

The VOICE

Nebraska State Education Association • September 2023



BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

Fremont Education Association members rally to assist one of their own.

Also inside:

- 100,000 Nebraskans sign the petition!
- A good start to the school year
- Get help paying for classroom supplies



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Executive Officers



NSEA President Jenni Benson and Vice President Paul Schulte with Nebraska NEA Directors Edward Ventura and Renae Noble.

New Executive Officers: Schulte and Noble take office Sept. 1

Two new NSEA executive team members officially took office on Sept. 1. Paul Schulte, Millard Education Association, will lead the Nebraska State Education Association as vice president. Renae Noble, Chadron Education Association, will serve as one of two Nebraska representatives to the National Education Association (NEA) Board of Directors.

Schulte and Noble along with NSEA President Jenni Benson and Nebraska NEA Director Edward Ventura complete the Executive Officers of the Board of Directors.

Schulte will serve a three-year term as vice president. He takes the reins from former NSEA Vice President Robert Miller, who served one, three-year term beginning in 2020. Schulte previously served as vice president from 2017 until 2020.

Noble will serve a three-year term on the NEA Board of Directors. She takes over for former NEA Director Linda Freye. Freye has served two, three-year terms as a Nebraska representative on the NEA Board of Directors and was term-limited.

More than 200 delegates attended NSEA's annual Delegate Assembly in April to elect executive committee members and set the Association's agenda for the coming year.

Would You Like to Write for The Voice?

Would you like to write an item for *The Voice*? Perhaps an opinion column or an article on what is working in your classroom? Submissions can be classroom-related, humorous, inspiring or otherwise teaching related. Submit your questions about the process, and your topics to us at:

thevoice@nsea.org

On the Cover: When the Fremont Education Association president fell ill, his local and community came to his aid. See the story and photos, pages 7-9.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

JENNI BENSON

Savor the Firsts, the Lasts & Everything in Between

All our firsts, and our last, and everything in between. They swirl and dance on the invisible currents, and then one by one, they disappear to a place they will always be a part of.

-Jessi Kirby



I will start my seventh and last year as your NSEA president on September 1. I haven't had much time to reflect or remember. The work of the successful petition drive to put the repeal of LB753's voucher scheme on the ballot and the beginning of school have kept all of us busy.

It's a blistering hot, humid Sunday afternoon. We're only 10 days until we must submit the referendum petition to the Secretary of State, so I'm notarizing petitions for the many volunteers who are stopping by the office as I write this article while organizing a statewide trip.

This year has brought a multitude of firsts without my husband Mike, who died in January. Each first gives me pause to remember and be grateful for the blessings and time we shared.

As a grandma, I experience a lot of firsts with my 11 grandchildren. Being a grandparent is the most amazing job I have ever had. No matter what else is happening in your life, I encourage you to take the time to savor the firsts with your children and grandchildren. I know sometimes it is easier said than done—but take it from someone who knows—life is not guaranteed.

My trip across Nebraska this week will be with NEA Director Linda Freye. This will be her last job as an officer of NSEA, as her term ends August 31. It also begins many firsts

for her as she officially retired from teaching after nearly 40 years. We will have plenty of windshield time to reflect on lasts and to plan for some upcoming firsts.

I have attended many new hire events this past month. All were firsts for the educators in attendance. Whether a first-year teacher or a veteran changing districts, it was a first. A new job, new classroom, new assignment.

At every event, I first thanked everyone for choosing what is the greatest profession in the world. I also asked these new hires to ask for help and to take care of themselves and each other. It is extremely important that you are taken care of – it's important for you and it allows you take care of ALL students.

NSEA is here to support and help navigate the firsts and the lasts. I am honored and proud to be your NSEA President and I look forward to continuing to serve this final year of my presidency. We have a great deal of work to do to repeal LB753 on the November 2024 ballot in support of our public schools, our students, staff and communities.

Together, we will navigate and embrace the firsts and the lasts. Thank you for all you do for our students, families, and public education.



Left photo: South Sioux City Education Association President Pat Bernstraugh with Tracia Bloom and Beth Kolbo at a petition drive in Dakota County. **Right photo:** NSEA members pose for a photo at their drive-through petition signing event outside the Lincoln Education Association building.

SHOW ME THE SIGNATURES: Petition circulators turn in more than 100K signatures

When NSEA and a coalition of not-for-profit organizations launched the Support Our Schools Nebraska petition drive in early June, organizers set a lofty goal of gathering 90,000 signatures in 90 days. At the petition launch press conference, leaders in education—including NSEA President Jenni Benson and Millard Education Association President Tim Royers—took turns at the mic asking for public school educators and their allies for help. And did they deliver!

Almost immediately following its launch, Support Our Schools Nebraska began promoting petition signature gathering events in every corner of the state. This summer, volunteers and circulators logged thousands of hours gathering signatures from Nebraskans to ensure that voters will get a say on LB753's tax scheme that diverts tax dollars to private schools.

The incredible momentum and energy of the petition drive attracted some out-of-state, bad-faith actors who poured tens of thousands of dollars into Nebraska, hoping to keep its own taxpayers from voting on the issue in 2024. Betsy DeVos, a Michigan billionaire politician, has largely funded the effort.

Opponents sent aggressive blockers to harass and intimidate Support Our Schools Nebraska volunteers. The

shameful tactics and threats from opponents only fueled the desire of circulators and voters.

In all, organizers turned in more than 100,000 signatures to the Secretary of State's Office in late August—about 40,000 more than the roughly 60,000 valid signatures needed to make the 2024 ballot. Watch for updates on the status of this ongoing effort at NSEA.org and in *The Voice*.

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Voters flood local newspapers to oppose private school vouchers

DEAR VOTER, LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MILFORD — “The only new opportunities LB753 creates is for these “charitable donors” to receive a far more generous dollar-for-dollar income tax credit rather than the simple tax deduction provided all other charitable donations. LB753 isn’t about creating more opportunities or “school choice” for students. It is about creating a scheme to circumvent the intent of our State Constitution by providing state income tax dollars to private and parochial schools...”
- Dave Welsh, Milford

SCOTTSBLUFF — “When fully implemented, LB 753 would drain and divert \$100 million from the Nebraska General Fund. This is the state fund that helps pay for such things as public schools, Veterans homes, roads, prisons, community colleges, libraries, disabilities, Medicaid and all state agencies’ operating expenses like salaries, healthcare, maintenance, etc. Also importantly, when the General Fund’s obligations cannot be met, the options are to increase taxes or cut important services.”
- Teri Hlava, Former Chadron-area teacher

NORFOLK — “Public schools serve roughly 90% of Nebraska children and ultimately drive our state’s growth. A program that withholds tax dollars from public schools, including many already underfunded, is bad for Nebraska.”
- Janelle Stevenson & Marylee Moulton, League of Women Voters of Nebraska

OMAHA — “And what about the dozens of rural Nebraska communities that don’t even have a private school but will still be impacted by the tax dollars lost as a result of LB 753.

“**And what about the dozens of rural Nebraska communities that don’t even have a private school but will still be impacted by the tax dollars lost as a result of LB 753.**
- Deborah Van Fleet ”

Those opposing LB 753 surely believe their fellow Nebraskans have the right to donate their “private money” to whatever organization they choose but the tax breaks those donations bring — which reduce the state’s tax receipts — should not be so vastly superior to what donations to other charitable organizations bring.”
- Deborah Van Fleet, Omaha

NEBRASKA CITY — “The voucher scheme in LB 753 does not help all children. In fact, it even subsidizes discriminatory practices. Unlike public schools, whose doors are open to all, private schools can, and many do, discriminate against kids.”
-Stephanie Stanek, Nebraska City Education Association

“**The only thing that is guaranteed is corporations and major donors will receive an unprecedented tax break which will reduce tax receipts for Nebraska.**
- Sharon Bohling ”

HYANNIS — “Let’s remember that Nebraska is already providing a K-12 education for any student who wants one. There is no reason why the taxpayer should be asked to provide

additional revenue to students who chose not to use the public K-12 education provided and want a private education.”
- Al Davis, Hyannis

MCCOOK — “LB753 does not guarantee all who donate will be able to take advantage of the tax break. It does not guarantee that even one more needy student will receive a private school scholarship. The only thing that is guaranteed is corporations and major donors will receive an unprecedented tax break which will reduce tax receipts for Nebraska.”
- Sharon Bohling, McCook

COLUMBUS — “Historically our Platte County Public Schools have ranked in the top tier of Nebraska schools. Not only do our schools educate college prep students but also through our STEM, Ag and vocational programs we are preparing students for their futures and the future of our community. Our schools can only do this if we have strong tax support from the State of Nebraska. With the passage of LB753, The Opportunity Scholarship Act, by the Nebraska Legislature, it will entitle individuals and corporations to receive tax credits. This will divert tax money from public schools.

- AWARE group members: Candy Becher, Susanne Disco, Jeanette Jackson, Sandy Jochens, Janet Hibbs Jones, Anne Kallesen, Carol Keller, Ramon and Doug Kluth, Lisa Nielsen, Jamie Snyder, Jean and Rod Supencheck (Columbus)

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When local president Doug Sheppard fell seriously ill last year, Fremont Education Association members rallied to support one of their own. Right Photo: Doug Sheppard with his wife Jody Sheppard and youngest daughter, Emmalee.



BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT: Strong membership and unity in times of uncertainty

As Doug Sheppard remembers it, he hadn't been feeling well for about a year. His wife, Jody, will tell you it was more like two years. The symptoms came on slowly for Doug. He began to feel fatigued. As a sixth-grade math teacher, local president of the Fremont Education Association (FEA), a husband and a father of three, he had valid reasons to be tired. But this was not the normal drain that comes with a busy personal and professional lifestyle. Doug lost his appetite; he lost weight, and his colleagues began to worry.

"Some of the people I taught with kept asking, 'Are you feeling well?' or they'd say, 'You don't seem like yourself,'" Doug recalled.

It wasn't as if Doug was ignoring his health—he'd been checked out at the local hospital, but doctors couldn't pinpoint what was making him feel ill.

Jody, a second-grade teacher at Milliken Park Elementary School and FEA member, said she watched as her husband became more withdrawn.

"He would come home from work,

just sit in the recliner and be done for the night," she said. "I think he gave his all to his students and he would come home and be wiped out."

Things went on like that for some time and Doug continued to teach and lead the FEA through the school year.

A Second Opinion

As a long-time president of FEA, Doug has both contributed to and maintained the long-standing culture of respect between the local association and school administrators. It is a cornerstone in FEA's near 100% membership – and that respect and close relationship played a role in saving Doug's life. It was a conversation with a Fremont administrator and Jody that finally led Doug to seek a second opinion.

"My administrator talked to my wife and said, 'I think you need to get your husband in for another appointment.' It really came from a place of concern. He cared about me, and he still does," said Doug.

Doug's doctor referred him to a specialist at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha in mid-January. He went through a

series of tests, scans and bloodwork before his specialist ordered a liver biopsy. The day of the biopsy, Doug and Jody returned home but his condition continued to worsen. Doug was taken to the emergency room in Fremont and teams from both hospitals worked together on additional testing while awaiting the biopsy results. Doug was diagnosed with nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), a condition that would require a liver transplant.

The Transplant

On Feb. 10, Doug was transferred to UNMC for a liver transplant evaluation to see if he was a candidate for the life-saving surgery.

"I got to Omaha, and it was just kind of a total blur. Things happened so fast," Doug said. "I guess I didn't know I was in as bad of shape as I was."

Doug and Jody learned that he would be placed on the liver transplant list while awaiting approval from insurance. On Feb. 17, everything came together. Blue Cross Blue Shield Nebraska approved the transplant surgery and, minutes before the clock struck midnight,



From left: FEA Treasurer/Membership Chair Becky Turner, Doug Sheppard, and FEA President Keith Cummings.

they received word that Doug had a match, and a liver was available.

“It was unique because my wife and I had just fallen asleep in the hospital room. The phone rang and I said, ‘Which kid is calling us now?’” he said. “It was actually a case worker with UNMC calling us to say, ‘Hey, we have a liver for you. Do you want it?’”

Doug underwent surgery the following afternoon.

The Support

As Doug recovered from the transplant in the hospital and then at home, FEA members, administrators and the community rallied around the Sheppard family.

“It’s hard for me to even put into words how much I appreciate what everyone has done for me and my family,” Doug said. “The teachers in my building pulled together money to help pay to get my yard mowed throughout the summer. I was on restrictions where I couldn’t do any of the heavy lifting, pushing or pulling.”

Jody and Doug never had to worry about their students during the ordeal. Administrators made sure Doug and Jody’s classes were covered.

“Our family, FEA members, administration—even parents of our students reached out to us, and it was just overwhelming knowing we had so much support,” added Jody.

There was no need to worry about having enough sick days either.

Before Doug’s tenure, FEA had negotiated a sick leave bank that Fremont Public Schools staff have access to in the event of a major medical event.

The hospital bills would be coming but Doug knew as a member of the Educators Health Alliance, he was in good hands.

“The cost of health insurance is something I hear people gripe and moan about. But I always tell people you don’t really realize how much you need it until you actually need it,” Doug said. “It’s pretty impressive

how much of my surgery BCBS has covered.”

Doug worried he might have to take early retirement but a call to the NSEA set his mind at ease.

“I was determining what I was going to do if I needed to take early retirement or even if I could. I spent five or six hours with the NSEA attorney. That in itself more than made up for the cost of membership,” Doug explained. “My transplant and recovery have been a test of all the reasons you choose to join your association but hope you never have to use it in this way.”

Doug decided to step down as FEA president last April.

“Throughout this whole process my FEA leadership team has been awesome. As an FEA member, your leadership team has your back. We work as a group. We’ve built those relationships with administration and within our association as well.”

Back to School

In early August, Doug received word from his team of doctors that he is cleared to return to the classroom and he’s excited to be back.

“I’m ready to go back to work,” said Doug. “I was pretty pumped about that. I’m ready to go back to work to see the kids, to see the teachers and to be back in the classroom.”

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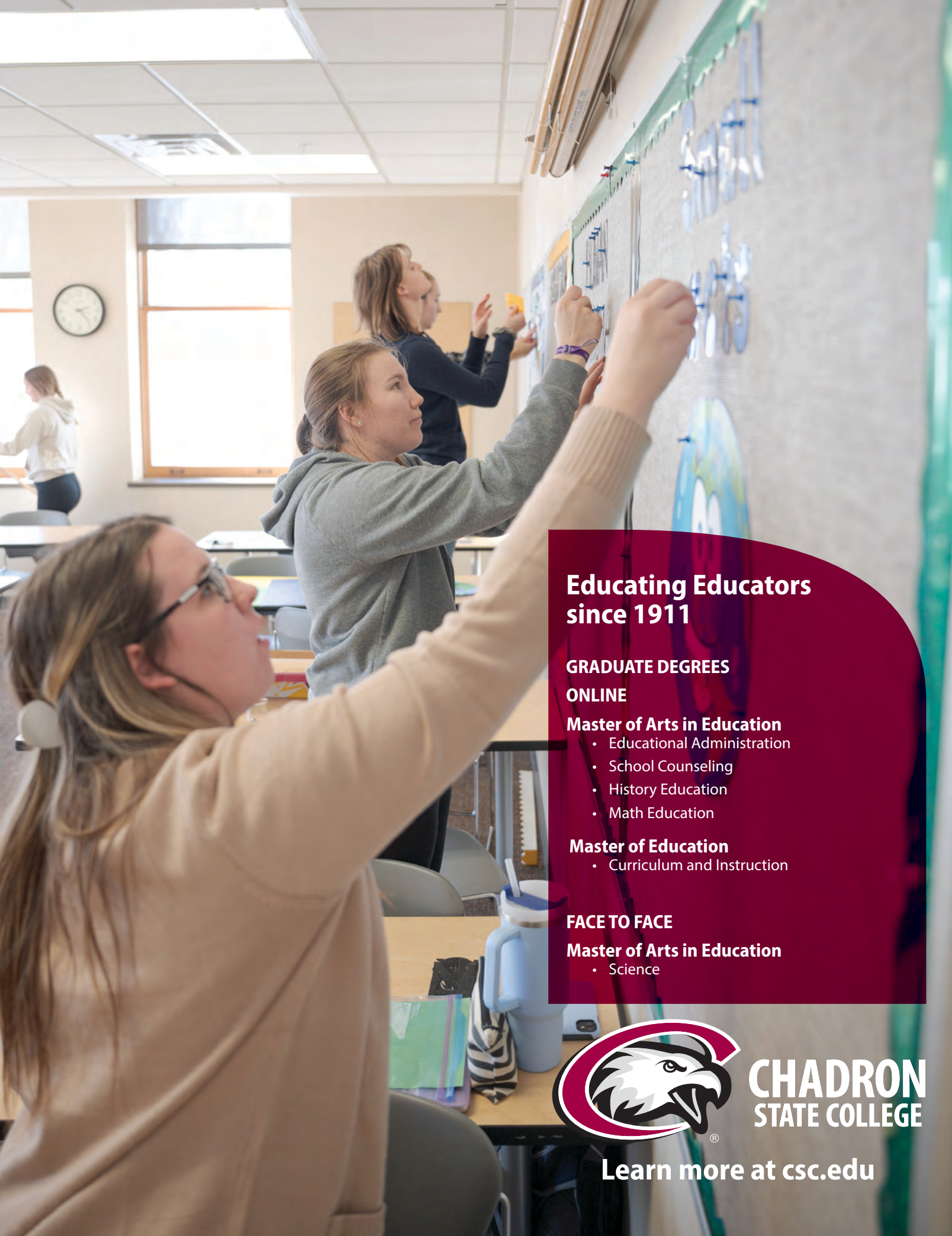
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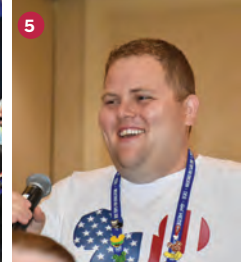
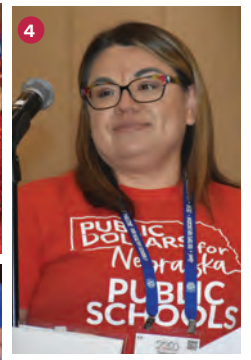
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RA 2023: 1. Nebraska delegates at the annual RA. 2. Retired Board member Pat Etherton with delegate Linda Freye. 3. Paula Aguirre holds a "Freedom to Teach" sign. 4. Delegate Rosita Krauel waits to speak. 5. Delegate Jake Jolliffe takes a turn at the mic.

NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY 2023: EDUCATORS RALLY FOR FREEDOM TO LEARN

More than 6,000 delegates attended the National Education Association's annual Representative Assembly in July. The world's largest democratic, deliberative body, by educators, for educators convened in Orlando, Fla. Sixty-six Nebraska delegates debated issues and helped set NEA policy and activities for the year ahead.

Respect for Education

A powerful lineup of speakers at the conference discussed some of the most pressing issues in American education. U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona called for an end to the "intentional toxic disrespect" from those who want to privatize education and starve public schools and their students of the resources they need. Cardona said the country owes educators a debt of gratitude and respect. He emphasized that teachers need to be able to have a voice in school decisions and the autonomy to do what they believe is best for their students. Cardona said educators need more planning time, professional development during the workday and higher pay.

Freedom Advocates

Several thousand educators attending this year's RA rallied

outside the Orange County Convention Center, calling for an end to attacks on students and public education. During the Freedom to Learn rally, members sent a message to political leaders who are banning books, silencing educators, and taking away the freedom to learn from students.

NEA Elections

Delegates re-elected NEA President Becky Pringle, Vice President Princess Moss, and Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria.

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Turn to the NSEA Children's Fund

Since the first few donated dollars trickled into the NSEA Children Fund coffers in 1994, dollars have been exiting the fund to assist children in need. That is the founding principle of the Children's Fund: to help children.



Donations to the Children's Fund have provided hundreds of thousands of dollars to help children in need. It has helped to pay for glasses, clothing, medical and dental needs of children; provide assistance to a family whose home and belongings were destroyed by fire; and more.

There is never any red tape or lengthy delay for members wanting to use the fund to help a students. A call to Karen Hunt at the NSEA (800-742-0047) is usually all that is needed. For more information, visit nsea.org/childrensfund.

Ag Sack Lunch Program

The 14th Annual Ag Sack Lunch program will again educate fourth-grade students across Nebraska. With both in-person and virtual options available, the reach of the program continues to grow, serving students from Omaha to Scottsbluff, while spreading education and awareness about Nebraska agriculture.

The in-person program provides students with a free lunch along with a 25-minute lesson regarding Nebraska agriculture. As many fourth-grade classrooms visit the Nebraska State Capitol, this is an essential opportunity to educate students about where their food comes from and help them gain an appreciation for the meals they eat each day.

While students enjoy their lunches, they will hear a presentation about the important role agriculture plays in Nebraska's economy, as well as the crops and livestock species that are raised in the state. The sack lunches consist of Nebraska-produced food items to emphasize the direct connection to Nebraska farms. Students also receive a deck of cards containing agriculture facts.

"This popular program has been filled in a short period of time each year," said Andy Chvatal, Nebraska Soybean Board executive director. "This is a testament to the need and desire for Nebraska agriculture education at a young age."

For classrooms that do not plan

to visit the State Capitol, virtual presentations are available. They include the same interactive presentation and deck of cards.

Reservations can be made by visiting AgSackLunchProgram.com.



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NSEA UNIVERSITY: Organizing, bargaining and student behavior learnings at conference

For the first time, NSEA University was held in Kearney, Neb. President Jenni Benson welcomed members on July 17 to kick off three days of professional learning. The conference, held at the Younes Conference Center, featured guest speakers and breakout sessions on collective bargaining strategies, cyber security, school safety and EHA benefits.

Helping Students in Poverty

Keynote speaker Dr. Donna Beegle told attendees that growing up, she didn't believe that education was for her or for people like her. She grew up not knowing the words her teachers used.

"I said 'ain't' in almost every other sentence and did not know when to say 'gone' or 'went,' 'seen' or 'saw,'" she explained.

Beegle dropped out during her freshman year of high school. She wouldn't earn her GED until the age of 26.

"When I tell people, 'At 15, I never knew a soul who benefited from education,' people will say to me, 'but you knew your teachers,'" she said. "Communication theory says, 'To be in a room with someone is not to know them. To know someone, you must identify with them.'"

Students and families who live in the crisis of poverty communicate and relate differently than their middle-



class peers and educators, Beegle explained. She gave members ways in which they can better communicate to build stronger relationships with their students living in poverty as well as their families.

Home on the Range

NSEA members and their guests were treated to a social outing and dinner at the Archway. See photos from The Archway's family-friendly historical exhibits on page 13.

Support Our Schools

National Education Association Executive Committee member Robert Rodriguez, a special education teacher and longtime activist, praised NSEA members for their work gathering signatures for the Support Our Schools Nebraska petition drive to repeal LB753, a voucher scheme passed by the 2023 Legislature. During his address, he encouraged educators to keep fighting for their students, communities, and public education for all. On July 18, NSEA U attendees gathered in Holdrege to collect petition signatures. In late August, Save Our Schools Nebraska submitted petitions with more than 100,000 signatures to the Secretary of State to put the issue to a vote of the people.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

The power of a teacher's influence

New York Times best-selling author, illustrator and founder of FableVision Learning, Peter Reynolds joined NSEA U attendees on Monday, July 17, for a virtual keynote address.

Reynolds shared with educators the incredible influence they can have with their students.

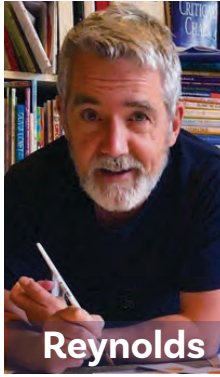
"I remember the exact moment a teacher recognized my interest in drawing," said Reynolds.

He told attendees it was this teacher who set him on a journey of art and innovation.

"I can track where I am today back to this conversation I had with Mr. Matson," Reynolds said.

Reynolds was in Mr. Matson's math class and doodling on his paper instead of listening.

"He recognized my interest, which was to draw and tell stories. He could have said, 'Pete you have detention on Thursday'



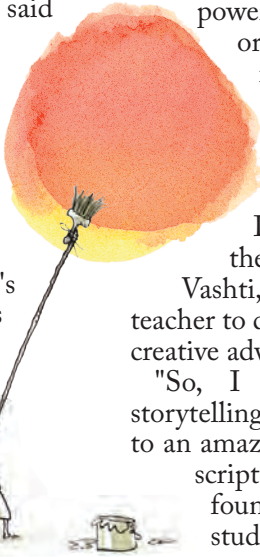
which some other teachers did tell me. But instead, he said 'I'm going to use that energy.'"

Mr. Matson challenged Reynolds to use his gift of drawing to explain how to solve a math problem. Reynolds accepted the challenge and handed in a series of drawings, similar to a comic strip.

"He did one of the most powerful things an educator or caregiver can do—he noticed me. He took the time to see who I was," Reynolds said.

Years later, Reynolds dedicated his book, "The Dot" to Mr. Matson. It's the story of a young girl, Vashti, who is challenged by her teacher to draw a dot which inspires a creative adventure.

"So, I use my art and my storytelling to teach. That's thanks to an amazing teacher who went off-script, connected the dots, and found a cool way to engage his student," he said.



An illustration of "Vashti" by Peter Reynolds.



by Lisa Fricke

Thank you for the opportunity to have two State Board of Education listening sessions at NSEA U. Board members Patti Gubbels, Sherry Jones, and I listened closely, and took copious notes. As I listened, I heard three main areas of concern: Teacher challenges; relevant teaching preparation; and productive support from principals.

According to Article VII-1, "The Legislature shall provide for the free instruction in the common schools of this state of all persons between the ages of five and twenty-one years..."

To continue to meet that mandate, we must effectively address the current teacher shortage, retain our veteran teachers, and find innovative ways to recruit teachers.

At this time, institutions of higher learning are planning another summit to address this crisis, but we must also continue to work with various organizations and recruit other education partners, businesses, communities, counsels, and foundations to meet our education obligation. In order to maintain quality education, we must also address the concerns of our dedicated teachers.

The State Board panel not only listened, but we look forward to finding potential solutions to lessen the burden of our hard-working educators.

Lisa Fricke
Retired teacher
Lifetime member of NSEA

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Register for Teachers' Night at Omaha's Durham Museum



Teachers' Night: Oct. 6, 2023



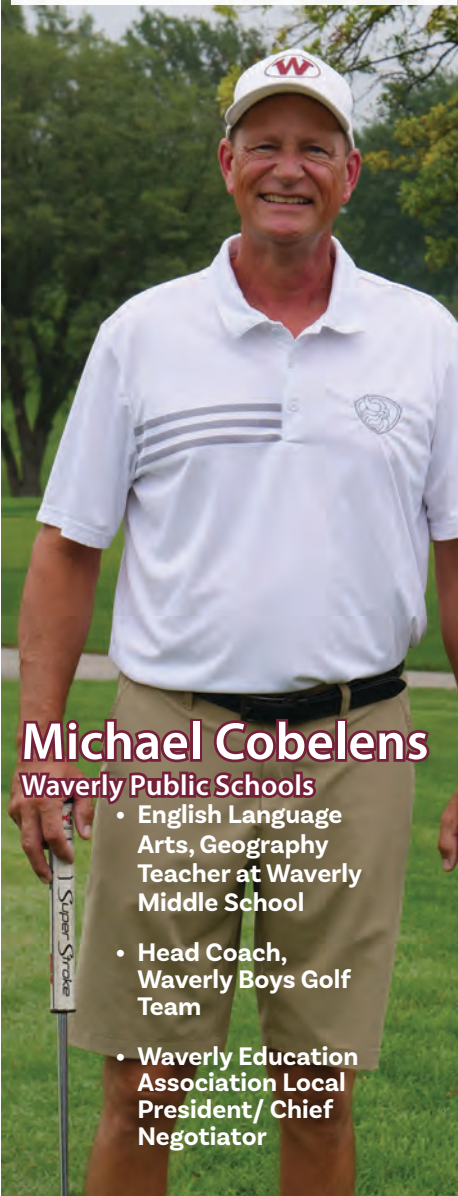
The Durham Museum in Omaha will again host its annual Teachers' Week Oct. 2-6, 2023.

The special week will conclude with the 20th annual Teachers' Night, where educators are invited to take part in a resource fair. Representatives from regional cultural and educational institutions will have free classroom-ready materials, as well as information about field trips and programs in their areas. NSEA is a sponsor of the event.

Attendees will enjoy food and prizes and explore the museum. This year, attendees will get a sneak peek at the museum's fall exhibition, Julia Child: A Recipe for Life.

The night is free of charge to educators at all levels and subjects. For more details and to register to attend, visit the museum's website at durhammuseum.org/teachers-week.

My involvement as a member of Neb. Coaches Association and NSEA has always been about the kids. NCA gives coaches a collective voice within the Nebraska School Activities Association. NSEA works to support students by lifting educators' voices to advocate for learning conditions. Both associations play an important role in creating great public schools.



Michael Cobelens
Waverly Public Schools

- English Language Arts, Geography Teacher at Waverly Middle School
- Head Coach, Waverly Boys Golf Team
- Waverly Education Association Local President/ Chief Negotiator

BINGO!

Educators: This two in one Bingo! card game is a fun way to teach second through fifth graders about the many useful items made from pig and soybean by-products. The "Pork" game is on one side of the card, the "Soy" game on the other. The free Bingo kit includes game tokens, worksheets, call-out-cards, and a classroom poster.

The Nebraska Pork Producers Association is proud to offer this educational resource and several others, all available to you for **FREE**.



Order your Bingo! kit today by visiting neporkeducation.com or scan the QR code.



PERSONAL EMAIL ACCOUNT A MUST

In the hustle and bustle of day-to-day life as an educator, it is convenient to communicate with just one email account. By doing so, however, you may be trading convenience for personal protection. You need to think twice before casually chatting over school email, and here's why.

Subject to review

Your school email is district property. That means no one from the school district needs to ask your permission to review any emails you have sent or received, and it could mean a parent could obtain copies of your emails through an open records request under the Freedom of Information Act.

Also, association business must be kept separate. Let's say you're involved in a dispute with an administrator (something NSEA experts can help with). You wouldn't want that administrator to have access to your association emails on your school-issued email account. That could hurt you in the long run during a hearing.

Don't save or store personal documents on your work computer, as they are subject to the same access as an email account. Anyone from the school district can view them at any time. The district owns any district-issued

technology such as laptops or tablets for use in the classroom, for coaching, or for any other school-related purpose.

Further, email and technology are not subject to work day hours. It does not matter whether you are "on" or "off-the-clock" when sending an email. The district owns the property and your activity on that property 24/7.

Your personal email, cell phone or computer, on the other hand, are not district property. The district does need your permission to access these accounts and devices. You should always use these personal devices — not school-issued ones — for association business or to access your social media accounts.

Finally, depending on your school board policy, negotiated agreement and/or staff handbook, the use of personal communication and personal devices may be restricted to outside the contract day, so only use your personal devices when you're off the clock.

School email accounts

Even before you begin typing a message on your school computer or email account, consider your motives and all possible outcomes.

Are you saying anything disparaging about students, colleagues,

administration or the school board? If so, use your personal email on a personal device, and do it on your own time, not during the school day.

Make sure you are sending your personal message to the recipient's personal email, as well, especially if they are a work colleague or fellow association member.

Are you saying something political? Refrain from sending anything promoting or disparaging about ballot measures or political candidates.

Are you saying anything you would want to be private? Be aware that at any time someone can review and read all communications from your school email.

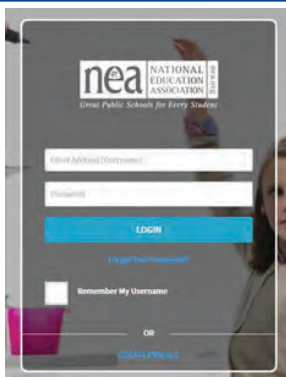
NSEA encourages all members to create a personal email account through a non-school platform, such as Gmail or Hotmail, to conduct personal and association business.

Visit NEA 360

If you're a new member or if it's been awhile since you last logged in, take a moment to update your information on the MyNEA360 portal.

Go to myNEA360.org and use the instructions below to create or update your profile.

UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION



- Go to www.myNEA360.org
- Click **CREATE PROFILE** (if you are new to edCommunities) or
- **LOGIN** (if you already have an edCommunities profile)



- Enter your information
 - Click **REGISTER FOR ACCESS**
- Skip this step if you have already created an edCommunities profile.*



- A verification message will be sent to your email.

- Click **MyNEA360 Profile**



- Click Edit Personal Information to access your personal data
- Ability to review and update your own record as necessary.
- Quick links to resources
- Help Desk – Get answers on your time.

If you experience technical difficulties with the myNEA360 website, you can send your updated information by email to membership@nsea.org or call NSEA at (800) 742-0047.

REMINDER!



Check your paycheck

Employees and employers both have a responsibility to confirm their paychecks are correct.

It's not a common problem, but it is an issue for which members have turned to NSEA for help. Sometimes it's a clerical error that causes an overpayment or underpayment of salary to a school employee. When it happens, it can cause economic hardship for a teacher or school employee. Reparations in such instances may have to be decided on a case-by-case basis.

Local associations should remind or help members to review their first paycheck of each school year for accuracy. It is recommended that each local assist its members, and new members in particular, with the computations to determine whether that first check of the year is correct. Many of these problems could be avoided with such a service.

If a discrepancy is discovered, members should notify NSEA immediately. Each month the issue goes unresolved adds to the amount the member will have to repay – or to the income lost if the member is being underpaid. The matter is further complicated when considering tax and retirement implications.

If you find a paycheck discrepancy, contact your NSEA Organizational Specialist at 1-800-742-0047.



NSEA Staff Shuffle: Departures, and retirement leads to changes

The departure of longtime NSEA Associate Executive Director and Comptroller Sheri Jablonski on Aug. 31 resulted in new job titles and responsibilities for several current NSEA staff.

Jablonski, who began her career at NSEA in 1992, has led the association through important business decisions during her tenure. She was instrumental in creating the NSEA Children's Fund. Since 1994, donations to the Children's Fund have provided hundreds of thousands of dollars to help children in need.

Isau Metes was named Associate Executive Director and has spent the summer months working with Jablonski to ensure a smooth transition of association responsibilities. Metes most recently served as Director of Advocacy and has worked as Director for Teaching and Learning and as an Organizational Specialist.

Assistant comptroller Kami Beaty will assume the role of

Comptroller and Michelle Raphael was named as Business Manager. Raphael was an Organizational Specialist for four years. She is a certified treasury professional and past president of the Nebraska Association of Financial Professionals.

Jason Wiese took over for Metes as Director of Advocacy. Wiese served as the Organizational Specialist for the Northeast Unit.

Omaha Education Association Organizational Specialist Liz Figueroa retired June 1. Figueroa has been with the Omaha Education Association since 2017. Taking her place at OEA is Organizational Specialist Heather Fritz. Fritz most recently served as an Organizational Specialist for membership.

Two associate staff members resigned this summer. Tamra Mick worked to assist staff at NSEA headquarters and Becky Scherbring was assigned to assist the Millard Education Association.



Scan to learn more!



TRAVELERS 

New Carrier Selected for NEA Auto & Home Insurance Program

NEA MB has announced that Travelers has been selected as the new carrier for the NEA Auto & Home Insurance Program.

Travelers emerged as the standout choice with competitive rates, nationwide coverage, and a brand that aligns with NEA MB's commitment to providing the best customer service to NEA members.

About Travelers

Travelers is dedicated to ensuring a seamless transition for members by offering competitive rates, which include a member discount and other eligible discounts to minimize premium impacts as existing policyholders move from the current provider, California Casualty. Key member benefits include:

- Money-saving discounts, including multi-policy and safe driver

- Coverage options and packages tailored to members needs
- Free, no-obligation quotes from licensed insurance representatives
- Online and mobile app policy services with MyTravelers®
- 24/7 claim reporting and customer service.

The new NEA Auto & Home Program provided by Travelers is expected to be fully operational by fourth quarter of 2023, well before most current program participants policies expire with California Casualty. NEA MB will communicate with members to ensure a seamless transition. For questions regarding the NEA Auto & Home Insurance Program, contact NEA MB today by emailing questions to ask-us@neamb.com.

THE CHILD CARE CRISIS IN NEBRASKA IS HURTING EVERYONE.



Quality early childhood education supports children's healthy development and future learning. Yet, too many Nebraska families can't find quality, affordable care.

Let's solve the child care crisis. It's not going to solve itself.

Support early childhood education at:

NebraskaCaresForKids.org



Save with Exclusive Member Offers

The NEA Discount Marketplace, powered by Rakuten, enables members to earn cash back when they shop and save on brand-name merchandise from more than 3,500 top retailers and online stores. Check out the following member-exclusive deals in September and search more retailers at neamb.com/marketplace:

Michaels

Get creative with craft supplies and explore the new Maker Place at Michaels this fall. Members save more by shopping through the NEA Discount Marketplace.

Macy's

Members save more at Macy's. Earn extra cash back

on clothing, jewelry, toys and home décor. Visit the NEA Discount Marketplace to start shopping for all your fall favorites today!

Finish Line

Get back-to-school deals on athletic shoes and clothing at Finish Line when you shop through the NEA Discount Marketplace. Members earn extra cash back on every purchase!

Champion

Stay comfortable in the classroom with classic sportswear from Champion USA. Members save on all their favorites and earn extra cash back.

PetSmart

Keep your pet happy and healthy with food, toys, treats and more from PetSmart. Discover member deals when you shop through the NEA Discount Marketplace.

How do you pay for classroom supplies?

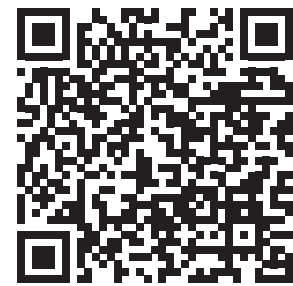
More than half of teachers nationally spend more than \$500 a year of their own hard-earned money on classroom materials. That's why long-time corporate supporter, Horace Mann, sponsors the non-profit organization, DonorsChoose.org, which connects public school teachers in need of supplies with individual donors who want to help.

As an educator, you have one of the most important jobs there is: shaping children's futures. But with school budgets constantly dwindling, your job becomes more and more challenging. Horace Mann is here to help.

DonorsChoose is a website and nonprofit organization that connects public school teachers in need of classroom materials and experiences with individual donors who want to help. Since partnering with DonorsChoose in 2011, donors have contributed more than \$5 million to projects on the website.

Horace Mann also offers workshops that teach educators how to submit DonorsChoose projects, to help improve their chances of getting those projects funded by donors. Visit DonorsChoose.org or scan the QR code on this page to set up a project.

Visit DonorsChoose.org



Scan this QR Code
to set up a project!



DonorsChoose is an independent third-party not affiliated with Horace Mann. Horace Mann provides no guarantee that educators' projects will receive funding through DonorsChoose.



Benefits designed with **YOU IN MIND**

Explore exclusive benefits online:

- Student debt reduction
- Flexible insurance coverage
- Complimentary life insurance
- Easy retirement planning
- Shopping and travel deals



Scan below
to learn more





TRISH GUINAN

Message from the Executive Director

For the past two years, I have had the honor of attending Fremont Education Association’s new teacher breakfast as an invited guest. This year, executive team members each took a turn at the front of the room to share their personal reasons for joining the Fremont Education Association—their “why” message. When past FEA President Doug Sheppard spoke this year, he had new reasons to be thankful for FEA colleagues and the Association’s close work with the Fremont Public Schools administration

Telling Your ‘Why’

Doug explained that years ago, he joined his local student association and continued his membership. He had many reasons to join NSEA as a young teacher and he rattled off a few reasons before explaining that membership is like insurance. You hope you’ll never have to use it, but you would never want to be without it. Doug explained that in his 30-plus years as a member of NSEA, he had never had to use the Association’s legal services—that is until his recent hospitalization and liver transplant (see story on pages 7-8).

Doug explained there was a time during his recovery when he didn’t know if he would ever be able to return to the classroom. Not yet eligible to retire, Doug had questions and he knew NSEA would have the answers. He said a phone call to his Organizational Specialist was all it took to get the ball rolling. Doug spent hours on the phone with NSEA legal working through the “what ifs” surrounding his career, his health, and what his decision would mean for his family. It was the kind of service that no other organization can match.

Respect Matters

Doug credited the mutual respect between FEA and district administrators for the tremendous

support shown to his family and his students while he focused on his health.

As a past FEA president, negotiator and member myself, I have an intimate understanding of how this local association worked to build a reliable, supportive place for all in education. FEA has been able to effectively advocate for members through building relationships and mutual respect with school administration, the district, and the community. As a local, FEA has a robust network of members who have helped uplift one another, especially during difficult times—the support shown to Doug through his health crisis is just one example. While speaking at the new teachers breakfast, Doug mentioned that his school administrators even made time to visit him in the hospital while he recovered. He said he didn’t know of any other local association that shares the kind of mutual respect that FEA and their school district have built. Of course, building this kind of relationship with any district administration takes constant work, communication, and respect.

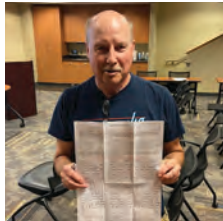
An Incredible Recovery

In the spring, I attended a benefit held in Doug’s honor. While he couldn’t attend in person during his recovery, he made do with the help of technology. Doug graciously greeted attendees via a smart device and FaceTime. In August, I watched as Doug gave his “why” speech – and was amazed to see the recovery he’s made in just a few short months.

During this year’s new teacher breakfast, Doug shared some exciting news—his medical team had cleared him to return to the classroom for his final year before retirement. The news was met with applause. Congratulations, Doug! Good luck this year!

“
Fremont Education Association has a robust network of members who have helped uplift one another—especially during difficult times.
”

CORE: (Call On Retired Educators)



WELCOMING
New Retirees!

Support Our Schools Nebraska: NSEA Retired members Rita Bennett, Sheri Paden, Carla Watson, De Tonack, Margie Nowak and Steven Clapp volunteered their time this summer to assist with the referendum petition drive!

Register today for the NSEA-Retired Fall Conference

October
18

The NSEA-Retired Fall Conference will be Oct. 18 at the Grand Island Stuhr Museum and will feature breakout sessions both in the morning and afternoon. Attendees will also learn about the rich history of Stuhr Museum's expansive facilities. Registration will soon be available at www.nsea.org/retired. The event is free for all members and \$10 for guests. Registration and refreshments will begin at

8:30 a.m. **The deadline for registrations is October 11.**

Welcome, NSEA-Retired President Heineman!



John Heineman officially took office on Sept. 1 as president of the Nebraska State Education Association-Retired. The 2000 Nebraska Teacher of the Year spent more than 30 years at Lincoln High School, teaching speech and theater and inspiring students to express themselves confidently and creatively. Now, as president of NSEA-Retired, he hopes to continue to champion the cause of education, ensuring that the voices of retired educators are heard and valued.



More details coming soon!

BlueCross BlueShield of Nebraska information sessions will be held in Omaha, Lincoln, Kearney and Norfolk in October and early November. A webinar will be made available after the in-person presentations. Details will be posted on www.nsea.org/retired and in the September Retired Advocate.



Top Picture: Maxey Elementary retirees Suzanne Schoening and Linda Freye surrounded by Lincoln Retired members Lesa Christiancy and Shelley Clayburn. Several local retired chapters have reached out to thank new educator retirees and to encourage membership in NSEA/NEA Retired.

Bottom Picture: Julie Erickson (Prescott) received "retiree M&M vitamins" and membership information from Lincoln Retired member Diane Lamb. The candy treats to serve as a welcome and 'thank you' to new retirees and include information on joining NSEA and NEA-Retireds.

Have an article idea for the NSEA-Retired Advocate or the NSEA Voice magazine? Send your idea to John Heineman at RingoJohn@aol.com

Nickels named UNK College of Education Distinguished Educator of the Year

Former Nebraska State Board of Education member and retired NSEA Organizational Specialist Maureen Nickels has been selected as the 2023 UNK College of Education Distinguished Educator of the Year.

Nickels has dedicated her 43-year career to the education of children in Nebraska. Nickels was an elementary school teacher for 26 years before working as an organizational specialist for the NSEA.

During her time at NSEA, she developed and facilitated the Intergenerational Mentoring Program, which placed retired teachers as mentors for college students training to become classroom teachers. She retired from NSEA in 2017.

Nickels was elected to the Nebraska State Board of Education in 2014. She served as vice president and then two years as president, leading the board through the COVID-19 pandemic. During her tenure, Nickels chaired committees on educator effectiveness and worked with state leaders on providing compliance flexibility for local schools and districts. She was a member of the National Association of State Boards of Education from 2015-22. In 2022, she was honored with the organization's Distinguished Service Award.

Nickels will be feted in September during the 43rd annual Distinguished UNK Alumni Awards luncheon.



Nickels



NEA Honors Perez for Teacher Excellence

Omaha Education Association member Lee Perez was honored as a top finalist for the 2023 Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence.

In May, the NEA Foundation hosted its 2023 Salute to Excellence in Education Gala in Washington DC. Perez was honored during the gala for his commitment to his students and the teaching profession. He is an English as a Second Language teacher at Omaha's Alice Buffett Magnet Middle School and the 2022 Nebraska Teacher of the Year.

Perez was one of five finalists selected nationally to be recognized for exceptional skill in the classroom, attention to equity and diversity, engagement of families and communities, commitment to ongoing professional development, and advocacy for the profession.

The NEA Foundation is a national philanthropic organization committed to promoting the best in public education. The Foundation invests in educators' leadership, shared learning, and collaboration; supports partnerships and initiatives that strengthen public education; and promotes improvements in public education policy and practice.

Tanderup Honored with NEA Human & Civil Rights Award

NSEA-Retired member and activist Arthur "Art" Tanderup was honored as NEA's 2023 H. Councill Trenholm Memorial Award recipient.

Tanderup, a retired educator and Nebraska farmer, is an activist in education, agriculture and environmental causes. In 2014, Tanderup joined members of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in South Dakota in demonstrating opposition to the proposed extension of TransCanada's Keystone XL pipeline.

In 2018, the Tanderup family donated 10 acres of their farm in northeast Nebraska to the Ponca tribes of Oklahoma and Nebraska. The donation allowed the tribes to continue to plant their sacred corn in Nebraska and impeded the progress of the controversial pipeline.

Tanderup has also worked with world-renowned aerial artist John Quigley to design, plow and cut environmental and political crop



images. Tanderup was honored during the 56th Annual NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner in July. NEA's Human and Civil Rights Awards honors individuals and organizations, including those from within the Association, who have expanded human and civil rights in their communities.

In Memory

We recognize these members whom we've lost recently.

Charles E. Haase, 86, Omaha

Richard L. McGee, 83, Dix

Leonard J. Nickerson, 86, Lincoln

Nancy "Jane" Koch, 76, Hastings

Sheryl Barry, 87, Schuyler

Ronald L. Kort, 81, Hastings

Darrel Hoffman, 83, Beatrice

Mailed By: **The Nebraska State Education Association**
605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742

Your Voice is Important

2023 Teacher of the Year: Renee Jones shares her ideas for starting the school year off right.



The first few weeks of the semester, in my opinion, can have a significant impact on your time spent together. During this time, together with your students, you are building relationships, establishing routines, and laying the groundwork of what to expect for the remainder of the semester.

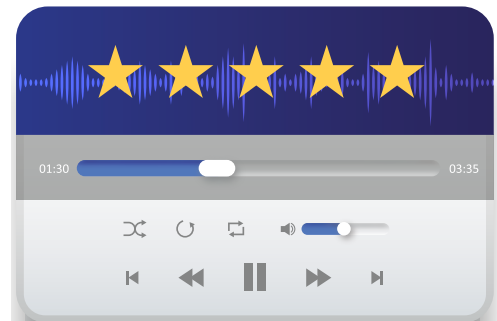
Each semester, for every class, I begin completing two things before the end of the first week: a collaborative activity where the students are actively out of their seats and talking with their peers and the building of collaborative classroom norms.

Establishing classroom rules and expectations is important to creating your learning environment. Additionally, encouraging students to actively participate in an activity that builds these normative expectations is a way of saying – “I see you, your voice is important.” – from the first moments you are together.

In my classroom, I facilitate an activity that encourages each student to reflect on what success in the classroom looks

like for them. I then invite students to write down three tangible actions that support the success they just described. I ask the students to write these three items on sticky notes and anonymously place them on the whiteboard. As a class, we read each note and create the classroom norms we need to be successful in our classroom. I post these in our classroom and acknowledge and reflect on these norms throughout the semester.

Additionally, with intention, I build a movement and connection activity early into the semester. I want my students to be active participants, to know the names of each of their peers, and to feel comfortable taking risks. I believe that by asking my students to do this, in small increments, at the start of our time together, it eases the tension as the tasks become more difficult—such as being asked to present a five-minute speech in front of their peers. I want my students to know that, in our classroom, we move around and frequently talk and share ideas with our peers.

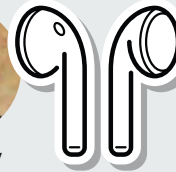


PODCAST PICK

Labor Day Listening



Begley



Royers

As the nation celebrates the social and economic achievements of organized labor by American workers on Labor Day, it's worth taking 30 minutes to listen to the podcast, "What does Labor Want?"

The podcast is produced by UNO's William Brennan Institute for Labor Studies and is hosted by Director Jim Begley, PHR, MPA.

Begley interviewed Millard Education Association President Tim Royers for the July 14th episode. Royers spoke about his experiences in the field of education, as an NSEA leader and about his work on the Support Our Schools Nebraska referendum petition drive this summer. Find the podcast on Spotify or by visiting www.spoti.fi/45jIJXW