

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

Just about everyone else is from the eastern part of the state, but when the Nebraska Art Teachers Association (NATA) hands out its annual awards next month, one from Imperial will represent western Nebraska.

Lindsey Tomaso, an art teacher at Chase County Schools, will be honored as the state's K-12 Art Educator for 2013-14 on Sept. 20 at Wayne State College. The awards ceremony will be held as part of the NATA fall conference.

NATA is a professional organization with a mission to develop and promote quality art education in Nebraska through a statewide support system, with opportunities for growth and development through leadership and service.

Tomaso will start her third year this fall as the K-7 art teacher at Chase County Schools.

She said she bases her CCS art curriculum for all of her students on the basic elements and principles of art, including color, line and shape.

But, having a bachelor's degree in art history has also guided her to include history into much of her curriculum, she said.

As an example, her first graders last year worked on cave paintings. But before they got into the actual painting, the class looked at cave painting from France.

With her third graders, they studied Dale Chiuly and his stained glass work, and used some of that knowledge with creative displays at the school's Art Festival.

Personally, Tomaso said her favorite type of art to work with herself is pastels. She also enjoys figural oils and wildlife art.

In addition to her degree in art history, she also holds a bachelor's degree in studio art, and later earned her teaching endorsement.

Before moving to Imperial two summers ago, she operated a studio in Omaha, and taught art lessons in students' homes. She also taught some after-school programs. The year before she was hired by Chase County Schools, she taught a cartooning class at Metro Tech Community College in Omaha.

Tomaso is a strong believer of advocating for art education. She said one of her true joys of teaching is the difference art can make in some students.

"It's so incredible to see that transformation," she said.

In light of many schools cutting art programs due to budget constraints, Tomaso recalls her childhood and the difference her art classes made in her education.

"It was where I felt safe and where I flourished. I want to see that for my students," she said.

Tomaso attends the state and national art teacher conferences as often as possible in addition to other offerings.

She just returned from the Educators Essentials Art Teacher Conference in Savannah, Ga., and also enjoys the Prairie Visions event hosted by UNO and the Nebraska Arts Council that emphasizes bringing the community into the classroom.

Tomaso said she doesn't have any idea who nominated her for the award.

"I'd sure like to find out," she smiled.

She said her parents and sister plan to join her in Wayne for the awards ceremony next month.