Park City High School custodian honored for years of serving students, school

Ponce is invited to attend the National Education Association Conference in Las Vegas in March. There, the winner of the national association’s Education Support Professional of the Year will be named, and Ponce is in the running.

What made Ponce stand out was how much he cares for the students. Roger Arbabi, the principal of PCHS, has been at the school for only a few months, but he said he realized on day one what an asset Ponce is to the team.

“He knows the kiddos, he knows the staff, he is supportive and hard-working,” he said. “He is a well-rounded, wonderful person.”

Amanda Allen, a senior and co-captain of the high school’s cheerleading team, said almost all of the students at the school love him. She said he is a friendly face students can rely on.

“No matter if you know him or not, he’ll always ask you if you’re having a good day,” she said.

And she has seen how hard he works, which is why she is glad he was honored. She and the rest of the cheer team stood on the stage and yelled “Way to go Cande, way to go,” after he received his award.

“I’m always at the high school at 6:30 a.m. doing student council stuff and he is there, working hard,” she said.

Bob Edmiston, a former assistant principal at the high school and the current principal of McPolin Elementary School, attended the ceremony to celebrate Ponce. He said Ponce was always a hard worker, but did not put himself in the spotlight. He is glad he is getting the recognition he deserves.

Following the ceremony, Ponce admitted that he does not like grand parties to celebrate him. “It’s unexpected for me,” he said in Spanish during an interview. “I prefer to be back there than in front.”

But, he said he was grateful for the honor.

Ponce said he did not choose to be a custodian, but rather that the job chose him. Before becoming a custodian, he was working three jobs to make ends meet. When he saw the opening for the custodian job, he thought it would be better for himself and his family.

He still works two jobs — he helps his wife run the family-owned Hispanic grocery store in Coalville called Neena’s Market — and he said he gets tired sometimes. But he loves working for the kids in the district and watching them succeed.

He thinks the reason why students like him is because he respects them and gives them advice when he can. If he sees they are making a bad decision, he is not scared to call them out. He reminds them to think about their future and to have hope.

“I help them with all that I can,” he said. “I like the job and I like to help the kids. When they come to me and ask if I am busy, I always say, ‘Yes, I am busy, but what can I do for you?’”

Carolyn Webber Alder
November 28, 2018
ParkRecord.com
The Utah School Employees Association (USEA) represents Education Support Professionals throughout Utah such as bus drivers, maintenance workers, food service employees, paraeducators, secretaries, media specialists and custodians. These men and women are essential elements of Utah’s quality educational system and fundamental partners in student success.

USEA is the voice for Education Support Professionals throughout Utah.

**PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING**

- Support full funding of all costs associated with new student growth for the coming school year
- Support increased funding through the Weighted Pupil Unit to allow local school boards maximum flexibility in funding local priorities and needs, including employee compensation and retention
- Support full funding of Social Security and retirement cost “above the line”
- Oppose education funding allocation on the basis of artificial benchmarks such as dollars spent “in the classroom”
- Oppose the use of tax dollars to fund or subsidize non-public education

**LIVING WAGE COMPENSATION**

- Support legislation that encourages the creation and preservation of classified jobs with salary, hours, and benefits adequate to allow classified employees to raise families and build careers while working for Utah’s school districts and helping to ensure that our students are successful
- Oppose legislation that encourages local school boards to create part-time, non-benefitted classified jobs

**PRIVATIZATION AND LOCAL CONTROL**

- Support legislation that encourages or prefers the use of private contractors to provide support functions, which experience has shown is not in the best interest of Utah students or taxpayers
- Oppose privatization of school district’s bus fleets

**STUDENT TRANSPORTATION**

- Support full funding of state-law-mandated student transportation
- Support funding assistance for districts affected by increasing fuel costs or geographic challenges
- Support funding for local school boards to upgrade existing bus fleets for increased efficiency
- Support continuation of the requirement that all school-related travel be in appropriate school buses operated by trained professional school bus drivers
- Oppose any privatization of school district’s bus fleets

**COMPENSATION**

- Support full funding of Social Security and retirement cost “above the line”
- Oppose education funding allocation on the basis of artificial benchmarks such as dollars spent “in the classroom”
- Support school districts hiring classified staff as public employees since they are important members of their local communities
- Support the ability of local school boards to determine the specific needs and the best interests of their own districts, student population and local constituencies

**EMPLOYMENT**

- Support protection of adequate due process for career classified employees, including continued protection from termination without just cause
- Support fair and valid performance evaluations for classified employees based on objective job-based criteria
- Support continued effort at increased collaboration between classified employees, their local school board employers, teachers, and other stakeholders by avoidance of divisive legislation
- Support continued development and funding of professional development opportunities for classified employees so they can better serve our students
- Support continued improvement in providing a safe school environment for students and employees

If you have any questions, please contact Jeremiah Sniffin, USEA Government Relations Director - 801-269-9320 or jsniffin@useautah.org

To contact your legislator visit the Utah State Legislature website at [https://le.utah.gov](https://le.utah.gov)

**THE USEA LEGISLATIVE TEAM IS MONITORING LEGISLATION THAT COULD AFFECT YOU, AS A PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEE. WATCH YOUR EMAILS FOR UPDATES THROUGHOUT THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION. BE SURE THE USEA OFFICE HAS YOUR CURRENT PERSONAL EMAIL ADDRESS - 801-269-9320**

We would love to hear from our members and local leaders on all the great things that are going on in your locals. Please submit your stories to: information@useautah.org

We reserve the right to accept, edit or reject any contributing materials.
One on One
By Lorica Pilivi, USEA Vice President

In spring of 2017, I was asked to help present at the Organizing Institute that USEA was sponsoring in June 2017. I agreed with reservation, because I had not attended one before and didn’t know the curriculum. I was provided with a power point to review and “adapt” to be my “own”. I also had a partner to teach with from my own local, Ronda Shaffer. As I studied the material and went over and over and over it, I knew I was not the right person to teach this module in the training, but I was determined to give it my best shot. The subject was the One on One conversation. How hard could that be? I talk to people every day, but not always with the mindset of the one on one conversation. I, at this point, had not seen one done, not done one myself and had only the most basic idea of what it was. As I studied the material, I constantly felt that I was a “great Pretender” for teaching something that I had no experience in doing. This did not sit well with me, but I had already agreed to teach something. (For all those who attended the Organizing Institute in June 2017, I apologize for my own inadequacies, for which I have tried to remedy.) The whole time I was teaching, I was berating myself. Anyway, moving forward, I decided that I could not teach something like that again without actually “practicing what I was preaching”.

During July that same summer I was privileged to participate in the first session of the Leaders for Tomorrow program with NEA, where I learned more about the one on one conversation, it’s intent, and goals. I made plans when I returned home. I was going to work!! Being President of BEESPA, (Box Elder Education Support Professionals Association) I called on my Executive Board to help with these conversations. I know, it was summer, the time of year for a lot of us to be lazy, to travel, and to have family time, work other jobs, etc. The goals I had in mind were; a) Put faces to the names on my membership list, b) Engage with my members outside the workplace, and c) Obtain more current information ie: personal email, worksite location. I had created a visiting report to be filled out for each person we spoke with. Some of the information on the form included how long did they work for the school district, to which worksite where they assigned, personal email, etc. We decided that it would be too hard to visit people AND fill out all the information at the same time, it would end up being more like an interview and not a visit, if we went out singly so we went out in 2’s. One person would be the “scribe” and the other would just talk to our member. I had some anxiety over going to people’s homes I didn’t know and talking to them, but determination won over anxiety. In the end, it was a lot of fun for me and I gained a lot from the experience. I didn’t want to just talk to them, but also give them something. Our new negotiated agreement was just completed with our district and so I wanted to share that with them. Some folks were not home, understandably, so we left a note and a copy of the agreement on their door. I received lots of positive feedback.

This approach takes a lot of time to accomplish. Each conversation should be only about 10 minutes, however, when we were visiting, sometimes we’d be engaged with a member for 30 minutes. I let the flow of conversation be the dictator of time, and since we were not at worksites we could spend the extra time. In this way, I learned more about who and what our members were concerned about in our district. This last summer, I also went visiting members, but a little differently. I went to worksites with our new Organizational Specialists and visited with those who work in the summer months. We spoke to members and potential members alike and again shared our negotiated agreement with them. Worksites visits do need to be more strict on the 10 minutes, because we are interrupting their work. (We also took treats, which helps break the ice on any conversation. wink* wink*)

You may be wondering why I am going on and on about this. It is important for our members to be contacted and while I still have not talked to everyone in my own district, I have continually put forth effort to do so. Our members, a lot of times, speak to someone, sign up, and never get spoken to again by the Association. In order to keep members engaged and get involved, we need to put the effort out there to talk to them. Summer time can be ideal when schedules tend to slow a little, but really any time to talk to members is good. This is a work in progress for me, but I gained more friends, and knowledge by doing this work and appreciate and understand more each time I visit with members what each job family does for our students. Remember my friends; Our work environment is our students’ learning environment!! One person cannot do everything, just like it takes a village to raise children. We are that village for each other too. Supporting and uplifting one another is a part of our relationship with one another. I have been incredibly blessed with the opportunity to serve in this great Association where we keep our students needs foremost in all that we do.

Thank you for your continued membership and support of one another in our efforts to help our students learn and grow.

USEA SPRING INTO ACTION!
MEMBER & LEADER WORKSHOP
Saturday, April 13, 2019
8:30-4:00PM
USEA
864 E Arrowhead Lane, Murray, UT (UEA Auditorium)
Light Breakfast & Lunch will be provided

Utah School Employees Association
RSVP to Jnewbold@useaut.org
or Call 801-269-9320

USEA Matters! USEAUTAH.ORG
FREE MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS
FOR NEA MEMBERS!

GET TWO FREE SUBSCRIPTIONS
neamb.com/USEAGet2

Thank you for being an NEA Member! NEA Member Benefits is offering our members two FREE subscriptions from the NEA Magazine Service.

Select from popular titles including:

- ARCHAEOLOGY
- AUTO WEEK
- BOATING
- BRIDAL GUIDE
- FIELD & STREAM
- HARPER’S
- HOLA! USA SPANISH EDITION
- INDIANAPOLIS MONTHLY
- KIPLINGER’S PERSONAL FINANCE
- OUTDOOR LIFE
- ST. LOUIS
- STORY MONSTERS INK
- TEXAS MONTHLY
- THE RED BULLETIN
- WEIGHT WATCHERS
- WINE ENTHUSIAST
- WORKING MOTHER
- …AND MORE!

Quantities are limited, free titles and number of issues are subject to change; there is a limit of 2 free subscriptions per member, per year.
Join with your USEA Legislative Team and our USA partners to meet and share information and concerns with your legislators and gain knowledge of the legislative/political process:

- Meet at 7 a.m. on Capitol Hill in the Copper Room, located in the Senate Building near the Cafeteria (350 N. State Street).
- The USEA and USA Legislative Team will brief attendees on education bills and the public education budget.
- Attend a committee meeting or watch floor debates to see policymaking in action.
- The Teams will assist you in contacting your legislators from your legislative districts.
- Educator Day on the Hill attendees reconvene at noon in the Copper Room to "de-brief" the morning activities. Lunch will be provided.
- Contact Jeremiah Sniffin, USEA Government Relations Director, if you would like to attend Educator Day on the Hill. You may reach Jeremiah at jsniffin@useaut.org or contact the USEA office at 801-269-9320 or information@useautah.org.

UTAH STATE LEGISLATURE
JANUARY 28TH - MARCH 14TH

USEA will hold its annual Ride for Education on Saturday, May 18, 2019 which expands USEA’s ability to provide education scholarships to our members and/or their families. Currently, along with ridership, we are seeking support from a monetary and volunteer basis. We have many areas where you can support and be a part of this great event. If you can lend a hand, please contact Blake Pulspisher, Committee Chair at bpulspisher@useautah.org or Jeremiah Sniffin, USEA Staff Lead, jsniffin@useaut.org. The USEA office is able to assist you as well - 801-269-9320.

2018-19 USEA Calendar

USEA Board Meetings
March 9, 2019

Legislative Session
January 28 - March 14, 2019
Educator Day on the Hill Every Friday at 7 a.m.

National ESP Conference
March 22-24, 2019

Leadership Training
April 13, 2019

USEA Ride for Education
May 18, 2019

Leadership Summit
August 1, 2019

Awards Banquet
August 2, 2019

Delegate Conference
August 3, 2019

REGISTER TODAY!
HELP SUPPORT EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS FOR USEA MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES.
WE ALSO NEED VOLUNTEERS!

RideForEducation.org
May 18, 2019 Kaysville Utah
Presented by Utah School Employees Association

USEA Educator Day on the Hill
2019 Dates:
February 1
February 8
February 15
February 22
March 1

USEA Officers & Staff
PRESIDENT
Jason Lewis
VICE PRESIDENT
Loriota Pilivi
STATE EXECUTIVE BOARD
Blake Pulspisher Area 1
Sandi Favia Area 2
Erik Adams Area 3
Maryann Gilmore Area 4
Lisa Adams Area 5
Michelle Guymon Area 6
Maryann Gilmore Area 7
Rob Martin Area 8
Mike Evans Area 9
Vacant Area 10

STAFF
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Bryan L. Sprague
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
Wendi Kesler
ORGANIZATIONAL SPECIALIST
DIRECTOR OF ORGANIZING
Tim Bell
ORGANIZATIONAL SPECIALIST
DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
Jeremiah Sniffin
ASSOCIATE STAFF
Julie Newbold
NEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Michael Harman
Mindy Layton
USEA MATTERS
Wendi Kesler
USEA OFFICE
Bryan L. Sprague