

Your Neighborhood News  
From the “Neighbors of Winner Road Association”  
[www.winnerneighbors.org](http://www.winnerneighbors.org)

**Issue #6**  
**11/05/07**

*Delivered to over 200 homes by hand!*

## Take Five Minutes to Change the World !!

Tuesday, November 6th, will be arguably the most important day for your family and your neighbors in the past 40 years!

That day is Election Day. And the critical issue on the ballot that will have a huge effect on us all is the question that asks you this:

**Do you want to move the 7 schools in Independence that have been in the KCMO School District for the last several decades into the Independence School District ?**

I'm sure you've heard that this vote was coming. The yard-signs are everywhere. The issue has been an important part of stories in the Independence Examiner for weeks. People are talking about it everywhere on this side of town. And I know from my involvement with the petition drive that some 98% of the people who read this article already support the school district change.

But I urge you: On voting day, don't assume that we're going to win this! We still need you to take action and vote!!

Remember: This same issue went to a vote back in the 1970's... and the issue failed! Our kids and our neighborhoods have remained stuck in the KCMO School District ever since!

Was it because too many people said to themselves “I'm not going to vote today. Let somebody else worry about it.”? Maybe. Maybe not.

The point is: **You need to make sure your voice is heard. Every vote is critical on this one.** If you really feel strongly about getting out of the KCMO district, how would you feel if you forgot to vote on Tuesday, and the issue failed ?

Whether you have kids or not, the fact remains: **What people think about the quality of the school district you live in... is extremely important to the futures of your family and your neighbors.** It can convince people to come and invest their children, their homes, their businesses, their money, and their lives into your area. Or it can convince them to take all of those things and LEAVE your area.

Please, please mark your calendar. Set your alarm. Write a note to yourself. Please vote for this school district change on Tuesday, November 6th !

Just a few minutes of your time will have a huge impact on the world around you. Don't forget to take your opportunity to change the world for the better!

## My Personal Take on the KCMO School District

I worked for the KCMO School District from 1989-1998. I taught 7th (and sometimes 8th) Grade Science at Martin Luther King Middle School (4201 Indiana). I was 22 years old when I took that job, moving to Independence from Waukesha, Wisconsin (a suburb of Milwaukee). Little did I know what I was getting into.

It was a tough job. Middle school aged kids are not easy to manage in a classroom. It's harder still when most of them come from families that are broken. I don't just mean families where the mom was the only parent around. Sadly, that's almost common-place today. I mean from families torn apart by drugs, families where grandma was raising the children, or families where the kids were more stable and functional than their parents.

It was a tough, stressful job, often quite depressing and demoralizing. However, there were many fun, bright moments. And I taught many kids that I thought were brilliant, amazing, loving people.

When it came to my fellow teachers, I learned that about 80% of them were honest, good, hard-working people who did a good job of teaching. Of the remaining 20%, some were new teachers who had trouble learning how to take charge, some were obviously in the wrong career. But some, unfortunately, were lazy as a rock while others were clearly "coasting" until retirement. I suppose it's like that in any company.

What did I learn about the "folks downtown"... the School Board and Central Administration?

I can't say I even ever encountered a single one of them personally, but I felt the power of some of their aggravating policies daily.

The main thing that I think annoyed me the most for those 9 years was that it was almost impossible to remove a "bad apple" completely from your classroom. By "bad apple", I mean a child who daily, consistently, disrupts class, makes zero attempts to learn anything, and persists in annoying and aggravating other students. (I'm saying that in a lot cleaner, kinder words than probably should be applied to the behavior I witnessed.)

Each year, the team of five teachers I was on would have at least one student who was a complete and total disruption. They made teaching the other kids almost impossible because they were always interfering, starting fights, sabotaging projects, picking on other kids, blatantly disobeying the teacher and sometimes even daring the teacher to do something about it!

It was extremely difficult to get the Administration to intervene and take the chronic behavior problem seriously. The team of five teachers I was on were required to literally spend **months** of time documenting infractions and all the different strategies we had tried in dealing with them. Anything less would simply result in the child being right back in class again, continuing to prevent the other kids from learning. And, quite frankly, other kids picked up on this and would start disrupting class too. The take-home lesson was that there were few, if any, consequences for being an ass in the class.

Now, I know that this sort of thing happens to a lesser extent in all American classrooms. We do want to keep the kids in class as much as possible, for their own education's sake. No child should be "left behind".

**But at what point do you realize that the damage this one child is inflicting on himself is far less than the damage they are doing to the other 25 kids in the class, day-in and day-out?**

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I believe that the key reason that the KCMO Administration refused to do anything about chronic discipline problems was this: The District was getting Federal dollars for each and every hour that each and every student was recorded as being in class in the teacher's attendance book. There was a HUGE financial incentive to keep those kids in class!

Thus, the vice-principal's office was a revolving door all day long. Teachers would send kids to the office (for much more minor infractions than I described earlier, but still usually serious stuff) and the kid would come right back to class.

So, there's the major lesson I learned: **What mattered to those in power in the KCMO District was MONEY, pure and simple.** It mattered more than anything. Keeping that money coming in was the number one goal.

I've been out of the district and working in the computer world for nine years now. So, you could say that if I was trying to apply my experience with those people to today's people, well, my information is old.

But have things really changed at the KCMO School District's Central Office?

I'll let you decide.

But I will point out this: I remember what happened to two of my "old bosses". Two former Superintendents of the KCMO School District. Dr. Walter Marks was supposed to be on medical leave due to a bad back. And yet I clearly remember the TV News video showing him at his "summer home" in Florida, hauling large sheets of plywood at the time! And Dr. Henry Williams, who was Superintendent during my last year with the District. I was quite surprised to read earlier this year that he'd been charged with stealing more than \$100,000 from the suburban St. Louis school district that he went to after he left Kansas City!

### **Is it any wonder that the KCMO District has a credibility problem?**

My sister-in-law still works for the KCMO School District. She and I got into a small, slightly-heated debate about the school district change issue. She accused me of only being "in it for the property values". I had to REMIND her that I have two young grandchildren living just a few blocks away from me. Unless they move, this will directly affect the quality of the schools they attend in a few years!

So then I started focusing my debate on the fact that we want neighborhood schools (especially at the middle school and high school level). Surely, why would anyone be AGAINST us having neighborhood schools? Isn't that what everyone wants?

I asked her, "Why won't you let us have neighborhood schools over here?" She paused, clearly thinking about it for a few moments, and then said... calmly, and somewhat sadly: "Well, where will the money come from to run the District?"

To which, of course, I answered, "How about you get the money to run Kansas City Schools from people and businesses in Kansas City?"

**Peel away the layers and the good people of Western Independence are just "a cash machine" for Kansas City. And even the teachers know it.**

See you at the polls November 6th.

## ABOUT US

The “**Neighbors of Winner Road Association**” is a voluntary group of your neighbors (homeowners, renters, and people who work in the area)...who are interested in improving life in our neighborhood.

We meet on the third Thursday of each month, at 7 PM, at Sovereign Grace Church, 9901 E. Winner Rd. There is no cost for membership. We do not charge any dues.

We invite you to visit your website at <http://www.winnerneighbors.org>.

This newsletter is currently being published 3 times per year. We might do 4. Maybe.

### What exactly is our Neighborhood ? Where are the Boundaries?

Our neighborhood makes up most, but not all, of the “Fairview Heights” neighborhood, as defined by the old “Neighborhood Council” system from the 1980’s. We are bordered by Truman Road on the North and 18th Street on the South. Our western border is Brookside. Our eastern border is the Railroad Bridge on Winner Road, which is the boundary line between us and Bristol #5 neighborhood. A nice map is available on our website, [www.winnerneighbors.org](http://www.winnerneighbors.org). (Sorry, we didn’t have enough space to put a decent-sized map in this issue.)

### GOT EMAIL?

You can receive alerts about our upcoming meetings and events by subscribing to our “**NEWS**” **email mailing list**.

To subscribe:

- 1) Go to our website ([www.winnerneighbors.org](http://www.winnerneighbors.org)).
- 2) Locate the small subscription form that sits on the left-hand-side of any page on that site.
- 3) Fill out that form and submit it!
- 4) Wait for confirmation email to arrive and then hit “Reply” and “Send”. This confirms your subscription.

### CONTACTS

Chairperson (plus Newsletter & Website-related concerns):	David Raasch	9725 E. Winner	461-3563
Treasurer:	Anne Verhulst	9755 E. Winner	337-3298
Block Captain:	Leah Burton	9732 E. Winner	836-4359
Block Captain:	Francine Wild	9883 E. Winner	836-8983

# Please Rank Our Neighborhood's Problems

Dear Neighbor,

We need your input. Earlier this year, the City met several times with our neighborhood and two others to learn about our issues. As a result of those meetings, we came up with our neighborhood's "top 8 issues". The biggest of these issues, "We're stuck in the KCMO School District", is already being addressed by Tuesday's ballot issue.

However, we still have the seven remaining big issues to deal with. **I would like you to tell me which issues you feel are the most critical**, so that our group may prioritize our efforts to improve our neighborhood!

I'm about to list these seven "bad things about our neighborhood" below. What I'd like you to do is to rank them in order of how important they are to you... and then get this information back to me. So, next to each item, on the left, is a blank. Please put a "1" in front of the most important issue that you think we need to deal with. Put a "2" behind the second most important one. And so on.

- \_\_\_ A. The neighborhood is not "child-friendly".
- \_\_\_ B. There are too many rental units and not enough owner-occupied homes.
- \_\_\_ C. Local businesses need our support.
- \_\_\_ D. Too many of the rental units in our neighborhood are not maintained / not clean.
- \_\_\_ E. The neighborhood looks and feels cluttered (litter, trash, etc.)
- \_\_\_ F. We have poor access to health care.
- \_\_\_ G. The neighborhood feels unsafe.

When you are finished, **you can get this info back to me using one of many different methods:**

- A) Tear off this page and slip it in the mail slot next to the front door of my house: 9725 E. Winner Rd.
- B) Fax it to me at 866-380-2437.
- C) You could type those 7 items and your rankings into an email and send it to me at "david.raasch@winnerneighbors.org".
- D) You could always call our answering machine and quickly read the number-letter combinations. My number is 461-3563.

I plan to tally the results into a single prioritized list. **The Neighbors of Winner Road will then use this list to determine what problem(s) to attack first.**

We've fixed street / sidewalk / lighting issues. We've vastly improved a litter problem. We've helped paint an eyesore of a railroad bridge. We've worked hard on this school district issue. So, I'm sure we can do something to help alleviate ANY of these seven issues !!

Please help us understand what you need the most! Thank you!

David Raasch  
on behalf of  
The Neighbors of Winner Road Association