



# LEA *Express*

March 10, 2008

A weekly compilation of Association news, minutes, upcoming events and tips for LEA Members.

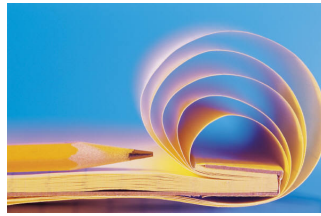
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## Contact Us

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## PROCOM Minutes



Click on the following link to read the ProCom Minutes.

<http://www.lincolneducationassociation.org/MinutesProCom.html>

ProCom (Professional Committee) is a joint committee, established by the Professional Agreement, of the school district and the Association. ProCom continues the commitment to meet regularly to discuss overall relations between the parties, exchange information, receive suggestions, consider problems and discuss improvements. The district shall have five to eight persons appointed by the Superintendent, one of which shall be the Superintendent and including one principal from each educational level. The Association shall have five to eight persons appointed by the Association, one of which shall be the President of the LEA. Currently, the members are Jenni Absalon, Doreen Ainslie, Marcia Benner, Dr. Nancy Biggs, Bill Bucher, Dr. Susan Gourley, Matthew Hoffman, Dr. Marilyn Moore, Dr. Pat Hunter-Pirtle, Jim Rea, Arlene Rea, Daniel Ross, Dennis Van Horn, Ruth Ann Wylie, Resa Wiltse.

## LEA Foundation Grants and Scholarships

### LEA Foundation Grants—Deadlines May 1 and March 30

If you are interested in applying for the LEA Foundation Catastrophic Assistance Grant available for members (four times per year), please apply by the May 1 deadline.

If you are interested in applying for one of the LEA Foundation Certificated Professional Grants available for members (one elementary and one secondary per semester), please apply by the March 30 deadline.

If you would like a scholarship application contact Elaine at [elaine.koch@nsea.org](mailto:elaine.koch@nsea.org) or 489-7500. All applications are also available on the LEA website at <http://www.lincolneducationassociation.org/LEAFGrants.html>.

## **LEA Foundation Scholarships—Deadline April 15**

If you are interested in applying for one of the LEA Foundation Scholarships that are available for members (Christa McAuliffe and Barbara Buckingham Patrons), please apply by the April 15 deadline.

If you know of a Lincoln public high school junior or senior interested in pursuing a teaching career, two LEA Foundation Future Teacher Scholarships are available with an April 15 deadline.

If you would like a scholarship application contact Elaine at [elaine.koch@nsea.org](mailto:elaine.koch@nsea.org) or 489-7500. All applications are also available on the LEA website at <http://www.lincolneducationassociation.org/Scholarships.html>.

## **LEA-R Scholarship—Deadline April 1**

If you know of a graduate of the Lincoln public high schools who are in or near their practice teaching semesters, the LEA-Retired also has a scholarship available. The deadline for this scholarship is April 1.

If you would like a scholarship application contact Elaine at [elaine.koch@nsea.org](mailto:elaine.koch@nsea.org) or 489-7500. All applications are also available on the LEA website at <http://www.lincolneducationassociation.org/OtherAssistance.html>.

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## **LEA Foundation Fundraiser**



### **Plans for April 25?**

If you haven't made plans for April 25, please put the LEAF Fundraiser at the Cornhusker Marriott Hotel on your calendar. The fourth annual LEA Foundation Fundraiser will be held at the Cornhusker from 4 p.m. until 11 p.m. Come bid on some wonderful items or buy raffle tickets! Your support will help raise funds for scholarships and educational use grants for members as well as grants to help members in case of catastrophic events in their lives.

Click onto ...

<http://www.lincolneducationassociation.org/LEAFoundationFundraiser.html>  
to see the list of raffle and auction items. [While you are at the fundraiser, come watch the NSEA Delegate Assembly proceedings as delegates representing members make decisions regarding the NSEA direction for the coming year.]

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## LEA Money Savers

Check out this current Discount Card participant's event!

- ✓ Union Bank & Trust Company
- ✓ Richdale Apartments Discount
- ✓ Graham Tire Discount
- ✓ Creative Classroom



Click on the following link to view the additional ways your dues can "pay-off" for you...

<http://www.lincolneducationassociation.org/LEADiscounts.html>

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### Union Bank and Trust Company

15 Lincoln Locations

323-1777

[www.ubt.com](http://www.ubt.com)

[bankeasy@ubt.com](mailto:bankeasy@ubt.com)

LEA members receive a special package of financial services and advantages:

- ✓ Free Checking with No Minimum Balance (Simply Free Checking)
- ✓ Free first order of checks (150 duplicate or wallet)
- ✓ No Annual Fee Visa ATM/Check card with rewards
- ✓ Two Free ATM transactions monthly at non-Union Bank ATMs
- ✓ Free Online Banking, BillPay and Telebank
- ✓ Credit Card with rewards and no annual fee
- ✓ 1/4% Discount on Personal Loans (with automatic payment deduction)\*
- ✓ Free Pre-Approval on Mortgage Loans
- ✓ Full Service Home Mortgage Loan Department
- ✓ Home Equity Lines of Credit available
- ✓ Free Retirement Planning and Financial Goals Review with Investment Representative\*\*
- ✓ Free Estate Planning Consultation

*Credit cards, consumer and mortgage loans subject to approval.*

*\*1/4% discount not available with any other offers.*

*\*\*Securities and mutual funds available through Union Investments are not deposits of Union Bank, are not insured by the FDIC, and may involve investment risks including potential loss of principal.*

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**The Richdale Group**

7201 Pioneers Blvd

**Lincoln NE 68506**  
**484-7900**  
**www.richdale.com**

Lenox Village Apartments (7201 Pioneers Blvd)  
Lionsgate Apartments (5101 Vine Street)  
Rockledge Oaks Apartments (8320 Rockledge Rd)  
Tanglewood Apartments (301 N 44<sup>th</sup> St)

Those relocating to a Richdale Group property who sign a one-year lease will receive 5% off of the market rental rate. Discount may be used as one-time lump-sum discount off of the first full month's rent or as a 5% monthly discount over this one year lease term. Subject to availability.

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**Graham Tire Discount**  
**474-2277**  
**Contact: Rick Alt, Manager**

March 10<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>

For one week only, all Lincoln Education Association members can buy their tires at the same low price as our dealers.

Click on the following link to view all the details and to print a coupon to receive an oil, lube and filter change for \$15.95 through March 31, 2008.

<http://www.lincolneducationassociation.org/LEADiscounts.html>

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**Creative Classrooms, Inc.**  
**1265 South Cotner Blvd**  
**Lincoln, NE 68510**

Click on the following link to check out Creative Classrooms March specials.

## LEA Tidbits



- NSEA New Leader Institute: Slots Open Now
- Toyota International Teacher Program to the Galapagos Islands
- Promoting the General Welfare
- Members say 'No' to LB987
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- Last Chance: Free Generic Prescription Drugs
- NEA A+ Auto

### **NSEA New Leader Institute: Slots Open Now**

It may be early March, but plans for June events are already under way at NSEA — and that includes plans for the 21st annual NSEA New Leader Institute.

New Leader is open to all NSEA K-12, Higher Education, Education Support Professionals and Student Education Association of Nebraska (SEAN) members looking to improve their personal and professional leadership skills. The Institute is widely considered as one of the best training opportunities provided by NSEA — and there is no cost to members.

The Institute is intended for NSEA members of all ages and skill levels interested in leadership roles in their local, district or state associations. In the past 20 years, more than 400 NSEA members have participated, and have given the Institute rave reviews!

The 2008 edition will begin Sunday afternoon, June 8, and will wrap with a graduation luncheon on Wednesday, June 11. The conference will be held at Lincoln Southwest High School. NSEA provides lodging and all meals.

If you would like to be nominated for this prestigious institute, please contact LEA President Arlene Rea at [arlene.rea@nsea.org](mailto:arlene.rea@nsea.org) or 489-7500 before March 26.

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### **Toyota International Teacher Program to the Galapagos Islands**

This year all teachers in grades **6 – 12** and **Library Media Specialists** are eligible to apply! All full time teachers of all subjects in the 50 states and the District of Columbia are encouraged to apply.

This is a special chance for educators to visit these remote islands; the inspiration for Darwin and home to unique ecosystems found no where else on Earth!

The application is now online at [www.iie.org/toyota](http://www.iie.org/toyota). The deadline for application is **May 9, 2008**.

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## **Promoting the General Welfare**

A conference bringing together representatives of the labor, academic and social justice communities to examine selected social and economic justice issues will be held April 5 in Omaha.

Appropriately, the title of the conference and of the opening address is “Promoting the General Welfare.” The opening session will feature long-time civil rights activist Norman Hill. He is past president and executive director of the A. Philip Randolph Institute. Hill will address the role of unions and collective behavior in fully realizing the human rights spelled out in our Declaration of Independence and the U.N.’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Keynoting the closing session will be Robin Williams, the associate director for Civil Rights and Community Action for the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. Williams will speak to “Putting It All Together — Labor/Community Alliances Make a Difference.”

Cost of the conference before March 28 is \$20 for students and \$30 for general admission. After March 28, the cost is \$30 for students and \$40 for general admission. There are five social work CEUs available for the conference.

The conference will begin at 9 a.m. and close at 5 p.m. All sessions will be held at the Milo Bail Student Center at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. To register, call 402-595-2344.

The conference is sponsored by the William Brennan Institute for Labor Studies at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

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## **Members say ‘No’ to LB987**

NSEA has testified against LB987, which would add bureaucracy to state government and lead to statewide assessments. More importantly, a number of NSEA members have made their thoughts known in letters to State Sen. Annette Dubas, who told NSEA she wanted input from teachers, and shared that input with other senators.

LB987, as presented to the Legislature’s Education Committee, would allow the governor to appoint the Quality Education Accountability Commission. Control of educational assessment and accountability would be transferred from the State Board of Education and the Department of Education to the commission, which would work to develop a statewide assessment system.

In letters to Sen. Dubas, NSEA members overwhelmingly favored Nebraska’s existing assessment system. They delivered a clear message that the School-based Teacher-led Assessment Reporting System (STARS) took hard work to develop; works quite well; and should not be tossed aside in favor of rigid, statewide testing.

“Our members tell us that STARS has been extremely difficult and very time-consuming to create. But once their district developed their assessment systems, teachers changed what and how they teach, and children benefited academically,”

said NSEA President Jess Wolf. "They assess to determine student progress, not just to get a (test) score."

LB987 creates additional government bureaucracy. Wolf said the Constitution of the State of Nebraska "is clear that the State Board of Education is a constitutional body and has the authority and duty to provide the rules and regulations that govern the operation of Nebraska's public schools."

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### **Blue Cross and Blue Shield Health Care Updates**

Average rates for the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska health care plan used by most Nebraska public school employees will increase by just 4.8 percent on Sept. 1 -- the lowest rate in at least a dozen years.

The health care plan will also grow from a two-tiered plan to four tiers, making the plan more equitable for single parents and couples without children.

The Educator's Health Alliance Board of Directors approved the 2008-09 rates, as well as the changes in the tier structure, on Feb. 12. NSEA Executive Director Craig R. Christiansen chairs the EHA Board.

"There has been an inequity in that there were two categories of plan participants - couples without children, or single adults with a child -- that were paying a full family rate, which is obviously more expensive," said Christiansen.

The equity issue argued for the four-tiered plan, which has become predominate in Nebraska, he said.

"The long term effect will be more equity in the relationship between the premium and the coverage," he said.

As the new school year approaches, school districts and local associations must pay special attention to the implication of the tier changes.

"Much more care must be paid to which category each plan member is in," he said.

In the meantime, Christiansen applauded the 4.8 percent rate increase, which is well below the medical inflation rate.

"I'm very proud of EHA and our members in terms of how our members are being better consumers of health care," he said. "There has been a major shift to generic drugs, which are cheaper for the member and for the shared insurance costs of EHA."

There are no changes in benefits for the 2008-09 plan.

### **High Deductible Plan Possible**

The 4.8 percent increase is an average over the four tiers, cautioned Christiansen.

The actual increases will depend on the relative number of participants in each category.

"All of the individual districts and individuals therefore may see different increases," he said. "But the overall plan has an increase of just 4.8 percent."

Christiansen also noted that EHA Board members are concerned about providing health care options for Education Support Professionals (ESPs). In order to provide low-cost options, the Board is in the process of reviewing a high-deductible plan with a significantly lower premium.

"We hope to adopt that this spring, if it becomes available," he said.

### **Open Enrollment**

The EHA Board also opted to offer an open enrollment period for employees and dependent who are eligible to participate but have not previously enrolled in the EHHA medical plan.

Individuals who would be classified as 'late enrollees' under the EHA Underwriting Guidelines will have an opportunity to enroll, add dependents, or add dependent coverage in one of the now three tiers that include dependents.

In addition to opening up the eligibility to enroll, the 'late enrollee' penalties of pre-existing conditions exclusions, coverage waiting periods, and late fees will not be applied to individuals enrolling during this period. The enrollment period will be from May 1 through Sept. 30, with a coverage effective date of Sept. 1.

### **Constantly Rising**

Christiansen asked NSEA members to remember that the cost of health care is constantly rising.

"The national trends for medical inflation reflect increases not only in hospital and doctor costs, but in how often we, the plan members, utilize those services. The job of EHA is to offer a plan that provides quality insurance in an era of rapidly rising health care costs," he said.

The EHA Board sets the rates each year. A 12-member board oversees the health insurance plan for Nebraska educators. On the EHA board are six NSEA representatives. Three members represent the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, and three more represent the Nebraska Association of School Boards.

For more details on the rates, check the EHA web site:

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

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### **Last Chance: Free Generic Prescription Drugs**

Health care is one of those things that we think of in terms of dollars and cents. For one more month, members of the Educator's Health Alliance Blue Cross and

Blue Shield of Nebraska plan can think of health care as ‘free.’

March is the third and final month that Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska will be offering its members free generic prescription drugs!

If you’re already taking a generic prescription drug, whenever you get a refill using either a participating Rx Nebraska retail pharmacy or PrimeMail mail service program, your copay/coinsurance amount will be waived. If you’re currently taking a brand name drug, ask your doctor if a generic drug is available and appropriate to treat your condition, and if so, to write you a new prescription. Have the new prescription filled at a participating pharmacy or through PrimeMail, and the normal copay/coinsurance will be waived. That’s all there is to it!

The plan’s prescription drug benefits are subject to satisfaction of the calendar year deductible. This deductible must be satisfied before the free generics offer will be available to you.

By encouraging the use of generics, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska is hoping you’ll continue to use generics after the free offer ends for ongoing savings.

Generic drugs offer the same quality, strength, purity and stability as brand name drugs, but cost much less. In fact, the average cost of a 30-day supply of a generic prescription drug is \$22 compared to an average of \$123 for a brand name drug.

Note that persons who are 65 years old or older, and who are in a Medicare, Medicare Supplement or Medicare Part D plan, are not eligible. Only those who participate in the Educator’s Health Alliance Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska Plan are eligible.

For more details, go to the Web site at: [www.genericsfromneblues.com](http://www.genericsfromneblues.com)

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Kristen Smith, Field Representative  
E-Mail: [kksmith@aplus.com](mailto:kksmith@aplus.com)  
Home Office: 402-991-6811  
Toll Free V-Mail: 800-964-3903 ext. 5991  
To receive a Quote: 877-777-1419

### **Signs Your Car has Pothole Damage**

A pothole can seriously damage a vehicle’s ride control system, according to the Car Care Council, and drivers are advised to avoid them whenever possible.

Should you not be able to steer around one, however, and you feel a bad jarring

motion, don't ignore it. You should have the car's shocks or struts checked to make sure they haven't been damaged.

Shocks and struts control how cars ride and handle. Shock absorbers – or struts – act as a cushion to dampen the bouncing action that comes from the car's springs. Springs absorb road bumps and, without them, the car would be difficult to control.

Shocks and struts also control spring and suspension movement to keep tires in contact with the road. This affects steering, stability and even braking. A broken shock or strut could alter steering and handling of the vehicle and create a driving hazard.

Here are some warning signs you may have damage:

The vehicle rolls or sways on turns.

The vehicle's front end dives when braking.

The vehicle's rear end squats when accelerating.

The vehicle "bottom's out" or thumps on bumps.

The vehicle sits lower in the front or rear.

The vehicle is leaking or has signs of physical damage, such as rusting or dents.

There is a loss of directional control during sudden stops.

Don't wait to get your car's shocks or struts fixed, to maximize your safety on the road.

If you have additional questions concerning your vehicle or would like to receive a free no-obligation quote, please give us a call at **1-877-777-1419**. This is a message provided by A+ NEA Members *Auto & Home Insurance Program*.

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## Calendar of Events



Click on the following link for the LEA Calendar of Events ...

<http://www.lincolneducationassociation.org/calendarofevents.html>