

PRESS RELEASE
NEVADA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS
November 23, 2009

Nevada Association of School Boards Presents
2009 Awards and Elects New Officers

On Saturday, November 21, at its Annual Conference held in Reno at the Airport Plaza Hotel & Conference Center, the Nevada Association of School Boards recognized the achievements and contributions of school board members, administrators, and others for 2009 and elected new officers for the Association.

In addition to its customary awards, the Association also recognized Assemblyman Lynn Stewart with a Special Award in honor of his service as a high school teacher of American government and history for thirty-four years and as a member of the Nevada Legislature for three Special and two regular Sessions as well as for his support of K-12 public education in Nevada as a member of the Assembly Committee on Education.

2009 Awards and their recipients include:
NASB Director of the Year—Susan Davis, Lander County School District

Susan Davis became a School Trustee in Lander County in 2007 and immediately was appointed to the position of NASB Director. She has attended each NASB meeting and professional development activity. Her input and insights are valuable in that she brings a rural perspective to discussions that is informative and insightful. She also served as her board's legislative liaison during the 2009 Session, communicating frequently with legislators about issues of concern to Lander County and school board members from across the State. Ms. Davis is a down to earth, forthright person who is a team player and courageous in working for the greater good of all Nevada children.

New School Board Member of the Year—Estela LeVario Gutierrez, Washoe County School District

Estela LeVario Gutierrez was appointed to the Washoe County School District Board of Trustees in September 2008. Although she is still early in her Board career, she has already demonstrated strong and effective leadership skills based upon her knowledge of K-12 and higher education. Her active involvement with diversity initiatives has brought understanding of the needs for all students to the Board of Trustees. She has served as the NASB Director on behalf of her Board, bringing enthusiasm to that position along with a willingness to serve school board members across Nevada. She has been appointed one of the Association's two diversity resources to provide assistance to boards in other districts about diversity issues and new approaches to resolving challenges related to diversity matters.

Veteran School Board Member of the Year—Bob Burnham, Eureka County School District

Bob Burnham has served on the Board of Trustees of the Eureka County School District since 2004 and has enthusiastically supported the School District and all of its initiatives. He has served as the Board's legislative representative and NASB Director. In his capacity as legislative representative, he was involved in promoting the passage of Assembly Bill 66 which requires drivers to stop at any location for a school bus displaying flashing red lights. This bill protects children throughout the State as they travel to and from school. Mr. Burnham was also instrumental in advocating for the passage of Senate Bill 61 which expands the authority of school boards in counties with population less than 5,000 (Esmeralda, Eureka, Lincoln, and Storey) to have greater latitude in the use of their mitigation funds. According to one of the nomination forms, "Mr. Burnham is always knowledgeable about and always dedicated to student achievement and success."

Individual School Board Member of the Year—Kevin Pape, Nye County School District

Kevin Pape arrived in Pahrump in 2005 to assume management of the town's new WalMart and was immediately recruited to serve on the School District's Bond Committee. When a vacancy opened on the Nye County School District Board of Trustees in 2006, Mr. Pape was appointed to fill that seat. In 2007, he ran unopposed for the seat and in 2008 was elected President of the Board of Trustees. Mr. Pape has inaugurated many programs that have positively impacted both the community and the School District. For the last three years, he has sponsored a "Health Fair" at WalMart that has provided an outlet for dozens of communities to provide services for the Nye County's children and their parents. In 2009, more than 400 immunizations were provided to children as part of the "Health Fair." As Board President, Mr. Pape and Superintendent Rob Roberts guided the Board of Trustees through "heart-and gut-wrenching" budget cuts necessitated by reductions in per pupil support and the decline of local tax revenues. Mr. Pape's 85-year-old mother died in August 2008 with Kevin at her side. At that time, Mr. Pape gave his mom her Board of Trustees' business card and told her that his election to the Board had been "the greatest and proudest moment of his life." In a very short period of time, he has been able to combine the power and name recognition of a retail giant with service to the public and children of the community while serving as a School Board member.

Innovative Educator of the Year—Aaron Hansen, White Pine Middle School, White Pine County School District

Under the leadership of Aaron Hansen, White Pine Middle School has piloted many innovative programs that have had a direct impact on raising student achievement and success. The school staff developed and adopted a plan for school improvement around rigor, relevance, and relationships, recognizing that without the important element of relationships rigor and relevance would probably not occur. Mr. Hansen led staff in adopting two aggressive anti-bullying initiatives: the Bully List and the Defenders' Program. Students are surveyed to identify bullies in the school. Those students who are named on the very confidential Bully List meet with Mr. Hansen and the counselor to receive help in

changing their behaviors and adopting new ways to interact with their peers. In the Defenders' Program, students are trained and empowered to confront bullying situations with the intention of defusing the situation without making the bully feel threatened or embarrassed. Because of the success of these programs, White Pine Middle School has been featured on the ABC Nightly News. In 2009, the White Pine Middle School was named a National Distinguished Middle School and invited to present information about its programs to encourage student achievement and success at the National Model Schools' Conference. Mr. Hansen gave credit to the amazing staff at White Pine Middle School for rallying with him to improve the school's climate and opportunities for academic achievement for all children.

The Association recognizes two administrators as School Administrator of the Year:

School Administrator of the Year—Dr. Terry Owens, Hafen Elementary School, Nye County School District

Dr. Owens was named principal of Hafen Elementary School in 2004. At that time, the school had the lowest test scores in the District, lacked curriculum focus and teacher cohesiveness, and had limited parent involvement. Dr. Owens was determined to create order and success out of chaos for both teachers and students. One of the first reforms was to adopt the concepts of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at each grade level and for the school as a whole. The PLCs moved to standardize curriculum and instructional materials. Nevada standards were reviewed and integrated into each teacher's daily lesson plan and instructional focus. All extraneous supplementary materials were discarded. A culture of diagnosis of test scores to improve instruction and planning for remediation improved teacher morale and effectiveness. Hafen Elementary School is a Title I school and was designated as a High Achieving Exemplary Turn-Around School in 2007-2008. In accepting her award, Dr. Owens acknowledged that the staff of Hafen Elementary School has been united in its efforts to promote student achievement and to continue the success that the school has achieved.

School Administrator of the Year—Brian Messmer, Jackpot Combined School, Elko County School District

Jackpot Combined School was recognized in September 2009 as a Blue Ribbon School, only one of three throughout Nevada. The Elko County School District Board of Trustees nominated Brian Messmer because of the leadership that he has brought to the Jackpot school community. Mr. Messmer was selected to serve as principal in 1999. In 2005, Mr. Messmer attended the Harvard Leadership Institute to learn how to provide more effective leadership to the teachers in helping their students attain higher levels of proficiency. Soon after, through his efforts to engage teachers in factual conversations about student performance, the school culture began to change. Mr. Messmer and the staff chose to implement a ZAP program—Zeroes Aren't Permitted—effectively taking away the student's choice to fail. Teachers began to measure student success not by homework completion but through the mastery of concepts as measured by formative assessments. Teachers also began to participate in Professional Learning Communities; with this changing culture, so too came the belief that students could learn and be successful. Over the past five years, Mr. Messmer

has encouraged teachers to rise to the needs of their students and for students to believe in themselves.

Superintendent of the Year—Ben Zunino, Eureka County School District

Ben Zunino has served as Superintendent of the Eureka County School District for eight years. During that time, he has enthusiastically supported not only Eureka County School District but also the needs of other school districts throughout Nevada. He is not merely the superintendent, but he is also the principal for both elementary schools in the District, which are located 129 miles apart. This requires frequent travel and dedication to maintain the excellence expected of all students. Under his tenure, all three of Eureka County's schools have been designated as High Achieving for the past five years. To help parents better understand the concepts their children were being taught in math at the elementary level, he implemented a special course for parents in Crescent Valley. He has also spent three years providing instruction in university coursework for rural administrators. Mr. Zunino and the Eureka County School District Board of Trustees moved to a four-day school week to improve student attendance and achievement. As a result, there has been an average decrease in absences of 34% and an increase of grade point averages at two of the three schools. Mr. Zunino was tenacious in the passage of Senate Bill 61 that expands the authority of school boards in counties having population less than 5,000 (Esmeralda, Eureka, Lincoln, and Storey). He advocated for the passage of this legislation during three consecutive Sessions of the Nevada Legislature. Without his determination and advocacy, these districts would not have the ability to continue instructional programs and the services and activities necessary to support those programs during times of budget crisis. Mr. Zunino and the Board worked collaboratively with the community to pass the first successful school bond issue since 1965.

Media Award for Outstanding Education Reporting—Jessica Garcia, Sparks Tribune, Washoe County

According to the nomination submitted by the Washoe County School District Board of Trustees, Jessica Garcia is the only member of the local media who regularly attends and reports on the meetings of the Board of Trustees. She also attends almost all town hall meetings and participates in other Board activities. Ms. Garcia always contacts the District's Communications Department to seek out story ideas and to "fact check" items on her Board meeting coverage. She is focused on understanding issues, obtaining correct information, and seeking opinions. Ms. Garcia also played a critical role to ensure that the community was involved in the Board's search for a new superintendent. The Board was determined to seek input from the community about the desired skills and attributes appropriate for an effective superintendent. A combination of community events and online surveys, together with the opportunity to review resumes and interview online were provided to stakeholders. Ms. Garcia regularly attended every meeting related to the search for a new superintendent, candidate interviews, and town hall forums. The Board compliments Ms. Garcia for her commitment to reporting that is fair, comprehensive, and written with education, students, and the community in mind.

Individual Friend to K-12 Public Education—Cathy Girard, Nye County

Retired from Air Intelligence Operations at Nellis Air Force Base with 21 years of service, Cathy Girard heads the Nye County School Volunteer Program. Ms. Girard began as a volunteer with the Program in 2004. When the Program's founder and coordinator retired, Ms. Girard was recruited to head the Program and carry on its valuable services to Nye County students. Volunteers serve as lunch aides, library aides, and playground monitors. They provide clerical assistance, one-on-one tutoring, monitor playgrounds, and assist at activities such as the first day of school for kindergarten children, photo day, and any of the numerous special events that occur at Nye County schools throughout the year. As the coordinator of the Program, Ms. Girard continually recruits volunteers and processes all volunteer applications. She then matches the skills and experiences of the volunteers with the needs of the District's schools. Working with the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program in Las Vegas, Ms. Girard must collect and report all volunteer hours across the District. The volunteer hours are not only a reflection of the service volunteered for children but also are important in seeking grants which can be used where most needed at Nye County school sites. It was feared that the Nye County School Volunteer Program would simply cease to exist when its founder retired. Ms. Girard has, however, not only sustained the Program but expanded it. Hundreds of volunteers contributed 11,870 hours of service to children during the 2006-2007 school year. That number increased to 13,686 hours in 2007-2008 and to 16,750 hours in 2008-2009—an increase of over 40% in the three-year period. The smiles and happy faces of children in Nye County schools are a great reward for a Program that would not exist without Cathy Girard.

Executive Director's Award—This Award was made jointly to two outstanding School Board Members: Carolyn Edwards [Clark] and Sharla Hales [Douglas]

During the 2009 Session of the Nevada Legislature, Carolyn Edwards served as the Association's Legislative Chair and Sharla Hales, Immediate Past President, stepped up to provide assistance in NASB's legislative advocacy efforts throughout the 120-day Session. Both Ms. Edwards and Ms. Hales reviewed more than 450 bills during the 2009 Session, carefully reading proposals that were often convoluted and long. Ms. Edwards and Ms. Hales provided advice and counsel to the Association's Executive Director about communication with school district Legislative Representatives in order to communicate about needed advocacy from local boards. Ms. Edwards and Ms. Hales spent untold hours creating testimony and delivering it to legislators and committees on behalf of all school board members across the State, representing concerns from large and small, rural and urban, districts about issues focused on a broad range of topics. Ms. Hales spent much time in Carson City, meeting with legislators on behalf of the Association and talking with legislators about proposals regarding K-12 public education. Both Ms. Edwards and Ms. Hales moved beyond the challenges faced by their individual school districts to represent the perspectives and views of all seventeen school districts and their boards of trustees.

Local Governance Team of the Year—Lyon County School District Board of Trustees and Superintendent Caroline McIntosh

Superintendent Caroline McIntosh has headed an effort to improve boardsmanship and governance skills for the Board of Trustees as well as academic and extracurricular programs in the Lyon County School District. According to the nomination form, for the first time, the Board of Trustees has taken full advantage of professional development opportunities to learn how to work together more effectively, to set collaborative goals, and to plan objectives for reviewing and developing policy related to improving student achievement. All Board Members have walked the school campuses with the Superintendent to see first-hand the buildings, facilities, and grounds. They have visited with the staff members at each school to listen and to learn about their concerns. The Board has held town hall meetings to gather input from members of the public. Currently the Board is also gathering input from the three bargaining units that represent staff in Lyon County. The Superintendent photographs everything and uses those photographs to recognize students and staff at public meetings. The Board of Trustees and Superintendent are now working together in a united and collaborative manner to improve their governance and, in turn, student achievement at all Lyon County schools.

School Board of the Year—Carson City School District Board of Trustees

The Carson City School District Board of Trustees has managed the District's finances to ensure that resources continue to be available to serve children even though the District's enrollment has been declining. During recent years of lower student enrollment, the financial practices of the District have provided all school districts with an excellent example of resource management. During the last year, the Board has faced the challenge of losing several board members and handling reduced per pupil support. Nonetheless, the Board has worked together and supported change and creative remedies in a professional manner. The Board demonstrates mutual respect and appreciation for one another's skills and abilities. Individual Board members have served as NASB officers and have been long-time advocates of the Association. Because of its proximity to the Nevada Legislature, members of the Carson City School District Board of Trustees are frequently called upon to testify or to meet with legislators about issues of concern to all board members. Often the Board is asked to provide quick and accurate information on behalf of all school districts. Always this is done in a professional manner and with accurate information. The willingness of the Carson City School District Board of Trustees to work collaboratively with staff and the community ensures the success of students in their care. Marty Johnson, JNA Consulting Group LLC, a long-time corporate sponsor and friend of the Association, provided a check in the amount of \$500 to the Carson City School District Board of Trustees for winning this award.

In addition to these awards, Patty Jones, President of the Elko County School District Board of Trustees, made a special presentation to Mary Ann Kenley, School Board and Superintendent Secretary. In making this presentation, Ms. Jones commented that it is not often that an individual has made a life-time commitment to ensure that the Board of Trustees has all required materials and information to provide support to the Superintendent and to present a balanced perspective of the District's

business. She noted that Ms. Kenley has also transitioned the Board from reams of photocopied pages to an electronic, web-based management system. Over the course of her 31 years of service to the District, Ms. Kenley has experienced the evolution from Selectric typewriters and carbon paper to electronic word processing and document storage. While the nomination of Ms. Kenley did not neatly fit into any of the existing NASB award categories, it signaled the need for a new category which will be implemented next year for Outstanding Board of Trustees' Support Staff.

Shera Alberti-Annunzio, UNR Extended Studies, awarded Douglas County School District Board Member Sharla Hales a certificate from the Certified Public Official Program. Ms. Hales is the second school board member to meet the rigorous coursework demands of this Program. Wayne Carlson, Executive Director of the Nevada Public Agency Insurance Pool, Public Agency Compensation Trust, presented a check in the amount of \$1,000 to Ms. Hales on behalf of the Nevada Public Agency Insurance Pool in recognition of this accomplishment.

The Association recognized 2009 President Irene Chachas [White Pine] for her dedicated service to NASB over the course of the last year and for moving the Association toward achievement of its strategic goals.

The Association elected new officers for 2010:

President—Jim Lemaire, Carson City School District;

President Elect—Christine Miller, Storey County School District;

Vice President—Carolyn Edwards, Clark School District; and

Legislative Chair—Bob Burnham, Eureka County School District.

For questions, please contact Dr. Dotty Merrill, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Boards, 775/443-5988 or 775/657-8412.

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