CONTACT

every child. one voice.®

Today

Missouri Parent Teacher Association

Volume 91, Issue 1
July 2009

Contact
Parents
Support your child’s future plans, you are their #1 influence.

As your child returns to school this fall, don’t forget about the importance of education and career planning. *Missouri Connections* is a free resource that allows you to get involved in the planning process with your child. Aligned to the Missouri Career Paths and the 16 Career Clusters, your child is able to explore postsecondary education options and careers, plan their educational courses, and build an electronic career portfolio.

Visit [www.missouriconnections.org](http://www.missouriconnections.org) today to:

- Take A Virtual Tour.
- Learn How Careers are Presented to Students.
- Access Your Child’s Portfolio.
- Review an Education & Career Planning Timeline.
- Get Additional Information & Resources.

For more information on *Missouri Connections*, please contact your child’s school counselor.
President’s Message

PTA - Parents and Teachers working together to form an association that will work for a better life and education for every child in their school community be it in the home, school, city, state or nation. Our founders set the standards over 113 years ago. We must continue to strive to accomplish these standards TODAY and every day.

During these tough economic times PTAs will struggle with membership and fundraising; but we must not let our children down. Many of our families are in positions they have never been in before – never thought they would ever be in! They are looking for help and advice that they never thought they would ever have to ask for: help with resumes; help with dealing with social services; help with budgets and maybe even help with learning how to do “do-it-yourself” home improvements. Can PTA be a catalyst within the community to help with these needs? YES!!!!

- Plan workshops to bring in experts to help parents through these difficult times.
- Plan community activities to bring families together for the common good of the community and to let them know that they are not alone.
- Plan to organize a network for all families to help ease some of the burdens.

Besides tough times for our families, our schools are struggling with budget cuts – thus making it harder to meet the needs of all students. Schools have to make very difficult decisions when it comes to programs and employees. Now is the time for PTAs to reach out to our school systems to help determine the greatest needs and then organize the community to work together to meet these needs.

- Plan an aggressive volunteer program to organize tutors, mentors and aides in the school.
- Plan curriculum events to help parents understand the goals of the school and how they can help their children to achieve these goals.
- Plan a school beautification program to help the entire school community feel proud of their school.

Communities must remain strong and have purpose during these times. PTAs can act as the bridge to help bring the community, families and schools together.

- Plan a career day for students and parents – invite the business community into your schools.
- Plan to bring your city and county social service organizations to the school to help parents better understand the services available to them.
- Plan to visit with local community service groups and businesses to organize support for the school.
- Plan to support local food pantries and clothing banks.

And, never forget that PTA is the largest advocate group for the welfare of all children.

- Plan to make your communities aware of what is happening in our federal and state legislatures that affect our children’s education and well-being.
- Plan to help your community make the best decisions for all concerned during these difficult times.

With everyone working together our families, schools and communities will be successful and stronger as we work to support each other and strive to make sure that we continue to make every child’s potential a reality TODAY and every day.

By Mary Oyler, Missouri PTA President
Thank you Senator Bond

In appreciation of his years of dedicated service, Missouri PTA was honored to bestow upon Senator Kit Bond the Missouri PTA Distinguished Service Award. Donna Petiford, VP of Legislation and Advocacy, presented Senator Bond with the award in his office during the National Legislative Conference.

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2003

March 12, 2009

Mary J. Oyler, President
Missouri PTA
2100 I-70 Drive
Columbia, Missouri 65203

Dear Mary:

It was a great honor to accept the Missouri PTA distinguished Service Award. I have enormous respect for the PTA and feel very privileged to be recognized by you and your members.

Parents are an essential part of a child’s education and a critical component of ensuring that every student reaches their full potential. The PTA empowers parents not only to be more involved in the education of their child but also an advocate for education and their community. I think that is a very important role and applaud the PTA for their good work.

As Governor and Senator I have had the privilege to work with the Missouri PTA for almost 40 years. I look forward to continuing that partnership as Congress faces the enormous education challenges ahead.

Again, thank you for this award. Please extend my appreciation to your members who took the time to come to Washington to advocate for the Missouri PTA and present me with this award.

Sincerely,

Kit Bond
Christopher S. Bond

PIctured left to right: Susan Smith, Stephanie Miller, Dorothy Gardner, Senator Kit Bond, Donna Petiford, and Wendy Jackson

MOPTA CONTACT

MISSOURI PTA THANKS
THE FOLLOWING PROUD SPONSORS OF
2009 MISSION POSSIBLE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE:

Membership Lunch sponsor
George K. Baum & Company

Delegate Packet sponsor
Chuck E. Cheese’s

Breakfast Club Members
(sponsors of Leadership Breakfast)

Great American Opportunities

Miche Bags

Meravic

Barnes & Noble Booksellers

Thanks to these fine companies for their support of PTA.
Early Bird Awards
Units that send the
HIGHEST MEMBERSHIP
based upon last year’s
TOTAL MEMBERSHIP to the state office
POSTMARKED ON OR BEFORE
OCTOBER 2, 2009 will earn the
EARLY BIRD AWARD
and recognized at the
Missouri PTA Convention
in Springfield in October

THREE (3) WINNING CATEGORIES
Early Childhood/Elementary/Special Ed.
Middle School/Jr. High/Combined
(grade/middle, grade/high, jr.)
High School

NO APPLICATION NECESSARY
Get those dues in by October 2nd, and
YOU MAY BE A WINNER!
Join the PTA TEAM
Together Everyone Achieves More!

Outstanding Membership Campaign Grant

Our congratulations go out to this year’s winner of the 2008-2009 Outstanding Membership Campaign Grant, Platte City Middle School PTSA.

This school’s leadership decided to make a concerted effort to increase their membership. They used a variety of methods to achieve their membership goals; visibility at school & PTA events, incentives, personal interaction and distribution of information about their programs.

With the support of their school staff & principal, membership sign-ups were offered at enrollment days, university programs, parent/teacher conferences & school events. Officers were on hand at all these events to answer questions and provide information on their incentives and programs supported by the PTA. All members had their name entered into a drawing for a free Wii. Students and parents alike were continually made aware of all the benefits of being a PTA member through flyers, emails & personal contact.

Here is part of the summary provided on this unit’s application: “Parent, student and school involvement make a successful PTSA. All were needed to provide the support that allowed us to be successful in our membership drive. With the support of school principals & teachers, we were able to talk about PTSA directly to each family and student. Making them aware of all the programs and events we sponsored was informative and appreciated by all. Officers and members recruited throughout the year to ensure our success. Students & parents were made to feel welcome.”

Lora Tenpenny, President and Barbara Watson, VP & Membership Co-Chair were on hand to be recognized and accept the award at the Leadership Conference in May. This unit had a goal, with a plan to reach that goal and used good old-fashioned hard work to achieve their goal. Their success proves this advice by one of the great men of our time; **Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing. Abraham Lincoln.**

And the Winner Is...

The 2008-2009 Membership Awards were presented this year at the Leadership Conference on May 2, 2009. These outstanding units were recognized for their hard work.

**STUDENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE AWARD**
Platte City Middle School PTSA, Pony Express Region
Application Award for the Unit with the highest percentage of student members based on school enrollment. 48% of Platte City’s membership were students.

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AWARD**
Cherokee Middle School PTSA, Ozark Region
Unit with the highest number of business members. This unit had 53 business members.

**GOLDEN GAVEL AWARDS** – these are awarded in 5 different categories
Hazelwood North Middle School PTSA, Gateway Region

Unit with the highest numerical increase in membership. Hazelwood increased their membership by 275 members.

Parkview High School PTSA, Ozark Region
Unit with the highest percentage increase in membership. Parkview increased their membership a whopping 1,030%.

Blue Springs High School PTSA, Three Trails Region
Unit with the highest membership total. BSHS’s membership totaled 1,056 members.

Greenwood Lab PTSA, Ozark Region
Unit with the highest membership percentage based on school enrollment. Greenwood’s membership equaled 134% of their student enrollment.

Center PTA Council, Three Trails Region
Council with the highest percentage of total membership increase over previous year.

Congratulations to all our award winning units!

OMDRplus Available for All PTA Units

OMDRplus powered by Just Between Friends is here. If you have not yet registered your unit, you may do so now by going through our PTA Start-up Wizard at www.JustBetweenFriends.com/2008QuickStart. You will need your National PTA Local Unit ID to complete the wizard. If you don’t have your local Unit ID, please contact our office at 1-800-328-7330 or National PTA.

www.mopta.org
Starting Your Year Off Right
Do you have your membership drive all planned? The key to making your PT A a powerful unit is all in the details. Successful units have a game plan for their year. Make sure you incorporate the following 10 steps and you too can become a success story!

1. **START EARLY**! You can never start too early. A well planned membership campaign is ready to go by the first day of school or before.

2. **HAVE A MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE OF MORE THAN ONE**. To be a truly successful unit, split membership recruitment into different jobs and utilize the talents and resources of your parents and students.

3. **SET A MEMBERSHIP GOAL**. All good plans have a goal. Make sure that everyone knows what that goal is and how you plan to reach it.

4. **CREATE MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVES**. Arrange for discounts or coupons for PT A members at local businesses or create awards for students and/or classrooms that reach 100% membership.

5. **ASK YOUR SCHOOL FACULTY TO JOIN AND BECOME INVOLVED IN YOUR DRIVE**. Teachers and school staff can be your greatest allies in running a successful campaign. Show them what PT A does for them and utilize their help to reach parents.

6. **RECRUIT BUSINESS MEMBERS**. Give local businesses the chance to support the work your PT A does and create ways to give them visible recognition for that support.

7. **BE VISIBLE – ADVERTISE WHAT YOU’RE DOING**. Have a PT A bulletin board showing the progress of your membership drive. Remember to always have a PT A table with information and sign-up forms available at every school event or function.

8. **GET COLLECTED DUES SENT IN MONTHLY**. Make sure those state and national dues get sent in on the first of the month. No one is officially a PT A member until their dues reach the state office.

9. **REMEMBER...MEMBERSHIP IS A YEAR ROUND EFFORT**. Don’t stop your membership recruitment after the first couple months of school. Give everyone the chance to become a PT A member - those who missed out on the first go around, new parents to your school and anyone else who supports work done on the behalf of children.

10. **APPLY FOR AWARDS – RECEIVE THE RECOGNITION YOUR UNIT DESERVES**. Let your hard work and the success of your unit shine! Show off those awards and recognition certificates on your PT A bulletin board or a PT A wall in your school. Give your PT A members the chance to enjoy a visible accolade made possible through their support.

With the right planning and help, every PT A has the opportunity and ability to become a success. Follow these 10 steps and you are well on your way to reaching that goal. We know you can do it!

The Benefits of Membership
National PT A has created the following benefit providers for all PT A Members. Be sure to advertise these benefits, along with any others you may create, during your membership drive. You can check out the Missouri PT A, www.mopta.org or National PT A, www.pta.org websites for further information on how your members access these benefits. Make sure the details on benefit access are provided only to your PT A members, and not your school as a whole. These are part of the rewards given for joining PT A.

- **BARNES & NOBLE.com** – PT A members will save 5% from this discounted online bookstore on books, music, DVD’s and more. Visit: [www.pta.org/barnesandnoble](http://www.pta.org/barnesandnoble). Username and Password are needed – located on the back of membership card.

- **MEDICALERT** - For more information and to sign up for the MedicAlert Kid Smart program visit [www.medicalert.org/pta](http://www.medicalert.org/pta) or call 1-800-ID-AERT.

- **METLIFE Home & Auto Insurance** - MetLife Auto & Home has special group discounts now available to PT A members. In addition to the PT A group discounts, this program also includes the following features at no additional charge:
  * Deductible Savings Benefit SM 1
  * Replacement Costs for Total Loss on New Cars 2, 3
  * Replacement Costs for Special Parts 2, 4
  * Enhanced Rental Car Damage Coverage 2
  * Identity Protection Services 5

- **SHARP ELECTRONICS** - All of the products on the Sharp Electronics/PT A Member Store site are being offered to PT A members at reduced pricing. Visit the PT A/Sharp Electronics member store at: [http://www.sharp-cart.com/eCommerce?passCode=PTA](http://www.sharp-cart.com/eCommerce?passCode=PTA)

- **SOUTHWEST VACATIONS** – 5% discount on vacation packages of two nights or longer to any Southwest destination. The promotion code PTATRAVEL should be used to receive discount when booking online, [www.southwestvacations.com](http://www.southwestvacations.com) or phoning (800) 423-5683


Other Special Savings & Discounts
- **PTA Credit Card**: PTA and OneCause are working together to turn your everyday purchases into much-needed contributions, at no extra cost to you. Using the PTA Visa’s card, provided by OneCause, you can contribute 1% of your total spending plus a $25 one-time bonus to your national and local PT A, which receives 65% of the contribution. You’ll also have the ability to customize this new card with a photo of your choice. To save money and contribute up to 20% extra when you shop at your favorite merchants — online, in your neighborhood, and in national stores and catalogs — simply start your shopping at www.OneCause.com!

- **PTA Digital**: This community print portal launched in April by Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and Hewlett Packard allows students, parents and faculty to easily and cost-effectively create and print customized merchandise for school and home. On the site, you will be able to create your own personalized photo and print products such as customized calendars, graduation invitations, photo books, and fundraising merchandise. Visit www.ptadigital.com!
I am PTA

By Dorothy Gardner, Editor

Just how do you define diversity? What is the first thing that pops into your head? This past March I was fortunate enough to represent Missouri PTA at the National Council of States, and this question of diversity along with inclusion was our primary topic of consideration. I know you might be saying to yourself, what is the National Council of States?

For many years I also had no idea such a council existed. Comprised of representatives from each of the State PTAs and National PTA at-large representatives, the focus of the group, as stated by the Bylaws, is to identify and prioritize trends to guide the board in setting strategic direction, review and recommend issues related to organizational policy, and identify and recommend action on strategic direction, emerging issues, polices and legislative trends.

Okay, so now that we are all up to speed, there I sat last March at a table comprised of individuals from across the country I had never met before, however we were all there to discuss a couple of common PTA issues, diversity and inclusion.

At my table there were individuals from California, New Mexico, Georgia, South Carolina, Virginia and Texas, a pretty diverse collection of states. Of the eight of us, two were men, two spoke fluent Spanish, one was African-American and two were Hispanic, a pretty diverse collection of individuals. In addition, each table was assigned a moderator to move the conversation along, make sure everyone participated, and make sure we worked as an inclusive group.

You might have just chuckled to yourself and thought “group of PTA people needing a moderator to help move along dialogue?” We all know most PTA individuals are perfectly comfortable sharing and sharing and sharing. But, we did have a task at hand, a primary focus, and needed to stay on track. So in your mind would you say my table was diverse? Did our obvious differences fall into your definition of diversity?

Notice I didn’t make reference to our economic backgrounds, religious preferences, or difference in ages just to name what could have been a few other distinguishing factors. The more we discussed diversity the more we realized each person’s perception of diversity is different. More so, each individual’s unique environment has a huge impact on how diversity is reflected.

Becoming a diverse PTA is not as easy as checking off a master list. Whose list would your PTA unit utilize? Well there is one group everyone could put on their check off list, if we had one, men. As President-Elect Saylor’s pointed out, 50% of all parents are men. With that being an undisputable fact, why are the number of men actively involved so very low? This is one area we collectively need to work on. But, aside from the gender issue, diversity among your own unit may look drastically different from another unit.

How often have you heard a PTA group referred to as a clique? Since this was a problem resounded from pretty much all the tables, I’m pretty sure it’s not a Missouri problem. Unfortunately, often when someone refers to a PTA as a clique they are really saying “I don’t belong or feel welcome in that group.” This is often not a product of something your PTA did but rather didn’t do, and it can be a difficult obstacle to overcome. The key is to first take a good look at the group of people, your membership, your PTA is there to represent and from there build a comfort zone.

Taking a hard look at your PTA requires both internal insight and some outside guidance. Who currently makes up your officers and board members? Are your children all in the same grade? Are they all from the same neighborhood? Attend the same church? How many are stay-at-home parents, versus full-time are part-time working parents?

Next compare your active PTA members to the make up of the school’s parents. Are parents from all the socio-economic groups included? Are all cultures predominating in your school represented? If you’re a PTSA are students involved? This is where some outside guidance might be helpful. Sit down with the school principal or counselor, let them know what you are trying to do and ask for their input. Your school’s administration and teachers have a pretty good handle on the different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds within the school. They are also a great resource when attempting to reach other groups especially if there is a language barrier or varying cultural differences.

No matter how hard you try, it is often exceedingly difficult to make personal contact with all the parents at school. However, personal contact, a personalized invitation to join, is the best way to make individuals feel welcome. Signs, flyers and email are all great ways to communicate, but none of them will ever replace the importance of personal contact. Networking directly with other parents not only reinforces your common goals, but in turn builds collaboration. People are always willing to support what they have helped to create. Sure, this is going to take some effort and might require some “stepping outside of your comfort zone,” but it is the single most important tool when building a well-rounded unit. The single act of genuinely welcoming individuals can go a long way in changing negative perceptions.

Once you’ve got them in the door you need to know what you’re selling. The primary focus of PTA has somehow gotten lost in the past several years. I once knew of a superintendent who referred to the PTA as “cookie baking people.” What he failed to understand was our very deep roots in advocacy. It is our focus on advocacy that sets us apart from other parent organizations. There really is something for everyone in our organization. Would I have joined PTA if it were just a group of moms baking cookies? No, I joined because I felt strongly about issues related to children. I joined because I saw a worthwhile cause.

Imagine a commercial where individuals from all walks of life, speaking a variety of languages proclaim, “I am PTA.” Diversity is a key factor as we move forward as a group. We have a great message. We must work to make everyone in our own schools feel enough apart of our organization to stand up and say, “I am PTA.”

Thank you for your generous donation to the Founder’s Day Fund

Richardson Elementary PTA
Ervin Middle PTSA
Meadow Lane Elementary PTA
Sycamore Hills Elementary PTA
Blue Spgs Early Childhood Preschool PTA
Peculiar Elementary PTA
Liberty Oaks Elementary PTA
Hazelwood Central High PTSA
Kentucky Trail Elementary PTA
Raytown PTA Council
Longview Farm Elementary PTA
INTRODUCING........

The State Membership Theme for the 2009-2010 year:

Join the PTA T.E.A.M
Together Everyone Achieves More

As the theme portrays, it takes true teamwork, by both the unit leadership and members to become a successful PTA unit. Each of the underscored words represents a part in the success of any team.

TOGETHER: The fact that someone (strong leader) or something (a desire to help our children) is needed to hold a team TOGETHER in order to work successfully.

EVERYONE: It takes EVERYONE, all flavors & colors of personalities to reach success, whether it’s in your leadership or your members.

ACHIEVES: Encouraging input and hard work by all ACHIEVES your goals.

MORE: The MORE you take note of the ideas & the information available, the MORE likely you are to create a successful team.

Please consider using this as your membership theme this year and challenge your school, parents, grandparents, friends, neighbors and community to...

Join the PTA T.E.A.M. – Together Everyone Achieves More!

Students Do Make a Difference

The students of Mrs. Johnson 4th and 5th grade PEAK class saw a problem at their school. A persistent problem affecting students, teachers and parents, idling cars sat in front of the school daily emitting tons of pollution. While only a small group of students, they decided they should and could make a difference. Research was the first stop and necessary before they could develop a plan for action.

After hearing about the Mid-America Regional Councils "Idle-Free Zones" campaign they invited a MARC representative to come speak to their class and give them detailed information on the campaign. It turned out by participating in the campaign MARC would provide the group with permanent Idle-Free Zone signs they could post outside the school building. Next they conducted research at the school and uncovered some disturbing facts.

Armed with their new knowledge they set up a meeting with the school principal and laid out their plan. Education for parents, teachers and students was necessary in order to bring the problem to everyone’s attention. Skits and PowerPoint presentations were developed and presented to the entire student body. They crafted an article for parents, “PEAK Service Learning Project,” which was included in the school newsletter. And for their big finale, the signs were posted for current and future students, parents and teachers as a reminder of the importance of safe air.

If you are interested in participating in MARC’s “Idle-Free Zones” campaign contact MARC at 816-474-4240 or visit their website www.cleanbuseshealthykids.org/idling.asp.

PEAK Service Learning Project

We, the 4th and 5th grade PEAK students, are working very hard on a service learning project called Idle No More, Our Lungs Won’t Get Sore. We have been collecting data on how soon cars arrive at Doniphan and idle as they wait for dismissal, and we have been researching the harmful effects of ground-level ozone. Did you know that some people arrive as early as 2:15 p.m. and idle until they pick up their children at 3:25p.m.?!?

Here are ways to help us and things you should know.

Things to know...

• The health effects from the car exhaust is more harmful to children because children breathe faster than adults and take in more polluted air.
• Ground-level ozone can cause irritation to the lungs, coughing, shortness of breath, scarring in the lungs and aggravation of chronic lung diseases such as asthma.
• If you’ll be stopped for more than one minute turn off your engine and you will save money on gas.
• Over 30 seconds of idling uses more fuel than restarting the engine.

Things to help us...

• Turn off your car if you get to school early to pick up your child.
• Consider not coming so early to pick up your child. (10-15 minutes early would be much better)
• Wear appropriate clothing to keep warm after you turn off your car.

Please participate in our school’s idle-free plan and feel good about turning off your engine when waiting to pickup your child from school.
PTA Hits the Hill

By Donna Petiford, VP Legislation and Advocacy

“We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee.”

-Marian Wright Edelman, the founder and President of the Children’s Defense Fund; the first African American woman admitted to the Mississippi state bar; lawyer, educator, activist, reformer, children’s advocate and administrator; keynote speaker-2009 National PTA Legislative Conference.

National PTA hosted the 2009 Legislative Conference March 11-12 in Washington, DC, in conjunction with state presidents’ training, National Council of States (NCS) session and a special training session for federal legislative chairs. The two-day conference featured workshops for advocates of all experience levels and culminated with PTA members visiting members of Congress on the Hill.

Missouri was well represented at the conference by five attendees, Wendy Jackson, Missouri PTA President-Elect; Donna Petiford, VP and Director-Department of Legislation and Advocacy; Stephanie Miller, State Legislative Chair; Dorothy Gardner, Contact Editor and NCS Representative and Susan Smith, Legislative Chair for Springfield Council of PTAs. These 5 attendees delivered the message of PTA’s public policy agenda to every Missouri member of Congress.


Our Hill visit talking points included the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) now known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). PTA looks forward to having the opportunity to encourage strengthening parent involvement and engagement in the pending reauthorization. PTA is asking for additional funding for Parent Information and Resource Centers that provide training, information and support for parent involvement from early childhood through adolescence.

PTA is also concerned with child nutrition and is asking Congress to require the USDA to update the national nutritional standards for school foods sold outside of the school meals program in order to keep pace with emerging scientific evidence about nutrition; to reduce the paperwork barriers that limit participation in the National School Lunch Program; and to increase funding for the Department of Defense Fresh Program (or is equivalent) to emphasize the purchase of local produce wherever possible.

An awards luncheon recognized Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD) and Rep. Judy Biggert (R-IL) with National PTA’s Congressional Voice For Children Award. Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) was honored with the National Congress of Parents and Teachers Founders Award. PTA Outstanding Advocacy efforts of California State PTA and Capistrano Unified Council PTA (CA) were also recognized. Kim Anderson of Dana Hills High School (CA) was honored with the first “Shirley IGO Advocate of the Year Award”.

It’s not too early to start planning for next year’s Legislative Conference scheduled for March 9-11, 2010. Advocacy is the heart of PTA’s mission, so make plans now to participate in this challenging, yet rewarding opportunity to be the voice of all children to our elected officials in our nation’s capital.

10 Ways to Increase Your PTA Membership

1. **START** your membership drive early. Set a realistic goal and don’t give up until you pass the goal!
2. **HOLD** a “Membership Kick-Off” event - make it festive and fun!
3. **SPONSOR** a PTA “open house” before school opens in the fall to visit classrooms, meet teachers and join PTA.
4. **MAKE** a list of some of the things members get with their PTA membership and use as a handout or poster.
5. **ASK** the Chamber of Commerce to encourage local businesses to display posters for joining PTA as school begins in the fall.
6. **HAVE** a “new parent coffee get-together” for parents of kindergarten and first graders to deal with first day trauma and an opportunity to join PTA.
7. **INCLUDE** information that goes home to parents at the beginning of school that includes last year’s PTA accomplishments along with this year’s goals and plans.
8. **USE** every talent available to promote membership. Ask a journalist to help with letters and articles, an artist for posters, sketches and logos, businesses for access to a copy machine, etc. Put a “Help Wanted” ad for talent in your newsletter.
9. **PRODUCE** a calendar for members with PTA and school activities clearly displayed.
10. **COUNCILS:** Ask the superintendent for a spot on the agenda of a principals’ meeting. Emphasize membership and strength in numbers district wide.
Programs - Thinking Outside the Box

By Barb Gilmore, VP Programs

Let’s face it. We’ve been thinking up programs for our units, schools, and community for a long time! In the hard times we’re facing, we need to take some of those programs, dust them off a bit, and “tweak” them into something fresh and new.

At the PTA Leadership Conference, a roomful of delegates did just that, and came up with some new twists on some tried and true programs. The first step to a wonderful program is to follow the eight steps to “Planning a Successful Program” which are listed as follows: 1. Form a program committee or team; 2. Identify priorities and the focus – survey your parents and teachers; 3. Set a goal – what do you hope to accomplish; 4. Determine the type of program (based on your survey); 5. Plan the program – date, time, place – type of event or activity; 6. Publicize the program – via flyers, web, email; 7. Deliver the program as you’ve planned it; 8. Evaluate the program and follow up. (More complete information can be found in the Member’s Only section of the mopta.org website).

Now that we’ve received the steps to plan our wonderful program, let’s take a peek at some new ideas on some familiar and not so familiar programs that our attendees came up with!

Start with a General PTA meeting. If you’re not able to do this every time, pick and choose important meetings that you can offer a childcare program. Contact Barnes & Noble to have Clifford come and play with the children. Have community members come in to read or do a storytelling with the children. Do a theme – a campfire story time. Supply graham crackers and marshmallows (with permission) and sit around a “campfire” and tell stories. Having a fun time can also mean an educational learning experience.

Do a Love Around the World program to build community within the school family. Set up stations representing different countries, and at each station have an activity representing that country – talking about food, dance, language, games, etc. Have the parents and children work together. Issue passports to each student and have them “stamped” as they complete a visit to a station. Contact groups in your community to be involved in the program. Ideas mentioned in the programs workshop were an Irish jig dance lessons, making gummy bear sushi, reading a well-known Dr. Seuss book in another language, and learning about the currency in another country and how it compares to U.S. currency.

Have a Family Literacy Night, but don’t just read books. Act them out! Sponsor a Reader’s Theatre. A Writer’s Corner could also encourage students to write their own stories and read those in conjunction with the event. See if a local well-known actor or guest writer would come in to help.

Set up a Healthy Lifestyle Challenge. Make your own Amazing Race. Have a movement instructor from a fitness center, or your own physical education teacher devise a “Movin’ and Groovin’ with Mom and Dad” time to show how families can exercise together and have fun. Include a nutritionist to talk about healthy snacking that won’t ruin dinner or your health. Include healthy recipes.

The above are tried and true programs, with a new twist. Dust off your programs, and see if you can think outside the box.

Mark Your Calendar

JULY
National Parks & Recreation Month
4 Independence Day
4 Missouri PTA Office Closed
20 Special Olympics Day
26 Parent’s Day

AUGUST
National Immunization Awareness Month
Children’s Eye Health & Safety Month
1 Dues to State Office

SEPTEMBER
National Preparedness Month
Baby Safety Month
1 Dues to State Office
1 Deadline for Advocacy Through Leadership Award
7 Labor Day
7 Missouri PTA Office Closed
13 Grandparents Day
15 Deadline for Certified PTA Leader Application
17 Constitution Day
22 Fall Begins

OCTOBER
Breast Cancer Awareness Month
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Reflections

Once again, Reflections Showcase had a fantastic turnout. Winners from all over came to receive recognition for their extraordinary efforts. Viewing the visual arts, photography, film and dance productions it was quite easy to see the students who entered were passionate about their work. Listening to the music and written compositions it was quite easy to hear the commitment put into their pieces. But, what really happens behind the scenes in creating a Reflections project? And was it worthwhile in their eyes?

What was your inspiration? Brandon Walls of Brittany Hill Middle School PTA while visiting Charleston South Carolina was able to see “Turtles On Parade”. Inspired, he decided to take a picture of a turtle cooking and it won at the state level. This was the 8th year Brandon has participated in the Reflections program and each year his work has made it to the state level. However, his turtle cooking picture this was the first time he placed at the state level.

Who encouraged you to enter? A student in Matthews PTA, Leah Martin’s mother told her about the program and asked her if she wanted to participate. Right away she knew what she wanted to do. It took her an entire day but her Snowy Day at Santa’s Workshop at the North Pole was well worth the effort. This was the first year she participated in the program and is looking forward to next year theme.

What category did you enter and why did you pick that particular area? Connor Henry of Chinn Elementary PTA decided one day to write a song and “send it across the universe”. In fact, the song creation happened before the Reflections program flyers came home. His mother, knowing Connor had created something special, encouraged him to enter the piece.

How did you feel when you found out you won? Mikayla DeJarnett of Cedar Creek Elementary PTA decided to take a picture of a tree. She has a great love for nature and felt the picture turned out cool. Her mom was the first to tell her the good news. The only word that explained how she felt was “excited!” The great news was also read over the announcements at school. This was the first time she had ever won. She will definitely be entering next year.

What would you tell other students who might be thinking about entering? Kate Smith of Eugene Field Elementary PTA admitted this was the first year she had entered a project. However, it wasn’t the first year her mom had encourage her to participate. Year after year, her mom would ask if she wanted to create a project and finally Kate got tired of all the asking and just decided to do it. It turned out to be a great experience for her, and she is glad she took part in the program. What would she tell other students who might be thinking about creating a project? If you want to learn something new this is the thing to do.

How much time did your project take you to complete? Michael Putthoff of Blue Springs High School PTSA spent a month creating his first place music piece. Initially he was inspired by the Discovery Channel’s documentary on Niagara Falls. For two years Michael has been working with computer generated music. Combining this format, the great falls inspiration and an incredible amount of time and effort, Michael created something truly special.

National PTA has announced their final Reflections winners list for the 2008-2009 “Wow!” year. Our winners from Missouri are:

Award of Excellence: Megan Lee, Dance Choreography, Middle/Junior division from Blue Springs

Award of Merit: Lia Fricke, Dance Choreography, Intermediate division from Park Hill schools

Award of Merit: Hannah Campbell, Dance Choreography, Senior division from Columbia

Award of Merit: Darcie Kinnison, Film Production, Intermediate division from Columbia

Award of Merit: Eleanor Scott, Photography, Primary division from Ozark

National PTA awarded 7 Outstanding Awards, 1 in each of the 6 art categories (tie this year in V/A); 72 Awards of Excellence; and 120 Awards of Merit.

Each winner will be invited to attend the 2010 Reflections Gallery in Washington DC.

Congratulations to all of our Missouri PTA National winners!! You represent the “Show-Me” State well!
What is it Worth?

By Dorothy Gardner, Editor

I have yet to meet someone who failed to believe PTA was a worthwhile cause. PTA does great things for our schools, great things for our kids. Sure PTA is a good cause. During Nora Hare’s all-conference workshop “Making the Case for PTA” when asked what PTA was worth the word “priceless” was shouted out. Nora’s response - if that is the case, PTA is priceless, why wasn’t the room we were in filled to the brim?

Just as the consensus PTA is a worthwhile cause, people generally want to make a difference in their communities. However, there exist a variety of rational for passing up the opportunity to join or become involved with PTA. I’m sure you’ve heard many of them before. “I’m just too busy.” “No one asked me to help.” “I don’t think I can make a difference.” “Someone else will do it.” However, there may be some underlying reasons parents and teachers alike will not openly share. There are many parents who feel intimidated by the school atmosphere. For these parents past experiences from their own childhood may be currently creating an obstacle, hindering their own ability to feel comfortable interacting with anything school related. Others may not feel they have the skills for the job, they feel unprepared. If you grew up like I did, PTA didn’t exist in the schools. Unless one’s parent was an active PTA member how would one really know the mission and purpose of PTA. And, sadly many people just fail to value volunteerism. If you aren’t paid for work you perform there must be no value, right?

What it really boils down to is the message. No cause drums up passionate support by only publicizing it’s self as worthwhile and priceless. People need more. Somewhere in the message a personal connection must jump out. Value needs to be added to the message. People need to know who we are and what they will get if they become a member.

Let’s look first at the “T” in PTA. Sadly, today many schools look at the PTA and see an ATM machine. Supplemental school funding was not the issue on the minds our founders. From our inception in 1897 our single primary focus has been advocacy. And simply put, advocacy, not PTA checkbooks, will bring funds into school districts. Advocacy in local communities and beyond pushing for an increased support of education is a unique value only found within the PTA organization. Within our structure there are the resources to train and provide a legislative platform. In addition, a PTA unit within the school provides a valuable communication link between the school, parents, community and other PTAs. This network is quite an asset. Programs to enhance and support the school are in place and ready to be utilized. Reflections, Three for Me, and Take Your Child To School Day are just a few examples of strong successful programs. Our organization has fiscal accountability structures in place. Believe me, this in its self provides great piece of mind for administrators. And what could be better than trained volunteers! PTA leaders are not just willing, but ready to lead.

So now it’s back-to-school and you have your PTA table set up and ready to go. What message will you give the parents? What are they looking for? Simply put parents need support. How many times have you heard parenting is the hardest job you’ll ever do. Admit it, there are days you just want to throw up your hands and shout ‘I quit’. Sure the pluses do outweigh the negatives, but we all can use, need, support. PTA bridges the gap between home and school. Want to understand how the school system works? Join PTA. Want to learn how to communicate with teachers? Join PTA. Want to network with other parents who are going through the same things you are? Join PTA. The resources available for parents are abundant. Advocacy plays a role here as well. Children do not vote. They have no voice within our political structure. We use our voices to advocate on their behalf whether it is a school, local community, state or national issue.

With that in mind, what about the “S”. Some do it well, run a PTSA in their schools, while others struggle to find a meaningful way to incorporate students. Just as parents are looking for support, students are looking for somewhere to belong. They are looking for an atmosphere where they can develop leadership qualities. True well functioning PTSA’s provide students with the platform to step into leadership roles and develop new skills. How will our children learn to make their voices heard? Advocacy is not a trait inherited through DNA. It is learned. And what better way to learn then within an organization of dedicated advocates.

Mary Oyler refers to the message as your ‘elevator speech’. You will never stumble when faced with the question ‘why do you do PTA’ if you know what value PTA brings. You already feel the passion. You have seen the value PTA can and does bring. Now is the time to put that worth into a message others can relate to and understand.
“Cornering the Market”

ON BETTER NUTRITION AND FITNESS

By Peggy Preston, Missouri PTA Health/Wellness and Safety Chair

With a new school year fast approaching, it’s not too early to make plans to have the most healthy and nutritious year ever. By looking at some “best practice” ideas, you can start your preparation and planning now.

The Nixa Schools in southwest Missouri have taken nutrition and fitness very seriously. To organize their efforts, the SHAC (School Health Advisory Committee) was formed four years ago. Elementary principal Dr. Kevin Kopp chairs the committee that meets monthly. This is a very active committee that helps with the community’s annual Safety Palooza, hosts an annual 5k fun run, and holds a special “Nutrition Night” (a chef demonstrates a healthy meal for children and families and participants visit a variety of stations that encourage nutrition – how to pack healthy snacks, testimonials, etc.) that is also held annually. All of these events are open to all school attendees, parents, and community.

Chairman Kopp believes it is very important to stress health and fitness as a lifestyle. According to Kopp, the schools are “taking small steps in a positive direction to promote a lifestyle of healthy habits.” At Century Elementary – one of the district’s five K-4 buildings – kids, parents, and families enjoyed the “Mountain Climbers’ Mile” in early September. Held on a Saturday morning, the event was free to all. A small charge was assessed to those who wanted a t-shirt and or raffle tickets for a Wii Fit system. Families had a great time, an opportunity to visit with friends and teachers, and shared a fun and active event.

Throughout the school year selected fourth grade students participated in the NAC (Nutrition Advisory Council); their input about cafeteria choices was solicited. Century students learned the “Fruits and Vegetables” song and sang it throughout the year. Century’s students participated in various fitness challenges including the “Shape Up Our Students” program.

A giant map of the U.S. was painted on a highly visible wall in the building. This was used to track the progress of the students’ activity during designated times of the school year. Non-food incentives are given to the children in the grade level with the most participation. During the last school year Century even won $500 from the state because of this program.

In addition, Century’s P.E. instructor Andrew Boyce tests children for the Presidential Challenge as part of his curriculum. Those who earn this honor are recognized at a special assembly at the end of Field Day each year. Once a week, Kopp starts the students’ day with “Three Minutes of Movement” in the gym before dismissal to classes; typically students and/or faculty co-lead these activities.

During Nutrition Week in late January, all staff was encouraged to include one fitness or health activity each day in class. Students in computer classes were seen doing sit-ups, push-ups, and jumping jacks as they worked with the outstanding www.mightygiants.com website. Faculty meetings have included a race by teachers throughout the building, a Pilates session, and a “Dance Dance Revolution” challenge. The music teacher Jan Mason led Jumba classes after school several days a week.

The SHAC partners with OPAA (Nixa’s food service contractor) to provide several outstanding activities including a monthly Fear Factor Food Day. Students are given a small amount of a fruit or vegetable that they might not have tried before – kiwi, sugar snap peas, beets, etc. Those who consume the item sign a large poster in the lunchroom and have the opportunity to participate in the Fear Factor Chant. The grade level with the highest percentage of participation is recognized.

Another activity was “Eat the Rainbow”. The students really loved this activity where a gourmet chef from the College of the Ozarks creates a fun fruit dessert for them. He visits with them and encourages them to try new fruits. The students from the NAC serve as the wait staff during this event, wearing chef aprons and hats. According to OPAA director Cindy Kubowicz, the goal of these activities was to “nourish their minds as well as their bodies. Even if they don’t try the Fear Factor challenge, they see it, maybe touch it, and see their peers eating it – which means maybe next time they might try it! With Eat a Rainbow, they are exposed to foods that they may not have the opportunity to taste. Mango sorbet would be a great example of that!”

“Settings for all Seasons”

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Fleetridge’s Brilliant Stars Read-a-Thon

By Susan Marple, Elementary PTA President

Frustrated by years of fundraising with cookie dough and catalog sales, Christmas shops and coupon books, the PTA at Fleetridge Elementary, located in the Raytown School District, began discussing alternative solutions to raising its hefty $20,000 budget in the summer of 2007. While the concept of raising money without “selling stuff” had a lot of support among parents and teachers, no ideas had surfaced that seemed viable as the 2007-2008 school year began and another fundraising season had settled upon Fleetridge.

That fall, while at the Missouri PTA Convention, members of the PTA heard a presentation by Franklin Elementary PTA. Franklin Elementary PTA in Liberty, had developed a fundraiser that didn’t rely on selling anything except good, old-fashioned, student achievement. After listening to the developers of the program, Cheryl McCann and Kelley Wrenn Pozel, officers Susan Marple, Karen DeLaMare and Nina Karnoili sat with tears in their eyes as they dreamed of the success a similar program could have at Fleetridge for the 2008-2009 school year.

Christina Foster, Fundraising Chairperson, recruited the help of another enthusiastic PTA Board Member, Anita Little, Corresponding Secretary, and the two of them spent the summer months preparing for the launch of what became known as the Brilliant Stars Read-A-Thon.

With the help of Chris Miller, the school’s mascot, a star, was pump up, modernized, and before everyone’s eyes, the “Star Reader” was born. Having a recognizable identity such as the “Star Reader” who quickly became the spokesperson for the campaign, made it easy for parents to identify materials sent home in backpacks that updated families on individual, classroom and grade level competitions, upcoming Read-Together events, reading journal submission dates and fundraising money submission deadlines.

Solicitation letters for donations were sent to businesses and that little extra effort got Fleetridge a check from one local business for $200! In addition, several parents and community leaders submitted cash donations to help the PTA fund the project.

Community businesses and churches pitched in by offering their facilities for three scheduled Read-Together events where families were invited to join friends and family and support their school by reading together. At each Read-Together event, the PTA offered drinks and snacks, for a nominal charge. Two local children’s book authors helped out by reading their books to the audience, selling copies of their books at the Read-Together and donating profits to the PTA. Most importantly, each Read-Together offered valuable minutes of quiet time devoted to reading that students could log toward their personal reading goal for the month.

As it happens in a lot of great schools, a competition blossomed among students, teachers, classrooms, parents and grade levels for distinction as the outstanding individual, class or grade-level “Star” with the most minutes read or pledges collected. And as the final days approached, students and families alike were anxiously anticipating receiving a report from Christina that had the total number of minutes read by each student. When the total minutes were finally calculated, students had read a staggering 1,000,000 minutes!

From the hard work of its students, pledges totaled over $12,000. Since the PTA had only spent about $1,000 on prizes and materials, it had managed keep costs at less than 10% of the money raised, and it got to keep 100% of its profit!

Christina had set up a reward system that was focused on how much reading the students did. Since children could count their minutes read at school and home, every child who participated in the Read-A-Thon earned a new Scholastic book, compliments of the PTA. Prizes were then awarded for the highest reader in each class, grade level, and the top reader in the school. Christina really wanted students to focus on reading as a means to help out their school community and improve their skills, and get away from the materialism of what each child would get for reading. Top readers (based solely on minutes read) were recognized a week after the results were in at a PTA Unit Meeting where they received Barnes & Noble gift cards. Teachers who had the highest reading minutes in each grade level received a bookmark from the PTA and a certificate to display proudly in their classroom.

At the kickoff assembly, Susan Marple, PTA President, incentivized the kids’ fundraising efforts by offering to prepare and serve lunch to any student who received more than $200 in pledges. The formal lunch would include their favorite foods, beverages and a special guest, Mike Otto, the school’s principal. Ten students met that challenge, and on January 23rd, those students were invited to dine in the school library at tables with “real” tablecloths, fancy dishes, flatware and special glasses. Everyone had a blast!

The PTA received kudos on the success of its fundraising method from families, Raytown School District administrators, School Board Members and community leaders. If you would like to know more about the Brilliant Star Read-A-Thon, please contact email fleetridgepta@raytownschools.org.
“If you fail to plan...you plan to fail.”
Plan NOW to attend the Missouri PTA convention in October 2009!

Missouri PTA Convention • October 23-25, 2009
University Plaza Hotel & Convention Center
Springfield, Missouri

As you start setting your goals and budgets for the 2009-2010 school year, remember that convention attendance is highly beneficial to your unit because of the countless PTA resources made available in one location. Now more than ever, units are in need of the experience, leadership and support that Missouri PTA has to offer.

2009 Convention Highlights
Keynote Speaker Janette Fennell, Founder and President, KIDS AND CARS.
Ms. Fennell has been seen on Oprah, featured in Ladies Home Journal as well as several other media outlets advocating safety for children and non-traffic related injuries.

Workshops will cover a wide spectrum of topics from student achievement, membership, leadership, Internet safety, parent involvement and more.

Exhibitors and vendors will be present and eager to share their innovations and creative ideas with your unit.
TODAY, plan to attend Missouri PTA’s 2009 convention in Springfield.
TOMORROW, watch for your “Call to Convention” packet. (late July)
TOGETHER, we will continue to make a difference for all Missouri’s children.