

THE LIVING ROOM TIMES

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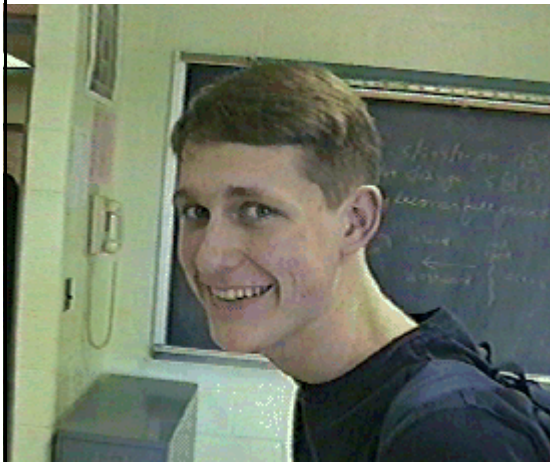
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SPECIAL ELECTION EDITION #2: THE 1998 NHS JUNIOR CLASS ELECTION SEASON

“The race is on, baby”

Stevens announces candidacy for class president



Above: Standing in Mrs. Roberts’s classroom Friday as he walks toward the door en route to his sixth-period class, Tim Stevens announces that he plans to run for president.

Former class president Tim Stevens threw his hat into the ring Friday afternoon, announcing that he plans to run once again for the presidency of the Class of 1999. Stevens will be attempting to reclaim the office which he held during freshman and sophomore years, then lost last June to Ryan McBride.

“I wish to announce my candidacy for office,” Stevens told *The Living Room Times* in an exclusive interview after fifth period on Friday. “I am going to run.”

“The race is on, baby. The race is on,” proclaimed Jeff Brunetti, who will be one of Stevens’s opponents in the election this June.

Stevens says that he had not previously told anyone—not even his girlfriend, Sara Hamilton—of his decision. Friday’s

“As it got closer, I realized that there was a lot of good that’d come out of being president, so I decided to go for it.”

—Tim Stevens

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Key Club elections to be held tomorrow

Four juniors seek presidency; student council elections next week

Four familiar faces, all juniors, will compete for the privilege of being president of Newington High School’s biggest extracurricular club when the Key Club holds its elections tomorrow evening.

Key Club candidate chart, page 2

Sara Colpitts and Jaimie Kwassman, familiar because they ran against each other for class treasurer last year, are running. So are Jeff Cultrera and Idalina Estanislau, familiar because they have been romantically involved, on and off, since seventh grade. The runner-up in the four-way race for president automatically becomes vice president.

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Campaign '98

Upcoming events

- Key Club votes tomorrow
- Student council election: preliminary meeting tomorrow afterschool, election next week
- Class election process begins after May 29 senior ball

Key Club Candidate Chart

Candidates for Key Club offices signed up by filling out a form on which they each answered the question “Why are you the best candidate for this office?” and then listed their “school activities” and “outside activities.” Here are their responses from those forms:

President

Sara Colpitts

best candidate because: much experience in a leadership position as president, secretary, and treasurer of different organizations; constant involvement in Key Club activities & fundraisers

school activities: 3 years in Key Club (secretary this year), ski club, swim team, Class of 1999 treasurer (freshman and sophomore years), musical productions *Bye Bye Birdie* & *My Fair Lady* (assistant producer), National Honor Society

outside activities: president of St. Paul’s Youth Group

Jeff Cultrera

best candidate because: I feel that I’m the best candidate for the office of President because I’ve been involved in the Key Club for 3 years and have been an officer for one year. So I know how things work. And I feel I can keep the Key Club a success or with your views and opinions that I’ll make a point of having a better club than this year.

school activities: Key Club treasurer, Italian Club, Neighbors Helping Neighbors, student council (alternate), track, baseball, soccer, Student Leadership Council

outside activities: Parks and Rec. basketball, church youth group, cook at Mortensen’s, volunteer escort

Idalina Estanislau

best candidate because: ...Along with being an active member for 3 years, I have been involved in many other volunteer organizations such as Girl Scouts, Neighbors Helping Neighbors, and the St. Mary’s Group of Youth. I am capable of leading a volunteer club.

school activities: Common Ground, softball, field hockey, *My Fair Lady* (orchestra), student council, National Honor Society, Spanish National Honor Society, class representative/prom committee, Hugh O’Brien Leadership Seminar

outside activities: Girl Scouts, St. Mary’s Youth Group, Connecticut Destiny Softball, work 2 jobs, babysitting

Jaimie Kwassman

best candidate because: I have been an active member of Key Club for 3 years and I have many new ideas to bring into the club such as a toy drive for homeless children.

school activities: Key Club, clarinet choir, student council, junior class treasurer, band (symphonic), prom committee, Student Leadership Council

outside activities: B’Nai B’rith youth organization, Hartford Conservatory Ensemble, Hartford Conservatory Lessons

Treasurer

Jeff Brunetti

best candidate because: I feel that I am the best candidate for the office because of extreme dedication along with acute preciseness in getting the job done. I follow directions well & do what I’m told.

school activities: varsity soccer, varsity baseball, vice principal student selection committee, National Honor Society

outside activities: Parks and Rec. basketball (champions), Premiere soccer team, travel soccer team, busboy at Elaine’s Restaurant, volunteer at Jefferson House, golf, summer athletic teams

Natalie Chavez

best candidate because: I am responsible, organized, and hardworking and wish to volunteer to help in any way possible to the Key Club. My strength in the field of mathematics should make a great addition to my other abilities.

school activities: JV basketball (captain), varsity track, varsity cross country (captain), Neighbors Helping Neighbors, chemistry club, history club, student senate, New Student Committee

outside activities: I usually find a way to serve my community through school.

Alla Remen

best candidate because: I am trustworthy and responsible. I am also good at math and work well with money.

school activities: student council, student government, swimming, tennis, indoor track, Key Club

outside activities: swimming

Secretary

Joanna Kornafel

best candidate because: I am organized, responsible, and work hard. I have been in Key Club for 3 years and am involved in various aspects of its activities, like Jefferson House and the new New Kids Committee.

school activities: cross country, indoor track, tennis, Neighbors Helping Neighbors, adventure club, chamber orchestra, history club, chemistry club, National Honor Society, student council

outside activities: church

Kathleen Simoneau

best candidate because: I am responsible and attend every meeting. I am actively involved in Key Club this year and was last year also. I enjoy volunteering and will do the job as best as I can.

school activities: student council, Class of 2000 government, drama club

outside activities: work, babysit, street hockey

The election will be held at Tuesday’s Key Club meeting. Candidates can make speeches if they wish, although they are not required to do so. All Key Club members are eligible to vote, including seniors.

Stevens to run for class president

Joins Brunetti, probably McBride in possible rematch

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big announcement was the end of nearly a year of uncertainty about whether he would run again.

Stevens's decision increases the chance that the race this June will be a rematch of last year's three-way presidential election between Stevens, Brunetti, and President McBride. McBride said on Wednesday that he "probably will run" for re-election. Brunetti has already decided for certain to seek the presidency again: he declared on April 1, exactly one month before Stevens's announcement, that he will indeed run for president—provided Vice President Lauren Correll doesn't ditch the #2 job and run for the top spot. Correll stated last week that she would not run for president unless both Stevens and McBride were to decide against running, something which is out of the question now that Stevens has jumped into the race. That means Brunetti is definitely in the running, and a three-way rematch is a distinct possibility.

Asked for his reaction Friday to Stevens's decision to run, McBride said, "Good. You know, he wants to run. It's his prerogative. So, I don't know—it should be fun." McBride said he's "sure it will be" an interesting election with good competition.

Brunetti agreed. "I think it'll make an enjoyable race again, for everybody to see this year, and I think it'll be great," he stated.

"Man on the street" Kevin Hauschulz, who proclaimed after last year's election that "it's time for a change at Newington High School...and if it doesn't work, we'll go back to Tim," was asked Friday for his reaction to Stevens's decision to run. "Good," Hauschulz replied. "I'm glad that he's running. More competition this year."

Stevens said that he is approaching this year's contest with "the same attitude I always do: I hope I win the election." As far as assessing his chances of victory, Stevens—who has not won a *contested* election since the beginning of freshman year—didn't have much to say. "I try not to think about my chances, because either

you can get too headstrong, or you can get way too down on yourself, and you count yourself out before it's started," he explained. For the time being, Stevens said, "I'm just going to worry about...writing my speech, and that's about it. I'm not going to worry about what I think is going to happen, because that can change any second."

Besides, Stevens added, whether or not he thinks he will win did not turn out to be a crucial factor in his choice on whether to run. "There were quite a few times when I thought I wasn't [going to run]," he said, and "a lot of it was based on the fact that I didn't think that I could win. And I decided that whether or not I win is not important, but the fact that I run is more important."

Among the factors which *were* instrumental in the ex-president's decision to seek his old office again were conversations with others about the issue, he said. "I talked to a couple of people who I thought would have good input with it, and I listened to what a lot of people were saying in the halls: constantly asking if I was running, suggesting I should. And then I finally sat down and worked it out in my head and decided it was a good idea."

Asked *when* he actually made the decision which he announced on Friday, Stevens said he has "been back and forth on it for a while. Maybe sometime [vacation] week." It was on April 16 that Stevens announced that he would make his decision public—be it yes or no—on Friday, May 1.

Listing the pros and cons which he weighed when deliberating over whether to run, Stevens harkened back to a statement he made last year hours after learning he had lost to McBride. Back then, when asked if he'd run in '98, Stevens replied, "No promises at this point, but—I mean, if Ryan does a great job, no, but otherwise, yes, I'll be there." On Friday, Stevens said, "I had to analyze how good it looked like the students felt that Ryan had done, because if he had done an excellent job in my opinion and others' [opinions], I wouldn't bother running, because he deserves the job the most. I mean, if he had done a great job, and he had proven to me that I failed in my job, then I definitely wouldn't have run."

Other decision-making factors included "how much I wanted it," said Stevens. "As it got closer, I realized that there was a lot of good that'd come out of being president, so I decided to go for it."

Now that he's in the race, Stevens will have to focus on closing the gap between himself and McBride. Few

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Above: Jeff Brunetti smiles as he announces on April 1 that he will run for president — assuming that vice president Lauren Correll doesn't decide to run for the top spot.

Stevens, Brunetti hope to catch McBride

Stevens enters race one month after Brunetti's announcement

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people really know how wide that gap is, since numerical election results are not released publicly. (Candidates themselves have the option of finding out how they did in an election, but Stevens says he never did so.) But a *Living Room Times* survey of 93 juniors in January showed that of the 75 students who chose to reveal which candidate they had voted for in last year's race, McBride had an edge of about 16%—a percentage which would translate to approximately 40 or 45 voters out of the whole junior class.

However, that *LRT* poll also indicates that McBride's edge may have narrowed significantly since then. When students were asked who they would vote for in a three-way rematch between McBride, Stevens, and Brunetti this year, 34% of the 92 respondents chose McBride, while 30% chose Stevens—a drastically reduced 4% gap. Brunetti received 8% of the vote, while 28% said they had no idea who they would choose.

But although McBride's lead appears smaller now than it may have been last year, Stevens remains a challenger and an underdog, and making up that gap is his task. Asked what he will have to do in order to accomplish that, Stevens said, "It all comes down to those who haven't made their decisions. I'm not going to try to chase after people who are clearly his supporters, just as I wouldn't expect him to chase after people who are clearly my supporters. It all comes down to those who are undecided, those who are swaying both ways, have interest in either group, or in Jeff, or—any of the three. So you have to concentrate on those and sway them that way, one way or the other."

Brunetti, it would seem, has an even bigger gap to make up. Asked Friday if he believes he can do it, the election's biggest underdog stated, "We'll try, we'll try. Like they say, anything's possible."

Of course, any new candidates entering the race could completely change the dynamic of things, as Stevens affirmed Friday. "Oh, absolutely," he said. "As opposed to three, that's 4 or 5 or 6 different ways the votes are split. It all depends on who runs."

Liz Acey, who toyed with the idea of running last year, may once again consider doing so this year. "I'll think about it. I'll get back to you," she said Thursday, as reported in Friday's *Living Room Times*.

Tim Jorel may also be considering a run for the presidency. As he walked past McBride in the hallway on Wednesday during the president's interview with the *LRT*, Jorel announced, "I plan to run...McBride's goin' down." But it was unclear whether Jorel was being



Above: President Ryan McBride gets a pat on the back from his friend Peter Pellegrini. Pellegrini considered running for president last year, but this year he has pledged his "full support" to McBride.

serious or just joking around, and the *Times* was unable to contact him on Friday to find out more.

The *LRT* is not aware of any other rumored or planned candidacies for president at this time. Peter Pellegrini, who considered running last year, said Thursday that he will not run this year, pledging his "full support" to his friend McBride.

Meanwhile, other students are beginning to make their plans regarding the races for the other four class offices.

Lauren Correll indicated with a "thumbs up" symbol on Tuesday that she plans to run for re-election. As mentioned earlier, she said she would not consider running for president unless neither McBride nor Stevens was running. "I'd like to do it, but I'd feel bad," said Correll, who is planning to run for president of the National Honor Society. "I just want to be involved. It's not like I have to president...as long as I'm involved, it's okay."

So with Stevens in the race for president and McBride leaning towards running, Correll will be seeking the vice presidency again, this time as the incumbent. Last year, she defeated then-incumbent Joanna Kornafel to win the office. Asked last week if she would challenge Correll this year, Kornafel said, "I don't know. I have no idea." Joe Ploszay, who signed up to run for vice president last year but was disqualified during the petition process, was likewise unsure whether he would run this year.

The Living Room Times has not specifically contacted the other three incumbent officers to confirm that they plan to run for re-election. However, President McBride confidently stated on Wednesday that all the incumbents except him are certain that they will be running. "I'm the only question mark," he said.

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Looks like another interesting election

All incumbents face potential challenges; presidential rematch likely

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Given that, the question is who will oppose the incumbent treasurer, secretary, and social chairperson. And much like the presidential and vice presidential races, answers are slowly beginning to trickle in.

Treasurer Jaimie Kwassman will receive at least one challenge—from Sara Colpitts, the ex-treasurer whom Kwassman ousted last year. Colpitts confirmed via e-mail on Saturday that she plans to oppose Kwassman in this year's election.

Secretary Brynna Johnson, who was the only unopposed incumbent in last year's election, this year may finally have to face a challenge—for the first time since September 1995. Shortly after last year's election, David Downes expressed regret that he had not run against Johnson. He vowed to do so in 1998—and on Wednesday, he said that he is still considering that option. "I'm thinking about it," Downes said. "Somebody's got to beat her."

Social Chairperson Ali Lucey was the only *opposed* incumbent in the Class of '99 to survive the sweeping "time for a change" movement last year and win a contested election. Lucey defeated challenger Idalina Estanislau is what was generally believed to be a very close race. After the results were announced last year, Lucey said she was very happy and surprised, and stated, "Idalina did a very good job. She should run again next year. She's very good."

But last week, Estanislau appeared to be leaning against that option. On Wednesday, she said she will "probably not" run against Lucey again this year; the next day, she sounded even more confident as she stated, "I don't think so" when asked if she would run.

But that doesn't necessarily mean that Lucey will be unopposed. Mike Duensing expressed interest Thursday in challenging her, saying that he would like to be social chair "because I want to plan a senior trip." Duensing admitted that in general, "I don't know anything about anything yet." But he elaborated on his class trip idea, saying that "a couple of my friends did it. Senior girls, they went to Cancun. And I want to, I don't know, get something going."

So it looks like there should be quite a lot of action throughout the junior class races this year, making for another interesting election season. The class election process will get underway after the May 29 senior ball, according to Mrs. Gossoo.

Most of the attention, of course, will be focused on the presidential race. With Brunetti hoping to rise from the role of spoiler to that of a legitimate contender, and with Stevens and McBride moving toward another June face-off, it looks like another compelling presidential contest could be in store. And this year, a little something extra

will be at stake: the winner of this election will, as class president, get to make a speech at graduation next year.

Making the presidential race all the more interesting is the controversy which has surrounded the incumbent president from the moment he ripped up his speech last year and spoke to the class "from the heart." The ad-lib act, which was praised by his supporters as "the best speech I've ever heard" and criticized by his detractors as a silly performance by a "stand-up comic," polarized much of the debate over last year's election.

As a result of that lingering controversy, enhanced by a rowdy classwide assembly in October which some said turned into a "McBride pep rally," some students still believe McBride should not be taken seriously as a president. Indeed, the aforementioned *Living Room Times* survey indicated that in comparisons of Presidents Stevens and McBride, Stevens held an overwhelming edge in the category of "taking his job seriously," even among respondents who voted for McBride last year.

The key question is just how many students feel McBride is a "joke," and how will that belief affect their votes. As reported in Friday's *LRT*, McBride stated on Wednesday that the success of the junior prom "shows that I'm not a joke," adding, "I...take what I do seriously to the largest extent I possibly can."

On Friday, Stevens emphatically agreed with McBride. "I know he's not a joke," Stevens said. "He was a victim of circumstances. He did what he had to do to win, and unfortunately, people thought that from that speech, that his entire [candidacy] was about that, that he was just a stand-up comedian. And I've seen in the past that that's not true, so that's not fair to him."

Asked how much of an effect the issue will have on the election if McBride runs, Stevens responded, "See, I don't really know how many people buy into it, because a lot of the people I talk to know who he is, so they know that he doesn't treat [the presidency] as a joke. But it all boils down to what the common view is. From my standpoint, I don't think it'll be that big a deal, but for all I know, there could be fifty people out there who think he is a joke."

Putting aside last year's speeches, Stevens focused more during his interview Friday on how McBride has done this year, as president of the class. Asked about his aforementioned statement from last year that he wouldn't run this year "if Ryan does a great job," Stevens explained that he said that "not because I thought I couldn't win if he did a great job, but more because I thought I shouldn't run if he did a great job. And I thought he did an average job, and I think there's still room, as there always is, for an improvement."

And Stevens thinks he can provide that improvement? "God, I hope so."

Key Club to vote for officers tomorrow

Student council election expected to take place next week

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Jeff Brunetti, Natalie Chavez, and Alla Remen are competing for the job of Key Club treasurer. Joanna Kornafel and Kathleen Simoneau are running for secretary. All the candidates are juniors except for Remen and Simoneau, who are both sophomores. A chart of the Key Club candidates' lists of activities and answers to the question "Why are you the best candidate for this office?" can be found on page 2.

Meanwhile, the student council elections will be held sometime next week, according to advisor Maureen Gossoo. Mrs. Gossoo said Friday that there will be a student council meeting afterschool tomorrow at which students who are considering a run for office can express their interest. The elections will hopefully be held at the next meeting, said Gossoo, which will be next week.