



Citizens for Strong Schools, Inc.
P.O. Box 1071
Gainesville, FL 32602

www.yesforAlachuaschools.org

Citizens' advocacy group formed to support local school funding initiative

September 22, 2008: A group of local citizens concerned about the impact of state budget cuts on schools has organized to support a local funding initiative on the November ballot.

Citizens for Strong Schools has been recognized as a new corporation by the state of Florida and as a political committee by the Alachua County Supervisor of Elections Office. The group, led by local businessman Mark McGriff, is advocating a one mill increase in the local property tax rate to support Alachua County's public schools.

"As a businessman and a parent, I recognize that the entire community benefits from having an 'A' rated school system," said McGriff. "That means we all pay the price when our schools are threatened by a lack of funding."

Alachua County's schools have lost about \$14 million in the last year, and state officials have told school districts to expect more cuts in the upcoming school year and beyond. In April, the district will also lose nearly \$1 million in federal funds currently used to pay for school nurses.

If approved by voters, the one mill would raise about \$13 million for four years, which is as long as the additional levy would last. One mill is equal to \$1 of taxes for every \$1000 of the taxable value of a property.

"For about ten dollars a month for the average homeowner, we can bring back and maintain programs that make our schools successful," said McGriff. "We think that's a worthwhile investment in our schools and our community."

"We certainly appreciate the efforts of this group," said Superintendent Dan Boyd. "These volunteers recognize that our schools are in a crisis situation that will negatively affect the quality of education we can provide in Alachua County for years to come."

Under the ballot language, money raised through the one mill must be spent on school nurses, elementary art, music and guidance programs, school libraries, career/technical and academic magnet programs, classroom technology and middle school band programs. An independent group of local citizens will oversee the spending of the revenues to ensure they are used appropriately.

Citizens for Strong Schools will be communicating with local voters about the one mill right up until the November 4 election. The group is now in the process of raising funds for ads, signs, fliers and other materials. Anyone interested in contributing to the effort can send a check made out to Citizens for Strong Schools to:

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The group has also established a website with more information about the one mill initiative and how to get involved or contribute to the campaign online. That address is www.yesforAlachuaschools.org.

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For more information, contact Mark McGriff at 372-8406 or at mark@yesforalachuaschools.org