Over the past many years, Mary has served Missouri PTA in many ways, but most recently she has been state president, our leader. Being leader brings with it the opportunity to meet many new faces and experience a world of unique opportunities. Being leader means one will be fortunate enough to be on the receiving end of many great accolades but it also means dealing with various difficult issues. Mostly, being our leader requires a great deal of personal sacrifice. We are all deeply touched and grateful for the sacrifices Mary has made to serve as our state president from 2007-2009. Thank you Mary for all your work in making sure every child’s voice was heard Today.
President’s Message

By Wendy Jackson, Missouri PTA President

“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much” this quote by Helen Keller is truly inspiring. Even through adversity she was able to see that if you find people with like-minded goals anything is possible. I never started out to become the Missouri PTA state president, which is just where my journey has taken me.

Although, I could not have been on this journey without my wonderful husband Doug, whose undying support is certainly appreciated. I am proud to be the mother of two great sons, Doug 24 and Jordan 10. I am also a very proud grandmother to Hunter 4. I have a beautiful daughter-in-law Cheri who is now a daughter to me. As well, I am an aunt to Ashley 23, a niece that I had the pleasure of helping to raise. She was recently married as well and has a beautiful daughter Alyssa, age 2, and husband Ryan. My family is where I get my inspiration. I have always felt that being involved was not a choice, but a necessity. It is vital to the success of children everywhere. In recent studies it was the number one factor in determining whether a student would be successful in their school career. It was more important than socioeconomics or the level of the parent’s education. What that says to me is that every child has the potential to be successful. Our mission and purpose of PTA is to educate parents to realize the importance of their role and engage them.

Oprah Winfrey once said, “I’ve come to believe that each of us has a personal calling that’s as unique as a fingerprint and that the best way to succeed is to discover what you love and then find a way to offer it to others in the form of service, working hard and also allowing the energy of the universe to lead you.” This quote holds true for me. I found that helping in my children’s school was something that I love, whether it’s classroom party mom, book fair chair, membership chair, teacher appreciation chair, treasurer, or legislative chair it was an opportunity. At the same time I was able to meet the staff of their schools, other parents, and my children’s friends. In doing so I have developed leadership skills, made contacts and met some of the greatest people that I have the pleasure to call my friends. I have been able to experience some opportunities that would not have been possible without my involvement, not only the schools, but PTA as well.

I challenge each of you to find people to bring along on your journey. To offer your leadership to them, mentor and encourage them. As simple as just asking is sometimes all it takes. A friendly smile, a warm hello, will go a long way in communicating to others that you want them to be a part of your PTA team.

PTA is about teamwork, working together and helping children and families. We are in some tough economic times and PTA can help. It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. Communities need to come together to support each other. This is a very difficult time for schools and families. Together we can overcome this adversity and be stronger for it. What might PTA do to help? Schools now more than ever can use volunteers to help ease some of the strains of budget cuts. Committing to the Three For Me program and showing parents just how easy it is to volunteer for at least 3 hours in their child’s school throughout the year. Schools are not the only ones straining, families are straining as well. Offer up ideas that are little or no cost, get back to the basics. Invite a chef to help teach parents and students how to prepare some quick and affordable meals or snacks. Offer a game night or movie night. The possibilities are endless and limited only by your imaginations. Dare to see where your journey takes you.

In the words of a great friend, “If not me, then who?” ask yourself this as you continue on your journey in PTA. The greatest gift all of us have to give is ourselves. Working “Together” hand in hand anything is possible. It is my pleasure to serve as the current Missouri PTA state president. “Together” we will do so much.

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

www.mopta.org

President’s Message
If you were unable to join me at the national convention in Fort Lauderdale this past June, let me say once again how incredibly grateful I am that you have entrusted me to be the first ever male National President of PTA. But I owe you even more thanks for your decision to be involved in this association at this time in our history.

We have reached a defining moment, and members committed to our mission have work to do. When faced with the question of whether you, personally, were committed to helping PTA reach out to all communities, you have stood up and said, “Yes!” When given a choice between supporting your child and supporting all children—even knowing the challenges involved—the decision was clear. Because it’s not really one or the other: by working on behalf of America’s students, you truly are helping your student, your family, and your school.

These can’t just be words, however. We are asking you to follow through in action as well. There is no question that PTA must work harder on its growth and its diversity. The only question is: what will you do to help PTA expand into the communities where it is most needed? We need more men to be involved in PTA, and in children’s lives. Will you help PTA raise its male membership from 10% to 20% over the next two years? We need better representation in PTA from the very youth we have chosen to serve. Will you help PTAs get more students to join us? We need to improve our service to the families who have members serving in our military. Will you help the families in your community when their loved one gets deployed overseas?

Now is the time for serious people to get engaged. At a time when we need to ask everyone in our schools and communities—especially those who have never been asked before—to become part of the PTA family, we need serious people. Serious people who will embrace new ideas, new methods, and a new look. Serious people who will make PTA the family experience it needs to be: a place where all families are welcome. Please join me as we make our PTA, America’s PTA.

Everyone starts somewhere in PTA. Nineteen years ago Wendy Jackson was drawn to PTA in much the same way most of us are, when her first child started Kindergarten. Being a young mother, she was wise enough to realize she didn’t know all the answers and sought out the PTA in an effort to surround herself with parenting resources. Her job then was counting Campbell soup labels. Since that time Wendy has held numerous positions, including the State Board positions of Membership Emphasis chair, Ozark region regional director, Vice President of Membership services, PAFLE chairman, Vice President of Field Service and most recently President Elect. However, all roads still lead back to the local unit where her youngest son, a 4th grader, attends school. Feeling it is vitally important to stay connected at the local level she serves as parliamentarian for the unit. Being involved at her son’s school is a top priority. Wendy makes sure to clear her schedule at least once a week to volunteer in the school and regularly shares a school lunch with her son and his friends. So maybe she is no longer counting out Campbell soup labels, but she is still a vital part of the PTA volunteer force whether it be Family fun night, teacher appreciation week or just dropping off a dish.

Life is a busy place for Wendy. Together with her husband of 24 years, she owns and operates a small custom cabinet business in the Ozark area. So taking on a volunteer leadership role requires a combination of personal drive and sacrifice. Wendy is driven by her belief that everyone was put on this earth to do something and her calling has been PTA. All her time and effort over the past years has been rewarded by relationships that have made her stronger as an individual.

Looking forward to the future of PTA Wendy sees an open book. The ways in which we can continue to positively impact children’s lives are endless. It is up to us to move our organization forward in order to continue to grow. We need to tap into new technologies and embrace new ways of doing things. Most importantly, she believes as long as we lead by example, demonstrating to our children the importance of community service will instill that trait within them. Doing that alone, will open up endless possibilities for the future.
Espy PTA Steps Up

Budget cuts due to lack of state funding has unfortunately been a hot topic across our state. Espy Elementary, in the Nixa School District, was faced with the possibility of losing state funding for the Career Ladder program, a program that benefits both teachers and students. Unwilling to let this program fall by the wayside, Espy Elementary teachers and the Espy PTA put their heads together and found a solution. During PTA general meetings teachers would work individually with students while parents attend presentations of the highly successful parenting program Love and Logic. This collaborative effort is truly a win-win solution for all involved.

Our Courts a Project of iCivics

The Our Courts civics education project, founded by retired Associate United States Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, was created to reinvigorate civics learning inside and outside the classroom. The Our Courts website, www.ourcourts.org, provides free web-based civics resources designed for middle school students, including lesson plans and online games. Unfortunately, civics is being pushed out of the classroom. Where it is taught, civics is often described as one of the students’ least favorite subjects. Our Courts engages students through problems that they want to solve because the content is relevant and the delivery is intriguing. Materials include units on the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, the three branches of government, and the judiciary. The website also includes a language arts unit, which uses legal cases to teach reading and writing requirements. All the resources are searchable by Missouri’s social studies and language arts standards, for easy integration into existing curricula.

Reflections “Beauty Is…”

Hopefully your Reflections program is underway in your school. If not there is still time to get one up and running. A complete guide to the Reflections program was included in the president’s summer packet mailing and can also be found online under ‘Parent Resources’ and then ‘Reflections/Awards’. When sending in your entries be mindful of a few important details because we do not want anyone to be disqualified.

• Your unit must be a unit in good standing – not sure, check with your regional director or the state office. If you find you are not currently in good standing we are more than willing to help you get those good standing requirements up-to-date.

• All entries must arrive in the state office by 4:30pm on January 15th, 2010. Judging begins that evening so merely being postmarked by January 15th will not suffice, entries must be physically present.

• Each entry must have a signed student entry form attached. “A special note – this form was accidentally omitted from the printed Reflections toolkit mailed during the summer. It is currently available at the very end of the online version or can be requested from the state office.

• Be sure to include Form A and B, on separate pieces of paper, with your entries. If you are shipping more than one package include a Form A in each package – simply mark Form A 1 of 2 etc. This will assist in avoiding any possible confusion or disqualification.

• Send your entries to: Missouri PTA, 2101 Burlington St., Columbia, MO. 65202-1997

Donations

Thank you for your generous donations. With your continued support we can do great things.

Building Fund
Longview Farm Elementary PTA
Ott Elementary PTA
Laurel Hills Elementary PTA
Bingham Middle School PTSA

Scholarship Fund
Longview Farm Elementary PTA
Ott Elementary PTA
Red Bridge Elementary PTA
Laurel Hills Elementary PTA
Bingham Middle School PTSA

Founders Gift
Longview Farm Elementary PTA
Laurel Hills Elementary PTA
Bingham Middle School PTSA

New PTA Units!

We’d like to extend a warm welcome to our newest PTA units.

Little Blue PTA
David Harrison Elementary PTA

Don’t Forget - To remain a unit in good standing a copy of your unit’s annual financial report, audit (annual financial review) and IRS tax form 990 is due to the state office by December 1st.
PTA Membership. . .IS AS EASY AS A-B-C
Act now & Always Ask
Be enthusiastic
Challenge members
Don’t overlook businesses
Enlist faculty and staff
Fathers are important too
Goals are a good start
Heed the purposes of PTA
Interest new people
Join your council meetings
Keep accurate records
Learn by doing
Membership is year-round
Notice new families

NPTA Member Benefits
• BARNES & NOBLE.com – PTA members will save 5% from this discounted online bookstore on books, music, DVD’s and more.
• MEDICALERT - PTA members receive a 20% discount for the MedicAlert Kid Smart® program, providing 24-hour child ID and caregiver notification services. In an emergency, responders can access your child’s medical history and records with one easy phone call.
• METLIFE - MetLife Auto & Home has special group discounts now available to PTA members.
• SHARP ELECTRONICS - All of the products on the Sharp Electronics/PTA Member Store site are being offered to PTA members at reduced pricing.
• SOUTHWEST VACATIONS – 5% discount on vacation packages of two nights or longer to any Southwest destination.
• T-MOBILE – 14% discount off your monthly service charges for new and existing T-Mobile subscribers, plus additional savings for new subscribers.

Check out the Missouri PTA, www.mopta.org or National PTA, 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 PTA members.

Important 990EZ Update
Originally for this year the IRS stated they were doing away with the schedule A and added a section for it on the 990EZ. However, instead they had added a new Schedule A that needs to be filled out with the 990EZ. The new Schedule A is called Public Charity Status and Public Support. You will need to check box 9 on the front and then complete part III. In part III they will ask for this year’s totals and the last 4 years. Previously the old Schedule A only asked for the last 4 year’s and not this year's.
How we communicate with our members, the way we disseminate information, can make or break any organization. Knowledge is power. By creating an informed membership we empower them with regard to issues relating to children. In the last several years the sources of readily available information with regard to PTA has multiplied many times over. But still if a member doesn’t know the information exists or how to gain access all our efforts are moot.

National PTA relies largely on state PTAs to pass along and keep individual units informed. In similar fashion the state then shares information with the units with an expectation the unit leaders will disseminate the information to the individual members. In an effort to encourage units to do just that, MO PTA developed both a newsletter and website award. Since their inception the applications each year have grown and this year was no different. In fact, the number of entries for both awards more than doubled from the previous year. Judged by the communication department, the task of narrowing down both groups to just one winner each proved to be a difficult endeavor.

First up, the newsletter award. And the winner is …. Laura Ingalls Wilder PTA!!! So what where the deciding factors that hoisted Laura Ingalls Wilder PTAs newsletter to the top of the heap? People are drawn to things that spark their visual interest. By nature we are much more apt to pick up and browse through something that at first glance catches our eye. Laura Ingalls Wilder PTAs newsletter layout did just that. The general design and use of both graphics and fonts not only attracted our attention but visually engaged the reader. When employing varying graphics and fonts sometimes the layout can seem cluttered or ‘too busy’. Here the PTA managed to find just the right balance and stuck with it. Members quickly became accustom to the design and could easily pick it out in a pile of school related paperwork.

However, looking nice or having a pretty cover only draws in the reader. If substance does not exist the publication will be quickly dismissed. In this regard the PTA included coverage of school and local events including dates, times and contact information. But they didn’t stop there. Articles pulled from National and MO PTA resources were highlighted in each issue. Members were kept abreast of happenings at their school, in their community and on the state and national stage.

Next up, the website award. And the winner is .... Springfield Council PTA!!! Many people often confuse websites with an online newsletter and therefore misunderstand how people utilize the web. Websites are portholes of information. Users pull up a particular website looking for specific information and the information better be easy to find. The Springfield Council PTAs website has a very professional appearance, a format many online users have come to expect in a website. In this type of format the use of varying fonts and graphics must be used wisely. The wrong color or too many fonts and graphics and the site can be hard on the users eyes or even distract from the information. Here the Springfield Council PTA managed to develop a page that drew your eyes quickly to different portholes of information available.

In just a click or two we could find out everything we ever wanted to know with regard to the PTA. Did we need to know what happened during the last meeting or what was going on in the district – ‘click’ there it was. Were we curious what programs or events the PTA had to offer – ‘click’ and we found updated information including calendar and contact information. Might we be wondering how we could get more involved - ‘click’ and we could find out where volunteers were needed. What if we were looking for PTA or parenting information beyond the Springfield Council PTA – ‘click’ and we were presented with a list of links to take us there.

Congratulations to both Laura Ingalls Wilder PTA and Springfield Council PTA on their exceptional work. Do you think your newsletter or website has what it takes to knock our socks off? Then be sure to enter. Information on entering can be found on the MO PTA website and also in your Toolkit.
How to Plan and Hold a Legislative Forum

One of the most productive ways to begin building relationships between legislators and your membership is to host a legislative forum. Legislators appreciate the opportunity to meet with constituents and your membership will see advocacy in action when you bring legislators to your community. Follow these step-by-step guidelines to host a successful legislative forum. Contact the Missouri PTA Office if you need any assistance getting started. (1-800-328-7330 Toll Free; 573-445-4161 Phone; office@mopta.org)

Choose Dates: The first date should be shortly before the legislative session begins. Then, check with your legislators for their choice in frequency of forums during the legislative session – monthly, every other month, or as desired. Follow up with a final forum just before or just after the legislative session ends to recap the accomplishments of the session and discuss needs for the following year. Thursdays or Fridays are usually a legislators best time, especially when the legislators are in session.

Time: The recommended time frame is 60-90 minutes in the late afternoon or early evening.

Place: A centrally located place such as a high school or central office is usually the best place to host a legislative forum.

Publicity:
- The Public Relations Chair should contact the local paper, TV and other media outlets with a news release stating the time, place, date, and who will be in attendance.
- Send notices home with students and use unit and district newsletters.
- Invite school board members and administrators.
- Invite other educational groups in the area to help co-sponsor the forum.

Contacts: Write letters to your legislators at least THREE WEEKS in advance. Give them the date, time and place of the forum. Give some ground rules to the legislators (i.e.: each will be given five minutes to speak and then have a question and answer period.) If possible, include the topics/questions to be covered in the invitation.

Have a strong moderator! Do not allow abuse of your legislators. We must agree to disagree on issues agreeably. Sometimes people with opposing views have the same goals in mind, just different ideas on how to reach those goals. Missouri PTA will provide a moderator with sufficient notice of the event.

Arrangements: If possible, your hospitality committee should have refreshments available when people arrive and after the conclusion of the forum. Make LARGE name signs, tables with microphones, water and glasses. Consider preparing a program. Contact your state legislative chair or committee members to receive a list of approved questions that pertain to Missouri PTA priorities.

SEND THANK YOU NOTES TO ALL LEGISLATORS AND PARTICIPANTS!!!

Missouri General Assembly Passes Food Allergy Bill

By Donna Petiford, Missouri PTA, VP Legislation & Advocacy

Delegates to last year’s 2008 Missouri PTA Convention passed a resolution addressing the need to raise awareness of the increasing instances of food allergies among children in Missouri schools. We are pleased that the Missouri General Assembly addressed this topic early in the last legislative session and Gov. Jay Nixon has signed a bill into law. HB 922 (Allergy Prevention and Response in Schools) requires each school district to adopt a policy on allergy prevention and response by July 1, 2011, with priority given to addressing potentially deadly food-borne allergies. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education must develop a model policy by July 1, 2010, that does not conflict with existing school safety and environmental policies. “The policy must include elements distinguishing between building-wide, classroom, and individual approaches to allergy prevention and management; providing an age-appropriate response to building-level and classroom-level allergy education and prevention; describing the role of certificated and non-certificated staff, parents, and other students in preventing and mitigating allergies; and addressing confidentiality issues relating to sharing student medical information” according to the Missouri House of Representatives’ website.

Other bills of interest addressed by the 95th General Assembly are available on the Missouri PTA website under Legislation, Capital Chatter tab.
Two Missouri PTA Units Awarded for Parent Involvement!

By Deann Jepson, Parent Education & Involvement Chair

Congratulations to the Meadowbrook PTA and the Springfield Special Education Parent Teacher Association (SEPTA) for recently being awarded a Parent Education and Involvement Grant at the Missouri PTA state convention! Beginning in 1993, the Parent Education & Involvement Grant was established to help with programming costs incurred by local and council units throughout the state of Missouri. This grant is awarded to units that effectively organize, plan and hold a program/project, specific workshop, or event that educates and/or celebrates parent involvement in their school. After careful consideration from the review committee, these two awardees’ programs were selected to receive funding to help support their continued efforts toward educating and involving parents in their communities.

This year the Meadowbrook Elementary PTA (Kansas City) will be utilizing their grant funding to support Parent Workshops. These free workshops feature various topics of interest such as Strategies for Successful Parenting, Internet Safety, and Saving for College. Movie Night is also offered for school age children of workshop attendees, thus providing entertainment and a safe environment while parents attend the workshops. This is an excellent example of how the PTA is providing parent education and involvement within their school.

Springfield SEPTA (Springfield, MO), in conjunction with the Delaware PTA, will also provide at no cost to attendees a Resource Fair specifically designed to build connections between individuals and organizations working with special needs children and their families in Springfield and the surrounding areas. Over 30 exhibits will provide information about their specific services to participants. This collaborative event between Springfield SEPTA, Delaware PTA, Springfield Council PTA, and the District Administration helps connect parents to many resources and community services in their area. It is an opportunity to learn about the issues confronted by special needs families and what resources are available for them. In addition, this is also another great way of connecting the entire community while providing needed educational materials and services to parents.

For more information about the Parent Education and Involvement Grant and how to apply, visit the MO State PTA’s Web site at www.mopta.org.

Student Safety Award Winner

By Peggy Preston, Missouri PTA Health/Welfare and Safety chair

For the past two school years, Ben Daniels has packed a “safe” lunch every day so that he can eat lunch with his friend Jaxon just outside the cafeteria at Century Elementary in Nixa. He did this without his parents urging because of his care and concern for his buddy who had severe food allergies. Other students volunteer to eat lunch with Jaxon and they took turns doing so but Ben still packs his “safe” lunch just in case. In the event that another classmate is absent or forgets, Ben can eat with Jaxon; he just doesn’t want him to eat alone. Ben was recognized at the Missouri PTA state convention as this year’s Student Safety Award winner. What a great friend he is. Congratulations!

Health and Safety Education Grant Winner

By Peggy Preston, Missouri Health/Safety and Wellness chair

Liberty Oaks Elementary PTA in Kansas City is this year’s winner of the Health and Safety Education grant with the “Girls Gettin’ Fit” program. The club was formed to provide girls at the school with an opportunity to learn about their fitness and participate in a variety of fitness activities, including fitness stations, jogging/walking, aerobics, plyometric stations, and Pilates. The rationale behind making the club an exclusive “girls only” atmosphere is so they will feel less intimidated and more likely to actively join in the activities. The club meets once a week for the entire school year and is led by the school’s health teacher. The plan is to involve community members by inviting local fitness instructors to come teach a class and nutrition specialists to teach participants how to prepare healthy snacks. Another goal is for the girls to train for and participate in a 5K race. The presentation of the monetary award to Liberty Oaks Elementary PTA was made at the Missouri PTA state convention. Congratulations!
When you tell your children that they can do anything they want to do as long as they set their minds to it, that the sky’s the limit, or reach for the stars and shoot for the moon, they usually look at you funny and say “yeah, sure” or “whatever”.

I know someone who goes to work everyday, looks towards the sky and wonders what is the “best way to resolve any structural anomalies with the Space Shuttle Orbiter”. Kara Schmitt is a 25-year-old young lady who just happens to be one of my 9 nieces.

Kara is employed with United Space Alliance (NASA) at Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida. Kara graduated from Eau Gallie High School, Fl in 2002, attended Florida Institute of Technology (FIT) in 2006 receiving a Bachelor of Science in Physics, she also has received her Master degree in Space Systems from FIT in August 2009. Kara plans “to finish up with at least a PhD in Physics with a fusion based dissertation, but has not chosen a school” as of August 28, 2009. Knowing Kara I am pretty sure it won’t be long before she finds an excellent school to attend.

Kara has a very busy schedule, with her work and all of her hobbies- riding her horse pilgrim, riding/racing her motorcycle, competing in competitive gun competitions, and every once in a while tandem ski diving. However, I spoke with Kara via phone and e-mail and she was very happy to answer the following question:

**What is your official title and what do you do?**

“My official title is “Orbiter Structures Engineer”. What I do on a day-to-day basis is to resolve any structural anomalies with the Space Shuttle Orbiter. We’re responsible for hardware including the structural framework, the wings, windows and wing leading edge panels, which are a complex version of carbon fiber that we call Reinforced Carbon Carbon, or RCC’s. We get to work on the floor with technicians to repair any issues and work closely with people from all over the world to resolve problems”.

**How old were you when you realized that you wanted to go into the Physics field?**

“High School, before 11th grade I had no idea what I wanted to be when I grew up. Frankly I still don’t. The field of physics is so broad with so many choices that it’s difficult to pick just one thing because they all seem so neat”.

**Why should girls get involved or take more interest in this (science) field?**

“There are so many different things you can do with science. Science is the study of how the world around you works, so if you have a particular interest in Roller coasters, rockets, space, the medical industry, or pretty much anything else, you can bet there is some science behind it. It’s pretty exciting to know that your likely doing something that no one has ever done before”.

**So how does her love for space relate to the classroom?**

With microphone in place, a miniature booster rocket and a replica of a space shuttle on the table Kara sits across the room in front of a large video monitor. You see images of children. In fact, these are third graders in Surprise, Arizona one of them being Kara’s 2nd Cousin. Imagine you are in the third grade. The presentation begins. “Good morning. My name is Kara Schmitt and this is a colleague of mine. We work at Kennedy Space Center in Florida and we really do help build rockets and launch them into outer space.” Listening closely you hear voices whispering with excitement, as the children edge closer for a better view.

The smiles are priceless. The presentation continues with colorful Power Point slides, descriptions of the Shuttle vehicle and, in the third-graders language, how a rocket is launched into space at hundreds of miles an hour. Kara Schmitt is creating an impact.

Kara shares her time with young people, hoping to make a positive impression. “I love talking to the students about space shuttles, what NASA is doing and where we are going in space. In today’s talk we were surprised we didn’t get any potty questions. One of the kids did ask how long it takes to get to Mercury and we weren’t certain of the answer, so he stumped us on that one,” says Kara.

“How do I feel when explaining to young people the scope of my job? nervous, but overall excited. If you can entertain a group of kids, the big-shots at NASA are easy.”

“Do you need a topic for a program or just a program? **By Elaine Gerstenberger, Pony Express Regional Director**

When you tell your children that they can do anything they want to do as long as they set their minds to it, that the sky’s the limit, or reach for the stars and shoot for the moon, they usually look at you funny and say “yeah, sure” or “whatever”.

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PTA Great Idea Bank FAQs

Q: What is the new PTA Great Idea Bank?
A: The PTA Great Idea Bank that existed as an online-accessible database of ideas on key PTA topics has been replaced with a more vibrant, user-friendly and interactive social network. This network, found at www.ptagreatideabank.org, is built on the Ning.com platform. Ning is a well-financed, five-year-old company that provides people a free tool for creating social networks. Ning has more than 29 million users on more than one million networks. It has become a popular option for many non-profit associations’ social networking needs.

Q: What about the bulletin boards? Aren’t they the same thing?
A: Not exactly. The social network is also more user friendly, versatile, and expandable than the bulletin boards. The system hampered participation and some topics had not seen posts since last summer. On a technical note, the boards were constantly inundated with bogus applications for membership, generated by spammers seeking to post content on the boards. This was not only dangerous but time-consuming to handle.

The boards will officially shut down August 31, 2009. Notices have been posted and new, valid applicants to the bulletin boards have been informed.

Q: Are the Great Idea Bank discussions moderated?
A: The social networking environment is moderated to a degree. GIB administrators will monitor conversations and posts, but will only delete content that is deemed inappropriate or considered advertising. Ning.com has a strong privacy and terms of service policy (found here: http://www.ptagreatideabank.org/main/authorization/termsOfService?previousUrl=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ptagreatideabank.org%2F). This policy is augmented by the PTA Great Idea Bank user policy, posted in a box at the bottom of the home page.

Q: Is there a user guide available?
A: Yes, it can be downloaded from the link found in the upper left corner of the home page or at PTA.org/GIB/PTA Great Idea Bank User Guide.doc

Q: How can I use the Great Idea Bank?
A: (Internal) You can form groups around specific topics or projects (examples: Healthy Lifestyles or the Miami National Standards Pilot Program). You can reply to discussions relevant to your content area or expertise. You can start discussions centered on specific areas. You can refer people to PTA resources but don’t make it a hard sell. This is not the venue for this kind of marketing and promotion. The community will react against it.

Explore the Great Idea Bank and see how conversations evolve to determine how you might best interact with our members and potential members.

Q: What is the objective of the PTA Great Idea Bank?
A: The most important goal of the Great Idea Bank is to create a vibrant interactive community, fueled mostly by the participants, not PTA. PTA benefits by hosting this community and starting conversations. People will find value in the conversations and even camaraderie fostered by this social network and will associate that value with PTA. This platform will provide a way for PTA to answer questions, provide resources and promote programs, but that is all secondary to building the community. Users come first here.

No “Couch Potatoes” Allowed

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

It is autumn and temperatures are falling. A new season of “must see” television could draw your family into a sedentary lifestyle. But...family fitness is best when it’s a year-round endeavor. Family walks and bicycle rides are appropriate for most ages and can be as challenging as you want them to be. Try adding hills or distance each time and you’ve got a new adventure. The difficult thing is to find activities that can be done inside when the weather isn’t cooperating. Mall walking, jumping rope, dancing, scavenger hunts throughout the house, and “follow the leader” are all inexpensive or free activities for the entire family.

There are many choices when it comes to fitness DVDs, even those designed for the younger set or young at heart. Many are set to rock and roll, hip hop, or square dance music – fun for everyone! Many quality videos can be found at www.fitnessbeginnings.com. Gaming systems like the Wii can be a lot of fun and a good source for exercise. For example, Wii Fit comes with four games for strength training, aerobics, yoga, and balance. Another very popular “get healthy and in shape” game is EA Sports Active. It includes twenty-minute workouts that target both your upper and lower body. This can be played solo or with two players. For those who want to try snowboarding, the Shaun White Snowboarding Road Trip allows you to try your skills on a balance board, “tour the world”, meet new people, and learn new tricks while working out.

A very important thing to remember is that your family is watching. If you as the parent make exercise a priority, your children will follow suit. Anything that gets you up and moving is a great way to exercise and stay fit. So...what will YOU choose so that you don’t become a “couch potato” this fall?

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You Have Questions, We Have Answers

By Dorothy Gardner, Editor

Running any organization is no easy task. Whether you’ve had prior experience or this is your first go around, inherently millions of questions come up every day. So we’ve rounded up some of the most frequently asked questions our regional directors receive.

WHAT IS A UNIT IN GOOD STANDING?

Believe it or not requiring a unit to be ‘in good standing’ is not MO PTA’s way of making life difficult. Rather it is designed to keep units healthy with regard to both PTA National standards and Federal and State regulations. A unit in good standing is:

• Adheres to the Purposes and basic policies of the PTA

• Remits the national and state dues to the state office by dates required – monthly.

• Has Bylaws approved every three years according to the procedures of the state PTA (these procedures are listed in the toolkit and mailed to units in an electronic format prior to their renewal date.)

• Submits a copy of the unit’s annual financial report and audit (annual financial review) to the state office by December 1st of each year

• Submits a copy of the required IRS tax form (990s) to the state office by December 1st of each year

• Submits the names and address of officers to the state office by March 31st of each year

What happens if your PTA missed a deadline for one of the above items? As soon as your unit has fulfilled these requirements you will immediately become once again a unit in good standing.

HAS OUR UNIT PTA PAID DUES YET?

Perhaps you are gearing up to send in an application for an award or grant and you just want to double check to make sure you’ve fulfilled all ‘unit in good standing’ requirements. How can you be sure the membership dues made it to the office? A simple email or phone call can quickly answer your question. During office hours, the Coordinator of Administrative Service, Linda Thiele, and the Office Secretary, Liz Hostetler, have that information at their fingertips. To contact the office send an email to office@mopta.org or call 1-800-328-7330 (local numbers 573-445-4161).

WHERE IS THE MEMBERSHIP DUES FORM?

Your unit has been running a great membership drive. The membership chair has reported the total number of memberships for the month and your treasurer has a check with the state and national portions ready to go. Now where did that membership form go? Three forms were included in the unit president’s summer packet, but they can also be downloaded from the MO PTA website. Once online, www.mopta.org, choose the ‘Forms/Awards Applications’ located in the blue box on the right hand side of the webpage. Under ‘Forms’ click on the first one listed – 2009-2010 Membership dues reporting form. Once the PDF file loads up you are ready to print it, fill in the information and send it into the main office. Feel free to save the file on your own computer for future use.

WHERE DO I GET MEMBERSHIP CARDS?

Getting a PTA unit up and running at the first of the year can be a very hectic ordeal. So much takes place during those first couple of months. In an effort to help units get a jump on things, we include the membership cards in the summer packets that are mailed to each unit president mid-July. However, it is very likely in the month of July the August/September back-to-school membership drive wasn’t in the forefront of any president’s mind. So chances are the cards are most likely still sitting in that summer packet. Just how do we decide how many membership cards your unit is given at the beginning of the year? This number is based on your membership total from the prior year. The cards come printed 10 per page and are designed to run through a regular desktop printer. One more FYI – everyone’s membership year runs July 1st through June 30th.

HOW DO I GET MORE MEMBERSHIP CARDS?

This year your membership drive has quite frankly rocked. Already you’ve eclipsed last year’s membership totals and you plan to keep sending that number higher. One small problem – you’ve run out of membership cards. What an excellent problem to have! Remember that membership dues reporting form? About three-fourths down the form there is a line available to request additional membership cards be sent to the unit president. Whoever submits the form can request additional cards and the state office will mail them to the unit president. Keep in mind they do come in sheets of 10 and this request needs to be for cards needed in addition to the ones already supplied in the summer packet.

WHAT IS MY PTA’S ID?

Before you became unit president you might not even had been aware each unit had an ID number. This little number really doesn’t concern most PTA members unless you are the one filling out the membership cards, awards/grant applications or Reflection submissions. Each unit received a Local Unit Information sheet in the summer packet where you can find your unit number or contact the state office and they will be happy to help. State office email – office@mopta.org phone 1-800-328-7330 or 573-445-4161.

WHEN ARE OUR BYLAWS DUE FOR RENEWAL?

Units are asked to review and renew their bylaws once every three years. There are a couple of routes to find out when that magic date will pop up. First off, check the current copy of your bylaws. When a unit receives bylaws back from the state bylaws chair a cover page is included which includes the date those bylaws were last approved and the next renewal date. But
let’s say all you can dig up are copies of the original and no one currently active in the unit can figure out where the original ended up. It happens so don’t panic. Your regional director has a master list containing, among many things, the date you are looking for. Also, you can always check with the state office. The state office will have that information readily available and can also assist in those cases where the actual unit bylaws have gone missing.

**What is the difference between bylaws and standing rules?**

I know you are thinking to yourself, boring, but simply put without bylaws you could find yourself trying to operate in the wild wild west. Bylaws, unique to each unit, define the structure or ‘rules’ of your organization. Within the bylaws you will find the primary characteristics and how the organization functions. Very upfront, every member, by going over the bylaws, knows exactly how the organization should run. Because they are the foundation of the unit they cannot be changed without previous notice to all members and then only by a vote of a specified large majority (this number is stated within the bylaws). In addition bylaws cannot be suspended. Comprised of articles which determine the size and activities of the organization, generally one will find: the name of the organization, its objectives, members, officers, meetings, executive board, committees, parliamentary authority and amendment procedure.

Think of the PTA unit as it’s own entity, not the current officers or committee heads, but rather it’s own unique being. In most cases, the PTA existed before you became a member and will go on long after you are gone. The people who make up the current PTA, the membership, are in a constant state of flux, changing year to year. However, because this PTA, this entity, has it’s own set of bylaws, no matter how much the face of the members changes the structure stays the same.

So then why do we need standing rules you might be asking yourself. While they do seem similar in that they detail out duties and procedures they are not deemed to be crucial to the basic foundation of the unit. For instance, in your bylaws a basic foundation would be to establish that meetings will be held monthly. However, the more specific details of when and where you hold those meeting might be laid out in the standing rules. For example, monthly meetings will be held on the third Tuesday of the month at 6pm in the school library. Another good example would be committee chair duties. The basic structure of the organization might state you will have a hospitality chair. All the duties, what is expected of that position, are spelt out within the standing rules. We place the nitty gritty details in the standing rules because unlike bylaws they can be easily change, suspended, revised or rescinded by a simple majority at any business meeting without prior notice. Usually standing rules are not created at the same time the bylaws are established, but rather they are adopted individually as the need arises.

Don’t currently have standing rules; well it’s never too late. Adopt as needed and keep a copy with your bylaws under a different heading. Used together in unison bylaws and standing rules work to help keep the unit running smoothly.

**Does my unit have to hire a CPA to do the Audit?**

No. The use of the word audit can mean many things depending upon the content. In the world of PTA it is has succeeded in causing mass confusion. The audit required by National PTA is more of an annual financial check-up or review. Check your bylaws, for you might find a procedure already set in place. The intention is, and it is perfectly acceptable, for a selected group of volunteers, audit committee, from within the unit to perform the audit. Who comprises this committee should be members who are currently not on or will be on (during the next school year) the bank signature card.

**How do I do an audit, and why does the state need it?**

It seems so invasive the state and National PTA wanting to see what is going on with respect to your unit’s money. But, before you get defensive please know we don’t really care how much money you raised fundraising or how much you spent on this or that line item. Nothing sends a unit spiraling downward than the misuse or mishandling of funds. The audit requirement was designed for units to perform a self-check that will assure not only the state and National PTA but also your individual members things are running smoothly within your unit.

To actually perform the audit the National PTA has created a step-by-step Financial Review-Internal Audit Procedure and even a sample Financial Review form. This can be found on pages 24-26 of the Money Matters Quick-Reference Guide Publication. All presidents should have received a copy of this publication in their National summer mailing of the ‘Big Box of Possibilities’. It actually came in a box. But, the complete publication can also be found online. Go to www.pta.org click on the box across the top that says ‘running a PTA’ and from there go to ‘Quick-Reference Guides’. To download the PDF file you will be asked for a ‘name’ and ‘password’. These can be found on the back of your membership card (username & password).

**What should I do if last years treasurer didn’t file a 990?**

You can run and you can hide but the IRS will eventually track you down and present you with a big fine. We know this happens. Your PTA’s new officers came on board gung-ho about the new year only to find out someone’s failure to previously do their job has created a headache. Unfortunately there isn’t much you can do but get it done now. Simply ignoring the previous year’s filing will only make matters worse when you file this year. Most likely you have, or will, receive a letter from the IRS spelling out your delinquency and imposing a fine. Go ahead and contact the office and find the individual assigned to your case. Explain what happened and how to proceed from there. Usually a simple letter from the PTA unit and a quick effort in getting the filing up-to-date can erase the nasty fine.
Any organization is only as good as it’s leaders. But how does one ensure a continued strong stable organization when the leadership changes every year or two? This remains an ongoing obstacle for PTA units where membership changes, sometimes dramatically, for a variety of reasons from one year to the next. How a unit transitions from one president to the next can strongly impact the success of each year.

English Landing Elementary PTA recently experienced a unique transition between the immediate past and current president. Kelly Seymour and Michael Atchison’s friendship dates back to their college days when they were both involved with the Student government at Mizzou. Little did they know several years down the road they would find their children attending the same elementary school. Isn’t there an old saying we either make friends in PTA or drag our existing friends into PTA? Well, perhaps it isn’t an old saying but maybe it should be. When English Landing Elementary PTA wanted to create a Grant writing committee Kelly knew Michael, who is a published writer and attorney, would be a perfect fit. So she reached out to him and asked if he would consider working on this committee.

By choosing to accept the position on the grant writing committee, Michael became a leading force within a traditionally strong PTA unit. A large part of this strength lies in the sheer numbers of dedicated English Landing Elementary PTA volunteers. Twenty-four standing committees are comprised of a variety of parents rather than just a handful. Kelly, herself, had the benefit of taking charge as president of this PTA directly after a predecessor who had relied heavily on the bylaws for guidance. But just inheriting a strong foundation does not insure a smooth transition. There are numerous stories of presidents who feel as if the PTA was ‘dumped’ in their laps. Kelly felt she was well prepared for her own transition to presidency. After all, her predecessor was going on to become Parkhill Council PTA president and was always there to answer questions. It was only when it came time to take charge that Kelly realized she would have benefited greatly from spending much more time shadowing her own predecessor the previous spring in order to figure out what she needed to accomplish in the fall. “I wished I had realized earlier how far ahead I needed to be thinking.”

For a year before he took office, beginning with the summer board meeting, Michael shadowed Kelly. In addition to attending the general PTA meetings they corresponded regularly via email and text messaging. They also worked closely together on a committee. By the time spring rolled around the two felt very comfortable talking candidly about the upcoming school year.

While their unique history played a big role in allowing the two to formulate a successful avenue of communication, it also made it clear just how important of a role the lines of communication play during a transition. By the end of March ideally the current president knows who will be their successor. Sometimes this person may already be a friend, in other cases a casual acquaintance, or, because it can happen, they may be a complete stranger. It is up to the president to reach out to that individual and open up a formal line of communications.

Both are extremely proud of what they have accomplished together as a team and find they share the same vision regarding the mission of their PTA. While this has greatly benefited the PTA it has also enriched their personal lives. The qualities that drew them to each other as friends in college are still present today. Tackling PTA projects has afforded them the opportunity to once again spend time working together and enjoying each other’s families. As an incoming gift Kelly presented Michael with a book, Ruby Payne’s A Framework for Understanding Poverty. When Kelly’s last meeting as president rolled around Michael in turn presented Kelly with a book and then symbolically adjourned the meeting. After the meeting had concluded, back at Kelly’s home, they, along with Kelly’s husband, broke open a bottle of champagne and toasted their work together, Kelly’s conclusion as PTA president and Michael’s future presidency.
How May We Help You?

Every two years the State Executive Committee and Board are elected and appointed. Check the MO PTA website for an updated list of committee heads and regional directors.

President
Wendy Jackson
wendyj@mopta.org

President-Elect
Donna Petiford
dpetiford@mopta.org

Treasurer
Patty Buckholz
pattyb@mopta.org

Secretary
Kim Weber
kimw@mopta.org

Department of Legislation and Advocacy
Vice-President and Director
Stephanie Miller
stephaniem@mopta.org

Department of Membership Services
Vice-President and Director
Shelly Throckmorton
shellyt@mopta.org

Department of Communications
Vice-President and Director
Dorothy Gardner
dorothyg@mopta.org

Department of Field Service
Vice-President and Director
Pat Brune
path@mopta.org

Department of Programs
Vice-President and Director
Jennifer Casey
jcasey@mopta.org

Mark Your Calendar

NOVEMBER
PTA Healthy Lifestyles Month
1 Dues to State Office
11 Veteran’s Day
19 National Parent Involvement Day
26 Thanksgiving

DECEMBER
Winter Packet & Legislative Handbook Mailed to Units
1 Dues to State Office
1 AIDS Awareness Day
1 Audit Report (Annual Financial Review) Due to State Office
1 Copy of IRS 990 or 990-N to State Office

JANUARY
1 Dues to State Office
15 Reflections Deadline 4:30pm
26 Missouri’s Child Advocacy Day

FEBRUARY
Black History Month
1 Dues to State Office
1 National School Counseling Week
7-13 PTA Take Your Family to School Week
17 PTA Founder’s Day

MARCH
Women’s History Month
1 Dues to State Office
2 Read Across America
3 Missouri Principal’s Day
9-11 National PTA Legislative Conference
Missouri’s Child Advocacy Day • Tuesday, January 26, 2010

Make plans now to join Missouri PTA and Missouri’s Alliance for Children, Youth, and Families in Jefferson City beginning at 9:00am in the Capital Rotunda.

The events for the day include:
• Recognition of this year’s Child Advocate Award
• Workshops
• Exhibits showcasing services for children and families
• Meetings with legislators
• Networking with other advocates
• March to the Capitol and Rally

Items to Remember:
• You do not need to preregister.
• You may attend Child Advocacy Day free of charge.
• Parking is available in the Madison Street Garage for a fee. Free parking is available on the west side of the Capitol (down the hill).
• Call your Senator or Representative in advance to make a 15-minute appointment.
• Find the name of your senator or representative on the internet at http://www.senate.mo.gov/llookup/leg_lookup.aspx
• Business casual clothing is suggested.