



**Lincoln Southwest High School Music Director Receives Nebraska's
2016-17 Music Educator Award**

LINCOLN – Denise Cotton of Lincoln Southwest High School is Nebraska's 2016-17 National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Outstanding Music Educator of the Year.

Cotton was nominated for the NFHS award by the Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA) with the collaboration of the Nebraska Music Educators Association (NMEA). Nominations are based upon outstanding service and unselfish devotion to interscholastic music by high school or college music educators. The NFHS Outstanding Music Educator Award was first given in 1989 when seven individuals received sectional awards. Since that time, 163 sectional and 293 state awards have been presented. Also, 1989 marked the beginning of an annual selection of a NFHS Citation recipient. The Citation is one of the highest awards presented by the NFHS in the fine arts.

Cotton holds a Bachelor of Music in Voice from the University of Missouri and a Master of Music in Voice from the University of Illinois. She is recognized as an outstanding music instructor, teacher, honorary clinician, and adjudicator. She continues a 22-year music career which has included positions at Moberly Junior High School in Moberly, Missouri and Lincoln Public Schools, in Lincoln, Nebraska. She currently serves Lincoln Southwest High School as a vocal music director and Music Department Chair.

Over the years Cotton has earned numerous professional honors and accomplishments including: A + Educator of the Week, creator of the High School Music Theory curriculum used district wide in Lincoln Public Schools and leading 237 Nebraska All-State high school choir students since 2003.

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During her non-teaching hours she remains a leader and a champion for music education and currently serves as Treasurer for the Nebraska Choral Directors Association.

Cotton's students have earned top ratings and awards at district and state contests in Nebraska, throughout the Midwest, and nationally. She is a firm believer that opportunities help students "spread their wings and fly to new heights." She has provided countless opportunities for countless students.

Cotton was honored and presented with her award in Lincoln at the Nebraska Music Educators Association Annual Awards Banquet in late November.

Nebraska's NFHS Music Educator Award Winners since 2002

- 2002 - Bryan Johnson, Oakland-Craig High School
- 2003 - Dean Dahlke, Bertrand High School
- 2004 - Gene Torrens, Elkhorn High School
- 2005 - Dr. Michelle Bluford, Elkhorn High School
- 2006 - Fred Ritter, Columbus High School
- 2007 - Sharon Hoffman, Bayard Public Schools
- 2008 - Byron Braasch, Lewis & Clark Middle School
- 2009 - Stan Johnson, Shickley Public Schools
- 2010 - Dave Klein, Kearney Public Schools
- 2011 - Cheri Helmer-Riensche, Papillion-La Vista South High School
- 2012 - William Reichert, Broken Bow High School
- 2013 - Cheri Helmer-Riensche, *Regional Winner*, Papillion-La Vista South
- 2013 - Rita Sinner, Western Nebraska Community College
- 2014 - Rex Barker, Millard South High School
- 2015 - Patricia Ritchie, Millard West High School
- 2016 - Denise Cotton, Lincoln Southwest High School