

November 2005

Welcome to KAIRS Today!

This is the monthly electronic newsletter of the Kansas Association of Religious and Independent Schools (KAIRS). KAIRS Today is sent as a service to KAIRS members across Kansas.

Our goal is to keep you informed about legislative, regulatory and national news, and educational issues. Please look for this on the 20th of each month. Contact Corey Reese, editor, with questions or concerns – crkairs@yahoo.com.

A happy and blessed Thanksgiving to KAIRS members, their schools and families.

**Editor's Note: Last month we introduced two new sections in our newsletter. The first was under the title of Innovative Programs where we'd like to share some of the exciting programs our member schools are creating and offering to their students.*

The second was an announcements section. We will include announcements of special events and speakers where member schools would like to invite other KAIRS members to attend. This would include special speakers, beyond school fundraisers and annual events.

We would like to invite our membership to submit these listings at crkairs@yahoo.com. The KAIRS Executive Board reserves the right to exclude any submission and all submissions will require Board approval to be included. Please note that KAIRS is not endorsing these events or programs, but rather providing our membership with a notification service. Thanks! – the editor.

THE NOVEMBER ISSUE:

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NOVEMBER GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING SUMMARY:

GARY MUSSELMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, (KSHSAA). FEATURED SPEAKER AT NOV 8 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Gary Musselman, executive director, Kansas State High School Athletics Association (KSHSAA) addressed KAIRS members at the quarterly general membership meeting November 8 in Topeka. Mr. Musselman spoke about the organization and its goals of helping and working together with all schools, large or small. He pointed out that it is not just athletics, but rather KSHSAA is an activity organization. He is suggesting that a list of names be drawn up for a possible committee to explore the myths and the realities of KSHSAA activities. He and the organization stand ready to help in whatever way they can.

“Some states are beginning to “weight” private school students so that they will compete at a higher classification level - ostensibly because private schools can ‘recruit’ students from a larger area than some schools can,” Karen Norton, KAIRS president, explained. “Keeping the conversation going with Gary and hearing how we can help, is always beneficial.”

In addition to Mr. Musselman’s presentation, public policy and the KAIRS annual convention were discussed.

Public Policy - In the absence of Bob Voboril, Karen commented on the public policy. She presented a statement from the state of Texas, a state that presently recognizes various independent accreditation agencies as being legitimate. Texas does not require these accredited schools to take the state tests. Several other states have similar positions regarding private and religious schools. KAIRS members agreed to explore the method of providing state accreditation to private schools that is used in Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico.

There was discussion regarding a possible meeting with the Commissioner of Education, Bob Corkins. Karen will attempt to set up a meeting prior to the convention in February and also to request that the new Commissioner come to address the members at the Annual meeting.

Annual Convention News - The theme of the convention is *Building Community, Building Schools*. There will be a session on Employment Law, led by Diane Worth of Morris Laing in Wichita. Other sessions include Risk Management, Grant Writing, Service Learning, and potentially a presentation by the new Commissioner of Education. The convention is February 6 and 7 at the Ramada Inn in Topeka.

(Thanks to Bill Dieckhoff, KAIRS secretary, for the minutes from the meeting.)

PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE

From Bob Voboril:

By now you know that the Kansas State Board of Education has hired a non-educator as Commissioner and has revised the state science standards against the recommendation of the science standards committee. In addition, the Commissioner has asked the Board of Education to endorse vouchers in KSDE's legislative agenda.

I have been asked to endorse all three policy decisions, and I have declined. KAIRS members value cooperative partnerships with public educators, state educational policy makers, and elected public officials.

While KAIRS is committed to equitable treatment for its members and equitable funding for schools, we have never sought to resolve our concerns through conflict with public education or by taking resources from public education. Many KAIRS members would endorse the revised science standards, voucher legislation, and an independent commissioner, but I am concerned about the lack of collaboration and, at times, the deliberate antagonism prevailing in current KSDE Board of Education discussions and decisions.

It has therefore seemed to me that the wisest course is to restate our public policy agenda and its underlying principles without endorsing specific actions of either faction of the State Board of Education.

FEBRUARY ANNUAL CONVENTION UPDATE

Building Community, Building Schools is the theme for the February 6 & 7 Annual KAIRS Convention. Among other informative topics, Diane Worth of Morris Laing in Wichita will discuss Employment Law. Other sessions include Risk Management, Grant Writing, Service Learning, and potentially a presentation by the new Commissioner of Education. The convention will move to the Ramada Inn this year. Registration is \$75 and registration forms will be mailed soon. Please make plans to attend.

KAIRS DISTINGUISHED TEACHERS 2006 AWARDS

Reminder! Please have all winners to Shelli Kadel NO LATER than December 2. The past honorees truly have been distinguished educators. Don't miss out!

For the past two years, we have featured the Distinguished Teachers in our Annual Report and plan to continue this tradition. We hope that with their permission, we will also feature them on our new KAIRS Web page.

When submitting a photo of your winner, please take an excellent, digital close-up from the neck up, with a neutral background. Either color or black and white are fine, and please send it as a jpeg file to Corey Reese at crkairs@yahoo.com. It is one of the favorite aspects of our Annual Report!

KAREN NORTON ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT

Karen Norton, KAIRS president, recently announced her retirement from the Independent School, to be effective at the end of the 2005-06 school year. Karen helped begin the school as a teacher/principal in 1980, and when the director left after the first year, she took over as the Principal/Head of School. Throughout her tenure, she has lead the school through its growth, which culminated this fall with The Independent School being named as both Wichita's and KAIRS' first Blue Ribbon School.

This announcement also impacts KAIRS as Karen will not pursue another term as president when her present tenure expires – also at the end of the 2005-06 school year. Congratulations to Karen for many years of outstanding service to both The Independent School and KAIRS.

KAIRS CENSUS FORMS

Just a quick reminder – we're down to the last few schools so please return your census forms to Bob Voboril. The response so far has been excellent and the information is truly valuable to our organization.

IMPORTANT DATES

Nov 30: Hall of Fame Nominations Due

Dec 2: Distinguished Teachers 2006 Nominations Due to Shelli Kadel

Feb 6-7: Annual Meeting, Topeka

KAIRS 2005-06 OFFICERS

President: Karen Norton, The Independent School, Wichita

Vice President: Nick Compagnone, Salina Catholic Diocese

Secretary: Bill Dieckhoff, Holy Cross Lutheran School, Wichita

Treasurer: David Swank, Trinity Academy, Wichita

Annual Meeting Co-Secretaries: Shelli Kadel, Wichita Friends School

&
Nick Compagnone, Salina Catholic Diocese

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