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Share this QR code with a potential member and ask them to join today!

Or direct potential members to our website at www.nea-nm.org and click on the JOIN NEA New Mexico slider. It's never been easier!

A Year In Review

There are times in life that help define who we are. The year 2020 has yielded both heartbreak and hope as we take inventory of what we have for the road ahead. NEA-NM, through you, our members, has also experienced these same heartbreaks and hopes. We have journeyed together through the COVID-19 environment and its tremendous impact on New Mexico’s educators and the children that are at the heart of all we do. Let’s look back at where we were to help determine where we will go.

We began 2020 full of hope, with excitement in the air. The legislative session left many with a good feeling. It seemed at long last that we were finding the right balance to include early childhood education funding in the conversation about education priorities. While there would be more to build upon, the state had taken promising steps: adding hundreds of millions of dollars to increase educator compensation, shore up resources for students from low income families, English learners and students with special needs. A NM Public Education Department that was willing to acknowledge and address educational inequalities, combined with a governor that knew the importance of funding a strong educational foundation for our future citizens, was encouraging indeed. Unfortunately, COVID-19 changed so much from late February into March and now December. We have all been thrust into environments that require new skills and has heightened our anxiety about our safety and the safety of our students and families.

In March, NEA-NM immediately began working with our education allies to transition to this new reality. With the addition of a new Executive Director, Dr. Earl Wiman, it has been our goal to share relevant, up-to-date information to help our members navigate the immediate challenges of our changing landscape. We engaged with our legal counsel and our national organization to seek answers to the most pressing questions, and we strengthened and provided continuous training to our statewide employee rights team. Based upon information gathered from you, our members, we immediately increased our communication efforts statewide. We had to develop protocols for our members that literally dealt with life and death. Finally, we looked for inspiration in the field and found positive stories in all corners of the state where educators, particularly our Education Support Professionals, rose to the challenge and went way above and beyond for their students, risking their own personal safety to continue to feed students, even while schools were shut down.

In mid-April, we hosted our first of many Tele-Town Halls with PED Secretary Dr. Ryan Stewart and Lieutenant Governor Howie Morales. This was extremely well attended and gave valuable information to those that joined. We also began the work of getting our members ready for their critical stand in politics by reminding them to register to vote, giving them the information around requesting absentee ballots, and moving forward with an agenda to elect those most friendly to public education issues.

Continue reading on page 2.
A Year In Review...continued

Throughout the pandemic, your voice has guided our actions. Through extensive surveys and honest conversations about the topic of school re-entry, we knew that leadership development was needed to help members in locals around the state. In June, NEA-NM hosted a Summer Leadership Summit that focused on training our members around a variety of important topics, including teaching strategies in an online setting and legal advice. Also, NEA-NM worked with AFT, the PED and other stakeholders to contribute to NMPED’s reentry guidance. To that end, another Tele-Town Hall was created in late July where Todd Wertheim, lead counsel for NEA-NM, listened to members and gave insight and advice on multiple topics.

As the new school year began in August, we turned our attention to safe practices and collaboration with Districts and School Boards across the state to keep our staff and students healthy. In correlation with that intent, NEA-NM hosted another Tele-Town Hall with PED Secretary Dr. Stewart and he engaged with local students from around the state for informative conversation that was driven by COVID-19 related questions. We also released a state-driven document that encapsulated the responses from thousands of members across New Mexico that gave voice to their concerns and produced five solid recommendations around school re-entry.

Locals across the state worked hard to maintain open, consistent and honest discussions with their respective administrations for how Districts would provide learning either in-person or remote. These conversations were focused on key educational issues, especially ongoing safety and equity for all. The challenge of reaching our newest colleagues in the profession became an increasingly important topic and NEA-NM responded by hosting a statewide, virtual, new employee orientation to compliment the work already being done in the field.

In looking towards an upcoming election that would change the course of direction for public education as a whole, an ambitious plan was laid out to elect officials that shared our common values. Regionally elected member representatives to NEA-NM’s Education Political Action (EDPAC) team researched and recommended candidates to members. The recommendations of our members are based upon the candidate’s educational views and past practice. If you would like to be part of the team that shapes our political direction, contact your local president about how you can run for EDPAC. Our political action team provided relevant information on early voting and opportunities to help those that could help us. A late October “Get Out the Vote” virutal event, hosting guest speakers in Las Cruces, New Mexico, was a tremendous success where many of our recommended candidates shared their thoughts of the future and offered motivation to close out November 3rd elections on the highest of notes. The success was evident as pro-public education champions took the majority of the House and Senate in New Mexico while a new course of direction was chosen nation wide as well.

In late October, we also hosted an historic, virtual Delegate Council. The Delegate Council is our biggest yearly event where members and local leaders from around the state gather to conduct the business of NEA-NM; listen to a report from the President and Executive Director; nominate and elect members for NEA-NM office; pass a budget; and approve a set of legislative goals. Many first-time delegates attended, and we invite you to join us in 2021 to guide the direction of our democratic organization.

Looking back, this year exposed so many challenges and inequities that only the backdrop of a pandemic can reveal. It has also, however, given us an opportunity to reach new and innovative solutions. We all learned new skills and acquired tools to survive in a very altered environment. The question is where do we go in 2021? While there is still much uncertainty, one thing is for sure. We, as NEA-NM leaders and members, communities and students, will Forge The Path Together and continue to advocate for a public education system that serves as a model to others. With so much still in the balance, we simply cannot leave that outcome to chance.

Finally, let us keep close in our hearts those dear colleagues and family members that we have lost. They continue to travel the path with us in our hearts and memories.

We appreciate all of you. Stay safe!!

NEA-NM 2021 Legislative Goals

State Representative Christine Trujillo, Legislative Education Study Committee Chair, recently wrote that the pandemic has changed every aspect of our lives and our public schools have felt the brunt of it. She writes in the November 2020 edition of InformED that “No matter how hard and smart everyone works and even if the pandemic magically ends before the end of the year (and that’s not going to happen), we now have a “Covid generation,” a demographic of children who will need more for many years to make up for what they’ve lost in the last few months”.

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In the context of the current public health crisis, it is critical our educator voice be included in the upcoming legislative session. State legislators and their decisions will determine health and safety in the workplace and shape the quality of education New Mexico’s students can expect to receive for years to come. Undoubtedly, this pandemic has revealed the stark inequity that continues to plague our public education system, but it also has provided an opportunity to adopt innovative policies and recommit ourselves to public education.

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Now Accepting
Applications

Are you an educator or education student committed to pursuing social and racial justice?

If so, NEA-NM invites you to apply for the Education Justice Fellowship Pilot Cohort of 2021!

ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP

Education Justice Fellows will work with NEA-NM, the New Mexico Community Schools Statewide Network, community leaders, decisionmakers, local organizers, and educators to develop and act upon grassroots strategies for advancing education justice in the state and nationwide during a year-long fellowship program.

WE PROVIDE

- An engaging education justice curriculum
- Workshops with organizers, activists, and decisionmakers
- Leadership development seminars
- Peer mentoring and one-on-one coaching
- Opportunities to make connections with other educators engaged in social and racial justice
- A stipend of $1500 per semester

APPLY TODAY
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NEA-NM 2021 Elections

The NEA-NM 2021 All-Member Election begins on January 29, 2021. The lists of candidates and declared elected candidates are on the NEA-NM website, www.nea-nm.org, for various state positions. Postcards and emails will be sent with voting details on January 29th. Be on the lookout for these items. Paper ballots may be obtained by contacting NEA-NM at (505) 982-1916. Electronic voting will close on Friday, February 19, 2021.

We now introduce you to our declared elected candidates for NEA Director and NEA Alternate Director...

Denise Sheehan, NEA Director-elect for NEA-New Mexico

Denise has worked with Las Cruces Public Schools for 16 years. She later obtained her master’s degree in Language, Literacy, and Culture during which her work on Social Justice was included in the book “Un-Standardizing Curriculum,” by Christine Sleeter and Dr. Judith Flores Carmona.

Denise currently works as the Staff Development Specialist for the Beginning Teacher Induction Program for the Elementary level. Her passion is Racial and Social Justice and she strives to ensure that we continue to advocate for those who do not have a voice. She has several years of experience at all levels in our union from the local level to national. She currently serves as President for NEA-Las Cruces. At the state level, she serves on the EMAC (Ethnic Minority Affairs) Racial & Social Justice Committee and as a Board Member.

At the national level, she has facilitated training on Racial and Social Justice, School Board Elections, Community Schools, and Membership. Denise says, “I am in love with our Union and what we stand for. I am an advocate for students and for our amazing profession. My commitment to doing the work that is necessary is stronger than ever and I look forward to continuing to serve for many years to come.”

Melanie Hallbeck, NEA Alternate Director-elect for NEA-New Mexico

Melanie is a social studies teacher and proud NEA member for the past 7 years in Alamogordo. She has had the privilege of representing teachers and ESPs as an AR and as a member of NEA-Alamogordo’s collective bargaining team and employee rights team. In addition, she has served as secretary, vice-president, and for the past three years, the President of NEA-Alamogordo.

Currently, she is serving on the NEA-NM Constitution and Bylaws Committee and the NEA-NM Board of Directors. Melanie says, “I love public education, its educators, and my union. I get to work with amazing individuals who help foster the potential of young people in our communities. Every day I know that the NEA is supporting those endeavors and the educators who are making good things happen.”

As your NEA Alternate Director, she plans to listen to our members’ concerns and ensure they are heard and represented. She is enthusiastic about working with NEA leadership to strengthen our position and impact on those important issues facing public education and those issues that personally affect you as a public education employee.
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