

## *LEAdvocate*

*Issue # 8*

*January 12, 2009*

Arlene Rea, President

[arlene.rea@nsea.org](mailto:arlene.rea@nsea.org)

Dan Studer, UniServ Director & Editor

[dan.studer@nsea.org](mailto:dan.studer@nsea.org)

Dear Colleagues:

Recently, the press followed by the public has spent a considerable amount of time discussing and in many cases venting over the raises given by the Lincoln Board of Education to the Superintendent of Schools and upper LPS management. Initially, it was stated that the management increases were equal to the 2008-2009 teacher package of 4.5%, but that was later amended, indicating that the increases involved were greater than the teacher package and included benefits not included in the teacher package. Given the current economic times, the increases have stirred considerable controversy in some sectors of the city.

In a January 9th *Lincoln Journal Star* editorial by LPS School Board member Ed Zimmer, Mr. Zimmer writes, "We learned the necessity (and cost) of staying competitive when we recently recruited an excellent new Associate Superintendent of Business Affairs... I voted as I did because I believe we have an excellent, high-performing executive team." Although LEA members are well aware that the Association has no control over the salaries awarded to administrators in this district, LEA has always maintained and will continue to maintain that the Lincoln Public Schools has an "excellent, high performing" team in the teachers of this district.

In the day-in and day-out business of making a difference in a child's life, other than parents, no one makes a greater difference than the teachers of this district. Teachers in this district face a daily, awesome responsibility. They make hundreds of decisions every day in their classroom that affect children and their future. Teachers are held to the highest of standards both professionally and personally. Teachers labor daily under incredible workloads that do not begin with the arrival of students in the morning and with the departure of students at the end of the day. Late afternoons, evenings, weekends, and breaks are consumed with fulfilling responsibilities for the good of students after contract hours and compensation have long lapsed. Not a year goes by (dare we say month? week?) in which new responsibilities are added to the plates of teachers with nothing seemingly ever removed. Teachers are responsible not just to the students within the walls of their classroom, but to administrators and colleagues at their site, to parents across their communities, to the public at large, and forces of control outside of their power in the state legislature and Congress.

In spite of the constant and ever growing demands upon teachers, teachers willingly add to their burdens by volunteering their time, energy, and skills to committees and additional responsibilities both in their buildings and district-wide and further their education and hone their skills in staff development courses and advanced college classes on their own time.

**Everything that a teacher does has one goal: the betterment of the students within their charge. LEA challenges *anyone* to find a better example of "excellence" than the teachers of this district.**

The LEA has always maintained and will continue to maintain that the District and the LPS Board of Education must provide salaries and benefits to teachers that are not only competitive, but acknowledge the fact that Lincoln teachers, on a daily basis, go above and beyond basic requirements to meet the needs of their students. Although the last round of negotiations provided teachers with an increase in both health insurance benefits and salary, the degree of compensation the teachers of Lincoln receive is and always will be seen as an essential reflection of the District and the Board of Education's acknowledgement of the excellent level of performance of the teachers in this district.

LEA does not believe the Board of Education can find a better way to allocate their limited, available resources than to place their teaching staff as priority number one just as the Lincoln teaching staff consistently places their students as priority number one. Helping the School Board see the need to meet

their responsibility to teachers is a challenge LEA embraces. It is also a challenge to which LEA dedicates itself. It is a challenge that must be met by all parties.

~~~ *Arlene Rea,*

LEA President

## **Taking Classes to Advance Your Degree or Your Placement on the Salary Schedule?**

### **Want Some Financial Help?**

Too often LEA members who are taking university classes and spending hard earned cash for those credit hours overlook a great opportunity to get financial assistance for those expenses.

**Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Nebraska offers college scholarships to LEA/NSEA members.**



Since 1986, financial aid has been provided to college-bound Nebraska teachers through the Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Nebraska Professional Development Fund.

To be eligible, LEA/NSEA members must be covered by a Blue Cross/Blue Shield health care policy. Scholarships can be used by teachers to pursue an advanced degree, seek an additional teaching endorsement, or to take course work to meet certification requirements. All courses must be taken for credit.

There are generally three application periods each year, to coincide with the end of spring, summer and fall college sessions. Interested association members must complete the official application form that appears on a regular basis in the NSEA publication, *The Voice* (see the most current issue you recently received at home).

Each applicant may apply for scholarship dollars for no more than three hours of college course work during any session. Books and other supplies are not covered. Previous scholarship applicants, whether successful or not, are always eligible to re-apply. Applicants may be recipients of only two of the three scholarship cycles during each school year.

To apply, you may fill out a scholarship application by going to:

[http://nsea.org/members/teaching/scholarships/bcbs\\_scholarship.htm](http://nsea.org/members/teaching/scholarships/bcbs_scholarship.htm)

and send the application to NSEA.

**Applications for the current round of scholarships must be postmarked by Monday, February 9, 2009.**

Applicants need to follow directions completely when filling out the application form and typing the ONE page addendum. The committee will discard application forms that are not completely and accurately filled in. Additionally, each of the four criteria that **MUST** be contained in the one page attachment needs to be specific and will be screened carefully. Applicants need to check their work carefully to ensure an optimum consideration by the Committee for their request.

Stipend winners must present evidence of successful course work completion at an accredited post-secondary institution before they receive the grant money.

The scholarship program has no effect on the company's premiums, according to Celann LaGreca, Blue Cross/Blue Shield communications director. She said funds for NSEA scholarships come entirely from their budget account for public relations. They're in no way charged against the NSEA account.

For more information, contact the NSEA by calling 475-7611 or by calling toll-free 1-800-742-0047. Sally Bodtke is the associate staff member who handles the scholarship program.

