

Green, Pridgeon and Thomas seek Dixie County school superintendent's position

By Jeff M. Hardison © July 21, 2016 @ 2:07 p.m.

DIXIE COUNTY -- There are three candidates for Dixie County Superintendent of Schools - Jimmie L. Green Jr., Cheryl C. Pridgeon and Mike Thomas.



JIMMIE L. GREEN JR.

Jimmie L. Green Jr. is a graduate of James Anderson Elementary School and is a member of the Dixie County High School Class of 1982.

The 62-year-old man, born in 1954 learned from his mother Mary Nell Green that it is important to learn. He said this is one of the sources for his love of learning.

She was the valedictorian of her school, which at the time in Franklin County was segregated.

A key element in Green's philosophy of education is that students must have a moral foundation. They can learn this by teachers modeling self-control and self-restraint.

Unless a child is in a safe environment, Green said, the potential for him or her to learn is greatly reduced. By gaining temperance and impulse control, students then can

become enlightened.

Green said this groundwork is vital for the children to understand and appreciate society and the institutions of civilization – including schools.

After high school, Green earned an Associate of Arts degree from Lake City Community College (which is now named Florida Gateway College). He attended the University of Florida, from whence he was recruited into the Gainesville Police Department in 1986.

While at GPD, he was on the murder task force that led to the arrest of serial killer Danny Rolling.

He served the residents and visitors of Gainesville in that capacity until 1992 when he made a lateral transfer into the Miami Police Department and served in Miami until Christmas of 1995.

At that point in his life, Green wanted to complete his Bachelor's Degree, which he did in political science at Florida International University, and then he went on to earn his Master's Degree in Intellectual History from FIU in 2006.

He returned to Dixie County to teach, he said, and was hired by Marianna High School in Jackson County, where he taught social sciences until 2009. Green also taught dual-enrollment classes of American History and American History II at Chipola College in Marianna.

From 2009 to 2013, he taught at Suffolk County Community College in New York. His mother suffered from a stroke in 2013, he said, and that is when he returned to Dixie County again to handle the family's property.

Green is an ordained minister who serves at Potter's House in Chiefland, and his wife Lisa Robinson, the daughter of the late Pastor Lorenzo Robinson, is an elder in the church.

"I think it is more productive for a society to nurture socially well-adjusted children and adolescents," he said, "than to repair broken adults. I am dedicated to the intellectual, moral, and social development of all our children."

Green said he is devoted to the maturation of children. He said he endorses building more in the vocational education realm in Dixie County.

Two other aspects of learning where Green believes Dixie County and all of Florida need to improve are in music and art education.

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He said music and art are absolutely necessary to students, because this creative process stirs the imagination and cultivates the mind. Ethics and civics education are to be looked at for increasing, he said, to help the children have a greater appreciation for society.



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CHERYL C. PRIDGEON

Although Cheryl C. Pridgeon did not return a phone call seeking her input for people to see why she should be elected for Dixie County Superintendent of Schools, she did place a statement on the Dixie County Supervisor of Elections website.

She noted that she feels that her experience on the board, along with my 28 years teaching in three different school districts, has more than prepared me to lead Dixie County Schools in an efficient and effective manner.

“I will lead with transparency and accountability,” Pridgeon noted, “and promise to always err on the side of the students we serve.”

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MIKE THOMAS

Mike Thomas is a lifelong resident of Dixie County and a member of the 1984 Dixie County High School Graduating Class.

He and his wife Jill (St. Laurent) Thomas have four children, three of whom are in Dixie County public schools – two in seventh grade and one in the 11th grade.

He is the principal at Anderson Elementary School. Thomas is a member and deacon at First Baptist Church of Cross City.

He earned his Bachelor of Science degree in animal sciences from Florida A&M University, where and when, in 2000, he also earned his Master’s Degree in Educational Leadership.

He has taught classes, as well as serving as a school administrator for the past 21 years in three of the four schools in Dixie County. He also coached basketball and baseball.

Thomas has always been active in continuing his own education, and in 2014 he completed the 18-month series of courses through the Northeast Florida Educational Consortium in Principal Leadership Academy.

Thomas is therefore certified to be a principal in an elementary school, middle school or high



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school in Florida.

He is also certified to teach children in grades kindergarten through 12th grade who are in Exceptional Student Education.

Thomas wants voters to know he has the love and passion for students that is needed move Dixie County schools forward into a safer and healthy environment.

With three children still in Dixie County schools, Thomas said he has a personal and emotional connection to the school system. By having children in the system here, Thomas feels it helps him have an increased awareness, as well as felling an intensity to make sure things go right in all of the schools.

As he noted in his message on the webpage of Dixie County Supervisor of Elections Starlet Cannon, "My experience includes budget, discipline, instructional, safety, and curriculum decisions along with extra-curricular activities. I have always been a voice for the teachers and support staff and will continue to have an open door policy for our citizens."

Thomas said in a telephone interview on Thursday (July 21) that he has always lived his life in such a way as to exhibit character and integrity so that Dixie County residents will be proud to have him as their superintendent of schools.

Bell, Bush and Medlin seek Dixie County School Board seat

By Jeff M. Hardison © July 22, 2016 @ 1:57 p.m.

DIXIE COUNTY -- There are three candidates for Dixie County School Board District 1 - Patrick Bell, Crystal Bush and Amanda Medlin.

PATRICK BELL

Patrick Bell said he believes Dixie County voters should choose him for the School Board because he feels like he is the most qualified candidate.

Bell has served on the Dixie County School Board, where he was during the 2004-8 term. Therefore, he has made policy and worked on the budget as a Dixie County School Board member before.

Interestingly, his paternal grandfather Josh Bell was on the very first Dixie County School Board that was in the 1920s, when Dixie County became a county on April 25, 1921.

Bell retired as a captain from the Florida Department of Corrections after 30 years. While working at the DOC, he took classes in counseling, communication, crisis intervention, management and human diversity.

He earned an Associate of Arts degree in Education from Lake City Community College (which is now named Florida Gateway College in Lake City). Bell attended the University of West Florida after that.

He attends McCalls Chapel United Methodist Church of Branford, where he serves as the chairperson of the Church Council.

As for what is known as the common core curriculum, Bell said he is not in favor of it. He added that he believes there should be more teaching and less testing. And Bell asserted that Dixie County needs more career and vocational program, because not every student is destined to go to college.

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CRYSTAL BUSH Crystal Bush was a reading coach aide, and has been the varsity cheerleading coach for the past four years at Dixie County High School last year.

If elected, she could no longer be a reading coach aide, but she could still be a cheerleading coach there. She is currently the DCHS FFA Alumni president. She has been a member of this alumni group for 20 years.

She and her husband Kevin Bush have two daughters who both went to school and graduated from DCHS.

Kendall Bush, 20, is the "K" in BACK Fighting Cancer Inc., which is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization located in the Tri-County Area. That group's primary mission is to provide

financial assistance to families in Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist Counties with a child fighting cancer. Crystal Bush is among the founding members of BACK Fighting Cancer.

Kendall is a student at Florida Gateway College (formerly known as Lake City Community College). Kasey Bush, 22, is also an FGC student, her mom said.

Both young women are DCHS graduates.

Crystal Bush said she has seen education in Dixie County as a parent and as an employee. This candidate for School Board said she has a passion for children and is involved in the community.

Bush said she has strong family ties to Dixie County. In addition to her work at DCHS, she has worked in the banking profession for 15 years.

Lydia Baptist Church is this candidate's home church, where she has been a member of for 26 years.

This candidate said one aspect of her platform includes continuing to have Dixie County be strong in providing vocational education avenues, because not every child is college-bound. She is all for being college-ready, but she also knows people are needed in trades as well as professions.

AMANDA MALONE MEDLIN

Amanda Malone Medlin said all five of her children are in Dixie County schools now. Three aged 14, 15 and 16 are at DCHS. One aged 11 years old is at Ruth Raines Middle School and her 10-year-old is at Anderson Elementary School.

One aspect about this candidate is that she is the sole contributor to her campaign. Another part of her life she has no qualms about sharing is that she is a Christian woman.

As the mother of five children, Medlin said she has learned to budget and believes she will be good with taking care of business and finance in the school system.

Medlin said she feels like she can add to the Dixie County School Board in a positive way. And while she is not going to plan to go in making drastic changes in this school system, she is also not going to be seen as "a yes man." Self-described as a "team player," Medlin said she will not just let something go by the wayside by ignoring it.