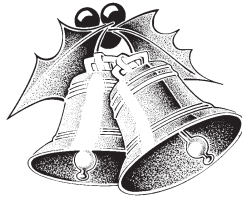


(Continued from page 1)

4. Your NAME, FULL ADDRESS, and GRADE LEVEL must be submitted with your essay. The NAME and LOCATION of your SCHOOL must be included. Entries without complete information will be disqualified.
5. It should be understood that students who enter do so as individuals and are not officially representing the school.
6. There are no entry blanks. Send completed essays directly to Val DeFever.
7. The original copy of the essay must be submitted to Val DeFever, PO Box 644, Independence, KS 67301. The essays must be postmarked on or before **February 1, 2008**. The original copy will become property of Schools for Quality Education, Inc. and will not be returned to the participant. Call with questions: 620-870-9698 (cell) or 620-331-3363 (home).



Why Rural Matters 2007; The Realities of Rural Education Growth

Why Rural Matters 2007: The Realities of Rural Education Growth is a snapshot of rural education that provides essential information on the condition of rural education in the 50 states and uncovers new trends and challenges facing rural educators. Overall, enrollment in rural schools is up by 15% — a reversal of the year-over-year declines these communities have seen. While overall enrollment is on the rise, the most startling data revealed in the report is the 55% increase in rural minority students, with some states experiencing increases of over 100%. *Why Rural Matters 2007* also serves as a reminder that many rural schools continue to face a number of challenges, including high poverty levels, low student achievement, low teacher salaries, and uneven distribution of Title I funds.

The report is available online at www.ruraledu.org/whyruralmatters and is available to order for \$25 on the Rural Trust's e-store.

*By Jerry Johnson and Marty Strange
Rural School and Community Trust
October 2007*

President's Message

It is hard to believe another year is quickly drawing to a close. This year's SQE annual meeting and breakfast was held in Kansas City in conjunction with the KASB annual conference. New associate membership categories and service fees were approved at the annual meeting. The service fees for member school districts will remain at \$300 per year. The associate memberships include any other non-school organizations at \$300 per year, individuals from non-member school districts at \$30 per year and higher education students at \$2.50 per year. The associate members will be non-voting.

The service fees are used to cover association expenses, maintain an office and a Public Relations Representative. Additional donations from members and friends of small and rural schools covers other expenses. The board thought there may be organizations and individuals who would like to be a part of our organization in order to stay informed and provide financial support for small and rural schools. As it is, there are only a few organizations representing small and rural schools. It would be helpful to have other organizations supporting common view points as we talk to legislators.

Please take the time to think of businesses, service organizations, clubs and individuals in your community who have an interest in the future of your school. We would like to formally invite them to be a part of SQE.

Please forward any possible members and their contact information to the SQE Board Members in your region, listed in the back of this newsletter, or to Barbara Havlicek, SQE's Executive Secretary. All membership contact information will be greatly appreciated.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

*Steve Watts
USD #292 — Wheatland
SQE President*





Public Relations Message



Newspaperman, Frosty Troy, who has been an advocate for public education for many years doesn't waste time mincing words. He is quick to herald the good things happening in education and debunks misinformation. His 30 minute talk with rural educators and board members at the recent National Rural Education Association's Convention in Oklahoma, blasting those who bash American public education, snidely recognized an expert in education "as anyone who has ever driven past a public school". Citing how much we are doing for public education students Troy pointed to evidence of our success as 300 million more students took the ACT last year with scores remaining fairly stable.

Frosty encouraged educators of their worth by sharing his personal success story. It was one of his middle school teachers who told him, "I saw your poem in the school paper. Have you ever thought about being a writer?" This teacher was the first to help him believe in his writing ability. Frosty went on to become an investigative reporter and finally a newspaper editor. Many years later he found this special teacher and sent her a copy of his newspaper along with a note telling her what a difference she had made in his life. She sent the paper back to him — full of red marks — she had graded it! Troy stressed that teachers across our country are making a big difference for our children and it is a shame that they rank 12th on the pay scale when compared to the 30 industrial nations of the world. While our teachers teach 1,080 days a year compared to 830 in the other countries that pay difference is even more degrading. Frosty challenged anyone to just follow a teacher around for a day or a week to see what it means to be a teacher today.

Troy's solid credentials as an investigative reporter provided the audience with a wide range of information. In his view what we have in our country is a "Racial Gap" rather than an achievement gap. Citing statistics from Abigail and Stephen Thornington's book, *Closing the Racial Gap in America*, Mr. Troy talked of the 50% dropout rate among minority students. He felt that the fact that 2/3 of all black children are born out of wedlock had much

to do with their failure in school, noting the importance of having a dad to look up to and please. He strongly suggested we need more counselors in our schools helping kids rather than spending all their time trying to get them into colleges.

Frosty raised the concern of the threat of vouchers on public schools. Although raised a Catholic he stands firmly against a voucher option, saying that the vouchers program in Washington D.C. cherry picked good students, leaving the needy kids behind. Calling it an absolute evil, Frosty cautioned vouchers would drain \$73 billion out of public education if ever allowed to take hold. He further echoed that the nation's 6.1 million special education students would not be welcomed into private schools.

Noting that everyone is for higher standards, Troy pointed out that many of our public education children attend schools where their safety is a real issue. In Chicago and East Los Angeles there is barbed wire around parking lots and armed guards. Saying educators deserve a purple heart he insisted these kids are getting a first rate education. Cautioning that statistics can be misleading he told the group our dropout rate isn't 30% when our graduation rate is really 83%. And all this with our teachers averaging 1,080 hours of teaching time a year compared to 830 hours in other countries. Frosty insisted our teachers do a tough job and need time off.

In closing, Mr. Troy encouraged the audience to unite and stand up for rural schools at civic clubs and every other opportunity that comes our way.

Val DeFever
Public Relations Representative



Mark Your Calendar

SQE Public Relations Breakfast

Thursday, February 14, 2008
Jayhawk Club, Topeka
6:30-8:00 a.m.
Reservations required
Call 785-532-5886

28th Annual Rural and Small Schools Conference

February 24-25, 2008
Clarion Hotel
Manhattan, KS
For registration information, contact
785-532-5886

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620-548-2521

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