

Alliance Introduces Two Candidates for the Healthcare Board

BY MICHELLE ASCHWALD

The Alliance to Save Our Hospital, a political action committee (PAC), announced its two candidates for the Marin Healthcare District (MHCD) board November 4, 2008 General Election.

Incumbent MHCD board chair Sharon Jackson and retired Marin obstetrician-gynecologist Harris "Hank" Simmonds declared their candidacy before 40 supporters at Creekside Park in Greenbrae, across from Marin General Hospital (MGH) on Wednesday, May 28.

"The challenge we have is to chart a pathway for the hospital once Sutter Health departs," Jackson said. "The present directors have worked well together this year. Now, we have a chance to get a solid consensus. We are asking the community to re-elect me and elect Hank Simmonds so that we will have a cohesive five-member board."

Jackson stated that the Alliance is announcing early because there will be a very full General Election ballot.

Simmonds said he is stepping forward to ensure the continuation of an important community asset because the failure of MGH would hurt everyone in Marin. The physician, who received his undergraduate and medical degrees from University of California, Los Angeles practiced obstetrics and gynecology in Marin from 1971 to 2006 and served as MGH chief of staff and chairman of its OB/GYN Department, and continues as an honorary member of the medical staff. He said, "Marin General is the cornerstone of the healthcare system in Marin." He cited campaign goals of facility modernization and retrofitting, financial solvency and the delivery of top-notch care for the citizens of Marin.

"These candidates have the skills to 'Save Our Hospital,'" Alliance co-chair Charles Auerbach of Belve-

dere told the crowd.

Ann Otter, also a co-chair and Belvedere resident, explained that the Alliance was formed in 2006 during the discord between the healthcare board and Sutter when there was concern about losing MGH. During the 2006 election, the Alliance raised \$140,000 to bankroll Dr. James Clever and Dr. Larry Bedard's successful campaigns, Otter told *The Ark*.

Three members of the Alliance (Jackson, Clever and Bedard) currently serve on the MHCD board and its members hope to win a fourth seat by electing Dr. Simmonds to replace Dr. Archimedes Ramirez, an incumbent candidate. The fifth member of the MHCD board is Jennifer Rienks, who was sponsored by the Friends of the Marin Healthcare District PAC during the 2006 election. She has two years remaining on her term. Ramirez, who is also affiliated with "Friends," could not be reached for comment.

The last day to file nomination papers for the non-partisan healthcare board office with the Marin County Registrar of Voters is August 3, 2008.

The MHCD is a special district of the State of California, created by the Marin County Board of Supervisors in 1946, to oversee the development and operation of a public hospital in Marin County. The District includes most of Marin County (except Novato and portions of West Marin). ☛