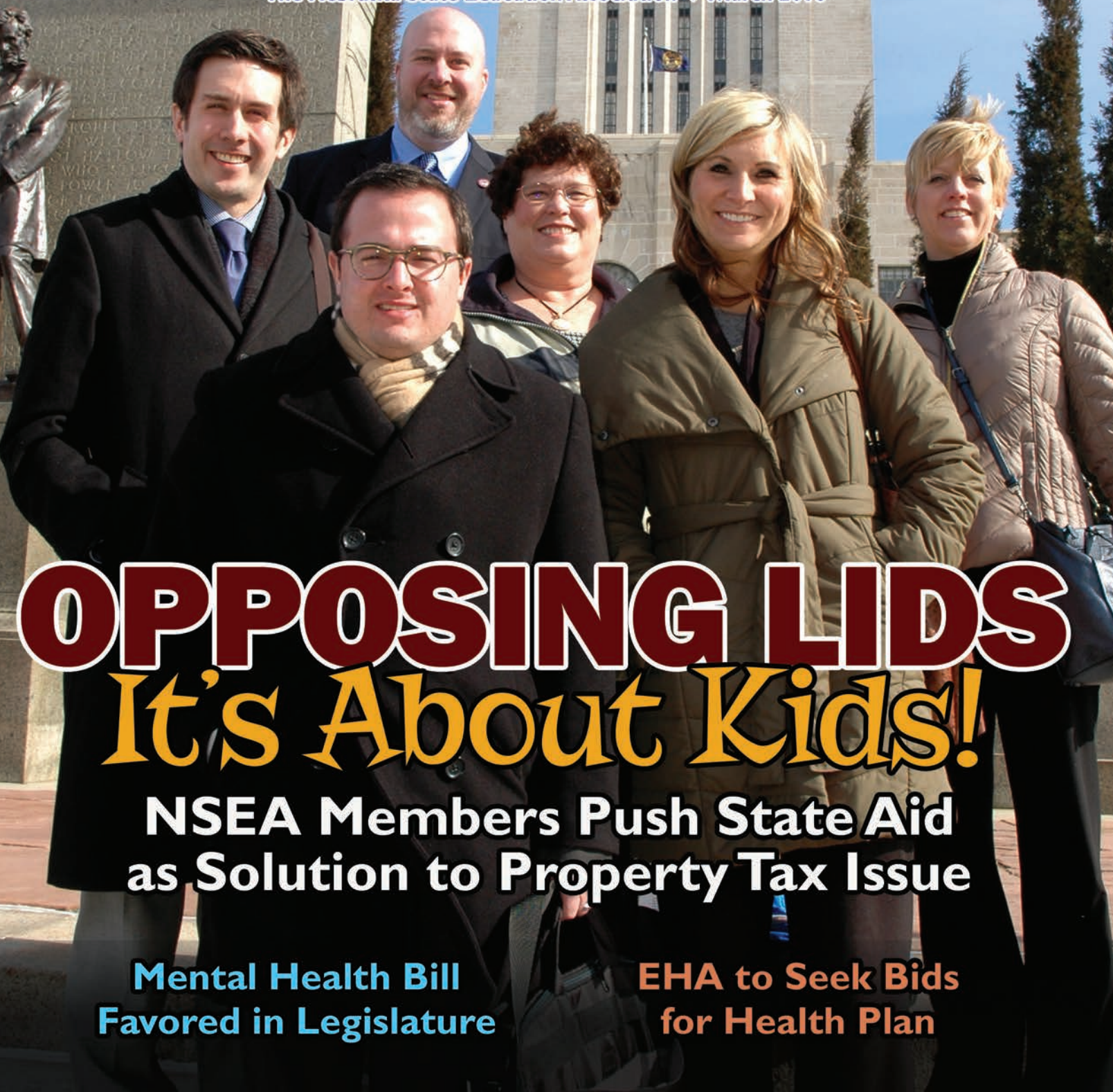


# THE VOICE

The Nebraska State Education Association ❖ March 2016



## OPPOSING LIDS It's About Kids!

**NSEA Members Push State Aid  
as Solution to Property Tax Issue**

**Mental Health Bill  
Favored in Legislature**

**EHA to Seek Bids  
for Health Plan**

## Upcoming Assignments

### Kicking off 150!

**April 15-16**

■ **What:** There is plenty of time to join in as the celebration of NSEA's 150th anniversary opens at Delegate Assembly 2016, set for the Embassy Suites in Lincoln. NSEA was founded in 1867 in Brownville.

■ **Details:** Delegate Assembly will be held in Lincoln on April 15-16. Learn about becoming a delegate on Page 11.

### Election Ahead

**May 10**

■ **What:** Yes, the Primary Election in Nebraska is a little more than eight weeks away. Candidates have filed for a variety of offices, and bipartisan teams of NSEA members will soon be interviewing and recommending candidates for election.

■ **Details:** If you aren't registered, you have until 6 p.m. Friday, April 29, at your county election office. Watch for NSEA-recommended candidates in the May edition of *The Voice*.

### Learn to Lead!

**July 11-14**

■ **What:** The time is now to start declaring your interest in NSEA's 29th Leadership Institute.

■ **Details:** Emerging leaders at the local or state level are encouraged to attend this expense-paid experience at NSEA Headquarters in Lincoln. Learn more in this edition on page 17.

# Child in Need? Use the Children's Fund

## NSEA Fund Aids Kids in Need of Assistance

Several years ago, when a tornado struck in the vicinity of a rural Nebraska community, the twister not only injured the three children in a young family, it also destroyed their home and carried off most of their clothing and belongings.

An NSEA member at the community school made the right call, and reached out to the NSEA Children's Fund. The response was quick: a voucher for clothing was sent, and the family got the basic necessities from a local big box store in short order.

When they were able, the teacher took the children shopping for clothes, and let NSEA know how very grateful the children were, and how the experience eased some of the struggles the family was experiencing at the time.

Such a testimonial explains how the Children's Fund can make a difference in a child's life.

Every NSEA member is aware of children who face such struggles. NSEA members see children who are under-dressed in cold weather; students who eat well only when school is in session;

and students who can't see the front of the room clearly because they receive no regular vision care.

Teachers have frequently been known to spend their own hard-earned dollars to help these children. But a teacher can't assist every child encountered during the school day, much less during the school year. And that is why NSEA created the Children's Fund.

Since 1994, donations to the Children's Fund have provided hundreds of thousands of dollars to help children in need. In just the past two years, the Children's Fund has provided around \$120,000 in relief to Nebraska public school students.

Contributions to the NSEA Children's Fund come from teachers and businesses across the state. Contributions are tax deductible — and it's important to note that every penny contributed goes to help children. NSEA picks up all the administrative expenses.

For teachers to receive funding to help a child, there is no red tape, no form to fill out. Simply contact the NSEA at 800-742-0047 and ask for Sally Bodtke. Or e-mail her at:

[sally.bodtke@nsea.org](mailto:sally.bodtke@nsea.org)



## Cover Story:

When it comes to lobbying the Legislature, there is no more effective voice than that of a teacher. Among those testifying in February were, clockwise from front, Joe Wanning, South Sioux City; Tim Royers and Paul Schulte, Millard; and Suzanne Dailey, Joan Manley and Danell Simons, South Sioux City. For more details, turn to

# Page 9

# NSEA THE VOICE

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Volume 69, No. 7  
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.



# Detroit, Here We Come



**NSEA President  
Nancy Fulton**

“  
Years ago,  
Nebraska relied  
on the ‘three-  
legged stool’  
model for taxes  
— a roughly  
equal share of  
revenue came  
from property  
taxes, income  
taxes and sales  
taxes. That stool  
is no longer  
evenly balanced.”

The condition of the public school system in Detroit is well known.

Photographs of buckled and damaged gymnasium floors, falling ceilings, mold and mildew have flooded the Internet. Exposed wires hang from openings left by missing ceiling tiles. Class size can reach 45 or even 50 students. There is a persistent teacher shortage, more budget cuts were imposed in January, and years of state control has yet to lift the system from a morass of debt.

Can any child learn in these conditions? Can teachers teach in such conditions? Do we in Nebraska aspire to be like Detroit?

### Losses in Elm Creek, York

Our public school system may soon be headed on the road to a Detroit-like status if policymakers are unable to grasp the obvious and solve the property tax crisis. The crisis, of course, is our collective overreliance on property taxes. The clear and obvious solution is to boost aid from the state to support K-12 schools.

Sadly, however, proposals to enhance state aid are non-existent. Already starved from the top – Nebraska ranks 49th in top-down state aid to K-12 schools – policymakers now look to starve schools from the bottom up by imposing even tighter budget restrictions on school districts and other local governments that have had budgets battered and beaten over the past 10 years.

A news clipping that crossed my desk last week indicated that state aid to the Elm Creek public schools fell from \$1.31 million 10 years ago to \$46,000 this year. York received \$3.7 million in 2008-09 and is projected to receive \$560,000 next year.

Both might be property-rich districts, with rising property values, but you see the issue. Years ago, Nebraska relied on the “three-legged stool” model for taxes – a roughly equal share of revenue came from property taxes, income taxes and sales taxes. That stool is no longer evenly balanced.

### President

Some policymakers claim that school district spending is uncontrolled, that public schools are failing. That bogus propaganda is part of an organized drumbeat to encourage implementation of, and funding for, charter schools and vouchers.

As has been widely reported, Nebraska school districts had an average annual spending increase of 3.5 percent over the past decade – far less than the annual hikes in the state budget for that period.

That budget growth is reasonable, particularly when you consider inflation and the burgeoning growth in student numbers.

Nebraska Department of Education figures tell us the pre-K-12 student population in Nebraska was at 284,912 in 2000-01. By this year, the population was 315,542 – an additional 30,630 students. More than 3,200 students were added in the last year alone.

Consider the needs of educating these additional 30,630 students. Collectively they would make up the third-largest school district in Nebraska. If you put them in classrooms of 22 students each, that is 1,392 new classrooms and teachers, plus support staff, computers and other materials.

Every Nebraska lawmaker campaigned to “grow Nebraska.” With such growth, comes cost.

### President

Yet some policymakers embrace cuts and lids.

Scottsbluff Star-Herald Publisher Greg Awtry offered a well-informed analysis of the situation. He reminded us that in 2013, senators undertook a hard look at the state’s tax system through a special Tax Modernization Committee. The committee’s study, said Awtry, referred to an even-more exhaustive 1987 look at the state’s tax system known as the Syracuse Study. The Tax Modernization Committee report said this:

“The main focus of the Syracuse study was Nebraska’s higher than average use of property tax in its tax system. Syracuse authors recommended reducing the role of property taxes in financing government services. The main policy they identified was an increase in state aid to local governments.”

In addition, you’ll recall that as recently as 2006 Nebraskans went to the polls and defeated a statewide plan to impose lids that would negatively affect education. We hope Nebraska senators will do the same.

Finally in honor of my favorite author, Dr. Seuss, writing in *The Lorax*, I offer this quote: “Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better, it’s not.”

Otherwise, Detroit, here we come!

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



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

Beatrice.....Page 23	Belleuve .....Page 18	Lincoln .....Page 5, 8, 10, 18	Ralston .....Page 18
	College of St. Mary .....Page 14	Millard .....Page 9	Scottsbluff .....Page 14
	Douglas County West.....Page 18	Omaha.....Page 14, 18, 22	South Sioux City .....Page 9
	Douglas County Youth Center.....Page 17	Palmer .....Page 17	Wayne State College.....Page 14
	Hastings .....Page 22	Peru State College.....Page 14	

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# Ravitch to Nebraska: 'Stay Independent'

## Former Bush Appointee Says Charters are Based on False Promises

Diane Ravitch is a well-respected educational leader in the U.S., and the 2010 NEA Friend of Education.

The writer of a regular blog, Ravitch recently aimed her keyboard at Nebraska, and urged citizens to push back at efforts by special interests to install charter schools.

She was Assistant Secretary of Education under Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton. She later was a member of the National Assessment Governing Board, which supervises the National Assessment of Educational Progress. She is a co-founder of The Network for Public Education, dedicated to fighting against corporate-led educational reforms. One of her January blog posts was entitled "Nebraska: Say NO to Charters, Again."

This is what Ravitch wrote:

"Nebraska is a remarkable state. It is



Ravitch

one of the few states in the nation that has not authorized charter schools. All of its publicly funded schools are public schools. Yet now there is a renewed push by far-right extremists to introduce charter legislation. This is a terrible idea.

"Charters are based on false promises. They do not 'perform' better than public schools.

"Charters divide communities and erode public support for public education.

"Nebraska doesn't need charters. It is one of the top-performing states in the nation on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. On the latest NAEP, Nebraska came in 9th in the nation in fourth grade math, 12th in the nation in eighth grade math, and 11th in the nation in reading in both 4th and 8th grades. Nebraska had higher scores on NAEP than all but one of the 18 states that won Race to the Top funding (Massachusetts).

"The low-performing schools in Nebraska are the schools with the poorest children. Please, Nebraskans, direct your reforms at root causes and do not destroy your state's effective public schools.

"Don't be lemmings. Stay independent from the crowd that is rushing to privatize and destroy your treasured public schools."

# Back to the Drawing Board in Kansas

## Court to Lawmakers: Funding Plan Unfair

A February ruling by the Kansas Supreme Court ordered Gov. Sam Brownback and the Legislature to fix state funding for public schools.

The court ruled a controversial block grant funding plan unconstitutional, and ordered lawmakers to develop a new plan or risk closure of Kansas public schools.

The ruling said "the Legislature's chosen path during the 2016 session will ultimately determine whether Kansas students will be treated fairly and the schoolhouse doors will be open to them in August for the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year."

The court wrote that, if lawmakers do not act, "no constitutionally valid school finance system exists through which funds for fiscal year 2017 can be lawfully raised, distributed or spent."

Brownback blamed the ruling on "an activist court." However, deep income

tax cuts pushed by Brownback resulted in fewer state dollars last year, and the replacement block grant program did not provide adequate funding. Several Kansas school districts closed early last spring, citing a lack of funding.

Kansas-NEA President Mark Farr said the ruling supported the widely-held notion that the block grant program would not meet constitutional muster.

"In a courageous, well-reasoned opinion, the Supreme Court of Kansas has once again ruled that the state legislature is not meeting its constitutional obligation to Kansas public schools," he said.

"Kansas educators have been working harder than ever to deal with the realities of irresponsible tax cuts, the corresponding revenue decline and the increase in need these policies have produced.

"On behalf of the educators of Kansas, I call upon the legislature to end the partisan gamesmanship and to fulfill its obligation to the kids of Kansas without reservation or retribution."

# Former TOY Seeks to Join State Board

## Koch Johns Taught at Cozad, Lincoln

Nebraska 2006 Teacher of the Year Patsy Koch Johns has filed for election to the State Board of Education to represent District 1, which includes two-thirds of Lincoln and Lancaster County.

Incumbent Lillie Larsen will not seek re-election.

Koch Johns retired in 2012 and said she was encouraged to seek election.

"My children received an excellent education from Nebraska public schools and I hope my grandchildren have these same opportunities," she said.

Nebraskans must work to close the achievement gap, which is widened by poverty.

"Too many Nebraska children live in poverty, which dramatically affects their ability to come to school ready to learn and thrive," she said. "We must work to deliver student support in a comprehensive, systematic approach to each and every student in a school if we are to close the gap."

She will also continue the increased focus on quality early childhood education.

"The research is clear: Quality early childhood education pays off in terms of long-term student performance, a reduced need for remediation, and decreased dropouts," said Koch Johns. "This is an important and wise investment for children."

An International Baccalaureate-trained theater teacher, she believes that parents and teachers working together offer the best opportunity to identify individual strengths and create situations that allow growth for students.

She was the first in her family to pursue higher education, attending Kearney State College and graduating with a degree in education and majors in theater, English and speech. She earned a master's degree in theater at the University of Arkansas, while teaching acting and also working in the psychology department.

Koch Johns taught at Georgia's Paine College and was in charge of a program for students entering college with insufficient reading, writing and speaking skills. She taught in Missouri and at Cozad before teaching at Lincoln High School, where she chaired the English Department.

She is president of Nebraskans for the Arts, coaches at Lincoln Southwest High School, works as a TEDx Lincoln Youth coach, and serves on the board of the Angels Theatre Company and the Lincoln Theatre Alliance.



Koch Johns



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# EHA Will Seek Competitive Bids

## Looking to 2017-18 School Year

The health insurance plan used by nearly every Nebraska educator will go through a competitive bidding process for the plan year that starts on Sept. 1, 2017.

The Educators Health Alliance (EHA) Board of Directors, which manages the plan, in February approved a resolution for "...the issuance of a Request for Proposal (RFP) to determine the insurance company for the EHA Plan and to direct our consultant to proceed immediately in preparation for a Sept. 1, 2017, coverage effective date."

In addition, EHA consultant Kevin Dolsky, of Actuarial and Health Care Solutions, will engage a team of consultants and actuaries from the nationally recognized firm Buck Consultants. That team will manage the issuance, evaluation and analytics associated with the RFP.

It is anticipated the request of Notice of Intent to Bid and the RFP details will be released to potential bidders in March 2016.

This process is one more step in the EHA board's efforts to keep costs low, and maintain long-term stability. Not only does the EHA



Educators  
Health  
Alliance

board seeks bids on the statewide plan on a regular basis, the board also constantly monitors the plan to ensure it offers competitive rates and operates in an efficient and healthy manner.

NSEA Associate Executive Director Neal Clayburn chairs the EHA Board of Directors.

"Ours is a unique plan – there isn't another like it in the country," said Clayburn. "Our unique, statewide approach gives our members much more leverage when it comes to the bidding process."

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska is the current contract holder.

The EHA plan's insurance coverage includes more than 80,000 education employees, early retirees and their dependents in more than 400 school groups, including 241 of Nebraska's 245 K-12 school districts.

NSEA members instigated the formation of the statewide health care network more than 45 years ago. The 12-member EHA Board of Directors now manages the plan. Board members represent the NSEA, the Nebraska Association of School Boards and the Nebraska Council of School Administrators. As the founding organization, NSEA holds six seats on the board.

# Blue Cross Offers Free ID Protection Services

For more than 75 years, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska has worked to protect the health and information of the health care plan subscribers.

For nearly 50 years, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska has served Nebraska teachers through a statewide health insurance plan assembled by NSEA.

Now, as part of a continued commitment to plan subscribers, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska has teamed with AllClear ID to offer two additional levels of protection: identity repair and credit monitoring services.

Health care plan participants and eligible family members will have automatic access to AllClear Secure identity repair, and have the opportunity to enroll in AllClear Pro credit monitoring – all at no cost. Services will be available to the subscriber and covered family members for as long as the subscriber remains covered under a Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska health plan.

If you experience identity theft, a dedicated investigator from AllClear ID will act as your guide and advocate from start to finish; will initiate the dispute process; and will ensure your identity returns to its pre-fraud state – all at no cost. Access to identity repair is automatic; meaning, no enrollment is needed.

AllClear Pro credit monitoring is just as simple. Credit monitoring offers additional layers that specifically monitors new credit accounts opened in your name. When this happens, AllClear ID sends you alerts so you stay informed of your credit activity. Although this service is also free, you must enroll, as you will need to provide AllClear ID with personal information, such as your

Social Security number.

AllClear ID is recognized for its expertise, partnership and innovative solutions. AllClear ID has a 97 percent customer satisfaction rating and 20 international awards.

If you have any questions about these

identity repair or credit monitoring services, please call the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska Member Services department at the number shown on the back of your Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska member ID card.

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# Support for Mental Health

## Mosier: All Can Learn When Needs are Met

Three years ago, Lincoln teacher Nancy Mosier started the school year with 20 “brand new, eager and nervous kindergartners.”

Among them was a child with developmental delays. For short periods each day, the child worked with a special education teacher. But mainstreamed alongside her peers, she exhibited disruptive behaviors that took more time than Mosier could devote to one child.

“She had wonderfully supportive parents, and I had great teammates to collaborate with that helped me along the way,” Mosier told the Nebraska Legislature’s Appropriations Committee in February. “But it wasn’t enough.”

Two months into the school year Mosier was able to get para-educator support for the child. The para worked with Mosier and the special education teacher, and the child began to soar, emotionally and academically.

“The other side effect of proper support for her was that I was able to give the rest of my children my best, uninterrupted instruction, and the grades of many of those students rose right along with hers,” said Mosier.

Meeting student mental and behavioral health needs benefits all, Mosier said, speaking in support of LB838, offered by Lincoln Sen. Kate Bolz. LB838 allocates funds for a Department of Education specialist to provide technical assistance on behavioral and mental health needs to K-12 schools. The aid would include development of an inventory of existing learning supports for students and identification of needed services, among other items. NSEA backs LB838 and testified in favor of passage.

But Mosier’s testimony carried the day.

The number of children with mental and behavioral needs is growing, and they require more support than she can provide.

“It’s overwhelming,” she told senators.

“My instructional time is being eaten up by very disruptive and unsafe student behaviors. I’ve been showing up earlier and staying later to do lesson planning and preparing for normal instruction because the time I used to spend planning and preparing has now been devoted to providing some pretty intense support for kids with some pretty high needs,” said Mosier.

All kids can succeed with the proper, research-based support LB838 offers, she said.

“I would like to ask for your support on LB838 because Nebraska kids are worth it,” she said.



**Bolz**

“My instructional time is being eaten up by very disruptive and unsafe student behaviors. I’ve been showing up earlier and staying later to do lesson planning and preparing for normal instruction because the time I used to spend planning and preparing has now been devoted to providing some pretty intense support for kids with some pretty high needs.”

**Easy, Peasy:** Lincoln Education Association member Nancy Mosier made testimony before the Legislature look easy. She just told her story to the Legislature’s Appropriations Committee, in support of LB838.



# Opposing Lids: It's About Kids

## NSEA Members Give Senators a View from the Classroom

When Nebraska 2016 Teacher of the Year Tim Royers asked the Legislature's Education Committee to keep LB959 in committee, he made certain senators know his plea was not for more state funding to improve teacher pay.

"This is about giving us the resources we need to do our job,"

Royers told senators in February. "And the kind of budget restrictions and growth allowance hits that LB959 puts into place severely hinders the ability of districts to give teachers the tools we need to be successful."

Royers was one of several NSEA members to testify on key education bills in February. LB959 and companion bill LB958 together comprise an ill-conceived effort to deal with a forced overreliance on property taxes by Nebraska school districts.

Twenty years ago, state aid to K-12 schools made up more than 33 percent of the state's general fund. Today, it makes up just 27 percent. That 6 percent drop equates to somewhere north of \$200 million state wide – money that, if replaced through state aid – would provide a fair amount of property tax relief.

Yet rather than replace lost state aid, LB959 attacks the overreliance on property taxes by placing more lids on kids. The bill tightens restrictions on school district spending, puts limits on school district cash reserves, and otherwise thwarts local control.

While those restrictions may echo in the halls of the State Capitol, they have real ramifications in school hallways, said Royers.

In an ideal world, he said, as expectations for teachers increase – and they should increase, he noted – teachers would have fewer classes and school districts would hire more teachers to compensate.

In the real world, however, the opposite is true, said Royers.

"We're moving in the opposite direction and these restrictions will compound the problem," he said. "Schools will attrition out positions. So everything looks good – you don't hear about teachers losing their jobs, but silently for the rest of us our class sizes go up as there are fewer of us to teach more kids."

Nebraska Department of Education numbers shows the public



**Braving the Cold:** Frigid weather did not keep these six from making their voices heard before the Nebraska Legislature in February. From left are Tim Royers, Millard; Joe Wanning (front) South Sioux City; Paul Schulte, Millard; and Suzanne Dailey, Joan Manley and Danell Simons, South Sioux City.

schools have 30,630 more students today than they did 15 years ago.

Teacher burnout – "a documented, psychological effect," said Royers – has devastating consequences for faculty, and especially for those hit the worst who leave teaching.

"My fear is not that budget restrictions mean less pay but rather that it means I can't make time for a student because my obligations are just too much," said Royers.

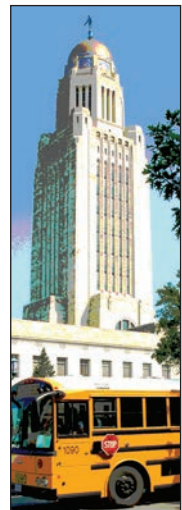
"Please do not advance LB959," he said.

### Downward Trend

Also opposing LB959 were South Sioux City Education Association members Joe Wanning and Danell Simons.

Sitting alongside South Sioux City Superintendent Vernon Fisher, they testified that statistics show school spending statewide has been on a downward trend in the recent past. South Sioux City's budget was up about 4 percent from 2013-14 to 2014-15, far less than the 11 percent statewide average suggested by the Platte Institute, they said.

Loss of state aid has cost the district 25 classroom teaching



'16 Nebraska Legislature

## LB959: An End to Early Retirement Incentives?

Just a few years ago, the threat of legislative tinkering with statutes concerning early retirement incentives by school districts caused one suburban school district to halt its incentive plan.

Now, LB958 and LB959, companion pieces in front of the Legislature, would slowly remove school district early retirement programs from spending lid exemptions.

As introduced, LB959 would put 10 percent of the funding for such programs back under state-imposed lid restrictions each year for five years, until 50 percent of the funding falls under the lid.

While those plans have proven to save school districts money in the long run by allowing younger and lesser-paid teachers to replace higher-paid veteran teachers, removing the lid exemption

would undoubtedly affect the early retirement offerings in most school districts.

Concerned? Call or e-mail your state senator, or members of the Legislature's Education Committee. They are:

- Sen. Kate Sullivan: ..... ksullivan@leg.ne.gov
- Sen. Rick Kolowski: ..... rkolowski@leg.ne.gov
- Sen. Roy Baker: ..... rbaker@leg.ne.gov
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- Sen. Adam Morfeld: ..... amorfeld@leg.ne.gov
- Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks: ..... ppansingbrooks@leg.ne.gov
- Sen. David Schnoor: ..... dschnoor@leg.ne.gov

positions and have forced cuts in counseling, nursing and programs that promote college and career readiness. Class sizes have increased, and cuts have hampered the district ability to expose students to technology, and to stay current on trends in technology.

Loss of revenue also handicaps a school district's ability to develop and sustain a plan for preventative and deferred maintenance, and completely eliminates a district's flexibility when emergency needs arise.

Jason Hayes, NSEA's director of Public Policy and Legislative Research, noted that under LB958 and LB959 the capacity of school districts to provide a quality education would be greatly diminished, especially if state aid does not make up for revenue lost to buttoned-down lids. State aid projections for 2016-17 show an increase in state aid of only 1.13 percent.

"State aid is still \$35 million below the funding level that was in place back in 2010," said Hays. "It is because of the 18 percent-plus reduction in state aid in 2011, and slow growth since that has caused school districts to rely even more heavily on local property taxes."

NSEA members were among a parade of school and other local government representatives who testified that additional state aid, not cuts, would better serve constituents. NSEA representatives, and NSEA staff and leadership, testified on a number of other hot-button educational issues as well.

### Community College Aid

NSEA also went on the record in support of LB852, which would appropriate an additional \$6 million from the General Fund for fiscal year 2016-17 to provide additional aid to community colleges to be used for core operating budgets.

The appropriation would provide direct property tax relief in communities and counties where community colleges have property taxing authority – a far better approach to property tax relief than lids, levy



**Portrait Pose:** Lincoln State Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks poses for a photo with NSEA-Retired members Arlene Rea, left, and Jan Olmstead, both of Lincoln, as a staffer snaps a photograph.

caps and other artificial measures that hamper services to Nebraska students.

### Mental Health Aid

NSEA Organizational Specialist Jay Sears told the Education Committee that the Association lends full support to LB838, which would provide funding for a Nebraska Department of Education specialist in behavioral and mental health needs (see story on Page 8).

"Our educator members report an increasing need to respond to mental and behavioral needs of students in their classrooms," said Sears. "They know that if students are experiencing mental or behavioral issues in their lives it is difficult for those students to learn. If LB838 makes a difference in one child's life, or diverts one child from a path to suicide, it will be worthwhile."

The NDE specialist would help develop the future vision and role for schools in response to the growing pressure to help students with mental and behavioral issues.

### More Mental Health Aid!

NSEA submitted a letter in support of Legislative Resolution 413, which calls for a Task Force on Behavioral and Men-

tal Health.

"Our members, who work in K-12 public schools, community colleges, state colleges, the university system, and special purpose schools have reported that one of the major issues they are encountering are students with mental health issues," wrote Sears. "Finding resources to help these students and their families is extremely difficult. This issues is especially problematic in more rural areas of the state."

When facing mental health issues, said Sears, it is difficult for learning to take place.

### Social Media Privacy

NSEA supported LB821 as a "common sense approach to protecting an employee's personal information, as well as freedom of speech."

The bill prohibits an employer from requiring an employee or applicant to disclose a user name, password, or related account information in order to gain access to the employee's or applicant's social networking site profile or account. It also prohibits an employer from requiring an employee or applicant from logging on to such a site in the employer's presence so as to provide the employer access to the site.

## CIR System of Settling Contract Disputes Well Proven

### Fulton: 'CIR Orderly, Predictable'

NSEA urged the Legislature's Business and Labor Committee to oppose LB1044 and preserve the Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR).

NSEA President Nancy Fulton told the committee that the CIR is "an important part of an orderly and predictable system, in which the CIR determines wages in Nebraska public labor disputes."

Fulton said the CIR's dispute resolution process has worked well for decades to provide for stable labor relations in the public sector.

Fulton also sought to dispel a myth about the CIR: that public sector unions are quite willing to go to the CIR instead of settling the contract through negotiations.

"The fact is that unions are usually very reluctant to seek resolution from the CIR. For public schools, the Commission resolves wage disputes by finding a wage that is at the mid-point of those in comparable school districts. Schools that rank above the comparable wage are understandably hesitant to seek help from the CIR. Even schools somewhat below comparable must be careful because they may lose wage structures or fringe benefits that are above comparability.

"The real story is that unions do not frivolously go to the CIR. The standard of comparability can cut both ways. And that is an important part of the success of this system — and what critics often overlook."

Crete Sen. Laura Ebke introduced the bill on the final day of bill introduction.

# A Memory Maker: DA 2016

## Delegate Assembly Kicks Off NSEA Sesquicentennial Observance

### It Started in Brownville, Celebration Begins in Lincoln April 15-16

On Oct. 16, 1867, a small group of educators met in Brownville and formally adopted a constitution for the Nebraska State Teachers' Association.

Those educators would have been hard-pressed to imagine that today's Association, the NSEA, is a teacher-led, 28,000-member, statewide Association that continues to advocate for public school students and teachers.



**Garcia**

No doubt, however, they would be pleased with that prospect — and with the realization that the 2016 NSEA Delegate Assembly will open a more-than-year-long celebration of the coming 150th anniversary

of that Brownville meeting.

"We are so incredibly fortunate that this group of educators had the foresight to come together in 1867 and make a push for unity," said NSEA President Nancy Fulton.

"I am just as proud that we, here today, carry on the work they started and have the opportunity to recognize the lengthy service of this Association to public education in Nebraska."

#### A Memorable Event

The celebration starts with NSEA's Delegate Assembly in Lincoln April 15-16, and it is not too late to serve as a delegate. Nearly 300 NSEA members will attend to renew Association goals and set forth work to be done in the coming year.

The 2016 event will be memorable. In addition to opening the sesquicentennial celebration, NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia will keynote the 2016 event.

Garcia began her education career working in the cafeteria, became a Utah state Teacher of the Year, and is the first Hispanic

woman to lead a major American labor organization.

Any NSEA member interested in serving as a delegate must register that intent quickly, as NSEA will not be able to expand the block of reserved rooms. Saturday's session of Delegate Assembly coincides with the University of Nebraska's spring football game, and rooms will be in short supply.

To make your interest in serving as a delegate known, contact your local association president, your local association building or faculty representative, or your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047.

#### Call for Action

In formal business, delegates will debate and vote on Association bylaws amendments (the bylaws give the Association structure); updates to the Resolutions, which are NSEA's guiding principles; and proposed New Business Items, which call for action within the next 12 months.

#### Bylaws, Resolutions

Those three items, and Delegate Assembly Standing and Procedural Rules, have strict meaning and deadlines:

- A New Business Item calls for an action.

For example, "The NSEA shall ask the Legislature to address mental health funding for schools." Due date to be included in delegate packets: Friday, April 1.

- A Bylaw amendment alters NSEA governing documents. For example, an amendment might assign duties to the president. Due date: midnight Tuesday, March 15.

- A Resolution is a belief statement. For example, "NSEA believes all students should have a safe learning environment." Due date to be included in delegate packets: Friday, April 1.

- A Standing or Procedural Rule governs the Delegate Assembly process. Rules call for proposed changes to be submitted 30 days in advance. Due date: Tuesday, March 15.

Associations and/or individual delegates may submit New Business Items or Resolutions during the first or second Delegate Assembly business session. Standing and Procedural Rule changes may be submitted during the first session.

Forms for submitting these business items can be found at:

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



## 2016 Delegate Assembly: History in the Making

At one point or another, every NSEA member should experience Delegate Assembly. For those who enjoy process and politics, the debate on issues and Association bylaws and resolutions are a highlight. For those looking to be inspired, keynote speaker and NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia fits the bill. Members can network, learn about their association and much more. Consider these details about NSEA's 155th Delegate Assembly Friday and Saturday, April 15-16, in Lincoln.

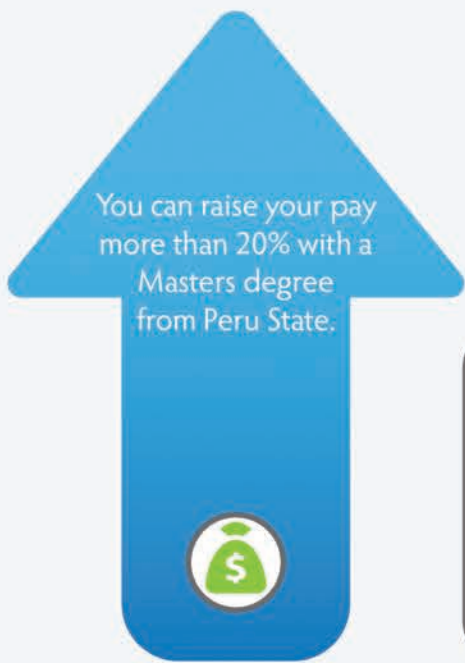
**Who:** Any member in good standing may apply for election or appointment as a delegate. Talk to your building rep or local president for details, or call your NSEA field staff member at 1-800-742-0047.

**What:** DA is where members are heard in a democratically-run forum. Delegates set Association goals, dues and update Bylaws and Resolutions (NSEA's guiding principles).

**Where:** Embassy Suites, Lincoln.

**Other Details:** Each local association is entitled to representation by 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. Smaller locals band together in 'clusters' to select delegates.

**Cost:** NSEA covers half a Friday night shared hotel room for each delegate, a Saturday box lunch, and mileage. Breakfast is provided for hotel guests. Delegates who stay elsewhere and are interested in breakfast should call NSEA's Joan Sparks at 1-800-742-0047.



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EDUC 605	Cognition and Learning	Sept 3 - Sept 30, 2016	3
EDUC 553	Using the Internet	Oct 1 - Oct 28, 2016	3
EDUC 540	The Master Teacher	Oct 29 - Nov 25, 2016	3
EDUC 600	Sociology of Education	Jan 7 - Feb 3, 2017	3
SPED 500	Inclusionary Practices	Feb 4 - March 3, 2017	3
EDUC 552	Introduction to Multimedia Authoring (or elective or Graduate Transfer Credit)	March 4 - March 31, 2017	3
EDUC 621	Curriculum Development	June 5 - July 28, 2017	3
EDUC 602	Statistical Methods and Data Analysis	June 5 - July 28, 2017	3
EDUC 569	Teachers as Collaborative Leaders (or elective or Graduate Transfer Credit)	Sept 2 - Sept 29, 2017	3
EDUC 623	Assessment of Instruction (8-week capstone)	Sept 30 - Nov 24, 2017	3

*\*First course is free if the cohort meets the enrollment requirement of 30 students.*

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**All Smiles:** As the Intergenerational Mentoring program opened, smiles were the norm. From left are Stephanie Williamson, College of St. Mary; Hannah Rice, Wayne State College; and Nicole Reznicek, Peru State College.

# InterGen Hits 13

## Unique NSEA Program Assists Teachers-to-Be

Fourteen college students who are in training to be teachers now have a little more support over the next few years.

Each was teamed with a retired teacher and tasked with one goal: get to know each other. The retirees are to serve as mentors and sounding boards to the students over the next 24 months or so, as they close their college careers and begin teaching.

The pairings came at the 13th edition of the NSEA-Retired Intergenerational Mentoring Project, held at NSEA headquarters.

The mentor is non-judgmental, non-evaluative, and can help the student get through tough times or challenging situations. The student knows an experienced mentor will listen when asked.

If you would like to participate next year, contact NSEA at 1-800-742-0047.



**Deep Discussion:** Peru State College's Elizabeth Chamberlin, left, listens as retiree Marlee Anderson, Omaha, talks about her teaching career.



**Overview:** Glenda Ehler, Scottsbluff, listens as the program is explained.



**Ribbons All Around:** Wayne State College's Brittany Nielsen, left, ties a ribbon on the talking stick as she tells her story. Watching are Wayne State's Hannah Rice and retiree Kris Jonyka, Omaha.

# Payroll or Plan Time Questions? Call NSEA

## Questions Answered, Giving You an Edge With NSEA Membership

When you are teaching in your classroom on your own, and an issue arises, it helps to know that standing behind you – with plenty of expertise and ability – is a fine cadre of NSEA employees known as organizational specialists.

Those organizational specialists see widely varied questions every week, from questions about substitute pay, to volatile students to plan time issues.

The 18 organizational specialists are stationed across the state, have varied experiences and roles in the education world, and are your first “touch” when you have a question, concern or issue that needs a solution.

Standing behind those organizational specialists is NSEA’s Department of Advocacy, and, in rare cases, a legal firm on retainer with decades of experience.

**This question, concerning substitute pay, came through NSEA’s website to an organizational specialist:**

*“I’m a long term substitute and will be teaching from the beginning of the school*



*year until the first of March, and possibly the entire school year. I am wondering if I would only get substitute pay or payroll pay. Right now I am only getting long term sub pay and no benefits.”*

**Then there was this question about a volatile student:**

*“I’ve been working with my principal and my school district to deal with a student in my classroom who is volatile. He flies into rages on a nearly daily basis. Rages can include yelling and screaming, sometimes at other students, and violence. Rages can last for hours. I have had students tell me they are afraid or scared of this student and other parents also tell me they are concerned. I would greatly appreciate your advice and support in dealing with this situation.”*

**And, of course, there is the annual spate of questions about planning time infringements, much like this one:**

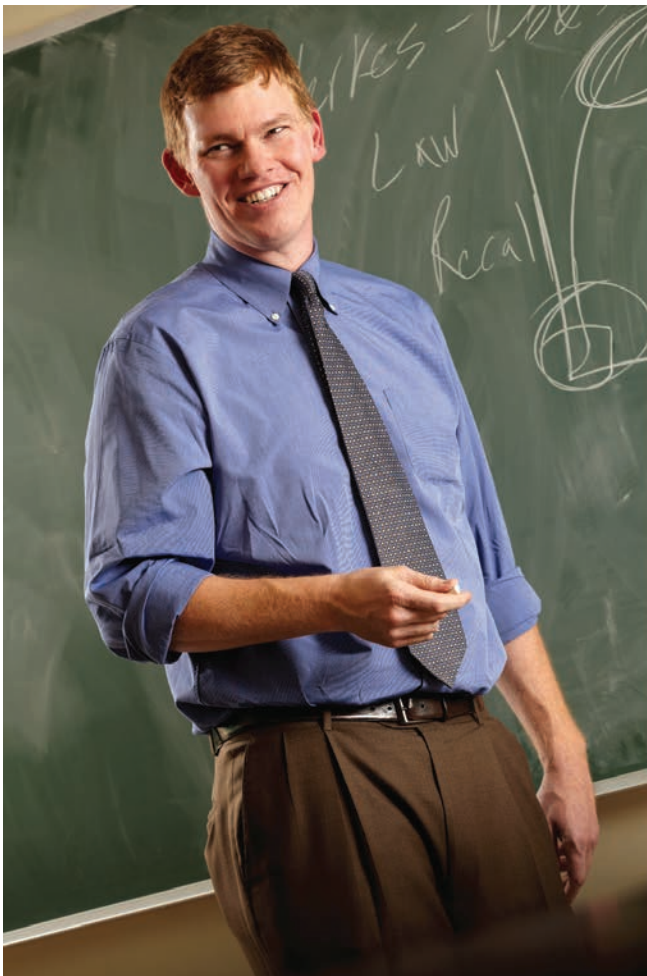
*“According to our contract, we are supposed to have 45 minutes of uninterrupted plan time every day and we aren’t allowed that. On Fridays we are lucky to get 20 minutes, and now next year they want the traveling teachers to travel during their plan time. We only get one plan a day and I have five courses to plan for. I’m getting very tired. Many nights I’m here late planning and grading papers. Any suggestions?”*

These questions are typical of the wide range of questions received from members through the NSEA website on a regular basis. Other questions come to organizational specialists through the NSEA hotline, or through face-to-face contact as those organizational specialists visit the buildings they are assigned to work.

Whatever your question, you can contact your NSEA organizational specialist in complete confidentiality. That is the NSEA edge. No other organization provides such service!

Call your NSEA organizational specialist at 1-800-742-0047, or send your question through the ‘Contact Us’ feature of the NSEA website at:

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



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Contact Annie at 402.827.3555  
or [afink2@nebrwesleyan.edu](mailto:afink2@nebrwesleyan.edu)



# Learn of Leadership Through NSEA Institute

## 'Powerful' Experience Offers Networking, Expertise to Leaders

NSEA's annual Leadership Institute may be one of the Association's best-kept secrets — but with the reviews that the Institute receives each year, the word has to be getting out.

Here is what Palmer Education Association member Whitney Hester wrote as she evaluated the 2015 edition of the Institute:

"It was powerful to spend four days with a wonderful diverse group of teachers that all brought something amazing to the learning table."

David Boyce, a member of the Douglas County Youth Center Education Association, was no less enthusiastic.

"As teachers we know the value of a mentor," wrote Boyce. "For me, the NSEA is a network of mentors that helps me to become the teacher professional I want to be for my students."

The NSEA Leadership Institute is a four-day, expense paid program that provides expertise and information to members who are new to leadership positions,



or who are considering seeking leadership positions in their Association.

The 2016 event will be held at NSEA Headquarters in Lincoln over the days of July 11-14.

"The Institute has become a great tool for those members who are in early stages of leadership, or who are thinking of becoming leaders," said Kristen Sedlacek, an NSEA organizational specialist and the Institute's director. "Whether the member hopes to become a faculty or building representative, their local association president, or serve on a state-wide board, the experience of the Institute will be of benefit."

The Institute offers training on member rights, organizing, membership and other aspects of the Association. Participants will also network with other local leaders.

Any K-12, Higher Education or Educational Support Professional member who is a local leader or has interest in becoming a local leader may attend.

Those interested should call NSEA Associate Staff member Jan Anderson at 1-800-742-0047, or e-mail:

[jan.anderson@nsea.org](mailto:jan.anderson@nsea.org)

Class size is limited. Apply soon!

## Save Using NEA Click & Save Offers

Spring into action: spring holidays, spring break and spring weather will soon be upon us! NEA Click & Save, the online discount buying service for NEA members, highlights select retailers and merchants each month. Check out these featured "Buy-lights" for March!

■ **Under Armour:** Save on athletic gear for men, women, and children; free shipping on orders of \$49 or more

■ **Shari's Berries:** Unique gifts for every occasion, including the "original" gourmet dipped strawberries

■ **Kohl's:** Get a new spring outfit, plus free shipping on orders of \$75 or more

■ **NEA MB Entertainment Store:** Exclusive pricing on world-class performances and entertainment including Broadway shows; movie tickets from Regal, AMC and Cinemark theaters; and deals at Six Flags, Universal Studios and LEGOLAND

■ **LLBean:** Equipment and apparel for a variety of outdoor pursuits; free shipping on all orders

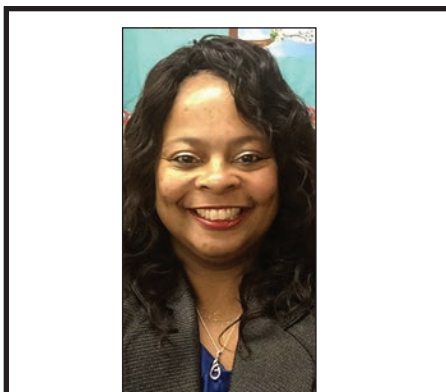
Be sure to check Click & Save often for unadvertised, limited offers, including discount certificates from Restaurant.com. Join the 386,100 NEA members already registered for NEA Click & Save. For sav-

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# NSEA Members Sharpen Skills at NEA Session

## Training Targets Women, Minorities

By Eddie Ventura, Jr., Chair, Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee

Nearly a dozen NSEA members joined 200 of their peers from across the USA at the National Education Association's Minority and Women's Leadership Training Conference in San Francisco Jan. 29-31.

Attendees spent time sharpening leadership skills and sharing strategies focused on how to advocate for student-centered policies that will improve their schools and communities.

Attending from NSEA were Tanishia Butler, Bellevue; Rosey Krauel, Douglas County West; Dene Oglesby, Ralston; Isau Metes, Julie Colby, Joseph Rousseau and Daniel Witte all of Lincoln; Faith Keim, Anthony Williams, Ayesha Station and Edward T. Ventura Jr. all of Omaha.

Educators participated in hands-on training to learn foundational leadership skills and gain an understanding of the logistics of running for elected office.

"The discussion about Institutional Racism was a call to action for me and is something that I want to take back to my local. I feel more comfortable about speaking up and more confident in my leadership skills," said Metes, a Lincoln Education Association board member and an Asian Pacific Islander representative on NSEA's Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee.

Omaha Education Association's Ayesha Station learned about voice.

"I learned the importance of my voice and using it to be a voice for others. I am hoping to use the lessons I learned to improve Omaha and the entire state of Nebraska," she said.

Lincoln's Rousseau said he "left with



**Learning on the Road:** This contingent of NSEA members spent a weekend learning about leadership and more. Front, from left, are Julie Colby, Lincoln; Ayesha Station, Omaha; Rosey Krauel, Douglas County West; Isau Metes, Lincoln; Tanishia Butler, Bellevue; and Faith Keim, Omaha.

Back row, from left, are: Anthony Williams, Omaha; Daniel Witte and Joseph Rousseau, Lincoln; Edward Ventura Jr., Omaha; and Dene Oglesby, Ralston.

a deep understanding of leadership within our association and a multitude of individuals who support our efforts towards association leadership from many different geographic areas."

Lincoln's Colby loved the conference.

"This conference provided me invaluable training in areas of leadership. It was an intense filled weekend but I felt it was an awesome learning opportunity."

Butler called the conference an opportunity for women and people of color to be educated, uplifted and encouraged. She said the weekend "provided educators a chance to demonstrate new and innovative leadership skills, as well as a platform to learn how to make a difference in our organizations locally and nationally."

### Training Ahead!

There are several opportunities ahead for Ethnic and Minority members of NSEA to attend out-of-state conferences. They include:

- The NEA Black Issues Conference, set for April 15-17 in Kansas City, MO.
- The NEA Native American/Alaska Native Issues Conference, set for May 13-15 at a location to be determined.
- The NEA Hispanic Issues Confer-

ence, set for June 17-19 in New York City.

■ The NEA Asian/Pacific Islander Issues Conference, scheduled for June 20-23 in the Los Angeles area.

For travel request forms, visit the EMAC website at [nsea.org/emac](http://nsea.org/emac), or reach EMAC Chair Edward T. Ventura Jr. at:

[venturaomaha@gmail.com](mailto:venturaomaha@gmail.com)

### Meet at NSEA

Members are urged to attend the Saturday, March 19, meeting of the NSEA Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee at the NSEA Headquarters in Lincoln. The day begins with caucus meetings at 9:30 a.m. and the meeting will convene at 10 a.m. Lunch will be provided. If you plan to attend, contact NSEA's Tamra Mick at:

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

### OEA Black Caucus Meets

Omaha Education Association Black Caucus members will meet on Saturday, March 5, at 9 a.m. to discuss bylaws and constitution. In February, the members discussed travel opportunities and leadership opportunities within the association. For more information contact Carol Hicks, the NSEA staff liaison to the Ethnic and Minority Affairs Committee. She can be reached at:

[carol.hicks@nsea.org](mailto:carol.hicks@nsea.org)

# The Arts: A Big Boost to the Economy!

Those educators who work in the creative arts might want to note this information: The U.S. economy gets a huge boost from the arts, according to the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

A study by the BEA and NEA found that in 2013, arts and cultural production contributed \$704.2 billion to the U.S. economy, a 32.5 percent increase since 1998.

The study also found that consumer spending on the performing arts grew 10 percent annually over the 15-year period from 1998 to 2013. Among the findings:

■ Theaters contributed \$7.1 billion, followed by music (including jazz, rock, and country bands and artists) at \$4.2 billion, and symphony orchestras and chamber groups at \$2.1 billion.

■ Over the 15-year period, the annual growth rate for arts and culture as a whole (1.8 percent) was on par with that of the total U.S. economy (1.9 percent). But it grew faster than other sectors such as accommodation and food services (1.4 percent), retail (1.3 percent), and transportation and warehousing (1.1 percent).

NEA Chairman Jane Chu said the study "tells us that the arts are a strong contributor to America's economic vitality."

## Save With Dave

If you're considering a new car purchase in the next year, you might want to check out the NEA Auto Buying Program.

Why? Because Association members using the program have seen an average savings of \$3,221 off of the manufacturer's suggested retail price. That potential savings alone is worth checking out the deals available through the NEA Member Benefits Plan.



**Glenn**

Members using the plan get a price and a guaranteed savings prior to visiting the dealership. Members can also save up to \$1,000 on used cars and receive free CARFAX reports. To top it off, family members are eligible for the program.

For details, go to the NEA Member Benefits website and click on the blue 'Discounts' link at the top middle of the page, and then look for the 'Home & Auto Discounts' link. The Member Benefits website is at:

[neamb.com](http://neamb.com)

## Protect Your Vehicle

Speaking of vehicles, the NEA Vehicle Protection Plan is worth a review, as well.

NEA and NEA members are eligible for a \$100 discount on any extended vehicle protection policy. The program is backed by CARCHEX, an A+ rated company by the Better Business Bureau, and a nationwide leader in automotive warranty protection. The protection plan provides the highest level of extended auto warranty coverage at the lowest possible price.

Members are also eligible to receive these benefits:

- Payment for vehicle repair bills.
- Zero percent easy payment plans.
- 24/7 roadside assistance.
- Car rental coverage.
- Hotel and lodging coverage.
- Emergency fuel delivery.
- Flat tire change service.
- Battery jump service.

There are coverage options and pricing plans crafted to meet your needs.

For details, go to the NEA Member Benefits website and click on the blue 'Discounts' link at the top middle of the page, and then look for the 'Home & Auto Discounts' link. The Member Benefits website is at:

[neamb.com](http://neamb.com)

*David Glenn is Nebraska's NEA Member Benefits representative*

# Classroom Energy!

## Get Inspired with These Eight Creative Ways to Re-Energize Your Classroom Now!

Fight the midyear slump and boost your students' enthusiasm for learning with these teacher-tested tips.

Keeping enthusiasm for school alive in the second half of the year can be a struggle, particularly as snow days, standardized testing and spring fever begin to take a toll. First-grade teacher Jessica Meacham knows this scene, and notes that it's not just students who start to lose their fire — educators, too, begin to slump as the year pushes on. But she also knows she can't afford to slack. "It is essential that I show my energy and enthusiasm for every part of our day," says the Door County, WI, teacher. "If I lose my excitement and energy, students may lose theirs, too."

Little things can go a long way toward boosting student interest in school. To help you keep things fresh through the second half of the year, we gathered eight teacher-tested tips for rebooting your classroom:

**1 Get student buy-in:** To help students stay excited about learning, consider a thematic integrated unit on a topic that your students will grab on to, says Deanna Jump, an education blogger and kindergarten teacher. "Brainstorm a list of topics as a class and then take a class vote on the ones that seem to get the most interest," she says. "When students are excited about what they are learning the amount of time spent on behavioral disruptions goes down and student learning goes way up."

**2 Hand over responsibilities:** Starting midyear, Wisconsin first-grade teacher Lisa Mattes puts her first-graders in charge of handing out daily warm-up materials, changing the daily and monthly calendar, and delivering items to other teachers as needed. "They feel so official and grown up when put in charge," she says. "They start looking for more things they can be responsible for and it is win-win."

**3 Mix up the routines:** Think about your routines and how they might be changed up, Meacham says. Her students receive a new format for their independent reading recording sheets in January, switching from paper to postcard. "The change keeps their interest and might even spark a renewed sense of purpose for the activity," she says. You can also change seat assignments or the way students line up for lunch.

**4 Offer brain breaks:** Incorporate yoga type stretches, jogging in place or jumping jacks when you have a minute to spare, Mattes advises. If you have 3-5 minutes, use a brain break video. "They've been so helpful during the Polar Vortex we've had in Wisconsin," Mattes says.

**5 Introduce new books:** Make time to read aloud to students and introduce new books. In January, The American Library Association announces its Newbery, Caldecott, Siebert and other awards. Jump advises teachers to think about how they can incorporate such high-quality literature into their core lessons to keep it fresh.

**6 Redecorate, rearrange:** Meacham likes to shift the classroom around mid-year. She advises teachers to think about flipping the layout of two classroom areas, such as the classroom library and the guided reading area,

or introducing new design elements, such as a plant or a new lamp. Students will notice the changes. And get students involved in the design. "Let them have some input into the changes that are made," Jump says. "If there is often a traffic jam at the cubbies, have the kids help brainstorm ways that this problem can be alleviated."

**7 Clean up your space:** By midyear, your classroom clutter has likely piled up. Meacham has a dusting, purging and organization "party" over winter break. "Afterward, I feel more prepared and ready for the second half of the year, and I am less prone to be distracted by paper piles and dust, leaving my focus on where it should be—my students," she says.

**8 Find a PLN:** Turn to Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and education blogs to find a personal learning network (PLN). These platforms allow you to stay current and find best practices in educational technology and instruction, Meacham says. You can also get great ideas for lessons, bulletin boards and classroom organization. Meacham and Mattes recommend the following Pinterest sites for teachers:

- School Stuff.
- Literacy.
- Top Teachers Smorgasboard.
- Bright Ideas for the Classroom.

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**Kiplinger**

"I started taking history classes at the University of Nebraska at Kearney — and I was hooked after the first class. The quality of the curriculum and the professors made me decide to keep going and get my master's degree. I wanted a degree that would mean something. In my last year of classroom teaching, I was named Texas History Teacher of the Year. Now I run the social studies department for my entire district. Getting my degree at the University of Nebraska changed my life."

**Steve Sonksen, Texas**

History, MA

University of Nebraska at Kearney

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## Public Schools — The Common Good

“  
Why are some of our mega-rich interested in the idea of publically supported private schools?  
”

Public education in the United States is one of the greatest opportunities this country offers. And it provides it free to all children. It was not always so. As a nation, we have worked for many years to provide good schools for every child. There have been significant battles with those who objected to their children attending schools with children of a different race, ethnicity, religion, family income, or social class. If a town is big enough to have more than one school, there are often debates over which is better. There are often more opinions than people. One thing is certain: good education for every community's children is foundational to our nation's social, civil, and economic success.

The rough pioneer beginnings of Nebraska meant that there were simply not enough teachers, students...or schools. In the early years of this state, less than 40 percent of school-age children actually attended school. The principle that a good, free, public education with devoted and qualified teachers should be available to every child is what generations of Nebraskans have fought to achieve. Today, every child in every community in this state has free access to the great opportunity of a public school.

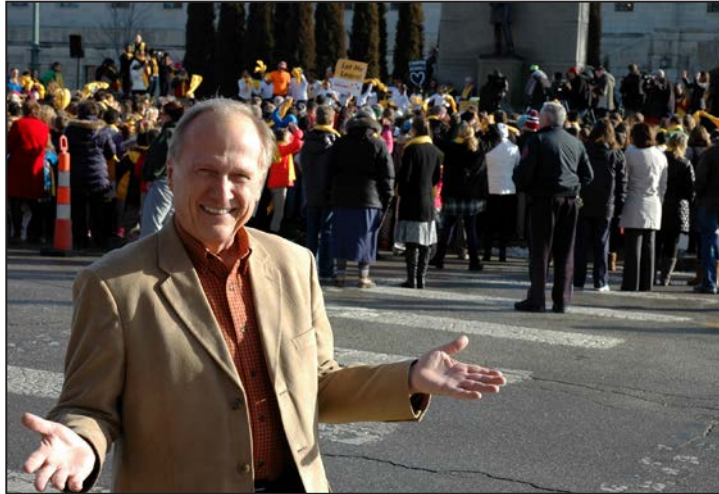
### The Simple Answer

Over the past few years, there have been several unsuccessful attempts to bring charter schools to Nebraska. Do we need charter schools in Nebraska? The simple answer is no. The argument that charter schools offer greater opportunities for innovation and change is false in Nebraska. In fact, all schools constantly need innovation and changes. In Nebraska, we have a system in which the Commissioner of Education has invited local school district superintendents to invent and create just such improvements. If the current rules and regulations stand in the way of innovation in our schools, the Commissioner promises to honor requests for waivers to relax any such barrier. Importantly, that means local districts and local officials are still monitoring the

expenditure of public monies.

### Follow the Money

Anyone can go to – or start – a private school right now, but not with public monies. For decades Nebraskans have overwhelmingly said that public monies must be in the trust of public officials – not private interests. The old adage is to “follow the money” and find the real interests of those who would suggest that public monies flow to private, “charter” schools. What is the real interest? What is at stake is a huge amount of money that our communities invest in their children and their future. Why are some of our mega-rich interested in the idea of publically supported private schools? Follow the money. What is at stake in America is a public investment in public education



**So, what's the problem? NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen across the street from a rally by charter school and voucher proponents rally. Proponents can make that choice now — but not with taxpayer money!**

that is approximately the size of the gross domestic product of Australia. Are we willing to give away this investment in our children to those who simply want to make more money? I do not argue with those well-intentioned parents who want the best for their children. I do ask that they think about the other children in our communities. Every child should have access to an excellent education. Charter schools may appear to be an answer for some, but America stands for access to quality education for *all* children.

### Generations of Hard Work

We are fortunate to live in a state with good schools, good teachers, and supportive communities. We must remember that this is the result of generations of Nebraskans who have worked hard for 150 years to build a tradition of good education in our public schools. It is a tradition of community schools, using community resources, decided by local boards in the interest of the community's children. For those who want an alternative, there are choices and the freedom to choose. But one thing is certain: such a personal choice should never be at the cost of public monies or public school resources.

## Postponed? No Problem!

### Retired Members Adjust, Descend on Capitol to Lobby

Better late than never.

More than 30 members of NSEA-Retired reworked their schedules to accommodate a snowstorm that postponed the annual Lobby Day Activities from Feb. 2 to Feb. 9.

Senators, too, were in catch-up mode on Feb. 9, with a full day of hearings, rather than the usual morning session and afternoon hearings.

Members combed the halls for senators and urged them to support further steps to erase taxes on Social Security income, thereby encouraging retirees to stay in Nebraska after they retire. Retirees also spread the word about adequate funding for public schools, as LB958 and LB959 threaten to devastate funding forces for K-12 public schools (see page 9).

Speaker of the Legislature Sen. Galen Hadley spoke to the group at lunch, and laid out his expectations for the session.

It was a very informative day for all. For those not in attendance, there are two ways to keep up with the business that takes place at the State Capitol. First, sign up for the Unicameral Update, published weekly by the Clerk of the Legislature's office and sent out each week in the mail. To get on the mailing list, call 402-471-2788 or e-mail:

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

Second, NSEA provides legislative updates and calls to action by sending out updates to your e-mail address. If you would like to be included in their emailed updates, sign up to be a cyber lobbyist at:

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

Note: Make sure that when you view legislative information, you are doing so using a personal email account on a personal computer, and are not connected to a public school server.

### Spring Conference Ahead!

Registration is now open for the Spring Conference for NSEA-Retired!

The conference will be held on Thursday, April 14, at the St. Benedict Retreat Center, 1126 Road I, north of downtown Schuyler. This has been a popular location over the last few years, and we look forward to spending another spring day at this peaceful location. Patsy Koch-Johns, a retired Lincoln teacher and Nebraska's 2006 Teacher of the Year, will deliver the keynote address *The Poverty Problem* at 9 a.m., followed by two periods of breakout sessions. The breakouts will include:

- EHA, BCBS and Medicare.
- Antiques — Trash or Treasure?
- Funeral Planning Your Own Way.
- Photograph as a Hobby.
- Coping with Alzheimer's.
- Healthy Choices for Wellness.

A luncheon and business meeting will follow the breakout sessions. Eric Berg, from Nebraska Forestry Services, will deliver the Spotlight on Nebraska address *Community Landscapes - What is it All About?*

For more details, and to register, go to:

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

### Make Your Vote Count

Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale outlined deadlines regarding voter registration and early voting for the coming statewide elections. Early voting by mail for elections start 35 days prior to an election, while early voting in person at Nebraska county election offices



**Making Rounds:** These intrepid members of NSEA-Retired braved biting cold and a one-week delay to attend the Association's annual Lobby Day function in February. The Nebraska Legislature had also rescheduled after a snow from a week earlier, so many senators were in daylong hearings. But this quartet stopped by several offices, including that of Hastings Sen. Les Seiler. From left are Leo Getzfred, Jim Landwehr and Jan Barnason, all of Hastings, and Tamara Bailey, Omaha.

starts 30 days prior to the Election.

Any registered voter can cast an early ballot. Gale listed the following deadlines for the statewide elections:

- Mail-in voter registrations must be postmarked by the third Friday preceding an election.
- Voter registration closes at motor vehicle offices and state agencies on the third Friday preceding an election.
- In-person voter registration at county election offices ends at 6 p.m. the second Friday preceding an election. This includes registration changes such as updating an address.
- Registered voters can make requests until 4 p.m. the Wednesday preceding an election for early voting ballots to be mailed. The day before the election is the deadline for in-person early voting at county election offices.
- The deadline for all early voting ballots to be returned to the county election office is 8 p.m. Central or 7 p.m. Mountain Time on Election Day (the hour set for the polls to close).

The Secretary of State's website, provides detailed information regarding the voting process. It includes the Nebraska voter registration application form, an application to request an early voting ballot, addresses and phone numbers for county election offices, and a look-up tool that allows voters to verify their registration status.

Gale reminded people to update their voter registration if they have moved within a county or submit a new registration if they have moved from one county to another. Gale urged eligible Nebraskans to make sure they are registered to vote and then take the time to cast ballots. "Voting in Nebraska is a very user-friendly process," he said. People with voting questions can contact their county election office or the Secretary of State's office at 402-471-2555.

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

## NEA Enters Partnership with Educators Rising

### Collaboration Will Set Steps on 'Road to Accomplished Teaching'

The National Education Association has entered a partnership with Educators Rising, a new national organization that cultivates highly skilled educators by guiding young people on a path to becoming accomplished teachers, starting in high school.

The NEA partnership agreement comes as a \$250,000 grant award that will be used specifically for the development of Educators Rising Standards, which aim to back-map professional teaching standards — what teachers need to know and be able to do — into an earlier, pre-collegiate stage of teacher recruitment and development.

The Educators Rising Standards will be developed through a committee process developed and employed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). The standards will form the bedrock for curriculum and micro-credentials — competency-based recognitions — for “grow your own” teacher pipeline programs in high schools across the country.

Educators Rising Standards will be

published in May 2016. Based on the standards, Educators Rising micro-credentials will be developed in partnership with Digital Promise and published in September 2016.

NSEA has worked with the Nebraska chapter of Educators Rising for several years. That partnership includes an annual \$5,000 NSEA grant to Educators Rising.

As communities across the nation face teacher shortages and declining enrollment in teacher preparation programs, Educators Rising aims to increase the supply of skilled future teachers by engaging teenagers in exploring the teaching profession through elective courses and hands-on teaching internships.

Educators Rising launched in August 2015 as a national network supporting grow-your-own teacher programs across the country. Since its launch, more than 12,000 students and teacher leaders in over 1,000 schools across the country have joined the movement. Educators Rising has eleven state and two regional affiliates.

Originally founded as Future Teachers of America in 1937 by NEA, Educators Rising is powered by Phi Delta Kappa International, a professional association for educators.

### Larry Shoff

Longtime teacher, coach and NSEA member Larry L. Shoff, 68, of Beatrice, died unexpectedly at his home on Feb. 16.



**Shoff**

A graduate of Wymore High School and Peru State Teachers College, Shoff taught and coached athletics for the Diller-Odell Public Schools for 33 years before his retirement in 2010. He continued to substitute teach at Diller-Odell following his retirement.

Shoff was active in his local association, and had served as association president and was chief negotiator for a number of years. He served the NSEA as a member of the association's cyber-lobbyist team up until his death.

Survivors include a daughter Julie, a sister and brother and their families. Wife Barbara preceded him in death in 2006. A memorial has been established to the Diller-Odell Public Schools Scholarship Fund.



**The Message is Clear: When charter and corporate school advocates held a rally on the west steps of the State Capitol in February, the message from public school advocates was clear: fourth floor windows at NSEA spelled out 'PUBLIC \$4 PUBLIC SCHOOLS.' Charter schools in other states have diverted badly needed tax revenues from public schools and sent them to privately managed charter and corporate schools — not a model wanted or needed in Nebraska.**

### Verona Scheer

Retired teacher and NSEA member Verona L.C. Scheer, 93, died at Tecumseh on Feb. 13.

She graduated from Cook High School and Peru State College. She taught mathematics and business for 36 years at Cook, Fremont and Dunbar in Nebraska, and also at Harlan, IA. She was a member of NSEA, the Nebraska State Business Education Association, the Nebraska Association of Teachers of Mathematics, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the Nebraska City Area Teachers Association. A life member of the American Legion Auxiliary at Cook, she compiled the History of Cook for the 1988 centennial.

Survivors include two sons, a daughter, their spouses, and eight grandchildren. Memorials are to the Nemaha Valley Schools Foundation and Grace Lutheran Church, both at Cook.

# Nebraska History Starts at Brownville

## School Tours Available

Nebraska's history as a state essentially started in the Brownville area, and today custom school tours – perfect for fourth grade Nebraska history lessons – are available in Brownville from March through November every year.

Tours can visit the museum/home of third Nebraska Gov. Robert W. Furnas and walk through the Gov. Furnas Arboretum and view the bronze statue of Furnas.

Visitors can also tour the Schoolhouse Art Gallery and Nature Center, visit the unusual Furnas gravesite in the historic Walnut Grove Cemetery and see Capital Square Park. Picnic tables are available at Capital Square and the Schoolhouse if lunch is brought. As an alternative, a simple lunch could be provided by the Lyceum Restaurant for a nominal cost.

Additional museums and historic sites could include any of the following: The Flatwater Folk Art Museum, The Captain Bailey House Museum, The Carson House, the Land Office, the Railroad Depot and the Meriwether Lewis Dredge Museum.

NSEA members should note that Brownville is the site of NSEA's founding meeting, in October 1867. A state historical marker commemorating the NSEA founding sits at the location at the corner of S. 4th and Water streets. Furnas was a founding member.

For details, or to arrange a tour, call 402-825-4992, or e-mail:

[janchismwright@gmail.com](mailto:janchismwright@gmail.com)

Check out the Brownville website at:

[www.brownville-ne.com](http://www.brownville-ne.com)

## Speaking of Teaching

"Teaching is my blessing. If I had taught before I had written a book, I would never have written a book. I love it so."

— *Maya Angelou,*  
*Poet, Author, Teacher,*  
*1928-2014*

## Adopting Classroom Pets

By Lisa Wyrick, a fifth grade math & science teacher from San Jose, CA:

"My classroom animals make even reluctant students want to engage. I've found that fostering classroom pets rather than owning them is the way to go. I have an arboreal salamander, an Oregon alligator lizard, three parakeets and two corn snakes, but the best are my foster rabbits. Instead of taking on ownership, I've arranged with a local foster group to house rabbits who are awaiting adoption.

"The rabbits receive full medical care from the group, and the foster group gave me all the set-up equipment I needed. The rabbits range from babies to adults, and I have them usually for several



## Presidential Patrol

**NSEA Associate Executive Director Neal Clayburn is a Civil War buff — so much so that each President's Day for the past few years he has dressed as a private in the Union Army and joined others to stand guard at the statue of President Abraham Lincoln on the west steps of the State Capitol. Clayburn is a member of Sons of Union Veterans, as his great-great-grandfather served on the Union side in an Illinois infantry unit.**

weeks or months, sending them back to the organization on adoption fair weekends. When one gets adopted, I get another that same day. I keep them in my classroom in a large cage, but most of the school day, the rabbits are running in a fenced in play area within my classroom. They easily litter-box train, and I keep a small shop vacuum nearby for any stray straw that escapes their pen. And, no, they don't smell.

"This arrangement works well because I can turn down a rabbit if a school vacation is coming up. The rabbits teach students about taking care of animals as well as the whole concept of abandoned or poorly chosen pets and the need to

provide homes for the animals already in our midst."

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

