

# NCS D News Zone



VOLUME IV

ISSUE V

DEC. 18, 2009

## NCS D SUPPORTS COMMUNITY, GIVES BACK OVER HOLIDAYS

By Jennifer Schultes

The Natrona County School District has many things to be thankful for this holiday season (and all year long, no doubt).

We are able to provide our students with the most optimal learning environments imaginable. We have faithful staff members who work every day to encourage and inspire our children. We have dedicated students who overcome obstacles to become champion learners. And, we have a

supportive community that works with us to offer life-changing opportunities to the leaders of tomorrow.

Although we are grateful all year long, the district especially enjoys showing its thanks by getting involved and giving back during the holidays. Most of our schools sponsor fundraisers or other activities to help support those who support us.

Here are just a few examples of how NCS D has shown/is showing its thanks during the holidays:

*See GIVING, page 4*



*A crowd of students and staff from various E.L.A.T.E. schools cheer as a would-be strike slides to a stop just before touching the pins in a round of turkey bowling.*

## INSIDE:

ONLINE OPEN  
ENROLLMENT STARTS  
IN JANUARY

PAGE 5

COMMUNITY, BOARD  
CONSIDER HIGH  
SCHOOL OPTIONS

PAGES 6 & 7

WINTER BRIDGES  
GIVES STUDENTS  
GIFT OF TIME

PAGE 10

SAY 'THANK YOU'  
WITH A MEDALLION  
NOMINATION

PAGE 11

# CHILDREN'S EDUCATION MUST REMAIN TOP PRIORITY IN WYOMING



Wyoming legislators commended the Natrona County School District earlier this month for our use of state education funding and for our improvements in student achievement.

It's great to hear – and to pass on to all of you in recognition of your hard work. At the same time, though, you and I know

that we have more work to do.

On Nov. 4, some of our staff members and trustees joined me to meet with a group of Wyoming legislators. We talked about what we're doing here in Natrona County, what results we're seeing, and what the future will hold. This conversation was especially pertinent this year, because most experts are predicting that money is going to be tight in the upcoming legislative budget session.

We in K-12 education are walking a fine line. We have been tremendously lucky in the past decade, seeing unprecedented financial support from our state. We have to accept that that financial support probably can't be sustained at the same level in these harder economic times. At the same time, though, we are asking our state leaders to continue making education a priority.

Here in NCSD, we chose to implement the pieces of the state's K-12 funding model with the greatest potential to raise student achievement. It was a decision made collaboratively by classified and certified staff members, administrators, cabinet members and trustees. Not every district made the same choice; some opted to put their additional money into other priorities, without following the state's research.

I'm proud of our decision. We have followed the model in reducing class sizes in early grade levels, in hiring and assigning certified teachers to work as instructional facilitators and tutors, and in offering

support for students in the form of extended day and extended year programs.

It's early, but we're already seeing some positive results from this work. The percent of third-graders who are reading at or above grade level has climbed 6 percent in the last year. Certified tutors are making particular progress at the upper elementary and middle school levels in closing gaps and helping struggling students catch up with their peers. Summer school and Winter Bridges offer hundreds of students the opportunity to regain – or get ahead on – their credits. And the number of students dropping out of our high schools has plummeted by more than 200 students – or 5 percent – in the last three years.

We shared these actions and results with our Natrona County legislators, as well as with the leadership of the Legislature's Joint Education Committee, in the hope that they would continue their support of the funding model and of our work. Because we do have a lot more work to do, and it's only going to get harder as we get closer to our goals. The gains we have made are positive and are heading in the right direction, but we can do better. We will need continued support, though.

It's important that our employees know what we are asking of our state lawmakers. We know that K-12 education may be affected as we enter leaner times, and we're preparing for that fact.

However, we have asked legislators to maintain consistency in the K-12 funding model. If cuts need to be made, we would prefer that they come as a percentage and that we decide locally how to manage fewer resources.

We also need to maintain a priority on school capital construction. Many projects have been completed across the state, and here in Natrona County, we still have much work to do to improve our educational facilities for students. Our high schools are at or above capacity and are in need of major renovation. While money may be tight, the costs of construction are less than they were even a year ago. Now is the time to take a responsible chance and invest in infrastructure.

*See LEGISLATURE, page 3*

## *Goal 5 team to work on communication, division goals*

Goal 5, Efficient and Effective Operations (“NCSD will be efficient and effective in its operations and classrooms”) due to its immense scope, is working to ensure each division has a specific goal to address efficient and effective operations.

The goal team has people representing each division and school. Since communication was a portion of the concern expressed in round two of the Organizational Assessment, they will look at ways to create effective communication within the district. This does not mean just communication from the Central Services Facility to the schools, but also communication in the schools as well as communication from the schools to CSF. The team currently is working on a methodology to address this issue.

## BOARD KEEPS BUSY IN NOVEMBER

The board of trustees held two retreats in November. In the first retreat, Steve Hopkins, associate superintendent of Business Services, gave a report on the possibility of a bond election to fund local improvements, or “enhancements,” in schools. At this retreat, trustees also decided it would be wise to include reports about their professional development opportunities at board meetings to allow for optimal discussion among themselves and to increase transparency with the community.

During the second retreat, the board discussed middle school reorganization and high school configuration. Next year, the district will begin shifting some programs to meet its space-grade configuration plans and to address capacity issues in middle and junior high schools in Casper. Steps in the temporary plan include moving Casper Classical Academy into the under-used Frontier Middle School building; setting capacity limits on all middle schools; further shifting sixth-graders from elementary to middle schools and ninth-graders from middle to high schools; and using annexed space to serve ninth-grade “houses” at the high school level. Three possible high school options also were discussed at the retreat. See “Community, board consider high school options” on pages 6 & 7 for more information.

During the board meeting on Nov. 9, the board approved a lease agreement between the 12/24 Club of Casper and the district, which will provide the ProStart program with a larger teaching/kitchen facility at 136 W. 8th St. in Casper for its growing school population. The board also approved funding for the Natrona County High School locker room project. The board originally allocated \$400,000 for the project, but the final project required additional funding. The board approved an additional \$588,352, part from excess bond funds and part from one-time board priority funds. The project will add about 213 lockers and additional space for freshmen PE and athletic locker rooms at the school.

The Nov. 23 board meeting was hosted by Midwest Schools. The board approved an updated bullying policy, which includes 21st Century issues such as cyberbullying and “sexting,” as well as an updated reporting process. The policy involved stakeholder input and a review by NCSD legal counsel. The new policy goes into effect Dec. 31.

## LEGISLATURE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

We know that times are hard, for everyone. Our children's education, however, must remain at the forefront of Wyoming's priorities. We are asking our Legislature to strike a healthy balance between day-to-day operations and appropriate investment in facilities, and to continue giving local boards the latitude to manage their own district budgets.

In exchange, you and I have to continue making good decisions and working to improve our students' achievement. We're on the right path, but we must meet and exceed our customers' expectations.

## GIVING, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

### BAR NUNN ELEMENTARY

◆ The student council raised \$100 through Crazy Hair and Pajama days to donate to the Raising Readers in Wyoming Project.

◆ In November, the school collected more than 500 cans of food for the Central Wyoming Rescue Mission.

◆ Through Decades Day, the school raised \$100 to donate to the Make-A-Wish Foundation in the memory of late first-grade teacher Retha Weber.

◆ The student council plans to continue to hold spirit days throughout the remainder of the year to raise money for the community.

### DEAN MORGAN JUNIOR HIGH

◆ The student council conducted a food drive in November.

◆ Also in November, a dance was held at the school, with the admission being a can of food.

◆ On a recent Saturday, the National Junior Honor Society sponsored the Dean Morgan “Dollar” Christmas Store, where students, parents and community members went to the cafeteria to do their Christmas shopping. Proceeds went to Seton House and other local charities.

### FORT CASPAR ACADEMY

◆ Students collected canned food for Joshua’s Storehouse in early December – kindergarteners organized the food drive and the fifth- and sixth-grade students counted the food daily to keep track of how much was being collected. Teachers incorporated learning about the use of spreadsheets with the activity while the kids learned the virtue of generosity!

### FRONTIER MIDDLE SCHOOL

◆ Michele Haass’ sixth-grade advisory group has worked every month this year to provide an item for those who receive Meals On Wheels food. Items have included cards, bookmarks and Christmas ornaments.

◆ Haass’ sixth-grade class as a whole has worked with Prince of Peace Lutheran Preschool throughout the year as “big buddies.”

◆ The eighth-grade band invited preschool kids from the Learning Junction to join them for pizza and music earlier this month.

### KELLY WALSH HIGH SCHOOL

◆ KW’s E.L.A.T.E. program – which includes Centennial Junior High, Frontier Middle School, Dean Morgan Junior High, Casper Classical Academy, Woods Learning Center, Verda James, Sagewood, Pineview, Manor Heights, Willard, Evansville, Star Lane and Prince of Peace Preschool – held its Two Tons of Love food drive, with the mission of collecting two tons of food to donate to the Holy Cross Center Food Bank and another two tons of food to the Casper Humane Society. The results, after combining all school’s contributions: 366 turkeys, \$1,965 in cash and 11.2 tons of food (combined for Holy Cross and the Humane Society)!

### PARK ELEMENTARY

◆ Students in Angela Ourth’s and Sarah Rowland’s first- and second-grade classes baked muffins, cookies and other goodies for the Casper Rescue Mission prior to Thanksgiving.

◆ Throughout December, the entire school is working to raise money for the Jason’s Friends Foundation by conducting a penny drive and other fundraising activities, including an after-school movie event and by sending Candy-Cane-Grams.

### SOUTHRIDGE ELEMENTARY

◆ Southridge students and families in need are invited to submit “wish lists” of clothing and toys to the school’s PTO Giving Tree Program. This is done anonymously to protect the confidentiality of each child’s situation. According to Principal Rick Skatula, historically, the Southridge community has provided gifts to between 50 and 100 families each year. Skatula and office manager Becky Gifford get to “play elf” and deliver the gifts to the families.

◆ The school also has conducted a food drive for the past four years, raising more than 1,000 pounds of food for the Holy Cross Center Food Bank.

### TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT

◆ Staff members in the Transportation Department donated food to Joshua’s Storehouse before Thanksgiving and are conducting another drive to do so again before Christmas.

## ONLINE OPEN ENROLLMENT STARTS IN JANUARY

By Jenni Luckett

The Natrona County School District will open its online school request process during the month of January.

Families whose children are new to the district or changing schools in 2010-11 will be asked to go online to [www.natronaschools.org](http://www.natronaschools.org) between Jan. 6 and Jan. 22 to select their top three choices for schools.

The process will work much as it has in years past, with a couple of differences. Rather than using an outside vendor, the NCSD IT Department is building the district its own online forms. The internal system will allow the district to respond to feedback with more agility and to sync information easily with Infinite Campus, the student information system. It also should save the district several thousands of dollars each year and use less bandwidth, ensuring a smoother process for parents.

The district is working harder this year to get

the word out about the open enrollment process.

Every family with a student currently in our schools will receive information in the mail about the open enrollment process, and the AlertNow system will be used to remind families about the opening and closing dates for the process. The community also will be saturated with information about the process, with details going to local businesses, community organizations, doctors’ offices, realtors and more.

Employees who frequently answer questions from families are asked to familiarize themselves with the open enrollment process in order to provide basic information. A few key points:

◆ The process opens Jan. 6 and closes Jan. 22. Families must go online to select schools between these dates in order to have an equal chance of receiving their first, second or third choices. The system is not first-come, first-served, though, so families can take their time to research schools throughout the month.

◆ Community information nights will be held at 6:30 p.m. Dec. 15 and 17 to provide information about the process. Online help days will be held from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Jan. 14 and 19 and from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Jan. 16 at Central Services. Schools will host open houses throughout the month of January to provide more information to families.

◆ Only families whose children are new to the district or who are changing schools next year need to go online. For example, students who will start kindergarten in 2010, or students who are moving to the district in 2010 need to complete the process. (This includes students who currently are enrolled in an NCSD preschool; they do need to go online.) Students who are changing schools to start middle school or high school also need to go online. Students who are staying in the same school do not need to do anything.

◆ Spanish-speaking families can receive personal help by contacting Erika Moens in the Title III Office at 251-8802.

◆ Others who need help can find more information – including digital copies of all publications – online at [www.natronaschools.org](http://www.natronaschools.org) by clicking on Enrollment. Help also is available by calling the NCSD Enrollment Office at 3-5322.

# COMMUNITY, BOARD CONSIDER HIGH SCHOOL OPTIONS

By Jenni Luckett

A committee of staff members, parents and other community members has recommended three possible options for configuring Natrona County School District high schools in the coming five years.

Each of the proposed recommendations includes renovations to Kelly Walsh and Natrona County high schools, as well as the construction of a third major high school in Casper. The recommendations assume continued service at the smaller high schools of Midwest and Roosevelt, as well as at the Star Lane Center program.

The recommendations come out of the Path to 2025 Visioning Committee, which has been meeting for more than a year to research best practices in secondary schools, to develop a vision for the future of NCSD's middle and high schools, and now to help set the course for the next phase of construction in the district. The recommendations went to the NCSD board of trustees in November, and further discussion, community input sessions, and public display of the options is planned until the board's scheduled vote in January.

All three of the recommendations are designed to meet the district's approved space-grade configuration, which says that high schools should serve about 1,200 students at a time and should be targeted to ninth- through 12<sup>th</sup>-graders. They also are designed to provide the physical space necessary to allow for a transformation of how high school education is delivered in Natrona County, expanding options for students and meeting the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> Century learners.

The board of trustees is expected to vote on an option in January, though it will not necessarily be bound to the three recommendations. (Some board members say they favor renovating Kelly Walsh and Natrona County high schools without building a new school.) To provide input on the process prior to the vote, you can e-mail [NCSD\\_Ideas@natronaschools.org](mailto:NCSD_Ideas@natronaschools.org).

The district has already received funding from the Wyoming School Facilities Commission to design renovations to Kelly Walsh and Natrona County high schools, as well as to

design a new high school. Though funding for construction of any of the projects in questionable, district leaders say having completed, "shovel-ready" designs may move NCSD up the priority list for state funding.

The district plans to begin looking for architects immediately following the board's decision and to start designing high schools this spring.



## OPTION 1: THREE PROFESSIONAL PATHWAY ACADEMIES

Kelly Walsh and Natrona County high schools would be renovated, and a third large high school would be built, so that all three served about 1,200 ninth- to 12th-grade students. Each school would be organized around "professional pathways," such as graphic arts, biomedical studies, etc.

Core academic instruction would be integrated into the pathways. For example, students in biomedical studies would take high school or college level chemistry or anatomy that related to biology and medicine, depending on their individual needs.

The pathways would be established at a district level, in cooperation with schools, to ensure that the entire district offered a range of choices to students and that efforts weren't duplicated among schools, unless student demand necessitated repetition of a pathway at different schools.

In addition to the pathway structure, all schools would offer AP and dual enrollment courses for students, and all schools would have a ninth-grade house to help new students transition into high school. Each school also would offer a full athletic program, though the new high school might also offer non-traditional athletics or wellness opportunities.



## OPTION 2: TWO SMALL LEARNING COMMUNITIES, ONE PROFESSIONAL PATHWAY ACADEMY

Kelly Walsh and Natrona County high schools would be renovated and reorganized to support small learning communities. In these schools, the larger student population would be divided into smaller "houses," and students and teachers in a "house" would stay together for core academic instruction, building tighter relationships among students and staff members, similar to the way the many NCSD middle schools currently operate.

Meanwhile, a new high school would be built to provide students professional pathways, as in Option 1. Each pathway would be a different strand of study. While NCHS and KWHS would offer general career-technical education and fine/performing arts, specialized programs would be offered as part of the pathways at the new school only.

In this plan, AP and dual enrollment courses would be offered at all three schools, and all three also would offer a ninth-grade house to help transition students into the high school environment. All three schools also would serve about 1,200 ninth- through 12th-grade students.

NC and KW would offer full athletic and extracurricular programs, and students at the new high school would be invited to participate in those programs.

## OPTION 3: THREE DIFFERENT HIGH SCHOOLS

A new high school would join renovated Kelly Walsh and Natrona County high schools, with each serving about 1,200 ninth- to 12th-graders. Each school would be uniquely organized, though, providing different options to students.

The new high school would be organized around professional pathway academics, where core academics would be integrated into the pathways.

KW and NC each would be reorganized to provide different approaches to instruction and programming. For example, one might offer a multidisciplinary, small learning community atmosphere, while the other might be organized around learning labs for project-based learning.

All three schools would offer AP and dual enrollment courses, as well as ninth-grade houses. NC and KW each would have general career-technical education and fine/performing arts, but the new high school would offer specialized CTE and arts programs.

All three schools would offer athletic and extracurricular activity programs, but they each may have different options for students.

# CIGNA offers important services

## I RECEIVED A CALL FROM CIGNA WELL INFORMED. WHAT DO THEY WANT?

The CIGNA Well Informed Program is designed to provide information to physicians and their patients about health risks patients may have or preventive treatments they may need. By analyzing information such as medical and pharmacy claims data and laboratory results, the program will identify specific patient health issues and concerns and will send this information to both you and your physician. You can opt in or out of the Well Informed Program at anytime.

CIGNA Well Informed uses evidence-based care guidelines to identify gaps for prevalent conditions in care patterns, disease management, medication adherence, national standards of care and patient safety. Using these guidelines, it is possible to evaluate physician treatment patterns at the patient level and patient adherence with their physician's recommended care.

The Well Informed Program is intended to support care management efforts by helping to:

- ◆ Increase patient compliance with treatment plans
- ◆ Increase preventive health activities
- ◆ Provide support in managing chronic disease
- ◆ Prevent potential adverse drug reactions and avoidable medical errors
- ◆ Alert the physician to potential divergence from common standards of care
- ◆ Bring together disparate pieces of clinical information
- ◆ Encourage patients to be involved and informed about their health status
- ◆ Flag potential urgent patient health issues and/or concerns

## CARE FOR CHRONIC CONDITIONS FROM WELL AWARE

*Don't let a chronic condition control your life.*

If you or a family member has a chronic condition, that can be a real challenge. But you still have your commitments, responsibilities and goals—your life. Now you have a resource to help you manage your condition.

It's CIGNA's Well Aware for Better Health®, offering help for these chronic conditions:

- ◆ Asthma
- ◆ Diabetes
- ◆ Heart disease
- ◆ Low back pain
- ◆ Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

Each allows you to design a personalized action plan under your doctor's guidance. The Well Aware Program will provide your doctor with confidential updates on your progress and challenges and will provide you with:

- ◆ Access to a personal, experienced registered nurse to call for guidance and support
- ◆ Educational material about your condition
- ◆ Self-care information
- ◆ Reminders of important tests and exams
- ◆ Informational newsletters

You'll learn to anticipate your symptoms and manage them better. You can reduce the risk of complications by following a plan you've worked out under your doctor's care. And if you do become ill, you'll have information and support to help you deal with it. You can spend less time being a patient and more time leading your life.

## CIGNA PRESCRIPTION DRUG STAND-ALONE PROGRAM

CIGNA utilizes RxPrime Services to process purchases at local pharmacies (in or out of town) and utilizes TelDrug Services to process and to distribute mail order purchases.

### Local Retail Pharmacy Prescription Purchases

Each 30 day or less prescription order
\$7 Copay – Generic
\$40 Copay – Preferred Brand Name
\$60 Copay – Non-Preferred Brand Name

If the prescription cost is less than the copay, you pay the lesser cost. The CIGNA medical card serves as a prescription copay card.

### In-Network

Casper retail pharmacy providers are CIGNA participants. There are some non-contract pharmacy providers (out-of-network) in Casper. These providers include specialty service pharmacies.

*See CIGNA, page 9*

## STUDENT WELLNESS KEEPS KIDS, ADULTS IN SHAPE

By Katrina Lorenzen

Thank you Holiday Hustle participants for your contributions and motivation to walk! A box of canned goods was donated to Joshua's Storehouse. Congratulations to Nancy Amend (winner of the two cans donation) and Kellie Olson (winner of the four cans donation)!

Have you signed up for the 12 Days of Fitness, which began Dec. 9? A new activity will take place each day, and you will add on to the previous day. It's simple and fun and anyone can join in!

A classroom movement workshop took place this fall and Natrona County High School will have workshops during the Winter

Institute. If you are interested in having a classroom movement workshop, please contact Amy Costello at 3-1700 or Katrina Lorenzen at 3-5253.

See you next year for the Jump into Wellness Family Walk! Gather your family members to begin 2010 with a walk and you could win some prizes!

## CIGNA, continued from page 8

Before purchasing prescriptions at any pharmacy, in or out of town, please inquire if they are CIGNA RxPrime participants. You may utilize CIGNA's online service to locate a participating pharmacy provider.

### OUT-OF-NETWORK

If you are in a hardship situation or traveling in an area where there is not an in-network pharmacy, you must file a special claim.

You will be reimbursed for the in-network rates, less the appropriate copay, by completing a pharmacy claim form.

### TEL-DRUG: MAIL ORDER SERVICES

#### Maintenance prescriptions (Max 90-day supply)

\$14	Copay – Generic
\$40	Copay – Preferred Brand Name
\$120	Copay – Non-Preferred Brand Name

For more information or to view some areas of interest, visit [www.mycigna.com](http://www.mycigna.com). Select the "My Plans" tab, then select "Pharmacy."

For CIGNA Pharmacy Network Providers (left side tool), select "Find a Pharmacy in CIGNA Provider Directory."

For pharmacy reimbursement forms (left side tool), select "Get a Prescription Drug Form." Forms are used for hardship situations and to be reimbursed if a

prescription was purchased at full cost.

For a Tel-Drug mail order form (left side tool), select "Download a Tel-Drug Order Form."

For prescription name and cost information (middle tool), select "Prescription Drug Price Quotes."

You may call CIGNA (1-800-244-6224) or you may contact the NCSD Employee Group Health Insurance Office to receive a pharmacy reimbursement form and/or a Tel-Drug order form.

*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,  
3-5208

Victoria Nolte,  
insurance specialist,  
3-5207

Monica Sayles,  
insurance specialist,  
3-5328

## NCS D STAYS HEALTHY OVER HOLIDAYS

By Rachel Trujillo-Myers

### HEALTH 4 THE HOLIDAYS

More than 150 employees have signed up for the December wellness program, Health 4 the Holidays! The program is designed to help you stay active, eat healthy, maintain weight and manage stress throughout the busy holiday season. Participants record a health habit daily for 28 days. Those who turn in their completed log form by Jan. 15 will earn a Health 4 the Holidays sweatshirt! Remember to turn in the completed log form to Rachel by Jan. 15 at the latest.

### WALKTOBER

More than 400 employees participated in the Walktober program, with 105 completing the pre- and post- fitness screening at the Wyoming Athletic Club! Based on their final activity, incentives earned included a fleece vest, windbreaker, walking kit, radio pedometer kit or lunchbox. Thanks to everyone who participated!

### GREAT AMERICAN FITNESS ADVENTURE

Help is on the way to help sustain those New Years

resolutions! Be on the lookout for more information regarding the upcoming winter program, the Great American Fitness Adventure. The goal of the program will be to visit 100 National Parks in 100 days, by doing at least 30 minutes of activity a day. Opportunities for participants to explore different local exercise venues is planned ... more information will be posted soon! The program may be modified depending on results of the employee wellness interest survey.

### EMPLOYEE WELLNESS INTEREST SURVEY

Thanks to everyone who participated in the survey! Detailed results will be posted in the January issue of *NCS D News Zone*.

### SMOKING/TOBACCO CESSATION CLASS

Pre-registration is required for the eight-week smoking/tobacco cessation class, which begins Tuesday, Jan. 12. The classes are held weekly at the Central Services Facility and last from 6:30 to 8 p.m. There is a \$20 charge per person, and there is a 16-person maximum and four-person minimum for this class. It is vital to attend all sessions to ensure success. Contact Rachel at 3-0228 or Rachel\_Trujillo-Myers@natronaschools.org by Jan. 11 to enroll.

## WINTER BRIDGES GIVES STUDENTS GIFT OF TIME

By Jennifer Schultes

For the third year, Winter Bridges once again will offer credit completion and remediation opportunities for students Jan. 4 – 7 from 8 a.m. to noon. High schools will have the option to extend the services to 3 p.m. Tutors, who are certified teachers, will facilitate student work, while the classroom teachers are in Winter Institute, their professional development period in between semesters.

All schools will issue invitations

to eligible students. The purpose for Winter Bridges at the elementary level is an intensive remediation period and an extension of tutor support. At the high school level, the focus is on credit completion to keep the students on track for graduation.

“The greatest benefit of this program,” Shawna Trujillo, director of Transitions Services, said, “is for the ninth- through 12th-graders because they are so close to graduation.”

Bus transportation will be provided for students if they currently are bused students. A morning snack and lunch also will be provided.

“We’re working hard to not babysit and build gingerbread houses, but to focus on math and reading for the kids who need the gift of time,” Trujillo said.

If parents have questions about whether their child is eligible, please advise them to contact their school.

## SAY ‘THANK YOU’ WITH A MEDALLION NOMINATION

By Jenni Luckett

It’s time again to start thinking about your nominations for the NCS D Medallion of Excellence awards program!

Medallion, which started in 1997 and got a whole new look in 2008-09, honors the district’s most outstanding employees for their service and contributions to the students of Natrona County.

This year, NCS D will bestow up to 20 Medallion of Excellence awards on employees and teams. The 20 awards will be given to individuals and/or teams who exemplify one of the five goals of the district.

Nomination packets have been sent to every school and facility in the district, and extras also are available at the Central Services Facility in the Human Resources or Community Relations offices. In addition, the nomination packet is available on the district’s Web site, [www.natronaschools.org](http://www.natronaschools.org), by clicking on Departments>Human Resources>Employee Recognition.

All nominations must be received by Human Resources by 4 p.m. Jan. 19. Winners will be announced shortly thereafter.

The awards program will be Tuesday, Feb. 23, at the Best Western Ramkota. The event will begin with cash bar cocktails and free hors d’oeuvres at 5 p.m., followed by the awards ceremony at 5:30 p.m.

### WHO CAN COMPLETE A NOMINATION FORM?

Any NCS D employee can nominate a coworker for a Medallion of Excellence award. The nomination form requires the person making the nomination to write a short, one-page essay about why the nominee deserves the award, and to collect three letters of support. Letters of support can come from other NCS D employees, as well as from parents, students or community members.

### WHO CAN BE NOMINATED?

Any NCS D employee can be nominated for a Medallion award in any category. Employees include administrators, certified and classified staff members,

full- and part-time employees, temporary and seasonal workers.

Teams who are nominated must include at least one NCS D employee, but also may include students, parents, or community members. (For example, a thriving school improvement team or parent-teacher group may be nominated, so long as at least one team member is an NCS D employee.)

Employees cannot win more than one individual Medallion award per year. However, an employee may win both as an individual and as a member of a team in one year. Employees are eligible for the awards every year.

### WHAT IS THE CRITERIA?

The Medallion of Excellence awards align with the district’s strategic goals. All members of our NCS D team are eligible in all of the following categories:

*Literate Students:* All NCS D students will read at grade level by the end of third grade.

*Excelling Schools:* NCS D will perform in the top 10 percent of all Wyoming districts on statewide assessments.

*Prepared Graduates:* All NCS D students will graduate from high school and be prepared for college and/or a high-skills career.

*Safe, Healthy People:* NCS D will maintain environments that are physically and mentally safe and healthy for everyone.

*Efficient, Effective Operations:* NCS D will be efficient and effective in its operations and classrooms.

### WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

Visit the Employee Recognition page at [www.natronaschools.org](http://www.natronaschools.org) or contact Kathi Hawley in Human Resources at 3-5231 or [Kathi\\_Hawley@natronaschools.org](mailto:Kathi_Hawley@natronaschools.org).



## UPDATE YOUR INFO ONLINE

Help improve communication in the Natrona County School District!

The NCSD Web site depends on all employees to contribute and keep information up-to-date. The interactive site is a key resource for newcomers in our community to learn about NCSD schools, as well as for parents, students and community members to find information they need about the organization.

Every NCSD employee has their own page on the site, and everyone is expected to keep at least basic contact information on the site current. That means you need to log in to update your phone number, office hours and building location whenever this information changes.

To log in, go to [www.natronaschools.org](http://www.natronaschools.org), and click "Login" at the top, right side of the page. Enter your username (firstname\_lastname@natronaschools.org) and password. (If you don't know your password, leave that spot blank and click "Login." You'll be taken to an error page where you can click "forgot password" to have a new one e-mailed to you.)

When you have logged in, you will see a link to "Manage Your Account" in the top, righthand corner of the page. Click it, then complete the simple form to make sure all information is accurate. When you are finished, click "Update Profile."

The entire process will take no more than two minutes, but you will ensure that our online information is current and our customers can find the service they need at all times.

Thank you for your cooperation!

## USE FIVE-DIGIT DIALING

Do you hear a "fast busy" when you dial a phone number from your district telephone?

About three years ago, the district's Information Technology Department installed a new phone system in response to a mandate Qwest forced upon us. This new system created 2,600 in-district phone lines and 143 outside lines.

With this system, when we dial a seven-digit phone number, whether it is in-district or out, we are tying up the limited number of outside lines. Therefore, seven-digit dialing should be used only when dialing outside of the district, otherwise, you may hear a "fast busy," as Drew Walker and Rick Dacus, both with the IT Department, describe it. If you place a call or fax to a fellow NCSD staff member, please begin using five-digit dialing, or the last five digits of the phone number (3-XXXX). (Remember, if you are dialing a district number from outside the district, dial all seven digits!)

"When you have this many phones," Dacus said, "you need to find a way to effectively and

efficiently manage them."

If you dial an outside number and still hear a fast busy, please e-mail Dacus at [Rick\\_Dacus@natronaschools.org](mailto:Rick_Dacus@natronaschools.org), as the district may need to look into increasing the number of outside lines.

## NCSD HOSTS JANUARY UNITED WAY EVENT

The Communication Team is excited to announce the SOUPerbowl fundraising event for United Way of Natrona County!

Come to the Central Services Facility on Tuesday, Jan. 5, 2010 to participate in this exciting, football-themed event full of fun and food! There will be a sumptuous buffet line full of delicious soups and entrees ready to warm you up from the inside out. The buffet line will operate on a buck-a-bowl system: Fill up as many bowls as you wish with soups, bread, salads and more, and then simply pay a dollar per bowl at the end of the line. All proceeds go to the United Way of Natrona County.

Then, after you eat your fill, make sure to participate in a football trivia scavenger hunt to familiarize yourself with CSF's relocated offices! "Team members" from each department will be on-hand to help you answer football trivia questions and sign off on your score sheet. Collect all the departments and run your sheet to one of the referees in Community Relations to win the grand prize!