

NF12M

## Susan E. Kerr

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initiatives that I would like to see completed.

These include 1.) The transition to a grade 6-8 middle school and the expansion of preschool. This will involve curricular revisions, support for teachers and students, and boundary changes.

2.) The expansion of U-46 rising, an initiative which is bringing rigor, collaboration, and critical thinking into the classroom. I have been impressed not only by the presentations the board has received on this subject, but also by the student engagement and enthusiasm I have seen on my visits to classrooms.

3.) The introduction of an International Baccalaureate (IB) program to the academy at Elgin High School.

4.) Multiple building projects if the referendum passes.

**Q:** What is the role of the school board in setting and monitoring curriculum?

**A:** Curriculum development in U-46 is a detailed process which has several stages before a curriculum and/or its accompanying resources come before the school board. It begins with a "call to committee," which gathers together teachers and administrators to outline the curriculum, identify resources and professional development, and pilot the program.

The curriculum is vetted by Instructional Cabinet and Instructional Council before it comes before the school board. It is the role of the school board to ask questions, look at the financial implications, and vote.

It is also the role of the board

to listen to concerns from parents about the curriculum and bring those to the attention of the administration.

**Q:** Are there curriculum issues within the district that you feel need particular attention from the board?

**A:** There are no curriculum issues within the district that I am concerned about, but I believe the board and administration must closely monitor legislation in Springfield.

Some of the legislation includes mandates that, while well-intentioned, add additional subjects to the school day or may not allow much local flexibility.

The board and administration must work with local legislators, the Illinois Association of School Boards, and the Illinois State Board of Education to ensure our views are heard.

## Samreen Khan

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human right our country provides to its highest value.

As the daughter of a professor of biology, who taught in public universities and colleges for over 45 years, I strongly value the opportunity of education for all. I decided to run for the U-46 school board after navigating district policies and programs for my child, who had received Early Intervention at home.

As a single mother, I was thrilled to have access to the amazing Pre-K programs for my son at U-46.

As a board member, I will ensure that our teachers and staff are supported, while being held to the highest standards. I will make the success of our students my number one priority.

I will be an advocate for students and will work to guarantee that they graduate with the skills needed to be successful in life and contributing

members of society.

**Q:** What is the role of the school board in setting and monitoring curriculum?

**A:** The school board plays a crucial role in setting and monitoring the curriculum. The school board is responsible for setting education policy and guidelines subject to state and federal laws and regulations.

While ISBE's Standard and Instruction Department determines milestones for academic achievement, the Teaching and Learning Department at U-46 is charged with adopting state standards and developing curriculum presenting to the board for approval.

The board has the authority to approve or amend the curriculum that is based on best practices and research driven. To ensure the curriculum is meeting the needs of students and making progress toward academic goals, the board should evaluate progress from

reviewing student test scores and other data to determine if the curriculum is meeting the standards.

This being said, it is critical to be inclusive of teacher's voices, experience in the classrooms, and ensuring they are involved in any curriculum development and approval.

**Q:** Are there curriculum issues within the district that you feel need particular attention from the board?

**A:** Noting the transition back to classroom learning post-pandemic may have been challenging for students, it is important to find innovative ways to encourage that re-engagement.

The latest School Report Card shows a slight decrease in math and science achievement in the district pre-pandemic vs. post-pandemic. I would like to learn how the board can support staff and teachers in the classrooms to address these overall achievement gaps.

## Heather LH Manzella

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to ensure that curriculum is appropriate and focus on improving academic and life skills.

**Q:** What is the role of the school board in setting and

monitoring curriculum?

**A:** The school board is the final decision on approving which curriculum is purchased by the district.

**Q:** Are there curriculum issues within the district that you feel need particular

attention from the board?

**A:** Yes. According to the Illinois State Board of Education's most recent report card, 53 of the 57 schools in U-46 are failing to educate students to proficiency levels in English, math, and science.

## Chanda Schwartz

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### Q&A

**Q:** Why are you running for this office, whether for reelection or election the first time? Is there a particular issue that motivates you?

**A:** I am running for school board because I am passionate about serving and giving back to our community. I started serving in the district to stay informed and contribute to moving the district forward.

As a parent with two students who attend U-46 schools, I have learned the ins and outs of navigating the district and advocating for a student with special needs. I have enjoyed getting to know members of our community, serving alongside parents, community members, and staff.

I want to bring my experience and service in the district to the school board. I value education and I care about supporting the needs of all students. I believe in

academic success for all and that when we support our staff, we support our students.

**Q:** What is the role of the school board in setting and monitoring curriculum?

**A:** The Curriculum & Instruction department designs curriculum. We also have the U-46 Instructional Council, an advisory group who makes recommendations to the superintendent and board of education related to curriculum and other areas.

The school board is guided by board policy in adopting and monitoring curriculum. It is the superintendent of the district who recommends a comprehensive curriculum that is aligned with specific criteria.

The school board's role is to adopt a curriculum, upon recommendation of the superintendent, that satisfies the specified criteria per board policy.

Current curriculum is monitored, reviewed, and reported to the school board

through a curriculum review program developed by the superintendent.

**Q:** Are there curriculum issues within the district that you feel need particular attention from the board?

**A:** With the advancements of artificial intelligence and the buzz around ChatGPT, there is a shift that will need to happen in our educational system in the near future.

Figuring out what that shift will look like and how to adapt is important. With this technology, the answers to most traditional homework questions are just a few keyboard clicks away.

It will be important to understand how this technology may be leveraged as a potential tool in teaching curriculum and doing so without compromising the originality of student assignments.

Furthermore, we can expand how we teach about the advancements of technology and how students can leverage them.

needs current and ongoing support and attention is the process in which curricular issues are reviewed, critiqued and shared. There needs to continue to be a process whereby students, teachers, parents, administrators, and community members can express a voice in curriculum review and renewal.

A system where diverse input and perspectives are welcomed and taken into account, builds a culture of inclusiveness and ownership in a school community. Stakeholders want to be acknowledged for their opinion, respected in the dialogue, and informed of decision making rationale.

## Notes on religion

*To include your church in the free listings, email to [tricity@dailyherald.com](mailto:tricity@dailyherald.com) or [foxvalley@dailyherald.com](mailto:foxvalley@dailyherald.com).*

**First UMC-Elgin:** On Sunday, March 26, the Rev. Felicia LaBoy's sermon will be "Who is Tending Your Garden?," based on John 15:1-8 and Luke 8:1-8 and 11-15, at 10 a.m. at First United Methodist Church, 216 E. Highland Ave. in Elgin. Or watch via [www.fumcelgin.org](http://www.fumcelgin.org) or listen to a delayed broadcast of the service at 11 a.m. Sundays on radio WRMN 1410 AM.

On Sunday, March 26, the church will present a piano recital by concert pianist Jonathan Besancon at 2 p.m. All funds raised will go to the modernization of the church elevator. The church offers a Soup Kettle every Monday from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. For information, call the church office at (847) 741-0038.

**United Methodist Church of Geneva:** On Sunday, March

26, the Rev. Rob Hamilton continues the Lenten series "Were You There?" at United Methodist Church of Geneva. Worship is at 9 a.m. in person at the church, 211 Hamilton St., or online at [genevaumc.org](http://genevaumc.org). During Lent, Pastor Hamilton is offering a narrative look at the bystanders and scoffers, the other victims, the soldiers, the beloved disciple, the women, and those who cared for Jesus' body — all there with Jesus in his final hours. This week, it will be "The Women" as Pastor Rob considers what it was like for the women at the cross.

**Cornerstone UMC:** On March 25-26, the Rev. Melissa Hood continues the sermon series "Come and Seek" with "Can These Bones Live?" "Do We Really Believe In New Life?" at the 5 p.m. Saturday and 10 a.m. Sunday worship at Cornerstone United Methodist Church, 41W170 Russell Road in Elgin. This week, the Rev. Melissa Hood will talk about

how God promises to carry you and invites you to carry others. Visit [www.umc-cornerstone.org](http://www.umc-cornerstone.org).

**Bethlehem Lutheran-St. Charles:** On March 26, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 1145 N. Fifth Ave. in St. Charles, will worship at 9:30 a.m. Sunday. Sunday school follows for ages 3 through fifth grade, and an Adult Education Hour.

The 9:30 a.m. service will be streamed on the church's YouTube channel. Holy Communion is celebrated every Sunday.

During the month of March, the church also is hosting midweek worship at 7 p.m. Wednesdays, preceded by Soup Suppers beginning at 5:45 p.m. For details, call (630) 584-2199 or visit [www.bethlehemluth.org](http://www.bethlehemluth.org).

**Good Shepherd Lutheran:** On March 25-26, the Rev. Steve Maske will share the message

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## Elgin rabbi honored for years of service

Submitted by Academy for Jewish Religion

The Academy for Jewish Religion is marking the contributions of alumni from three different classes who have been serving the Jewish community for 13, 25 and 50-plus years.

Rabbi Margaret Frisch Klein of Congregation Kneseth Israel in Elgin is among a group of rabbis and cantors from across the country honored for their service as part of one Jewish seminary's mission to celebrate and embrace the full spectrum of Jewish tradition and observance.

On Thursday, March 16, the Academy for Jewish Religion in Yonkers, N.Y., recognized 19 of its alumni for their significant service to their Jewish communities for more than a decade in a virtual ceremony.

In addition to recognition of years of service for alumni,



**Margaret Frisch Klein**

Rabbi Stephen A. Leon of El Paso, Texas, received the Marbeh Shalom Community Service Award for his work with the Jewish descendants of people who were

forced to convert to Christianity during the Spanish Inquisition.

Additionally, Rabbi Michael G. Kohn was recognized as ARC Alumnus of the Year.

The full list of honorees includes:

- B'Nei Mitzvah Class of 2010 for 13 years of service: Rabbi Melody Davis, Cantor Joan Finn, Rabbi Margaret Frisch Klein, Rabbi Paul Hoffman, Rabbi Irwin Huberman, Rabbi Molly Karp, Cantor Isabel Kopstein, Rabbi Enid C. Lader,

Rabbi Moshe Rudin and Rabbi Ziona Zelazo.

- Mehadrin Class of 1998 for 25 years of service: Rabbi Mark Blazer, Rabbi Malka Drucker, Cantor Barbra Lieberstein, and Cantor Anna West Ott.

- Klei Zahav Class for 50-plus years of service: Rabbi Solomon Agin, Rabbi Jerry Cutler, Rabbi Howard Hersch, and Rabbi Stephen A. Leon.

Founded in 1956, Academy for Jewish Religion is a non-denominational Jewish seminary that ordains rabbis and cantors for all Jewish communities. It embraces the rich diversity within Judaism and equips students of all ages and backgrounds to lead and serve Jewish communities in an increasingly diverse and complex world through innovative and rigorous educational programming that deepens spirituality and cultivates vibrant connections.

## Kathleen 'Kate' Thommes

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enjoyed my time on the U-46 board of education and would like to continue to serve our students, families, and schools. I have a unique perspective as an educator, parent, and community member that allows me to consider all sides of an issue.

My own children have participated in special education, Dual Language, Academies, the arts, and athletic teams. I am a former U-46 educator and a present member of a labor union. My family has called U-46 and Elgin home for over 20 years.

I am motivated by our community and schools. Our programs, classes, and teachers prepare our students for the greater world.

On the board, we have started good work with the Unite U-46 initiatives and our diversity and inclusion efforts. We have a balanced budget. We have well thought out plans to expand our schools. We have brought in new curriculum, updated our board policies, and I would like the ability to continue with those, and more.

**Q:** What is the role of the school board in setting and monitoring curriculum?

**A:** The teachers and staff in U-46 are well qualified to determine the best choices for our students. They have an extensive process with committees made up of multiple members from multiple schools and departments asking for input from all relevant sources.

Each piece of curriculum brought to the board has been well reviewed and well vetted, narrowed down from multiple choices. As a board member, I have been given the opportunity to review multiple pieces of curriculum and, as an educator, I feel well qualified to do so. Our role is to review the curriculum with an eye to the district's mission and goals as well as the students and their needs. Our role is not to second guess or micromanage the experts in student learning and growth.

Our role is to support the teachers and staff with growing and developing the programs and curriculum that make our students successful during and after their time in

U-46.

**Q:** Are there curriculum issues within the district that you feel need particular attention from the board?

**A:** While the board of education reviews and approves all curriculum put forth by teachers and staff, they should not be micromanaging the curriculum choices made by teachers and staff in U-46.

The issues arise when a board of education oversteps that role and prevents teachers from doing what they do best.

We do have an important role in continuing the district's mission of educating all students. All Means All.

Curriculum should reflect the students who attend our schools. It should reflect the 21st century. It should reflect the diversity, inclusion, and equity the board of education has as district goals.

The board of education is responsible for the greater picture, not the bits and pieces.

The teachers in U-46 do an excellent job of choosing and implementing an excellent curriculum. I look forward to supporting them as they continue to do so.

## Mike Backer

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superintendent, staff, parents and community stakeholders; to encourage active engagement in the process.

**Q:** Are there curriculum issues within the district that you feel need particular attention from the board?

**A:** One topic that I believe

and its goals, as well as the progress being made toward achieving those goals.

**Q:** Are there curriculum issues within the district that you feel need particular attention from the board?

**A:** I am particularly concerned about English language arts and mathematics achievement in the district. These are foundational subjects that are crucial for students' success in all other areas of their education and in their future careers.

I believe that the board should take a close look at the curriculum and

instruction in these subjects to ensure that they are rigorous, up-to-date, and aligned with state and national standards.

Additionally, I would advocate for the use of data and research to guide our decision-making in these areas, and to monitor student progress and teacher effectiveness. I believe that the school board should work closely with parents, teachers and administrators to ensure that the community is aware of the progress and challenges in these areas and to ensure transparency.