Communities, schools go hand-in-hand

On a typical sunny, windy spring day in Kansas, the Oxford High School softball team played South Haven on one field while the Oxford baseball team practiced on another.

Between was the skeleton of an under-construction concession stand.

Crowds were gathered to cheer on the teams and students were selling concessions.

Oxford USD 358 Superintendent Mark Whitener pointed around to the 17 acres of land, the two sports fields, and the rising concession stand.

“All had been donated from various sources.

“Our community has just been great,” Whitener said.

A few miles east, members of the Winfield USD 465 Foundation gave a tour of The Harbor Project — a beautifully landscaped courtyard between Winfield High School and Winfield Middle School.

The area of trees, plants and brick pavers is used by students for a multitude of academic and social activities and special celebrations or to just hang out during lunch.

All of it was put together by donations from the community. The USD 465 Foundation raised more than $200,000 for the project by selling bricks, benches and other items.

“People are engaged and want to help,” said Julie Thompson, one of the leaders of The Harbor Project.

Thompson, Sheryle Ohm and Debra Schwyhart, also officers of the USD 465 Foundation, noted the many ways the foundation helps enhance the lives of Winfield students and teachers through...continued on page 3

School Board Member Spotlight: Aaron Estabrook, Manhattan USD 383

Sometimes, a person has to get out and see the world to truly appreciate what’s back at home. Manhattan-Ogden USD 383 board member Aaron Estabrook discusses how his time abroad in the Army helped prepare him for his service on the board.

Aaron is a Kansan through and through. He was raised on a small farm outside of Dodge City. During his youth he was a member of 4-H, where “in addition to showing bucket calves and swine, 4-H exposed me to Parliamentary Procedure and Robert's Rules of Order.” High school sports were also a huge part of his youth, as they allowed him the opportunity to see a lot of Kansas. Following high school he enrolled at Kansas State University, where he spent some time studying abroad and obtained a certificate in International Mediation and Conflict Resolution while studying in Cyprus and Israel.

After graduating from Kansas State with a degree in Political Science, Aaron enlisted in the US Army as a Tank Crewman. “Shortly after training I deployed to Afghanistan with the 2nd Infantry Division where we fought to take back control of areas in Kandahar Province from the Taliban.” He was field promoted to Sergeant and served a year in combat under various roles: Rifleman, Tank Gunner, Vehicle Commander, and Platoon Medic. He returned to Manhattan following the expiration of his Active Duty contract to raise his family and work with the Salvation Army as a case manager for homeless veterans across Kansas.

After an unsuccessful run for the Kansas House in 2012, Aaron began to appreciate the role of school boards and public education. “When asked by a retired teacher if I would consider running for the local school board in 2013, I agreed and the voters of Manhattan elected me.”

Aaron has served 3 years on the Board of Education and last year served on...continued on page 6
KASB Work Comp Board approves 8 percent rate reduction, dividend payments to members

An 8 percent rate reduction and approval of a plan to issue $300,000 in dividends to Kansas schools are among the decisions recently made by the board of trustees of the KASB Workers Compensation Fund, Inc.

“There is no better evidence of a fiscally strong pool than dividends and rate reductions,” said Rod Spangler, KASB Director of Insurance Services. “These two things just happened with the KASB Work Comp Fund.”

The Fund was established by the school board association in 1987 and currently serves 111 KASB member organizations.

The Fund is administered by KASB with an in-house claims department, and is governed by a separate Board of Trustees composed of locally-elected board of education members. No eligible member has ever been denied coverage, nor has any member been non-renewed due to excessive losses.

The Fund operates solely for the benefit of KASB members and is designed to return favorable operating results to members through dividends or a reduction in future premium costs. Based on the health of the insurance pool, the board of trustees approved a rate reduction for all current and new members for the 2016-17 Fund Year and the dividend payment plan for 1989-90 and 1991-92 during its April meeting.

This is the third time in the KASB Work Comp Fund’s history dividends have been authorized. Work Comp Fund members who will receive dividends will be notified in writing in the near future. The amount returned to each qualifying member of the work comp fund is based on the amount of premium paid and the loss ratio on submitted claims. The current $300,000 dividend plan covers specific members of the fund for 1989-90 and 1991-92 school years.

“The positive side of an insurance pool is the concept of shared risk, cost control and the potential for dividends,” Spangler said. “The negative side, of course, is that with the shared risk comes the potential for additional premium assessments.”

In the 30 year history of the KASB Work Comp Fund, two special assessments were required; one in the 2002-03 school year and another in the 2004-05 school year. However, $775,000 of the special assessment amounts have now been returned to the participating members.

“The fund is financially strong and healthy,” said Spangler. “When you are looking to save money and finding efficiencies, it is not just about renewals.”

Spangler urges school leaders to take advantage of the annual review and renewal process for insurance protection and other risk management products.

“In light of budget constraints facing our members, and the continued efforts to sustain high student success, don’t let these annual renewals come and go without a serious review of your options, your risk, and a potential for real savings that can be put to better use,” Spangler said.

Another focus of the KASB pool is cost containment and loss control. The KASB Work Comp Fund recently launched an online learning management system for members of the work comp fund they can use with their employees to train on how to prevent on-the-job injuries and reduce the number of work comp claims. KASB is looking to use the learning management system to help launch other training programs as well. –Carol Pitts, cpitts@kasb.org

The Kansas Association of School Boards is a not-for-profit organization located in Topeka, Kansas dedicated to serving members of governing boards for unified school districts, community colleges, area vocational-technical schools and cooperatives, interlocals and regional service centers. The association serves a membership base of close to 5,000 school board members and educational leaders.

Kansas Association of School Boards 1420 SW Arrowhead Road Topeka, Kansas 66604 785.273.3600 | 800.432.2471
KASB Board travels to Oxford for April meeting

The south central Kansas community of Oxford and Oxford USD 358 rolled out the welcome mat for the KASB Board of Directors April 15 and 16. The board traveled to the home district of KASB President Don Shimkus for its April 2016 meeting.

Oxford USD 358 has a storied history in Kansas public education. It was the first school system established in Kansas west and south of the Arkansas River. KASB Board of Directors and staff were introduced to several examples of how the community continues to partner with and support students and the Oklahoma school system.

The visit started with lunch and a visit to the Old Mill. The mill was built in 1874 and went on to produce flour and cornmeal before it ceased operation in 1977. It has since been placed on the National Historical Register, but continues to produce opportunities for the community. It is now home to a restaurant operated in part by the Oxford High School Entrepreneurship Class. Students run the business end of the restaurant, gaining experience in all phases of operating a small business.

A short bus ride then took the board of directors and staff to the high school for presentations by the high school band and vocal groups. Students in grades three, four, and five then gave a presentation on how they created a salsa garden as part of the school’s STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) program.

The board of directors also got some “face time” with middle school students competing in the KidWind Challenge on the campus of K-State April 15. Three of the students used an iPad and FaceTime to report their progress to those watching in Oxford. The school visit ended at the art show and competition held that day at the high school.

The remainder of the afternoon was spent visiting with downtown Oxford merchants and touring local sites, followed by dinner in Winfield.

The KASB Board of Directors gathered Saturday morning at Oxford High School for its regular meeting. Mark Tallman, KASB associate executive director for advocacy and communications, gave an update on school finance legislation and the school funding lawsuit. The board heard several routine business reports from KASB staff and then worked in small groups to develop strategic priorities for the association’s staff for the coming year.

The board agreed to modify the election process for regional vice-presidents. Elections are held each year at the association’s annual conference, but the timing allotted for the elections makes participation difficult. The board approved a plan to hold vice-president elections as a part of the Delegate Assembly during Convention.

The next regular meeting of the board of directors is scheduled for June 4 in Topeka. ~Carol Pitts, cpitts@kasb.org

KASB Board of Directors
• Don Shimkus, Oxford USD 358, President
• Rod Stewart, Washington County USD 108, Past President
• Amy Martin, Olathe USD 233, President-Elect
• Dayna Miller, Basehor-Linwood USD 458, Region 1, President-Elect Designee
• Kevin Schasteen, Paola USD 368, Region 2
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• Rick Shier, Olathe USD 233, Region 15
• Patrick Woods, Topeka USD 501, Ex Officio
• Frank Henderson, Seaman USD 345, Ex Officio, NSBA Board Western Region

KASB would like to know more about how your local communities are helping your schools. Please email information about the partnerships you have in your communities and neighborhoods to Scott Rothschild at srothschild@kasb.org.

Communities and Schools continued from page 1

scholarships, donation of musical instruments, teacher grants and an art restoration fund.

The volunteerism of Winfield and Oxford are just two of hundreds of examples across Kansas where local communities step up and help their local school district.

Most educators realize that schools and communities must work together to help students succeed.

And most schools and communities work hand-in-hand providing funds and volunteers that provide enhanced programs that otherwise wouldn’t be available through general tax revenue. Whether it’s sponsoring trips, cleaning up schools, repairing equipment, buying books … the list of ways communities help their schools is almost endless.

And in many towns in Kansas, the schools are the major buildings and meeting places for communities.

In urban areas, schools can improve neighborhoods and provide partnerships that connect students to all kinds of community services. ~Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

Oxford USD 358 Superintendent Mark Whitener stands in front of concession stand that was being built near the school’s baseball and softball field. The material and labor for the stand were being donated; an example of the many ways community members help out the school.

* * *
Students and instructors from Blue Valley USD 229’s AVID program spoke at the April 21 meeting of the Coalition of Innovative School Districts.

AVID- Advancement Via Individual Determination- is a program designed to assist students who are considered in the “academic middle” yet show “academic potential” and students who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education. For example, students who are the first in their family to attend college or students who earn “average” grades would be considered candidates for the AVID program. AVID students come from many different backgrounds and have various interests, which are essential for collaboration and supporting each other as they engage in high rigor courses and work through the AVID curriculum. As AVID is meant to prepare students for the challenges that accompany post-secondary education, AVID involves intense college prep instruction.

Blue Valley began its AVID program in 2006 with 24 students in a ninth grade class. Every year a new class would be added to each grade level. By 2010 all of the Blue Valley schools has an AVID class in grades 9-12.

Currently, 11 Kansas school districts participate in the AVID program, with nearly 80 schools having the program in place. According to the 2014-15 data, approximately 4,900 student are enrolled in AVID.

With the help of their eighth grade counselors, AVID recruits are identified in middle school, although participation in the program is completely voluntary and students must commit to the program.

AVID students are then enrolled in rigorous college prep courses with an emphasis on “a strong, relevant writing and reading curriculum.” The AVID elective course is available within the regular academic school day as a daily or specialized block schedule. Within this schedule students participate in a mix of instruction and tutorial sessions. The AVID methodology, known as WICR (Writing, Inquiry, Reading and Collaboration), helps prepare the students for the rigors of college work by showing them how to think critically, manage their notes/projects and manage their time. The AVID curriculum includes writing and college and career courses and strategies for success. Tutorials include collaborative study groups, writing groups and Socratic seminars. Student progress is monitored through the AVID Data system. The results are then analyzed as a means of continuing to fine tune the program to meet the needs of the students and ensure they succeed in the program.

While there is no cost for students to participate in the AVID program, there are costs associated with running the program. The library cost is roughly $4,500. Training for instructors can cost about $800-$1,500 per person. In addition to instructors, AVID students also work with tutors from local colleges. Training and employing the tutors cost the program about $10,000. By identifying the cost of program resources, the school and district are showing a commitment to the implementation of and continued staff development in AVID.

Three senior students from Blue Valley’s AVID program attended the meeting and discussed how, while AVID is a rigorous college prep program, they are still able to enjoy and participate in the aspects of “normal” high school life, such as sports and other extracurriculars. They also mentioned how AVID students are encouraged- expected, even- to apply for any and all college scholarships they come across, even if it’s a long shot they will receive it. In the BVHS AVID class of 2015, 90 students graduated from the program with all of the graduates accepted to post-secondary institutions and roughly 70 percent of those students receiving scholarship offers. The curriculum may be intense, but the numbers show the hard work does pay off.

AVID in Kansas by the numbers
The AVID program exists in 11 districts in Kansas, which includes 56 middle schools and high schools and 25 elementary schools. For more information go to www.avid.org. -Shaneice McNabney, smcnabney@kasb.org

American Fidelity recently launched a new brand, with an updated logo and brand statement developed to reflect our re-envisioned focus.

We are here to provide a different opinion. While many companies may offer a one-size-fits all approach, American Fidelity has a deep understanding of the unique needs of education professionals.

As a specialist with over 50 years’ experience serving more than 3,100 school districts nationwide, we are always seeking new ways to help educate your employees and streamline your benefit enrollment process.

From Section 125 Plans to 403(b) Plan Administration Services, HSA Administration and Affordable Care Act guidance, our expertise and experience in your field can be a valuable resource to your organization when seeking services that can help you and your employees maximize tax savings and manage costs associated with various benefits. In addition, we offer supplemental benefit options. From Disability Income Plans to Cancer and Life Insurance, each is suited for your employee’s unique situation.

Last, to enroll in these products and services, we offer an online enrollment solution. Our AFenroll® platform is a complete web-based enrollment, communication and administration platform that can assist you and your employees with the entire benefit enrollment process.

As a prestigious partner of KASB, we are here to support members of the education community. We are excited about the future of American Fidelity, and we look forward to our continued partnership and sharing the many ways American Fidelity can meet your needs.
Data collected by KASB shows that since 1998, the number of days in a teacher’s annual contract has decreased by approximately 10 days, and the average length of each of those days has increased by approximately 10 minutes. Most of the change has occurred since 2009.

According to data collected via KASB’s annual Teacher Contract Details and Teacher Negotiation Settlement Surveys, the average number of days in a teacher’s contract has decreased from 187.23 in 1998 to 178.78 in 2016, as shown in the Teacher Total Contract Days graph.

However, during that same time, the length of teachers’ contract days has increased from seven hours and 52 minutes to eight hours, as shown in the Average Teacher Day Length graph.

When you combine the data from the two graphs, you come up with the total contract hours for teachers. This shows that total teacher hours have decreased an average of almost 40 hours since 1998 (from 1471 to 1432), as shown in the Teacher Total Contract Hours graph.

And finally, the number of days off for teachers has to be considered. As the Teacher Average Vacation, Sick, and Personal Days graph shows, from 1998 to 2016, the total number of vacation, sick, and personal days available to teachers has increased by approximately 5.5 days.

What does this data tell us? It tells us that since 1998:

• Total contract days for teachers has decreased by almost 10 days.
• Time per day for teachers has increased by almost 10 minutes.
• Total contract hours for teachers has decreased by almost 40 hours.
• The total for teacher vacation, sick, and personal days has increased by over five days.

For more details on teacher contracts and other school district data, visit kasb.org/research.
Legislature adjourns; budget contains K-12 protection proviso

The wrap up session started with a proposal by Gov. Sam Brownback that would have cut public schools by $57 million and it ended with a rickety state budget that contained an amendment supporters said would protect school funding.

The Kansas Legislature adjourned the 2016 session in the early morning hours of Mon. May 2 after passing a budget that will lead to cuts in higher education, delay highway projects and a state payment to KPERS. But a proviso in the budget prevents Brownback from reducing K-12 funding under his allotment authority.

But even with that protection, concerns remain about the possibility of a special Legislative Session if the Kansas Supreme Court doesn’t accept the recently approved equity fix to school finance. Oral arguments in that case are scheduled for May 10 at 9:00 a.m.

During the wrap up session, one vote was made in the House to increase revenue by eliminating the controversial state income tax exemption for the owners of 330,000 businesses. But that failed 45-74.

Legislators also approved a number of other education-related bills including requiring school employees to take suicide prevention training, setting up a state bond review process, regulating the use of emergency safety interventions, modifying working after retirement provisions and others.

For more details on education bills during the 2016 legislative session, go to www.kasb.org/legiswebinars. ~Scott Rothschild, srothschild@kasb.org

Board Member Spotlight

continued from page 1

the KASB Legislative Committee. In addition to his service on the school board, he has also served on municipal committees such as the Manhattan Parks and Recreation Board. As an advocate for Kansas veterans, he has served as the State Chair for NAMI-Kansas Veterans and Military Council and the Governor’s Behavioral Health Services Planning Council Subcommittee on Veterans.

Aaron’s commitment to public education and the people who help make it possible runs as deep as his commitment to our veterans. And he cites the people as being the most rewarding part of serving on the school board. “Our educators are our best resource and they seem to have endless amounts of patience, compassion, and resiliency.” He also finds these good qualities in the citizens of the school district, whose attitudes of collaboration help to maximize “opportunities of success for our students.”

However, he realizes educators could be doing so much more for the students with the proper financial resources. Pushback from state political leadership and fiscal uncertainty make for challenges within the district, such as retaining and attracting “the best and the brightest” and obtaining the tools needed to adequately educate students facing increasing poverty and socio-economic barriers. But he feels the most important issue “looking toward the future” for Manhattan-Ogden is “growth and how to build capacity while navigating hostile political rhetoric and harmful policies.”

And Aaron has a message for the state officials who are making it difficult for public school students to get the best education possible: “Stop. Read Article 6 of the Kansas Constitution. If your job description and authority is not contained within that section, then stop acting like it is. Please respect both the voters and the constitution. For those who do have responsibilities under Article 6 please do not let anyone else take those from you. Local Control is essential for local districts to thrive and meet their specific needs; meddling by state officials in local matters is harmful to the quality of education our schools can deliver.” ~Shaneice McNabney, smcnabney@kasb.org
Some legislators note Kansas ranks third in the share of the state budget dedicated to public schools but when considering all funds for education - which legislators say is important to do - Kansas ranks below the national average. And when it comes to student achievement, the amount of dollars seems more important than the source of the funding.

When all school revenue sources are considered - federal, state and local - Kansas spends $11,596 per pupil, about $800 below the U.S. average and ranking 27th in the nation.

Those numbers are from the U.S. Census Bureau’s report Public Education Finance for 2012-13 school year, the most recent data available.

This ranking includes not only state appropriations (what we think about as state aid), but also all local revenue sources, including property tax levies, student fees and local gifts and grants; and all federal aid, including education programs and student meal support.

However, looking at the percent of education funding that comes from the state, rather than the amount, Kansas ranks 18th in the country. That is because since the early 1990s, the Kansas Legislature has chosen to rely more heavily on state funding rather than local funding to hold down property taxes and provide a more equalized funding system.

A third way to measure state support for K-12 education is the portion of the state budget that goes to this function. It is this statistic, from the National Association of State Budget Officers, that shows Kansas ranking third.

The percent of a state’s budget spent on K-12 education really does not provide much information on overall funding of education in that state. Among the top five states cited by NASBO, Vermont ranks near the top in total funding (sixth), Indiana and Kansas rank in the middle (25th and 27th, respectively) and Utah and Colorado rank near the bottom (49th and 38th).

An example of how the share of state budget spent on K-12 or the share of K-12 received from the state can have no impact on overall K-12 funding is illustrated by the way Kansas shifted from a local source to a state source. That switch did not change school funding, but was a major reason the share of Kansas' total budget going to K-12 increased from 25.9 percent in 2014 to 29.6 percent in 2015.

Find Mark’s blog online at http://tallmankasb.blogspot.com.
KASB Summer Advocacy Tour starts soon

The 2016 Legislative Session is behind us and elections are ahead, so that can mean only one thing — time for KASB’s Summer Advocacy Tour.

KASB advocacy team members will inform, delight and collect feedback from you as they crisscross the state in a series of meetings.

The tour includes stops in Sublette on May 31; Oakley and Hays, June 1; Great Bend, June 2; Emporia and Clearwater, June 6; Wichita, June 7; Lawrence and Kansas City, June 13; Topeka and Olathe, June 16; Manhattan and Hiawatha, June 20; Paola and Greenbush, June 21; Independence, June 22; and Hutchinson and Salina, June 23.

Please watch KASB’s News Briefs and kasb.org for more details about the tour.