The success of Utica Community Schools is due in no small part to a caring community committed to quality education. When we identify a need, our community responds. Whether it is donating backpacks filled with new school supplies, contacting the Marine Toys for Tots program for drop boxes, sponsoring student scholarships, holding spaghetti dinner fundraisers and canned food drives for those in need, this is a community that cares deeply. Friends helping friends, and families helping neighbors. As I have witnessed time and time again, UCS residents put a high priority on our children.

This year, we heard parents and residents who told us that student safety and security was a priority. Upon hearing those concerns the UCS Board of Education acted, unanimously placing a $155 million bond proposal on the November 6 ballot. This bond proposal is designed to address student safety and security, infrastructure and technology improvements. If approved by voters, every UCS student and every UCS school will be affected.

For years, UCS has strived to be on the forefront of providing career and technical education (CTE) programs that give our students a competitive advantage in career and college pursuits. Our goal is to incorporate specific tools, machinery and workspaces in classrooms to support specialized training in areas such as health care, automation and manufacturing. If approved, this bond proposal would provide school building renovations giving students and teachers technology improvements to develop skills for the jobs of the future.

Our residents have long supported bond issues that have allowed our school district to meet our capital needs and protect the investment the community has made in its school buildings. By law, bond revenue may only be used for capital improvements and not used for operating expenses such as salaries or utilities. This bond has been structured with no change in the tax rate residents are now paying.

The Stevenson Center for Manufacturing, Automation, and Design Engineering (MADE), has been introduced this year to ninth grade students with an interest in manufacturing. The academy has been designed to meet business demand for highly skilled, high tech employees. “Stevenson MADE offers students a direct link between their classroom and their career, clearly showing them why what they are learning is so important,” Superintendent Dr. Christine Johns said. “The academy works hand in hand with business and industry to give graduates a head start on high-paying jobs that will grow our region’s economy.”

Students participating in the program can earn college credit and will graduate with workforce experiences and industry recognized certifications. Industry partners involved in the program’s planning have supported the initiative to address a critical need in the regional and global workforce.

“This Stevenson MADE initiative meets this goal and has put us on the ground floor of something truly special,” commented Bruce Osani, general manager of Fori Automation. The program will provide businesses with “entry level employees who understand our systems and have the ability to be creative thinkers, work collaboratively with others, communicate effectively and support company innovation.”

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Independent auditor recognizes UCS for excellence in financial management

For the 15th straight year, an independent auditor has recognized Utica Community Schools for meeting the highest standards in financial management through its annual audit. Donna Hanson, CPA and partner in the auditing firm of Plante Moran, recognized Michigan’s second largest school district for excellence in financial reporting, ending the 2017-2018 fiscal year with a balanced operating fund.

“Under the Board of Education’s leadership, Utica Community Schools has demonstrated to its taxpayers that it meets the highest level of fiscal accountability and has eliminated a structural deficit that resulted from reductions in state funding,” Hanson said.

Utica Community Schools has received an “unmodified” opinion with no findings for the past 15 years – which Hanson said is due to strong financial controls and policies related to expenditures and meets all guidelines established for federal grants.

In addition, Hanson noted that the Board of Education has once again earned a Certificate of Excellence from the Association of School Business Officials International for the sixth year. “This audit again reflects the Board of Education’s accountability to residents and our focus on providing students the best educational environment with the revenue provided by state lawmakers,” Board President Gene Klida said. “This Board of Education will continue to advocate for our children with state lawmakers by demanding a

Local businesses build career interests at Manufacturing Day

More than 400 UCS high school students explored and learned about possible career paths to promote interest in skilled manufacturing jobs.

Students from each high school received first-hand exposure to viable Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers in all areas related to manufacturing, including skilled trades, marketing/sales, and engineering.
Switzer sixth grader is one of ten honored nationally for environmental awareness

Trinity Favazza has been named the Mayor of Amphibville by the Detroit Zoo, after she wrote an essay for a zoo sponsored contest. The essay was part of a conservation project to remind others about the importance of taking care of nature. Trinity is one of the youngest certified members of FrogWatch USA.

She recently visited Washington, D.C. to receive the President’s Environmental Youth Award from the Environmental Protection Agency for Region 5, which includes Michigan.

Nine students among 16,000 U.S. seniors to be named 2019 National Merit semifinalists

UCS National Merit Semi-finalists are: Emme Fidler and Susan Holtan, of Henry Ford II High School; Drew Beckman, of Stevenson High School; Brian Jones, Nicholas Koshy, and Samantha Souder, of Eisenhower High School; and Megan Botkin, Katelynn Paluch, and George Paul, of the Utica Academy for International Studies. Beckman, Fidler, Koshy, Holtan and Souder also attend the Utica Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology.

“We are proud that UCS students continue to earn top honors through the prestigious National Merit Scholarship Program,” Superintendent Dr. Christine Johns said. “Through hard work and dedication, these seniors have distinguished themselves as among the top one percent of students in the Class of 2019.”

More than 1.6 million students of the Class of 2019 entered the National Merit Program by taking the 2017 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. The nationwide pool of semi-finalists includes the highest scoring entrants in each state.

To move from semi-finalist to finalist status, students must submit a detailed scholarship application. Finalists have an opportunity to continue in the competition for 7,500 National Merit Scholarships totaling $31 million next spring.

Art students will inspire and inform peers half-a-world away

Six Morgan Elementary art students are among 100 students to have their work sent to China as part of a cultural exchange program sponsored by the Michigan 4-H Art Exchange through Michigan State University Extension (MSUE).

The students are Eli Layson, Sophia VanDenBrouck, Evan Trim, Noor Hatown, Ava Papastamatia and Elizabeth Moret. Their art teacher at Morgan Elementary is Karen Borbolla.

The China Art program is a free global education opportunity provided by MSUE. It is an annual statewide program that connects students with children their own age in China.

Student band leaders from Utica, Henry Ford II, Eisenhower and Stevenson high schools

All four award-winning marching bands strike a positive chord with the community through the annual Band-A-Rama

The October 7 Band-A-Rama showcased the district’s talented high school musicians in truly remarkable field performances. Ticket proceeds benefited the Louis Gonda Memorial Music Scholarship to fund opportunities for UCS band students to further their music education. Over the years, the Gonda Fund has enabled hundreds of students to attend music camps, take private lessons or otherwise enrich their music study.

This year, all four high school bands performed their half-time shows.

Chieftain Marching Band – Music of Motown
Eagle Marching Band – The Planets
Titan Marching Band – Superbowl Halftime Show
Falcon Marching Band – Don’t Stop the Music

Utica Community Schools continues to be honored at state and national levels for the high quality of its music program. The district was selected again this year as one of the nation’s Best Communities for Music Education.

Stevenson Competitive Cheer coach named State Coach of the Year

Brianna Verdoordt has been selected as the Michigan High School Coaches Association (MHSCA) State Coach of the Year for the sport of Competitive Cheer. Verdoordt’s selection, from a statewide group of nominees, was based on her leadership and years of contribution to the sport, school and community.

She led the Stevenson Titan Competitive Cheer Team to multiple championships including the 2018 State Championship.

On September 28, Board President Gene Kida and Superintendent Dr. Christine Johns recognized Verdoordt for her honor on behalf of the UCS Board of Education. MHSCA will present her award on November 11 at the MHSCA Winter Awards Luncheon to be held in Lansing, Michigan.

Making a Difference in the lives of others

A Wiley Elementary fourth grader has become a shining example of how to be a team player. Caleb Widdows is still years away from being a Utica High School student, but he has shown his Chieftain pride through a service project.

Widdows has been representing his community by supporting the Wigs 4 Kids program in honor of a football player at Sterling Heights High School, who passed away from cancer.

Caleb and his dad – the Sterling Heights Varsity Football coach Brent Widdows – have supported the Wigs 4 Kids program since Caleb was a toddler.

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Points of Pride

UCS students kick off a transatlantic partnership

First-year German students at Bemis Junior High will represent Michigan in a partnership that showcases how closely the United States and Germany are linked through history, shared values and visions for the future.

The program – called Wunderbar Together – is a yearlong celebration that will explore partnerships in all areas of society – ranging from business and industry to politics, education, culture, science, civil society, sports and lifestyle.

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Audit
Continued from front page
funding system that recognizes the true cost of educating a student.”

The 2017-2018 audit indicated the district finished with $272 million in expenditures, with 80 percent of its costs directly supporting instruction, including teachers, counseling and paraprofessionals. Hanson noted that UCS has one of the highest percentages of expenditures directly supporting classroom instruction among regional and comparable school districts.

Overall, revenue for the school district is $274 million, with 83 percent of the funding coming from the State of Michigan.

Hanson noted that the district has effectively addressed the long-term impact of reduced state funding. Reductions in state revenue occurring in 2011-2012 have not been restored.

“This audit reflects that through the Board of Education’s financial leadership, UCS has addressed the district’s financial realities and brought expenditures in line with revenue,” Hanson said. “The focus now moves to maintaining a structural balance in future years.”

Board Treasurer, Dr. Robert Ross noted that the UCS community will continue to work together to create financial stability. “I know there will certainly be more challenges ahead, but we have clearly demonstrated that by working together we can meet these issues head on by focusing on what is best for our students,” Dr. Ross said.

District officials said they remain committed to working with state lawmakers to advocate for increased school funding. The UCS Board of Education has formally supported the work of the School Finance Research Collaborative, which determined the state is not meeting the funding level necessary to address the cost to educate a child in Michigan.

Safety and Security 2018 Bond Proposal

Ballot Language

BOND PROPOSAL

Shall the Utica Community Schools, County of Macomb, Michigan, borrow the principal sum of not to exceed One Hundred Fifty-Five Million Dollars ($155,000,000) and issue its unlimited tax general obligation bonds for the purpose of defraying the cost of:

- making safety and security improvements, including cameras and door systems, in School District buildings;
- equipping, furnishing, reequipping and refurbishing School District buildings, facilities, and structures, and acquiring school buses and technology equipment;
- constructing additions to and/or remodeling School District buildings; and
- improving and developing sites, including playgrounds, athletic fields, facilities and structures in the School District?

The debt millage required to retire all bonds of the School District currently outstanding and proposed pursuant to this ballot is expected to be at or below 3.50 mills. The estimated millage to be levied in 2020 to service this issue of bonds is 0.89 mills ($0.89 per $1,000 of taxable value) and the estimated simple average annual millage rate required to retire the bonds of this issue is 1.30 mills ($1.30 per $1,000 of taxable value). The bonds may be issued in one or more series, payable in the case of each series in not to exceed 16 years from the date of issue of such series.

The School District currently has $137,585,000 of qualified bonds outstanding under the School Bond Qualification and Loan Program (the “Program”). The School District does not expect to borrow from the Program to pay debt service on these bonds. If the School District borrows from the Program, the estimated millage rate may change based on changes in certain circumstances.

[ ] YES
[ ] NO

(Under State law, expenditure of bond proceeds must be audited, and the proceeds cannot be used for teacher, administrator or employee salaries, repair or maintenance costs or other operating expenses.)

Projects include:
- Safety and school security,
- Infrastructure improvements that are part of the district’s ongoing strategic facility management program,
- Upgraded instructional technology that provides students a competitive advantage for the high-paying jobs of the future.

State law forbids public school districts from using money from a bond proposal for daily operational costs, such as employee salaries and benefits, routine cleaning and maintenance, supplies, fuel, electricity, natural gas and other utilities.

Voter approval is structured to avoid an increase in the current tax rate.

Foundation to our district’s success
Continued from front page

We understand that being sound financial stewards is very important to our residents and the district continues to work hard to maintain that trust. For 15 years, UCS has proudly received the highest level of assurance on the district’s financial statements with a rating of “excellent” according to independent auditors Plante Moran. In addition, the district has earned a Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting award for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) from the Association of School Business Officials International for six years running.

Since the beginning of our republic and over the course of U.S. history, scholars have noted a connection between our democracy and public schooling. As citizens, voters are the cornerstone in shaping our communities and their futures. In this issue, we have included candidate-provided profiles for those seeking re-election or a seat on the Board of Education, ballot language for the safety and security bond proposal, as well as a bond proposal quick link.

As friends, families and neighbors, I thank you for your continued commitment to this community and particularly to its youth, who are truly our most important asset.

Election Day is Tuesday, November 6

For more information visit www.uticaK12.org/2018bond
Eight candidates seek to fill three positions on the Utica Community Schools Board of Education in the November 6 general election. The terms of office are six years each beginning January 2019. Residents should direct all voting or election questions to the Macomb County Clerk’s office or to their local municipal office. The following information was provided by the candidates:

Kimberly Becker of Macomb Township, is a graduate of Henry Ford II High School and has a bachelor’s degree from Grand Valley State University in violin performance. She is a substitute teacher with EDUStaff.

She and her husband James have two children — a son who currently attends Eisenhower High School, and a daughter who graduated from Eisenhower in 2018. Becker is the Pathways Ambassador in the Confident Communicators Club, a part of Toastmasters International.

Alisa Diez did not respond.

Gene L. Klida of Shelby Township, has a bachelor’s degree from Michigan State University. She is a community volunteer. She and her husband David have two sons, a 2001 and a 2006 graduate of Eisenhower High School.

Klida is currently President of the UCS Board of Education and has served on the board for 20 years. She was first elected in May 1998. Klida has held the board office of Vice President and Secretary as well as Chair of the Curriculum Committee. She has served as a member on the Capital Projects, Human Resource and Finance committees.

Klida sits on the Macomb County Art Institute Authority Board, Utica Community Action Team and is Legislative Chair of the Macomb County School Boards Association. Klida is also a member of the Michigan Association of School Boards and the National School Board Association.

Kenneth Krolczyk of Washington, has a bachelor’s degree in Administration from Central Michigan University. He is an IT Manager with International Automotive Components.

Krolczyk and his wife Virginia have four children — a 2017 graduate from Eisenhower High School and children currently attending Eisenhower, Malow Junior High, and Duncan Elementary schools.

Krolczyk is currently a Trustee of the UCS Board of Education and has served on the board for six and a half years. He was elected in 2011. Krolczyk has served on the Capital Projects, Human Resource and Finance committees. He is a volunteer at St. John Vianney Church.

Surai Patel of Sterling Heights, is a graduate of Utica High School and has a bachelor’s degree in Computer Science, as well as a bachelor’s degree in Electrical & Computer Engineering. He is President of Integrated Systems Solutions, Inc.

He and his wife Dipti have a young daughter.

Patel is affiliated with the Carnegie Mellon Admissions Council, Street Democracy and the Good Karma Club. He is also affiliated with LOUD Capital, ZeroNines and the Apple Developer Network.

Kelli Rankin of Shelby Township, has a master’s degree from Oakland University and a bachelor’s degree in Supply Chain Management from Michigan State University. She is a senior manager operational excellence at General Motors.

She and her husband Dan have two sons who both attend Crissman Elementary School.

Rankin is a member of the 2018 UCS Citizens for Education Project (CFEP), an executive board member of the Michigan State University Detroit Executive Forum and a former PTA secretary at Crissman Elementary. She is a volunteer and advocate JDRF International and a member of Inforum.

Paul Romanczuk of Sterling Heights, completed three years at Wayne State University. He is a retired Chrysler Corporation (FACA) production analyst.

He and his wife Kathleen have four children - three are Henry Ford II High School graduates and one is a Utica High School graduate.

Romanczuk is manager/coach 12 U, 14U Sterling Heights Baseball/Softball Association, manager/coach 14U Sterling Basketball League, and commissioner (6 year old through 18 year old) Sterling Basketball League.

Michele Templeton of Sterling Heights, is a proud 1977 graduate of Stevenson High School. She is the choir director at St. Mark Orthodox Church.

She and her husband Douglass have one child, a daughter, who is a 2011 graduate of Stevenson High School.

Templeton is currently the Vice President of the UCS Board of Education and has served on the board for 13 years. She was first elected in May 2005 and re-elected in May 2011. She has held the board office of Secretary and Trustee. Templeton is the chair of the Human Resources committee and member of the Curriculum committee.

She has served as a classroom volunteer, lunch supervisor, school representative on the UCS Enrollment Distribution Advisory Council and member of the UCS 2003 Citizens for Education Project Bond Steering Committee.