

## KAIRS Executive Committee 2010-2011

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Dr. Nick Compagnone  
Superintendent of Schools  
Catholic Diocese of Salina

### Vice President

Terry Tilson  
Superintendent  
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Jamie Finkeldei  
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Catholic Diocese of Wichita

### Annual Meeting Secretary

Shelli Kadel  
Head of School  
Wichita Friends School

### Member at Large,

#### Lutheran Representative

Neal Kurtz  
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Linn Lutheran School

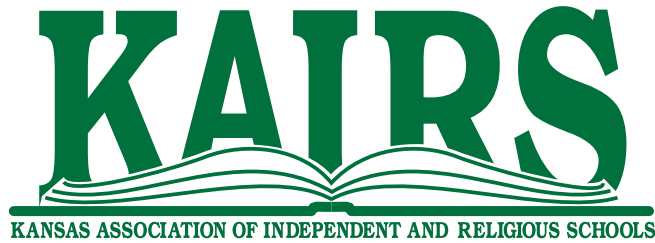
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## KAIRS Marks 40 Years of Service to Kansas Schools

The Kansas Association of Religious and Independent Schools (KAIRS) is celebrating its 40th anniversary. Beginning in 1970, the founders recognized the need for private schools – religious and secular – to unite and speak in one voice with the various governmental agencies that impact education across the state.

The issues of concern that were present 40 years ago include many that are still being discussed today: alternative accreditation for non-public schools, funding for special education and transportation, and licensure and professional development for teachers. This past year, KAIRS members were involved in ongoing conversations regarding many of these matters on a state, and even national level.

KAIRS is committed to represent its membership of more than 35,000 students who attend



Linda Comkle, 2010 Distinguished Teacher, Diocese of Dodge City (far left), enjoys the 2010 Hall of Fame Banquet with Dr. Marcus Winters, Keynote Speaker (far right) and other guests.

140 Catholic, Christian, Lutheran, Seventh-day Adventist and Independent schools in Kansas. This includes almost 2,400 full-time teachers and more than 22,000 families.

### Meetings with Kansas Board of Education and Commissioner of Education

In the spring of 2010, KAIRS President, Dr. Nick Compagnone,

went before the Board of Education (BOE) to present the KAIRS alternate accreditation resolution. In this proposal KAIRS schools would have the option for state-recognized accreditation through AdvancEd/NCA. After hearing the proposal, the BOE asked Dr. Compagnone to meet with the Commissioner of Education to consider the plan.

*See 40 Years of Service on page 3*

## From the KAIRS President

About 40 years ago the United States was celebrating the first landing on the moon. This had been the goal throughout the previous decade after the Soviet Union was first to send a satellite into space. Our nation was fixated on ramping up education so we could produce top scientists. As a result, it seems that every decade since then has introduced a new educational proposal ... A Nation at Risk, Quality Performance, No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top are just a few of those initiatives.

Kansas' first schools were private schools, just like many American schools that established our country's foundation for education. Today, private schools help fulfill the American ideal of educational pluralism, and this includes our great State of Kansas.

This year we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the formation of KAIRS – originally KANS. Our founders in 1970 envisioned the purpose of the organization not only to represent the Independent and Religious



schools in the State of Kansas but also to be a partner in the educational structure. KAIRS has worked diligently to collaborate with partners on the federal, state and local levels, to listen carefully, and to endeavor to reach agreements on important public policy issues. KAIRS represents a diverse group of schools that is brought together by common goals and needs.

This past year, we have continued to focus on alternate accreditation and this gave me the opportunity to speak with the Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) and our new Commissioner of Education. These were helpful conversations and we continue to work towards a solution for the benefit of all students.

As we move forward we must realize that our tasks are not ones that will be accomplished quickly, and require a long-range view. Our hope is that KAIRS will continue in its service for the next 40 years in order that our schools can continue in their missions to ensure an educated citizenry and to help students reach their potential and contribute to the common good. Independent and religious schools are good for parents, local communities and Kansas!

— Nick Compagnone, Ed.D, KAIRS President

# KANS/KAIRS: A Look at Where We've Been

## 1970:

- Kansas Association of Non-Public Schools (KANS) created; Founders include:
- Robert Eggold, Superintendent for Schools, Kansas District of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, KANS Chair, 1970–1989
- James Thiessen, Superintendent, Berean Academy, KANS Secretary, 1970–1989
- Vince DeCoursey, Executive Director of the Kansas Catholic Conference, KANS Treasurer, 1970–1989

## 1989:

- Sister Michelle Faltus, Superintendent, Catholic Schools, Archdiocese of Kansas City, elected chair
- Named Changed to Kansas Association for Non Government Schools (still KANS)

## 1989:

- KANS incorporated

## 1994:

- Charles Jedele, Topeka Lutheran Principal elected chair, elected chair

## 1998:

- Bob Voboril, Superintendent, Wichita Diocese, elected president, Executive Committee formed and chairs now become presidents

## 1998 – 1999

- Organization changes name to KAIRS (Kansas Association of Independent and Religious Schools)

## 1999:

- First KAIRS Annual Meeting

## 2002:

- First class of KAIRS Distinguished Teachers honored

## 2003:

- Karen Norton, Head of

School, The Independent School of Wichita, elected president

## 2005:

- KAIRS Hall of Fame created, KAIRS Founders honored in inaugural class. KAIRS website, www.kairs.org created

## 2006:

- Dr. Nick Compagnone, Superintendent, Diocese of Salina, elected president

## 2008:

- KAIRS extends associate membership to independent and religious universities in Kansas

## Thoughts from Three Former KAIRS Leaders

### Charles Jedele, KANS Chair 1994–1998

While I was the KANS Chair, we worked to develop relationships with the Kansas Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner of Education and met bimonthly with them about different issues, and how we could work together for better education and more resources for our schools. I encouraged our organization to become a member of CAPE. We went to Washington, DC for the meetings and lobbied our Senators and Representatives – to remind them that private and religious schools were important to our State.

I also greatly enjoyed the fellowship I had with the other administrators. We shared with each other our successes, joys and failures, and it gave me a broader perspective.



Charles and Ann Jedele

### Bob Voboril, KAIRS President, 1998–2003



During my tenure as KAIRS President, QPA and new teacher licensure were being implemented. We worked to establish strong working relationships with the state department of education and helped to pass a state law guaranteeing every child the right to receive special educational services regardless of where they attended school.

It was also a time of change for KAIRS, as I led the KAIRS Board to establish an annual meeting with the banquet and honors ceremony; create the position of communications director, which led to the creation of our Website; change our name to KAIRS; and to recruit some outstanding new members. While I was in the presidency, I became acquainted with some of the finest educational leaders I have ever met.

### Karen Norton, KAIRS President, 2003–2007

Being involved in KAIRS gave me a great sense for the wide diversity of educational options. At the time, our highest priority was alternate accreditation. We worked with the Commissioner of Education to allow first-year teachers to qualify for their five-year licenses if they taught in schools accredited by KAIRS-approved accrediting agencies. We also finalized plans for the Hall of Fame for outstanding life-long educators.

Through KAIRS, I interacted with administrators from many different schools and gained a bigger vision for education. I developed a great respect for the demanding work in which every KAIRS school is involved, and I greatly appreciated the fine people who do God's work daily.



## KAIRS Hall of Fame

The KAIRS website (www.kairs.org) is also the location of the KAIRS Hall of Fame, where KAIRS honors its outstanding educators who have made life-long contributions to religious and independent schools in Kansas. These educators have given extraordinary service to a KAIRS member school (or a series of schools) during their career as educators. ■



Vincent DeCoursey



Robert Eggold



James Thiessen



Bunny Hill



Karen Norton



Jean Ross



Edward Bierbaum



Keith Jopp



Suze Anne Norton

### KAIRS Hall of Fame Members

#### Founders:

Vincent DeCoursey  
(1917-1991)

Robert Eggold

James Thiessen

#### 2005:

Bunny Hill

#### 2006:

Karen Norton

Jean Ross

#### 2007:

Edward Bierbaum

#### 2010:

Keith Jopp

Suze Anne Norton

## 40 Years of Service

*continued from page 1*

Dr. Compagnone and Dr. Nancy Bolz, State Director for Kansas North Central Association AdvancEd, met with the incoming Commissioner of Education, Dr. Diane DeBacker in September, to discuss a more modest proposal (see paragraph below). While no decisions were confirmed during the meeting, the dialogue was positive, with the hope of ongoing discussions.

### Alternate Accreditation

For many years, alternative accreditation has continued to be of vital importance to many KAIRS member schools. With a new Commissioner of Education this past year, KAIRS re-shaped its proposal to focus on the issues pertaining to Professional Development, Special Education, Title funding and other federal services, and transportation/busing.

A proposal concerning alternate accreditation has also been presented to the newly formed Kansas Education Commission, which was created by the BOE to examine the framework for re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Upon the completion of its meetings, the commission will report its conclusions to the BOE.

### Executive Committee Welcomes New Treasurer

Jamie Finkeldei, Principal of Resurrection Catholic School in Wichita, joined the KAIRS Executive Committee in 2010 as treasurer. Mr. Finkeldei is originally from Wichita where he attended Catholic schools and returned as a teacher. He became principal at Resurrection in 2007. He is a graduate of Wichita State University where he holds a bachelor's and two master's degrees.

### 2010 Annual Meeting

For the first time in more than 10 years, the Annual Meeting in Topeka had to be postponed due to ice and snow – particularly in the Western Kansas area. The meeting was moved to April and the featured keynote speaker, Marcus Winters, Ph.D., Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, was able to change his schedule to accommodate the meeting.

Dr. Winters is an expert on education policy, including the topics of school choice, high school graduation rates and special education. He spoke to KAIRS members about the important role school choice plays in successful schools, the surprising growth of vouchers for Special Education programs – particularly in Florida, presented a detailed look at Charter schools and why they are growing in numbers, and finally led a discussion

on the pros and cons of general education vouchers.

The meeting featured other excellent speakers including Dr. Nancy Bolz, State Director for Kansas North Central Association AdvancEd, and Tate Toedman, Education Program Consultant, Title Programs and Services for the Kansas Department of Education.

The Hall of Fame Banquet continues to be a high point of the annual meeting and six teachers were honored for 2010 (see photo bottom left). In addition, two new members were added to the KAIRS Hall of Fame: Keith Jopp, St. Paul Lu-



*Shelli Kadel, Head of School, Wichita Friends School, coordinates the Annual Meeting as its secretary since 2006.*

theran School Principal for 43 years in Cheney and Suze Anne Norton, Head of the Lower School at Wichita Collegiate School for 25 years. ■

## In Memoriam

### Diocese of Salina – Distinguished Teachers 2011



**Paula Huser** was a beloved music teacher at Holy Family Grade School in Hays. She

came to Holy Family in 1994, and also started the school's first art program. In 2005, she was named Outstanding Elementary Music Educator for the Northwest KMEA District.

"Paula's love for her students and Holy Family was profoundly shown when after being away from school for a semester, she wanted to return to work to be with the people she loved, doing what she loved," explained Jana Simon, Holy Family Principal. "When she realized that her body would not allow her to fulfill her vocation, I had the hardest task of my career, accepting her resignation."

She earned her Bachelor of Music degree from Fort Hays State University in 1973 and her Master of Music degree in 1980. In 1987, she completed a bachelor's degree in art – also from Fort Hays State. Mrs. Huser lost her battle with cancer in October 2010.



**Rhonda Cole** began teaching at St. Mary's Catholic School in Salina in 1988 as a 3rd

grade teacher. In 1997, she moved to Kindergarten. Recognizing how vulnerable her students were at that young age she wrote, "It is important to me that at the end of the day I end with a positive comment. That way, every child leaves with a good feeling." She continued to tutor students as long as she was able.

"Rhonda had a way to reach children and their families that left an impression on all who knew her," said Cindy Compagnone, Assistant Principal, St. Mary's. "She had a strong faith and portrayed that to her students daily. After she was sick, I watched her teach without complaint, even though she was in pain."

Mrs. Cole graduated from Marymount College in 1975 with a bachelor's degree in psychology of exceptional children, with a minor in elementary education. She passed away in December 2010.

## KAIRS 2010 Distinguished Teachers



*KAIRS recognized the 2010 Distinguished Teachers during the Annual Meeting's Hall of Fame Banquet. Winners were (from left): Sandy Nilges, Diocese of Salina, Joy Burton, Independent Schools, Kathy Starr, Lutheran Schools, Linda Conkle, Diocese of Dodge City, Benita Cox, Diocese of Wichita, Beth Smith, Christian Schools.*

# KAIRS Distinguished Teachers 2011

## Christian Schools



**Jerald (Jerry) McClenahan** has taught science at the high school level at Berean Academy since 1979, and has dedicated his career to providing a solid scientific foundation for his students. Additionally, he serves as the sponsor for Student Council and National Honor Society at Berean. Mr. McClenahan is a life-long learner who has been involved in education at the secondary, post-secondary and research level during his career, and is also a science instructor at Butler Community College.

“Mr. McClenahan is viewed by his students and colleagues as a great encourager and always willing to go the second mile with a student who may be struggling. Most importantly, he serves as a model of a man of faith and integrity for all who know him,” said Terry Tilson, Berean Academy Superintendent.

Mr. McClenahan received a Bachelor of Science degree from Kearney State College in 1977 and a Master of Science degree from Wichita State University in 1990.

## Diocese of Dodge City



**Lois Hammer** is in her 23rd year of teaching second and third grade at St. Joseph Catholic School in Ellinwood. She is a faithful teacher whose classroom environment is one that encourages independent learning and individual responsibility. She has also lovingly prepared 22 second grade classes to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

Additionally, Mrs. Hammer has served on numerous community projects and helped establish the Special Olympics in Barton County.

“Mrs. Hammer is truly a devoted teacher. Her students work diligently to complete assignments so as to participate in the unending supply of hands-on learning games or activities available in the classroom,” said Marlene Clayton, Lead Teacher, St. Joseph School. “The children clamor to play these ‘games’ with fellow classmates, all-the-while developing valuable interpersonal and academic skills.”

Mrs. Hammer earned her Bachelor of Science degree in education at Emporia State University in 1971 and her master’s degree from Fort Hays State University in 1976.

## Independent Schools



**Marcia Smola** has taught second grade at The Independent School for 25 years and is recognized for her innovative curriculum, which has even included a pet tarantula in her classroom. She places high expectations on her young students and guides them as their confidence grows. She has been active in the committee leadership, capital campaigns and planning sessions of the Lower School and

served as Co-Interim Head of the Lower School in 2009.

Karen Norton, Head of The Independent School, 1981-2006, said, “Marcia Smola is a dedicated teacher, who has inspired nearly 30 years worth of students to bigger and higher aspirations. She is well known for her compassion and love for her students. She has also contributed to the success of The Independent School, and stepped up to lead and encourage students, family members and teachers when needed.”

Mrs. Smola obtained her bachelor’s degree in elementary education from the University of Kansas in 1974.

## Lutheran Schools



**Tashia Dieckhoff** joined Holy Cross in 2007 as a first grade teacher. Prior to becoming a member of the faculty at Holy Cross, Mrs. Dieckhoff gained valuable experience working at several Lutheran schools across Kansas. She is a creative and stimulating teacher for young minds and has the natural ability to blend spontaneity while expecting her students to meet the highest of standards. In addition, her interactive use of technology in the classroom helps prepare her students to become strong Christian leaders.

“Mrs. Dieckhoff is an excellent model of life-long learning for other teachers and our students,” said Amber Fiala, Principal, Holy Cross Lutheran in Wichita. “She has a Christ-centered classroom, is willing to go the extra mile with interactive lessons, and her lessons give the students a small taste of the powerful connection with technology and working with others.”

Mrs. Dieckhoff earned her Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education in 1989 from Concordia College in Seward, Nebraska.

## Diocese of Wichita



**Lisa Payne** serves as both the principal and a sixth grade teacher of Holy Name Catholic School in Coffeyville, which is her alma mater. While she is an exemplary administrator, teaching is her vocation and her true love. Since joining the faculty in 2003, her strong math teaching skills have resulted in Holy Name reaching the state standard

of excellence every year.

“Lisa is a wonderful teacher and principal. She is an industrious person, working and teaching over and beyond her duties,” said Father Ben Nguyen, Pastor of Holy Name Church. “Her professionalism in the classroom greatly encourages the children to desire to learn more and be well-educated in all their subjects.”

Mrs. Payne began her teaching career in 1986. She received her BS in education from Pittsburg State University in 1984. She also earned two master’s degrees from Pittsburg, one in special education in 1994 and a second in school leadership in 2007.

## Mission

Through its common commitment to quality education, KAIRS serves to unify its member schools while respecting their diversity. KAIRS provides a framework for communication and cooperation among independent and religious schools in the state of Kansas, preschool through college. In addition, KAIRS strives to maintain productive relationships with the Kansas State Board of Education, the Kansas State Department of Education, the Kansas Board of Regents, the local, state, and federal governments, and other agencies that impact quality education.