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## School Board candidates present themselves at forum



Some of the students who volunteered to help are seen after the program on Saturday (July 28). These Williston Middle High School students had just completed a program that went from 10 a.m. to just after 1 p.m. They are (from left) Will McCoy, former chaplain of the WMHS FFA Sr. Chapter and is among the candidates for vice president in the fall; Ryan Kline, former vice president of the WMHS FFA Sr. Chapter and is among the candidates for president in the fall (Kline is also the secretary for FFA District 7); Austin Lake, a member of the WMHS Chapter of the National Honor Society, Victoria Lake, a member of the WMHS Chapter of the National Honor Society; Janiya Williams, a member of the WMHS Band; and Adam Sistrunk, president of the FFA Junior Chapter. (not pictured – WMHS FFA Treasurer Anthony Griffith)

### Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © July 29, 2018 at 9:58 p.m.

**BRONSON** – Two candidates for the Levy County School Board, District Five post were among the 18 candidates seeking various offices who spoke Saturday (July 28) at the Williston Middle High School Cafetorium.



Ashley Breeden Clemenzi (left) and Gary Bennett are the candidates for Levy County School Board, District 5. Cameron Asbell, District 1, and Brad Etheridge, District 3, were up for

reelection. Both Asbell and Etheridge qualified and no one else qualified to run in those races. Therefore, those other two School Board members are essentially reelected to the five-person board.

Ashley Breeden Clemenzi and Gary Bennett both shared introductions similar to their posts previously noted on the [BUSINESS PAGE](#) of *HardisonInk.com*.

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Beyond their introductions already published, these candidates, like the other candidates at this event, answered questions that were read by volunteer students from WMHS.

One of the questions to the candidates was what they will do to make children succeed.

Bennett stressed his belief that parents need to be involved in the students' education, although he did not spell out a method to better involve parents.

Bennett mentioned his endorsement for vocational education, as well as the academic track for students who are college bound. Another aspect of curriculum he notes is focus on basics such as mathematics, English, science and social studies.

Clemenzi said she concurs with Bennett in regard to having educational opportunities for vocations and trades.

She mentioned that the Levy County School District is evaluated as a "C" now, and while some parents and educators may settle for that, she is not content with that. Improving the quality of education for Levy County students is one reason she is running, Clemenzi said.

By looking at the school system that exists now, and the procedures in Levy County, Clemenzi sees administration focusing on behavior issues. Another methodology she sees being performed is to "bring the bottom up."

Instead, she would prefer the district focus on the bottom, middle and top thirds of students equally.

"We will always stay a 'C' if we focus only on the bottom third," Clemenzi said.

As for parental participation, Clemenzi concurs with Bennett in the regard as well. She sees parents, students and teachers as three legs of a three-legged stool that will not stand if one of the legs is not part of the foundation.

Among the other questions asked of the candidates was if they would approve participation by Levy County students in a nationwide student walkout to protest gun violence.

Bennett said if students are allowed to walkout and not study to protest gun violence, then why not let them walkout to protest against violations of human rights or any other number of social and or local issues.

Therefore, Bennett said, his answer is "No" to excusing an absence of a walkout of protesting gun violence.

"I believe in freedom of expression very strongly," Clemenzi said.

In regard to planned protests by students, Clemenzi said she supports this if there is a designated time before regular school hours or after regular school hours.

Clemenzi believes in structure, and the normal school day should not be interrupted by a walkout, she said.