

October 9, 2008

Anti-bond Group Hosts 'Flunked' Screening

By Lori Yount

In the heat of the campaign for a \$370 million bond issue for Wichita public schools, anti-bond and limited-government advocates hosted a screening Wednesday night of the documentary "Flunked."

A few hundred people, from political candidates handing out handshakes to district residents responding to ads, gathered at the Orpheum Theatre to watch the film, which highlighted success at public, private and charter schools nationwide that took new approaches to education.

Helen Cochran, spokeswoman for anti-bond group Citizens for Better Education, called it an "uplifting" event. The screening was also sponsored by conservative think-tank Flint Hills Center for Public Policy and limited-government advocates Americans for Prosperity, which isn't campaigning on the bond issue.

Janet Maddy, who said she often works in schools through Lifetouch photography, came to the event after hearing a radio ad about the screening.

"I'm really concerned about education and why we're not achieving goals," she said.

"Flunked" executive producer Steven Maggi said he hopes the documentary will inspire people to demand more options in education from state legislatures and school boards.

"It's to empower the people to know about it," he said. "We believe in funding education, but you've got to be a smart investor."

At least one Wichita school board member, vice president Barbara Fuller, attended. She said she was there to see the options offered in the film and support the district and its proposed bond plan.

"We have choice -- any parent has choice," Fuller said, referring to the district's open enrollment and magnet school programs that allow children to attend schools outside their neighborhoods when there's room.

But Maddy, a resident of the Wichita school district, said she questioned the needs outlined in the pro-bond campaign.

"More money is never the total answer," she said. "Either way, I'm looking for what's right."