

*A number of other IEA members have received special recognition.*

- **Paula Brockman** of Lowell Scott Middle School in West Ada won a \$100,000 grant from Farmers Insurance in the *Dream Big Teacher Challenge*. Brockman is a sixth grade geography and English teacher who plans to use the grant for an outdoor classroom with interpretive learning stations, a greenhouse and more.
- **Melissa Hunt** from Stoddard Elementary in Blackfoot received a \$2,500 award in the *Dream Big Teacher Challenge*. She was a \$100,000 grant winner last year.
- **Kathy Prummer** (Sand Point Middle School) and **Mary Towler** (Compass Academy, Idaho Falls) were named finalists for the Presidential Award in Mathematics and Science.
- **Christy Hall** of Reed Elementary School in Kuna received a \$750 grant from CapEd to provide books and book bags so that students can read at home to supplement their classroom work.
- **Steve Haugenberg** of Minico High School received the Lifetime Achievement Award for Track from the Idaho High School Activities Association. He was also named the 2015 State of Idaho Track Coach of the Year by the Idaho State Coaches Association.

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# Honors ACCOLADES

It has been a banner year for members of the Idaho Education Association when it comes to collecting awards, grants, prizes and tributes. Capping things off was the announcement that **Melyssa Ferro**, a science teacher at Syringa Middle School in Caldwell, was named Idaho's 2016 Teacher of the Year. She received the prestigious honor at a surprise assembly in the school gymnasium, being lauded by Idaho State Superintendent Sherri Ybarra in front of crowd of students, fellow teachers and special guests including IEA President Penni Cyr and Caldwell Education Association president Debbie Olsen.

As Idaho's Teacher of the Year, Ferro receives a \$1,000 award, is eligible for National Teacher of the Year honors, and will be invited to address the legislature during the upcoming session. The opportunity to serve as spokesman and advocate for Idaho's teachers and students is something that she takes very seriously. "I want to be the Lorax," Ferro says. "To be the person who speaks for those who can't advocate for themselves." (See our leadership letter on page two for more



*Teacher of the Year Melyssa Ferro (right) with Superintendent Sherri Ybarra*

*on Ferro's ideas and opinions about public education in Idaho).*

Being recognized for her enthusiasm about teaching and her dedication to students is nothing new for Ferro. She also recently received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Math and Science Teaching, and was named the Teacher of the Year in Caldwell. All of which is indicative of her primary objective—helping students maximize their potential by making math and science interesting.

"I want kids to have positive, hands-on experiences and develop a passion for learning now," she says. Examples of that approach include collaborative programs with local colleges, a partnership with the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, and an every-other-year trip to Tampa for exploration field research.

At first wanting to be a scientist herself, Ferro eventually found more satisfaction in inspiring and mentoring others, and called home in her sophomore year of college to tell her parents

that she had decided to be a teacher. She found sympathetic ears there, as her parents, Milon and Joyce McDaniel, are both professional educators who share the same passion and persistence.



*Melyssa Ferro with her parents Milon and Joyce McDaniel, who are also professional educators*

*For this edition of the IEA Reporter, we posed questions about critical education topics to two of Idaho's top education experts—newly minted Teacher of the Year Melyssa Ferro and IEA President Penni Cyr. For the full-length version of this Q & A, including their thoughts on master teacher premiums, class sizes, discretionary funding, and ideas to improve public education, visit [www.idahoea.org/reporter/educationperspectives](http://www.idahoea.org/reporter/educationperspectives).*

**Q:** The Career Ladder compensation model was the “big splash” from the last legislative session. How has it been received thus far by professional educators and others?

**Ferro:** I have seen very little to indicate that this legislation has made a difference in my building or my district. It did not make it easier to hire new teachers. If anything, it just created a complex salary schedule that no one, including members of the negotiations team, can explain to anyone. Many districts do not understand how to make sure that all teachers with Masters degrees are being credited for them and are losing out on state funding because of it. Some master teacher candidates are deciding that it is not worth their efforts to get continuing education beyond the minimum required for recertification. None of it seems to really address the bottom line of helping students.

**Cyr:** The Career Ladder definitely has received mixed reviews, depending on the understanding of members and district administration and school board members. One difficulty has been helping everyone understand that the CL is an allocation schedule NOT a pay schedule. It is another “formula” the state uses to determine how much money will be sent to each district each year for compensation of certified teachers. It was not ever intended to determine what teachers earn; that is determined through negotiations between the local association and the district.

**Q:** We have seen some progress in reducing the emphasis on high-stakes testing in Idaho. What effect has this had on students and teachers? What would you like to see happen regarding standardized tests going forward?

**Ferro:** I have not seen that reduction hit the classroom level in my district yet. The sheer volume of testing that the math and ELA teachers in my district do is overwhelming. They are still spending more time testing than they are teaching. I think that it is safe to say that classroom teachers would like to see testing limited to a few days during the year rather than multiple weeks. Another huge benefit would be to have the testing focus on evaluating student progress in a formative manner rather



## Education Perspectives: IEA President Penni Cyr and Idaho Teacher of the Year Melyssa Ferro

than being utilized to summatively assess both the students and their teachers, which is happening under the current high-stakes formula. Most of the tests currently being used summatively were never designed for that purpose. They are meant to be a formative assessment that allows teachers to diagnose areas of weakness for further instruction.

**Cyr:** Teachers want their students to succeed. With the great emphasis on high stakes tests under the former Superintendent of Public Instruction and NCLB, teachers have had to resort to “teaching to the test” to make sure their students did well. Tests were never meant to determine if a student could graduate from school or if a teacher should get paid more or get fired. Tests should be used to determine where students are struggling and what help they need. Tests were designed to help professional educators make the best decisions about what students need to continue growing and learning. Under the test and punish regime, some students have gotten very stressed and unhappy; some parents have been concerned that their student aren’t receiving a well-rounded education, and many teachers have lost the joy of teaching

because they are unable to properly focus on their students’ needs and interests. Schools have been reducing or eliminating electives and other classes like P.E., music, and art so teachers can spend more time on tested subjects. It is my hope that the number of tests is reduced and that we no longer place such high stakes on tests, but instead let the professionals do their jobs and use tests to guide education decisions for their student.

**Q:** There has been a substantial increase in the number of non-certified teachers and counselors taking on responsibilities typically handled by certified professionals. How concerning is this and what should be done about it?

**Ferro:** There is no pathway to teacher certification that can take the place of a high quality internship and student teaching experience. Content expertise combined with strong classroom management skills is the only way to ensure equity of educational access to students from all across our

state. Rather than lower the bar for people entering the teaching profession in an effort to fill increasingly hard-to-fill positions in the teaching field, or worse yet, pawning off the responsibly onto non-certificated staff and counselors, it is time for Idaho policy makers to address the core problem. The way to put a highly qualified teacher in every Idaho classroom is going to come down to increasing compensation in a manner that demonstrates a recognition of education and time in the profession and creating an environment of respect for the men and women that serve in Idaho’s public schools.

**Cyr:** This is very concerning. On the one hand, the legislature says it wants to reward the “best of the best” teachers and on the other hand, they have opened up a variety of pathways for people without professional training in education to teach our students. If the legislature is concerned that our students aren’t being taught by fully-prepared educators, then why do they allow alternative paths to certification? Why do they allow pre-service educators and others to serve as the professional teacher? Idaho students deserve to be taught by highly-qualified, professional teachers.





## Local Presidents Meet, Host Superintendent Ybarra: "Education is Not a Sideline Sport"

More than 50 local association presidents from around the state met in Boise to receive and share important information about education issues, along with IEA programs and initiatives. Local presidents were given updates about the statewide Career Ladder salary allocation formula and received information on how to create effective local teacher compensation schedules. There was also training and discussion about topics such as building electronic profiles, strategies for working with local school boards and the latest legal developments.

Idaho State Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra accepted an invitation to address the local presidents and encouraged them to join her in supporting a vision of achievement for schools and students. She highlighted some aspects of her budget proposal as well as touching on some policy ideas that are either already up and running or in the works. Ybarra acknowledged the negativity of the previous administration, and encouraged the local presidents to remain engaged. "I understand that education is not a sideline sport," she said. "You have to roll up your sleeves and get involved."



State Superintendent Sherri Ybarra speaks to IEA local presidents

## Idaho Legislators Visit Local Schools "Educator for a Day" a Key Part of American Education Week

The IEA and its members celebrated American Education Week, November 16-30, with a variety of activities recognizing professional educators and seeking to promote public education. Parents were spotlighted for their involvement (see our story at <http://idahoea.org/news/payette-parents-are-plenty-involved/>), while ESPs and substitute teachers each had their own designated day of appreciation.

One of the most noteworthy aspects of American Education Week was "Educator for a Day" on Thursday, November 19. IEA members all around the state invited community leaders into their schools and classrooms to see first-hand the instruction that transpires on a daily basis.

**Brandon Hampton**, a technical education teacher at Les Bois Junior High School in Boise, invited state Representative Ilana Rubel (D-Boise) to attend the district's inaugural Engineering and Robotics competition. Rep. Rubel witnessed students competing in events such as video game design, catapults, robotics, Auto CAD, and CO2 propelled dragsters. "I thoroughly enjoyed seeing the great work that our students are doing in engineering and robotics," she says. "The passion that Mr. Hampton and the other teachers pour into working with kids on hands-on projects is exciting and inspirational." Representative Paulette Jordan (D-Plummer), visited Lena Whitmore Elementary School in Moscow. She interacted extensively with **Molly Pannkuk's** first graders and **Lisa Belknap's** second graders, and wrote about it later on her Facebook page.



Reporter DeSiree Fawn of KMVT-TV was an "Educator for a Day" at Alturas Elementary School at the invitation of the Blaine County EA

"I enjoyed every moment with the students and meeting with our teachers in Moscow who deserve every bit of recognition for their dedication to educating our children! I am most appreciative of those students in the 2nd and 1st grade who took the time to share their personal stories with me! This inside glimpse certainly gave me a greater understanding and appreciation for what our teachers experience on a daily basis, and it is a beautiful relationship to see.

Blaine County Education Association was very active in "Educator for a Day" activities, with a number of elected officials and other guests visiting schools. BCEA also invited reporter DeSiree Fawn of KMVT/KSVT-TV into the classroom of art teacher **Joni Cashman** at Alturas Elementary School. Links to that story can be found at [www.kmvt.com](http://www.kmvt.com) and on the BCEA Facebook page.



Rep. Ilana Rubel (right) with award winners from Boise's Engineering and Robotics Competition



## Harry McCarty.

After more than a decade of service as a Region Director, Harry is retiring from the IEA. As a key leader of the Western

Region Organizing Center, he has been a fierce advocate for members at the bargaining table and beyond. Harry was also an integral part of the IEA's efforts to overturn the potentially disastrous Propositions 1, 2, and 3.

**Bob Day.** Former IEA President and Associate Executive Director Bob Day passed away recently in Woodburn, Oregon. Bob served as IEA President in 1966-67 and 1967-68, and was also on the committee that oversaw construction of the current IEA headquarters building. He was later the IEA's Associate Executive Director, retiring from that position in 1984. Bob mentored many IEA staff members, including current Region Director Kathy Yamamoto. "Bob was always there to listen and offer his wisdom," she says. "He was a true advocate for our members and played an important role in shaping our organization during the time we began to receive funding for UniServ Director positions in Idaho."



## Maggie Calica.

A tireless worker on behalf of the members and students in Region 5, Maggie retired recently to spend

more time with her family and pursue her love of travel. Maggie has been a stalwart of the IEA field staff for nearly a dozen years, and her passion for educators and the opportunity for every student to have access to education will long be remembered. "The members and leaders of this region are truly amazing people, and their dedication to their profession and the Association is immeasurable," she says. "It is my hope that they will continue to feel empowered as a profession, that the IEA thrives and everyone carries on the good fight to keep public education vibrant."

## Teaching Respect

### Idaho Falls EA Members Take the Lead

With an increased emphasis being placed on anti-bullying efforts and treating all students with respect, Skyline High School teachers **Billie Wixom** and **Lynn MacAusland** came up with a new way to reinforce the idea that derogatory remarks and discriminatory behavior will not be tolerated. More accurately, it is a repurposed way. The two social studies and government teachers came across a poster originally designed several years ago by the IEA's Human and Civil Rights Committee, and modified it for use in their building.

"We personalized it and branded it with the IFEA logo," says Wixom, who is the IFEA building representative at Skyline. "The principal loved it, and then it just took off around the district." The small project grew organically after other schools began inquiring about the poster, which led to a presentation at a district principal's meeting and conversations with Superintendent George Boland and IFEA President **Angela Gillman**.

The poster spells out quite clearly that degrading remarks about the race,



IEA members Billie Wixom and Lynn MacAusland jump started anti-bullying efforts at Skyline High

ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, religion or disability of others are not acceptable. Each school has the opportunity to personalize the text based on their student's grade level and other factors. "The teachers really embraced it—the message is right there in front of everyone," says MacAusland. "Now when students come into the classroom they feel protected, and their needs can be met," adds Wixom.

Administrators and parents are also on board with the poster and the message it carries. "It integrates well with the state-mandated training about bullying, and it helps our staff recognize diversity," says Skyline principal Aaron Jarnigan. "It is easier to educate when students feel involved, respected and safe," he says.

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

### Cora Caldwell

#### Love of People and Books Leads to Librarian of the Year Honor

**Cora Caldwell** has carved out an amazing career in public education, culminating with recognition earlier this year as Idaho's School Librarian of the Year. With 26 years on the job as a librarian in the Gooding School District, including the last five as District Librarian, Caldwell has been able to impact the lives of countless children in her small town.

"I am so humbled," Caldwell says. "People who get this award are great people, and I just don't think of myself that way." Many students, parents and colleagues in Gooding would strongly disagree, including Gooding Public Library Director Cindy Bigler, who worked with Caldwell at Gooding High School and now collaborates with her on numerous projects aimed at nurturing a love of reading. "She doesn't really tout all the amazing things she does; she is a great mentor and is always willing to help people achieve their desires," Bigler says. "Cora is constantly searching for techniques that support teachers and students and instill a love of learning."





# Making a Difference

## Idaho Public Teachers Contest Winners

Jefferson Elementary School in Pocatello was awarded a \$1,000 contribution as the first place winner of the *Making a Difference* contest, which was sponsored by the IEA through the *Idaho Public Teachers* awareness campaign. Online entries detailing why specific Idaho public schools needed and deserved this award were accepted during the summer and fall, and Jefferson teacher **Michelle Rogers'** entry was selected as the winner. Her entry requested that the funds be used for items such as school supplies, I-pad apps, and equipment for physical education, art and music. "We try to exhaust every option available in order to help our students succeed and beat the odds they are given based on circumstance," Rogers said.

Because so many compelling entries were received on behalf of schools around the state, the IEA elected to recognize four other schools with second place awards of \$500 each. "We know that education resources can be scarce in Idaho, and we hope these contributions will provide some measure of assistance to our great public schools and professional educators," said IEA president Penni Cyr. The second place winners were:

- **Highland Elementary School, Craigmont.** The winning entry was submitted by parent Kristen Wright, who requested that the money go to "the Highlands special education department to ensure quality education for my children as well as the other amazing children in our area".

- **Mullan Trail Elementary School, Post Falls.** There were multiple entries on behalf of this school, including parent Michelle Garrett, who shared the growth experiences of her children over the last nine years and said that "with this prize the school can continue doing what it does best—put our kids first and ensure that Mullan Trail Elementary is maintaining momentum in preparing our children for their continued education".

- **Borah High School, Boise.** Teacher **Pamela Atkins** submitted the winning entry, which praised a program called "Lions' Den" that keeps the school library open after school so that students have a safe and productive environment for doing homework. She noted that Borah HS has a large refugee student population and that more than 40 different languages are spoken at the school.

- **Desert Springs Elementary, Vallivue.** Librarian/Media Specialist **Katie Wiese** submitted this entry highlighting the school's Lunch Bunch Book Club and other efforts to make sure that kids (especially in low income neighborhoods) have access to reading materials.

*The Idaho Public Teachers: Dedicated to the Ones We Love* initiative featured advertisements on radio and television stations around the state, as well on a variety



*Making a Difference contest winner Michelle Rogers (second from left) gets a big check from IEA President Penni Cyr*



*Boise EA President Stephanie Myers with Borah High School's Pamela Atkins, Amy Everson, and Tim Standlee*



*IEA President Penni Cyr congratulates Highland Elementary parent Kristen Wright on her second place award*

of websites, showcasing the compelling stories of Idaho's amazing public school teachers. The website also features some terrific videos and a variety of resources about public school teachers and public education. Learn more at:

[www.idahopublicteachers.org](http://www.idahopublicteachers.org)  
[www.facebook.com/idahopublicteachers](https://www.facebook.com/idahopublicteachers)

Caldwell grew up in New Plymouth and graduated from the University of Idaho. She started her education career teaching home economics in Gooding before taking classes for her media endorsement and obtaining a Master's degree in Library Science from BYU. It was the dynamic in place in those early years that led her to the IEA. "I've been a member since 1972, because when I first started teaching, home economics was considered a hazardous occupation," she says with a laugh. "I truly believe that there are things I can't do to help and protect myself like a professional organization can."

As the district librarian, Caldwell splits her time between the high school, middle school and elementary schools, as well as the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind. The ISDB is home to about 90 students from pre-K to beyond high school, and Caldwell helps makes sure that the unique needs of these students are met.

Whatever the age or ability level, whatever the student's circumstances,

Caldwell has one overriding goal. "Helping a child find the right book that will ignite a passion for reading is crucial," she says. "It doesn't really matter what they read, because if they enjoy it they will branch out."

**"helping a child find a passion for reading is crucial."**

Collaborating with the classroom teachers is another critical component of her work. Teachers and librarians meet regularly to discuss what is happening in class and how library resources can supplement and compliment those lessons. "Our teaching staff in Gooding has been great," Caldwell says. "They really care and go the extra mile."

The same can be said for Caldwell, whose passion for connecting people and books has made her an indispensable part of the Gooding community. For her part, she deflects and shares the recognition that has come with her Librarian of the Year award. "I couldn't do half of what I do without great support from family, staff, the public library, and the IEA."

## Children's Fund

### Helps IEA Members Help Kids

The IEA established the Children's Fund more than a decade ago in response to the needs of Idaho children. Far too many kids are lacking in basic necessities such as clothing, food, medical care, eyeglasses, and school supplies. Without these essentials, many students struggle to find their academic and social footing in the classroom. Funded primarily with donations by IEA members, along with generous contributions from a handful of businesses and organizations, the Children's Fund can be accessed by IEA members on behalf of children and families in need.

Now you can help improve the lives of Idaho children through the Amazon Smiles program, which will donate 0.5% of all purchases to the IEA Children's Fund. Get started today at:

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/84-1417138>

For more on the tremendous impact that the IEA Children's Fund has had on students and families, check out our video featuring Children's Fund Chair Randi Sinclair and IEA President Penni Cyr.

<http://idahoea.org/parents-community/iea-childrens-fund/>



*Democracy in action at the 2015 IEA Delegate Assembly*

## IEA Delegate Assembly

The IEA's annual meeting and Delegate Assembly will take place April 22-23, 2016 at the Boise Centre on the Grove. Registration information will be sent to local associations in late January and official delegate lists must be submitted to the IEA by March 23. In keeping with tradition, a memorial slideshow will honor educator-colleagues who have passed away in the last year. If you have names and information/pictures to include, please e-mail them to [jflehart@idahoea.org](mailto:jflehart@idahoea.org).

## NEA Representative Assembly

This year's National Education Association RA will be held July 2-7, 2016 in Washington, DC. IEA members interested in running for a state delegate position must fill out a resume form and submit it to the IEA along with a recent black and white photo. These applications must be received by January 19, and will then be placed on the ballot in the nominee's zone. The RA agenda and other information can be found under the "Grants and Events" tab on the NEA website ([www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)). The NEA and IEA are committed to ethnic-minority involvement and strongly encourage ethnic-minority members to submit a resume.

For ballots and additional information, please e-mail Julie Fleharty at [jflehart@idahoea.org](mailto:jflehart@idahoea.org) or call the IEA headquarters at 208-344-1341.

## ESP CORNER

### A Lot is Happening in ESPville

ESPs in Idaho have started to unite, and a movement is happening. This was especially evident on November 18, National ESP Day, which has been set aside to recognize and appreciate all the hard work, dedication, and passion that ESP's bring to public schools around the nation each and every day.

There were a number of events around the state that celebrated National ESP Day--from providing a free dinner social to awarding ESPs with tokens of appreciation. Lewiston EA held a "giving thanks" event that featured ESPs out and about in the community. Caldwell EA hosted a "free coffee to ESPs" social at a local coffee shop that was featured in the local paper. Minidoka County EA held a similar event where a video was shown and a PowerPoint presentation was made to inform the local ESPs. Fruitland EA and Boise EA gave candy bars and post-it notes to their ESPs. Many other locals took part in showcasing the importance of ESPs in Public Schools. As a result, ESPs are uniting across the state to demonstrate that they are professional, that they deserve a living wage, and that they make a huge difference in public education.

The IEA loves to recognize ESPs and the contributions they make to the profession. Now is the perfect opportunity to nominate an ESP member for the Edythe Crowe Award, which is presented annually to Idaho's ESP of the Year. Applications are available through the IEA headquarters or your local president, and are due in January. The recipient of the ESP of the Year award will have the opportunity to participate in the National Education Association's ESP Conference in 2017.

Remember to check out these other awesome ESP-related materials.

- In conjunction with National ESP Day, IEA Communications Director Dave Harbison interviewed ESP-at-large Stacie Aspiazu-Johnson about several key topics of importance to ESPs. Listen to the podcast at <http://idahoea.org/stacie>
- NEA has created an ESP oriented blog, hosted by Marla Lipkin, president of a 650 ESP-member local in Pennsylvania. Read the blog at <http://thepassionatopara.com/>.

*Stacie Aspiazu-Johnson  
Chair-ESP Committee, ESP at large-IEA Board of Directors*





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## Next Steps Idaho — *Counseling Follow Up*

As shared in the “*Counseling in Crisis?*” cover story in our previous issue, increasing demands and static or decreasing resources for counselors is a challenge faced across the state. However, the issue is starting to receive more attention, and there are resources available.

Launched in the fall by the State Board of Education, Next Steps Idaho is a website designed to assist schools and counselors as they work with students to explore and prepare for postsecondary college and career options. The site provides information for counselors, students, and families on every step of the journey.

Planning checklists, questions to research and ask a counselor during appointments, and grade-by-grade timelines are available, as is information on topics ranging from financial aid to career exploration. The site content was developed after extensive research with Idaho students about the challenges they see and the information they need as they begin to think about life after high school.

[www.NextStepsIdaho.gov](http://www.NextStepsIdaho.gov).

Read the original “*Counseling in Crisis?*” cover story at:  
<http://idahoea.org/reporter/counseling-in-crisis/>



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