

## CommunityNashville RECEIVES TED MARTIN AWARD

CommunityNashville was chosen to receive the 2007 Ted Martin Human Relations Award for the powerful impact it has made on public education. In its 35 years of work in Tennessee schools, CommunityNashville (formerly known as The National Conference of Christians and Jews, The Conference, and The National Conference for Community and Justice of Middle Tennessee) has worked through programmatic strategies, research, and public policy initiatives to change the lives of Nashville's children and school leaders. Specifically, CommunityNashville has worked tirelessly to break down barriers and build inclusive communities through empowering youth leaders and developing in them the skills needed to become caring, responsible citizens committed to the values of inclusion and justice.

CommunityNashville has created amazing changes in the lives of Nashville's children through its innovative Building Bridges Youth Program, which includes its award winning Camp Any-town highlighted by Oprah Winfrey as a program that, "literally transforms young people's lives." Currently, CommunityNashville's multi-faceted Building Bridges Program has reached students in 14 of Nashville's 15 public high schools, and served thousands of Nashville students.

To create such a realistic impact in Middle Tennessee youth's lives, CommunityNashville has partnered with Metro Nashville Public Schools, the Oasis Center, United Way of Metropolitan Nashville, and the Metro Police Department to develop its line of life-changing programs. The following initiatives form the components of the Building Bridges Program that serves Middle Tennessee's youth:

**Camp Any-town:** A life-changing, weeklong human relations and leadership program for high school

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## NO name-calling week January 21-25, 2008

No Name-Calling Week (NNCW) is an annual week of educational activities aimed at ending name-calling and providing schools with the tools and inspiration to launch an on-going dialogue about ways to eliminate bullying. A young adult novel entitled *The Misfits*, a young adult novel by James Howe and the inspiration of NNCW, tells the story of four best friends trying to survive the seventh grade in the face of all too frequent taunts based on their weight, height, intelligence, and sexual orientation/gender expression. Motivated by the inequities they see around them, the "Gang of Five" (as they are known) creates a new political party during student council elections and run on a platform aimed at wiping out name-calling of all kinds. Though they lose the election, they win the support of the school's principal for their cause and their idea for a "No Name-Calling Day" at school.

This project is targeted at grades five through eight because these are the years when name-calling is particularly acute. However, the concept can be easily adapted by students and educators at other grade levels.

This weeklong focused event will be January 21-25, 2008. MNEA's Human Relations Committee is sponsoring a workshop on December 4 at 4:30 pm to begin organizing and sharing ideas to facilitate middle school participation in the event. Interested schools and/or school facilitators should contact MNEA at [mymnea.com](http://mymnea.com). For more information on NNCW, visit [www.nonamecallingweek.org](http://www.nonamecallingweek.org).





## PRE-PAID COLLEGE TUITION

Of all the gifts families give children, why not consider the gift of education? Tennessee's Prepaid 529 Program is a way to ensure that families are able to fund their children's college education.

The Baccalaureate Education System Trust (BEST) prepaid 529 tuition program, created by the Tennessee General Assembly in 1997, is an innovative plan which recognizes that saving is the key to funding a child's college education.

BEST allows parents, grandparents and other relatives to start paying for college expenses before a child reaches college age, by allowing parents to purchase units of tuition at today's cost. These units gain earnings based on the increase in the weighted average tuition inflation at Tennessee's four-year public universities. Although, the pricing and payout are based on the weighted average tuition increases at state universities, participants may use the funds at any University in the nation.

These are only a few reasons why the BEST Pre-paid Plan is one of the best options for Tennessee families who wish to save for their children's college education. Administered by the state's Treasury Department, the plan is exempt from all Tennessee state taxes as well as federal income tax on qualified educational withdrawals, which include; tuition, fees, books, room & board, and equipment or supplies required for attendance or enrollment.

Tennessee families can learn more about Tennessee's BEST Prepaid Plan by dialing 1-888-486-BEST, by calling 532-8056 in the Nashville area, or by visiting the program's website at:

<http://treasury.state.tn.us/best/>

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### November



- 15** MNEA Representative Assembly  
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 19-23** Thanksgiving Break
- 27** School Board Meeting  
Bransford Avenue Administration Building
- 29** Introduction to Dave Ramsey's  
Financial Peace

### December

- 3** TEA Member Assistance Program  
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 4** "No Name Calling Week" Workshop  
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 6** MNEA Executive Board  
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 11** School Board Meeting  
Bransford Avenue Administration Building
- 13** MNEA Representative Assembly  
4:30 p.m. at MNEA Headquarters
- 19-21** High School Exams (half days for 9-12)
- 21** Last day of fall semester (half day all grades)

*Please note that registration for all University of MNEA workshops is open to members and non-members. However, non-members are expected to pay a nominal \$20 fee to defray expenses that would otherwise be supported by MNEA dues.*

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## KNOW YOUR CONTRACT

As noted in an earlier edition of *The Slate*, the **2007-2008 Educational Agreement** is currently at press, but the electronic version of the document is available at <http://mnea.com/Agreements/contract.pdf> or on the Human Resources tab of the [www.mnps.org](http://www.mnps.org).

Every month MNEA receives numerous telephone calls about the lack of discipline in Metro Schools. Unfortunately, the issue is truly one of enforcement. Our contract outlines several important factors related to discipline (Article II, Section I on pages 6-8). For example, some principals insist that teachers call parents before sending students to the office. In the excerpt below, one can see that serious or repeated infractions will allow a teacher to send a child to the office without intermediate steps!

**Article II, "Association and Teacher Rights," Section I, Sub-division 6. [Emphasis added.]**



The general purpose of this provision shall be to provide concise information for both teacher and principal to assist them in cooperatively maintaining the best possible learning environment. Maintenance of proper student behavior, generally, is the concern of the entire professional staff. **Maintenance of proper student behavior in the classroom is primarily the responsibility of the teacher. However, a teacher will direct a pupil to the Principal or a designee when the seriousness of the behavior, the persistence of the misbehavior, or the disruptive effect of the violation makes the continued presence of the student unacceptable.** (2003)

In such cases, the teacher will immediately furnish the Principal or his/her designee with knowledge of the referral and as soon as possible, but no later than the conclusion of that school day, the full details of the incident leading to the dismissal and a concise written statement describing the disciplinary steps taken by the teacher before referral to the Principal or his/her designee. The teacher shall readmit the pupil upon the written authorization of the Principal or his/her designee. A concise written communication of the action taken by the Principal or his/her designee to assist the teacher and/or pupil shall be provided. (2003)

## 2009-2010 Calendar Approved

At its regularly scheduled meeting, the Board of Education adopted a calendar for the 2009-2010 school year. Below is the calendar that was approved. MNEA agreed with this calendar because it met most of the needs that teachers seemed to express except for the Fall Break issue. Neither the Board nor support personnel were willing to create a calendar with additional days off for Fall break. Support personnel insisted that unpaid days have a negative impact on the lifestyle of lower paid workers, particularly part-time cafeteria workers. Also, adding more unpaid days to the school calendar would mean starting school earlier in August, which everyone wants to avoid after this year's fiasco.

### Fall Semester begins on Thursday, August 13, 2009

First nine weeks ends on Thursday, October 13, 2009 (44 days)  
 Fall semester ends on Friday, December 18, 2009  
 Fall semester is 84 days  
 Winter Break is December 21, 2009 - January 1, 2010  
 Planning/Assessment Day is Monday, January 4, 2010

### Spring Semester begins on Tuesday, January 5, 2010

Third nine weeks ends on Thursday, March 11, 2010 (46 days)  
 Spring Break is March 29 through April 2, 2010  
 Spring Semester ends! Last Day of School is May 21, 2010  
 Spring Semester is 91 days  
 Total school days 175

### Inservice Days:

August 10, 11, and 12, 2009 (3 days)  
 November 11, 2009  
 February 15, 2010  
 May 24, 2010

### Planning/Assessment Days:

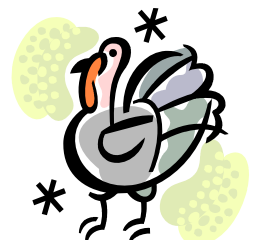
September 18, 2009  
 October 9, 2009  
 January 4, 2010  
 March 12, 2010

### Parent/Teacher Conference Day:

October 19, 2009

### Holidays:

September 7, 2009 (*Labor Day*)  
 November 25, 2009 (*Wednesday before Thanksgiving*)  
 November 26 - 27, 2009 (*Thanksgiving holidays*)  
 January 18, 2010 (*Martin Luther King Jr. holiday*)



## FROM THE PRESIDENT....

I get phone calls all the time asking me about Sick Leave Bank, Long-Term Disability, Short-Term disability and Disability Retirement under TCRS. First, MNPS has no short-term disability plan. The Metropolitan Nashville Certificated Employee Sick Leave Bank was negotiated by MNEA shortly after TEA successfully lobbied for authorizing legislation many years ago. Sick Leave Bank is designed to fill the gap that is created for those who have purchased the optional long-term disability coverage. Even though the Long-Term Disability (LTD) coverage is optional, the group policy provides for coordination of benefits. As a result, teachers who receive sick leave from the Bank are not eligible for pay from the LTD policy. If the benefits were not coordinated, the underwriter would have quoted higher premiums.



The standards for a disability pension from TCRS are very high. While the standards for TCRS disability retirement are not as high as Social Security disability which requires that individuals be unable to perform any job functions, the certification process is very rigorous and requires periodic reviews. The end result is that teachers who become disabled on the job often wait over a year to have their disability approved. The good news is that if a teacher is certified as disabled under Social Security TCRS will accept that determination for initial certification of the disability.

### Calling all...Runners

Networking with other educators is a great way to build a sense of community and connectedness within our association. MNEA would like to help facilitate this effort by connecting members with like interests. If you have ideas for additional groups and would like to volunteer as a facilitator, please contact us at 726-1499 or email [mymnea@comcast.net](mailto:mymnea@comcast.net).



Have you ever wanted to run or walk a marathon or half marathon? The Country Music Marathon is Saturday, April 26, 2008. Join other educators in training and make this dream a reality! Contact MNEA at 726-1499 or email [mymnea@comcast.net](mailto:mymnea@comcast.net).



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students in Nashville and Middle Tennessee. Any-town participants have the opportunity to live with and get to know people from many different ethnic, racial, religious, cultural, and socioeconomic groups. Any-town helps students explore their own identities and biases to create a model community based on respect, understanding and peace. This self-exploration helps Tennessee's young citizens develop skills that will positively impact their communities.

**Camp Mini-town:** A three-day leadership retreat for high school students focused on building and fostering more respectful and inclusive environments in their schools. Mini-town focuses on teaching skills that empower students to interrupt prejudice and exclusive behaviors. CommunityNashville works closely with MNPS to serve a diverse student population and meet the needs of our community's growing diversity and complexity.

**It's Your Move:** Allows students and educators to begin exploring human-relation issues that affect their schools and community. This program challenges students and educators to create and implement a plan of action in an effort to address issues of justice and equity in their school communities. Teachers and students work to create action plans for anti-discriminatory activities in their schools, as well as activities promoting tolerance, safety, and respect for all.

**School Safety Summit:** An annual partnership with schools and other youth-serving agencies. Each year, approximately 300 youth from area public and private schools attend the Summit to learn about making their schools and communities safer places.

**Youth Advisory Council:** A youth-leadership board of local student leaders who shape CommunityNashville programs and design their implementation. This initiative proves the organization's commitment to student-driven programs that tangibly reach today's youth.

**Cultural Studies Initiatives:** A program for youth who have been through one of CommunityNashville's residential programs and want to explore human diversity issues with deeper meaning. This past year, youth explored Martin Luther King's non-violence approach, violence in the media, and consumerism as it relates to ethnic and youth marketing. They also explored different holiday traditions, such as Kwanzaa, Hanukah, Christmas, and Ramadan.

**Youth Innovation Project:** An initiative of the Kellogg Foundation that empowers youth to identify an issue in their community, apply for a grant to address that issue, and implement a plan of action to improve the situation.

More details and up-to-date information at [www.mnea.com](http://www.mnea.com)