



IOWA ACE news

Spring 2007



WHAT'S NEW AT IOWA ACE

Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education is on the move and on the brink of playing an important role in influencing future legislation affecting school choice and nonpublic education in Iowa. Recently we began the process of forming Iowa Advocates for Choice in Education. This partner organization will, pending IRS approval, be a 501(c)(4) organization, which means that it can perform lobbying and other activities that attempt to influence legislation in our state. We will keep you updated on this exciting development.

At our recent meeting of the Board of Directors and Parent Advisory Board, Iowa ACE elected new officers who will begin serving on July 1, 2007. We are pleased that Jeff Courter of Des Moines will continue serving as Parent Advisory Board President and Chairman of the Board of Directors. Also returning as Vice President of the Parent Advisory Board and Vice Chair of the Board of Directors will be Mr. Tim Manatt of Gilbertville. Joining these gentlemen will be Scott Lindholm of Davenport as Secretary, and David TeGrotenhuis from Oskaloosa as Treasurer. We thank these Board members for giving so generously of their time and talent.

SUPPORT SCHOOL CHOICE! SUPPORT NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS! SUPPORT IOWA ACE

- **VISIT** our website and **SUBSCRIBE** to our online newsletters and updates
- **CONTRIBUTE TO IOWA ACE** – a donation to Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education is a tax-deductible contribution supporting equal opportunity in education for Iowa's families
- **INVITE US TO SPEAK** – to your school, civic group or other organization seeking to learn more about expanding educational options for Iowa's low and middle-income families

THIS NEWSLETTER IS A PUBLICATION OF

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"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

-NELSON MANDELA

"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire."

-WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education

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NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS DAY – A HUGE SUCCESS!

On a blustery, cold day in April over 900 students, parents, teachers, and administrators from Iowa's nonpublic school community congregated at the State Capitol to show off their talents and connect with legislators. The Fourth Annual Nonpublic Schools Day was held on Tuesday, April 3, and saw record participation. Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education was proud to sponsor this important event.

Students from nearly 40 nonpublic schools toured the Capitol, met with legislators, presented table displays and performed for visitors in the rotunda. Attendance was over twice what it was in 2006 and media attention followed with both religious and mainstream media covering the event. The purpose of Nonpublic Schools Day is to educate legislators and the public on the strengths and needs of our nonpublic schools, as well as to highlight the many contributions that nonpublic schools make to our communities.

Performances by bands, choirs, jazz ensembles, a hand bell choir, and piano soloists clearly demonstrated that Iowa's nonpublic schools have extremely talented musicians and teachers. The table displays featured developing technology, language programs, and many other unique educational offerings. Students were able to enjoy visits with their legislators and learn about our state government while legislators learned about the many benefits of nonpublic schools. This event made it clear that students, teachers and parents are all very enthused about their experiences in Iowa's nonpublic schools.

Mark your calendars and pack your parkas for next year's Nonpublic Schools Day, which will be held on Wednesday, April 2, 2008. Not only will we again have performances and displays in the rotunda, but we will add an exciting outdoor rally on the West Mall of the Capitol complex. We hope to see you there!



IOWA ALLIANCE
FOR CHOICE IN EDUCATION



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:

TRISH WILGER – BETTENDORF



In our last newsletter I wrote to you of my experiences during a visit to schools in Milwaukee. That trip reinforced for me the importance of the reason we are here at Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education - to work for school choice. I recently had a personal experience in my local schools that once again made me think long and hard about the reasons we do what we do.

My son will be entering kindergarten in the fall and as such, it was time for us to choose his school. A little over a year ago we moved to a great neighborhood with what are considered to be some of the best public schools in the state. Meanwhile, our son continued to attend preschool at the Catholic school near our previous home. We have been parishioners at the church there for over ten years.

While I had already reached a preliminary decision on where my son would enroll, I'm big on exploring all options and so I went to observe the kindergarten class at our local public school. Located on a beautiful campus, the grade school has wonderful facilities, dedicated teachers and many involved families. They have top-notch technology and students do well on state-wide testing. Our Catholic school also has a

talented principal, devoted teachers and staff, great technology and the students there do well on testing and in their academic careers beyond grade school. In the end, we chose in favor of a faith-based education because that best met the needs and beliefs of our family.

This experience spoke volumes to me about school choice. How blessed is my family?!? Not only do we have more than one option, ALL of our options are GOOD! There are many families who have no choice at all on where their children go to school. There are many families who have options, but none of them are good. When it comes to school choice, I am spoiled. I live in a nice neighborhood with good public schools and I have the ability to afford nonpublic education. Through my work at Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education, I hope to place more families in the position I enjoy – the position of having many excellent educational options for our children.

MEET THE FAMILY OF MARQUETTE ACADEMY, DAVENPORT

In the inner-city of Davenport you will find a strong, vibrant community at Marquette Academy, an accredited non-denominational school serving students in preschool through 5th grade. This school was founded in 1999 by Senator Joe Seng and a group of dedicated supporters after the Davenport Diocese had to close the original St. Joseph's Church and School. The school is 151 years old and is the only mission school in Iowa. The devoted staff is led by Principal Sandra Tisor, who previously taught for 33 years in public schools. Principal Tisor commutes from her home in Joy, Illinois, to be a part of this exciting school.



The student body of Marquette Academy is one-third Hispanic, one-third African-American, and one-third Caucasian. Most are from the surrounding Davenport neighborhood, but some even commute from Illinois. These students receive the benefit of a small teacher-student ratio and special attention from their principal, who conducts special field trips with them. The school is supported by a Board of Directors that is deeply involved in the school. These Board members write grants, volunteer with students, and call upon their network of friends and colleagues to work on the school building at reduced cost. The administration, staff and Board are all united in their belief that the students are receiving support and supervision that they could not possibly receive in the neighborhood public school.

The end of the school year does not mean the end of activity at Marquette Academy. This summer, the school will be offering both a free breakfast and lunch to any child under the age of eighteen. These children need not be Marquette students and need only show up to be fed. This project is made possible by one of the many grants obtained by the school. Marquette Academy will also be offering a Nutrition Program and cooking classes for students and parents. Additionally, tutors will be available for those who want to work on their reading and math skills during the summer months. The summer will also see improvements to the building, as grants for new flooring and interior painting come through.

SCHOOL CHOICE LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

This year's General Assembly passed legislation that is very beneficial to Iowa's nonpublic schools. As this newsletter goes to press, this legislation is awaiting the consideration of Governor Culver.

Appropriations bill SF 601 contains language increasing the cap on tax credits allowed under the Educational Opportunities Act by \$2.5 million for tax year 2008. The current cap for tax credits is \$5 million; this bill will increase that cap to a total of \$7.5 million for 2008. This is a substantial benefit to Iowa's low and middle-income families seeking educational options. Should Governor Culver sign this bill into law, our School Tuition Organizations will be able to give out more tax credits and thus will see increased contributions from donors. This will result in more funds being distributed in tuition grants to low and middle-income families who wish to attend nonpublic schools.

Another favorable piece of legislation is contained in HF 923, which allows for STO donor contributions other than cash. This language would allow for stock contributions to School Tuition Organizations, as well as many other new options for donors. As a result, donating to a School Tuition Organization is made even more appealing to donors.

As of this writing, Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education has kicked off a postcard campaign, asking members to send a note to Governor Culver indicating their support of this legislation.

Marquette Academy is a vibrant school working to make positive improvements in the lives of its students and the surrounding community. Principal Tisor states, "I firmly believe the hand of God is on this school." Many others join her in that belief.

Students of Marquette Academy will receive substantial financial support through tuition grants made possible by the Educational Opportunities Act. The school is a member of the School Tuition Organization of Southeast Iowa. Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education works to support educational equality for low and middle-income families in Iowa by supporting programs such as the School Tuition Organizations.

GIVE THE GIFT OF SCHOOL CHOICE – DONATE NOW TO A SCHOOL TUITION ORGANIZATION

Under the Educational Opportunities Act, donors to School Tuition Organizations will receive an Iowa income tax credit of 65% of the donation amount and will also be able to claim this charitable contribution as a deduction on their Federal returns. School Tuition Organizations in turn will distribute at least 90% of these contributions as tuition grants to low and middle-income families wishing to send their children to one of Iowa's accredited, nonpublic schools. Through this program, many more families will be given the ability to choose the school that best meets their child's needs.

Don't be left out of this wonderful way to receive a major tax credit while supporting nonpublic school students. Tax credits are going fast – donate to one of these School Tuition Organizations today!

| NAME OF STO | SCHOOLS INCLUDED | CONTACT PERSON |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Our Faith, Our Children, Our Future STO | Dubuque Diocese Schools and St. Paul Lutheran School, Waverly | Sup. Jeff Henderson dbqasup@arch.pvt.k12.ia.us 563-556-2580 ext. 307 |
| Monsignor Lafferty Tuition Foundation | Sioux City Diocese Catholic Schools | Sup. Kevin Vickery kevinv@scdiocese.org 712-233-7589 |
| Catholic Tuition Organization, Diocese of Des Moines | Des Moines Diocese Schools | Ms. Jessica Thornton jthornton@dmdiocese.org 515-237-5010 Dr. Jerry Deegan jdeegan@dowling.pvt.k12.ia.us |
| School Tuition Organization of Southeast Iowa | Davenport Diocese Schools (with the exception of Scott County) includes Marquette Academy, Davenport | Mr. Steve Roling Steve@roling.net 563-244-1040 |
| Northwest Iowa Christian Schools Tuition Organization | N. W. Iowa area Christian Schools | Mr. Arlyn Schaap aschaap@occhristian.pvt.k12.ia.us 712-737-2274 |
| Mississippi Valley School Tuition Organization | Scott County Catholic Schools | Miss Kara Koestner koestnerk@mail.assumption.pvt.k12.ia.us 563-326-5313 ext.228 |
| Heart of Iowa School Tuition Organization | Des Moines Christian School, Grandview Park Baptist School, Iowa Christian Academy, Mt. Olive Lutheran, Ankeny Christian Academy | Helen Ogbourne hogbourne@icablazers.org 515-221-3999 R. Kim Dreher kim@knappproperties.com 515-222-5232 |
| Legacy of Grace School Tuition Organization | Christian schools in Pella, Newton, Sully, Peoria and Oskaloosa | Joel Groenenboom jagroen@mahaska.org 641-673-6913 |
| North Central Iowa STO | Community Christian School – Fort Dodge, Timothy Christian School – Wellsburg | Roger Everett ccschool@dodgenet.com 515-573-3011 |
| Iowa Lutheran School Tuition Organization | Lutheran Schools – except St. Paul Lutheran School, Waverly and Mt. Olive Lutheran School, Des Moines | Barb Buescher iowalutheransto@mchsi.com www.iowalutheransto.org 319-233-3967 |