

CONTACT

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Cover photo:

Kids First Town Halls meeting

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Information from this magazine may be excerpted for other PTA publications as long as credit is given to Missouri PTA and any byline that may appear with the item must be included.

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President's Message By Donna Petiford, Missouri PTA President



Communicating with Legislators

It's that time of year again, and our Missouri legislative session is in full swing. Every day bills are being proposed that will change current laws that affect our children and our public schools. Our elected officials need to hear from us, the parents and community who know what's best for children. Unless they hear from constituents, legislators may vote their party line or in line with their personal beliefs.

There are several ways that PTA recommends you can connect with your elected officials. First and foremost, know who they are and how to reach them. Keep a list of all of your state and federal representatives and senators handy so that as issues arise, you are ready to connect. Emails, phone calls and personal visits are among the best and most effective means of communicating with these decision makers. Emails are easy and effective, while phone calls are especially efficient when an important vote is coming up. By far, the most impressive communication is a personal visit, not only does this make the message personal, it helps build relationships and establishes you as someone who can be a resource to that member of congress or the state legislature on issues important to children.

Keep in mind these tips when contacting elected officials:

E-Mail

Emails should contain the basics of effective, professional letter writing. Do not use abbreviations, trendy letter combinations or symbols to make your message heard. Have another person proofread your letter before you send it. Use spell check if available, and copy others that need or want to be kept informed of the situation. If a legislator wants to print your email, you want a document that will get the respect it deserves. National PTA will provide a template letter with requests for action, however, it is important that

you personalize these letters so that your audience knows where you stand on the issue and why this is important to you. (I've been told by my representative that he can spot a form letter, so the more you can make the template sound like you-the better). Anonymous communications are not read so don't forget to include your name and title, address, phone number and email address on all communication.

Phone Calls

Before you place your call, remember that it is not the member of Congress themselves answering the phone; it will most likely be a legislative staff member with whom you speak. Make sure to prepare beforehand for your call. Make notes of particular legislation and research for each issue. Identify yourself as one of the member's constituents and explain to the staff member what it is you are calling about and what action you would like to see taken.

Personal Visits

Meeting in person to discuss a particular bill or issue is the BEST way to influence your legislator.

Prepare for your visit beforehand, make an appointment ahead of time and arrive promptly.

Always be respectful in your tone and language and present yourself in a professional manner.

Whether your communication is by email, phone or in person, always be polite, courteous and concise. Take time to thank these public servants for their service to your community and try to illustrate the connection between the legislation being voted on in Washington or Jefferson City with the effects it will have locally. This will help bring the point home to the member and provide further encouragement for their office to take your requests and concerns seriously. Remember, they were elected by a vote of the people and are where they are to represent you. If presented well, you will find that these elected officials will welcome your advice.

Checklist to Help Prevent Violence in Schools

National PTA @ www.PTA.org

10 Things You Can Do to Prevent Violence in Your School Community

1. Talk to Your Children

Keeping the lines of communication open with your children and teens is an important step to keeping involved in their schoolwork, friends, and activities. Ask open-ended questions and use phrases such as “tell me more” and “what do you think?” Phrases like these show your children that you are listening and that you want to hear more about their opinions, ideas, and how they view the world. Start important discussions with your children—about violence, smoking, drugs, sex, drinking, death—even if the topics are difficult or embarrassing. Don’t wait for your children or teens to come to you.

2. Set Clear Rules and Limits for Your Children

Children need clearly defined rules and limits set for them so that they know what is expected of them and the consequences for not complying. When setting family rules and limits, be sure children understand the purpose behind the rules and be consistent in enforcing them. Discipline is more effective if children have been involved in establishing the rules and, oftentimes, in deciding the consequences. Remember to be fair and flexible—as your children grow older, they become ready for expanded rights and changes in rules and limits. Show your children through your actions how to adhere to rules and regulations, be responsible, have empathy toward others, control anger, and manage stress.

3. Know the Warning Signs

Knowing what is normal behavior for your son or daughter can help you recognize even small changes in behavior and give you an early warning that something is troubling your child. Sudden changes—from subtle to dramatic—should alert parents to potential problems. These could include withdrawal from friends, decline in grades, abruptly quitting sports or clubs the child had previously enjoyed, sleep disruptions, eating problems, evasiveness, lying, and chronic physical complaints (stomachache or headaches).

4. Don’t Be Afraid to Parent; Know When to Intervene

Parents need to step in and intervene when children exhibit behavior or attitudes that could potentially harm them or others. And you don’t have to deal with problems alone—the most effective interventions have parent, school, and health professionals working together to provide on-going monitoring and support.

5. Stay Involved in Your Child’s School

Show your children you believe education is important and that you want your children to do their best in school by being involved in their education. Get to know your child’s teachers and help them get to know you and your child. Communicate with your child’s teachers throughout the school year, not just when problems arise. Stay informed of school events, class projects, and homework assignments. Attend all parent orientation activities and parent-teacher conferences. Volunteer to assist with school functions and join your local PTA. Help your children seek a balance between schoolwork and outside activities. Parents also need to support school rules and goals.

6. Join Your PTA or a Violence Prevention Coalition

According to the National Crime Prevention Council, the crime rate can decrease by as much as 30 percent when a violence prevention initiative is a community-wide effort. All parents, students, school

staff, and members of the community need to be a part of creating safe school environments for our children. Many PTAs and other school-based groups are working to identify the problems and causes of school violence and possible solutions for violence prevention.

7. Help to Organize a Community Violence Prevention Forum

Parents, school officials, and community members working together can be the most effective way to prevent violence in our schools.

8. Help Develop A School Violence Prevention and Response Plan

School communities that have violence prevention plans and crisis management teams in place are more prepared to identify and avert potential problems and to know what to do when a crisis happens. The most effective violence prevention and response plans are developed in cooperation with school and health officials, parents, and community members. These plans include descriptions of school safety policies, early warning signs, intervention strategies, emergency response plans, and post-crisis procedures.

9. Know How to Deal With the Media in a Crisis

Good public relations and media relations start with understanding how the media works and what they expect from organization’s that issue press releases, hold press conferences, and distribute media kits.

10. Work to Influence Lawmakers

Writing an editorial for the local newspaper, holding a petition drive, speaking before a school board meeting, or sending a letter to your legislator can be effective ways to voice your opinion and gain support from decision makers for violence prevention programs in your community. Working with other concerned parents, teachers, and community members, you can influence local, state and even federal decisions that affect the education, safety, and well-being of our children.

Emergency Plan

*Dorothy Gardner, VP and Director,
Dept. of Legislation & Advocacy*

How can you help your school better prepare for emergencies and protect students?

The first step is to be informed about existing plans and procedures. Effective emergency preparedness plans are routinely revisited to identify areas of improvement. Find ways to collaborate effectively with school staff and fellow parents and community members to best prepare for emergency situations. Encourage your child’s school to publish the emergency plan in parent/student handbooks, on the school website, and to distribute via backpack, mail, or email. The U.S. Department of Education provides many resources to help schools create and update School Emergency Management Plans, including:

- Practical Information on Crisis Planning - <http://rems.ed.gov/docs/PracticalInformationonCrisisPlanning.pdf>
- Steps for Developing a School Emergency Preparedness Plan - <http://rems.ed.gov/docs/StepsforDevelopingSchoolEMPlan.pdf>
- Components of Comprehensive School and School District Emergency Mgmt. Plans - <http://rems.ed.gov/docs/ComponentsofSchoolEMPlans.pdf>

Focusing on Kid's Issues

*Dorothy Gardner, VP and Director,
Dept. of Legislation & Advocacy*

Kids First Town Halls are more than just your run of the mill Legislative Forum. These events only focus on issues related to child welfare - issues often missing from traditional legislative forums where the main topics seems to forever revolve around jobs, taxes and entitlement programs. Unfortunately, when the traditional issues are discussed - how do we 'fix' the problems we are faced with today - education is rarely addressed. Yet education, quality education, is the key. How do we create and maintain good jobs? The answer is simple, by graduating students from high school who are college and career ready.

Historically the U.S. has excelled in innovation. Quality education that not only succeeds in teaching the fundamentals, but also encourages creativity is necessary to light the spark in our future innovators. Where will the next Steve Jobs come from? He or she could be sitting in a third grade classroom anywhere in the U.S. right now. We, as a nation, need those individuals to be provided with the opportunities to reach their full potential. Education is a crucial infrastructure piece of our society and should be given a priority status.

Kids First Town Halls provide 'Kid's issues only' events for both elected officials and community members. In this atmosphere, education is given top billing. Both legislators and those in attendance are exposed to the PTA legislative agenda. Constituents are able to listen to their elected officials stances on issues impacting children. And, hopefully, a closer connection is made between the elected official and the constituent.

Prior to the start of the Missouri General Assembly, four Kids First Town Halls took place all around the state. PTA members in Liberty, Hazelwood, Springfield and Columbia turned out to hear what their state and federal representative's answers were on questions addressing funding early childhood education, vouchers, priorities for improving education, parent engagement, and sequestration. When the topic of vouchers came up during the Liberty Town Hall, Representative Berry stated that when our public school system was created it established a contract with our society for that reason he was not a fan of vouchers. During the Springfield Town Hall both Senator Wasson and Senator Dixon pointed out the need for Tax Credit reform. Vouchers bills have continually threatened public education funding and various education organizations also feel tax credit reform needs serious attention in Missouri.

These Kids First Town Halls gave PTA members the opportunity to hear about these important education concerns right in their own backyards and made issues related to child welfare a top priority.

Advocate – Yes You Can

*Dorothy Gardner, VP and Director,
Dept. of Legislation & Advocacy*

Anyone can advocate. No special skills or in depth knowledge about the legislative process is required. Your passion to be a voice for *everychild* is all that is needed. Pick one or two of the ideas below and become an advocate today.

- Attend a local School Board Forum and vote on Election Day.
- Mark your calendar and attend the Missouri's Child Advocacy Day in Jefferson City on April 2nd. Find a couple of PTA members to go with you and make a day of it.
- Did your PTA host the Reflections program at your school? Write a short note to your local representatives explaining the program, how many children participated and any winning entries that went on to the state level. This will create a connection between your students and the elected official.
- Not a member of the JC/DC network? Join today!! Forms can be found in the Tool kit, Winter Packet or go online to the Missouri PTA webpage, www.mopta.org, and click on the "subscribe to Legislative alerts" in the 'Act Now' box on the front page. When legislative alerts arise, be sure to take action.
- Pick one of the issues from the list of 2013 Missouri PTA Legislative Platform and write a short note to one of your local legislators letting them know you feel that this is an important issue. Our legislators hear from paid lobbyist in Washington D.C. and Jefferson City each day. It is paramount they also hear from us. The 2013 Missouri PTA Legislative Platform can be found on the Advocacy Resources page of the website (http://www.mopta.org/legislation/advocacy_resources_page.html).

MO Legislature Back-to-Work

*Dorothy Gardner, VP and Director,
Dept. of Legislation & Advocacy*

On January 9th the Missouri Legislature returned to session in Jefferson City and have until the 60th day of the Legislative session to file bills. However, the pre-filing of bills began back in December. Many of these bills are now in the process of working their way through the public hearing, committee and amending process, and, for some, a final vote. Missouri PTA is keeping a close eye on the filling and process of bills that pertain to child welfare and education. Visit the Capitol Chatter tab under Legislation on the website for the latest information, www.mopta.org/legislation/capitol-chatter.html.

Basic Training Camp: Coming to a Town Near You

*Linda Wansing, VP & Director Department of Field Service
Susan Rupert, VP & Director Department of Membership Services*

Missouri PTA presents, "2013 Basic Training Camp". This year the Missouri PTA Board of Managers will be hitting the road to bring basic training to your area! This new "training camp" format is designed to replace Spring Leadership Conference. The new method of training will provide each unit in the state an opportunity to have officers trained at a location close to where they are located, for a minimal fee and little time away from home and family! There will be training opportunities for President, Membership Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, and Student Involvement. We are excited about the new format and the opportunity to meet you and help you prepare to be the best officer you can be! Be on the lookout for mailers and email to your local unit. Get ready for a fun, powerful opportunity to learn how to take your unit to the next level.

Who Will Make Up Your School Board

By Dorothy Gardner, Vice President and Director Department of Legislation and Advocacy

On April 2nd voters across the state will go to the polls and choose the candidates they feel will best represent them on their local school board. PTA's cannot support or oppose candidates running for school board but under IRS regulations, they can host candidate forums and publish candidate questionnaires. Such forums and questionnaires serve a dual function of informing community members about their choices among candidates and demonstrating the value of PTA.

Publishing questionnaires is a simple and effective way to inform your membership about the candidate's views on education issues. All candidates must be invited to participate and their answers must be published exactly as submitted – no editing or paraphrasing is allowed. When conducting a candidate questionnaire follow these few simple guidelines.

- Formulate your questions.
- Decide what avenue you are going to use to publish the answers (newsletter, website, local newspaper, etc.).
- Establish a deadline for candidates to submit answers.
- Invite all registered candidates to participate and let them know where and when the answers will be published.
- Publish questions and the candidate's answers.

A candidate forum is simply a platform for candidates running for public office to express their views. There are a few different formats: candidate speeches, panel discussions, and audience question-and-answer session. Your PTA can choose to employ one or a combination of these formats for your event. The key is to make sure the forum provides candidates an equal and fair opportunity to express their positions.

Organizing the forum

- Secure a location accessible to all, pick a date and establish time limits.
- Invite all registered candidates.
- Choose an unbiased moderator.
- Promote the event using a neutral tone. Make sure to emphasize the nonpartisan nature of the event.
- Review the chosen format with the candidates.
- Establish ground rules for the distribution of candidates campaign materials. Do not allow any PTA members there, in an official capacity, to hand out these materials.

Conducting the forum

- Review the format once again with all the candidates present.
- Introduce the candidates to the moderator.
- Before you begin, have the moderator explain the format, time limits and any ground rules to the audience.
- Do not ask a candidate to publicly endorse any issues.
- Thank all candidates for attending the forum.

What questions might you ask a School Board Candidate? Here a few for starters. Another great source for questions is your local membership. Find out what questions they would like to see answered.

- What will you do to address the problems schools face with declining funding as they also try to meet the challenges of ever growing enrollments, children with special needs, and new educational technology?
- What specific plans would you recommend to support and improve public schools?
- What specific actions will you take to increase the role of parents in decision making and promote parental involvement in schools?

- If elected, what would you do to address the childhood obesity problem?
- What will you do to help attract highly qualified teachers to our schools?
- Do you believe that art and music are part of a quality education, and if so, what do you plan to do to make sure these programs remain in our schools?
- What is your view on voucher programs that allow parents to use public funds to send their children to private schools?
- What does being a supporter of public education mean to you?
- What do you think is the biggest challenge facing our public schools right now and what is your plan to address it?
- Do all of the teachers in our schools meet the federal government's definition of highly qualified? If not, as a board member, what would you do to address this.
- How are our schools planning to ensure that students graduate with the knowledge and skills they need to be college and career ready?
- In what ways are you reaching out to the business community to build their support for quality public school?
- What kind of community partnerships or activities could support student achievement outside of school?
- What would you do as a board member to ensure that afterschool programs and other activities remain in place for students?
- And finally it might be nice to know if the candidates running are active PTA members.

Hey it's March, membership is done...right? NO WAY!!!

Susan Rupert, VP & Director Department of Membership Services

Just because back in January we rang in the "New Year" doesn't mean our work is done.

Membership recruiting is a year round job. 365 days! Not just for membership chairs, but for all of us! Everyone needs to always be looking for the opportunity to share the "good news" of *Today's PTA*.

So where do we go from here? How can we continue to reach new members? Here are few ideas that might help keep your membership campaign "BLASTING OFF" even into the new school year.

- **Who hasn't joined?** Compare your membership roster to last year's to see who is missing. Contact them and find out the reason why they haven't joined. Maybe they forgot, work keeps them from volunteering, their child graduated or didn't have the money at the beginning of school. Maybe they were not asked. Seize the moment and invite them to join!
- **Continue to be visible.** Membership tables need to be a "fixture" at school events. The membership minute or report should be a part of every board & unit meeting agenda. The unit's goals, accomplishments and invitation to join needs to be prominently displayed in the school.

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Partnership For Children

By Erin Brower, Partnership for Children's Director of Advocacy & Public Policy

Partnership for Children is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, multi-issue child advocacy organization committed to improving the lives of Missouri's children and youth. Partnership for Children produces the annual *KIDS COUNT in Missouri Data Book*, the state's most comprehensive compilation and analysis of data on children's issues. The *KIDS COUNT in Missouri* mission is to improve the well-being of Missouri's children and families by bringing quality data analysis to policymakers, organizations, the media and the public to help inform the direction of our state's policies as they relate to children.

KIDS COUNT in Missouri provides information on the following 29 indicators of child well-being for the state and each of its counties.

29 INDICATORS

Child population	Children enrolled in MO HealthNet for Kids
Children as a percent of total population	Children with elevated blood lead levels
Minority children	Children receiving public SED mental health services
Students enrolled in free/reduced lunch price program	Child deaths, ages 1 – 14
Births to mothers without high school diplomas	Out-of-home placement entries
Children in poverty	Child abuse and neglect
Children under 6 in poverty	Violent teen deaths, ages 15 – 19
Children in single parent families	Annual high school dropouts
Average annual wage/salary	Births to teens, ages 15 – 19
Adult unemployment	Juvenile law violations referrals, ages 10 – 17
Parents paying child support in the state system	Children with limited English proficiency
Children receiving cash assistance	Children receiving subsidized child care
Children receiving food stamps	Licensed child care capacity
Infant mortality	Accredited child care facilities
Low birthweight infants	

HIGHLIGHTED INDICATORS: children in poverty and children under 6 in poverty

Poverty negatively impacts a child's education, health and social behavior. Children with poor education, poor health and poor social behavior are not successful. If Missouri's children are not successful, the state as a whole is in danger.

Definition

KIDS COUNT in Missouri tracks the percentage of children (under 18) that live in families with income below the federal poverty level (FPL). The FPL depends on the number of adults and children in the family. For a single parent (under 65) with two children, the FPL in 2009 was \$18,310 (\$19,090 in 2012). Note, the FPL is very low; most families need an income of at least double the FPL to meet their basic needs.

Missouri Findings

- 1.4 million children live in Missouri. One in five of those children live in poverty.
- The number of Missouri children living in poverty has steadily increased over time from approximately 15% in 2005 to 20.2% in 2009.
- Nearly one in four (24.5%) Missouri children under 6 were living in poverty in 2009. These children are already at a huge disadvantage compared to those children not living in poverty. For example, poverty is directly connected to a child's chances of becoming a juvenile delinquent.
- In Missouri's largest cities, the percent of children living in poverty is particularly high: 44.1% in Springfield, 41.8% in St. Louis City and 29.3% in Kansas City.

County Findings

- In 2009, 13 counties had more than 35% of children living in poverty: Pemiscot, Carter, Hickory, Shannon, St. Louis City, Iron, Vernon, Dunklin, Stone, Wayne, Ozark, Washington and Polk.
- The counties with the lowest percentage of children living in poverty – all below 12% – were St. Charles, Lafayette, Platte, Osage, Callaway, Clay, Cass and Ray.

Children are 25% of our population, but 100% of our future. Our children are struggling, and we have to help them.

For more information, please contact Erin Brower, Partnership for Children's Director of Advocacy & Public Policy, at brower@pfc.org.

To view the *KIDS COUNT in Missouri Data Book* go to: <http://www.oseda.missouri.edu/kidscount/>.

In addition to the *KIDS COUNT in Missouri Data Book*, which provides data on a county level, there is a national *KIDS COUNT Data Book* which tracks the well-being of our nation's children, state by state. To view the national *KIDS COUNT Data Book* go to: <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>.

AWARDS - DON'T FORGET TO APPLY!

Susan Rupert, VP & Director Department of Membership Services

Did your unit “Blast Off” this year? EVERY unit deserves to be recognized for its outstanding accomplishments. EVERY unit needs to apply for one or more of the many Missouri and National PTA awards. It’s EASIER than you think. Award details, qualifications and applications were provided in the tool kit you received last summer and are also available on the state website, www.mopta.org, under “Form/Award Applications”.

We know you did great things. So get on your soap box and toot your horn! Tell the world!

Let us know how you did it – you may take the prize and inspire other units to do the same!

How did you help PTA start “Another 100 Years of Student Success”?

Most applications take no longer than a few minutes to fill out, so what are you waiting for?

The following award applications must be postmarked by April 1, 2013.

Outstanding Membership Campaign Award

Council Achievement Award

Unit Achievement Awards (Blue & Gold Seal)

Outstanding Local Unit/Council Newsletter Award

Outstanding Local Unit/Council Website Award

Membership Awards

Student Safety Award

Health/Wellness & Safety Education Award

Parent Education & Involvement Award

Get those applications in and make your unit an Award Winner!



CREATING A CULTURE OF CHANGE: SAFE AND SOBER

According to the CDC, the average child tries alcohol for the first time at age 12. Youth get drunk twice as fast as adults and have more trouble knowing when to stop and an adolescent may become addicted to alcohol much quicker than an adult because their brains are still developing until their mid 20s. The SAFE AND SOBER Program is designed to give middle and high school students, parents and teachers the information they need to prevent underage drinking.

SAFE AND SOBER is a three part program:

1) The parent program provides education to parents about the dangers and consequences of underage drinking, including alcohol’s affect on the developing brain. Parents are provided information that helps them set limits and expectations for their teen about underage drinking.

2) The high school program is two-fold. Teens participate in a video based presentation that shows the consequences of underage drinking and how it can change their future forever. Students are then asked to take sign a pledge card to remain safe and sober until they are 21 years old. Students must take the card home and have a parent or guardian sign it, making them aware of the pledge their student is taking.

3) The middle school program further engages the high school students who have taken the pledge. High school students will share the reasons they took the pledge and the share the culture of high school that does not include alcohol.

This program is a great educational tool to help reinforce positive decision

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10 Ways

To keep your membership campaign “BLASTING OFF”

1. **REACH OUT:** Contact those community members, businesses & parents who have had strong interest and leadership in your PTA but no longer have children in school. Educate them about *Today’s PTA* and how they can still be a part of it.
2. **MEMBERSHIP HONOR ROLL:** Create an Honor Roll of members and publish it in your PTA’s newsletter, website or bulletin board. This is a great way to publicly acknowledge their support.
3. **WHY JOIN?** Use your school’s website to post the top 10 reasons for joining your PTA. Include a membership form that can be printed out.
4. **PROVIDE STRONG LEADERSHIP:** Remember to be inclusive, welcoming and embrace the vision & objectives of PTA. Don’t forget to promote the important child advocacy role we have. Don’t assume people know.
5. **THANK YOU...THANK YOU!!!** Take time to thank your members and volunteers often for their support and time. Without them there would not be a PTA. Observe National Volunteer Week. Utilize Teachers Appreciation Week to thank the school staff. Remember to thank your unit’s officers & chairs for their hard work.
6. **BREAK DOWN BARRIERS:** What is keeping people from joining and participating? Examine the obstacles and possible solutions. They can be economic, family-related, or “comfort” related. Use this info to plan for next year.
7. **USE YOUR TIME WISELY:** Instead of starting from scratch use the customizable resources that are available online at PTA.org/Marketing.
8. **NATIONAL BENEFIT PROVIDERS:** Keep these updated and visible. Promote these exclusive discounts along with any local incentives you may be offering. Provide details on how to access the benefits only to your PTA members.
9. **THE STUDENT MARKET:** Offer a special drawing to all students that are members because it is never too late to join. Make sure the prize appeals to them i.e. iTunes Gift Card.
10. **TRAINING = KNOWLEDGE = SUCCESS!** Encourage your chairman & officers, including incoming officers, to attend the new Training Camp that is coming to your local area. Get your board ready for next year and help build strong leaders for the future.

A Message for School Leaders from National PTA

Harnessing the Power of Volunteers

Shrinking budgets. Increasing class sizes. Government mandates. The challenges of delivering quality education are daunting. There is help. It's the PTA.

It doesn't take much time to get a Parent Teacher Association started either. Find just one parent in your school to take the lead, and before you know it, there will be a group of dedicated parents doing what PTA does best: providing resources and programs to all families.

PTAs Benefit Everyone

PTA addresses issues that are important to parents and public school administrators. We fight for full funding, quality teachers, and capabilities for schools to thrive. If your school or district does not have a PTA, now is the time. Membership is open to everyone. Your PTA is autonomous but supported by a national structure. It sets its own dues.

Some of PTA's Benefits

- *Leverage Volunteer Power.* PTA organizes hard-working, dedicated volunteers. Parents are ready to help implement school improvement programs.
- *Improve Communication.* PTAs frequently coordinate production of a school newsletter and information fliers, keeping the entire school community informed of current events, issues, and accomplishments. Regular meetings allow PTAs to share information with members.
- *See Measurable Results.* More than 85 research studies conducted over the past 30 years prove that kids do better when parents are involved. Grades are higher. Test scores improve. Attendance increases.

- *Discover More Dollars.* Local PTAs are self-funding. By inviting the entire school's parent community to join, they generate membership fees to pay for programs. Local PTA fundraisers support school programs, building improvements, and educational events.
- *Tap into Proven Programs.* Local PTAs have access to ready-made, easy-to-use programs with proven success records. From health and safety topics, to collaborating with teachers and community members, to fundraising, the programs get results.
- *Boost Children's Well-Being.* PTAs focus on what students need to be successful in their learning, including nutrition, health, school safety, physical fitness and general well-being. PTA works with schools to ensure that children succeed.
- *Enjoy Informed Parents.* Involved parents understand the challenges schools face and become part of the solution. By developing a closer relationship with parents, student achievement improves, and the school develops a positive reputation in the community.
- *Fulfill NCLB Obligations.* Finally, PTAs can help schools fulfill the parent involvement requirement of the No Child Left Behind Act. PTA understands the needs behind NCLB. In fact, it's PTA's definition of parent involvement that is used in NCLB.

Missouri PTA volunteers across the state are hard at work advocating, educating, and helping parents, teachers, and administrators. We believe that this network of support sets us apart from other parent groups. If you would like more information on becoming a PTA please contact us at: office@mopta.org. We are happy to assist you in learning more about our association and the activities, programs and advocacy efforts on behalf of all children, families and schools in the "show me" state.

CREATING A CULTURE OF CHANGE: SAFE AND SOBER

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making and safe behaviors to Missouri students. By properly educating students on the criminal, civil, personal and emotional consequences of their actions, the program encourages safe choices both now and as students transition toward adulthood. During the video presentation, the ask is that each student takes a pledge to themselves and their parent(s) to commit to remaining alcohol and drug free to ensure they, along with their classmates, are safe, healthy, and can look forward to bright futures.

This program has a powerful mix of emotional stories, engaging video, and educational information to ensure students capture and retain the message. Many schools partner SAFE AND SOBER with existing safety related programming, dramatizations, or other special events to help drive home the message that the entire community cares about each of them.

As further encouragement for students to sign the pledge to stay drug and alcohol free on prom night, the high school with the highest participation in each sized based category can win up to \$1,000 for their school! If your school gets to 70% pledge rate but doesn't win the category, you are put into a drawing for 10 \$500 prizes! With this element of healthy competition between schools, the students encourage each other to take the pledge. This positive

peer pressure is not only active during the assembly and ensuring "pledge time", but also transitions to the weeks, days, and hours leading up to prom, providing a reminder to make positive choices and stay safe.

SAFE AND SOBER is a non-profit organization, under the Mercy Health Foundation-Springfield. The program was founded in 2004 by Springfield-based attorney Kurt Larson as Safe and Sober Prom Night. Since its inception, the program has reached more than 50,000 students in southwest Missouri. Recently the program received a grant from the Missouri Department of Transportation for \$130,000 to help the program spread statewide and to allow high school students to take the program to middle school students. Help bring the SAFE AND SOBER program to your school today! For more information on how to implement the program in your school, email info@missourisafeandsober.com, call 417-631-4009 or visit the website: www.missourisafeandsober.com.

Hazelwood School District holds additional meeting with fire and police to improve safety

By Diana Gulotta, Assistant Superintendent for Communications, Hazelwood Public Schools

In light of the recent tragedy in Connecticut, Hazelwood School District administrators held a second meeting Jan. 3, with leaders from police and fire departments serving schools in the District. Superintendent Dr. Grayling Tobias, in addition to HSD Board of Education members and other District leaders, met with leaders from the Florissant, Hazelwood and St. Louis police departments, as well as leaders from the Florissant Valley, Spanish Lake and Black Jack fire protection districts.

The purpose of the meeting was to improve communication and re-examine and review safety procedures to ensure the safety of our students and staff. District

leaders first met with police and fire officials in late December.

“This is a great opportunity to move forward by bringing the police, fire and school district together in an effort to provide a safe and secure environment for students, staff and community members. Safety is our highest priority and we want to cooperate with all of our officials who serve our students and community,” said Tobias.

During the meeting, police and fire officials continued a discussion that began in December regarding the safety of our schools. In December, HSD officials shared the HSD emergency operations procedures with the police and fire officials

and asked for feedback on ways to improve.

“We continued our conversation this morning, and we received excellent feedback from all of the agencies on how we can make improvements to our school safety procedures,” Tobias said. “We will be working in partnership with our police and fire agencies to conduct a safety and security audit that will provide HSD with recommendations for improvement.”

Tobias said he plans to hold more meetings in the future to ensure the conversation about improving school safety continues. In addition, police and fire officials are invited to share an update on our partnership at a future HSD Board of Education meeting.

The Hazelwood School District serves more than 18,000 students and is the second largest district in St. Louis County. Communities in the district include Hazelwood, Black Jack, Spanish Lake, a large section of Florissant, portions of Bridgeton, Bellefontaine Neighbors and Ferguson, and several square miles of unincorporated St. Louis County. The district's mission statement follows: “We are a collaborative learning community guided by a relentless focus to ensure each student achieves maximum growth.”



2013 PTA Take Your Family To School Week Recipients:

Congratulations Hazelwood Galactic PTA and Kellybrooke PTA

National PTA's **Take Your Family to School Week** encourages PTAs and school leaders to provide opportunities for families to engage in their child's learning and overall well-being in the school environment. Funded by the AXA Foundation, this year's Take Your Family to School Week was Feb. 18-22, 2013 and the theme this year was **Safety at Home and at Play**.

Grant recommendations from these Missouri PTA units included a question on how these schools will incorporate family-centered injury prevention activities in their events. **Hazelwood Galactic PTA**, a gifted programs PTA, provides events that help parents understand concerns they face as a family and as parents

of gifted students. Events include guest speakers and a trivia night event, which will feature a category dedicated to injury prevention. They will also include display posters and printed materials at the event. **Kellybrooke PTA** is hosting several events including a parent/child workshop focused on internet safety and cyber bullying and will include trained representatives from the local police department. They will also host a health fair and include resources and representatives from various community members on the subjects such as bike, car and pet safety. They will also incorporate a 1-mile fun walk/run.

The Snowflakes for Sandy Hook Project

National PTA

Every day since the horrific school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, staff and volunteers throughout the state have dedicated their time to helping the community heal. And for the foreseeable future, the Connecticut PTSA and National PTA will continue to support the families of Sandy Hook.

If you missed the CBS Evening News ("On the Road" with Steve Hartman) on Friday 11, 2013, Please read the heartfelt message from Jim Accomando, President of the Connecticut PTSA, about the Snowflakes for Sandy Hook Project.

On behalf of the Connecticut PTSA, I must express how grateful we are for the incredible outpouring of love and goodwill that followed the unspeakable tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School on December 14. The Snowflakes for Sandy Hook Project—a unique and thoughtful idea meant to engage the emotions of children and parents through the creation and sending of snowflakes—has amazingly snowballed into a worldwide blizzard, pun intended.

The Connecticut PTSA is a small operation. We have an office of approximately 2,000 square feet with one full-time and one part-time employee. On December 18, our office received the first Sandy Hook snowflake and now—three weeks later—we have completely filled, from floor to ceiling, the entire office, as well as an additional 2,500 square feet of office space donated by our landlord, a 48' trailer, and two 12'x 12' storage pods. Meanwhile, the post office is storing four additional 48' trailers filled with snowflakes, correspondence, cash and checks, all designated for the families of Sandy Hook School.

Each envelop, package, and box we received is filled with emotion, and each contains a unique story. Senders included heartfelt cards and letters; some contained loose change and small bills from a child's savings. Checks of all amounts continue to arrive daily. We received beautifully crafted snowflakes of all colors, shapes, materials, and sizes, as well as school supplies, plush animals, toys, decorations and personal tributes for the victims' families.

The Sandy Hook and Newtown families know of our efforts and are most grateful. We have met with our Newtown PTA members several times and remain in daily contact with Sandy Hook. This past Monday, parents from the Sandy Hook PTA joined us, along with National PTA

President Betsy Landers, Beth Rorick and Abi Weaver, to open mail.

Currently, with our volunteers and staff working tirelessly, we have processed approximately 10 percent of the received mail, with new trucks arriving daily. We have received packages from all 50 US states, every province in Canada, and more than 40 countries worldwide. We have enough snowflakes to decorate each of the PTA schools in Newtown. We will distribute additional snowflakes to private and parochial schools, daycare facilities, town buildings, and any other facility in the community that wants to display a winter wonderland in solidarity with Sandy Hook. If you have created snowflakes, but have not yet mailed them, please keep and display them in your school or community. We will, however, continue to collect all personal and fundraising donations indefinitely.

How You Can Help the Connecticut PTSA

*As you can imagine, with such an awesome response, our current challenge revolves around logistics. With limited workspace, only 15 volunteers can process mail each day. Even with 30 volunteers working 10 hours a day (as was the case this past Saturday), we were able to make a small dent that was buried under new arrivals within two days. We welcome all volunteers to join us; we work six days a week, and promise a gratifying memory to cherish forever. Lastly, all food used to feed volunteers is purchased from donations made by our Executive Officers and Board Members. No PTA funds are used for this relief effort. **We welcome any non-PTA donations to offset volunteer and logistical expenses as we continue to work over the next several months. Please send all donations to: Connecticut PTSA, 3000 Whitney Avenue Suite 121, Hamden, CT 06518.***

After receiving thousands of emails and phone calls of support, we need to express our thanks to all of you for your thoughts and prayers to the Sandy Hook families and our Connecticut PTA community. We feel your warmth and have expressed this to the Sandy Hook PTA many times.

Jim Accomando, President CT PTSA, on behalf of the Staff and Board of the Connecticut PTSA

Reflections – Student Showcase

By Michele Reed, VP & Director Department of Programs

Wow, it is hard to believe that it is already March, and we completed the first year with major rule changes to the Reflections program. There were many hurdles to jump, and bumps in the road, but we did it. The Missouri PTA Reflections committee has unpacked, sorted and sent our entries to the judges. Our first place winning entries have been sent to National PTA, and we are working hard to get notification to our student winners, and the winners list out to our units. Missouri has, as always, proven that Arts in Education really matters and it shows with this year's Reflections entries.

Missouri PTA would like to thank all of the students who participated, and the countless hours all of the Reflections chairpersons have spent preparing entries and making sure they were ready for state judging. We understand, in this year of change, that things were different and confusing so, therefore, we are working to clarify the Missouri PTA Reflections Rules for next year.

In this year of changes, Missouri PTA is also changing student showcase. We will be hosting an event just for Reflections this year. Students placing first will be able to perform their entries if they choose to do so, including

the dance choreography winners. In the past the dance choreography winners have not been able to perform their winning entry.

The Missouri PTA Reflections Student Showcase will be held in Columbia, Missouri at Rockbridge High School on April 27, 2013, so mark your calendar. Be sure that any students who placed at the state level have received their information letter, and let the office know how many from their family will be attending.

We appreciate all that you do for the students of Missouri and we encourage you to continue supporting the Arts in your schools.

Student Success for MAP Testing

By Michele Reed, VP & Director Department of Programs

As we approach MAP testing for all students in Missouri it is important to encourage parents and students to make sure they are getting plenty of sleep and eating the right foods for brain power. As parents, teachers and caregivers; we need to encourage students at this critical time to eat fruits grains and dairy, to make sure they are in the best shape possible. Of course eating these foods should be encouraged all year long.

It has been proven in many articles that kids that eat healthy perform better in everything they do; whether it is sports or academics. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education list the below tips for making sure your child does well on the MAP test.

Tip #1: Read, Read, Read!

Reading takes skill and practice. One of the best and simplest steps to improve the reading ability for children is to provide sustained periods of time for children to read.

Tip #2: Help your child to read like a writer.

Even in the early grades, children can begin to “get into the head” of the author. Reading improves a child's writing, and writing improves a child's reading.

Tip #3: Read a variety of books and magazines.

MAP Communication Arts test contains short stories, poems, dialogues, magazine articles, charts and tables. Children need to be able to read a wide variety of texts ranging from road signs to restaurant menus, comic books to classics, and from tennis shoe ads to computer manuals.

Tip #4: Build your child's reading stamina.

To build reading stamina, you may wish to encourage your child to increase gradually the amount of time she reads at one sitting. Include short breaks, such as stretching or closing her eyes for a minute. Set individual reading goals based upon doing the “best that she can.”

Tip #5: Teach your child that visuals are part of the text.

Students are often required to gather information from photos, captions, drawings, charts, and graphs. You can help by teaching your child to look at all of these materials as part of the total text.

Tip #6: Help your child know how to use text-based support in written responses.

Most of the constructed-response items on the MAP assessments have two parts or require children to explain or show how they arrived at their answers. Children will receive only partial credit for answers to

questions that are not supported with specific details or that do not contain an explanation.

Tip #7: Teach your child to preview the test before starting.

Planning the test time will allow your child to pace himself while he is working and decrease stress.

Tip #8: Teach your child to identify all parts of a question.

Teach your child to identify exactly what each question is asking. Some questions have multiple parts, which are often combined into a single sentence with a single question mark at the end. The child should underline each question word (who, what, when, where, why, how and any other word or phrase that indicates a question). By doing so, she can see if a question has multiple parts. Not answering all parts of a multi-part question is a common error.

Tip #9: Teach your child to paraphrase test items, turning questions into statements.

Teach your child to turn questions into statements. The child may underline the question words as described above, and then turn each part of the item into a statement. For example, the question, “Why did the main character play with the ball?” could be rephrased as “The main character played with the ball because ...” This practice allows the child to phrase the question in a way that makes the most sense to him. He is then ready to read the passage and look for answers.

Tip #10: What can a parent or guardian do to ensure successful assessment for their student?

- Be aware of the testing schedule.
- Be certain that your child has had adequate rest (this may mean getting them used to an earlier bed time before the week of testing).
- Be on time for school.
- Avoid scheduling appointments that can be done at a later date.
- Dress your child in layered clothing. This way, the child may add clothing to get warmer or remove some clothing to be cooler.
- If your school allows it, make sure your child has a book to read when the testing session is complete.
- Be certain that your child has two or more number two pencils (not mechanical).

Have a positive attitude.

Adapted from the Practical Parenting Partnerships by Laura Schwab and the 2001 MAP Class 6 Team

A Former Student Representative Perspective

By: Amanda Weber

No Child Left Behind, Unit in Good Standing, Annual Financial Review, what are those, what could they mean? They are words and terms that every PTA member should know and ones that I learned as well as much, much more during my tenure as Student Representative for Missouri PTA. I learned what challenges are facing public education and how important the role PTA moms and dads have in helping with those challenges but also how critical and important it is for the students who are striving to achieve an education. For far too long, students and parents alike have become isolated to only think and worry about their children, their classes and or their school, but true PTA membership and advocacy worries about every child, every class, and every school.

While attending a National PTA convention, I saw how members from across the United States cried, cheered, laughed and worked together for better tomorrows for all of the children in schools everywhere. I had lunch with the National PTA President at my favorite local restaurant; we discussed normal stuff that was happening to my peers and me at our local high school. I remember thinking this is a person who will talk with Presidents, Congressmen, and VIP's from large international companies and she is asking me "What my lunch period is like?" I also got to meet some great students from across Missouri at conferences and conventions that wanted to make a difference.

My proudest and most memorable moments would be working with the other students to write a student resolution on Distracted Driving, proving once again how even just one quiet voice can create change and that there is no little feat that a dedicated, motivated group like PTA can't do. Second to that would be meeting Gov. Matt Blunt and watching him signing the Proclamation on Parent Involvement that Missouri PTA advocated for.

We all have heroes and people that we look up to or people that we strive to be like, Missouri PTA has had and still does have some of the greatest people one will meet. From Tina Zubeck asking us to "Be the

One", Kathy Nevans "Believe", Mary Oyler's "Today", and Wendy Jackson's "Together", they all have taught me invaluable lessons in leadership, responsibility and effort. Who says heroes have to have capes and special powers, those ladies just sought better tomorrows for me and all children. It was a great feeling to work alongside these presidents and know that they had my back and every student in Missouri backs. My friends would be jealous when I got out of school to attend a PTA convention or conference but I always told them it was a long weekend, and that I came back to school to rest. This is very true, if you think serving on the board of managers for Missouri PTA is a fluff job, it is not, think of how long your own PTA meetings are, and triple that for a Missouri PTA meeting. It is okay though because important work is being discussed and planned and they are watching every student's backs and probably some teachers and school districts as well.

Now that I am in college I don't always see the benefits and work of the PTA like I did in my own PTSA back in high school. I get to hear about it from my friends who are still on the board and from Facebook or Twitter. If someone had told me four years ago that Missouri PTA would be on Facebook or tweet on Twitter, I would have laughed out loud and thought how absurd. But as a student delegate I learned that PTA's have to change, so stepping up their social media game is what they have to do now to be actively communicating, engaged and advocating each and every day the PTA way. While I might not be as active as I once was, I still am a proud PTA member and still call Missouri PTA, my other family. I also know that some of the students that are striving for greatness here at my college probably came from a PTA school and they always had the support and resources that they needed. As I embark on my journey to become a teacher myself someday, I will continue to always support PTA and hopefully my child, my class and my school will see the benefit of PTA. Been there, done that, learned it and committed to it! PTA, it truly is for everyone.

Hey it's March, membership is done...right? NO WAY!!!

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- **Reach a new segment.** Look at the diversity of your unit see if there is a "group" that your PTA is not reaching. Males, working moms, grandparents, Hispanics, students, etc. Research programs, i.e. Watch Dogs, All Pro Dads, iMOM that might help you become a better resource and increase their involvement. If unable to implement it before school is out, make it a goal for next year.
- **The revolving door.** There is always a "new" student. Keep your PTA information updated and include membership forms in "New Student" packets. Work closely with the office staff and send a welcome letter to new families in the district.
- **New member discount.** Partner with a local business to add a new member discount. Try adding a "Spring" membership discount that promotes family time outside. Discounts at the batting cages, miniature or regular golf or go carts work great. Remember to promote the NPPTA member benefits too.
- **Kindergarten round-up.** Parents that are enrolling their first child into the education system are embarking on a new adventure. They do not know about supply lists, car lines, class parties, volunteering, etc. They need to be educated about the importance of parent involvement and PTA's advocacy role. Load up the "welcome

wagon" and be the friendly PTA face that helps them get through this unfamiliar territory.

- **Middle School Student/Parent Orientation.** Host a special open house for those families that are transiting from elementary to middle school. Use this opportunity to inform parents that PTA membership and parent involvement is just as important to student success as before. Enlist the help of PTSA student members to give tours and tips on opening lockers. Hold a scavenger hunt to help incoming students & parents become familiar with the building. Allow time for the home room teacher to meet the parents and share expectations.
- **The Year End responsibilities:** Taking care of "business" is vital to the continued success of the unit's membership campaign into the next school year. Here are a few simple hints.
 - ✓ Make sure all dues are postmarked by March 1st.
 - ✓ Apply for membership awards by April 1st.
 - ✓ Review and update the membership roster.
 - ✓ Update procedure book.
 - ✓ Attend training.

Short Takes

INTRODUCING THE NEW HEALTH-BASED PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE PROGRAM

In September 2012, the President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition announced they are phasing out their Youth Fitness Test which dates back to 1966 and replacing it with the Presidential Youth Fitness Program. The comprehensive school-based program employs the latest science and promotes health and physical activity for America's youth. This voluntary program represents a significant change in how schools and parents approach kids' physical fitness. Instead of recognizing athletic performance, the new program assesses students' health related fitness and helps them progress over time. The Presidential Youth Fitness Program is available for free to schools at www.presidentialyouthfitnessprogram.org.

We know a lot more about healthy living now than we did nearly three decades ago, when the first national youth fitness test was born. Research shows that children who practice good health maintain higher attendance rates, are better able to learn, exhibit higher self-esteem, and have a lower risk of developing chronic diseases. Physical activity is critical to our children's health and well-being.

ALL PRO DAD-HOW TO START A CHAPTER

What does it take to be an All Pro Dad? One minute a day; one hour a month; one day a year. Missouri PTA and All Pro Dad challenge all local units to start an All Pro Dad chapter at your local school. All Pro Dad provides a great program that will increase male involvement within your PTA and could increase your membership up to 20%.

A number of PTAs in Missouri have already started an All Pro Dad chapter. To start an All Pro Dad chapter in your school, please visit the www.allprodad.com website for more information and use the promo code "PTAFREE" to start your ALL PRO DAD chapter for free!!!

NATIONAL PTA HAS PRODUCED FOUR TIP-SHEETS TO ASSIST LOCAL PTAS IN OPTIMIZING THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA EFFORTS.

The tip-sheets offer advice on using Facebook, Twitter, blogs and YouTube.

[http://www.pta.org/files/NPTA_Social_Media_Tipsheets_\(2\).pdf](http://www.pta.org/files/NPTA_Social_Media_Tipsheets_(2).pdf)

Mark Your Calendar

March

Women's History Month

Music in Our School Month

National Nutrition Month

- 1 Memberships dues to state office
- 2 Read Across America Day
- 6 Principal's Day
- 13 MOPTA mid-year Membership Drive "Lucky in '13" Ends.
- 13-14 National PTA Legislative Conference, Arlington VA
- 17 St. Patrick's Day
- 31 New Officers Form Due to State Office
- 31 Easter

April

Child Abuse Prevention Month

National Youth Sports Safety Month

Counseling Awareness Month

April 1 – May 17 MAP Testing Window for the state

- 1 Award Applications Due to state office
- 2 Election Day
- Child Advocacy Day
- 22 Earth Day
- 24 Administrative Professionals Day
- 27 Reflections Student Showcase

May

Healthy Vision Month

National Physical Fitness & Sports

Asthma Awareness Month

National Foster Care Month

- 1 May Day
- 5 Cinco De Mayo
- 6-10 Teacher Appreciation Week
- 7 National Teachers Day
- 12 Mother's Day
- 18 Armed Forces
- 27 Memorial Day

MISSOURI PTA ON THE WEB AND THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA.

Find us online @ www.MOPTA.org

Like us on facebook @ Missouri PTA

Join us on Pinterest. (<http://pinterest.com/missouripta>) for some great ideas and while you are at it, share some of your own.

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MISSOURI CHILD ADVOCACY DAY APRIL 2ND 2013

Join Missouri PTA and Child Advocates from across the State at the 31st annual Missouri Child Advocacy Day In Jefferson City

**Speak up and ask lawmakers
to make child welfare issues
a top priority in Missouri**



Registration is free
Register online at www.childadvocacyday.org