

## GIMME AN "N"

"N" as in "New".

Steve Bongiovi , 2006 New York State Teacher of the Year

Philadelphia and its setting of historical significance served as NNSTOY's platform to exhibit just how "New" and just how "Now" it has become. The entity recently renamed as the National Network of State Teachers of the Year has existed as an organization for more than 30 years. It has served its unique and highly talented membership faithfully and honorably for that entire tenure. But the past 3 years, and the two most recent annual conferences, have demonstrated with brilliant clarity an evolution, a growth and a focus that truly have created a **new** NNSTOY. Educationally, we stand equal to any professional organization in terms of attention, commitment and impact. NNSTOY in Philly offered its participants the chance to hear, to see, and to interact with individuals of the highest caliber and repute in our profession: Arne Duncan, Charlotte Danielson, Richard Roberts, Rick Hess, Jon Quam and National Teachers of the Year/NNSTOY members Sarah Brown Wessling, Rebecca Mieliwocki, and Michelle Shearer, among many, many others. Furthermore, as noted in Brett Bigham's brilliant conference blog, the audience itself at any NNSTOY session is a veritable Who's Who of Teacher Leadership. The status of NNSTOY within the world of education is currently unparalleled in its lifetime as an organization.

Yet, that realization is just the start for this **new** NNSTOY. We are now also evolving in the arena of service. Attendees' trip to the City of Brotherly Love included an opportunity to spread some, as well. STOYs volunteered in three separate service ventures, devoting time, talent and effort to the local region in diverse areas. Teachers went to Philabundance Hunger Relief to assist in supporting food bank initiatives throughout the city. Others participated in interactive educational programs at the Philadelphia Zoo. Still more travelled to the warehouse of "Cradles to Crayons" to assist in inventory, storage and preparation of school supplies, clothing and general household needs destined to be distributed to literally hundreds of regional social service institutions. So, indeed, gimme an "n" for NNSTOY as a **new** service organization.

Still one more "new" to consider: NNSTOY as a social society. Indisputably, members have always been sociable, within and among themselves, often to a successful and highly developed degree. Nobody who observed the 25th anniversary tribute to Jon Quam, replete with Mummers, could offer any alternate opinion. But the organization stepped up its social status officially and bureaucratically by sponsoring a trip to the Phillies-Nationals game at Citizens Bank Park on Friday, July 11. Nearly 100 conference registrants, with family and guests, tested the mettle of the city subway system as the Phillies organization graciously "took us out to the ball game" at the cost of 2 subway tokens. Tim Dove led the lineup and I stayed at the rear, making sure that our "field trip" lost nobody in transit. It was a thrilling sight indeed to see us overwhelm three subway cars---everyone made it in, I guarantee---and ultimately reconvene in our section on the second tier along the right field line. What little division that might be sensed by state or year of honor designation evaporated forever as the fans from NNSTOY rooted the home team to victory. This "gimme an N" is a nod to NNSTOY the **new** social group.

President Katherine Bassett, her officers and Board of Directors all did a wonderful job throughout the conference. One of many memorable offerings was Katherine's precise pronunciation clarification: how to say NNSTOY? Why are we STOYS, not TOYS? So maybe another "n" isn't needed. But it certainly has been earned. Gimme an N---for new!!