

The Educators'



ADVOCATE

JAN/FEB 2022

Volume 53 | Issue 3



**2022
Teacher of
Excellence
Stephanie
Ballard**



YOU DESERVE MORE

Like the comfort of knowing
they're covered



SCAN & GO

You deserve the peace of mind that comes with protecting your loved ones. NEA Member Benefits offers educator-tailored insurance solutions you can count on to help keep your family covered, plus plenty of resources to help you make sense of it.

Explore your coverage options at neamb.com/protect



/neamemberbenefits



@NEABenefits



800-637-4636

nea Member
Benefits

LIFE INSURANCE PROTECTION

Inside this Issue

- 4 **President's Corner**
- 5 **Read Across America**
- 6 **Local Spotlight – Tri Valley EA**
- 7 **Honored Women Educators**
- 8–9 **Teacher of Excellence**
- 10 **Educators For A Day**
- 11 **How Savi Helps Educators Find Student Loan Debt Relief**
- 12 **New SDEA Staff**
- 13 **SDEA Summer Academy**
- 14 **What Say You? SDEA Asks and You Answer**
- 16 **SDEA Retired**

JAN/FEB 2022

Volume 53 | Issue 3

President

Loren Paul

Vice President

Stephanie Hageman

NEA Director

Dana Livermont

Treasurer

Kim Soldatke

Executive Director

Ryan Rolfs

Communications Director

Sandra Waltman

Communications Specialist

Rebecca Feller

Address

South Dakota
Education Association
411 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501

The Educators' Advocate (ISSN 0013-2047) is published five times annually by SDEA/NEA, 411 East Capitol Avenue, Pierre, SD. Periodicals postage paid at Pierre, SD.

Postmaster:

Send address to
The Educators' Advocate,
411 East Capitol Avenue,
Pierre, SD 57501.
Official publication of the
South Dakota Education
Association/NEA.

Vision

We envision valued education professionals providing quality public education for all students.

Mission

South Dakota Education Association ensures the collective voice for South Dakota public education professionals.



President's Corner

A Big Thank You... But You Deserve So Much More

There are two times in the year that we make a special effort to thank our public-school educators. In November we have American Education Week and then in May we have teacher appreciation week. Considering everything that our educators are going through, I am not sure that is enough.

It's been a tough year with staff shortages, a lack of substitutes, more absences because of Covid-19, and on top of all of that, a lot of political rhetoric aimed at dividing educators and parents. Yet, with all of this going on, South Dakota's educators continue to be professionals by showing up to give students a complete and accurate education. Day in and day out you give everything you have to create an environment that gives them the freedom to learn. It's been daunting, but you do it anyway.

I don't want to wait until May to say thank you for everything you are doing for our students. You need to hear it right now, and probably every day from now until the end of time. SDEA is committed to making sure that every parent, lawmaker, community leader or anyone who cares about the kids of South Dakota knows how hard the educators of South Dakota are working. You have always worked hard, but these are unprecedented times, and you deserve gratitude now more than ever.

It is my hope that when parents and your communities really understand the challenges you are all facing, it helps bring us together to push back against the rhetoric

and, together, demand that our state leaders provide the funding our schools need, and our students deserve. I think a united front would be one of the best thank-you gifts we can give.

Let me be frank; South Dakotans need to realize that if we continue down this current path of political divisiveness, we will lose more and more educators. The current conditions are not sustainable. As your SDEA President, I am committed to making sure everyone truly understands the challenges you face and why we need to not only be more appreciative of your work, but give you the resources necessary so you can and want to continue to do the amazing work you do.

I always end this column letting you know how honored I am to represent the world's most dedicated educators. But, after witnessing your efforts over the last couple of years, I am also in awe of your commitment to the students of South Dakota. Thank You.

Loren Paul
SDEA President

605-224-9263, ext 116
loren.paul@sdea.org



Read Across America

Read Across America is the nation's largest celebration of reading for everyone. Titles and resources should include books that students can see themselves reflected in, as well as books that allow readers to see a world or a character that might be different than them.

There's a need for schools and libraries to include and promote diverse books. Students need books that provide both windows and mirrors if we are going to

create more readers, writers, and people who feel included and recognized, and who understand that the world is far richer than just their experiences alone.

Readers who feel included, recognized, and a part of the world are engaged readers.

When choosing books for this year's celebrations, focus on being inclusive of all your students and community. Below are just a few titles you can consider for your celebrations:



The Day You Begin
by Jacqueline Woodson



Suki's Kimono
by Chieri Uegaki



Imagine
by Juan Felipe Herrera



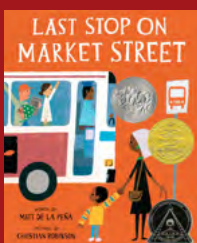
My Day with Gong Gong
by Sennah Yee



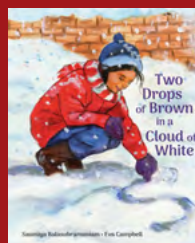
Mela and the Elephant
by Dow Phumiruk



Roxy the Raccoon
by Alice Reeves



Last Stop on Market Street
by Matt de la Peña



Two Drops of Brown in a Cloud of White
by Saumiya Balasubramaniam

LOCAL SPOTLIGHT

Tri Valley EA Works to Keep Students and Families Warm



Just when we thought our educators were maxed out on how much time and energy they had, the members of the Tri-Valley Education Association (TVEA) found a way to help students and families in need. With the help of a grant from SDEA, TVEA teamed up with Warm Up South Dakota to make blankets for area students and families who live in poverty. Collectively, the members committed over 42 hours to the project, but the members say it was well worth it.



Elementary Art teacher, Maria Kendle, helped organize the event, says service projects such as these send a powerful message to students and brings the community together. “I love events like this because it shows the kids we truly care about them, but it also gives us, as staff, an opportunity to bond with each other,” said

Kendle. “It really drives home the sense of community in different ways.”

TVEA member Michael Hoffman, who is Tri-Valley’s Middle and High School Band teacher, attended the event because he wanted to help his students and their families. “I am happy to give my time to help my students keep warm as we head into the winter months. It’s also fun to have an opportunity to get together with other teachers in the district to do something to help out our community,” said Hoffman.

Elementary Music teacher, Brenda Baker, summed it up the best. “Working with kids is more than teaching content, it’s showing that you care about them as a whole person.”



Visit www.projectwarmup.org to learn more about how you can provide blankets to those in need.

Is your local association interested in doing a community service project? Contact your UniServ Director to learn more about grant dollars that may be available.

Honored Women Educators of South Dakota

Because it can be difficult to get all necessary information on the nominee, while not divulging the fact that the person is being nominated, a new format was voted on in August 2017. Submit the information that can be obtained, with items listed below required. Submit the information by April 30, 2022 to: Jacqueline Sly, 22560 Potter Road, Rapid City SD 57702. Nominations can be submitted electronically to: jacslly48@gmail.com

Then the nominee will be notified and will be asked to complete the form by May 30, 2022. Those selected for membership in Honored Women Educators of South Dakota will be notified and will be invited to the June 25th luncheon.

Each SDEA Member may submit one nominee per year.

Requirements of nominees:

1. Be active in education at present and be a present SDEA member. Or, if retired, the nominee must have been an SDEA member during her active career
2. Have a minimum of four years of college
3. Should have spent at least ten years in the field of education
4. Be fully qualified educationally for their field of work
5. Have made major contributions in the area of education
6. Should be active in the community and exhibit character traits worthy of the honor of membership
7. Eligible for membership are classroom teachers, administrators, librarians, supervisors, and former educators

Submit the following information on a word document. Please note that the letters of recommendation (#8), can be submitted by either you or the nominee.

1. Full name of nominee
2. Mailing address of nominee
3. Phone number of nominee
4. Email address of nominee
5. Present position of nominee, if currently teaching; past position, if retired
6. Write a paragraph that reveals the personality and real worth of the nominee
7. Name, signature, addresses, phone number of nominator who submits the nomination, and date
8. Optional: Submit 2 or 3 letters of recommendation from others who are familiar with the contributions of the nominee. Possible choices could be co-workers, administrators, students or former students, or parents of present or former students. If the nominator does not submit the letters of recommendation, the nominee will be asked to do so.

SDEA's 2022 Teacher of Excellence – Stephanie Ballard

“We’re doing important work!”

The South Dakota Education Association (SDEA) named Brookings’ middle school teacher Stephanie Ballard the 2022 SDEA Teacher of Excellence. Ballard will also be nominated for the NEA Foundation’s Awards for Teaching Excellence. Educators selected for this award have demonstrated outstanding professional practice, association advocacy, community engagement, and leadership in professional development.



Ballard, a Special Education teacher at George S. Mickelson Middle School, is an active member of the Brookings Education Association. When asked how she felt about being selected, she responded in her usual humble way, “I feel like a pretty unremarkable teacher who just does my job in building relationships with my students, planning instructional units, teaching math lessons, sifting through data, and communicating with families. I know there are many excellent teachers in my district and state, and dedicated members of the South Dakota Education Association,” said Ballard. “I’m grateful for this honor and the opportunities to become a better leader and advocate for educators and students across our state.”

Despite the many challenges facing public education, Ballard enthusiastically encourages young South Dakotans to go into teaching. “Nothing is perfect or stagnant in education- technology and resources and policies and reform are always evolving. This can be a stressful career to pursue, but it comes with so much purpose and fulfillment if you put your heart into your work,” said Ballard. “It’s been a rough few years in public education; I, myself, have never felt so busy, stressed, or stretched thin. As educators, our health and wellness are important, and it’s crucial to take care of ourselves before we can meet the diverse needs of our students. But if you feel called to education, called to make a difference in future generations, I encourage you to follow that passion and remember that passion on the more stressful days, maybe even the most stressful years. We’re doing important work!”



SDEA President Loren Paul is impressed with Ballard’s level of sincerity and seriousness that she brings to her work. Paul says her passion for the profession and students is evident in every conversation that she has. “You can feel how important

the calling of education is to her,” said Paul. “Stephanie is dedicated to her family, her faith, and her profession. She a fierce advocate for her entire school family. She’s been supporting the work of ESPs in her district as they work towards ways to address the need for better mentoring and for better compensation,” said Paul. “Stephanie never gives up. Whether the obstacle that she encounters is in her personal life or her professional life, she finds a way to accept the obstacle, and adapt to overcome it.”

Todd Foster, Ballard’s Principal says, “Stephanie truly loves learning and loves her students. “She does such an outstanding job of developing relationships with her students and her families. She

cares so much about the personal side of her learners and builds those relationships first, then moves to the learning. She truly makes a difference in their lives.”

The NEA Foundation Awards for Teaching Excellence recognize, reward, and promote excellence in teaching and advocacy for the association. The awards are jointly presented by the NEA Foundation and the NEA. Along with a \$1,000 grant from SDEA, Ballard will receive a trip to the NEA Foundation’s 2023 Salute to Excellence in Education Gala in Washington DC. Five awardees are selected for The Horace Mann Awards for Teaching Excellence and receive \$10,000. The NEA Member Benefits Award for Teaching Excellence recipient, selected from the five, receives \$25,000 in cash.

UniServ Program – Advocating for our members since 1970

The UniServ program provides services to SDEA members and local associations. The term “UniServ” refers to unified service, integrating the local, state and national programs in the delivery of services and benefits to members.

Members and local associations have access to well-trained UniServ staff who provide training, assistance, and information covering each program area of SDEA negotiations, member rights and membership development.

Eric Herold

Western UniServ Director

Eric.Herold@sdea.org

LouAnn Jensen

EGL UniServ Director

LouAnn.Jensen@sdea.org

Philip Moore

SEE UniServ Director

Philip.Moore@sdea.org

Sandy Arseneault

Plains UniServ Director

Sandy.Arseneault@sdea.org

Grace Gill

Eastern Prairie UniServ Director

Grace.Gill@sdea.org

SDEA Members Only:

Log into MyNEA360 to join the “SDEA Members Only” group to access SDEA/NEA member only documents and information. New users will need to create a MyNEA360 profile in order to be verified as an SDEA member.

Educators For A Day

Inviting Legislators into Your Classroom Can Help Shed Some Light on the Challenges Facing Our Schools

There is a lot of legislation that will impact schools and students making headlines. Many of these bills make educators scratch their heads and wonder when the last time some of the bill's authors were in a public-school classroom. This past fall, members of SDEA's Legislative Action Teams invited some local lawmakers into the classroom for the Educator for A Day event during American Education Week.

This is a great opportunity to welcome legislators into your school to help them see firsthand the work that educators do every single day. This year we had four legislators who accepted the invitation to spend a day with a classroom teacher to see what today's classroom looks like. SDEA thanks Rep. Jennifer Keintz, Rep. Tamara St. John, Senator Michael Rohl and Senator Casey Crabtree for spending time with our students and members.



How Savi Helps Educators Find Student Loan Debt Relief

There is an abundance of information about forgiveness and repayment programs, but it's overwhelming and typically aimed at a large, general audience. Savi's co-founders, Aaron Smith and Tobin Van Ostern, wanted to create a more streamlined, personalized and interactive approach.

"We designed the Savi platform to cut through the confusion and anxiety around student debt," Van Ostern says. "We wanted people to understand all their options—including potential forgiveness—and then make it really easy to enroll and stay up to date."



Both men have a background in college debt relief policies and consumer education, and they're passionate about advocating for and supporting student borrowers. "I've seen firsthand the burden and bureaucracy of this system from trying to manage my own debt," Smith says. "It has been incredibly rewarding to help people earn freedom from that debt."

NEA members have special access to the NEA Student Debt Navigator, powered by Savi, and there is no cost to determine your eligibility and potential savings. Input information about yourself and your loans, such as your income, the amount of your monthly student loan payments, how long you've been teaching and where,

and subject(s) taught. And if you have an online account with a federal loan servicer, you simply provide your login. Savi will then sync with the servicer and instantly populate all required loan information for you.

The Savi tool analyzes your information and displays available repayment and forgiveness options side-by-side. For example, it knows if your school receives Title 1 funding, which can qualify you for Teacher Loan Forgiveness or Perkins Loan Teacher Cancellation.

If you opt to enroll in a forgiveness or repayment program, Savi will populate all necessary information in the correct Department of Education application, saving you time and preventing errors that could lead to delays. If you choose to file electronically through the platform, you can do so at a reduced cost of \$29.95—a savings of \$60 off the price for non-NEA members. You'll also receive ongoing advice, tools and information to help you better manage your debt.

Not all debt can be forgiven or reduced

Not everyone qualifies for income-based repayment, Teacher Loan Forgiveness or PSLF programs. However, there are still avenues to explore via the NEA Student Debt Navigator that can provide significant relief:

Consolidation allows you to combine multiple federal education loans into one for a single monthly payment. You can transfer variable-rate loans to fixed-interest ones, while simplifying and even lowering monthly payments by spreading them out over a longer period of time (up to 30 years). Be sure you understand the possible

— continued to page 12

New SDEA Staff



Christy Ryland

What is your role?

Administrative Assistant & Event Coordinator

What did you do before SDEA?

Administrative Assistant & Bookkeeper for Hollaway Bridge and Culvert Inc.

Something you want members to know about you.

I can't get enough of the river and Lake Oahe. I enjoy fishing year-round and getting in as much beach time as possible in the summer.

Anything you want to share about your family?

I am happily married with three children. I have a 22 year old son and 19 year old twin daughters.

Lathie Under Baggage

What is your role?

Data Strategist

What did you do before SDEA?

Electronic Medical Record Trainer

Something you want the members to know about you?

I enjoy traveling, camping in the Black Hills, and spending time with family and friends.

Anything you want to share about family?

I live in Rapid City with my husband, Jacob. We have 4 children Kacie (18), Grant (16), Cooper (3) and Emery (2).



— continued from page 12

negative outcomes of a consolidation—including the loss of interest rate discounts, principal rebates and other borrower benefits. Savi's student loan experts can help you navigate potential consolidation avenues and explain their pros and cons.

Deferment or forbearance lets you temporarily stop making payments or reduce the amount paid to avoid defaulting. You can pay interest as it builds up over this time, or you may be able to delay this by adding it to your principal balance after the deferment/forbearance period (a process known as “capitalizing” the interest). If you take the latter route, keep in mind that the total amount you repay over the life of a loan could increase.

Run your numbers today with the NEA Student Debt Navigator calculator and take charge of your student loan debt.



<https://bit.ly/3LDjtTc>



SUMMER ACADEMY

July 18 – 19, 2022

University of Sioux Falls

SDEA is hosting its inaugural Summer Academy in July in Sioux Falls.

This is your one-stop shop for all SDEA's trainings.

Tracks include Professional Development, Early Career Educators, Membership and Leadership.

Offerings will include sessions for Certified Staff, Education Support Professionals and Higher Education members.

SDEA encourages each local to bring a team to ensure you can access all these great sessions.



<https://bit.ly/3sYdsbj>

See You in July!

What Say You?

SDEA Asks and You Answer.

In each issue of the Educators Advocate, our team will pose a question to our members, and we will share some of the best answers in the next issue. We asked some of your fellow educators the following question and here is what they had to say:

If you could have one person living or dead sub/shadow in your classroom who would it be? Why?

“
*Keith Richards.
I think they'd get a chuckle
out of that.*
Jeff Thomson
Cleveland Elementary
”

“
*Maya Angelou
was my first
thought—but I'd
also take either of
the Obamas*
Krista McCorkle
May Overby
Elementary
”

“
*Thomas Jefferson to set the record
straight on what the Founding Fathers
envisioned and give his opinion on the
current state of affairs.*
Matt Evans
West Central Middle School
”

**What say
you?**

Question for our next issue...

**Who is your favorite
contemporary author to highlight
for Read Across America?**

“
Answer here:

”



On December 2nd, SDEA-Retired Educators President Bob Hoffmann observed the meeting of the South Dakota Retirement System (SDRS) in Pierre, at which the annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for the coming year was determined to be 3.5 %, the maximum limit, as defined by South Dakota law for the retirement funds.

The meeting included presentations from officers and advisors concerning the funds, which have presently achieved over 105% funding levels with an annual rate of return of 22%, compared to an assumed average of 6.5%.

Investment advisors provided a not-so-sunny outlook for the near future

in an environment experiencing 5.9% inflation rate, impacts from COVID shutdowns and recovery, and a perception that the markets are over-valued, and thus fragile against possible interruptions.

SDEA-Retired has participated with the SDRS leadership and staff in recent years in offering “Pre-Retired Workshops” for active SDEA members who are nearing retirement, to help prepare them for the choices and opportunities that will be available to them at the time. Schedules and locations for those “Pre-Retired Workshops” will be announced next spring.

Contact info:

SDEA-Retired Liaison:

Philip.Moore @sdea.org

SDEA Leadership:

sdearetirededucators@outlook.com



Facebook page:

“sdea retired educators”

SAVE THE DATE

April 8 & 9 – SDEA Representative Assembly



UPCOMING EVENTS

March

- 2 Read Across America
- 5 Budget Committee meeting
- 11-13 NEA Leadership Summit
- 19 Plains Mini RA @ Pierre office 10am
- 21 Western Mini RA
- 21 EGL Mini RA @ 6 pm
- 22 SEE Unit meeting
- 24 Eastern Prairie Mini RA @ SF CTA
- 25-27 NEA ESP Conference
- 28 Veto Day

April

- 8-9 SDEA RA



411 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501

605-224-9263
sdea.org



@sdea.org



@SDEAEducators



South Dakota
Education Association



@SDEducators



@sdeaeeducators