



Miss Rogue Valley

SOU student from Phoenix wins pageant for a second time

Cassandra Tolman also won in 2004

February 4, 2007

www.mailtribune.com

SUNDAY



Showdown in Miami

Game time: 3:25 p.m., CBS, Ch. Web: www.mailtribune.com/super

What to see Sports, 10 What to Life, 10

Mail Tribune

SOUTHERN OREGON'S NEWS SOURCE

\$1.

Chalkboard Project has right plan for schools

By SUE DENSMORE

Oregon legislators are back in Salem, and we've heard repeatedly that education will be their No. 1 priority this session. But as a parent, lifelong Oregonian, community volunteer and business owner, I want to support our elected leaders to take the right steps to improve our schools. I'm relieved Oregon is finally positioned to invest more in our education system, but just adding more money to the K-12 pie isn't enough — that money must be targeted to the areas where it will make the most difference for our kids.

There's one organization we can turn to for guidance during this legislative session: The Chalkboard Project. This statewide nonprofit organization has taken a thorough, independent look at our K-12 public schools. And Chalkboard has developed a strong action plan based on what it found.

GUEST OPINION

Medford schools — and schools throughout Oregon — are good, but need our support to ensure all of our students are graduating from high school prepared for their futures. We must raise reading and math achievement. We must reduce our dropout and new teacher attrition rates, and lower class sizes in key early grades. And we must increase citizens' confidence that schools are spending money wisely.

During Chalkboard's extensive research, our citizens made a few things clear. They want great schools. They're willing to invest in improvements that clearly will raise student achievement. But they're not interested in throwing more money at the status quo.

Other research findings are equally clear. Children who can't read well by third grade face long odds in ever catching up. Low class sizes are critical in the early grades; in the higher grades, it's not clear they make much difference. What does make a difference is having a top-notch teacher in every classroom and excellent principal in every school — there is no more important investment we can make.

Chalkboard has a long-term plan to provide more professional support to our educators as well as hold them more accountable for results. Oregonians want both.

Chalkboard has a plan to carefully target more funding toward reading tutors and other "best practices" that are proven to raise student achievement, while making sure schools continue providing a guaranteed level of quality service to children. Oregonians want both.

Chalkboard has a plan to help districts find more savings, while stabilizing our school funding system. Oregonians want both.

I've been involved in Chalkboard's work for more than a year. I'm one of the thousands of citizens they turned to for ideas on how to improve our K-12 schools, and I helped facilitate discussions with others in our community. It's this kind of outreach that makes Chalkboard's legislative recommendations compelling — Chalkboard's pragmatic proposals truly do represent the will of Oregonians.

Check out these proposals for yourself at www.chalkboardproject.org. We owe it to our children and our community's future to support our legislators in passing these critical education reforms.

Sue Densmore is the owner of Sue Densmore Communication Strategies in Medford and a member of the Chalkboard Project's statewide citizens corps.