

Wildcat Newsletter
Fall of 2008

Dear Parents/Patrons,

“A proud man is always looking down on things and people, and of course, as long as you’re looking down, you can’t see something that’s above you.”
– C.S. Lewis (1898 – 1963).

Congratulations are in order for our volleyball team for being District Champions and placing fourth at the State Volleyball Tournament in Lincoln. The competition was tough, as Class D2 had perhaps the strongest field of the three smaller classes. Abby Sorensen was selected as All-Tourney in a class laden with talent. Several of our players received All-Conference accolades. Please thank the coaching staff and players when you see them for representing our school and community with a great season.

Congratulations are also in order for our One-Act Play Production as they are the 2008 Crossroads Conference Champions. Also, Stefan Weiler was selected as All-State Orchestra for his piano performance.

As I have mentioned in previous communications, Clay Center Public School will be facing some difficult decisions regarding our future as a school district. This should not be a surprise to you if you have followed our enrollment and levy history, or have attended levy override meetings. This is not just a financial situation, but it has to do with academics and extracurricular activities. It is about providing the best possible education and experiences for our students.

The Clay Center Board of Education, administration, and many of you have been aware of this situation for a number of years. We will be studying this in greater detail, and more specifically exploring the various possibilities that are available to our district. This may involve other districts in the area, and we need to be sensitive to their wishes.

It is very difficult for the citizens of any community to make changes in their school. In rural Nebraska, the local school plays an integral part in the culture and history of the community and surrounding area. Please know that we will be having community meetings to address this dilemma, but we

need to gather information and explore possibilities before we meet as a community. There are no secrets, but we need to present to you real possibilities, not just “ideas” that might work. We also understand that each of you has ideas and preferences as to the future of Clay Center Public School, and it is important for those thoughts to be heard. This is an important crossroads for our school. I encourage you to call if you have questions.

Please support our students during these fall and winter activities. They appreciate your support. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Lee Sayer
Superintendent

Wildcat Newsletter January 2009

Dear Parents/Patrons,

“It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope...” – Robert F. Kennedy

It is the small things we do in life on a daily basis that makes a difference in our community. It is not always easy to stand up and do the right thing, but we are all better for these actions.

As I have mentioned in last month’s newsletter, we are actively studying possible affiliations with a neighboring school district. We are still moving ahead with this process. Several of you have spoken to board members, administration and staff members. This is an important decision, thus it merits our attention. There will be a community meeting on January 12, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the school gymnasium. The purpose of this meeting is to explain why this is necessary, and to hear from the patrons of the district.

Any decision of this magnitude affects many people in our community. The obvious group impacted is our students, but the staff at Clay Center Public School, and the neighboring district that we affiliate with will also need to make adjustments in their lives. Others outside the immediate school family will also need to make changes in their daily routines. There is no perfect solution, but we can make this an opportunity for improvement.

A reorganization of our district will provide many positive benefits to our district. I am hopeful this move provides several tangible benefits to include a lower tax levy for the patrons, greater stability for the students and staff members, and ultimately a better education for our children. This is possible if we work together to ensure the best possible education for our children.

Please understand that I do not intend to diminish the feelings that many of you hold for Clay Center Public School, but we are at a crossroads. I encourage you to attend the public meeting in January and express your thoughts. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Lee Sayer
Superintendent

Wildcat Newsletter
February, 2009

Dear Parents/Patrons,

“Never look down to test the ground before taking your next step; only he who keeps his eye fixed on the far horizon will find the right road.” – Dag Hammarskjold (1905 – 1961)

Thanks to everyone who attended our community meeting on January 12th. This is an important issue for everyone in the Clay Center Public School District and our community. Any reorganization, or making no changes, will have a lasting impact on our children’s education and the culture of the community. Each of you has reasons to prefer a certain decision. The school board members understand, and the decision will be difficult.

Several of you voiced concerns about the timeline that was mentioned at the meeting on the 12th. There are several reasons for moving at the pace we have chosen. First, the other school districts need time to make decisions with their communities. We also believe it is important to allow staff and parents to make decisions in a timely manner. By next fall, we need to inform the Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA) of our intentions so schedules can be made for the 2010 school year (we need to contract officials for athletics, judges for speech meets, order uniforms if necessary, plan transportation, assign teaching and activity responsibilities, etc.). We may also need to continue or change conference affiliations.

School finance is an integral part of any decision. Because any merger will negate any school levy override, plans must be made to determine financing for the next fiscal year. We also need to allow the Nebraska Department of Education ample time to allow for information regarding state aid. These are a few of the decisions that need to be made well in advance of any reorganization

The topic of option enrollment was mentioned at the meeting on January 12th. Only two of the schools in the county have a positive net option enrollment, those being Harvard and Sutton. Clay Center and South Central Unified District #5 are in the negative. These figures and others can be found on the Nebraska Department of Education website under school finance and state aid.

The Clay Center School Board of Education has met with South Central Unified District #5 and Harvard Public School for a second time. We will also have met with Harvard for a third time to discuss finances (we had already discussed this with South Central Unified #5). Sutton Public School has also expressed interest in visiting with our board committee.

The board is gathering information that will permit them to make an appropriate decision.

Please call my office or one of the school board members if you have questions. The phone number for my office is 402-762-3561.

Sincerely,
Lee Sayer
Superintendent

