PDK Connection – Heritage News

The Heritage Society recognizes individual donors whose estate planning includes support for the PDK Educational Foundation. In this bimonthly Kappan column, we celebrate the legacy and traditions of PDK International and give current and potential donors a glimpse of the people and programs who benefit from their generosity.

ILLINOIS PDK AND EDUCATORS RISING: CREATING COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING PATHWAYS

In 2018, Lindsey Jensen, the Illinois State Teacher of the Year, visited a PDK Educators Rising chapter in California and, in her words, “it blew her away.” So she made it her work to create such an opportunity for all the schools in Illinois. With the help of PDK’s national office, she built a coalition and received Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker’s support to get Educators Rising a million dollars of funding in the 2020 state budget. Then came COVID, and the 2019 budget was simply rolled over, with no new funding.

But the story did not end there. In July, Governor Pritzker created a grant to create teacher pathways with community colleges and Education for Employment systems. This created an opportunity for a new strategy in which the Illinois State Teacher of the Year (ILSTOY) organization would become the Illinois EdRising Affiliate, and the national office of PDK International would become the state’s career and technical state organization (CTSO), enabling districts to use federal and state funding for Educators Rising. This required the collaboration of a variety of stakeholders, including PDK, ILSTOY, the Illinois State Board of Education, and partners in local districts and institutes of higher education.

Today, we are working with districts across the state to use newly available funds to begin planning for the 2021 academic year by creating chapters in middle and high schools, putting in place the infrastructure for the Academy Curriculum and micro-credentials, working with local higher education partners to create dual-credit options, and recruiting students into the program. These aspiring educators will learn about the profession, be trained in classroom management and instructional delivery, practice through clinical experiences, and have the opportunity to showcase their skills in local, state, and national competitions.

This would not have been possible if Lindsey Jensen had not decided to champion the cause and bring other stakeholders along. Educators Rising has programs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and we have official state agreements in 31 of them. Every one of those programs needs your continued support and advocacy to bring in more districts, higher education partners, and funders. We also need volunteers to help mentor students and lend a hand at competitions and conferences. And these programs also need funds. We call upon the PDK, Pi Lambda Theta, and EdRising communities to help champion the work nationwide.

SUPPORT EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Your gift will reach more than 100,000 current and future educators through their career, by guiding young people on the path to becoming accomplished educators and supporting leaders and academics who seek to leave a lasting legacy. Your support will help PDK elevate and change the narrative about public education, inform the national discourse, and bridge research and practice. Donation options include cash gifts, stocks and securities, legacy giving, and more. For more information, contact us at give@pdkintl.org or 800-766-1156.

PLANNED GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

By joining the PDK Heritage Society, you will help ensure that future generations of educators will be well prepared to provide their students with outstanding educational experiences. To leave a gift in your will, simply share this sentence with your attorney or financial planner: “I bequeath $____ or __% of my estate to PDK International, P.O. Box 13090, Arlington, VA 22219.”

THANK YOU TO OUR HERITAGE NEWS SUPPORTER

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STUDENT OFFICER SPOTLIGHT
Kieran Van Vorhis  
Hometown: Gahanna, OH  
School: Capital University, Columbus, OH  
I am very excited to serve as the Educators Rising vice president of engagement and programs! I cannot wait to amplify student voices and further spread the word about Educators Rising. I am very passionate about education because I believe students have the power to change the world. Through teaching and learning, we can help inspire our upcoming generations and create a bright future.

SCHOLARSHIP WINNER SPOTLIGHT
Winnie Johnson  
Hometown: Yonkers, NY  
School: Northeastern University, Boston, MA  
Being born to immigrant parents who moved to the United States for a better life, I knew I had to work twice as hard as anyone else. My educational journey has been a roller-coaster ride, but I knew I had a community of people depending on me, so success was the only option. One of my aspirations in life is to become a principal, and I am returning to school to pursue a doctorate in curriculum, teaching, learning, and leadership. I’m now in my fourth year as a classroom teacher, and I plan on remaining a classroom teacher until I finish my degree. Being a classroom teacher brings me joy.

If you are interested in establishing your own scholarship, visit pdkintl.org/giving.

HERITAGE MEMBER SPOTLIGHT
Dr. Gene Ulrich  
In his 64 years as an educator, Dr. Gene Ulrich has transformed the lives of thousands of students in 98 different countries. He has taught at every level, from junior high to university and graduate students.

Dr. Ulrich’s service to PDK extends from 1978 to today and includes almost a decade as an officer and area coordinator. He also shared his considerable financial expertise as a certified financial planner as part of his service to PDK.

At 85 years young, Dr. Ulrich is involved in planning his ninth course in natural sciences in Hawaii this summer. He stays active on the golf course and keeps up with education policy through Kappan magazine. We thank Dr. Ulrich for his contributions as both an educator and as a role model for future generations.

DISTINGUISHED EDUCATOR SPOTLIGHT
Maureen LaRaviere  
A longtime professional member of PDK International, Maureen LaRaviere exemplifies the core values of the PDK Association — a commitment to research, service, and leadership. LaRaviere, who began teaching in 2003 in Chicago, Illinois, says the most gratifying part of her career is seeing students succeed as adults and become successful in the workforce. She believes that no matter what profession a student chooses, a teacher helped them get there and that there is no better job than that of a teacher.

Learn more about becoming a PDK Distinguished Educator at pdkintl.org/distinguished.