

NCS D News Zone



VOLUME V

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DISTRICT USES HORSES TO HEAL, TEACH TRANSITIONS STUDENTS

By Jennifer Schultes

“There is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man.”

Julie Feiler, NCS D school social worker, and Karol Santistevan, Reach 4 A Star Riding Academy director, took this Winston Churchill quote and ran with it as they wrote the Centaurian Enrichment Program grant for the school district. The program will allow between 70 and 80 at-risk students in the Transitions Program to work with horses over the course of a year.

The purpose of the grant is twofold, Feiler and Santistevan explained: They hope it will reengage the students in the traditional school setting and increase graduation rates.

Reach 4 A Star started as a program to assist people with disabilities, Santistevan said. After seeing how much it helped with



Julie Feiler, left, and Karol Santistevan, right, stand with Simba, a 14-year-old Arabian who will be used to help heal and teach NCS D Transitions students.

their well-being and mental health, she and Feiler decided to see if the concept would translate well to

other groups of people.

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NCS D MUST PREPARE FOR REALITY AHEAD

Like nature around us, the Natrona County School District is preparing for a potentially chilly winter – only figuratively.



As most of us know, the state of Wyoming is seeing decreased revenue from sales tax and the mineral industry alike.

That means that funding coming to schools in the next biennium – the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years – could be lower than we've seen in a while.

We have been incredibly fortunate in the past several years to have a state whose revenue was thriving and whose leaders valued funding education. We have added countless new programs and resources to schools across the state, from the Wyoming School Facility Commission's capital construction program to elements of the recalibration model such as tutors, instructional facilitators and summer school programs.

In all likelihood, however, this coming legislative session will not mark a season of adding to school district coffers. We fully expect that

Java With Joel

NCS D wants to hear your ideas for how we, as a district, can get leaner and improve efficiency.

Superintendent Joel Dvorak and Associate Superintendent Steve Hopkins will visit several locations around the district in the coming month for "Java With Joel" sessions.

These informal sessions are designed to give all staff members an opportunity to chat with district leaders about their ideas. There will be coffee and treats at each session, and all employees are encouraged to come forward with their ideas for how to deal with the potential budget issues the district could face.

Sessions will be held at:
9:30 a.m., Nov. 2, CSF
2:30 p.m., Nov. 6, CSF
7 a.m., Nov. 11, Dean Morgan
3:30 p.m., Nov. 11, Dean Morgan
3:15 p.m., Nov. 13, Midwest
7 a.m., Nov. 16, Kelly Walsh
3:30 p.m., Nov. 16, Kelly Walsh
7:30 a.m., Dec. 2, Verda James
3:45 p.m., Dec. 2, Verda James
7 a.m., Dec. 7, Oregon Trail
3:45 p.m., Dec. 7, Oregon Trail

Please come to any session that is convenient for you.

In addition, the district will be collecting feedback from employees and the community at-large in other formats, as well. We invite you to e-mail your thoughts to NCS D_ideas@natronaschools.org or submit your ideas anonymously through the online feedback form at www.natronaschools.org.

funding to districts will either hold flat or potentially decrease due to the state's financial position.

The good news is that we, as a district, have time to prepare for the changing reality. There's no need to panic. By planning ahead and planning carefully, we hope to temper this storm with as little impact as possible on our students

and the services we offer them.

As a district, we have already begun making changes. For example, we are carefully considering every position that becomes vacant, determining whether it needs to be filled or if we can make up some budget dollars naturally through attrition.

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PLANNING, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

At the same time, we have tightened down some processes, so that all new hours and new positions now need to be cleared through the human resources and business office leaders, as well as through my office. We're not adding potential costs without serious consideration.

In addition, each school, department and division has been asked to brainstorm ideas on how to become leaner. It's true that the vast majority of our budget is spent on staff member salaries and benefits, but that's not the only place where we can make up budget shortfalls. We all know ways that we can be a little more careful with our dollars to make them stretch further.

In November, the NCS D Board of Trustees will review all options on the table. We won't know until March, after the winter legislative session, exactly what our budget will be. We will be prepared, though, to respond to whatever news comes out of that session.

This is a fundamental shift in perspective for our

district, especially after the last several years of adding new resources. However, I will repeat that it is not a time to panic. This is a time to be a little more careful, to be thoughtful and intentional about everything we do – not just every dollar we spend. We will focus more on our fifth strategic goal as a district, Efficient and Effective Processes, and we will remember that we always have the responsibility to be good stewards of public money and public trust.

We may be entering a lean "winter" in our state, but we're lucky. We have plenty of time to prepare.

We can deal with whatever shortfall may be coming down the pipe. And, with careful planning, we can do it with a minimum impact on the quality service we offer our community and our children.

OA: District made strides, but has work left to do

By Jenni Luckett

The Natrona County School District has made great strides since its first organizational assessment last year, but there still is plenty of work to do.

That's the message of the district's second organizational assessment, completed last month by Krenek Consulting. Independent assessors visited the district in September to interview nearly 500 employees, students and community members – up from about 300 last year – about their view of the district's systems.

Mardi Krenek, lead on the assessing team, said that it is common for organizations to see a dip in their progress in the first

year before radical improvement can set in. In the Natrona County School District, some things have improved, but other issues also have arisen in the process.

"Any time a district goes through a set of eyes from the outside that don't have any bias, and they reflect back what 500 of your staff and community members tell you, you learn a lot," said Dr. Joel Dvorak, NCS D superintendent.

"If we're really an organization in the process of continuous improvement, the first thing you have to do is face the brutal facts," he said. "Then you have to work hard to make sure that you celebrate those things that are good, and then you work hard to improve those

things that can get you on that continuous improvement journey toward greatness."

In general, Dvorak said feedback he heard through the process included positives, such as the sense of more direction and strategic planning in the district; improved systems, particularly in the human resources division; and a decrease in fear from staff and community members.

Mardi Krenek added that customer service, which wasn't even mentioned last year, seems to have become a rallying cry throughout the district as employees seek to find ways to better serve students, families and all their customers.

See OA, page 5

CENTAURIAN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

They brought forward the idea to Superintendent Joel Dvorak, who suggested it be used in conjunction with the Transitions Program.

“When Julie visited with me about the Centaurian Program, I thought it was a great idea to have students -- especially those who were at-risk -- to care for and learn about horses,” Dvorak wrote. “This helps ground young people in caring for these great animals. I am excited about this idea!”

The program seems to be translating well to the district, too.

“It was perfect!” Feiler exclaimed. “It’s just blending together perfectly with the [values clarification] elective class the kids can take. The

coursework in their books ... it’s uncanny how closely it mirrors our work!”

Feiler and Santistevan have additional plans for the program, too. Eventually, they hope to incorporate emergency responders (police, fire and other emergency service people) in with the program to help break down barriers the students might have with authority figures. They also hope to use the program as an Employee Wellness incentive.

“I don’t think people realize what fabulous exercise working with horses is,” Feiler said. “Not to mention the mental wellbeing it provides.”

Why horses?

“Horses are large and powerful, which creates a natural opportunity for someone to overcome fear and develop confidence. The size and power of the horse are naturally intimidating to many people. Accomplishing a task involving the horse, in spite of those fears, creates confidence and provides for wonderful metaphors when dealing with other intimidating and challenging situations in life.

“Horses are very much like humans in that they are social animals ... They would rather be with their peers. They have distinct personalities, attitudes and moods ... At times, they seem stubborn and defiant. They like to have fun. In other words, horses provide vast opportunities for metaphorical learning ... Horses have the ability to mirror exactly what human body language is telling them. Many people will complain, ‘The horse is stubborn; The horse doesn’t like me.’ But the lesson to be learned is that if they change themselves, the horses respond differently. Horses are honest, which makes them especially powerful messengers.”
-- Julie Feiler

GROUP TARGETS LITERACY

By Jenni Luckett

NCS D’s strategic goal teams are making regular reports to the district’s Board of Trustees, starting with the Goal 1 team in September.

Goal 1 focuses on literate students. The group is working to develop an action plan to build more partnerships with parents and the community to strengthen and support literacy skills and, this spring, will develop an action plan to support more high-performing literacy classrooms in NCS D schools.

Mike Bond, executive director of Curriculum and Instruction, reminded the board that research shows that children who struggle with reading in third, fourth and fifth grade are more likely than their peers to fail a class in ninth grade. And students who fail at least one class in ninth grade are significantly more likely to drop out of school.

Goal 1: Literate Students
4 to 5:30 p.m., second and fourth Wednesday of the month

Goal 2: Excelling Schools
3:45 p.m., third Monday of the month

Goal 3: Prepared Grads
Please check natronaschools.org calendar for upcoming times

Goal 4: Safe, Healthy People
3 p.m. Nov. 2
Please check natronaschools.org calendar for other upcoming times

Goal 5: Efficient, Effective Operations
3 p.m., first Monday of the month

OA, CONTINUED FROM 3

On the other hand, Dvorak said, there’s still a lot to do in improving communication, alignment and efficiency – all of which is essential to improving student learning.

“The students in this school district are a great asset. There is more untapped potential and talent in those 12,000 children than, I would think, anywhere in the state

of Wyoming. It’s our job to unleash that potential,” he said. “It’s our responsibility to make sure that every one of those kids really is a champion and that we are champions for them.”

The following is an overview of the feedback Krenek Consulting heard from staff, students and community members during a week of interviews last month. The complete results presentation (about one hour) is available on video on the district’s Web site at www.natronaschools.org, under Departments>Superintendent>OA.

LEADERSHIP

Strengths: The superintendent is visible, accessible, and approachable throughout the community. Leadership involved stakeholders in the district planning process.

Opportunities: Visibility and accessibility of Central Services staff are limited and often absent. While the district has developed goals to drive the district to excellence, most staff don’t know their role in making them a reality. While the district has developed values and beliefs, not all leaders are modeling them. While goal teams have been developed, they are creating more confusion than they are providing direction.

STRATEGIC PLANNING & RESULTS

Strengths: The district has developed an initial strategic planning document with five goals.

Opportunities: Plans across the district are being used inconsistently to drive the work as well as monitor progress. Not all staff feel supported by central office administrators. While a communication plan for the district has been drafted, it is not evident that it is being used to drive the work.

CURRICULUM & TEACHING

Strengths: Resources are being directed to schools based on data and needs. Data is driving interventions for some students.

Opportunities: The lack of an aligned K-12 curriculum is creating issues for staff and students. While there is a lot of professional development being offered, follow-up to ensure implementation and fidelity is inconsistent.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Strengths: Customer service has become a focus of the district.

Opportunities: Although efforts have been made to improve communication, many gaps still exist. Stakeholders don’t feel that their voice is being heard in the district.

STELLAR PEOPLE

Strengths: Staff is a strength and asset of the district.

Opportunities: While the district has improved the hiring process, cycle time is still an issue. The lack of a districtwide scheduling calendar is allowing multiple meetings to be scheduled at the same time. While the district has numerous recognition initiatives, staff members desire a simple, heartfelt “thank you.” There is an “us” and “them” mentality between Central Services and the schools. While meetings are more focused, there are too many and people aren’t sure what happens to the results.

EFFECTIVE & EFFICIENT PROCESSES

Strengths: The restructuring of Human Resources has improved its effectiveness.

Opportunities: There is a strong feeling across the district that funds are being used inefficiently and inequitably. While there has been a focus on being more efficient and effective, processes are not in place to drive consistency. Additionally, the processes that are in place are often times not followed.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Strengths: Staff has access to data in user-friendly formats. Data is available in a quick and timely manner.

Opportunities: While the district is working to provide strategic direction and accountability models, there is still work to be done to move the district forward. While data is being used across the district, not all schools are using it to change instruction or drive interventions. While a lot of operational data is being collected, it is not being used for continuous improvement.

TEACHERS WIN AWARD, GIVE BACK TO COMMUNITY

By Jennifer Schultes

Charlotte Benardis, preschool teacher at Pineview Elementary, and Tracy Padilla, second-grade teacher at North Casper, recently were recognized in Cheyenne when they received the State Literacy Award for their Destination Literacy program. They were nominated by Peggy Laughlin, with the education program at the University of Wyoming/Casper College.

Destination Literacy, which corresponds with the district's goal of literate students, began at UW/CC about five years ago while Benardis and Padilla were earning their teaching degrees.

"We saw a need for kids with no exposure to books and vocabulary because of their backgrounds," Padilla explained. "And, we wanted to give back to the community."

The program originally began with a peer at Casper College, but didn't go very far, due to lack of interest. Benardis said she and Padilla loved the idea and ran with it. One reason it has been such a success, Benardis said, is that they spoke to their fellow education students before classes and encouraged them to give back to their community.

"The district loves what you do to give back," Benardis said.

And so, the pair, along with other teachers and community members, visits the Evansville Boys & Girls Club and Family Center at Seton House monthly to work on reading skills with children ages 3 and up. Readings are conducted in a big group, then they break into small groups. At the end, an activity is tied in with the books just read, and then

every child walks away with a book in his or her hand.

The literacy group goes even a step further at Seton House, where it works with parents to teach them skills about how to read with their kids in a program called Destination for the Next Generation. There also are opportunities for parents to win books.

Both women incorporate their knowledge of the district's expectations of literacy with the program.

"I take the district's curriculum and goals and tie them in with Destination Literacy, so we truly are working to improve literacy in our community and district," Padilla said.

Why is literacy so important? It is the backbone of all learning, Benardis said.

"You can't even get a license without being able to read, nor can

you apply for a job if you can't read the application!"

Benardis said a Pizza Hut manager, who donates dinner to the Seton House Destination Literacy meetings (dinner is not served at the Evansville Boys & Girls Club), thanked the group for working so hard to promote reading for possible future employees.

Destination Literacy meets once per month September through April. If you or someone you know are interested in giving back to the community and helping with Destination Literacy, e-mail Benardis and/or Padilla through FirstClass. Non-district employees are welcome to help, too, since the group has modified its bylaws.

"It began as a college organization," Benardis explained, "but then we realized it was a lot bigger."



Tracy Padilla works with a small group of second-graders, discussing how words sometimes have similar sounds. She asked her class, "Why do we read every day?" They answered, "So we can read better and build our stamina!"

REVIEW IMPORTANT INSURANCE INFORMATION

Reviewing claims online at www.mycigna.com

You can review your claims and Explanation of Benefits (EOB) online at www.mycigna.com. If this is your first time logging on, please follow the instructions to register. Once you have registered, keep your user ID and password in a safe place.

To search your health claims or a family member's health claims follow these instructions:

- Home Page
- Select "Claim Search"
- Select "Search Medical claims"

A drop-down box lists all covered members of your family

- Select name
- Choose date range
- Select "Find Claims"

A list of claims by claim number and provider will appear:

- Select the claim number you wish to review

For a detailed demonstration:

- Select the "My Plans" tab on the menu toolbar (stay on this page)
- On the left side, middle of the page:
- Select "Getting to Know myCIGNA Guide"

Medicare Part D prescription coverage disclosure notice

The Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 requires entities that provide prescription drug coverage to Medicare Part D eligible individuals to provide a written disclosure notice to all covered Medicare eligible individuals. This group includes eligible active working individuals and their dependents, individuals enrolled in Medigap plans with prescription drug coverage, COBRA eligible individuals, their dependents, disabled individuals covered under a prescription drug plan and any retirees and their dependents.

This month, the Medicare Part D prescription coverage disclosure notice and the "Creditable Coverage" notice will be mailed to the address on file to all active working individuals and retirees who are covered under the District's health plan.

Who to contact if you have insurance questions

Employee Group Health Insurance Office
Natrona County School District
970 N. Glenn Rd.
Casper, WY 82601

Arlene Steward, employee group insurance manager,
253-5208

Victoria Nolte, insurance specialist, 253-5207
Monica Sayles, insurance specialist, 253-5328

Student Wellness puts on field trip, walks

There is a great opportunity for an educational field trip coming up at the Nicolaysen Art Museum in November: "I Want Candy: The Sweet Stuff in American Art."

The art exhibit challenges the mind and describes the visual consumption of the sweet stuff in American art. Candy allures, but it can also represent a danger when transformed into rampant consumerism and gluttony.

The field trip will take place the week of November 2-5, and will have limited availability. There will be

rotating sessions that will include the art discussion, nutrition, and writing on perceptions of food and the importance of health. There also will be a panel discussion for adults to attend on the evening of Nov. 5. More information will be coming out very soon, so be on the lookout!

Get moving! There will be two chances each month to join the fun with the monthly wellness walk: 4 or 5 p.m.!

Each month will have a themed activity, so participate and you could win a prize! Please go to www.natronaschools.org under Student Wellness to see the schedule of walks and to register. The Turkey Trot walk will be Nov. 4, behind Old Town. Come out for a chance to win a turkey! (Wellness Walks are for NCS staff, students and members of the community!)

-- Katrina Lorenzen

News Zone survey yielding helpful, 'green' results

By Jennifer Schultes

As of Oct. 14, 146 of you have taken the survey "Does NCSD News Zone satisfy?" Thank you all who have given us your feedback!

The survey will remain open until Friday, Oct. 23. If you haven't yet taken it, please do so. To take it online, click on the promo advertising the survey on the home page of the district's Web site, www.natronaschools.org. Paper copies can be found in the Transportation Department's offices or with JoAnne Jackson at Central Services.

Here is a brief update on the status of the survey:

- ◆ 59.1 percent prefer to read the paper version of the newsletter, as opposed to the online version
- ◆ 62.8 percent find the articles useful and interesting
- ◆ 87.6 percent think News Zone is well-written
- ◆ 84.7 percent feel it appears professional and gives a good impression of the district
- ◆ 80.3 percent of you enjoy the photographs
- ◆ 68.6 percent are most interested in reading about district events; 19 percent are interested in reading about facilities news

- ◆ 76.6 percent of you enjoy the design of News Zone
- ◆ 79.6 percent of you are happy with its distribution frequency

One of the most common comments made is the concern of the cost of News Zone.

Each month, Multi-Media Services prints 2,500 copies of the 12-page newsletter. When printed on coated (shiny) paper, the total cost is \$910.20, or just under 37 cents per copy. When printed on uncoated ("flat" or non-shiny) paper, the cost goes down to 31 cents per copy, or a total of \$775. (Four years ago, the cost of the four-page, two-color employee newsletter News About Us was \$500.)

Therefore, taking into consideration your concerns and the need to cut costs for the district, we're going to "go green." The newsletter will be printed on the uncoated paper, which is cheaper and also much easier to recycle. We ask that you do please recycle the newsletters, as well as all other paper waste.

Watch for more detailed survey findings in the November issue of NCSD News Zone!

EMPLOYEES FALL INTO FITNESS

We have 426 employees, spouses and retirees and 33 teams that have stepped up to face the Walktober walking challenge!

The goal of the program is to earn 40 leaves during the 56-day program. The color of the leaf earned depends on the total amount of activity recorded: 30-44 minutes/6,000-7,999 steps earns a red leaf; 45-59 minutes/8,000-9,999 steps earns an orange leaf; and 60+ minutes/10,000+ steps earns a gold leaf. Incentives earned are based on leaves accumulated.

So far, the weekly average for participants is 51 minutes of activity per day/8,893 steps a day! Awesome job everyone!

Incentives will be awarded to those who completed pre-fitness screening at the Wyoming Athletic Club, as well

Walktober Stats: Week 1
Total participants: 433
Completed pre-screening: 160
Total teams: 34
Top team: Walkin' Clueless
Wonders
Top steps: Stephanie Mestas,
DMJH 127,963 steps
Top minutes: Fred Maquire,
KWHS, 960 minutes

as a final incentive if both pre- and post-screenings are completed. Final incentive prizes will be based on overall activity, as well as reaching bimonthly goals.

Weekly drawings also will be held for all participants with a chance to earn incentives, as well as incentives for top stepper/minutes. The top team also will receive a weekly incentive!

Thanks to everyone for participating!
 -- Rachel Trujillo-Myers

Yoga
 CSF, Wednesdays, 4:30-5:30 p.m.
 KWHS, Wednesdays, 4-5 p.m.

WeightWatchers
 DMJH, Wednesdays, 6-7 a.m.
 KWHS, Fridays, 6-7 a.m.
 Join any week!

CPR/First Aid
 Nov. 3 & 17
 U.W. Outreach Building,
 951 N. Poplar St.
 8:30-11:30 a.m. OR
 6:30-9:30 p.m.
 Call or e-mail Rachel to register:
 253-5228,
 Rachel_Trujillo-Myers@
 natronaschools.org

CSF MAKES CHANGES TO IMPROVE HEALTH AND SAFETY

By Jennifer Schultes

Schools have gone to great lengths to comply with Goal No. 4 of the Strategic Plan, led by Crystal Mueller, associate superintendent of Human Resources: Pop has been replaced by juice and water; elementary schools offer health bars that contain fruits and vegetables; vending machines supply healthier choices; and healthier, non-food fundraisers are encouraged.

This is a district initiative, though, and Central Services (CSF) is doing its part, too.

Earlier this summer, it was brought to the Facilities & Technology Department's attention that several CSF staff members were suffering from unexplainable headaches. This led the facilities team to conduct air quality tests, which showed that the quality indeed was not that great.

So, to improve the quality, as well as customer service, CSF has been quite busy.

First, all paint that has been/is being used in new and existing buildings is well below the Environmental Protection Agency's minimum for volatile organic compounds (VOCs), or chemicals, said Dennis Bay, director of Facilities & Technology. Going a step even further, though, Bay and his team are looking into using paint with even lower VOCs, in areas where employees experience hypersensitivity to the chemicals.

CSF also has improved the air ventilation and circulation in the Multi-Media Services (MMS) area of the building by adding additional exhaust ventilation to push fumes from cleaning supplies and ink directly out of the facility. Use of the old exhaust system, which let out in the center of the building, has been discontinued.

"Frankly," Bay said, "I've noticed a huge difference. This work seems to be having a good effect."

MMS will pitch in to reduce odors throughout

the facility by keeping its door closed while printing, laminating, cleaning, etc.

Other big changes include the relocation of several offices, in an effort to make CSF more efficient and effective.

"We're trying to make this a one-stop shop," Bay explained. "Most people who visit CSF come to see Insurance, Employee Services and Wellness, and now those are all alongside each other."

"This work truly has been to align with Goal No. 4," he continued, "and once the remodeling project has been done in November, we want to test the air quality again and compare to the results we got earlier this summer ... see how big of a difference we have made."

Bay concluded with one serious reminder.

"Very little can be done about the burnt popcorn smell, though."



It's RECESS TIME!

Students at Southridge Elementary School enjoy their new playground equipment Oct. 12, despite a layer of snow in the fall zone. Southridge, along with University Park, Sagewood, Red Creek, Powder River, North Casper, Poison Spider and Alcova elementary schools, received new playground equipment this year with help from local fundraising and the NCSD Board of Trustees. The board recently voted to extend funding for a playground replacement another year, which will allow Crest Hill, Manor Heights and Evansville elementary schools to upgrade their equipment.

EMPLOYEE ONLINE GOES LIVE

All Natrona County School District employees now have access to their human resources information through Employee Online (EO).

This system provides a Web-based HR technology service, where staff members are able to access their employment information 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Employees can view their payroll information, including pay stubs, position information and forms. In the near future, employees also will be able to update personal information such as their mailing address, directly on the Web site.

At present, EO is only available from within the district. Employees will need to be logged on to the district server to access the site. You can access EO by visiting the NCS D Web site at www.natronaschools.org and clicking on "Employees," then "Employee Online."

To access the new online tool, employees will need a username and password. Employees' usernames will be their employee ID numbers. This begins with "E0," (that's a zero, not the letter O), followed by four numeric digits. It can be found on new ID badges issued in the past two years or on pay stubs. Passwords were e-mailed to employees on Aug. 10.

For more information, contact Cheryl Caster (253-5246) or Ada Haller (253-5337).

CSF CUTS COSTS, GARBAGE WITH WATERCOOLERS

The Central Services Facility has installed watercoolers in all its meeting rooms in an effort to cut down on costs, as well as garbage.

The new watercoolers are bottom-loading, meaning that almost anyone can restock a fresh jug when the cooler is empty. The watercoolers also will provide hot and cold running water. Cups will continue to be provided, though employees are encouraged to bring their own reusable waterbottles, mugs or glasses for refills of water.

The installation of the new watercoolers will allow the district to stop providing soda and water in individual bottles at all meetings. This should significantly reduce costs, while also cutting down on the amount of plastic in the district's trash. In addition, offering water instead of soda during meetings also will align with the district's wellness policy.

NCS D RAISES MONEY FOR UNITED WAY OF NATRONA COUNTY

The Community Relations Office would like to extend a sincere thank you to all district employees who donated to United Way. Your generous contributions have added up and are sure to make a wonderful impact on our community and our kids.

The Central Services Facility will

host a Fall Festival to raise even more money for United Way. The first event will be Oct. 30, when we'll have a silent auction and pumpkin decorating contest. Stop by CSF from Oct. 28 to 30 to place a bid on the silent auction items. There are some great donations available for bidding, including:

- A Nordic ski pass
- A fall sports lovers package
- Donated pottery, jewelry and crafts
- Fantastic sports memorabilia, including a football signed by former Orange Crush-era Broncos linebacker Randy Gradishar; as well as baseballs signed by former Colorado Rockies left-fielder Matt Holiday, MLB perfect game pitcher Tom Browning, and current Rockies shortstop Troy Tulowitzki.

There also will be a pumpkin decorating contest during the fall festival. Pay \$5 at Community Relations to enter your painted or carved pumpkins. The morning of Oct. 30, bring your decorated pumpkin from home and place it for inspection in the East Room. Vote for your favorite by putting \$1 in the pumpkin's jar. The winning pumpkin is the one that earns the most votes (or dollars). Winners will be announced at the end of the festival. All proceeds from the silent auction and pumpkin contest benefit United Way.