

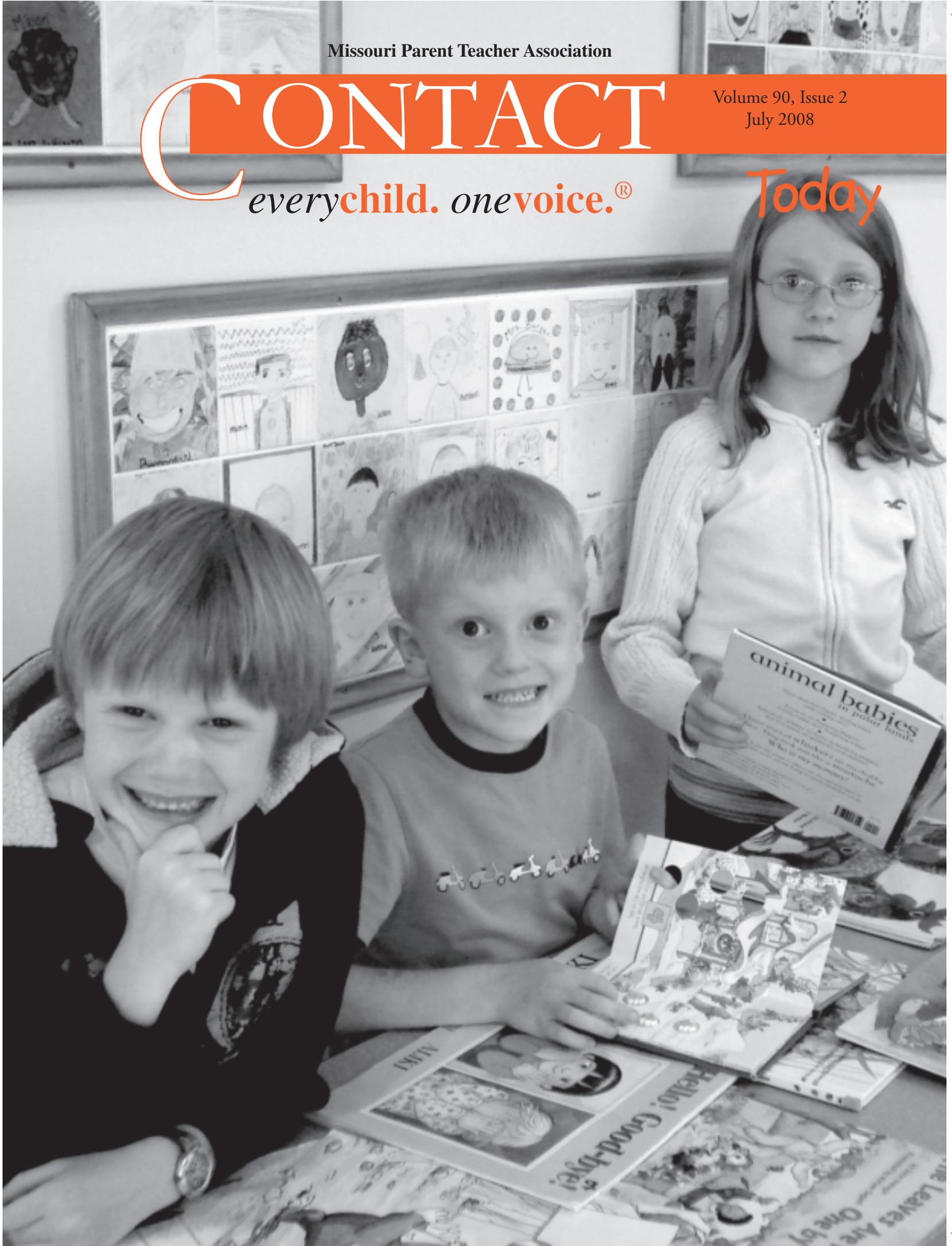
Missouri Parent Teacher Association

CONTACT

everychild. onevoice.®

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Today



Parent and Family Involvement – It's not just for parents

As passed by the 2008 Missouri Legislature

PARENT & FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION WEEK SEPTEMBER 2008

Here are some ways you can be involved –

Involvement programs that link to learning improve student achievement.

Student learning improves more when parent and community involvement is high. Activities to promote learning might be **family nights on math or literacy - *family/teacher conferences that involve students - *or family workshops on planning for college.*

Speaking up for children protects and promotes their success.

Research findings show parent(s) or significant adults that are active in their child's educational experience in the home and the school contribute to a student's success academically and socially in school education. The more families advocate for their children, the longer their children stay in school.

Families or significant adults should **become knowledgeable about the operations of schools and the laws that govern those operations - *be confident about their ability to work with schools - *expect only the best from their children and for their children - *join PTA.*

All families can contribute to their children's success.

School staff/administrators, along with parents, must buy into believing that by working together great involvement can happen! If parents and school staff do a few of the following, we can promote children's academic success by **teaching the importance of education and find out what your children are expected to know - *sending children to school ready to learn - *making parent involvement a priority and removing barriers for involvement - *sharing decision-making power and working to understand differences.*

Community organizing gets results.

Community members, businesses and organizations can improve learning. These partners could **provide expanded learning opportunities - *build broad-based support for increased school funding - *and provide quality after-school programs if needed.*

"The Parent and Family Involvement week will not only help parents become more involved, but also help parents and teachers work together to set common goals for the students. I was glad to lend my assistance to the Missouri PTA and Missouri's students with this bill." **State Representative Will Kraus, Raytown, MO, sponsor of the bill in the 2008 Missouri Legislature**

For more information and ideas visit www.mopta.org or www.pta.org

Cover photo:

Paxton Keeley Elementary PTA
Literacy Night

Contents

- 1 President's Message
- 2 Short Takes
- 3 Short Takes
- 4 Membership
- 5 Collaboration
- 6 Resolution
- 7 Reflections & Students
- 8 OMDR
- 9 Legislation
- 10 Phoebe Apperson Hearst Award
& Calendar
- 11 Hispanic Outreach
- 12 Communication

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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.

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President's Message *By Mary Oyler, Missouri PTA President*

As I write this article, I have just returned from the National PTA Convention. Attending convention is always a way to rejuvenate your beliefs in PTA, renew friendships and gather a wealth of information. As usual, this is what happened as I participated in all the events in San Diego. But, there was one event that I was not prepared for nor was I prepared for the impact it would have on me. At the end of the first general meeting we were honored to be joined by Maya Angelou.

Seated in a comfortable chair, Ms. Angelou started her chat by singing an old gospel, *Rainbow in the Cloud*.

"God put a rainbow in the cloud, Well, it looked like the sun wouldn't shine anymore God put a rainbow in the cloud."

I had never heard this song and was a little confused. As she continued her chat, she talked about her life and the people that touched her – all of the people that had "Put a rainbow in her cloud." She talked about her childhood, the struggles and the joy; her various careers, the success and hard decisions; her family, the good times and the bad times; and the many people that she met along the way. Ms. Angelou continued to point out how each of us has those special people that help us through life and those people each of us helps and how far this help reaches into the future. How every day we can "put a rainbow in someone's cloud."

When I first became involved in PTA, it was because I wanted to be involved with my children's education. I did exactly what I thought I should be doing – helping at school whenever I could, reaching out to the children and building relationships with the families in my school. This was the right thing to do. This made me feel good and I was happy being a part of a bigger community. Never realizing at the time that I was truly reaching out and making a difference in the lives of the children I worked with.

A few years ago I was picking up a few things at Wal-Mart and a young mother came up to me, I didn't recognize her. She looked at me and said, "Aren't you Pat's mom?" (Pat is my oldest son). I said yes and she said that she remembered me from school. She then looked at her child and

said, "This is Mrs. Oyler, she always helped us at school – I hope I can do that when you are in school." I was amazed that she remembered me and what I had done. But even more that I had made a difference and she wanted to make that same difference.

So my challenge to you as you work through this year, is to take time to think about the people that have reached out to you in your personal life, in your volunteer life and in your professional life. Take time to thank them for making that difference. But most all, take time to think about the people that you have reached out to in even the smallest way – you are making a difference – sometimes a difference you will never know about – unless you are one of the very lucky ones that hear about your impact from an unexpected story or meeting.

Each and every day, PTA touches the lives of children and families through volunteers, advocacy, parenting programs; and caring members that work hard in their communities and schools to make sure that every child's potential becomes a reality. I thank you for "putting a rainbow in someone's cloud" today and every day.

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

Top 10 Reasons Why PTA Convention should be YOUR Choice!

10. PTA Idol talent show. Fun kick-off event.
9. PTA Gives Back –Today. Community service project benefiting Synergy Services.
8. SPEED Vending. Fun way to learn about what exhibitors have to offer.
7. Exhibit Hall. Wide variety of programs, fundraiser, and information booths.
6. Food is Included! Registration includes all meals on Saturday and lunch on Sunday.
5. Student track. Available for PTSA members in grades 6-12.
4. Voice in the business of Missouri PTA. Debate and vote on a resolution and bylaws changes.
3. Network with other PTA members. Share ideas and get energized!
2. 35 Workshops. Wide variety of topics including leadership training, health & safety, home –school connections, parenting skills, and advocacy.
1. Dr. Bowen White’s “Why Normal Isn’t Healthy” all-conference presentation.

PTA... the People’s Choice should be YOUR choice of where to be October 17-19, 2008! Missouri PTA State Convention, KCI Expo Center, Kansas City



Your PTA president has a Call to Convention packet with all of the registration materials and information. Or go to www.mopta.org to download. Registration deadline is September 17, so don't delay!

Get Ready (FOR BACK-TO-SCHOOL)

By Jan Harp Domene, PTA National President



You could say that back-to-school time is the “busy season” for parents (but really, it’s always busy season for parents, isn’t it?). With the beginning of the school year comes all sorts of preparation. For parents, it’s getting their kids ready to return to the classroom. For PTA leaders, it’s ensuring that students will be able to learn and families able to participate in the life of the school.

While establishing the programs and policies that will define your coming school year, remember that the underlying intention of all PTA work is to get families, schools, and communities to work together. The National Standards for Family-School Partnerships can be your

guide as you work with the entire school community in support of student achievement.

This fall will also bring some great PTA programs and events—many of which you can start preparing for now. PTA Start the Art Week will be celebrated again the first full week of October, and followed shortly by the National Student/Parent Mock Election at the end of October and PTA Healthy Lifestyles Month in November. You can learn more about all these wonderful initiatives on www.pta.org, which itself will be an exciting new site just in time for back-to-school this year.

Of course the best way to prepare for the school year is to take advantage of all the resources in the 2008 PTA Back-to-School Kit. The PTA Quick-Reference Guides have been updated, and the Program and Advocacy Resource Guide and Membership Marketing Templates and Tools CD-ROMs are packed with calendars, handouts, fliers, and more.

PTA is prepared to give you all the support you need for the 2008–2009 school year, and with nearly 50 million students expected to enroll in U.S. public schools—a record-setting number—we’ll need all the help from parents, schools, and communities that we can get. Ready or not, here they come!

10 WAYS TO INCREASE YOUR PTA MEMBERSHIP

1. *DIVIDE* your board into membership teams and give them specific assignments for getting new members.
2. *MAKE* sure each of your school board members is a card carrying PTA member.
3. *HAVE* a special door prize drawing for PTSA student members at their dances.
4. *SUBMIT* news about your PTA activities to the media regularly.
5. *CONTACT* your local elected officials about membership.
6. *PLACE* a star beside the names of parents and staff that are PTA members in your PTA sponsored phone directory.
7. *PROMOTE* a faculty membership contest. Challenge faculty from another school of similar size to meet or beat your faculty percentage number.
8. *ASK* the Chamber of Commerce to encourage local businesses to display posters for joining PTA as school begins in the fall.
9. *PROVIDE* a tear-off application to join PTA in every PTA newsletter.
10. *COUNCILS*: Ask your school superintendent to encourage PTA membership to the district school employees in a letter or district newsletter.

Shape Up Missouri & Shape Up Our Students Competitions

KICK-OFF OCTOBER 1ST, 2008



Shape Up Missouri (SUM) is a team based wellness competition of the Show-Me STATE GAMES and the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Health that is ready to assist you in reaching your goals of weight loss and developing a healthier lifestyle.

The SUM fall session runs from October 1st to December 3rd, 2008 and the spring session runs from January 19th to April 13, 2009. Teams can continue to sign up for the fall session until the first reporting period of the competition on October 22nd, 2009. Both sessions will focus on weight loss and/or physical activity, so get a team of 2 to 10 people together to begin a journey that could change your life.

SUM provides biweekly newsletters full of information on nutrition, exercise, recipes, plus much more. Monthly incentives and prizes are also awarded. Each participant will receive a free SUM t-shirt for enrolling in the competition. In addition, SUM is committed to sponsoring mini awards up to \$500 in the form of Healthy Community Awards to give communities financial support in establishing SUM as their community wellness initiative. There will be ten \$500 community awards given in each session! There are several community awards available, so sign up today!

The cost is only \$15 per person per session, or \$25 per person (save \$5 by signing up for both sessions, today) when you enroll now for both spring and fall sessions. You do not have to have been enrolled in the spring session to join the fall session; you can choose one, or both. The proceeds from SUM allow the Show-Me STATE GAMES and the Governors Council on Physical Fitness and Health to offer the school competition, Shape Up Our Students, for free.

The incidence of childhood obesity has doubled in the last two decades and tripled for adolescents. In an effort to address this crisis Missouri schools, K-12, are able to enroll in Shape Up Our Students (SOS) for free. The sessions will run during the same time frame as the adult program,

with the fall session beginning October 1st, 2009. Schools can continue to register until the first reporting period on October 22nd. All participants will be encouraged to increase their physical activity to meet or exceed the standards set by the Centers for Disease Control of 60 minutes of activity a day, five days each week; as well as improving their nutritional choices. Students will be given weekly nutrition and fitness challenges along with resources to give them options for making healthier choices. Schools can enroll their entire student body and/or small school teams. A total of \$5000 in awards was awarded to the P.E. Departments of the ten winning schools around the state!

If you wish to participate in Shape Up Missouri, or Shape Up Our Students, you may register at www.smsg.org. For more information on Shape Up Missouri or Shape Up Our Students, contact Larry Luetjen, Shape Up Missouri Coordinator, at 573-882-7326 or luetjenj@missouri.edu.

PTA National Convention: LOCAL PTA WINS CLIMBING WALL

The 2008 Parent's Expo at the annual convention featured fit programs for kids, including an indoor climbing concept to help students meet state and national standards for physical education. It is certainly an exciting way to combat the current health challenges facing the youth in our country!

As a part of the introduction of the climbing wall to physical fitness programs for kids, Everlast held a raffle for a climbing wall package. The winner of the Magna Traverse Climbing Wall package from Everlast was Jami Stewart with Lucy Franklin Elementary School of Blue Springs, Missouri. Congratulations to Jami and Lucy Franklin Elementary! We can't wait to see the pictures of students enjoying their new "sport!"

Bravo!!

Do you know Patty Voss? Chances are if you are part of the Lee's Summit Area Council you not only know of Patty, but also appreciate all she has done for the Lee's Summit PTAs. Time and time again Patty has answered the PTA call not only at the local level but the state level as well. The National Life Achievement Award is the highest PTA honor given to those unique individuals who not only give their time but also dedicates themselves to issues regarding children. Because of all Patty has done to forward and assist in the PTA mission, the Lee's Summit Area Council awarded Patty with this honor. Congratulations Patty for all you have and continue to do for our kids.

NEW! Missouri PTA Membership "Honor Roll"

*By Shelly Throckmorton,
Membership Emphasis Chair*

Let your PTA unit shine and become a part of our Missouri PTA Membership Honor Roll. Every year, Missouri has great units that continually work hard and don't always get the recognition they deserve! To honor all these units and many others, we have created a Membership Honor Roll. To qualify for the Honor Roll, your unit needs to either meet or exceed your previous year's membership number by March 1st, 2009. Once qualified, your unit will receive an Honor Roll achievement certificate. The Honor Roll will be published on the Missouri PTA website and in the May issue of CONTACT magazine.

Making the Membership Honor Roll is an achievement that should be celebrated by everyone. It represents the hard work that our units do every year and we hope your unit will join this list and be recognized.

We're Soaring to New Heights...Join PTA Today!

Membership: SOARING TO NEW HEIGHTS...JOIN PTA!

By Shelly Throckmorton, Membership Emphasis Chair

Is your PTA ready to Soar To New Heights during this membership year? The first step to a successful campaign is the planning. Make sure to incorporate the following 10 steps into your membership plan so that your membership will SOAR!

1. **START EARLY:** It's never too early to begin planning. An organized membership campaign will be ready to go the first day of school or before.
2. **MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE:** Your committee might include past presidents or officers or members with marketing or sales experience. Include the school principal and another staff member. Split the work up to best utilize the talents that your group has to offer.
3. **MEMBERSHIP GOALS:** How many members did you have last year? How many would you like to have this year? All good plans have a goal. Make sure everyone knows what the goal is and how you plan to reach it.
4. **MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES:** Ask local businesses for discounts or coupons for PTA members or create awards for students and/or classrooms that reach 100% membership.
5. **SCHOOL STAFF:** Invite the staff at your school to join your PTA. Show them what your PTA does for them and utilize their help to reach parents.
6. **BUSINESS MEMBERS:** Invite your local businesses to support the work of your PTA and create ways to give them visible recognition for their support.
7. **ADVERTISE..ADVERTISE..ADVERTISE:** Be visible at all PTA and school functions. Always have sign up forms and information about your PTA available. Give updates about your membership drive in your newsletters and/or put up a PTA bulletin board.
8. **MEMBERSHIP DUES:** Make sure to send in the state and national portion of your PTA dues to the Missouri PTA office at the beginning of each month. No one is officially a member until their dues have been received by the state office.
9. **RESOURCES:** www.pta.org; www.mopta.org; Our Children magazine from National PTA; *CONTACT* magazine from Missouri PTA; Membership Quick Reference Guide mailed to presidents by National PTA in July; membership section of the Tool Kit mailed to presidents by Missouri PTA in July; Membership Marketing Tools and Templates provided on CD-Rom and available on the National PTA website
10. **REASONS TO BE A PTA MEMBER:**

For Parents to join PTA:

- Research shows that when parents are involved in students' education, those students generally have higher grades and test scores.
- PTA informs parents about what is going on in schools on a national, state and local level.
- PTA provides parenting training through presentations, resources and programs.
- Parents have representation before the legislature and congress to make a difference in the laws that affect children.

For Teachers, Administrators and School Board Members to join PTA:

- PTA has a voice in local, state and national government topics such as school funding and teaching standards.
- PTA offers funding for supplies, field trips, assemblies, arts, awards, etc.
- PTA provides access to materials designed to help educators involve parents in their children's education.

For Businesses and Community Leaders to join PTA:

- Partnering with PTA provides the opportunities for positive advertising and shared information.
- PTA provides opportunities for involvement with other dedicated volunteers who share goals relating to youth.

For Non-English speaking and minorities to join PTA:

- PTA helps individuals to navigate within the school system.
- PTA meetings and activities allow discussion between groups.

Interaction between families through diversity awareness training and activities provides opportunities to share their culture and to promote positive community experience.

By incorporating these 10 steps into your membership year, you will be ready to soar into your best year yet!

Collaborate to Achieve

By Dorothy Gardner, MO PTA Editor

It never ceases to amaze me when I find exactly what I need when I'm not actively looking for it. While volunteering at the 2007 National PTA convention, I was assigned door monitor duty for a workshop on collaboration. Truth be told, I really didn't want to be there. No, not the convention at which I was tickled pink to attend, but rather that particular workshop. The drive from Kansas City had been a long one and upon arrival there were only a few moments to toss my luggage in my room before heading over to my first assignment of the day. On top of that, a seemingly much more interesting workshop topic was simultaneously being offered down the hall.

Perhaps it was fate, or maybe I was just in the right place at the right time. The workshop presenter opened with a quote President Bill Clinton had once used to address a group of teachers. "Every blade of grass has an angel that bends over it and whispers, grow, grow." Maybe you have heard this before somewhere, sometime. Derived from the Talmud it is quite a famous quote. However, I had never heard it prior to this particular moment in time. Being a sucker for a good inspirational quote, I was now glued to my seat, my attention squarely on the speaker.

The number of organizations whose primary focus often intersect is vast. Just take a moment and count out every organization whose main mission, or even part of their mission, centers around service to children. As I sat in my chair, numerous groups popped into my head, everything from teacher's organizations to food pantries. But one in particular jumped to the forefront of my thinking cap.

Only a few months prior, Julie Conn of the Clay County Clothes Closet had contacted me, as the then President of the Liberty Council PTA, and Dee Rosekrans, Liberty School District Director of Community Development, to look at ways we could possibly work together. At the time, Julie Conn expressed the Clothes Closet's dire need for donations. They simply did not have enough clothes to service the families seeking assistance within the Closet's humble walls. In past years, many of the PTA units had given monetary donations to the Closet. But

during our meeting, a bigger idea popped in my head. An idea that was much bigger than I could accomplish on my own. Being a parent of two children who seemed to grow overnight, I knew emptying out my closets alone could result in a large quantity of clothing that my family no longer had a use for, but could service children elsewhere. Surely I wasn't the only one. Brain buzzing, I shared my vision for a District wide clothing drive.

Supported by the district's social workers, it didn't take much to receive a motion and positive vote among the unit presidents who made up our Council to pursue collaboration with the Clothes Closet. Knowing what I wanted to accomplish and having the vision to see the benefit this partnership could produce, I just needed a plan. So here I sat, in a workshop I never intended on attending, gaining the tools I needed to plunge forward with my collaboration back home.

For a collaboration to be successful, each group involved must be open to clearly communicate what they expect to gain. In addition, groups must be willing to expend the resources needed to meet their goals. And finally, something I hadn't thought of, it is imperative all involved benefit from the joint venture. After listening to Julie Conn, it was pretty easy to figure out how the Clothes Closet would benefit. The resulting donations from the PTA clothing drives would literally fill their closets, allowing them to serve more families. But other than volunteers putting in a great deal of time and effort, I racked my brain to see the benefit on our side. Other than it would be a generous task to undertake.

I must admit, it was during this time I might have missed part of what the speaker was explaining as I sat in my chair, face scrunched up and eyes focusing on nothing in particular while I thought. Somewhere in this scenario, there had to be a bigger benefit for our units and a bigger mission. Way back in the remote recesses of my mind, I recalled the words of a fellow PTA unit officer when a member once questioned money budget for an Exceptional Child line item. A line item intended to assist children in need at our school. We planned to utilize the money to buy book bags, spirit wear, yearbooks, even

book sale vouchers and so on for children who otherwise would go without. The member's issue was with the fact this line item would only benefit a small percentage of the children rather than the majority. This officer's response was nothing short of extraordinary. Each one of the children, she explained, who are served by this program, will hopefully benefit with higher self-esteem. Rather than feeling apart from the rest of the students, they will feel part of the whole and therefore perform better in school. Continuing, she elaborated on the fact that these children sit in classrooms next our children. And in general, if all the individual members of the class come to school prepared and feeling good about themselves the entire class will more successfully move forward in the learning process.

Now I had my complete approach, my bigger mission, and yes there was also the fact this collective effort fit right into the PTA's actual Mission and Vision. Further meetings between the PTA and the Closet were held in order to fine-tune what we hoped to accomplish. And, no not everything went as smoothly as we hoped, but through sharing our experiences at Council and open communication we adapted where we needed and make notes for future years.

Great things are accomplished when groups focus on their strengths and collaborate together to achieve a greater common good. By opening our doors to work with other organizations we can reach heights never before attainable.



Food Allergies & Anaphylaxis Resolution

- WHEREAS, Food allergies and anaphylactic reactions among children are an increasing school health issue, and approximately 2.2 million school-age children are at risk in the U.S., including more than 40,000 children in Missouri, and reactions account for 30,000 emergency room visits and 150-200 deaths, many in schools, each year in the U.S.; and
- WHEREAS, The prevalence of food allergies among children in the U.S. has increased substantially with the incidence of peanut allergies doubling over a recent five-year period, and
- WHEREAS, Just eight foods account for 85-90 percent of all food allergic reactions, namely milk, egg, wheat, peanut, soy, tree nuts, fish and shellfish; and
- WHEREAS, Accidental ingestion or exposure, by children, may occur most often at schools and daycares where children often consume two meals and a snack during the day, and in some cases a reaction may be the first sign of an allergy; and
- WHEREAS, The importance of managing food-allergic students has been recognized by the National Association of School Nurses; the National Association of Elementary School Principals; the National School Boards Association; the American Medical Association; the American Academy of Pediatrics; and the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology; and
- WHEREAS, Because there is no cure for food allergies, strict avoidance is the only way to prevent a reaction; therefore be it
- RESOLVED, That the Missouri Congress of Parents and Teachers (Missouri PTA), its units and councils, inform students, parents, school personnel and the community about the prevalence of food allergies, allergen avoidance, emergency responses and ways in which safety for children with food allergies can be increased in the school, the child care setting, and the home; and be it further
- RESOLVED, That Missouri PTA, its units and councils, work with local school districts to encourage consideration of the risks of food allergies when planning PTA and school-sponsored events; and be it further
- RESOLVED, That Missouri PTA, its units and councils, support legislation aimed at improving the lives of all individuals affected by food allergies and anaphylaxis; and be it further
- RESOLVED, That Missouri PTA, its units and councils, encourage parents and guardians to take personal responsibility for the safety of their children by informing their school, child care providers, and group activity leaders of existing food allergies.

Submitted by Missouri PTA Resolutions Committee
Recommended for Consideration by Missouri PTA Board of Managers

This resolution will be put forth for adoption at the October 2008 MOPTA Convention.

Missouri PTA

2008-2009 REFLECTIONS PROGRAM

By Toni Wiechmann, MO PTA Reflections Chair

“Arts and Culture Come Alive with PTA”

Kids all around the country are going back to school and PTA/PTSA units are planning their school year. Now is the time to encourage your students to participate in this year's Reflections Program, themed “Wow!” Creativity through arts and culture enhance a student's learning experience and PTA leads the way as advocates for their creativity through programs such as Reflections and Start the Art Week, October 6-10, 2008. And what better way to encourage the arts in education than by implementing Reflections at your school!

For Reflections, students create artwork in six different categories: Visual Arts, Photography, Musical Composition, Dance Choreography, Literature, and Video Production. Their entries should be designed around the central theme of each year's program, such as last year's theme of “I Can Make a Difference By...” and the 2008-2009 theme of “Wow!” Artistic merit, as well as the artist's interpretation of the theme, is the primary criteria for judging. PTA/PTSA units will judge artwork at the local level and then send those winners to the Missouri state level of judging. Once MOPTA has completed final judging, first place winning entries are forwarded on to the National level. MOPTA also hosts a Reflections Student Showcase each April to award students' achievements and display state winners' entries.

The 2008-2009 Reflections Tool Kit pages were mailed to units in July and these same pages can be found online at our MOPTA website. Reflections Chairs should start right away in promoting the program so that there is plenty of time for students to create their artwork. Keep in mind that this school year's MOPTA deadline is Friday, January 16th 2009 at 4:30pm, and all artwork must be delivered to the state office by that time. Preliminary judging will begin that evening by our Reflections Committee so you don't want your unit's entries to be late. Plan your own unit's deadline accordingly so that you have sufficient time for unit judging and shipment to the state office.

Units and Reflections Chairs should pay close attention to the rules and requirements in the Reflections Tool Kit set forth by National PTA and MOPTA so that your unit's entries are not disqualified. All paperwork must be filled out as stated in the Tool Kit pages and note that some requirements for artwork standards and submissions have changed from last year, so follow only rules for this year's 2008-2009 program. Each unit should only send to MOPTA a maximum of 18 total entries, 3 in each of the 6 artwork categories. MOPTA has unfortunately had to disqualify several units for paperwork mistakes, missing paperwork, or failure to follow Reflections requirements.

For last year's 2007-2008 Reflections Program, “I Can Make a Difference By...” we had over 12,000 students participate in the arts program with over 1200 of those sent in to MOPTA. After we receive and judge the entries at the state level, MOPTA sends all first place winners to National PTA. And we were pleased to learn from National PTA that we had five National Reflections Award of Merit winners announced last May:

- Brooklyn Wattenbarger for Dance Choreography from St. Joseph, Intermediate division
- Erin Bachus for Film/Video Production from Springfield, Intermediate division
- Jesse Caylor for Literature from Gladstone, Senior division
- Micayla Miles for Photography from Logan-Rogersville, Middle/Junior division
- Katelyn Low for Photography from Blue Springs, Primary division

Award of Merit winners received silver-plated Reflections medallions from NPTA along with an award letter from National PTA. Congratulations to each of our National PTA winners, MOPTA winners, and all students who participated in our Reflections Program!! You have honored our “Show Me State” quite well!

MOPTA looks forward to this year's 2008-2009 Reflections program with the theme of “Wow!” And we hope to see even more student participation from all of our “Show Me” students!

Are you REALLY a PTSA?

By Mark Kempf,
Student Involvement
Chairman

Your unit identified as a PTSA, but are you really functioning as a PTSA? Have you incorporated the Students as a valuable ingredient in your unit's leadership?

Many PTSA units are PTSA in name only. Sure they may offer student memberships. However, they continue to function in a “business as usual” manner with all adults and no students running the show. Or, they added a “token” student position to their board, but never allow that student to be effectively involved.

Students play a vital role in what our PTA and PTSA units do. After all, students are our focus. The PTA mission statement, the PTA vision statement as well as the stated Purposes of the Parent Teacher Association all speak of providing for children. The students are definitely our focus. At the middle school and high school level, we have the unique opportunity to include these same students in what we do as a PTA unit. Who knows more about what is going on in the school than the students themselves? Who know better what needs the students have than the students themselves? And who better to provide feedback about the programs that we are providing than the students themselves? You might be surprised at what you will learn.

Students can also come up with some really amazing thoughts and ideas concerning their own welfare. After all, they are the ones actually living the experience of public education. If we continue to only accept a “business as usual” mentality, we'll only be able to accomplish what we have always done. But, if we open our minds and accept these students as the resource they are, we'll move beyond the same old “been there, done that” ideas and come up with new and innovative ways of addressing the needs of our students.

An important thing to keep in mind though is that just like adults, the students do not magically know how to be an effective leader. Just like adults they need time, opportunity, and training. Just like adults, these student leaders need to have the opportunity to participate in PTA leadership training at events such as the Annual Missouri PTA Leadership Conference, the Annual Missouri PTA Convention, and local training opportunities such as regional conferences and schools of information. Yes, it is an expense for your budget, but one that will pay off, especially in the life of a child, in the long run.

Online Membership Data Reporting (OMDR)

Starting this summer, there are exciting changes coming - Online Membership Data Reporting (OMDR) is transforming into OMDR Plus, powered by JustBetweenFriends! National PTA is taking OMDR to the next level by adding significant functionality aimed directly at adding value to local units and to the parents that belong to those units.

JustBetweenFriends is an internet based service that will soon incorporate the current functionality found in OMDR. The result is OMDR Plus. Soon, and continually over time, there will be even more capabilities added so that you have even more options to communicate to your parents and members.

As OMDR migrates to OMDR Plus, all of the member management capabilities in OMDR will be available in the easy to use interface of JustBetweenFriends. All data already entered into OMDR will automatically be transferred into OMDR Plus, so no previous efforts will be wasted. It is expected that this phase will be ready for units to use near the beginning of the 2008-09 school year.

Coming soon in the first version of OMDR Plus is a very exciting set of volunteer management capabilities. This section of the service will allow units to more easily manage the task of recruiting and scheduling volunteers based on the needs of the unit, the interest areas of the volunteers, and the available time of the individual volunteers. This section is expected to be available around the end of this calendar year.

This is only the beginning! National PTA has a three year plan mapped out for OMDR Plus and will be counting on feedback and ideas to further enhance the system to make it even more valuable to unit leaders and PTA members everywhere. Continue to watch the website for more OMDR Plus updates!

If the term OMDR is new to you, continue to read on for more information.

All local PTA units were to begin reporting membership by way of the OMDR system beginning July 1, 2007.

OMDR is a data base system that allows for National PTA to account for its more than six million members, much like any other organization. Once a member has been entered into the system, they will be eligible to receive many of the wonderful products that National PTA has to offer; including the online version of OUR CHILDREN magazine, parent involvement resources, exclusive member benefits and sponsorship information, just to name a few.

For you, OMDR is yet another tool to help you as a unit, connect and communicate with your membership. Once you have entered your member information you can move that information into a template that will allow you to print mailing labels, membership rosters and even batch emails to inform your membership or ask for help at your next event! Communication is a key tool to a successful year!

When creating your Membership Form for the upcoming school year, you will want to make sure that you have collected all of the information needed to input into the system. The information you will need from your new member includes: name, complete address, phone number and email address. Once you have collected this information you can enter it into the OMDR system and your new member will receive a "Welcome to PTA" message from National PTA.

Check the Missouri PTA Tool Kit (mailed to Presidents in July) for more detailed instructions and log in information for the OMDR system.

If you have any questions feel free to contact: Jennifer Casey, VP Membership Services at: jcasey@mopta.org or home at 816-224-0907.

GET CONNECTED WITH OMDR!

WANTED!

A fresh and relevant school assembly!

- ★ Invite Sheriff Quick Draw to your elementary school to present **CARTOONS OF CHARACTER**, a 50-minute assembly featuring LIVE cartoon drawings and timely stories that define **HONESTY, RESPECT, and RESPONSIBILITY.**
- ★ Sheriff Quick Draw (aka, Lyle Farquhar), is a nationally recognized cartoonist and book illustrator. Through huge on-the-spot drawings, audience participation and humor, he will bring to life relevant values that will compliment your curriculum.
- ★ "...it was one of the better assemblies we've had in years!" Sarah, Teacher, N. Kansas City.

Call **816.858.7766** or e-mail cartoonsofcharacter@hotmail.com today to request a brochure or to book **YOUR** assembly!

2008 Legislative Session Summary

By Donna Pediford, VP Legislation & Advocacy

"The last day of the Missouri General Assembly was almost a legislative session in and of itself, as 70 bills passed on to the governor, at times with break-neck speed."

– The Columbia Missourian

We are glad to report the passing of House Bill 2213 (Sponsor Will Kraus) which requires the Governor to annually issue a proclamation designating the second week of September as Parent and Family Involvement in Education Week.

We are pleased that this year's version of the tax credit (voucher) bill, Senate Bills 993/770 and House Bills 1886/2040 (Crowell/Rupp and Scharnhorst/Jetton), did not pass due to a "bombardment" of contacts made to legislators by voucher opponents (including Missouri PTA members). However, Missouri PTA has actively opposed vouchers bills for over 30 years and will likely be on the defense against this issue again next year.

Other legislation opposed by Missouri PTA was House Joint Resolution 70 (Sponsor Allen Icet) that would have proposed a constitutional spending limit similar to the Colorado provision known as "TABOR," or the so-called "Taxpayer Bill of Rights." The HJR passed the House

but did not make it through the Senate. This proposal would limit annual growth in state appropriations to a cost-of-living adjustment factor plus a population growth factor and even includes requirements for imposing further tax cuts if the spending limits are operational. Missouri PTA opposes any attempt to place additional restrictions on the State's ability to provide revenue for essential services such as public education.

A number of bills were presented this session that did not pass. These bills are supported by Missouri PTA resolutions or position statements:

SB 843. (Sponsor: Yvonne Wilson) Would have created a trust fund and commission for youth smoking prevention.

HB 1427 (Sponsor: Will Kraus). Would have given immunity from civil or criminal liability to persons reporting suspected child abuse to the proper authorities. Voted do pass consent by the Special Committee on Family Services, however, it was voted do pass-not consent by Rules Committee. Included in Senate Bill 885 and was reported do pass by Special Committee on Family Services. This bill became loaded

down with unrelated amendments in the House. The bill was sent to conference very late in the session, and the differences were not worked out in time before session ended on May 16. This means the bill is dead and any future legislation will have to start all over again next January.

HB 2046 (Sponsor Judy Baker) would have required school districts to offer a driver's education course to students 15 years of age or older and allows certain students who complete the course to apply for a license at 17 years of age.

HB 2306 (Sponsor Judy Baker) would have prohibited an individual with a temporary instruction permit or an intermediate driver's license from operating a motor vehicle while using a cell phone except under certain conditions.

HJR 44. (Sponsor Tim Flook) would have proposed a constitutional amendment raising the allowable level of bonded indebtedness for school districts.

One Vote Can Make a Difference

EXCERPT FROM THE 2008 ELECTION GUIDE THAT WAS INCLUDED IN YOUR BACK TO SCHOOL KIT

It is easy to feel as if your single vote would be lost among the millions of those cast nationwide. But your vote does make a difference—whether in a national, state, or local election. These are just a few races out of the many that have been decided by a small number of votes:

- In 1996, Ron Wyden won election to the U.S. Senate from Oregon by one percent of the vote.
- In 1977, the mayor of Ann Arbor, Michigan, was elected by just one vote.
- Marcus Morton was elected Governor of Massachusetts in 1839 by one vote out of 102,066 cast.
- In 1960, John F. Kennedy won the presidency by only one vote per precinct in Illinois. One voter in each precinct could have changed the result in Illinois, resulting in the election of Richard Nixon.

Your vote does make a difference.

Being educated about candidates for public office is critical to advocating effectively for youth. Through informed decision making at the ballot box, PTA members can directly make a difference on the issues that affect our children and public schools. When PTA votes, we become a powerful voice for all children, and this will be especially true in the upcoming elections on

November 4, 2008. A wealth of additional resources can be accessed through the League of Women Voters Education Fund at www.vote411.org. For even more information about how to get involved this election year, please visit www.pta.org/vote.

National Student / Parent Mock Election

From www.pta.org



PTA has partnered with the National Student/Parent Mock Election for the 2008 election cycle. Through the Mock Election, NSPME engages young people and their parents, facilitating a dialogue between them that is truly invaluable; by voting on both candidates and contemporary issues, this project initiates an important discussion on the responsibility and power we all have as citizens.

How to Participate:

1. ENROLL! - You may enroll online at www.nationalmockelection.com.
2. DESIGN YOUR PROGRAM - The National Student/Parent Mock Election allows you the flexibility of designing the voter education program that is right for your students. Free curriculum materials can be downloaded at <http://www.nationalmockelection.com/curriculum.html>. Votes will be cast for candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate, governors (where there is a race), and on the national issues. The result of the votes on the issues will become the "Recommendations of America's students and parents to the newly elected President and legislators," and will be presented to the newly elected President, Congress and the Governors in January.
3. VOTE! - Vote on the internet, by phone, or by fax. Watch www.nationalmockelection.org and www.missourimockelection.org for further instructions.

The Award Goes to...Paxton Keeley Elementary PTA!!!

By Wendy Jackson, MO PTA President Elect

The Phoebe Apperson Hearst Excellence in Education Partnership Award recognizes PTAs whose collaborative efforts with parents, families, educators, and community members promote parent/family involvement in ongoing programs and encourage student success. Each year local units are encouraged to look at their own programs. Chances are one of those great programs already fulfill the PAH requirements.

This year the PAH award was awarded to Paxton Keeley in Heritage region. As schools strive to include student success in all programs, Paxton Keeley worked to promote family involvement into the love of reading and languages, out of this Literacy Night was born. On Literacy Night families are invited to hear local leaders transformed into readers. In addition to students being immersed in wonderful storytelling, the students are also given the opportunity to have a delicious soup meal in the cafeteria. The evening also supports a used book sale with most books being sold for a mere cost of 25 cents. To top off the evening, they provide parents with an information session.

Paxton Keeley collaborated with their community to the best of their advantage. They were able to incorporate a vast portion of the community by bringing in storytellers from the University of Missouri, Local library, and speakers from the HyVee grocery store to help to make their event a huge success. Not only did everyone enjoy a fun evening and learning experience, but also over 1000 books went home with over 125 families.



“WOW!” Reflections Reminder!!

ALL STUDENT ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED

IN THE MOPTA OFFICE BY 4:30PM ON

FRIDAY, JANUARY 16, 2009

Please plan your delivery method so that your artwork submissions arrive on time!

Mark Your Calendar

SEPTEMBER

- PTA Membership Month
- National Preparedness Month
- Hispanic Heritage Month
- 1 Membership Dues to State Office
- 1 Labor Day
- 1-7 Missouri Parent Involvement in Education Week
- 7 Grandparent's Day
- 21 International Peace Day
- 22 Autumn Begins / Family Day
- 28 National Good Neighbor Day

OCTOBER

- 1 Membership Dues to State Office
- 2 National Custodial Workers Day
- 6 PTA Start the Art Week Begins
- 8 Walk to School Day
- 13 Columbus Day
- 13-17 National School Lunch Week
- 14-18 School Nutrition Week
- 16-17 State Office Closed
- 18 National Red Ribbon Week Begins
- 18-19 Missouri PTA Convention (Kansas City)
- 19-25 America's Safe Schools Week
- 20 State office closed
- 20-24 National School Bus Safety Week
- 25 National Make a Difference Day
- 26 State office closed
- 31 Halloween

NOVEMBER

- American Indian Heritage Month
- 1 Membership Dues to State Office
- 1 National Family Literacy Day
- 2 Daylight Saving time
- 4 Election Day
- 11 Veterans Day
- 16 American Education Week Begins
- 23 National Family Week Begins
- 27 Thanksgiving Day

DECEMBER (Looking Ahead)

- 1 AIDS Awareness Day
- 21 Hanukkah Begins
- 25 Christmas
- 26 Kwanzaa Begins
- 29 Islamic New Year

Hispanic Membership Outreach

By Paulette Baker, Membership Outreach Chairman

¡Bienvenidos a Nuestra Escuela!

Signs with statements such as this one are spotted more and more in Missouri schools as we welcome Hispanic families to our schools and to Missouri PTA. According to the US Census Bureau, the Hispanic population is growing three times faster than the US population as a whole. The fastest growing members of this group are those younger than 17. It is predicted that by 2025 Hispanics will represent more than 25% of all school age children. Many of these students are bilingual, but their parents are not. This lack of English communication skills presents some challenges to both school personnel and PTA organizations as they strive to include all parents as active learning partners with their children.

In the Hispanic culture, education is the domain of the school. Hispanic parents are unfamiliar with the concept of active parent participation at school activities. Many of these parents may not only feel a cultural disconnect, but also may not read or speak English. Unfortunately, in many cases, Hispanic parents are illiterate in their native language. Lack of transportation also prevents them from attending school activities.

How can you welcome and encourage Hispanic parents to be active participants in their child's learning?

1. English Speaking Amigos. Use bilingual parents as parent support for new non-English speaking parents.
2. Interpretation/translation services. If possible, use District ESL teachers or Spanish interpreters to sit with a small group of Spanish speaking parents to translate as you conduct parent meetings. Use District interpreters or bilingual parents to translate flyers for family events.
3. Representation on your PTA board. Consider adding a Hispanic family representative to your PTA board to ensure important information is shared with all families and to encourage active participation of all parents.
4. Hispanic family nights. Work with school and/or District personnel to hold several Hispanic family nights with interpreters available to present important topics on school policies, the importance and explanation of parent/teacher conferences, common classroom procedures and celebrations, and ways parents can help their child be successful learners.

5. Personal Contact. Use District and/or bilingual parent volunteers to be a welcoming committee to:
 - a. guide Hispanic parents at the beginning of the year
 - b. be a regular presence at school arrival/dismissal times and make it a practice to speak with Hispanic parents
 - c. make personal phone calls in advance to invite Hispanic parents to specific activities or answer questions, always do a follow-up call just a few days before the event

Most parents want their child to succeed. If Hispanic parents are not attending your PTA meetings or other functions, don't assume that they are uninterested parents. Use your bilingual welcoming committee to find out if the reason for poor attendance is the language, culture, or comfort at such meetings. Don't be afraid to ask them to help at an event. Ask dads as well as moms. You may find a great worker to help at the next carnival, book fair, school dance, or playground installation!

PTA Spanish Resources

As the largest volunteer parent organization in the United States, National PTA recognizes the rapidly growing Hispanic community and the need to provide information in Spanish. National PTA recently launched a newly designed website, www.pta.org, that features a companion site entirely in Spanish. The Spanish-language site focuses on parent and community involvement in schools and on how that involvement helps children succeed and learning environments improve.

Welcoming in the New School Year

By Pat Higginbotham, Gateway Regional Director

This year the Hazelwood School District and Hazelwood PTA Council teamed up to hold their 2nd Annual Back To School Fair on Saturday, August 2nd, which coincided with the same weekend as the Tax Free back to school. From 10am to 3pm at Jamestown Mall, all 32 schools held a table. Some schools used this opportunity to start their PTA memberships drive, and each school gave out important dates and information for the coming school year. The School District offered information on bus routes, immunization shots and much more school information was given out the day of the fair. Most Principals and PTA officers were available at each school table to greet and give out information on their schools and PTA functions for the students and parents. In addition the Stores at Jamestown Mall offered specials for the Tax Free Weekend.

Thank You For Your Generous Donations

Building Fund:

- ESPY PTA of Nixa

Founder's Day Fund:

- ESPY PTA of Nixa

Scholarship Fund:

- Springfield Council PTA
- ESPY PTA of Nixa

A little can go a long way. Please remember our State funds when formulating your own unit budgets.

Hello, is anyone out there? Communication

By Dorothy Gardner, MO PTA Editor

Do you sometimes feel as if there is a wide void between you and your membership? Families have a vast number of obligations on their plates and often, although we are reluctant to admit, PTA meetings end up on the bottom of the priority pole. Still, there are ways to get information out and quite literally into their hands. People are diverse creatures and the way in which they prefer to gather their information is just as diverse. Some will attend meetings and readily soak up all the agenda has to offer. Others lean towards everything electronic. If it doesn't come across a computer screen they may never know it existed. And then there are those who gravitate towards the tangible aspect of 'in their hands' to read information. That is where the all-important newsletter comes into play.

NEWSLETTERS

How many of you can attest to the fact that sometimes the vast quantity of paper arriving home in a child's backpack leads you to simply skim through the pile? A good newsletter is more than just an updated calendar and contact information. A good newsletter adequately informs and in a way entertains. Both necessary to keep the reader engaged and coming back for more.

So just how do you make your newsletters 'pop' for the readers. Here are a few tips to make your newsletter work for your PTA.

- While content is important so is the look and publication schedule. Make sure to have a constant title and schedule. If members can readily identify the newsletter it will stand out amid the sea of information that crosses their desk. Just as important, members need to feel they can rely on it for timely information in order to give it credibility. Something that comes out on a regular basis will be utilized as a resource rather than something that might show up in a backpack here and there.
- Highlight both upcoming events and past successes. Since not everyone can attend meetings bring the meeting and events to them. Toot your horn and pat yourselves on the back for all the well-done efforts and let everyone know what great events are coming up. This gives membership the opportunity to

'see' your PTA in action and offer them the chance to get involved. But make sure your articles are concise, catch the eye and keep the reader's attention. Utilize graphic and colorful writing to keep your readers reading.

- Use the medium to spotlight your unit's accountability. Recap budget reports and important votes that may have taken place during a past meeting. Often our members have no idea how decisions get made and may feel as if their opinion doesn't count. By seeing a recap of how you conduct business this will draw attention to the way your unit is run and in turn make your unit more credible in the member's eyes.
- This is also the perfect opportunity to thank those who have given their time to make an event successful. Everyone, even if they won't admit it, likes to be thanked for what they've done. On the flip side, it lets the rest of your membership know the PTA is not a clique of a few but the work of many.

WEB SITE

Being that we live in an electronic age, even if you it's not your cup of tea, utilizing the web with an informative web site is a key step in making sure you reach your entire membership. However there are does and don't when putting together a stellar web page, one that will keep your members logging on for more information. Possibly one of the most important guides to remember is the '3 click rule'. Studies have shown if a visitor to your site is unable to find what they are looking for in 3 clicks they will log off and most likely for good. So with that in mind here are a few tips to really make your web site reach the masses taken from the National PTA's [Websites That Work: creating the best online experience for your community](#) by Randy Craig, Lia Rogers and Barb Bungard.

- Enhance Readability – make sure the fonts are clean, legible and big enough to read.
- Incorporate clear links – make sure the links are obvious, use colored or underlined text, and don't underline other text (non links) for emphasis.
- Keep decorative images to a minimum. All images should serve a purpose

and remember the user is looking for information and focusing on the text.

- Add photos to your page just made sure they are an appropriate size, no one really likes a gargantuan images filling the screen.
- Optimized your content – Remember this is not a print format. People read differently online. They tend to scan more often and at a rapid pace as they search for specific answers. Write in a condensed manner. Typical users will only read about one-fourth of the words on the page.
- Employ entry points – Add subhead, bullet points, boldface, keywords, and headlines guide your user through the content.
- Answer user's questions – They've pulled up your site to find information, make sure it is included.

So great, you're saying to yourself, now I know what it should look like but what should I actually include. Just what are the questions I should anticipate and answer? In general, keep the content fresh and updated. You want a site that will keep your users returning on a regular basis.

- It's nice to put a face with a name so add some pictures.
- Make sure contact information is included.
- Post meeting minutes
- President's messages – local, state, and national.
- Legislative alerts and government official contact information
- Committee assignments
- Updated calendar of events. Keep everyone in the know.
- PDF of flyers, a 'digital backpack'
- Volunteer & donation opportunities
- Fundraising & rebate program information
- Newsletters
- Summarize the benefits of PTA
- Links to state, national & school sites
- NOT Bylaws

Now go out there and make sure your message gets heard!



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Missouri PTA
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PLAN NOW to Attend the 2008
Missouri PTA Convention

**PTA...The People's
Choice**

October 18-19, 2008
KCI Expo Center

(Just east of the Kansas City International Airport)

Convention Saturday-Sunday. Pre-convention
activities Friday evening.

Workshops, networking, awards, advocacy,
inspiration and yes, even lots of fun! It's all here
for you at the 2008 Missouri PTA convention! All
PTA members are encouraged to attend... be sure
to include convention in your 2008-2009 budget!

Go to www.mopta.org for more details