

THE

# VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ February 2015



“THIS KID IS A  
**TEACHER**”

*Future Educators Association Promotes a Career in Teaching*

## Upcoming Assignments

### Talk to Senators, Part I Tuesday, Feb. 3

■ **What:** NSEA-Retired members meet at NSEA on this date to talk to senators about issues ranging from achievement to teacher retirement!

■ **Details:** Turn to Page 23 for more information, or call Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047.

### Select Your Candidates

#### Monday, Feb. 16

■ **What:** Elections to fill vacancies at the NSEA district and state level will begin on this date.

■ **Details:** Voting takes place online. Turn to page 7 for details.

### Read Across is Near!

#### Monday, March 2

■ **What:** You have plenty of time to prepare a blowout celebration of Read Across America!

■ **Details:** See more on Page 5, and get tons of Seussian ideas at: [www.nea.org/grants/886.htm](http://www.nea.org/grants/886.htm)

### Talk to Senators, Part II

#### Tuesday, March 3

■ **What:** All NSEA members can reserve to talk to senators at a Legislative Dinner on this date.

■ **Details:** Turn to Page 14, or call Cathy Schapmann at 1-800-742-0047.

# Letters of Intent & You

## Certificated Employees Cannot be Required to Declare Employment Intentions Until March 15

Letters of intent distributed by school districts at this time of year are a serious matter and PK-12 educators need to be aware of their rights, says NSEA Director of Advocacy Trish Guinan.

On or after March 15 each year, Nebraska school districts are allowed to require certificated employees – teachers, counselors, speech pathologists, psychologists and others – to sign binding letters of intent and/or individual contracts. Those letters, in essence, signify whether the teacher intends to return for employment with that district for the following school year.

In recent years, however, teachers have been asked to declare their intentions earlier and earlier, according to Guinan. This year again, some school administrators distributed the letters in January, asking for responses by mid-month. In past years, some administrators have distributed letters as early as Dec. 1, with a response requested within 10 days.

“It continues to be a problem each year,” Guinan said. “But a school district cannot require teachers to make a commitment before March 15.”

On the other hand, failure to sign and return the letter by stated deadlines that fall on March 15, or later, is a serious threat to your employment.

Nebraska State Statute 79-829, which addresses permanent certificated employees and contracts, says, in part, “the certificated employee shall not be required to signify such acceptance prior to March 15 of each year.”

Guinan suggests that if administrators distribute such a letter or contract prior to March 15, and ask for its return prior to that date, that a local association representative fax a copy to Guinan or their assigned organizational specialist at the NSEA (1-402-475-2630). A scanned copy can also be emailed to Guinan at:

[trish.guinan@nsea.org](mailto:trish.guinan@nsea.org)

In the meantime, an appropriate response to the letter by teachers is “I don’t know yet” or “I’m not sure.”

If members receive such a letter on or after March 15, or asks for a return after that date, it is important to sign the letter and turn it in by the due date.

Questions? Call your NSEA organizational specialist, or Guinan, toll-free, at 1-800-742-0047.

*“..the certificated employee shall not be required to signify such acceptance prior to March 15 of each year.”*  
— **Nebraska State Statute 79-829**

## Cover Story:

Omaha South High’s Jack Bangert advises his school’s Future Educators Association, which has guided students Shayla Stevens, left, and Maria Munoz, center, toward a career in the education profession. For more, including details on the Nebraska Department of Education’s FEA contact, please turn to

# Page 8



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# From My Little Pony to Teaching



**NSEA President  
Nancy Fulton**

“  
...teaching  
mixes grueling  
hard work with  
wild successes  
and sometimes  
with keen  
disappointment.  
Yet there are  
good reasons  
why we must  
encourage  
those that we  
instinctively  
know would  
succeed as a  
teacher.”

What was the irresistible, undeniable force that pulled you into the teaching profession? What made you answer that call?

Ask your colleagues those questions, and answers will revolve around several common themes.

*“I love learning, and want to share that love and develop it in others.”*

Or, perhaps, *“I wanted to teach because I found that I love the interaction; I love helping kids grow academically and socially.”*

Common themes would emerge: helping others to grow, learn, discover the world and become contributing citizens.

In focus groups NSEA conducted with randomly selected young teachers last spring, their answers mirrored such themes. The educators interviewed all revealed a brightly burning passion for teaching. Most have a love for their students and most chose teaching because they wanted a life that mattered. They find great satisfaction in building relationships and observing those “light bulb” moments.

The future of our profession is bright, by the way, if our focus group participants are any gauge!

## Immersed in Education

Those young teachers have found their way into a profession that fits their passion. They were the few from that majority of elementary age kids who aspired to be teachers and then actually followed through to make teaching a career.

Count my daughter among that group. She loved her teachers, loved school and turned that love into a career. I freely admit that I may have fostered her love for teaching.

My son and daughter – like the children many of you are raising or have raised – found themselves immersed in education from an early age. My children were in my classroom frequently, or were around as I did schoolwork at home. Frequently, my daughter would “teach” her stable of My Little Ponies or my son’s He-Man action figures.

Eventually, my daughter was a peer tutor for her middle school and high school classmates, leading her father and I to predict that she would someday head off to a teacher prep program. Science and math was her interest in college and graduate school, but teaching was her lifeblood. Today,

rather than follow the science route into medicine or research, she teaches chemistry at a Wisconsin college – and is passionately in love with her job.

## Grueling Hard Work

My own school district let high school students serve as a classroom aide during study hall. While some just wanted a pass out of study hall, at least a few had a true interest in exploring the education profession. It was easy to sort out the potential teachers – those who loved working with other students. Many of my former student aides have made education their choice of professions.

In those student aide and other programs, I don’t know that we as educators ever do enough to trumpet the benefits of teaching, to encourage and nudge our best and brightest toward the head of the classroom. Yes, teaching mixes grueling hard work with wild successes and sometimes with keen disappointment. Yet there are good reasons why we must encourage those that we instinctively know would succeed as a teacher.

First, we want and need the best and brightest minds as teachers and industry leaders. Second, Nebraska teacher education programs tell us the number of students entering their programs are on the decline. Third, many of those who do enter the profession quickly depart for less-demanding and higher-paying professions.

## Light That Fire!

NSEA is committed to supporting the Future Educators Association, operated through the Nebraska Department of Education. FEA encourages high school students to investigate a career in teaching. Your Board of Directors has given \$5,000 each of the last three years to foster this program’s growth. I would urge you to consider forming an FEA chapter at your school, if you haven’t already. Find contact details for the FEA advisor on Page 9.

William Butler Yeats said, “Education is not the filling of the pail, but the lighting of the fire.” It is important that we share our passion for our profession and light that fire in the next generation.

You, as well as anyone, can identify which child teaching today to My Little Pony or He-Man figurines, will be tomorrow’s great teacher.

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

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

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# State Funding Cuts Push Tuition Higher

A report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) confirms what has long been suspected: as state governments pay less and less of the cost of state college and university expenses, tuition costs rise, and college becomes less affordable.

The report says that beginning in 2012, public colleges collected more in tuition dollars than they received from state funding. According to the report, tuition made up 25 percent of public college revenue, up from 17 percent in 2003. During those same years, however, state funding fell from 32 percent to 23 percent.

During that 10-year span, state funding for public colleges nationwide decreased from \$80 billion to \$71 billion. That reduction is even more dramatic when considering enrollment levels: the number of students enrolled in public colleges rose by 20 percent during the time of the study.

### Less Affordable

Median state funding per student declined 24 percent – from \$6,211 in fiscal year 2003, to \$4,695 in fiscal year 2012.

“And during that time, tuition prices actually rose by about 55 percent,” said Melissa Emrey-Arras, the GAO’s director for

Education, Workforce and Income Security.

Emrey-Arras said the bottom line is that college has become less affordable.

“If you look at a four-year public school, the median tuition and fees were less than \$5,000 in 2003, but by 2012 that price had gone up to over \$7,000 a year. So there’s been a real jump in the cost of tuition, and that’s taken a larger chunk out of family budgets,” she said.

Emrey-Arras said the federal government is working with states to improve affordability, and spent \$136 billion in the past year on loans, grants and work

city funds provided directly to students. In addition, \$158 million went to grant programs to states to improve affordability.

The report said nearly half of experts interviewed indicated modifications to federal student aid programs might improve affordability, but may also affect some students adversely.

Data reported by the Washington Post and attributed to the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland notes that in the 1970s, state government supplied nearly 75 percent of funding for public colleges and universities.

| STUDENT DEBT: NEBRASKA  |              |      |                      |      |
|---|--------------|------|----------------------|------|
| PUBLIC 4-YEAR INSTITUTIONS AND PRIVATE NON-PROFIT 4 YEAR INSTITUTIONS |              |      |                      |      |
|   | AVERAGE DEBT | RANK | PROPORTION WITH DEBT | RANK |
| STATE AVERAGE   | \$26,490     | 24   | 62%                  | 21   |
| WWW.PROJECTONSTUDENTDEBT.ORG  |              |      |                      |      |

## Get Ready to Read!

### Annual Read Across America Observance will be on March 2

Theodor Geisel – also known as Dr. Seuss – once said that “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”

Thankfully, teachers care quite a lot, and that is why the National Education Association created Read Across America 18 years ago.

The 18th observance of Read Across America — which celebrates the birthday of Dr. Seuss by encouraging reading! Is set for Monday, March 2. Is your classroom ready for the big day of reading?

Read Across America asks every child in every community to celebrate the love of reading. The program also supports NEA members, parents, caregivers, and children with the resources and activities they need to keep reading fun throughout the year.

The Seussian event frequently opens a full week of reading events and activities! In order to help your event be a grand success, NEA has put together a package of items and ideas online to help you celebrate. For instance:

- Get the latest info: Go to the website to find a wide variety of information, including how to create a reading event, activity ideas, downloadable information for parents, as well as the pledge to participate this year! Items and materials are updated frequently, so please check back often.

- Celebration day items: The NEA Read Across America



**Hats and Smiles:** NSEA President Nancy Fulton smiles as she passes out Cat in the Hat hats to children at a Read Across America event last year.

website provides the Read Across America song, oath and poem, as well as NEA’s Declaration of Reading Independence.

- Find the poster! Download and print the 2014 Read Across America Day Poster from the NEA Read Across America website.

- Invite the media: Why not let the world know about your celebration – and the importance of literacy? The NEA Read Across America website has a series of tips, ideas and sample news releases and letters to the editor you can use to get your project noticed by local newspaper, radio stations and television station reporters.

For more details, visit the website at:

[nea.org/readacross](http://nea.org/readacross)

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# Nickels Takes Office; McPherson Urged to Quit

## NSEA Board OK's Resolution Asking Resignation of State Board Member

A dust-up over the election of one new member of the State Board of Education faded quickly in January, while another new electee to that board created a maelstrom of controversy that drew calls from NSEA and others for his resignation.

Retired Grand Island teaching veteran Maureen Nickels was sworn into office on Jan. 8, after former Gov. Dave Heineman pushed for legal action to bar her from serving.

At a December meeting of the Nebraska Board of Canvassers, Heineman alleged – and State Treasurer Don Stenberg agreed – that the state constitution bars anyone involved in education from service on the State Board. Nickels is an organizational specialist for NSEA; the canvassing board, comprised of state constitutional officers, certifies election results.

At the meeting, Heineman and Stenberg pushed Secretary of State John Gale to deny Nickels a Certificate of Election, or barring that, to make certain Gale filed a legal challenge “by 4 p.m. on January 8” – shortly after Nickels would be sworn into office, and the same day Heineman left office.

On Dec. 17, Nickels' attorney Scott Norby asked the Lancaster County District Court to compel Gale to issue the certificate. Later that day, the court ordered Gale to do so, or explain why a certificate should not be issued. Within 30 minutes of the court's order, Gale issued the certificate — backdated to Dec. 3. Nickels was sworn in on Jan. 8 – right on time.

Meanwhile, Gov. Pete Ricketts, U.S. Sen. Ben Sasse, U.S. Sen. Deb Fisher, numerous other officials and at least five newspapers have called for the resignation of State Board member Pat



**The Oath:** Retired Grand Island teacher and NSEA Organizational Specialist Maureen Nickels is sworn into service by Secretary of State John Gale.

McPherson. The NSEA Board of Directors formally joined that call with unanimous passage of a resolution on Jan. 24.

After McPherson's election in November, it was discovered that the blog he founded and contributed to published racist slurs. His district includes a slice of central Omaha and rural Douglas County, including Waterloo, Valley and Bennington.

McPherson has denied authorship of the blog postings and has resisted calls to resign, which have come from other elected officials, including at least four colleagues on the state board. Dozens of pastors from the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance have also called for him to resign.

“We believe Pat McPherson is unfit to provide leadership as a Nebraska Board of Education member that sets educational policy for our state's public schools, students and teachers,” said NSEA President Nancy Fulton. “The blog illustrates that he does not have the ability to dispatch his duties on the Board fairly and effectively with the interest of each and every Nebraska child at heart.”

McPherson had not resigned at press time.

## Take Part!

### Vote in NSEA Leader Elections

You can play a part in determining the future of your NSEA by voting in district elections that begin soon.

All you need is your NSEA ID number and a valid e-mail address.



Voting opens at 12:01 a.m. Monday, Feb. 16. Prior to that date, members with valid e-mail addresses on file at NSEA will receive an e-mail detailing the voting and including the member's 10-digit ID number.

Members without a valid e-mail address on file will receive a postcard explaining the voting. If you do not receive a postcard or an e-mail by Feb. 16, call NSEA at 1-800-742-0047.

Update your e-mail address with NSEA by clicking on the icon, above, at:




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

At the website, you may view a list of candidates and a biography for those who have supplied such details.

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**About FEA:** During an interview last year, Omaha South High School teacher Jack Bangert explained the benefits of the Future Educators Association with the help of then-South High seniors Shayla Stevens, left, and Maria Munoz.

# ‘This Kid is a Teacher’

## Future Educators Association Promotes a Career in Teaching

It’s difficult to argue with Jack Bangert’s methodology as he assesses the talented students in his Omaha South High School classrooms.

“A lot of times, I think teachers look out over their classrooms and say ‘this kid is a doctor,’” said Bangert.

“I look out and say ‘this kid is a teacher.’”

Bangert and his Omaha South colleagues have identified plenty of future teachers in recent years. As the coordinator of the Education Academy program at Omaha South, he encourages the best and brightest of his charges to investigate and consider education as a profession.

In practice, he wishes all educators would make a habit of encouraging promising students to look at teaching as a career.

“Recruiting kids and imbuing in them why education is important may be the most important work I can do,” said Bangert.

Omaha South’s Education Academy – a chapter of the Nebraska Department of Education’s Future Educators Association program – has grown steadily, with about 25 involved this year. The work of the Academy is already showing results, said Bangert, with the first wave of program grads well into their college careers and on the way to the teaching profession.

“We’ve got two principals already looking at all those kids,” said Bangert.

That’s good news, says Nicole Coffey, State DECA Advisor

and interim director of the Future Educators Association (FEA) program for the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE).

“We have such a need for teachers; there is so much support to recruit and train teachers,” she said.

“The program has the potential to be as big, or bigger, than any of our other career student organizations,” Coffey said.



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### ‘Joys of Their Successes’

At Omaha South, students in their junior year can enroll in an Intro to Education class, a dual enrollment program with Metro Community College.

In the class, Bangert encourages his students to talk about what it means to be a teacher.

“We don’t spend a lot of time talking about lesson plans, grade books or the daily grind,” he said. “We do spend an inordinate amount of time talking about the importance of education; 90 percent of these kids’ parents have less than an eighth grade education.”

Students soon begin to understand “what I can do with education in terms of education, poverty and social justice,” said Bangert.

At the end of that semester, the student can say they want to be a teacher; they aren’t sure whether they want to be a teacher; or they aren’t interested in the profession.

If they fall into the first two categories, Bangert matches



them with an elementary school and a cooperating teacher for an hour each afternoon in their senior year.

“When they are in the classroom, it is unfiltered,” said Bangert. “They don’t know what will happen. They get to see the joys of their successes.”

Their experience looks good on a resume and also allows students to make a much better decision on their educational path.

Two Class of 2014 graduates credit South High’s Education Academy program with feeding their interest in teaching.

“I’ve wanted to be a teacher since I was six years old, and each year after that my goals became more specific,” said Shayla Stevens, who hopes to major in Spanish and elementary education.

Maria Munoz spent time working in a third grade classroom at Spring Lake Elementary School.

“I get to see how the teacher plans, how you conduct your classroom, how teachers put their needs aside,” she said.

Stevens also sees the program as helping out her community.

“In order to keep the Omaha South community growing, we have to leave, to grow and bring our knowledge back,” she said. “I’ll most likely come back here.”

Such talk enthuses Bangert.

“I encourage them to leave; it will make them better. I encourage them to travel, to study abroad,” he said. “The more experiences you have with people, the better you’ll be able to relate to kids in your class.”

### Finding a Niche

NDE’s Carol Ringenberg, who served as interim advisor through early 2014, noted that FEA is not a school-sanctioned activity like debate or yearbook. It is rather an inter-curriculum, in-the-classroom program.

“It has a curriculum that teachers can use in the classroom that dovetails into the FEA,” she said.

The curriculum, for instance, provides teaching methods that students can study and experience.

“One of the cool things about FEA is that it catches a lot of kids who haven’t found their niche,” she said. “A lot of these kids are the high ability kids who might be a little bit lost. In the FEA, they can find their passion, something they like.”

For his part, Bangert says the NDE assistance is invaluable. The NDE’s

# Learn More About FEA

## Pearson to Keynote State Conference Feb. 23

More than 200 high school students will attend the 2015 State Conference of Nebraska’s Future Educators Association on Feb. 23.

Scheduled at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, it will include professional development sessions, a keynote, election of officers, and competitions. Nicole Coffey, State DECA Advisor and interim state director of the FEA program is excited.

“It is run by amazing chapter advisors who want to see these kids do well and thrive,” said Coffey.

The keynoter is former Omaha South High teacher Ferial Pearson. In 2011, Pearson received the NEA Virginia Uribe Award for Creative Leadership in Human Rights.

She is the author of *The Secret Kindness Agents*, which tells how she was moved by the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy to wonder whether simple acts of kindness might change a life. Pearson and her students found that acts of kindness changed the lives of those they met – and their own lives as well. Pearson is now with the Department of Education faculty at UNO.

Professional development topics will include community awareness, the power of potential, keeping students engaged, and leadership development.

Competitive events include a job interview session; My FEA Moment, in which the participant writes about the moment in which they decided to pursue teaching; lesson planning and delivery; and an ethical dilemma session focused on problem solving.

The program opens at UNO’s Strauss Performing Arts Center at 8 a.m. Coffey expects it to conclude at about 4 p.m. To attend reach Coffey at 402-471-4803, or at:

[nicole.coffey@nebraska.gov](mailto:nicole.coffey@nebraska.gov)



Pearson

## Start an FEA Chapter at Your School

If you would like to consider starting a chapter of the Future Educators Association at your school building or district, talk to Nicole Coffey at the Nebraska Department of Education. She can be reached at 402-471-4803, or at:

[nicole.coffey@nebraska.gov](mailto:nicole.coffey@nebraska.gov)

## NSEA Helps FEA Gain Traction

There is renewed attention focused on the FEA, said Nicole Coffey, DECA Advisor and interim director of the FEA for the Nebraska Department of Education.

The U.S. Department of Education now recognizes FEA as a Career Technical Education Student Organization. That recognition allows limited federal dollars to be spent and nudged the FEA under the NDE umbrella.

Most Nebraska FEA chapters have operated in Omaha-area schools, fostered by support from Phi Delta Kappa and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. With federal dollars available, PDK ceded statewide organizational duties to the NDE. That was timely, says Coffey’s NDE counterpart, Carol Ringenberg.

“We have 26 chapters, and we’re hearing more about it. The chatter is out there,” said Ringenberg.

NDE houses the FEA in the Center for Student Leadership with other career student organizations like DECA, FBLA, FCCLA, FFA, HOSA and SkillsUSA.

The NSEA Board of Directors has allocated \$5,000 each of the last three years to support FEA. As with corporate sponsors of other career ed programs, NSEA’s dollars support student travel and other expenses at state and national conferences.

professional development for career education programs, he says, is “among the best I’ve done.”

“There is no doubt that if I call and say ‘I need this,’ I would have 100 percent support” from the NDE, he said.

The result is that more South High

students like Maria Munoz will consider a career in teaching.

“You realize that ‘I’m helping to create this learning environment,’” she said. “It’s really great to see how the students grow, educationally.”

“It’s pretty nice.”

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# DA Forecast: A Storm of Action!

## Storm Chaser Reed Timmer, NEA Leader on Agenda

Prepare for a storm of activity ahead! The 2015 edition of NSEA's Delegate Assembly promises to offer a full schedule of activities – and an unusual treat!

Among the keynote speakers will be Reed Timmer, former star of the Discovery Channel's program Storm Chasers. Timmer is on the schedule Saturday morning, following a Friday evening address by an as-yet-undisclosed member of the NEA Executive Committee.



**Timmer**

In between and around those addresses, NSEA members will conduct the Association's business by discussing, debating and voting on Bylaws proposals, as well as making updates to the Association's Resolutions, which act as the organization's guiding principles. Members will also set dues for the 2015-16 Association year.

### Stronger Together

The theme for the 2015 Assembly is 'A Storm of Action' which signifies the power your Association generates collectively when members are called upon to act.

Given the attacks on public schools and your Association in the Nebraska Legislature and at the federal level this year, that slogan is appropriate.

"While policymakers ought to be working toward solving the real-life issues that face teachers and students in the classroom, they promote corporate schools, sending public dollars to private schools, and defunding of your Association," said NSEA President Nancy Fulton. "At Delegate Assembly our members can discuss and plan for dealing with those issues."

## NSEA Supports Update of Special Ed Certificates

NSEA has testified on behalf of educators in favor of changes to Nebraska Department of Education regulations governing teaching certificate endorsements.

NSEA supported changes made in the seven-year review process of Rule 24 regulations for special education teachers. Under the revised rules, special education teachers will receive generalist certificates and then advance toward specialties such as behaviorally disordered, learning disabilities or deaf or hard of hearing.

In a letter to the Nebraska Department

of Education, NSEA Director of Instructional Advocacy Jay Sears said noted that NSEA members attended numerous input sessions with NDE support staff, and served on ad hoc committees that reviewed the proposed changes. Other NSEA members serving on the Nebraska Council of Teacher Education voted to recommend approval of the changes to the State Board of Education.

"Though this process of updating the various special education endorsements has taken several years, our members believe the endorsements

we recommend to the State Board and that are contained in this hearing draft, will serve the needs of our special population students," wrote Sears.

The State is expected to consider approval of the Rule 24 changes at the board's Feb. 6 meeting.

For details, check the Department of Education website and click on the 'Rules & Regulations' link along the left side of the home page, and then click on the 'Current Hearings Draft' on the following page. The NDE website is at:

[education.ne.gov](http://education.ne.gov)

### Delegate Assembly: The Details

NSEA's 154th Delegate Assembly is set for Lincoln on Friday evening and Saturday, April 24-25.

Because NSEA is your Association, you, as a dues-paying member, are eligible to attend as a delegate. It is simple to attain delegate status, and more than 300 members typically attend. Your local association president will soon receive details regarding eligibility. Here are some details:

**Who:** Any member in good standing may apply for election as a delegate.

**What:** Where member voices are best heard in a democratically-run format.

**Why:** Delegates set Association goals and dues, and update Bylaws and Resolutions (NSEA's guiding principles).

**Other:** Each local association is entitled to representation, based on one delegate per 50 members, or greater fraction thereof. Thus, any local with 26 members is eligible to select one or more delegates, based on membership. Locals with fewer than 50 members join in 'clusters' to select delegates.

**Cost:** NSEA pays half a Friday night shared hotel room for each delegate, a Saturday box lunch, and mileage.

Talk to your building rep, local president or your NSEA organizational specialist (1-800-742-0047) if you would like to serve.

This year's event will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Lincoln, beginning Friday, April 24, and continuing Saturday, April 25.

### Timmer: A Passion for Learning

Timmer starred in the Discovery Channel's Storm Chasers program, where he often drove the armored vehicle the Dominator – cameras rolling – into the core of a tornado. Aside from filming tornadoes from the inside, his goal is to create a 3D "X-Ray" of a tornado using his armored vehicles.

Timmer is known for his passion for learning and for teaching – he can often be found advocating for education about the dangers of extreme weather and disasters. He is a regular in university lecture halls and civic auditoriums.

More details will appear in the March and April editions of The Voice, with a full schedule planned for the April issue.

# Thank a Negotiator!

## They Came from:

Riverside  
 Imperial  
 St. Paul  
 McCook  
 Columbus  
 Minden  
 Gothenburg  
 Fairbury  
 Wayne  
 Norfolk  
 Boone Central  
 Tekamah-Herman  
 Louisville  
 Loup County  
 Perkins County  
 Axtell  
 Harvard  
**And Elsewhere!**

If your local association has a contract settlement for 2015-16 (and most have), thank your negotiators. They work hard at that task.

In particular, the negotiators on these pages — and others — took time over the past year to learn how to use NSEA's Navigator software, which provides accurate comparisons of salaries and benefits between school districts. That detailed information gives negotiators a clear view of each school district's total compensation compared to peer districts.

The bottom line: NSEA — and your local negotiating team — works for you!



**One-on-One:** NSEA Associate Staff for Collective Bargaining's Kathy Hutchinson, right, works with Lisa Hamling, Riverside Education Association, on the Navigator software workshop in Norfolk.



**North Platte Navigators:** Leaders from five local associations met in North Platte this past summer to learn about NSEA's Navigator software, with NSEA staff providing training. From left are Scott King and Diana Tate, Perkins County; Douglas Wadas, Loup County; Lynette Svenson, Callaway; Bryan Regier, Hyannis; and Kim Wilson and Becky Odens, Imperial. NSEA field staff members Matt Pittman, Randy Gordon and Ron Goldenstein assisted.



**At Hastings:** Learning about Navigator at Hastings were, from left, Lynn DeVries and Jami Long, Harvard; Tennille Gifford, Kearney; Don Kleinsasser, St. Paul; Vatisa Kuehn, Axtell; Jodi Sell, Arcadia; Kim Swedburg, Axtell; Tricia Buchanan, Kellie Seward and Stacey Keller, St. Paul; Catlin Bos and Robin Henrichs, McCook. Not pictured, Ben Welsch, Hastings.



**Learning the Ropes:** In Lincoln in July to learn about NSEA’s Navigator software were, seated, from left: Joann Paulsen and Dawn Gokie of Minden; and Lori Focher, Columbus. Standing, from left, are Julie Ratka, Minden; Kim Graff, Gothenburg; David Nielsen, Louisville; Ann Foster, Gothenburg; Brian Mahoney, Douglas County Youth Center; and Joni Ebel, Columbus.



**Steering with Navigator at Fremont:** These nine local leaders attended NSEA’s Navigator software workshop last summer at Fremont, where they learned to compare their district’s total compensation with that of peer school districts.

Seated from left are Tracia Blom, South Sioux City; Teresa Feick, Arlington; Sarah Smith and Jane Walford, Tekamah-Herman; and Sally Scott, Fairbury. Standing from left are Jeff Manka, Arlington; John Walford and Kevin Breedlove, Tekamah-Herman; and Mick Suey, Fairbury.



**Meeting at Norfolk:** NSEA leaders from eight local associations met for training on NSEA’s Navigator software at Norfolk. Seated, from left, are David Shrader, Verdigre; Rich Wergin and Kathy Hutchinson, NSEA; Lisa Hamling, Riverside; Jen Thomas and Lee Brogie, Wayne.

Standing, from left, are: Rick Spotanski, Stanton; Jason Schmidt, Battle Creek; Curtis Reese, Norfolk; Heather Lander, South Sioux City; Cassandra Joseph, South Sioux City; Leann Widhalm, Norfolk; Josi Johnson, Norfolk; Whitney Paulson, Chris Grundmayer and Lisa Carder, all of Boone Central; Duane Obermier, NSEA staff.



**Getting Acquainted:** Lincoln Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks met with constituents-to-be during a pre-session dinner for Lincoln-area senators. From left are Rita Bennett, Lincoln; NSEA Organizational Specialist Brian Mikkelsen; Michael Wylie and Bill Hayes, Lincoln; Pansing Brooks; NEA Director John Heineman, Sue and Perry Showers, all of Lincoln.

# Bill Would Muzzle Teacher Voices

## NSEA Favors Bills on Mentoring, Mental Health, Time to Teach

We have known this day was coming, and now it has arrived: a state senator has introduced legislation that poses a serious threat to the work that gives you a voice in policymaking, protects your employment rights, and assists you in improving your benefits and salary.



'15 Nebraska Legislature

LB288 is squarely aimed at silencing your voice by defunding your local and state education associations.

Currently, NSEA members can pay their Association dues through payroll deduction. LB288 would prohibit all Association dues deductions from your payroll.

Dist. 32's new state senator, Laura Ebke, Crete, introduced LB288. She represents Saline, Fillmore, Jefferson and Thayer counties, and a corner of Lancaster County.

Ebke will call LB288 a "payroll protection" bill. In truth, it is "paycheck deception" – a trumped up solution in search of a problem with no other purpose than to defund and hamper Association efforts to

influence pro-public school policymaking and the protections membership provides for your employment rights and benefits.

There are other anti-public schools proposals in the legislative hoppers. It's déjà vu for vouchers and for-profit schools, with new proposals on the agenda again this year. There are several bills that change tax policy and would gut the ability of school districts to fund needed programming.

### Time to Teach

Other, more positive proposals, both grand and productive, were introduced.

NSEA has worked with senators on bills regarding class size reduction, additional mental health services for students, curtailing the over-testing of students, funding a Master Teacher Program, teacher mentoring, and a coordinator for the Educator Effectiveness and educator Evaluation Program. They include:

- LB185 (Sen. Kate Bolz) would restore \$1 million in funding for the Master Teacher Program Act.
- LB239 (Sen. Ken Haar) would provide for a Nebraska Department of Education coordinator for the Educator Effectiveness and Educator Evaluation programs.
- LB274 (Sen. Matt Hansen) would appropriate \$2.5 million for mentor teacher stipends.
- LB435 (Sen. Tanya Cook) would adopt the Time to Teach and Time to Learn Act, and allocate \$15 million for class size reduction and \$10 million for instructional time grants for all school districts.
- LB438 (Sen. Adam Morfield) would establish an Education Trust Fund.
- A series of bills (LB108, LB240, LB443 and LB499) address mental health issues. LB443 (Bolz) would allow school districts flexibility.

### Stifling Teacher Voices

While Ebke says LB288 is a matter of principle – that school districts should not have to make such payroll adjustments – she makes no provisions for banning payroll deductions for house payments, YMCA memberships or any other such deductions.

"This bill is not about saving taxpayer dollars. It is about stifling the collective voice of public school teachers," said NSEA President Nancy Fulton. "Our members are in their classrooms all across the state, all day, working to educate our children, and they count on their Association to fight for education policies that are in the best interests of students and our public schools.

"We will oppose this bill

## Don't Let LB288 Silence You!!

With NSEA squarely in the bull's eye on LB288, and with other legislation needing your support, it is imperative that Nebraska teachers stay current and let senators know of their concerns about actions that affect public schools. Here's how:

- **NSEA text message alerts:** To sign up for the text messaging service, provide the requested information at this website: <http://www.nsea.org/text.htm>

You can also sign up by e-mailing your first and last name and a cell number to:

[kristi.capek@nsea.org](mailto:kristi.capek@nsea.org)

- **Telephone:** Call the NSEA toll-free at 1-800-742-0047. An experienced NSEA team watches the legislative process closely.

- **The Voice:** NSEA's monthly magazine keeps members on top of the latest legislative happenings.

- **E-Updates:** Receive NSEA's weekly Legislative Update email and/or become one of NSEA's cyberlobbyists To do so, e-mail Cathy Schapmann at:

[cathy.schapmann@nsea.org](mailto:cathy.schapmann@nsea.org)

every step of the way, and we will defeat this bill.”

### Public Dollars to For-Profit Schools

NSEA will also oppose any legislation that allows public tax dollars meant for public schools to be diverted to for-profit corporate schools or private schools.

LB26, by Omaha Sen. Bob Krist, gives tax credits for contributions to private school “scholarships.” LB26 would cap the amount of lost state revenue at \$10 million in 2016, but would allow that cap to grow moving forward. That sorely-needed revenue would be lost to public schools.

LB616 rehashes previous attempts to foist for-profit schools on Nebraska taxpayers under the guise of school choice. O’Neill-area Sen. Tyson Larson proposed LB616.

“This isn’t really about school choice,” said Fulton. “This is the proverbial ‘once a camel gets his nose in the tent, his body will soon follow’ ploy. LB616 is the first step toward transferring public money, accountability, transparency and education to the private sector. Vouchers take dollars from our public schools to fund private schools at taxpayer expense. Charters are corporate schools funded at taxpayer expense.”

Fulton said senators should instead invest in strategies that are known to help improve the success of all students, such as smaller class sizes, parental involvement and more learning and training opportunities for teachers.

# Taxes & Rankings

## No. 3? No. 25? It Depends on Who You Ask

There probably isn’t a taxpaying Nebraskan alive who thinks the state’s taxes are too low, but the fact is that Nebraska is in the middle of the pack among all states.

In his State of the State address, Gov. Pete Ricketts cited a WalletHub.com ranking calling Nebraska the third-highest taxed state in the nation, trailing only California and New York.

An Omaha World-Herald article pointed out that more traditional sources of tax rankings show Nebraska between 20th and 30th among all states.

WalletHub’s ranking applied each state’s taxes to a single filer living in a \$175,000 house, earning \$65,000 a year, with a new car. The Open Sky Institute’s Renee Fry noted that the average Nebraska single filer earns only \$28,000, and the average Nebraska dwelling is valued at \$116,000. Thus, the profile is far from average in Nebraska.

Other rankings are more reasonable. The well-respected Tax Foundation ranks Nebraska 25th in tax burden, but also shows the state making progress in tax relief. The Foundation’s October rankings moved Nebraska from 34th to 29th over the past year in “best tax climate.” The study cited tax reforms of the past two years, including a state income tax cut two years ago. Nebraska fares well in other rankings, as well:

■ In July 2014, Forbes Magazine ranked Lincoln No. 6 and Omaha No. 25 among the nation’s top 200 metro areas on cost of living, doing business, and job and economic growth.

■ In November 2014, using 36 subset ranking categories, Forbes ranked Nebraska as the seventh-best state to do business.

■ In July 2014, Pollina Corporate Real Estate listed Nebraska as No. 3 among “pro-business states.”

■ In October, Kiplinger’s ranked Omaha as No. 3 and Lincoln as No. 8 in the nation’s Top 10 Most Affordable Cities.



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# NSEA: A Collective Force

## Together, Association Members Stand Up for Your Best Interests

NSEA's For all it's Worth series continues with the delivery of quick and easy details about Association membership, its benefits and value.

Every month during the 2014-15 Association year, the For all it's Worth series provides easy-to-access information about your NSEA membership. Throughout the school year, you will receive monthly membership editions via email, highlighting three key areas: Membership Benefits, Working Conditions and Action & Advocacy.

### A Collective Force

Your association takes on many roles for your benefit, including negotiator and bargaining agent. As your number one ad-

vocate, your association is well-prepared to provide collective bargaining support and to carry out contract negotiations.

Whether it is for wages, benefits or working conditions, your membership connects you to an unrivaled negotiating and bargaining support system that works to ensure your and your students' best interests are always protected. These resources enable you to have a meaningful say in the workplace and in your profession. Your association provides the power, voice and strength in numbers to improve the well-being of all members.

As a member, your association:

- Helps you negotiate your contract and seeks the best agreement possible;
- Protects and fights off attempts to weaken your contract;
- Acts as your agent and works to provide bargaining team training, assistance and research.

Watch for news and updates from the For all it's Worth series in your email in-box, on Facebook and online at:

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



## EMAC, OEA Send Six to Minority Leadership Training

Getting the skills needed to be an effective leader is the key to the NEA Minority Leadership Training (MLT) Conference that happened late January in San Antonio. NSEA's Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee (EMAC) sent

four members and the Omaha Education Association sent two more members to prepare them to lead confidently and consciously by focusing on a student-centered agenda and social justice issues that impact their students, schools and communities.

Attending from Nebraska were Gina Ambroz, Hispanic, Grand Island; Yano Jones, Black, Omaha; Manny and Karla Andazola, both Hispanic, Lexington; Che Drummond, Black, Omaha; and Terrell Matthews, Black, Omaha.

The NEA's training curriculum supports the needs of Association members at all levels of leadership — "emerging" to "experienced" — appointed or elected to the highest local, state, and national leadership positions.

MLT provided members of NEA's four designated ethnic minority groups (American/Indian Alaska Native; Asian/Pacific Islander; Black; and Hispanic) the skills they need to be effective leaders in their schools, communities, and the Association.

For details on serving or attending such conferences, reach NSEA-EMAC

Chair Ed Ventura at 402.210.1655 or at: [venturaomaha@gmail.com](mailto:venturaomaha@gmail.com)



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Judy Montgomery, Assistant Director, Curriculum  
University of Nebraska High School, Lincoln

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Peggy Tilgner, Science Education Consultant  
Daykin



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# Retirees, SEAN: Consider InterGen12

## Program Matches College Student with Retiree for Mentoring

Every SEAN member – and every NSEA-Retired member, as well – should consider participating in the NSEA-Retired affiliate’s InterGenerational Mentoring Project.

The 12-year-old project pairs NSEA-Retired members with members of the Student Education Association of Nebraska – college students – during the student’s junior year in teacher education. The NSEA-Retired member acts as a mentor to the student member from their junior year through their senior student teaching semester and into their first year as a professional teacher, if desired.

The relationship between the mentor and the student is a non-judgmental, non-evaluative one. The mentor can help the prospective teacher get through the tough day-to-day moments and challenging situations that every student teacher and every first-year teacher will face. Through telephone, e-mail, and face-to-face conversations, the student knows he or she has an experienced mentor to turn to for an idea for a lesson, a hint for handling a discipline problem, or a trusting shoulder to lean on.

Sessions will be held at NSEA headquarters, and begin at



**Bonding:** Retired Lincoln teacher Sandi Belz Hansen and then-University of Nebraska-Kearney student Riley Moncrief became close through the InterGenerational Mentoring Project of the NSEA-Retired affiliate. Here, they spend time painting a masterpiece at the Corky Canvas. Said Moncrief: “Sandi is an amazing mentor and is such a blessing in my life! I’m so glad we have kept in contact.”

12:30 p.m. Friday, March 20. The program concludes on Saturday at 1:30 p.m. Housing is provided by NSEA, with a gas stipend, depending on location. For details, call Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047. To sign up, go to:

[bit.ly/IGMentor2015](http://bit.ly/IGMentor2015)

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The University is approved to offer work leading to teacher certification in elementary and secondary education by the Nebraska Department of Education, 888-285-2556.

# How to Manage Your Passwords

## Throw Out the Sticky Notes; These Programs are a Better Way

By Jeff Bertolucci

Security experts tell us to create long, complex passwords (think numerals and symbols) for every online account. But how are we supposed to remember all of those mind-numbing character strings?

Enter software that manages your passwords for you. These programs allow you to store your passwords in one file by creating one ultra-secure master password to serve as the portal to all your other user names and passwords. Here are three of our favorites.

■ **Dashlane.** This is an excellent choice for the password-challenged. Not only is it highly secure, but it's also a breeze to use. Dashlane is a free download for Windows and Mac PCs and most smart phones and tablets. Enter a master password (be sure to remember it because Dashlane doesn't save it) and the app automatically encrypts your passwords and other private information using military-grade AES-256 encryption, which has never been hacked. Dashlane imports new and existing passwords from your Web browser into its "vault"; the program can remember your shipping and credit card information, as well as auto-fill online checkout screens.

Dashlane also works within your Web browser to monitor your online activities. When you log in to your e-mail, for instance, Dashlane pops up and asks whether it should save your user name and password. Plus, it rates the strength of your existing passwords (and tells you if they should be changed), and it generates strong passwords for new sites that you join. If you signed up for two-step verification using Google Authenticator

(you need a code generated by an app in addition to your password), you may continue to use it.

Although Dashlane is a dandy password manager, the free version is limited to one device. If you'd like to use it on several gadgets, you'll need the premium edition (\$30 per year), which syncs passwords and backs up data across multiple devices.

■ **LastPass.** This is another top-notch free password manager. Like Dashlane, LastPass prompts you to create a master password (it, too, uses AES-256 encryption), integrates with the browser, detects when you log in to password-protected sites and asks whether you want it to remember log-in information. LastPass generates strong passwords for new sites and auto-fills credit card and shipping information. And LastPass has added the ability to rate the strength of existing passwords.

LastPass stores your data online, which lets you access your credit card numbers from any Web browser. (The downside: You may be uncomfortable with your sensitive personal data stored in the cloud.) The app supports Google Authenticator, but you'll need the premium version (\$1 a month) to use LastPass on a variety of smart phones and tablets, including Android, BlackBerry, iOS (Apple) and Windows Phone devices.

■ **Keeper.** If all you want is a free password manager and little more, Keeper is appealing. Like its competitors, the app uses bulletproof AES-256 encryption. The app supports two-step verification, but it doesn't rate the strength of your passwords. The free version works well on a single device, but you'll want Keeper Backup (\$10 per device per year) to sync among several PCs, tablets and phones.

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## Save With Dave: NEAMB Can Help Your Retirement Planning

You've planned for retirement, but do you have a long-term care plan to protect your children and your savings?

If due to illness or dementia, you need assistance with daily activities like bathing, dressing and eating, long-term care insurance pays for caregivers to come to your home to help.

By the time you turn 65 there is a 70 percent chance you'll need long-term care at some point. Such care is not covered by health insurance or Medicare.

You can help protect your independence and preserve your savings by getting NEA Long-Term Care coverage, which includes:

- Free long-term care needs assessment;
- Discounted group pricing;

■ Coverage to stay in your own home or a nursing home.

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## The False Promise of Charter Schools

The concept of “Charter Schools” is a hot political issue in most states. Nebraska is among the eight states that do not allow them. What are these schools and why should Nebraskans care whether charter schools operate in our state?

Although the great variation in charter schools in the other 42 states make them difficult to define, the simplest description is that these schools operate under a “charter” instead of normal school structure. In other words, charter schools are generally exempt from most school laws. For proponents of the charter concept, that is a huge selling point. For opponents of charters, the exemption from school laws means that their students will not have the protections or structures of public policy that were designed to provide successful experiences in publicly-funded schools. Both viewpoints have their adherents. What are the public policy issues?

The most fundamental question is what charter proponents want to do that they cannot do now. There can be little dispute that there is wide variation in the learning approaches in our schools. Schools across Nebraska have adopted unique and innovative approaches to the particular needs of their students and their communities. Some schools have non-traditional calendars; some Nebraska students only have a four-day school week.

Nebraska schools can use the strong involvement of teacher leaders in school curriculum or schedule design. Other innovative approaches involve the ‘school within a school’ approach, shifts from teacher-centered to student-centered classrooms, radically different approaches to parent and family involvement in their student’s schooling, and collaborative groupings of teachers to share expertise in the planning and delivery of great lessons in our classrooms.

### Solution Without a Problem

Several Nebraska schools currently have a theme-approach to integrated learning, so that the entire school is known for a particular focus. Examples include Global Studies, Mathematics, Technical Science, Dual Language, and Information Technology. The uniqueness of many schools even gives them their particular name: the Zoo Academy in the Papillion-La Vista Schools, Zoo Kindergarten at Bancroft Elementary in Omaha,

and the Arts and Humanities School in Lincoln. All of these examples (and many others) are not the result of exempting schools from school law, but are a result of the flexibility in school design and operation that current school law in Nebraska already allows.

Charter schools offer to fix a problem — using public funds — that does not exist in Nebraska.

### Danger Signals

In reality, solutions that charter schools offer are already to be found in Nebraska. The previously mentioned schools are examples of the balance between innovation and conservative protection of both public funds and students’ school experience. Radical solutions are sometimes necessary. But the word radical comes from the Latin word for “root.” Radical solutions are those that get to the fundamental “root” of a problem, not cause more than they solve.

The research on charter schools raises some clear danger signals. The scholarly research shows clear disadvantages for the minority community with charter schools, including a much higher attrition rate for minority students and, ironically, relatively increased segregation rates for both the charter schools and the regular community schools. In terms of student achievement, the current

research on charter school student performance reveals that charter schools tend to score below regular community schools.

### Avoid the Bandwagon

The question of charters has become a political question that is more about ideology than education. The research is clear on that. Unfortunately for many students across the nation, the passage of charter school laws has meant wins for politicians, rather than practical help for our students. Our state is wise to have avoided the “bandwagon” of charter schools. Talk with your local teachers, school administrators, and school board members. Support them in exploring and implementing local innovation that makes sense for local communities and the success of our children. But tell them that charter schools are not the answer.



**An Example of Nebraska School Innovation: NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen at the Lincoln Public Schools’ Arts and Humanities School building.**

## Time to Build on Legislative Success

### Coalition Involvement, Lobby Day on Tap

Following the success of the 2014 session of the Nebraska Legislature, NSEA-Retired continues to work with a coalition of organizations to develop new legislation that will make Nebraska even more “retiree friendly.” More information on specific legislation will be shared with those at the annual Lobby Day in Lincoln on Tuesday, Feb. 3.

In the meantime, if you have not yet signed up for Lobby Day – perhaps one of our most important days of the year – you are urged to do so by calling NSEA’s Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047, or sign up at the website at:

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

On the NSEA-Retired website, you will find links to begin lobbying, and following the bills being discussed in the Nebraska Legislature. In particular, will find specific guides to:

- Contacting your representatives;
- Becoming a cyber-lobbyist;
- Receiving NEA’s weekly email newsletter;
- Ten Golden Rules of Lobbying;
- The legislative process and;
- Visiting Capitol Hill.

Find those links by clicking on the NSEA-Retired link and then looking just below that link for ‘Legislative Action Center’ at the NSEA home page at:

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

### NSEA Retired Elections in March

It isn’t too late to place your name in contention for one of the seats up for election in March. The deadline for nominations is Friday, Feb. 6.

Voting will take place in March, with ballots mailed in late February or early March. Nominations are accepted at, and nominees are listed at, the NSEA-Retired website

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

Be sure to check this list of nominees and their bios, to help you make an informed decision on your vote for:

- NSEA-Retired Board District Directors (Metro);
- Delegate Assembly in Kearney (17 delegates); and
- Representative Assembly in Atlanta (5 delegates).

Ballots must be mailed back in the



**Quilted Quality: Gloria Boham displays a quilt that will be given away in a drawing to benefit the NSEA Children’s Fund.**

postage paid envelope you will receive before the March deadline. Questions? Call Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047.

### Quilt Tickets on Sale

A year ago, NSEA-Retired raised more than \$1,000 for the NSEA Children’s Fund with the raffle of a fine quilt made by Lorene Behrends, and a baby quilt made by Gloria Boham. For this year at least, the tradition continues with a baby blanket quilt donated by Gloria Boham, sister of NSEA-Retired Metro District Representative Walta Sue Dodd. Gloria has been creating baby blanket quilts for use in the annual raffle for NSEA-Retired for several years.

Raffle tickets are \$1 each or 6 for \$5, and are available at any NSEA-Retired event over the next few months, or by calling NSEA’s Rebecca Smith at 1-800-742-0047. The drawing for the quilt will take place at the July meeting of the NSEA Board of Directors.

### Spring Conference!

The NSEA-R Spring Conference will be held on April 23, 2015, at St. Benedicts Center near Schuyler.

### Volunteer at the International

The International, a world-class horse show jumping experience, is seeking retired educators to serve as volunteers during the April 9-11, 2015 event at the

CenturyLink Center in Omaha.

Riders with national and international experience will compete in this high-level event. The event includes a free Equine Educational Expo from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. with hands-on interactive opportunities designed to engage, entertain and educate.

Volunteers will lead school group tours through the Equine Educational Expo, which includes watching daytime jumping events. Children will be exposed to the sights, sounds, smells and even the touch of horses.

The commitment from volunteers is minimal. Volunteers will be expected to attend a one-hour orientation session in Omaha, sign up for at least one, two hour group tour shift, and purchase the International Volunteer shirt at a cost of \$25 which includes a voucher which can be exchanged for a ticket to either Friday or Saturday night’s competition. Volunteers must sign up by early March, with the orientation and a building tour planned for Saturday, March 21. There will be a makeup orientation session in early April.

For more details, visit the International website at [www.theinternationalomaha.com](http://www.theinternationalomaha.com), or to sign up, contact volunteer coordinators Holly Hackwith (402-575-7665) or Brad Pence (402-427-4116) by telephone or at:

[holly@corporateartco.com](mailto:holly@corporateartco.com)  
[wbpence@abbnebraska.com](mailto:wbpence@abbnebraska.com)

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

Vote for  
**Pat Etherton**



NSEA-Retired for:  
**Representative Assembly  
& Delegate Assembly**

# Christie Led NSEA in '70

## Was Retired Omaha South Teacher

Robert "Bob" Christie joined NSEA in his first year of teaching in 1949.

By the mid-1960s, he had been a president of NSEA District II, had served two terms on the NSEA Board of Directors, and was president of the Omaha Education Association. In 1970, he was elected president of NSEA.



**Christie**

Christie, who taught history at Omaha South High School for more than 30 years, died on Jan. 14. He was 90. If not a record, his 65-plus years of membership certainly

approaches a record for membership longevity.

A 1942 graduate of Omaha North High School, Christie was in the Signal Service during World War II, including service at Okinawa. Following three years of military service, Christie earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Omaha in 1949 and followed that with a master's degree from the university in 1953. He immediately signed on to teach at Omaha South, later also taught part-time at the University of Omaha.

Christie was a well-known figure at NSEA Delegate Assemblies, NEA Representative Assemblies and NSEA's Summer Leadership Conference.

His son, Robert, and wife, Wanda, preceded him in death. Two nieces and several cousins survive.



**Headed to the Gala: Bellevue Education Association and NSEA member Janis Elliott will be honored for teaching excellence in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 13.**

## Bellevue's Elliott Will be Honored at NEA Gala

### Teaching Excellence will be Recognized

Bellevue physics teacher and NSEA member Jan Elliott is among 39 public educators to be honored at the NEA Foundation's Salute to Excellence in Education Gala in Washington, D.C., on Feb. 13.

She will receive a 2015 California Casualty Award for Teaching Excellence.

"We give these awards annually to honor and promote excellence in education and to elevate the profession. Educators like these are critical to their students' academic success, and they deserve national recognition," said Harriet Sanford, President and CEO of the NEA Foundation.

The educators were nominated by their National Education Association state affiliates – Elliott received NSEA's Teaching Excellence Award in 2013. Each educator's school will also receive a \$650 award.

From the 39 state awardees, five finalists will receive \$10,000 cash awards. One finalist will be named the nation's top educator and receive an additional \$25,000. The NEA Foundation and the National Education Association jointly present the awards.

# NEA Grants to Members at Ralston, Shelton

## Will Support Improved Student Performance

NSEA members at Ralston and Shelton are among 42 sets of educators in 22 states who have just received word that they will receive grants from the NEA Foundation.

Daniel Boster, a language arts educator, and co-applicant, Darin Jenson, of Ralston High School have received a \$5,000 Learning & Leadership Grant to study and develop mindful writing pedagogy.

Jenette Meyer, a teacher at Shelton Elementary School, and co-applicant and para-educator Regan Miller, have received a \$5,000 Student Achievement Grant to encourage student-directed learning by allowing students to create lesson plans and present topics to peers.

"These grants clearly show how NSEA and NEA support educator-driven solutions that contribute to improved student performance,"

said Nancy Fulton, NSEA president.

At Ralston, Boster and Jenson will create a pedagogy that will prepare students for required assessments and help them develop the writing skills necessary for future employment. Boster and Jensen will share their findings with colleagues upon completing the study.

In Shelton, Miller and Meyer will organize students to research a topic, teach it to a group of peers or younger students, and administer quizzes and games for the audience to demonstrate their understanding.

The NEA Foundation awards its grants to educators three times a year. Application forms and a video with step-by-step instructions on how to apply can be found in the Grants to Educators section of the NEA Foundation website.



# Czech, Croatia Planned in '16

## Off the Beaten Path Tour Planned by Carper

A learning experience that will go off the beaten path will head to the Czech Republic and Croatia in mid-June, 2016.

Jan Carper will lead the tour, and her vision was to plan a unique trip. Travelers will see many traditional magnificent sights as well as have time to experience some of the best of Czech and Croatian culture, history, food and people.

The goal was to keep the cost as close to \$4,900 as possible, while maintaining a premium travel experience. That goal has been met, and there is a \$340 discount for those who register by Feb. 28. The cost includes all breakfasts (full European) and dinners, round-trip airfare, lodging, in-country transportation, entry fees to itinerary events, tour director services and guided sightseeing.

The tour departs from Omaha on June 15, 2016 and returns on June 27. In between, travelers will visit the Prague Castle and St. Vitus Cathedral at Prague; Zagreb; Cesky Krumlov; and Diocletian's Palace, Peristil Square and St. Dujce's Cathedral at Dubrovnik; among other sites.

To sign up, or for details, reach Jan Carper at 402-469-6579, or at:

[jcarper1@live.com](mailto:jcarper1@live.com)

## Speaking of Teaching

"We are not afraid to entrust the American people with unpleasant facts, foreign ideas, alien philosophies and competitive values. For a nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people."

— *President John F. Kennedy, (1917-1963)*

## A Germ-Free Classroom

From Lynn Cashell, a teacher at Springfield, PA.

"I keep a pump bottle of hand sanitizer next to every computer, so students may use it before they begin working. I also keep a bottle next to every box of tissues and remind the kids to use it after blowing their noses. I do encourage hand washing as well, but the convenience of the sanitizer works well.

"While our housekeeping staff wipes down the desks weekly, I hand out Lysol or Clorox wipes every Friday, so the kids can clean their desks. They actually love it and are

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



**Cash available: Members of the Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) who will soon enter a student teaching semester, take note: The NSEA-Retired affiliate has available three \$1,000 scholarships for use during your student teaching semester. Pictured are two of last year's recipients and NSEA-Retired Vice President Tom Black. From left are Rae Carbaugh, Peru State College; Black; and Brenna Wragge, University of Nebraska at Omaha.**

**Learn more at [www.nsea.org/SEAN](http://www.nsea.org/SEAN), or contact Tamra Mick at 1-800-742-0047 or via e-mail at:**

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

**The deadline for application is March 1.**



always surprised at how dirty they become. The wipes are conveniently located under my sink, so kids often take it upon themselves to do some cleaning.

"One thing I do to protect myself is to always use my own pen or pencil when revising and editing with my students. Those of you who teach elementary school know just where your students' pencils — not mention their little hands — usually end up!"

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