



# EBEA NEWSLETTER

East Brunswick Education Association

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United in Excellence

October 2013

## IN THIS ISSUE

|                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Special Election                     | 1  |
| Save the Dates                       | 1  |
| Candidates' Biographical Information | 2  |
| Candidates' Profiles                 | 3  |
| EBEA Fall Fest                       | 9  |
| Cheers and Tears                     | 10 |
| Odds and Ends                        | 11 |

## SPECIAL ELECTION EDITION

***This edition spotlights candidates who are seeking election to the East Brunswick Board of Education.***

Legislation, (Public Law 2011, Chapter 202), signed by Governor Christie gives communities the option to change the date of the annual school board member election to November. As a result of this enacted legislation, the election of school board members to the East Brunswick Board of Education will take place on Tuesday, November 5, 2013.

Four candidates are seeking seats for three positions on the Board this year. All registered voters need to exercise their right to vote. For those voting in person, polls are open from 6:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. Vote by Mail Ballots must be received by the County Clerk's office on or before November 5, 2013.

The following guidelines are provided to help you evaluate the candidates featured in this special edition.

### **A School Board Member SHOULD:**

1. Possess a sincere desire to contribute to the well being of our schools by supporting and fostering excellence in education.
2. Establish school goals based on students' educational needs, parent and community aspirations, state and federal standards and district financial resources.
3. Be objective and consider all sides of an issue before reaching decisions.
4. Be an effective communicator between the community and the school system.
5. Be committed to adequate financing for the district's present and future needs.
6. Nurture positive change through collaboration among all who care about our children.
7. Establish a process for negotiations in good faith with its employees and in alignment with educational goals and financial responsibilities.

### **A School Board Member SHOULD NOT:**

1. Attempt to run the schools vs. work to see that the schools are run well.
2. Object to residents who express their opinions or share opposing views.
3. Seek a seat on the Board for personal glory or for the purpose of carrying out personal objectives.
4. Sacrifice quality education to save pennies in tax points.
5. Foster controversy and discord rather than cooperative working relationships.
6. Ignore the oath of office for school board members.

### **SAVE THE DATES**



**October 29<sup>th</sup>  
EBEA Fall Fest**

**November 5<sup>th</sup>  
Don't Forget to  
VOTE**

**November 7<sup>th</sup>  
MCEA NJEA  
Convention  
Reception**

**November 7<sup>th</sup>  
November 21<sup>st</sup>  
EBBOE Meetings**

**REMEMBER....ELECTIONS MATTER....DON'T MISS THE VOTE**

**Tuesday, November 5, 2013**

## CANDIDATES' BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

**Dr. Brad Cohen:** Dr. Cohen, a physician, has resided in East Brunswick for 20 years. His children are graduates of EBHS, Class of 2006 and Class of 2008.

**Holly Howard:** Mrs. Howard, former educator and former restaurant manager, is a 32 year resident of the community. She has two adult children who both attended East Brunswick Schools, grades K-12.

**Curt Philipczak:** Mr. Philipczak has resided in East Brunswick for 13 years. He is a self-employed licensed certified public accountant. He has two school age children enrolled in grades 2 and 4 at Chittick School.

**Erum Shakir:** Mrs. Shakir, an East Brunswick resident for 15 years and a product of the East Brunswick Public Schools, is now a stay-at-home mom. She was previously employed as a Human Resource/Project Coordinator. She has three children – one attends Memorial School.

**Each candidate was asked to provide, in addition to some biographical information, his or her “message” to the members of the East Brunswick Education Association. In making their statement it was suggested that the candidates address the following questions:**

1. Why have you chosen to run for the Board of Education? Please include your professional/personal experience that supports your candidacy.
2. We all know that these are challenging times for public education. Please identify two or three challenges facing our public school district. How would you address them?
3. How do you envision yourself working with our EBEA members for the betterment of the district?
4. While the Governor's office reports that public schools have seen more state aid than ever before, the district's state aid data for FY 2014 vs. FY 2013 shows no increase. Utilizing this comparative data, how can a fiscally responsible budget be developed while maintaining the quality of public education in our school district?

**Polls Open 6 AM to 8 PM**



**On November 5, 2013**

# CANDIDATES' PROFILES

## Dr. Brad Cohen

Having had the privilege of serving on the East Brunswick Board of Education (BOE) for the past three years, I am completely convinced of the responsibility and mission of those of us who seek your support. The fact that the East Brunswick School System is held in such high regard is NO accident. The BOE, administration, teachers, aides, parents and children have established a culture of SUCCESS. This tone is set and enforced by the Board of Education. As a result, any candidate for this position must be completely committed to education and our children – as this is our future!

Education has ALWAYS been important to me. I have done a good part of my schooling right here in New Jersey. I graduated from UMDNJ (now Rutgers) New Jersey Medical School and Rutgers Business School, earning both MD and MBA degrees. Medical school and residency training were no easy tasks, but my commitment to the art and science of medicine kept me focused on a goal. There can be no better feeling than the satisfaction from having made a difference in someone's life. In medicine – this can be curing a disease, easing pain, lifting a burden, delivering a baby, or simply forming a human connection that allows someone to know that you really care. In this regard – I believe we are both very much the same. Despite the negativity, politics, criticism, etc. – we are in honorable and rewarding professions and should always be proud of the roles and the responsibilities we assume.

I ran for a position on the BOE in 2010 and won a three year term. As many of you can recall – 2010 was a banner year in education here in New Jersey and East Brunswick. First and foremost we cannot forget that we were smack in the middle of the Great Recession. Unemployment was about 10%; real unemployment was more like 20%. The areas hit worst were the financial, healthcare, and technology sectors – some of the biggest areas of work for those of us here in New Jersey and East Brunswick. The EBEA was at impasse with the BOE regarding contracts. Chris Christie had entered office earlier in the year and imposed draconian cuts in State aid to most districts in the state. A charter school was approved and opened here in East Brunswick, requiring a large amount of money allocated from our already reduced school budget. Through it all, I and my fellow BOE members were able to maintain programs and services commensurate with our commitment to Excellence in Academics, Athletics, and the Arts.

The past few years have seen an easing of some of the budget concerns as State Aid has slowly rebounded (though not to pre-2010 levels). We have been able to restore some of the programs, teachers, and activities that were cut. We have seen the opening of full day Kindergarten, the rebuilding of Memorial Elementary School, and the attainment of Blue Ribbon status in ALL ELEVEN of our schools (no other district in the state can make that statement). All of this has been done without going over the State mandated 2% cap on property taxes.

I seek your support as I run for re-election – as there is still more to be accomplished. There is unfinished business in terms of the recruitment of a new Superintendent, the institution of TEACHNJ, and the PARCC assessment program.

As many of you know, seeking a replacement for Dr. JoAnn Magistro is no easy task. With salary caps in place, many top quality school districts are finding themselves in the same position as those of us here in East Brunswick. We were unfortunate that after an exhausting search last year, we were unable to find a replacement. We presently have Dr. Patrick Piegari serving as our Interim Superintendent. He has a wealth of experience having been a Superintendent and County Superintendent before coming here to East Brunswick. He will serve us well as we seek a permanent Superintendent, but we must complete this task in an increasingly competitive environment.

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# CANDIDATES' PROFILES

## Dr. Brad Cohen

I do not need to tell you that this year brings the implementation of the State mandated teacher evaluation legislation known as TEACHNJ. This monumental task must be done by your principals and administrators – some of whom are also being evaluated. Even with a tight budget, we are committed to NOT hiring new administrators. The stated purpose of TEACHNJ is to improve student outcomes by improving the quality of our teachers. This is NOT new to us here in East Brunswick and it is NOT meant to be punitive. Our Board means to give our teachers all the tools they need to be successful. To that goal, we have adjusted administrative responsibilities to create the position of Director of Staff Development and Evaluation. Notice that development is stated first – that was no accident. We intend to provide programs, mentoring, and services to any teacher in need of improvement.

I have personally attended some of the workshops that were set up to roll out the Danielson evaluation system. I wanted to satisfy the Board and myself that it was being done in a manner that was fair and respectful. As many of you know, Domains two and three are not very different from the evaluation system we have always used in the district. Keep in mind that we invest in each teacher and intend to stand by the culture of SUCCESS we have worked hard to establish. We here in East Brunswick have prided ourselves in accepting nothing less.

To those of you who are NOT teachers, but are part of the EBEA bargaining unit – you are not an afterthought. You are very important and are integral to the success of our students. Remember, we are a village and every part counts. This was just reinforced last week with the EBEF production of Dancing with the East Brunswick Stars. People from all across East Brunswick raised almost \$50,000 for our schools and programs.

As you can hopefully see by now, I believe I have found a passion outside of medicine. I am committed to our town, its children, and the public educational system we provide. Since my children have long graduated from our schools – I have NO bias in the performance of the duties for which I have been elected to do. I want to provide even more opportunities to the children of East Brunswick than were available to me and my children.

Each of you must vote based on your beliefs and your conscience – but I encourage you to VOTE. Please help me to continue my role in the education community by re-electing me to the Board of Education.

Best of luck in this new school year.



# CANDIDATES' PROFILES

## Holly Howard

The single most important responsibility of a Board of Education is the selection of their Superintendent of Schools. Despite a lengthy search prior to Dr. Magistro's retirement, we were unsuccessful in finding a candidate who met our criteria and was a good fit for the district. What I am looking for is a true instructional leader, passionate about his/her work, with the ability to motivate all of us to focus on success for every student, every day. From my experiences with superintendents from other districts, I know exactly what I don't want. We need capable educational leadership but more importantly a transformational leader who will have enthusiasm and vision for what we can achieve and the energy and drive to get us there. My goal is to find a candidate with the potential for growth and longevity here in East Brunswick.

I have chosen to run again because of my loyalty and love of our district. As a new parent, I became part of the wonderful Frost family, which shaped my passion for what we give our students here in East Brunswick. Serving as both President of Frost PTA and Presidents Council, I had the unique experience of being involved in all our schools and gained a better understanding of the necessity of collaboration and communication between levels for the continued success of students and staff. What sets me apart is this depth of knowledge about all aspects of our school system. Between my experiences as a parent and in my role as Board member, I can offer an objective, balanced prospective to evaluate proposals, situations and resolve issues. In my years on the Board, I have served on every committee and been involved in initiatives including planning and construction of new buildings, adoption of curriculum and the development of strategies to keep our school buildings safe and secure for our students and staff. I have learned much from past mistakes the Board has made and feel I can be a voice to prevent future missteps going forward. On a personal level, I am truly gratified to see many of our former students return to join our staff or to make East Brunswick their home once again. My son and his wife recently moved back, purchased a home and are currently expecting their first child, a future kindergartener at Lawrence Brook. This is additional motivation to maintain and always improve what we have in this district.

In addition to the challenge of finding a new superintendent, the district will be working to satisfy the state mandated teacher evaluation requirements. Everyone has worked very hard in anticipation of this new system. I feel that we are more than ready because the professionalism of our teaching staff and the preparation of our evaluators.

Our district has a history of administration, staff and community members working together for the betterment of our students. I have had the privilege of serving on committees for curriculum, special education, student services, recognition, negotiations, principal selection, referenda and Middle States Evaluation. Through our open and collegial discussions over time, hopefully the members of the EBEA have recognized how much I value their opinions and have gained their respect. During these meetings, I am so proud that our staff members have chosen to spend their careers here. I wish more people could see what I have come to recognize and appreciate in this unfortunate era of teacher bashing.

Which brings me to the question of developing a fiscally responsible budget while maintaining the quality of public education in our school district. Despite Governor Christie's TV commercials where he claims to have given more money than ever before to our schools, the facts show that we have been given less. Since our reserve was taken four years ago, we have been behind. In the last fiscal year, even though state aid remained flat, it was still a decrease for us since our assessment charged by the state for the School Construction Act went up, resulting in a net loss. The biggest

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# CANDIDATES' PROFILES

## Holly Howard

change for us is that with no vote on the budget, we now can plan better. Of course even with state aid flat, there is the variable of amount of tax levy to be raised, which impacts our taxpayers and must always be a major concern. But without the threat of a defeated budget resulting in millions of dollars being cut each year, we can plan better to support instruction in our classrooms. We also will renew our efforts to work together productively with the township and create a more reciprocal relationship with the hopes of creating new shared services contracts in areas such as computer networking and storage, plus interlocal financing agreements to save taxpayers money. In addition, the EBEF continues to support innovation and excellence in our classrooms. Between all of us, I believe we can continue to support the quality of education synonymous with East Brunswick.



# CANDIDATES' PROFILES

## Curt Philipczak

### Question #1:

Three years ago, when I first decided to run, I was a concerned parent with a child in the school system. There were massive cuts in state aid and I wanted to contribute my time and expertise, searching for financial solutions.

I'm a Certified Public Accountant licensed in New Jersey practicing public accounting for my own firm. Currently, the cuts in school funding may not be as large as they were three years ago but I still feel that we need to be looking and planning for the future. I would like to be a part of the process moving forward.

Three years later, both of my children are now in our school system. Serving on the Board of Education has been a wonderful learning opportunity for me. I have deeper respect for the talented people that have made our school district an outstanding one. I take pride in my community and I'm proud of the East Brunswick school system.

### Question #2:

Currently, the Board of Education in East Brunswick is involved in a superintendent search. I believe this to be an important issue because finding the right fit of goals and objectives with a person who may lead the district, in the future, is the most important directive a Board of Education member can ever be involved with. I look forward to working together with the other Board of Education members in finding the right candidate.

Another challenge that is important is school districts were mandated by the state of New Jersey to introduce teacher evaluations. I believe the Board of Education in East Brunswick should monitor our compliance with the mandate as it relates to the fairness of those evaluations.

Since it's a new state mandate, the next few years will be important in how the state evaluates the progress and the results of this mandate. I am proud of the great teachers we have in East Brunswick.

The continuing challenge we face is the budget which governs our ability to deliver the best for our students. I hope that educational funding will be seen as a priority by the state when they do their budget in the future. I also hope state legislators can understand the financial burden they place on school districts when mandates are placed on them and the state does not increase funding with the mandate.

### Question #3:

I believe effective, open communication is key in working together in any organization. I look forward to working with any community or professional organization that wishes to contribute ideas and solutions for the benefit of our quality education system we have in East Brunswick.

### Question #4:

There are no easy solutions when it comes to cuts in state aid. Every year brings on different challenges. At the end of the day, I promise to work with everyone to deliver the best budget for our School district with the focus always to be on the children and where our school district is not forced to abandon our quality of education in light of the state budget.

# CANDIDATES' PROFILES

## Erum Shakir

### Question #1:

I have chosen to run because I want to help maintain and increase the rankings and the highest level of excellence that our school system is known for. East Brunswick schools have raised and educated me with merit and distinction, and I hope that my children will receive the same or better quality of education. I also want to introduce a voice that speaks for the minority, because our town is becoming increasingly diverse. Our residents deserve a fresh outlook to represent them. I want to be a vital part of the future of our youth and give back to the community that I have always considered home.

### Question #2:

Increasing taxes for parents/homeowners is definitely a huge problem. 60% OF OUR TAXES go toward education, and that's a huge burden on the residents. I want to fight for our students and parents, and get the state government involved with the Board of Education. There needs to be some sort of balance between, the state, municipality and residents so that there is not such a huge burden on residents.

I also believe that teachers need to be supported in this crucial time, because they are obviously the prime movers in the education of our children's education. We need to focus on their needs to help our students, and increase our parent-teacher communication. This will ultimately help our parents, through the abilities of our teachers, to be more involved in the increasingly different types of issues that affect our children, like bullying, insecurities, pressure, popularity, etc. Teachers' reach has been cut, which has impacted their ability to be the best quality educators.

### Question #3:

I sincerely believe in communication and cooperation to utilize resources in the most efficient manner. As a mother and homeowner, I am well aware that funds need to be used properly and not wasted on unnecessary and superfluous ideas. Rather, we should focus on our classrooms and specific innovative projects to help instill leadership in our children.

I excel in event planning and bringing innovative, creative ideas to the table, which I have displayed by being a part of a recent East Brunswick Education Foundation event. I have a strong dedication to serve the residents of this town. My goal is to reach out to the community on a more individual basis - Sometimes residents can be frustrated by a problem or issue and feel intimidated to address it. I have spoken to residents who have requested that they are concerned about social issues concerning their children, and they just want to make sure that their children are safe, and not distracted away from academics by social pressure. If I were to serve on the board, I want to attend social gatherings in East Brunswick, meet the parents and hear their inputs, concerns and make an effort to solve problems/concerns. I can work as a liaison between the community and BOE that will assist the community to convey their concerns and input to the Board of Education.

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# CANDIDATES' PROFILES

Erum Shakir

## Question #4:

The budget is a huge concern for growth, and it is increasingly difficult to develop a budget when state aid has been decreasing. It is essential that we do everything possible to assure that East Brunswick remains an affordable community where families can give their children, not just an average education, but an exceptional education – and it's what East Brunswick is known for, EXCELLENT SCHOOLS. So, I propose that we need to work with committees to see where the classrooms and teachers absolutely need the money, and cut down on areas where we can. I also believe in using the gym and cafeteria to generate revenue to decrease the burden on our parents.



## EBEA Fall Fest

Come join the fun and celebrate with your co-workers!

*\* DJ \* Dancing \* Buffet Dinner \* Cash Bar \* Raffles \* Prizes*

October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013

4:00 PM – 7:00 PM

\$15 per person

(Checks only, payable to EBEA)

EB Chateau, 678 Cranbury Road

Snap the code to add the fun  
to your calendar!



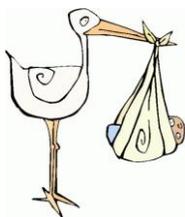
# Cheers and Tears

## Congratulations to:

**Adam Recktenwald**, EBHS, recipient of the NJ Council for the Humanities Teacher of the Year

**Robin Sarfati**, Lawrence Brook teacher, on the birth of her daughter Carlee Paige (in September)

**Michelle Fokas**, EBHS special ed. teachers on the birth of her twins Sophie Rose and Jerome Joseph (in September)



**Anthony Alexander**, Irwin teacher, on the birth of his daughter Emma Harper (in September)

**Barbara Alexander**, Admin. secretary, on the birth of her granddaughter Emma Harper (in September)

**Carol Falco**, EBHS instructional assistant, on the birth of her grandchild (in September)

**Dorothy Demetor**, Memorial nurse, on the birth of her granddaughter Emery Grace (in September)

**Victoria Zaleski**, CJHS English teacher, on the birth of her daughter Vienna Marie (in October)

**Lynne Prevete**, Lawrence Brook aide, on the birth of her granddaughter Vienna Marie (in October)

**Ronnie Goldstein**, EBHS Family and Consumer Science teacher, on the birth of her granddaughter Kendall Jordyn (in October)



**Shelly Bloom**, retiree, on the marriage of her son (in October)

**Patricia LaDuca**, Supervisor of Language Arts, on the birth of her granddaughter Lorielle Marie (in October)

## Condolences to:

**Marianne Cerrito**, retiree, on the death of her brother-in-law (in September)

The family of **Frank Antoniewicz**, retiree, on his death (in September)

**Valerie Pfeifer**, Irwin aide, on the death of her father (in September)

**Elaine Moran**, HMS French teacher, on the death of her mother (in October)

**Lucy Bortono**, Irwin secretary, on the death of her father (in October)

**Denise Girgente**, Admin. tech. specialist, on the death of her mother-in-law (in October)

**Norine McLaughlin**, Admin/Transportation driver, on the death of her father (in October)



## Get Well Wishes to:

**Mike Zielinski**, EBHS special ed. teacher

**Jean Martin**, EBHS aide

**MaryAnn Mastrogiamomo**, Bowne-Munro aide

**Ilene Berlin Fireman**, HMS Child Study Team

**Elizabeth Caracciolo**, Lawrence Brook aide



**“What comes from the heart, goes to the heart.”**

**Samuel Taylor Coleridge**



## Alpha Delta Kappa...Kappa Chapter October is ADK Month

We celebrate our founders and welcome interested contracted teachers. We are an international organization of women educators who impact the lives of our students, community and our members through educational excellence, altruism and world understanding.

If you would like to learn more please contact  
**Dorothy Heinze (732) 257-5754**



### ***A Thank You From Our EBEA Philanthropic Scholarship Recipient***

Dear Members of the EBEA,

Thank you very much for the generous scholarship. Your thoughtfulness and generosity are greatly appreciated.

I enjoyed my sophomore year at Towson University with several accomplishments. I have been named to the Dean's List both fall and spring semesters, inducted in The National Society of Collegiate Scholars in Washington, D.C. - Towson University Chapter, and accepted into my screened major, the Integrated Elementary Education/Special Education Program. Also, I was elected to serve as New Member Educator on the Executive Board of my sorority, Delta Delta Delta, sponsoring St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

I am looking forward to my junior year hoping to have as much success as I had in my sophomore year.

Thankfully,

Kirsten Granit (2011 recipient)



# East Brunswick Education Association

**We are an all-inclusive local NJEA/NEA  
affiliate representing approximately 1,400  
members in East Brunswick, New Jersey.**



***Like us on facebook!***

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PARC Cranbury  
575 Cranbury Road, Suites B1 & B2  
East Brunswick, NJ 08816  
(732) 390-6600  
[www.my-ebea.org](http://www.my-ebea.org)



**EBEA OFFICERS**  
**President:** Ruth Davitt  
**Vice President:** Mike Wildermuth  
**Support Staff Director:** Joan Hickman  
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