



# IOWA ACEnews

Winter 2007



## DONATE NOW TO YOUR SCHOOL TUITION ORGANIZATION:

### 2007 INCOME TAX CREDITS ARE GOING FAST!

You've heard about the 65% tax credit on donations to a School Tuition Organization, but did you know that there are twice as many credits available for the 2007 tax year? You read correctly – STOs are authorized to give out \$5 million in Iowa tax credits this year. That means that any donation you make to an STO will result in your receiving 65% of it back. No donation is too small or too large – there is no minimum or cap on an individual donation.

Iowa is one of only a handful of states to have such a program. This is an extraordinary program that will benefit Iowa's nonpublic school students and make a nonpublic school education possible for many more families. Please consider a donation today and tell others about this incredible tax credit that helps our nonpublic schools.

## NEW FUNDS CREATE NEW OPPORTUNITIES:

STO Tuition Grants make nonpublic education possible for many new families – HURRY! DEADLINES FAST APPROACHING!

A new source of funding is now available for those students attending or hoping to attend a nonpublic school in Iowa! Through the Educational Opportunities Act, additional funding for nonpublic school students is now available. School Tuition Organizations across the state collected over \$3.8 million in voluntary cash contributions during 2006 and they will now begin disbursing at least 90% of those funds in tuition grants to eligible families. Students are eligible for these grants if their household income does not exceed an amount equal to three times the federal poverty guideline for their family size. As an example, the federal poverty guideline for a family of four in 2006 was \$20,000. Therefore a family of four with an income of \$60,000 or less is eligible for a tuition grant. Each STO may establish additional criteria for receiving a tuition grant, beyond the income requirement.

Nonpublic education is now a possibility for many more students because of this program. If you are interested in finding out more about receiving a tuition grant through a School Tuition Organization or know of a family that might be interested in such an opportunity, please contact your accredited, nonpublic school of choice immediately. They will have deadline details and applications available to you. You may also contact Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education at [info@iowaace.org](mailto:info@iowaace.org) or 515-323-0687 for more information.

*“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 EDUCATION – A FAMILY TRADITION

Joel Groenenboom and his family believe in Christian education. While growing up, Joel and his six brothers and sisters attended Oskaloosa Christian School and Pella Christian High School. Joel's wife, Laura, also grew up in the Christian schools in Pella. Joel and Laura feel very blessed that they have been able to choose a Christ-centered education for their children. The



Groenenbooms have eleven children, six of whom were adopted, ranging in age from twenty-nine to two years old. Joel believes that Christian education has been a blessing to them all. He and his wife are pleased that Christ is intertwined in all of the academic subjects taught at their Christian school, and that when children misbehave they are brought back in line in a loving, Christian manner and taught the reasons behind the expectations placed on them.

The Groenenbooms have several special-needs children who are in the special education program at Pella Christian Grade School. Joel states that this program at Pella Christian Grade School is “exceptional,” and he greatly appreciates the fact that educators there believe and teach that “every child is of equal value before the Lord, and each can live up to their fullest potential.” The Groenenboom children will go on to attend the special needs program at Pella Christian High School, which is also widely-recognized as an exceptional program.

The Groenenbooms also have children attending Oskaloosa Christian School, where Joel has served on the school board. Joel believes it is a privilege to serve on the school board. The position allowed him to see the sacrifices made by all persons involved with the school - teachers who accept lower pay, parents who not only pay tuition but help with fund-raising activities to support the school, and grandparents who donate funds to the school. Joel finds it very comforting to know that so many people are willing to make huge sacrifices in order to provide Christian education to those who seek it. Joel and Laura Groenenboom couldn't be more pleased that they are able to choose the schools that best meet the various needs of their children.

### SEE YOU IN DES MOINES FOR

## NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS DAY

**TUESDAY, APRIL 3, 2007  
STATE CAPITOL BUILDING  
DES MOINES, IOWA**

A growing tradition, Nonpublic Schools Day is an opportunity for our students to show off their talents, visit with their legislators, tour the capitol, and let the public know about all our nonpublic schools have to offer. We would like to have students from all areas of the state in attendance. Iowa ACE will be offering financial assistance for travel expenses. Details are under development. Keep checking our website at [www.iowaace.org](http://www.iowaace.org) or call Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education at (515)323-0687 for the latest on details.



**IOWA ALLIANCE  
FOR CHOICE IN EDUCATION**



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

**TRISH WILGER – BETTENDORF**



As I sit here on this absolutely frigid winter morning, I'm thinking about the mission of Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education and the reasons why we do what we do – all 35,000 and more of them attending our nonpublic schools, and the many who are not yet able to attend. I want to share a recent experience that brought me in touch with the core of the school choice movement – our children.

In October I attended a conference of school choice supporters in Milwaukee. As part of this program, School Choice Wisconsin conducted school tours. I was a privileged guest at two of these 'choice' schools. Milwaukee College Prep, located in one of the city's poorest neighborhoods, is an independent charter (public) school whose program includes preschool through 8th grade. On the cold, rainy day that I visited, a group of uniformed third-graders came into the room with us and recited the Declaration of Excellence, which you will find printed in this newsletter. The sun may not have been shining outside, but it certainly was shining inside that room; the energy and quest for learning were palpable. The administration, staff and families of Milwaukee College Prep are working miracles.

Scores on standardized tests have not only exceeded the Milwaukee Public Schools average, but now exceed the average scores of the entire state of Wisconsin. The question posed at this school is not "Are you going to college?" but "Where are you going to college?" Milwaukee's voucher system, the oldest school choice program in the country, makes this school possible.

Notre Dame Middle School is a Catholic middle school located on Milwaukee's south side that serves at-risk Hispanic girls. During our visit, the president and principal of the school described how their students must walk past operational crack houses every day to come to school. Ninety-percent of the students live at or below poverty level and most come to NDMS performing below grade level. The school has instituted mandatory before and after-school programs in order to ensure the safety of their students and to build good study habits and life skills. The girls are in school from 7:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m. every day. NDMS directs all graduates to college-preparatory high schools and continues to monitor students until they graduate from high school. The school has done a phenomenal job in the ten years it has existed. Ninety-four percent of NDMS graduates complete high school, and 78% of them are currently enrolled in college. Compare this with national statistics that show 30% of Hispanic students drop out of high school before graduation, and only 1 in 10 Latina women attend college. Nearly half of the school's revenue is received from Milwaukee's school choice program.

Iowa is not Milwaukee. Iowa does not have crime and poverty of that magnitude, nor do we have a public school system that is beyond crisis level. However, a common thread exists between us – our students flourish when their needs are met by their schools. Students are entitled to attend the school that best serves their needs. Whether the choice is a school that has higher expectations, one that offers a safe environment, one that offers the best special needs program available, or one that caters to specific talents, the choice should rest with the parents. All parents should have the ability to choose the school that best serves their children's needs, regardless of income or address. That is why Iowa ACE is here – to promote the expansion of school choice for the benefit of Iowa's children.

## MILWAUKEE COLLEGE PREP DECLARATION OF EXCELLENCE

Today is a new day. I will use this day to the fullest in my quest to know who I am, what I want, and where I am going. I believe in the relentless pursuit of excellence. Education and success are my birthright.

My superior thoughts, discipline, dedication and desire are the tools I use to pave the road less traveled to college and beyond. I am determined to build a better tomorrow for me, my family, and my community.

I am the captain of my own ship. I am fully responsible for the choices I make. I always strive to be proactive. I will surround myself with people that lift me higher and will not empower other's negativity. Names may hurt me, but I will not allow them to dictate my destiny. I will always keep my compass focused on my 'mission possible'.

There are no shortcuts in the pursuit of excellence. The only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary. I am never in the land of the done, but always in the land of the doing. I never rest until my good is better and my better is best.

I walk on the shoulders of giants who have gone before me. I am Aesop and Maya Angelou. I am Benjamin Banneker and the Bard. I am Dr. Carson and Marva Collins. I am Zarlenga. From A to Z, I celebrate, emulate and commemorate their example.

I am not awed by the challenges of reality, but believe that I can change the world and establish my legacy in it. I am self-determined, self-generated, self-propelled and self-reliant. I believe that this is my time and my place. I will find a way to achieve excellence, or I will make one.

## IOWA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE DIRECTOR EARNS PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL AWARD

During its annual winter meeting, the Board of Directors of the National Catholic Educational Association unanimously voted to bestow the 2007 Leonard F. DeFiore Award on Ms. Sara Eide, who recently stepped



down from serving as the Executive Director of the Iowa Catholic Conference. The Leonard F. De Fiore Parental Choice Advocate Award is presented annually to one individual who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in promoting full and fair parental choice in education. The award is named after Leonard F. DeFiore, who served as NCEA president from 1996 to 2001. Ms. Eide will receive the award in April during the NCEA annual convention in Baltimore, Maryland.

Ms. Eide is most deserving of this national honor. Over the past six years, she has lobbied the Iowa General Assembly and governor to pass legislation that supports nonpublic education. During the 2006 session, she was the driving force behind the drafting and eventual passage of the Educational Opportunities Act. This ground-breaking legislation makes nonpublic education affordable to many more Iowa families.

Ms. Eide is also a founding board member of Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education.

## GET INVOLVED IN IOWA ACE

**CONNECT** – Subscribe to our newsletter online so that you may receive email alerts and future newsletters by email. Visit [www.iowaace.org](http://www.iowaace.org) today!

**INFORM** – Invite us to speak to your group.

**SUPPORT** – Make a tax-deductible contribution to Iowa ACE that will help sustain our efforts to promote nonpublic education and school choice for all Iowa families.

## IOWANS SNAP UP \$2.5 MILLION IN TAX CREDITS BENEFITING NONPUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

During the fall and early winter of 2006, Iowans quickly took advantage of the largest tax credit available. The \$2.5 million in tax credits authorized by the Educational Opportunities Act for 2006 were distributed by the nine School Tuition Organizations (STOs) in the state, with time to spare. Donors who contributed to one of the STOs were given an Iowa tax credit of 65% of the total amount of their donation.

The School Tuition Organizations are charitable organizations representing two or more accredited nonpublic schools. The STOs will now allocate these funds in tuition grants to eligible Iowa school children, who in turn will use these grants to attend one of Iowa's accredited nonpublic schools. The total amount of tax credit available rises to \$5 million for the 2007 tax year. Read further information in this newsletter on obtaining a tuition grant and donating to an STO. Information is also available on our website at [www.iowaace.org](http://www.iowaace.org) and you may call us at (515)323-0687 with questions.

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