

NSEA-RETIRED ADVOCATE

www.nsea.org/retired

June 2024

Volume 19, Issue 3

NSEA-RETIRED OFFICERS

John Heineman,
NSEA-Retired
President
ringojohn@aol.com



Roger Rea,
Vice President
roger.omaha@gmail.com

Dr. Sarah Brown, Secretary
travelersarah@hotmail.com

Arlene Rea, Treasurer
arlenerea36@yahoo.com

DISTRICT DIRECTORS

Patsy Koch Johns, Capitol
pk.cozadlincolntheatre@gmail.com

Dr. Margie Nowak, Capitol
margienowak@hotmail.com

Dan Schiefelbein, Elkhorn
dan.schiefelbein@gmail.com

Ruby Davis, Metro
deltard4@gmail.com

Walta Sue Dodd, Metro
wsdodd@aol.com

Joy Brown, Panhandle
joyb1302@gmail.com

Howard Gaffney, Sandhills
gaffneyhl22@gmail.com

Jan Barnason, Tri-Valley
jkbarnason@gmail.com

If you are not receiving emails from the NSEA-Retired list or your email address has changed, send a message to RingoJohn@aol.com.

Inside the Spring Conference at MAHONEY STATE PARK



Top left: Coffee and refreshments kick off the NSEA-Retired Spring conference. **Top right:** Rita Bennett leads a workshop at the conference. **Bottom left:** Sarah Brown and Joy Brown welcome conference attendees at Mahoney State Park. **Bottom Right:** Lakota guests display cultural items.

The NSEA-Retired Spring Conference, held April 18 at Mahoney State Park, gathered nearly 100 members for a day of engaging speakers, activities, and networking opportunities. The annual event featured a range of discussions and sessions aimed at addressing current challenges and sharing valuable information with retired educators.

The conference's keynote speaker, Dr. Sarah Skretta from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, tackled the pressing issue of the teacher shortage in Nebraska, offering strategies to mitigate this critical problem.

Participants also benefited from various breakout sessions. Jonathan Burleson from the Nebraska Department of Insurance provided insights on Medicare, while John Hunt, author of "Secrets of the Sandhills," shared his literary expertise. Rita Bennett's workshop on "The Best Things in Life are Free" and Jeff Cole's discussion on after-school programming, "Beyond the Bells," were also well-received. Susan Estes from NEA Member Benefits rounded out the sessions with her informative presentation.

A standout activity at the confer-

Inside the Spring Conference Cont.

ence was the silent auction and scarf sale, which raised \$900 for the NSEA Children's Fund, allowing members to acquire unique items while contributing to a worthy cause.

The event also featured an unexpected highlight: a visit from Michael Townsend, Mahoney State Park Superintendent, who provided insights into Nebraska's state parks. Additionally, guests who shared stories about Lakota culture enriched the cultural understanding of attendees.

NSEA President Jenni Benson, Vice President Paul Schulte, and Political Director Brian Mikkelsen led an informative discussion on current legislative issues in Nebraska. They emphasized the importance of member advocacy, particularly in opposing voucher legislation, by engaging with the Support Our School Nebraska referendum petition campaign throughout the summer months. See more on the fight against vouchers on page 8.



NSEA-Retired Member Featured in Public School Proud Ad Campaign

NSEA-Retired member Bob Fuerer, along with several other NSEA members and Nebraska parents were featured in an outreach campaign focusing on all the ways Nebraska Public Schools serve as the heart of their communities this spring.

Fuerer is a retired teacher from North Bend Public Schools and the 2011 Nebraska Teacher of the Year.

"I've had the opportunity to work with so many outstanding students and parents in my 37 years as a public school teacher. The two things I've noticed they all have in common: a love for their community and a pride in their school," Fuerer says in his TV, radio and online ad.

The campaign features a diverse group of Nebraska educators and parents who shared how our Nebraska public schools serve as symbols of community pride and identity.

Funding for the campaign was made possible through a National Education Association (NEA) grant.

SAVE THE DATE

**NSEA-Retired
Fall Conference at**

The
ARCHWAY

OCTOBER

17

More details to come!

Quick action turns potential tragedy into lifesaving act of kindness

Commentary and Resources By: Jeff Hoham, LEA-Retired Committee Member

Intuition and a willingness to act led Joe Shandera, retired Board President of the Lincoln Education Association, to make a welfare check call that turned a potential tragedy into a lifesaving act of kindness.

Shandera and other members were attending a scheduled morning LEA-Retired Board meeting on February 15.

"Our board members take turns bringing small breakfast treats. That morning, the person who said they would bring some fruit, didn't show up," Shandera said. "After the meeting concluded, a couple of us discussed the person's absence and decided to try to make contact. Unfortunately, none of us were successful."

By 5 p.m. that same evening, with still no contact from the member, Shandera and his wife decided to visit the member's home. After speaking with a neighbor who told them the member hadn't been seen for several days, Shandera reached out to some relatives of the member. After family said their calls went unanswered, Shandera called on Lincoln police for a wellness check.

Two officers responded and attempted to gain access to the locked house. Eventually, with the help of an officer who was also a locksmith, they managed to enter through a back garage door.

Inside, officers discovered the individual lying on the bathroom floor, having been there for days after a fall. Despite the ordeal, the person was alive. Emergency services arrived swiftly to transport them to the hospital. After a hospital stay followed by inpatient rehabilitation and outpatient therapies, the individual has made a successful recovery.

Reflecting on the incident, Joe Shandera emphasized the importance of community vigilance and timely intervention in such situations.

"We feel very fortunate for this incident to have a positive ending," he remarked gratefully.

Jeff Hoham, a committee member of the LEA-Retired, underscored the significance of Joe's actions in showcasing community care. "This amazing story of how one man's actions can save another's life is a true testament to the

caring nature of our community," he commented.

The narrative serves as a poignant reminder of the critical role community members play in looking out for one another's well-being. The welfare check instructions in the

blue chart can provide valuable insights into recognizing and responding to situations where someone's safety may be at risk.

Joe Shandera's courageous initiative stands as an inspiring example, urging everyone to heed their instincts and take action when they suspect someone may be in need of assistance. His story reaffirms that a simple act of concern can make a profound difference in saving lives within our neighborhoods.



HOW TO REQUEST A WELFARE CHECK

- + Call a local police non-emergency number or 911. Always call 911 if you suspect that the person is in active, immediate danger (like a suicidal friend or loved one). Dial the police non-emergency number for serious but not necessarily life-threatening concerns (like a neighbor you haven't heard from in a few days)
- + Specify the person's full name and address, and explain why you're concerned or why you believe they might be in danger.
- + Wait for a response from the police. They will update you if the welfare check is successful. If not, they will prioritize immediate concerns.
- + Consistent lack of contact is concerning; occasional missed calls or texts aren't alarming, but persistent lack of communication should be addressed.
- + Welfare checks are often requested for individuals showing signs of suicidal behavior, such as troubling messages, unusual social media posts, or admissions of distress. Acting quickly with a welfare check can be life-saving and connect them with necessary mental health resources.
- + If you notice suspicious activity near someone's home, like signs of a break-in or unknown individuals lurking, call the police for a welfare check to swiftly aid potential victims.

Leadership Attends the NEA-Retired Chicago Conference

Seven NSEA-Retired members traveled to Chicago, Illinois this spring to represent members at the 2024 NEA-Retired Conference.

Members attending the conference were NSEA-Retired Board President John Heineman, NSEA-Retired Vice President Roger Rea, Secretary Sarah Brown, Treasurer Arlene Rea, District Representatives Margie Nowak, Howard Gaffney, Walta Sue Dodd, as well as NSEA Vice President Paul Schulte and NSEA Liaison Kristen Sedlacek.

Education & Democracy

The conference, titled "Education, Democracy, Freedom: Our Right! Our Responsibility," featured speakers, breakout sessions, advocacy and opportunities for social and personal growth.

"It was a rewarding experience. I was filled with pride and admiration for the Nebraska delegates' exceptional representation of Nebraska," said Heineman. "Their dedication shone brightly, embodying the values of education and community."

Heineman said the insights shared by the officers of the National Education Association painted a vivid picture of the organization's visionary path ahead.

"Their perspectives and aspirations for the future of education resonated deeply, inspiring a sense of hope and unity among attendees," he said. "Overall, the event proved to be a memorable and enlightening gathering, fostering connections, celebrating accomplishments, and fueling a collective drive towards advancing education on a broader scale."

NSEA-Retired President John Heineman led a workshop on parliamentary procedure, engaging the audience in the importance of parliamentary knowledge in guiding and informing others within the educational field.

Reaching All Members

Each of the delegates and representatives chose areas most relevant to themselves and the NSEA-Retired.

Secretary and Membership Committee member Sarah Brown attended sessions including "Who Wants to Be an NEA Knowledge Bowl Winner?," "Cyber Security," "Reaching Across All Membership Categories,"



Left to Right: Arlene Rea, Howard Gaffney, Roger Rea, Margie Nowak, NSEA Liaison Kristen Sedlacek, Walta Sue Dodd, NSEA-Retired President John Heineman, Sarah Brown and NSEA Vice-President Paul Schulte.

and "What I Want My Loved Ones to Know: A Practical Look at Life and Preparedness."

In the "Knowledge Bowl," participants reviewed a trivia style presentation which reviewed history, benefits and NEA programs. The "Cyber" session demonstrated types of scams and members shared experiences from their personal lives; the "Membership Categories" session included ways to increase membership within the state; and the "Practical Look" reviewed programs available on the NEA Member Benefits website.

Brown hopes to share some of her insights with her local.

Generation Gaps

NSEA-Retired Treasurer Arlene Rea not only attended the Parliamentary Procedure session but also attended the "Social Emotional Awareness: Discussing Generational Gaps" which led to a deeper understanding as to why we are having trouble with membership.

After reviewing the guideposts of the different generations: Boomers I, born between 1946 and 1954; Boomers II, born between 1955 and 1964; Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980; Millennials, born between 1981 and 1996; and Generation Z,

born between 1997 and 2012; and the differences between generational communications, leadership and collaboration, participants possess an awareness of each generation's organizational needs.

Also relevant to ongoing work to stop private school vouchers in Nebraska, Rea attended, "Identifying and Understanding the Groups Working to Undermine Public Education" where participants were provided with information about a well-coordinated, nationwide effort by groups who threaten public education and their reasons for their determination to seek privatization.

Margie Nowak attended a workshop on NEA Member Benefits. Dodd attended sessions on lobbying lawmakers and building community engagement.

Howard Gaffney attended interesting and informative sessions, and was impressed with the presenters along with the handouts and information presented. Perhaps most memorable of all was the unexpected "tour" of Chicago after being sent to the wrong restaurant. A full accounting of this event was in April's *The Voice* magazine.



Nineteen NSEA-Retired members represented our association at the 2024 Delegate Assembly held in Lincoln this April. All the delegates prepared well and took an active role in the debates, discussions, and votes at this year's Delegate Assembly. NSEA-Retired was represented well, and our voice was heard throughout the DA!



The NSEA-Retired Board, the Metro District, and all NSEA-Retired members would like to thank Ruby Davis for her service on the Board of Directors for the past three years. Ruby's kindness, insights, and support are much appreciated by all those who served with her and we wish her the best of luck on her next adventure!

Lincoln Education Association-Retired Awards Scholarships

Each year the Lincoln Education Association-Retired raises money for scholarships for outstanding college students preparing to student teach.

Recipients are selected from applications from students who graduated from the Lincoln Public Schools and are pursuing a career and education in Nebraska. This year three students were honored with \$1000 dollar scholarships at the annual scholarship luncheon.

Aleskey Betancur is a 2020 graduate of Lincoln East High School. She is currently attending college at Nebraska Wesleyan University.

Ella Carter graduated from Lincoln East High School in 2021 is currently studying at University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) and has endorsements in biology.

Sara Kemper is a 2001 graduate of Lincoln High School. She is studying secondary special education at UNL. She currently works with The Arc of Lincoln and the Autism Family Network.



Photo (left to right): Union Bank and Trust representatives Jason McCown, Barbara Hetcko and Diane Lamb, scholarship recipients Sara Kemper and Ella Carter, and Lincoln Education Association-Retired President Joe Shandera.



Forgot to claim your Nebraska Property Tax Credit? You're not alone!

Article By: Roger Rea, NSEA-Retired Vice President

Property tax relief has been a focus of the Unicameral for many years. Senators have offered several types of property tax relief (including an expanded Homestead Exemption) in an effort to offset the local property tax burden. Since the state does not directly levy a property tax, some creative ways to provide property tax relief have been passed.

For the 2020 tax year, senators appropriated \$130 million for homeowners who paid taxes to K-12 schools. Senators wanted to be sure that homeowners knew that this relief was coming from the State. Instead of providing a direct payment to taxpayers, taxpayers have to claim a tax credit on their tax return to get their money. Nebraska Tax Commissioner James Kamm described the program this way: "What the State of Nebraska is doing it is giving them a credit against their state income taxes for the property taxes paid at the local level." If you claim your credit, the money gets added to your refund or deducted from what you owe.

The legislature has changed the formula for property tax relief and has increased the amount of funding appropriated over the years. Unfortunately, so has the amount that has not been claimed! A total of \$561 million was set aside for tax year 2023, to provide income tax credits for taxes paid to K-12 schools. According to the Nebraska Department of Revenue, only 46% of the amount set aside was actually claimed in 2022. Here's a summary for the past three tax years:

Tax Year 2020: \$82 million claimed of \$130 million possible (\$48 million unclaimed)

Tax Year 2021: \$418 million claimed of \$578 million possible (\$160 million unclaimed)

Tax Year 2022: \$549.5 million claimed of \$763 million possible (\$213.5 million unclaimed)

Nebraska now provides refundable tax credits for both K-12 schools and community college property taxes paid. Each credit is equal to a distinct percentage multiplied by either the school district or community college tax paid. For the 2023 tax year, the credit is 30% of the taxes paid for K-12 school district and community college taxes. How much money is that? For a home in Douglas County valued at \$230,000 the property tax credit is about \$900.

Taxpayers across the state are not claiming the money that has been appropriated for property tax relief. The table displays how taxpayers in some of the larger school districts fared for the 2022 tax year:

2022 Tax Year	
School District	Property Tax Credits
Omaha (OPS)	65% unclaimed
Grand Island	60% unclaimed
Bellevue	59% unclaimed
Papillion-La Vista	57% unclaimed
Lincoln	51% unclaimed
Westside	51% unclaimed
Millard	50% unclaimed
Gretna	40% unclaimed
Bennington	35% unclaimed
Elkhorn	35% unclaimed

If you did not claim the tax credit, it's not too late! You can file an amended Nebraska Property Tax Credit Form (PTCX) for unclaimed credits for the past three years. Details can be found by consulting your tax

advisor and by visiting the Nebraska Department of Revenue website: www.revenue.nebraska.gov/about/nebraska-property-tax-credits.

For more information, call Nebraska Taxpayer Assistance at 1-800-742-7474.

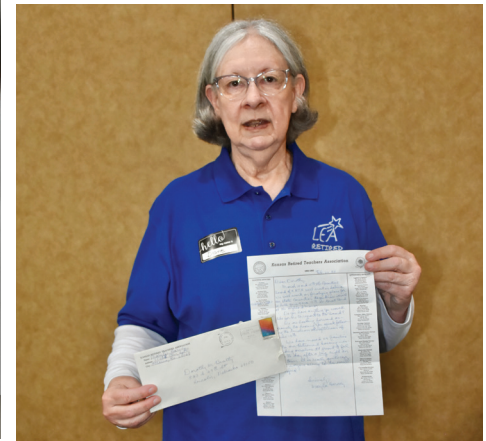
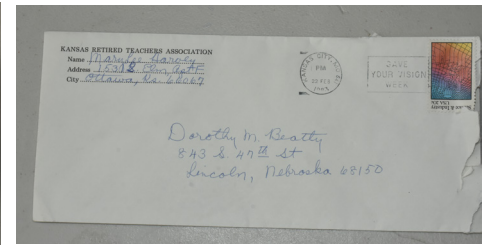
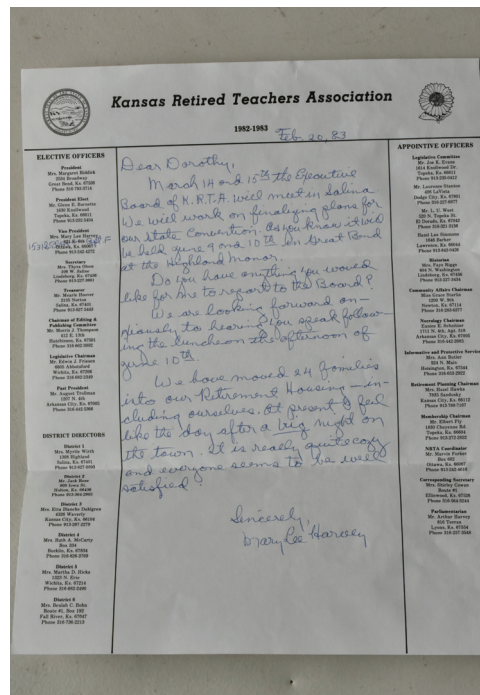
40 year old letter found in donated materials during LEA-Retired "Come and Get It" Event

Article By: Diane Knapp, NSEA-Retired

The Lincoln Education Association-Retired (LEA-R), in collaboration with the Lincoln Education Association (LEA), is gearing up for its annual "Come and Get It" project, aimed at supporting new hires within Lincoln Public Schools (LPS). This initiative collects and distributes donated school supplies and classroom materials to help new teachers kick-start their careers with the resources they need. As preparations for the upcoming giveaway gear up, a remarkable discovery from last year's event has resurfaced. While sorting through donated materials in 2023, LEA-Retired member Diane Knapp stumbled upon an unexpected find — a stamped letter dated February 22, 1983.

"Leave it to a teacher to never throw anything away," Knapp said.

The letter, addressed to Dorothy Beatty of Lincoln, Nebraska, was a reminder of a speaking engagement sent by Mary Lee Harvey from Ottawa, Kansas. The event in question was the Kansas Retired Teacher Association State Convention, scheduled for June 9-10, 1983, in



Great Bend, Kansas. This discovery highlighted the enduring nature of educators' meticulous record-keeping and their tendency to preserve items of historical significance.

As the LEA-R and LEA prepare for the next giveaway, the story of the

40-year-old letter serves as a poignant reminder of the lasting connections and shared history within the teaching profession.

For more information on how to contribute to the "Come and Get It" project or to volunteer, please visit www.lincolneducationassociation.org.

Members Explore Omaha's History on Guided Bus Tours

Forty-four members and friends of NSEA-Retired participated in a three-hour bus tour of Omaha, visiting over a hundred historical sites. Held after Black History Month and during Women's History Month, the tour highlighted women's contributions to their communities through activism and leadership.

The tour covered various neighborhoods, including the Riverfront, Downtown, Midtown, and North Omaha. Key stops included the Malcolm X site, Omaha Star Newspaper, Shirley Tyree Theater, and Big Mama's Cafe. Other notable landmarks were the historic TAC building, several schools, universities, churches, and union sites, showcasing contributions from local philanthropists like the Buffett family.

The tour celebrated Omaha's rich history and the pivotal roles women have played in the city's development.





Nebraska State Education Association-Retired
 605 S. 14th St. Lincoln, NE 68508
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PETITIONS ARE DUE JULY 15

Visit SupportOurSchoolsNebraska.org



The Legislature passed LB1402 to deny Nebraskans' right to vote on sending taxpayer dollars to private schools. This summer, Nebraska taxpayers have sought out the Support Our Schools Nebraska referendum petition to make sure public money stays in public schools!

Turn in your signatures by July 15 to ensure the signatures will count! This deadline ensures the SOSNE Team can get petitions organized by county and ready to turn into the Nebraska Secretary of State. Whether you have 5 signatures or several sheets full, drop them off on or before July 15 at:

LINCOLN: NSEA: 605 S 14 ST. —OR—
 LEA: 4920 NORMAL

OMAHA: OEA: 4202 S 57TH ST

EXPRESS MAIL: SUPPORT OUR SCHOOLS
 NEBRASKA 605 S. 14TH ST. LINCOLN, NE,
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Express mail your notarized pages and include a receipt to be reimbursed!