

SCOTTSDALE REPUBLIC

OPINIONS EDITOR

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Include your name and city of residence with your response.

Voters need to see the value in long-term education solutions

As a lifelong advocate for whole-child learning, I consider the impending cuts to Scottsdale classrooms and programs to all be horrendous options. It saddens me immensely, after advocating for quality education for over 30 years, to have hit this financial precipice in education support.

The Scottsdale Unified School District has diligently and thoughtfully made over \$20 million in cuts to our annual budget over the past few years, and we have been able to protect invaluable programs and classroom budgets — up until now.

We have cut administration by 22 percent and will cut more. Our administrative costs last year were at 9.1 percent, which is under the state and national averages, even though our funding increasingly depends on a plethora of additional unfunded administrative tasks that have been mandated by the state and federal governments.

However, low administrative costs



My Turn

BONNIE SNEED

Most of that professional development is considered to be administrative expense. So are services by psychologists that exist solely for the benefit of students.

Increased accountability legislation recently passed at federal and state levels requires more data collection, and expense to decipher, store and report on required data. These measures result in better accountability, and will probably help to increase the educational quality for students, but without increased funding for these mandates, the money must come in the

are only a minute portion of criteria for an efficient district. True efficiency comes in the form of overall effectiveness over expenditures. Professional development for teachers is one of the tangible keys to success for our district.

form of more administrative costs. The teachers simply cannot provide these evaluation measures themselves, nor would we want them to take away valuable instruction time for these administrative tasks.

All public schools rely on voters and taxpayers — through their override votes and their choices of representation in Washington and Arizona, to determine the amount of financial support for education. Cuts have occurred at the federal, state and local levels simultaneously. The voters recently decided to say “no” at every level, regardless of results or efficiency.

Since the recession, SUSD has demonstrated a stellar reputation for overcoming financial obstacles, yet still maintaining a high level of excellence. I would expect local voters, especially, to see the value in supporting that efficient level of service, if for no other reason than to retain their home values and quality of communities.

The looming federal and state cuts

will affect all Arizona schools and will cause all classroom funding to drop in every district, although the Scottsdale situation will likely experience higher profile.

Please know that everything possible is being done to preserve the quality of education and safety for SUSD students. It is my fervent hope that our community will realize that our per-student base spending level is capped by our state Legislature.

It is my hope that concerned voters will become truly involved in finding long-term solutions to allow our public schools to demonstrate efficiency and excellence, and to help restore valuable programs. But, it will take decisive, cohesive and extended effort from all stakeholders in our educational community who truly value quality public education.

Bonnie Sneed is serving her second term on the SUSD governing board.

Successes prove value of integrated mental-health solution

Just like diabetes and hypertension, mental illness is an ailment that is treatable — and if untreated can cause morbidity and mortality.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and the goal is to bring awareness that mental illness impacts us all. The National Institute of Mental Health estimates that 26.2 percent of Americans age 18 and older — more than one in four adults — suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year. That translates into 57.7 million people.

That same research shows as many as 70 percent of primary-care visits stem from mental health issues. Most primary-care doctors and their staff lack the training or the time to fully address the patients' wide range of psychosocial issues. Realizing this gap in care, Magellan Health Services of Arizona developed a model of care that integrates physical and mental health and addresses the individual's whole health needs.



My Turn

SHAREH GHANI

Magellan is effectively managing the physical and behavioral health needs of 1,500 individuals challenged with severe mental illness.

The IHH model includes far more than just co-location of behavioral and physical health-care services. It's about whole-person care, which includes training of peer-support team members in Stanford's Chronic Disease Self Management Program and providing support for hospitalized individuals. The most important aspect, in my mind, is the improved quality of life and satisfac-

Nearly three years ago, under Gov. Jan Brewer's leadership, Magellan launched Integrated Health Homes, or IHH, and now operates six in Maricopa County.

Through coordinated care and unique therapeutic interventions,

tion with care that members are voicing about IHH. Through innovative treatment planning, the IHH medical and behavioral teams pinpoint solutions to successfully manage chronic physical health conditions.

There are several success stories that illustrate how IHHs are overcoming significant barriers in acquiring health-care services for a person with mental illness:

» One man, who had been misdiagnosed with anxiety, learned at his IHH he had a congenital heart defect.

» A woman was frequently being readmitted to the hospital with breathing problems until it was discovered at her IHH that symptoms of her schizoaffective disorder were preventing her from using her prescribed inhaler.

» A woman has lost 70 pounds since her IHH nurse practitioner discovered she was pre-diabetic and provided self-care guidance.

Success stories such as these abound since Magellan began providing an integrated solution for our state's most vulnerable citizens.

It's forward thinking such as this that will help more and more people come out from the shadows of mental-health stigma and receive the care they need for their mental and physical health needs.

Someday, we'll celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month for all the successes in treatment, rather than needing to raise awareness about illness that is as real as diabetes or heart disease.

Dr. Shareh Ghani is the chief medical officer for Magellan Health Services of Arizona, manager of Central Arizona's (Maricopa County and parts of Pinal County) Regional Behavioral Health Authority since 2007.