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Our Vision
The WEA is an organization dedicated to creating the best educational environment for all learners and the best working environment for all educational employees.

Our Mission
The mission of the WEA is to advance public education on all levels by: creating equitable educational opportunity for all learners; promoting the highest quality standards for the profession; and expanding the rights furthering the interests of education personnel. The WEA will continue to build a learning community which will provide a high-quality education for all.

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Contact
Cheyenne Office: 800-442-2395
Casper Office: 800-464-6419
Rock Springs Office: 800-660-6771
Lander Office: 800-464-6412
www.wyoea.org

Editor
Amanda Turner
Layout & Design
Kristin Custis

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Not that long ago, you returned to your classrooms, libraries, buses and schools refreshed and ready for the new school year. But, as the weeks back to school turn to months, many educators are already at a place in the school year where they are at risk for burnout.

Educators are, by nature, very giving people. It’s in our nature to ensure our students’ wellbeing, without necessarily prioritizing our own. But, to be at your very best for your students, you have to take care of yourself.

One of the best ways we can take care of ourselves is to continue our own learning.

Maybe you’re taking a higher education class, maybe you’ll pursue a new hobby or skill, or maybe you’re learning about a new culture in advance of a big vacation. There are countless avenues by which you can further your own knowledge and become a better educator as you continue on your path as a lifelong learner.

NEA provides an excellent means by which members can further their knowledge around everything from Computer Science to classroom management: NEA Micro-Credentials. WEA members now have free access to more than 100 micro-credentialing courses. To browse the full catalogue, visit nea.certificationbank.com.

NEA Members Benefits is another great resource for educator self-care. Learn more about creating a work-life balance, how to say ‘no’, streamlining lesson plans, budgeting your time, and more at neamb.com. You can also treat yourself to any number of discounted health and fitness items. For instance, FLY in-home exercise bikes are currently available for $250+ off through NEA Click & Save.

You can save money on anything from fitness trackers to a rejuvenating vacation at neamb.com.

Finally, remember that you are valued. Your Association appreciates what you do for Wyoming’s students each day. Your commitment, your sacrifices and your dedication are a worthwhile investment in our youth. Please take time to take care of yourselves! Keep up the great work!

Kathy Vetter, WEA President, kvetter@wyoea.org

Self-Care and Mentorship

KATHY VETTER

Kathy Vetter, WEA President, kvetter@wyoea.org
October marks the beginning of WEA’s newest media campaign: One Voice Wyoming. With the support of grant funding from the National Education Association (NEA), WEA will be creating and sharing a campaign aimed at elevating the profile of educators across our state. Existing research conducted through NEA reveals that teachers’ and other education employees’ dissatisfaction in their profession grows by up to 20% within the first ten years in the profession, which in turn results in high turnover. Additionally, this study showed that educators are more likely to remain in their field if they feel respected and valued by their community at large. To that end, WEA will be developing—and sharing statewide—a series of advertisements across print, web, television and radio platforms, aimed at bolstering a positive public perception of Wyoming educators.

One Voice Wyoming will focus specifically on highlighting the exemplary achievements of Wyoming’s new educators, education support professionals and minority leaders in education. Now through October 2020, be on the lookout for the One Voice Wyoming symbol on select articles in WEA News magazines, and stories shared across social media. The success of this campaign relies, not solely on the contributions and participation of our members. If you, or one of your colleagues, is doing exemplary work please share these stories and successes with WEA!

Between the covers of this magazine, and each edition of WEA News, you will find stories of exemplary educators doing great work across Wyoming. Highlighting fellow members’ achievements serves to bolster positive perceptions about educators in Wyoming, which then in turn, strengthens our voice before the legislature and empowers educators and students across our state. Stories like CLIMBing Into The Driver’s Seat on page 16 and Science + Culture = Enduring Knowledge on page 10 perfectly embody the goals and ambitions of the One Voice Wyoming campaign. To support our united voice in advocating for education, please share stories from your community with us by contacting WEA Communications Director, Amanda Turner at aturner@wyoea.org or (307)365-2317.

Looking forward to a richly storied and inspiring year together,

One Voice Wyoming
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Wyoming’s First Lady

JENNIE GORDON

Combatting Rural Poverty: WEA Teams Up With the First Lady

The Wyoming Education Association was honored to partner with First Lady Jennie Gordon on a series of town hall meetings held across Weston County in September.

The town hall meetings were intended to connect people living in rural poverty with local resources to improve their lives.

The First Lady was the keynote speaker at each of three events, speaking on her platform of eradicating childhood hunger in Wyoming. “I am thrilled to join with organizations in these counties to share resources as well as my vision for bringing organizations together to address childhood hunger in Wyoming” said First Lady Jennie Gordon. “I look forward to partnering with the Wyoming Education Association as we work together toward these goals.”

Agency leaders from across Weston County were also present to provide information about services, participate in panel discussions and answer questions from the public. Representatives from Wyoming Workforce Services, the Wyoming Economic Security Division and Helping Hands of Weston County were among the agencies and charitable organizations represented at each of the three town hall meetings.

These events found their genesis in grant work completed by Wyoming Rises Against Poverty (WRAP), an initiative of the Wyoming Education Association. WEA has worked diligently in Weston County and other select areas across the state to inform communities about the deleterious effects of rural poverty on the health, wellbeing, education and security of people and families in rural Wyoming. “WEA has been doing Poverty Simulations for a few years to help our members better understand the experience of students and families in poverty. It’s an in-depth simulation of living for a month in poverty and deciding how to pay bills, keep a family fed, and keep a household running on limited funds,” said WEA UniServ Director, Judy Trohkimoine. “Many of us grew up not having to worry about a choice of whether to fill a prescription or pay the utility bill, and this activity makes poverty personal. We hope that after experiencing the simulation, our members are more understanding of students and families living in poverty and can point them towards resources in their communities.”

The town hall meetings in Newcastle and Upton were held at Newcastle High School and Upton Elementary school. “Our hope is that in holding these events at local schools we’re reinforcing the concept that educators can serve as resources for students and families in poverty,” said WEA President, Kathy Vetter. “Public schools can serve as the epicenter of guidance and assistance through effective, trauma-informed teaching practices and readily available knowledge of local resources that exist to assist community members in need.”

“I LOOK FORWARD TO PARTNERING WITH THE WYOMING EDUCATION ASSOCIATION AS WE WORK TOGETHER TOWARD THESE GOALS.” -FIRST LADY OF WYOMING, JENNIE GORDON

Wyoming First Lady Jennie Gordon speaking at a Town Hall Meeting in Weston County.
Celebrating Wyoming’s educators at the University of Wyoming’s 2019 Educator Appreciation Game, WEA staff and local leaders enjoyed a sunny September Saturday at War Memorial Stadium in Laramie where the Cowboys took on the Idaho Vandals. Before kickoff, WEA gave away free t-shirts to Wyoming educators in the Indoor Practice Facility. “The positive nature with which community members approached our table reinforced my view that this state supports public education,” said Southeast Region UniServ Director, Greg Herold. “Time and time again I heard about someone’s favorite teacher, or that his or her parent was a teacher or that their child is working on a teaching degree, shared Herold. “People said it with pride and support in their voices.”

ACEA Co-Presidents Ami Cass and Mariah Learned were selected to represent WEA members and be honored on the field during the game and WEA members were eligible to purchase discounted tickets for this game. Thank you, educators for all that you do! WEA was proud to honor your commitment to Wyoming’s students!

PHOTO CREDITS CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:
THIS PAGE:
1. Educators receiving free t-shirts in the Indoor Practice Facility. 2. Jillian Balow and select educators enjoying on-field recognition at the 2019 Educator Appreciation Game. 3. From Left: ACEA Co-presidents Ami Cass and Mariah Learned. Photographed with UW’s Pistol Pete and cheerleaders. 4. Aspiring educators and UW cheerleaders before the game.
Q&A With Wyoming’s 2020 NEA Global Fellow: Reva Lobatos, Fourth Grade Teacher at Fort Washakie Elementary.

We’re excited to see what Reva Lobatos gains as an NEA Foundation Global Learning Fellow! With a year of professional development and an international field study ahead of her, Reva is ecstatic about the opportunity ahead. Congratulations, Reva!

1) What does it mean to know that you were selected out of all WEA member-educators in Wyoming to receive this prestigious award and enjoy this rare opportunity?

I cannot express how honored I am to receive this prestigious award. I love teaching and I know that everyday, I have an opportunity to make an impact on my students in a positive way. Connecting the world through global education is a dream come true and being given the opportunity to actually see it in action, in person is just amazing to me! I know a lot of Wyoming educators and I am constantly in awe of their dedication, creativity, and passion for this profession. I am one among many who deserve recognition and opportunities like this and I am humbled by being chosen.

2) Do you know yet where you’ll be visiting?

Yes! Peru!!!!

3) What are you most excited about in relation to this award/program?

I am most excited to see the similarities between the children in Peru and the children in Wyoming. I love to travel and when I do, it is so fun for me to notice how much alike we all are around the world!

4) When will you start packing for your trip?

Since the trip will be relatively soon after the end of the school year, I will probably start packing the night before! My mind is ultra-focused at the end of the school year on making sure that my students are leaving prepared for the next grade level, but cared for enough to never forget that they are loved.

5) What’s your key to success? What makes you an exemplary educator? What advice would you give to other educators (aspiring or early career) looking to become extraordinary educators or influences in students’ lives?

There really is no secret to being a successful teacher. It doesn’t come from curriculum, training, programs, statistics, or test scores. Even the cutest decorations, themes, and teacher planning materials aren’t the key! I have found that my greatest accomplishments come on the days/years that I am genuine in my care and concern for my students as people. I listen to their concerns and make myself available to help, if they need me, but I also gently push them to think for themselves and discover their own strengths. I have very high expectations coupled with genuine love for them as human beings. Children are smart and they respond to that combination.

Membership Committee Meeting

This summer, WEA Staff and governance convened with NEA staff to share with the Membership Committee the many tools and resources available to grow your Association through member recruitment and retention. Utilizing these tools, the committee then dove into developing strategic, data-driven regional membership plans during a two-day Membership Committee meeting. To learn more about the plans developed for your region for the 2019-2020 school year, and the best ways in which your local can support WEA’s membership growth goals, reach out to your UniServ Director.
SAVE THE DATE
2019 WYOMING ARTS SUMMIT

Equity in the Arts

CELEBRATING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF WYOMING WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE

NOV 7-9, 2019 | LITTLE AMERICA, CHEYENNE

The Arts Council’s bi-annual summit offers professional development for artists and arts advocates, administrators, and educators, and will highlight many of Wyoming’s talented visual, performing, and literary artists. The Arts Summit features a variety of interdisciplinary and discipline-specific workshops, sessions, and presentations, and music showcases, receptions, and networking opportunities!

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Mary Anne Carter, acting chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

Pam Breaux, president and CEO of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA)

Educators will be able to earn up to 1 PTSB credit. The Wyoming Arts Council will accept school vouchers for this event.

Register online at 2019artssummit.eventbrite.com.

Individuals and organizations may apply for a Professional Development/Career Advancement Grant from the Arts Council to attend the summit. Click on the Grants tab on the Arts Council website. If registration rates are prohibitive to you or your organization, please contact the Arts Council.
This past summer, students on the Wind River Indian Reservation had the opportunity to learn about multiple science disciplines while attending a “Drone Camp”, funded by the University of Wyoming under the Bessie Coleman Project with a National Science Foundation grant. Students learned how to read geological maps, and use drones and video editing tools to visit historic sites where their ancestors hunted buffalo, and connected their Arapaho language and culture to science and math learning.

WEA members Iva Moss-Redman who teaches STEM at Arapahoe Middle School and Michael Redman who teaches Arapaho Culture at St. Stephen’s School, were part of a team of five educators who held a Drone Camp for 24 middle school and high school students from Arapahoe, Wyoming Indian, St. Stephen’s and Riverton Schools. For this first year of Drone Camp, Arapahoe Middle School was selected as host site along with other sites in Denver, Cheyenne, and Riverton.

In addition to the field learning experiences, students learned with guest scientists: A geologist to teach them to read topographical maps and understand the rocks and soil of the buffalo jumps at Beaver Rim, a ridge east of the Wind River Indian Reservation; an ecologist to explain the plants, and human impact on the land; and technology specialists to help students learn to fly drones and then edit the video collected by those drones. Students went on a field trip and used drones to fly over the buffalo wallow and buffalo jump at Beaver Rim.

Students are learning Arapaho language along with science. Michael Redman called on the tribal elders to use existing terms in the Arapaho language to create new terminology for the scientific principals about which students are learning. For example, one of the participating student’s grandfather, Owen Goggles, gave the drone a name that roughly translates as “eyes that see and fly”. This allows the students and their elders to have conversations together, in Arapaho, about the scientific principles that they are learning and using.

This STEM-learning project for Native American youth is made possible by the research and planning of Dr. Jacqueline Leonard at the University of Wyoming.
Best in the West:

Wyoming Education Quality Ranked Highest in the Mountain West

Education Week’s 23rd annual report card, Quality Counts 2019, ranks Wyoming sixth nationally in education quality. This rating raises Wyoming from being ranked seventh in 2018. Again, this year, Wyoming scored the highest among western states, and first in the nation in school finance. “Once again we’re reminded that dedicated educators, committed constituents and consistent advocacy for education in Wyoming is paying off,” said WEA President Kathy Vetter. “In prioritizing education, Wyoming ensures that our students enjoy equitability and opportunity as they prepare for their futures.”

Wyoming also outranked neighboring states Utah, Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, Montana and Idaho in the K-12 Student Achievement category. The national average for K-12 student achievement is a 73.0. Wyoming scored a 74.8. For a grading summary and an interactive map detailing student achievement scores across the United States, check out bit.ly/qcwyoming.

Taken from Quality Counts 2019- Grading the States.
Released September 3, 2019:

Wyoming provides another example where funding grades have an impact in a state’s overall score. It finishes first, nationally, in the funding category—far ahead of its geographic neighbors. In comparison, Montana stands in 27th place for finance and Idaho finishes last. Wyoming has been the top state for school finance over the past decade largely because it has been the most successful in balancing strong spending with equity across districts—it finishes first for spending and seventh for equity. No other state lands in the top 10 for both categories.

PHOTO CREDITS:

OPPOSITE PAGE OR L TO R: Animal skin drawing of the Wind River Indian Reservation, the drone, and the Arapaho words for drone and drone camp, commemorating this first year of the drone camp. Student uses drone flight simulation training software to learn to fly drones during the Drone Summer Camp. Students used topographical maps to create teepees with symbols representing their culture and history, bringing art into the science camp experience.

OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM: This panoramic picture was taken at the buffalo jump at Beaver Rim during the student field trip as part of the drone camp – students practiced using the drones here.
Keep Working for the future.

— Speaker of the House, Rep. Steve Harshman

WEA was front and center at this summer’s ribbon cutting ceremony for the newly renovated Capitol! A quality public education will be key to success for future generations working to shape the laws of our great state in the beautifully renovated Wyoming State Capitol. Today’s students are tomorrow’s leaders and we here at WEA can’t wait to see the great things they’ll accomplish in this—the Wyoming People’s House. Our Lobby Team will be spending plenty of time there throughout the 2020 session, too.

Follow the latest developments and learn more about legislation impacting education on WEA’s Government Affairs blog wealegislativeinfo.com/blog.

SEE WEA’S VIDEO FROM THE RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY AT: HTTP://BIT.LY/WYCAPITOLUNVEILING.

Photos courtesy of the Wyoming Capitol Square Project. Photo of Steve Harshman, Speaker of the House, property of WEA.
The Joint Education Committee of the Wyoming Legislature began to tackle some major issues during their interim meeting leading up to next year’s legislative session. During this meeting the Committee identified three priorities: promoting an external cost adjustment, authorizing another “school funding recalibration,” and removing funding caps for special education.

**External Cost Adjustment**

The external cost adjustment is a mechanism to adjust revenues to keep up with inflation and to keep Wyoming salaries competitive. WEA strongly supports a new external cost adjustment to provide badly needed funds. The state’s consultant report shows that the actual salaries being paid by districts are an average of about $6,000 (11%) more per teacher than the legislative model provides for teacher salaries. Much of the discussion relating to the need for an external cost adjustment (ECA) revolved around the fact that Wyoming is losing ground with other states when paying teachers and other staff. Testimony from administrators, school board members and others clearly illustrated problems filling positions. Carol Jelaco, Sweetwater County School District #1 Board Chair in Rock Springs, testified that the district still has 25 vacant positions. She noted that this year, her district raised the base teacher salary to $50,000 hoping to keep and attract teachers. Carol shared that almost immediately following her district’s base salary increase, three districts in neighboring Utah also raised their base to at least $50,000.

The Wyoming Supreme Court ruled over a decade ago that the state must adequately fund education and use the ECA to keep up with inflation. The Legislature has neglected to provide this funding in many recent years, which many believe has lowered the amount of funding for schools below the constitutional mandate. All members of the Joint Education Committee, except Senator Affie Ellis from Cheyenne, approved moving the concept of an ECA to the Joint Appropriations Committee.

**Recalibration**

As part of a Wyoming Supreme Court’s decision directing the Legislature to adequately and equitably fund Wyoming public education, the Legislature is required to evaluate the quality of education being offered to Wyoming K-12 students about every five years. This evaluation establishes what elements are necessary for a high-quality education, and the Legislature is then constitutionally required to properly fund all the necessary components to ensure that Wyoming students continue to receive a high-quality education. This process of identifying necessary components and their current cost is called “recalibration.” The Legislature approved a recalibration study in 2005, 2010, and 2015. An additional recalibration was conducted in 2017. Findings indicated that Wyoming’s school funding model was underfunding education by up to $90 million, annually. Unfortunately, no changes were made as a result of the 2017 recalibration study.

During the JEC, the committee voted to fund a recalibration study in 2020 with results likely available for consideration during the 2021 legislative session.

**CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE**
JOINT EDUCATION COMMITTEE
CONTINUED

Special Education Funding Restored

The Legislature has adopted an arbitrary cap on the total dollars it will spend on special education, irrespective of the actual need for such services. Members of the JEC voted to restore full funding for special education and remove the cap. If approved by the full legislature, the cap will be removed next year and moving forward thereafter. To help fill the funding gap, the committee will explore tapping into federal Medicaid resources; these resources could eventually equate to about $2.7 million in annual funds. WEA strongly believes that this arbitrary cap is both educationally inappropriate and contrary to the clear mandate of the Wyoming Supreme Court to provide funding for the cost of all educational components.

WEA appreciates the work of the Joint Education Committee, but these are just beginning steps, with these changes needing approvals in the Appropriations Committee as well as the full Legislature. At the same time, there are those who not only oppose these steps but advocate new cuts to school funding. It will be a major battle to keep and improve funding in the next session, meaning that WEA will need a vigorous response from members in every community to tell legislators that they need to support Wyoming’s schoolchildren.

NEXT STEPS:

- October 29-30 Appropriations Committee Meeting Riverton
- November 14-15 Joint Education Committee Meeting Cheyenne
- December 16-20 Appropriations Committee Meeting Cheyenne
- January 6-17 Appropriations Committee Budget Hearings Cheyenne
- February 10 Legislative Budget Session Convenes Cheyenne
- March 6 Legislative Budget Session Adjourns (tentative) Cheyenne

Saying Goodbye

It is bittersweet for all of us here at WEA to bid farewell to Government Relations Director, Tamsin (Tammy) Johnson. Tammy’s passion for students, teaching and the legal system helped her excel in the role of Government Relations Director of WEA since August of 2017. Tammy came to WEA after a long career in public education in Wyoming; she taught English for 16 years at Laramie Sr. High School and worked at the Wyoming Department of Education.

Treasury leaves WEA to serve as the Executive Secretary for Wyoming of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). AFL-CIO is the largest federation of unions in the United States. WEA appreciates Tammy’s strong and informed voice as a committed advocate for Wyoming students and educators at the legislature.

Congratulations and farewell, Tammy!

Tammy Johnson

We're Hiring!

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIRECTOR

LEARN MORE AT WYOEAOA.ORG
NOMINATION FORMS AVAILABLE ON OUR WEBSITE

2020 WEA VACANCIES

STATE/NATIONAL OFFICES:
WEA President 3-year term
WEA Vice President 3-year term
WEA ESP Statewide Representative 2-year term
WEA Ethnic Minority Statewide Representative 2-year term
WEA Higher Education Statewide Representative 2-year term

STATE DELEGATES TO NEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY:
NEA RA State Delegate (Category 1) - 2-year term - up to 5 delegates
NEA RA State Delegate (Category 2) - 1-year term - 1 delegate
NEA RA Region Cluster Delegates (1-year term) --- this includes Certified and ESP members who belong to a local with less than 75 members
CR Cluster 1 delegate
NER Cluster 1 delegate
NWR Cluster 4 delegates
SER Cluster 1 delegate
SWR Cluster 2 delegates
NEA RA State ESP Cluster Delegate --- (ESP Members with no local) - 1 delegate

REGION OFFICES:
Central Region Representative 2-year term
NE Region President 2-year term
NE Region Vice President 2-year term
NW Region President 2-year term
SE Region President 2-year term
SE Region Vice President 2-year term
SE Region Representative 2-year term
SW Region Representative 2-year term

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WEAnews Magazine
Ad Deadline Dates:
Pre-Legislative Edition: January 6, 2020 for February Edition
For many students, their day in the Wyoming education system begins before they walk through the front doors of their school; it starts as they step onto their school bus. For Albany County School District #1 (ACSD1) bus driver, Beatriz Gilchrist, the importance of that first interaction with students is paramount. “We’re the first line of contact with these kids in the morning,” said Beatriz, “and in the afternoon we’re the last faces that students see, associated with their school.”

Beatriz is one of three recent CLIMB graduates to begin a career as a bus driver with ACSD1 after completing the CLIMB program. “I come from a long line of bus drivers,” said Beatriz. “I really enjoy driving the buses and I love working with kids, for me, it’s the perfect combination.” ACSD1 Transportation Trainer Mary Ruskey has mentored several young women from the CLIMB program to successful employment on ACSD1 routes. “I love the CLIMB program,” said Mary “for me, it’s gratifying to see more women becoming interested in working in transportation; it is traditionally considered to be a male-dominated industry, but women are nurturing and have great attention to detail—attributes which are key to being successful bus drivers.”

CLIMB graduate and bus driver, Taylisha Taylor
admits to at first being intimidated by the gender stereotypes surrounding driving a bus. But, Taylor overcame her hesitations, “I love that it is hands-on,” Taylor said. “It gives you a lot of confidence. It’s pretty cool because you’re driving something so big.”

Special needs bus driver, Amber Nation, also came to transportation from the CLIMB program. Like her colleagues, Amber loves her job. “It’s incredibly rewarding and I love driving the bus. I never thought I’d be driving a bus,” said Amber.

CLIMB values their partnership with Albany County School District #1’s Transportation Department. “Their role not only in providing the training, but also as an employment partner has been so transformative in the lives of so many families,” said Assistant Director of External Relations for Climb Wyoming, Katie Hogarty. “The moms, having gone through that training and being employed by the school district now, are so confident and have such a useful trade. They have a skill that they are proud of; that their kids are proud of. Their kids have a brighter future now because of the school district’s role in providing training and as an employer partner.”

Mary Ruskey has been driving a bus for eight years and training drivers for four years. “I love kids. I love driving a school bus. I love training people,” said Mary. “I feel like I can bring people in and make them aware that it’s not just getting behind the wheel and driving the bus; You have to incorporate everything else surrounding that. So, you’re dealing with children and you’ve got their safety to think about; physical safety, but you also have to consider their emotional safety,” said Mary.

“I really have the most important cargo in the entire world behind me. I don’t care what I have to do, I’m going to get them from point A to point B and we’re all going to make the best decisions possible because there is no way that I’m going to let anything happen to anyone’s child,” said Mary. “The students know that I’m there for them and I support them.”

“I take pride in my students knowing that even as they encounter challenges in their lives, they can always count on one thing; their bus driver loves them,” said Mary. Amber Nation also appreciates her ability to have a positive impact on students’ lives, “You can come away at the end of the day knowing that you made a difference,” said Amber. “It’s small, but, it’s rewarding.”

“I just really love my job,” shared Beatriz Gilchrist. “I love seeing the kids smile and knowing that they’re making it to school safely and making it back home safely. I appreciate knowing that I’m making a difference for education just by smiling and seeing them smile.”

“BEING A MEMBER OF WEA IS MY SAFETY NET. IT MAKES ME FEEL A LOT BETTER DRIVING MY ROUTE—NOT KNOWING WHAT COULD HAPPEN DRIVING DOWN THE STREET ONE DAY—IT’S JUST SO NICE TO KNOW THAT I AM SAFE AS I GO THROUGH MY DAY. MY FAMILY WILL BE OK, THANKS TO WEA.”

- BEATRIZ GILCHRIST
Congratulations to our own John Fabela, an Instrumental Music Instructor in Powell, WY, on being selected to receive the 2020 NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence! John is one of 45 public school educators who will receive the prestigious California Casualty Award for Teaching Excellence at the NEA Foundation’s Salute to Excellence in Education Gala next February in Washington, D.C.

Each year, the Salute to Excellence in Education Gala draws almost 1,000 supporters of public education, and thousands more online, to applaud these awardees. At the gala, the educators are truly the stars, celebrated throughout the night with music, performances, videos, and more.

Of his award, Fabela told WEA News, “It is extremely humbling to be recognized by my colleagues and to be the 2020 Wyoming recipient of the NEA Foundation Award for Teaching Excellence. I have met so many outstanding educators in the state of Wyoming and I am honored to be representing all of you in Washington D.C. This is my 33rd year as a Music Educator and I feel like there is so much more I have to learn and accomplish.”

Of the 45 state awardees who were nominated by their National Education Association state affiliate, five finalists will be announced at the beginning of the school year and receive $10,000 at the gala. The nation’s top educator will be revealed at the gala on February 7, 2020 and receive an additional $25,000.

The gala will be livestreamed at neafoundation.org.
Student Wyoming Education Association

The University of Wyoming chapter of Student Wyoming Education Association (SWEA) is a student organization based out of the University of Wyoming College of Education. We are a branch of the Wyoming Education Association and desire to fulfill the National Education Association's goals, and vision. I am your current UW Chapter SWEA president. I am a senior pursuing Secondary English Education with a minor in Business and an English as a Second Language Endorsement. I will be student teaching in Cody for the Spring semester.

Our main goal is to provide our educators with the three P's: Professional Development, Political Action, and Public Service.

The three P's guide our vision as SWEA and the projects that we take on within our organization. The first P, Professional Development, is achieved at every meeting. There are many professional development opportunities for our educators each meeting, such as: resume building, classroom management strategies, student teaching survival, interview tips, and many other skills that our future educators will need. The second P, Political Action, is addressed with visits from current legislative members in Wyoming who update and inform us on education legislation. The third P, Public Service, is our favorite mission because we get to give back to the community.

This semester, there are many events taking place in our community of which SWEA will be a part. We will be participating in The Big Event, Homecoming, and Safe Treat, and other events as they develop.

In the future, we hope to continue providing professional development opportunities along with legislative knowledge to our members in an effort to help them grow as educators. To learn more about the many benefits of your SWEA membership, or to connect friends and colleagues interested in becoming SWEA members, please feel free to reach out to me at abarker8@uwyo.edu.

Looking forward to another outstanding year in SWEA!

Make the most of your SWEA membership. From discounts on major purchases like vehicles and appliances, to exclusive bargains on travel, renters’ insurance and more, you’ll find great ways to make the most of your dues dollars at neamb.com.
Advocating for Healthy Retirement for Educators

By: Vicki Swenson

WEA-R has joined the Wyoming Coalition for a Healthy Retirement. The coalition is comprised of entities of which employees presently, or in the future will, receive WRS Benefits. The Coalition is coordinated by the Equality State Policy Center (ESPC) and is presently working on a WRS Inflation Adjustment which we hope to have introduced during the next legislative session.

WEA has been working with the ESPC to develop and present four Retiree Lobby Trainings. These trainings serve to inform retirees of what cost of living adjustment legislation will entail and how best to advocate for its passage. All Coalition entities will be contacting and recruiting retired members to participate in seminars. Lunch will be provided for attendees at each training and there is no cost for WEA members to attend. To find out more about lobbying around issues pertaining to a healthy retirement throughout the months of October and November, visit http://bit.ly/colalobbytrainings.

I am extremely enthused about what our members will take away from these training! My hope is that each attendee feels well-prepared to become a strong advocate for this endeavor and future political advocacy work! All WEA-R members should have received a series of emails about these upcoming lobby trainings with detailed information on how to register. Please email me at WYOEA.R307@gmail.com or text me (307-660-9995) if you have any additional questions or concerns. Please try to attend one of these trainings! Your voice before the legislature is key to informing Wyoming leadership about the necessity of a cost of living adjustment for Wyoming retirees.

WEA-R presented two well-received pre-retirement seminars in Worland and Rock Springs, this spring. We will offer this type of seminar in each of the other regions: Jonathan Neher, a Financial Advisor with Valenta Capital Management, will present WRS options and Social Security benefits. David Glenn, with NEA Member Benefits, will present “What I Want My Family to Know”. There will also a short presentation detailing your exclusive access to NEA Member Benefits. I will present a brief overview of Medicare and provide information on resources and assistance available to you when you are ready to enroll. Be on the lookout for an email from WEA-R with site locations and registration instructions. Please try and attend!

Proposed Change to WEA Constitution: Changing the Word “Student” to “Aspiring Educator”

In an effort to align with language used by the National Education Association, at the 2019 WEA Delegate Assembly, a Constitutional amendment was proposed to change the language of the WEA Constitution describing a membership category to read “aspiring educator” instead of “student”.

Below, you will find the exact language of the constitutional amendment approved by the delegates at the 2019 Delegate Assembly convening on March 29-31 in Casper, WY. At a minimum of 120 days from the initial publication of this change (it first appeared in the June 2019 edition of WEA News), in November, the general membership body will vote on whether or not to approve the following amendment:

Section 3 – Affiliation

Active, Reserve, Retired and Student ASPIRING EDUCATOR members of the WEA shall also be members of the National Education Association (NEA) and the appropriate local affiliate if local membership is open to them. No local affiliate of the Association shall enroll active members unless they also enroll as members of the WEA and the NEA.

Upcoming Pre-Retirement Seminars

- NE/Gillette, November 19th: 4:30 pm - 7:30 pm
- Central/Casper, November 20th: 4:30 pm - 7:30 pm
- SE/Cheyenne, November 21st: 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Wyoming Retirement System Names New Executive Director

By: Polly Scott

David Swindell has been selected to lead the Wyoming Retirement System, the administrator of retirement plans for most public employees in Wyoming, including teachers and other education personnel. Swindell will serve as WRS’ tenth Executive Director. Mr. Swindell replaces Ruth Ryerson, who retired in July after leading the system for the past 6 years.

He comes to the position of Executive Director after serving five years as the system’s Deputy Director. Swindell was raised in Riverton, Wyoming and was appointed to U.S. Military Academy at West Point from Riverton High School. He served 22 years in the U.S. Army, retiring with a rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Prior to serving WRS, Dave was the Chief Financial Officer for the City of Pocatello, ID. His education includes a MPA with concentration in economics from Princeton University and a Bachelor of Science degree from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Swindell notes that “challenges are always present, but Ruth left WRS in a good position to be successful. I’ve been proud to serve as her deputy, and honored to be selected as her successor. We know that educators are the largest single employee group in the system, accounting for about 44% of the 40,640 active employees in the system. Retirement benefits are a major reason teachers enter and stay in the profession.

“I’m a product of Wyoming’s public education system. My mother was a teacher and school administrator in Fremont County. For all of us at WRS, excellent administration of educator retirement is a professional calling. For many of us, including me, it is also personal. Thank you for your service to the people of Wyoming!”

GRADY HUTCHERSON

FOR

WEA PRESIDENT

WEA Members,

It has truly been an honor and a privilege serving the past 7 years as your WEA Vice President. The final year of my last term is upon us and I am excited to inform you of my decision to run for WEA President. We are the WEA! It is our collective voice that determines the future of our students and educational employees in the state of Wyoming.

Together we can and we will be successful!

gradyhutch@gmail.com 307.532.1731
July's 2019 Visionary Leadership Quest saw record attendance. The Quest spanned three days at Casper's Hilton Garden Inn and covered training on everything from leadership and one-on-one conversations, to an NEA360 data deep-dive, and trauma-informed teaching practices. WEA members welcomed NEA trainers Lynn Malarz, Hilario Benzon and Dominic Padilla and spent time learning from state staff and local leaders.

“We were pleased with the positive feedback from members,” said WEA Executive Director, Ron Sniffin. “State staff works dedicatedly up to the event to ensure that it is a valuable experience for our members. Cultivating leaders across the organization serves to expand our capacity across the state and strengthen WEA.”

I'm so thankful that we have this opportunity,” said WEA member Jessica Hodges. “This was the first Association event that I've attended outside of my local and I learned more than I ever even expected about becoming a leader in my local. Before this event, I felt unprepared to talk to people about WEA in one-on-one conversations. Now, I realize that it's not hard. It's not this daunting task that somebody’s forcing us to do. It's a chance to share what matters to us, and that's easy.”

Hodges would encourage others to attend WEAs
statewide trainings “Everything was covered for us. I didn’t have to travel out of state or fundraise to benefit from these trainings,” said Hodges, “it’s an opportunity that you have by being a WEA member. By attending, you have so much to gain and nothing to lose.”

A big thank you to sponsors American Fidelity, California Casualty and NEA Member Benefits! Your sponsorships make it possible for WEA to conserve members’ dues dollars when funding statewide trainings.

To see more great photos from the event, visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/wyoea

PHOTO CREDITS:

OPPOSITE PAGE: 2019 Visionary Leadership Quest attendees at the Casper Hilton Garden Inn.

THIS PAGE: 1. Hilario Benzon, Manager of the Human Civil Rights Department at NEA’s Center for Social Justice teaching attendees about the harmful effects of implicit bias, micro-aggressions and stereotypes. 2. Members Todd Herreid, Judy Crow and Mark Chollak learning about one-on-one conversations through a spirited game of Charades. 3. WEA members enjoying the 2019 Visionary Leadership Quest. 4. NCEA President, Dirk Andrews speaking to members. 5. Wyoming Speaker of the House Steve Harshman speaking with attendees about Wyoming’s education funding model.
Thank you for being an NEA Member! NEA Member Benefits is offering our members two FREE subscriptions from the NEA Magazine Service.

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Quantities are limited; free titles and number of issues are subject to change; there is a limit of 2 free subscriptions per member, per year.
As the leaves turn and the evenings cool, summer already seems a distant memory in these early days of fall. But, it wasn’t that long ago that the Campbell County Education Association and WEA came together to celebrate educators by enjoying savory food, beautiful weather and engaging conversation, at the first-ever Edupalooza event, in Gillette. The event served as a networking opportunity for all ESP and new-hire teachers in Campbell County and doubled as a food drive for the Blessings in a Backpack weekend food program.

“This was a great effort and excellent publicity for Campbell County EA and WEA,” said Central/Northeast UniServ Director, Judy Trohkimoinen, “we were excited to have youth cheerleaders, vendors and the radio station there, and grateful for the food donations from Thunder Basin High School and California Casualty.”

Turnout wasn’t as high for Edupalooza as event organizers had hoped, but local leaders and WEA staff are optimistic about the possibility for this event to gain momentum, next year. “First- time events are always tough and this one was no exception, but the people who came had a great time and next year we hope it will be even bigger and better.”
Across the nation, back-to-school recruiting bolsters numbers for teacher advocacy organizations, and Wyoming is no exception. Thanks to the commitment and hard work of our members, WEA saw healthy recruiting efforts across the state. The Albany County Education Association (ACEA) enjoyed special success at their back-to-school event this year, welcoming 3 out of every 4 educators present at their certified new employee orientation luncheon into the ACEA.

Co-President Mariah Learned attributes ACEA’s recruiting success, in part, to skills learned by leadership at WEA’s statewide Visionary Leadership Quest conference in Casper this summer. “We made adjustments to our event to include elements from a presentation given by Dirk Andrews at VLQ,” said Learned. “We enlisted members of ACEA from different buildings and positions to host tables at our luncheon. We engaged in real conversations about ACEA. Hosts shared with potential members why they choose to be members of ACEA and addressed questions and concerns. The authentic peer-to-peer conversations; they’re what made our event a success. Authenticity is key.”

The Natrona County Education Association found recruiting success by employing similar organizing principles. “NCEA had our most successful recruitment event in the last seven years,” said NCEA President Dirk Andrews. “There were more than 90 new faculty members in attendance, and we signed up 63 new members,” said Andrews. “I attribute our success to the organizing model in which members share their stories as to why they belong [to WEA/NCEA] and then ask for the new faculty to join us.” Andrews also credits their growth to an engaged membership base. “I want to extend a huge thank you to our multitude of table hosts. They were willing to sacrifice a half-day of free time during their summer to recruit new hires. We couldn’t have succeeded without you!”
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We’re Hiring!

Southwest UniServ Director - WYOMING EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Position Category: Professional Staff

Position Location: Rock Springs, WY

Position Description: The essential functions of the position include assisting local WEA affiliates and WEA members in organization and program development through visitation, diagnosis, and planning of programs designed to implement the goals of the organization, strengthen and improve the welfare of members and enhance the educational climate. Advocacy and representation for members on a wide array of issues; developing and executing local association programs for membership, public relations, political action, member rights, organizational and leadership development; working collaboratively with governance and staff to implement national and state association programs and priorities.

This region runs from Pinedale to Evanston and Rawlins.

FOR MORE DETAILS, VISIT US ONLINE AT WWW.WYOEA.ORG OR EMAIL RON SNIFFIN AT RSNIFFIN@WYOEA.ORG

Welcome!

Kristin Custis joins WEA as the Communications Support Specialist. Kristin graduated from Colorado Mesa University with a Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communications and after meeting her husband she moved to Cheyenne in 2006 and started a family.

Kristin spent 10 years as the Marketing Director at the Cheyenne Frontier Days Old West Museum honing her marketing skills. She then spent a year-and-a-half as the Foundation Outreach Coordinator for the Friends of the Cheyenne Botanic Gardens working with donors and the membership program.

With over 10 years of marketing management experience, she brings a successful background in public relations and communications. In addition, she works part-time in her husband’s busy law firm managing all of the marketing and bookkeeping.

If she is not in the office, you can find her shuttling kids to multiple practices daily, skiing and enjoying her family.

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FREE POETRY RECITATION COMPETITION
SPONSORED BY THE WYOMING ARTS COUNCIL & NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

Helps high school students master public speaking, build self-confidence, learn about their literary heritage and compete for more than $100,000 in awards.

WYOMING STATE CHAMPION WILL RECEIVE:
- A $200 cash prize and an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington, D.C. and a $500 cash stipend for their school to purchase poetry materials

TEACHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE:
- State competition expenses are paid by the Wyoming Arts Council for educators and high school finalists

REGISTER AND HOST YOUR SCHOOL COMPETITION BEFORE FEBRUARY 7, 2020
STATE FINALS WILL BE HELD IN CHEYENNE MARCH 2 – 3, 2020

GET INVOLVED TODAY!
To register your school, please visit: wyoarts.state.wy.us/wac-program/poetryoutloud
or contact Mary Billiter:
307-757-8806 | mary.billiter1@wyo.gov
For more information visit: poetryoutloud.org

REGISTER YOUR SCHOOL TODAY!

2018 Poetry Out Loud Wyoming State Champion, Lauren Haiar, Sundance Secondary School
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We greatly appreciate your dedication to helping future generations. That’s why we are bringing back our Academic Award. One lucky winner will receive $2,500 to purchase school supplies for their students. Good Luck!

ENTER TODAY!

EducatorsAcademicAward.com/NEA
Before You Go!

Above Left: NCEA President and NEA Director Dirk Andrews and Jillian Balow at Congresswoman Liz Cheney’s office in Washington D.C. Above Right: WEA member and Ethnic Minority Statewide Representative, Lydia Rayfield serving ice cream to students and families during Global Night. Lydia shared with community members about her travel to South Africa through the NEA Global Fellowship program, this summer.

Taking in the sites in Washington D.C. in August, 2019. Select WEA members and staff attended an NEA conference to learn more about the Every Student Succeeds Act and how Wyoming educators can best shape both statewide and national policy. From left: WEA Vice President, Grady Hutcherson, ACEA Co-President Mariah Learned, Northwest Region Rep Lannette Lahey, Southeast Region President Amy Simpson, Central Region President Rebecca Murray, WEA Executive Director Ron Sniffin, WEA Treasurer Kim Amen.

Powell EA leaders learning and identifying WEA priorities. Clockwise starting at bottom left: Powell EA Association Representative Christy Landwehr, Powell EA President Necole Hanks, Northwest Region President John Fabela and Powell EA Secretary Stacey Faxson.

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NOVEMBER 18-22, 2019

November 2019
• 18 Kickoff Day
• 19 Parents Day
• 20 Education Support Professionals Day
• 21 Educator for a Day
• 22 Substitute Educators Day