

## EASTERN NEBRASKA SECTION



Society of  
Women Engineers

ASPIRE • ADVANCE • ACHIEVE

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March 2008 Newsletter

## 2008 Global Marathon For, By and About Women in Engineering March 26-27



### Invitation to Participate in the Global Marathon

I am pleased to partner with the National Engineers Foundation and accept the position of National Honorary Chairperson for the 2008 Global 24-Hour Marathon, "For, By, and About Women in Engineering." The 2008 event promises to be an exciting educational event designed to enlighten women around the globe about the various disciplines, benefits, and wide range possibilities in S.T.E.M, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math careers.

The 2008 Marathon will follow a new model as the 24 hours of continuous programming will 'follow the sun' by aligning the programming with the business day around the globe. The event will kickoff in the United States and then travel to Mexico, China, India, Africa, and Europe, retuning back to the United States for the closing ceremonies.

I would like to welcome the region leads from each country as they join with Verizon Business and the National Engineers Foundation to make this a collaborative and successful global event in March 2008

On behalf of the Foundation, I invite your participation in the 2008 Global Marathon, a 24-hour event that starts at noon EST on Wednesday, March 26.

Judy Spitz  
Senior Vice President – Chief Information Office  
Verizon Business

## Message from the President



Our Section has been very busy the past two months, between planning for Wow! That's Engineering event this October, E-Week activities, and volunteering for the Metro Area Science fair. I would like to extend a special thank you to **Elizabeth Hunter** for her participation and leadership role in organizing the E-Week Banquet and representing SWE at the Engineers Roundtable during E-Week activities. Many thank you's to **Amanda Stahlnecker, Janis Pfingsten, Pam Dingman, Susan Randall, and Cybil Boss** for attending the E-Week Banquet. I also like to thank **Janis Pfingsten** and **Jo Whitaker** for attendig the SWE booth at the Westroads Mall and volunteering at the Metro Omaha Science Fair at UNO as Judges.

Our March Membership meeting was a joint meeting with American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). I would like to thank the ASCE members for welcoming us and for all the SWE memnbers that were able to attend. The meeting was held on March 13 at Bistro 121 in Omaha. The speaker, Mr. John Hansen with the Nebraska Farmer's Union presented on Wind Resources in Nerbaska.

Finally, it will soon be time to elect new officers for FY09, including President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Section Representatives, and an Alternate Section Representative. At the March Office meeting, the Officers elected the Nominating Committee, which is composed of section members in good standing who would like to help determine the slate of candidates for election. If you are interested in being part of the Nominating Committee or running for an FY09 Officer role, please contact me or any current officer.

*Without your input and participation, our Section will not grow!*

Respectfully,

Lara Syrocki, P.E.  
Eastern-NE SWE Section President

### How were you inspired?

Share stories about who inspired you to become an engineer and how your family impacted your future and career. Your stories will be featured in a future newsletter. Send them to [newsletter@swe-nebraska.org](mailto:newsletter@swe-nebraska.org).

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **Next Meeting**

#### **Joint meeting with the students**

#### **Lincoln, NE**

Final details about this meeting are still being worked out. They will be distributed via email shortly. If you have any questions, contact Lara Syrocki at [president@swe-nebraska.org](mailto:president@swe-nebraska.org).

### **Upcoming Meetings**

May – Planning FY09 meeting  
June – Officer Elections  
July - Social

If you have any ideas for topics of meetings or other suggestions or know of another organization's meeting that would be of interest to the section, please email [SWE\\_Planning@swe-nebraska.org](mailto:SWE_Planning@swe-nebraska.org).

### **WOW! THAT'S ENGINEERING 2008**

Planning is underway. The committee has held a couple of meetings so far this year and we have a great start to another wonderful event. We meet on a monthly basis, if you ever want to join in on the planning.

If you would like to be a part of the committee, contact Amanda Stahlnecker at [wow\\_event@swe-nebraska.org](mailto:wow_event@swe-nebraska.org).

For more information about the section's activities, please visit our website at [www.swe-nebraska.org](http://www.swe-nebraska.org)



## NOTEWORTHY NEWS

Currently there is an Affirmative Action Initiative Petition in Nebraska to place on the November ballot a constitutional amendment that would repeal any affirmative action programs in the state. This is a very serious matter as it affects our state as a whole but our section as well. This same matter is being addressed in Colorado, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Arizona. As you can see, most of these states lie in the SWE Region I.

See pages 8-10 for recent articles about this issue.

For information on National SWE's dealings with public policy, go to [www.swe.org](http://www.swe.org) and click on the link on the left hand side for News and Public Policy.

### **UNO Update**

<http://www.unomaha.edu/swe>

### **UNL UPDATE**

<http://swe.unl.edu/>

### **Would you like to take on a leadership role in our section?**

Start thinking about how you could contribute to the section and become a leader. From something as simple as hosting/planning a monthly meeting or social to taking on an officer role, there are numerous opportunities for you to get involved. To learn more about these opportunities, contact Lara Syrocki, section president, at [president@swe-nebraska.org](mailto:president@swe-nebraska.org)

### **INFORMATION TO SHARE**

We always welcome articles of interest or tidbits of news from our newsletter recipients. Send information for the next newsletter to Amanda Stahlnecker at [newsletter@swe-nebraska.org](mailto:newsletter@swe-nebraska.org).

**Region I Conference 2008 in  
Boulder, Colorado**  
February 29 – March 1, 2008

Amanda Stahlnecker and Janis Pfingsten attended the Region I 2008 Conference in Boulder, Colorado. They had a great time networking with both professionals and students throughout the region. Interestingly enough, Amanda even met a student that was interested in railway engineering.

At the professional meeting, there were about 30 members present with approximately 80 professionals registered for the whole conference. Some items to note from the meeting:

- SWE is working on some safeguard measures to help sections secure their finances including procedures and trainings. The finances of each section should not be the sole responsibility of the treasure but at a minimum 2 people should be overseeing the sections finances. This will help prevent embezzlement of funds.
- Revised Section Bylaws are due with approval from national and each section May 1<sup>st</sup>. Janis will be spearheading this effort for our section.
- Region I is trying to beef up their leadership by holding a Leadership Retreat this fall to help train the leaders of each section. More information about the retreat will be forthcoming.

At the joint meeting between the professionals and the students, the 2009 Conference bids were discussed. Colorado State University and Washington University placed bids. The winner of the bid will be announced shortly.

At the 2010 Conference, the focus will be on Section Histories. Each section should starting thinking and compiling items for the time capsule that will be put together at that conference. In addition, each section should look into their history to understand the roots of their section.

SWE Public Policy was a key issue of both the professional and joint meetings. Nationally SWE is working hard to utilize Title IX not just for athletics but for STEM education. Melissa Carl is our SWE Washington Representative and her efforts on Capitol Hill are greatly appreciated.

As some of you may know, the Region I website is in rough shape and needs to be updated. This item was put on high priority and should be resolved over the next couple of months with a revised or even completely new website up and running.

While many of you all were enjoying the snow on March 1<sup>st</sup>, Janis and Amanda were enjoying a nice spring 60's day where they walked around the Boulder campus to the various events of the conference. Friday night included a social event which Janis attended. Saturday started with meetings was followed by sessions covering a wide range of topics and ended with another social at the Boulder Dinner Theatre (Little Shop of Horrors). The topics of the sessions were focused on 5 different tracks:

1. Life Balance
2. Environmental and Technical
3. Aerospace and Weather
4. Leadership and Professional Development
5. Everyday Health and Wellness

It is with pleasure that I announce that 2 of our fellow Nebraskans were presenters at the conference. Janis Pfingsten presenting on Team Building and Gretchen Gonzales (UNO Collegiate Section) presented on Section Fund Development. They both did an excellent job. Overall, the conference was a great time and tremendous success.

**We hope you can attend the Regional Conference next year!!!**

## EWEEK 2008 HAPPENINGS

### **To the Mall with Engineering**

On February 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> at Westroads Mall in the Von Maur Court, Janis Pfingsten and Jo Whitaker set up a display to showcase our section of the Society of Women Engineers. They talked with several interested people who were viewing all the engineering booths taking part in EWEEK 2008's Mall Displays.

### **Lara Syrocki goes to the classroom**

My son William who is in 4th grade asked me to come and talk to his class about engineering, so I jumped at the chance and went on Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day!

The 4<sup>th</sup> graders at Mary Our Queen were excited to have William's mom talk about engineering, since William had told them that his mom was going to bring "cool" things with her. I talked to the class about the different kind of engineering and ask them to name what kinds of engineers were involved in building their school or classroom.

I gave out puzzles that we have in our SWE inventory from DLR and the kids and the teacher loved it. We also made BuunyCopters and watched how they descended with two different kinds of paper clips. I also gave the class copies of the famous SWE Lip Gloss! The boys did not want it until I told them that they can take it and make it for their moms for Mother's Day!!

I would like to thank Miss. Moore, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade teacher at Mary our Queen for allowing me to Introduce a Girl to Engineering and to DLR for supplying us with the puzzles.

### **3 Women Take to the Fair**

The Metropolitan Science and Engineering Fair was held on March 8, 2008, at UNO. Three women represented SWE at the fair, Janis Pfingsten, Jeanne Stewart, and Jo Whitaker. We reviewed 9 projects in the junior division, giving 3 awards. There was only one girl in the senior division, she also got an award. The awards were books. (Janis and Lara knows the title.)

At the request of the organizers we also judged the engineering projects in the senior division, both boys and girls, for a \$1000 scholarship donated by UNL.

### **EWEEK Banquet**

This year's EWEEK banquet was held on Thursday February 21<sup>st</sup> at Cascio's Steak House. It was very well attended. A great presentation from Google about the capabilities and applications of Google Earth.

### **How do you pledge to introduce engineering to the younger generations, especially the girls?**

February 21<sup>st</sup> was Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day. Did you take the challenge to commit yourself to promoting engineering to girls this year? What did you pledge to do?

Share your pledge with us by submitting your pledge to [newsletter@swe-nebraska.org](mailto:newsletter@swe-nebraska.org) to be included in the April newsletter.

## **BLOCK KIDS CONTEST**

The Annual Block Kids Contest was held on Saturday, February 9<sup>th</sup> at the IBEW Hall in Omaha. A total of 69 boys and girls participated. We had 13 judges, including 6 new judges of whom 3 were from the Society of Women Engineers. Home Depot donated nail bags this year which helped transporting legos from the table to the supply house and back. The Chapter sold coffee and donuts, which seems to have been a big hit with the parents and kids. The 50/50 raffle was won by a parent and the Chapter donated their half to Brendan Collins, who has been ill for the last 4 months and is well on his way to a full recovery. The following children won:

**First Place – 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade**  
**Joseph Riesberg, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade from St. Gerald Elementary**  
**Built a Bridge**

**First Place – 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Grade**  
**Spencer Nussrallah, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade from Mary Our Queen Elementary**  
**Built a Hydraulic Crane**

**First Place 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Grade,**  
**Ashley Smock, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade from Trumble Park Elementary**  
**Built a Windmill**  
**Overall Winner**  
**Brendan Owens, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade, St. Robert Bellarmine**  
**Built a Biodiesel Plant**

Check out the new website for pictures of the Contest.....[www.nawicomaha.com](http://www.nawicomaha.com).

A BIG THANK YOU to all the companies and individuals that donated items for the goodie bags and helped purchase t-shirts and hats for the kids.

Thank you to all the volunteers and NAWIC members who helped with the contest.

## **LADY IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

She may not be one of our members but she is definitely someone to take notice of from an Omaha based company.

PINK Magazine  
2/15/2008

UP's Duren one of top 15 women in corporate America, magazine says *PINK* magazine recently named Union Pacific Railroad Vice President and General Manager-Chemicals Diane Duren to its "Top 15 Women in Business" list.

A national magazine targeted at professional women, *PINK* annually profiles the "most influential women driving innovation and revenue in corporate America," according to a prepared statement.

Duren made the list for helping create the Express Lane food product unit train during her tenure as UP's VP and GM of agriculture products. The train — which moves perishables from Washington state to New York — tapped a major market opportunity that long had been abandoned by railroads, the magazine said. She also helped UP take advantage of the growing ethanol market by playing a role in the construction of a rail network to support ethanol moves.

Since joining UP in 1985, Duren has held various finance and marketing and sales positions.

<http://www.pinkmagazine.com/index.html>

**IF YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN "TODAY'S OMAHA WOMAN" NEWSLETTER, YOU MAY WANT TO CHECK IT OUT SOMETIME TO LEARN MORE ABOUT LOCAL SUCCESSFUL WOMEN.**

## **LOCAL JOB POSTINGS**

To post local engineering or engineering related jobs please contact our SWE section at [newsletter@swe-nebraska.org](mailto:newsletter@swe-nebraska.org).

### **Senior Geotechnical Engineer**

Our client, a geotechnical engineering and construction materials consulting firm that performs services for Private and Public clients in 9 Midwestern states is seeking an experienced Geotechnical Engineer who has exceptional leadership skills and a desire to be a part of the management team. This profitable company is expanding due to increased demand for geotechnical engineering services as they are the "company of choice" for many municipalities and construction firms due to their attention to detail and excellent customer service. The company is very progressive in how they help their customers as evidenced by them being the only company in Central Iowa to operate their own testing facility. The ideal candidate will have an advanced degree (MS or PHD) in Geotechnical Engineering and possess a Professional Engineering license or have the ability to secure this license in the very near future. The ideal candidate must also possess a minimum of 5 years in Geotechnical Engineering and have proven leadership skills to help mentor the employees and be a part of strategic planning. If you would like to be a part of a company that is built upon superb ethics and character; would like to leverage your career for more growth and income and where your service to the customer is valued as a professional, please email your resume to Terry Lebo at [lebot@qwestoffice.net](mailto:lebot@qwestoffice.net)

### **Mechanical Project Engineer**

BCDM is a reputable architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, and construction management firm that integrates the built and natural environments to develop innovative and high-quality solutions for our clients. It is the goal of BCDM to provide an array of project opportunities for our employees; we feel that well rounded and successful professionals need the opportunity to have their hands on various types of projects.

BCDM is seeking a positive and creative individual with excellent design, graphic and communication skills to fill a position of **Mechanical Project Engineer** in our Omaha office.

### **Essential Job Functions**

- Initiate and create engineering project designs
- Develop engineering concepts and solutions
- Manage and execute resources and schedule
- Develop project tasks and staff hours
- Responsible for management of assigned projects
- Edit and coordinate specifications
- Assist with cost estimating
- Conduct code compliance reviews

### **Qualifications**

- Professional degree and licensure required
- Seven or more years of experience preferred
- Has experience in developing and/or leading a Mechanical Engineering department
- Capable of completing studies, master plans, schematic designs, design development, and construction documents
- Has knowledge in the execution of production software such as AutoCAD, and Trace Trane
- Must also be able to provide assistance with bidding, construction administration, trouble shooting, mechanical commissioning. Must be willing to work on design teams or individually in a studio-like environment
- Must be a detailed, goal oriented, value driven individual with proven problem solving abilities.

BCDM offers a competitive salary, 100% paid medical and dental benefits, life-insurance, generous time-off benefits, 401(k) and a flexible work environment. BCDM is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer.

If you are interested, send a resume to [adye@bcdm.net](mailto:adye@bcdm.net) or call Audrey Dye at 402-384-6406.

# Chamber Board Takes Position on Affirmative Action Initiative Petition

*Published: March 19, 2008*

An initiative petition has been filed with the Nebraska Secretary of State to place on the November ballot a constitutional amendment "to prohibit discriminating against or granting preferential treatment to any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education or public contracting by the state or any of its agencies, institutions or political subdivisions." Placing this on the ballot would require securing 115,000 signatures of Nebraska voters.

**Should this proposal be placed on the ballot and approved by the voters, affirmative action programs of any public entity in the state would be in effect repealed. This would affect student and professor recruitment and retention, employee recruitment, and minority contracting programs at the state, city and county levels, and any other effort that might be found to violate this provision.**

The Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce board of directors adopted a position in opposition to this proposal at their March 14 meeting. The board urges Chamber members not to sign the petition and not to vote for it should it be placed on the November ballot.

In reaching this position, the Chamber board made the findings that:

- The business community is committed to diversity in the state's institutions of higher learning and believes this diversity strengthens our competitiveness as a state and ultimately helps produce a stronger workforce
- The repeal of affirmative action sends a negative message to prospective Nebraskans and prospective employers considering Nebraska that we do not value diversity in our public policies
- The repeal of affirmative action from the state's constitution would likely mean the end of minority contracting programs that are an important aspect of the Chamber's ongoing community development strategies in North Omaha, Midtown and South Omaha and other capacity building efforts, and
- The business community is comfortable with the current status of the law on affirmative action as outlined in recent decisions by the U.S. Supreme Court and as such does not believe that any amendment to the Nebraska Constitution is necessary or in the best interests of the State of Nebraska.

Published Saturday | March 15, 2008

## **Outside cash fuels drive to kill affirmative action-style program**

BY MARTHA STODDARD  
WORLD-HERALD BUREAU

LINCOLN — More than 99 percent of the money for an effort seeking to end affirmative action-style programs in Nebraska has come from a New York City hedge fund executive and groups based in California and Michigan.

Leaders of the initiative petition effort said Friday that such out-of-state funding is essential to achieving their goals and putting the proposed ban before Nebraska voters.

"I don't care where I get the money," said Marc Schniederjans with the Nebraska Civil Rights Initiative. "I don't care where I get the help. I just want to get equal rights."

Reports filed with the state show that all but \$437 of the \$58,771.22 collected by the Nebraska group so far has come from outside Nebraska.

The largest contribution — \$50,000 — came from Paul Singer, a founding partner with Elliott Associates, which was described last year as a \$7 billion hedge fund. Two groups tied to California businessman Ward Connerly gave more than \$8,000.

Of the remainder, \$100 was donated by Schniederjans, of Lincoln.

The source of the other money was not disclosed. Donors who give \$250 or less to ballot organizations do not have to be disclosed under Nebraska law.

Connerly's group is seeking to put a proposed constitutional amendment on November's ballot. If passed by voters, it would prohibit all consideration of race, ethnicity and gender in hiring, scholarship or contracting decisions made by public agencies such as the University of Nebraska.

The Nebraska Civil Rights Initiative is one of five state efforts to gain passage of affirmative action bans this year. All five are supported by Connerly and his American Civil Rights Coalition, based in Sacramento, Calif.

Groups affiliated with Connerly have won passage of similar bans in California, Michigan and Washington.

Connerly said opponents typically accuse his group of being carpetbaggers, who come in from out of state to try to affect another state's affairs. But he said he never goes where he's not invited. That's been the case in Nebraska, he said.

"If we were not wanted there, we wouldn't be there," Connerly said.

Supporters of affirmative action criticized the out-of-state funding, saying the initiative petition process was intended to be a way for Nebraska citizens to address issues.

"It's intended to address the Nebraska Constitution, Nebraska issues, and so it should come from

Nebraskans," said Rebecca Gonzales, a leader with the newly formed group Nebraskans United.

The group is a coalition of Nebraska-based organizations and citizens who oppose the proposed constitutional amendment that Schniederjans' group wants to put on the ballot.

Schniederjans said Nebraska's effort is being led by Nebraskans, even if money is coming from other states. He said his experience has taught him that outside money is critical to the success of petition drives in Nebraska.

Connerly's American Civil Rights Coalition has provided \$3,750 worth of in-kind support for the Nebraska initiative so far. Schniederjans said that support has consisted of a consultant who is helping get the petition drive off the ground.

The Michigan Civil Rights Initiative also gave \$4,584.22 to the Nebraska effort.

Connerly said he asked New Yorker Singer to help the Nebraska group. Singer has been a supporter of affirmative action bans for the past 11 years, he said.

Singer has donated to a number of other conservative groups, including the Swift Boat Vets and POWS for Truth, which campaigned against Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry in 2004.

Nebraskans may learn more about the money behind the petition drive in future months. If the American Civil Rights Coalition gives more than \$10,000 to the Nebraska effort, it would be classified as a major out-of-state contributor under Nebraska law.

That means it would have to file reports with the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission. The commission issued an advisory opinion Friday that said those reports would have to disclose the names of people who gave more than \$200 to the national group.

Connerly said his organization sought the advisory opinion so it could be sure to play by the rules. Nebraska's disclosure law won't affect the national group's involvement with Nebraska, but it could make a difference to some potential donors, he said.

So far, most of the money spent by the Nebraska Civil Rights Initiative has gone to a Georgia-based firm that collects petition signatures.

Schniederjans said paid circulators made an initial push and will return to the state later. Most of the signature-gathering at the moment was being done by volunteers.

***Neither birth nor sex forms a limit to genius.  
- Charlotte Bronte***