

NSEA-RETIRED ADVOCATE

www.nsea.org/retired

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Spring Conference Lifts Off at SAC AEROSPACE MUSEUM

The NSEA-Retired held its annual Spring Conference on April 24 at the Strategic Air Command & Aerospace (SAC) Museum, offering attendees a day of inspiration, connection and professional enrichment.

The event began on a high note with a keynote address from Nebraska native and retired NASA astronaut Clay Anderson. Anderson captivated the audience with stories from his time in space, sharing experiences from his journey aboard the International Space Station and reflecting on the broader lessons of exploration, perseverance and curiosity.

Another highlight of the conference was a presentation by Jason “The Bird Nerd” St. Sauver, who engaged attendees with his insights on designing natural environments that benefit birds, insects and people. His talk emphasized

the importance of using native plants to create spaces that support biodiversity and community well-being.

Bob Michl, representing the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, also spoke at the event. He provided an overview of the educational programs OLLI offers for retired individuals, highlighting the value of continued learning later in life.

In addition, representatives from the University of Nebraska at Kearney’s College of Education introduced the “Legacy Education: One Room, One Teacher Scholarship Program.” The initiative honors the history of rural education and supports the next generation of teachers committed to serving Nebraska’s small communities.

NSEA-Retired member Art Tanderup shared his experiences



Mission Accomplished: 1. NSEA-Retired members Jan Barnason and Patricia Etherton explore exhibits at the SAC Museum. 2. Framed by an aircraft and cloudy skies, the SAC facility hosted this year's conference. 3. Retired NASA astronaut Clay Anderson. 4. Members Rhonda and Steve Burbach with Pam and David Wright. 5. Dan Holt with Humanities Nebraska. 6. NSEA-Retired member Art Tanderup holding Ponca Sacred Corn. 7. Members were surrounded by the legacy of flight and innovation at the SAC facility. 8. Mark Reid and Kristin Howard with the University of Nebraska Foundation. 9. Jason "The Bird Nerd" St. Sauver.

growing Ponca Sacred Corn, which resonated deeply with those in attendance. His commitment to heritage crops and sustainable farming practices sparked lively discussions and reinforced the importance of Native American traditions in our communities.

The conference's business meeting provided an opportunity to reflect on recent progress and future goals. NSEA President Tim Royers addressed attendees with legislative updates and highlighted the association's ongoing advocacy efforts at the state level.

Members also received updates on the NSEA Aspiring Educators program, which supports college students pursuing careers in education. Attendees welcomed the news of the group's growth and the many opportunities available to future educators.

Representatives from the TeamMates Mentoring program shared the organization's history and continued success in supporting youth across Nebraska. They emphasized the unique value retired educators bring as mentors and encouraged NSEA-Retired

members to consider volunteering.

The day concluded with a performance by Dan Holtz of Humanities Nebraska. His presentation, "Nebraska Stories Through Songs," brought the state's history to life through storytelling and music, leaving the audience with a sense of nostalgia and appreciation for Nebraska's rich cultural heritage.

Watch for more opportunities to connect with members in your areas as NSEA-Retired continues to build a strong community focused on education and lifelong learning.

FRIENDS OF EDUCATION

In a celebratory ceremony at Delegate Assembly, Patsy Koch Johns and Lisa Fricke were awarded the prestigious NSEA Friends of Education Award for their remarkable contributions to the education sector in Nebraska. After serving eight dedicated years on the Nebraska State Board of Education, both women have left an indelible mark on schools, teachers and students across the state.

Throughout their tenure, Koch Johns and Fricke demonstrated unwavering commitment to public educators and their students. Their collective efforts have led to significant advancements in curriculum development, teacher support programs and student engagement initiatives. By prioritizing the needs of educators and learners alike, they have fostered an environment where academic excellence and well-being can thrive.

Patsy Koch Johns' visionary leadership has been pivotal in advocating for policies that support inclusive education and equitable access to resources. She has championed initiatives aimed at improving teacher training and retention, recognizing that empowered educators are essential to student success.

Lisa Fricke, known for her collaborative approach, has worked tirelessly to bridge the gap between educational institutions and local communities. Her focus on enhancing community involvement has strengthened partnerships that benefit students and families, further enriching the educational landscape in Nebraska.

Together, Koch Johns and Fricke have not only influenced policy but have also inspired countless educators to drive change within their own classrooms. Their dedication has resonated throughout the state, paving the way for a brighter future for Nebraska's children.



NSEA President Tim Royers presents the 2025 Friends of Education Awards to Patsy Koch Johns and Lisa Fricke.

As they step away from their positions on the board, their legacy will continue to influence educational practices and policies for years to come. The NSEA Friends of Education Award serves as a testament to their tireless efforts and profound impact on the Nebraska education system.

Congratulations to Patsy Koch Johns and Lisa Fricke for this well-deserved recognition! Their contributions will surely be felt by generations of students, teachers, and communities across the state.

A Heartfelt Thank You to Dr. Sarah Brown and Jan Barnason

NSEA-Retired extends its sincere appreciation and gratitude to two leaders who are concluding their service on the board: Dr. Sarah Brown, outgoing secretary of the NSEA-Retired Board, and Jan Barnason, outgoing representative from the Tri-Valley District. Both have been instrumental in advancing the mission and values of NSEA-Retired.

Dr. Sarah Brown has served NSEA-Retired with distinction, bringing unwavering commitment to her role as secretary. Throughout her tenure, Dr. Brown has contributed to the strengthening of public education. Her passion for education, even in retirement, has been a model of



Jan Barnason



Dr. Sarah Brown

service and dedication that will continue to inspire members.

Jan Barnason, who has served as the representative for the Tri-Valley District, has likewise made a profound impact through her enthusiastic and tireless service. Her devotion to the organization and its mission has played a key role in building a stronger, more connected network of retired educators throughout the Tri-Valley area.

Both Dr. Brown and Barnason have exemplified the core values of NSEA-Retired.

NSEA-Retired extends heartfelt thanks to both Dr. Brown and Barnason for their years of dedicated service. Their terms as officers will end in September.

New Teacher Grants Awarded by LEA-Retired



From left to right: Barb Hetcko, Brittany Planos from Union Bank & Trust, Diane Lamb, Kinsley Ragland, Sarah Baillie, LEA-Retired President Joe Shandera. Barb Hetcko and Diane Lamb are Scholarship Co-Chairs for LEA-Retired.

The Lincoln Education Association-Retired announced scholarship and grant winners as part of their ongoing efforts to support educators.

LEA-Retired provides three, \$1,000 scholarships to Lincoln Public School graduates who will be student teaching during the following school year. Sarah Baillie, Kinsley Ragland and Daisy Ward were selected as the 2025 recipients.

In an attempt to encourage teachers in their first five years of teaching to continue in education, LEA-Retired also awards \$500 grants to four current Lincoln Public School and NSEA/LEA members. Cecilia Burda, Delani Young, Kim Sleeper and Cecilia Hernandez were selected from 18 grant applications.

These grants are designed to support innovative projects that enhance learning experiences for students and contribute to the professional development of teachers.

The LEA-Retired Scholarship committee announced that grant funds will be used to send a recipient to the National Council of Teachers of English conference in Boston. This opportunity will allow her to expand her knowledge, network with fellow educators, and bring back fresh ideas to implement in her classroom.

Another grant will support a dedicated educator who is focusing on researching trauma-informed methods for teaching sensitive topics. This vital work aims to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment that acknowledges and addresses the unique experiences of these students.

The third grant recipient is bringing creativity to life in their first-grade classroom by designing engaging projects that involve students in building their very own monsters. This exciting project will not only ignite the imaginations of young learners but also promote collaboration and teamwork.

LEA-Retired is very grateful to Union Bank and Trust for providing much of the funding for these scholarships and teacher grants. Scan the QR code to learn more about grant opportunities with LEA-Retired!



Delani Young with Chris Martin and Brittany Planos.



Shandera with grant winner Cecilia Burda.



Martin with Delani Young from Lincoln Southwest.



Shandera with grant winner Cecilia Hernandez from School Middle School.



Medicare Supplement Rates for 2025 Released

Article By: Roger Rea, NSEA-Retired Vice President

Medicare is insurance for individuals who are 65 or older or who have qualifying disabilities. If you retire before you turn 65 and have EHA Direct Bill coverage, you will need to sign up for Medicare when you do turn 65 in order to avoid any gaps in insurance coverage. Your Medicare coverage will start on the first of the month in which you turn 65, unless your birthday is on the first of the month. If your birthday is the first of the month, your Medicare coverage will begin on the first of the month prior to your birthday month. You must complete your enrollment process in Medicare **BEFORE** your coverage will begin!

There is a seven-month window of opportunity to sign up for Medicare without losing coverage or incurring penalties. The window starts three months prior to your birthday month, includes the month you turn 65, and closes three months after your birthday month. If you miss this window of opportunity, you will need to wait until the General Enrollment period – which starts Jan. 1 of each year and closes March 31. You will not have insurance coverage until you complete the enrollment process, and you will be subject to lifetime premium surcharge penalties for late enrollment.

If you are still working when you turn 65, you will **NOT** sign up for Medicare until you lose your employer-sponsored insurance plan. In the event that you retire after you turn 65, you will sign up for Medicare when your employer-sponsored plan ends. Generally, Medicare advises that you sign up for Medicare three months before your employer-sponsored plan coverage ends. So long as you have employer-sponsored insurance coverage, you will not be subject to any Medicare penalties for not signing up at age 65.

There are several “parts” to traditional Medicare: Part A, Part B and Part D. Medicare Part A covers hospital visits. If you paid into Social Security while you were working, the premium for Part A has been pre-paid by your Social Security contributions. Medicare Part B covers doctor’s visits, and has an additional premium. Medicare Part D covers prescription medications, and has a premium. You should also consider purchasing a Medicare Supplement to help pay for the things that Medicare does not fully cover. NSEA-Retired endorses Educators’ Medicare Supplement, which is underwritten by BCBSNE. Both you and your spouse are eligible for the Educators’ Medicare Supplement, even if your spouse was

not a member of NSEA-Retired. You can find out more about Educators’ Medicare Supplement on the NSEA-Retired website, www.nsea.org/retired, and clicking on the **RETIREMENT AND INSURANCE** tab.

If you are retired and receiving Social Security benefits, your Medicare card will automatically be sent to you when you turn 65. If you are still working when you turn 65, you may get the cards sent to you when you turn 65. If you are still covered by an employer-sponsored health plan, you should return the Medicare card and decline Part B coverage (Part A is automatic at age 65). If you do not decline Part B at this time, you may be subject to premium penalties for other coverage when you need that coverage. Premiums for Medicare Part B and Part D can be automatically deducted from your Social Security check if you wish.

More detailed information about Medicare can be found on the Medicare website, www.medicare.gov. Information about Educators’ Medicare Supplement can be found on the EHA website, www.ehapan.org. Click on the **RETIREES** tab, and look for Educators’ Medicare Supplement Plan for the video description of the supplement.

Feeling Lucky? These Raffle Winners Sure Do!



From left to right: Margaret Rasmussen, Judy Zabel, Diane Knapp, Rita Bennett, John Heineman, Karen Scribner and Jeff Hoham. Margaret, Diane and Jeff are Co-Chairs of our Fundraising Committee. Judy, Rita, John and Karen were raffle winners.

At the March LEAD Conference and NSEA Board meeting, attendees were reminded that the flagpole outside the NSEA building—facing the Nebraska State Capitol—was originally donated and installed by NSEA-Retired. This flagpole stands as a lasting symbol of retired educators' contributions to the Association.

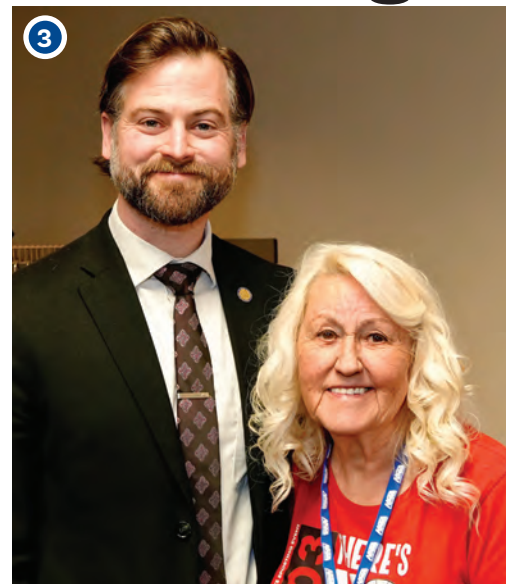
It was noted that the flag periodically needs to be replaced due to weather and wear. In response, attendees quickly pooled funds to purchase a replacement flag to keep on hand. Their generosity sparked a broader plan: to establish an ongoing program ensuring the flag is properly maintained and replaced as needed.

This gesture—small in scale, but powerful in symbolism—demonstrates the continued leadership and generosity of Nebraska's retired educators. Their commitment to the profession doesn't end with retirement; it lives on in the ways they continue to uplift their colleagues and the association, one flag at a time.



From Us to You, Red, White & Blue

NSEA-Retired Governance/Lobby Day Triumphs Despite Weather Challenges



Governance/Lobby Day: 1. NSEA-Retired members Rich Wergin with Sen. Jana Hughes (Dist. 24). 2. Nancy Wingate, Sen. Myron Dorn (Dist. 30) with Lenny VerMaas. 3. Patricia Etherton with Sen. George Dungan (Dist. 26). 4. Sen. Margo Juarez (Dist. 5) with Walta Sue Dodd. 5. Lisa Fricke with Sen. Dunixi Guereca (Dist. 7). 6. Linda Lanin with Sen. Robert Clements (Dist. 2).

Despite weather-related delays, the Nebraska State Education Association–Retired held its annual Governance/Lobby Day with determination and strong turnout.

Originally postponed due to inclement weather, the event was rescheduled and brought together about 50 retired educators at the State Capitol. Participants gathered to advocate for key policy changes affecting educators and their communities.

NSEA-Retired members focused on two primary legislative concerns: supporting the implementation of paid family and medical leave and protecting the integrity of the state's retirement system and pension plans for educators.

Members emphasized the importance of aid family and medical leave, highlighting how it not only supports educators facing personal or family health challenges but also promotes a healthier work-life balance. Members encouraged lawmakers to support the bill and its potential for attracting and retaining quality educators in Nebraska's schools.

Equally prominent on the agenda was the protection of the retirement system and pensions for educators. Participants

voiced their concerns regarding the need for a stable and reliable system that honors the years of service and commitment that retired educators have provided to their communities. Many joined together to share personal stories of how a secure retirement allows them to continue contributing to society through volunteer work and mentorship opportunities.

NSEA-Retired members met with many lawmakers representing Nebraskans from all parts of the state. Some members even shared a hug with their representatives.

Participants said their presence at the Capitol served as a reminder that the voices of retired educators remain relevant in shaping education policy. Many emphasized that their decades of experience offer valuable perspective on the needs of both current educators and students.

NSEA President Tim Royers and NSEA Director of Government Relations Jason Hayes both expressed appreciation for the continued efforts of its retired members and said they remain committed to supporting their advocacy in the years ahead.



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Know a Non-Member? Ask Them to Join NSEA-Retired



Summer is the perfect time to help non-members consider the benefits of joining the Nebraska State Education Association-Retired (NSEA-Retired). Here are five compelling reasons to become a member.

Protect Retirement

Membership in NSEA-Retired provides essential resources and support to help secure your retirement. The association advocates for policies that protect pensions and benefits, ensuring a stable financial future for retired educators.

Improve Public Education

By joining NSEA-Retired, you contribute to a collective effort to enhance the quality of public education. Together, we can promote initiatives and reforms that benefit all students and educators, creating a brighter future for our schools.

Advocate for Students

As a member, you gain a powerful voice in advocating for policies that support education. NSEA-Retired engages in political action to ensure that the

interests of students and educators are represented at local, state and national levels.

Stay Connected

Membership offers a valuable opportunity to stay connected with fellow educators. Reconnect with former colleagues, share experiences and build lasting relationships within a supportive community that understands the challenges and triumphs of the profession.

Stay Informed

NSEA-Retired provides access to conferences, workshops and media resources that keep you informed about the latest trends and developments in education. Staying updated enhances your ability to contribute meaningfully to discussions about public education.

Becoming an NSEA-Retired member means being part of a dedicated community. Join us in making a difference for ourselves and for generations of educators to come!

Visit www.nsea.org/joinnow or contact the NSEA Membership Department at 1-800-742-0047.

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