

Longtime educator dies unexpectedly

By GRAHAM S. PARKER

A longtime servant to public education and well-respected member of the Capital District's education community died suddenly, cutting short the opportunity to complete a full circle of service.

Steven Swinton had been a science teacher and head of that department at Shaker High School and was also a woodworker, grandfather and husband. Before his death, Swinton had sought to continue his commitment to education and his community by running for the North Colonie school board. He had had no opponent for that seat.

Swinton was the only person to pick up a petition to run unopposed for the seat left vacant when Peter Catalano decided not to run again. That was on April 18; on Thursday, April 21, the 55-year-old educator died unexpectedly.

"He missed the contact with children," said board of education president David Rosenthal.

Swinton came to North Colonie 13 years ago to re-establish a working relationship with students, his true passion. As supervisor of the science department, Swinton continued to teach at least one class.

It's clear that his service went beyond that. Swinton often put in extra hours with students having problems grasping science principles, from chemistry to biology.

"Steve was the kind of person that dedicated himself to anything he did. No matter what he was doing he always went into it wholeheartedly," said Green Island Union Free School District Superintendent and Principal Herb Perkins.

Swinton and Perkins developed a close relationship during Swinton's tenure at the Green Island school.

Swinton was both student and teacher in the small urban school. The former Green Island student taught there in the early 1970s and served in multiple

□ Educator

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capacities from assistant superintendent for business, business manager, and eventually the school's superintendent.

Perkins and Swinton often hiked and participated in extracurricular outdoor activities with Green Island students.

"His heart was always here and people knew that; he believed in the small school idea and he was certainly dedicated to North Colonie," said Perkins.

Swinton's bid for the board came as no surprise, considering his commitment to the students and community.

"Swinton was a man of intelligence and his integrity was beyond reproach," said Rosenthal.

He and other board members had been looking forward to the opportunity to work alongside Swinton as he would surely have come full circle in his service to the school community.

Joe Corr, then the social studies department director, first met Swinton when he came to North Colonie in 1992 from Green Island. In the next couple of years they sat within 10 feet of each other in the school's department offices every day, Monday through Friday, until his



Steve Swinton

retirement on June 30 of last year.

Corr was glad to hear Swinton wanted to make the bid for the board.

"I thought, what a wonderful community service for the North Colonie School District. He had been a teacher, business manager, principal and superintendent. He had a great wealth of experience and an enormous commitment to North Colonie and that is what we will miss," Corr said.