



Mille Lacs Messenger



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Monday, November 10, 2008

Sam wins school board race

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Voters in the Onamia School District chose to replace long-time chair Dean Benson with newcomer Mary Sam, who received the highest vote total among five candidates for three open seats.

Returning to the board will be Dave Osterman and Jamie Root-Larsen, who also came out ahead of Benson and Bill Hill III.

Sam said there are several areas of need in the Onamia district. "Leadership is crucial - and trust," Sam said. In addition, she wants to see expanded early childhood education and grant writing.

Sam has extensive experience in education and said she understands the problems teachers face each year with large class sizes, students of differing learning styles, and students with a difference in resources, from poverty to those who come from homes with financial stability.

"Graduating from high school cannot be the only standard that we expect for our children anymore," Sam said. "We need to realign our school strategic plan and vision to ensure that it is aligned with local colleges and 21st century standards."

Sam said she is committed to holding legislators accountable so students in small rural districts, like Onamia, will have the same opportunities as those in larger districts.

She said she will support superintendent John Varner in entering and maintaining positive relationships with neighboring schools.

Sam said the job of the school board is not to micro manage the district but to support and hold the administration and teachers accountable. "Are we fiscally responsible?" Sam asked. "How do we make our school a welcoming place? Let's create an attitude of 'Yes we can,' in stead of 'no we can't.'"

As a school board member, Sam wants to work closely with the Legislature and get the ear of local representatives. "One of my goals is to work with the Legislature to get equal funding for our district," she said.

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