July 20 Forum: public vs. charter schools

Public schools. Charter schools. What is the best way to serve Nebraska students?

Following another year of legislative debate about charter schools, and the continuing national discussion about school choice, the Omaha Press Club Noon Education Forum on July 20 will examine both sides of the issue.

Speaking on behalf of charter schools will be Katie Linehan, executive director of Educate Nebraska. Linehan was born and raised in Omaha and has spent more than a decade working with underserved youth, primarily in north and south Omaha. She also was a middle school teacher at Success Academy Charter School in New York City’s Harlem.

Linehan taught English in South Korea and has been a kindergarten lead at Girls Inc. in north Omaha. She earned a bachelor’s degree from Loyola University New Orleans and a law degree from the University of Nebraska.

Educate Nebraska, an initiative launched in 2013, aims to bring charter schools to Nebraska, one of seven states where they are not authorized.

Continue On Page 3

Bill and Evonne Williams will be next ‘Face on Barroom Floor’ on Sept. 28

Couple has been driving force behind Honor Flights for veterans

Bill and Evonne Williams, the Omaha couple that has been the driving force behind the Honor Flights that have taken thousands of Nebraska veterans back to the monuments and memorials in Washington, D.C., will be honored Sept. 28 as the Omaha Press Club’s next “Face on the Barroom Floor.”

The Williams were recognized as the Midlanders of the Year by the Omaha World-Herald in 2013. They both grew up in rural communities where volunteering and helping others was a way of life. Bill was born in Ames, Iowa, and grew up in Red Oak, Iowa. Evonne was born in Deshler, Nebraska, and grew up on a farm near Byron, Nebraska.

Although neither Bill nor Evonne served in the armed forces, all four of their sons served in the military.

A more in-depth profile of the Williams will appear in the September edition of the OPC News.

The Face event is open to the public. Reservations can be made by calling 402-345-8008. Cost is $50 for OPC members and $60 for non-members.

Bill and Evonne Williams
Photo courtesy of the Omaha World-Herald

Hall of Fame 2017 honorees

The Omaha Press Club Hall of Fame 2017 honorees, or their representatives, gathered June 3 at the club for the induction dinner and ceremony. Front row, from left: Patricia Matson, Jim Horan (representing his late wife, Judy) and Alfred “Bud” Pagel. In back: C. David Kotok, Valerie Wilson (representing the late Sibyl Myers) and Dave Webber. For pictures of the honorees with their award presenters, turn to Page 2.

Photo by Gary Willis
JUDY HORAN

With Ann Pedersen presenting, Jim Horan accepted the award for his late wife, Judy. A longtime OPC volunteer and board member, Judy Horan was the first woman manager at an Omaha TV station, WOWT, and then embarked on a freelance writing career.

C. DAVID KOTOK

David Kotok, who received his award from Cate Folsom, retired as managing editor of the Omaha World-Herald after a distinguished career as an award-winning reporter. He specialized in political reporting and covered 10 national conventions.

PATRICIA MATSON

Toni Mench, at left, presented the award to Patricia Matson. Now a consultant to the Walt Disney Co., Matson spent almost 25 years at ABC Television. Earlier, she was a speechwriter and press officer in the Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford White Houses.

SIBYL MYERS

With Eileen Wirth presenting, Valerie Wilson received the award for the late Sibyl Myers. Developer of the Dreamland Historical Project to preserve Omaha’s African-American legacy, Myers was the longtime author of “Neighborhood Notes” in the Omaha World-Herald.

ALFRED “BUD” PAGEL

Alfred “Bud” Pagel received his award from Eileen Wirth. An emeritus associate professor of journalism at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Pagel earlier had a long reporting and editing career at newspapers in Neligh and Norfolk, Nebraska, and Miami and Omaha.

DAVE WEBBER

Dave Webber received his award from Ross Jernstrom. Webber has been a popular television figure in the area since 1978. He retired as sports director of WOWT in 2010 but still contributes to the station’s Husker coverage and “Friday Night Lights” report.
with Claudia Bohn, OPC Vice President

Name: Claudia Bohn.

Age: 54.

Place of employment: Methodist Health System

Title: Director of public relations/communications

Number of years as OPC member: Beginning year two

Current role with OPC: Vice president/president-elect, member of the Communications Committee

Favorite book: “To Kill a Mockingbird” -- although I recently read “Orphan Train” and loved it.

Favorite movie: “The Polar Express” -- we watched it every year at Christmas with our kids until they didn’t hear the bell anymore!

Favorite memory of career: While there are many, I’m going to say the story I was a part of in 2015, when our medical team was involved in the care of Karla and Angel Perez. Their heart-breaking story of a brain-dead woman giving birth spread globally and was also featured in National Geographic. It was emotional on many levels and one I will never forget.

Brush with fame: My kids think it’s pretty cool that I know the TV anchors in the Omaha market -- no offense to you print folks that I also work with!

About your family: My husband, Paul, is director of student services for the Papillion-La Vista School District; our son, Ethan, is a sophomore at UNL; and our daughter, Emily, is a senior at Papillion-La Vista High School. We also have a dog and cat -- Sadie and Marvin, respectively.

Favorite food: I’m old school -- fried chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy and corn.

Best advice you ever received: Not so much advice, but one of my favorite quotes from Ralph Waldo Emerson that I’ve tried to embrace: “The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.”

Hobbies: Reading, spending time with family, attending Husker football and volleyball

Favorite dish at OPC: I’ve grown a liking to the Tom O’Connor (chili and grilled cheese).

Favorite memory at OPC: Being able to take my mother-in-law and sister-in-law to the Tom Shatel lunch program featuring John Cook. I don’t think there are many bigger Husker volleyball fans around.

Why should people visit/become a member of OPC: The view, the atmosphere, the networking, the food -- did I mention the view? No other place like it in Omaha.

Favorite vacation spot: Although I’ve only been there twice -- San Diego

Favorite social media app: Twitter.
The things you learn when you get the right people together.

The club recently cosponsored a media panel with the Public Relations Society of America Nebraska chapter (PRSA) on the changing newsroom in a post-truth era.

We listened to BH Media’s vice president of news, Mike Reilly; the president and general manager of KETV, Ariel Roblin; Carson Vaughan, a freelance writer and reporter, and Margery Beck from the Associated Press.

Each made a brief statement on where they thought journalism was headed, and it was surprisingly positive.

Reilly said accusations of “fake news” have readers searching for the truth and subscribing to news outlets like the New York Times and the Washington Post in record numbers. Interest in Omaha World-Herald stories has increased as well, but a major hurdle still needs to be addressed: how to convince the public that news has a value that they are willing to pay more for.

Have you heard someone question the source of a story? Journalists do that, right? Well, Ariel Roblin said her teenagers are doing that all the time. When one of their friends recounts something seen on social media, they are asking: Where did you get that? And it’s not just because they are children of a TV station president and general manager. Roblin finds hope there that the next generation is going to be mindful of the information they share.

Nebraska and other fly-over states are getting new attention, according to freelance journalist Carson Vaughan. Provincial coastal publications are now interested in “cowboy poetry” and what rural Nebraskans think. It’s a window of opportunity that he suggests journalists should take advantage of so that the rest of the country can understand Nebraska better.

The Associated Press’ Margery Beck provided a note of caution to all of us. She described the recent violence against journalists. She said we as citizens should all guard against these actions because without a free press we have no democracy.

The panel presentation was a candid look at the journalism profession that was appreciated by the gathering of public relations professionals and Press Club members.

Another demonstration for me as to why the OPC will remain relevant in a post-truth era.

-Marcia Cady, OPC President

The OPC remembers Sean Weide

Always busy but never too busy to help. That describes Sean Weide, a man of many talents and interests.

Weide, who died May 30 in Omaha at age 49, was a man on the go in the media and in various volunteer roles after earning a journalism degree at Kearney State College. “He worked in TV, radio and print, but cycling was his true interest,” his sister, Bridget Weide Brooks, told the Omaha World-Herald.

Before Sean’s career path took him away from Omaha to become a globe-trotting press officer for professional cycling teams, he was a busy volunteer at the Press Club.

In 2006, Sean succeeded Bridget as chairman of the OPC’s Excellence in Journalism Awards and helped judge contest entries from other press clubs.

Bridget had initiated the awards in 2004.

A member of the OPC Communications Committee, Weide used his contacts and experience with Omaha media to author the popular Media Notes column in the club newsletter. He also was a contributor to the newsletter’s “Profiles in Journalism” series.

In 2008, Weide established his own communications firm and then began his association with cycling teams.

Weide, who was divorced, is survived by his five daughters – Emily, Lauren, Julia, Olivia and Veronica – whom he called his “princesses.” Other survivors, in addition to sister Bridget, include his mother, Rosemary Weide of Omaha; brothers Paul of Fairfax, Virginia, and Neil of Omaha; and sister Ann-Elizabeth Kouba of Auburn, Nebraska.
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A MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGER

Christine Jones Villamonte

We are in the full-fledged summer with lots of things on my mind besides the increasing heat.

First and foremost, I am thankful to be around – walking, talking and telling my story, which is minor compared to many, many others. My community in rural Plattsmouth was among those hit by the June 16 storms, with EF-1 and EF-2 tornadoes containing up to 110 mph winds. As I write this, it was determined that perhaps six twisters and EF-2 tornadoes containing up to 110 mph winds. As I write this, it was determined that perhaps six twisters touched down in the metro areas. My heart goes out to all affected, many of whom had only a few minutes warning. Despite all the damage, it was amazing

that no deaths were reported.

Our house was not directly hit, but the property did receive some damage, with seven trees uprooted and the fence broken. Many of our neighbors had it worse – with trees and flying debris on their roofs, trampolines smashed against the sides of houses, wood and metal fences mangled – and all of us without electricity and drinking water. Mother Nature wins again is the old saying.

If you saw me during the college baseball championships, please excuse my wrinkled clothes and hair in a bun. However, I did shower and my clothes were clean despite the lack of power. Even my son’s baseball uniform was clean as I washed in the sink by hand and dried on the deck – sorry for the view, neighbors!

As I explain to my children, everything is material and replaceable, but we are not. Thank you for another day on earth.

Summer closing: This year’s annual closing of the club runs from July 24 to Aug. 15. Private clubs typically schedule an annual closing. Since we are a city club with no pool (still working on the rooftop swimming pool!), we close in the summer, while country clubs close in the winter after the holidays.

If you are interested in booking space at the club, please reach out to me by email (opcchristine@gmail.com) or phone; no dates are available during our break. A reminder: For OPC members, there is no rental fee – resulting in a savings of up to $1,300. If you have booked a date, expect an email or phone call as a reminder to submit your plans. When we reopen, we have many things scheduled for the fall such as our quarterly wine dinner, the “Face on the Barroom Floor” on Sept 28 honoring Bill and Evonne Williams, and, of course, our monthly forums.

-Christine Jones Villamonte, B.S. Nutrition, Restaurant Manager/Events Coordinator
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Are you looking for a perfect party setting? A lunch surrounded by brilliance? A dinner your guests will always remember? Keep the OPC in mind.

TUESDAY, Aug. 15
Club reopens

THURSDAY, Sept. 28
“Face on the Barroom Floor”
Bill and Evonne Williams
5:30 p.m. reception
6:30 p.m. dinner
7:45 p.m. roast

THURSDAY, Oct. 19
Noon Education Forum
Mayor Jean Stothert
Noon to 1 p.m.
Lunch begins at 11:30 a.m.

CANCELLATION POLICY: All reservations must be cancelled 48 HOURS in advance.

WE’RE ONLINE! READ YOUR OPC NEWSLETTER AT OMHAAPRESSCLUB.COM

Hours of Operation
LUNCH
Monday - Friday
11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.
BAR
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4:30 p.m. to close
DINNER
Thursday - Saturday
5:30 p.m. to close