

Brief history of the OEA

Events and organizations that shaped who we are today.

The OEA is the sum of its parts

By: Roger Rea – April 2023

Record of accomplishments

- 1932 = Credit Union starts Feb. 2, 1932
- 1933 = Teacher pay cut 50% by vote of public
- 1935 = 100% of OPS teachers are members
 - Name was Omaha Teacher’s Forum
- 1936 = hire Walter Siders as Exec. Sec.
 - BCBS health insurance is available to teachers
- 1937 = OEA moves into its own office
- 1937 = “**Orange Ticket**” formed to elect BOE
 - Started by PTA and OEA

- 1938 = Siders resigns for health reasons
- 1939 = OEA Hires Frank Heinisch (attorney) as Exec. Dir.
- 1940 = Teachers ask for pay restitution from 1933 cut of 50%
- 1941 = OEA offices move to a new location
- 1942 = BOE votes to use 2 mill levy to restore some of the 50% pay cut of 1933 to teachers
 - Name of organization is changed to OEA
- 1944 = OPS engineers and custodians strike to get pay increase similar to teachers from 2 mill levy
 - Most schools are closed by strike
- 1945 = OEA affiliates with NSEA
- 1946 = 95% of teachers refuse to sign contracts until pay increase is agreed to
- 1947 = OEA Office moves to new location (again)

- 1948 = teachers reject contract offer of BOE
- 1949 = talk of starting an affordable apartment building
- 1951 = New Retirement System (career avg. salary) begins
- 1951 = OEA Cooperative Apartment Building construction begins at 122 S. 39th St.
 - 12 story building is tallest apartment building in Omaha
- 1952 = talk of Belle Ryan Home for retired teachers begins
 - OEA apartment building completed
- 1954 = OEA Store opens to sell rummage items – proceeds used to help retired teachers
- 1955 = OPS teachers vote to join Social Security
 - OEA Store hires retired teachers to qualify them for Soc. Sec.
- 1956 = OEA Manor construction begins for retired teachers at 321 N. 23rd Street – opens in 1957
 - Managed and owned by Senior Citizens, Inc., a corporate board appointed by OEA Board of Directors

- 1961 = Russell Stover candy sales in progress – proceeds go to help retired teachers
- 1963 = OEA gets APA payroll deduction for dues and group insurance premiums
 - Manages the BCBS plan for all OPS employees
- 1964 = First Laurels Night held
- 1964 = OEA Foundation formed – incorporated on Sept. 8, 1964
 - Governed by OEA Past Presidents
 - Takes over operation of OEA Store, and receives donations from OEA member's estates & payroll ded.
 - Frank Heinisch dies Sept. 22, 1964

- 1965 = Frank Williams named OEA Exec. Dir.
- 1966 = First Foundation Scholarship is granted (\$250), named the Heinisch Scholarship
- 1968 = Foundation gives \$10,722 to causes, 90% goes to manor. OEA Store \$ goes to Foundation
- 1969 = OEA office in Center Mall damaged by fire; moves to BCBS Building on 72nd St.
 - Foundation agrees to pay off Manor bonds in exchange for estate legacy gift to OEA from member
 - OEA Store profits and estate gifts to OEA put tax-exempt status in question – Foundation solved this

- 1970 = TPNA (Teacher Professional Negotiations Act) gives OEA first teacher bargaining law in Nebraska passed into law
- 1971 = OEA office moves to Manor garage
 - Office has 3,000 sq. ft. of meeting space
 - Helps financial solvency of Manor
- 1974 = First impasse in negotiations over BOE payment of family insurance premiums
- 1976 = Second impasse goes to CIR. BOE rejects CIR order, appeals to Supreme Court. Large OEA demo ("*March on the Castle*") causes BOE to accept CIR order.

- 1981 = First Master Agreement reached and put into writing
- 1983 = OEA helps start EAP (Employee Assistance Program)
- 1984 = Full-time OEA president language adopted in contract form
- 1985 = *OEA-Retired* starts; chartered March 3, 1993
- 1986 = First full-time OEA pres. is elected
- 1987 = TPNA repealed and OPS covered by CIR
- 1988 = Retirement plan changed to final average salary with 1.5% formula multiplier, 30-year max.
 - Previous plan was a career avg. salary plan

- 1989 = LB 89 puts state money into salaries
 - OEA store has given \$415,719 to the Foundation since the Foundation was formed (25 years ago)
 - Linda Richter hired as Foundation bookkeeper in 1987
 - In 2022, 93 scholarships awarded for \$391,800
- 1991 = 2% lid amendment defeated
- 1998 = Manor sold for \$997,117
 - OEA also owned several parcels of land near Manor
 - Planned to use land to develop a nursing home at Manor – too expensive to accomplish
 - All of proceeds of Manor sale go to OEA corporation
- 2000 = OEA new office opens at 4202 S. 57th St.
 - Office opens without debt, and no dues increase
 - Construction cost = \$1,137,770