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SPECIAL ELECTION EDITION #11: THE 1998 NHS JUNIOR CLASS ELECTION SEASON

Stevens steals the show

Poll indicates ex-president gains ground on McBride after highly effective speech; election looks like a two-man race once again

In his final appearance on the political stage of Newington High School, Tim Stevens gave perhaps his greatest performance yet as he made a loud, energetic, impassioned speech Wednesday which captured the attention of much of the class, upstaging even charismatic incumbent Ryan McBride.

<u>LRT poll:</u> <u>Race for</u> <u>president</u>	<u>AP</u> <u>class</u>	<u>Non-</u> <u>AP</u> <u>classes</u>	<u>Projected</u> <u>classwide</u> <u>total*</u>
McBride	2	23	44%
Stevens	13	20	43%
Kornafel	4	5	11%
Brunetti	0	1	2%

*adjusts data to accurately represent the proportions of AP and non-AP students in the entire Class of '99 (based on U.S. History classes, which is where the poll was conducted)



Above: "I'm tired of it!" Tim Stevens exclaims during his speech Wednesday as he discusses the "vicious rumor" that the Class of '99 is "lazy." Below: Poll results show students' ratings of the presidential candidates' speeches.

Campaigners get creative at finish

Multimedia campaigning and an old-fashioned gentlemanly bet characterized the active last day of the Newington High Class of 1999's final campaign.

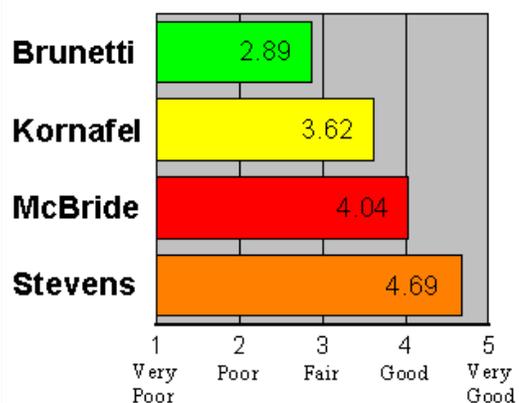
Joanna Kornafel, a candidate for president, and Natalie Chavez, a candidate for secretary and a good friend of

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Stevens closed the gap which had existed between himself and McBride, according to the LRT polls which were conducted before and after the speeches. By the end of the day Wednesday, the four-way presidential election appeared to have boiled down, much like last year's contest did, to a two-man race between McBride and Stevens—and that race looked too close to call. Survey percentages adjusted to accurately reflect the academic leveling of the entire

Average ratings of speeches

74 students surveyed



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Several candidates get creative in last day before election

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Kornafel's, went high-tech with their campaigns on the final day. In second period history class Wednesday, both were part of the group which was scheduled to present their assigned video project, so they took advantage of their opportunity and started the video with a campaign advertisement—complete with patriotic music—featuring Chavez speaking, reminding students to “vote for Joanna and Natalie” in Thursday's elections.

The high-tech, multimedia side of the Kornafel and Chavez campaigns showed itself again Wednesday evening as each candidate sent a self-promoting e-mail to a number of Internet-connected juniors.

Chavez's e-mail message was simple: “DON'T FORGET TO VOTE FOR NATALIE CHAVEZ FOR SENIOR CLASS SECRETARY !!!!!!”

Kornafel, on the other hand, had a little more to say. Acknowledging first of all that “Yes, yes, I know I am stealing Natalie's idea” (Kornafel sent her e-mail more than six hours after Chavez sent hers), Kornafel nevertheless stated, “I decided to do this anyway. I wanted to ask you all to vote for me tomorrow.” She continued, “This is my last ditch effort to get votes after today's speeches. I can't compete with the skills of Tim, Ryan, and Jeff (who should have had the chance to speak w/o those interruptions). I made my speech the best way I knew how. Tomorrow's elections shouldn't be about speeches, however. It should be about the candidate who you believe is the best for president. I will work for the class, not myself. I want all of you to understand that.”

“Thank you for taking the time to read this,” she concluded, “and I ask you to remember me in tomorrow's election.”

Jeff Brunetti's bad luck during his speech, mentioned by Kornafel in that e-mail, has caused his election prospects to look bleak, forcing his campaign

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Speeches successful for Stevens, McBride

Ex-president, incumbent president both draw big cheers at assembly

“This is the best class in the entire school. Us. No one else!” —**Tim Stevens**



Cheers and applause were common Wednesday for Stevens (above) and for McBride (below).



“Most of the time, I'm not serious. I take a fun approach to everything. 'Cause that's what I'm all about.” —**Ryan McBride**

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class showed a virtual dead heat between the top two contenders.

McBride, for his part, recaptured some of the speechmaking magic which led to the popular upswell that carried him to victory last year. His speech was well-written and well-read—it earned a 4.04, or “good,” in the LRT poll, not too terribly far below Stevens's “very good” 4.68. But although he gave a good speech, McBride—specifically disallowed this year from ripping up his prepared speech or changing his planned remarks significantly—was unable to “top” Stevens this time in a speechmaking contest. He may very well still top Stevens in the election, however; for one thing, the statistical dead heat between the two front-runners could lean in McBride's favor as voters' recollections of the speeches fade away 24 hours after hearing them.

Although he was the first student seeking the *presidency* to speak Wednesday, Stevens was the eighth candidate overall to come to the podium. He

followed the two candidates for social chairperson, one for treasurer, two for secretary, and two for vice president. But if the students in the audience were starting to get bored, Stevens quickly woke them up with his typically loud voice and unpredictable dialogue.

After beginning with “Well, I'm back”—a statement which drew hoots of approval from the restless crowd—Stevens continued, “And the big question everyone's asking is, ‘Why?’ The answer really isn't that complicated. It's all of you: my classmates, my friends, even those of you who wish you never saw me,” he added with a touch of humor.

“I'm running for president because I'd be honored if you selected me,”

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Front-runners appeal to the masses

Speeches by Stevens, McBride get crowd interested

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not because the title would look good on a transcript or would “somehow make me more popular,” Stevens said.

At this point, a boy in the audience exclaimed, “I love you!” This statement drew a laugh from the crowd, but in contrast to McBride’s speech last year—in which he replied to such a remark with “I love you too”—Stevens paid no attention. He continued, “That’s what brought me back. That is why I love this job. It’s not about me. It was never about me or any single one of us. It’s about all of us together,” he said, clenching his fist.

“I also stand before you today to address an issue that’s been bothering me for some time: a vicious rumor which has followed this class since day one, since we were stuck down at the ‘bottom of the barrel,’” Stevens continued, making reference to something he said in his unorthodox, wildly popular speech in September 1995—the speech which won him the Class of ’99’s freshman class presidency—in which he described the place of his fellow “lowly” freshmen as “the bottom of the barrel.” His allusion to that remark drew a few hoots and a little bit of applause Wednesday, but it was a few moments later, as Stevens began to describe the “issue” at hand, that he really got the crowd going. “It’s about class participation,” he said. “People have told us how uninvolved we are. How unmotivated; how lazy. And I’m tired of it! The Class of ’99 is not lazy!”

This emphatic statement drew a hearty round of cheers and applause—and Stevens wasn’t finished yet.

“We are not unmotivated,” he went on. “Look around you. This is the best class in the entire school. Us. No

one else!”

At this, the the audience naturally exploded in cheers. Two students in the back of the auditorium gave Stevens the wu-tang clan salute.

“We are leaders, not followers. In sports, academics, and everything else, this class excels. I’m not saying this to make you feel good; I’m saying it because it’s true. Time and time again, we have proven ourselves. There is nothing this class cannot achieve.”

Stevens went on to say that he does not personally hold “the key to an increase in participation, to an increase in school spirit.” That, he said, would be “a claim that is not only arrogant, but completely false. None of the candidates before you today can rightfully claim this.”

“The key lies in all of us,” Stevens continued. “I alone cannot lead this class to greatness; it is our responsibility together. However, I promise to give you everything I have, to each and every one of you.”

Stevens also promised that communications between class officers and the student body would be improved under his administration. “It’s no one’s fault, but there has been a silence between officers and peers since the very beginning, and”—in an tone of voice sounding angry almost to the point of rage, he went on—“it *must end now*.” This emphatic exclamation drew another round of cheers and applause. “I choose to fight back against this silence....If I am elected, together we will take down this invisible wall.”

“This is our last year—our moment to shine,” Stevens concluded. “I know each and every one of you is ready

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Gualtieri to shave head if Brunetti wins

Campaign manager uses outrageous promise to try to get more votes

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manager, Claudio Gualtieri, to resort to desperate measures to get out the vote for Brunetti. As the devoted campaign manager explains it, “If Jeff Brunetti wins, Shannon [Kelly] is going to shave my hair off with a razor blade in the courtyard, and she’s going to put a bow tie on me.”

Gualtieri has apparently made this deal in an attempt to encourage people to vote for Brunetti in the hopes of seeing such a spectacle. “I’m sacrificing for my class,” Gualtieri stated. “Get people to turn their vote over, hopefully.”

Gualtieri said he doesn’t know whether his strategy will be enough to ensure a victory for Brunetti—and a

shaved head for himself—but he thinks that Brunetti will gain enough votes to move at least into second or third place. Asked whether the strategy might take away enough support from Stevens voters to hand the election to McBride, Gualtieri replied, “I don’t know where we’d be taking from in that case. I’m just hoping to take votes [from somewhere].”

Brunetti Camp—the official name of Brunetti’s presidential campaign—also hopes to gain a few votes through their scrollerboard ad, which was up in the cafeteria on Wednesday, according to Gualtieri.

As for the head-shaving deal, Gualtieri stated firmly that “I will hold to it. I will go through with it” if Brunetti prevails.

Stevens, McBride: too close to call

Today's presidential election looks like it could be a tight one

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to take our class to the highest level, the level where we belong. Thank you very much."

With that, the audience erupted into rowdy applause. Several students in the back of the auditorium stood up and cheered. Fists were pumped, and the wu-tang salute was seen again.

The class soon had something else to cheer about as well. Ryan McBride, an expert on inspiring the masses, spoke next. The post-Stevens frenzy soon translated itself into a hearty cheer for McBride as the incumbent president was introduced. Mike Duensing, a candidate for social chair, stood up and clapped for McBride as he walked up to the podium, as did several others in the crowd.



Above: Ryan McBride, his image blurred by motion as he walks rapidly toward the podium, is cheered on by Mike Duensing.

Despite the fact the candidates were not supposed to deviate from their approved speeches at all—a reaction to McBride's decision last year to rip up his planned speech and talk "from the heart"—the president played with fire on Wednesday, deviating slightly, but not quite enough to be disqualified. He started his speech by looking directly at the audience and asking, "How's everybody doing today?" Various members of the audience shouted things in response; McBride stated, "Hi." He then began his written speech.

McBride started by listing his credentials. He read them directly from his prepared speech without deviating until someone in the crowd—reportedly Travis Meyer—yelled "gym hockey." McBride concurred, "[I] like gym hockey." The striking similarity of that statement to things which McBride said off-the-cuff in last year's "from the heart" speech, as well as the risk of disqualification which he was taking by saying anything this year without approval, caused the "gym

hockey" reference to draw laughter and applause.

But McBride immediately returned to his written speech. He spoke next about the junior prom, which he called "one of the most successful yet."

"We had more than 300 people attend" the prom, he said, "which brought a profit to the class's funds, which, hopefully next year, will go to, like, a better DJ. I understand that was a problem." The class responded positively to that suggestion.

Like Stevens's "bottom of the barrel" allusion to 1995, McBride made an apparent reference to his 1997 speech when he said of the 300+ prom attendance, "if that's not participation, I don't know what is." Last year, one of the central tenets of McBride's off-the-cuff speech was his focus on "par-ti-ci-pation."

He went on to invite students to participate in the class car wash on June 7, adding controversially, and again outside of his written script, that "there'll be a couple of unofficial competitors, if you know what I'm saying"—reportedly a reference to a "wet t-shirt competition," although McBride later would neither confirm nor deny that that was the competition he was referring to. At any rate, some audience members got the joke, and laughter and cheers resulted. One of those laughing was social chair candidate Mike Duensing, who cracked up at the oblique reference to the "competitions."

McBride then hastily continued with his written, approved description of the car wash: "It's a fun time to spend with friends, raise a little money for the class in a worthy cause."

Moving on, McBride stood on the strength of his record as president during the 1997-98 year. "Last year, I promised to be a decisive leader who was not afraid to take action and make important decisions that would benefit the class. If you want a good example of this, go home and take a look at the quality of your prom pictures." McBride took credit, along with the other four officers, for choosing Art Rich, a slightly more expensive studio, over Varsity studio, "which is notorious at NHS for bad pictures." The result: "Quality prom pictures at a fair price," the president stated.

"Under my administration," McBride continued, "all the officers' combined efforts saved the average Newington High School student 10% off their estimated prom ticket costs." The audience applauded this accomplishment.

McBride went on to say that "I take pride in knowing that any person in this class can approach me and have a legitimate say in a serious conversation about school and

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Candidates speak; election today

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the class.” He asked voters to “take a long, hard look at the candidates, and ask yourself, ‘Who would I most feel comfortable approaching?’” Students in the audience answered this question with cries of “Ryan!”

McBride closed his speech by addressing the issue of his own seriousness—something which he has been criticized for supposedly lacking ever since he was elected on the strength of an ad-lib speech last year. In his speech yesterday, McBride even lifted a quote from the pages of *The Living Room Times*, in which Carrie Ripley described McBride’s speech last year as the work of a “stand-up comic.” “I’ve taken several knocks by a couple students saying that I wasn’t serious or that I was a ‘stand-up comic,’” he said.

“And you know what?” he said Wednesday. “That’s right.”

Thus, in a stunning move, the incumbent took a whole new approach to the seriousness issue. Whereas in past interviews with *The Living Room Times*, McBride has said that he *is* a serious president, he made no attempt to say that on Wednesday. Although he did not say that he doesn’t take his *job* as president seriously, what he did say in his speech was a far cry from his April 29 statement to the *LRT* that “I’m a serious individual.”

“Most of the time, I’m not serious,” McBride continued yesterday. “I take a fun approach to everything. ‘Cause that’s what I’m all about.”

“Yeah!” yelled someone from the audience, as many others erupted into wild cheers at what amounted to a direct assault on the importance and relevance of attacks of McBride’s character based on the seriousness issue.

“If I were to take a serious approach to everything, then you guys just wouldn’t like me,” he added.

“So in closing, I challenge the Class of ’99 to elect me, Ryan McBride, as senior class president.” Before he could even finish that sentence, the wild cheers began.

The applause seemed not quite as widespread as they had been for Stevens, however. At any rate, students polled later in the day rated Stevens’s speech as better than McBride’s. In fact, 54 of 74 survey participants rated Stevens’s speech as “very good,” compared to only 19 of 74 for McBride. Still, the general opinion was that McBride’s speech was a good and effective one.

Ex-vice president Joanna Kornafel, now a first-time

“I don’t believe this is a race based on gender...

But I have to admit, I think it would be rather interesting if a girl were president. After all, girls can do anything they put their minds to, right?”

—Joanna Kornafel

“I’m a serious candidate running for a serious position, and my only hope is that you take this election seriously.”

—Jeff Brunetti

presidential candidate, spoke next. Her remarks were fairly typical for a class office speech, with the notable exception of the portion which addressed the issue of her femaleness. “I don’t believe this is a race based on gender,” she said. “I feel that you will pick the candidate you think deserves to be president next year. But I have to admit, I think it would be rather interesting if a girl were president. After all, girls can do anything they put their minds to, right?” This rhetorical question, of course, evoked cheers and applause from a number of girls in the audience.

Other than that, Kornafel addressed some fairly standard issues, but of course put her own spin on them. “I noticed that we didn’t have any class activities this year,” she said. “How can we have a great senior year if we don’t do anything?”

“I’ve heard that some people were a little disappointed in the junior prom. I myself had a great time, but I think next year could be even better,” Kornafel said. “We as a class need to decide what we want: a repeat of [this] year, or an excellent senior year. It’s up to you, and if elected, I will do my best to do what you, as a class, want.”

“Senior year should go out with a bang,” she finished. “I think I can be the one to help do that. Remember, tomorrow, vote for Joanna Kornafel.”

Jeff Brunetti was the final presidential candidate to speak. Brunetti, who was doomed in last year’s three-way presidential race against Stevens and McBride when he was put in the unenviable position of trying to follow Stevens’s “script”-ripping antics and McBride’s speech-ripping antics, was hounded with bad luck again on Wednesday. This time, his problem was not following an unbeatable speech, but simply that he couldn’t get his message out because the microphone failed twice during his speech due to intercom announcements which disrupted the signal.

“It’s hard to believe, but next year is our final year at this school. The years have flown by; our senior year is probably the most difficult one to handle”—at this point, the microphone stopped working, but Brunetti didn’t miss a beat, immediately stepping aside and raising his voice to speak without amplification—“What college do we go to? And all those deadlines we have to meet.”

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Class of '99 election is this morning

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As Brunetti spoke, an announcement began over the intercom, making it even harder to hear him. The crowd, sympathizing, began to cheer for his persistence. Brunetti, meanwhile, diligently kept talking—even though the majority of the students in the auditorium probably couldn't hear him. Finally, after two or three virtually inaudible sentences, he stopped, waited for the intercom announcement to end, then picked up the microphone and began talking again.

Things went along fine for a while as Brunetti listed his qualifications. "I had to ask myself, 'What makes me the best candidate for president?' Now, bragging about myself is not my style, but it's a question I have to do battle with," Brunetti explained. "I'm the best candidate because I'm a hard worker. I'm a bit of a perfectionist, and get the job done right. I'm smart, and will work to the utmost of my ability to get the job done. I just love working with others, since it makes for jolly working conditions."

Discussing his plans for next year, which include a food drive and a charity fundraiser, Brunetti said, "I can't do it by myself. You—yes, I'm talking to my peers now— you must take part in the class. Get involved and we can do many great things."

"I'm a serious candidate running for a serious position, and my only hope is that you take this election seriously.

Four candidates for president—four," Brunetti emphasized. Someone in the audience loudly repeated, "Four." "The decision will be the toughest ever," continued Brunetti. "The choice is in your hands. All your votes count."

"My promise to you is that I'll go all out," Brunetti went on. "I love this class because we are the greatest class to come through this school. Ever. Without a doubt." The crowd cheered.

Then suddenly, the microphone went off again, just as Brunetti began his concluding sentence. "Yes— vote for me. I'll go all out for you, my class, the Class of '99," he finished softly and dejectedly, his voice trailing off as he walked away discouraged. The heartbreaking ending drew sympathetic "awws" from the crowd, followed by a round of applause.

Brunetti had barely sat down when someone in the audience yelled "We want Tim!"—a scene strangely reminiscent of last year, when the end of Brunetti's speech led right into the beginning of the crowd's chants of "Ryan! Ryan!"

The *LRT* interviewed various candidates and voters yesterday, but due to time limitations, we are unable to print quotes from those interviews in this edition. Some will be included in upcoming editions on Friday and/or Monday.