

THE VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ September 2014

GETTING A

W

I've worked very hard for this school, I love this school, and I will fight for this job. With the help of everybody at NSEA, I came out on top.

- Clint Jones, Meridian Public Schools

**Advocacy Conference
Comes to You!**

**Commissioner: Where Do
You Find Teaching Joy?**

Upcoming Assignments

Blue Cross Scholarships Tuesday, Sept. 30

■ **What:** If you could use a little cash to help improve your skills or gain new teaching endorsements, the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Scholarship Fund is for you!

■ **Details:** The grants pay for a healthy share of your post-grad classes. Learn more on page 14.

NSEA Advocacy Conference Sept. 10 through Oct. 4

■ **What:** NSEA's top-notch training is a must for negotiators.

■ **Details:** For the first time, training at nine sites across the state. Learn more on Page 5.

General Election Tuesday, Nov. 4

■ **What:** Nebraska's General Election. Citizens will cast ballots in local school board elections, for nearly two dozen state senators, state constitutional offices and governor.

■ **Details:** If you haven't yet registered to vote, do so: elected officials and policies affect all you do in the classroom. Be informed: start by reading about NSEA's gubernatorial recommendation on page 7.



Children's Fund: Meant to be Used

For 20 Years, Children's Fund has Helped Nebraska Students Succeed

"I have three students without winter coats. I have another student who lives with nine people in a one-bedroom home with three broken out windows. I have two other students who wear the same shirt and pants three or four days a week."



That was the start of a lengthy email last winter from a member seeking help for students. The rest of the email illustrated exactly why, in 1994, NSEA started the Children's Fund: because teachers just can't afford to help every child in need.

"I have purchased shirts and clothes for my students, but I have a large family and we live paycheck-to-paycheck ourselves."

The Children's Fund mission is simple: to ensure that a child's personal need does not interfere with his or her ability to learn and succeed. NSEA members see scores of children in need every day, but the individual teacher

cannot help every child. That is where the Children's Fund comes into play. The fund is meant to be used to help Nebraska children in need.

Over the years, the Children's Fund has given thousands of Nebraska children in every corner of the state the opportunity to succeed. New eyeglasses, coats, boots, mittens, new shirts or socks, meal assistance – all will be covered, depending on the circumstances.

Donations from individual NSEA members, from local association fund drives and Nebraska businesses finance the Children's Fund.

"When a child needs basic necessities their family can't afford, the Children's Fund is there to help," said NSEA President Nancy Fulton.

At the request of an NSEA member, assistance is immediate and confidential. NSEA assumes the overhead; every penny donated helps a child. To request assistance, call NSEA's Sally Bodtke at 1-800-742-0047, or email her at:

sally.bodtke@nsea.org

Cover Story:

Milligan Public Schools physical education teacher and coach Clint Jones found himself facing a reduction-in-force, and almost threw in the towel. Then he decided to call NSEA. He's still on the job today, serving students and the school district. For details, turn to

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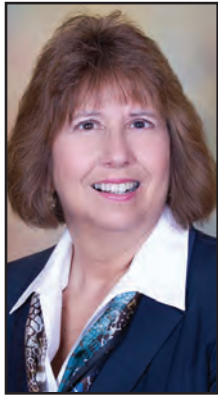
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A Fingerprint on Tomorrow



**NSEA President
Nancy Fulton**

“Facts by themselves are nothing...It is through teaching that they become something real, something students can grasp, and use to shape their tomorrows.”

—Anonymous

At this point in the school season, I often look back and recall being amazed, as a parent, at how much my own children grew and matured over the summer months.

Summer growth spurts! At times during the summer months, my children seemed to grow and mature before my very eyes. I’m sure that there were some summers when my Wilber-Clatonia colleagues greeted my children as they returned from their summer adventures and wondered what kind of fertilizer or super food the Fulton family had been serving at the dinner table! I know there were some summers when I had the same question.

The start of a new school year is an exciting time, regardless of whether this is your first day of school or the first day of your 34th year of school. While students were away from the classroom, growing and (hopefully) maturing, many of you were growing yourselves, through advanced coursework, trainings and professional development.

Your newfound knowledge makes the start of your new school year even more exciting: you have new knowledge to impart; a new vision to share; new worlds of learning to explore with your students.

The back-to-school-season brings that kind of excitement. As a teacher, this is my favorite time of the school year. There is nothing like being at the head of a classroom of students eager for a new year of adventures.

Up to the Task

The quote at the top of this article is on a poster displayed in my third grade classroom for many years. The quote refers to “shaping their tomorrows.” Consider that more than 300,000 Nebraska students are back in their K-12 classrooms this year, ready to grow, engage and learn with more than 28,000 public school educators. That’s a lot of

“tomorrows” to be shaped. We are up to the task.

No matter what is required of you, no matter where or what you teach, no matter the challenges your students face, I know you will do everything possible to see that those in your care get the high quality education they deserve and need in order to have a brighter tomorrow. In more cases than you probably know, you will undoubtedly be the best part, the bright spot, in a student’s day.

Your work will forever leave your fingerprint on tomorrow.

‘Raise Your Hand!’

You may by now be familiar with the National Education Association’s call to action, to Raise Your Hand for Public Education. It is a national initiative to mobilize educators, parents, policy makers, and community leaders to ensure the success of all our students. By making a commitment to public schools, we can unite to maintain Nebraska’s great public schools.

Let’s Raise Our Hands for adequate and equitable school funding. Our state should invest in P-16 public education and provide the resources necessary to continue to support strong schools, strong communities and a strong economy.

Let’s Raise Our Hands for small class sizes. Research has shown that students cannot reach their full potential in an overcrowded classroom. Students should be in a class that is small enough to allow for meaningful interaction among the class. Students should be in a class that allows teachers to be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the members of the class, and to work to enrich the strengths and overcome the weaknesses.

Sensible Testing

Finally, let’s Raise our Hands for common-sense testing. Students should not be tested to the point of frustration, or in quantities and in frequency that takes the place of quality instruction. Testing should improve instruction and aid learning, not as a tool for labeling and ranking.

To all of you, have a wonderful start to a new school year, and remember to Raise Your Hand for your local school and for the students you teach.

“
...no matter what you teach, no matter the challenges your students face, I know you will do everything possible to see that those in your care get the high quality care they deserve...”



Finding Nebraska’s Great Public Schools (GPS)

NSEA locals from around the state appear or are mentioned in this issue. Look for:

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Advocacy Conference Goes Regional!

Area Meetings Bring Best Bargaining Practices, Skills, Knowledge, to You

After meeting annually at a single, central location, NSEA's vaunted Advocacy Conference is going regional!

For more than 30 years NSEA has used the Advocacy Conference to train local association negotiators in the art of bargaining; to update them on changes in state law or health plan rates; to provide the latest update on state aid projections, and more.

For all of those years, the Advocacy Conference has met in a central location in Nebraska – usually Grand Island or Kearney – with members driving to that site.

In September and October, the Advocacy Conference will come to members, in the form of nine regional meetings across the state. The nine sites fit neatly into a golf-oriented theme, hence the title “The NSEA Open: Regional Advocacy Conferences.”

“We hope this makes it much easier for many of our members,” said NSEA Director of Advocacy Trish Guinan. “Some members drove as long as six hours one-way to attend. That shouldn’t happen this year.”

In addition, the Friday night/all-day Saturday format of the past has been scrapped in favor of evening or Saturday morning events. The sessions will be intense and useful to



those on hand, said Guinan.

“We’ll focus on what they need to know when the state-mandated bargaining period begins on Nov. 1,” said Guinan. “State statute provides a tight deadline for the bargaining process, and we want every local to get off to a good start this year.”

Negotiators should have already received details about the conferences, and registration for the nine sites is already under way on the NSEA website at:

www.nsea.org

If you have questions about the conferences details, contact your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047. Here are the dates and locations of the nine conferences:

- **Gothenburg:** Wednesday, Sept. 10, Walker’s.
- **Hastings:** Tuesday, Sept. 16, Lochland Country Club.
- **Burwell:** Wednesday, Sept. 17, Sandstone Grill.
- **Omaha:** Monday, Sept. 22, Upstream.
- **Valentine:** Tuesday, Sept. 23, Peppermill Steak House.
- **Beatrice:** Wednesday, Sept. 24, The Black Crow.
- **York:** Tuesday, Sept 30, Chances R.
- **Norfolk:** Wednesday, Oct. 1, Norfolk Country Club.
- **Gering:** Saturday, Oct. 4, Gering Civic Center.

Ag Sack Lunch Kicks Off Year Five

Nebraska fourth-graders once again can enjoy a free sack lunch and a fact-filled presentation about Nebraska agriculture at the State Capitol, thanks to the Ag Sack Lunch Program.



More than 20,000

fourth-graders visit the State Capitol in Lincoln each year as part of state-mandated curriculum. The program uses the visits to reach students.

The program shares its agriculture-centered message and a free lunch with the fourth-graders each year. It educates the students — and by extension their parents — in a fun way about how important agriculture is to the state’s economy.

Reservations for the 2014-15 school year are limited to 5,000 students on a first-come-first served basis. Spots fill quickly, according to coordinators, who urge teachers to sign up their classes even if they don’t have schedules set for their State Capitol visit. It is especially important that teachers wanting to bring

their classes for the first time register quickly, they said, since many teachers have been bringing their classes back every year. Register online at:

agsacklunchprogram.com

Letters of invitation will be sent in early September to fourth-grade teachers in about 660 elementary schools across 44 counties in the eastern third of Nebraska, the classes most likely to make the Lincoln trip. A primary objective is to help students from urban areas develop a better understanding of how agriculture affects their daily lives.

In addition to the free lunches, each student receives a card game full of farm-related facts to take home.

The presentations last about 20 minutes and teach students about the role agriculture plays in the state’s economy. Presentation leaders are university students from farm backgrounds trained to conduct the sessions.

Nurses & Others: Get Added Liability Coverage Through NEA

Nurses who teach or supervise in the medical arts might want to consider NEA’s Educators Employment Liability Insurance.

For \$13, NEA provides nurses, other health educators and athletic trainers added liability for teaching and supervisory responsibilities. The policy for active and active part-time NSEA members covers nurses for:

- Rendering first-aid and regular nurse services as a part of employment.
- Administering oral prescription medicine to students, if advance written authorization has been provided.

Nurses and eligible school employees include dental hygienists, occupational therapists or physical therapists. NSEA members who are athletic trainers may also buy the coverage.

To obtain coverage, send a letter requesting coverage with a check for \$13, payable to NSEA, to: Megan Lyons, NSEA, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Indicate your occupation (school nurse). Include your home and work telephone numbers.

Checks for the 2014-15 school year must be received by Oct. 1, 2014. Checks received after that date will provide coverage for the remaining months of the employment year.

For details, call Megan at 1-800-742-0047.

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On Education Issues, It's Hassebrook

Bipartisan Team of NSEA Members Check the Facts, Recommend Hassebrook as Governor

Education a Hassebrook Focus; Opposes Corporate Schools

When Nebraskans go to the polls on Tuesday, Nov. 4, they will elect the first new governor in the state in 10 years. Only one of the two candidates has the credentials to be called an "education governor."

Based on answers to education-related questions, a bi-partisan team of 15 NSEA members from across the state interviewed both candidates and recommended that Chuck Hassebrook become the state's next governor.

Hassebrook has extensive experience in education, with 18 years as a member of the University of Nebraska Board of Regents.

His opponent, Pete Ricketts, is a past president and benefactor of a pro-voucher organization in Omaha.

In 37 years at the Center for Rural Affairs, Hassebrook advised and helped thousands of small businesses get started and stay in operation.

Ricketts stepped into the business world through, and then retired early from, a multi-million dollar corporation started by his father.

Hassebrook opposes the establishment of for-profit, corporate schools in Nebraska. Ricketts favors such schools.

Hassebrook understands the importance of education; indeed, education, renewable energy and help for small businesses are the three top strategies in his campaign.

Ricketts barely mentions his plans for education in his



Hassebrook

public appearances or on his website.

There are key differences between the candidates on other issues, as well. But NSEA's recommendation for Hassebrook is based on education issues, like the questions posed by NSEA to the candidates:

NSEA: Do you support public funds to provide vouchers or tax credits to those who choose to send their children to private schools?

Hassebrook: No. I oppose using public tax dollars for private or corporate schools.

Ricketts: Yes. Provided that it is consistent with local control and other budget priorities are considered in the process.

NSEA: Would you support charter school legislation?

Hassebrook: I oppose charters because they drain funds from public schools and overall have not been demonstrated to improve educational attainment. Further, they tend to cherry pick students, leaving public schools with a greater concentration of the most disadvantaged students.

Ricketts: Yes. I believe a charter school law is appropriate. I believe charter schools should be allowed to operate upon mutually agreed on contracts.

Clearly, when it comes to education, Chuck Hassebrook is the right person to lead Nebraska for the next four years.



Visioning Process Under Way

What should the education system in Nebraska look like in the next 10 years? Twenty years? Thirty years?

State senators agree that the state needs a vision of public education's future in Nebraska. They voted 43-0 in April to pass LBI 103, which provides for the Legislature's Education Committee to embark on a strategic planning, or visioning, process, for pre-school to post-secondary (P-16) education in Nebraska.

Members of the committee, and a larger committee of citizens – including NSEA members – have been meeting to move the process forward. Now comes the public hearing stage. The Committee will take testimony at three sites in October. The sites, times and dates are:

■ **Omaha:** Monday, Oct. 6, 1:30 p.m., Gallup, 1001 Gallup Dr.

■ **Norfolk:** Wednesday, Oct. 15, 1:30 p.m., Suite E, Lifelong Learning Center, Northeast Community College.

■ **Broken Bow:** Thursday, Oct. 16, 1:30 p.m., Broken Bow High School auditorium.

Tax Cuts Fail Kansas Schools

State Budget 'Over the Cliff'; Credit Downgraded

Tax cuts that were touted as a way to spur the Kansas economy have failed badly in that state, and threaten future funding for that state's public schools, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

In a report by Michael Leachman, the Center's director of State Fiscal Research, a recent downgrade of Kansas' credit rating by Standard & Poor's means the Kansas state budget "is a train heading off a cliff."

Kansas legislators approved massive tax cuts 18 months ago in hopes such cuts would produce more economic growth. Leachman said the state assumes revenue will surge in the next year – even though more tax cuts go into effect with the New Year.

Leachman said "That's why Duane Goossen, the state's former budget director, recently wrote 'the Kansas budget appears to be teetering on the edge

of a fiscal cliff, but that's an illusion. We've already gone over the edge.'"

The state is drawing on emergency reserves. Once those reserves are gone, Leachman said any further cuts would come on top of deep cuts already made to schools and other services.

The future looks dim, he said. The 2015 cuts will be followed by income tax cuts each of the next three years, "making it even harder for Kansas to fund its schools and other services."

Leachman noted that Moody's – another bond major credit rating firm – also downgraded the Kansas credit rating earlier in the year.

The rating agencies clearly understand, said Leachman, that the Kansas approach to fiscal policy is a disaster.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities is a nonprofit, nonpartisan policy organization working at the federal and state levels on fiscal policy.

The Right Call

Meridian Teacher, Coach, Faced RIF, Called NSEA

Teacher, coach and advocate for kids: Clint Jones has always counted those as his most important roles.

Today, he also counts himself as an advocate for NSEA.

Jones' nine-year run at the Meridian Public Schools might have ended a year ago, had NSEA not been at his side during a reduction-in-force action that threatened one-fourth of his job and paycheck.

After receiving the RIF notice, he briefly considered moving on. Instead, made the right call and contacted NSEA.

"There was a time when I thought I would look for another job," he said. "But I thought 'I've worked very hard for this school, I love this school, and I will fight for this job.' With the help of everybody at NSEA, I came out on top."

DURING THE 2012-13 year, Jones was head football and track coach, taught physical education and spent one-fourth of his time as activities director.

Until the spring of 2013, his evaluations as activities director had been positive. His previous AD evaluations had been informal, verbal pat-on-the-back during his broader evaluation as a teacher.

Administrators, however, had begun changing expectations for his activities director assignment, and had added new duties, including budget duties and the evaluation of his fellow coaches – items up to that point managed by administrators.

During his final 2012-13 evaluation, Jones felt pressure to resign as activities director. Yet with a wife and two small children at the time – he has three children today – he felt he could not afford the financial loss. He sought assurance the district would retain him in a full-time role if he resigned as activities director. Given



"I love this school!": Meridian Education Association member Clint Jones faced a RIF last year, and decided to fight for his job, with NSEA's assistance.

verbal assurance he would retain full-time status, he resigned as AD.

THAT ASSURANCE did not last. Within days, Jones received a RIF notice: administrators planned to cut his 2013-14 schedule and salary by one-fourth. He called NSEA at once. After talking with NSEA Organizational Specialist Mike Wiesen, Jones filed for a hearing before the Meridian Board of Education.

Jones says he believes the trouble began 18 months earlier when he disagreed with administrators over the discipline handed down to a student after an on-field incident. Jones disagreed when administrators suspended the student from activities for a full year. The school handbook, he said, called for a three-game suspension, and delegated the suspensions decision to Jones, as AD.

"I did the right thing," said Jones. "I stood up for a kid, and my job was threatened."

PATRONS, STUDENTS and teachers packed the school commons area during the May 2013 hearing before the school board.

"I had tremendous support from the public and from teachers here," said Jones. "That was one of the things that helped me get through."

At the hearing, Wiesen established that Meridian fell short of national

guidelines for phys ed offerings to students. Two administrators, both former phys ed teachers, agreed, and concurred that the class schedule provided opportunities for additional PE classes.

Further, Wiesen established that the district's evaluation tools were of poor design, and led to poor evaluation of Jones' work as AD. Wiesen also argued that those poor evaluations led Jones to resign as AD. He also argued Jones would not have resigned had



Nebraska Coaches Association Clinic: Danielle King, left, and Lacy Kinderknecht, of the Logan County Education Association, left, and Wausa Education Association's Brandon Kirby, right, tack their names to the NSEA map of the state.



administrators told him doing so would cause a cut in his contract.

The hearing went past 2 a.m., including several hours of closed board deliberations. Patrons applauded when the board voted 6-0 to retain Jones on a full-time basis.

“I was really grateful that the board listened to the facts and didn’t come in with preconceived ideas or notions,” he said.

Both the superintendent and principal have left the district.

“IT WAS HARD TO go through, but I feel I am so much

stronger for going through it,” Jones said. “I feel there is not much now that I could not handle.”

He said Wiesen “was awesome. He gave me great advice. It was huge to have NSEA on my side.”

Today, Jones believes in NSEA. “I was probably naïve to think that nothing like that would ever happen to me,” he said.

“I think that it’s a misconception in a lot of teachers’ minds, thinking that this will never happen to them. It can. All it takes is a disagreement with an administrator, and your job can be on the line.”

Collaboration, Teamwork Those Traits an Association Benefit, Says Battle Creek’s Christensen

Like any teacher and coach, Teresa Christensen keeps a busy schedule.

She teaches American history, civics and psychology at Battle Creek, is head varsity volleyball and junior high track coach, and sponsors prom and junior high student council.

She is also a negotiator for the Battle Creek Education Association.

With all that activity, a husband and two teenage daughters, it takes family teamwork to stay on schedule.

“I have an amazing family that allows me to do this,” she said.

There was a time she did not attend BCEA activities: she wasn’t a member. Christensen belonged to the Nebraska Coaches Association for many years, and felt she had all the liability coverage and other benefits she needed.

“As I grew older, and became a more experienced teacher, I realized I didn’t have a lot of say-so in the academic part of my career,” said Christensen.

She calls the Nebraska Coaches Association “a great organization,” and still belongs. Yet she said it makes sense to belong to both NSEA and NCA.

“The added support, depending on whether it’s a classroom situation or whether it’s on the court – whatever you need, you have the backing of either organization,” she said.

NSEA membership, she said, gives her

a voice in the academic and bargaining sides of the equation. Serving as a negotiator allows her to do more.

“I think you make a difference as a negotiator,” she said.

A BENEFIT of NSEA membership, aside from the obvious plus of having a say in contract talks, is collaboration.

The BCEA meets monthly, and members often brainstorm ways to improve their work and their school.

“It’s just a great time to collaborate, because you don’t have that time during the day,” she said.

When asked to join the BCEA negotiations team, she said yes.

“I thought ‘maybe this is where I could make a difference.’ I could be the voice for those who don’t have the courage to speak up or to fight for what they believe is right,” she said.

Last year the team had a good sense of what the base salary settlement would be, so sought to improve the extra duty schedule. The negotiations team collected a master list of every teacher’s extra duties, and charted a course to improve the schedule. There was initial resistance from some BCEA members, but the schedule eventually received near-unanimous approval.

“It wasn’t always smooth, but in the end it really benefitted everyone and ev-



A membership voice: Battle Creek Education Association member Teresa Christensen says association membership gives her a voice in the academic side of her teaching career.

everyone was happy,” she said.

That is an example of the benefit Christensen sees with association membership: collaboration and teamwork that benefits everyone.



Checking in: Also signing in at NSEA’s booth at the Nebraska Coaches Association clinic were Elkhorn Education Association’s Kalle Wamsat and Lindsay Aliano, left; and Niobrara Education Association’s J.J. Parks, at right.

Your Passion for Education ... It Is in You!

By Dr. Matt Blomstedt
Nebraska Commissioner of Education

The energy and excitement of the first day of school for students, teachers, and, yes, the Commissioner of Education is a great reminder of the passion we have for the work of educating every student, every day across Nebraska.

What drives you to be in the education profession?

Perhaps, it is that memory of anticipation of entering the unknown the first day of kindergarten, middle school or high school. I remember the butterflies and level of excitement to hit a new mark each year. I still get that feeling. Unfortunately, we can get lost in all the work — and it is a lot of work — to prepare for each day and each year. Where do you find that joy to energize yourself for the work?

Here's some of what drives me every day. I am energized to have an opportunity to think about how my work, done well, can positively affect every student in Nebraska. I don't get that chance to look into a student's eyes and know I'm making a difference, but I try to imagine how each of your classrooms is affected.

I'm energized knowing that a system that supports each of your classrooms and lets you focus on your students collectively and individually does make a difference.

I'm driven by my own family's history and expectations that every child is a valuable asset to the present and the



Blomstedt

future of our state, nation and world.

I'm driven by stories of my grandparents helping to start a school for special needs students in Palisade, Nebraska, so my Uncle Eldon who had Down syndrome could attend school. That was before the advent of special education services for students.

I'm driven to believe that every person contributes to the next generation. I'm driven by the excitement of knowing that teachers are working every day to engage students in learning. Recently I described the Nebraska education system as one designed in the Nebraska Constitution and state statutes, influenced by federal, state and local governments but DRIVEN by educator passion, vision and leadership. So, I'm

“driven” by you and your passion.

Subscribe to State Board Updates

NSEA members can now check a website for a monthly summary of action by the Nebraska State Board of Education. That site is at:

<http://bit.ly/Aug14Summary>

In addition, members can subscribe to receive future State Board of Education reports, as well as occasional news releases from the Nebraska Department of Education. Sign up for those reports at this link:

<http://bit.ly/NDEList>

You can also follow the Department of Education on Twitter at:

[@NDE_News](https://twitter.com/NDE_News) [#nedoe](https://twitter.com/nedoe)

I'm certain that you, like me, are driven by the excitement and passion for learning that your students bring to your classroom and school every day. When you need to reenergize yourself, dig deep and remember that you are helping both the students in front of you and the generations that follow. This is a big and important job we have. I'm honored to be part of the system you are driving.

Next Month: *The Commissioner updates the state board's work on A QuESTT, the new state accountability system.*

Members Will Serve on NSEA District, State Board

NSEA members have elected or re-elected nearly four dozen of their fellow members to represent them at the state level on the NSEA Board of Directors, or at the district level on one of NSEA's six district governance boards.

The online election took place last spring. Elected were:

Capitol District

NSEA Board: Rita Bennett, Lincoln.

District Treasurer: William West, Lincoln.

District Secretary: Robin Ankrom, Falls City.

District Executive Committee: Ann Allyn, Lincoln.

Bylaw Amendment: For, 244; Against, 7.

Elkhorn District

NSEA Board: David Shrader, Verdigré.

Dist. Treasurer: Jill Anderson, Walthill.

Metro District

NSEA Board: Marsha Edquist, Millard; Alan Bone, Westside.

District Treasurer: Linda Floro, Papillion-LaVista.

District Secretary: Jane Leadabrand, Ralston.

District Executive Committee, Subdistrict 2: Sasha Cervantes, Omaha.

District Executive Committee, Subdistrict 6: Josh Hennagir, Millard.

District Executive Committee, Subdistrict 8: Brad Wellmann, Bellevue.

Panhandle District

District President: Daniel Spatzier-

ath, Mitchell.

District Secretary: Renae Noble, Chadron.

District Executive Committee: Teresa Bailey, Gering; Ann Hurt, Leyton.

Sandhills District

District Treasurer: Marcia Smith, Wheeler Central.

District Secretary: Troy Feters, Ogallala.

Tri-Valley District

NSEA Board: Dennis Batterman, Chase County; Melissa Boutwell, Lexington.

District Vice President: Amy Burns, Kearney.

District Executive Comm. (West): Janet Sheaffer, Imperial; Pam Burks, Mid-Plains Community College.

Neihardt Site Welcomes Educational Tour Groups

Poet Laureate's Museum, Library Welcomes School Groups

Educators looking for a field trip in northeast Nebraska would do well to consider the Neihardt State Historic Site at Bancroft, an admission-free museum, research library and educational center dedicated to the life and work of John G. Neihardt, Poet Laureate of Nebraska.

The Nebraska State Historical Society branch museum houses numerous artifacts pertaining to Neihardt and to Native American tribes of the Great Plains. On display are sacred items belonging to the Oglala Lakota Holy Man Black Elk, given to Neihardt during interviews resulting in the book *Black Elk Speaks*.

On the grounds, visitors can explore the Sacred Hoop Garden with its granite interpretive markers, and see the study where Neihardt wrote the first volumes of *A Cycle of the West* and many of his earlier poems, short stories, literary criticisms, and essays.

The site is open year-round. Educational tour groups and field trips are encouraged, and staff will help teachers, at all levels, create curriculum and activities that align with their goals.

Special exhibits, events and displays occur throughout the year. For details about school visits or educational programming, call 1-888-777-4667 or visit: www.neihardt.com



25th Annual Nebraska Paraeducator Conference

25 Years of Celebrating Paraeducators

2014

October 30, 2014

Holiday Inn - Kearney, Nebraska

The Nebraska Paraeducator Conference brings together paraeducators from across the state to learn new ideas and strategies, to meet other paraeducators and to share their own experiences and ideas. The registration fee is \$50.

For more information visit:

["http://para.unl.edu/conference/conference2014.html"](http://para.unl.edu/conference/conference2014.html)

Paraeducator of the Year Award Nominations

An important part of the conference is to recognize outstanding paraeducators who are nominated by school districts throughout the state. The selected individual will be honored at the conference. To nominate an outstanding paraeducator, visit ["http://para.unl.edu/conference/conference2014.html"](http://para.unl.edu/conference/conference2014.html)

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A Voice at the Representative Assembly: These four NSEA members took the concerns of their local associations and the NSEA to the National Education Association Representative Assembly in Denver in July. From left are Melissa Boutwell, Lexington, a member of the NSEA Board of Directors; Jill Kimbrough, representing Grand Island, and now teaching at Millard; and Julie Colby and Jules Spickelmier, both of Lincoln.

An End to ‘Toxic Testing’

Delegates to NEA RA Approve Effort to End ‘Test Mania’

The National Education Association will embark on a national campaign to put the focus of assessments and accountability back on student learning and end the “test, blame and punish” system that has dominated public education in the last decade.

More than 8,000 delegates at NEA’s Representative Assembly – including nearly 100 NSEA member delegates – voted in favor of the campaign.

“Testing certainly has its place in the educational process,” said NSEA President Nancy Fulton. “The testing pendulum, however, has swung too far. Teaching and learning, not testing, should be the dominant theme in a classroom.”

The effort seeks to end the abuse and overuse of high stakes standardized tests, and will push to reduce the amount of student and instructional time consumed by such tests. That was among highlights of the RA, held in Denver. Delegates also elected an all-female, all-minority team of three to lead NEA for the next three years (see sidebar).

NEBRASKA’S DELEGATES were active, including



Speaking out: Amy Himes, top, of Papillion-LaVista, and Paul Schulte, Millard, both saw their New Business Items advance at NEA’s 2014 Representative Assembly.

Papillion-LaVista Education Association member Amy Himes, who introduced a New Business Item on alternative energy education, and shepherded it to passage.

Himes’ proposal said “The NEA shall support teachers’ efforts to lead and educate students about clean energy industries by providing the teacher digital and electronic resources needed for interdisciplinary curricular.”

“Amy was instrumental in getting that approved, and she spoke eloquently on behalf of her proposal,” said Fulton.

NSEA members were quite active at the microphone stations, as well. NSEA’s floor strategy, directed by NEA Director-Elect Deb Gnuse of Grand Island and Maddie Fennell of Omaha, was masterful. They dispatched NSEA members to various microphone stands across the conference hall floor. As their turn to speak arrived, they ceded their time to Himes, another NSEA member or NEA member who wished to speak.

MILLARD’S PAUL SCHULTE

also benefitted from such strategy. His New Business Item urged NEA to investigate potential cost savings of using charter buses to transport members to RA. Bus companies

often send empty buses to the RA city from neighboring states, to be used to transport NEA members to and from their hotels during the convention. Lincoln Education Association members rode one such bus from Lincoln to Denver, and saved substantially on travel costs. Delegates referred Schulte's proposal to committee for investigation.

THE ANTI-TOXIC testing measure calls for governmental oversight of the powerful testing industry with the creation of a "testing ombudsman" by the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Consumer Protection Bureau and the Federal Trade Commission. The position will serve as a watchdog over the testing industry and monitor testing companies' impact on education legislation.

NEA will continue to push the president and Congress to overhaul ESEA and end mandates that require yearly testing, and to lift mandates requiring states to administer outdated tests that are not aligned to school curricula.

'We Will Not Be Silent'

History Made With Election Of Three to NEA Exec Team

NEA president-elect Lily Eskelsen García concluded NEA's 152nd Representative Assembly with a strong message to those "who don't know what they're talking about."

Said Eskelsen: "We will not be silent."

"We," of course, refers to the three million educators who know what is best for students, learning, and the teaching profession.

The former Utah Teacher of the Year spoke of the practices from the likes of moviemakers, billionaire brothers, and conservative politicians who have made poor decisions on behalf of U.S. students.

"People who don't know what they're talking about are talking about increasing the use of commercial standardized tests in high-stakes decisions about students and about educators...when all the evidence that can be gathered shows that it is corrupting what it means to teach and what it means to learn," she told delegates.

Eskelsen García is part of a historic new NEA leadership team. Becky Pringle, a middle school physical science teacher from Harrisburg, Pa., is NEA's new vice president, and is one of the highest-ranking African-American females in the labor movement.

NEA is the first major union to be led by three women of color, as Princess Moss was elected secretary-treasurer. She is a music teacher and past president of the Virginia Education Association.



Signs of the Times: Nebraska delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly effectively use a sign system to pass along state leadership stances and other messages to the 100 or so members of the delegation in the convention hall. Sending messages, from left, are Dennis Batterman, Imperial; Jen Ehlers, Grand Island; and Cama Charlet, Millard.

The measure comes at a time when parents around the country are fed up with the testing obsession. Opting-out protests have taken place in Colorado, New Mexico, Kansas and at least six other states. Grassroots parent movements say they will protest until over-testing is curbed.

According to NEA research, nearly half of all states now tie teacher evaluations to students' standardized test results. For many teachers, those evaluations are linked to the performance of students and subjects they don't even teach.

"Educators support high standards for all students and being held accountable for high quality instructional practice," said Fulton, "but that can't be measured by students' standardized test scores."



New Leaders: At the helm of the National Education Association are Vice President Becky Pringle, President Lily Eskelsen García and Secretary-Treasurer Princess Moss.

The focus for the next three years will be on Eskelsen García, who began her school career as a lunch lady, became a kindergarten aid and later a teacher. She has worked with both homeless and gifted children, has mentored student teachers and has even run for Congress. While her effort lost, she earned 45 percent of the vote against an incumbent, and today is arguably the most influential Hispanic educator in the country.

Her vision, in part, is to give back to those who know the names of the people they teach — educators — a platform to fight for what is best for their students, and the integrity and professional respect of the men and women who serve them.

"We know what is at stake and it is why we are who we are. It is why we are fearless and why we will not be silent when people who for their own profit and political posture subvert words like 'reform' or 'accountability,'" she said.

Blue Cross/Blue Shield Deadline Approaching

How would you like to improve your skills and knowledge – and only have to pay part of the cost?

NSEA is now taking fall term applications for scholarships through the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska Professional Development Fund.

The scholarships are awarded three times each year. The next deadline is Tuesday, Sept. 30. All applications must be made through the NSEA website. Applicants will receive an e-mail confirming receipt of the application (if you do not receive an e-mail, call NSEA).

Scholarships may be used to pursue an advanced degree, seek additional teaching endorsements or to take course work for certification requirements. Stipends may cover up to 50 percent of the cost of a single, three-hour college course. Each applicant may apply for scholarship dollars for no more than three hours of course work. Books and supplies are not covered.

To apply, NSEA members must complete the application form on the NSEA website. The form will be posted on the NSEA website through the Tuesday, Sept. 30, deadline.

NSEA will notify scholarship applicants of the status of



their application in October. The goal is to award stipends to the largest number of members from each of NSEA's six governance districts. To be eligible, NSEA members must be covered by either single or family Blue Cross/Blue Shield health care.

Previous applicants, successful or not, may re-apply. However, applicants may be scholarship recipients in only two of the three scholarship cycles during a school year. Winners must provide evidence of completion of course work at an accredited post-secondary institution before they receive the stipend.

All courses must be taken for credit.

Since 1986, 5,077 NSEA members have shared more than \$670,000 in scholarship dollars, thanks to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska.

The scholarship program does not affect Blue Cross and Blue Shield premiums. To apply, go to the website at:

www.nsea.org

For details, contact Sally Bodtke at 1-800-742-0047 or via e-mail at:

sally.bodtke@nsea.org

Riverside Charter OK'd: Board Approves Matching Funds

Hastings, Columbus, S. Platte, Thayer Cent. Get Bond Issue Aid

The NSEA Board of Directors has approved a new charter for the Riverside Education Association.

The board approved the REA charter request in June. The REA is the result of the consolidation of the Spalding and Cedar Rapids school districts.

In addition, the board has recently approved requests from local associations for matching funds to promote passage of bond issues. The matching funds program is one of the many ways the NSEA gives back to members. Requests included:

■ A request for \$3,000 from the **Hastings Education Association** was approved. The funds promoted passage of a \$21.3 million school bond to secure the remodeling of, and additions to, five elementary schools. The funds, matched by the Hastings Education Association, funded newspaper ads, print literature and other outreach to voters in the district. The bond issue passed on May 13.

■ A \$3,000 request from the **Columbus Education Association** for a bond issue to build a new high school. The CEA matched the grant, and the money was used for mailings, yard signs, ad-

vertisements and other promotions. The \$49.9 million bond passed on May 13.

■ A \$500 request from the **South Platte Education Association** to promote a school bond that will add classrooms, update locker rooms, provide pre-school space and update offices. The SPEA matched the funds, and used the money for advertising, flyers and

signs to promote the \$6.7 million bond issue, which passed on May 13.

■ The board approved \$500 for the **Thayer Central Education Association** to support a bond issue. The grant was used for newspaper advertising and promotional mailings to support the \$12.9 million renovation, which failed narrowly on a 651-606 vote on May 13.

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Ventura Takes Helm of EMAC Affiliate

Ambitious List of Goals on Minority Organization's Agenda

The NSEA Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (NSEA-EMAC) encourages ethnic minority participation in all NSEA activities to ensure diverse membership representation.

The chair of NSEA-EMAC for 2014-15 is Edward T. Ventura Jr., a K-5 technology teacher and member of the Omaha Education Association. NSEA President Nancy Fulton appointed him to a one-year term as president.

"I am excited for us to get started," he said.

He recalled the theme from the 2014 NEA Ethnic Leaders meeting, "I am an Ethnic Minority and I am the NEA" and said "I want to continue building our minority leadership training locally, statewide and nationally."

The vice chair for 2014-15 is Norfolk teacher Jose Hernandez.

The representatives from the five



Ventura

NSEA EMAC caucuses are: Susan Townsend, Lincoln, and Tracy Hartman-Bradley, Omaha, American Indian/Alaska Native; Hashi Coan, Kearney, and Susan Loney, Omaha, Asian Pacific Islander; Sharon Bell, Lincoln, and Broderick Steed, Umo^{ho} Nation, Black/African American; and Manuel Andazola, Lexington, Hispanic.

Ventura said the committee is seeking a second representative for the Hispanic caucus.

Goals for the committee this year include:

- Getting EMAC members to travel to their national caucus, to the NEA Western Region and NEA Ethnic Minority Training; and having more EMAC members attend Delegate Assembly and NEA Representative Assembly.

- Work to get the EMAC chair an elected position, with voting rights, on

the NSEA board.

- Scheduling an NEA representative for the EMAC Summer Seminar.

- Work to get EMAC on the Student Education Association of Nebraska conference agenda.

- Review EMAC Bylaws.

- Create a monthly newsletter for EMAC.

- EMAC also continues to seek nominations for the Great Plains Milestone Award, given to an individual or group that has promoted human and civil rights within their communities. Who do you know?

The first EMAC meeting is set for Saturday, Oct. 4, at 9:30 a.m. with caucus meetings and the general meeting at 10 a.m. at the Omaha Education Association offices. Contact Ventura at: 402-210-1655 or via email:

venturaomaha@gmail.com

Ventura is also on Twitter under the address:

[@ventura_omaha](https://twitter.com/ventura_omaha)

Amazing Personal Narratives Writing Seminar



Join teacher/trainer Ron Coniglio for the best writing seminar you will ever attend! Specially designed for Nebraska Elementary School teachers, this seminar teaches how to help students create engaging characters; and how to design realistic, highly detailed settings. He will also share his amazing "How to Write Dynamic Dialogue" technique.

Oct. 1, Norfolk • Oct. 2, Bellevue • Oct. 3, Lincoln
Oct. 15, Ogallala • Oct. 16, North Platte • Oct. 17, Kearney

What educators say:

"I had a room filled with what many researchers call, marginalized students. Their writing scores were awful! Then I attended your conference... WOW! I had over 75% of my students score at or above proficient."

~ Cherylynn Moody, 3rd grade teacher

"Ron's approach is so calming and non-threatening. He reads his audience and responds to them. Ron has simplified a difficult task- the teaching of writing- and made folks feel they could teach writing effectively. It was the best training on writing I have ever attended, brilliant!"

Loretta Arnette, Principal

Administrators attend for free with one or more registrant.

Space is limited. To register, please contact Ron at:
wizardscastlepublishing@hotmail.com

A Night at the Ballpark

Members of the Omaha Education Association and the Millard Education Association joined together in July to host a Night at the Ballpark for teachers new to the district. Those in attendance enjoyed snacks before the Class AAA Omaha Stormchasers took the field.

Clockwise, from top right: Sally Belling, left, new at Omaha's Davis Middle School, gets acquainted with OEA's Rachel Howe; Millard South's Nicole Kinzer learned about the Association from MEA's Matt Heys; NSEA President Nancy Fulton greeted new Omaha Central High math teacher Frances Keating; Antonio Gonzalez, left, of Millard's Horizon High School, met with Millard's Marsha Edquist; and Perthedia Berry, Omaha's TAC building, poses with granddaughter Natalia Perry.



Plum Creek Literacy Fest Scheduled in Seward

The 19th Plum Creek Literacy Conference for adults will feature well-known authors, literacy experts, an exhibit of art from the Golden Books collection and more.

It convenes at Concordia University in Seward on Saturday, Sept. 27.

The conference follows the Friday Plum Creek Children's Literacy Festival, also at Concordia.

Teachers, administrators and media specialists will hear visiting authors and illustrators, as well as additional literacy experts. Featured at the noon luncheon will be Rosemary Wells, well-known author of the Max and Ruby series. Her topic will be Booking Up Our Kids.

A special exhibit, The Golden Legacy, is scheduled for Concordia's Marxhausen Gallery. The exhibit features original illustrations from the Little Golden Books series.

Featured is Nebraska State Poet Twyla Hansen, as well as authors and illustrators Nick Bruel, Floyd Cooper, Jack Gantos, Jeff Kurrus and April Pulley Sayre.

Registration begins at 7:30 a.m., the first session at 9 a.m. Registration for the Adult Conference is \$75, and includes a luncheon with Rosemary Wells and five sessions. Get payment and registration forms from Vikki Gremel at 402-643-7483, or at:

www.cune.edu/plumcreek

Fulbright Awards Offer Expanded Opportunities

The 2015-16 Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Program is under way!

If you are a primary and/or secondary classroom teacher; guidance counselor; curriculum specialist; talented and gifted coordinator; special education coordinator; or media/specialist/librarian, you may be eligible to participate in a unique international professional development opportunity for 3-6 months through the Fulbright Program!

By conducting educational research abroad, U.S. teachers gain new skills, learn new instructional methods and assessment methodologies and share best practices with international colleagues and students. Teachers also have the opportunity to expand their understanding of other cultures and international education systems.

Under the 2015-16 program, teachers may travel to: Botswana, Finland, India, Israel, Mexico, Palestinian Territories, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan or Vietnam. Additional countries will be added.

The application deadline is Nov. 5. Start your application today at:

<https://dafulbrightteachers.org/>

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neamb.com

Benefits of the program include up to \$1,000 of life insurance; up to \$5,000 of AD&D insurance; and up to \$50,000 of AD&D insurance for any covered accident that occurs while on the job or while serving as an Association leader.

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David Glenn is Nebraska's NEA Member Benefits representative

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Save with Member Benefits Offers on Read Across, More

Each month NEA Member Benefits offers some real savings opportunities for members. For the month of September, consider these options! Go to the NEA Member Benefits website (neamb.com) to find details on these deals:

■ Shop a great selection of key brands teachers have grown to trust and get 15 percent off on regular-priced items from Carson-Dellosa Publishing. That offer includes decoratives, pocket charts, games and books that will motivate students and take learning to another level. In addition, you'll find free shipping on orders of \$35 or more.

■ Using Digital Wish, you can build a wish list of technological products for your classroom, and tell prospective online donors how their support will help students. After your purchase, Digital Wish donates from 2 percent to 10 percent to your next project.

■ There is a sale going on at Smile-Makers! The online teacher store for student rewards, classroom décor and more has savings of up to 20 percent for NEA members, including free shipping on all orders. Use the promo code NEAMB when placing your order.

■ Hard to believe, but NEA's Read Across America is just six months away. Find everything you need, and more, at the NEAMB Read Across America Dr. Seuss Store. NEA members receive 20 percent off, and free shipping on orders of \$25 or more.

■ Uboost is a neat way to recognize student achievement and engage students. Backed by research, the program rewards students with redeemable points for prizes they'll want. NEA members can register to receive a prize valued at \$265.

Drive learning outcomes.

■ Adopt-A-Classroom utilizes social networking to encourage friends and others to donate to your Adopt-A-Classroom account. You can then use donated funds from online vendors to buy classroom supplies.

■ Curriki is a non-profit that empowers educators to share curricula. NEA members can upload and download as resources freely. That includes lesson plans, units, assessments, rubrics, online courses, and multimedia assets like ebooks, etextbooks, videos, podcasts, animations and photos – all at no charge!





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Going Home

I recently attended a reunion at a high school where I once taught. Former students, teachers, parents, custodians, and cafeteria workers attended. So did the spouses, siblings, and children of the former students. Some came with great difficulty and from long distances to be there. Even the oldest living graduate returned at the age of 104. It had been 30 years since the school's last graduate walked across the stage.

A school reunion is not an unusual story. In larger cities, it hardly rates a mention in the local paper. In smaller towns, it is a much more important story for the entire community. In many communities, the annual school reunion is a social event that brings together virtually everyone who is not still in school. Often, plans for a family reunion center around the annual school reunion. In my home town, the town printed a local calendar with the reunion date printed on it. That event ranked with the importance of other major holidays on the calendar.

'Kind Mother'

School days are a significant time in everyone's life. Considering an average life expectancy in the United States of reaching the mid-70s and a usual period of 13 years of public school (K-12), the average high school graduates spend about one-sixth of their lives in school. For those who go on to college and graduate school, the amount of time in school might account for more than one-third of a person's life. For teachers, "school days" may be almost their entire life. A teacher who started kindergarten at 5 and retires at 65, has spent 77 percent of his or her life connected to school. By any measure, school is a major part of everyone's life. It is no surprise that a school reunion is like "going home."

Our language reflects the place that school has in shaping our life. Graduates refer to their school as their "alma mater." That term in Latin literally means school is our "nourishing" or "kind mother." That nourishing process begins with us in school learning how to put let-

ters together to make words and ends with us learning how to put plans together to make choices for life. We learn how to live and get along with others, how to solve problems, how to make choices between conflicting claims of fact, and how to move our self-identity from being a child to being an adult. School is, in fact, an alma mater, a nourishing mother.

Laughter...and Some Tears

For many communities, the public school is the actual center of activity. In a very real way, the existence of the school signals the continued vitality of that community. Main Street businesses understand the economic relationships of

a school to everything from housing prices to business revenues...from job opportunities to market growth. Our public schools matter.

The thoughts that everyone experiences at a school reunion, especially at one that has closed, are probably very similar. As I walked through the building where I had taught 30 years ago, I looked at the cases of old school trophies, the halls filled with the now-middle-aged students recalling a favorite teacher, their stories, laughter... and some tears. These bonds last a lifetime.



Going Home: Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen with retired Principal Dr. Odra Bradley in the halls of the Omaha Technical High School building, 30 years after the school closed.

Natural Talk

I looked especially for the school's last principal. Now in his early 90s, he was as engaged and vital as I had remembered so long ago. We talked about what a good school this had been. It is the natural talk at any reunion. But it quickly shifted to our chosen work to keep public schools as an alma mater... a nourishing mother...for every student. "Keep working," he urged. "Keep at it." It is a worthy challenge for every citizen in every community. Support our public schools. They should always be places of learning and nourishment where students of every age feel like they are "going home."

Fall Confab will Return to Kearney

'Spotlight' Talk Looks at Hastings and WWII Depot

The 2014 fall conference for the NSEA-Retired affiliate will again be held at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney. The conference date is Tuesday, Oct. 28.

The highlight will be an appearance by Walt Miller, who will provide the annual "Spotlight on Nebraska" talk.

Miller, a Hastings historian, has published *U.S. Naval Ammunition Depot*, a book detailing the operation of the World War II Naval Ammunition Depot (NAD) just east of Hastings along U.S. Highway 6. The NAD provided more than 40 percent of the Navy's munitions during World War II, and many of the storage bunkers and structures at the site are in use today.

Complete details about the conference will appear in the next issue of NSEA-Retired's publication, *The Advocate*, as well as the next issue of *The Voice*, and on the NSEA-Retired website, at:

nsea.org/retired

Upcoming Seminars on Health Care for Retirees

NSEA-Retired will again team

Former Retired President Rathe was 89

Dale D. Rathe, a retired Lincoln teacher and former president of the NSEA-Retired, died June 5 at Lincoln. He was 89.

A Sterling native, Rathe graduated from high school and began teaching in rural schools at the age of 16. He eventually received a doctorate in education from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He joined the Lincoln Public Schools staff and taught there for 32 years, and served as supervisor of science for the district. He developed the first Aerospace Educational curriculum for Nebraska Schools.

Rathe was active in NSEA, and was on the planning committee for the NSEA Helpmobile, a mobile professional development program that operated in the 1970s and 1980s. After his retirement, Rathe became involved in the NSEA-Retired affiliate, serving as president from 1994-98.

He is survived by his wife, Dorothy, and seven children.



Rathe

with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska to bring important information about the options you have for insurance during retirement (both EHA coverage prior to age 65 and Medicare coverage after age 65). The seminars will cover:

- The four EHA options available to retirees younger than 65 (and how to switch plans if you wish);

- How to make the transition to Medicare;

- How to use the Medicare website to find an appropriate Part D provider for your prescription medications.

Blue Cross will mail complete details about the seminars in early October. Information will also be posted on the NSEA-Retired website at:

nsea.org/retired

The seminars are set for 9:30-11:30 a.m. and EHA seminars are set for 1:30-3:30 p.m. at each location. Reservations are not required to attend any of the seminars. Plan to arrive a bit early to get a good seat.

Here is the tentative schedule for the seminars:

- **Tuesday, Oct. 21:** Omaha, Westside Community Conference Center, 3534 108th St.

- **Wednesday, Oct. 22:** Columbus, The Evans House, 2204 14th St.

- **Thursday, Oct. 23:** Lincoln, Center for People in Need, 3901 N. 27th St.

- **Friday, Oct. 24:** Kearney, Holiday Inn, 110 S. 2nd Ave.

Another NSEA-R Honor

In late June, NSEA-Retired President Roger Rea accepted the 2014 NSEA-Retired Spotlight Award for second place for the NSEA-Retired Corner in *The Voice*. The Corner, now edited by retired Papillion-LaVista teacher Renae Kelly, has received an award of excellence from the NEA in each of the past 15 or so years.

— Renae Kelly, Editor
renaerkelly@gmail.com

Legislative Action Continues to be a Priority for NSEA-Retired

LB987, passed by the legislature and signed into law by the governor on April 2, 2014, represents an important first step in making Nebraska more retiree friendly. But our work on this issue is not finished. Three important additional changes are needed:

- The threshold income floor before taxing Social Security benefits should be raised to \$60,000 (single) or \$75,000 (married, filing jointly).

- The threshold income floor should be indexed for inflation going forward.

- There should be a gradual taxation of incomes that exceed the threshold limit.

NSEA-Retired President Roger Rea asks that NSEA-Retired members contact members of the Revenue Committee, thanking them for taking the important first step detailed in LB987. The members of the Revenue Committee are: Sen. Galen Hadley, Kearney, chair; Sen. Paul Schumacher, Columbus, vice chair; Sen. Tom Hansen, North Platte; Sen. Burke Harr, Omaha; Sen. Charlie Janssen, Fremont;

Sen. Beau McCoy, Omaha; Sen. Pete Pirsch, Omaha; Sen. Kate Sullivan, Cedar Rapids.

Email any of the committee members by using this email address: first initial and last name, @leg.ne.gov. For instance, Sen. Hadley's address is:

ghadley@leg.ne.gov

Said Rea: "We did not get everything we wanted in LB987, but we did achieve an important first step. As the old saying goes, 'Half a loaf is better than none.' Now we begin the quest for the second half!"

Osborn Plans Retirement

Spent 27 Years on the Road Supporting Educators

For 27 years, Nebraska teachers have found their road to classroom success smoothed by the work of Gary Osborn.

That “smoothing” will now fall into the hands of someone else. Osborn announced his retirement from the ranks of NSEA’s field staff on Aug. 31.

“Gary has served the NSEA and the teachers of Nebraska for more than a quarter-century as a consummate professional staff member,” said NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen. “We thank him for the difference his work has made.”

Osborn taught at Belden for three years before that district merged with nearby Randolph in 1966. He taught at Randolph until he joined NSEA’s field staff unit in August 1987.

He taught American history, world history, English and even French. He also coached volleyball and softball, and directed school plays. On the association front, he was a negotiator and president for the Randolph Education Associa-



Osborn

tion. He also served on the NSEA Board of Directors from 1975-84.

He was teaching at Randolph when the superintendent became the first president of the Randolph Education Association, a common occurrence during that era. Administrators at the helm of leadership of the association did not last long; those in the teaching ranks surged into the leadership roles of the association in the late 1960s, and turned it into a teacher-led organization. Osborn was among those young teacher-leaders in that surge.

Osborn has served local associations in north central Nebraska, northeast Nebraska for six years, and, for the past two years, southeast Nebraska.

In addition to his field staff duties, he has served as the organizer for the Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) affiliate since 1995.

In retirement, he plans to give more attention to family, in particular his grandsons, ages 6 and 18 months.

Jerry Jones: He had Been There, Done That

When Jerry Jones retired from the NSEA in 1997, a story in *The Voice* summed up his career in four words: Been there, done that.

Jones, a Korean War veteran, retired teacher, principal, superintendent and for 24 years an NSEA UniServ director, died at his Grand Island home on July 28. He was 81.

A Clay Center native, he taught at Sutton, was a principal at Fairmont and superintendent at Guide Rock and Madison before joining the NSEA staff. He was president of three different lo-



Jones

cal associations: the Fillmore County Education Association, the Webster County Education Association and the Madison County Education Association.

Earlier, after he left the Army in the mid-1950s, he worked as a grievance steward for the Bakers and Confectioners Union in New York.

His contract, salary schedule and bargaining expertise were well-respected around the state.

Survivors include his wife of 60 years, Barb, four sons and a daughter and numerous grandchildren.

NSEA Communications Work Nets 14 Awards

NSEA’s communications work was recognized with 14 awards from the NEA State Education Editors this year – 10 first place awards and four awards of distinction.

NSEA took top honors for its magazine of record, *The Voice*. This is the third time in the past 6 years that *The Voice*

has been selected as Best Magazine. *The Voice* also received an Award of Distinction twice during those 6 years.

First place awards were also received for Best News Story, Best Feature Story, Best Editorial Design, Best Website, Best Use of Social Media and Best E-Newsletter.

Juliann Barger

Longtime teacher and NSEA member Juliann Barger, 59, Paxton, died at her home in April.

Barger was a Sargent-area native and a Trenton High School graduate. She earned a bachelor’s degree in English education from Kearney State College and taught at Brule before becoming an English teacher and speech and drama coach at Sutherland. In 2000, she joined Educational Service Unit No. 16, and eventually became the unit’s staff development director.

She earned a master’s degree in educational administration from the University of Nebraska-Kearney.

Survivors include her husband, Jon, and two children and their families.

Melvin Berka

Melvin A. Berka, 83, Lincoln, died July 26 in Lincoln.

An Iowa native, he taught social studies in Iowa before moving to Lincoln Northeast High School in 1963 where he taught 27 years. He was a lifetime member of NSEA. His wife, Donna, worked at NSEA for more than 20 years, retiring in 1995.

Berka is survived by his wife, five children, 13 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Gayle Ellison

Longtime NSEA member Gayle L. Ellison, 69, of Lewiston, died in April.

Ellison taught school for a year in Superior, then for 42 years at the Lewiston Consolidated School. He was a past mayor of Lewiston, and was a past chief negotiator for the Lewiston Education Association. He was involved with the activities of Lewiston School, running the clock, being a scorekeeper, and managing quiz bowl.

Speaking of Teaching

“When we see how much money we pay to sports figures, sitcom stars and rock and roll legends, it makes you wonder why teachers’ salaries are at the bottom of the ladder. (It is time) we begin to place our public school teachers closer and closer to the top of the list of American heroes -- where they truly belong.”

— *Herb Alpert, Grammy Winning Musician*

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

Middle School Educators will Meet In York

The Nebraska Association for Middle Level Education (NAMLE) will host its Fall Professional Development Institute at the York Middle School on Friday, Oct. 3.

The Institute has evolved into a superb staff development opportunity for middle level educators, and this year will feature Dave Burgess, a highly sought professional development advo-

cate known for his creative and outrageously energetic style. His workshops motivate and inspire and help teachers develop practical ways to become more creative and engaging.

Burgess is author of *Teach Like a Pirate: Increase Student Engagement, Boost Your Creativity, and Transform Your Life as an Educator*.

Registration and continental break-

fast for the conference start at 7:30 a.m., with the Institute to run from 8:15 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. The cost is \$70 for a member and \$90 for a non-member.

For a full list of details about the 2014 conference, including the registration form, click on the ‘Professional Development Institute 10/3/14’ link on the website at:

namle.org

Family of Teachers



Educational legacy: As a staff member at NSEA, Paul Belz served educators in Nebraska from 1964-84, the last 10 of those years as the Association’s executive director.

In July, his widow, Alice (seated at center) and their descendants toured the NSEA Headquarters building in Lincoln to show members of the family where Belz worked for much of his life. Many of the family members are, or have been, teachers. Among the Belz family descendants, the teachers include Dave and Terri Mabon, Sandi and Dan Hansen, Bobbi Rezac and Ashley Gloystein.