

Welcome to the Larry in Fishers dot com podcast; I'm Larry Lannan.

Larry: Hamilton Southeastern School Board "At-Large" elections go like this: there are three seats. All voters within the district choose one candidate per Township. There are five candidates in Fall Creek Township's Election. Chauna Leigh Holder is one of those five candidates; a nurse with a son enrolled in the HSE Schools.

Casey Alexander talks with Chauna Leigh Holder in this podcast.

Casey: Hello. My name is Casey Alexander and I'm a freshman at Fishers High School. I have participated in activities like Model UN and Fishers Junior High School's "We the People". Today I'm joined with school board candidate Chauna Holder. Chauna, please tell us about yourself.

Chauna: Thanks for having me. Again, my name is Chauna Holder. I'm a candidate in Fall Creek Township. I'm a mom to one elementary school student in HSE and a career nurse and I've also been an educator at the high school level. Background a little bit further pertaining to this interview in particular, I started the nurse education training program, so it was a CNA training program and you are all probably familiar with the J. Everett Light Career Center, things like that. So I started that for Warren. That was my pet project for about nine years. I've been a public health nurse for twenty years and am currently involved in the Covid-19 response at the state level. And I'm very interested in what our school board is doing and what we can do better, and therefore, I am running for the seat.

Casey: Wonderful. So, to what extent will you be considering the student voice in your position as a school board member?

Chauna: You know, I think the students have more than made it clear that no one is listening to them. There are a number of student groups, there are a number of student social media groups. There's all kinds of ways that students are trying to be heard and it is as though the adults are just talking over them. My purpose as a School Board member, as should be any school board member, is to make sure that student voices are heard and that parent voices are heard, and ultimately that we act as a board, along with the superintendent, to make choices that are in the best interest of all students.

So of course there needs to be some temperance but we are not in the schools on a daily basis and we are not experiencing school as a high-school student. We have our experiences to draw from, but things have definitely changed. And the students absolutely deserve to be heard. I'm encouraged by students like you that are taking on this endeavor and I think the most important thing is that people want to be heard, people want to be understood, and then when you act in the best interest of everyone and come back around and explain why you made the decision that you did. What was that thought process that went into it and why is this the outcome? I think there is a huge opportunity for communication to improve from the board, to the community and vice versa.

Casey: As a student, I'm definitely going to have to agree with that one. What are the top three priorities that you would try to handle if you were elected to the school board. Or essentially, what is your platform?

Chauna: Okay. My platform, if you have seen any of my online stuff is "hashtag" #all kids and people...(laughs)... I would think that's pretty simple but to further explain that - all kids. We have a term that is being used that's called exceptional learners and I have a little bit of a struggle with that because exceptional automatically lends itself to those that are elite; those that are somehow above and beyond what we consider average. I'm average. I'm still an average student in my doctoral program and the average is getting it done. All students. Black, white, Hispanic, Indian, Muslim, whatever your particular issue is - all students.

Because that is who our community is comprised of; it's comprised of everyone and so everyone everyone needs to be considered when we're making policies, when we're providing procedures, when we are providing structure for how our schools are going to operate and educate our learners. So, it's not just if I have an issue that's important to me than that is what I'm going to wave my flag about - no. The equity that is so important to me is - there are different things that pop up at different times and each person deserves to have their feelings heard and they deserve to have actions taken that are sensitive to their needs. So, my platform is simply all kids but that really means all kids, no matter what the challenge is. I don't care about sexuality, I don't care about how you look to me, I don't care about how you learn... as a person I'm here to represent you as a person.

Casey: So this has been a remarkably unique year in regard to public health and safety. How do you plan to ensure the safety of every kid in the district?

Chauna: Wow! That is a loaded question and I will start by saying this: my training has prepared me to respond to a number of Public Health Emergencies. That's from incident command to local public health emersion with response to mass incidence, things of that nature, and what I have seen with the Covid response is very mixed and it's very dependent on which building you are in, which person you talk to, what perspective. There's somethings that have been done very well and there are some things that have been done not as well. And what I would like for us to do - what I would like to have done, initially when we first began suffering in the pandemic - while everyone was not moving was an opportune time to talk about what is this going to look like and how long it's going to last. If we look at our history, we know a pandemic is going to be at minimum a year to 18 months. That's daunting, but that's reality and I think if we look at the realities of the way a situation presents then we are better able to plan for how we're going to draw ourselves out of that.

With the public health challenges I think that I would have liked to have seen those that are differently-abled or the exceptional learners, those that have day-to-day needs and specialties that are provided while they are in the school building, have been absent from those services for so long... I would have liked to have seen them staged to come back first because they are the

students that absolutely are needing those services. And there's not a really good way to provide those outside of the school setting especially when you're under a mandate that is basically no contact, that kind of thing. And then to bring back our students who have demonstrated social needs, so are you not getting meals at home because that was your primary source of getting your nourishment was going to school and getting those regular meals? Our kids that need backpacks of snacks on the weekends. Let's send them back next. Children like mine, fortunately, that don't need those kinds of services, that are out for other reasons - let's wait to put those back at the very last. I think we could have had a staged approach and quite a lot more planning forward. I think that's where a lot of people are having trouble - that it appears that there wasn't enough planning and again that maybe a communication deficit.

Casey: This has also been a remarkable and unique year in that we have seen a focus on equity in the last few months in tandem with the Black Lives Matter movement. Do you plan to advance equity and equality in the district, and if so - how?

Chauna: That's a great question because what candidate would say that they were not going to advance equity, you know? That's the reality of campaigning, and also, you know trying to get those boats but the reality is having the lived experience that I do and having the professional experience that I do. I've been fortunate enough to work with several different academic areas, so talking about school nurses, teachers, administrators - all of those people that are in tune, understand how important equity is, and that equity is not simply promoting one over another. It is recognizing that there are structures in place, systems in place, that actively deny opportunities to different groups. So, in one arena that may be because of a gender bias. In another arena, that may be because of a religious preference.

Equity is all about making sure that everyone has the best opportunity to succeed and for me that means first of all, acknowledging that disequity exists. I think that's been the most challenging conversation in this community the past two weeks, the idea that systemic racism doesn't exist. It absolutely does and there's no way to deny that. Our country was built on opportunities taken from all different groups. Not just Blacks, not just Native Americans but we're talking the Irish, the Chinese, anyone that has served as an indentured servant at any point during history. This is all documented and first is acknowledging that there is a problem. Two is inviting people to discuss - so we have got to be able to sit around a table and have honest discussions about what we can do to remove barriers wherever possible and three is taking action.

Casey: So this is the last of the generic questions that we are asking every candidate, but why are you the best choice for the school board? Why should we vote for you?

Chauna: Because I'm awesome is the short answer but (laughter)...okay, seriously. The short answer is because when you have people that are invested in the best for everyone - those are your candidates. I don't have backing. I'm a true grassroots political candidate and so I'm jumping into this rather naively, I quickly learned there are lots of different motives from lots of

different areas and I'm excited that I don't have those hands operating any puppet strings behind me so that's one, I'm independent. Two: I genuinely care about all people I mean I've been a nurse for 20 years I don't get to go into a patient room and say "oh no, I don't like this patient, I'm not going to help them, I'm not going to tell them what they need to know or help them get the resources they need to get better". Absolute not. Nurses are the most trusted profession across the board and there's no difference here. Thirdly, I am a person who is strong in her opinions but also a strong team player. So what I've seen so far is that there is very vivid division amongst certain members and certain relationships on the school board and that's fine but what's not okay is when you are you're at an impasse and you can't make decisions in the best interest of all students because of your personal issues. So you have to have some able to set aside differences and will keep the work moving forward. I'm absolutely one of those people.

I've been involved in government for most of my career and so the government healthcare is completely different from individualized practice. Always working for the betterment of large groups of people and so this is not really any different to me I don't think that there's any other candidate, no matter how well-meaning they are, that can really speak to issues of equity than myself. It's one thing to have someone that consults as an expert or someone that is familiar with something. It is quite another thing to have someone that has lived experience in the room at the time when the decisions are being made.

Casey: That's fantastic. And unfortunately for me, you already answered one of my candidate-specific questions. It was about your "all students" policies, so I'm just going to move along with the second one. How does your medical background prepare you for being a school board member, especially during the time of a pandemic? What can you bring to the school board in regards to health and safety of students and staff?

Chauna: Okay! So that unique training that we have as Nurses teaches us to think through an entire decision so the entire decision-making process is called the acronym is ADPIE and that is assessment planning intervention and...shoot. Of course I'm going to tell you what it is and not be able to recall it. But there is a process that we learn and it's its second nature but it's looking at a problem and then thinking about all of the options that are available to us going a step further and saying "okay, now what does that look like in action", so breaking down those steps and that's kind of where a "Lean" process, if people are familiar with that, will come into it as well. Lean looks at the problem and picks at it and picks at it until it's stripped away and there's just the bare bones and then you can deal with those issues. We do that, kind of on our feet as nurses and then evaluate - coming back and saying okay just went well this did not go well. Let's retool this so that we can do this better the next time because there's always a next time.

So like with this, I've heard of certain schools that have implemented QR codes so that they can monitor where students are throughout the building. That sounds excellent because I can't imagine being a teacher in this time and have to not only teach to those in the classroom, those that are online, and monitor every time someone gets up from their assigned seats to get up to go to the restroom, to go sneeze in the hallway because everyone is very scared about anyone sneezing or coughing even with their mask on, to changing classrooms, to disinfecting between

classes, when you don't have proper PPE, when you've been promised that you'll have cleaning supplies but you don't have them, and if you do have them maybe they are not marked with how they are supposed to be used. All of those different kinds of things. So, having someone in the room at the time that the sensitive information is shared amongst the board, because the board is not going to share everything that they know. That would be defeatist on the part of the board. Why do I have a board if they want to share everything? No, there's certain information that they have that has to be kept protected, but to have someone in the room that doesn't want to act as a consultant only, but they're invested and they want to be part of the solution that's the difference that I bring to the table.

As a healthcare provider, someone that actually does the work, not an administrator, not a person that is you know, executing the orders of someone else - there's a unique patient perspective and that comes into play when you say "well how are people affected by this decision" and take an all-encompassing look, a holistic look, at what do these decisions mean for our students? That's why people should vote for me.

Casey: Fantastic. So that's all the questions that I have so I'm going to open the next portion for your closing statements.

Chauna: Well, thank you for the time today and to you and your sister. I appreciate you both continuing this. I understand that this is a legacy that Larry has started and I think that he's a new grandpa so maybe he's spending time with that new grandbaby, which I don't blame him.

I am excited, I am encouraged, there has been an outpouring of support, mostly online since we are limited during this Covid situation. But, it seems that people are really genuinely interested in equity. There are a few loud voices that would have you to believe otherwise but I think the majority is definitely interested in equity. I think they are interested in teaching their children how to engage in a global society. That means that you have to be able to have open discussions about tough topics. With social-emotional learning, with diversity and equity being at the forefront, I think we can absolutely prepare our students. We've got the academics, we definitely have slid in those numbers the last few years, but I think it's because we need to refocus and re-energize. With some new blood on the board, that could absolutely happen in HSE and I hope that it does

Larry: Once again, my thanks to Casey and Izzy Alexander for handling the school board candidate interviews this election cycle. Remember if you vote a straight party ticket, your voting process is not over. You'll want to vote for the county council and then the school board.

This is the Larry in Fishers dot com podcast. My name is Larry Lannan. On behalf of Casey and Izzy Alexander, thanks for listening. Be safe, and be kind.