

## Lutz Guv'na Campaign Starts Sunday

By ELIZABETH LEE BROWN The Tampa Tribune

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LUTZ - The race to become the next Lutz guv'na is going to be a three-woman contest.

Let the mudslinging begin.

This year's charitable dogfight is between a woman's club volunteer with roots in Lutz, a restaurateur known for her home cooking, and a mother of three who is a professional fundraiser.

Whoever raises the most money is given the honorary title at the community's July 4 parade.

The annual mock election kicks off Sunday with a guv'na dinner to benefit all the campaigns. The food and music run from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Lutz Community Center.

First-time candidate Annie Fernandez, a member of the Lutz-Land O' Lakes Woman's Club, has experience on her side.

Fernandez, 64, was campaign manager to reigning Lutz Guv'na Edwina Kramer. This year, the pair are switching roles.

"I'm coming back to Lutz and I just thought it would be fun," she said about her decision to run. Fernandez, who has lived in Forest Hills for the past four decades, is in the process of coming back to the community where she was born and raised.

"I just love it out here in Lutz. I'm very fond of community work and volunteer work," said Fernandez, who oversees the club's Juniores group.

Her guv'na campaign slogan is: "Hop on the A train. Vote for a local, Annie Fernandez." She is playing up the railroad theme by dressing as a train engineer for her campaign functions.

If elected, Fernandez wants to build on her home-grown heritage by promising to plant an orange grove in every yard. She grew up in Lutz, and her father ran a grove caretaking business.

Under her administration, the old Bullard Park baseball fields and band shell would be restored.

Fernandez also vows to return the flagpole to the front of the Old Lutz School, where she attended first through eighth grades.

#### [A Well-Fed Constituency](#)

Nancy Rehling, who owns Nancy's Good n' Fast restaurant on U.S. 41, said her food-themed campaign slogan is "Nancy serves Lutz."

"We're going to make sure everyone is well-fed," said Rehling, who will be catering Sunday's kickoff dinner. Most of her upcoming fundraisers revolve around eating. She is coordinating a Father's Day spaghetti dinner at the community center so families can treat their dads to an Italian meal.

She also wants to host an ice cream social featuring old-fashioned games.

"Our whole focus is that we're family," she said.

Rehling and her husband, Bob, opened the restaurant specializing in homemade food in June. Previously, she ran a restaurant in Lake Como, the Pasco County nudist resort where she lives.

Rehling, 57, said she agreed to run for gov'na after getting pressure from organizers.

"This isn't a serious thing. This is just doing good for the town we live in, the town we love," she said.

She said she wants to support her community of 15 years and is proud that Lutz has retained its country atmosphere. "It's still got that feeling - that family feeling, the community feeling. Here, it's real. People focus on family and community. It just makes this area very special," Rehling said.

#### Showing Passion For Community

Fernandez and Rehling are facing competition from a professional money raiser.

Candidate Michele Northrup, who oversees fundraising at Learning Gate Community School, said she decided to enter the race after Lutz leaders approached the charter school for a candidate.

"Everyone looked at me at once and said, 'Definitely, we want Michele to run and to represent the school,'" she said. Northrup has built her campaign around the Love Lutz theme, with a Web site at [www.lovelutz.com](http://www.lovelutz.com) and Love Lutz T-shirts and bracelets. She also purchased a 1967 fire truck to showcase at each campaign stop and to use as a float in the Fourth of July parade.

"I just want to show the passion for the community," she said. "I love the Lutz community - how small it is, how everybody knows everybody, and that hometown feel." Northrup, 36, attended kindergarten at the Old Lutz School and lives in Northdale with her husband, Tom Was, and their three sons.

Her children attend Learning Gate, so she is planning events geared to families through the end of the school year.

After the school year, Northrup hopes to organize a silent auction.

Upcoming events include a Scoop-a-palooza from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. May 12 at The Junction, where 20 percent of ice cream sales will be donated to her campaign. The ice cream shop is at Van Dyke Road and North Dale Mabry Highway.

A babysitting night May 19 will give Learning Gate parents a chance to drop off their children for four hours.

Students at the charter school are getting excited about the campaign, Northrup said.

"I go down the halls and they're saying, 'Guv'na. Guv'na.' I joke around and say, 'Big changes, next year when I'm guv'na. Big changes,'" she said.

### **GUV'NA CAMPAIGN**

**WHAT:** Lutz Guv'na Kick-off dinner

**WHEN:** 4 to 7 p.m. Sunday

**WHERE:** Lutz Community Center, 98 First Ave NW.

**CONTACT:** Eleanor Cecil at (813) 727-7549

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