

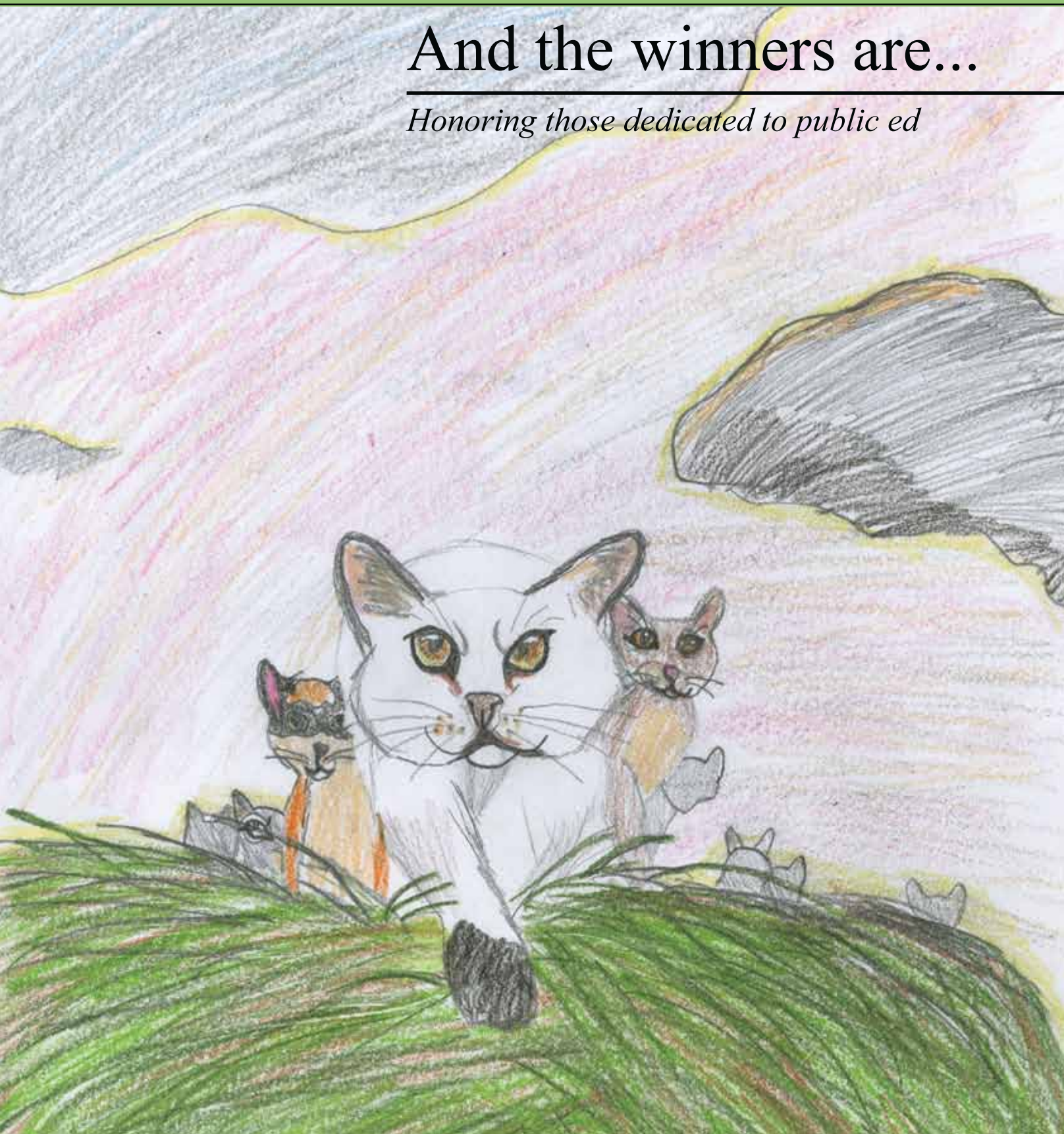
THE EDUCATION FOCUS

FOR THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE OKLAHOMA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

April/May 2013

And the winners are...

Honoring those dedicated to public ed



And the winners are...

In our annual awards issue, we honor outstanding teachers, talented students, two citizens who fight for public education, dedicated local associations and a school administrator willing to stand up for teachers and students.



Page 2 Norman's **Claudia Swisher** is giving teens a desire to read for pleasure and Enid's **Sherri Hendrie** has developed a plan that helps teachers improve learning at Emerson Middle School.

Page 3 Mid-Del's **Kelly Fry** helps his students take ownership of their education and Tulsa Superintendent **Dr. Keith Ballard** has stepped into the spotlight to fight for public education.



Page 4 Two locals have earned Collective Bargaining Awards – **Enid EA** for efforts locally and **Tulsa CTA** for work that benefits teachers statewide.

Page 5 **Marlow Perkins Sipes**, a mother from Tulsa, and **Kevin Sain**, a lawyer from Idabel, have won Human and Civil Rights awards for their dedication to public education.



Page 6 ESP **Judie Abbott** goes above and beyond in her job and for the students at the Lawton-Fort Sill Area Lifelong Learning Center.

On the cover – “**Warriors**,” by **Alexis Bonnell** of Arrow Springs Elementary in Broken Arrow, 1st place in 3rd-5th Grade division of OEA's Read Across America poster contest. See more on Page 11.

Join the conversation with OEA!



- On Facebook –
- Oklahoma.Education.Association
 - Student.Oklahoma.Education.Association
- On Twitter –
- twitter.com/okea
- On Pinterest –
- pinterest.com/oeaedupins

Need help? Call us.

Do you need assistance with a personnel matter? Would you like OEA to bring top-notch professional development to your building? Does your Association need organizing help? Call your regional office and ask for help, or visit okea.org for details on our programs and services.

**Oklahoma City Metro,
Northwest, Southeast
and Southwest Teams**
800/522-8091 or 405/528-7785

Northeast and Tulsa Metro Teams
800/331-5143 or 918/665-2282

The Education Focus

Volume 30, No. 5

The Education Focus is a production
of the Oklahoma Education
Association's Communications Center.

Linda S. Hampton, President
Alicia Priest, Vice President
Lela Odom, Executive Director

Communications Center
Doug Folks, Editor
Kandis West, Media Relations
Maureen Peters, Center Assistant

The Education Focus (ISSN 1542-1678) is published seven times annually with issues in October/November, December/January, February, March, April/May, June/July and August/September, for \$5 by the Oklahoma Education Association, 323 E. Madison, Oklahoma City, OK 73105. Periodicals postage paid at Okla. City, OK, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Education Focus, PO Box 18485, Oklahoma City, OK 73154.

Join today!

Membership in the OEA provides security, symbolizes professionalism and brings with it a wealth of benefits.

Visit okea.org
for more information, and
call 800/522-8091
to find out how to join today.



Money is driving the education reform train

By Linda Hampton
OEA President

Have you ever wondered who is “driving the train” that is running the school reform movement across our nation and in Oklahoma?

To find the answer to that question, you need to *follow the money!* It has become common in our nation for rich people to form tax-exempt foundations and invest their riches in changing laws and policies that conform with their beliefs. Bill Gates, the Walton Foundation, Broad, the Koch Brothers and other billionaires are among those pushing education reforms down the track.

Oklahoma is being “taken for a ride” on this train that is barreling through America. Three Oklahoma foundations (In As Much, Kaiser, Schusterman) have paid to bring a group called Stand for Children to our state. Stand for Children is working tirelessly to get an expanded charter school bill passed in the Legislature. The Gates Foundation promotes online schools, and they also had a huge impact on the Teacher Leader Evaluation (TLE) law changes here in Oklahoma.

The Arnold Foundation is the most recent group to enter the picture in Oklahoma. The Arnold family has committed \$2 million to our state leaders to change our public employee pension systems into either defined contribution or cash balance pension plans for new employees. Both of these plans will lower the cost to the state and, therefore, lower the benefit to the employees. Both alternatives will jeopardize the funding of the plan for current employees.

In addition to rich families driving the train, corporations also want a piece of the education reform track.

Their agenda is to make money for their companies through changes in education laws. One avenue they use to influence legislation is through a group called ALEC – the American Legislative Exchange Council.

Through their extensive network and relationships with elected officials, ALEC provides more than 1,000 pieces of “model legislation” for a variety of policy areas, including education. Their aim is clear and their formula simple: defund, deregulate, privatize, profit.

Sound familiar? Many Oklahoma legislators are members of ALEC and several bills that have been introduced in our Legislature are ALEC model bills – charters, vouchers, education tax credits, virtual schools and privatization of schools, just to name a few. Their anti-public education agenda clearly puts kids last and corporations first.

Instead of working with educators and parents, ALEC works with politicians, CEOs and special interest groups who think they know how to ‘fix’ schools. Another of ALEC’s priorities is to weaken or eliminate unions by eliminating collective bargaining and the ability of members to have their dues and voluntary political action contributions payroll deducted.

This not only would weaken our voice and our ability to promote great public schools, but would weaken our ability to hold our politicians



President Linda Hampton

accountable on public education issues. If we are silenced who will be the voice for our students and our schools? Sadly, the answer is that those with the most money will be in control. As teachers and support professionals, we have to be the ones to say loudly and clearly that our children’s education is not for sale.

Unlike all of these groups, we believe that our children deserve education policies that put them first and not last. Instead of trying to fuel the money train, we should be investing in our children’s future, not using our children’s future as an investment for profit. We should be making decisions based on research about what is best for our students, not on how much profit can be made. And lastly, instead of reducing retirement benefits we should be looking at ways to ensure retirement benefits don’t decrease for hard-working school employees.

As always, thanks for all you do!



Reclaim Your Power
Reclaim Your Profession

2013 Summer Leadership Academy
July 24-25 at NSU Broken Arrow

Register today @ [okea.org!](http://okea.org)

Turning teens into readers

By Doug Folks

At least one student has observed that Claudia Swisher has found a way to get paid for reading. In a way, that's true. She has what must be one of the sweetest teaching assignments ever – five classes a day of “Reading for Pleasure” at Norman North High School.

While the class may sound like an easy “A,”

Teachers Teaching Students

Swisher has a detailed syllabus that helps turn high school students into avid readers. The class is good for all levels of readers because the basic requirements are to read books and to share what they've read. Students are not assigned books, but pick their own. If the book is too “adult,” Swisher makes sure parents know and approve of the selection.

Swisher is a fourth-generation teacher who has taught 38 years in three states and at every level, K-12. A former State Teacher of the Year finalist, she renewed her National Board Certification in 2009.

“Booksellers,” the culminating project for the English elective Reading for Pleasure, has earned Swisher OEA's 2013 Excellence in the Classroom Award for Teachers Teaching Students.

The project requires students to create an interactive project that “sells” a book to the other students. Including food and giveaways is encouraged, like serving red punch



Claudia Swisher and some of her Reading for Pleasure students at Norman North High School.

Photo by Doug Folks.

to sell a vampire book. “Sellers” are to talk about the book with enthusiasm and knowledge.

“Buyers” are expected to talk with each “seller” and ask genuine questions (not “teacher” questions they already know the answer to), such as, “If your book was a day of the week, which day would it be?” As they talk with the sellers, buyers are looking to add to their lists of “books to read next.”

Half of the students are sellers on a particular day while the other half are buyers. The next day roles are reversed. Because the “buying” and “selling” happens in a flea-market atmosphere, shy students aren't intimidated by having to present in front of an entire class.

Hendrie's plan helps Enid school improve

By Doug Folks

Sherri Hendrie has created a new environment at Enid's Emerson Middle School that features effective instructional strategies, high student accountability and plenty of opportunities for student success.

Her “School Improvement Plan” was developed to pull Emerson off of



Enid's Sherri Hendrie

Photo by Doug Folks.

the state's School Improvement list, and has earned Hendrie the 2013 OEA Professional Excellence Award for Teachers Teaching Teachers.

Hendrie is a member of the Enid Education Association and an instructional coach at Emerson and Coolidge Elementary.

Teachers Teaching Teachers

Under her School Improvement Plan, teachers were given access to researched-based strategies, professional development, formative/summative assessments, data disaggregation and best teaching practices.

With the creation of a “rich, focused learning environment,” the program's goal was that students would become self-motivated, accountable and successful in the classroom.

Through several professional development sessions, teachers learned the Anatomy of a Lesson, which fea-

See “Students conduct” on Page 7

Students take ownership in Fry's classroom

By Kandis West

Kelly Fry's dedication to transformational leadership in his classroom allows his students to take ownership of their education.

"I watch my students change from learner to teacher, then teacher to mentor," said Fry, who specializes in using practical application of math and science in his pre-engineering class to debunk myths about STEM (Science, **NFIE Award for Teaching Excellence** Technology, Engineering and Math) subjects and lure a diverse group of students into the field of engineering.

This is just one reason why Fry was selected as OEA's nominee for the NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence.

As a teacher, he starts with high expectations and a be-



Photo by Doug Folks.

Mid-Del's Kelly Fry (center) with Rebecca Crosley (left) and Kari Hampton, 7th graders at Del Crest Middle School.

lief that each student has a reservoir of talent just waiting to be tapped. Fry is not only a great teacher that improves the academic success of his students, but he also prepares his middle school students for life. He designs his curriculum so that their academic success is just the launching pad for their success as a productive citizen of the world.

Leadership in professional development is the cornerstone of Kelly's success. He works as a teacher/leader by teaching other teachers across the state how to success-

See "Relationships" on Page 6

Tulsa's Ballard defends public education

By Doug Folks

During more than 30 years in education, Dr. Keith Ballard has worn many hats – teacher, assistant principal, superintendent, adjunct professor and executive director. Lately, he also has served as the face and voice of reason for all of public education.

Nearing what Ballard has said would be the end of his career, it would have been easy to sit back and let things happen. But instead, the superintendent of Tulsa Public Schools has taken a public stance in confronting issues detrimental to public education.

Ballard has been awarded OEA's 2013 Advocate for Academic Freedom

Award for standing up for all public schools, not just his own district.

Ballard and the Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association worked closely to compete for grant money from the Gates Foundation, crafting historic language on teacher and principal evaluation. While TPS did not receive that money af-



Photo provided by Tulsa Public Schools.

Dr. Keith Ballard

ter completing the process, the Tulsa Model Teacher Leader Evaluation system remained.

As a member of the Teacher Leader Evaluation Commission, Ballard was an outspoken supporter for making the Tulsa TLE **Advocate for Academic Freedom** the state ap-

proved model. He felt strongly that the Tulsa Model was best for Oklahoma schools because it was developed and fine-tuned by Oklahoma teachers and administrators.

The Tulsa Model was eventually chosen as the preferred model and nearly 500 state districts adopted it to pilot this year.

Ballard stood front and center when superintendents across the state criticized the new A-F Grading system as unfair and misleading. He worked with the State Board to help them see the method for determining grades has serious flaws and is working with the Legislature to remedy those flaws.

When State Department of Education held money out of the midterm appropriation adjustments for virtual schools – money that should have gone to help public schools overcome funding shortages – Ballard fired back. He met with the media and pointed out how withholding millions of dollars from public education was damaging public schools.

See "Ballard" on Page 6

Enid, Tulsa win bargaining awards

By Doug Folks

OEA's Collective Bargaining Award is given to an individual or local association for "... making a significant contribution to the advancement of education through the collective bargaining process."

Typically, the award goes to just one honoree in a given year. But for 2013, the Collective Bargaining Committee had two outstanding

Collective Bargaining Award

nominations and found a way to honor both.

One local – the Enid Education Association (EEA) – had great success on the local level. The other honoree – the Tulsa Classroom Teachers Association (TCTA) – accomplished something that benefits most school districts in the state.

Compensation for "Other" Duties

The EEA team always tries to bargain language that affects its members on a daily basis. One issue that continually arises is how teacher workload continues to increase from legislative action (or inaction). Mandates and the loss of funding have put teachers and districts in a bind.

With that in mind, EEA worked to add compensation for duties outside the normal instructional assignment.

Three specific areas are now addressed in EEA's contract:

- **Substitute Pay** – If a teacher loses planning time due to an administrator-assigned duty or because a substitute isn't or can't be hired, the teacher is paid \$12 an hour and \$6 for each additional half-hour. If a lack of a substitute requires a teacher to take another class for the day, that teacher receives the current sub pay. If two teachers split the class, they each receive one-half the substitute rate.

- **District Required Workshops/ Duty** – Teachers who attend district workshops required by the local school board and/or administration outside of regular school hours are compensated at \$12 an hour. The same rate of pay is given to teachers

who are assigned to supervise school basketball or football games and assist with academic meets outside regular school hours.

- **Non-Classroom Duties** – Teachers are compensated



Photo by Doug Folks.

Enid EA bargaining team members (left to right) Reba Gregory, spokesman Rick Moulton, Cindy Moore, Linda Reames and Kim Brittan.

at \$12 an hour when assigned to supervise lunch, breakfast, after-school supervision or bus duty, or to Saturday school. Teachers can be assigned to after-school study supervision for a maximum of 60 minutes after student dismissal and receive \$12 an hour.

Members of EEA's bargaining team are Rick Moulton, spokesperson; Kim Brittan, Reba Gregory, Cindy Moore and Linda Reames.

TLE Placed in Master Contract

TCTA's involvement in the creation of the Tulsa Model TLE is well documented. The evaluation system is the preferred model adopted by the State Board of Education and is being piloted by nearly 500 school districts statewide.

TCTA has taken the next step for all teachers by bargaining the entire TLE and its forms into the Tulsa master contract. State law requires only the procedure to be bargained, but TCTA's language goes beyond the law by protecting teachers from arbitrary changes in the rubric, forms and procedures.

See "Tulsa Model" on Page 8



Photo by Doug Folks.

TCTA bargaining team members: (from left) President Lynn Stockley, Patricia Mott, Shawna Mott-Wright, and Vice President Patti Ferguson-Palmer. Not pictured are John Dvornik and Linda Hendrix, OEA Advocacy Specialist for TCTA and the team spokesperson.

Tulsa mom pushes for better funding

By Kandis West

When Marlow Perkins Sipes realized that public schools were being short-changed at the Legislature, she took matters into her hands and worked to change minds.

Sipes is the founder of the Tulsa-area parent organization 49th Is Not OK. Last spring, she led other members of the organization to the halls of the State Capitol where they worked to educate legislators on the folly of cutting taxes while education funding continued to fall. She orga-

F.D. Moon Educational Award

nized parent engagement meetings and candidate forums, telling education's story wherever she could.

Her focused leadership and dedicated efforts to improving public education for the children in Oklahoma make Sipes the perfect recipient of the 2013 F.D. Moon Educational



Photo by Doug Folks.

Marlow Perkins Sipes in her store, the Lolly Garden, in Tulsa's Utica Square.

Award. The honor, one of OEA's Human and Civil Rights Awards, is presented to a person who has contributed significantly to the advancement of education for students.

Sipes was compelled to form 49th Is Not OK to draw attention to the importance of public policies which support public education.

"Ms. Sipes leadership and courage last spring in support of public education was refreshing, inspirational and powerful. She captured the essence of what parent power can do in the public conversation about education funding and policy," said Lloyd Snow, superintendent of Sand Springs Schools.

Under Marlow's guidance, 49th is Not OK has made a huge difference in the ongoing debate of tax cuts vs education funding, and continues to be a strong voice of parents statewide.

"Marlow has volunteered countless hours, tapped every acquaintance, cajoled every legislator, pleaded with the governor and generally left no stone unturned as she seeks to restore education funding," said Annie VanHanken, a representative of the George Kaiser Family Foundation.

Native son gives back to Idabel schools

By Kandis West

Nothing makes a community more proud than for one of its own to come home and make life better in his hometown.

Kevin Sain, a product of Idabel Public Schools, is a perfect example. After completing law school and passing the bar exam, he returned to his hometown to establish a law practice.

But just having a business in town would never be enough for Sain. He is also an active participant in the vibrant life of Idabel, particularly donating time and talent to the local school district.

Sain's dedication and support of Idabel Public Schools has earned him the 2013 Glenn Snider Human Relations

Glenn Snider Human Relations Award

Award. The honor, one of OEA's Human and Civil Rights awards, is presented to a person who best exemplifies the practice of effective human relations and concerns for human rights.

"Kevin Sain is a rare individual who is devoted to promoting our school and our students. He has proven by his actions that he is a rare individual," said Carolyn White, Idabel High School Counselor and a former OEA board

member. "Our community and our students have benefitted greatly because of his unselfish deeds."

One of those deeds included working without pay to help an athlete with an appeal to the Oklahoma Secondary Schools Activity Association (OSSAA). Sain is also a busy auctioneer who donates his talents to fund-raising efforts for the school district.

In his letter of nomination, former Idabel superintendent James Sharpe said, "Kevin is truly an asset to our school district. His ability to demonstrate a genuine concern for others, to work closely with people from all walks of life within the community and to resolve issues pertinent to the success of Idabel Public Schools are only three of the many reasons to consider Kevin for this award."



Photo provided.

Kevin Sain shares his auctioneer skills to benefit Idabel Public Schools.

ESP Abbott goes above and beyond for Lawton students

By Doug Folks

Judie Abbott has held several different positions during her 23 years as a Lawton Public Schools employee, including jobs that no longer exist. For instance, she began her career as a Xerox operator. She also coordinated distribution of films requested by teachers for classes, handled internal and external mail, and worked as a receptionist and a secretary.

She performed all of those jobs as well or better than anyone ever could. But, it is how she always goes way above and beyond not just for the job but for students that has earned Abbott the OEA's 2013 Education Support Professional Award.

As winner of OEA's top ESP honor, Abbott will automatically be nominated for the National Education Association's ESP of the Year.

While Abbott's current title is secretary for the Lawton-Fort Sill Area Lifelong Learning Center (LALLC), a more accurate description might be Heart and Soul of the LALLC. Her job duties are too numerous to mention, but her support of the students who come through the center is exceptional.

Her position puts her in front of students of all ages

and ethnic backgrounds. Many of them need to be lifted up and Abbott works to give them the courage and that belief they can pass the GED or complete one of the other adult education classes.

"On numerous occasions, Judie has bought groceries for students and even paid their utility bills in order for them to be able to continue to come to class," wrote Dr. Cheryl Monts, director of LPS's Professional Development Center, in her nomination of Abbott.

"If a student, or anyone else in the building, doesn't have transportation, she provides them a ride. Students taking English as a Second Language that qualify for educational benefits through the Veteran's Administration know they can go to Judie for help."

Monts says it is sometimes difficult to say whether Abbott is a support professional or "Super Woman." In her case, the two titles are no doubt one and the same.



Photo by Doug Folks.

Lawton's Judie Abbott

Relationships with students, parents are vital

Continued from Page 3

fully incorporate STEM into every classroom. He starts in his own district by working hand-in-hand with the Math/Science curriculum coordinator, the STEM coordinator and the Career Tech center to encourage hands-on practical application and seamless integration of STEM in all subjects of study.

Fry believes it is essential to foster a relationship with his students and that it is absolutely necessary to develop that same relationship with the parents and the community. For example, he organizes an annual Veteran's Day assembly and invites

current leaders from the aviation and aerospace industry to speak to his engineering classes about how STEM classes are essential to the industry.

He is just as passionate about the teaching profession as he is about his students' learning. His advocacy for

the profession begins with his personal admission that as teachers, we have let other groups define public education.

Fry's passion for teaching and public education make him an obvious candidate for the NEA Foundation's highest award.

Ballard takes the lead for public education

Continued from Page 3

"Because Dr. Ballard is so passionate about these and other educational issues, he agreed to postpone his retirement so that he does not leave at a time when so many decisions by the state seem intent on

destroying or dismantling our public schools," said TCTA President Lynn Stockley in her letter nominating Ballard for the award.

All of Oklahoma's public schools are benefitting from Ballard's willingness to step into the spotlight.

Communications and 5 Star Local Awards

The Marshall Gregory Awards recognize professional and high school student reporters and broadcasters and their newspapers, websites, radio and television stations for excellence in accurate, positive coverage of public schools, education issues, the education process and/or the Oklahoma Education Association.

Student Broadcast Division

Television Feature Story

Award of Excellence – “Poetry Slam,” Rosemary Boyd, Norman North HS

Award of Merit – “Oklahoma Summer Arts Institute,” Jacob Rabon, Norman North HS

Television News Story

Award of Merit – “District 8 Convention,” Evan Patterson, Norman HS

Television Series

Award of Merit – “Classes,” Emily Baker, Alex Lautzenheiser & Audrey Parrish, Norman North HS

Television Year-round coverage

Award of Merit – “Timberwolf Tracks,” Norman North Broadcasting Class, Norman North HS

Student Print Division

Print News Story

Award of Excellence – “Community Urged to Vote in Local Election,” McKenzie Everette, Chouteau HS

Awards of Merit – “CNN Crews Film Bullying Program at Chouteau,” Alyson Drumm, Chouteau HS; and “Edmond Youth Summit Preparing for College,” Jonathan Miller, Edmond Memorial HS

Print Special Issue

Award of Excellence – “Celebrate Education,” *The Pride of CHS*, Matthew Bendure & McKenzie Everett, Editors, Chouteau HS

Print Photojournalism

Award of Merit – “Student and Teacher Using Sky Scout,” McKenzie Everette, Chouteau HS

Print Feature Story

Award of Merit – “The Native American Experience,” Chandler White, Edmond Memorial HS

Print Editorials

Award of Merit – “Here’s Our Angle,” McKenzie Everett & Matthew Bendure, Chouteau HS

2013 Golden Apple

Recognizing OEA local Associations for their consistent efforts to provide quality communications to all of their audiences, including members and other education personnel, local school administration, parents, and the community in general.

Print Brochures – “TCTA Membership Recruitment Brochure,” Tulsa CTA

Electronic Newsletters – “TCTA Connection E-News Alert,” Tulsa CTA

Special Projects – “Walk for Kids,” Sand Springs EA

Internal Print – “Appreciation Cards,” Bartlesville EA

Print Newsletters – “TCTA Connection,” Tulsa CTA

2013 Five Star Local Awards

The Five Star Local program recognizes OEA local associations for their work in the areas of Advocacy, Communications, Legislative and Political Organizing, Organizational Development and Teaching and Learning. Each area is judged separately and stars are awarded for each area in which the local met all the criteria.

Winners of the Spring 2013 Five Star Local Awards have each earned all five stars. They are:

- Bartlesville Education Association
- Enid Education Association
- Professional Educators’ Association of Lawton (PEAL)
- Professional Educators of Norman (PEN)
- McLoud Association of Classroom Teachers
- Putnam City Association of Classroom Teachers
- Sand Springs Education Association

Students conduct self-evaluations

Continued from Page 2
tured activating prior knowledge (20 percent), teacher input (20 percent), student active participation (45 percent), and identify student success (15 percent).

Teachers were also given time to participate in two peer observations, including having their own classes covered during the observations if needed. The idea was that colleagues would be able to collaborate with one another in a classroom setting, gaining insight into new

instructional and classroom management strategies.

Two activities involving students gave them accountability within the plan. First, individual conferences where held with each student at Emerson, with emphasis on expected levels of achievement, sequential paths to improvement and achievement of goals. Second, students conduct self-evaluations of their OCCT assessment data to identify strengths and weaknesses and set goals for the next year.

What You Need to Know About ALEC

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) has become a very organized and successful player in state legislative processes. Their efforts in Oklahoma are showing up in a number of bills, but many of our citizens have no idea of the group's reach and influence. Following is a quick primer on ALEC.

What is ALEC?

ALEC has become a powerful bill-writing machine, cranking out model legislation that benefits corporations. Behind closed doors, ALEC-member corporations hand state legislators the changes to state law they desire to directly benefit their bottom lines.

Corporations sit on all nine ALEC task forces and vote with legislators to approve "model" bills. They have their own corporate governing board, which meets jointly with the legislative board. Participating legislators then bring those proposals home and introduce them in statehouses across the nation as their own brilliant ideas without disclosing that corporations crafted and approved the bills.

Who funds ALEC?

Each corporate member pays an annual fee of \$7,000 to \$25,000. If a corporation participates in any of the nine task forces, additional annual fees of \$2,500 to \$10,000 are levied.

ALEC enjoys nonprofit tax status, which makes dues payments and donations tax deductible. Legislators pay \$50 annual dues, which account for less than 2 percent of ALEC's funding.

How effective is ALEC?

ALEC boasts that it has over 1,000 bills introduced by legislative members across the country every year, with about 20 percent signed into law.

What type of legislation does ALEC promote?

ALEC committees write legislation for a number of areas and is responsible for bills such as the At-Will Employment Act, Expert Witness Standards Act and voter ID bills. Examples of ALEC education legislation in Oklahoma include merit pay for educators, statewide virtual and charter school expansion, district deregulation and attacks on due process.

Who benefits from ALEC?

Although ALEC claims to take an ideological stance of free markets, limited government, federalism and individual liberty, many of its model bills benefit corporations whose agents write them. For legislators, the appeal rests largely on all-expenses-paid trips that provide many

part-time legislators with vacations that they could not afford on their own. They get to rub shoulders with wealthy captains of industry – major prospective out-of-state donors to their political campaigns. For a few hours of work on a task force, legislators can bring the whole family to ALEC's annual convention, stay in swank hotels, attend cool parties and raise funds for the campaign coffers. In 2009, ALEC spent \$251,873 on childcare so legislators and their spouses could have fun.

Who is participating?

Oklahoma has the highest percentage of state leader membership, including Gov. Mary Fallin. Oklahoma's largest companies, including Chesapeake, OG&E, Cox Communications and Oklahoma Natural Gas are members. Several of America's largest corporations, including Bank of America, DELL and McDonalds, have publicly cut ties with ALEC due to consumer scrutiny and image tarnishing.

Visit www.alecexposed.org/ to see which Oklahoma legislators and what companies pay dues to ALEC, and sign a petition agreeing to educate friends and relatives about the mission of ALEC, and find more information.

Tulsa Model locals benefit from TCTA's efforts

Continued from Page 4

"All locals using the Tulsa Model enjoy some protection in the evaluation process because Tulsa Public Schools can't change the model without doing so through the bargaining process," said Patti Ferguson-Palmer, TCTA vice president, in her letter of nomination. "This provides input for all members in 500 locals (using the Tulsa Model)."

By negotiating the TLE into the contract, TCTA feels it has secured

member rights in regards to evaluations, Personal Development Plans (PDPs) and reductions in force (RIF).

TCTA has bargained the first RIF policy in the state that complies to the requirements of SB 2033, which established a state-wide evaluation system that would include both qualitative and quantitative components.

The new RIF policy language maintains bumping rights for teachers who hold certification in more

than one area and includes recall language. In addition, TCTA bargained that evaluators must be certified administrators while state law allows districts to designate non-administrators as evaluators.

Members of TCTA's bargaining team are President Lynn Stockley, Ferguson-Palmer, Shawna Mott-Wright, Patricia Mott, John Dvornik and Linda Hendrix, OEA Advocacy Specialist for TCTA and the team spokesperson.

From campus to classroom

Fogarty Elementary receives OTT's makeover

A wall full of palm prints, great professional development and a tie for Chapter of the Year highlighted Student OEA's Outreach to Teach and Spring Convention in early March.

Students from college campuses across the state spent March 1 at Guthrie's Fogarty Elementary, painting murals of bright colors in hallways, the gym and even a restroom. Palm prints of every student at Fogarty climb the wall of a stairway just across from a large painted tree with palm prints of the day's volunteers serving as leaves. The area will long serve as the centerpiece of OTT 2013.

"Campus to Classroom" was the theme for the two-day event. March 2's Spring Convention featured safety and classroom management among breakout session topics. A mini-job fair featuring representatives from Mid-Del,

Putnam City, Moore and Tulsa gave attendees a chance to talk with potential employers, and a panel discussion comprised of newer teachers and a principal completed the day.

A rare tie in the state Chapter of the Year competition meant Northwestern Oklahoma State University (NWOSU) and Oklahoma Panhandle State University (OPSU) shared this year's prize. Other SOEA winners were,

- University of Oklahoma, Outstanding Local Newsletter and Outstanding Local Website
- OPSU, Outstanding Class Project for Destination Learning 2012
- Jerry Mehelic, OPSU, Chapter Advisor of the Year
- Kirsten Benyshek, OPSU, Outstanding Local Student Leader Award
- Dr. Susan Scott, University of Central Oklahoma chapter advisor, and Mike McIlwee, OEA teaching and learning specialist for the Northwest Region, were both honored for their dedication to SOEA.



Panhandle State's Brittany Sciacca, Katlin Vaughan and Jessica Downing show their red palms after adding "leaves" to the community tree.



Mural painters (from left) Elaina Gibson, OU; SOEA President Victoria Reed, Cameron; and Jackie Snow, OU, add colorful figures to a hallway wall.

Special thanks to our 2013 sponsors

American Fidelity Assurance
Guthrie Public Schools
Horace Mann
NEA Director Lori Burris
Oklahoma Educators Credit Union
Putnam City ACT
Sonic Drive-In of Noble
Dr. Susan Scott and the University
of Central Oklahoma
SOEA Chapter Advisors



Students Willie McCallister and Braden Henry apply their handprints to the stairway with help from Andrea McDowell and Kacy Burnett, an employee of Enterprise Rental Car, who also cooked lunch for the volunteers.

Photos by Doug Folks.

Virtual school accountability is virtually nonexistent

By *Heath Merchen*
Associate General Counsel

Trying to track down how virtual schools are funded is about as easy as finding the Nigerian scam artists who convinced your grandmother to email them her checking account info and social security number.

At present, any virtual school in Oklahoma is supposed to be tied to a physical charter school, school district, technology center, tribe or college in order to receive funding. However, the State Department of Education is writing checks to virtual schools that have no such affiliation. Not small checks, mind you. Millions.

Virtual school companies from around the country have caught the scent and are now circling our state's education budget like sharks, and our State Superintendent of Public Instruction is chumming the waters with money that was supposed to be forwarded to school districts to make up for shortfalls. What we see instead of new textbooks and additional teachers are billboards and radio ads enticing parents to the "schools of the future."

Make no mistake, these private companies are very efficient at what they do – but what they do isn't about education, it's about maximum financial return with minimal investment. Those placing the ads aren't buying billboard space out of concern for Oklahoma students – they are doing it because it will make them a lot of money with no accountability.

Accountability was the purpose of requiring a "sponsor" school district in the existing statutes. Under that framework, the Oklahoma State Board

of Education could audit, control and check to ensure the virtual students received something of substance, but the State Board has no such authority over a private company.

Somehow, our State Department

From your counsel

started authorizing payments directly to those private companies. Nobody asks how. Nobody asks why, ("statutes, we don't need no stinkin' statutes"). The State can't take it back, fine them or otherwise penalize them if they screw up, because they aren't school districts or official charters. They are just private companies providing a "service" for a fee.

All they have to do is sell enough virtual school seats at the start of the year to justify their check, and what happens next is anybody's guess. Maybe the staff is certified. Maybe they aren't. Maybe they are paid on the minimum salary scale. Maybe they aren't. Maybe they are moonlighting from their Nigerian scam artist email jobs ... who knows. The State Department sure doesn't.

Case in point: Large checks were written last year to Epic One on One, a self-proclaimed statewide virtual charter school, and Epic has confirmed that they do not have a sponsoring charter school or school district. They can't have received funding as "the" statewide virtual charter school because the "Statewide Virtual Charter School Board" had its very first meeting just last month.

Ask the State Department what authority the department had to issue



Heath Merchen

those checks and you will be waiting a very long time for a returned call or email. Submit formal comments pointing out these flaws with respect to the State Department's proposed rules, and you will simply receive a "not relevant" response.

Ironically, as the legislature heaps more mandates on Oklahoma's public schools (TLE, Common Core, etc.) while reducing funding, they don't so much as raise an eyebrow when checks are written to virtual schools with no strings, accountability or follow up.

In fact, the most recent legislative

Make no mistake, these private companies are very efficient at what they do – but what they do isn't about education, it's about maximum financial return with minimal investment.

proposal to amend the virtual school requirements (SB 267) has absolutely no accountability standards and even takes the State Board completely out of the mix, making it even easier for private companies to collect funds without ever accounting for what they have or haven't done.

Many a venture capitalist learned during the dot-com era that Internet investments are often more form than substance; sadly, our State Legislature has yet to learn that lesson. The idea of it sounds great, as does the sales pitch ... the substance, however, is more virtual than real.

RAA poster contest shows off talent

Nearly 700 Oklahoma students entered OEA's 2013 Read Across America Poster Contest, and once again the competition was fierce.

The top artists were as diverse in their subject matter as Shakespeare and a bus-driving pigeon. Dr. Seuss characters appeared in the drawings of students of all ages and the Hunger Games books were popular as well.

Following is a list of this year's winners, and you can see all of the winning pictures in the Photo Gallery section of okea.org.

Kindergarten-2nd Grade

1st place – Jenna Lynn Mitsdarfen, "Don't Let The Pigeon Drive The Bus," 2nd Grade, Moore Elementary, Tulsa Union, Teacher – Brooke Kasbaum.

2nd Place – Sydney McNamar, "The Lorax," 2nd Grade, Moore Elementary, Tulsa Union, Teacher – Beth Grounds.

HM – Serenity Minton, "Dolphins," 2nd Grade, Fogarty Elementary, Guthrie, Teacher – Chris DiGiovanni

3rd-5th Grade

1st Place – Alexis Bonnell, "Warriors," 4th Grade, Arrow Springs Elementary, Broken Arrow, Teacher – Katy Cook

2nd Place – Caitlin Conrad, "Guardians of the Ga'Hoole: The Journey," 5th Grade, Mustang Centennial Elementary, Mustang, Teacher – Melissa Malloy

HM – Hayden Jopling, "Charlotte's Web," 5th Grade, Mustang Centennial Elementary, Mustang, Teacher – Melissa Malloy

6th-8th Grade

1st Place – Cherokee Guillory, "The Lorax," 6th Grade, Pansy Kidd Middle School, Pouteau, Teacher – Cindy Hall

2nd Place – Jake Bishop, "Harold and the Purple Crayon," 6th Grade, Bristow Middle School, Bristow, Teacher – Dana Parish

HM – Rosemaricel Ignacio, "Kiss of the Rose Princess," 7th Grade, Tomlinson Middle School, Lawton, Teacher – Jeanne Haines

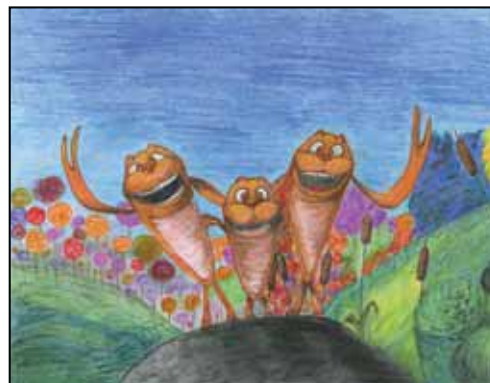
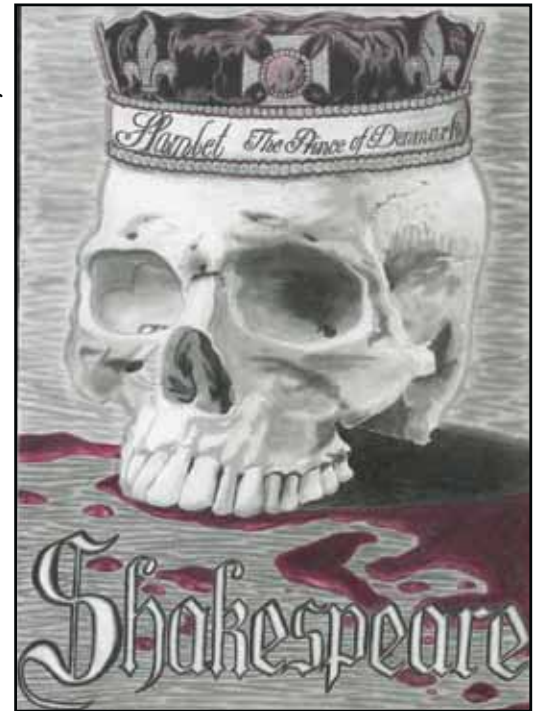
9th-12th Grade

1st Place – Riley Bengel, "Hamlet: Prince of Denmark," 12th Grade, Memorial High School, Tulsa, Teacher – Alexandra Kokorich.

2nd Place – Minji Zdeb, "The Fault in Our Stars," 10th Grade, McAlester High School, Teacher – Lori Douglas

HM – Samira Darbandi, "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows," 12th Grade, Memorial High School, Tulsa, Teacher – Alexandra Kokorich

HM – Ryan Busgith, "The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship," 10th Grade, Memorial High School, Tulsa, Teacher – Alexandra Kokorich.



First place winners in OEA's 2013 Read Across America Poster Contest are "Hamlet: Prince of Denmark" (top) by Riley Bengel, "Warriors" (above left) by Alexis Bonnell, "Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus" (above right) by Jenna Lynn Mitsdarfen, and "The Lorax" (left) by Cherokee Guillory.

Online learning for your lifeSM



Professional development is a journey. The NEA Academy is your guide.

Educators tell us they think of professional development as an ongoing journey . . . a lifelong exploration of learning and teaching. To help ensure that your exploration is meaningful and productive, the NEA Academy conducts an extensive content, quality, and pricing review of institutions and course providers before selecting those worthy of being

Academy partners. As an NEA member, you can always count on the quality, affordability, and convenience of our professional development offerings.

- More than **59 master's degree** and **17 graduate certificate programs** offered by the best public, private, and non-profit universities
- **Tuition discounts** and **fee waivers** for degree and certificate programs; **scholarships** available for eligible applicants
- Over 150 **peer-reviewed** continuing education courses
- **Discounted rates** on all professional development courses
- All programs and courses are offered online, so you can **set your own schedule** – one that works for your life and your priorities

NEA ACADEMY'S UNIVERSITY PARTNERS

The Richard W. Riley
College of Education and Leadership
WALDEN UNIVERSITY



UMassOnline
University of Massachusetts
Amherst · Boston · Dartmouth · Lowell · Worcester

As your professional association, we lead the way in offering professional development that meets each member's needs. Why would you go anywhere else?

Start your professional development journey today at neaacademy.org.

 **neaacademySM**
Online learning for your lifeSM
neaacademy.org

© 2012 National Education Association. All rights reserved.

AC390413

American Fidelity Assurance Company

*Providing Quality Products
and Services to the*



OKLAHOMA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



Helping to secure OEA Members' Financial Security Since 1960 American Fidelity Assurance Company is committed to the education community. We are proud to offer the following products and services to Oklahoma Education Association members:

- Cancer Insurance^{*,+}
- Life Insurance^{**,*}
- Disability Income Insurance^{*}
- Accident Only Insurance^{*,+}
- Tax-Deferred Annuities^{**}
- Section 125 Plans



**American Fidelity
Assurance Company**

A member of the American Fidelity Group®

Kacey Boothe

Western Oklahoma Manager
Lawton Branch Office
1 SW 11th Street, Suite #195
Lawton, OK 73501
1-800-288-1239 • 580-248-0011

Kacey Boothe

Western Oklahoma Manager
Oklahoma City Branch Office
7510 Broadway Ext. Suite 202
Oklahoma City, OK 73116
1-800-933-1853 • 405-416-8810

Wayne Ryan

Eastern Oklahoma Manager
Tulsa Branch Office
4606 South Garnett Rd. #110
Tulsa, OK 74146
1-800-365-2782 • 918-622-6994

**These products may contain limitations, exclusions and waiting periods.*

***Not eligible under Section 125.*

+This product is inappropriate for people who are eligible for Medicaid coverage.

All products may not be available in all states.



Oklahoma Education Association
putting education first™

Periodical
 Post Paid at
 Okla. City, OK

Mortgage rates are still low – **Act now!**

Call **1-800-541-2105**
 or visit neamb.com/hfp today!



Thousands of your fellow members have already taken advantage of the low mortgage rates provided through the **NEA Home Financing Program®** to refinance an existing home or purchase a new one. The **NEA Home Financing Program**, provided by Wells Fargo Home Mortgage, is not just another mortgage program – it comes with the full support and advocacy of your association.

Don't miss out on the low mortgage rates! Contact a home mortgage consultant at **1-800-541-2105** or visit neamb.com/hfp to lock-in your rate today.

*Remember, the **NEA Home Financing Program** is also available to families of NEA members.*

Enjoy these benefits for NEA members:

- Competitive rates and fees
- Choice of loan options
- Everything up until closing can be handled through a toll-free number
- A 60-day interest rate lock option to protect against rising rates
- **NEA Member Bonus - Get a \$200 gift card when you close on your loan!**

1. To be eligible for this promotion, you must close on a new purchase or refinance loan secured by a first mortgage or deed of trust through a Wells Fargo Home Mortgage eligible program, subject to availability. This promotion cannot be combined with the benefits of **The Relocation Mortgage Program®, Wells Fargo Three-Step Refinance System®** or any other program or promotion. Not available on assumption or modification loans, loans originated through brokers, joint ventures or other third parties, home equity loans or home equity lines of credit. This promotion is subject to change, or may be withdrawn at any time without notice and is administered by a third-party vendor, not affiliated with Wells Fargo Home Mortgage. This promotion consists of a stored-value gift card that may be redeemed at participating merchants. Obtain the list of participating merchants by calling 1-800-875-0190 or by going to <http://www.performanceplusaward.com/>. Once redeemed, the gift card promotion may be reported to the IRS on a Form 1099-MISC. Please consult your tax advisor regarding your individual tax implications. Contact your home mortgage consultant for additional details, including current availability, terms and conditions. NEA family members include spouse (domestic partner), adult children and parents. Information is accurate as of date of printing and subject to change without notice. Wells Fargo Home Mortgage is a division of Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. ©2013 Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.

