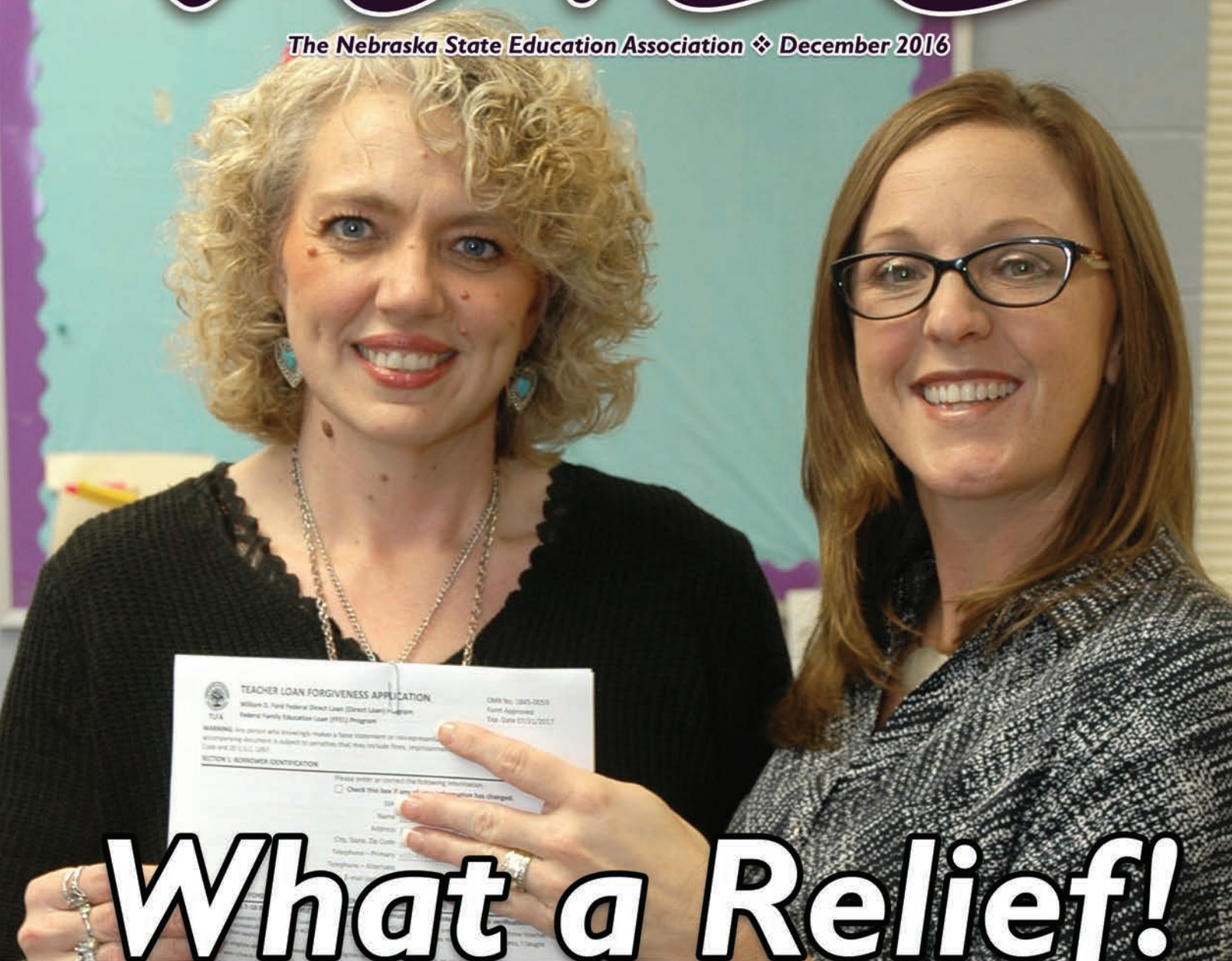


THE

SHOUT OUTS

VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ December 2016



What a Relief!

Association Supports Program that Helps Forgive Thousands of Dollars in Student Loan Debt

Sound Outlook for Retirement Plan

A Future First Lady's Tale



A Future First Lady's Tale

Smart Alecks, Close Calls at the Airport

This is one of a series on NSEA's history as the Association celebrates 150 years.

Ruth Thone doesn't recall exactly how she came to work for the Nebraska State Education Association, but her perspective on two-plus years she spent with NSEA are important from an historical perspective.

Thone was at NSEA from 1954 to 1956, when NSEA was on the verge of a membership explosion. It was an era of general appreciation of public education and, perhaps, even an overriding reliance on public education as a solution to many of society's ills.

She had just married Charlie Thone, a young attorney who would later become a four-term Nebraska congressman, and, in 1979, the state's 34th governor.

A Scottsbluff native, Thone knew Archer Burnham, who had been superintendent there before becoming NSEA executive director in 1938. Burnham had just retired and was still heavily involved at NSEA operations when she started work in May 1954. Burnham may have had a hand in her hiring.

Following Burnham as executive director was Don Kline. Perhaps it was fortunate for Kline that Thone was from Scottsbluff. He was an amateur pilot, and flew to Scottsbluff with Thone aboard the plane.

"We got close, and the (runway) lights were out at the Scottsbluff field," she said.

"Don said 'I've never been here before,' and I didn't know what to do. So I told him where the airport was, and just as we landed the lights came on," she said.

Thone recalls her work at NSEA.

"I sold ads and helped edit the newspaper, but Gene Berg was the heart and soul of the newspaper and all NSEA publications."

It was "all hands on deck" when it came



Memories: Ruth Thone, above, with NSEA Executive Director Craig Christiansen. Below, Thone registers members at an NSEA event in about 1955.



to Delegate Assembly and the fall teacher's convention – sponsored and organized at several sites across the state each year by NSEA. Thone registered members as they arrived at Delegate Assembly. Teacher's convention was a different story.

"At the district conventions, we were assigned duties," she said. "I remember taking the train to the McCook meeting. I was somewhat gregarious, so I was put to work greeting people."

More than anything, Thone recalls the

people she worked with and the old, three-story house that served as headquarters. A board room at the front of the building on the first floor doubled as a workroom when mailings to members were being readied.

The publications staff of three – including Joan Casari – worked in the one big third floor room. Thone called it "our little aerie" and said "we were young and thought we were the smartest people around. But we were good at what we did."

Burnham, she said, was "just revered. You just treated Archer Burnham with the greatest respect. Intellectually, he was head and shoulders above everyone else, except John Lynch. He was a brilliant man."

Lynch would become NSEA executive director in 1964. He was a lobbyist and "was very good, quite delightful.

"We were totally subservient to Archer and John," said Thone.

Klein also lobbied and was very intelligent and self-assured. "We were in awe of anyone who lobbied. That (state capitol) was a big, exciting place across the street. You had to be good," she said.

Berg, the editor, was very smart, as well, and possessed a dominating personality. Thone recalls Alberta Stack, Burnham's assistant: "A little, teeny woman, but she was tough. All loyalty to Archer," she said.

Ultimately, members ruled. "They were the most important. The entire staff treated them with great respect," she said. "They just didn't know they had these smart alecks on the third floor!"

Thone left NSEA in 1956 when her husband became an assistant to U.S. Sen. Roman Hruska. They moved to Washington, D.C., and started a family and successful political career. Today, they live in Lincoln.

Cover: Roxanne Rector cleared \$5,000 off the top of her student loans with the assistance of Horace Mann Company's Candace Specht. Learn more about student loan forgiveness on **Page 6**



Nebraska State Education Association
605 S. 14th Street
Lincoln, NE 68508-2742 • www.nsea.org
(402) 475-7611 • (800) 742-0047

Volume 70, No. 4
ISSN Number: 1085-0783
USPS Number: 000-369

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Official publication of the Nebraska State Education Association, 605 South 14th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Periodical postage paid at Lincoln, NE, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: send address changes to The Voice, NSEA, 605 S. 14th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508-2742.

Published and mailed 6 times yearly in September, Oc-

tober, November, February, April and August. Published online in December, January, March and May.

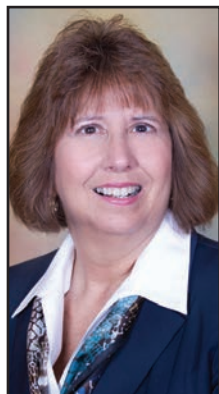
Payment of annual NSEA dues entitles Nebraska educators to receive The Voice. Cost of producing 10 issues of The Voice each year is \$3.41 per member.

Advertising rates available on request. Appearance of an advertisement in The Voice does not imply NSEA endorsement of the product advertised or views expressed.

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



The Challenges are Many



**NSEA President
Nancy Fulton**

“

Sadly, as important as the education of our children might be, the challenges facing public education were rarely — if ever — mentioned by candidates or commentators.

”

Regardless of which candidates you favored, the November General Election marked a long-awaited and thankful culmination to a difficult and divisive campaign cycle.

Now that the politicking is behind us, it is time for educators to use our best skills and teach. However, I suggest that we use our teaching skills to reach a different audience.

While we use our talents each day to shepherd Nebraska children along the path to constructive adulthood, I believe it would benefit all involved to spend at least some time educating our policymakers.

As educators and education support professionals, we were all acutely aware of the challenges that face public education before the election season ever began. Those challenges have not diminished; some might say they have grown in scope and number. Yet we watched endless campaign reports, endured tense debates, and read countless over-the-top mailers as candidates tried to out-maneuver each other on fiscal responsibility, tax cuts, small business development, and two or three other hot-button issues.

Sadly, as important as the education of our children might be, the challenges facing public education were rarely — if ever — mentioned by candidates or commentators.

The Challenges are Many

I believe educators understand clearly that elected officials shape our schools. They determine what classroom resources we have (or do not have!) in our cupboards in order to meet the varied needs of our students.

I am also confident that most teachers, regardless of party affiliation, share a common interest in a strong economy, a fiscally responsible government, and a high-quality education for all children. That includes provisions for a safe and secure learning and working environment in all schools.

We must let our policymakers know, loud and clear, that education must no longer play second fiddle to louder, well-funded interests. Educating our children solves a multitude of ills. Think what a better educated workforce does for the business world. Understand what a well-educated citizenry does for incarceration rates. What might a smart, active populace do for health issues and related social costs? Many of those issues can begin to be addressed in the school setting.

Clearly, education must get far more attention than it received during the campaign cycle.

Education is more than a matter of a line item budget issue. It is crucial that policymakers know the importance of their decisions; that every action they take affects children, parents and teachers. They must learn to listen to the knowledge and expertise that

classroom educators offer; they must listen to parents; and yes, even to the children.

Educators, however, must offer their voice to the discussion on the need for more mental health assistance for students, more funding to reduce achievement gaps, more room in the school day for STEM and physical education.

The challenges are many. But so are our voices.

We all became educators because we care so deeply about our children. Talking to our policymakers — and educating them about our needs — is a great way to showcase that caring attitude.

Set the Tone

Early in November I had the grand opportunity to join our student members at the Student Education Association of Nebraska Fall Conference and Outreach to Teach in Wayne and Emerson.

On hand was NEA Student Program Chair Ashley Muscarella, a college student from Pennsylvania. This bright, articulate, future educator spoke to the students about her reasons for activism. I believe Ashley’s reasons resonate with most educators.

Teachers and teachers-to-be are in the profession because they believe in their students, they believe in public education, and they believe in the future of public education, she said. With their passion, teachers have the power to set the course for public education, to set the tone for all education.

“In teaching today’s students, we are teaching tomorrow’s doctors, teachers, philosophers and others.”

Every classroom lecture is a most important keynote address, she said.

“Every lesson a teacher gives is the most important keynote address of the day,” she said, “and teachers often give such keynotes several times a day.

“We have the opportunity to set the tone, so we have to make it count every single day,” she said.

Are We Doing Enough?

Ashley challenged the students with this thought: When children are bullied, are overlooked, or are victims of racism, they are denied the right to be children. Are we, as teachers doing enough?

Yes, she said. But there is always time to do more.

“We can be the change agent and advocate for them. We can make strides in raising student achievement and preparing students for the future, but it means ensuring that public education should be at the top of any priority list of any elected official,” she said.

And that gets back to where we started. We must, each of us, advocate for our profession, continue to work to build an education system that works for every student.

Together, we can. Please lend your voice.

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Sturdy Outlook for Retirement Plan

Value, Funding Ratio of Teacher Plan has Strengthened Over Past Year

The state retirement plan for teachers and school employees continues to grow both in assets and in funded ratio, but a cut in the actuarial assumed rate of investment returns will slightly delay the projected return to a near-100 percent funded ratio.

That said, a chorus of reports on the plan indicates a healthy outlook. The good news came at November's yearly joint meeting of the Nebraska Investment Council and the Public Employees Retirement Board (PERB).

The retirement board manages the intake and disbursement of retirement plan dollars for school employees, judges, and the state patrol, as well as state and county employees. The investment council manages the investments for those plans.

For the year ending June 30, the actuarial value of the school retirement plan grew by \$560 million – from \$9.486 billion to \$10.046 billion. During the same period, the funded ratio of actuarial assets grew from 88 to 90 percent. The plan was just 83 percent funded two years ago and 77 percent funded three years ago.

The funded ratio measures the value of the plan – with gains and losses smoothed over a five-year period – against plan liabilities.

Historically, the actuarial funded ratio of the school plan has hovered in the upper 80s to mid-90s, though the Great Recession pushed the ratio into the mid-70s.

PERB Co-chair Gail Werner-Robertson lauded the fact that the school retirement plan, combined with plans for state judges and State Patrol employees, ranked among the top plans in the country when looking at investment returns at one, three, five and 10 years ago.

A Challenge

In October, the PERB Board reduced the actuarial assumed rate of investment return from 8 to 7.5 percent annually, effective July 1, 2017. That lowering of expectations is an industry trend, said Max

Kotary, of Aon Hewitt Investment Consulting, Inc.

Kotary said that 10 years ago 60 percent of retirement plans used the 8 percent assumed rate. Today, that figure is at 20 or 25 percent.

“Most plans are now at 7.5 percent,” he said.

Lowering the assumed rate of return, he said, will increase the chance that the rate of return will be met. He cautioned, however, that meeting the 7.5 percent rate will still likely be a challenge.

The board also adjusted the mortality table for plan members, inserting longer life expectancy figures. The rate of return and life expectancy changes drops the plan's projected funded ratio for 2017 to about 84 percent by 2019. However, the funded ratio then begins a slow upward trend, reaching 100 percent by about 2038.

The ‘Only Guarantee’

Decreasing the assumed rate of return may also alter the state's role in funding the plan, according to actuarial projections. On top of employee contributions of 9.78 percent of salary, and employer contributions equal to 9.88 percent of salary, the state has a statutory obligation to contribute an amount equal to 2 percent of employee pay each year.

However, with the lower expectations on investment return, new projections indicate an injection of an additional \$900,000 in state monies will be needed in 2020, with an additional \$3 million needed in 2021. That figure will slightly grow each year until about 2035, when the plan is 100 percent funded. But Pat Beckham of Cavanaugh Macdonald Consulting reminded board members that numbers are all based on current assumptions.

“Those assumptions will not all happen,” she said. “That's the only thing I can guarantee.”

Other notable facts regarding the school plan:

- On July 1, there were 41,443 active educators contributing to the plan, at an average age of 45.3, down slightly from 2015's 45.5.

- Retirement plans for state patrol and judges also grew in the past year. The plan for judges grew from 97 percent to 98 percent funded; the plan for State Patrol grew from 87 percent to 89 percent.

Falling Union Membership Costs Others

Wages Everywhere Stagnate With Declining Union Membership

A new report from a non-profit, non-partisan organization has found that almost across the board, real wages today are substantially lower than in the 1970s, thanks to declining union membership.

The Economic Policy Institute's report says that the decline in union power has received little attention in the debate over wage stagnation. More focus is given to globalization, technological change and other issues.

“Unions, especially in industries and regions where they are strong, help boost the wages of all workers by establishing pay and benefit standards that many nonunion firms adopt,” said the report.

“But this union boost to nonunion pay

has weakened as the share of private-sector workers in a union has fallen from 1 in 3 in the 1950s to 1 in 20 today.”

The report said nonunion workers benefit from their union brethren in many ways. “Strong unions set pay and benefits standards that nonunion employers follow. Those employers may raise pay for some workers to forestall an organizing drive, which leads to an upward adjustment in wages of workers above them, to maintain relative pay differentials,” said the report.

For instance, better pay in union-organized shops will increase competition for skilled workers so that nonunion companies raise pay to prevent employee loss to shops with union wages.

Key findings from the report include:

- For nonunion private-sector men, weekly wages would have been an estimated 5 percent (\$52) higher in 2013 had union density remained at 1979 levels. For

a year-round worker, this translates to an annual wage loss of \$2,704.

- For nonunion private-sector men without a bachelor's degree or more education, weekly wages would be an estimated 8 percent (\$58) higher in 2013 if union density remained at 1979 levels. This translates to an annual wage loss of \$3,016.

- The effects of union decline on the wages of nonunion women are not as substantial because women were not as unionized as men were in 1979. Weekly wages would be approximately 2 to 3 percent higher if union density remained at its 1979 levels. However, the cumulative effects are still sizable. For 32.9 million full-time nonunion women working in the private sector, pay would be roughly \$24 billion more per year.

Overall, those losses in wages amount to about \$133 billion per year. For more details on the study, go to the website at:

www.epi.org/



Quick Relief: Lincoln Education Association member Roxanne Rector, left, had \$5,000 in student loan debt forgiven in a matter of weeks after Horace Mann Company's Candace Specht, right, helped her navigate the paperwork maze.

Quick Relief

Horace Mann Program Can Help Manage Loan Debt

In November, more than 14 years after graduating from college and beginning her career as a teacher, Roxanne Rector was still paying on about \$25,000 in student loans.

In the space of just a few short weeks, however, her loan debt was cut by \$5,000.

With assistance from her Association and the Horace Mann Company, Rector applied for and was quickly approved for a \$5,000 reduction in student loan debt. She discovered she qualified for the reduction as she attended a workshop on reducing student loan debt. The Horace Mann Company presented and the Lincoln Education Association hosted the workshop.

"Taking this \$5,000 off the debt will be really nice," said Rector, a fifth grade teacher at Lincoln's McPhee Elementary School.

Reducing student loan debt for Association members is the goal of a growing new service provided by the Horace Mann Company, an Association-endorsed insurance and financial services company.

A survey by Horace Mann found that 71 percent of educators agree that student loan debt is a primary motivator for young teachers deciding between staying in the profession or switching to a career that pays better.

"The stress of the debt burden is wearing young people down," said Cindy Dornbush, a regional vice president for Horace Mann. "College graduates with high student loan debt are less happy, more stressed and even report worse physical health than their

peers with lower level of debt."

NSEA President Nancy Fulton said the average monthly student loan payment for borrowers between the ages of 20 and 30 is about \$350, according to the website Student Loan Hero. On a starting teacher's salary, that cuts deeply into any teacher's monthly budget.

"This causes our new college grads to delay life milestones like marriage, buying a house or saving for the future," said Fulton.

Misgivings about such debt is also likely to turn potential teachers away from the profession, said Fulton. That is an important consideration since the number of students looking at a teaching career has plummeted in recent years. According to the Nebraska Department of Education, there were 7,576 education degree candidates enrolled in Nebraska colleges and universities in 2003-04. Ten years later, there were just 3,528 education candidates, a drop of more than 53 percent.

'In the Family Budget'

By the time of her graduation from Dana College in 2002, Rector had amassed student loan debt of nearly \$50,000.

"I thought 'I'm going to be paying on this forever,'" said Rector.

Her first few years in teaching were spent paying on interest alone, with monthly payments barely touching the loan principal. A diligent approach has cut the debt in half, but there is much to be done.

"The loan debt has been placed into our family budget and has been an automatic, a constant \$232 a month off the top of the paycheck," said Rector. "It's right up there with the mortgage."

Candace Specht, a Horace Mann agent for the Lincoln area, said the size of Rector's loan debt is not unusual.

“I see some teachers with \$65,000 in debt or more,” said Specht.

Also not unusual: Like many teachers, Rector was unaware that her eight years at McPhee Elementary qualified for the \$5,000 reduction. Educators with debt on a federal Stafford loan are eligible for the \$5,000 in forgiveness once they have completed five years at a Title I school. After she learned she was eligible, she was unsure where to begin to utilize the program, and didn’t know who might answer her questions. That’s when she connected with Specht.

“Roxanne has been here for longer than five years and hadn’t even delved into it,” said Specht. “In her case, she could apply for the \$5,000 right away, and was able to get the reduction almost immediately.”

Specht said other qualifiers, such as teaching specialties like special education and grades 7-12 math or science can earn even deeper cuts in loan debt – as much as \$17,500 in some cases.

Other teachers may be aware of the debt reduction option, but either haven’t taken the time to follow through, don’t know where to start, or perhaps fear the undertaking.

“When you are trying to navigate this yourself, it can be a very daunting task,” said Specht.

Additional Income

As part of a commitment to helping Association members plan for a brighter financial future, Horace Mann now offers the free loan reduction workshops to local Associations. The company has agents located across the state ready to lead the workshops.

In addition, agents will assist educators to consider a change in repayment plans to one of several based on income. Those with lower levels of income may be eligible to have monthly payments decreased.

For those who may not qualify for debt reduction, there are other avenues.

“After we’ve exhausted all loan forgiveness options, we also look into better interest rates,” she said.

Fortunately, Rector has enjoyed a very low interest rate. But she did take advantage of a Horace Mann plan that cut her monthly auto/home insurance premiums by half.

“That was wonderful. That additional income can be applied to the student loans as well,” she said.

Rector’s situation, said Specht, is just one of many examples. Loan forgiveness is very individualized, and every borrower has a unique set of facts to consider.

A Sense of Trust

As a faculty representative, Rector said LEA’s role in hosting the debt reduction workshop was another perk of membership.

“If LEA trusts this person, I can trust them to do right by me,” said Rector.

Specht said the workshops give another sense of value to Association members. And, she said, members feel more comfortable talking to someone face-to-face, someone they can know and trust, instead of a voice on the other end of an 800 number.

Specht said the response to the workshops has been pleasing. Her schedule is booked with personal, one-on-one appointments weeks in advance.

Dornbush said Horace Mann agents across the state have the expertise to assist association members as they navigate the loan forgiveness maze. To request a workshop for your association, contact Dornbush at 402-680-9382.

Repayment Options and Programs for Educators

Do you have a federal student loan? Are you confused about your repayment options? The U.S. Department of Education has created some powerful tools to help you manage your loans and, in some cases, get loan forgiveness. These resources, provided by the federal Department of Education, will help you manage and repay your federal student loans.

Getting Started

Know when you have to start making payments. For most loans, you’ll have six months—or nine months for Federal Perkins Loans—after you graduate, leave school, or drop below half-time enrollment before you must begin making your loan payments. Take this time to make a plan for repayment.

Consider Loan Consolidation

A Direct Consolidation Loan allows you to combine all of your federal student loans into one loan with one monthly payment. Loan consolidation can be helpful if you have multiple servicers, loans from the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program, or Federal Perkins Loans. Loan consolidation can increase your chances of qualifying for an affordable repayment plan and loan forgiveness options, but it may not be the best option for you. Learn more about loan consolidation here:

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/repay-loans/consolidation>

Base Payments on Your Paycheck

If you want to lower your monthly payment or can’t afford to make standard payments, select an Income-Driven Repayment Plan. Income-driven plans set your payment at a percentage of your income and will put you on a path to forgiveness. Qualifying payments can be as low as \$0.

With income-driven plans, you’ll be in repayment for up to 20 or 25 years. If your loans are not repaid in full after 20 or 25 years, the remaining balance will be forgiven. Estimate your payments and find the income-driven repayment plan that’s right for you at:

studentloans.gov/myDirectLoan/mobile/repayment/repaymentEstimator.action

If you don’t select a specific repayment plan, your loan will be put on the Standard Repayment Plan. The Standard Repayment Plan determines your monthly payment without regard for your ability to pay that amount. You can switch to a different plan at any time by contacting your loan servicer, the company that manages your loan.

Loan Forgiveness Programs Specifically for Educators

Teachers may qualify for both of these forgiveness programs, but not for the same time period:

■ **Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program:** You may qualify for this program if you (a) teach full-time for five complete and consecutive academic years in certain elementary and secondary schools and educational service agencies that serve low-income families, and (b) meet other qualifications. To learn more about the Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program visit:

studentaid.ed.gov/sa/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/teacher

■ **Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program:** You may qualify for this loan forgiveness program if you are employed by a government or a not-for-profit organization in any capacity, which many educators are. You must make 120 qualifying payments under an income-driven plan to qualify. To learn more about PSLF visit:

studentaid.ed.gov/sa/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation/public-service

Other Resources

Better Make Room has recently released Up Next, which helps college students and graduates make informed decisions about the student loan process and repayment plans. To find out more, simply text the word COLLEGE to 44044 to receive free personalized updates, reminders and one-on-one advising.

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There are Great Things Happening Here

Teachers Urged to Break Silence and Brag About the Learning Going on in Nebraska Classrooms



Pearson

Editor's Note: Ferial Pearson is an instructor in the College of Education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and has taught at Omaha South High and Ralston High schools. Her letter, below, caught the eye of national public education advocate Diane Ravitch this past spring. As Ravitch said, Pearson has "has embarked on a mission of kindness. In this newspaper article, she wrote a letter to the teachers of Omaha to thank them for their hard work and their many successes. The letter got a lot of buzz in Nebraska and on social media because some politicians have been bad-mouthing the public schools, as part of their campaign for vouchers.

"Change the name of the city and state and the letter would sound right in every district."

Dear Omaha Public School Teachers,

I see you. I see your work. I know you are doing innovative, creative, pedagogically sound things. I know how much you care about your students and how hard you love them. I know this because I've been in dozens and dozens of your schools in the past three years and have been blown away by your talents, skills and resilience. I know because I taught at Omaha South High School for 10 years and Ralston High for two, and I lived it. I know because I have now taught more than a hundred of you in my classes at the College of Education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha over the past six years.

We have laughed and cried together about our work and our students. You have been brave and vulnerable in sharing your struggles and insecurities, and we have grown, so much, together. I know because I go to IncluCity Camp with your students and hear about how much they are learning and how much they look up to you. Are there some bad eggs? Absolutely. But the good ones outshine the bad. By far.

On Monday, I read about an Omaha South High student from Mexico who was accepted to Harvard. Two years ago, while observing a practicum student at Omaha North High, I met an African American student who was trying to decide between two Ivy League schools that he had been accepted to, one of which his brother was already attending. I have seen my own students go to Yale, the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Creighton, University of Nebraska at Omaha, University of Nebraska at Lincoln, and many, many other schools.

Some have doctorates, others are Licensed Mental Health Care Professionals, teachers with graduate degrees, social workers, social justice advocates, rock star chefs, phenomenal mechanics, welders, professional artists, utility line workers, day care providers, professors, lawyers, medical doctors, writers, business owners, professional musicians, fashion designers, funeral directors, athletes, men-

tors — and the list goes on. I could tag them all here, but you'd be reading until next year.

These are students of different races, abilities, backgrounds, sexual orientations, genders and nationalities. Last week, I met a young man who now works Centris Credit Union, thanks to the innovative work of staff at Omaha South High who collaborated with Wells Fargo to open a branch in the school so that kids could do actual banking and that provided him with a direct line to his career today. I remember the Packasso Project, the brainchild of Fairouz Bishara and the Art Department at Omaha South High School getting talented artists off the streets and giving them legitimate canvasses and artist mentors from across the community. There are stories like this in almost every school in this city.

So, dear OPS teachers, when the education reformers tell you that you are failing at your job based on test scores, or that your schools are "bad" or "failing" please tell them the stories of your students. Never stop bragging about your students. Tell them that the ones who don't make it aren't suffering from an achievement gap; they are suffering from an opportunity gap and that is something that the community needs to help us with.

We do what we can with what we've got, and when the soil is fertile and the sun shines and there is enough water, our seeds thrive and bloom into gorgeous blossoms. Sometimes, we plant a seed in a child, but that child is in dry and barren soil, is traumatized, and doesn't know when it will rain next. So we nurture them as best we can. They may get that sunshine and rain and food years after we let them go and we'll never see the fruits of our labor, but they come back, sometimes, and they show us their flowers. Some never do, and while that's sad, we do our best anyway.

Tell the education reformers that rather than taking our resources away to try and do better than us in a different place with our kids, whom we love, that there are already great things happening here, and we could use those resources to become even better. We are not perfect, but we are doing great things and willing to improve. Tell them to work with us to care about the whole child. To help us get those children their sunshine and soil and food and water. We'll take care of their brains and hearts if the community will help us take care of their bodies as well.

Thank you for doing what you do and being who you are. You are my heroes.

(Note: This goes for ALL my public school teacher friends, not just those in Omaha, and to the paraprofessionals and custodians and administrators and media specialists and cafeteria workers and office assistants and..and...)

*Sincerely,
Ferial Pearson*

"Never stop bragging about your students."

— Ferial Pearson, Instructor,
University of Nebraska Omaha

State's 150th Celebration Puts Emphasis on Children

Sesquicentennial Celebration Includes Classroom Opportunities

When the Nebraska 150 Celebration's (NE150) executive director talks about programming for the state's Sesquicentennial, she quickly calls attention to the emphasis that has been placed on education.

Children, said Regan Anson, are a priority.

"They are the future of our state, and we want them to take away incredible memories that will last a lifetime," she said.

One goal of NE150 programming is to help others learn something new about the state. Of the 14 events and initiatives to launch in January and run through 2017, six focus on students and classrooms.

"Fourth graders study Nebraska history, so focusing some of our programming there was a natural fit," Anson said.

The programs geared exclusively to fourth grade classrooms include the Nebraska Atlas Project and the Nebraska Experience.

The Atlas Project provides a 52-page workbook for every fourth grade student, along with online curriculum for teachers. The instruction can be used for science, reading, writing and math.

Historical Site Visits Encouraged

The NE150 is also working to provide every fourth grader the opportunity to visit a state historical site through "The Nebraska Experience." Working with the Nebraska Arts Council (NAC), the NE150 will underwrite the cost of school buses as well as admission fees.

The "Now You Know Nebraska" program is a series of 174 video shorts that will highlight unique and interesting Nebraska facts and stories. The short videos will be available every day of the school year via YouTube and are intended to supplement history lessons for fourth through eighth graders.

"One State, One Book" will send more than 26,000 copies of *Chief Standing Bear of the Ponca* by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve, along with a curriculum guide, to every fifth grade classroom. The NE150 will encourage teachers to use Mystery Skype sessions, video chats or virtual book clubs with classrooms from other parts of the state.



Mobile Museum is 'Hands-On'

"I Am Nebraska" is designed to connect classrooms and communities. Utilizing a variety of social media platforms, the NE150 will encourage the submission of living history videos. High school and college level honor societies in particular will be encouraged to assist in interviews, helping them to find worthy service opportunities while bridging the gap between generations.

The Mobile Children's Museum will bring a hands-on, fun learning experience to children who may not have a chance to visit a children's museum. The state-of-the-art, expandable tractor-trailer will travel to 40 communities from April through October. Core messages will include details about Nebraska's heritage, diversity, immigration, innovation, agriculture and technology.

For details, go to facebook.com/Nebraska150 or visit:

www.ne150.org



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Stipends Aid in Cost of Graduate Work

It's time to get your scholarship application skills buffed and honed: the application period for the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska scholarship program is now open!

Three times each year, NSEA members may apply for a scholarship from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska. The scholarships are designed to help NSEA members pay for some of the cost of graduate coursework. Applications for the spring semester will be taken until Feb. 19.

Applicants must be covered by either single or family Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska health care insurance. Scholarships are for advanced degrees; additional teaching endorsements; or courses for certification. Courses must be from an accredited post-secondary institution for credit. Books and fees are not covered.

Applicants may seek scholarship dollars



for no more than three hours of course work a semester and can only be awarded a scholarship during two of the three scholarship rounds (fall, spring and summer) during a school year. Applicants must apply for their course work in the semester the course ends.

After submission, applicants will receive an e-mail receipt (please contact the NSEA if a confirmation receipt is not received). Applicants will be notified of the status of their application between four to six weeks after application deadline.

The goal of the program is to award stipends to the largest number of members from each of NSEA's six governance districts. Since 1986, a total of 5,602 NSEA members have shared more than \$755,000 in Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska scholarship dollars. The program does not affect Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska premiums.

Questions? Reach Sally Bodtke at 1-800-742-0047 or via email at:

sally.bodtke@nsea.org

Belz-Lynch-Krause Scholarships Reward Staff Development Projects

Good teachers are always looking for ways to improve their skill set.

NSEA makes learning easier with an award from the Belz/Lynch/Krause Educational Grant Fund. The 2016 application deadline for those funds is Saturday, Jan. 20.

The Belz/Lynch/Krause dollars are awarded for projects related to improving a local association; development of instructional materials; or for staff development for individuals of a local association. Eligible are any NSEA member; group of NSEA members; or any NSEA local association.

The application must include an abstract of the project, not to exceed four typed pages, including the following information: need; how the project will address the need to relate to professional growth goals; project description; timeline; a budget statement; and method of evaluating the project's success. Applications must be postmarked by Sunday, Feb. 19. Recipients will be notified in March.

A letter describing and evaluating the project shall be submitted to the NSEA Scholarship and Grants Committee within



Belz

Lynch

Krause

three months of project completion.

The grants are named for John Lynch, NSEA's executive director from 1959 to 1974; Paul Belz, executive director from 1974-84; and Helen Krause, a former NSEA president, and the first Nebraskan to serve on NEA's Executive Committee.

For details, or for an application form, visit the NSEA website look for the link on the home page. The form will be posted through Sunday, Feb. 19. The site is at:

www.nsea.org

Get more details from Sally Bodtke at 1-800-742-0047 or by email at:

sally.bodtke@nsea.org

Give the Gift of an Award Nomination

Honor a Colleague

The deadline to nominate a deserving co-worker for one of NSEA's awards is slowly moving closer. Wouldn't it be a good idea to review the options here and start the easy nomination process now?

Any NSEA member may nominate a member teacher, ESP or deserving group. Mailed nominations must be postmarked by Friday, Feb. 17, 2017, and should be sent to NSEA Awards, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Nominations may also be submitted online, with required supporting material mailed to the NSEA. Online nomination forms are found under the 'Call for Nominations' link at:

www.nsea.org

The 2017 Delegate Assembly will be held at Lincoln's Cornhusker Marriott Hotel April 21-22. NSEA members are eligible for:

■ **NSEA Rookie of the Year:**

To honor a first-year teacher who excelled in the 2015-16 school year.

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

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

Finalists will be notified in March, with winners revealed at Delegate Assembly. Recipients receive a \$250 cash award.

NSEA members are also eligible for:

■ **The Great Plains Milestone Award:** Honors an individual/group for promoting human and civil rights.

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

■ **Local Public Relations:** Honors local associations for outstanding communication within the association.

Also to be presented:

■ **Friend of Education:** Honors an individual or organization that has made a statewide contribution to education.

■ **Media:** Recognizes a newspaper, television or radio station for coverage of education issues and promotion of public education.

Count Five Children Assisted!

\$150K Drive Progresses

The mother of five boys was in dire straits. With six mouths to feed, there was little money for clothes or other necessities.

That's when a teacher at the small, rural school noticed the family's need. A call to NSEA and the Children's Fund was quick to provide the boys some new clothing and a boost in self-confidence and respect. The mother's note of thanks was forwarded to NSEA.

"I'm not sure who to thank, so I hope this will get passed on to the right person/people," she wrote in neat, careful cursive.

"A teacher delivered gifts for my boys that were funded through the NSEA Children's Fund. Your gift meant so much to myself and the boys. They loved their new clothes," she wrote. "Someday I hope to be in a position to help another family as you have helped us."

Count five Nebraska children assisted!

Today, the Children's Fund barely meets needs each year, and in some busy years, cuts into a small reserve. For instance, in 2015-16 the Fund sent out about \$3,200 more than it realized through donations.

In order to put the fund on sound financial footing, NSEA leadership launched a drive to raise \$150,000 by October 2017, the 150th anniversary of NSEA's founding.

To date, the campaign has raised \$22,775.

Local associations are encouraged to brainstorm fundraising ideas: collect change; host a jeans day fundraiser; or consider other options. Individual members may also donate and have their name included in the NSEA 150th anniversary history book publication (see box).

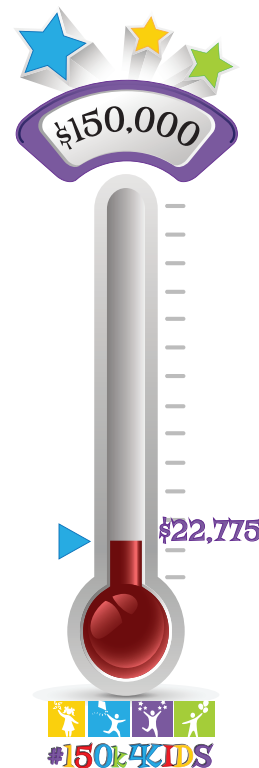
To make giving easier, the Children's Fund now

accepts gifts through PayPal. Find the PayPal link at:

nsea.org/childrensfund

Questions? Call Sally Bodtke at 1-800-742-0047 or at:

sally.bodtke@nsea.org



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SEAN Outreach '16

Importance of Teaching Stressed

The importance of teaching was emphasized and re-emphasized at the 2016 Fall Conference of the Student Education Association of Nebraska in early November.

Former Nebraska All American football player and current University of Nebraska-Omaha Athletic Director Trev Alberts told about 100 SEAN members that a teacher made an incredible difference in his life.

"I hope you all know how important your roles are," he told students.

NEA Student Program Chair Ashley Muscarella re-emphasized the importance of teaching when she said teachers "have the power and impact to set the tone" for a student's life.

That all came before SEAN members left the Wayne State College campus and headed to Emerson-Hubbard Public Schools where they made a real difference in short order during the annual Outreach to Teach Project. They painted walls, cupboards, bleachers and playground equipment; added murals to walls; cleaned and scrubbed; pulled weeds and more.

Alberts said he was not serious about school until a sixth grade teacher pulled him aside and said he was "getting by."

"That was the first time I thought I should be doing more," he said. "The impact you can have on young people can make a real difference."

Muscarella agreed. "Every lesson is the most important keynote address. Teachers give those keynotes every day," she said.

Teachers, she said, make a difference.

"By teaching today's students, we're teaching tomorrow's doctors, teachers, philosophers and others. That's the change we can be, and we need to be an advocate for that."

School work: Members of the Student Education Association of Nebraska came from across the state in November to give a quick facelift to the Emerson-Hubbard Public Schools. At top left, Wayne State College's Haley Guenther gives a fresh coat of paint to playground equipment. At left, York College's Sierra Valerio freshens a set of drawers. Below, this Peru State College team pulled weeds from a landscaped area. From left are Logan Zeleny, Megan Wallace, Elly Lempka, Marissa Wusk and Amanda Antholz.





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Save With Susan

Spread holiday cheer and savings by using NEA Click & Save, the online discount buying service for NEA members with these offers from select retailers and merchants.

These are the featured 'Buy-lights' this month.

■ **Best Buy:** Get great deals on home appliances and electronics, plus free in store pick-up, free home delivery, and free shipping on orders of \$35 and up.

■ **Kohl's:** Check out top brands on apparel, shoes, accessories, home products and more to find great prices, every day. Free shipping on orders of \$75 or more.

■ **Toys "R" Us:** Enjoy free in-store pick-up the same day at nearly 600 nationwide locations; free shipping on orders of \$19 or more.

■ **Columbia Sportswear:** Save on authentic and innovative products for passionate outdoor lovers.

■ **Bed Bath & Beyond:** Peruse one of the largest selections of products for the home at everyday low prices; free shipping on orders of \$25 or more.

■ **NEAMB Entertainment Store:** Exclusive member pricing on world-class entertainment including Broadway shows, movies, sporting events, and amusement parks; now featuring college and NFL game tickets!

Check Click & Save often for unadvertised, limited offers, including discount dining certificates from Restaurant.com. Join the 407,000 NEA members already registered for NEA Click & Save. Go to:

www.neamb.com/clickandsave

Note: Up-to-date information on merchant discounts, shipping terms and WOW Points appears on the NEA Click & Save website and may change at any time.

Spread Holiday Cheer

Why not get a lovely centerpiece for your table or a thoughtful gift for your host?

Save 20 percent on flower arrangements, plants, gourmet gift baskets, and more! For more information and to place your order, go to www.neamb.com and look for 1800Flowers.com under the Discounts tab.

Save Big on Travel with Hertz

Upcoming travel plans? NEA members save up to 25 percent off Hertz car rentals all year! Reserve your Hertz car rental at www.neamb.com/hertz or by calling 800-654-3131 and referencing your CDP# 50655. Terms and conditions apply.

Susan Estes is Nebraska's NEA Member Benefits representative



Estes

Five Easy Ways to Stick to Your Holiday Budget

Do the Holidays Leave You Spent? Try These Solvency Tips

The spirit of holiday giving can turn into the season of splurging — unless you stick to a budget. It might be fun to indulge today, but it won't be fun to pay tomorrow.

Yet you can stick to a budget without sacrificing the fun of giving and celebrating. Here are five ways to make it work.

Create a Realistic Holiday Budget

Here are three key steps to follow.

■ **Know what you can afford.** Many financial experts put the maximum budget at 1.5 percent of your annual income, but the figure is different for each person. It may be a standard percent of income or it may be a dollar limit.

■ **Make a list.** Try online printables like ConsumerCredit.com's Holiday Shopping CheckList and Holiday Budget Worksheet, or use pen and paper, an Excel spreadsheet or whatever works for you.

List everything you plan to buy: greeting cards and postage; decorations; food and drink; travel; wrapping paper, gift bags, bows and tape; and, of course, gifts.

List everyone you plan to give to and the amount you plan to spend on each. Include teachers, doctors and coworkers, plus year-end tips for newspaper carriers, babysitters, housecleaners and others.

■ **Compare and modify.** Does your budget cover everything? Most people find their initial dollar amount is unrealistic. It's essential to modify the list or your budget so you don't overspend. If you can't add more money, shorten your list.

Implement a Shopping Strategy

Plan your route. Instead of just heading to the mall to see what you can find, map out what stores to visit, in order, and what to shop for at each. Do the same for online shopping.

Save on shipping by grouping online purchases to use free shipping. Savvy shoppers wait until Cyber Monday to check out.

Shop when convenient, not when you're stressed. There is no single easiest or best

time, so pick a time that's convenient and start as soon as your budget is set. Tackle the bulk of shopping as early as possible to lower stress levels. Avoid crowds by sticking to weekdays when most people are at work.

Keep a copy of your list. When you see the right gift at the right price, buy it, check it off and stop shopping for that person.

Go Online to Save Time, Money

Use smartphone apps to save as you shop, says Kendal Perez, a savings expert with CouponSherpa.com.

"Download our Coupon Sherpa app for instant access to in-store coupons. This will help you save because retailers are competing for your dollars," she said.

Or buy gift cards.

"You'll save whether you give them as gifts or use them to pay for gifts. Check Gift Card Granny, a comparison shopping site for discount gift cards," she said.

Another way to stretch your budget: use your credit card reward points to buy gifts or trade points for gift cards.

Use Cash Creatively

Don't shop with your credit card. Studies have found that people spend 15-20 percent more on purchases paid with a credit card. Use a debit card or cash instead.

Use large bills when using cash. Larger bills slow spending as people tend to hold onto large bills longer. Start out with a \$50 bill instead of ones, fives and tens.

Try the envelope system. Tuck the money you plan to spend on each category into a separate envelope.

Give Homemade Gifts

Give of your time, talents and meaningful shared experiences instead of purchased presents. Shovel a neighbor's snow. Take care of his yard. Offer babysitting services.

Make your own holiday cards. Cut holiday greeting card costs by sending electronic cards, many of which are free. Or create and print your own cards.

Save on wrapping paper by covering gifts in recycled comics pages, old maps, bus schedules and other novelty items.

With so many easy ways to stick to a budget, you're sure to have a happier holiday and worry less about January bills.



Step Forward to Leadership

Openings on NSEA, District Boards are Opportunities to Lead

As the start of a new year approaches, local association members and leaders might reassess their roles in the Association.

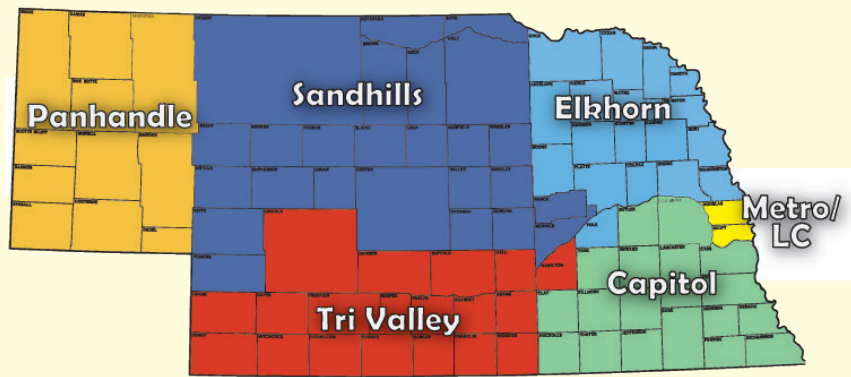
Is it time to step forward and consider a leadership role in their statewide association?

Beginning on Friday, Feb. 24, all NSEA members will be able to vote for candidates to fill nearly three dozen district leadership posts, as well as openings on the NSEA's Board of Directors. If elected, they will assume leadership roles in determining the Association's future.

The window for filing opens on Sunday, Jan. 1, and closes Sunday, Feb. 5. Voting will take place online, and will begin at 12:01 a.m. on Friday, Feb. 24, and will close at midnight on Saturday, March 11.

To file for Association office: Simply go to the NSEA website and click on the '2017 District Elections' link. Select your district, and then select the office you are interested in seeking. All persons seeking to file as a candidate will need their 10-digit NSEA membership identification number. Your number can be found on your NSEA Access membership card; above your name on the mailing label of *The Voice*, or on the email that delivers the digital editions of *The Voice*. Call NSEA if you have questions about the election: 1-800-742-0047.

As a step in the online filing process, all candidates will have an opportunity to provide a 50-word statement about their candidacy. Voters will be able to access that statement during balloting. It may be easiest for candidates to type the statement in a Word or other text document before beginning the process, and then paste the statement



THE VACANCIES

A district-by-district (see map) look at leadership opportunities within NSEA:

TRI-VALLEY

- District vice president;
- District secretary;
- Two seats (a two-year term and a three-year term) on the NSEA Board of Directors;
- One executive committee seat from the West subdistrict; two seats (a one-year term and a two-year term) from the East subdistrict; two seats (a one-year term and a two-year term) from the Central subdistrict.

ELKHORN

- District president;
- District vice president;
- One seat on the NSEA Board of Directors;
- Three seats on the district executive committee.

CAPITOL

- District president;
- District vice president;
- One seat on the NSEA Board of Directors;
- One seat on the district executive committee.

METRO

- District president;
- District vice president;
- Two seats on the NSEA Board of Directors;
- Five seats on the executive committee (all odd-numbered subdistricts).

PANHANDLE

- District president (one year);
- District treasurer;
- District secretary;
- Two seats on the district executive committee.

SANDHILLS

- District president;
- District vice president;
- One exec committee seat.

into the appropriate box during the filing process.

Note that NSEA's Minority Involvement Plan encourages minorities to seek Association office at all levels. The plan says "It shall be the goal of the Association to seek minority representation on governing and appointive bodies at least equal to the percentage of minority membership for that appropriate level."

If you do not have access to the Internet, mail your name, address, local association name and a 50-word statement to: NSEA Elections, 605 S. 14th St., Lincoln, NE 68508-2742. Be sure to state which office you are seeking.

In all cases, the deadline for filing for office is Sunday, Feb. 5. The NSEA website is at:

www.nsea.org

Higher Ed Academy Seeks Leaders

Members of the NSEA Higher Ed Academy will soon elect officers for the 2017-18 Association year.



Vacancies exist for the the vice presidency, secretary, higher education faculty representative, academic professional representative, and educational support professional representative. All are three-year terms.

Because Higher Ed members are now integrat-

ed into NSEA's six districts, depending on workplace, they will receive two e-mails — one alerting them to NSEA elections and one for Higher

Ed Academy elections.

Those interested in one of these positions must contact NSEA President Nancy Fulton by Feb. 5. She can be reached at 1-800-742-0047, or at:

nancy.fulton@nsea.org

Needed: Valid E-mail Address

Do you want to vote in the NSEA elections in 2017? All you need is your 10-digit NSEA identification number.

Voting opens at 12:01 a.m. Friday, Feb. 24. Prior to that date, members with valid e-mail addresses on file at NSEA will receive an e-mail detailing the process. The e-mail will include their unique 10-digit identification number.

NSEA members without a valid e-mail address on file will receive a postcard explaining the voting process. If you do not receive either a postcard or an e-mail from NSEA by Friday, Feb. 24, call NSEA at 1-800-742-0047.

Update your e-mail address by calling NSEA at 1-800-742-0047, or by filling the form at:

www.nsea.org/contact-us



From Building Blocks to Nation-Building

In virtually every pre-school and primary classroom, there is (or should be!!) a box of wooden blocks of various shapes for students to use as they imagine, create, build. These “building blocks” are an important part in student’s work of imagining and learning through play and object manipulation. Plain wooden blocks, Lincoln Logs, and parquetry blocks are children’s tools in not only building houses, stores and cities, but in building roads and tunnels and other connections that make communities. These first years of playing/learning about communities is too often downplayed (or ignored) by adults, who themselves struggle with the continual problems of community and nation-building.

Most of us readily understand nation-building as it applies to emerging or “new” nations that have undergone revolutionary change. The United States was a new nation after it broke away from Great Britain. It needed to create new laws, new governance institutions...new ways of doing business as Americans, not British colonists. That transition from colonies to an independent nation took courageous and far-sighted leaders...and actions...at every level. Those leaders today are celebrated as “Founding Fathers” and heroes of a successful 8-year war against what was considered at that time as one of the greatest military powers on earth. But that is not the only model of nation-building we have to celebrate and nourish.

The profound – and sobering – reality is that an independent, democratic society must attend to nation-building on a daily basis.

A Work in Progress

Thirteen generations of Americans have had to understand not only how to build houses and cities, but how to build and maintain connections within and between communities in a nation that must be continually repaired, re-worked, re-nourished and re-built. That is not the job of our long-dead Founding Fathers. It is the ongoing work of every generation if this nation is to continue.

Like many young students over many generations,

I was enthralled by the story of Daniel Boone as he led settlers through the Cumberland Gap to what he had created as one of the first English-speaking settlements west of the Appalachian Mountains. I loved the story of how Boone created this new settlement at virtually the same time that the American Revolution began. Much later, I discovered that creating (and maintaining) Fort Boonesborough was not quite as simple and straightforward as I had thought. No community is simple to maintain. Neither are nations.



At the original site of Fort Boonesborough: NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen at the 1907 DAR Monument to a community that started the same year as the American Revolution.

Identity Issues

In fact, for the United States, the problem of nation-building has been not only an initial challenge, it has been a continuing task at every time and in every community since the Revolutionary War.

Although we don’t often consider the battles for unity that occurred in the 1780s between the original colonies and the Free Republic of Franklin, the Vermont Republic, or the Southwest Territory, these were serious contests between regional and national identity.

Reminiscent of early regional identity issues in this country, the recent historical shift away from a white, protestant, straight, male dominated society to today’s racial, religious, gender, and lifestyle diversity demands an even greater attention to the community work before us.

Careful Preparation

It is critical for each community to carefully prepare every generation for the important work of tolerance, acceptance, the recognition of common goals, and the knowledge that everything fails if we cannot live and work together in peace. How well the pre-school and primary grade students learn to play creatively in building communities, beginning on their very first day in school, will be, in part, measured by the continual success of their community.

As adults we have an obligation to actively support and engage these young students, not just in building block play, but in building and developing skill in listening, talking, and working together. We have done fairly well so far, but it is a daily task. How well will we do tomorrow?

Election of Officers Deadlines are Near

Leadership Vacancies, Delegate Rosters will be Filled by Vote

The new year will bring big changes.

NSEA-Retired will hold elections in 2017 for the offices of president and vice president, as well as for members of the NSEA-Retired Board of Directors for the Capitol, Elkhorn and Sandhills Districts.

All the officers will be elected to three-year terms, beginning Aug. 15, 2017.

Also to be elected: delegates to 2017 NSEA Delegate Assembly, to be held in Lincoln on April 21-22; and delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly, to be held in Boston from June 30 to July 5. These delegates will serve a one year term.

Complete details on how to file for these elections will be posted in mid-January on the NSEA-Retired website at:

www.nsea.org/retired

Any NSEA-Retired member in good standing is eligible to seek election to one of these openings. Candidates for District Director, NSEA Delegate Assembly or NEA Representative Assembly must live in the NSEA District they wish to represent.

For Your Calendar

Two key dates for your 2017 calendar:

■ The NSEA-Retired Lobby Day is set for Tuesday, Feb. 7, starting at the NSEA Headquarters. With the 2017 Legislative session promising to be a blockbuster, all efforts to talk to senators will be appreciated.

■ The latest round of NSEA-Retired's Intergenerational Mentoring will be held Friday and Saturday, Feb. 24-25. For details on both, go to the website at:

nsea.org/retired

To register, contact Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047, or at:

rebecca.smith@nsea.org

Local Affiliates Listed

Each year, as a service to members, this space includes a directory of local organizations for retirees.

This information is provided as a way for members at the local level to plan for upcoming events, and to get in touch and keep in touch with leaders from the area.

The first series of local affiliates were included last month. The listing on this page completes the local affiliate series.

Elkhorn/Sandhills Education Association-Retired

The 27 members of the chapter have an ambitious schedule ahead. On Nov. 21, the

Aldrich Museum Opens for Retirees

No Admission Charge in January

As a thank-you for NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen's October 2016 column that referred to a book by Nebraska author Bess Streeter Aldrich, retired Nebraska teachers will get free admission to the Aldrich Museum in Elmwood during January.

Christiansen wrote about Miss Bishop, a novel about a teacher that was later turned into a movie, "Cheers for Miss Bishop."

Retired Elmwood-Murdock business education instructor Kurk Shrader wrote that "Mrs. Aldrich was a great supporter of public education, taught before marrying, and recognized the deep commitment and sacrifices of an aunt who taught for many decades. This was the premise of Miss Bishop."

As executive director of the Foundation, Shrader offered free admission for retired teachers during the month of January 2017. The museum, in the former home of Aldrich, is located in Elmwood, which is just north of Highway 34 about 20 miles east of Lincoln. The museum is open from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. each Saturday and Sunday.

annual holiday carry-in luncheon will be held at the ESU No. 8 building in Neligh, with a social activity to follow.

On Feb. 27, members will meet in West Point for a tour of Valmont. On June 19, a 10 a.m. tour of the Clarkson Museum, with lunch and a business meeting, is scheduled.

LuEtta Clark is president (402-329-6601). Other officers are Secretary LaRene Konopasek, 402-371-8164, lakono@yahoo.com; and Treasurer Pat Monson, 402-371-8803, pmonson@cablone.net.

Millard Education Association-Retired

Millard has a membership of 234, with annual dues of \$5 and a \$50 lifetime dues option. The chapter meets monthly, with programs varying from NSEA-R activities to eating out and field trips. The chapter has visited wineries, Offutt Air Force Base, taken trolley tours of Omaha and have volunteered at the food bank.

Officers are President Jim Rames, 402-895-2484, rames9@cox.net; Vice President Sid Rames, 402-895-2484, rames9@cox.net; and Treasurer Pat Brinkman.

Panhandle Education Association-Retired

President is Jadie W. Giorgis, 308-235-4453, gior65jw@emhargmail.com.

Other officers are Vice President Joann Dietz, 308-235-3028; Secretary EarlaDeen Walker, 308-235-4795; Treasurers Gordon and Shirley Whartman, 308-235-4573.

Platte Valley Education Association-Retired

This chapter is another with an ambitious meeting schedule. All meetings are set for 2 p.m., and include:

Feb. 1: a program on Pacha Soap, by Andrew and Abigail Vrbas, at the Hastings Heartland Bank south of Perkins.

May 3: A report on the Adams County Teen Court will be offered by Patti Hinrikus, also at the Hastings Heartland Bank.

President Mary Ann Niemoth will call the meetings to order. She can be reached at 402-463-7273 or mniemoth@gmail.com.

Other officers are Vice President Yvette Engelhaupt, 308-384-5398, yengelha@charter.net; Secretary LaVila VanBoening, 402-463-0051, lv61442@windstream.net; Treasurer Christy Hewitt, 308-384-3389, chewitt51@msn.com; and Card Person Marianne Fitzgibbon, 402-746-2536, mfitzgib@gpcom.net.

Central Panhandle Chapter NSEA-Retired

Twila Griffiths is president of the Central Panhandle Chapter, where dues are \$3. The chapter meets at 11 a.m. on the third Monday of the month at the Runza in Scottsbluff. The schedule includes Sen. John Stinner on Nov. 21; Veteran's Home Administrator Lonnie Starks on Jan. 16; Jim McDermott with a report on NSEA-Retired Lobby Day on Feb. 20; an AARP representative on March 20; development updates on April 17; and election of officers on May 15.

Other officers are Vice President Kent Harvey, 308-632-3410, kharvey@wncc.edu; Secretary/Treasurer Sandy Harrach, 308-635-3048, sharrach@embarqmail.com; and Courtesy Chairman Janet Gardner, 308-632-3169, jgardner@allophone.com.

—Rena Kelly, Editor
renaekelly@gmail.com

Three Spots Open on NSEA Leadership Team

Open in April DA Election: Executive Committee Seats

At NSEA's Delegate Assembly in Lincoln on April 21-22, delegates will elect members to fill three open slots on the Association's Executive Committee. Each elected candidate will serve a three-year term.

Open for election are the positions of president, vice president and one of NSEA's two seats on the National Education Association Board of Directors. Current President Nancy Fulton and NEA Director John Heineman are term limited and cannot seek re-election to those posts.

Any NSEA member in good standing is eligible to file for election to these positions. However, candidates and potential candidates should be aware that the 2017 Delegate Assembly will not be business as usual.

Events on Friday night, April 21, will be dedicated solely to a gala celebration of NSEA's 150th anniversary at Lincoln Station, in the city's Haymarket District. The semi-formal event will include delegates and invited dignitaries from around the state. No formal Delegate Assembly business will be conducted, and the usual practice of

nominating candidates during the Friday evening business will take place during the official opening session on Saturday morning, April 22, 2017.

No campaigning or campaign materials will be allowed at the gala. However, candidates may purchase, for a small fee, campaign ads of predetermined size in the handbook that will be distributed to delegates. Proceeds from the ads will go directly to the Children's Fund.

Candidates who wish to secure vendor tables at the Delegate Assembly site must make that request of the NSEA executive director no later than 45 days in advance of the April 22 event.

In addition, 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 the NSEA executive director not less than 45 days prior to April 22. The actual deadline for both those actions is 11:59 p.m. CST on Tuesday, March 7, 2017.

Candidates may also advertise in NSEA's monthly magazine, *The Voice*. For rates and deadlines, email:

al.koontz@nsea.org

The 2017 Delegate Assembly will be held at Lincoln's Marriott Cornhusker Hotel.

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

Falcone, Miller Honored

Earn Presidential Math, Science Citations; Graham Receives Environmental Award

Two NSEA members were among 213 U.S. teachers honored with the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. They received their awards in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 8. The recipients were:

■ **Amy Falcone**, a math teacher at **Westside's Hillside Elementary School**.

■ **Nicole Miller**, a science teacher at **Lakeview Jr-Sr High School**.

The award is given to outstanding K-12 science and mathematics teachers from across the country. Recipients earn a \$10,000 award from the National Science Foundation to be used at their discretion.

Shawn Graham, an **Omaha Education Association** member, received the 2015-16 Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators.

In August, Graham received a Presidential plaque and a cash award of \$2,500 to be used to further his professional development in environmental education. Additionally, his school will receive up to \$2,500.

Graham has taught 11th and 12th grade students for 13 years. His two main goals are to generate a deeper understanding of course topics by connecting his students with the environment, and to encourage students to pursue lifelong learning through post-secondary education.

Three years ago, Graham created the **Accelerate Job Shadowing/Internship** program, which identifies student interests and matches students with community partners in relevant fields. He has taken advantage of the partnerships in a number of projects. With the **Nebraska Games and Parks Hatchery**, students utilized a new hydroponic lab to assess ways to increase food production while maintaining a healthy ecosystem for **White Nile Tilapia**.

Dollar General Corporation representatives arrived at **Johnson County Central Elementary School** and **Johnson County Central High School** in Tecumseh in late October ready to start a revolution.

Company representatives carried a yellow and black box to each school with a special gift inside. When school leaders opened the box in front of students, they were each surprised to find a check for \$25,000.

The gift is part of Dollar General's **Reading Revolution** plan which provides schools with additional resources to purchase books, computers and other educational supplies to enhance their reading and literacy. Since 2013, the program has given more than \$2 million to more than 50 schools.

The Johnson County schools were chosen because of strong community contributions to the Dollar General Literacy Foun-

Dr. J.S. Johar

Dr. J.S. Johar, the retired dean of the division of math and science at Wayne State College, died Oct. 10 in Chesterfield, Mo. He was 81.

Johar retired from Wayne State after 32 years of service. He earned a bachelor of science degree in chemistry from the Government College Ludhiana in Punjab, India; a master's degree at Chandigarh, India; his PhD from the University of Florida in 1966; and post doctorate from the University of Idaho in 1967.

Johar was a longtime and active member of NSEA.

He is survived by his wife, Manjit; three sons, and their families.

tion, particularly at the Tecumseh store.

York Middle School science teacher **Tricia Hirschfeld** received the 2015-16 Golden Apple Award from the York News-Times at an all-staff breakfast in August. The award recognizes work from the previous academic year.

She was cited for setting high expectations for student behavior and academics.

The letter of nomination said "she cares about all students and uses her expertise to help each student reach his or her potential. Her background and degree in special education has been a wonderful asset to our team, to this committee and to the district."

Buy a Home, Get \$500 Gift!

Wells Fargo Offer is for Members Only

Those who say NSEA membership doesn't pay don't know what they are talking about!

NEA members and eligible family members who purchase or refinance a home through NEA's Home Financing Program will receive a \$500 Wells Fargo My Mortgage Gift Award after closing.

To be eligible, the applicant must submit a membership verification form with the loan application. You can download a printable, pre-filled verification form from the NEA Member Benefits website at:

neamb.com/finance/nea-wells-fargo-mortgage.htm

Be sure you are registered as an NSEA member, signed in, and then click the "Print Membership Form" button to download.

To learn more, call NEA Member Benefits at 1-800-632-4968. A knowledgeable Wells Fargo Home Mortgage consultant will work with you every step of the way!

NECC Recognized by Aspen Institute

College is Finalist for \$1 Million Prize

Northeast Community College in Norfolk is one of 10 finalists for the 2017 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence, the preeminent recognition of achievement and improvement in community colleges.

The \$1 million prize will be awarded in March at Washington, D.C.

It recognizes outstanding institutions selected from an original pool of more than 1,000 public community colleges. The Prize assesses community colleges' achievements in student learning; certificate and degree completion; employment and earnings for graduates; and access and success for minority and low-income students.

The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit:

www.aspeninstitute.org

Speaking of Education

"Learning is not compulsory....neither is survival."

— *W. Edwards Deming,
American engineer, professor, author
and lecturer
1900-1993*

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



Navigator Expertise: The negotiations team for the Plattsmouth Education Association was at NSEA Headquarters in Lincoln recently to take training on NSEA's Navigator program, which assists with comparability studies. From left are Dennis Beckmann, Tricia Day, Dee Franks and Larry Kress. State law now dictates the bargaining schedule for school districts, and the season opened Nov. 1.

Inclusion and the Buddy System

Angela Johnston, a fourth-grade teacher at Clairton Elementary School in Clairton, PA:

"I teach a self-contained class with full inclusion. This year we have all identified students in grade four in one room. There are 13 identified students in my classroom of 26 students. Within these identified students there are 10 identified as Learning Support and 3 as Gifted and Talented. The remaining 13 children are functioning at average or above average level. I do a number of things in order to keep students on track:

- I have assigned each identified student a buddy and manage my classroom on the buddy system. This works really well because it makes all students responsible for their own work.

- The buddies check up on each other, and my work is cut in half.

- We provide homework trackers within the school for each student, so my buddies make sure each one has his/her homework assignment before leaving the classroom for the day.

- During my silent reading period each day the buddies read to each other. OK, it's not exactly SILENT, but everyone is reading and it works really well.

"You will not believe the independence it has created for all students and how close these students have become. I have found I have time to chat with each team of buddies weekly and give praise. Self-esteem has risen tremendously and peer acceptance has increased. They have become protectors of each other."



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nea.org/tools/Works4Me.html