The Pennsylvania PTA is continuing in our efforts to “Go Green”! Please see www.papta.org for more details!

A Message from Michele

I’ve had people (both PTA and non-PTA) ask what makes PTA different than other parent groups and why should they consider becoming a PTA, or why should they remain a PTA. I believe with all my heart that any parent doing good things for children is doing something wonderful, no matter what the name of their group is. However, as a PTA, you’re doing great things for ALL children.

One of the many things that make PTA different from any other parent group is Advocacy. You, as a PTA member, are an advocate for all children whether you realize it or not. Advocacy takes many forms. You might spend a few minutes talking to other parents during the kids’ practice about issues. Maybe you’ve sent emails to your members when something was going on at school or in your community. Perhaps you attend your local school board meetings or contact your local legislators when issues arise. You might even be very active by coordinating or participating in an event raising awareness for something important affecting children. These are all forms of advocacy, and each one is doing great things for kids.

Throughout the years, the PTA voice has made a difference on so many occasions. Most recently in Pennsylvania, your voice was heard loud and clear when it came to encouraging our legislators to pass a budget that was good for education. Some were upset with Governor Rendell for not passing the budget sooner, but he has been a firm believer in public education, and our children. He held his ground to make sure education kept an important place in the budget. It took a very long time for the four caucuses to agree on a budget. This was due in part to the unified voice of public education supporters and because of that loud voice, our children came out on top.

Thank you for speaking up and thank you for all you do for kids!

We look forward to working with you and your members.

Michele

Important Dates to Remember

Nov. 15, 2009 - 10% Membership Increase Report Form due
Nov. 21, 2009 - Local unit Reflections winners to Council or Region
Dec. 1, 2009 - Remit dues to be unit in good standing
Dec. 19, 2009 - Council Reflections winners to Region
Jan. 23, 2010 - Region Reflections winners to State Chairman
Feb. 17, 2010 - Founder’s Day
Feb. 17, 2010 - Convention Super Saver PLUS registration
Mar. 1, 2010 - Forward remitting dues to state office
Mar. 5, 2010 - Submit award entries to state office
Mar. 17, 2010 - Convention Super Saver registration
April 1, 2010 - Convention Advance registration
April 16 - 18, 2010 - PA PTA Annual Convention
Holiday Inn Harrisburg-Hershey
June 10 - 13, 2010 - National PTA Convention, Memphis, TN
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Council on the Arts

POETRY OUT LOUD: NATIONAL RECITATION CONTEST

Pennsylvania’s high school age students are invited to participate in the Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest. This exciting new national arts education program encourages intensive learning about great poetry through educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition in high schools across the country. Taking part in Poetry Out Loud can help students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage. The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, the State Arts Agency, administers Poetry Out Loud in the Commonwealth as part of its ongoing efforts to foster educational excellence for Pennsylvania’s students through participation in the creative process.

Created by The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, Poetry Out Loud uses a structure similar to the National Spelling Bee. Competition begins at the classroom level. Winners advance to school-wide competition, regional contests, then to state competition, and ultimately to the National Finals. All types of high schools are welcome to participate, including public, private, parochial, independent, charter, etc.

The National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation has partnered with State Arts Agencies to support the expansion of Poetry Out Loud. Poetry Out Loud was launched in high schools across America in 2006 with tens of thousands of students participating. More than 150,000 students are expected to take part this year.

In Pennsylvania, a regional-level contest was implemented between the Classroom/School and State Contests.

Pennsylvania is served in thirteen designated regions by the PCA’s Arts in Education partners and the Pennsylvania Parent Teacher Association. Regional winners compete at the State Finals in Harrisburg. The state winner goes to the National Finals in Washington, D.C.

The state winner receives $200 and an all-expenses-paid trip to the national championship. The state winner’s school will receive a $500 stipend for the purchase of poetry books. The runner-up in each state will receive $100, with $200 for his or her school library. Additionally, a total of $50,000 in scholarships and school stipends will be awarded at the National Finals.

FREE Poetry Out Loud curriculum materials include print and online poetry anthologies, a teacher’s guide to help instructors teach recitation and performance, an audio CD featuring distinguished actors and writers, promotional and media guides, and a comprehensive website: www.poetryoutloud.org

While teachers, students, and poetry lovers everywhere are welcome to use this website to organize their own recitation contests, the official contest is limited to the programs run by each State’s Arts Agency. If you or an educator interested in participating in the official program, please contact your appropriate regional partner.

A list of the PCA’s Poetry Out Loud partners is cont’d. on page 5.

Your state board is committed to serving you, the members of the PTA.
A complete listing of contact information can be found on the website.
As liaison to the state PTA, your Region Vice-President should be your first contact.

Presidents: Please be sure to share this information with your members. It is also available to them on the Pennsylvania PTA website: www.papta.org.

November 2009

PTA in Pennsylvania
2010 POL FACT SHEET
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Council on the Arts
Office of the Governor
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Harrisburg, PA 17120

Phone: 717-787-6883
Fax: 717-787-2530
TTY users: 1-800-654-5984
www.pacouncilonthearts.org

Contact Information for Poetry Out Loud Regions

Allentown Art Museum ........................................... 610-432-4333
Serves: Carbon, Lehigh, Monroe, Northampton, and Pike (SE)

Arts Erie ............................................................. 814-452-3427
Serves: Cameron, Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer,
Potter, Venango and Warren

ArtsPath: Indiana University of Pennsylvania .......... 724-357-4565
Serves: Armstrong, Butler, Jefferson and Indiana

Cultural Alliance of York County ............................ 717-812-9255
Serves: Adams, Franklin and York

Galaxy: The Arts in Education Program of Central Intermediate Unit 16 .. 814-237-3003
Serves: Centre, Clearfield and Clinton

Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit 19 ........... 570-876-9308
Serves: Lackawanna, Luzerne, Pike (NW), Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming (E)

Northern Tier Partnership for Arts in Education/
Bradford County Regional Arts Council ................. 570-268-2787
Serves: Bradford, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Sullivan, Tioga and Wyoming (W)

Pennsylvania Parent Teacher Association .................. 717-564-8985
Serves: Cumberland, Dauphin (NW), Fulton, Huntingdon, and Schuylkill

Perry County Council of the Arts ........................... 717-567-7023
Serves: Juniata, Mifflin, Northumberland, Perry, Snyder and Union

Philadelphia Arts in Education Partnership ............... 215-717-6596
Serves: Bucks, Chester (E), Delaware, Montgomery and, Philadelphia

Pittsburgh Center for the Arts ................................ 412-361-0873
Serves: Allegheny, Beaver, Greene and Washington

South Central PaARTners: Millersville University .......... 717-871-2186
Serves: Berks, Chester (NW), Dauphin (SE), Lancaster, and Lebanon

Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art ........................ 814-946-4464
Serves: Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Fayette, Somerset and Westmoreland

The Arts in Education Division of the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts provides funding for arts in education programs and projects, publishes a directory of artists, and offers professional development opportunities for artists and educators such as conferences, workshops, etc. Funding is available to public and private schools; childcare centers, senior centers and other not-for-profit, tax-exempt organizations; and units of government in Pennsylvania. For more information about Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest, please contact: Amy Gabriele at 717-525-5547 or a-gabriele@state.pa.us

The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts is a state agency established in 1966 by the Pennsylvania General Assembly as an Executive Office of the Governor and charged with "the encouragement and development of the various arts" in the Commonwealth. The PCA accomplishes its mission through a combination of grants to the arts; partnerships and initiatives; technical assistance to partners and applicants; and by serving as a resource for arts-related information for state, federal and local government, the public, other funding entities, the arts field, and other interested organizations and individuals.

The PCA is governed by a Council of 19 members — 15 private citizens and 4 members of the General Assembly. The citizen members are appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate and serve without compensation. The agency has a professional staff of 16, headed by the Executive Director. The PCA receives funding through an annual state appropriation and from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

Vacancies in the Pennsylvania PTA
There currently are a few vacancies on the Pennsylvania PTA State Board of Managers.

Due to personal reasons, three board members were unable to fulfill their duties and have stepped down leaving vacancies in the positions of Region Vice-President for Regions 5, 9, and 13.

If you have an interest in helping out, please contact President Michele Morrow to discuss it in more detail.

- Region 5 currently serves the counties of: Armstrong, Clarion and Indiana
- Region 9 currently serves the counties of: Lycoming, McKean, Potter and Tioga
- Region 13 currently serves the counties of: Berks, Lehigh, Northampton, and Carbon
Fundraising may not be our favorite thing to do, but it's a necessity of running a non-profit organization. We can't function without money, but we also can't spend all of our time and energy trying to raise money.

When contemplating fundraising efforts, keep three things in mind:
1. The 3-1 guideline: Hold at least (3) educational programs/events to every (1) fundraising event. This will ensure you’re not spending all of your time & energy raising money instead of doing great things for the kids and for PTA.

2. Create your budget by deciding what programs/activities you want to hold and then figure out how raise the funds to do so. Do not raise the money first then try to figure out how to spend it.

3. Determine how to go about raising the funds.

Many PTAs have had great success with the traditional candy/wrapping paper style fundraiser companies. However, with all the activities our children participate in these days, and with the failing economy, families are faced with constantly “selling stuff” to support not just PTA, but band, Scouts, sports teams, and so on. This often times leaves the PTA asking the big question: How do we meet our budget and fund these programs?

Has your PTA ever considered applying for grants?

Grants are a source of funding that PTAs typically do not tap into because the subject of "grant writing" may sound intimidating.

10 simple steps to overcoming the fear of “Grant Writing”

Foundations within communities that support certain missions and/or activities give Grant money. Most of these foundations have money they must give away, so why not let them give it to your PTA! When researching grants:

1. Start with a goal. (i.e. We would like to raise $3,000 for a summer reading camp.)

2. Look for foundations that give to the county your PTA is located in. Names of these foundations can be found on-line, or at your local community college. On-line software is available, but can be expensive.

3. Be sure the foundations you’re looking at provide funds for what you need. If they give money to science don't apply for a reading grant, you won't get it! Most grantors are pretty strict about this.

...Cont’d on page 5
4. Call the foundation and pitch the idea before starting the paperwork. Ask for deadline dates and other specific requirements. Grants have very specific “windows” of dates for application and spending. Keep in mind that if you’re even one day late you probably won’t be considered. If you feel confident in your idea ask for a meeting with the foundation, they usually do it.

5. Write a concept paper: A one-page description of the project, who it will benefit, how it will be done, what organizations will be involved, etc. Many grantors love when partners are involved, so if at all possible, partner up with another organization for the event/program.

6. Design a plan: Who will run the project, how long will it take, has the school approved it, will it happen again next year, etc. Many grantors consider 1-3 year grants so there is sustainability.

7. Design a budget. Plan out exactly how much money is needed and how it will be spent, down to the smallest detail.

8. Pay close attention to the requirements and stipulations that come with each grant (deadlines, closeout info, spending details, etc). Missing details will delay the process and in many cases be cause for denial. All grant applicants must be non-profit organizations. Generally the grantor requires proof of that, a list of the board members and sometimes minutes. Some applications only require the EIN (Employee Identification Number) as evidence of the non-profit status, but others may require an actual copy of your 501(c)(3) non-profit status. This may be on file with your PTAs records, if not, contact the state PTA office. If you’re incorporated, they may require proof of that as well.

9. Always apply more than one place for any project. BE FLEXIBLE.

10. Have patience! Grant approval can take some time to come to fruition. Be sure to keep this in mind when planning.

A list of “Successful Fundraisers” will be added to the Pennsylvania PTA website.

Does your PTA have a successful non-brochure type fundraiser you’d like to share? Email them to state PTA president, Michele Morrow - mmorrow@papta.org
Put “Fundraising Ideas” in the subject line.
From Our Consultants...

BUILDING A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS AND A SUPERINTENDENT THROUGH MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATION

Communication is the key to any healthy relationship. As Superintendent of Schools at Northampton Area School District, I must develop and maintain relationships with many different stakeholders in the school community. The student and the parent are the primary stakeholders whom I serve on a daily basis in our schools, so communication with parents is very important to me. The parents and the community rely on the superintendent as the source of information about how the students and schools are doing.

The education of our children requires a partnership between home and school. Studies have shown a significant link between parent involvement and student achievement. Unfortunately, sometimes the parent is the missing link in this partnership – maybe it is the choice of the parent or maybe the school did not offer an effective opportunity for the parent to be involved. Whichever the case, we must continue to communicate with each other; we must not stop because one side does not respond as expected or does not fulfill expectations. When the communication link breaks down, it is the child who suffers. Especially in this day and age, with the present unprecedented economic crisis, parents and schools must communicate even more so to understand the struggles that a student or family may be experiencing due to the financial downturn.

A parent is a child’s first educator. The teacher builds on the child’s pre-school knowledge when the child begins school, then together the parent and teacher help to build student success through the K-12 years. This cannot be done without continuous, clear communication between home and school, or without clear expectations of the student, parent, and educator.

Because each parent entrusts the daily education and safety of their child to the district, it is the superintendent’s responsibility to ensure that parent expectations are met. There are always some parental requests that cannot be honored, therefore, it is important to try to help parents understand the reasons for the decisions that are made by the superintendent.

Communication with parents may take many forms. One-way forms of communication that I use are letters, memos, district web site announcements and updates, annual calendars, and news articles, which provide information needed by parents. More importantly, I use two-way communication, which builds strong partnerships with parents, i.e., e-mail exchanges, attendance at PTA meetings, “Meet the Superintendent” sessions, and attendance at school dinners and other activities. These are all considered outreach forms of communication with parents that encourage valued informal discussions. Educational community forums or “town meetings” have been held to inform the public of issues and programs. Parents are also invited to serve on district committees, such as the District-wide Safe Schools Committee.

Each of our schools, with the assistance of the PTA, publishes parent newsletters. Parent-teacher conferences are held throughout the year. We have scheduled days each school year when we encourage parents to visit our K-12 classrooms during the school day. Student handbooks and policies are on-line for easy access. Instructional classes are offered to parents so they can help their children study and can assist them with homework. In these ways we seek to make parents full partners in their child’s education.

As superintendent, I have an open-door policy and I encourage parents to meet one-on-one with me so I can learn what they are really concerned about. I respond to each and every telephone call and e-mail, even if only to let the parent know that I am looking into their concern. I encourage parents to attend our two monthly board meetings to extend communication at the School Board level. We also utilize ParentLink - a telephone notification system - to notify parents of school closings, emergencies, and special events. This has been a very successful tool in providing immediate notification to parents.

It should not matter if one parent or fifty parents attend a scheduled meeting or activity. The district must continue to schedule interactive meetings with parents in order to continue to build bridges that open dialogue between the parents and the district. Together parents and district personnel can build a positive relationship and partnership within every district school. After all, building strong and meaningful communication among all stakeholders is the key to a successful partnership.

Dr. Linda J. Firestone, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Northampton Area School District
Northampton, PA

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Aimee Lefevres .................. Pittsburgh
Melvin Riddick .................. Allentown
Barbara Gay .......................... Owen J Roberts SD
Debbie Collins ............... Northampton SD
Linda Firestone ............... Northampton SD
Caroline Allen ............... Northampton Area Student Council

Director of Administration
Anita N. Weikel .......................... AWeikel@papta.org
Our 2010 PA PTA Convention Theme is:
Keeping Information Sweet & Simple for Every Success...SWEET!

Remember to continuously check our website, www.papta.org, for the latest and greatest Pennsylvania PTA happenings!

Coming up in the next issue: Call to Convention
It will contain basic convention information about the April 2010 convention and will be mailed to all local presidents in January. Specific details will be posted online for your convenience (registration forms, workshop details, action items to be brought forward, etc.).