



“Hats Off to Our 2015 Friends of Education”

USD 497’s American Education Week Celebration of School Volunteerism

Broken Arrow Elementary – Mindy Hidalgo

Presenter: Brian McCaffrey

A part of the Broken Arrow family for many years, Mindy has been instrumental in getting Marathon Club started. She’s always willing to lend a hand at Parent-Teacher Conferences, the BA Walk-A-Thon, in the classroom, school carnival or on field trips...

Deerfield Elementary – Tony Collins, 6th Street Hy-Vee

Presenters: Joni Appleman, Anne Bailey

A Deerfield LEAP partner since 2002, Hy-Vee’s partnership has been invaluable to our school community. Hy-Vee never fails to go above and beyond to support students, from teaching them the art of pie baking to cheering for the marathon club and much more!

Liberty Memorial Central Middle School – Jean Martin

Presenter: Jeff Harkin

Jean regularly volunteers, bringing a wealth of knowledge to assist students with reading, writing, comprehension and science lab activities. She is caring, responsive and appreciated! Last year, she involved students in successfully petitioning for a state fossil.

Lawrence High School – Patrick Witthaus, Spencer Reed

Presenters: Matt Brungardt, Mike Norris, Mark Preut

As part of a Site Council goal to focus on building design issues, we connected with the KU Chapter of The American Institute of Architecture Students. Patrick, Spencer and student chapter members volunteered to develop a preliminary campus master plan.

Kennedy Elementary – Jesse Brinson, Mark Guengerich

Presenter: Cris Anderson

Jesse and Mark have been instrumental in bringing a successful Watch D.O.G.S. program to Kennedy. Both dads actively volunteer in their students’ classrooms. Jesse reads weekly and Mark works as PTO chair to bring other engagement opportunities to parents.

South Middle School – Ben Smith

Presenter: Jennifer Bessolo

Ben’s been instrumental in inspiring innovation and forward thinking at South. He’s offered time and insights in the creation of our Makers’ Space and continues to impact the potential of our learning spaces to become truly progressive 21st century experiences.

Lawrence College & Career Center – Greg Beck

Presenter: Patrick Kelly

Greg initiated and organized the donation of four garage doors and our first LEAP partnership with Amarr Entrematic. He serves on the Manufacturing Pathway Advisory Committee and encourages others in his field to get involved with Lawrence Public Schools.

Prairie Park Elementary – Irene Soderstrom

Presenter: David Williams

Irene has devoted countless hours to promoting the health, safety and wellbeing of students and staff. Her efforts include projects like our garden, PTA fundraisers, conference meals, Food Shelf and more. Irene’s commitment makes our school a better place!

Southwest Middle School – Christopher Storm

Presenters: Kristen Ryan, Dani Lotton-Barker

A local civil engineer and parent, Christopher is the professional engineer mentor for our National Engineers Week Future City teams. He helps them understand the engineering process, raises funds for student travel and accompanies teams to Nationals.

Free State High – Doug Holiday

Presenter: Myron Graber

It’s with great pleasure that Free State High recognizes Doug Holiday. Through Biggs Burgers, Doug has provided hundreds of meals to staff and students. His dedication and support of Free State High School is truly appreciated.

West Middle School – Carrie Mershon

Presenter: Myron Melton

With an amazing amount of energy, Carrie, a working parent of two who is pursuing an advanced degree at K-State, finds time to serve as the chairperson for site council and Parents of West Warhawks and organize carnivals, activity nights, book fairs and more.

New York Elementary – Mary Adams

Presenters: Nancy DeGarmo, Kathy Robinson, Shana Talley

Mary helps New York through her selfless organizing abilities and making connections. She rallies the troops to bring volunteers to read to students, provide a meal for our back-to-school night and deliver cookies when needed. She’s also a great substitute.



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Cordley Elementary – Amy Schmidt-Cowardin

From her start at Cordley, Amy quickly became involved with PTA. She volunteers her time at events and has been instrumental in developing and expanding our PTA Potluck and family dinner. She serves on site council and represents us on Educate Lawrence.

Presenter: Scott Cinnamon

Hillcrest Elementary – Janel Leitch

Besides serving as PTO co-president, Janel co-chairs the Ryan Gray Playground Committee, which is fundraising to rebuild the Ryan Gray playground. Hillcrest celebrates Janel and all she does for our school community.

Presenter: Tammy Becker

Langston Hughes Elementary – Michael Kelly

A volunteer and advocate for our school, Mike co-chairs site council and leads our Safe Route to Schools Committee. He’s vigilant about sharing information about safety concerns. Mike has done tons of small and large jobs around the school. We count on him!

Presenter: Jackie Mickel

Pinckney Elementary – Jenny Skillman

Jenny gives many volunteer hours to making Pinckney a GREAT school. She co-chairs site council, leads marathon club and PACERS and supported the Pinckney History Open House event. She has a Pinckney third- and fifth-grader. We appreciate her dedication!

Presenter: Kristi Hill

Project Search – Kale Laverentz

As a KU supervisor, trainer and mentor in the landscape field, Kale brings Project Search interns onto his crew and provides them the right amount of challenge and support to build vocational skills, gain confidence and reach their full potential. He’s a great partner!

Presenters: Tracey Norris, Llara Baska

Quail Run Elementary – Noel Rowland

Noel has been a tremendous asset to our school for many years. She has been heavily involved in PTO and has helped make our WATCH D.O.G.S. program a super success. She is a self-starter and makes our school a better place each day!

Presenter: Samrie Devin

Schwegler Elementary – Rod Hoffer

Rod has spent countless hours supporting our school as a volunteer with PTA. From bringing coolers and ice to our movie nights to preparing baseball fields to be used in the spring, he can always be counted on to lend Schwegler a helping hand.

Presenters: Jared Comfort, Melissa Roberts, Kristin Oswald

Sunflower Elementary – Janice McClure

Janice, a.k.a. Grandma, has been volunteering for many years, since her two grandchildren attended Sunflower. Even though she hasn’t had students here for years she continues to dedicate several hours every Wednesday to help teachers and students.

Presenters: Howard Diacon, Mindy Stutler

Sunset Hill Elementary – Wendi Morris

One often finds PTO treasurer Wendi in the school halls. Her generous spirit, attention to detail and boundless energy are evident. She judiciously fulfills her role, ensuring we have the items we seek, encouragement we need and unconditional support we cherish.

Presenters: Darcy Kraus, Josie and Max Morris

Woodlawn Elementary – Trisha Slough, Chris and Angela Schmidt

Under Trisha’s direction, and largely due to the resources and labor of Chris and Angela, our OWLS area has been transformed! We now have a beautiful concrete path to better enjoy the refurbished pond, Monarch Way Station and the beautiful perennials.

Presenters: Jeanne Fridell, Katie Martino



Sincere thanks to ALL school volunteers, the 2015 Friends of Education, school presenters, student emcees Miranda Hernandez, Paige Bequette, Asher Supernaw and Alison Gehrke, volunteers Julie Boyle, Annette Dabney, Susan DeSandre, Rick Doll, Janice Dunn, Janice Fullerton, Marcel Harmon, Coleen Martin, Trish Neuteboom, Pam Powers, Kathy Robinson, Kate Welch, Mike Wormsley and Laurie Ziegler; LEA and USD 497’s Print Shop and Information Technology Services.