NEBRASKA SCHOOL ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: November 4, 2026
Contact: Taryn Retzlaff
NSAA Phone: 402-489-0386



LINCOLN, NE — The Nebraska School Activities Association is proud to recognize John & Shonda Russell of Creek Valley High School as this week's Above and Beyond Award nominee.

The NSAA's Above and Beyond program is designed to recognize and celebrate the outstanding individuals who make a meaningful impact within their communities. Whether it's a student, coach, community member, or parent, this award honors those who go the extra mile to support and uplift others. From acts of kindness and leadership to innovative projects and volunteer work, we want to showcase Nebraska's incredible stories of individuals who embody dedication, service, and excellence.

John and Shonda Russell are shining examples of educators who go above and beyond to make a lasting difference in the lives of students. As outstanding teachers and dedicated robotics coaches, they have devoted countless hours to guiding Creek Valley youth, helping students discover their potential while building a culture of teamwork, confidence, and pride.

Since taking on the role of robotics coaches, John and Shonda have worked tirelessly to lead the Creek Valley Lightning Robotics teams to the top. Their dedication was once again on full display as the Creek Valley Middle School and High School teams traveled to Highlands Ranch, Colorado, to compete against 13 teams from Nebraska and Colorado. The competition included students from prestigious schools such as D'Evelyn Jr./Sr. High and STEM School of Highlands Ranch.

Creek Valley stormed the field with self-built engineering marvels and emerged as champions—for the third-year running.

The Creek Valley High School team captured first place in the Robot Challenge and earned third place overall in the highly competitive BEST Award category. The Creek Valley Middle School team also delivered an impressive performance,

leading the competition throughout the day before a dramatic final-minute finish resulting in a second-place overall result.

The High School team's success will continue at the next level as they advance to the Regional Championships in Wichita, Kansas, December 6–7, where they will represent Creek Valley among the region's top robotics teams.

While the accomplishments on the competition field are impressive, John and Shonda's greatest impact can be seen in the students they mentor. They make sure every member of the team understands that their contribution matters. Whether a student is designing, building, programming, presenting, or supporting the team in another way, John and Shonda ensure that each student feels valued and involved.

Through their leadership, they teach students lessons that extend far beyond robotics. They instill teamwork, confidence, problem-solving skills, perseverance, and pride in accomplishment. They encourage students to face challenges with patience and determination while showing them that success comes from working together and believing in one another.

John and Shonda are true leaders within Creek Valley, demonstrating integrity, patience, and a genuine passion for learning. Their commitment to students reaches beyond the classroom and competition field, as they continually invest their time, energy, and hearts into the success of Creek Valley youth.

They lead by example, showing students what it means to work hard, support others, overcome obstacles, and never give up. Their influence has created a lasting, positive impact not only on the students they coach, but also on the entire school and community.

John and Shonda Russell are the kind of role models every child deserves—educators who believe in their students, challenge them to grow, celebrate their accomplishments, and inspire them to reach their full potential. They give their "all" every day for Creek Valley youth, and their dedication, leadership, and commitment make them truly deserving of recognition for going above and beyond.

The NSAA's Above and Beyond Program is designed to recognize the hidden gems of communities across Nebraska. **Click here to nominate someone today!**

About the Nebraska School Activities Association (NSAA)

The NSAA, based in Lincoln, Nebraska, is the statewide leadership organization for high school sports and performing arts activities. Since 1910, the NSAA has provided leadership and support for education-based interscholastic sports and performing arts activities that help students succeed in their lives. The NSAA enforces rules and regulations promulgated by the member schools, providing for a level competitive playing field in sports and activities. NSAA organizes and administers regular and postseason activities in 29 different sports and activities. Game officials and activities judges are registered by the NSAA and assigned by NSAA for postseason competition. For more information about the NSAA, visit the NSAA website at ***www.nsaahome.org****.*

###