

Special points of interest:

- Five Star Local Program Recognition
- Participate in Elections
- It's Tax Time

Inside this issue:

Time for Local Recognition	2
Elections-Elections	2
A Builder or a Wrecker?	2
Calendar	2
Calling All Art Students!	3
Hot Deals and Discounts from NEA Member Benefits	3
Tax-Related Q & A's	4
The Rewards of Refinancing	5

THE LINCOLN-WAY

A publication of the Lincolnway UniServ Unit

Volume 5, Issue 6

March, 2009

New and Inappropriate Uses for Cell Phones

A new activity is becoming a problem around the state. A number of high school (and middle school) students have been involved in "sexting." This is the practice of using a cell phone to take nude photos of classmates and then sharing them either on a Facebook/MySpace page or sending them to friends via a cell phone. This is a widespread problem found throughout the country.

One of the first cases in Iowa occurred earlier this year in Sioux City. A couple of other instances have recently appeared. The phenomenon is new enough



that the courts really haven't determined how to deal with it. Some states are treating it as child pornography since the photos are often of minor children.

The problem is that child pornography laws were developed to prevent adults from trafficking in this type of material. Instead, adolescents are taking and distributing the material. Since cell phones are regulated by

the federal government, the distribution of these photos runs astray of federal law.

Some judges are reluctant to prosecute these cases as child pornography since they don't want the person taking the photo to fall into the sex offender category in that state.

In the Sioux City case, the county attorney wanted to apply the section of Iowa law that deals with taking sexually explicit photos of a minor. This is a Class C felony punishable up to ten years in prison. School officials and parents around the

(Continued on page 4)

Staff Reductions and Terminations

All teachers should understand that staff reduction involves termination of a teaching contract due to the elimination of a teaching position and/or program. It does not reflect an individual's teaching performance. Chapter 279, Code of Iowa, governs staff reduction and termination of teacher contracts. Below are some of the most frequently asked questions involving Chapter 279.

Contact local association representatives or one of the Lincolnway offices for assistance with specific questions or problems.

If a district chooses to reduce staff, how will it determine whose contract(s) will be terminated? Every Master Contract contains a Staff Reduction Article. This Article outlines the procedure that the district must follow in selecting the

individual(s) to be staff reduced.

If the district plans to terminate my contract, when will I know? Superintendents or their designees shall notify a teacher not later than April 30 that the teacher's continuing contract will be terminated effective at the end of the current school year. This notification shall be in writing and

(Continued on page 3)

Time for Local Recognition



ISEA is once again sponsoring the **Five Star Local Program**. This program recognizes locals for their activities in communications, advocacy, legislative and political organizing, organizational development, and teaching and

learning.

The nomination form is due to the Lincolnway office by **Wednesday, April 1** (no April Fooling!).

The Unit winner will receive \$100 of merchandise

from the ISEA Store and recognition at the ISEA Summer Conference.

For the application form, go to <http://www.isea.org/awards/images/5star08-09.pdf>.

Elections—Elections

Online voting for Iowa’s state delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly in San Diego this July will continue through **Sunday, March 15th**.

Members can access the voting “booth” at www.isea.org/ra-online-voting. Instructions are also located on page 11 of the February Communicue. Members will need their individual ID number as well as the first four letters of their last name to log-on to vote. Contact Janet Wilson at jwilson@isea.org or 800.445.9358 with any problems in completing this process. Lincolnway encourages members to exercise their right to vote.

And speaking of elections, Lincolnway will hold its own election during the Spring Representative Assembly at Cronk’s in Denison on Thursday, April 16th. The offices open on the Executive Council include:

- ▶ Secretary-Treasurer
- ▶ Four Members-At-Large

Please contact Linda Sporrer at lsporrer@isea.org if interested in running for office.

A Builder or a Wrecker? *

I passed one day through a lonely town,
and saw some men tearing a building down.
With a “heave” and “ho” and a husky yell,
they swung a beam and a side wall fell.

I asked the foreman, “Are these men skilled?
The type you’d hire if you had to build?”
“Oh no”, he chuckled, “oh no indeed,
The common laborer’s all I need.

“Why I can destroy in a day or two,
what builders have taken weeks to do.”
I thought to myself as I walked away,
which of these roles have I tried to play?

Am I a builder, who works with care,
making his tools a ruler and square?
Shaping my peers to a well made plan,
helping them be the best they can?

Or am I a wrecker who walks around
content with the labor of tearing down?

**from <http://www.homeholidaysfamilyandfun.com>*



March

- 2 NEA’s Read Across America
- 5 Executive Council Meeting, 5:30 pm and Delegate Orientation, 6:30 pm in Carroll
- 13 Peri’s Birthday
- 15 Last day to vote online for NEA RA Delegates
- 25 Chris Bern visit to Woodbine

April

- 1 ISEA Executive Board Meeting, Ames
- 1 Five Star Local applications due
- 2 Delegate Assembly, Ames
- 2 Unit Dinner at Lucullan’s, 5:30 pm
- 3 Delegate Assembly, Ames
- 10 Office Closed- Good Friday
- 15 Design-a-Decal entries due
- 16 Spring Representative Assembly, Denison, 6:00 pm
- 22 Administrative Professionals Day

Calling All Art Students!

It is time once again for the ISEA Design-a-Decal competition. Students of ISEA members are encouraged to submit original designs to participate in the 24th annual contest.

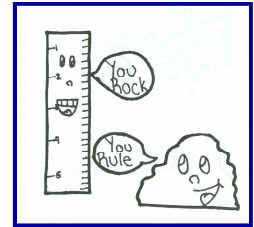
Entries must be submitted to ISEA by **Wednesday, April**

15th. A panel of evaluators will review the entries and choose 24 designs to be used as the 2009-10 ISEA Student Achievement Decals.

Along with other recognition, both the winners and their school will receive a plaque with all of the year's designs.

All members will receive several sheets of the decals for use with students during the school year.

For more information including the specific guidelines, go to <http://www.isea.org/awards/images/dd-flyer-09.pdf>.



Hot Deals/Discounts from NEA Member Benefits

NEA members get a five percent (5%) discount and free shipping on all orders, regardless of size, from SmileMakers, an online supplies discounter and a division of Staples.

Members may also sign up for "Teachers' Club," which awards one point (worth 10 cents) for each dollar spent. First-time orders qualify for 25 extra points. Points may be applied toward future pur-

chases.

Access SmileMakers at www.neamb.com/smile.



Get the Most Out of Your 2008 Tax Return—with Help and Discounts from H&R Block!

H&R Block is ready to help with your 2008 taxes!

Download a discount coupon and save up to \$40 on your in-person tax consultation at an H&R Block retail office, or choose online tax filing

and pay less than the standard cost.

Get more information, including your coupon, at: neamb.com/taxcut08 or call toll-free, 1-800-786-3429.



Staff Reductions and Terminations

(Continued from page 1)

shall be personally delivered to the teacher or mailed by certified mail. If you do not receive such a notice, your continuing teacher contract will be extended, and you will receive an individual teaching contract from the school district for the next school year.

What should I do if I receive a written Notice of Intent to Recommend the Termination of my contract? First, contact your local association leaders. Next, contact your UniServ

Director. You have only five (5) calendar days to respond to the superintendent's notice.

What should I do if I'm given the opportunity to resign or be fired? Keep in mind that neither the principal nor the superintendent can fire you! The school board makes the final decision regarding your employment. Never resign without first talking to your local association leaders and your UniServ Director! You may lose valuable rights if you resign without talking to someone about your situa-

tion and your rights.

What rights do I have under my extra-curricular contract? If you coach an athletic sport, you are entitled to a separate extra-curricular contract for each sport you coach. If the district also employs you as a teacher, your Chapter 279 rights apply to both your teaching and extra-curricular contract(s). If you are not under contract with the district as a teacher, you are an at-will employee and you do not have Chapter 279 contract rights.

Quote

'The nature of relationships among the adults in a school has more to do with the success of the students in that building than any other factor.'

~ Roland Barth



New and Inappropriate Uses for Cell Phones

(Continued from page 1)

country are split on this as well. In some cases, the "model" for the photo consented to the pictures being taken, so parents don't feel as though the child taking the picture should be penalized as a felon.

And how prevalent is this activity? The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy reported last month that [a survey of 1,280 teens and young adults](#) found that 20 percent of the teens said

they had sent or posted nude or semi nude photos or videos of themselves. That number was slightly higher for teenage girls — 22 percent — vs. boys — 18 percent. For more information, go to http://thenationalcampaign.org/sextech/PDF/SexTech_Summary.pdf.

How does this affect members? If members are aware of this activity, they need to alert district administrators. If they accidentally see one of the photos on a student's phone or social networking

site, they still need to alert district officials. Members also need to document when they saw it and what the circumstances were. If, for some unexplainable reason, the photo was sent to the member, then there could be bigger problems. A call to the UniServ Director would then be in order.

As with this activity and other issues, awareness is the key. Please contact Myron or Peri with further questions and/or concerns.

Tax-Related Q & A's

Q: Last year, I bought supplies for my classroom that were not reimbursed by the school district. Can I deduct some of those expenses when I file my 2008 tax return?

A: Yes. Even if you do not itemize deductions, you can claim up to \$250 of out-of-pocket expenses you paid in 2008. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) lists it as the "Educator Expense" deduction on the tax form.

Further, the U.S. Congress has extended the provision for the 2009 tax year filing, as well.

Here are details: Unreimbursed expenses can be deducted for the following items: books, supplies, computer equipment (including related software and services), other equipment, and

supplemental classroom materials. The deduction can be claimed under "Adjusted Gross Income" on either line 23 of Form 1040 or line 16 of Form 1040A, depending on your tax filing status.

You are considered an "eligible educator" if you are a kindergarten through grade 12 teacher, instructor, counselor, principal, or aide. To qualify, you must work at least 900 hours a school year in a school that provides elementary or secondary education, as determined under state law.

To learn more about the IRS Educator Expenses tax deduction, go to <http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc458.html>. This section also describes how qualified expenses may be affected by other deductions that you

may be taking in 2008.

As you prepare tax forms for 2008 filing, you will want to learn about the partnership of NEA Member Benefits and H&R Block, the nation's largest tax preparation company. For more information about discounts and special pricing on tax preparations for NEA members, see www.neamb.com/taxcut08/.

Q: I know I can deduct for qualified classroom expenses on my 2008 tax return, but what about union dues, health care expenses, and professional development fees or tuition?

A: Many miscellaneous deductions are subject to a 2% limit (i.e., you can claim the amount of expenses that is

(Continued on page 5)

Iowa State Education Association

Sioux City Office

Myron Halverson
UniServ Director
1119 4th Street, Suite 213
Sioux City, IA 51101
E-mail:
mhalverson@isea.org
Phone: 800-378-9819
Fax: 712-252-0174

Des Moines Office

Peri Van Tassel
UniServ Director
E-mail:
pvantassel@isea.org

Linda Sporrer
Secretary

E-mail: lsporrer@isea.org
777 3rd St.
Des Moines, IA 50309
Phone: 800-378-9769
Fax: 515-471-8049

LINCOLNWAY UU EXECUTIVE BOARD

Mary Siepker,
President
msiepker@willinet.net
H: 712-276-6801

La Dona Jergenson,
ISEA Exec Board Rep
ljergenson@audubon.
k12.ia.us
H: 712-563-3282



The Rewards of Refinancing

More and more homeowners are finding that their home's equity can be a powerful financial tool. You can leverage your home's equity to help you get onto solid financial footing. Refinancing your current mortgage may be a step that can help you:

- Consolidate high-interest loans or bills into a single, more manageable monthly mortgage payment
- Lower your interest rate
- Reduce your monthly mortgage payments
- Reduce the term of your existing mortgage to pay it off faster
- Access available funds for tuition costs, home improvements, or to cover large expenses.

When Should You Consider Refinancing?

Our home mortgage consultants will walk you through

Tax-Related Q & A's

(Continued from page 4)

more than 2% of your adjusted gross income) and must be itemized using Schedule A of Form 1040 or Form 1040NR. There are several good resources on the IRS.gov website to help you determine if you qualify for the deductions you mention. For union dues, see Page 7 of the IRS Publication 529 called "Miscellaneous Deductions," which can be found on the Internet at [http://](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p529.pdf)

the financing options available to you when you are considering a refinance. Here are a few of the factors they will look at:

- **Interest Rates.** If today's rates are at least .5% lower than your current interest rate, then it may be a good idea to consider refinancing your current mortgage.
- **Length of Time in the Home.** The longer you remain in your home the more likely your refinancing will pay off. If you're thinking about moving within 5 to 7 years, perhaps you should consider other debt consolidation options such as a home equity loan or line of credit instead.
- **Loan Term.** The amount of time needed to repay a loan is called the term. When interest rates are low enough,

you may shorten the term of your loan without having to greatly increase your monthly mortgage payments. The shorter the term of the loan, the less you pay in interest for that loan.

To learn more about refinancing, call:

Karen Benecke-Renken

Home Mortgage Consultant
515-237-5811 Work
515-778-3986 Cell
karen.a.beneckerenken@wellsfargo.com
www.homeloanwithkaren.com



Remember, the benefits of the NEA Home Financing Program are also extended to parents and adult children of NEA members.

www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p529.pdf. Be sure to heed the caution regarding the lobbying expenses portion of dues, which is not deductible. Publication 529 includes a section up front that covers "What's New for 2008" in tax law changes and also a section on expenses that are not deductible.

Another good IRS tax information source is Publication 17, "Your Federal Income Tax." Part Four, Section 19

on "Education-Related Adjustments" covers topics such as deductibility of student loan interest, tuition and fees. You can find it at <http://www.irs.gov/publications/p17/ch19.html>.

If you are not confident about your deductions, you can always take advantage of the special discounts for NEA members on tax preparation assistance from H&R Block. Go to www.neamb.com/taxcut08/ to get the details.