

OCTOBER 2006

Welcome to KAIRS Today 2006-07.

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. Each issue will also be available on the KAIRS Web site at <http://www.kairs.org/>.

Our goal is to keep you informed about legislative, regulatory and national news, and educational issues. Please look for this between the 20th and 25th of each month.

Contact Corey Reese, editor, with questions or concerns – crkairs@yahoo.com.

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OCTOBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING – A SUMMARY

Sister Carol Cimino Expertly Guides Group Through Public Relations

Perception is everything in the market, and it is vitally important to understand the perception of your school. That's how public relations expert, Carol Cimino, SSJ, EdD, began her presentation Thursday, October 12 in Salina.

"Before you begin a public relations or marketing campaign, you have to have a realistic understanding of how your school is perceived," she explained to KAIRS members and Salina Diocese administrators. "You can spend a million dollars on a campaign, but if the perception is that you are not a good school, it's not going to work."

This key element was just the beginning of an extremely informative,

practical and entertaining session with Sister Carol – a popular marketing and public relations consultant. In addition to instructing her audience on ways to accurately discover the perception of their schools, she also provided interesting current statistics about Catholic and private education, and provided insights on conducting an effective public relations campaign.

Sister Carol listed numerous options in discovering a school's perception. She recommended asking students and parents, doing informal phone surveys and asking a variety of people throughout the community. "After you find out about the perceptions, you'll know what to do. If there is an area where the perception is incorrect, you know you will have some work to do," she said.

One of her primary recommendations was to take advantage of the unique properties of religious and independent schools. According to statistics from a recent study from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University, when asked what was most important to them about private Catholic education, parents indicated that quality religious education, quality academic instruction and a safe environment were the top three factors.

"One of the perceptions that people need to understand is that we teach an academic program, but it's taught like no other – it's not like the one in the public school," she explained. "Every teacher is a "religion" teacher. If I'm in a Catholic school and I'm teaching math, I'm teaching Catholic math. If I'm teaching *The Scarlet Letter*, our teachers will teach from a Catholic perspective."

She continued, "If we do a good job, religious education rises to the top of importance and people will say they chose us for our religious education. They really started with academics. That says we've gotten our message across."

A Good Plan Asks the Right Questions

Effective marketing and public relations is often a matter of asking the right questions, Sister Carol stressed. When beginning a campaign, she asked, "Why do we need to tell 'the story' of our schools?" Her answers included the need to educate the public about what our schools are doing; to involve more people in our schools; to gain support for our schools; to be accountable to what we say about our schools; and to renew goals, objectives and progress.

Among the options available to schools, Sister Carol recommended annually creating a matrix for the various public relations elements available for to a school. Her suggestions included listing the frequency and specific person (or people) involved with the school's Website, special events, publications, letters and correspondences, advertising, news and the telephone. This would provide a good view of the activities that were

planned for the entire year.

When creating a plan, Sister Carol encouraged the administrators to provide a sense of excitement and to involve as many opportunities as possible for people to participate. “If you’re the only school of your type in your area, you are IT. If you are the only Catholic school in your town – if you go, there are no more,” she said. “Often when I speak, people ask me, ‘How do we raise more money?’ My response is, ‘You can’t get funds until you get friends.’ The more people you involve in your program, the more friends you’ll have.”

She also addressed the issue of the cost of private education – for those schools who charge tuition. Sister Carol encouraged the group to help parents break down the costs into smaller units so they could understand the value of Catholic (or private) education. If annual tuition was \$4,000, then the cost breaks down to \$20 per day.

“Many of our parents pay thousands each month for daycare. Help your parents organize their priorities by asking the right questions: ‘How much of our education can you get for a week at Disneyworld?’ ‘Is stuff more important than kids?’

She explained, “I tell parents that their child has one chance at an education. We need to give our children roots and wings.”

Sister Carol’s practical suggestions struck a chord with KAIRS Annual Meeting Secretary, Shelli Kadel, Head of School with Wichita Friends School, who attended the presentation. “Sister Carol Cimino’s presentation was outstanding. She gave me techniques to take home and use that very day. Instead of presenting good generic marketing ideas, she provided the rationale and steps for marketing a religious/independent school. Her approach to marketing schools with a mission helped me think differently about school development. It seems to me that any KAIRS school would benefit from her seasoned and well-thought-out strategies. Visit her website (srcarol.com) just to get a taste!”

Valuable Resource by Sister Carol & DVD Available

Sister Carol has written a helpful book, *Continuing to Ensure a Future Full of Hope*, for parent groups and school boards. It is available at the National Catholic Educational Association website, www.ncea.org. Click on Online Store, go to the member or nonmember site from the catalog, search for Cimino. The book is \$12 for nonmembers and slightly less expensive for members.

The October 12 meeting is also available on DVD from Nick Compagnone for a \$10 handling fee. Please notify Nick at if you would like to request a copy.

NOVEMBER MEMBERSHIP MEETING NOVEMBER 16

Steve Brown, president and founder, Vogel & Brown, Chartered, who will present an informative workshop on Estate Planning at the November Membership meeting on Thursday, November 16. Mr. Brown is an Estate Planning attorney from Salina and will provide insights on how our schools can assist our constituents to remember our schools in their estate planning.

From Mr. Brown's website:

Brown & Vogel, Chartered is dedicated to counselling-oriented estate planning with their clients and their clients' other professional advisors (insurance agents, CPAs, financial advisors, and other attorneys). Our founder and President, Steven W. Brown, is licensed to practice law in Kansas. He is a member of the WealthCounsel, LLC, a national group of more than 1,000 attorneys that emphasize counselling in the transfer of wealth within a family. He is a charter member of LifeSpan Legal Services™, a national organization of attorneys dedicated to co-creating "plans that work" with clients.

The meeting will be in Topeka, 10 am – 2 pm. Please contact Bill Dieckhoff, KAIRS Secretary, by Monday, November 13 with your lunch reservations.

ANNUAL MEETING – EXCITING SPEAKERS SCHEDULED **Kansas Commissioner of Education to speak**

The year, the theme of our Annual Meeting, February 12 – 13 will be KAIRS Schools: Schools of Transformation. The focus of the meeting will be to identify how our schools are part of the educational challenges of the 21st Century. Sessions will cover topics that include school mission, accountability and communications.

Bob Corkins, Kansas Commissioner of Education, will address the KAIRS membership on educational reform and transformational leadership. We also will have Philip P. Kerstetter, Ph.D., President and CEO, of Kansas Wesleyan University. Dr. Kerstetter was appointed the seventeenth president of Kansas Wesleyan University in 2002. He will discuss the impact of faith-based institutions of learning.

KAIRS CENSUS FORMS AVAILABLE ON WEBSITE

Each year, KAIRS conducts a census of its membership and compiles it in a printed profile. The census forms are NOW AVAILABLE on the KAIRS

website, www.kairs.org, as both PDF file and word documents. You may either fax them or email the word document to Nick Compagnone, KAIRS President. Please return them by November 1.

KAIRS DISTINGUISHED TEACHERS 2007 – FORMS AVAILABLE ON WEBSITE

The Distinguished Teachers Awards are one of the most important activities KAIRS engages in each year. Our teachers are the foundation of the excellence that all our schools strive to provide. Please begin to think about which one of your teachers deserves to be recognized for his or her outstanding contributions to your school and students. If you've attended the KAIRS annual meeting Hall of Fame banquet, where these teachers are honored, you know what a blessing these individuals are to all of us.

FORMS ARE NOW AVAILABLE ON THE WEBSITE, www.kairs.org.

Nominees should be sent to Shelli Kadel.

-ACSI and Independent Schools nominations are due November 1.

-Lutheran Schools should send their nominees to Pam Nummela by November 15.

All others are due December 2.

We feature the Distinguished Teachers in our Annual Report and on the KAIRS Web page and need a photo of each teacher. 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.

Remember to look for the submission forms on the website. You will be able to download the Distinguished Teacher form as a PDF or word document.

PUBLIC POLICY UPDATE: DEVELOPMENTS IN TAX CREDIT PROGRAMS

From the Milton & Rose D. Friedman Foundation, June 02, 2006

Iowa enacts new scholarship tax credit program.

Unprecedented bipartisan support marks a growing trend among the states.

INDIANAPOLIS-Today, Gov. Tom Vilsack (D-IA) signed the Educational

Opportunities Act (EOA), a law that will allow thousands of Iowa students the chance to receive scholarships to attend a school of their parents choice. The bill, which reached the governor's desk after getting overwhelming support from both sides of the political aisle, is the second time this year that a democrat governor has signed a school choice law.

"This is a great day for all Iowa families," said Sara Eide, executive director of the Iowa Catholic Conference. "While the Catholic Conference has been working on this issue for nearly twenty years, it took the combined efforts of parents, educators, community leaders, organizations such as the Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education, and our national allies to make policymakers understand that expanded school options is a critical need in the state."

The program establishes a 65 percent tax credit for individuals who make contributions to approved school tuition organizations (STOs), which then distribute scholarships to families to be used at a school of their choice. To qualify, families must have an income that is at 300 percent or below of the federal poverty level. STOs must spend 90% of funds raised on scholarships, and scholarships may not exceed tuition at the child's private school. In addition, while the program will be capped at \$2.5 million for 2006, the cap will rise to \$5 million for subsequent years.

Following a growing trend occurring around the country, the EOA received overwhelming bipartisan support from Republicans and Democrats alike. In the Senate, which is evenly split between the two parties, the bill passed 49-1: and in the House, where Republicans hold only a one vote majority, the bill passed by a vote of 75-19.

In 2006, school choice has seen growth in the number of Democrats who back educational freedom. Earlier this year, Gov. Janet Napolitano of Arizona became the first Democrat governor to sign a new school choice bill into law. Gov. Vilsack becomes the second governor to do so. Democrat Gov. Jim Doyle of Wisconsin signed a bill expanding the cap of the Milwaukee school choice program by nearly 7,000 students. Also, the Democrat leaders of the Missouri Black Caucus were among the top proponents of a school choice bill before its legislature.

"We're seeing an important shift in the support for school choice," said Robert C. Enlow, executive director of the Friedman Foundation. "More and more legislators, parents and opinion makers from all sides of the political spectrum are realizing that the ability to choose a school is a fundamental freedom and that there are immense moral implications that

come from denying families educational choice."

www.friedmanfoundation.org/news/2006-06-02.html

The Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation, dubbed "the nation's leading voucher advocates" by the Wall Street Journal, is a non-profit organization established in 1996. The origins of the foundation lie in the Friedmans' long-standing concern about the serious deficiencies in America's elementary and secondary public schools. The best way to improve the quality of education, they believe, is to enable all parents with the freedom to choose the schools that their children attend. The Friedman Foundation builds upon this vision, clarifies its meaning to the public and amplifies the national call for true education reform through school choice.

FROM: KSSmallBiz.com

Promoting the interests of small business in Kansas through advocacy and communications. Educating small business owners, legislators, and the public about small business and small business issues.

Originally published in The Kansas City Kansan, Wednesday, August 23, 2006

SCHOOL'S IN SESSION, AND THE LABORATORIES OF DEMOCRACY ARE OPEN

By John R. LaPlante

One of the advantages that the U.S. has over many countries is that it is a federal republic, which gives states significant opportunities to innovate. It's no wonder that they have been called "the laboratories of democracy."

As students enter a new school year, Kansans can look to innovations recently enacted in the other 49 laboratories for ideas on how to further public education.

Of all the states, Arizona may be the one most willing to try new approaches and expand recently created experiments. Prior to this year, the state already had a tax credit program by which individuals can claim a tax credit for donations to School Tuition Organizations, or STOs. In turn, the STOs give scholarships to students seeking alternatives to their standard school district.

Thanks to a recent law enacted in Arizona, corporations as well as individuals can receive tax credits for donations to STOs. Gov. Janet Napolitano, a Democrat, allowed it to become law without her signature. In

addition, she approved a voucher program for children in foster care, as well as a separate program for students with disabilities.

In Pennsylvania, over 2,200 businesses receive tax credits for contributions to scholarship programs. In July, the state raised the limit on such credits to \$54 million. Gov. Ed Rendell, a Democrat, gave his assent to the program. His participation is yet another sign that support for alternative means of financing public education is no longer limited to Republicans.

In June, Rhode Island created a similar program, with the support of a Democratic-controlled Legislature and the Republican governor.

In 2005, Utah created the Carson Smith Special Needs Scholarship program, which allows students with autism to attend a private school. Thanks to changes in the rules made in back in March, state officials expect the number of participating students and schools to increase for the 2006-07 school year.

Ohio is known for its Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program. Because the program lets students take funds to religious schools, it faced many legal challenges. The U.S. Supreme Court approved it in 2002.

A more recently created program, called EdChoice, gives a similar benefit to students outside Cleveland. Under EdChoice, students who attend chronically underperforming schools can receive public funds to attend privately run schools. In March, Ohio expanded the program. Students who attend schools on “academic watch” not merely those in “academic emergency” now have the right to pick a different school. The move more than doubled the number of eligible students.

In Iowa, the Educational Opportunities Act was passed by a vote of 49-1 in the House and a 75-19 vote in the Senate. Both bodies are almost evenly split between the two major parties. In June, Gov. Tom Vilsack, a Democrat, signed an individual taxpayer tax credit for contributions to STOs.

Wisconsin has had a Milwaukee voucher program for over a decade. Earlier this year, parents feared that a legal cap on the number of students allowed to participate would, for the first time, keep some students from participating. In March, Gov. Jim Doyle, a Democrat, signed legislation that increases the cap by 50 percent. As a result, over 20,000 students will be able to attend a school of their choice, whether it is run by government or a private organization.

Thanks in part to tax credits, voucher programs, charter schools, and interdistrict choice, students are now more likely to find schools that match them, rather than simply plug into the default offered by the local school district.

These initiatives have been embraced by politicians and families of a variety of political views, religious beliefs, and neighborhoods. Some

appeal to low-income people, others, to a broader spectrum. Some are focused on specific cities; others are open to residents throughout a state.

But they have this in common: despite drawing opposition from the ranks of union officials, school boards, and others, they are expanding in scope and number. Parents who are looking for a better match for their children's education are making headway. Unfortunately, these innovations have yet to reach Kansas.

John R. LaPlante is an education policy fellow with the Kansas-based Flint Hills Center for Public Policy.

IMPORTANT 2006-07 KAIRS DATES

Nov 16: General Membership Meeting, Topeka

Feb 12-13: Annual Meeting, Topeka

KAIRS 2006-07 OFFICERS

President: Nick Compagnone, Salina Catholic Diocese

Vice President: Pam Nummela, Bethany Lutheran School, Overland Park

Secretary: Bill Dieckhoff, Holy Cross Lutheran School, Wichita

Treasurer: David Swank, Trinity Academy, Wichita

Annual Meeting Secretary: Shelli Kadel, Wichita Friends School