

## Year-end Celebration

Celebrations signal that we are thankful for the progress made toward established goals, and a chance to look at what has been accomplished. Last week we officially ended another school year with an appreciation luncheon and celebration for USD 435's staff. The event was held in the courtyard at the Eisenhower Library and was co-sponsored by the Eisenhower Center and West's Country Mart.

Emily Miller, an educator for the Eisenhower Foundation and a former Abilene student, welcomed our group. She spoke of the collaboration between our two entities and of the new and innovative Ike Education K-12 programs that our teachers helped pilot during the past year. "Ike ED had the opportunity to work with Abilene students 18 different times. We served over 700 students, many of them on more than one occasion, who participated in 87 programs," she said. These unique programs helped provide our students with a greater understanding of Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th President of the United States and Supreme Allied Commander during World War II.

After a delicious fried chicken lunch, it was my pleasure to thank the staff for a job well done and to provide a quick year-end review. I mentioned that the principals have reported great gains on our aimsweb testing in all areas with students reaching higher standards than ever before. We also took pride in the fact that we graduated 110 students and sent them on to their next walk in life.

Of course it was a perfect time to acknowledge district awards, such as the USD 435 Apple Distinguished Program Award, and recognize staff who received special recognition this past year including:

- Kyleen Harris — recognition as a KSDE Certified Child Nutrition Manager.
- Shannon Heintz — a semi finalist for the Presidential Award of Excellence in Mathematics and Science.
- Megan Berry — recipient of the Horizon Award.
- Kim Funston and David McClain— recipients of the Staff Developer of the Year Award from Learning Forward Kansas.
- Diane Wyatt — recipient of the KHAPERD 2013 Middle School Teacher of the year, the Mid-West Region Teacher of the year, and the National PE Teacher of the year award.
- Megan Meneley — recipient of the 2014 Klett-Langenscheidt Award for excellence in teaching German in Kansas.

It was also a time to reflect on the power of teamwork that was exhibited this year with the successful passage of our bond issue. As a community we teamed up, people of all ages and people of all walks of life, including educators, as we worked together for a common good.

This celebration was a chance to celebrate our successes and to again reiterate that working together is key and will continue to be key as we move into the future of education at Abilene Public Schools.

