

THE

# VOICE

The Nebraska State Edu

2013



2014  
NEBRASKA  
TEACHER  
OF THE  
YEAR

# KRISTI BUNDY

ASHLAND-GREENWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL

## Upcoming Assignments

### Nebraska Legislature Convenes

Jan 8

■ **What:** The Second Session of the 103rd Nebraska Legislature opens a 60-day run on this date. Key issues: the state's tax structure and funding for education at all levels, pre-kindergarten and above.

■ **Details:** Watch the NSEA website (nsea.org) and the January issue of *The Voice* for session details and how to contact your senator.

### Nominate a Colleague!

Jan. 31

■ **What:** A handful of deserving NSEA members and others will be recognized for their work at NSEA's 153rd Delegate Assembly in April. Do you have a colleague worthy of nomination?

■ **Details:** Find out how to nominate a co-worker on Page 17.

### NSEA Delegate Assembly

April 11-12

■ **What:** For nearly 150 years, NSEA has been an educational leader. Become a delegate, and help lead your professional organization into the next 150 years.

■ **Details:** To learn more about becoming a delegate, talk to your local association leaders or call your NSEA field director at 1-800-742-0047.

# Questions Answered: That's the NSEA Edge

## Get Answers to Your Questions from NSEA

When you call those "alternative" education associations with a question about your Nebraska retirement, or about a problem with an evaluation, chances are the voice on the other end of the phone – located in a strip mall along a busy California six-lane highway – will have no answers for you.

In fact, the voice will likely refer you to your state education association — NSEA — for help. That scenario has played out before, and it will surely happen again.

If you want true expertise in the field of Nebraska education, trust the NSEA and the 18 field directors the Association has on the ground across the state. Only they can deliver front line services to NSEA's nearly 28,000 members statewide. Their work provides the NSEA Edge – the benefit that no other professional education organization offers.

For instance, in recent weeks, NSEA field staff have dealt with these questions, submitted by members through the NSEA website:

*"I have a question regarding the*

*form for student loan forgiveness. Whom do I need to contact about this information to get help in filling it out correctly?"*

*"I am 65. How do I still keep my membership after going on Medicare. I do substitute in our school system."*

*"We have a staff member who is considering retiring this year. She was wondering if all schools give out retirement packages. If they do, she was*

*wondering how to find out if other schools give out retirement packages and what the packages are. Do you know how a person could go about finding out this information?"*

These are just some of the broad and diverse questions posed to NSEA field staff each day. Field staff are located across the state, from Omaha to Scottsbluff. In the case immediate, urgent assistance is needed, contact NSEA Headquarters at 1-800-742-0047, where a field staff member is always on duty. In Omaha, call 402-731-0800. In Lincoln, call 402-489-7500.

Or, use the 'Contact Us' link on the NSEA website at:

[www.nsea.org](http://www.nsea.org)



## Cover Story:

Ashland-Greenwood Middle School teacher Kristi Bundy loves learning and loves her students, both contributing factors to her selection as Nebraska's 2014 Teacher of the Year. Learn more about Bundy on

## Page 8



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Cited for excellence each year by the State Education Editors, including these 2013 awards: Best Magazine, Best News Story, Best Feature Story, Best Photography and Best Editorial Design.



# An Exercise in Freedom



**NSEA President  
Nancy Fulton**

“  
A ‘true’  
comp study  
meant evening  
sessions with  
handwritten  
notes on chart  
paper or yellow-  
lined note pads,  
often around a  
kitchen table.  
”

When I joined the Wilber-Clatonia Education Association’s negotiations team nearly 30 years ago, I quickly felt the presence of a tremendous responsibility on my shoulders.

I was advocating for co-workers – colleagues whom I knew worked hard and gave their all each day. I knew they deserved a decent and dignified wage, access to good health care and a respectable retirement. I also understood that the school board’s role was to be a good steward of taxpayer dollars.

Contrary to what some might believe, these are not opposing interests. They share a common goal: ensuring that the community is able to provide a quality education for our children. Recruiting and retaining quality teachers is a key component to reaching that common goal.

Nevertheless, negotiations are a balancing act that is often difficult.

I believe that collective bargaining is an exercise in freedom. The mutual exchange of positions and proposals between an employer and a group of employees ends with your contract, a binding agreement detailing employment terms and conditions.

Perhaps an opinion from a 2007 Canadian Supreme Court decision expresses that freedom most eloquently: “The right to bargain collectively with an employer enhances the human dignity, liberty, and autonomy of workers by giving them the opportunity to influence the establishment of workplace rules and thereby gain some control over a major aspect of their lives, namely their work.”

As 2013 closes, colleagues in your district and nearly every district in the state are bargaining. It’s tough work, often unnoticed and frequently thankless. And it’s become much more complicated in the past 45 years.

### At the Kitchen Table

Collective bargaining began in Nebraska in 1967. NSEA was celebrating its 100th Anniversary and, for the first time, educators had a voice in shaping their working and teaching conditions.

My service on the Wilber-Clatonia negotiating team began about 15 years later. The process was very basic by today’s standards. Like my local,

most associations began with the negotiations team arriving at a request for a base salary and then delivering that request to the board. Also standard: a request to continue health insurance coverage.

The salary request was based on few factors other than NSEA’s state bargaining goals, or efforts by NSEA field staff to coordinate bargaining by athletic conference. Comparability was little more than a sharing of base salaries with neighboring districts. A “true” comp study meant evening sessions with hand-written notes on chart paper or yellow lined notepads, often around a kitchen table. A handshake frequently finalized a settlement, with no written agreement needed.

### The More We Know...

Today’s comp studies use NSEA’s Navigator software, which provides negotiators more information than ever before. Comp studies use an array process to compare similarly sized schools within a reasonable distance of the district under review.

Negotiators are also much more knowledgeable than in the past. They monitor school budgets; review district financial reports; and discuss state aid, allowable growth rates, levy lids, cash reserves, valuation assessments and unused budget authority. A printed and signed negotiated agreement is the rule, not the exception.

As an experienced former negotiator, I understand the responsibilities shouldered by today’s negotiators. I offer these insights that I believe enable successful contract settlement.

First, knowledge is power. The more we know and are prepared, the more we are able to control our fate and our work environment.

Second: use effective communication. It enables educators to understand each other better. It builds trust and respect. It creates environments where compromise is reached. Non-verbal communication is just as critical as verbal communication.

Finally, build relationships. Developing a relationship and partnering toward a common goal can lead to a win-win situation.

Treasure this exercise in freedom. And don’t forget to thank your negotiators.



## Finding Nebraska’s Great Public Schools (GPS)

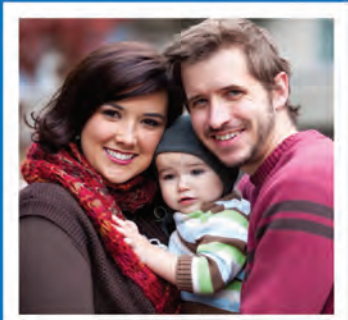
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# Retirement Plan Rebounds

## Long-term Outlook Rosy Thanks in Part to NSEA-Led Compromise

A year ago, the funded ratio of the Nebraska teacher retirement plan was at a 10-year low, as it struggled to recover from the Great Recession.

At that time, a consultant predicted that without changes, the state would have to kick in \$306 million over the next five years to keep the plan funded.

What a difference a year makes.

Today the retirement plan is well on the road to full recovery. All it took was an NSEA-brokered compromise in the Legislature – a compromise that survived a concerted opposition in the Legislature (see sidebar).

NSEA will continue to work with the NPER board, lawmakers and the governor to keep the teacher retirement plan sound and viable.

“The state retirement plan is an important benefit to Nebraska educators. They invest a fair share of their monthly income to this plan, and we will see that their investment is protected,” said NSEA President Nancy Fulton.

### Growing Stronger

The LB553 compromise used a \$20 million contribution to the plan by the state, plus tweaks to the contribution rate and benefit rates, to remain healthy.

In fact, in a report to the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement Board (PERB) and the Nebraska Investment Council (NIC), the consulting firm of Cavanaugh Macdonald Consulting LLC projected that the teacher retirement plan would grow in strength over the next 30 years. The report was made public during the annual joint meeting of the PERB and the NIC on Nov. 18.

The report indicated that, as of July 1, 2013, the teacher retirement plan was 77 percent funded, the same level of funding from July 1, 2012, and just below the 80 percent level of 2011. The outlook, however, is rosier this year, thanks to a surging market and the tweaks to the plan approved by the Legislature.

A year ago, a consultant projected the plan would require cash infusions from the state in the amount of \$60 million in

## Some Senators Fought Retirement Plan

Does it matter who you elect to the Nebraska Legislature? You bet it does.

NSEA was instrumental in developing and encouraging to passage LB553, a compromise that protected and shored up the defined benefit retirement plan for Nebraska educators.

But it wasn't easy. A cabal of 15 or so state senators worked diligently to derail LB553, a proposal designed and now shown to keep the retirement plan solid and strong for the next 30 years (see main story).

Early on, Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh, Omaha, proposed an amendment that would have effectively gutted the compromise.

On final reading, LB553 passed 34-0. Thirteen senators, however, were present and did not vote; two more were absent and excused.

After Gov. Dave Heineman vetoed LB553, Sen. Heath Mello brought the bill back for an override attempt. Needing 30 votes, the override passed 32-1, with Sen. Bill Kintner casting the lone 'no' vote. Fifteen of his colleagues – including nearly all of those who did not vote on final reading – also failed to vote on the override.

The 15 “present and not voting” on the override were Sens. Dave Bloomfield, Lydia Brasch, Mark Christensen, Mike Gloor, Tom Hansen, Charlie Janssen, Tyson Larson, Beau McCoy, John Murante, John Nelson, Pete Pirsch, Scott Price, Jim Smith and Dan Watermeier. In addition, Lautenbaugh was again excused and not voting.

See more at:

<http://bit.ly/17ujOQK>

2013; \$45 million in 2014; \$36 million in 2015; \$42 million in 2016; and \$123 million in 2017.

This year's report, however, foresees no need for cash infusions from the state for the next 30 years. The consultant also indicated the plan's funded ratio – a sign of the plan's health – should continue to grow, hitting 100 percent by 2032 and 120 percent by 2042.

State Sen. Jeremy Nordquist chairs the Public Employees Retirement Systems Committee.

“We enacted major reforms to the retirement plan this past session that have put us on the pathway to full health,” said Nordquist.

“The work and support of the NSEA and our public school employees has been critical to ensuring we are able to maintain a reliable, appropriate pension plan for our teachers and support staff. I believe the plan is essential to recruiting and retaining quality educators in Nebraska,” he said.

The plan had \$7.25 billion in assets on July 1, 2012, and \$8.01 billion on July 1, 2013.

The consultant said the retirement plans for the state patrol and judges need cash infusions from the state of

\$4.7 million and \$835,000, respectively. The funded ratios for those plans are 76 and 88 percent, respectively.

There are 80,492 participants in the teacher retirement system, with about 19,500 of those retired and receiving benefits. Another 40,300 are active and contributing to the retirement plan, with the remaining members inactive in the plan. The plan will pay out about \$425 million to participants this year.



**Re-Elect  
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## SPRING COURSES | 2014

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ART 846-01	Seminar in Art Education	EDAD 848	Curriculum Planning (2 sections)	TE 804	Curriculum Development in Multicultural Education (2 sections)
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BIOL 812-01	Microbial Diversity	EDAD 899P-01	ST: Introduction to Educational Administration Research	TE 836-01	Post-Baccalaureate Student Teaching
BIOL 813-01	Issues in Bioethics	EDAD 899P-02	ST: Athletic Director	TE 845-01	Contemporary Theory & Practice in Reading
BIOL 814-01	Plant Pathology	EDAD 940-01	Administrative Theory	TE 846-01	Diagnosis/Correction of Reading Difficulties
BIOL 820-02	Introduction to Graduate Study	EDAD 944-01	Seminar in Educational Administration	TE 853C-01	Improvement of Instruction in Elementary School Language Arts
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BIOL 827-01	Biological Statistics	HIST 801	America Interpreted (2 sections)	TE 871-01	Collection Development & Management
BIOL 830P-01	ST: Plant Systems in Evolution	HIST 803-01	Historical Methodst	TE 875-01	Administration of the School Library
BIOL 830P-02	ST: Virology	HIST 848	ST: The Great Depression (2 sections)	TE 878-01	Leadership in Instructional Technology
BIOL 830P-04	ST: Desert Field Biology	HIST 848-02	ST: Museum & Historical Site Interpretation	TE 886P	Technology Tools for Teachers (2 sections)
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BIOL 831B-01	Biological Research: Methodology	HIST 849-01	ST: Age of Enlightenment	TESE 821P-01	Nature & Needs of Exceptionalities
BIOL 831C-01	Biological Research: Annotated Bibliography	HIST 849-02	ST: Imperialism	TESE 826-01	Program Design for Gifted/Talented Education
BIOL 831D-01	Biological Research: Data Collection	HIST 849-03	ST: Gender & War	TESE 830-01	Consultation & Collaboration with Families & Agencies Serving Individuals with Disabilities
BIOL 831E-01	Biological Research: Statistical Analysis	HIST 849	ST: Nazi Germany (2 sections)	TESE 840-01	Bilingual Special Education
BIOL 831F-01	Biological Research: Manuscript	HIST 849-05	ST: Medieval Europe	TESE 861-01	Legal Issues in Special Education
BIOL 839-01	Human Physiological Systems	MKT 837P-01	Sales Management	TESE 863-01	Research Based Instructional Strategies for Students with Disabilities
BIOL 863-01	Biological Perspectives	MUS 802P-01	Music History & Theory Review	TESE 867-01	Applied & Functional Behavior Analysis
BIOL 881	Current Issues in Biology (4 sections)	MUS 814-01	Aesthetics of Music	TESE 875P-01	Curriculum Content for Secondary Students with Disabilities
CHEM 821-01	Inorganic Chemistry II for High School Teacher	MUS 897-01	Graduate Capstone Project: Directed Studies		
CSIS 828P-01	Data Communication & Distributed Processing	SFED 310-01	Driving Task Analysis		
CSIS 850P-01	E-Commerce Information Systems	SFED 430-01	Developing Driver Education Classroom Skills		
CSIS 858P-01	Computer Security	SFED 431-01	Developing Driver Education Vehicle Skills (Lecture)		
CSIS 894P-01	Directed Research in Computer Science & Information Systems	SFED 431-02	Developing Driver Education Vehicle Skills (Lab)		

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\*UNK's College of Education Online graduate programs are ranked 8th in the nation — U.S. News & World Report. The University of Nebraska is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution. Individuals needing accommodation under ADA should contact the ADA Coordinator at UNK, 308.865.8655. UNK Creative Services 2013.

# NEA Foundation Renews Omaha Grant

## \$250,000 for OEA-OPS Plan; Training will Focus on Achievement

The NEA Foundation has renewed a grant in support of a partnership between the Omaha Education Association, the Omaha Public Schools and community leaders.

The \$250,000 grant will provide another year of the action plan to develop and implement policy and practice to improve student achievement.

In the last year, the Foundation grant has enabled three high-need Omaha elementary schools to engage in whole school reform planning with a focus on improved instructional quality and equity through an expanded teacher role. New funding will support continued development of teacher instructional leadership and expand the program to two more schools this year and three more schools in 2014-15, said OEA President Chris Proulx. The schools now working with the grant have already seen a positive impact on achievement.

“Each school working with this grant is learning how to develop stronger levels of trust between teachers and administrators so they can have better conversations with each other about their teaching practices. They’ll be more comfortable taking risks associated with being open and reflective about their strengths and weaknesses,” he said.

“Each school is also learning how to create more oppor-

tunities for teacher leadership and to develop better shared decision making models,” said Proulx.

Grant participants have developed an Equity and Collaboration Audit designed to assess collaborative capacity, and to guide school-specific training. Deepened and sustained collaboration at the school level will be facilitated through data generated by the audit, which measures schools’ and/or educators’ and administrators’:

- Understanding of systemic change processes, change management and change agency.
- Collaborative skills, including inquiry, dialogue and reflection skills.
- Skills for data review, analysis and root cause analysis.
- Problem-solving processes and skills, including conflict management and interest-based strategies.

Although approaches vary from community to community, all teams are finding educator-led ways to improve instructional quality and effectiveness.

Over the past decade, the NEA Foundation has invested more than \$11 million to support union-district partnerships to improve teaching and learning in seven communities. Each site has unique approaches, but share a single goal: to accelerate the achievement rate for under-achieving low income and minority students. In addition to funding, the Foundation provides access to expertise and best practices, gleaned from its work with school districts and evidence-based research.

The NEA Foundation is a public charity supported by contributions from educators’ dues, corporate sponsors and others who support public education. For details, visit:

[www.neafoundation.org](http://www.neafoundation.org)



## Save with NSEA

### NSEA’s Membership Card Saves Cash; Your New 2014 Card Arrives Soon!

Your brand new 2013-14 NSEA membership card will arrive in your mailbox soon.

The new card, seen at right, is a true gateway to savings and will land in your mailbox before mid-December. In the meantime, your current card is good until the new card arrives.

As is usual, the NSEA card, through the Access savings program, opens a whole world of benefits, and gives members the opportunity to save much more than the cost of annual membership.

NSEA’s Access membership card serves double duty. It’s both an Association membership card and a discount card that can be used at thousands of merchant sites across the country.

The new card is valid through December 2014. All NSEA



members, including first-time members, can access savings by using their individual 10-digit Association identification number, which appears above the member’s name on every Association mailing.

To start saving, members must activate their card once it arrives. It’s easy to do, by following these steps:

- Log on to the NSEA website at [www.nsea.org](http://www.nsea.org).
- Click on the icon of the membership card shown on this page.
- Enter your 10-digit member identification number (located on the front of the card or on the mailing label above your name).
- Create your personal account by following the registration instructions.

You can also activate your account by calling the toll-free number listed on the back of each card: 1-888-313-6591.

Some merchants require that you present your card at the time of purchase. Others require that you print a coupon from the Access website, so be certain to check the individual merchant page on the website for specific instructions.

Start saving!



**One-on-one:** Nebraska's 2014 Teacher of the Year is Kristi Bundy, a sixth grade teacher at Ashland-Greenwood Middle School. Among other roles, Bundy is vice president of the Ashland-Greenwood Education Association.

# A Life & Love of Learning

Nebraska 2014 Teacher of the Year Kristi Bundy Loves Children and Her Profession

To say that Kristi Bundy was born to teach might sound cliché, but it is very close to the truth.

At a young age, a love of children led her to work babysitting gigs for 50 cents an hour; to give free horseback riding lessons; and to work as an assistant for several teachers while in high school.

Combine that with her love for learning – she challenges her Ashland-Greenwood sixth graders to teach her something new each day – and you have the makeup of a great teacher.

In fact, you have the makeup of the 2014 Nebraska Teacher of the Year.

State officials recognized Bundy in a surprise ceremony at the Ashland-Greenwood Middle School gymnasium on Oct. 8. A month later at a luncheon in her honor at NSEA Headquarters in Lincoln, Bundy formally accepted the title. She succeeds 2013 recipient Angela Mosier, a math teacher at Westside District 66 in Omaha.

Mosier advised Bundy to enjoy every minute of the coming year. Mosier said

## About Kristi Bundy

- Has taught sixth grade science, language arts and math at Ashland-Greenwood Middle School since 2003.

- Taught at a K-7 rural school and a K-12 rural school for nearly seven years before joining the Ashland-Greenwood staff.

- Is vice president of the Ashland-Greenwood Education Association.

- Is a teacher leader in Ashland-Greenwood's role as a pilot site for the Nebraska Department of Education's Teacher/Principal Evaluation model.

- Master's degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in Teacher Learning and Teacher Education.

- Bachelor's degree in K-6 education, with a physical education endorsement, from the University of Nebraska-Omaha.

- 2013 recipient of the Alice Raikes Distinguished Teacher Award.





her experience the past year “was one of the most amazing, life-changing things that has ever happened to me.”

In an interview just days before the formal ceremony, Bundy was humble about her selection.

“I’m like all teachers. We don’t like the attention,” she said. “Ask us to point out our students, and we’ll do that all day long. But to toot our own horn...”

One of a set of four very well-qualified finalists, Bundy’s extensive work as a teacher and leader caught the eye of the selection committee that determined Nebraska’s 39th Teacher of the Year. As such, she will receive a gift package of cash, hardware and other items from sponsors of the Nebraska Department of Education’s Teacher of the Year program.

The program also recognized three other educators as finalists: Robert Henrichs, Lincoln Southwest High School; Judith Stucky, Westside District 66, Omaha; and Lisa Graham, Waverly. Bundy, Henrichs and Stucky are NSEA members.

### Good Input

Bundy is Ashland born and raised, and her background groomed her well for her current position as sixth grade language arts and science teacher at the Ashland-Greenwood Middle School.

In January 1985, just weeks after her graduation from the University of Nebraska-Omaha, Bundy was teaching all subjects at a K-8 rural school near Ashland. After about 10 years off to start a family, she took over duties at a K-7 rural school in the area. At first uncomfortable as the only teacher, she soon came to love the school family. And when she accepted the sixth grade job at Ashland-Greenwood teaching all subjects, she felt well prepared for the challenge.

After teaching all subjects to all ages for several years, Bundy accepted a sixth grade classroom at the Ashland-Greenwood Middle School. While she has learned much from her colleagues, she said that with her background “I felt that I had good input for them, as well.”

### Two-Way Street

Bundy says she tries to learn something new every day, and she shares what she learns with her

# Lincoln, Westside Members Recognized

In addition to recognizing Ashland-Greenwood’s Kristi Bundy as the 2014 Nebraska Teacher of the Year, the Nebraska Department of Education also honored three other finalists with Awards of Excellence. They were Robert Henrichs, Lincoln; Judith Stucky, Westside District 66; and Lisa Graham, Waverly. Henrichs and Stucky are NSEA members.

### Robert J. Henrichs Grades 9-12 English, Theatre Lincoln Southwest High School

“Teaching,” says Robert Henrichs, “is my calling.”

He dreamed of becoming a teacher since first grade, when he helped a friend learn to read. To become the most effective teacher he can be, Henrichs said he must have a “respectful, honest, personable and caring relationship with my students.”

The essence of theatre education, he said, “is to develop in students the ability to dream, and to deal responsibly, creatively and confidently with the choices in our ever-changing world.”

Henrichs was the youngest person ever elected to the office of vice president and president of the national Educational Theatre Association, and he is now honored in the ETA Hall of Fame.

Henrichs credits his success to an ability to dream, and says it his duty as an educator to instill the ability to dream in his students.



Henrichs



Stucky

“Whether they grow up to be a lawyer, plumber, dentist, stay-at-home parent, mechanic, or a teacher, it is my hope that I can give them the skills to be successful at school, at work, and in everyday life.”

### Judith Stucky, Grades 9-12 Science Westside High School

Judith Stucky admits it took her nearly six years to complete her undergraduate degree. But she blames the extended process on her love of learning: there were so many classes she wanted to take, including world languages, anthropology and math. She ended with nearly twice the number of credits required for graduation.

She also loves to help others learn. And she believes that everyone can, and should, learn physics.

“One simple idea is at the core of my beliefs: We are all teachers, and

we are all learners,” she said.

She also believes that there is a need to teach what really matters – and that doesn’t include memorizing facts that can be easily looked up.

“The skills students learn in a classroom, not the facts that they memorize for a test, are what they take with them for a lifetime,” she said.

Finally, she said, teachers must be learners.

“The strength of the profession is the strength of each individual,” she said.

students. That’s a two-way street, in her classroom, however, and she encourages students to share with her, as well.

“If they tell me something new, or give me new information, I log what and when they tell me in a notebook,” she said.

Her sixth-graders enjoy making it into her notebook, but sometimes she has to double check the details. And she will call students on their “facts.” She wants her students to understand research basics.

“I teach content, because I know I have to,” she said. “But I also teach them to know where to go to get good information.”

Good information also comes into play in Bundy’s role as a teacher/leader in Ashland-Greenwood’s piloting of a new process to develop a model for evaluation of teachers and principals. Ashland-Greenwood is one of 16 Nebraska districts piloting the development of the evaluations through a Nebraska Department of Education program.

“There’s lots of learning, and it’s hard work, good work,” said Bundy. “But it is research-based, and if we as teachers get better, our kids get better.”

That’s just what you’d expect to hear from someone who loves to learn.

# Wanted: You.

## A Few Good Educators Sought For Service on NSEA Candidate Recommendation Teams

Yes, it is true that next year NSEA will recommend candidates for election to the Legislature and other offices.

However, it is important to know that those recommendations come not from the top down, but from the grassroots level. From you, the member.

Each recommendation comes from a local and bi-partisan team of members at the local level. Each team reads and digests each candidate's answers to education-related questions, then interviews the candidates. Following the interviews, the teams debate the merits of each candidate, and then votes on a recommendation.

The committee then forwards the name of the recommended candidate to the appropriate NSEA district Board of Directors for approval. Those recommendations are then disseminated to members through NSEA communications channels.

### Help Needed!

As another election year draws near, NSEA President Nancy Fulton is looking for members from across the political spectrum to serve on those local interview teams.

"Our elected officials make decisions every day regarding education," said Fulton. "It only makes sense that we check out these candidates ahead of time and recommend those who will best serve our students and public education."

With nearly 20 legislative races, and races for other assorted statewide and regional offices, there will be plenty of opportunity for those interested to serve on local recommendation committees. Each team consists of five to eight NSEA members from, for instance, a particular legislative district.

"We'll have a lot of slots to fill on these interview teams," said Fulton.

Another common misconception, said Fulton, is that NSEA recommends candidates from only one side of the political aisle. A candidate's recommendation is based only on his or her stance on educational issues.

"In truth, over the past 20 years, the

## How the NSEA Process Works

NSEA keeps close tabs on candidate filings. After filing for office, the candidate receives a letter explaining NSEA's recommendation process. Also included is a questionnaire focused on public education.

Some candidates decline the invitation to participate or do not respond at all.

NSEA works with the local interview committee chair to arrange a date to meet with all candidates who choose to participate. All interviews are completed on the same day, and all team members must be present for all candidate interviews.

The team works to clarify the candidate's responses to the questionnaire. The candidate may also address the team on his/her positions on public education.

After interviews are completed, the team discusses the responses of each candidate. In addition to the questionnaire and interview, the team considers the candidate's voting record if he/she is an incumbent, the candidate's campaign organization and his/her standing in the community. The team wants to make sure that, should they recommend a candidate, the candidate has the potential to win.

The team may choose to recommend a candidate, to recommend multiple candidates, or to remain neutral in the race. For legislative races, the team's recommendation is then forwarded to the NSEA district board for approval. The NSEA Board of Directors acts on statewide races.

The recommendation is then relayed to members in the edition of *The Voice* that precedes the election date.

That's it!

historical percentage of recommended candidates for the officially non-partisan Nebraska Legislature is split almost evenly right down the middle between the two major political par-

ties," she said.

Those interested in consideration for service on a 2014 candidate interview team should contact Fulton's office at 1-800-742-0047.



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# Looking for a Few Good Nominees

## Your Colleagues are Worthy; Why Not Consider a Nomination?

Do you have a co-worker who is an outstanding teacher? Is your building custodian or school secretary a rock star?

Any NSEA member may nominate a deserving individual or group for the awards listed here, to be presented at the 2014 NSEA Delegate Assembly. All nominations must be postmarked by Friday, Jan. 31, 2014, and should be sent to: NSEA Awards, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742.

Nominations may also be submitted online, with any required supporting material mailed to the NSEA. Online nomination forms are at the 'Call for Nominations' link on the website at:

[www.nsea.org](http://www.nsea.org)

NSEA members are eligible for these awards:

■ **NSEA Rookie of the Year:** To honor a first-year teacher who sparkled in the 2012-13 school year.

■ **Award for Teaching Excellence:** To honor a teacher who has excelled in the classroom over a long period of time.

■ **Education Support Professional of the Year:** To honor an ESP who has excelled in his or her job.

Finalists will be notified in March, with the winners announced at the Delegate Assembly in Kearney on April 11-12. Each receives a \$250 cash award. The Teaching Excellence recipient also competes for the NEA Teaching Excellence Award.

Though there are no cash awards for these honors, NSEA members are also eligible for the following:

■ **Great Plains Milestone Award:** Honors an individual/group for promoting human, civil rights (Learn more, Page 15).

■ **Community Service:** Honors NSEA members and/or local associations involved in volunteer work outside of classroom hours.

■ **Local Public Relations:** Honors local associations for communication within the association, and promotion of educational excellence.

These awards will also be presented at Delegate Assem-

## Stand Strong Together Why You Should Attend Delegate Assembly!

A wise man once said "united we stand, divided we fall."

You can stand up for your Association brothers and sisters as a representative at NSEA's 153rd Delegate Assembly in April 2014.

As an NSEA member, **you** are eligible to be elected to serve as a delegate to the April 11-12, 2013 event in Kearney. It is at that meeting where difficult policy decisions will be reached, budget and dues will be set, and three vacancies on NSEA's Executive Committee will be filled.

For details, contact your NSEA field director at 1-800-742-0047.



bly in Kearney:

■ **Friend of Ed:** Local associations are encouraged to nominate an individual or group that has made a *statewide* contribution to education.

■ **Media:** Recognizes a newspaper, television or radio station for outstanding work in covering education issues and promoting community involvement in education. An essay of no more than 200 words explaining the nominee's qualifications must accompany each entry.

For more details, go to:

[nsea.org](http://nsea.org)

## Open in April: NSEA Executive Committee Seats

President, Vice President, NEA Board Seats are Open in 2014

At NSEA's annual Delegate Assembly in April, delegates will fill three open slots on the Association's Executive Committee. Each electee will serve a three-year term.

Open for election are the positions of NSEA president, vice president and one of Nebraska's two seats on the National Education Association Board of Directors. Current officeholders Nancy Fulton, Leann Widhalm and John Heineman are all eligible for re-election.

Beginning Jan. 1, any NSEA member in good standing is eligible to file for these positions. To have a candidate's name

### Next Month: All NSEA Vacancies

Watch for the January edition of *The Voice* for a listing of openings on all other NSEA state and regional boards.

placed on the ballot, the candidate must receive a nomination from the floor during the Assembly's opening session on Friday evening, April 11, 2014.

Any candidate who wishes to have campaign material included in a mailing to all delegates in advance of Delegate Assembly, must submit that information to NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen no later than 11:59 p.m. CST on Tuesday, Feb. 25, 2014.

The 2014 Delegate Assembly will be held at the Younes Convention Center in Kearney.

Questions? Contact NSEA at 1-800-742-0047.



**Wise counsel:** During a session on bargaining ground rules at NSEA's Advocacy Conference, NSEA Field Director Lynne Elwood, right, answers a question posed by Johnson-Brock member Karen Wolken.



**Making His Point:** At left, James Kosmicki, a member of the Central Community College Education Association, offers a point of discussion during a gathering of Higher Education Association representatives at the NSEA Advocacy Conference in Grand Island.

At right, Sen. Kate Sullivan, Cedar Rapids, chair of the Nebraska Legislature's Education Committee, briefed NSEA members on progress made on a study of the complex state aid to schools program.



# Advocacy Conference Buzzwords:

The 180 or so local association negotiators who attended NSEA's Advocacy Conference in Grand Island in October picked up some great skills and some great insight into issues that will affect members and their classrooms in coming years.

Sessions reviewed bargaining ground rules, salary schedules, negotiations data, and annual financial reports.

But the insight gained by members from the 90 or so local associations represented may have been just as valuable. As the second year of bargaining under a newly mandated negotiations calendar begins, consider the advice on the topics, below, identified by subhead.

## **State Aid to Education: Simplicity Uncertain**

Sen. Kate Sullivan, chair of the Legislature's Education

Committee, gave an update of the committee's progress after six interim hearings held across the state to study the state aid formula.

The complex formula includes allowances for students on free and reduced lunch, for special education, for school district sparsity and other factors. One of the committee's calls, she said, was to simplify the formula.

But, she said, "When you seek simplicity, sometimes you lose precision."

Sullivan said many interested parties "are still wondering what we'll come up with, and, frankly, I am, too."

She also urged NSEA members to be part of the process. "Please, we want your input...and my door is always open, my staff is always eager to hear from educators," she



**Clockwise, from top left:**

**Schedule Basics:** Giving attention to a session on salary schedules are Natalie Meyer, Meridian Education Association, at left, and Kevin Hermeling, Conestoga Education Association.

**Ground Rules:** Richard Chrisman, Northeast Community College Faculty Association, raises a point during a discussion on bargaining ground rules, while Becky Hall, Palmyra, back; and Marian Wallen, Beatrice, center, listen.

**Certification:** Learning about certification elections are, from left, Gerald Brand, Oakland-Craig Education Association; Robin Ankrom, Falls City Education Association; and Eliene Lottscher, Winside Education Association.

**Worth the Drive:** Hyannis Education Association's Bryan Regier left his home at 3 a.m. to get to Grand Island for the Advocacy Conference 8:30 a.m. start time, where he got some one-on-one time with NSEA attorney Scott Norby.

# Simplicity, Condensed, Absolutes

said. "You need to be at the table. We need to hear your voice, what your ideas are, what your needs are."

## **The Bargaining Calendar: Condensed This Year**

NSEA Attorney Scott Norby said the bargaining calendar is now driven by the state aid certification date. State statute says all negotiations and Resolution Officer hearings shall be complete 25 days after state aid is certified. Last year, that date was June 1. All indications are that the 2014 date will be March 1.

"This year is as condensed as the bargaining calendar can ever be," said Norby. "That's what we're up against. There will be challenges."

Norby urged an immediate start to contract talks.

"Things happen very quickly when your state aid date is March 1," he said.

NSEA Directory of Advocacy Trish Guinan gave encouraging news, and noted that this past year, all but eight locals had concluded contract talks by Feb. 8.

## **The Affordable Care Act: Don't Believe Absolutes**

NSEA Attorney Nicholas Welding said the federal Affordable Care Act is "wildly complex" and affects several other laws, including IRS laws and regulations. The ACA, he noted, will also affect local association contracts. He had one piece of advice for negotiators:

"Do not trust anyone who speaks with high levels of certainty, or in absolutes, regarding the ACA," he said.



# Outreach @ Lewiston

The seventh version of Outreach to Teach may have been one of the best!

Nearly 100 members of the Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) met at Lewiston on the first weekend of November to give the school building a quick makeover.

Previous versions of the Outreach program have freshened buildings in Norfolk, Lincoln, Omaha, Cedar Bluffs and Grand Island.

Never before, however, have students built a classroom. Using a pre-fabricated package, students built an outdoor lab/greenhouse.

Students also painted the lunchroom and weight room; added murals in several spots; replaced ceiling tiles in four classrooms and the band room; made benches for an outdoor area; performed a general grounds cleanup.

SEAN President Tommie Leaders and his Executive Committee did the bulk of planning and prep work, and the Lewiston administration and staff were very cooperative and helpful, said NSEA Field Director Gary Osborn.



**At work (clockwise from top):** Lewiston teacher Joan Stutesman (left) with students as they take a break from a day of replacing ceiling tiles in her classroom, from left, Wayne State's Raleigh Burke, Midland University's Hannah Archibald, and Wayne State's Ashton Moody and Jacob Zeiss; painting a wall in Lewiston colors were, from left, University of Nebraska-Kearney's Jessica Williams, Ashley Hansel and Brittany Snider; a new greenhouse takes shape on the Lewiston grounds; posing with heavy machinery were, from left, Peru State's Chondra Hope, Northeast Community College's Ethan Fleming, and Peru State's Megan Miesinger, Sam Carman and Chelsea Turek.

Students participated from Northeast Community College, University of Nebraska-Kearney, Midland University, Peru State College, College of St. Mary, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Nebraska-Omaha, Hastings College, York College and Wayne State College.



# SEAN: Apply Now for Scholarships

Those Near Their Student Teaching Semester Eligible for \$1,000 Stipend

Attention Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) members who will soon enter your student teaching semester: The NSEA-Retired Board of Directors has available three \$1,000 scholarships for use during your student teaching semester.

Applicants shall be college juniors or seniors who have been SEAN members for at least two years, including the current year. Scholarships will be awarded based on financial need and answers to essay questions.

Each application shall also require three letters of recommendation: one from a faculty or staff member of the college or university; one from a local SEAN chapter officer; and one from the local SEAN chapter advisor.

Scholarships shall be effective for the student teaching semester. Checks will be issued jointly to the student and his or her college or



**Current Recipients: NSEA-Retired Vice President Tom Black presented scholarships to three SEAN members at the SEAN Delegate Assembly in Lincoln last spring. From left are Jenna County, Nebraska Wesleyan University; Black; and James Bunch, Peru State College. Not pictured is Abigail Gabel, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.**

university.

Mail applications to Tamra Mick, NSEA, 605 South 14th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508, and must be postmarked no later than March 1, 2014. Download the current application from this website:

[www.nsea.org/SEAN](http://www.nsea.org/SEAN)

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

[tamra.mick@nsea.org](mailto:tamra.mick@nsea.org)

## Community College Members: Consider Organizing Boot Camp

### Only 20 Slots for Expense-Paid Training

Attention all community college educators teaching for change (and those who know them): The New Organizing Institute, in collaboration with the Leading Change Network Teaching Initiative and made possible by the Rappaport Family Foundation, will offer a four-day, intensive Teaching Community Organizing Boot Camp in January. The camp will build a cohort of community college faculty teaching practice-based organizing and leadership courses and workshops on community colleges throughout the U.S.

The camp is set for Jan. 9-12 and will be held at the Orange Springs Retreat Center, Orange Springs, FL.

There are only 20 spots available for this all travel expenses paid, four-day learning adventure – an opportunity worth \$2,000.

Applicants must be currently teaching at a community college in the U.S., or will be teaching and/or working on a U.S. community college campus with students during Spring 2014. Community college faculty from all disciplines are welcome.

For details, go to the website at:

<http://act.neworganizing.com/survey/MBT>

## SEAN Rebate Available at nsea.org

Are you a first-year teacher, just out of college?

If so, and if you were a member of the Student Education Association of Nebraska during your college years, you may be eligible for a rebate on your SEAN dues.

NSEA offers a one-time, \$10 rebate for every year you were a member of SEAN. And this year, NEA is offering an additional \$20 rebate for each year you were a member of SEAN. If, as a student, you were a member of SEAN all four years of college, the rebate of \$30 for each year could total \$120!

For a rebate form, contact your local association president, or download the form from the NSEA website at:

[nsea.org/memberinfo/nsea-treasurers-packet](http://nsea.org/memberinfo/nsea-treasurers-packet)

## Great Plains Milestone Award: Do You Know a Worthy Nominee?

### Honor Presented at Delegate Assembly

The NSEA's Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (EMAC) seeks nominees for the 2014 Great Plains Milestone Award. The award promotes the development, advancement and protection of human and civil rights and goes to an individual or group that has performed one or more of these activities:

- Recruited minority members into leadership.
- Promoted the teaching profession among future teachers.
- Encouraged and inspired youth to enter teaching.
- Worked to eradicate discrimination.
- Worked to build family, school, community partnerships.
- Designed and/or implemented curriculum promoting human and civil rights understanding.
- Provided leadership within local, state and/or national levels in programs that create awareness about issues of human and civil rights, peace, justice and international understanding.

Any NSEA member may submit a nomination. Supporting documents, pictures, digital media and other details must be submitted on or before Jan. 31, 2014. Award recipient(s) will be recognized at the 2014 NSEA Delegate Assembly.

For a nomination form, contact Tamra Mick at:

[tamra.mick@nsea.org](mailto:tamra.mick@nsea.org)

# Navigating with NSEA

## 'Comp' Studies Easier with Navigator Software

As the new state-mandated timeline for contract negotiations neared, local association bargaining teams from across the state turned to NSEA for expertise and guidance in conducting the comparability studies used in guiding negotiations.

The "comp studies" as they are commonly called, compare a school district's total compensation with as similar-sized school districts. The studies are made easier using the NSEA-owned Navigator software.

NSEA members from 11 districts were in Kearney in August to learn more about comparability studies and the Navigator software. NSEA's Kathy Hutchinson, pictured above with the



Greeley-Wolbach husband and wife team of Connie and Brad Williams, led the session. Below, NSEA Collective Bargaining Specialist Ron Goldenstein works with Wheeler Central's Teresa Smith, left, and Marcia Smith.

Other local associations represented included Amherst, Central City, Columbus, Franklin, Harvard, Kearney, Loup County, Valley County-Arcadia, and Wauneta-Palisade.

At bottom left, four members of the Southern Education Association (Wy-more) met at NSEA headquarters to take training Navigator. From left are Stephanie Ware, Jeff Schiebur, Mary Grabowski and Kalyne Breunsbach.

At bottom right, four members of the South Sioux City Education Association trained a day later. From left are Tracia Blom, Carmen Stark, Deb Kenny and Cassandra Joseph.





# NSEA's Tom Tonack was 72

## Former Bargaining Boss Left Lasting Imprint on Nebraska Teacher Contracts

Thomas Louis "Tom" Tonack, 72, Lincoln, former director of Bargaining and Research for NSEA, died on Oct. 30.

During a 20-year classroom career, Tonack taught biology, earth science and, later, computer literacy, and became active in Association work and causes. He taught two years at Stromsburg and then 20 at Kearney, where he served as president of the Kearney Education Association, chaired the KEA negotiations team and led the local campaign against a statewide budget lid proposal.

He served as treasurer for the NSEA Tri-Valley District, on several NSEA commissions, and, notably, on an ad hoc committee that integrated computers into the NSEA headquarters building.

Tonack also led the NSEA comparability study process from the butcher-paper-on-the-wall process into the computer age.

NSEA Collective Bargaining Specialist Ron Goldenstein was the NSEA field director for Kearney when Tonack joined the KEA negotiations team.

"When Kearney went to impasse, he and Tom Shield worked on a comparability study, by hand, and found that mistakes could be made easily," said Goldenstein. "They then partnered to write a program for comparability, as personal computers were just becoming popular and available. They called their company Midnight Computer Enterprises."

That computer program eventually evolved into the Navigator program still used by NSEA for comparability studies.

In 1986, Tonack joined NSEA as a UniServ director, and in September 1991 began a 15-year run at the helm of NSEA's Bargaining and Research division. In that role, he continued and expanded the work of his predecessor, Jerry Kriha.

"Evidence of Tom's dedication and service to NSEA and to the teachers of Nebraska can be found in virtually every teacher contract in Nebraska," said NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen.

"When we look at the strength of our negotiated contracts, we can see his lasting influence," he said.

Trish Guinan came to appreciate Tonack's legacy after she took the job, now titled Director of Advocacy.

"He was the man behind the scenes who deserves much more credit than he ever received. He was always a true teacher at the core," said Guinan.

He was known for a keen sense of humor and often advised negotiators to "Never bargain with an idiot. They will bring you down to their level and beat you with experience."

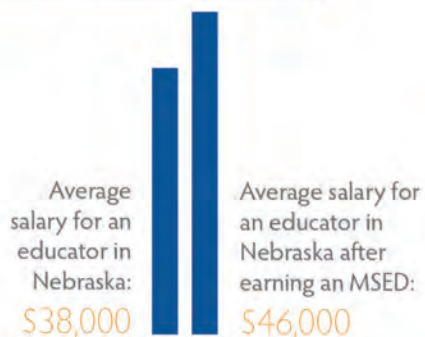
Tonack was born in Nebraska City, and with a twin brother, grew up in rural areas across Nebraska. A 1959 Loup County High School graduate, he earned a bachelor's degree from Kearney State College in 1964 and a master's degree in 1971.

Survivors include his wife, De; two children and their spouses, and four grandchildren. Memorials may be sent to the Children's Fund, in care of NSEA, 605 South 14th, Lincoln, 68508, or to a charity of your choice.



Tonack

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■ The **Back to School Program** brings senators into the classroom to visit with students about lawmaking and democracy. Since 2000, Nebraska senators have visited more than 70,000 students across the state. Find contact information and arrange a classroom visit for your state senator by using the Find Your Senator feature on the Nebraska Legislature's website.



■ The **Unicam Kids** website is designed for use in a fourth-grade classroom. Featuring videos, coloring pages and fun facts about the Legislature, the site prepares students for an upcoming field trip to the Capitol. An accompanying booklet is available through the Unicameral Information Office and can be mailed free of charge.

■ **Capitol Classroom** is a new, unique curriculum that teaches high school students about the nation's only unicameral legislature by providing a committee hearing simulation, floor debate simulation and public policy development exercise.

■ The **Unicameral Youth Legislature** combines a four-day legislative simulation with leadership-building and social activities to help young Nebraskans better understand the workings of a representative democracy. The youth legislature, designed for high school students, takes place at the State Capitol and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln through the UNL Big Red Summer Camp program. Scholarships are available.

The Unicameral Information Office also offers presentations on the history of the Unicameral and the legislative process to high school groups visiting the Capitol. Contact the office for details.

To learn more, or to order free educational publications or participate in our civics programs, visit:

[nebraskalegislature.gov/students](http://nebraskalegislature.gov/students)

For details, call 402-475-0764, or e-mail:

[ajohnson@leg.ne.gov](mailto:ajohnson@leg.ne.gov)

## Has Your Contact Info Changed? Update Details Easily on NSEA's Website

Have you moved? Have you changed your name by marriage? Are you planning to move? If so, you can update your NSEA membership information online.

How? Log on to the NSEA website and click on the 'Member Info' button on the left side of the screen. Then click on the 'For Members' link and look for the 'Member Update' icon in the center of the next screen, and follow directions. Keep your issue of The Voice near, as the mailing label includes your membership number, used to access your information.

The NSEA website is at:

[www.nsea.org](http://www.nsea.org)



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The card offers a low introductory APR offer, plus 3 percent back on gasoline purchases and 2 percent back on grocery purchases, and 1 percent back on all other purchases.

The **NEA Accelerated Rewards American Express Card** allows members to earn rewards 25 percent faster. The card not only offers a competitive rate, purchasing power and rewards, it also provides special offers from participating American Express merchants. A low introductory APR is one benefit, and the card earns 1.25 reward points on every \$1 in net retail, with reward redemption starting at 2,500 points.

The **NEA Credit Card with WorldPoints Rewards** is an outstanding way to reduce long-term debt and stretch your budget. New users receive a \$100 statement credit after qualifying transactions. Choose among cash, travel or merchandise rewards. Earn 1 point for every \$1 spent on purchases; points are unlimited with no blackout dates on travel. The card offers a low Introductory APR offer for members and up to 20 percent cash back on online purchases through the Add It Up program.

### Don't Forget About NEA Click & Save!

Are you looking for more holiday savings? Go to the NEA Member Benefits website to use the popular NEA Click & Save program. Find brand name bargains through Target, Best Buy, JC Penney, The Loft, Restaurants.com, Land's End, HP, FTD, Omaha Steaks, Home Depot, Sears, Lowes, Kohl's, Bed, Bath & Beyond, Macy's, Direct TV, Dell, to name only a few.

Find the Member Benefits site at:

**neamb.com**  
David Glenn is Nebraska's  
NEA Member Benefits representative

# Six Things to Know About Holiday Tipping

## How Much to Give to Those Who Help You All Year

By Lisa Gerstner

**1. Give the traditional way.** PayPal? Forget it. An end-of-the-year tip should be handed over in person. Tuck the money (crisp, new bills are a plus) into a card with a handwritten note expressing your appreciation. If you can't do it face-to-face — in the case of, say, the newspaper deliverer who passes by at 4 a.m. — mail a check or gift card, says Jodi R.R. Smith, president of etiquette consultant Mannersmith. And don't wait until the final weeks of December — the recipients may be depending on the money to buy holiday gifts. The optimum time for end-of-year tipping is the week before Thanksgiving or shortly thereafter.

**2. Make a list.** The people who make your life easier should be at the top of your list. They may include your nanny or caregiver, hairstylist, fitness instructor, housekeeper, dog walker, garbage collector and, if you live in a condominium or apartment, handyman or concierge. For a nanny, a week's pay is appropriate. The cost of one session is a good benchmark for many others on your list, such as a pet groomer, weekend babysitter or weekly cleaning person.

**3. And check it twice.** Take into account your relationship with the provider. If you have worked together closely or for a long time, or if you've received outstanding service throughout the year, you might tip at the higher end of the scale. The local cost of living matters, too; \$50 goes further in the Midwest than in Manhattan.

**4. Know whom not to tip.** Check a company's policy before you tip one of its employees. Mail carriers are not allowed to take cash; they may accept

gifts worth less than \$20. Nursing-home workers might not be permitted to take tips or gifts. Don't pass cash to a professional, such as your doctor, lawyer or accountant; home-baked goods, a bottle of wine or chocolates are acceptable. And don't give cash to your child's teacher — it could look like a bribe. Consider pooling your resources with other parents to give a gift card, if the school's gift-giving policy permits. "A teacher doesn't need another mug," Smith says.

**5. Don't fret if money is tight.** You don't have to blow your budget. It's okay to tip only your A-list providers, such as your nanny, says Smith. But you should show your gratitude to anyone you don't tip with a card and a note — and a small gift, such as a box of candy. Once

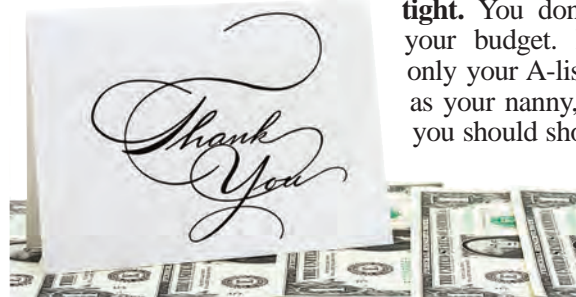
your cash flows again, you can make up for a missed tip any time the following year. Or you could use your talents and skills as currency, says Mary M. Mitchell, author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Etiquette*. Mitchell herself once gave a lesson in dining etiquette instead of a tip or gift. And homemade crafts and food are always low-cost, thoughtful ways to say thank you.

**6. Be generous if you can.** A father-than-usual tip could mean a lot to someone who is struggling financially. Be careful not to set an expectation that you'll tip extra each year, and avoid making anyone feel like a charity case, says Diane Gottsman, a national etiquette expert and owner of the Protocol School of Texas. She advises that you say that you know times are tough and that your ability to help out this year is a gift to you, too.

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# An Honest Day's Pay

My father was a laborer and a union member. His philosophy of the employer-employee relationship was summed up in a simple phrase: “An honest day’s pay for an honest day’s work.” It summarizes perfectly a relationship in which neither the employer nor the employee takes advantage of the other. Neither party is “getting away” with something.

In healthy workplaces, there exists a so-called “psychological contract” between employer and employee. The good work and loyalty of employees should be reflected in turn by both job and financial security from the employer. In short, it is an even trade when there is fair compensation for good work.

For large systems to function well over time there must be structural assurances for both employer and employee that a steady, competent work force is supported by a fundamentally sound compensation system. An important part of that compensation — and of the “psychological contract” — is a provision for financial security in retirement.

Retirement benefits are sometimes regarded as things that are simply “given” to the employee. The reality is that employment benefits are earned. Employers are not in the business of providing social welfare for employees. The hard-nosed business decisions on employee benefits are based on comparability and market price for labor. The fact is that benefits are aptly named — not because they benefit only the employee, but because they also benefit the employer. Labor is a commodity. When an employer “buys” labor, the price is based on the market. Retirement benefits are a part of the buying price — part of the total compensation to buy the services of the employee. Without a strong benefits package as part of total compensation, employees can simply go elsewhere in a competitive labor market, and that includes the very best and most qualified teachers.

## Political Design

The public consensus is that for-profit companies operate within the labor market and know what it takes to attract, hire, and retain quality employees. There is

much less understanding of the situation for public employers, who also draw their employees from a competitive labor market. An important element of the total compensation for public employees is the provision of retirement benefits. Properly constructed retirement systems — systems constructed on actuarial principles and not on politics — are sound arrangements that are designed with rigorous actuarial assumptions. Where we have seen public retirement systems falter or fail, it is primarily because of political and not actuarial design.

Recently, there has been a political call to end the practice of teachers and administrators who, having retired under Nebraska’s retirement provisions, decide to return to their profession and continue to work. Any misinformed political move to end this option is based on incorrect information. Teachers and administrators who decide to return — or are called back — to service after retiring are not improperly rewarded by the system. Retirement benefits are part of total compensation: an honest day’s pay for an honest day’s work.



**An Honest Day's Work:**  
NSEA Executive Director  
Craig R. Christiansen (40 years  
ago) is still smiling after a day of  
teaching in junior high.

## Segments or Continuous?

Teacher retirement benefits are determined by the number of years worked and an average salary calculation. There is no undue benefit to those who have retired and return to work. In fact, the amount of retirement benefit for these educators may be less than if they had simply continued to work for the same accumulated amount of time. Simplistic political slogans like “double dipping” are misapplied and meaningless in this situation.

Teachers earn their pay whether they work continuously for 30 years or whether they work for periods that accumulate to 30 years. Who cares? Choosing to work in segments instead of a continuous career offers no monetary advantage. Politicians who suggest otherwise are flat-out wrong. Teachers can tell when students...or politicians...have not done their homework. Doing the homework — checking the facts — might prevent both blatantly misinformed proposals and real damage to a system that works.

## Good News: Premiums Unchanged

Good news on the health insurance premium front: NSEA-Retired BlueSenior Classic, the Medicare supplement endorsed by NSEA-Retired and underwritten by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska, will have the same premium rates and structure for 2014 that were in effect for 2013!

Several changes to the EHA Early-Retiree health plan began in September. There is a video webinar on the website of the Educators Health Alliance (EHA) that provides the details of the four insurance options available to retired members younger than 65. Members who have questions about those options should view the webinar at:

[www.ehaplan.org](http://www.ehaplan.org)

In addition, handouts from the Medicare seminars and EHA Early-Retiree seminars held this fall are posted on the website of NSEA Retired. NSEA-Retired has also prepared a new guide for members who are transitioning to Medicare. To download the guide, and to see the webinar, go to the website at:

[www.nsea.org/retired](http://www.nsea.org/retired)

### Call for Nominations: January Deadlines Approaching

Now is the perfect time to begin thinking about active involvement in the NSEA-Retired organization. In February, NSEA-Retired will elect:

- Officers.
- District directors.
- Delegates to NSEA Delegate Assembly and NEA Representative Assembly, in Denver.

Beginning in January, nominations will be taken for these positions by application through the website at:

[www.nsea.org/retired](http://www.nsea.org/retired)

Watch the January edition of *The Voice* for details. The NSEA-Retired Corner will be a part of that issue, and will be on-line in early January.

### Local Retired Association News for 2013-14

Below are details on more NSEA-Retired local affiliates across the state.

#### Bellevue Education Association-Retired

**Officers:** President Steve Lebedz, Vice President Milt Butcher, Secretary Barbara Vaughn, Treasurer Sylvia Pel-



**Conference relaxation:** Retired Omaha educator Yvonne Steinbach reaches out and relaxes during a session on yoga at the NSEA-Retired Fall Conference in Omaha in late October. Also on the conference agenda were sessions on antiques, photograph preservation, healthy eating and the North Platte Canteen of World War II. The next NSEA-Retired gathering is the Spring Conference on April 10. Watch this space for details.

zer, Legislative Issues Phil Kaldahl.

**Meetings:** First Thursday of each month at 9:30 a.m., Bellevue Public Schools Welcome Center.

**Planned activities include:** an update about Bellevue Public Schools, by Supt. Frank Harwood; gardening and yard care; At Ease, by Lutheran Family Services; Bellevue East Jazz Choir; Sandhill Cranes, by Clem Klaphake; North Platte Canteen; Food Drive for Bellevue Pantry; Christmas Tree at Sarpy County Museum; Serve as tour guides for fourth grade history tours of Bellevue; a Christmas party.

The 100-plus members of the association pay \$5 in annual dues.

**Issues of concern:** Nebraska pension, health care, education and the Nebraska Legislature.

#### Elkhorn Sandhills Education Association-Retired

**Officers:** President Lu Etta M. Clark, Secretary Le Rene KonSPACEK, Treasurer Pat Monson.

**Planned activities include:** November 2013, a potluck at ESU No. 8, Neligh; February 2014, tour of the College of Nursing at Norfolk; June 2014, a visit to Ashfall Fossil Beds at Royal.

Annual dues are \$5.

Those interested in details about this local's activities may call Lu Etta Clark

at 402-329-6601 or at 402-649-4661.

**Issues of concern:** state income tax on retirement funds; changes in medical care affected by health care reforms, and the effect on Nebraska retirees.

#### Millard Education Association-Retired

**Officers:** President Jim Rames, Secretary-Treasurer Pat Brinkman, Legislative Issues Phil Kaldahl.

The local has 204 members. Dues are \$5 annual; \$50 for a lifetime plan.

The group meets monthly. Future topics include: Nov. 13, a luncheon at the Sage Student Bistro, followed by a tour of the General Crook House Museum; January, Rotella's Italian Bakery tour; lunch at Valentino's on S. 108th St.; February, Lobby Day, Lincoln; March Lucky Bucket Brewery and Distillery tour; April, NSEA-R spring conference; May 3, Gifford Farm tour; June, luncheon with new retirees at Old Country Buffet or Valentino's, and annual planning meeting; July 18, golf and/or lunch at Pacific Hills Golf Course.

**Issues of concern:** income tax on retirement; funding of state retirement system; how open insurance affects MEA-R members; delegates to NSEA state conference; having a good time.

— Renae Kelly, Editor  
[renaekelly@gmail.com](mailto:renaekelly@gmail.com)

## Grice Saluted in Omaha

### Earns Legacy Honor From Women's Group

Carolyn Grice was honored recently with the Education Legacy Award by the Omaha Chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women.

Grice is an assistant principal at Omaha South High School. She is a former president of the Omaha Education Association, former member of the NSEA Board of Directors and served two terms as a member of the National Education Association Board of Directors.

Grice began her teaching career 36 years ago, and has held several teaching and administrative positions with the Omaha Public Schools.

She has a bachelor of science de-



**Grice**

gree in elementary education, a master's degree in education administration and supervision, and a doctorate in educational administration.

She has received the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Teachers College Alumni Association Award of excellence; been honored at the Fifth Fabulous Women Recognition; has been cited by the YWCA Tribute to Women; and was a National Education Association delegate to the Education International Conference in South Africa.

Grice holds membership in several professional organizations in addition to NSEA and NEA, including the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and Phi Delta Kappa. She attends New Life Presbyterian Church, where she is a member of the Chancel Choir and is Clerk of the Session.

### In the News:

#### Chase County, Columbus, Ord, Wisner-Pilger, Burwell, Wakefield

At **Chase County Schools at Imperial**, **Lindsey Tomaso** has been honored as Nebraska's K-12 Art Educator for 2013-14. Tomaso owns a bachelor's degree in art history and formerly taught privately and owned an Omaha studio before joining the CCS faculty. She favors pastels, and incorporates history into teachings. She is a strong advocate for art education.

**Columbus Education Association** member and school nurse **Jean Kamrath** has been recognized by the Points of Light Action Network for her work with Closet Extravaganza.

Kamrath started the program in 2007 when a student came into her office and talk turned to the prom. When asked if she was going to attend, the girl said no, because of the cost. Kamrath secured a dress for the girl, then for three of her friends, and now Closet Extravaganza has provided donated dresses and makeup for hundreds of Columbus girls – 250 in 2011 alone.

Four Nebraska public schools are among 286 schools recognized nationally as National Blue Ribbon Schools by the federal Department of Education.

Attaining Blue Ribbon School status were **Wisner-Pilger Elementary School**, **Burwell Elementary School**, **Ord Elementary School** and **Wakefield Elementary School**.

The award honors schools where students perform at very high levels, or where significant improvements are being made in students' levels of achievement. To select the honorees, the department of Education requested nominations from the top education official in every state, plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and other U.S. protectorates.

*What good work has your local association completed recently? Let us know; send details to: [al.koontz@nsea.org](mailto:al.koontz@nsea.org)*

## Cathy Grondek

Members of the Ralston Education Association lost a friend, colleague and member on Oct. 5 with the unexpected passing of Cathy Colleen Grondek.

Grondek had survived a bout with cancer and was declared cancer free earlier in the year, but suffered a pulmonary embolism on Oct. 4. She was 62.

Grondek was in her 17th year at Ralston High School, where she taught special education, and later taught family and consumer sciences, in particular foods, textiles and design classes. She previously taught at Glenwood, IA. She was a past treasurer of the REA, and all sources cited her as a caring teacher with a special smile.

"She had such talent and related so well to the kids. They knew she cared about them," said REA President Jane Leadabrand. "I lost a very good friend."

Grondek enjoyed traveling and was a gifted quilter.

Survivors include her husband, Roman, three children and their spouses, and three grandchildren. The Grondek family will establish a scholarship for an RHS student interested in pursuing advanced studies or a career in the culinary arts.

## Lauren Akerson

Aurora students and staff are mourning Lauren Akerson, 31, who died in a Nov. 2 car accident west of York.

A Bayard High grad, Akerson earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Nebraska Wesleyan University in 2004. She was hired at Aurora as a para-educator in 2004, and in 2006 joined the staff as a second-grade teacher. She also coached volleyball at Aurora High School.

The driver of the van that crossed the center line and hit the car in which Akerson was riding has been charged with two felonies, including aggravated motor vehicle homicide. Toxicology results indicate he was intoxicated at the time of the crash.

Akerson was a member of NSEA, PEO and the First Evangelical Lutheran Church. She coached club volleyball, taught swimming lessons, and was part of Adopt-A-Flower Basket to Beautify Aurora. She enjoyed reading, shopping, traveling with family and friends and entertaining.

Survivors include her husband, Steve, of Aurora; parents, two sisters, nieces, nephews, aunts and uncles.

# What's on Your Bookshelf This Week?

## Members Reveal Their Current Readings

Educators love their books, so it is perhaps appropriate that National Book

Lovers Day is celebrated two times each year. That fact contributed to a \$50 gift certificate win by Kim Gardiner, an Omaha NSEA member.

Gardiner's name was selected at random to receive a \$50 gift card from Barnes & Noble after she posted the name of the book she was reading to NSEA's Facebook page. Her selection was *Mindset* by Carol Dweck.

Others who revealed their reading:

■ From Auburn member Kandi Skidmore Rohrs: *Teach Like a Pirate* by Dave Burgess.

■ From University of Nebraska-Kearney student Brenda Hardenbrook Stulken: *Winter of the World* by Ken Follett.

■ Lexington teacher Sophie Risinger was enjoying *Middle School: The Worst Years of My Life* by James Patterson and Chris Tebbetts. "This is a must read for any middle school teacher," said Risinger.

■ From Axtell member Andy Calena Ohlsen: *Pastrix* by Nadia Bolz-Weber. "It's a great book!" he noted.

■ Plattsmouth's Heather Kouba was enjoying *Stung* by Bethany Wiggins.

To learn more and to 'like' NSEA's Facebook page, go to Facebook and search for facebook.com/NSEA.org.

## Speaking of Teaching

"There is a place in America to take a stand: it is public education. It is the underpinning of our cultural and political system. It is the great common ground. Public education after all is the engine that moves us as a society toward a common destiny...it is in public education that the American dream begins to take shape."

— Tom Brokaw,  
Journalist and Author

Mailed By: The Nebraska State Education Association  
Suite 200, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742



**Warren and Friends:** Warren Buffett poses with some of the finalists from last year's 'Grow Your Own Business' competition.

## Buffett's 'Grow Your Own Business' Challenge Open for Competition

It's time again for kids to get creative juices flowing and start thinking about new business ideas for the third Warren Buffett Secret Millionaires Club "Grow Your Own Business Challenge." The competition launched in October and ends on Jan. 15.

The online competition invites kids 7-14 to create a new business idea. Like last year, five individuals and three team finalists will be flown to Omaha in May 2014 to present their winning ideas to Buffett and a panel of judges. One grand prize individual and members of one grand prize team will each be awarded \$5,000. The finalists will be invited to nominate a teacher who was most inspirational in the process to join them in Omaha and win up to \$1,000. For full rules, and to enter, visit:

[www.SMCKids.com](http://www.SMCKids.com)

The Secret Millionaires Club Learn & Earn promotion offers an educational website and on-line materials for educators, parents and volunteers to extend the valuable lessons from Buffett into the classroom, home and afterschool programs. Girls, Inc., Junior Achievement and 4H are all participating in the program.

## Basketball in Class

From Vic Heintzman, a teacher at Keaau, HI:

"I divide my class into any size groups. I make up a list of twenty or more questions on the subject being studied. I call on groups sequentially to answer one question and set a time limit. If the group answers correctly, a member of the group gets to shoot a 'basket' from a designated place in the classroom. If the basket is made, the team receives a point which is written on the board. I use a sponge ball and wastebasket. Using this method, I have found that the information is shared with everyone and test scores show improvement."

Sign up for Works4Me at this link:  
[www.nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html](http://www.nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html)

