

Megan and Eleanor, but resisted the temptation – and Steve Abrams' urging – to become a candidate. I stayed current in an indirect way through Barbara's work, but thought she was doing our share for county schools. Even though my family had inspired my school improvement efforts in the '80s, I was a bit surprised at how quickly they shifted from an initial skepticism about my candidacy to the quiet but enthusiastic support that kept me going through four draining campaigns to today's celebration. Certainly I could not have stayed the course without them and – like every other good thing in my life – they added the measure of joy that truly made these runs worthwhile.

The actual credit for this election's results should go to far too many people to mention here but I will, at least, take time to thank Paul Rankin, who managed our campaign with grace, humor and a firm commitment to the idea that we sought to win not from competitive zeal but because of what we could accomplish for our schools over the next four years. His leadership skill was fully matched by the organizational strength of Wendy Williams, the financial management talents of our two-campaign treasurer, Tim Knoblock; and the commitment of Elinor Walker, who shifted her status from being a primary opponent to becoming a timeless ally. I'll stop there because to go even one step further will evoke names of well over a dozen others who contributed enormously to our campaign efforts.

As a candidate, I have been fortunate in those who worked on my campaign and in those who were on the other side, as well. Over the last four years, I have campaigned against some highly gifted and committed people. In their thoughtful opposition they have strengthened my own effort, and I am fortunate that many of them have emerged as good friends – people such as Said Jahnmir, Lorie Rodich, and Beth Wong in 2000; and Bob Holden in the 2002 primary. In the general election, Dr. Henry Lee campaigned strongly on his own commitment to make our schools even better. He was a splendid opponent and – even though I couldn't vote for him this time – I hope to have a chance to vote for him soon.

Now, as we look beyond this election, this inaugural, I hope we also can move beyond campaigning to refocus our thinking on ways we can work together to build on the strengths of our system and use those strengths to reach the level of excellence to which we aspire for all of our students.

Attaining excellence in the face of the circumstances we now face will not be easy. We face challenges worthy of the energies we bring to it as a strong, committed, and diverse community. The economy is not as healthy as it was two years ago, public funds will be tighter, the demands of the federal *No Child Left Behind* legislation are unreasonably greater than the resources it provides, testing issues are more than vexing, and there is no safe, sure, low-cost solution for our over-used and under-funded facilities.

Those of you who know me know that those challenges led me to be a candidate for the Board of Education. In my many years in Montgomery County, the challenges have never been greater, never seemed more numerous or more difficult. I asked you as voters to

give me the opportunity to work on those challenges. I am grateful that I now have this chance to work with the other Board members on your behalf. Much as I enjoyed the campaign camaraderie, I am very glad that the campaign is over and I can finally say: Let's get to work now to build the excellence we all aspire to attain in our schools."

Re: **STATEMENT BY MRS. O'NEILL**

"Good afternoon. It seems like only yesterday that I was a newly elected Board member being sworn in for the first time. Four years has gone by in just the blink of an eye.

It has been an honor to have served on the Board with Reggie and Kermit, Sharon and Walt, Nancy and Steve, and our student members. Every Board member brings to the table his or her own unique style, issues, and personal background. I look forward to working with Charles and Gabe. Being a Board member involves lots of hard work. Being a successful School Board Member involves first learning that this is a team sport, not an individual event. Four years ago the Board's highest priority was the superintendent search. We were all committed to finding a dynamic leader capable of leading us into the 21st century. I know that in December 1998 neither Dr. Weast nor the Montgomery County Board knew that destiny would bring us together to lead our changing school system.

Montgomery County is growing and changing. I have been a witness to these changes as a student, a taxpayer, a parent, and a school Board member. I'm proud to be a product of this county's public schools – Walter Johnson class of 1968. I received an outstanding education. I believe my daughter, Jenny, who graduated in 1999, received an outstanding education. My goal will be to make sure that my daughter, Melissa, who will graduate in 2008, and all those who follow her receive that same high-quality education.

Maintaining a high-quality school system means meeting the challenges of today and anticipating the challenges of tomorrow. Insuring the success of our students requires a day-in and day-out commitment to them. We must meet the needs of each and every student – from the gifted, to the average, to those with special needs. We must provide our students with well-trained teachers and a challenging curriculum. We must make sure that we provide adequate, safe, secure, and healthy school facilities where our students can learn and our teachers can teach.

The election process, while tough and time consuming, is great preparation for service on the Board of Education. It causes you to stop and think about your beliefs and priorities, and it gives a voice to issues in the community. As an incumbent, I saw that the election also brought many friends from these four years of Board service to my campaign. Success as a political candidate is not achieved on your own. I feel blessed that my friends from my many years in the PTA in the Whitman Cluster worked actively on my behalf through two school board campaigns. In this election, 278 individuals contributed to my campaign and 40-plus friends worked the polls on election day. I must thank Carol Jarvis who served as my campaign manager through both elections and was a tireless

worker for me. I know that someday when Carol retires from teaching art, she can open her own political consulting business. Who would have thought that when we met in 1990 as PTA presidents we would make such a formidable campaign team. Special thanks also must go to Lafe Solomon for being such a great treasurer and friend. The other duties as assigned included gourmet appetizers for the campaign kickoff and coaxing a friend to lend a convertible for use in two Labor Day parades and then serving as my driver.

My mother, in-laws, husband, and close friends have made it possible for me to fulfill my Board obligations these past four years. They have driven Melissa to soccer practices, to the orthodontist, and baby sat on short notice when I had a sick child. I couldn't have done it without them.

I would be remiss in not pointing out that this campaign was a family affair. My mother campaigned for me at bridge club, at the AAUW, at the Women's National Democratic Club, and at the Sumner Village Condominium Association.

My in-laws campaigned at the aquatic center, at church, and at bridge, and everywhere they went they told everyone they met to vote for me. They truly blanketed the Kensington-Parkwood community with green Pat O'Neill signs.

My sister, Carolyn, gave up two days of her medical practice to work the polls for me on both Primary and General Election days. My brother-in-law, Joe, put up signs and worked the polls for me.

My daughter, Jenny, provided technical support by doing my campaign literature and worked her network of college friends to make sure they all voted by absentee ballot. My daughter, Melissa, insisted on working the polls. Who could resist a 'Please vote for my Mom.'

My husband, Rick – who would ever have thought that when we met on graduation day from Walter Johnson in 1968 that you would be out at the Metro campaigning for me, working the crowd at parades, and knocking on doors of strangers to put up Pat signs on busy roads?

I know there are so many needs in this school system. I am proud that I will be able to continue to work on behalf of our students.

A few years ago I participated in a community event with the then-Director of Community Ministries, the Rev. Lon Dring. Following the event, the Rev. Dring sent me a note and a prayer. He said that he thought this prayer reflected our work.

A PRAYER FOR THE CHILDREN

We pray for the children

who sneak popsicles before supper,
who erase holes in math workbooks,
who can never find their shoes.

And we pray for those
who stare at photographers from behind barbed wire,
who can't bound down the street in a new pair of sneakers,
who never "counted potatoes,"
who are born in places where we wouldn't be caught dead,
who never go to the circus,
who live in an X-rated world.

We pray for children
who bring us sticky kisses and fistfuls of dandelions,
who hug us in a hurry and forget their lunch money.
And we pray for those who never get dessert,
who have no safe blanket to drag behind them,
who watch their parents watch them die, who can't find any bread to steal,
who don't have any rooms to clean up,
whose pictures aren't on anybody's dresser,
whose monsters are real.

We pray for children
who spend all their allowance before Tuesday,
who throw tantrums in the grocery store and pick at their food,
who like ghost stories,
who shove dirty clothes under the bed,
who never rinse out the tub,
who get visits from the tooth fairy,
who don't like to be kissed in front of the carpool,
who squirm in church and scream in the phone,
whose tears we sometimes laugh at and
whose smiles can make us cry.

And we pray for those
whose nightmares come in the daytime,
who will eat anything,
who have never seen a dentist,
who aren't spoiled by anybody,
who go to bed hungry and cry themselves to sleep,
who live and move, but have no being.

We pray for children
who want to be carried and for those who must,

who we never give up on
and for those who don't get a second chance.
For those we smother and. . .
for those who will grab the hand of anybody kind enough to offer it.”

Re: **STATEMENT BY MR. ROMERO**

“I know that over the next four years we are going to spend a lot of time talking and making decisions about education and the future of our children and our county. So today I want to take the opportunity to talk about something else. Today I want to talk about the beauty of Washington, D.C., or put in another way, how lucky we all are.

But before I embark on some of those thoughts I must first give thanks to all Montgomery County citizens who voted, especially those who voted for me. I also want to thank the countless people, elected officials and institutions who endorsed my candidacy and helped me through the campaign, all too numerous to mention today. There are, however, some individuals I will acknowledge. I need to thank my wife, Debbie, and my two daughters, Gabriela and Anastasia, for supporting me and allowing me to run, and my father, my grandmother, and my brother, who supported me in spite of my craziness, or so they claim. I also want to thank Eleanor Krause, my business partner, for her constant support while I was making my decision to run and during the entire campaign.

There are three individuals who gave me their unconditional support since the moment they knew I was running: Patty Rapp, Michelle Turner and Cheryl Kagan – thank you, thank you, and thank you! I have found that in politics you really need true friends, those who will always tell you the bare truth and give you their best advice. Patty, Michelle, and Cheryl: thank you for your constant and truthful advice and God knows countless hours on the campaign trail. I know I would not be here were it not for all your help.

I also need to thank Scott Bisset, my treasurer, for keeping impeccable accounts and for being a great communicator; Teresa Wright and her family, Carol Chen, Beth Wong, Maureen Aprill, Joan McNamara, Moira LaVeck, Meredith Walters, Allyson Morrison, Jon Gerson, Gene Kijowski, and Gene Counihan. Among my Hispanic friends, I want to acknowledge Fernando Cruz-Villalba, Louis Martinez, Alberto Avendaño with *El Tiempo Latino*, Alejandro Carrasco with Radio America and Nora Montenegro with Univision. Thank you for covering this election, including my campaign, and keeping the Hispanic community informed. I also feel very fortunate to have spent a lot of time with Pat O'Neill, Charles Haughey and Reggie Felton. In all honesty however, I feel blessed that for the next four years I will not have to listen to your introductory remarks every other night. Believe me, I can quote each and every one of you in my sleep! As a matter of fact, I have!

One of my earliest memories of Washington, D.C. is the view of the Memorial Bridge and

the Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln memorials on the day our family first arrived here. It still astonishes me to see that stone bridge skim across the silver waters of the Potomac, its elegant arches subtly rusticated and its soft shadows making it look as if it floats. And talk about the whiteness of those memorials! I truly feel that we are some of the luckiest people on this planet to be living in one of the most beautiful cities in the world.

The history of Washington, D.C. is closely linked to the history of the United States. The new capital for the United States was created three years after the signing of the Constitution, and it embodies in its urban planning and architecture the political and ideological ideals of that document, as well as the important events of our history.

Now, George Washington had no preconceived forms or shapes for this new city. As a matter of fact, he did not even want to look at any European cities for any models to follow. He did have three aspirations for this city. First, this new city should help unify the young nation. Second, the city should be large and bold in scale. Third, the city's plan should express the noble ideals on which the United States was founded. This last point, as we all know, is nothing more than good 18th-century urban planning. Sir Christopher Wren, one of England's most talented 18th-century architects, described this point of view as follows:

“Architecture has its political use; public buildings being the ornament of a country; it establishes a nation, draws people and commerce; makes the people love their native country, which passion is the original of all great actions in a commonwealth.”

As a point aside, let's not forget this old idea as we go about constructing our public buildings dedicated to education. But let's get back to our city. George Washington, working in close collaboration with Pierre Charles L'Enfant, devised a city with two overlapping grids, an orthogonal and a radial grid. And there are two major focal points to the plan: “the Congress House” and “the President's House”. A great avenue physically and visually linked these two houses. This city plan was entirely devoted to embodying symbolically the ideas of the new democracy. There was much opposition to this plan, as it seemed too grand for such a young nation, and suffice it to say, it took a lot of politicking from George Washington to see it through. Needless to say, the city's history, much like our country, has had its tumultuous events: the burning of the White House and the Congress by the British, the desolation during the Civil War and the riots of the 1960s, and the butchering of the Mall at the turn of the 19th century. At the beginning of the 20th century, this city was looking ragged and tired, many of its streets unpaved and muddy, with no prominent monuments or major public building yet built. But it was the beginning of a new century. The United States was becoming a dominant force in the world, and this country, mostly due to the Industrial Revolution and the City Beautiful movement, was experiencing the rebirth of new cities. For our capital city, it took the McMillan Commission to bring those old ideas from George Washington back into prominence. In 1906, Senator McMillan, like George Washington had done before, hired a great architect and came up with a great plan and a bill. Daniel Burnham, just like L'Enfant, believed in the execution

of great ideas. "Make no little plans" is today synonymous with Burnham and our nation's capital. And just like George Washington, McMillan had a lot of politicking to do to see his plan through.

Today, it is nice to know that Abraham Lincoln is constantly looking over Congress, reminding every legislator, including Chris Van Hollen, that we have decided to be one united country. Every four years, as the new president is sworn in, he/she must travel from "The Congress House" to the "President's House" down Pennsylvania Avenue, and midpoint through this journey encounter the National Archives, a wonderful building that houses our Constitution. And it is nice to know that every inhabitant of the White House has a grand view of the Potomac and is reminded constantly of their great responsibility by both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, the fathers of our country. And we, the citizens of this great city also enjoy the Mall, America's front lawn, and all the museums that surround it, all free of charge.

I have learned a lot from this city, mostly that with great ideas and a lot of commitment we can make a difference. As we address many of the challenges our county faces – especially our number one priority, education – let's not forget to come up with great ideas and to commit ourselves to seeing them through, even if it takes a lot of politicking. Today, we all enjoy a beautiful city, one where the history of our country and our democracy can truly be seen. How lucky we are!"

Re: STATEMENT BY MR. FELTON

"I would like to join my colleagues in thanking all of you for joining with us in this great celebration. As many of you know, I believe that public service is the greatest contribution that you can make as an American. And, certainly, education is the strongest gift we can provide our citizens.

When I was first elected eight years ago, I joined this Board with a vision that we would provide a high-quality education for every student in this community. There were rough times then. Many of you remember we were not certain how we would fund budgets. There were threats of budget reductions, and we had to make some very difficult decisions. Four years ago, fortunately, times changed. We were able to witness and enjoy some great economic accomplishments. We brought out an outstanding leader, and that vision of ensuring that every child in Montgomery County would have a high-quality education was beginning to become a reality.

I remember that prior to coming on the Board, when I was selling real estate, every time I would see a real estate development I would get excited because it was a potential to earn money. When I became a member of this Board, every time I saw a development, I said, where shall we put these children? Your perspective changes.

We have a great community. Not only do we have more students than we have ever had,

but we have a wide diversity of students – each believing in this Board, having unquestionable confidence that we will ensure that their lives are successful. I am humbled by this awesome task we have before us. We have 140,000 students to take care of. But, we can only do that with the support of citizens like you and a great community as we have here. So, I look forward to that commitment. Our job is not just about paper and policy. It is about lives. It is about enriching lives and enriching families and enriching communities because that is what this community stands for.

Today, I come before you energized once again, seeking a third term. I would like to thank, above all, my wife, who reluctantly supported me one more time. I also would like to thank my son who, while not officially named, became my campaign chairman. He was away at Morehouse College during the last two installation services. I am pleased that he is here to join in this celebration. I would like to thank my good friend, Goodrich Stokes, who has served as my treasurer for eight years and as my friend for many years. Also, I would like to thank my sister who is 10 years younger than I am and who moved to Montgomery County to be with her great brother.

Also, I would like to thank the many friends and colleagues throughout this community who provided support to me, not only during this campaign, but certainly over the past eight years. I would like to thank MCPS staff and the superintendent, who by far are the best in the nation. We just need to tell our story a little better. I must thank the Board staff members who find a way, and I am not sure how, to meet each of our needs – each of us with different personalities and demands. They find a way to support us to the fullest.

As a Board member, there are no permanent friends and there are no permanent enemies. The only thing Board members have are permanent issues. And, those issues are to ensure that all children, all children, all children in this county receive a high-quality education. To those children, I recommit my service to them.”

**Re: STATEMENT OF MRS. KING
(Read by Mrs. O’Neill)**

“I couldn’t leave the school board officially until I thanked and recognized the great people I have worked with over the past eight years and give some advice to the incoming Board members. I would be here personally, but a meeting of the new House of Delegates was called for 4:00 today to name the new Speaker of the House, and I had to be there.

To the Board of Education staff: You have listened, refereed, written speeches, made appointments, answered letters, taken phone calls, and the list could go on and on. George, Glenda, Gail, Becky, Lori, Roz, and Roland have all been a huge help to me as a Board member. Gail and Lisa, I will miss the "TLC" given to all Board members; you do such a great job. Roz, my friend, walking partner, and mother – I thank you so much for taking good care of me. To Roland, you’ve been a great staff person, but also a great friend. If this job fails, you always have a future as a stand-up comic. And Smokey, I’m

going to call you if I need a body guard!

Though there will always be ways to make our system better, I have been amazed since first coming on the Board about the view from the "inside". From where I sat on the Board, I saw such great things happening in our system. I saw the most caring, passionate, hard working superintendent, executive staff, principals, teachers, building service workers, etc. People very rarely see how much work goes into the decisions that the Board makes, and I am proud to be associated with those who help to make those decisions. To Dr. Weast, I voted to bring you here and have never been sorry. Your vision and expertise have brought this system to higher levels, and I know this will continue.

To my fellow Board members: We've had many great times together as well as a few tears. Some day the harsh critics will take a field trip to some other boards of education, and they will see just how great this Board has been and will be. I believe I made the right choice – to take our educational issues to the state level, and I am looking to continue the close relationship I've had with all of you. Pat O'Neill, you've been my colleague, my friend, my navigator, my traveling partner, and my confidante, and I know, in a lot of ways, we will continue that.

To Gabe and Charlie: You have a great adventure ahead of you. Just remember to ask yourself what is best for the children, and your votes will come out right every time. If I can ever be of assistance, please feel free to call on me.

A special thank you goes to Pat O'Neill for reading this statement today. Just remember how much you all mean to me, and keep doing what you are doing for the children of Montgomery County."

Re: STATEMENT BY MR. ABRAMS

"As to my wife, I never would have done anything in Montgomery County without my best friend and soul mate of 30-plus years. She has borne the burden of being the family volunteer in schools so I could get the glory. She has dressed her children in look-alike contests for parades starting when one daughter was two years old and the other was a newborn. Typical of Judy, she has always done it with a smile.

I have been extraordinarily fortunate. I am the only Board member ever leaving the Board with two 'Reserved for Steve Abrams' signs and the experience of having gone through this process before. I will confess it is a greater pleasure doing it voluntarily rather than having it mandated by the voters of Montgomery County.

I am absolutely thrilled at the prospect of the new Board because one of the hallmarks of the old Board was that, although occasionally we would disagree, we could disagree agreeably. In fact, civility did not negate viable discourse on issues. I have every confidence that that trait will continue with the additions of Dr. Haughey and the architect.

Charles, I take great personal pleasure in your succeeding me as an at-large member because, as you well stated earlier, I had always envisioned that I would be succeeding you when I encouraged you to run before. You just took a little bit of time. I am going to encourage my former colleagues to remember that although he looks extraordinarily young, Charles is in his early seventies and would make a marvelous officer on this Board. So, do not waste a lot of time mulling that over.

Speaking of officers, I know Sharon Cox. I have served with Sharon Cox. I watched Charles run against Sharon Cox. There has not been a better Board member on this Board since I have served than Sharon Cox, and the statement regarding officers of this Board goes doubly. I say that out of the one regret that I have had in serving on this Board, and that is that I never had the opportunity to serve in that role. But, then again, I never had the opportunity to serve as a judge.

I am leaving here with an extraordinarily optimistic feeling. I am leaving what is probably the best public school system in the country. I am leaving a Board that is a much stronger Board than people give it credit for. I am leaving here after coming from the swearing-in of our county executive and County Council, where both statements supported this Board and this community.

The things we are doing here in Montgomery County are pace setting. The early childhood initiatives that are occurring here in Montgomery County are not only being recognized regionally, but day after day we pick up editorials in papers such as *The Philadelphia Inquirer* and *The Baltimore Sun*, and in national periodicals. These articles talk about what we are doing in Montgomery County. We are not just talking the talk, we are walking the walk. And, we are doing it in a good Republican fashion – trust but verify.

I have every confidence that despite the doom and gloom we hear about the current state of the economy, somehow we will find a way to make sure that this system retains adequate funding. Although budget cycles run hot and cold, a commitment to an ideal does not have to. We made that commitment to an ideal four years ago when we sat down with a new superintendent and laid out a vision as to what we wanted to accomplish. The results of that vision, although starting to filter in, will not be felt for another good eight to 10 years. We will be doing ourselves and the students of Montgomery County and the community a disservice if we fail to stay the course and to let those initiatives take root.

I am excited about a thing called *fast start*. We have always talked in the system about how nice it is to get people who think outside the box. It is nice that we have a superintendent who does that as well. He knows no bounds of jurisdiction. He will step on anyone's toes. He will take over Head Start today, and he will take over adult literacy tomorrow. You want to know something? That is good because we know how to do it better than the folks who are currently doing it. We can probably do it cheaper, and we can probably measure it and create a demonstration as to what works.

I ran initially as an outsider. Let me tell you, no outsider has ever developed a greater affection for and a friendship with the people who make up the Montgomery County Public Schools system. That runs the full gamut from our administrative staff to our teachers and support personnel. The commitment here is unlike anything you will ever find in any other job you are associated with. People eat, breathe, and live the education of our kids. People get excited by their achievements. When you take a look around at the vitality that we have in programs where we were able to institute lower class sizes and all-day kindergarten in those areas that needed them the most and see the smiles on the faces – not only of the kids, but of the teachers, principals, cafeteria workers, bus drivers – then, you know you have got something going here.

Your job is to keep it up. I have every confidence that you will. I wish all of you my heartfelt appreciation for a willingness to continue. I have every confidence that you will continue to do it right. I do have a challenge for Sharon – educate the *Gazette*. I have a challenge for all of you: there is a place for irreverence. I have tried to capitalize on that during my years here. In my absence, I certainly will defer to all of you sharing that role.

There is a need, though, to speak up, particularly when individuals are abusing unjustly this system. Do not be afraid to stand up for what is right. I think the community appreciates that. I know the system appreciates it. And the system is the best thing we got going for it. Thank you for allowing me to serve.”

Re: **PRESENTATION TO RETIRING BOARD MEMBER**

Mr. Felton gave a brief statement followed by a presentation of mementos that were reflective of Mr. Abrams service on the Board of Education.

Re: **STATEMENTS OF BOARD MEMBERS**

Board members welcomed Dr. Haughey and Mr. Romero, congratulated Mr. Felton and Mrs. O'Neill on their reelection to the Board, and thanked Mr. Abrams and Mrs. King for their work on the Board of Education and wished them well in all future endeavors.

Re: **ADJOURNMENT**

The swearing in was adjourned at 4:15 p.m. and was followed by a reception.

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

JDW:gr