

# County Republicans to select new party chairman Saturday

by Tim Gillie  
STAFF WRITER

Tooele County Republicans are slated to hold their organizing convention at the Utah Firefighters Museum at Deseret Peak Complex this Saturday.

County Republican delegates elected at the 2012 caucus meeting will gather to vote for new officers for the party.

Chris Sloan, who has led the party for two years, is not seeking another term as the county Republican party chairman.

"It's time for somebody else to take the party to the next level," he said.

Four years ago, Sloan was elected as county party chairman at a meeting of the Republican party central committee with eight people present.

Since that time he has dedicated the last two years to increasing involvement in the local party.

Sloan led the party to a major victory in the 2012 election that left only one Democrat holding office in Tooele County.

Erik Gumbrecht, currently a state Republican party central committee member from Tooele County and former precinct chairman, is the only

person that has announced the intention to seek the party chair position at the Saturday convention.

"I want to get the people in our party more involved in the community," he said. "People should be more engaged in the community volunteering in organizations that are a community asset."

Other announced party officer candidates are Blair Hope for vice chairman and Tracy Hymas Shaw for secretary-treasurer.

Four people have announced they will run for the two state Republican party central committee positions that will be selected at the convention.

The central committee candidates are Arthur Brady, Vint DeGraw, Vicki Griffith, Bob Eldard, and Elliot Lawrence.

In addition to the election for party officers and a vote on by-law changes, convention goers will hear from Congressman Chris Stewart and Lt. Governor Greg Bell.

The convention will start at 7 p.m. Saturday at the Firefighters Museum at the Deseret Peak Complex. The convention is open to the public but only delegates may vote.

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Maegan Burr

Erik Gumbrecht at his home in Tooele. Gumbrecht announced he will seek the party chair position at this weekend's convention for the Tooele County Republicans.

# Local students work toward graduation — without going to the classroom

by Tim Gillie  
STAFF WRITER

Rachel Shearer lives in Erda and is a senior in high school.

When she heads to school in the morning, she doesn't walk, take a bus or drive a car. All she has to do is walk across her room and turn on her computer.

Shearer is one of 18 students from Tooele County enrolled at Mountain Heights Academy, a tuition free charter school that provides an online education for students in seventh through twelfth-grade in Utah.

Mountain Heights Academy was founded in 2009 and has 320 students enrolled from throughout the state.

"I love the online school," she said. "The teachers have been very willing to work with me and you get a ton of help."



Maegan Burr

Jenni Klein, a teacher for Mountain Heights Academy, talks about her online classroom for World Civilizations Wednesday at her home in Stansbury. Klein instructs 160 students for the online high school.

Shearer has health problems that caused her to fall behind in her studies at her regular school. Her father heard an advertisement on the radio for Mountain Heights Academy and the two agreed that they would give it a try.

Shearer enrolled part time in Mountain Heights during her ninth and tenth-grade years and attended Stansbury High School part time. She enrolled full time in Mountain Heights in 11th grade and is currently in 12th grade working on requirements for graduation.

"One morning I was sitting at my computer working on an assignment with a bowl of food, a drink, my feet up on the desk and listening to music while I worked," said Shearer. "I would never be able to get away with doing that at a regular school."

Just a few miles down the road, one of Shearer's teachers, Jenni Klein, reaches 160 students from the living room of her Stansbury Park home.

"I wasn't sure about teaching online at first," said Klein. "But I have come to like it. I feel like I get to know my students better and I am able to give them more

individualized attention." Klein attended Utah State University and graduated with a degree in social studies and a secondary teaching degree in 2010.

She saw a job opening for a teacher at Mountain Heights and applied, not knowing it was an online school. When they offered her a job teaching in the fall of 2010, Klein thought she would take the job for a year and then look for work at a regular school.

Now into her third year, Klein, who did her student teaching at a brick and mortar school in Logan, said she would never go back to a regular school.

She prepares weekly lessons for her students, recording an introduction to the lesson on her eye camera. The lesson may include videos, reading assignments, or recorded lectures with a PowerPoint presentation. The school uses no textbooks. Instead Klein finds web-based non-copy-righted materials or develops her own materials.

One of Klein's class projects for her students was to hold a mock-legislature. She created a virtual legislature that allowed her students to propose bills, discuss

them by phone, text, email, and video chat outside office hours.

She spends another four hours a day correcting assignments and researching and preparing assignments.

From her computer at home, Klein can track the progress of her students on each lesson. Students are free to complete their work at anytime, but if she notices they haven't logged on for a few days, she tracks them down electronically and encourages them to complete their work.

When Klein first started teaching online, she was worried about her students missing out on social interaction with peers.

"I found that my students have very lively chats with each other about their work," she said.

Mountain Heights Academy also holds monthly activities that are service oriented along with school dances at regional locations throughout the state. This gives students and teachers the opportunity to meet face-to-face, she said.

But online teaching also has other advantages the teacher noted.

"My husband teaches at Hunter High School," said Klein.

"We take a back-to-school picture on the first day of school each year. He's all dressed up ready for the commute and I'm in my pajamas."

A year ago when Klein gave birth to her first child, she took a week off of school and then went back to teaching from her living room with her baby at her side.

For Shearer the online school has allowed her to catch up on most of her classes. She is planning to graduate from Mountain Heights this year.

"The teachers are great," said Shearer. "They care about me as a person. I am not just a student to them."

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