4 compete for 3 LMC board seats

Terms are for six years

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI HP Correspondent

BENTON TOWNSHIP Two incumbents, a recent appointee and a new-4 election for three seats on the Lake Michigan College Board of Trustees.

nonpartisan positions are board Vice Chairman Paul Bergan, Secretary Mary Jo Tomasini, Trustee Debra Johnson and Covert area blueberry farmer Barbara James Norman.

Bergan and Tomasini are hoping to return for new six-year terms, while Johnson – appointed in June – is seeking a first full six-year

Norman is making her first try for an LMC board seat, but has served on the Covert School Board.

Under LMC's rules. board members serve staggered six-year terms, so only two or three are up for re-election at any time. The board members also rotate among the various posi-

Paul Bergan

Bergan, 71, of 6158 Sandy Hill Drive, Eau Claire, is seeking his fourth term on the board. He has served for 18 years

and every position except chairman.

Bergan and his wife, Linda. have three sons and one daughter.

He spent 17 years as Berrien

Regional Education Service Agency's career and technical education director be-

BERGAN

fore retiring.

Bergan also coached football for 40 years, including stints at Benton Harbor and Eau Claire.

When asked why he's running again, Bergan respond-"I'm just so proud of what we've accomplished, all of the growth we've had, comer are vying in the Nov. and where I've come from, since I've been on the board."

oard of Trustees. As an example, Bergan The candidates for the mentioned LMC's promotion of partnerships with K-12 districts, which enable students to earn college credits while they're still attending high school.

"We were the first in Board. Michigan to do those kinds of things, and I've been very, very proud of that how much money that has saved the people in Berrien County," he said.

Bergan is also a 30-year member of the Workforce Development Board in all its incarnations, which reflects his passionate interest in vocational education, he said

"Sometimes, our early college (students) make up 10 percent of our enrollment. It goes without saying that Lake Michigan College is the key element of workforce development," Bergan said.

If re-elected, Bergan expects to keep doing all he can to promote LMC's role in boosting workforce development locally.

'The role of the community college is to help the community raise their skill levels to get the good-paying, high-paying jobs, and help employers get a trained workforce," Bergan said.
"Our role is to serve the people of this community that want to better them-

LMC also needs to pay attention to the bottom line learning. As a community, generation working the

Bergan believes. "We are the stewards of the taxpayer's dollars, and we need to be aware that, as we go forward,

we keep the college on a sound financial basis," he

Debra Johnson

Johnson, of 757 Tucker Drive, St. Joseph, was appointed in June to replace longtime board member Wil-Renee

liams. She from served 2004-05 on the St. Joseph School

Johnson is an administrator Lakeland Regional



She holds an MBA from Indiana Weslevan University and a bachelor science degree in nursing from De-Paul University.

Johnson is also a member of the Niles Chamber of Commerce, the Niles-Buchanan Rotary Club, the Niles Downtown Development Authority, and several professional nursing organiza-

Like the other candidates, Johnson sees herself as a passionate believer in education, and LMC's role in promoting its benefits within the area.

education because, without she had to get involved in education, I wouldn't be running her family's farm. here today," Johnson said, "I'm a third-generation at the time of her appoint-"You never stop while advancing its goals, we have a responsibility to

they're our future. We have to instill in them high qualities, and I believe this is a high quality institution. I recommendations on conbelieve in the local community college."

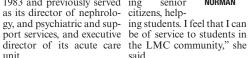
Attempts to reach Johnson for further comment down from Washington, we were unsuccessful as of deadline.

Barbara James Norman

Norman, 66, of 75127 28th Ave., Covert, said she is running to promote the role of education in improv-

ing peoples' lives, and give local residents a voice in LMC poli-

cy. "I'm community activist. I advocate helping senior citizens, help-



One example of Norman's philosophy is HELP (Higher Education Level Program), an organization that she started to assist area students in getting to

"We're losing so many students when they finish high school. I have, maybe, 20 success stories," said.

Norman has three adult children by her late husband, Sylvester.

She attended Western Michigan University for three and a half years and majored in agriculture. She "I'm passionate about did not get a degree because

> "I'm a third-generation owner of my blueberry farm, and I'm the fourth land," she said.

lead and guide young peo- In keeping with her work, how important it is to ple of tomorrow because Norman serves on various ple's employment," In keeping with her work, how important it is to peoagricultural bodies, such as said. the Michigan Technical Committee, which makes Fred Malawski. She attendservation issues and programs.

"When new rules comes decide whether that's useful or not in that area for us (local farmers)," she said.

She retired after a 22-year career with Covert Public ber. Schools, where she served as transportation director and held other jobs.

Norman also served from 2008-13 on the Covert School Board, and served and that's why I give my as president, vice president time back," Tomasini said. and trustee. She believes that her experiences on that level will prove helpful if she's elected to the LMC

"I'm a team player. Whatever is important to the people (serving on the them reach them," she said.
Norman said LMC

would benefit from her ture. managerial, personal and policy-making experiences.

"I'm just really blessed, I think. I'm healthy, I'm acleft)," she said.

Mary Jo Tomasini

Tomasini, 49, of 5924 Red Arrow Highway, Stevensville, is seeking a sec-

ond, six-year term. She has served as board treasurer and trustee.

"I'm sionate about education and the role that commucollege nity

plays in our community, how it affects business, and

Tomasini's husband is ed LMC for two years, where her interests shifted from nursing, to marketing, but didn't get a degree.

She's also served United Way and Junior Achievement in various roles, including campaign manager and board mem-

"I'm serving because education is important to me, and a two-year community college has a really important role in our community, "Whatever I do, I'm engaged.'

She is the CEO of Competitive Edge, which produces promotional products, and is now marking its 22nd year.

Tomasini said she is also board), in the goals they running again to give LMC need to reach, I can help a steadying hand and raise awareness of its role in shaping the jobs of the fu-

"There's so many jobs that just require a two-year degree," Tomasini said "People are starting to realtive and I think I have quite ize how important commua few more years (of service nity colleges are, and the role that they play in either preparing people to move on, or giving them the skills to work at a more technical career.'

If re-elected, Tomasini hopes to continue promoting LMC's growth in the community with programs that give residents the skills that they need to be competitive, she said.

One example is the nursing program.

LMC would like to offer four-year degree, cause more and more hospitals aren't hiring two-year (degree) nurses anymore,'

