

Missouri Parent Teacher Association

# CONTACT

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March 2008

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*Today*

*Advocate Today*



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**Cover photo:**

Missouri State Capital Building

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**CONTACT Staff****President/Publisher** Mary Oyler**Editor** Dorothy Gardner**Graphic Designer** Olivia Gill**President's Message**

By Mary Oyler, Missouri PTA President



As I started working on my message for this issue, I made three different attempts – but none of them seemed right. They had a great start, but didn't tend to flow into where I wanted to go. I turned off the computer and gave myself a little more time to reflect. This morning an idea came to me. Like my many starts that didn't produce the outcome I wanted to see, I started thinking about our children, especially those getting ready to take the Missouri Assessment Program test this spring.

Schools are working very hard to prepare the students for these tests. Teachers work daily to help the students prepare. This includes teaching reading strategies – how to make inferences, how to predict, how to summarize and how to determine the author's meaning in order to help improve reading skills and encourage children to become better readers. They spend endless hours planning and preparing lessons that will help our children develop the math, science or social studies skills they will need in order to succeed.

Our children work very hard every day during their communication arts learning block in order to improve their reading comprehension as well as their reading level. They work with math manipulatives and activities in order to better understand number concepts. They participate in activities daily to prepare them for the spring testing window and success.

Like the many starts for my message this month, the efforts our teachers and students are making to prepare for student success are great starts. But, in order for all of our children to achieve student success, parents must be a part of the process. Numerous studies show that when parents are involved in their children's education - SUCCESS will follow.

Parents must reach out to the schools to let teachers and administrators know they want to be a part of the education process of their children. Those parents that feel comfortable speaking out must also speak out for the parent who is unsure or doesn't understand what the expectations should be. Parents must ask questions and develop relationships with the educators in their community in order to develop a process where all parents feel comfortable being involved.

"Involved in your child's education" doesn't

mean that a parent has to be at the school on a continuous basis. It does mean that they should be informed about what the student is learning, are aware of how to help support the school, provide a quiet place and a special time in the home for study or reading and that their children come to school rested and ready to learn. It means that parents must give their children the gift of time to let them know that success in school as well as pride in a job well done will insure success in life.

In order for parents to be successful in this type of involvement, the school must establish effective communication between the home and school, must make all families feel welcome in the school, and must reach out to those families that are hesitant to become involved. No parent ever wakes up in the morning wishing that his or her child has an unsuccessful school experience. Some just don't have the background or tools to help their children develop into successful learners and it is up to those that have these skills to help others develop them.

Everyday parents send their most cherished possession into our schools. So, as these children prepare for the spring MAP tests, why don't we, as the adults in their lives, start the parent involvement process in order to help our children be successful TODAY and start them on the path of making their potential a reality?

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PHONE: 800-328-7330 FAX: 573-445-4163  
or [www.mopta.org](http://www.mopta.org)

Please notify the Publication Office in case of change of address or to purchase a subscription. It is important that we have accurate addresses so that we may provide the support and information to each local unit.

NOTE: Advertisements appearing in this publication do not constitute PTA's endorsement of the product or service.

PLEASE SHARE THIS MAGAZINE.

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.

National PTA Office: 330 North Wabash Ave Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60611-3690  
Phone: 312-670-6782 (670-NPTA), [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org).  
MO PTA 800-328-7330

**Who We Are****PTA Vision**

Making every child's potential a reality

**PTA Mission ~ PTA is:**

- A powerful voice for all children,
- A relevant resource for families and communities, and
- A strong advocate for the education and well-being of every child.

**PTA Purposes**

- To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, community, and place of worship
- To raise the standards of home life
- To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth
- To bring into closer relation the home and the school, that parents and teacher may cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth
- To develop between educators and general public such united efforts as will secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, social, and spiritual education

# What Does It Mean to Be Part of a Community?

By Jan Harp Domene, PTA National President



Is a community defined by geography? Sometimes. Is there a community when people are associated by like interests? That's closer. But a better definition for community might be "a group of individuals

who are connected."

It is not a common membership card or even the mutual desire to advocate for children that truly unites PTA members as a community – it is how we connect with each other, how we support and engage and share with each other. Building upon this idea is so important that PTA has recently updated its National Standards to put even more emphasis on the community – of PTA members, of schools, and of the public at large.

The new National Standards for Family-

School Partnerships serve as a guide for how families, schools, and citizen leaders can best form a community that works toward a common goal of student achievement. The first step in creating these stronger communities is ensuring inclusivity. Do your local units have plans in place for how they will reach out to all the families who are not yet involved with their school? Do they have strategies for drawing in civic partners from their neighborhoods and towns? If not, there's no better place to start than with the National Standards.

There's also no better time to begin than right now – with PTA's second half membership drive. This winter we have an excellent opportunity to bring fresh voices and important contributors into our PTAs and schools. Let's make sure we are extending membership invitations to new families transferring at semester break, to champions of education, and to business owners in the

area – they are all welcome in our community of advocates. For those potential members not familiar with our organization, the Showcase DVD that arrived with your fall state allotments is a terrific introduction to the value of PTA in schools.

For over 110 years, PTA has represented a community of people dedicated to the health, education, and well-being of America's children. As inheritors of that great tradition, it's now our job to keep this community strong, and growing.

## Volunteer Appreciation

By Wendy Jackson, President Elect

Webster defines "volunteer" as someone who is unpaid, who offers oneself, who comes forward, who undertakes, and Labor of Love. In PTA's all across this great state and nation we have "volunteers" who do everything from Presidency to sweeping the floor after a PTA event. We must take the time to recognize the value of each of these "volunteers" no matter how much or how little time they can give. We as a PTA need to recognize with gratitude and fully realize that the "volunteers" are the heart and soul at the local, council, state, and national level. The "volunteer" is what sets this organization apart from all others; we are able to accomplish great things because each of us has the heartfelt desire to make a difference in the lives of all children.

In a desire to "appreciate" our volunteers we must make sure that we take the time to "thank" them in a heartfelt way. Some ways to do that might include: thank you notes, a volunteer of the year award, a volunteer appreciation lunch held at the end of the year hosted by your school, honoring them with a Missouri Distinguished Service Award, or

National Life Time Achievement Award. Although these are things that will say thank you, we all know that the most important thing is for us to be sincere.

PTA is a "Labor of Love" and the work is hard, but the rewards are many, some... we will never know. Please take the time to remember those who volunteer.

## Nominate A Great Teacher

Is there a teacher in your child's life who is extraordinary? Someone who goes above and beyond to make sure students receive the best education possible? The Teacher's Insurance Plan sponsors an annual TOTY (Teacher of the Year) Award. The nominees are judged on ability to motivate students, their own unique special talents, and contributions to their school, students or community. The winner in Missouri will receive \$1000 and a \$500 grant for their school. Nominations are currently being accepted through April 30, 2008. If you would like to nominate a great teacher (or yourself) file out a TOTY nomination form and explain in 250 words or less why this particular person deserves to be picked as the Teacher of the Year. Forms and more information can be found online at [www.teachers.com/toty](http://www.teachers.com/toty).

## Who are your new officers?



Now that next year's officers have been elected remember to send those names into state office. Why? Mailing lists for both MO PTA and National PTA are compiled from the Officer Forms. Whether your PTA has new or re-elected officers important information and helpful tools are waiting. Make sure your PTA gets off to a great start next school year. Officers' forms can be found in the tool-kit and online ([www.mopta.org](http://www.mopta.org)). Information is due by March 31.

## Toot Your Horn

The deadline for several grants and awards is approaching. Make sure your PTA receives the pat on the back it deserves. Applications can be found in the toolkit or online ([www.mopta.org](http://www.mopta.org)).

Outstanding Membership Campaign Grant  
April 1<sup>st</sup>

Council Achievement Award April 15<sup>th</sup>

Unit Achievement Awards (Blue & Gold Seal)  
April 15<sup>th</sup>

Outstanding Local Unit or Council newsletter  
Award April 15<sup>th</sup>

Outstanding Local Unit or Council Website  
Award April 15<sup>th</sup>

Health & Safety Grant April 15<sup>th</sup>

Membership Awards April 15<sup>th</sup>

Student Involvement Grant August 1<sup>st</sup>

## SUPERSTAR UNIT Liberty Junior High School PTSA

Increase student membership. That was the main goal set by this PTSA and they not only successfully achieved that goal, but also are within one membership of their original membership goal number and 100% faculty membership. Their success also extends to receiving the State PTA "Early Bird" award for middle & junior high schools. Having goals and a plan to reach them, Jerri Griffith, President and Cindy Lowe, Membership Vice President, were able to increase their membership over 48%!

Several steps were put into place to meet membership goals. First, the price of student memberships and faculty memberships were offered at a lower cost than the year before, while the adult membership price was raised. They found this had virtually no impact on the number of adult memberships they received, but helped increase their student and faculty memberships. Memberships were offered at registration days, back-to-school nights and parent-teacher conferences.

Incentives were offered to both students and faculty PTA members. At a teacher appreciation breakfast, drawings were held for all school staff/faculty PTA members. They had 40-50 different gift cards and prizes, donated by local community businesses for the drawings. A "Spirit Dance" similar to the local high school homecoming dance was held for the students. All student PTA members were given free entry into the dance; everyone else received a PTA membership with their entrance fee. This dance is credited with being the primary reason they were able to reach their student membership goal. It was such a popular activity, they were asked to have this dance again next fall. Both of these events were put on at virtually no expense to the unit due to business and parent donations of food and drinks.

Communication is always an important part of any PTA unit and becomes much harder throughout junior and senior high school. Jerri utilized the school email list to send PTA newsletters, meeting announcements and other PTA reminders to parents. On the school website, a link was set up to go directly to their PTA website where membership forms were available. This link was also included in emails to the parents.

Liberty Jr. High PTSA showed that any unit can become successful by setting goals and making a plan to reach them. All it takes is a little hard work and creativity.

[www.mopta.org](http://www.mopta.org)

## 10 WAYS TO INCREASE YOUR PTA MEMBERSHIP

1. **CREATE** a special "members only" event – perhaps a dinner dessert with a featured speaker prior to your PTA meeting.
2. **PLAN** an all-school reward – ice cream, movie night, etc. when you reach your membership goal.
3. **SUBMIT** a write-up to your local paper on any awards/recognition your PTA receives or any award your unit presents to a member.
4. **ATTEND** registration days – election, kindergarten, secondary school, others. Have your membership materials visible and present.
5. **INVITE** those business members who have joined to come for special recognition and an opportunity to see inside the school.
6. **SEND** your PTA announcements home to be colored by children and brought back for display at meetings.
7. **KEEP** a record of PTA volunteer hours and publish them in your newsletter, bulletin board or on a sign.
8. **SPONSOR** a contest - have students write a sentence or paragraph "My family joined PTA because".
9. **ALWAYS** tell your PTA story in terms of definite goals and achievement rather than in bland, general statements.
10. **COUNCILS:** Consider having a PTA booth at local festivals or fairs.

# Your District's Wellness Policy

By Patty Buckholz, BSN, RN, PTA Administrative Assistant

Did you know that in the last few years your school district has adopted a Wellness Policy? As of July 2006 all Missouri school districts were required to have one. Each is a very comprehensive approach to nutrition, physical activity and other activities that factor into teaching our children to have a healthy lifestyle.

## *Why Wellness and Why Now?*

For schools, the trend toward wellness policies began with the Federal Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004. The act required each school district that participates in a program under the National School Lunch Act to have a local wellness policy for each school in their district by the 2006-2007 school year. Such policies are to have had input from students, parents, administrators, school food services and the community.

In response to the Federal act the Missouri legislature passed House Bill 568 in 2005. HB 568 required wellness programs address standards of the No Child Left Behind Act, Healthy People 2010 Leading Health Indicators complied by the National Centers for Health Statistics, and the Produce for Better Health Foundation's "5 a Day the Color Way" program. The bill also identified components the programs are to address including: tobacco use prevention, balanced diets, physical activity, and medical conditions associated with being overweight. The bill has many other requirements such as requiring districts to develop program components that: are multidisciplinary and address academic standards in math, language and health; can be integrated into the core curriculum at the elementary level; encouraging links between school and home to promote active lifestyles; and an obesity prevention program that includes K-5 sequential wellness education.

## *Where to Start?*

This is a lot of information to digest! To help Missouri schools sort through all this, the Missouri School Boards' Administration (MSBA) brought together several learned groups in a wellness workgroup. They created a model policy, procedures and forms that are research based that provide school districts with a best practices approach to a comprehensive wellness program.

The policy was designed to comply with federal law. It recommends that implementation, oversight and evaluation responsibilities be

assigned to a wellness committee, and that such a committee includes at least one each: parent, student, rep from school food services, school nurse, board member, administrator and other staff or community members as appropriate. As school districts formed their wellness committees and worked through the model policy they recommended specific parameters to be used in their district. Each board of education adopted specific policies to be used in their district.

## *Food and Nutrition*

For the nutritional component the Missouri Eat Smart Nutrition Guidelines are used as a baseline. They are to be applied to school breakfast and lunch, a la cart food and beverage items, food sold in vending machines and school stores, after school programs, rewards, celebrations and parties, fundraisers and intramural activities.

The Eat Smart Guidelines have three tiers of stringency. The minimum complies with USDA regulations and state policies; the advanced level includes much more stringent requirements such as school lunch main dishes with less than 16 g of total fat per serving, and serving fresh fruits or raw vegetables 4-5 times per week. School food services are very careful to include nutritious foods that appeal to children. You may be surprised to find that the school's hot dog on a bun is actually a low fat turkey dog on a whole grain white bun!

The nutritional component goes beyond the lunchroom, nutrition information is to be imbedded into curriculum and teachers are strongly encouraged to use reward systems that do not include food.

## *Physical Activity*

The physical activity goal is to assist students in learning the value and enjoy physical activity as an ongoing part of a healthy lifestyle.

It is recommended that elementary students have at least 150 minutes of PE per week, middle schoolers 225 minutes per week, and that high schoolers earn 2 units. These PE classes should have a variety of activities, including cooperative activities, and should include at least 50% actual physical activity that is moderate to vigorous. Additionally elementary students should have at least 60 minutes of supervised recess, which should be scheduled before lunch and held outdoors when possible. Many school districts find it difficult to adhere to these time parameters without slighting other areas of

curriculum.

Physical activity goes beyond traditional physical education class. The policy prohibits the use of or withholding of physical activity as a form of discipline or punishment. It encourages collaboration with community organizations to coordinate and enhance opportunities for activities. It encourages districts to find ways to invite the public in to use school facilities to promote the health of all citizens. It also encourages staff to pursue physically active and healthy lifestyles. Has your district recently instituted a 'smoke free campus' policy?

## *Other School-Based Activities*

The goal of other school based activities is to ensure an integrated whole-school approach to the wellness program.

The list of areas to consider is quite thorough, and each area has its own list of considerations. The areas of other school based activities include: community involvement, family involvement (with a comprehensive list of resource and support ideas for nutrition, physical activity and community programs), marketing and advertising, meal times (recommended to have, after sitting down, 10 minutes to eat breakfast and 20 minutes to eat lunch, having recess before lunch, and having a pleasant lunch atmosphere with casual conversation), outdoor air quality (using the Air Quality Index codes), staff development and training, staff wellness, sun safety, tobacco use prevention education, oversight and evaluation of the program, monitoring of food service compliance, compliance indicators (no less than four indicators to measure the impact of the program such as school health index, BMI of students and staff, number of healthy food items in vending machines, etc.), and periodic policy review and revision.

## *The Impact*

The scope of the wellness policy is very broad and comprehensive, and requires significant effort of several departments to implement. Some districts have chosen the minimal approach, others have gone straight for the advanced level. Most districts have had to implement a few areas at a time and build up to the level desired. It will take some time to find measurable success. However, when you consider that the health of our children is at stake, any parent will tell you it is surely worth the effort.

# Communicating with Elected Officials

From time to time Missouri PTA issues legislative alerts and ask members to SPEAK UP for children. It is through this coordinated advocacy effort that PTA blends the individual voices of members into a powerful chorus of voices for children.

The following are suggestions on how to answer these calls to action:

Write It Down - mailing a letter may not work in all cases because of the timing of the action. For instance, if an item is being debated on the house floor, the vote may happen at any time. However, if time allows, a written letter may still be an effective vehicle for communicating with your elected official.

- Letters may be handwritten or typed.
- Opinions should be expressed in the writer's own words (avoid form letters).
- Stick to one subject.
- Be accurate.
- Be polite and positive.
- Show how the issue will affect the elected official's constituents.
- Give the PTA position.

Say It in Person - again, timing is a consideration, however, personal visits are the most effective way to communicate with policy makers. You may want to visit policy makers in pairs or small groups.

- Schedule an appointment.
- Draft an agenda and list the issues to be discussed. If more than one person will be at the meeting, decide in advance who will speak and on what issues.
- Arrive on time.
- Be open to questions. If you don't know the answer, explain that you will get back with more information.
- Ask how the lawmaker will vote on the issue.
- After the visit, write a thank-you note and repeat your position.

Phone Calls, E-Mails, Faxes - are effective, especially when timing is critical and a policy maker's support or vote is needed immediately.

- When phoning, ask to speak to the lawmaker or an aide who handles the issue.
- When e-mailing or faxing, address the lawmaker or aide.

- Explain that you are from the lawmaker's district.
- Give the bill number and name.
- Explain why the issue is important to PTA.
- Ask the legislator to vote in your favor.
- If calling, write down your speaking points in advance.

E-mails should contain the basics of effective letter writing. Do not use abbreviations and trendy letter combinations (if a legislator wants to print your email, you want a document that will get the respect it deserves).

Remember that anonymous communications are not read, so don't forget to sign and add a return address on all forms of communication.

Follow up - after expressing your views, whether in person, by letter, e-mail, fax, or phone call; follow up on your legislator's vote or action. Always send a thank-you note if the action was in your favor. A polite note expressing your disappointment if the policy maker was against your position is also necessary. Your appreciation can also be expressed in more public ways, such as writing letters to the editor of the local paper.

## SAMPLE LETTER

January 6, 2008

The Honorable Mary Smith  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Smith:

As a concerned (PTA volunteer / citizen / parent) I am writing to urge your support for (bill number), (title of bill). If passed, this measure would benefit each of the (number) children who participate in the (name of program) in (your home town/schools). It would (give details of legislative and positive effects).

The Missouri PTA, of which I am a member, representing more than 80,000 members also supports this bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

Ima Advocate  
Hillside PTA  
Your City, MO 65810



# For Your Information

A ballot petition is an act of changing state law by taking the issue directly to voters and bypassing the state legislators. For an initiative changing state law or the Missouri Constitution to be placed on the ballot, a certain number of signatures must be obtained from registered voters. If someone asks you to sign a petition, please be aware of what you are approving before you sign. If you do not agree with an issue, do not sign the petition.

The following Initiative Petition has been approved by the Secretary of State's Office (for a complete list see [www.sos.mo.gov/elections/2008petitions](http://www.sos.mo.gov/elections/2008petitions)):

Shall Missouri law be amended to

- lower the legal age for the manufacture, sale, supply, purchase, possession and consumption of alcohol from twenty-one years of age to eighteen years of age;
- remove the age limit to sell or handle liquor or beer; and
- revise related criminal penalties consistent with the lower legal age?

## Thank You For Your Generous Gifts! Building Fund

Chapel Lakes Elementary PTA  
James Lewis Elementary PTA  
Robinson Elementary PTA  
Raytown Middle School PTSA  
Woodland Elementary PTA  
Lee's Summit Council of PTA's  
New Mark Middle School PTA  
Prairie View Elementary PTA  
Blue Springs PTA Council  
Greenwood Elementary PTA  
Franklin Smith Elementary PTA  
James A. Jeffries Elementary PTA  
Nixa High School PTSA  
Northgate Middle PTSA  
Lee's Summit West H.S. PTSA  
Pleasant Lea Elementary PTA  
Sequiota Elementary PTA  
Hawthorn Hill Elementary PTA  
Southeast Elementary PTA  
Belton PTA Council  
John Thomas PTA of Nixa  
Eugene Field Elementary PTA  
Inman PTA of Nixa  
Chinn Elementary PTA  
North Kansas City PTA Council  
Nixa Jr. High PTSA  
Trailridge Elementary PTA  
Richardson Elementary PTA  
Mark Twain Elementary PTA

# Participate in the Resolutions Process

By Denise McCarter, Resolutions Chairman

The PTA's mission for 110 years has been to support and speak on behalf of children and youth in schools, in the community, and before governmental bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children and youth. This mission is achieved through the resolutions process.

The resolutions process is a democratic process by which we as an organization of child advocates decide what actions and principles we will support. Through this process, we develop our legislative platform and the programs that we will sponsor to address an issue specified in a resolution. The resolutions process gives us clarity on how to make Missouri's children's world safer and more promising.

Through this process, you, as a Missouri PTA leader or member, can begin to bring issues that concern Missouri's children to the attention of the entire Missouri PTA membership and then to our schools and governmental representatives.

To initiate a resolution, discuss with your board, your unit, your council, teachers, and principals the issue(s) that may need to be addressed through legislation, programs, or education.

The State Resolutions Chairman is available to help you through this process. We encourage you to contact the Resolutions Chairman early for direction and support. You, your unit, or your council can make a difference for our children.

Take time to look over the current resolutions of Missouri PTA. There may already be a standing resolution that addresses your concerns. Current standing resolutions are available at [www.mopta.org](http://www.mopta.org) under the Legislation tab. Information there will also give you the required resolution proposal format.

## CRITERIA FOR SUBMITTING A RESOLUTION TO THE MISSOURI STATE PTA

To qualify for consideration by the Missouri State Resolutions Committee, all resolutions must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Concern a field of interest of the Missouri Congress of Parents and Teachers;
2. Be in harmony with the Objects and basic policies of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers;
3. Concern a matter that is statewide in scope and requires statewide action for solution;

4. State a position not previously adopted by the MCPT or the NCPT;
5. Include possible methods of implementation for the action called for;
6. Be written in language appropriate for consideration by MCPT convention delegates, e.g., "Be it resolved that the Missouri Congress of Parents and Teachers shall..."
7. Include a completed Convention Action Cover sheet signed by the submitting unit or council president;
8. Contain a summary of no more than 150 words that captures the resolution's intent and scope;
9. Include three (3) current background citations for each whereas with the appropriate information enclosed in brackets and labeled as to the appropriate whereas. Background citations are factual and verifiable data or statistics, published no more than six years ago—citations cannot be from PTA sources.
10. Structure each "whereas" and "resolve" in individual sections with the background and implementation material;
11. Include a table of contents and reference sheet.

Eight copies each of the resolution, rationale, support data, Convention Action Cover Sheet and method of implementation must be submitted for use by the committee and postmarked no later than May 1<sup>st</sup> to the State Resolutions Chairman. The State Resolutions Chairman's name and contact information are in the back of the Contact magazine and also on the Missouri PTA website, [www.mopta.org](http://www.mopta.org).

### AFTER THE RESOLUTION HAS BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE STATE PTA

The Resolutions Committee strictly adheres to the above criteria. If needed, the committee may edit or adapt proposed resolutions; substantive changes can only be made with the consent of the submitting group. The committee meets in May to consider proposed resolutions for approval. The Resolutions Chairman will acknowledge receipt of each proposed resolution, and will notify all submitters of the action taken on their proposal within one week of the Resolutions Committee meeting.

If you have any questions or would like more details concerning the resolutions process, contact Denise McCarter, Resolutions

Chairman through the Missouri PTA Website, [www.mopta.org](http://www.mopta.org) under Board of Managers, Department of Legislation and Advocacy.

## AtLaw & You!

Each year Missouri PTA presents an award for Advocacy Through Legislation (AtLaw Award) to an outstanding unit or council. Last year's award went to Springfield Council of PTAs and as home to your Vice President of Legislation and Advocacy as well as your State Legislative Chair, you can imagine that the Springfield Council will be a contender for 2008 Convention award as well. In order to give all units and councils an equal opportunity and to provide others with a blue print to successful advocacy efforts, we want to share how Springfield earned this award.

10 Council attendees at Convention (50pts)

20 attendees at Springfield/Ozark Region MOPTA Kids First Rally (200pts)

4 attendees at MOPTA Advocacy Training (40pts)

Articles submitted to Council News and Contact (summary of Kids First Rally) (10pts)

Advocacy emphasis at council meetings (spoke to council regarding the importance of membership dues to our advocacy efforts and on another occasion requested attendance of council members at the Kids First Rally) (10pts)

Council hosted its annual school board candidate's forum in March 2007 (35pts)

Total points: 345

Accumulating points is easy, most of us do these things regularly. The final step was to fill out the application and send it in before the September 1st deadline.

We hope that several units and councils will be in the running for the 2008 Convention AtLaw award. When we continue to make advocacy efforts an important part of our PTA activities, all children and youth benefit and that makes us all winners!



# And the Award Goes To...Representative Judy Baker

By Donna Pediford, VP of Legislation



The Missouri PTA Board of Managers unanimously agreed that this year's "A Better Missouri For Children" award would be given to Representative Judy Baker of Columbia. Missouri PTA appreciates Representative Baker's efforts to champion health and safety initiatives for the children and youth of our state. During the last legislative session she wrote bills to require driver's education in all Missouri schools, to

prohibit cell phone use by teen drivers and to establish curriculum for physical education. Representative Baker also attended the Missouri PTA Legislative Rally in Columbia and was a presenter at both the Missouri PTA Convention and Leadership Training.

In addition to her legislative duties, Rep. Baker serves her community as a member of the Columbia Kiwanis Club; she is a member and has served as deacon of the First Baptist Church of Columbia; she serves on the board of the Boone County Community Partnership and the advisory board for the Bradford Farm Research Center. Rep. Baker was elected President of the Democratic Women's Caucus for the House Democrats for the 2007-2008 session. She also started the "American Dream" caucus and is President of Healthy Missourians caucus. She is a member of Healthcare Information Technology Champions for National Council of State Legislators; a Board Member for the Mid-Missouri Community Action Agency; an Advisory Board Member for the Center for Health Transformation; and a member of Griffiths Leadership Society for Women.

Rep. Baker is an Adjunct Professor of Managerial Economics at Columbia College and a Healthcare Consultant and Managing Partner at Cura Advantage, a healthcare consulting firm.

"A Better Missouri For Children" Award was created in 1999 by Missouri PTA as a means of giving thanks and showing appreciation to those legislators who have distinguished themselves as champions for Missouri's children and youth, who have been advocates for children and youth through their legislative efforts and have tried to build a better Missouri for children. Past recipients of this award include Senator Charlie Shields (Kansas City), Representative Will Kraus (Raytown) and Representative Brian Baker (Belton).



## Bills Pre-Filed (as of January 6, 2008)

HB 1427 -- Child Abuse Report Immunity

Sponsor: Kraus

This bill gives immunity from any civil or criminal liability to any person who reports a case of suspected child abuse, neglect, or assault to the proper authorities including liability for any action taken by the proper institution, facility, or agency.

Because we believe that parents have a right to protect their children without fear of a civil lawsuit, Missouri PTA and its approximately 80,000 members support this bill. We urge all PTA members to contact their elected officials and encourage them to support this bill.

HJR 44 -- School District Bonded Indebtedness Limit

Sponsor: Flook

Upon voter approval, this proposed constitutional amendment raises the allowable level of bonded indebtedness for school districts from 15% to 20% of the value of taxable tangible property.

Missouri PTA supports this bill because the current 15% ceiling on indebtedness can restrict school districts from providing

adequate construction, expansion, and/or renovation of facilities. Please contact your elected officials and ask them to SPEAK UP for our public schools by supporting this bill.

SB 843 -- "Youth Smoking Prevention Trust Fund"

Sponsor: Wilson

This act creates the "Youth Smoking Prevention Trust Fund," which shall be funded by moneys received under the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement. The Commission for Youth Smoking Prevention is established in the Department of Health and Senior Services. The Commission shall fund youth smoking prevention programs modeled after evidence-based programs proven to reduce youth smoking.

Facts: Missouri is one of only five states that has committed no tobacco settlement or tobacco tax money for tobacco prevention programs; Missouri's smoking rate is the third highest in the nation with 26.6% of the adult population being smokers and 30.3% of high schoolers in Missouri being smokers; in Missouri, 16,000 children become regular smokers – new addicts – every year; and \$337 million are spent annually in Missouri on the marketing of tobacco products. Please ask your state lawmakers to support this bill TODAY.

# Protective Factors Prevent Child Abuse

By Amy Tuso, Liberty School District Prevention Coordinator

Protective factors are those variables that shield or guard against unsafe or unhealthy choices and actions. Research has been done on these factors for many years and they have been linked to teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, violence and child abuse. The factors relate to community, school, family and the individual; the more factors and better developed they are the less likely it is an individual will participate in activities that could cause harm to themselves or others. In relation to child abuse, there are five factors that have been shown by research to decrease the occurrence of abuse and neglect:

- Nurturing and Attachment
- Knowledge of Parenting and of Child and Youth Development
- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Concrete Supports for Parents

Nurturing and attachment is created through the bonding process between parents and their children. It is the time when trust is created and love and caring are deepened. This bond provides parents the ability to accept their children, no matter their behaviors; guide their children, no matter the difficulties; and protect

their children, no matter the situation.

Parents who have knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development are better able to set and enforce boundaries with their children and respond appropriately to the child, based on their age and developmental needs.

Parents who are resilient are able to manage everyday stress and handle crises as they arise. They are in tune with their emotional status and able to deal with negative emotions in a healthy way.

When parents have social connections with other adults they are able to receive support, understanding, comfort and help from people they trust. These connections may come from family members, neighbors, friends, or other parents; it is the strength of the relationship, not the role of the other person that is important.

Finally, parents must have concrete supports, which ensure the family's basic needs are met and the family is able to connect to services outside of the abilities of their social support network. The supports may be in the form of child or healthcare, transportation, housing, or other community based resources and services.

You can help reduce child abuse by:

- Being aware of your own challenges – ask for help when you need it.
- Learning about children's behaviors and expectations based on their age and development – teach others.
- Mentoring other parents - find a local program that mentors new mom, teenage moms, or moms who have been identified as in need.
- Bonding with your children - help them learn how to meet their emotional needs.

If you believe a child is being abused or neglected you should:

- Obtain medical attention immediately, if necessary.
- Insure the child has no further contact with anyone who may be committing the abuse or neglect.
- Notify the Child Abuse Hotline and/or local police: National Hotline – (800)422-4453
- Cooperate with the authorities investigating your report.
- Insure the child receives all necessary medical and psychological help.

# Your Kids Can Do This, Too! Congressional Award

By Tina Zubeck, Former Missouri State PTA President

Does your child play in the marching band, participate in soccer or volleyball, or serve in a leadership position in a club, 4H or youth group? Has your son or daughter achieved the Eagle Scout Award or the Girl Scout Gold Award? What would be an excellent entry on your child's resume for college? If you answered yes to any of those questions... the answer to the last question would be the CONGRESSIONAL AWARD FOR YOUTH. What is this you ask? An awesome program for our young people to be recognized and to help them set achievable goals and succeed.

The Congressional Award was approved by Congress in 1973. The award is about challenge. It is a fun and interesting way for students to become more involved in something they already enjoy or be recognized for things they are already doing!

To earn the Award, students set goals in four areas: volunteer public service, personal development, physical fitness and expedition/exploration. The student needs to have an adult

advisor who will help them set challenging but achievable goals. Students must be between the ages of 14 and 24. Each level builds upon the previous one. The levels include bronze, silver and gold certificates and then bronze, silver and gold medals. For example let's look at the bronze medal requirements:

- 100 hours of volunteer public service
- 50 hours of personal development
- 50 hours of physical fitness
- Expedition/exploration activity (including a minimum of one overnight)

Now think about what your student already does...do they participate in service projects at school, through 4H or at their church youth group? For personal development your student may set a goal of becoming first chair clarinet. Their practices and performances in the band will help them achieve this requirement. The physical fitness requirement can include PE classes, basketball games/practices, marching band or their own individual physical activity. The expedition or exploration category should

be used to develop a spirit of adventure and discovery. Some ideas include canoe trip wilderness hiking, stay with a family of a different culture, or mountain climbing. So as you can see, your student is probably already DOING many of these things, just not formally documenting them!

Every spring there is a state wide recognition event for all certificate levels and for bronze and silver medals. It is a very nice event with the Congressman delivering the student's certificate or medal. Once the student has achieved the gold medal status, the recognition event is held in Washington DC!! How wonderful would that be?

So, please go to the website, [www.congressionalaward.org](http://www.congressionalaward.org), and learn more about this awesome opportunity for our kids. Share with your neighbors, your school counselors and any youth leader. These kids deserve to be recognized and this program helps young people set goals, work hard and achieve. Nothing better than that!

# Virtual Driver's Education Will Help Meet Goal of Resolutions

By Scott Jennings, Vice President of Communications

At the October 2006 Missouri state convention, delegates approved a resolution titled "Driver's Education & Training." The justification for this resolution was the fact that only about 50 school districts in the state still offer Driver's Education as part of their curriculum.

By passing this resolution, the delegates were saying that they were tired of our young, inexperienced driver's dying in car crashes which is the leading cause of death among young people 15-20 years old.

The resolution's resolved sections encouraged "all local school district's to offer Driver's Education for elective credit" and called upon our state legislators "to provide a means of funding to local school districts so that proper Driver's Education and Training can be implemented in all of Missouri's public school districts."

Although the details of the resolved sections mentioned above haven't been met, there is a new tool called Missouri's Virtual Instruction Program (MoVIP) that is going to make available the classroom aspect of Driver's Education for elective credit to Missouri students.

According to Curt Fuchs, the director of online programs for the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the virtual classroom Driver's Education was to be piloted in February 2008. He stated further that it will be available in the summer as a payable elective for students and then again during the 2008-2009 school year beginning in the fall.

Fuchs stated that the program has been tailored to meet Missouri's Drivers Program requirements and the classroom or book portion will provide 32 hours of training and is meant to help educate young drivers on the classroom aspects prior to them applying for

their driving permits.

"The program is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week," Fuchs said. "It is designed to be available to accommodate student and family schedules. And, there are instructors and academic coaches available online for questions or help."

While the resolution that was passed in October 2006 calls for full reinstatement of Driver's Education programs in all Missouri school districts, Fuchs agreed that this is a "step in the right direction" to helping students learn proper driving protocol.

For parents who want more information about the program, they can contact MoVIP at 573-526-4219 and monitor the DESE website for more information at [www.dese.mo.gov/movip](http://www.dese.mo.gov/movip).

## Virtual Education Comes to Missouri

By Curt Fuchs, Director of Online Programs for the Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education



The Missouri Legislature passed legislation during the 2006 Session creating Missouri's version of a state wide virtual education program.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education was given the task to implement this legislation for all Missouri students (public and non public) in grades K-12.

Missouri's Virtual Instructional Program (MoVIP) started classes in August of this past year and currently has classes for K-5 students and 9-12 students. Middle school curriculum will be added in the summer of 2008.

Currently, MoVIP has approximately 1,700 students from 109 of the 115 counties in the state. Approximately 25% of our students are full time and 75% are part time. Students can enroll throughout the year.

Rough percentages show that 70% of our students are public school students, 23% have a home school background and 7% are from private schools. 27% of our students are on free and reduced lunch. Approximately 10% are special education students.

All that is needed to access the courses is the Internet and a computer. Students can easily contact their teachers through toll free numbers, email and yes, instant messaging is very popular with our students. MoVIP support systems include academic coaches and special education instructors.

Types of students whose needs are being met by MoVIP include:

(1) Homebound students for medical reasons. We have over 70 students who have medical conditions that prevent them from attending school (cancer, diabetes, heart disease, injuries from accidents, etc.). These students are receiving instruction through MoVIP with certified Missouri teachers.

(2) Special education students who have difficulties in the normal classroom are finding MoVIP as an alternative solution.

(3) Advanced students who need alternative access to courses. MoVIP currently has a 4<sup>th</sup> grader taking a high school geometry class. The student had the skill set, but the local school district felt it more appropriate for the student to access a geometry class via MoVIP rather than physically attending a high school. Rural school districts also offer Advanced Placement classes that they couldn't offer otherwise. These

same districts might not be able to offer classes like calculus, trigonometry, and physics because they cannot secure teaching staff or the numbers needed to support a class in this area.

(4) Foreign language classes are offered at both the elementary and secondary levels. Next year, MoVIP will offer Mandarin Chinese since Mandarin Chinese instructors statewide access can be accomplished through MoVIP.

(5) Home School students access various classes with the help of a certified Missouri teacher.

(6) Special circumstances include students who are suspended, pregnant, or for some other circumstance are taking advantage of MoVIP to continue their education from home.

(7) Missouri students who are currently overseas have access to MoVIP. We have missionaries in Papua New Guinea accessing courses through MoVIP. Families currently in the military are also taking advantage of MoVIP.

The legislation provides state funded seats (at no cost) through a separate appropriation for the classes. MoVIP currently still has state funded seats available for the 2007-2008 school year. A tuition program will be available when the state funds are expended for the program.

## Why Students Should Attend Leadership Conference

By Mark Kempf, Student Involvement Chair

Whether you're a parent or a student, have you ever found yourself considering the question "Why should students attend Leadership Conference"? It's a reasonable question so let's take a look at some of the reasons.

If you are part of a PTSA unit, I'm sure you know that the "S" stands for students. However, many PTSA units don't really utilize their students. If they have a student at all on their board they serve in more of a token position rather than being utilized as a real part of the unit leadership. Likewise, some PTSA units overlook their student leadership entirely. If your unit finds itself in either of these situations, are you truly a PTSA unit? PTSA means parents, teachers, and student working together. If we are failing to include the student portion then we are not truly functioning as a PTSA.

Who better than the students know what's really going on in the school, as well as in the classroom? The students are the ones actually experiencing the effect of policies and programs. Those same students can serve a vital role helping us understand the effectiveness of those policies and programs, as well as identifying areas of potential need.

That brings us back to the original question, "Why should students attend Leadership Conference"? If we honestly intend to utilize our students as a partner in our PTSA organization, shouldn't we see that they have an opportunity for training just like we offer our parents and teachers? This year, more than ever, we are focusing on providing training to our students at the Leadership Conference. This year, more than ever, we hope to provide training that will help our students become more effective in their roll as PTSA leaders.

Along with the training, we are also planning to utilize the students who attend Leadership Conference to let us know what kinds of training opportunities they would like to see offered at our MOPTA Convention this fall.

So, to answer the question, "Why should students attend Leadership Conference?" it's because our students are part of our PTSA leadership (or at least they should be) and as such THEY DESERVE IT.

## Who's on Your School Board?

Overseeing our Public schools, the decisions School Boards make affect a million children each school year across the state. The respective voters in their school district determine the individuals who serve on school boards. Is a candidates' forum being held in your district? If so, now is your chance to actively advocate on behalf of your children, schools and community. Be apart of the process. Attend your local forum, ask questions and listen to the candidates' answers. Come Election Day you will be well informed when you head to the polls.

Not sure what questions to ask? Here are a few suggestions from the PTA Grassroots Advocacy Toolkit.

- What will you do to address the problems schools face with declining funding as they also try to meet the challenges of growing enrollments, children with special needs, and new educational technology?
- What specific plans would you recommend to support and improve public schools?
- What actions will you take to help reduce children's exposure in violence in schools, in their neighborhoods, and on television?
- 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?
- Between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. many children and adolescents are left unsupervised at home. These hours are the peak hours for juvenile crime and other destructive behaviors. What do you plan to do to address this problem?
- 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?

### Thank You for Your Generous Donation Scholarship Fund

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Strafford Preschool PTA	Columbia PTA Council
New Mark Middle School PTA	Hazel Grove Elementary
Prairie View Elementary PTA	Blue Springs High School PTSA
Blue Springs PTA Council	Hyde Elementary PTA
Greenwood Elementary PTA	Raytown PTA Council
Alice Pittman Elementary PTA	Gladden Elementary PTA
Franklin Smith Elementary PTA	Pleasant Lea Middle School PTA
Glendale High PTSA	West Gray Elementary PTA
Hazel Grove Elementary	Wanda Gray Elementary PTA
Nixa High School PTSA	Inman PTA of Nixa
Northgate Middle PTSA	Springfield Special Education PTA
Lee's Summit West H.S. PTSA	Center High PTA
Raytown South Middle School PTSA	Chinn Elementary PTA
Pleasant Lea Elementary PTA	Trailridge Elementary PTA
Sherwood Elementary PTA	Richardson Elementary PTA
Sequiota Elementary PTA	Mark Twain Elementary PTA
Norfleet Elementary PTA	
Belton PTA Council	
John Thomas PTA of Nixa	

# There Can Only Be One Missouri's Teacher of the Year

By Dorothy Gardner, CONTACT Editor

As the auditorium filled, one could not help but notice the increasing elevation in the noise level as colleagues and friends greeted one another. The sound of their voices resonated throughout the room as they united once again after the long summer hiatus.

In stark contrast, three of us sat silently, diligently pouring over our notes in one last ditch effort to make sure what we had placed on paper contained not only all we desired to share with our audience but sounded lucid in our heads. Convocation was not a new experience for me. Previously, a year prior, I had experienced the dreadful feeling convocation provokes, similar to a herd of butterflies playing tag in the pit of my stomach.

Unfortunately, past experience has never seemed to lessen the nervous energy created by the prospect of speaking in front of hundreds of people. Basking in a bubble of silence amidst the sea of joyful voices soon proved too much for me and, as it turned out, also for the two sitting one to my left and one to my right. The three of us proceeded to engage in introductions and small talk. While this marked the first time Eric Langhorst, at the time sitting to my right, made a significant impression upon me, it would not be the last.

Despite his apprehension, Eric Langhorst, the Liberty Teacher of the Year, gave both an enlightening and enjoyable speech. It was only a few days later, my son came home raving about his Social Studies teacher who, instead of making them write down pages of class notes, put up Podcasts my son could simply download to his iPod. This seemed to ring a bell, so I asked if his Social Studies teacher happened to be Mr. Langhorst.

Bewildering, as it seemed, my son could recall pretty much everything about his new Social Studies teacher except his name. A week or so later my son burst through the front door after school and excitedly announced his Social Studies teacher had just been named Missouri Teacher of the Year.

Eric Langhorst has been teaching at the secondary level for 14 years. Growing up in a small town, Eric initially aspired to seek out a career in Sports Journalism. But after looking into the industry, he realized this would not be the path for him. Instead, he found himself drawn toward education, inspired not only by

his father, a History teacher, and various family members also in the field of education. But, also by the high level of admiration and respect the teachers in his town were afforded. Most of the teachers in Eric's hometown held master degrees and proved to be excellent role models.

Surprisingly as a high school student, Eric had a substandard History teacher. As a Social Studies teacher now, he attempts to relate to his student's lives on a personal level the events that took place 200 years ago. By employing the use of technology in his classroom, history comes alive. Engaged in the subject, students work on such projects as creating TV commercials representing either the British or Colonial point of view. The use of technology to create work, which will be presented in front of the entire class, increases students' desire to do a great job.

Employing parents as a classroom tool, Eric encourages parents or relatives with a background in the class' current field of study to visit the classroom as guests and share their knowledge. He also recommends parents and students explore local community history together by taking part in architecture walks on the historic Liberty Square.

Knowledge is the key when it comes to the parent's role in their student's Junior High experience. Utilizing both e-mail and a webpage, Eric strives to keep parents informed as fully as possible as to what their students are and will be studying week to week. This way he believes parents can use this knowledge as quality conversation starters at home with their students.

On the class webpage, parents, along with the students, can review lesson plans, assignments, notes, Podcasts, and weekly event synopsis. Already in its ninth year, Eric doesn't find the task of up keeping a webpage to be too much extra work and the benefits of the improved communication with both parents and students to far out weigh any extra effort on his part.

Having always enjoyed being in the classroom, this is exactly where he

sees himself in ten years. Granted being named the Missouri Teacher of the year has afforded Eric the opportunity to give presentations on the subject of technology in the classroom on both a regional and national level, but nothing quite compares to the everyday classroom experience.

According to Eric, each day is something new, fresh, presenting one with the occasion to "make one's day as good as they want it to be." One of the aspects he enjoys about the Junior High setting is that the students are still eager to learn, but at the same time are becoming adults.

Teaching, "it is my life", Eric told me. For the first time this year he is experiencing the role of education in student's lives as both a teacher and a parent. Reflecting back he feels each day he is doing what he has been given the tools to do. Being a teacher brings along with it the feeling of never being satisfied. At the end of the day Eric is continually left with the notion he could have always done more, reached more. This poses a challenge - one he thoroughly enjoys.



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# Enjoy the Music

By Kathy O'Laughlin, Resource Development Chair

This month we celebrate "Music In Our Schools Month (MIOSM). Every year, music classes from all over the country emphasize the importance of music in schools. I currently teach elementary school. Each year, during the month of March, I invite parents to bring their musical talents to my classroom and demonstrate the value of music in everyday life. Students are proud of their parents' abilities and enjoy having their parents come to class.

But why is it important to bring music education to the attention of the public? Each year, funding for the arts in education is cut in schools all over the nation. Often the reasoning behind these budget cuts is due to the "No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)" and the importance of studying the "core" subjects. However the NCLB itself states: "The term 'core academic subjects' means English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography." – No Child Left Behind Act of 2002, Title IX, Part A, Sec. 9101

Music education is vital to student success. This success is found specifically in four basic areas: success in society; success in school and learning; success in developing intelligence; and success in life. The Music Educators' National Conference (MENC) has documented many studies which show the value of music education in these areas.

### Success in Society

Perhaps the basic reason that every child must have an education in music is that music is a part of everyday society. The value of music for each individual is recognized in the many cultures of our country. Data shows that high earnings are not just associated with people who have high technical skills, but also those with a mastery of the arts and humanities. Secondary students who participate in band or orchestra are reported to have the lowest lifetime and current use of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs

### Success in School and Learning

Any music teacher or parent of a music

student can recall anecdotes about the effectiveness of music study in helping children become better students. Skills learned through the discipline of music transfer to study skills, communication skills, and cognitive skills which are useful in every part of the curriculum. Schools that have music programs have significantly higher graduation rates than do those without programs. Students in high-quality school music programs score higher on standardized tests regardless of the socioeconomic level of the school district.

### Success in Developing Intelligence

The available data supports a long-established base to the effect that music education makes kids smarter. What is especially compelling, however, is a combination of tightly controlled behavioral studies and groundbreaking neurological research that show how music study can actively contribute to brain development. One study of an IQ test given to groups of children, who were provided with lessons in keyboard, voice, drama, or no lessons at all, showed that the IQ of students in the keyboard or voice classes increased from their pre-lesson IQ score, more than the IQ of those students taking drama or no lessons. (August 2004, Psychological Science)

### Success in Life

Each of us wants our children to achieve success in school, employment, and in society in general. Participation in music brings countless benefits to each individual throughout life. The benefits may be psychological or spiritual, and they may be physical as well. To put it simply, we need to keep the arts in education because they instill in students the habits of mind that last a lifetime: critical analysis skills, the ability to deal with ambiguity and to solve problems, perseverance, and a drive for excellence.

If you are advocating keeping music education in your schools and would like more specific data research, please feel free to contact me at any time.

# Mark Your Calendar

## MARCH

- 1 Final membership dues for award deadline
- 2 Read Across America Day
- 5 Principal's Day
- 9 Day light Saving Time begins
- 31 New officer's list due to state office

## APRIL

- 5 School Librarian's Day
- 12 D.E.A.R day
- 15 Deadline for membership, safety & achievement awards
- 22 Earth Day
- 23 Administrative Professionals Day
- 24 Take your child to work day
- 25-26 Leadership Conference – Independence
- 25 PTA at the K
- 26 Student Showcase – Reflection Recognition
- 27-3 Volunteer Appreciation Week

## MAY

- National Fitness & Sports Month
- 1 Resolutions due to State office
- 9-9 Teacher Appreciation Week
- 5 Cinco de Mayo
- 6 National Teacher Day
- 6 School Nurse Day
- 11 Mother's Day
- 25 National Missing Children's Day
- 26 Memorial Day (State office closed)

Looking Ahead

## JUNE

- 23-23 National PTA Convention (San Diego, CA)

## OCTOBER

- 19-19 Missouri PTA Convention (Kansas City)

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