisor told me that I could go to college. He told me I had no limits, that with my grades and intelligence that I could do and be anything I wanted. I had never heard such a thing before. I was so excited, but when I told my parents, my father said I couldn't go to college and be his daughter.

College was not a goal for girls from my area. You were expected to get married right out of high school. I followed the path that was expected. I got married a couple months after graduation. I had a baby. After a marriage filled with substance abuse and domestic violence, I found myself a 19-year old, divorced, single mother with a minimum wage job. Life didn't look too bright.

But I couldn't forget the words of that advisor that I had what it took to be successful. I was feeling like a failure, but I didn't want to be a failure. I took some classes at a community college and did well. I found a computer science program at an out-of-state university. My son was 3 years old. We moved to a town where I knew no one. I found a job, rented an apartment, and enrolled for classes at the university.

Four years later, in 1982, I had a Bachelor of Science degree in computer science. I was able to support myself and my son as I would never have been able to do without the encouragement of that high school advisor. I don't even remember his name and I doubt that he would remember what he told me. But education and a dedicated advisor gave me a dream for myself that I would never have seen otherwise.

All our children should have the same opportunity to be encouraged in their own potential, to see the possibilities available to them. Our teachers and staffs that touch and change the lives of our children deserve proper resources and classrooms so they can focus on the children and the difference that they make in their lives.

Education didn't just change my life; it gave me my life.

Carolyn Tatum

H. PARKS HELMS: I am supporting the \$275.5 million in school bonds on behalf of our children, our teachers and our school support staffs. It is critical that we provide additional facilities and renovate existing structures if we are to deliver quality education to all of our children. The ongoing debate over pupil assignment should not cause us to lose sight of the schools' very real capital needs. Wherever our children go to school, each one deserves adequate, equitable, functional classrooms, media centers/libraries, cafeterias, restrooms and school buildings. It is not only fiscally responsible -- but morally responsible -- that we support these bonds!

GAILE THREATT: I believe that the facilities in schools impact the learning environment of all children. This is a matter of older, substandard facilities versus modern, superior facilities. Does this demonstrate equity in education? I am supporting the school bonds to at least make the substandard facilities standard.

BETH RESLER WALTERS: Making this investment in our schools will show that we as a community know how to take care of things we value -- just as we make regular investments to keep our homes and businesses up and running well.

KIT CRAMER, Charlotte Chamber: Some of the critics of the bonds have suggested that they will not address education quality. Nothing could be further from the truth. Children being forced to eat lunch either extremely early or extremely late because of a cafeteria that is inadequate for the population of the school definitely impacts their ability to focus during the day. Not to mention that we're asking teachers to impart knowledge under these conditions when it's becoming increasingly difficult to attract them to the profession and to this district. The needs have been thoroughly documented by the Citizens Capital Budget Advisory Committee and are thoroughly monitored by the Bond Oversight Committee. We need to pass these bonds!

REBA R. WHALEY: If you had to put on your suit and tie each day and labor in a building where the plumbing rarely worked or the walls sagged or plaster fell from the ceiling, then you would demand a transfer or find another job. Why then should we ask our precious children and our magnificent teachers to toil in those conditions? I support the bonds and I hope you do too.

GEORGE W. CAMPBELL, Mecklenburg Ministries: The probable revision of CMS's student/school assignment basis has pointed out the required equity needed among all of our schools. Equity in resources - buildings and personnel. Equity in support and enthusiasm for all of our schools. It is critical that Charlotte support our schools and the upcoming bond issue.

DICK HELMS: We cannot continue to ignore the situation we have created over the years and let the inner city schools continue to fall apart. We must achieve equity and buildings are an important part of that goal.

JEAN A. FEILER: I join with my pastor, Dr. H. Stephen Shoemaker, Myers Park Baptist Church, and many other voices who believe, and KNOW that the monies are needed and trust the board to spend them wisely. I have already voted YES. I encourage all who have not to do the same.

SUE BRECKENRIDGE: These bonds are "good news" bonds. The good news is that Charlotte is growing. Charlotte is thought to be a great place to live, where the quality of life exceeds most communities in the country. These students are our family. It's not their fault this community is outgrowing the physical facilities we have to put them in; we need to find a way to give every one of them a clean, safe environment in which to learn.

REBECCA ZICKERMAN: All children deserve the opportunity to get a solid education. They cannot learn at their optimum capacity in hot, cramped closets, nor can they learn properly in noisy, makeshift classrooms located in gymnasiums with partitions for walls. Let's stop the finger pointing and citing issues from the past as reasons why we shouldn't succeed in the future. Put our children first!

LUCILLE HOWARD: Those who claim "equity" became an issue only when the court ruled haven't been listening to parents, teachers and staff who have been pleading before the school board and county commission for the last 20 years.

CHRIS FOLK: Let's make children our #1 priority.

HERE'S WHERE TO VOTE THIS WEEK

 Monday, Oct. 30 -- BOE 8 am-7 pm; Libraries 10 am-7 pm
 Tuesday, Oct. 31 -- BOE 8 am-7 pm; Libraries 10 am-7 pm
 Wednesday, Nov. 1 -- BOE 8 am-7 pm; Libraries 10 am-7 pm
 Thursday, Nov. 2 -- BOE 8 am-7 pm; Libraries 10 am-7 pm
 Friday, Nov. 3 BOE 8 am-5 pm; Libraries 10 am-5 pm

The sites:

BOE: Board of Elections, 741 Kenilworth Ave., Suite 202

The Libraries:

Beatties Ford, 2412 Beatties Ford Road
 Independence, 6015 Conference Drive
 Main, 310 N. Tryon St.
 Morrison, 7015 Morrison Blvd.
 North, 16500 Holly Crest Ln., Huntersville
 South, 5801 Rea Road

University City, 301 East W.T. Harris Blvd.
West, 2157 West Blvd.

FELLOWSHIP SEEKS APPLICANTS FOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Part-time position available: We're looking for a people-oriented self-starter to serve as the Fellowship's executive director. Applicants should have successful experience recruiting and supervising volunteers. Interest in working in the areas of public relations, programming, record-keeping and non-profit compliance also helpful. Some computer literacy required, and willingness to learn more essential. A track record of collaboration across institutional lines a plus. This is a contract position. Send resume and references to The Swann Fellowship at swannfello@aol.com or 1510 E. 7th St., Charlotte, NC 28204-2410.

Send us e-mail addresses for people you think would like to receive this publication. Your comments and contributions are also welcome. To write about your school's activities, just do it -- then send it to us.

THE SWANN FELLOWSHIP
Lucy Bush, president
B.B. DeLaine, vice president

The name:

The Swann Fellowship was named for Darius and Vera Swann, who on behalf of their son James became the lead plaintiffs in Swann vs. Mecklenburg in the 1960s. Darius Swann was the first African American Presbyterian missionary ever assigned outside of Africa. His experiences in India led him to appreciate the value of an integrated society for human development.

The vision:

As people of faith, our vision is that all children in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System will have excellent educational opportunities which are both equitable and integrated.

The background:

Formed in 1997 out of several Charlotte religious congregations, the Fellowship focuses on being a witness to the value of diversity as an integral part of children's education, and educating the public on public school issues as they relate to this and allied subjects. The Swann Fellowship is a nonprofit organization exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. A copy of the license to solicit charitable contributions may be obtained from the N.C. Department of Human Resources, Solicitation Licensing Branch. Registration does not imply endorsement, approval or recommendation by the state.