

# Editor urges Durant residents to vote yes

By Ryan Brown

Now is the time for the community of Durant to step up for its school.

Four bond referendums were passed for the Durant school district in a period of just over four decades ending in 1999, according to a recent *Wildcat Chronicles* article written by News Editor Grace Paustian.

One hasn't passed since.

Over these last 24 years, however, it has not just been a silent waiting period.

In 2018, voters rejected a referendum that included a new high school gym, new STEM classrooms, an update to the auditorium, and a new secure entrance to the building.

Just this past March, another proposal for a \$15.6 million dollar bond referendum was rejected by voters. This referendum included renovations to the elementary-middle school gym and the auditorium.

On November 7, the school district is pursuing another bond referendum for projects totaling over \$13.2 million. It includes a new elementary-middle school gymnasium, updates to art and science classrooms, updates to the heating system, and relocation of the superintendent's office, among other things.

Now, as I sit here writing this, I can't help but worry about the future of our school.

Ms. Julie Rivera, president of the

school board, confirmed my concerns that this may be the last go around for an attempt at a bond for the foreseeable future.

"If this bond does not pass, we will not be pursuing a fourth bond in November, 2024," Ms. Rivera stated, unless the community comes to the board asking for it, then at which time it will have to review the idea.

If the upcoming bond does not pass, Ms. Rivera also said the district will need to be financially responsible and focus its efforts on making big improvements where it can with the funds it has.

"We haven't stopped making improvements the last couple of years because of the bond votes, but we have some big-ticket items (i.e.—elementary windows, elementary gym, updated lighting) ahead of us that need to be addressed," she said.

The overwhelming concern for residents of Durant is the means in which these bonds get paid for. This is the main reason that people have been voting no these past few years.

Durant's current levy rate, which is the amount that property is taxed per \$1,000 of property value, currently stands at \$9.36. This is considerably lower than 12 nearby comparable districts, with only the district of Bennett having a lower rate of \$8.39.

If the bond were to pass, the levy rate would move up to \$12.17. This rate would still be lower than nine of those 14

comparable districts, including Wilton.

"I would like to think that the residents would be in support of the tax levy rate of \$12.17 if the bond passes," Ms. Rivera said. "That will still be lower than many comparable districts in the area."

Considering the success of the bonds prior to 2000, Mrs. Katy Oberlander, who serves as vice president of the school board, feels that residents may not understand the needs of the school district.

"I'm not sure that the community also understands the state of the facilities and the needs that we have both with academic and extracurricular usage," she said.

"Both of these areas have increased greatly in my opinion since any previous bond would have been passed, and the bond is now needed to help get us to where we need to be to service our students and community to the best of our ability."

While residents who aren't in favor of the bond could see it as an undue burden to the community, Mrs. Oberlander believes it is an investment in the future.

"Similar to making improvements to your house, the benefit exceeds the cost both to your own house and those around you," she stated.

"If we are able to do this for our school, we are ensuring that Durant also continues to grow and thrive. Our water tower states 'prime for growth.' I hope the commu-



Photo by Nic Poston

A Durant house displays a sign showing support for the upcoming bond referendum on November 7.

nity believes in that motto and gets us to this next step and votes yes!"

All in all, as a student that has experienced firsthand the improvements that our school so desperately needs, I encourage all of you citizens of Durant to get out to the polls and vote this November 7.

Our school needs your support.

## Detentions From page 1

things that are not a doctor's appointment, she said, and if parents call their students out of school, the students should be allowed to leave without punishment.

"Some students are in out-of-school activities/competitions where they might miss school or have to leave early, so they can't provide a note for that either," she said.

Mr. Diederichs said no matter what policies get put in place, there will be issues.

He hopes this new system creates clarity for the student body.

"Anytime you make a choice, there is obviously a positive reaction or negative, depending on what you are doing in life. This just gives you an understanding," said Mr. Diederichs.

"If you are tardy, and there are three of them, obviously you gotta work on it and do better next time."

Mr. Diederichs said there has been

an increase in detentions this school year but can not disclose the exact number given out or the reasons for the detentions.

One sophomore boy said the school has issued too many detentions so far this school year and thinks that the handbook rules are too strict. But he also agrees that he has changed his behavior a little bit after serving several detentions, including one for being tardy.

According to the student hand-

book, the district's discipline and suspension procedures are based off of House File 604 passed by the Iowa legislature in May "and will evolve further as the guidance from the Department of Education is disseminated to the school."

"The progressive discipline plan will continue to evolve, and I am satisfied at this time with the plan, but will watch and make changes when needed," Mr. Diederichs said.

## Show From page 1

-dents, including drama students and those from the junior high choir, Concert Choir, and Chamber Choir.

"There are so many possibilities and opportunities available as performers and being a part of drama," said Ms. Link. "It can spark an interest and lead to great things in the future."

Students who are interested in be-

ing involved with the variety show but don't want to perform also have a chance to help run the show.

"Students can perform on stage, and there are a lot of opportunities to help backstage on crew in the lights, sound, spotlights, stage directing, moving props and curtain," said Ms. Link.

During the show, Ms. Link will

communicate with her crew through a headset system.

"I am calling the show, which means I check with the crew members over the headset to make sure the music is cued up, lights are ready, mics are ready and the students are ready to come on stage," said Ms. Link.

During the show, students will nar-

rate, provide jokes, and add transitions between the acts. On top of all of that, students are also able to help advertise for the show ahead of time.

One participant, junior Wyatt Richards, will be in both a skit and a solo. He practices for the show every chance he gets in both choir and drama.

"I get to perform by myself and show my voice and project it," said Richards, whose favorite part is "being able to perform with all my friends."

Another show participant, junior Carter Furne, will perform in a skit. Furne thinks that it gives him a good way to use his storytelling skills.

"I'm putting pretty much all my energy into that—even spending money on it," said Furne.

Ms. Link is excited to see the end results.

"I enjoy seeing the final product when they perform for a full audience, and they are confident and animated in their songs or skits," she said.



Photo by Nic Poston

Sophomore Ellasyn Clark and junior Jada Jones and will sing a duet during the variety show.



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**Richards**

Junior Wyatt Richards is making an appearance in the Durant variety show next month. He is singing a solo, and he's also doing a skit. Richards has been in drama for three years and really enjoys it because he loves to perform in front of an audience and loves inspiring people.