

# Rotary Notary

News from East Wichita Rotary Club

January 27, 2010



## Wichita Superintendent Says Schools Are Performing Well

John Allison returned to Kansas last July to become the superintendent of USD 259, the largest school district in Kansas. The district is currently serving more than 50,000 students, representing the greatest number of students since 1976.

John's Wichita roots are deep. As a child he visited his grandparents in Riverside every summer. Recently he learned that his office sits on the same corner as where his grandfather's office was once located.

Formerly the superintendent in Mt. Lebanon, PA, John and his family realized how much the Midwestern ethics and values mean to them once they returned here. His son, who has known since the age of four that he wants to attend KU, was so excited about moving to Wichita that he helped pack his father's bags for the trip here.

The district has many assets, including a strong board that is very committed to children and able to put politics aside. The support groups and staff are very committed to make this district the best it can be in terms of educating all children. There are many resources in this community that help put all the pieces together.

Currently the district is looking at adding two new high schools that will be funded by the bond issue that voters supported in 2008. There is a real opportunity to create a high school with a strong technology component.

John takes great pride in the performance of students, teachers and administrators here. He told us that Kansas ranks third in the nation for high school completion and we always score in the top ten percent in national reading and math assessments. About 89% of our citizens have a high school diploma. This has a direct impact on the economic viability of our state. On the average, people without a diploma earn around \$19,000/year. With a diploma their average income increases to \$29,000. With a bachelor's degree, average income jumps to \$51,000/year.



Previously in his career John Allison has worked in both Ft. Worth and the Shawnee Mission school district.

**Let's Get Real:** Do something that's good for kids and fun at the same time. Reality University, a program of Communities in Schools, immerses middle and high school students in what day-to-day living costs...and why it's so important to stay in school and learn a skill. East Wichita Rotarians have volunteered for Reality U and love it! The next sessions are: **Thursday, February 25 and Friday, February 26 at Southeast High School.** Please contact Cindy if you'd like to sign up!

## DR. VERBOSITY

See if you can translate this well-known maxim, rewritten for a political speech by that great communicator, Dr. Verbosity:

*When, nimbus-free, Sol marches by  
Across the circumambient sky,  
To graminiferous meads repair -  
Your instant task awaits you there!*



Greeter: John Hurst ♦ Invocation, Flag Salute and Four-Way Test: Jim Faith ♦

Business Brief: Craig Burns ♦ NO MEETING on November 25 or December 2

## Q & A with John Allison

Q: With all the new construction projects being financed by the bond issue, are there efforts to ensure that the work is being done by local architects, contractors and builders?

A: There are very strict guidelines that we must follow in selecting contractors and we cannot deviate from them. Although some out-of-state vendors have shown an interest in attending the pre-qualification meetings, very few have actually submitted proposals. The major projects are being designed and built by Kansas companies.

Q: What is the status of recruiting out-of-state and international teachers?

A: We recruited them for several hard-to-fill positions. This worked well in some areas, not as well in others. Some of these teachers that are doing a good job will probably stay, but we will not continue to recruit in this manner.

## A Message from Jon Tilton

In 1967, my father committed suicide at the age of 47. My mother was also 47, my sister 20, and I was 18. It devastated us.

One of the things that helped me cope was the realization that I was actually doubly blessed. Blessed because he was my dad, my teacher and blessed because I had him for 18 years.

I know we all feel blessed to have George as our friend, and, in my case, for more than 30 years.

The reason I am sharing this is because I have a favor to ask all of you. Occasionally one of my father's peers would share something with me about him—a memory, an observation, or perhaps something they admired. This information meant the world to me, especially since I never had the chance to be my father's friend as well as his son.

In the coming weeks, months (and years) should the opportunity ever present, I would ask you to share from your heart something about George to his children—verbal or written. Knowing the giving and caring hearts of my fellow club members, I don't think it would be at all difficult for you—but it would be a rare and precious gift to them they will cherish for the rest of their lives.

George lives in us, now—and we can share him with his children. It will mean the world to them.

## Dr. Verbosity Translation:

*"Make hay while the sun shines."*

*Note: Rotary Notary assumes no responsibility if the feelings of politicians or their speechwriters are hurt. Dr. Verbosity will appear in this publication from time to time as his schedule permits.*