

## David Ambrose: School Board candidate

I have filed for candidacy for another term on the Morgan County Board of Education. For over 40 years, I have worked in public education. This has included teaching, coaching, school administration and two terms as a Morgan County School Board member. In addition, I represent the eight eastern counties on the West Virginia School Board Executive Committee. As well, I am a member of the Training Review Standards Commission. Both of these groups design the training and development of School Board Members throughout West Virginia. In these roles, I have had a close-up look at board issues across the state, and what approaches have worked.

As a school board member, I have been particularly focused on student needs. As children progress from kindergarten through 12th grade, their needs vary. The critical question is whether our staff is given training to: 1. identify the strengths and weaknesses of students, and 2. employ the best techniques/plans each student deserves.

Regarding graduation rates



David Ambrose

in our state: The 2012 state average was 79.2%. Notably, the Morgan County Schools rate was 90.5% — 5th highest of the 55 counties. Of the class of 2013, 92.3% of our students graduated.

The West Virginia Boards of Education are required to report graduation rates for subgroups. The largest subgroup in Morgan County is the "Low SES Group," i.e. students in poverty. In the class of 2012, Morgan County had the highest graduation rate among all counties in the poverty cat-

egory. Our rate in this group was 90.5%, whereas the state average for this sub group is 76%.

These successes reflect the efforts of our teachers, assistants, and other professionals. I believe the purpose of the reduced rate levy, on the ballot May 13, is to sustain these successes by: 1. Providing a "school-within-school" for students who need significant help, 2. Reducing the impact of behavioral problems in the regular classroom, 3. Restoring the PASS program, which helps, one-to-one, children who could "fall through the cracks." 4. Helping our students access James Rumsey Vocational Training, 5. Giving college-bound students the advantage of Advanced Placement classes.

I serve in a number of organizations in Morgan County. These include the Berkeley Springs Lions Club, the Cacapon State Park Foundation, the Morgan County Fair Board and the RESA 8 Executive Council, as co-chair. I attend St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church.

## Brenda Hutchinson: School Board candidate

Thirty-five years ago, I moved to Morgan County in search of a better life for myself and my three young sons. It wasn't an easy transition; but the challenges of establishing a new life here were well worth the benefits of living in such a beautiful setting. Twenty-five years ago, I married a "native" Morgan Countian, and that has allowed me to view the county from two very different perspectives. First, through the eyes of a newcomer to the area; and secondly, through the eyes of someone who has lived here in Morgan County all of their life. Being able to see the problems and promise of Morgan County through both sets of eyes makes me uniquely qualified to evaluate the very divisive issues that are currently facing our county.

Along with this duality of vision, I would bring a wealth of experience to the school board. As a former County Commissioner, my main responsibility was to balance the county budget on an annu-



Brenda Hutchinson.

al basis. I know what it takes to make the difficult decisions required to use your tax dollars in the most effective manner possible. During the two years that I served as president of the commission, I even managed to lower the county tax levy without sacrificing any county services. I will bring that same tough-mindedness to the school board.

As a community volunteer, I am involved in our county

schools on a weekly basis. I have had the pleasure of serving as a PASS volunteer at three of our county schools over the past seven years, and I currently work with the Morgan County Partnership's 40 Asset Program to present a 30-minute class on the humane treatment of animals to our fifth grade classes. I am a firm believer that it takes the involvement of the entire community to ensure that our children receive the best possible education. They must be prepared to compete for jobs in a world that is nothing like the 1970s world into which I graduated.

Our county deserves school board members who have the skill set to perform the difficult work placed before them, who have the courage to make difficult decisions, and who are dedicated to providing our children with the best possible education to face the demands of today's workforce. If elected, you can count on me to be that person.

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## Danise Edmisten: School Board candidate

I am in the running for a position on the Morgan County school board and I would like to summarize some of my past work experience.

I have worked as an Administrative Assistant for construction/developers, bookkeeper for finance companies, legal secretary for various law offices, an infield secretary/employment officer for high rise constructions and am currently a Notary Public.

I am a member of the VFW, Eagles and American Legion.

We have lived at our present home for 15 years although my husband, Terry, and I have been commuting since the mid '80s to help manage the family farm and as my in-laws, Ed and Mary Lee have



Danise Edmisten

retired to Florida, we have taken over running the farm full-time.

# MCIEC celebrates 15 years

by Jazz Clark

Canned foods and utility bill help to needy families have been available locally for 15 years, due to the Morgan County Emergency Interfaith Care (MCIEC).

Secretary/Treasurer Bill Locke explained that MCIEC was created after he was helping people over the phone to pay for utilities through an even older charitable organization called Morgan County Emergency Assistance Team, or MCEAT.

"Fellow co-coordinator Rita Gray and I decided it was in our best interest to create our own group that was a coalition of many churches in the area," said Locke.

MCIEC partly functions as a food pantry, with food goods donated by people in the community or bought by the organization with donated funds.

People sometimes bring things that the food bank can-

not use, such as personal hygiene items or opened food products.

Three or four times a year since MCIEC started, they have received donations of artichoke hearts at the food bank.

"Now don't get me wrong, I love artichoke hearts and we appreciate anything we get," said Locke. "But artichoke hearts won't help a family survive for as long as a few cans of soup or some carrots and beans."

A list of the best items to give is distributed to all donors at the end of the year, along with annual reports.

Some of the more disposable items like popcorn, instant ramen or soda are available for families to take themselves. This way, food won't go to families who don't like the product in question.

"We'll give families food four times a year, no questions asked," said Locke. After that,

they'll need to discuss whether the family is in emergency status or not.

While many know of the food pantry function of MCIEC, much of their donated money is used to help families with emergency payments of electric bills, fuel and other vital utilities.

"Food is really a smaller expense," said Locke.

According to financial documents prepared by Treasurer Locke, \$131,460.92 was spent on the food pantry over the last 15 years. Utilities came to \$400,887.82 over that same timeframe.

Donors have contributed \$393,546 in cash donations. Over 20 churches in Morgan County have given \$239,446 through the Ministerial Association since MCIEC began.

In the last 15 years, the biggest change for the organization was the founding of the Regional Resource Connection. The RCC worked closely with the Division of Health and Human Resources, and helped streamline the process of connecting needy families with area services so MCIEC no longer had to interview people personally. This drastically cut down waiting times for families.

"It also makes our job a lot easier," Locke said.

Roughly 30 volunteers help process and distribute food to the community. Many are members of various Morgan County churches.

One volunteer, Herb Eppinger, said that "it's a rewarding experience."

"If I didn't feel like we helped people, I wouldn't volunteer," said Eppinger. He said that the last time he was there, they helped nine people. People generally need more financial help in winter, he said.

Locke said that MCIEC will provide training, and that potential volunteers do not have to be affiliated with a church.

"I would rather give out \$100 to 100 families in a year than give \$200 to 50 families," Locke said. "We're trying to help as many people as we possibly can."

The MCIEC food pantry is located behind St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church on Bath Street in downtown Berkeley Springs. The location is staffed Tuesdays and Fridays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and is closed when public schools are closed.

### Deadline Notice

All correspondents and advertisers are reminded the deadline for submitting copy to this publication is 12:00 Noon Monday each week.

## Local company attracts state investment in effort to make physical therapy tool for children

Two West Virginia investment funds announced last week that they are backing the development of Mighty Tykes, a Berkeley Springs company founded by local resident Isabella Yosiuco.

The INNOVA Commercialization Group, an initiative of the West Virginia High Technology Consortium Foundation, and West Virginia Jobs Investment Trust are investing \$200,000 into the maker of Mighty Tykes Infant and Child Weights — a physical therapy resource specifically made to help small children who suffer from poor muscle tone or muscle weakness due to a variety of conditions.

Made with kids in mind, the wrist and ankle weights are smaller and lighter than other strength-building tools available on the market to help children with muscle development. Poor muscle tone and tremors particularly affect children with conditions such as Down Syndrome, prematurity, Autism-spectrum disorders, Cerebral Palsy and Muscular Dystrophy.

Yosiuco invented the wrist and ankle weights with her son, Isaac, in mind. Isaac, now 3, has Down Syndrome and has had regular sessions with a local physical therapist since he was an infant.

When therapist Mary Jane Baniak, explained hypotonia — poor muscle tone — to Yosiuco, the local mom was visited by inspiration.

"Honestly, it seemed really obvious, so I went down to my basement and used some leftover fleece and a bit of our boys' sandbox sand to make up these tiny little weights," Yosiuco explained. "When our Physical Therapist saw them, she was really impressed, and encouraged me to explore manufacturing them."

Yosiuco said the weights can be used by therapists and parents in a variety of ways to help children.

Wearing them can build strength during exercise and normal play, and can also soothe children with sensory issues who like the comfort of feeling weight on their limbs.

"I've used MightyTykes as part of pediatric Physical Therapy services both in early intervention and the young school age population," Baniak said. "The weights have been very useful to promote symmetry and improve one sided weaknesses and general hypotonia."

As Yosiuco pursued the possibility of making the weights for other families and therapists, she decided to seek outside feedback from clinicians and other people in the disability community.

"Mighty Tykes initiated a market trial in the fall of 2012. Prototypes and a survey were sent to early intervention program families, professionals and institutions around the country. Among them, three appeared on *U.S. News & World Report* 'Honor Roll' of the best Children's Hospitals and all of which provided extremely favorable feedback," said Guy Peduto, Director of INNOVA.

She also received business coaching from Bob Marggraf, a local businessman who serves Eastern Panhandle companies through the West Virginia Small Business Development Center. His guidance helped Yosiuco prepare a business plan and financial documents to move Mighty Tykes forward.

"Mighty Tykes is an example of what the spirit of entrepreneurship is — identifying a problem, developing a market to meet the market demand and have the courage to do it," said Andy Zulauf,



Isabella Yosiuco sits with son Isaac, who inspired the invention of the wrist and ankle weights he wears. The weights will be produced under the brand Mighty Tykes, which just attracted investment from two major West Virginia business funds.

photo courtesy of Isabella Yosiuco

executive director of the state's Job Investment Trust.

**A family mission**

Developing the weights into a commercial product has been a journey for the Yosiuco family, including husband Ray Yosiuco and Isaac's big brother Pierce Yosiuco, seven. Yosiuco is a mom who works from home as a medical company communications professional. Her husband is an additions counselor and an artist.

Along the way, they have made it a priority to work with

companies that employ special-needs workers and they have sought out family-friendly businesses who share the Yosiuco's mission to turn challenges into opportunities.

"We're different by design. We aren't limited by the obstacles of our birth," said Isabella Yosiuco.

"Those obstacles can be turned around for the good — not just for their own good, but for the good of lots of people."

## School calendar

(from front)

Specific needs for Morgan County were also addressed in the calendar. The Friday before the Apple Butter Festival will remain a day off for students. It's scheduled as a continuing education day for staff.

School is out for a full week as usual at Thanksgiving on the proposed calendar. Christmas vacation would run from Wednesday, December 24 through Friday, January 2.

**Adding minutes**

School officials didn't add instructional minutes to the school day this year, Banks said. Adding six minutes to every school day all year long could add three additional days of instruction to the school year. Those three additional days could be used to offset two-hour delays and early dismissals, if needed.

The public can share their thoughts about the calendar at the March 25 public hearing, or by contacting the school board office at 304-258-2430.

*"Rock Me, Don't Shake Me"*



*Musicians Against Child Abuse*

**Featuring the Band:** 

**Saturday, March 29 • 9 p.m.-Midnight**  
**Hancock American Legion**

Proceeds from this event are combined with Child Abuse Awareness Walk/5K Run to be held on April 26 at Widmeyer Park and supports local Child Advocacy Centers & groups who provide treatment and awareness.

**Doors Open at 8 p.m. • Silent Auction**  
**Tickets – \$10.00 Per Person**  
Advance Tickets Are Recommended and Can Be Purchased by Calling 301-678-5622