

School board elections: Somers-Lakeside

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School elections are May 4 with contested trustee races in several school districts.

Information on candidates will be published throughout the week. Candidates were invited to respond to questions emailed by the Daily Inter Lake to provide voters with more information such as a candidate's background, experience and reason for running.

The following information is for Somers-Lakeside School District candidates.

There are two three-year terms with four candidates running. Candidates are John Hollensteiner and Jesica Swanson, both incumbents, Kendall Massie and Tanner Smith.

Polls will be open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. May 4 at Somers Middle School, 315 School Addition Road, and Lakeside Elementary, 255 Adams Street.

Name: John Hollensteiner (i)

Occupation: Builder

Background/experience: I have served on the District 29 School Board for the past nine years. This experience has taught me the roles, responsibilities and abilities of a school board member. I wish to build upon that knowledge base in order to further serve the students and families of the Somers/Lakeside community.

Why are you running for the school board? I have two children who attend Somers Middle School and a third child who attends college in Billings. I believe that a quality education, provided in a safe and secure learning environment, will develop our children and young adults into confident, capable and productive members of our communities. Our focus at Somers and Lakeside is to provide a strong and engaging curriculum to our students and to deliver that curriculum by qualified and talented teachers who encourage and expect our students to perform at their best levels. We seek to attract and maintain the highest quality administrators and teachers and to provide these educators with the rewarding and fulfilling careers of educating our youth.

As we navigate our way through what we all hope are the waning months of this pandemic, we will continue to balance the safety of our students and the approximate 75 teachers and staff who work in our schools with the easing of pandemic-induced restrictions.

If elected, is there anything you want to see accomplished? short-term goal is to ensure that our publicly-funded buildings remain open to the many fine local organizations which seek to

use our facilities. The community of Somers/Lakeside entrusted the school board to build a new middle school and I wish to maintain our facilities as a focal point for the community.

In the long-term, I wish to enhance and expand the extracurricular programs for our students such as sports, theatre and band. These programs are motivational for students, build character and provide well-rounded educations.

Name: Kendall Massie

Occupation: Vice President of Montana First Insurance, Inc.

Background/experience: I have previously participated in Leadership Flathead and have in the past and am currently on the Homeowners Association of the subdivision where we live. I participated in the local fundraising for Special Olympics Penguin Plunge and the local Buddy Walk for Down Syndrome Awareness.

Why are you running for the school board? I was asked by a local member of the community to consider running for the school board. I have four children currently in the school district and two that have moved on to Flathead High School. I feel that by sending my children to public schools also puts some onus onto the parents to make sure that the learning environment is safe, enjoyable, and conducive to learning. We also need to make sure the children have the proper tools in place to succeed. If I can make a difference or do my part to maintain a great standard of learning in Lakeside and Somers then I want to do what I can.

I would like to see School District 29 continue to be a place of learning history, math, science, English and social interaction. I want to know that my children and any children that go through Somers or Lakeside have what they need to learn and enjoy learning.

Name: Tanner Smith

Occupation: Owner/operator of Tanner J. Smith Construction, Inc.

Background/experience: Father of five and active community member. High school accomplishments include: student council rep, six years; Academic All-American football and basketball; state runner-up champion football and basketball '92; co-captain football '93; All-Conference football '93; All-District band and choir four years; John Phillip Sousa State band award winner '93; Boys State Leadership finalist; Aim Higher Montana attendee; Business Week attendee '91 and Montana Council of Mathematics attendee.

Why are you running for the school board? To be an unwavering voice for our students and teachers. Our current board members are all great people but appear to be complacent with the way things are currently being conducted. I believe we can do better for our students and teachers alike. Our students deserve to feel normal and enjoy school as it was always meant be. We have amazing teachers, staff and administrators at Lakeside and Somers but there needs to be a voice willing to speak up and say when enough is enough. I look forward to taking on the ever-growing teachers union and advocating for our children's rights and education. I welcome

debating with governing agencies and fighting for what we want as a community. We want our schools to educate our children and our individual households to govern how they are raised and what type of health precautions they feel are needed. That being said, I would greatly appreciate your vote so together, we can work to bring normalcy back to our schools and the lives of the people we hold closest to heart ... our children.

Name: Jesica Swanson (i)

Occupation: Writer, wife, mom

Background/experience: Every different season of life has given me the opportunity to serve our community in some capacity. In addition to serving on the current Somers District Board of Trustees, I also volunteer on the Big Sky Bible Camp/Camp Promise advisory committee. In the past, I have been a classroom volunteer, Somers/Lakeside PTA board member, co-coordinator of the Bigfork Mothers of Preschoolers group, youth leader, speaker, and volunteer at various community events.

Why are you running for the school board? As the parent of two children currently enrolled in the district, I do have a vested interest. I want to see our schools succeed in providing a quality education that checks all the academic boxes and ignites a lifelong love of learning in our students. Being on the school board is an opportunity to be a voice for not only the parents and students but also the staff members and taxpayers who are also affected by the decisions the board makes. I believe that I am an objective candidate who is willing to listen to all of those voices and work together to find reasonable solutions to the inevitable issues that arise in any given school year. This is what I have been driven to do in the past two years and what I will continue to do if given the opportunity to serve for another term.