

Nebraska's 131st birthday celebrated at State Capitol

By KELLY ROMANSKI
Staff Reporter

"Are you ready for a birthday party?" Secretary of State Scott Moore enthusiastically asked the 800 or so Nebraska fourth graders who gathered in the Capitol Rotunda Friday.

The children all gave a hearty cheer, especially after being told they were going to get a piece of cake at the end of Nebraska's 131st birthday celebration.

The party, hosted by Moore and Gov. Ben Nelson, brought fourth graders from every corner of the state together for a day devoted to celebrating Nebraska's rich history.

In addition to the children invited, 73-year-old Jim Frasc, composer of the state song, "Beautiful Nebraska," was honored for his contribution to the state. A permanent display of the song will be placed in the secretary of state's office.

The celebration also featured award presentations to students who entered various writing and art contests. Winners wrote an essay or

drew a picture representing the best aspects of the state.

All winners received medals, which Nelson draped around their necks. David Seay of Avoca then entertained those on hand with his presentation of "Nebraska Schools in the 1800s," a musical and historical account of 19th-century Midwestern education. The performance included an antique trumpet and a saw with a bow.

The children said they enjoyed the show but were antsy to eat some birthday cake afterwards.

"It's such a special thrill to have these children here to learn about the statehood," said Nelson, who signed a proclamation declaring March 1 Nebraska Statehood Day.

"Involvement is so important and critical for these children," he said. "You know, children are 20 percent of the population, but they are 100 percent of our future."

When the time finally came to cut the cake, the kids looked ready. The Norfolk Children's Choir, however, had to wait and to sing while everyone else ate.

Angela Jones, a 12-year-old

"It's such a special thrill to have these children here."

BEN NELSON
governor

sixth-grade member of the choir, said she was excited to perform at the state's birthday party. She and 11-year-old Jenna Hatfield, a fifth-grader, said they were even more excited to meet the governor.

"Our first question (upon finding out we were to perform) was, 'Is the governor going to be there?'"

And in the middle of it all was the ailing Frasc, who has terminal cancer.

While the Norfolk Children's Choir sang "Beautiful Nebraska," he stood up from his wheelchair - with tears in his eyes - and saluted.

"I could not be happier to hear these children sing," he said. "Kids are my future, even after I pass on."

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- ◆ Contestants must be full-time UNL undergraduate students.
- ◆ Recipe must be prepared and cooked in 60 minutes or less.
- ◆ Recipe must have 8 ingredients or less, not including beef or water.
- ◆ The recipe must be an original, unpublished recipe.
- ◆ Contest Deadline: Friday, March 20, 1998

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April 7, 1998

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