



# Ski Country Educator

November – December 2010

## **Membership is Critical to Our Relevance as an Organization**

Total membership in Ski Country UniServ has fallen quite significantly from last year's all time high of 1,206 members. This is understandable given the current economic recession, the negativity in the media towards public education, CEA, and education unions in relation to public school reform.

Please remember that in order to have relevance with our school administrations in regard to advocating for increased pay, stronger benefits, and better working conditions through bargaining, it is important to have strong membership.

Public school employees and association members are not afraid of education reform. In fact we welcome it. But it seems more and more the reforms are forced upon us through legislation, decided on by folks who are not always in tune with what is happening in our schools. In order for us to have any relevance in the political process, we need members; members who are strong leaders and members willing to speak out and have their voices heard.

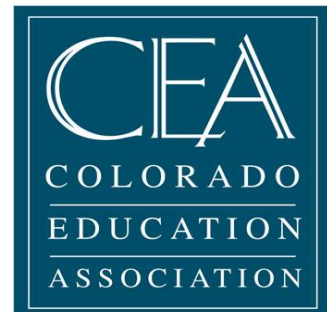
It will take us a while to dig out of the hole we have been placed in due to the current recession. Education employees should be the driving force in school reform and quality education is the means of lifting the country out of recession. Don't give up the fight. Become a member and an involved member at that. Together we can make a difference.

Ski Country UniServ  
P.O. Box 4472  
Dillon, Colorado  
80435  
Phone (970) 668-0830  
1-800-545-4916  
  
E-mail [scuu@nea.org](mailto:scuu@nea.org)

Caroline Hanson,  
Unit Chair

Dennis Carlson,  
Unit Director

Barb Hodson,  
Office Manager



## Amazing Ski Country Members

Ski Country leaders and members worked diligently in the battle to defeat the “Ugly Three” 60, 61, 101. As a result we have defeated these regressive ideas soundly at the polls.

Thanks to all of you who put up a yard sign, distributed campaign literature, and persuaded your friends and neighbors to vote no on 60, 61, and 101. Many thanks to those of you who wrote editorials in your local papers explaining the effects of these ballot issues on your local school districts. This is not the first time and likely will not be the last time that we will have to work to avoid a catastrophe for public education in Colorado.

A very special thank you to **Kevin Kleckler**, president of the **Hayden Education Association**, who organized an election activity on the evening of October 13<sup>th</sup>; activities that included canvassing the community in support of their district mill levy override and vote no on 60, 61, and 101, making phone calls to rural voters, and building yard signs in support of the mill levy.

Also to **Karen Green** of the **Aspen Education Association** who helped to organize neighborhood walks every weekend in October in support of Aspen’s Mill Levy, no on 60, 61, and 101, and CEA recommended candidate Gail Schwartz for senate district 5.

And to **Dave Grabowski**, president of the **Moffat County Education Association**, who organized a float in their annual homecoming parade, reminding spectators to vote no on 60, 61, and 101.

Let us not forget that the **CEA Fund for Children and Public Education** gave the **Summit County EA** and the **Summit County ESP Association** a total of \$1,000 to help in the effort to pass their mill levy. **South Routt EA, Hayden EA, Aspen EA, West Grand EA, and East Grand EA** all received \$500 each.

The mill levies in Aspen, Summit County, South Routt, and Hayden all passed. West Grand’s levy failed and East Grand’s bond issue failed, although the bond would have only been necessary if Amendment 61 had passed. Win or lose our members stepped up to the plate and worked tirelessly to help pass these ballot issues.

CEA is anticipating that in the next couple of years a coalition of public education supporters will sponsor a ballot issue that will actually bring in more money to public schools in Colorado. Now that the 1% over CPI is expiring on Amendment 23 and Colorado continues to fall behind in their financial commitment to public education, this ballot issue is sorely needed and about time.

## **Blaming Teachers – America’s Newest Sport**

Teacher bashing is becoming a popular sport in Colorado and across the nation, second only to public employee union bashing. It seems that a majority of the public expect us to accept no increases in cost of living. No step and lane movement on our salary schedules; and, oh by the way, they also expect us to work harder, put in longer hours, and do a better job.

Some folks disregard that a teacher graduates from college with debts that will take many years to pay off, especially on a teacher’s salary. The public does not understand that many teachers are teaching in schools that have had two or three different principals in the last four or five years. It’s more and more the norm that often a third or more of the students in public schools now come from homes that don’t even speak the English language. It’s discouraging and embarrassing that the majority of taxpayers in Colorado care so little about K-12 education as to allow per pupil spending as a percentage of personal income to fall lower than 48 other states in the nation, and that the child poverty rate in the state rose 70% between 2000 and 2008 and continues to rise.

Now that someone has declared that teachers are the number one factor in student success, the obvious scapegoat for low graduation rates, low student performance, and low performing schools has become teachers. If we can just make it easier to fire teachers we will eventually get the best and the brightest that starting salaries of \$30,000 to \$35,000 can buy.

The answer according to the recent documentary “Waiting for Superman” is charter schools where teachers have no rights. They have no due process; they never obtain tenure or non-probationary status; and they have no ability to bargain salaries or benefits. Considering this fact is it any wonder why so many politicians and so called school reformers think charter schools are the way to go. The statistics show that only one out of five charter schools show greater performance than public schools, and that regular public schools generally outperform public charter schools.

The legislature in 2010 passed a new law that says teachers must be deemed “effective” before they are granted non-probationary status and must remain “effective” to maintain probationary status. The law was passed before the term “effective” was even defined. Well, as a person who is part of CEA’s Educator Evaluation/Rights Task Force and having access to the criteria that may be put into place for determining an “effective” teacher, the title of the documentary “Waiting For Superman” is very appropriate; because to meet all the criteria for being a “highly effective” teacher, you will have to be superhuman.

... Dennis Carlson, Unit Director

## CEA Talking Points on “Waiting for Superman”

### About the Film

This film was made by “Inconvenient Truth” producer Davis Guggenheim. “Waiting for Superman” is scheduled for public release September 24 in New York City and Los Angeles and nation-wide release the week of October 3. Guggenheim says he made “Waiting for Superman” to encourage the same level of national discourse on public education that “An Inconvenient Truth” generated on climate change. Our Association welcomes others to the same discussion we’ve been having for years.

### General Comments

Our Association (3.2 million members nationally, 40,000 in 200 local associations in Colorado) welcomes and encourages filmgoers to join us in our mission of making great public schools for every student.

- Our Association and our members consistently advocate for the basic right of all students to attend great public schools. We hope the film inspires more Americans to become engaged in a larger discussion about the shared responsibility for ensuring that America has a public education system that prepares all of our children, not just some of them, to live and compete in a global society.
- “Waiting for Superman” is a film that evokes strong emotions. It tells the story of injustice in America’s education system, a story that teachers and education support professionals have been telling for years. We are delighted that more people are talking about these issues, and generating ideas about how to improve our nation’s public schools for all students.
- In many places, the situation is urgent, so for those new to the conversation, the impulse is to recommend simple, silver-bullet solutions. Of course, the challenges our public schools face are myriad and complex and in most cases there are no quick and easy fixes. Our Association seeks solutions that are research-based, collaborative, and sustainable.
- “Waiting for Superman” raises some important issues, but we should be careful not to allow a 90-minute film to define how we go about improving public education – our children and our nation deserve a more meaningful discussion about how we prepare our students for the future.
- To a large extent, the film misses the point by over simplifying complex issues. Ultimately, it’s just a film and, as such, it lacks the depth and factual, research-based policy analysis required to have a meaningful discussion about what’s best for every public school student in America. That said, we certainly appreciate that it has helped to spark a larger conversation about education.

- We commend the film’s call to action on behalf of America’s public schools. Community involvement is crucial to ensuring that every child has access to great public schools. For centuries, educators and their unions have led the fight for change and innovation in America’s public schools.
- While there are struggling public schools, there are also public schools across the country that help children from all backgrounds reach great academic heights. In them, unheralded teachers are doing extraordinary things every day. Unfortunately, this film did not feature those schools or teachers. It missed the opportunity to shed light on the good that is happening in our public schools.
- Rather than waiting for Superman, responsible and caring adults must find ways to work together to make sure that teachers have the tools and resources they need to do their jobs well. We must develop and support the teachers to whom we entrust our children’s future.
- Waiting for Superman says important things about the challenges of the public education system. However, the messaging —“charters are good” and “teachers unions are bad”—oversimplifies complicated issues and threatens to thwart thoughtful discussions about improving public schools. Improving public education is a shared responsibility: parents, teachers, school administrators, elected officials, and other adults must come together to determine how to make schools in their community great. Unfortunately, this is not reflected in the film’s tone, which is divisive rather than collaborative.
- The film promotes nostalgia for a school system of years past, seemingly forgetting past inequities like segregated schools; institutionalization of children with disabilities; and marginalization of and discrimination against female teachers and teachers of color.
- It glosses over the negative effects of testing mania and Bush-era reforms (No Child Left Behind) and ignores the impact of these so-called reforms on certain student populations, such as students with disabilities and rural students.
- The film promotes charter schools as the silver bullet to improve public education, even as it admits that only one charter school in five is more effective than a traditional public school. There is absolutely no discussion of the research confirming that regular public schools generally outperform public charter schools.
- The film’s producer interviewed experts who are uniformly anti-union — mostly “reformers” who believe teachers’ unions are the main obstacle to great public schools. Guggenheim does not interview a single superintendent or politician who has a collaborative relationship with the union where real transformation has taken place.



NEA's American Education Week (AEW) spotlights the importance of providing every child in America with a quality public education from kindergarten through college, and the need for everyone to do his or her part in making public schools great.

Our annual tagline, *Great Public Schools: A Basic Right and Our Responsibility*, reflects the Association's calling upon America to provide students with quality public schools so that they can grow, prosper, and achieve in the 21st century.

In 2010, the 89th annual American Education Week will take place **November 14–20**. Each day during the week will spotlight a different aspect of school life:

- **Monday, November 15** -*Kick-off Day*- From national commemorations to local community events, millions of Americans celebrate public education.
- **Tuesday, November 16** -*Parents' Day*- Schools invite parents into the classroom for a hands-on experience of what the day is like for their child.
- **Wednesday, November 17** *Education Support Professionals Day* Individuals who provide invaluable services to schools are recognized for their outstanding work.
- **Thursday, November 18** *Educator for a Day* Community leaders are invited to serve as educators to get a glimpse at a day in the life of a school employee.
- **Friday, November 19** *Substitute Educators Day* This day honors the educators who are called upon to replace regularly employed teachers.