

Teahon Recognized



COURTESY

Julie Teahon was recognized by 'Educators Rising' and she presented to a group of 400 future educators at their conference last week. She is pictured with Kay Kersey, the UNO Chapter of PDK president.

Julie Teahon, Sandhills Public Schools second grade teacher, has received the Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) 2023 Showcase Teacher award and she has been invited to share her passion and talent for teaching with the next generation of educators at UNO's Educator Rising Conference. Teahon received the recognition due to the impact she has made on the teaching profession. PDK International is a US professional organization for educators. PDK is focused on cultivating student interest in the teaching profession through Educators Rising.

Educators Rising is an

organization that helps make sure teachers have the experience and skills they need to be ready for the classroom. Starting with high school students, they provide passionate young people with hands-on teaching experience, sustain their interest in the profession, and help them cultivate the skills they need to be successful educators.

There were 400 high school students present at the conference. Teahon presented in three sessions and did a second grade activity about Digital Citizenship. She was then given a certificate by the Nebraska PDK chapter to celebrate this

honor. This also allows her to present at other conferences, if asked.

Mrs. Teahon has been a second grade teacher at Sandhills Public Schools for 23 years. She has her Masters in SPED. She is also on the NETA board so her passion is incorporating technology into her teaching and lessons. She has presented at fall and spring technology conferences, and is hoping to do more presentations in the future. She is married to Tedd Teahon and they have two children, Charlesie a senior and Thatcher a freshman at Sandhills High School. The family lives outside of Dunning on a ranch.

Community publishers reaffirm First Amendment support



COURTESY

NNA Chair John Galer discussed his visit to the Marion County Record in Kansas, shortly after local police raided the Record's newsroom and seized computers, phones, and records. He holds a copy of the newspaper that was published with great difficulty. SEIZED...but not silenced was the headline.

Marcia Hora

Community newspaper publishers, editors, and executives across the United States resoundingly reaffirmed their commitment to a free press undisturbed by unannounced police raids.

Meeting in Washington, National Newspaper Association members representing community daily and weekly newspapers in 31 states took their concerns to Capitol Hill in their annual Community Newspaper Summit. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Summits were virtual. The 2023 event was the first in-person gathering since 2019.

NNA Chair John Galer, publisher of The Journal News, Hillsboro, Illinois, discussed his visit to the Marion County Record in Kansas, shortly after local police raided the Record's newsroom and seized computers, phones, and records.

The National Newspaper Association criticized the police action hours after the raid, but Galer recommended that NNA restate its long-standing commitment to journalists' rights to confidentiality.

By acclamation, publishers adopted a new resolution that updated positions taken in the 1970s when newsroom raids were last visible on the national scene. Many publishers during the conference discussed heightened levels of threat to the free press.

"Although most in our communities highly value our local news and information, there is no

question that the national atmosphere has encouraged extremists to come out of the woodwork to threaten our existence," Galer said. "We were very sad to watch the Marion County Record get crippled by the acts of one local police department, but the saddest part is that we were not surprised. We watch local newspapers close every year because of economic and security threats. It is time for us to speak up with our loudest voices: community newspaper journalism is the glue that holds local democracies together. We must ask our readers, policymakers, and local leaders to support our work."

The text of the First Amendment resolution states:

Whereas, an invasion of the Marion County Record's newsroom by local police in August, 2023, directed international attention to the im-

periled rights of journalists to gather and disseminate news to the public; and

Whereas, recent reports of similar investigations, raids, censorship orders and seizures of journalists' work product have focused national attention upon the need for constant vigilance in support of First Amendment rights;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the publishers, editors, reporters, photographers and supporters of thousands of community newspapers across America stand firmly behind the U.S. Constitution's guarantee of freedom of the press and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that lawmakers, enforcement agencies and stakeholders in American freedoms hold a civic obligation to inform themselves of journalists' First Amendment rights.

Voters To Decide Next Year If Public Money Can Go To Private School Tuition

The Nebraska Secretary of State's office confirmed recently that state voters will decide next year whether public money can go to private school tuition.

A petition effort to get the question on the Nebraska 2024 ballot far exceeded the number of valid signatures needed to put the controversial question before voters.

The effort seeks to repeal a measure passed by the Nebraska Legislature earlier this year allowing millions in state income tax to be diverted to organizations that grant private school tuition scholarships. That passage set up a battle between powerful education unions and conservative groups trying to make their mark on school policies following COVID-19 lockdowns and ongoing fights over transgender policies.

In August, the Support our Schools referendum petition effort turned in 117,000 signatures to the Nebraska Secretary of State, nearly double the more than 61,000 valid signatures needed to make the ballot. Election officials validated nearly 92,000 of those collected signatures.

The new school funding law does not appropriate taxpayer dollars directly toward private school vouchers. Instead, it allows businesses, individuals, estates and trusts to donate a portion of their owed state income tax.

Businesses and individuals would be allowed to

donate up to \$100,000 per year, while estates and trusts could offer up to \$1 million a year. The bill would allocate \$25 million a year over the first two years starting in 2024, and up to \$100 million annually thereafter to cover such donations. That dollar-for-dollar tax credit is money that would otherwise go into the state's general revenue fund.

Supporters of the scholarship program said it helps underprivileged students who have few other choices when they find themselves in an underperforming or toxic public school environment. They deny opponents' assertions that it will hurt funding to public schools and stated lawmakers already passed a bill that would pump more than \$1 billion, mostly from federal pandemic recovery dollars, into public education.

Public school advocates counter that the act sends taxpayer dollars to private schools that are allowed under religious tenets to discriminate against LGBTQ+ students.

"The overwhelming success of this petition sends a clear message to the governor and state lawmakers. Nebraskans want to vote on the issue of diverting public tax dollars to pay for private schools, Jenni Benson, petition effort sponsor said.

Benson, who is also president of the Nebraska State Education Association, the state's largest teachers union said Ne-

braskans cannot afford to pay for two school systems.

Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen released the following statement about the petition, "This issue is very simple - it's about giving families a choice in identifying the best educational environment for their kids. This is not about which one is better - public or private schools. I am confident that voters will understand the decision before them and will vote to keep school choice for children. We must provide students and their families the ability to decide the educational fit that works best for them. This law accomplishes that."

Nebraska Attorney General Mike Hilgers will draft the ballot language for the measure in the coming days. In the weeks ahead of the 2024 election, state election staff will schedule three public hearings about the measure and create informational pamphlets that will be available to voters at county election offices the Secretary of State's office said.

TACF Banquet Saturday, November 18

Plan now to attend the annual Thedford Area Community Foundation fundraiser banquet at the Thomas County Fairgrounds east of Thedford. There will be a live and silent auction, prime rib dinner, and cash bar.

