

Special Board of Education Meeting
Thursday, February 6, 2014 5:00 PM

Gering Public Schools Central Office Training
Room 1519 10th Street Gering, NE
1519 10th Street
Gering, NE 69341

Agenda

1. Signature of Notification
2. Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, Roll Call, Welcome Visitors
 1. Acknowledge Open Meeting Laws
 - i. The Board of Education reserves the right to enter into Executive Session for the protection of the public interest; or the prevention of needless injury to the reputation of an individual, and if the individual has not requested a public meeting.
 - ii. Notice of this meeting was published on the GPS website, at the GPS Central Administration Office, at the City of Gering at City Hall and at the Gering Post Office.
3. Excuse Absent Board Members
4. Consent Agenda*
 1. *Sequence of agenda items are subject to change. Please plan to attend the entire meeting.
 2. Approval of Agenda/Amendment of Agenda Items
 3. Personnel Items
 - i. Contract Approvals
 - ii. Resignations
 1. Jack Martin (Physical Education Teacher at Lincoln Elementary)
 2. Bob Anderson (Vocational Tech Teacher at the High School)
 3. Mark Bishop (Vocational Tech Teacher at the High School)
 4. Cindy Drumheller (1st Grade Teacher at Northfield)
 5. Kristy Keller (Social Science teacher at the Junior High)
 6. Peggy Beatty (1st Grade Teacher at Cedar Canyon)
5. Reports
 1. Superintendent Report
6. Action Items
 1. Select the newspaper of record for 2014
 - i. Gering Citizen Newspaper
 - ii. Star Herald Newspaper
 - iii. Gering Courier Newspaper
 2. Approval of 2014-2015 Negotiated Agreement
7. Adjournment



January 20, 2014

To: Mr. Bob Hastings, Superintendent of Schools and members of the Gering Public Schools Board of Education

RE: 2014 Newspaper of Record – Gering Citizen

The Gering Citizen is honored to have served as the newspaper of record for Gering Public Schools in 2013. It is a responsibility and trust we do not take lightly. The coverage of Gering Public Schools' students, staff, events, public board meetings and legal proceedings will continue to be of highest priority in our ever-growing newspaper.

The past year has been a good one for Gering Citizen. In April, our newspaper received numerous Nebraska Press Association awards in the Weekly - Class B circulation (860-1,499) division. One of these was the first-place award for Youth Coverage, which included photos, feature stories and news coverage of Gering students. In addition, our circulation has grown, as indicated by the enclosed annual circulation report outlining the 12-month average of both the Citizen and Courier newspapers.

The quantity and quality of our news coverage has also increased. As shown by the enclosed sample papers, the Gering Citizen has consistently produced a large, 16-to-20-page newspaper filled with a balance of community, government, school, youth, and agriculture news, feature stories, opinion, history, sports and school events featuring Gering and topics of interest to our coverage area.

The Gering Citizen has become an established and reputable news source for readers and advertisers not only in Gering, but throughout the region. This means that the news, notices and achievements of the Gering Public Schools are even more widely seen and read, providing a larger value to you. The good news about Gering Schools is being widely read in Gering and throughout the panhandle.

As Gering's only locally-owned and operated newspaper, we function as one of your 10th Street neighbors with a staff that includes GHS alumni (owner/publisher Lisa Betz, owner Nina Betz), current GHS students (McKenna Cosey and Kayla Wick), parents of Gering school students (Phillip Eckerberg and Kay Grote), and active members of the GHS Booster Club (Kay Grote and Lisa Betz).

Because of these relationships, we remain deeply committed to the legal service, advertising, accurate news reporting and fresh, personal coverage of the GPS. This year the Citizen gifted a full-color, Gering Bulldog wall calendar, which generated \$150 in funds for the Booster Club and we will do so again in 2014, with a new marketing approach developed with Booster Club president Deb Pieper. We have also worked in collaboration with Spectrum Photo to create posters and banners for the Gering High School sports teams. Our dedicated staff continues to work to open and maintain beneficial relationships with your school staff, administration, board members, coaches, parents and students.

In addition to our award-winning coverage of Gering schools, all of the district's legal notices and minutes of meetings are published online at www.geringcitizen.com. This free, user-friendly service provides a permanent record of school proceedings and notices. This is a valuable service to the district's patrons, public and potential contract bidders and job seekers.

Simply put, providing Gering Public Schools and its patrons with timely and meaningful news coverage, school event information and legal advertising is our priority. We sincerely appreciate your faith in us as your designated newspaper since 2011 and request that you make the Gering Citizen your legal newspaper in 2014 and beyond.

Kay Grote
Editor
Gering Citizen

Lisa Betz
Owner/Publisher
Gering Citizen

A Comparison of the Circulation of Weekly Newspapers Serving Gering

All publications that have periodical mailing privileges must publish a “Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation” report annually. This statement is filed with the Postmaster to determine eligibility for mailing privileges. The statement lists basic facts about the publication and provides the circulation numbers from the previous 12 months. The report is public information because the postal service requires each newspaper to print this report in the legal notices section of its paper in the first part of October.

Below is a summary of the print circulation numbers submitted by the two weekly newspapers serving Gering. These numbers reflect the previous 12 months* average leading into the filing date, or the first of October 2013.

Total Distribution 2013:

- Gering Citizen – 1,325
- Gering Courier – 697

The bulk of Citizen subscribers exist in Scotts Bluff County and many also live in neighboring Morrill and Banner counties.

Sources:

- Gering Citizen – Statement of Ownership was printed on Oct. 10, 2013
- Gering Courier – Statement of Ownership was printed on Oct. 10, 2013

*Typically, we would provide actual numbers for the *final week* before the filing date; however, as the Courier sampled the community with complimentary copies throughout Gering on that date, the numbers for that date would not reflect the true circulation of both newspapers.

Gering Speech Team wins Class B-6 district title

By Elizabeth Gross

elizabethgross@geringcitizen.com

The Gering Speech team will have a major presence at the state tournament in Kearney next week. The Barking Bulldogs had first or second place finishers in all events. Tanner Baird was a double first place finisher, winning in both Informative and Entertainment Speaking. Also included in the team's six first-place finishers is Allison Baird in Serious Prose, Caleb Wyre in Poetry Interpretation, Samuel Eastman in Extemporaneous Speaking, the Oral Interpretation of Drama team consisting of Johnathon Boyd, Megan Brady, Andrew Delcamp, Hayley Grams, and Gavin Hovseth.

It took a total of 148 points for Gering to seal their fate as this year's District Championship team. Now the team is on to the final stage of the season as the Gering speakers head to the state tournament in Kearney on March 21.

Here are the results from the Class B-6 District tournament in Gering:

Humorous Prose

1, Hunter Reeves, Ogallala; 2, Andrew Delcamp, Gering; 3, Collin Cox, Alliance; 4, Lauren Gull, Sidney; 5, Caleb Hayden, Gering; 6, Jennifer VanFleet, Chadron

Serious Prose

1, Allison Baird, Gering; 2, Kendall Uhrich, Gering; 3, Alexis Smith, Mitchell; 4, Casey Baldwin, Sidney; 5, Roger Bunnell, Alliance; 6, David Strang, Alliance

Oral Interpretation of Poetry

1, Caleb Wyre, Gering; 2, Michael Kruse, Chadron; 3, Balie Waldhelm, Ogallala; 4, David

Strang, Alliance; 5, Micah Most, Ogallala

Extemporaneous Speaking

1, Samuel Eastman, Gering; 2, Phoebe Lockhart, Ogallala; 3, Casey Baldwin, Sidney; 4, Kyle Upp, Gering; 5, Mitchel Rankert, Sidney; 6, Evan Hansmeier, Ogallala

Entertainment Speaking

1, Tanner Baird, Gering; 2, Kaitlyn Kryznanowski, Gering; 3, Flor Acosta, Alliance; 4, Jordan Feisert, Ogallala; 5, Madeline McQuillan, Ogallala; 6, Shevelle Lee, Valentine

Informative Speaking

1, Tanner Baird, Gering; 2, Kali Rimington, Gering; 3, Abigail Nguyen, Ogallala; 4, Madison Hostetler, Ogallala; 5, Cassidy Linaberg, Valentine; 6, Anna Turner, Sidney

Duet Acting

1, Lauren Gull/ Darby Young, Sidney; 2, Johnathon Boyd/ Jenna Longmore, Gering; 3, Annie Brickner/ Jacy Miller, Valentine; 4, Balie Waldhelm/ Byron Nelson, Ogallala; 5, Samuel Cheramie/ Andrew Phelps, Sidney; 6, Rhiann Swancutt/ Jesus Samaniego, McCook

Oral Interpretation of Drama

1, Johnathon Boyd, Megan Brady, Andrew Delcamp, Hayley Grams, and Gavin Hovseth, Gering; 2, Aaron Gaswick, Cortland Goffena, and Terran Merriman-Honerkamp, Chadron; 3, Caleb Hayden, Kaitlyn Krzyzanowski, Kendall Uhrich, and Caleb Wyre, Gering; 4, Kathryn Engel, Emilene Engel, Abby Nyguyen, Clarissa Morales, and Cassie Ramirez, Ogallala; 5, Morgan Boots, Roger Bunnell, Collin Cox, and Kacey Horn, Alliance; 6, Elizabeth Goodell, William Grant, Mary Weingart, and Mikayla Witt, Alliance



Photo by Elizabeth Gross/ Gering Citizen

The Gering Speech team was crowned District B-6 champions Tuesday night in Gering. Team members front row from left are Kali Rimington, Hayley Grams, Allison Baird, Megan Brady, Jenna Longmore; middle row, Caleb Wyre, Kyle Upp, Tori Brumbaugh, Johnathon Boyd, Gavin Hovseth; back row, Kaitlyn Kryznanowski, Kendall Uhrich, Samuel Eastman, Tanner Baird, Caleb Hayden, and Andrew Delcamp.



First grader Jessenia Domingo gets into the spirit of Crazy Hat day on Tuesday. Students at Geil Elementary had fun-filled theme days to help raise money for The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.



First graders Angelita Valencia (left), and Emersyn Cross, enjoyed crazy hat/ hair day as part of their fundraiser for patients with Leukemia and Lymphoma.



Second grader Madeline Straub also enjoys crazy hair day.

Photos by Elizabeth Gross/ Gering Citizen

Geil Elementary students open big hearts for charity

By Elizabeth Gross

elizabethgross@geringcitizen.com

Students at Geil Elementary School are gathering their pennies, nickels and dimes to help the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Every day

this week has featured a theme for students. Students brought in their nickels for crazy hat and hair day on Tuesday, while Wednesday was dimes for a fashion disaster, and Thursday, students are encouraged to bring their quarters to be a super hero. Classrooms are competing to see who will collect the most money in support of the charity.

Pennies for Patients is a fundraising effort by The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Since 1994, students from across the country have been helping the foundation raise millions of dollars with a bit of spare change. Last week, students at Gering Junior High School raised \$879.39 for the charity.

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I'll be healthy – tomorrow

We all have those bad habits with our personal health that we find hard to get rid of and it just seems odd that health habits are what we have the most trouble with when keeping our body healthy should be on the top of our priority list.

But, I'm also guilty of having a couple bad health habits. The one I think about the most is how lazy I am with staying hydrated every day because I feel like I hardly ever drink anything. It's weird to me because I never usually feel that thirsty and if you put a full glass in front of me, I usually may only get halfway through it, especially at restaurants. But ever since my junior year, a personal goal of mine has been to drink more water.

I've always found it to be a habit I'd really like to break because I do believe it's one of the reasons why I have acne-prone skin. I've read countless articles that tell me drinking lots and lots of water each day can help reduce acne which has been a main motivator for myself since I started doing this. In all honesty, I'm actually fairly positive that my choice has helped improve my skin, even though I'm not the best at staying on top of correcting my habit.

I have even discussed my water habits with my boyfriend who encourages that drinking lots of water does help with your skin as well as your body. He actually taught me the other day that if your body is telling you you're thirsty, then it's already too late. You've waited too long to have something to drink. So he tells me even if I'm not thirsty, it never hurts to have a glass of water randomly throughout the day.

I know you're supposed to drink something along the lines of eight 8 oz. glasses of water a day but I just feel like I don't even drink a quarter of that requirement.

So, in order to try to kill my habits, I have been attempting to carry my water bottle with me most places I go. And I always make sure it's my filtered Brita one because that way I won't be tempted to put anything but water into it. Not that I despise water or anything, because I don't actually drink much else, but I would probably prefer unsweetened iced tea over water any day because of the taste.

Teen Voice



Kaitlyn Krzyzanowski
Columnist

weened iced tea over water any day because of the taste.

However, my water habit has allowed me to think I'm probably not alone in this. I'm sure there are others who have my exact same habit and are probably trying to break it as well. But not all of our health habits have to do with water. Maybe we don't have things in moderation or eat way too many sweets. No matter what it is, we tend to find changing difficult because once we develop a certain lifestyle we don't really want to transition to something different. Every time we realize what we're doing to ourselves, we usually say "Yeah, I'll be healthy. I'll do this and I'll do that. Tomorrow."

The problem with saying tomorrow is that we say it every single day so we never do it. It's work to stick with what we need to set our minds to in order to stay healthy because it truly is easier said than done. But the results are worth it.

Although I'm not sure how this column might benefit my readers, I am hoping that it's some sort of encouragement even though I'm not the best example. I'm working on improving my health though, and I'm aware that being and feeling healthy is the best reward in the end anyways so I will still be trying to drink enough water each day. So I will break my habit... tomorrow.

School Box Top program more than cereal

By Elizabeth Gross

elizabethgross@geringcitizen.com

Everyone has seen the little square box that says Box Tops for Education on various grocery items they have purchased. It's easy to throw away the box or recycle it without a second thought, however; those little squares have the potential to make area schools a lot of money. Since its creation in 1996, schools across the country have earned more than \$525 million dollars through the Box Tops for Education program.

The program was created to help struggling schools purchase school supplies, library books, and fund other projects needed for the school. The program is considered one of the largest fundraisers used by American schools.

Originally limited to cereal boxes, there are now 240 brands that participate and many more types of products involved in the program. Box Tops can now be found on office supplies, tissue, Hanes clothing, Ziploc containers and trash bags, to name a few.

The program is fairly simple. Each box top is worth 10 cents. The consumer merely has to clip the box top off the finished product and turn it in to the school. Fifty box



Photo by Elizabeth Gross/ Gering Citizen

Cereal, soup, frosting, cake mix, trail mix, office supplies; the list goes on for products that contain Box Tops for schools. Each Box Top is worth ten cents to your local school.

tops equal \$5. Once the tops are turned into the school a Box Top representative then sends them to General Mills. Once the Box Tops have been received, the school receives a check from the company.

For those who do shopping online there are also e-boxtops. Visit www.btfe.com/marketplace to sign up and register your school. The site provides a list of retail-

ers who help give Box Tops for every \$10 spent on their website.

Gering resident Valerie Harnish, who works at Geil Elementary, got interested in the program after helping the school's previous Box Top coordinator. "I started looking more at the Box Top program itself and realized we were missing out on so much money," she said.

Harnish has now taken over as

the Box Top coordinator for Geil Elementary. All of the Gering schools are registered on the Box Top site but Harnish would like to see the district embrace the program more intently. "I'm not asking people to go out and buy things," said Harnish. "I guarantee these tops are already in your pantry." In her home, Harnish keeps a magnetic sandwich bag on the fridge and anytime she gets a Box Top she puts it in the bag.

Every month Harnish sends out a newsletter letting the parents know where the school is at in reaching their goal. Last year Geil Elementary set a goal to raise \$750. The students who went beyond that were treated to a pop-sicle party for their effort. "My goal is to get as much as we can for our schools," said Harnish.

Harnish is ready to promote the program this year and hopes to get the community involved. "With all of our budget cuts it makes sense," she said. "It's the only way that we will be able to get things that will help out in our classroom."

If you don't currently have a child in school and would like to donate; Fresh Foods and the Gering Citizen will collect your Box Tops. One simple clip is all it takes to help our schools.

Talking to your children about online social media

By Elizabeth Gross

elizabethgross@geringcitizen.com

There are currently over 200 social media sites on the Internet today. Entire communities devoted to topics ranging from sending videos to family to sharing your original music creations. We have never been so connected to the world around us. However, behind the computer screen, people are no longer hindered by social rules or standards of etiquette. This sense of false anonymity has resulted in many people sharing ideas and expressing opinions they would not normally say in an in-person setting. The belief that we can hide behind a veil of anonymity while online has created the unfortunate behavior of cyber bullying.

Cyber bullying is defined as bullying that takes place using electronic devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers and tablets. Bullying can come in the form of pictures, messages and video, with social media being the number one platform.

Talking to your children is the first step for parents in teaching them about online etiquette as well as what to do if they become a victim of Internet bullying. When talking with children about online etiquette remind them that everything posted on the Internet is forever. A good guideline to follow is to ask themselves if they would say it in a face-to-face setting. If not, don't post it online. Posts on these sites can be taken out of context and used in ways unimaginable when we first posted them. When information is taken out of context, it can be difficult to understand the intention of the writer. Everything posted on social media websites is archived and can be retraced. If young people



Gering Citizen file photo

Two students check their social media site.

engage in any form of bullying there can be consequences to their actions, regardless of whether they had time to delete the offensive post.

On the other side of the coin, if your child becomes the victim of cyber bullying there are steps they need to take. First, they should stop any communication with the perpetrator and report them to the website's administrator. For example, Facebook has a zero tolerance policy on bullying. When a profile is reported as engaging in bullying, Facebook removes the bullying content and may disable the Facebook account of anyone who bullies or attacks another. As with all incidents of bullying, it is important to let them know that they can come to you the parent when bullying of any kind occurs.

Parents also need to stay informed about current social media trends. Many of these sites have mobile applications, making them

accessible from any cell phone. Easier access may make it harder for parents to feel like they have any control over what happens while their child is online; however, by understanding what goes on with these websites, you can be aware of privacy policies. For example, did you know that a Facebook user must be 13 years old or older in order to create a profile? Additionally, each social media site works differently in terms of blocking and privacy software.

Here are the top social media sites for users 13 and over:

Facebook: This powerhouse social media site has lost a little thunder over the years but is still popular among teens and young adults. Users must be 13 in order to create a profile. When the profile is initially created the site allows users to set privacy settings. A profile cannot be completely invisible. Anyone can type a user's name into a search engine in order to find a profile page; however, privacy

settings include the ability to block others from viewing photos and content on the profile.

Twitter: Twitter is quickly becoming one of the fastest social media sites for teenagers. The site is similar to Facebook when updating your status, however; they are limited to only 140 characters. Users share their knowledge using #hashtags which links users to popular ideas that are "trending" on the site. Videos and pictures can also be shared. Twitter is famous for the vast amount of celebrities who use it to connect with fans. The privacy settings are fairly vague, so it's difficult to determine just how someone can block a user.

Tumblr: This micro-blogging website is slowly gaining steam in drawing young users to the site. Users create a blog that allows them to post texts, photos, video, quotes, and links to various websites. Blogs can be dedicated to a variety of subjects from favorite actors, television shows or art. The privacy settings are this site are fairly secure as the user has complete control of who to follow or unfollow. Each post has the ability to tag the subject. The only way other users can see the content is if it is tagged. If nothing is tagged the blog is virtually invisible to other users. Each blog contains an "ask box" which is the site user message system which can only be enabled by the user.

Responsibility is key when connecting with others online. Bullying is damaging behavior that can have lasting effects for everyone involved. Giving your child a solid foundation for responsible online behavior empowers them to make the right choice.



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Gering Citizen SPORTS

PAGE B1

Thursday,
September 5, 2013

Lady Bulldogs make quick work of Alliance

By McKenna Copsey
Special to the Citizen

Tuesday night marked the home opener for the Lady Bulldog softball team versus Alliance, as it was the first game played at Gering's Oregon Trail Park. Gering swept Alliance with a final score of 18-4. Gering's junior varsity defeated Alliance 19-4.

Alliance acquired a quick start in the contest by plating three runs in the first inning. Alliance senior Brianna Ridenour scored the first run against the Bulldogs when Whitney Hall singled to centerfield. Hall and Renata Shoeman rounded out the scoring for Alliance in the first.

Gering scored 10 runs in the bottom of the first to take back the lead for good in the game. Alexa Longoria, Jessica Rogers, and Brooke Doggett all had hits in the inning. Alliance struggled on the mound as they walked six batters and three hit by pitch.

Alliance stumbled at the top of the second, scoring only one run, as Nicole Placek singled out to leftfield. The next batter hit a line drive to shortstop Ciera Booker and was out at first, followed by a strike out. Ridenour walked before Schoeneman doubled to left field. Placek scored before the third out was made.

Gering's Mikayla Butler started out the bottom of the second with a grounder to the pitcher, and was out at first. Isabel Thompson singled to centerfield before Isabel Wolf was walked. Thompson scored from a wild pitch. Shelby Schanaman was up next and doubled to right field,



Photos by Ken Kurtz/Spectrum Photo
Gering pitcher, Haylee Duyck unleashes a fast one at Oregon Trail Park on Tuesday. Gering's Lady Bulldogs defeated Alliance in two and half innings, with a final score of 18-4.

sending Wolf home. Haylee Duyck and Booker walk. Longoria singles to shortstop. Rogers is up next and singles to left field, sending Duyck and Booker home. Gering's next three batters were hit by pitch when Wolf hit a ground ball and was safe on the fielder's choice.

Schanaman was walked, leading Butler home to finish out the inning with a score of 18-4.

Alliance started out the third inning with Lindsy Osborn and Josie Seidler walked. Mikayla Witt hit a grounder to shortstop, causing Osborn to be out at third. The next batter struck out, and a



Junior Bulldog Jessica Rogers crosses home plate during Tuesday's contest against Alliance. The Lady Bulldogs enjoyed their first game at new digs in Oregon Trail Park Tuesday.

fly ball was caught by Gering's catcher Kaylee Bohnsack. No runs were scored by Alliance, resulting in the end of the game with a final score of 18-4, Gering.

"Overall, I think that we played very well. There are some things that we can work on, but I saw a big difference in today than I did

this weekend. There were improvements all the way around," Gering's head coach Molly Bonuchi said.

The Gering Bulldogs will be on the road to McCook for an invitation on Friday. The game will be held at McCook High School at 9 a.m.



Gering opens season with loss at home

By Jerry Purvis
news@geringcitizen.com

The Gering Bulldogs opened its 2013 football season at home, but were unable to get past the visiting Holdrege Dusters in a 21-12 defeat.

Holdrege was down 6-0 at halftime, but two touchdowns in their first two possessions of the second half gave them a lead they never gave up.

Gering's standout performance came from senior Gage Smith, who contributed 162 yards of rushing on 25 carries. Along the way, he scored a touchdown, intercepted a pass and scored two field goals, one of them from 43 yards out. Of his 162 yards total rushing, 103 of them were in the second half.

"Gage is one of our team leaders and he's really important to our offense," Head Coach Jimmie Rhodes said. "He starts at tailback and outside linebacker. He punts and returns kicks. He'll be a big part of our success."

Rhodes said the team showed a lot of positives that actually outweighed the negatives for an early game. Executing the running plays, knowing where the blocking sets up, pass protection were all good. The little things like dropped passes can be fixed. "Their attitude was good and they played from whistle to whistle."

Rhodes was also complimentary of how the Dusters played. "They had a plan and executed it well," he said. "Their kids played extremely hard on the road and they're going to be a contender this year."

Quarterback Dillon DeMott's nine carries added 32 yards rushing and he completed six of 20 passes for 104 yards.

Right now, Rhodes said the goal is to keep the team focused and do the little things that get away from them, like completions on third down and running solid routes.

Gering is on the road this Friday night for a 7 p.m. game against the Cardinals at Chadron. Rhodes said



Photos by Ken Kurtz/Spectrum Photo
Gering senior Dillon DeMott (No. 11) gets the job done by putting the hurt on a Holdrege Duster during Friday's opener last week. Despite the loss, the Bulldogs were tough and fought hard.

Senior Dillon DeMott (No. 11) fought through a rough patch Friday as two Dusters worked hard to take him down. The Bulldogs demonstrated a fighting spirit Friday that looks to serve the team well this season.

their long-time coach always "gives us fits on defense" and expects a tough game.



Bulldog senior Gage Winkler (No. 4) dominates the field, while a strong Duster offense tries to take him down while teammate, senior Baylen Smith zeros in for the assist.



TACO JOHN'S SENIOR STUDENT OF THE WEEK • TACO JOHN'S SENIOR STUDENT OF THE WEEK • TACO JOHN'S SENIOR STUDENT OF THE WEEK • TACO JOHN'S SENIOR STUDENT OF THE WEEK • TACO JOHN'S SENIOR STUDENT OF THE WEEK

Kayla participates in DECA, Health Professions Club, Nike, Key Club and Spanish Club, soccer and drill team. She is also the yearbook Editor-in-Chief this year. In her junior year, she served as yearbook Sports Editor qualified for state journalism. She was a member of the district championship Mock Trial.

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Brian Doll is an honor roll student, member of National Honor Society and named to Academic All State in tennis. Brian participates in Student Council, Key club, Young Republicans, Tennis, rack, Concert Band, Marching Band, Jazz and Pep bands. Brian hopes to attend NROTC scholarship.

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Our View: A soup kitchen on 10th Street?

Downtown development is a tricky thing. So many of us have specific ideas about what we'd like to see in Gering's downtown and recently, there has been hope in the form of grant money available for planning purposes, with further grant opportunity to implement ideas developed in the planning process.

Most of us can agree that Gering's downtown needs to be more welcoming, with more restaurants and retail that tourism visitors and residents alike could enjoy. The challenge of course, is that Gering has limited real estate available on Gering's 10th Street that would be appropriate for retail or restaurants.

One of the big open opportunities is the Fraternal Building across the street from Valley Bank. A lot of potential exists in that beautiful historic building. Wouldn't it be great to see two retail businesses in the downstairs part, and upstairs, maybe a unique restaurant? Perhaps that restaurant could even

have live entertainment on the weekends. The space is certainly large enough to accommodate it. Why not have upstairs apartments so that we increase foot traffic downtown?

But prime downtown real estate like the Fraternal Building is attractive to all kinds of possibilities. We have recently learned that a group of area pastors are looking to purchase the Fraternal Building as a possible site for a soup kitchen, perhaps with temporary housing available for the homeless.

Gering could definitely use a shelter for both homeless or displaced youth and adults in the community. Homelessness is a larger problem here than people realize, especially with our youth. But should we take prime real estate on 10th Street off the market of downtown development opportunities? Yes, we'll have more foot traffic downtown, but that traffic won't generate tax revenue for Gering, nor will it create an

environment that many of us want to see in Gering's downtown.

It's clear that Gering wants something better for our downtown than what we have now. Judging from the many who met at the Gering Civic Center months ago to brainstorm our hopes and dreams for 10th Street, a soup kitchen was not one of those dreams.

We're reluctant to say this, but from the people we have spoken with about this possibility, not one agreed that 10th Street is the place for it. Everyone agrees that a soup kitchen and homeless shelter is a good idea in Gering, but nobody understands why it should be on 10th Street on one of the two primary blocks for development of retail and restaurants.

We live in a free country, yes, and people have the right to do whatever they wish, that's a fact. But with so much time, effort and money being invested into downtown development planning with a hope of better things for Gering's to-

row, why is it that we can't think more deliberately about what Gering needs on 10th Street and see if we couldn't develop something that more closely aligns with the goals that so many people agree on?

What impression will our downtown give visitors to our area once we have two dollar stores and a soup kitchen/homeless shelter on our main street?

We do need a soup kitchen and we do need a homeless shelter, but there has to be a better location for them than 10th Street. Let that vital service, and its appropriate location, become part of the downtown planning process.

If it's not too late, we ask that those in the decision-making chairs on this matter will reconsider and find an alternative site for this plan that would better enable Gering to improve its downtown. Surely there is a site for the homeless shelter/soup kitchen that doesn't take up precious retail/restaurant opportunities on our main street.

Blackmailer

Observations Only



Nina Betz
Columnist

The next morning I made breakfast and set Don's plate of food on the table with the other necessary items without speaking a word. I carried my plate into my office and ate while checking my e-mail. I was delighted to have a letter from Hazel and enjoyed writing a return letter.

Don hollered at me and said he was going to tell his mother and sisters that I was mean to a helpless cripple. I needed time to think and sat in my office ignoring him for a while. Don was 51 and we had been married 24 years at the time of his illness. He followed the example set by his father and uncles; they were men and to their way of thinking that meant they were more important than women and girls, which entitled them to behave any way they pleased and say what they thought, even if others considered it rude. Admitting wrong doing and apologizing was unthinkable.

Don was a kind person with a great deal of personal charm and warmth. Upon reflection, I think he felt as though he needed to be overly kind and generous so people would like him, whereas his wife and daughter had no choice and he could treat them any way that suited his purpose. I had a decision to make; I could ride out the nine months and let Don continue his rude behavior toward me, knowing it would soon be over or I could encourage him to open his eyes and truly see.

During the 24 years of our marriage he was a back walking away; be it because of work, playing golf or whatever was on his agenda for the day. This time he was a captive audience; he couldn't physically run away from me and his daughter. But he could still choose to run away emotionally, like his father had done when he died of cancer. I had no way of knowing the outcome but I made the choice to stand up to my husband and help him grow emotionally and spiritually if I could.

"What did you say?" I asked him, pretending I hadn't heard. "You're mean and I'm going to tell Mom and my sisters how you

treat me," he yelled. "You'd better not," I yelled back, thinking the last thing I needed was criticism from his family.

Later in the day, his mother and two of his sisters came to visit and the first thing he said to them was, she's mean to me, and then he went on to explain that I took his food away from him and refused to help him. His mother asked him why I did that and he admitted that it was probably because he told me to move my butt faster. It was then that I had a brilliant idea. I said to him, since you're unhappy with the way I take care of you, you are welcome to live with your mother for a week and then you can move to Jan's house for a week. Then, I'm sure Judy and Bonnie will be happy to have you for a week as well. The expressions on their faces was laughable; the last thing they wanted to do was take care of him. Before I could finish planning his visits, his mother spoke up and told him that he needed to be nice to me and try to get along.

Don swallowed a bitter pill that day. As his understanding of himself and others grew, he also grew to be ashamed of himself. I found it hard to witness the change in my proud husband but I knew the lessons in humility were necessary and that I couldn't feel sorry for him.

To be continued

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Praise for teen columnist

I wanted to thank the teen voice columnist Kayla Wick for her inspiring article on Body Image. God gave us all unique bodies that we must take care of, realizing that no one is perfect. Even after playing with Barbies growing up, I was mature enough to know that real girls and women don't look like that. I have met some who could come close to that image but imagine that they have issues that I don't. The point is, I know what you mean. I was teased every single day in school for how I looked.

Also, I wanted to thank you for using lyrics from the ever popular boy band, One Direction, to get your message across. I was amazed to find another young fan out there. I didn't think there was much of a fan base for boy bands here in western Nebraska because they stay hidden. Way to go fellow columnist for rising to the occasion.

Personally, I have been a groupie of boy bands since before you were born. Older fans are out there and we have a voice too! I don't consider 36 old but compared to teenagers it seems that way!

Another friend of mine, Anna Tegtmeyer, (also an avid fan) thanks you tremendously for giving One Direction more exposure here in western Nebraska. They are the hottest boy band on the planet right now. Not even the Beatles could come close to this kind of fame. Their songs make us realize that we are all beautiful! You go girl! Don't forget Hanson, Backstreet Boys, and Jonas Brothers too! Awesome aren't they?

Joy Rutherford
Lyman

County resident weighs in on comm. center formula

It amazes me how popular we people in the country have become with the Gering City Council. In this state, if government can't hang 60 percent of the cost onto the three percent of the people out in the country, there is a big uproar.

McFarland and Gibbs say that if they use her formula it would save Scottsbluff \$50,000 and Gering \$20,000. Where is the money supposed to come from if they don't pay it? It's unfair to make the 30,000 in the cities pay this \$70,000, but it's okay to make the few in the country pay it. It doesn't hurt them.

Never mind that the country people have paid the lion's share for 22 years for the communications center. Never mind that I pay the city sales tax every time I come to town and I don't receive one thin dime of benefits from it. I'm just helping you pay your expenses year after year. Never mind that we pay personal property tax on high priced machinery and the money goes into the county coffers, which lowers the city's property taxes on their houses and cars, and they pay none. And all of this uproar over a one-time charge. MY GOSH!

One thing is for certain, if I can help it. I will not buy one single thing in the City of Gering again. For the record, a city taxpayer receives \$1.19 back in benefits for every dollar he pays in state and local taxes. A rural taxpayer receives 33 cents back in benefits for every dollar he spends in state and local taxes. Who is getting the shaft?

Wilbert Ruppel
Gering

Celebrating the Bulldog homecoming

Gering can look forward to another great downtown celebration next week. Homecoming is coming!

Like in the past, Homecoming will be a week of themed dress-up days for students, locker decorations by the students, a student-led pep rally, the big game and crowning of royalty under the Friday night lights and dance for the students. But this year will be a little different.

Next Tuesday, a community celebration is being planned, with a night parade beginning at 6:45 p.m. (to accommodate the football players). The entourage, featuring all the fall sports teams, band, cheerleaders, student groups, Booster Club and anyone else who wants to join in, will its way north up 10th St., followed by a community pep rally down at the football stadium. The Gering Merchants have been invited to get involved, with Blue-n-Gold Bulldog themed decorations. The effort and intent is to bridge the gap between our schools and our town—to get some Bulldog pride outside. To give our youth, the future of our community, some fun memories and firmly-rooted reasons to call Gering "my town."

Building Bridges



Kay Grote
Citizen Reporter

The effort started back in August at the regular monthly meeting of the Gering Booster Club. A very small group—I think there were five of us—gathered around one of the pub tables in the high school commons. We got to sharing ideas and memories of our high school years when one of the parents and GHS alum, Jackie Smith, asked if anyone remembered how cool homecoming used to be back in the day. She recalled a

big parade that made its way downtown and the pep rally that seemed to bring in the community. She, along with the rest of us, wondered where those days had gone.

We all had some recollection of the fun and festiveness of homecoming. Mine was a little different since I attended high school in the small community of Yoder, Wyoming. Our town didn't have much of a main street or downtown businesses except the bar, filling station and post office, so we never had the parade or big community celebration like the ones we had heard about in neighboring Torrington. I always wished we could have had the parade with parents waving at us and the homecoming court waving back from polished convertibles. But we made do. The burning of the "Lusk Tiger" atop a pile of donated fence posts and lathe sticks while standing on melting snow drifts remains one of my homecoming highlights.

So, the brainstorming started. A committee was formed. The what-ifs turned into a vision to inject a little bit of Bulldog spirit into all of Gering.

Members of the Booster's home-

coming committee have since contacted GHS Student Council members, who are responsible for coordinating the homecoming activities, to help them develop plans for the downtown festivities. I have heard, (from my own in-home Gering Bulldog source) that there is a new enthusiasm among the high school for homecoming this year. That's exciting! But the students are also getting other valuable lessons. By working through a process of committee meetings, motions and votes, phone calls and gaining the appropriate permits and permission, the students are learning, at the grassroots level, about diplomacy and delegation. This process of developing ownership in their hometown should, in effect, make their homecoming a gift to their town.

School administration is also encouraging the upper classmen to reach across to elementary students to develop a sense of Bulldog spirit and community pride. GHS principal Eldon Hubbard, who is also an active member of the Booster Club, said student council members are allowed to use their Leadership period to contact elementary students about planning their own home-

coming activities next week. I'm thinking it's got to leave a great impression upon our younger students when the "big kids" come to their school, dressed in uniforms, to talk to them and spend time with them. Again, it's a process of planting seeds for the next cycle of high school seniors.

To me, it seems like a logical move to try to get our school kids into downtown businesses and onto our downtown streets as much as possible. As I was researching the origins of homecoming, I learned that several universities, including Baylor, Illinois and Missouri, are credited for holding the inaugural "coming home" celebrations in the early 1900s. These universities invited college alumni back for a big home game because they, too, recognized the importance of connecting their students to the community. Baylor University called their first homecoming celebration "Good Will Week" and invited their alumni to return to campus to "renew former associations and friendships, and catch the Baylor spirit again." Doesn't that sound like a recipe for community connections and development?

Gering has a history of nice

family and youth celebrations including the Oregon Trail Days events with its wildly popular kiddie parade followed by an afternoon of children's games hosted by downtown merchants. Gering then welcomes families back again around Christmas time with Santa's Village and the beloved illuminated night parade to kick off the Christmas season throughout the valley. Gering obviously knows how to host a dandy parade. Logically, Homecoming should be rolled into our rotation of annual downtown Gering events.

With the Gering Public Schools now a fixture among our downtown business-scape, parents, students and school patrons should be included—as well as think to include themselves—in any kind of downtown activities, plans and visions. Likewise, Gering business owners should think to include school and student participation into their community promotional and growth efforts.

Next Tuesday, as we come out to celebrate our school's homecoming, consider the possibilities of creating a community "Good Will Week" celebration that will become memorable for the next generation of Gering Bulldogs.

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Gering Citizen SPORTS

PAGE B1

Thursday,
October 24, 2013

Team effort leads Gering girls' run to district championship

Bearcat boys ride perfect finish into quest for 10th state team title; SHS girls 2nd in tiebreak

By Terry Gaston
sports@geringcitizen

When all was said and done Thursday at the Class B, District 4 Cross Country Championships, the Scottsbluff boys were as perfect as a team could get and the Gering girls needed their fifth-place finisher to earn their team championship at Ogallala's West Wind Golf Course.

Defending Class B state champion and junior Matthew Barraza led the Bearcat boys to a sweep of the top-five finishes, with the first four Scottsbluff runners compiling a perfect 10-point team score on their way to dominating the results.

Lexington, which had the sixth- through eighth-place harriers, finished second with 33 points, and Gering claimed the third state team berth with 60 points, led by ninth-place finisher Steven Juarez.

The girls' team race was a deadlock at 35 points between Gering and Scottsbluff, with the Bearcats' charge led by junior Taylor Muncie and her winning, 4,000-meter course-record time of 18 minutes, 42.7 seconds.

Barraza also covered the boys' 5,000-meter course in record time, finishing in a time of 15:47. Senior Anthony Parra followed Barraza with his time of 16:12.23.

Senior Ben Willis-Teff finished in third at 16:21.97, junior Shane Burkey was fourth in 16:23.52; and senior Brendan Taedter took fifth place in 16:28.51. Junior Elias Hutt rounds out the Bearcats' lineup.

"We went way and above probably any of our expectations," said Scottsbluff coach Jim Barker, who has been working with the boys' state runners-up since early June in preparing for the chance to earn the Bearcat boys' 10th state team championship which they will attempt on Friday at the Kearney Country Club.

"We just had an awesome meet, but as the saying goes, you're only as good as your next meet. So we have to be able to back that up and do as well if not better this Friday."

Barker said the Bearcats' biggest enemy heading into the state meet, after coming off such a complete victory, might be complacency.

"It was exciting, but it actually could



Photos by Ken Kurtz/Spectrum Photo
Gering freshman Rebekah Rawlings competes at the Gering Invite, earlier this season. Rawlings led her team to first place with an individual fifth place finish at the Class B District Meet.



Scottsbluff junior Matthew Barraza placed first in the Class B State District Meet in Ogallala last Friday. Barraza led the Bearcats to sweep the top five finishes, earning the team a first place championship.

work against you too, because other teams could use that to fire themselves up. Lexington I think was somewhat upset since our No. 5 finished ahead of their No. 1, so I look for Lexington to be the team this year as kind of a sniper, the one that

if you're not careful could do some damage, and our guys can't take what they did for granted or any of our meets for granted.

"Hopefully we're all going to be well-rested and injury- and sick-free going into

state. I like our chances, we've had such a dominating season, but I don't think we've seen our best race yet. So if it's meant to be on Friday, the guys will put it together. They're a highly motivated group this year, and they will go above and beyond to do whatever to get the chance."

The Gering boys' third-place finish included two top-15 placers. Juarez, who ran for Minatare the past two years, earning his ninth-place finish in 16:58.28. Sophomore Jacey Shaul claimed the 15th-place individual medal with a time of 17:14.13.

Other Bulldogs who will run at state are seniors Aaron Pierce and Arich Knaub and juniors Keenean Fogle and Kyle Upp.

Muncie, who placed 10th at state as the Bearcat girls' lone state qualifier last year, gets to take her teammates with her to Kearney this week.

"We've had a great girls' season with limited numbers," Barker said. "Taylor especially has just excelled this year to a different level. I don't think our inner circle surprised us at districts because I felt we could get qualified, but when we were that close to winning, we were just excited as all get out that the team qualified."

"The girls were so excited," said Caleigh Walker, the Gering girls' coach and Barker's daughter. "We went in knowing it was going to be a challenge, going up against some tough teams. Those girls ran unbelievable. They ran their best race of the season and they ran together as a team. It was just an exciting day for them."

Freshman Rebekah Rawlings led the Bulldogs in the district meet with a fifth-place finish in 19:42.3. Junior Kali Rimington, one of two returning state qualifiers, took sixth in 20:05.9, while sophomore Jerilyn Laws came in 10th in 20:53.3. Sophomore Hadley Kirk, Gering's other state returnee, took 14th in 21:00.7.

By virtue of having their fifth-place finisher, junior Julia Ybarra, come in ahead of Scottsbluff's No.5 runner in junior Abigail Tygart, the Bulldogs got to claim the district

See DISTRICT on page B4




Tennis teams finish season at state tournament

By Jerry Purvis

news@geringcitizen.com

Both Gering and Scottsbluff boys' tennis teams made an early exit last week at the state tournament in Lincoln.

For the Gering Bulldogs, Brian Doll lost his #1 singles match 6-0, 6-0 to 8th seeded Jonathan Bieber of College View Academy. Jason Doll also lost his #2 singles match 6-2, 6-4 to 11th seeded Jacob Koncella of Omaha Gross.

In the #1 doubles match, Vince Moreno and Anthony Ramirez lost 6-0, 6-0 to Cole Bartley and Colin Peterson of Omaha Gross. And in #2 doubles, Alex Lupher and Noah Miller lost 6-3, 6-2 to 12th seeded team of Noah Burnell and Jordan Faye of Grand Island Central Catholic.

"The boys played well," said Gering coach Matt Palomo. "They faced a lot of seeded opponents but kept their heads high and played as well as they could. It's just that the other teams were better."

Gering just completed its second year as a school sport and Palomo said he's content with how the season went. And he's excited about next year.

Alex Lupher is back and will probably play #1 or #2 singles as a senior. Jason Doll, who will be a junior, will also compete for either #1 or #2 singles. Mason Marsh, who will be a junior, will compete for either #1 or #2 doubles, as will Grant Maser. Tyler Tjaden will probably be at #2 doubles.

"We also have some freshmen coming up," Palomo said. "That's



Photos by Lisa Betz/Gering Citizen
Senior Brian Doll, playing #1 singles, is about to return the ball during an early season match. Doll finished his high school tennis action at the state tournament in Lincoln.

why I coach, to get new kids in the program."

The Scottsbluff Bearcats also had only one day at state. Coach Ron Swank said both the singles players competed well. Logan Woodward at #1 singles lost 6-4, 6-3 to Logan Cobb of York. In the

#2 singles match, Sean Mercer-Smith lost 5-7, 6-4, 6-4 to Connor Stamm of McCook.

Swank said he had hoped the doubles teams would do better. But the #1 doubles team of Eric Olsen and Blake Wilberger lost 6-1, 6-3 to John Beckman and



Senior Vince Moreno returns a volley during the #1 doubles with partner Anthony Ramirez at a home match earlier this season.


Alexander Stoupa of Mount Michael Benedictine. In the #2 doubles match, Giovanni Aldrigo and Brad Divan lost 6-2, 6-1 to Tyler Dewey and Trent Koehler of York.

"We had a good year, despite not getting a lot of wins," Swank

said. "We had 13 players play enough varsity matches this year to earn a letter. And 10 of those will be returning next year."

Swank said that along with assistant coach Nate Lewis, they've set a foundation for success in the future.


TACO JOHN'S SENIOR STUDENT OF THE WEEK • TACO JOHN'S SENIOR STUDENT OF THE WEEK • TACO JOHN'S SENIOR STUDENT OF THE WEEK • TACO JOHN'S SENIOR STUDENT OF THE WEEK • TACO JOHN'S SENIOR STUDENT OF THE WEEK



Kayla is co-editor of the yearbook, and a member of Quill and Scroll. She is president of the National Honor Society. Kayla also participates in basketball, Key Club, and FCA. She plans to attend UNL, and eventually medical school.

TACO JOHN'S
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My rebellion

Red, green, blue, black, pink, purple, yellow, and brown. What do these colors remind you of? A box of crayons or maybe a bag of Skittles? How about hair? For centuries girls and guys have been dying their hair all sorts of colors but in the last couple years crazy colored hair seems to have become the fad. Whether it be a form of self-expression, a fight to fit in or an all-out rebellion, adults can't seem to wrap their heads around this fashion forward trend.

Something I always strive for is to never lose myself in anything I do and I believe a lot of teens are like me when it comes to that sense of self pride. I've had just about every hair color you can imagine: purple, red (dark and bright), blonde, every shade of brown and an awkward salmon pink kind of color, in every form you can think of: solid, highlights, tips, peek-a-boos and even an ombre.

Most people find it hard to understand why I feel the constant need to be changing my hair style and my response to them is to go try it! The first time I dyed my hair I fell in love, not with its toxic smell and ridiculous waiting times but with the way I felt after I was done. I was showing the world another side of me, a side they had never seen. My colorful hair shows my spunky, wild side, where as my neutral colors expressed my simplicity.

Fitting in is one of the most important things in the society of teenage girls. Which means if one popular girl is dying her hair, so is EVERY other girl in the school. Me on the other hand, I don't like fitting in, I like to stand out and make people stop and stare or maybe even ask "Wow! Who is that?" Because being in the "in-crowd" was never very important to me, I tend to oppose what the popular group is doing. When the fad among the "pops" was a neutral brown or blonde hair maybe even added with a little flair of black, what did I do? I dyed my hair fire truck red! Of course I couldn't be a wild child forever so my hair has just recently faded back into a more mellow color, but I didn't do it to fit in like so many teenage girls these days do. Enrique Iglesias captures this in his popular song Be Yourself, by making the statement, "Are you in, are you hip, are you cool? Do you try too

Teen Voice



Kayla Wick
Columnist

hard, or are you strong enough to be yourself?"

Now anyone who's not a part of today's "younger generation" has at some point thought to themselves that all us teens are dying our hair to nothing else than rebel. Clearly you are all COMPLETELY correct. What? Yes that's right I said that you are correct. Dying our hair over and over in all sorts of colors is our ultimate form of rebellion. However, let me correct you in the fact that we are not rebelling against our parents, our communities, or our schools in any way, shape, or form. We rebel against society's common belief of what beauty really is. I don't have to be blonde haired, blue eyed, and a size 2 to be beautiful, all I have to do is be myself and express myself in any way I choose. My hair color is almost like an insult to society in saying that I don't give a care what they think about how I look, I know I'm beautiful no matter what anyone else has to say.

So as you can see we're all rebellious, unpopular, teenagers who just want to express ourselves to the outside world. Just because my hair is bright red or neon blue doesn't mean I'm a bad person who's out of control and needs some discipline in her life, it means I'm truly not afraid to stand up to the world and say "Hey! I'm Kayla and I really don't care what you think of me!" Now I'm sure there are some teenagers out there with completely opposite motives, but this is true about at least part of my generation, this is me, and this is what I know to be true.

Gering Freshmen hit 50 percent honor roll mark

By Kay Grote

kaygrote@geringcitizen.com

Gering Freshmen Academy students hit two significant marks during the first quarter of their high school careers. Fifty-seven percent of the 9th grade class, 90 out of 157 total students, were named to the honor roll for the first quarter.

What's more, a total of 13 students managed perfect attendance, without tardies, during the first nine weeks of school. Eight of those students were also on the honor roll. GFA Principal Kraig Weyrich says these achievements show the dedication that this year's class of freshmen have to their education.

"I was pretty surprised when I went back over the numbers," Weyrich said of the list of student attaining the perfect attendance. "Especially to have no tardies, that shows their dedication. We have several other students with perfect attendance, but were tardy a couple of times. Even a few seconds late to class is still considered tardy."

Weyrich said there is a direct correlation between school attendance and grades. He said students who make it a priority to get to school and their classes on time and be in school every day tend to also be focused on their academic future.

Freshman Rebecca Boyd agrees.



Photo by Kay Grote/Gering Citizen

Gering Freshmen Academy students attaining perfect attendance with no tardies are, front row from left, Brenna Tallmon, Bretton Michaelson, Danika Atchison, Skylar Miller and Alexis Robles. Back row, Rebecca Boyd, Jarrod Salazar, James Eastman, Keaton Ebbers, Courtney Conn and Kali Rains. Absent are Selma Corona and Elijah Robles.

Boyd was one of the 13 students with perfect attendance and also among the 14, or top nine percent of the class, to maintain all As to be listed on the Superintendent's (4.0) Honor Roll.

"It shows commitment and you need to be committed to succeed," Boyd said. "Once you get into high school it gets more competitive and harder and harder to distinguish yourself. You have to push yourself to succeed."

Weyrich called this year's class of 157 freshmen a special bunch, while

Gering School Board member Mary Winn credited the school's teaching staff and the involvement of the young high school students.

"We have a really good staff at the Freshman Academy and I think they are working really well with the students," Winn said. "When kids are involved in activities they have to keep their grades up. In the high school we have seen arise in kids involved in activities, not just sports or speech, but also in things like art club and book club, so I'm hoping students

are finding things to keep them interested in and keeping up their grades."

A breakdown of the freshman students listed to the honor roll showed that nine percent, or 14 students, made straight As for the Superintendent's Honor Roll; 27 percent or 42 students maintained a grade point average between 3.50 and 3.99 for the Principal's Honor Roll and 22 percent, or 34 students, achieved a 3.0 to 3.49 grade point average to be listed on the Secretary's Honor Roll.

DeMoine Adams challenges students to live the three R's

By Kay Grote

kaygrote@geringcitizen.com

Shortly following his introduction to the Gering High School student body, former Husker defensive end DeMoine Adams had everyone on their feet attuned to his cues to perform a mass "wave" across the auditorium. By then end of his talk, he had students on their feet again, vowing to throw up the famed Blackshirts' crossbones in defense of their Bulldog team—their peers, teachers and community.

"The only way you can score in life is by doing the right thing," Adams told the 9-12 grade students. "Everything that seems 'cool' is not always what's right."

Adams traveled from Lincoln, where he is now based as a professional motivational speaker and is pursuing his doctorate in Leadership Education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, to speak to Gering students at the invitation of school staff and administrators. High School Vice Principal Shawn Seiler said Adams' visit came on the heels of what staff recognized as a crisis of character in the high school.

"We wanted to get another positive message to staff and students to bring everyone together as a family and work on how we treat each other, setting goals and raising the standard

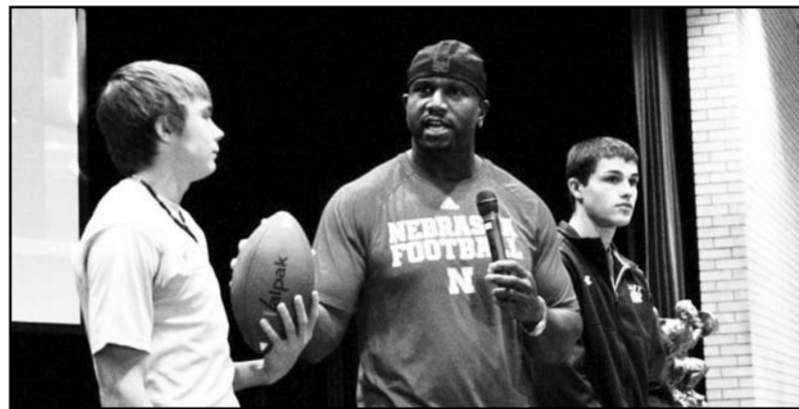


Photo by Kay Grote/Gering Citizen

Motivational speaker and former Husker defensive end DeMoine Adams illustrates a point of teamwork and scoring in life with the help of Gering High School seniors Dillon DeMott and Ryan Schwartzkopf during a leadership assembly at the school Monday morning.

of character," Seiler said. "I had heard DeMoine talk before with TeamMates and he had a lot of really positive things and I thought a lot of it went along with the Bulldog Way and incorporate it that way. With all the situations with different kids we were starting to see a heightened meanness among our kids recently. We thought his (Adams') message was good timing."

Using his own experiences growing up in Pine Bluff, Arkansas where he often fell into the wrong crowd in attempts to just fit in,

Adams said it took the intervention of a mentor, professional Major League baseball player Torii Hunter, to redirect him off of his road to ruin.

"He told me, if you want to make a difference and have a different life, you can't be afraid of being different," Adams said of Hunter's advice. "He told me the first thing I needed to do was to have the guts enough to be different from everyone else around me and stand up and do the right thing, to be real with myself and to be respectable." Those three R's were the focus of

Adams' talk with Gering students. He challenged the students to stand up for their family of the Bulldogs. He told students to always pursue doing the right thing, even if it is different. He encouraged them to be real with themselves and others, not falling into the traps of peer pressure and pursuit of shallow popularity. He shared with students his own experience of trying to force respect from others by attempting to achieve the coveted UN-L Lifer of the Year trophy, which he said he was not awarded until he gained the respect of his fellow teammates through humbleness and cooperation.

"Don't think just because you're cool, popular, cute or smart that you're automatically going to get respect," he cautioned students. "You get respect when you give it to others."

Seiler said Adams' message hit home and he hopes it resonates among students and staff for the remainder of the year.

"By all of us being aware and sensitive to how we treat each other, how we talk to each other, we all become better," Seiler said. "I think we all need to be self-reflective on how we do things. It will help us to grow as teachers, professionals, students, athletes, as people."

More information about Adams' motivational themes can be found at www.demoine-adams.com.



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Charley's Corner



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Continued from page A1 every month is often difficult and met with resistance.

Smith said that during evaluation each year, parents usually cite "childcare" as the reason that their children are enrolled in the after-school program, which means that for each family that uses the program as a childcare provider, the school gets docked grant money.

Doll said the after-school program is an abused program, being used as a childcare service and not for education or enrichment purposes.

"It's not a tool that extends the mission of Gering Public Schools," Doll said.

Another limitation to the pro-

gram is that the staff running the program are pulling double-duty, performing their full-time roles while using their precious spare time to run the program to the best of their abilities. In every school district in the state that has an after-school program, the district has a full-time program director, Smith said. The two exceptions are Lexington and Gering, she said.

Board members said if they had a bigger budget, the school could afford to hire a full-time director for the program and could even expand and improve the program.

While board members acknowledged the program's valuable role in the lives of children and fami-

lies, they also acknowledged the school district's limited resources and indicated that after-school care would best be left to the private sector, especially because the stated goal of the district is to provide education, not childcare.

"We want to give all families time to plan," Hastings said. "That's why we want to have this discussion in November. It's not a good discussion to have in May or June."

"I have started some very preliminary conversations with other organizations," Hastings said. "Regardless of what we do, we need to get moving ahead, one way or the other."

During the reports portion of the meeting, board members discussed the Freshman Academy honor roll, which boasted 50 percent of the freshman students as honor students during the first quarter.

"Mr. Weyrich, how to you attribute that?" said board member Mary Winn.

"Good teachers, honestly," said Kraig Weyrich, assistant principal. Weyrich said good attendance also makes a difference.

The Gering High School Key Club spent last Saturday collecting litter around the high school parking lot, Doll said. Board members commended Key Club members for cleaning up the school grounds, but expressed dismay over the littering habits of students at the high school this year.

"It's really getting to be an eyesore," Doll said. "It doesn't speak well of our students."

The schools' K-12 language arts curriculum is undergoing a major overhaul, which will be in progress over the coming months, Hastings said.

SCHOOLS

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Gering Blue team wins Mock Trial title

By Kay Grote

kaygrote@geringcitizen.com

Determining this year's Regional Mock Trial Champion team came down to a judge's ruling.

"This is a choice between outstanding and excellent," said Presiding Judge James Worden. "Today I rule in favor of Gering. Congratulations."

Judge Worden had the final say, ruling in favor of the defense in a case that pitted a tenant's use of an alleged unruly dog for a medical condition against a landlord defending her livelihood and safety of other tenants. Depending upon the presentation of facts and the credibility of each side's witnesses, the case, Worden said, could have easily gone either way.

For the first time since 2010, Gering won the coveted title and trophy over an equally polished and well-prepared Chadron team. The final round, held late Tuesday at the Scotts Bluff County Courthouse, came after a day-long bracket competition. Two teams each from Scottsbluff, Kimball and Chadron also participated. The win earned the Gering Blue team of two seniors and four juniors a trip to the state competition to be held Dec. 9-11 in Lincoln. For coaches Andy Stobel, Bell Island and Todd Morten, the win returns Gering to a level of competition they aspired to.

"It will be nice to get back to state," said Stobel after Tuesday's win.

Since early September, 14 Gering students have gathered after school to learn legal procedures, review case facts, develop strong character witnesses and fine-tune their presentation skills. Bell Island and Todd Morten, attorneys from Island, Huff and Nichols law firm in Gering, volunteer their time as coaches. Island, who has coached the Gering team since 1999, said earlier this season that the 2013-14 team is a nice mix of experienced participants and new students who are learning.

"Our attorneys have really grown this year and are much more confident in their ability to analyze a case and use the required legal processes and terminology; they're also more comfortable making and arguing objections," Stobel said.

Members of the Champion team are attorneys, juniors John Boyd, Gavin Hovseth and Kyle Upp and witnesses, seniors Holly Grote and Isabel Wolf, and

juniors Jenna Longmore and Chelcey Mannel. Mannel was unable to participate in the competition Tuesday due to illness.

Stobel said the students who play the role of witnesses have worked hard to develop believable personalities on the witness stand and to make cross-examining attorneys earn their money. During Tuesday's final round, it could very well have been the credibility and poise of the Gering witnesses during cross-examination that sealed the win.

Stobel said the challenge for developing their plaintiff and defense cases this year has been finding a balance. He explained that the plaintiff is being evicted from her apartment for violating the terms of the lease by having a dog - a seemingly black-and-white issue. However, because she claims to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and needs the dog as a service animal, it muddies the waters a bit.

"The students have had to figure out how to argue for both sides without sounding either whiny or heartless," Stobel said.

Only two students, Wolf and Grote, will graduate from the Gering squad. Stobel said he, Island and Morten are excited about the team's potential for next year. Gering has not won the state championship since 2001.

In addition to the winning varsity team, the Gering Gold team also competed well and gained valued experience during the eight-week practice season and the day-long competition. Members of the Gering Gold team are attorneys, juniors Rebecca Brenner and Cara Wimberly and sophomore Emma Leypoldt. Witnesses are juniors Nicolette Cook and Adrian Silva and sophomores Annastacia Cowan and Tegan Murdock.

As a bit of trivia, in 2001 State Sen. Adrian Smith introduced LR281 to the 97th Legislature congratulating the 2001-2002 Gering High School Mock Trial team and their coaches on winning the 2001 Nebraska Mock Trial completion. Team members were seniors Keaton Green, Shawn Robinson, Zach Stoltenberg, Megan Zimmerman, juniors Joe Manasek, Andy Stobel, Zach Wentz, sophomore Meagan Bauer and coaches Mary Winn, Matt Salomon and attorney Bell Island. The team represented Nebraska at the national competition in St. Paul, Minnesota that year.

"It is just overwhelming what these students have had to learn this year. For everyone on this year's blue team, this is their second year. Bell Island just deserves commendations for the number of years he's been with the Gering team and the thousands of dollars' worth of time he has given to our mock trial teams. There is probably no one in the state with more hours of volunteering with a mock trial team than Bell."

School Board member and former GHS Mock Trial Coach Mary Winn



Photos by Kay Grote/Gering Citizen

Gering High School 2013 Regional Mock Trial Champion team members are front row, Jenna Longmore, Chelcey Mannel and Holly Grote; back row, Gavin Hovseth, Kyle Upp, John Boyd and Isabel Wolf.



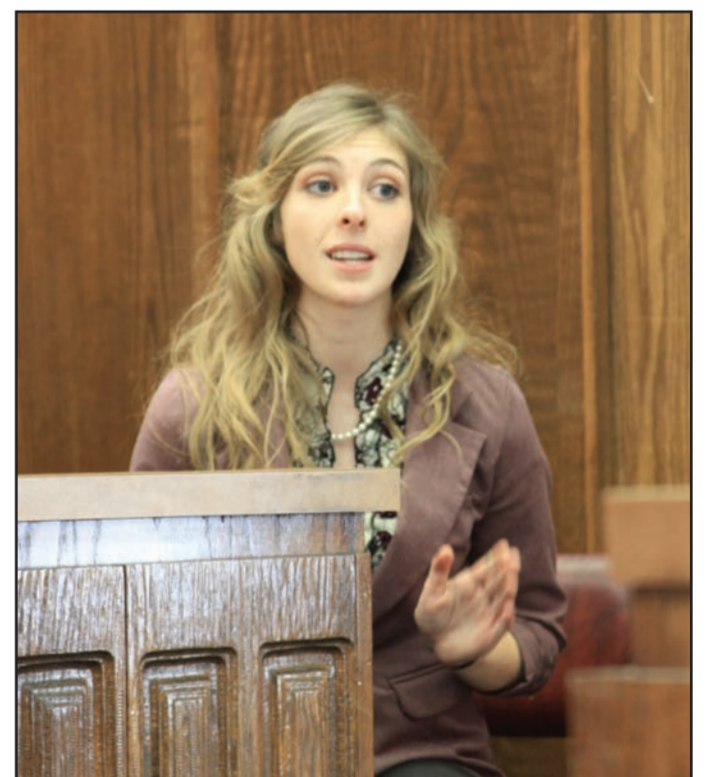
Gering Gold team members are front row, Nicolette Cook, Rebecca Brenner and Emma Leypoldt and back row, Cara Wimberly, Adrian Silva, Tegan Murdock and Annastacia Cowan.



Gering Blue attorney Kyle Upp explains his strategy to fellow attorneys John Boyd and Gavin Hovseth during a preliminary round of Mock Trial competition.

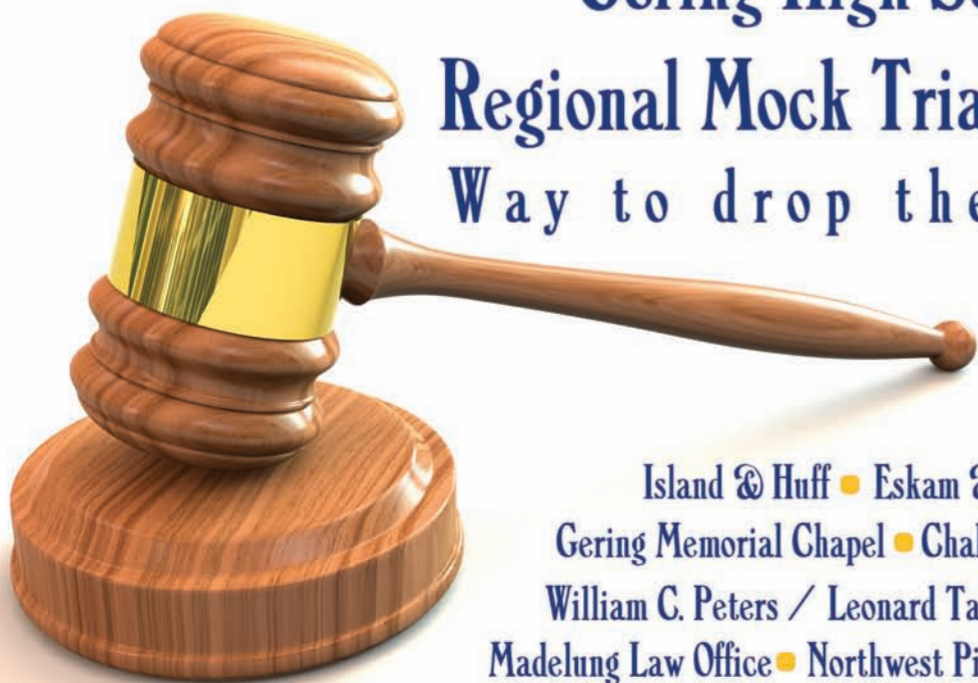


The winning Gering Mock Trial Team was coached by Todd Morten, Andy Stobel and Bell Island. Bell Island and Todd Morten, attorneys from Island, Huff and Nichols law firm in Gering, volunteer their time as coaches. Island has coached the Gering team since 1999.



Gering witness junior Jenna Longmore plays a convincing role during a preliminary round of the Mock Trial competition.

Congratulations
Gering High School 2013
Regional Mock Trial Champion team
Way to drop the gavel on'em!



Isabel Wolf, Holly Grote, Jenna Longmore
 Gavin Hovseth, Kyle Upp and John Boyd

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Photo by Kay Grote/Gering Citizen

Little Havynn Urdiales was one of hundreds of children to stop by Santa's Village after Gering's annual Christmas parade last Friday and enjoy the pint-sized igloo house. The igloo underwent repairs after it was damaged last year during high winds at Santa's Village in Gering. Always a favorite, children and grown-ups alike were happy to see its return.

GPS student performance improves, leaders strive for more

By Kay Grote

kaygrote@geringcitizen.com

While the scores indicate improvement, Gering Public School officials say they are not fully satisfied with the results of the State of the Schools Report released by the Nebraska Department of Education.

School Superintendent Bob Hastings and Curriculum Director Terri Martin said Monday that the results, from graduation rates to proficiency scores in reading, math, science and writing, do show steady improvement but also indicate that more must be done to have Gering students performing above state standards.

"Are we where we want to be, no. Are we going to continue to work hard to get where we want to be, yes," said Hastings of the overall report that is now available on the district's website. "There are several bright spots, but we'll continue to strive for improvement."

One of those bright spots was the graduation rate at Gering High School. The district's 2012 four-year cohort graduation rate was 93.60 percent, up significantly from the previous year's graduation rate of 87.21 percent. The state's overall graduation rate for 2012 was 87.21 percent. Martin said much credit goes to GHS staff.

"Kudos to the high school, Eldon (Hubbard) and Shawn (Seiler) and all those guys up there. They're doing a great job of

"Are we where we want to be? No. Are we going to continue to work hard to get where we want to be? Yes. There are several bright spots but we'll continue to strive for improvement."

- Bob Hastings, Gering Schools Superintendent



Gering Schools' Superintendent Bob Hastings



Gering Schools' Curriculum Director Terri Martin

keeping the students interested and engaged," Martin said, explaining that the principals work with the students to assure that they have the classes they need or are seeking and stay on track to graduate.

Hastings said good graduation rates are affected by several different factors, some of which are school controlled and some that are not.

"Things that contribute to good graduation rates are teachers who are working hard to keep the students engaged and wanting to keep them in school, principals who are working hard to keep kids in school and not trying to keep them out," Hastings said.

"The work of the counselors is

also a large contributing factor in graduation rates," Martin said. "The counselors at the 7-12 levels meet with every student every year—that's about 150 to 170 students per grade—and they make it a point to meet with each student and some they meet with multiple times, to make sure they are on schedule and on track to graduate with the courses they need. The teachers, also, are looking at students' grades all the time."

Another contributing factor in

Gering's growing graduation rate, Hastings and Martin said, is the successful structure at the Gering Freshman Academy, which serves as a springboard for students' high school careers. They said students' academic performance and activities at the Freshman Academy are closely monitored for the year, enabling school staff to give added attention to students who may otherwise get lost in a larger high school setting.

See SCHOOLS on page A2

County jail needs more space

By Jerry Purvis

news@geringcitizen.com

Scotts Bluff County Detention Center Director Ron Johns told the county board he needs to add some space to help alleviate overcapacity in the jail.

Capacity at the jail is 156 for adults, and the center usually runs about 170 inmates. Population has gone as high as 200 at times. However, those inmates were in the jail as well as Lexington and house arrest.

Johns said the jail's original design accommodates building bunk beds in some of the cells, which would add 16 more beds.

Johns said the U.S. Marshals Service keeps about 50 prisoners

in the county detention center at any time. But those numbers can change with new political leaders and new incarceration guidelines.

"It's hard to predict how many beds we need to set aside for federal prisoners," Johns told the board. "But I do think that crime will stay pretty high in the future."

Johns said 16 new beds would help alleviate overcrowding, but the county will still have to house some in the Dawson County Jail in Lexington. "It costs less for us to house some of our prisoners in Lexington than to turn away federal prisoners," he said. "If we can keep those federal prisoners here, it would cover the cost of double bunking."

He added another advantage is that when jail numbers go down,

the extra space can be used for the necessary separation of inmates in some cases.

Johns said after commissioner approval, the next step is to meet with the Nebraska Jail Standards Board to assure all space and safety requirements are met for the project. Then it's just a matter of installing new bunks. The estimated cost is from \$20,000 to \$25,000, but that could be lower if the work is done locally.

"We'd really like to add more modules to the detention center in the future," Johns said. "The pad has already been installed and wiring, so all we need to do is plug it in and set up another pod. If things don't change in the future, we'll probably need it."



Photo by Jerry Purvis/Gering Citizen

The winning entry for the Christmas parade was the Gering Junior High Activities Group, claiming the \$100 prize.

Christmas parade kicks off the season

By Jerry Purvis

news@geringcitizen.com

A large crowd gathered on a mild winter night last Friday to celebrate the start of the holiday season with the 8th annual Christmas Parade through downtown Gering.

A record setting 25 entries made their way down 10th Street, including reindeer. Santa wrapped up the parade on his way to Santa's Village in the Gering Civic Center, where he greeted the kids and got their gift ideas.

"It was a beautiful night for a parade," said RaNae Garton of the Gering Merchants Association. "It was so neat to watch people gather

with their lawn chairs and get snuggled up in blankets."

The reindeer made their second appearance in the parade because of help by Valley Bank and Trust and Valley Insurance.

"We're thankful that Santa allowed us to borrow his reindeer for the parade," said Amy Doll of Valley Insurance. "They really added to the magic of Christmas and the kids were really excited. We hope this becomes an annual tradition for the Christmas season."

In addition to a wide variety of entries from local businesses and civic organizations, JaCee Pilkington, Miss Nebraska 2013, made an appearance

during the parade.

Winning entries included the Gering Junior High Activities Group in first place, claiming the \$100 prize. Second place and \$75 went to the Gering Volunteer Fire Department, who brought out their antique 1930s American LaFrance fire truck, decked out with more than 4,000 lights. In third place, winning \$50 was Morgan Heil, a local girl who appeared as a Christmas angel on horseback.

About halfway through the parade, crowds started to gather at Santa's Village. Back again after a year absence was the igloo, as favorite with the kids.

See PARADE on page A2

Gering close to acceptance of comm. center agreement

By Jerry Purvis

news@geringcitizen.com

Members of the Gering Public Safety Committee met Monday evening to address any questions as the city is expected to sign onto an interlocal agreement with the county to continue receiving 911 emergency services.

Gering City Administrator Lane Danielzuk said the draft agreement has been sent to city council members and also to the county's smaller municipalities. The numbers for funding the county comm. center

are the ones proposed by the county. Those numbers had been a point of contention, as council members Jill McFarland and Larry Gibbs said the funding formula taxed residents of municipalities twice, at both the local and county levels.

Danielzuk said the council will discuss the agreement at its Dec. 9 meeting in anticipation of the county's Dec. 17 deadline to accept the agreement and come up with the first payment toward technology upgrades in the comm. center.

"If for some reason, our council has problems or issues with

coming to a policy decision with respect to the agreement, that needs to be addressed," Danielzuk said. "I've offered it on the agenda for that discussion. But it is our intention to approve an agreement."

Under the county's agreement, Gering would pay \$115,000 over the next three years, with this year's payment set at \$59,000. Danielzuk said he intends to have a signed agreement and a check to the county by Dec. 10.

Gering Fire Chief Templar, Police Chief George Holthus and

See AGREEMENT on page A2

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Our View: Childcare not school district's role

Members of the Gering School Board made a tough decision Monday night between providing what many families within the school district considered an essential service—the After School Program—or adhering closely to the district's purpose of educating students and being responsible with the district's funding. Although we consider the After School Program a valuable option to the families in our community, we agree with the school board's decision to discontinue the program. Their decision takes effect next August for the 2014-2015 school year.

The possible closing of the After School Program was reported in the Gering Citizen Nov. 21 following the board's Nov. 18 regular monthly meeting. Our reporter attended the meeting and made her report reflective of the board's discussion during the meeting. We also visited the issue in our Dec. 5 Our View opinion piece. These were all part of this paper's duty and desire to keep parents and patrons of the Gering Public Schools informed.

We are confident that the Gering School Board members did not take the decision lightly. Three of the six school board members are parents of current Gering students. One is a former teacher. All have had students go through the Gering school system and all are

long-time Gering residents. We say this to underscore the commitment the current Gering School Board has to the district's students and families. Board Chairman Alan Doll, speaking on behalf of the board, reiterated that it is not the school district's job to be a child care provider.

We feel confident, also, in the commitment and passion that educators within the Gering School district have for all students and that this was not a knee-jerk reaction. The school board has done its due diligence in meeting with school staff and the program coordinator to render their decision. The Business Committee met in November with Northfield Principal and After School Program Director Betty Smith who provided a program report and discussed the viability of the program. Smith reported at that time that since being transferred from her position as Principal at Cedar Canyon to Principal at Northfield it had become more difficult to run the program well due to time constraints. At that time, board members indicated that they would like to see the service provided but felt that the program may fit better into another entity's mission rather than the school district's.

The board, knowing the impact that their decision would have on a

large portion of the community, did allow some time for adjustment. Parents will have the remainder of this school year to utilize the After School Program. Doll said this would allow families time to find other child-care options. It will also allow time for some available and enterprising individuals from the private sector to step up and provide what is obviously a much-needed service in our community. Our question then becomes, "Who will it be?"

One thing we did find disturbing at Monday night's meeting was the lack of interest or representation from Gering parents who were either in support or against the closing of the After School Program. With the program currently affecting approximately 150 students, we would hope that parents would be aware of the board's dilemma and seek further information or show more interest. That is what your school board members were elected to do, to provide information, to hear your concerns and opinions and to represent the district's patrons. We encourage our readers to utilize their elected school board members at times, about issues such as this.

School board member Jerry Upp did say that one parent had contacted him with her concerns. Upp indicated that he understood the parent's concerns but after

further researching the issue and considering it from the side of After School Program coordinator Betty Smith, who Upp called a passionate educator, he got a full understanding of the school district's position.

One individual, Kirk Arnold, did attend the meeting after reading about the issue in the news media and did speak as a taxpayer rather than a parent. He questioned the district's inability to continue funding the program with a \$21 million budget.

Board members said the issue of the After School Program goes beyond the dollar signs. They also pointed to overutilization of district staff to carry out the demands of the program and wear on facilities as reasons why the program was no longer feasible. They also said the after-school childcare did not align with the district's education goals. We support the district's and the teachers' positions that they ultimately want to teach, not babysit.

So that brings us back to our original question. Who now will step up to provide this essential service? The purpose statement of the Gering Public Schools is "to develop the academic, personal, and social skills of all students and to prepare them to be productive, responsible global citizens." Please ask yourself, does that include daycare?

Final moment

Hospice delayed making the phone call to the Gering Chapel for at least an hour to allow time for the family to gather and the candlelight prayer service to be held.

After the service, family members went into the room and sat with him for a few minutes while we waited for the mortuary attendants to come to the house. Lisa, Don's mother and sisters and their children witnessed the final moments but I couldn't bear to watch them bring the narrow bed into the house and take his body away. I went outside and stood on the patio and cried. The journey begun nine months earlier was over.

The next day was a busy one with a visit to the Gering Chapel to set a time for the viewing and a date for the funeral. Afterward, Lisa and I visited the Blossom Shop, at that time, owned by the sister of Don's good friend, and ordered a blanket of red roses for the top of the casket. The pallbearers were notified of the date and time. Gering Chapel had Don's funeral clothes. The burial place was in the Gering family plot a few feet west of Sarah Gering's resting place. All that was left was to decide what we would wear to the funeral.

The second day, Lisa and I went to The Boutique to select our own funeral garments. I brought home a black two-piece dress with embroidery on the sleeves and skirt. Later, while trying on the dress at home, I was reminded of a vision I'd had the previous summer while watching television with Don. I was standing beside a funeral casket looking down at the person inside. My parents were elderly and the person inside could have been one of them but never did I imagine the person was my husband. I had forgotten about the vision until the moment I tried on the dress I was going to wear to the funeral. As I was looking at myself from the back in the black embroidered skirt and blouse, the realization came that I had chosen the very dress I was wearing in the vision and looked exactly the same as I did standing by the casket in my

Observations Only



Nina Betz
Columnist

vision a year earlier.

The funeral was on Thursday morning at the Central Church of Christ. Don had so many friends that attended the service that extra chairs had to be set up in the back of the church. Lisa and I chose the song "Turn your eyes upon Jesus," "Amazing Grace" and "In the Garden," sung by Tim Hebbert. After a luncheon served by the ladies of the church, the family members rode to the cemetery in the limousine from Gering Chapel for the burial and prayers. Afterward, the mourners were invited to take a red rose home with them.

The next day, Lisa wanted to go home to Laramie, Wyo. I knew she was having a hard time with her father's death and didn't want to ask her to stay for my sake. What I didn't realize was that I would be utterly alone that night and Saturday and Sunday nights too. My best friend was out of town on business. My parents were going on a camping trip. My mother-in-law and sisters-in-law were attending a ladies retreat in Denver over the weekend and I couldn't ask them to stay home. Saturday, I went shopping to keep busy but by nightfall I was hysterical, crying with no one to turn to. I called a sister-in-law in Lincoln and talked to her for a long time until I felt better and was able to sleep.

To be continued

The challenge of signing up for Obamacare

Editor's note: Funded by a grant from The Commonwealth Fund and distributed through the Nebraska Press Association, the Rural Health News Service provides Nebraskans with unbiased health-related information, designed to help better understand the health issues facing our communities, state and nation.

Buying health insurance is tough enough for anyone. It's hard to slog through the terminology. You have to ponder the unknowns about next year's illnesses and make your best guess about the coverage you'll need. Add in the hassle of navigating the new state shopping exchanges, and you're facing one of the most complicated shopping decisions, ever.

Given the complexity of this task and the cranky website Healthcare.gov, it's no wonder the federal government reported that only 137, 204 people across the country had actually selected an insurance plan through a federal exchange from Oct. 1 through Nov. 30. In Nebraska, nearly 2,000 people had chosen one.

Figures from government number crunchers, though, don't tell the whole story. What is it really like to sign up and make a choice? To find out, I've been following a 59-year-old Hastings, Neb., woman who began her quest for insurance to cover her daughter and husband weeks before Healthcare.gov opened for business. (She receives Social Security disability payments for a back injury and is covered under Medicare.)

The woman we'll call Marilyn (She didn't want her name used.) was a model shopper, and she did a lot of homework. She attended an AARP educational meeting, called insurance companies, got her name on eHealthInsurance and had dozens of agents contact her. She called Blue Cross, her family's current carrier, and investigated a new competitor CoOpportunity, one of those co-op arrangements the law allows.

Marilyn had a lot of questions about that company. "I liked the nonprofit idea," she said. "It cuts out the middle man and that provi-

Thinking About Health



Trudy Lieberman
Rural Health News Service

des the savings." Since it was a new company she had not heard of, she needed assurances the carrier would be around to pay claims. The sales agent told her it was affiliated with a company in Minnesota that had millions of dollars behind it.

Like other Americans, Marilyn struggled with Healthcare.gov. Early on she tried to create an account and could not. Persistent, she called the government's 800 number and was told to complete a paper application. She did that, but found many questions confusing like the one asking if she wanted the government to automatically check her eligibility each year.

She called the government 800 number to learn more. She was kept on hold for 20 minutes during the first call, and never got an answer. On the second try she did get an answer. "Some of the operators knew a little more; some a little less but their command of the information was not what it should be," Marilyn observed.

After about four weeks, she learned her husband and daughter were eligible for a family tax credit of \$233 to help buy a policy. Throughout November and into December she checked out the particulars for Blue Cross bronze and silver policies and for similar plans from CoOpportunity. Bronze policies, usually the cheapest, cover 60 percent of the policyholders' medical costs; silver plans cover 70 percent.

They choose a Blue Cross high

deductible bronze policy with a premium of \$569. There was one more choice to make. Instead of an "aggregate" deductible, which meant the higher family deductible would apply before benefits could be paid, they could pick an "embedded" deductible with each family member paying \$6,325 before insurance kicks in. Then the policy would pay for everything.

The family had run smack into the realities of the new market place. "The tax credit won't mean much when you have such a high deductible," Marilyn said. "When people find out about the nuts and bolts, they are going to be pissed." She summed up her experience in one word, "disappointing."

Others may have better experiences as Healthcare.gov improves and customer service reps become more knowledgeable. The bottom line remains: Being a good shopper for health coverage is just plain hard.

Trudy Lieberman, a journalist for more than 40 years, is a contributing editor to the *Columbia Journalism Review* where she blogs about health care and retirement at www.cjr.org. She is also a fellow at the Center for Advancing Health where she blogs about health at www.preparedpatientforum.org/. Lieberman has had a long career at Consumer Reports specializing in insurance, health care and health care financing. She was also the director of the Center for Consumer Health Choices at Consumers Union. She is a contributor to *The Nation*, and has written a column about health and the marketplace for the *Los Angeles Times*. Lieberman began her career as a consumer writer for the *Detroit Free Press* where her reporting became a model for consumer writers across the country. She holds a B.S. with distinction, and an honorary doctorate of humane letters from the University of Nebraska. In 2011, Lieberman was named the Soderlund Visiting Professor in the College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Nebraska where she taught public affairs reporting.

The next day Marilyn and her husband decided that the small tax credit was not worth buying an exchange policy, and they opted for a non-exchange policy to avoid the pain of dealing with Medicaid. A low premium was at the top of their must-have list.

They could keep their current policy, which was grandfathered under the law, but the premium might go up 16 percent in January to \$862, a steep increase. They could get a new Blue Cross plan that complied with the benefit requirements of the health law, or they could find a policy from another company.

They weighed the pros and cons and looked at the key trade-off—paying more up front and less when they needed medical care or paying a lower premium and more in the form of coinsurance and copays when they got sick.

They choose a Blue Cross high

deductible bronze policy with a premium of \$569. There was one more choice to make. Instead of an "aggregate" deductible, which meant the higher family deductible would apply before benefits could be paid, they could pick an "embedded" deductible with each family member paying \$6,325 before insurance kicks in. Then the policy would pay for everything.

The family had run smack into the realities of the new market place. "The tax credit won't mean much when you have such a high deductible," Marilyn said. "When people find out about the nuts and bolts, they are going to be pissed." She summed up her experience in one word, "disappointing."

Others may have better experiences as Healthcare.gov improves and customer service reps become more knowledgeable. The bottom line remains: Being a good shopper for health coverage is just plain hard.

Trudy Lieberman, a journalist for more than 40 years, is a contributing editor to the *Columbia Journalism Review* where she blogs about health care and retirement at www.cjr.org. She is also a fellow at the Center for Advancing Health where she blogs about health at www.preparedpatientforum.org/. Lieberman has had a long career at Consumer Reports specializing in insurance, health care and health care financing. She was also the director of the Center for Consumer Health Choices at Consumers Union. She is a contributor to *The Nation*, and has written a column about health and the marketplace for the *Los Angeles Times*. Lieberman began her career as a consumer writer for the *Detroit Free Press* where her reporting became a model for consumer writers across the country. She holds a B.S. with distinction, and an honorary doctorate of humane letters from the University of Nebraska. In 2011, Lieberman was named the Soderlund Visiting Professor in the College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Nebraska where she taught public affairs reporting.

The next day Marilyn and her husband decided that the small tax credit was not worth buying an exchange policy, and they opted for a non-exchange policy to avoid the pain of dealing with Medicaid. A low premium was at the top of their must-have list.

They could keep their current policy, which was grandfathered under the law, but the premium might go up 16 percent in January to \$862, a steep increase. They could get a new Blue Cross plan that complied with the benefit requirements of the health law, or they could find a policy from another company.

They weighed the pros and cons and looked at the key trade-off—paying more up front and less when they needed medical care or paying a lower premium and more in the form of coinsurance and copays when they got sick.

They choose a Blue Cross high

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"The common denominator of all my friends is that they're dead."
- Peter O'Toole

Editor's note: Peter O'Toole, 8-time Oscar nominee best known in his role as "Lawrence of Arabia," passed away this week at the age of 81.

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Star-Herald

"Pride in the Panhandle"

January 20, 2014

Bob Hastings, Superintendent
Gering Public Schools
Gering, NE 69341

Dear Mr. Hastings,

The Star-Herald respectfully makes application to be designated the "official legal newspaper" of the Gering Public Schools for 2014.

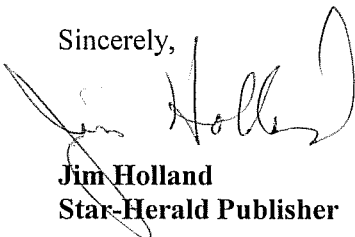
The Star-Herald has been a part of Gering and western Nebraska citizens' lives for more than 100 years, and is positioned to continue to provide the best in reporting for a long time to come. The Star-Herald prides itself on the quality of news we report for Gering Public Schools and the City of Gering. We support Gering not only with our quality news reporting, but also with employment for Gering citizens' as well. The Star-Herald currently has seventeen employees that reside in Gering.

In terms of efficiency, the Star-Herald is the best buy for the cost and its ability to get the word out, flexibility of dates for notices, and a knowledgeable staff that is well informed regarding the rules and regulations set forth by the Nebraska Legislature. In 2013, the school board elected to use the Gering Citizen for all legal advertising, but in cases has used the Star-Herald because of the flexibility we offer. This goes to show that our printing schedule has been a benefit to the school board and should be a consideration in your decision.

I would also like to point out that our newspaper offers more readership, penetration and flexibility than any other publication in the county, by far, on any given day. Our paid distribution is 13,194 and we are the only newspaper in the area that has an independent auditing firm verifying our paid circulation. In addition, we also have the #1 newspaper website in the area (starherald.com). We boast an average of 4,600 unique visitors to our page daily as well as over 1.2 million page views every month. All legal notices have, and will be, included online at no cost to Gering Public Schools.

Maximum legal publication rates are set by the Nebraska Legislature, and are the same regardless of the publication's circulation. That was the intent of the Legislature when it established publishing laws regarding official action of schools, and should be a prime consideration in reaching your decision. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jim Holland
Star-Herald Publisher

1405 Broadway, Scottsbluff, NE 69361 PO Box 1709, Scottsbluff, NE 69363
(308) 632-9000 1-800-846-6102 FAX (308) 632-9001

Gering COURIER



February 3, 2014

Dear Gering Board of Education,

As the editor of the Gering Courier, I would ask you to name us as the official newspaper for the Gering School System for 2014.

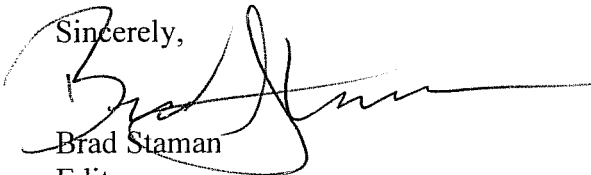
The Gering Courier is Gering's weekly newspaper, covering our community and the school better than any other media. Every week, as long as school is in, we have at least one to two stories in the Courier each week from Gering schools.

We cover the activities in the elementary schools, junior high, Freshman Academy and the senior high. Every other week we feature an outstanding senior in the Bulldog Profile. Students are regularly on the front page highlighting their achievements in the classroom and in the community. Our pages have spotlighted the fall play, the musical, speech, mock trial, and the many different activities throughout the school system. We have also published the work of different students, and put the spotlight on the outstanding achievements of our students, teachers and staff. We have been in the classrooms and the boardroom.

By naming the Gering Courier as your legal newspaper, you will be teaming up with a newspaper that believes in our young people. You will be teaming up with a trend setting newspaper who was the first to hire student reporters, and a paper who can turn everyday classroom activities into front page news, shining a positive light on the Gering School District, and more importantly, on the hard work of our teachers and the students.

We have been honored to serve the Gering school system for as long as the school system has served Gering. As the oldest, most award-winning newspaper in western Nebraska, I would ask you to name the Gering Courier as your official newspaper. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Brad Staman
Editor
Gering Courier

1720 10th Street, P.O. Box 70, Gering, NE 69341
308-436-2222



Gering Public Schools

Negotiated Professional Agreement

2014-2015 School Year

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: 2014-2015 SALARY SCHEDULES

APPENDIX B: 2014-2015 EXTRA DUTY SALARY SCHEDULES

PREAMBLE

THIS AGREEMENT IS MADE AND ENTERED INTO this ___ day of January, 2014, by and between the BOARD OF EDUCATION of the School District of GERING, DISTRICT #16, in the County of SCOTTS BLUFF in the State of NEBRASKA (hereinafter referred to as the "Board") and the GERING EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (hereinafter referred to as the "Association").

GENERAL PURPOSE

The Board and the Association recognize that the development of a quality educational program for the children attending the public schools of GERING, DISTRICT #16, is a joint responsibility which can best be achieved by agreement that all parties work toward common goals. The Board and the Association enter into this Agreement with mutual dedication, recognizing that the experience, creativity, and judgment of all parties are necessary to reach the educational needs of the community.

ARTICLE I

Recognition

The Nebraska Commission of Industrial Relations certified the Gering Education Association as the exclusive collective bargaining agent on April 14, 2005 for the following bargaining unit: All persons employed by the School District in the following positions: Certificated teaching personnel, counselors, reading coordinators/reading coaches, psychologists, preschool educators, registered nurses (but not LPN's), speech pathologists, occupational therapists, and preschool coordinators.

ARTICLE II

Teachers Rights

- A. Nothing contained in this Agreement shall be construed to deny any teacher those rights provided to him/her under Nebraska law or other applicable laws and regulations. Rights granted to teachers herein shall be deemed to be in addition to those provided elsewhere.
- B. The Board shall not discriminate against any teacher with respect to terms and conditions of employment by reason of membership in the Association and its affiliates, participation in collective negotiations with the Board, or institution of a grievance under the terms of this Agreement.

ARTICLE III

Grievance Procedure

The purpose of this grievance procedure is to secure at the lowest level, equitable solution to the problems, which may from time to time arise concerning the interpretation, application, and meaning of the terms and conditions of employment in this school district. An underlying principle of the grievance procedure is to ensure fair and equitable treatment to the district's employees.

A. DEFINITIONS

- 1. Grievance: A cause of distress, based upon an event or condition which affects the welfare and/or terms and conditions of employment of a certificated person, a group of certificated people, or others; or the interpretation and/or application of the Board of Education policies, administrative regulations, building level policies, negotiated agreements and other contractual obligations.

2. Grievant: An individual or group of individuals who submits a grievance for arbitration through established procedures.
3. Party of Interest: Person or persons making the claim, any person who might be required to take action, any person against whom action might be taken.
4. Time Limits: All time limits herein shall consist of teacher working days except when a grievance is submitted after the end of the school year. The number of days indicated at each level should be considered maximum and every effort shall be made at all levels to expedite the process. Failure of the Board or its representatives to comply with the time limits at any level shall permit the grievant to appeal the grievance to the next level.
5. Grievance Meetings or Hearings: All meetings and hearings under this procedure up to and including Step 2 of Level II shall be conducted in private and shall include only the administration's representative(s). All parties shall have the right to record the proceedings of any hearing or meeting at all formal levels of the grievance procedure.

B. Association Representation

A grievant shall have the right to have the Association representatives present to represent the grievant at each level of the grievance procedure. Nothing herein shall be construed as limiting the right of any teacher to discuss their grievance informally with their immediate supervisor and having the grievance adjusted informally. The settlement shall not be inconsistent with the terms of the negotiated agreement.

C. Reprisals

No reprisals of any kind shall be taken by the Board of Education, the grievant, and the administrator or parties of interest, against any individual or group because of participation in this due process procedure.

D. Withdrawal of a Grievance

A grievance may be withdrawn at any level without prejudice.

E. Timeliness of the Grievance

If the written grievance is not filed within twenty-one (21) calendar days after the individual or group knew or should have known, of the set of conditions on which the grievance is based, then the grievance shall be waived.

F. Advanced Step Filing

The grievance shall be initially filed at the level where the decision or action resulting in the grievance was made.

G. The Procedure:

Level I (Informal)

Initiating Claim:

Any certified employee of the school system who feels that he/she has a concern may initiate the process by discussing the matter with the building principal or immediate supervisor. A representative of the association may assist the employee in this resolution. If a resolution to the concern is not obtained through this discussion, the item should then be taken to the Superintendent of Schools. Every attempt should be made to resolve the problem at the informal level.

Level II (Formal)

Step 1: Any concern that is not resolved at the informal level may be submitted as a formal grievance.

If the aggrieved person is not satisfied with the disposition of his/her problem, or if no decision has been rendered following five (5) working days after stating the problem in the informal procedure, he/she may submit the problem as a formal grievance in writing to his/her principal or supervisor.

Step 2: If a grievance is not resolved at the building level to the satisfaction of the aggrieved person, or if no decision has been rendered within three (3) working days after the presentation of the grievance in writing, the individual may appeal the written grievance to the Superintendent. The appeal to the Superintendent must be carried out within three (3) working days after the written response from the building administrator or when that action was in order.

Within five (5) working days the Superintendent shall meet with the aggrieved person for the purpose of hearing and resolving the grievance. A record of such meeting shall be kept by the Superintendent. Within five (5) working days following the meeting with the aggrieved, the decision and reasons therefore shall be submitted to the aggrieved in writing.

Step 3: If the aggrieved person is not satisfied with the disposition of his/her grievance by the Superintendent of Schools or if no decision has been rendered within three (3) working days after the appeal meeting with the Superintendent, the aggrieved may appeal the grievance to the Board of Education. The appeal to the Board of Education must be carried out within six (6) working days after receiving the Superintendent's written decision or when that action was in order.

Within twenty-five (25) working days after receiving the written appeal, the Board of Education shall meet with the aggrieved person for the purpose of hearing and resolving the grievance. Within ten (10) working days following the meeting with the aggrieved, the Board of Education shall render a decision with reasons therefore in writing.

Extenuating circumstances (such as illness or being out-of-town) may prohibit strict adherence to the above timeliness specified in Steps 1, 2 and 3. Every attempt shall be made by all parties involved to adhere to the timeliness as established. Certain restrictions must apply at this level (Level II, Step 3) which are listed below:

- A. The grievance may be placed on the agenda of the Board of Education to be heard at their regular or special meetings, or a date may be set by the Board of a particular time and/or place.
- B. A majority of the Board of Education must be present to hear the grievance.
- C. A grievance shall be heard in open session. The grievance may be held in closed session by consent of both parties. All grievances shall be recorded. (Agreed upon by both parties.)
- D. Individual Board members may not act as a surrogate for the aggrieved.
- E. The Board's decision shall be rendered only after all the evidence is weighed, such as:
 - 1. Tape recordings or memos of meetings held prior to the Board hearing.
 - 2. Private discussion with the Superintendent and/or Principal concerning their disposition of the original problem.
- F. The Board of Education may call for a hearing on the grievance involving all parties as witnesses.
- G. The decision of the Board of Education will be final. Additional recourse may be sought through the legal system.

ARTICLE IV

Salaries

- A. Salary Schedule
The salary of each teacher covered by this agreement shall be determined by the salary schedule attached as Appendix A.
- B. Initial Placement
When hired, teachers shall be credited with all previous years of professional experience.
- C. Base Salary
The base salary for the 2014-2015 school year shall be \$32,650.00. Each teacher covered by this agreement shall receive an additional flat salary or fringe benefit amount of \$8,250, subject to the terms of the Flat Dollar Salary and Fringe Benefit. The compensation will be prorated to the percentage of time worked. Part-time teachers with FTE status of .5 or greater shall receive a flat dollar salary amount based on FTE position.
- D. Flat Dollar Salary Amount
For all Employees subject to this Agreement employed by the Gering Public School District employed at any time prior to January 1, 2012, the District shall pay such Employee a flat dollar salary amount of \$687.50 per month per full-time certificated employee as part of the salary package, unless the Employee elects to receive the

Fringe Benefit outlined in the following section. Certificated staff working half-time or more will have their flat dollar salary amount figured on the percentage of time contracted. The flat dollar salary amount for employment for less than the entire school year shall be calculated on the contract days employed divided by 186 days. Less than half-time certificated employees will not be eligible for the flat dollar salary amount. Payment of the flat dollar salary amount will be made monthly for 12 months. The Flat Dollar Salary Amount is compensation under Neb. Rev. Stat. 79-902.35, and is subject to the withholding of the employer and employee contribution to the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement System (NPERS) as required by law.

E. Fringe Benefit

For all Employees subject to this Agreement employed by the Gering Public School District employed at any time after January 1, 2012, the District shall pay such Employee a Fringe Benefit of \$687.50 per month for the school year per full-time certificated employee as part of the salary package. An Employee hired at any time prior to or during the 2011-2012 school year may make a one-time irrevocable election to receive the Fringe Benefit. Certificated staff working half-time or more will have their Fringe Benefit figured on the percentage of time contracted. The Fringe Benefit for employment for less than the entire school year shall be calculated on the contract days employed divided by 186. Less than half-time certificated employees will not be eligible for the Fringe Benefit. Payment of the Fringe Benefit will be made monthly for 12 months. Employees may elect to receive the fringe benefit as a cash payment, applied against the purchase of additional health and dental coverage, moved to a section 125 plan, or deposited into the HSA or a combination of the aforementioned plans. The Fringe Benefit is NOT compensation under Neb. Rev. Stat. 79902-35, and is NOT subject to the withholding of the employer and employee contribution to the Nebraska Public Employees Retirement System (NPERS).

F. Horizontal Movement

The horizontal index shall be 4.50%. Credit for additional hours shall be credited by September 1st and movement on the salary schedule shall take place accordingly. All graduate hours must be in the teacher's endorsed area/teaching field or part of a plan toward an additional endorsement or advanced degree, and have the prior written approval of the Superintendent/designee. The Superintendent/designee may approve hours which do not fit the above criteria, but will clearly be a benefit to the teacher and the District.

G. Vertical Movement

The vertical index shall be 4.50%. Teachers shall be placed on the proper vertical step in accordance with the experience in the District, but limited to one step per year.

H. Extra Duty

The contractual agreement between an individual teacher and the district relating to the performance of extracurricular duties shall be in accordance with the provisions of the extra-duty/extracurricular salary schedule. (See Appendix B)

I. Class Cover Substitute

Compensation for class cover as a substitute will be made at the rate of 1/6 of a substitute teacher's daily pay per period or 1/3 of a substitute teacher's pay per block, or a major portion thereof. Approval will be granted by the building principal.

J. Nurses

School nurses with a Bachelor of Science Degree shall receive 100% of the appropriate salary schedule placement. School nurses with less than a Bachelor of Science Degree shall receive a percentage of the appropriate salary schedule step placement.

- School nurses with a Registered Nurse license with a three (3) year diploma degree shall receive 88% of the appropriate salary schedule placement.
- School nurses with a Registered Nurse license with a two (2) year degree shall receive 75% of the appropriate salary schedule placement.

All other items of the negotiated agreement shall be provided in their entirety.

K. Additional Class Assignment

Additional class assignment will be paid at 1/8 (0.125) of the teacher's salary determined by his/her current placement on the salary schedule.

ARTICLE V

Fringe Benefits

All teachers with FTE status of .5 or greater shall have the right to exercise the option of participating in any of the fringe benefits offered by the District.

A. Health Insurance

The Association will choose the insurance carrier and deductible for health and accident insurance. For the 2014-2015 school fiscal year the School District shall contract for Educators Health Alliance (EHA) health insurance Blue Preferred \$750 Deductible/\$1,650 Deductible Dual Choice health insurance, or its equivalent successor deductible plan, and PPO - 80% A & B, with 50% C coverage dental at the premium cost established annually by the EHA for such fiscal plan years. All employees, whether receiving flat dollar salary amount or the fringe benefit that chose to accept the EHA health insurance plan through Gering Public Schools will receive a health insurance benefit pursuant to this paragraph. The District shall pay 50% of the annual single health premium payment with dental at the \$750 deductible premium level pursuant to the Educator Health Alliance schedule for the 2014-2015 school year if the individual teacher chooses that this fringe benefit is to be covered as part of the "125" IRS Cafeteria Plan. The remaining premium is to be covered as part of the "125" IRS Cafeteria Plan at the teacher's expense. If the teacher chooses to participate, he/she shall complete the necessary form for enrollment and authorization of payroll deductions. In addition, if the teacher desires to make any changes after the initial application, it will be their responsibility to amend the original enrollment.

B. Life Insurance

A group life insurance plan is available to those teachers covered by this agreement. The privilege of participation in this plan is left to the choice of the teacher. If a teacher

chooses to participate, he/she shall complete the necessary forms for enrollment and authorization of payroll deduction.

C. Disability Insurance

The Board shall provide long term disability insurance for each teacher covered by this agreement who meets the qualifications of the professional agreement by and between Gering Public Schools and the insurance provider. Benefits shall be payable upon the end of accumulated sick leave at sixty-seven (67) percent of annual contractual salary.

The amount of the premium for each employee shall be added to each employee's gross pay each month and deducted after tax for the premium payment. The implementation of this change in payment shall begin as soon as possible but no later than January 1, 2006. No individual covered by this negotiated agreement shall lose the disability insurance during the transition period.

D. IRS 125 Plan

Each teacher covered by this agreement shall have the option of participating in an IRS Section 125 Flexible Benefit Plan. The administration and participation costs of this benefit shall be paid for by the Board of Education. This fund will be administered according to the law. All payroll deductions will be deposited into the proper bank account in a timely fashion.

E. Pay for Unused Personal Days

For those teachers who have unused personal days at the end of the school year, the Board shall provide the following options.

1. If a teacher has one (1) day of personal leave at the end of the year, that teacher may select either 80% of a substitute teacher pay for that day or receive two (2) additional sick leave days.
2. If a teacher has two (2) days of personal leave at the end of the year, that teacher may select either 90% of the first level of the substitute daily pay schedule for those days or receive four (4) additional sick leave days.

In the event the teacher has the maximum of 66 days of sick leave, the teacher may not select the option of adding additional sick leave days listed above. Part-time teachers will receive this fringe benefit based upon their FTE pro-rata.

In the event the teacher is terminating employment at the end of the year, that teacher shall be paid for any unused personal days at the teacher's per diem rate of the teacher's salary schedule salary the last year of employment.

F. Sick Leave Buy Back

The Board of Education will buy back unused sick leave at the first level of the substitute daily pay schedule rate per day up to 36 days. This applies to any employee who leaves the District after at least 15 years of consecutive service who notifies the District of their decision to leave by February 1. This buy back provision replaces the regulation for Board

policy 408.01 Certificated Employees - Resignation implemented for the 2006-2007 school year.

G. Pay for Activity Events

1. Staff members will receive a bearer/guest activity pass for working two (2) activity events. Staff members may earn a student activity pass for each of their children by working one (1) additional activity event for each child's pass.
2. Employees assigned to perform duties outside the normal school day shall be compensated according to the schedule set forth below:
Hours: Compensation
Not less than zero (0) hours nor more than three (3) hours \$15.00 per assignment
Not less than three (3) hours nor more than five (5) hours \$30.00 per assignment
Not less than five (5) hours \$45.00 per assignment.
3. Pay for activity events is a non-negotiated item. Individuals who perform services at activity assignments shall agree to set amounts.

H. Sick Leave Bank

1. **Eligibility**

- a. All employees covered under this agreement shall have the right to participate in the Gering Public Schools Sick Leave Bank (Bank) under the terms set forth herein.
- b. Certified staff applying to draw from the Bank must meet the following criteria:
 - i. Depleted all leave in individual personal and sick leave bank.
 - ii. Requested leave through the Family Medical Leave Act.
 - iii. Be deemed ineligible for disability or Workmen's Compensation.
 - iv. Have incurred a minimum of three (3) consecutive days unpaid prior to receiving Bank benefits.
 - v. Submit an application for benefits in writing to the Superintendent of Schools stating the nature of the event, requested number of Bank days (not to exceed 20 per application), and eligibility as outlined in this agreement.
- c. Individuals are limited to an annual maximum of 60 (sixty) days of Bank benefits.

2. **Contributions**

- a. Participation as a contributor to the Bank is voluntary.
- b. Sick leave days donated by participants to the Bank are irrevocable and nonrefundable.

- c. Participants cannot designate the recipient of individual Bank day donations.
- d. An employee may annually contribute a maximum of five (5) days of accumulated sick leave to the Bank.
- e. Employees wishing to contribute to the Bank must have a minimum of ten (10) sick leave days available for their own use at the time of donation.
- f. Certified staff eligible to participate may begin contributing to the Bank immediately.

3. **Administration**

- a. Benefits from the bank may be distributed to the point where the Bank is depleted. If the Bank is depleted, no Bank days can be approved.
- b. When the Bank reaches a level of 20 days or less, a notification will be sent to all GPS employees asking for additional donations to the bank.
- c. Any unused sick leave bank days will be carried over to the following year.
- d. A Team will jointly approve or disapprove benefits. The team will consist of
 - i. Two Association designees
 - ii. One member of the Board Personnel Committee
 - iii. One building administrator
 - iv. One classified staff member
 - iv. Ad Hoc members at the team's request.
- e. The team may approve up to 20 days bank leave for each application received for any applicant that meets eligibility requirements.
- f. Employees may resubmit application(s) for additional Bank requests up to receipt of an annual maximum of 60 (sixty) days.
- g. The team has the discretion to waive dock days for subsequent Bank applications for the same illness/injury as the original application.

ARTICLE VI

Teacher Employment

A. Length of Contract

The length of each teacher's contract shall be 186 days. Teachers new to the district will be required to work one (1) additional day with 1/186 pay. The Board of Education shall have the authority to offer teachers extended contracts. Any teacher teaching on an extended contract will receive 1/186 of his/her salary schedule step, per day of extended contract. The School District and the GEA acknowledge that the scheduling of

the number of contract days and school calendar for each contract and school year is a management prerogative, and may be established by the Board of Education prior to January 1st of the previous school year, provided that the School District and GEA will negotiate the economic impact of any change in the number of contract days in the school term.

B. Elementary Planning Time

Elementary school teachers have one (1) full day of planning time at the end of each quarter; the school building administration may schedule a staff meeting for not more than one (1) hour during such planning time after the time established for the reporting of student grades.

C. Tuition Reimbursement

Whenever the Superintendent or his/her designee requires a teacher to obtain an additional endorsement on a teaching certificate, the District will reimburse that individual for the tuition for those classes required to obtain that certificate.

ARTICLE VII

Leaves

A. Sick Leave

At the beginning of each school year, each teacher covered by this agreement shall be credited with ten (10) days paid sick leave allowance or an equal amount related to the teacher's F.T.E. to be used for absences due to illness. The unused portion of such allowance shall be accumulated from year to year to a maximum of thirty-six (36) days. At this time, the Board will add thirty (30) days for a total of sixty-six (66). This addition is a one-time addition. A certificated employee who has exhausted his/her available sick days may convert available personal days to sick days at any time during the school year at a rate of one(1) personal day to two (2) sick days.

Absence due to personal injury or accident, and absence due to quarantine laws are both interpreted as sick leave.

Doctor and dental appointments are to be scheduled outside the normal working hours. Time for those appointments that must be made during working hours will be charged against the teacher's sick leave.

A certified employee will be allowed to use unlimited days of accumulated sick leave for family illness. Once days are exhausted they may be extended by personal days. After the total sick leave, both current and cumulative, has been exhausted, for each day absent, an amount equal to one day's salary will be deducted for each day absent. Employees who are entitled to Family Medical Leave and who request additional leave for Family Medical Leave reasons, shall use accrued personal days in addition to the paid sick days. For purposes of this paragraph, the term "family" shall mean the employee's spouse, son, daughter, parent, a person residing in the household of the employee regardless of the relationship to the employee, or someone for whom the employee is guardian or holds power of attorney.

B. Personal Leave

A certificated employee is eligible for two (2) days of personal leave each year; a teacher may carry over a maximum of four (4) personal days to the following school year. No more than four (4) consecutive personal days may be used at one time. For the breaks of Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas/New Years, Spring break, Easter or Memorial Day not more than one (1) personal day may be used the day before or after such school recess or holiday; the Superintendent shall have the authority to grant additional days.

A certified employee will be entitled to convert two (2) sick days to one (1) personal day, up to a maximum of three (3) additional personal days per year, at any time during the school year. The certified employee is only able to accumulate a maximum total of six (6) personal days, as set forth under the "Personal Leave" section. A certified employee who elects to convert sick days to personal days under this section shall not, in the same year, be entitled to convert these days back to sick leave or receive payment for any unused personal days, as allowed pursuant to "Pay for Unused Personal Days" found herein.

When a certified employee has exhausted their personal leave days provided to them, he/she may be granted two (2) dock days. The amount of 1/186th of his/her will be deducted from an employee's salary.

Weather: Employees who are unable to get to school because of weather when school is in session, will have a salary deduction equal to the cost of a substitute teacher for each day missed. A teacher may also opt to use a personal day in this case and may waive the five-day notification requirement.

C. Civic Leave

Certain types of contributions to the community shall be classified as necessary and those may be paid leave days. The decision for granting such leave shall be made by the Superintendent or his/her designee. Excluding jury duty, civic leave will be limited to five (5) days per year.

D. Bereavement Leave

A total of up to five (5) consecutive days on full pay is allowed each certificated employee that is employed full-time for absence in case of a death in the immediate family. Immediate family is defined as wife, husband, father, father-in-law, mother, mother-in-law, son, son-in-law, daughter, daughter-in-law, brother, brother-in-law, sister, sister-in-law, grandchildren, grandparent, aunt/uncle, niece/nephew or a person in the same home as part of the family or someone for whom the employee is guardian or holds power of attorney. Staff members who suffer the death of a child, step-child or spouse will have five (5) bereavement days plus an additional five (5) bereavement days will be deducted from the employee's sick leave balance. This time may be extended by personal leave.

Employees may be excused, without loss of pay, for a period of up to one day, to attend funeral services of relatives other than those listed above or to attend funeral services of friends with the approval of the Superintendent. Bereavement leave is not limited to five

(5) days in one year, but covers each death in the immediate family that occurs during the year.

F. Sabbatical Leave

Upon proof of purchase of insurance, the District will pay a dollar amount to the teacher which is equal to the lower of either (1) the amount equal to the single rate of the group health insurance in force or (2) a single premium rate of a health insurance policy selected by the employee. The teacher will sign a promissory note to repay the District the total amount of the premium paid. If the teacher does not return to employment by the District, the note will be due and payable. If the teacher returns to employment with the District, the note will be canceled after nine (9) months of service.

G. Professional Leave

Professional leave is without limit; however, this leave must be recommended by the building principal and approved by the Superintendent/designee.

This agreement will remain effective until another agreement is made between the Board and the Association. All other items previously negotiated shall remain in full force and effect, unless modified herein.

ARTICLE VIII

Document Authorization

In witness whereof the caused this contract to be signed by their respective presidents, attested by their respective chief negotiators, and their signatures to be placed hereon, all on the day and year and first above written.

GERING EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

_____, President

_____, Chief Negotiator

GERING BOARD OF EDUCATION

_____, Chief Negotiator

_____, Board President

_____, Supervising Council

APPENDIX A

2014-2015

Business Office						GERING PUBLIC SCHOOLS						
1/15/2014						CERTIFIED SALARY SCHEDULE						
						2014-2015						
						VERTICAL INDEX		0.045				
						HORIZONTAL INDEX		0.045				

STEP	BA	BA+9	BA+18	BA+27	BA+36	MA	MA+9	MA+18	MA+27	MA+36	MA+45	DE
1	1.0450	1.0900	1.1350	1.1800	1.2250	1.2700	1.3150	1.3600	1.4050	1.4500	1.4950	1.5400
2	1.0900	1.1350	1.1800	1.2250	1.2700	1.3150	1.3600	1.4050	1.4500	1.4950	1.5400	1.5850
3	1.1350	1.1800	1.2250	1.2700	1.3150	1.3600	1.4050	1.4500	1.4950	1.5400	1.5850	1.6300
4	1.1800	1.2250	1.2700	1.3150	1.3600	1.4050	1.4500	1.4950	1.5400	1.5850	1.6300	1.6750
5	1.2250	1.2700	1.3150	1.3600	1.4050	1.4500	1.4950	1.5400	1.5850	1.6300	1.6750	1.7200
6	1.2700	1.3150	1.3600	1.4050	1.4500	1.4950	1.5400	1.5850	1.6300	1.6750	1.7200	1.7650
7		1.3600	1.4050	1.4500	1.4950	1.5400	1.5850	1.6300	1.6750	1.7200	1.7650	1.8100
8			1.4500	1.4950	1.5400	1.5850	1.6300	1.6750	1.7200	1.7650	1.8100	1.8550
9				1.5400	1.5850	1.6300	1.6750	1.7200	1.7650	1.8100	1.8550	1.9000
10						1.6750	1.7200	1.7650	1.8100	1.8550	1.9000	1.9450
11						1.7200	1.7650	1.8100	1.8550	1.9000	1.9450	1.9900
12						1.7650	1.8100	1.8550	1.9000	1.9450	1.9900	2.0350
13								1.9000	1.9450	1.9900	2.0350	2.0800
14									1.9900	2.0350	2.0800	2.1250

						BASE SALARY	\$32,650.00					
						VERTICAL INCREMENT	\$ 1,469.25					
						HORIZONTAL INCREMENT	\$ 1,469.25					

STEP	BA	BA+9	BA+18	BA+27	BA+36	MA	MA+9	MA+18	MA+27	MA+36	MA+45	DE
1	\$34,119.25	\$35,588.50	\$37,057.75	\$38,527.00	\$39,996.25	\$41,465.50	\$42,934.75	\$44,404.00	\$45,873.25	\$47,342.50	\$48,811.75	\$50,281.00
2	\$35,588.50	\$37,057.75	\$38,527.00	\$39,996.25	\$41,465.50	\$42,934.75	\$44,404.00	\$45,873.25	\$47,342.50	\$48,811.75	\$50,281.00	\$51,750.25
3	\$37,057.75	\$38,527.00	\$39,996.25	\$41,465.50	\$42,934.75	\$44,404.00	\$45,873.25	\$47,342.50	\$48,811.75	\$50,281.00	\$51,750.25	\$53,219.50
4	\$38,527.00	\$39,996.25	\$41,465.50	\$42,934.75	\$44,404.00	\$45,873.25	\$47,342.50	\$48,811.75	\$50,281.00	\$51,750.25	\$53,219.50	\$54,688.75
5	\$39,996.25	\$41,465.50	\$42,934.75	\$44,404.00	\$45,873.25	\$47,342.50	\$48,811.75	\$50,281.00	\$51,750.25	\$53,219.50	\$54,688.75	\$56,158.00
6	\$41,465.50	\$42,934.75	\$44,404.00	\$45,873.25	\$47,342.50	\$48,811.75	\$50,281.00	\$51,750.25	\$53,219.50	\$54,688.75	\$56,158.00	\$57,627.25
7		\$44,404.00	\$45,873.25	\$47,342.50	\$48,811.75	\$50,281.00	\$51,750.25	\$53,219.50	\$54,688.75	\$56,158.00	\$57,627.25	\$59,096.50
8			\$47,342.50	\$48,811.75	\$50,281.00	\$51,750.25	\$53,219.50	\$54,688.75	\$56,158.00	\$57,627.25	\$59,096.50	\$60,565.75
9				\$50,281.00	\$51,750.25	\$53,219.50	\$54,688.75	\$56,158.00	\$57,627.25	\$59,096.50	\$60,565.75	\$62,035.00
10						\$54,688.75	\$56,158.00	\$57,627.25	\$59,096.50	\$60,565.75	\$62,035.00	\$63,504.25
11						\$56,158.00	\$57,627.25	\$59,096.50	\$60,565.75	\$62,035.00	\$63,504.25	\$64,973.50
12						\$57,627.25	\$59,096.50	\$60,565.75	\$62,035.00	\$63,504.25	\$64,973.50	\$66,442.75
13								\$62,035.00	\$63,504.25	\$64,973.50	\$66,442.75	\$67,912.00
14									\$64,973.50	\$66,442.75	\$67,912.00	\$69,381.25

						BASE SALARY	\$32,650.00	FLAT FEE	\$8,250.00			
						VERTICAL INCREMENT	\$ 1,469.25					
						HORIZONTAL INCREMENT	\$ 1,469.25					

APPENDIX B

2014-2015 EXTRA DUTY SALARY SCHEDULES

EXTRA DUTY SALARY SCHEDULE

1. Extra Duty assignments are all non-tenured positions.
 - a. Extra Duty assignments will be evaluated and assigned annually by the activities director with input from the appropriate administrator.
 - b. The extra duty assignments are not part of the continuing contract.
2. The Extra Duty Salary Schedule base will be the current base salary.
 - a. Those individuals whose 2008-2009 salary exceeds the salary determined by the schedule will be frozen and remain frozen until such time the salary of the schedule will meet or exceed the frozen salary.
 - b. Individuals new to a position will be granted up to five years of experience provided the experience is for same position they are hired for.
 - c. Individuals moving to a new position within the same sport will maintain their experience steps if they move to a lower category (ie, Category II to Category V). Individuals moving to a higher category will begin at step one (ie, Category II to Category I).
3. It is not necessary that each vacancy that exists on the schedule be filled.
4. Positions closely aligned with a teaching assignment (i.e. — band, vocal music, speech and others) will have specific written expectations established for the year by the building administrator and activities director.
 - a. The administration will have written expectations for each extra duty position established and shared prior to the potential coach signing the extra duty contract for the next year.
5. The Activities Director, appropriate administrator, and/or Head Coach will complete evaluations within 30 days of the ending of each activity.
 - a. The evaluations will be written and also provide for a conference.
 - b. A decision regarding the continuation of an extra duty assignment will be included in the conference.
 - c. Head coaches are evaluated by the Activities Director and/or appropriate administrator and they, in turn, must evaluate all of the assistant coaches in the program at all levels.
6. The appeals process for disputes pertaining to extra duty assignments is the following order:
 - a. Activities Director
 - b. Appropriate Principal
 - c. Superintendent.
 - d. Board of Education
7. The extra duty assignments will be issued on or before April 15.

- a. Individuals who wish a change in extra duty assignments are required to advise the Activities Director and appropriate administrator as soon as possible.
 - b. The administration will alert individuals about their extra duty assignment if a change is anticipated prior to the extra duty roster being issued on April 15.
8. Changes to the extra duty category lists need to be approved through the negotiations process.

CATEGORY 1 (16% - 20%)

Senior High Band
 Senior High Vocal
 Senior High Head Varsity Football
 Senior High Head Varsity Basketball (Boys & Girls)
 Senior High Head Wrestling
 Senior High Head Varsity Volleyball
 Senior High Head Varsity Track (Boys & Girls)
 Senior High Forensics
 Senior High Head Varsity Softball
 Senior High Head Varsity Soccer (Boys & Girls)
 Assistant Athletic Director

CATEGORY II (9%-14%)

Senior High Assistant Varsity Football
 Senior High Assistant Varsity Volleyball
 Senior High Assistant Varsity Basketball (Boys & Girls)
 Senior High Assistant Varsity Wrestling
 Senior High Assistant Varsity Track (Boys & Girls)
 Senior High Assistant Forensics
 Senior High Head Spirit Squad Sponsor
 Senior High Varsity Golf (Boys & Girls)
 Senior High Varsity Cross Country (Boys & Girls)
 Senior High Assistant Varsity Softball
 Senior High Assistant Varsity Soccer (Boys & Girls)
 Senior High Varsity Tennis (Boys & Girls)
 DECA
 Freshman Head Football
 Freshman Head Basketball (Boys & Girls)
 Freshman Head Volleyball

CATEGORY III (6.5%-9%)

Summer Band Instructor
 Summer Weight Coordinator
 Assistant Band Instructor
 Assistant Summer Band Instructor
 Senior High Assistant Spirit Squad Sponsor
 Senior High Yearbook Sponsor
 All School Play High School
 Assistant High School Musical Director

CATEGORY IV (4.5%-6.5%)

Junior High Head Football
Junior High Head Volleyball
Junior High Head Basketball (Boys & Girls) Junior High Head Track
(Boys & Girls) Junior High Head Wrestling
Freshmen Assistant Football
After School Weight Coordinator Fall
After School Weight Coordinator Winter
After School Weight Coordinator Spring

CATEGORY V (4%-6%)

Junior High Assistant Football
Junior High Assistant Basketball (Boys & Girls) Junior High Assistant Track
(Boys & Girls) Junior High Assistant Wrestling
Junior High Assistant Volleyball
Junior High Student Council Sponsor (2) Senior High Student Council
Sponsor (2) Senior High Concessions Sponsor
Senior High Mock Trial Freshman Speech
Freshman STUCO

CATEGORY VI (2.5%-4.5%)

Senior High Junior Class Sponsor Junior High Yearbook Sponsor
Junior High Cheerleader Sponsor Senior High Vocational Clubs
FBLA
FCCLA
Junior High Quiz Bowl 7th Grade Junior High Quiz Bowl 8th Grade
Junior High One Act Play

CATEGORY VII (1%-2%)

Freshman National Honor Society
Freshman Clowns Junior High Reach Junior High
Clowns
Junior High Intramural Coordinator
Senior High Reach Senior High Clowns Senior High Intramural
Coordinator
Senior High National Honor Society
Foreign Language Clubs German
Spanish
Senior High G Club Senior High GGAA Interact
Senior High Key Club Junior High Builders Club

Notes:

1. The Extra Duty Salary Schedule base will be the current teacher salary base.
2. It is not necessary that each vacancy that exists on the schedule be filled
3. Those individuals whose current salary exceeds the salary determined by the schedule will be frozen and remain frozen until such time the salary of the schedule will meet or exceed the frozen salary.
4. Individuals new to the position will be granted up to five years of experience provided the experience is for the same position they are hired for.
5. Individuals moving to a next position within the same sport will maintain their experience steps if they move to higher category (i.e., Category II to Category V) individuals moving to a lower category will begin at step one (i.e., Category II to Category I).

