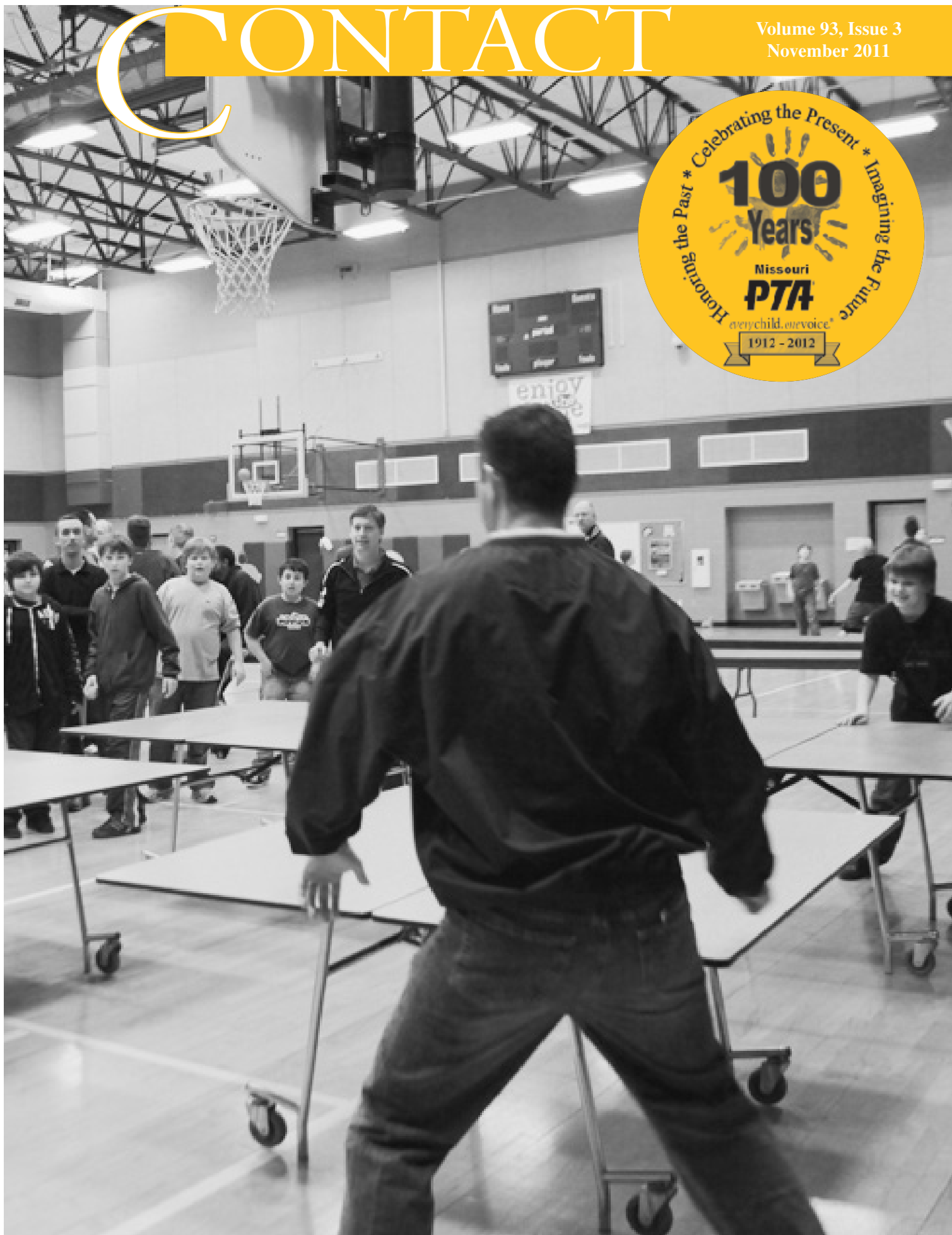


# CONTACT

Volume 93, Issue 3  
November 2011





We imagine these last two years have been a blur for Wendy.

It's hard to really describe the sheer amount of work and dedication it takes to be state president. For just a moment close your eyes and imagine not only being responsible for all the duties that come with being a unit president but also organizing and running the fundraiser and carnival simultaneously, everyday, all year long. To us that might be a fair representation of the work involved managing all that makes up Missouri PTA.

Wendy has done an incredible job and we are all grateful for her time and dedication.

**Thank you Wendy**

**Cover photo:**

SVMS M&amp;M Night.

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MO PTA 800-328-7330

**President's Message** *By Donna Petiford, Missouri PTA President*

*I (once) said "Somebody should do something about that." Then I realized I am somebody.*

— Lily Tomlin

I value the opportunities that I have enjoyed through my work as a PTA leader. I have been somebody who has volunteered in the schools that my daughter attended starting with the first week of her Kindergarten year. I was somebody who did not wait to be asked, but instead I sought out jobs where I could use the skills I knew

I had to help in any way I could, with whatever time I could spare.

I am somebody that does not hesitate to answer a legislative alert from National PTA or Missouri PTA because I know the value this adds to our association in helping pass and enforce laws that protect children and families. I am somebody who has visited the offices of my state and federal officials at least once in the past year, letting them know about important PTA issues and how these issues affect the voters in their representative districts.

I am somebody who buys a PTA membership for me, my husband and my daughter and I encourage everyone in my family and my circle of friends to do the same. I do this because I know that for just under 2¢ per day, this is the best investment I can make to support all public schools, and the health, safety and well being of children and families.

In this edition of *Contact* you will find stories of others who have made a difference through legislative advocacy, parent involvement and student health and safety who were honored at our recent convention in Columbia, MO. I hope their stories will encourage and inspire you to become somebody as well!

Anyone can be somebody!

**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

# Meet Donna Petiford – Missouri PTA President

Remember when you were just a child yourself sitting in a classroom and the homeroom parent showed up with cupcakes? Hands down those were some of the best days of the school year. 14 years ago when my daughter started Kindergarten, I wanted to be the homeroom mom and it was my dream to make cupcakes for class parties. Making cupcakes for the class was something that I had enjoyed doing with my mom, and I wanted to make those same memories with my daughter. Unfortunately, times change. You can imagine my disappointment when I found out our school district did not allow homemade snacks for classroom celebrations.

The fabulous cupcake making homeroom mom dream was soon replaced when I found a new way to be part of the school environment – PTA. What I discovered was that PTA was so much more than

cupcakes, even wonderful homemade cupcakes. There is plenty of work that needs to be done if you have the right attitude and make yourself available to the opportunities. Some of the things that I have had the opportunity to be involved with include RIF and other reading programs, the PTA Reflections program, the PTA Clothing Bank project of Springfield Council of PTAs and advocating for all children in my district, in Jefferson City and in Washington DC.

I have been fortunate enough to be able to see the effect that all of us, working together, can have on issues such as passing bond and levy initiatives for our schools, fighting against voucher legislation in our state and keeping children's health and safety a priority of all of our elected officials. I've also, on occasion, been able to take cupcakes to school (for

our annual teacher appreciation events).

I am looking forward to my term as state president, however, I don't feel like it is "my" term. There are several state officers taking this journey with me and I am excited to collaborate with them on their plans and the work we will do together. I will continue to make advocacy and legislative issues a priority and to encourage membership in our organization. As for other goals, I plan to make the best of all the resources that are trusted to our organization and do my best not to mess up a good thing. In only one year we will be celebrating our centennial as an organization. What an awesome milestone to achieve and celebrate together. Who knows maybe I'll even whip up some cupcakes.

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## 2010-2011 Blue & Gold Seal Achievement Award Winners

Congratulations to the following units and councils that were recognized as 2010-2011 Achievement Award winners at the 96<sup>th</sup> Annual State Convention in Columbia, October 14-16<sup>th</sup>. Take a moment to look through the 2011-2012 Grants & Awards booklet. Find out how easy it is to apply and be recognized for all of your hard work. Put your unit on this list next year and let the whole state of Missouri applaud you. You deserve it!

### ***Blue Seal Achievement Award Winners:***

- Gateway Region – Hazelwood West PTSA
- Heritage Region – Southern Boone County PTA
- Ozark Region – Eugene Field Elementary PTA (Springfield)
- Pony Express Region –
  - Cameron PTSA
  - Eugene Field Elementary PTA (St. Joseph)
  - Kellybrook PTA
  - Park Hill Congress Middle School PTA
  - Park Hill High School PTA
  - Park Hill Prairie Point Elementary PTA
  - South Valley Middle School PTSA

### Three Trails Region –

- Bridger Middle School PTSA
- Christian Ott Elementary PTA
- James Walker Elementary PTA
- Laurel Hills Elementary PTA
- Proctor Elementary PTA
- Sycamore Hills Elementary PTA
- Voy Spears Jr. Elementary PTA

### ***Gold Seal Achievement Award Winners:***

- Gateway Region – Hazelwood West PTSA;
- Three Trails Region – Christian Ott Elementary PTA

### ***Council Achievement Award Winner:***

- Ozark Region – Springfield Council of PTAs

# 10+ WAYS to UNLEASH the POWER of YOUR MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN!!

1. **TEAM UP WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS:** Work with youth and community service groups to promote PTA membership, as well as parent, student and community involvement.
2. **BE VISIBLE IN YOUR COMMUNITY:** Seek opportunities for PTA members to speak publicly about the importance of PTA in your community and school.
3. **“SELL” YOUR PTA:** Use your unit’s accomplishments and goals as selling points.
4. **“WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD!”:** Work with the Visitors Bureau or Chamber of Commerce to put together new student packets that include community information as well as how to join PTA and volunteer.
5. **USE YOUR LOCAL MEDIA:** Publicize your events always with an invitation to join PTA.
6. **WHO’S OUT THERE?:** Look beyond your school acquaintances. Invite family members, neighbors, coworkers and members of other organizations you are involved in to join.
7. **PTA RESOURCES:** Customizable postcards, door hangers, posters, etc. are available online at [PTA.org/Marketing](http://PTA.org/Marketing).
8. **NATIONAL BENEFIT PROVIDERS:** Promote these exclusive discounts along with any local incentives you may be offering. Provide details on how to access the benefits only to your PTA members.
9. **HAVEN’T JOINED YET?** Compare your current membership roster to last year’s to see who has not purchased a membership yet. Let them know it is never too late.
10. **HIGHLIGHT VOLUNTEERING AS A BENEFIT:** Stress the flexibility and positive impact of the PTA volunteer opportunities your unit offers.
11. **INVOLVEMENT LEADS TO RETAINMENT:** Involved members get the most out of their membership and will renew their membership each year.
12. **UNIT OR SCHOOL WEBSITE:** Keep members informed about local activities, legislation and benefits. Have membership forms that can be downloaded or submitted online so Alumni or prospective members outside the school community can easily join.
13. **COUNCILS:** Have a “Membership Minute” built into your meeting agendas as an opportunity for units to share a quick membership idea. Representatives write their idea on a note card before the meeting begins then 1 or 2 are picked to be read during that portion of the meeting.
14. **TARGET GROUP:** Pick a group, i.e. males, to focus your efforts on to increase membership and involvement.
15. **SET UP SHOP:** Have a membership booth at community fairs, school music performances, sporting events, etc. that visually highlights your unit’s activities, state & national accomplishments and the importance of becoming a member.

## NPTA Member Benefits

**Hertz** - The world’s largest airport general use car rental brand, is proud to offer PTA members these great benefits:

- Save up to 20% every time you reserve
- Get special promotions in addition to your discount
- Enjoy fee-waived Hertz #1 Club Gold enrollment - a \$60 savings!
- Earn free rental days and receive expedited service

**OfficeMax** - Now, PTA members can save on supply essentials and more at OfficeMax. You’ll find everything from notebooks, binders and pens to paper, art supplies and furniture. You can even make copies and print flyers and student presentations—all in store at the OfficeMax ImPress® Print Center. Ready to shop and save? Get the current deal now on the National PTA Member Benefits page and check back often for exclusive savings throughout the year.

**MetLife** - MetLife Auto & Home has special group discounts now available to PTA members as well as these following features at no additional charge (some restrictions may apply):

- Deductible Savings Benefit
- Replacement Costs for Total Loss on New Cars

- Replacement Costs for Special Parts
- Enhanced Rental Car Damage Coverage
- Identity Protection Services

**Sharp** - PTA members receive discounts ranging between 15 – 50% on a wide array of Sharp products, including AQUOS® LCD televisions, calculators, air purifiers, printers, audio systems and more when purchased from a discounted online site for PTA members.

**T-Mobile** - America’s Largest 4G Network™ and National PTA have partnered together to bring PTA members exclusive discounts on wireless mobile service and equipment. All PTA Members receive waived activation fee, 14% on monthly service charges\*, free two-day shipping and exclusive discounts on handsets and more. \*2 year contract required/restrictions may apply.

Check out the National PTA, [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org) website for further information on how your members access these benefits. Make sure the details on benefit access are provided only to your PTA members.

## Missouri PTA Unit Benefit

**PRIDE FUNDRAISING** - Pride Fundraising will help your PTA with the professional resources and know-how necessary for hosting healthier, more profitable Fun Runs, Bike-a-thons and Walk-a-thons. Missouri PTA units can save \$100 when you use Promotion Code “MOPTA” when registering for an event license. For more information please visit our custom landing page at [www.PrideFundraising.com/MOPTA](http://www.PrideFundraising.com/MOPTA). Be sure to request a FREE sample and information packet while you are there.

# The IRS and You: Why does it even matter?

By *Patty Buckholz, Past Missouri PTA Treasurer*

“Me!?” you say? “ME and the IRS?” Does the mere mention of IRS bring trembles of fear to you? Do you dread the thought of filing 990s and wonder why you need do this at all? Do you wonder why the IRS and PTA are even related, after all the IRS is the government and PTAs are not? It’s all because the relationship between the IRS and PTA is based on recognition and support of not-for-profit organizations. Fear not, PTA has the details worked out and if you follow your bylaws and general PTA recommendations your IRS status will be assured and you will live to tell of the experience.

Every PTA is a non-profit organization. A local PTA is part of Missouri PTA and National PTA which are established non-profit organizations. During chartering a local PTA adopts bylaws that include specific purposes and many business practices in common with Missouri PTA and National PTA, many of which are required of non-profit organizations; these portions of the bylaws are delineated by a # sign. It is the assurance of these practices that allows Missouri PTA to incorporate a new PTA unit into the PTA group as a non-profit organization. In contrast, an independent group must apply directly to the IRS to establish these same parameters and await individual approval by the IRS, such applications are accompanied by hefty application fees. Once established every non-profit organization has to prove to the IRS every year that they are conducting business as they were organized to do. PTAs provide this proof by filing a 990 and by retaining their “unit in good standing” status with Missouri PTA.

In 2006 the IRS required all non-profits to report regardless of their income. Groups were given a three year grace period to comply and last year those organizations with no 990 filings for three years lost their non-profit standing. This means they suddenly had to collect and pay taxes, their donors could no longer consider their donations tax deductible, and they were faced with trying to recoup their status. While there are procedures for reinstatement it is not simple nor is it free. It’s much easier to file on time. If there are any errors in your filing the IRS will let you know and you can work with that much more easily than you can start over.

The PTA Purposes are defined in Article II of the bylaws and center on children, parents and schools. Ironically there is no fundraising detailed in the PTA Purposes at all, but PTAs need some funds to accomplish the Purposes. Those PTA funds come under the scrutiny of the IRS as part of the obligation of any non-profit organization. The more funds that are brought in as gross receipts, the more interested the IRS is in the details of the organization because the potential for fraud and abuse of the non-profit privileges increases as the funds increase. Depending upon gross receipts the PTA will use the IRS informational form 990 or 990-EZ with Schedule A, or the 990-N e-postcard.

The saying goes, “Put your money where your mouth is.” and the filing of a 990 is your proof of just that. Gross receipts are the total of all funds brought into the PTA account(s) and are the key to which 990 is to be filed. For annual gross receipts of more than \$50,000 during the 2010-2011 year the IRS form 990 or 990EZ along with Schedule A are used. They are much more specific than the 990-N, they require that the PTA detail how funds were acquired and how they were used to accomplish the non-profit purposes. They also require a recap of the last five years’ worth of records.

If your PTA had gross receipts of \$50,000 or less for the 2010-2011 year then you can file the much simpler 990-N e-postcard online. The 990-N essentially takes your promise that all is in order, collects contact information, and then sends you an email that the requirement has been satisfied. The gross receipts limit of \$50,000 is new for the 2010-2011 year; filings of the 990-N e-postcard for previous years are limited to gross receipts of \$25,000.

National PTA has a publication just for treasurers, *PTA Money Matters Quick-Reference Guide* and Missouri PTA includes several pages just for treasurers in the 2011 *Tool Kit*; both were sent to presidents over the summer. These publications have instructions for the 990-N e-postcard filing online and pointers for completing the 990-EZ and Schedule A. There are also several pages of recommendations for safe handling of funds and documentation of your funds that will help when it comes time to file your 990. A treasurer should be able to file a 990-N online with relative ease. An individual who can read and follow directions can complete a 990-EZ and Schedule A. If a tax professional is used be sure they are experienced with non-profit organizations and they realize that your local unit is a subordinate of Missouri PTA.

All IRS filings are due the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 5<sup>th</sup> month following the close of the fiscal year. If your fiscal year runs July 1 through June 30 then your IRS filing is due November 15. Do not put it off to the last minute.

Because PTAs are established as IRS 501(3)c non-profit organizations by recommendation of Missouri PTA, every year Missouri PTA is responsible to tell the IRS which PTAs are following the non-profit requirements. Missouri PTA evaluates this “unit in good standing” status by requiring documentation from local PTAs including: membership dues payment, current officers on file, updated bylaws, and three financial documents on file by December 1 each year: a) annual financial review (audit), b) treasurer’s fiscal year-end report and c) a copy of the 990/Schedule A or 990-N confirmation email.

You can do this. Gather your instructions and documents. Do your homework. Start early. And then revel in your accomplishment when you are finished. Good luck!! You can do this!

# Reflection

By Michele Reed, Reflection Chair



“Diversity Means...” – is the theme for the 2011-2012 Reflections Program. You might be thinking – it’s November and too late to get started this year? Or, I will do this next year. Well I am here to tell you that it’s not too late to implement a successful Reflections Program in your school for this year. How you might ask? Follow the simple steps listed here and you will have a successful program in your school. For those of you who have already started your program you can use these same simple steps to make sure that your entries are submitted to Missouri PTA correctly and on time.

1. **Get the word out** – post your deadline and the location to get a copy of the art category rules in your school announcements, newsletters and on the web. Ask your school’s faculty and staff to encourage the students and help promote Reflections. Keep it simple, but get the word out to all of your students.
2. **Line Up your judges** – Contact members of your community and other schools who have a background in an art area and ask them to help you judge the artwork. Remember to provide the judges with the art category rules and the judges score card that are provided in the Missouri PTA Reflections Tool Kit.
3. **Encourage students to participate** – Work with teachers and school administrators to provide incentives for all students who participate. Think outside the box on things that would encourage participation in this wonderful program. You might have to think of ways to explain and define the definition of “Diversity” to students in younger grades. Work with the teachers, they will know their students best.
4. **Have your entries judged locally** - Have your submitted entries judged by your local judges. The three entries in each category within each age division in your school that score highest will be the entries you forward to Missouri PTA for judging.
5. **Make sure your unit is a “Unit in Good Standing”** – Verify with your president and treasurer that your PTA unit has satisfied all “Unit in Good Standing” criteria as outlined in the Missouri PTA Tool Kit.
6. **Keep Local Unit Records** – You should make photocopies of all literature pieces, and digital copies of all musical composition, film video production and dance choreography entries. If possible take digital photos of all photography and visual arts entries sent to Missouri PTA. This will ensure that the photography and visual arts entries submitted to Missouri PTA get returned to you in the spring. This will also help in the event that the electronic media for some reason gets damaged.
7. **Complete all necessary paperwork for state judging** – Be sure to follow the steps outlined in the Missouri PTA Reflections tool kit and submit a Form A, a Form B for each age division, and that the student entry form is completed correctly. Entries without all paperwork completed will be excluded from judging at the state level. Make sure you have completed all of the items on the Local Unit Submission Checklist as found in the Missouri PTA Reflections Tool Kit
8. **Send all entries to Missouri PTA by the deadline** – Once you have all of the paperwork completed and verified that your entries have followed all of the rules, make sure that they arrive at the Missouri State PTA Office no later than 4:30 p.m. on Friday January 19, 2012. Entries that arrive after this date and time will not be considered for judging.
9. **Recognize All students that participated**- Some schools host a “showcase” or art fair prior to sending the entries to Missouri PTA inviting students, parents and community members to the event. Students who participate in the Reflections program are honored with a certificate of participation or some other token of appreciation for their hard work. Also recognize those students whose entries are being sent to state PTA for judging on their achievements. Thank your judges for their time and effort spent judging all of your entries.
10. **Have Fun** – If students see that you are having fun and excited about the things they could and can create for you then they will be excited about participating and putting the effort into the project.

**Rule Changes for 2011-2012: Make sure that each student submits the required consent form and that they have titled their entry. Entries without a title will be disqualified.**

Full details for all of these steps can be found in the Missouri PTA Reflections Tool Kit that was distributed to all unit presidents this summer. The Reflections Tool Kit can also be found on the Missouri PTA web site. If you have questions please be sure to contact your council Reflections chairperson, your Regional Director, or the Missouri PTA Office.

## PE&I Award

Each year Missouri PTA is honored to award an outstanding unit with the Parent Education & Involvement Award. This award is given to a PTA unit that plans a program or project that focuses on bringing parents together to participate in a school activity. Research shows that parents who are involved raise students that are more academically aware and more adjusted throughout their school life.

Missouri PTA would like to commend Clinton County R3 PTA on their excellent program – PTA Back-to-School Splash Party. It is more important than ever to involve families. This program offers the opportunity for making friends with parents that may not have met if not for their hard work and dedication to the students of Clinton County R3.

In August 2010, the PTA hosted a Back-to-School Splash Party with Radio Disney at the local pool. More than 100 students and 60 parents/guardians attended the event. The day consisted of music, games, giveaways and fun! In order to offset the costs of the day, the PTA solicited either Gold (\$100.00) or Silver (\$50.00) sponsors. In all they received more than 24 business sponsors that more than paid for the event. The PTA would like to give a special thank you to their Principal Ms. Ausmus, for her generous support as their first Gold member sponsor.

Congratulations, Clinton County R3 PTA! We hope that you will continue to develop programs that will encourage parent involvement in your schools and communities.

## Student Safety Award

The Missouri PTA Student Safety Award winner is Emily Newman. Emily is a senior at Raytown High School in Raytown, MO. Emily works as a lifeguard at the local YWCA. The two confirmed saves at her job shows that she is mindful of everyone's safety. In addition to being a lifeguard, Emily helped her mother while she was a hospice patient, and was by her side helping her deal with cancer. Emily's school counselor best described her as a "hero" in many people's life. She plans to be a paramedic after graduation; she wants to continue helping save peoples lives. For these reasons Emily Newman is our 2011 Missouri PTA Student Safety winner.



## Health & Safety Awards

Each year Missouri PTA honors a unit or council for their programs or activities that promotes awareness for health and safety. This year we are pleased to award four unit's the Missouri PTA Health and Safety Education Grants.

Springfield Council of PTA's "Save a Life Tour" allowed two area high schools the opportunity to use a simulator and hard hitting messages to get up close and personal with what it is like to be involved in driving while drunk. The risks of what can happen with just one drink really brought home to students the consequences of this dangerous action.

Fairmount PTA from Independence involved everyone in their community by hosting a Crime fighting night! Each person was given a Detective Crime Fighting Manual that they took to eight different stations. While at the different stations, students and adults learned some valuable lessons. 911, who lives around you, what to do in case of an emergency, and how to be a good neighbor were just some of the activities presented to those participating.

Belair Elementary PTA in Jefferson City initiative for living healthy lifestyles was also chosen. Their mindset was to

change the way that they provide snacks at events. Changing out unhealthy foods and snacks to encouraging healthy snacks be provided at parties, map testing, and breakfasts was part of this mindset. They also hosted an annual open house meal. This also carried over to the way they fundraise. They hosted a 5k run to raise money for the school instead of unhealthy fundraising.

Blue Ridge Elementary PTA from Columbia started the BRE running club. BRE stands for A before school running club for students. Everyone involved keeps track of the amount of miles they run for the year, and awards are given to students when they reach milestones. This running carries over into the classroom, by studying a map to see the distance a person has ran. Different math equations based on the running are also used as examples in the class. In order to involve the community a 5K was also started to help fund the BRE club.

Congratulations to all of this year's winners. What a great way to involve students and your community in getting healthy and staying safe!



# Communication awards

By Dorothy Gardner VP of Communication

Getting information out to unit members can at times be a daunting task. Sure we would all love for every member to attend meetings. However, packed schedules and overlapping events often hinder individual's ability to be a part of monthly meetings. The good news is most people are actively seeking out information. Think of how information driven our society has become. Today information accessible by a variety of formats has become the norm.

Very often one of the first avenues people will look for information about a business or organization is the World Wide Web. Time Magazine's Alan Boswell posed the question "If a new country is born, and no one sees it online, does it really exist?" In this case he was referring to the month old country of South Sudan. At that time Google, Bing and Yahoo had yet to update their maps to include the new country. This led me to wonder, do members think their units are inactive simply because they have not come across information to inform them otherwise? Providing information beyond the realm of the unit or council meeting is an attempt to reach out and engage all our members.

Over the years we have found some units and councils who excel at just that – reaching out and trying to engage all members. The Outstanding Website and Newsletter awards are intended to highlight the cream of the crop and share their best practices with other interested units and councils. This was my fourth year serving on the awards committee and not only the number of entries blew me away but also the quality. Simply put there are a lot of great websites and newsletters serving Missouri's PTA members! But of course there can only be one winner in each category. After lengthy discussion we finally narrowed the field and settled in on the winners. Drum role please.... and the winners are for Outstanding Website Springfield Council of PTAs and for Outstanding Newsletter Kellybrook PTA!

truly functional lies in the ease of navigation. This website really took care to think about what information their users would be looking for and where it should be found. Having a website filled with great information is a useless tool if no one can find what they are looking for. Best practice sites make sure their corner of the World Wide Web is not only appealing but user friendly. However, let's not forget the content. Going through Springfield Council of PTAs website we were keenly aware of the quality of information. Any question one might have with regard to the council's role, purpose or activities was included in the site. Want to see for yourself? Point your browser to [sctptamo.com](http://sctptamo.com) and check it out.



Newsletters are often the one chance to put information directly into the hands of the members. Rather than waiting for users to seek the information out on the Internet, the newsletter often comes directly to them. It seeks one out and proclaims 'look what I have to say'. Kellybrook PTA hasn't been putting out newsletters for very long. The 2011-2012 school year marks Kellybrook's third year in existence. However, longevity does not a good newsletter make. Kellybrook PTA produced a newsletter with a stellar layout. After one or two arriving home from school, members would quickly be able to pick out the newsletter from among the piles of paper populating the backpack. Kellybrook made sure to not only enhance the readers knowledge by packing it full of local, state and national PTA information but by inserting pictures they produced a more personalized newsletter. No longer was it just a story. Articles about events and happenings were coupled with the images of real volunteers, students and teachers. In addition they added accountability features. Not able to attend a meeting but wondering if the money from the fundraiser you supported is being spent in the manner it was intended? All that information was reported in the newsletter for everyone to see.

Congratulations to both Springfield Council of PTAs and Kellybrook PTA for striving to deliver exemplary communication services to their members. Keeping members informed is a key factor when trying to get our message out and make sure every child's voice is heard.

# Town Hall Meetings: A Great Connection Between Legislators and the Community

Denise McCarter VP Department of Legislation and Advocacy

Many people think that making a difference in the area of local and state government is a complicated and daunting task. MOPTA provides our members with simple steps to begin to connect with our legislators and having our voices heard. One of the most efficient and powerful ways to do this is to host a Town Hall Meeting in your area.

MOPTA Town Hall Meetings are gatherings that can include local, state, and federal legislators and members of the school, PTA, local businesses and the community. MOPTA provides the invitations to the legislators, a moderator, a specific set of questions to be presented to the legislators, and other background resources. The local Town Hall Meeting Coordinators decide who, where and when the event will be held and make other arrangements. We have found that our legislators appreciate the opportunity to meet with constituents, and your PTA members and local citizens will see advocacy in action.

The questions presented at these meetings are ones that reflect the legislative focus of MOPTA for the current year. The legislators are given the questions well in advance so that they can be informed and prepared to speak on these topics. By formatting our meetings in this way, the legislators, as well as the community, are hearing MOPTA positions on issues that are affecting Missouri's children today.

Hosting a MOPTA Town Hall Meeting is one of the requirements for the local Unit/Council AtLaw Award each year, and attending one of these meetings is a requirement to receive the

individual AtLaw Award. By hosting this event, you are well on your way to receiving the Unit/Council AtLaw Award as well as enabling your members to qualify for the individual award.

On pages 96-98 of the MOPTA 2011-2012 Tool Kit there are specific directions and suggestions for planning a Town Hall Meeting. The MOPTA Board of Managers is ready to assist you in making the arrangements and getting your event off the ground. Please consider hosting a Town Hall Meeting in your area. Right now is the time to begin. Find a location and a date that won't conflict with other school activities, and then call the MOPTA office to get the event on the calendar. We are excited to help you host a MOPTA Town Hall Meeting. You can make a difference with MOPTA.



## Missouri PTA Legislative Priorities

Every year the Legislative Department develops a list of Legislative Priorities. These priorities are derived from resolutions and position statements that have been approved by the membership. Resolutions recently passed at convention will be evaluated by the Legislative department and then added to the 2012 Legislative platform. A complete list of resolutions and position statements are available on our website. Did you know that Missouri PTA supports:

- Legislation that protects and calls for local control of schools.
- A constitutional amendment permitting passage of school bonds by majority vote and raising the ceiling of indebtedness to 20%.
- Legislation to increase funding for programs and services aimed at the prevention of child abuse, neglect and maltreatment.
- Opposition to tax credits or tax deductions for tuition paid by

a parent or sponsors for nonpublic elementary and secondary school children.

- Enforcement of legislation requiring school districts to have policies that promote increased parent involvement in their children's education.
- Legislation that will maintain or generate local and state funding for public education.
- State funding for renovation and construction of essential school facilities.
- Legislation strengthening laws to limit and restrict projects that reduce funding to public education through tax increment financing (TIF), urban redevelopment corporations and enterprise zones.
- Legislation and other efforts to cause class size reduction in Missouri schools.

## If you ask they WILL join

How many times have you heard PTAs express concern over how to increase teacher support? Regional Director Linda Wansing has heard this concern for many years and decided it was time to reach out to her own local superintendent. Her goal was to brainstorm ways to come up with ideas that could be implemented in the Liberty School District. After exchanging several emails, Superintendent Mike Brewer said he would also work to step up support at the administration level.

Meanwhile, Linda also encouraged Council President Trace Graves to encourage teachers and school board members to join local units during her speech at convocation. Trace was more than up to the task. In addition to her speech, she gathered up membership information from all local units, made that information available to all administration and school board members, and then set aside time at the beginning of the first council

meeting for interested individuals to join local units.

During that first meeting Superintendent Brewer, two assistant superintendents, the chief financial officer and two school board members went around the room and purchased a PTA membership from every single unit in the Liberty School District. Now that really made a statement! What a positive way to start off the school year.

## Teacher of the Year

Missouri has a lot of very good teachers. I'd bet if you took just a moments right now to reflect you could probably come up with several. However, there can only be one Missouri Teacher of the Year. On October 26<sup>th</sup>, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education honored Kristen Merrell, a third-grade teacher in the Lee's Summit School District, as Missouri's Teacher of the year. Kristen automatically becomes Missouri's nominee for the National Teacher of the Year program. Congratulations Kristen!!

Seems there was scarcely a time when Kristen wasn't on a path destined to be a teacher. Remember when you were young and employed your stuffed animals to assist you in playing house, vet or school? Setting up a classroom full of stuffed animals was just the start of Kristen's path to becoming an extraordinary teacher. Years later during high school she stepped even further onto that path when she spent time tutoring classmates. Finally she solidified her career choice when she earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education from the University of Missouri-Kansas City and then a master's degree in teaching from Webster University. Currently she is working on an education specialist degree in school administration at the University of Central Missouri.

Kristen is one busy person. In addition to her work as a classroom teacher she has been a literacy lead teacher, a professional learning communities coach, a member of the math essential skills and curriculum assessment team, and is currently the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President at Lee's Summit Elementary PTA. That's right. This teacher really does put the "T" in PTA.

Kristen firmly believes parent involvement is the key to the success of her students. Every year she works hard at building relationships with not only her students but also with the student's parents. And her students consistently do succeed. No she doesn't have cookie cutter students. By understanding and gearing her teaching style towards the many different learning styles each year's students bring, Kristen's classroom routinely achieves at high levels based on building, district and state standards. By thoroughly understanding the students and parents on a more personal level, Kristen is able to focus in on each student and find what will give them the greatest opportunity to reach their potential.

There is one more avenue of involvement PTA believes is important when talking about student success – community involvement. Kristen demonstrates her understanding of the importance



community involvement can make with regard to a positive learning experience for students. By working with the local newspaper, student's letters to the editor were published. Students not only got to see their words in print but also gained a better understanding of how writing is utilized beyond the classroom. In addition, the community was amazed at the level of skill these 3<sup>rd</sup> graders produced.

Missouri PTA applauds Kristen not only for all her hard work but her belief in children. Some time in the future there will be hundreds of successful students who when asked who made a difference in their lives they will answer "Ms. Merrell".

# M&M Night

By Dorothy Gardner, VP Communications

Immediate past National PTA President, Chuck Saylor, made it his personal mission to bring the importance of male involvement front and center. All children, Chuck has said, have both a mother and father but for some reason PTA members are disproportionately female. Sure there have been some great male individuals involved but they in the minority. And we are talking about quality male involvement, not merely utilizing the dads to help with set up, moving large items or serving as the grill master. It was a goal of Chuck's to see programs that really focused on engaging dads.

Last spring South Valley Middle School PTSA put together, for the first time, a family fun night centered around dads interacting with their students. Students were encouraged to attend with either their dad or another significant male in their lives.



The event was called M&M Night – Middle Schoolers and Males.

On this inaugural event, over 100 students participated. They flocked to the school on a spring Friday night and were not disappointed by what they found. Quite a variety of activities were set up for their enjoyment.

What's a school event without a great picture to commemorate it? In the school commons area a Harley was set up on the stage serving as the backdrop for the students and dads to have their picture taken upon. Next it was time to play. Provided for their enjoyment were Minute-to-Win It and Wii games. Impromptu bands were formed and "Rock Band" songs streamed out of the large group instruction room. For those who preferred to strategize a station was set up where they could work together as a team to build a tower out of only paper. These towers were serious business. One could have heard a pin drop as these dads and students focused on constructing their masterpieces. If participants were looking for something a bit more physically active basketball and handball was taking place in the gym. Others gravitated toward the more traditional board games spread out across the library. Rounding out their experience, snacks of nachos, popcorn and drinks were available for refreshments.

It's always hard to institute a new program. Having nothing to go on from past experience you have no way to know how it will be received. In this case the unit received wonderful comments from both the dads and the kids. "Thank you Linda (the chair of the event and PTA president at the time) for doing this. I actually took my daughter out to dinner first and we have made it a complete father-daughter night." Another Father expressed, "This is the first

time I have been in the school." PTA leaders watched as one child anxiously showed his dad all around the school pointing out his art projects on display. In fact the event was such a hit at the end of the night the PTA had trouble getting everyone to leave. That in itself is the sign of a truly successful event.



# The Chiefs sports lab

By Denise McCarter VP of Legislation and Advocacy

The Chiefs, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City along with the YMCA hosted a private reception on Wednesday, August 24<sup>th</sup> in the Founder's Club located at Arrowhead Stadium. The reception was to formally announce and celebrate their new partnership to fight childhood obesity and educate children about proper nutrition, exercise, and overall wellness. Because of Missouri PTA's emphasis on these areas, we were invited to participate in the event.

As part of a multi-year partnership, the Sports Lab will be branded as the Chiefs Sports Lab powered by Blue KC. The partnership is highlighted by a three-step program to identify at-risk children, provide them with an educational visit to the Chiefs Sports Lab powered by Blue KC, and supply them with a seven-day membership to an area YMCA to help promote healthy living and tackle childhood obesity. The Chiefs Sports Lab is an interactive exhibit for elementary school age children that encourages and educates about nutrition, exercise, and healthy living choices. To see a short video about the sports lab, visit <http://www.kcchiefs.com/media-center/videos/Welcome-to-the-Chiefs-Sports-Lab/ee84f691-e177-4512-ba20-5e1c80a70802>.

Missouri PTA supports the efforts of both the Kansas City Chiefs and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City to place this emphasis on the wellness of children in the Kansas City area.

# BooHoo..WooHoo

Back to school time isn't just a time of adjustment for kids but also parents. For some it's a sad occasion and for others a time to rejoice. Springfield Council of PTA's hosted a "BooHoo/WooHoo" back to school breakfast for anyone with a child heading back to school who wanted to attend. The purpose of the breakfast was threefold: meet new PTA members, possibly find new members to join PTA and just have fun. Dawn Thompson, Springfield Council of PTA's President, provided tissues for the BooHooers and party horns for the WooHooers. Already another one has been planned for next year. What a great way for parents to 'get back to school'.

# Internet Essentials from Comcast

National PTA® presents a new innovative opportunity from Comcast®. **Internet Essentials** provides affordable Internet service to households with children who receive free school lunches under the National School Lunch Program.

Families who participate in the program will receive the following: Affordable Internet at \$9.95/month + tax. No price increases, activation fees, nor equipment rental fees. A low cost computer, available for \$149.99 + tax Free Internet training

- ACQUIRE MATERIALS:** Assist with the distribution of **Internet Essentials** information and materials to those you serve. To order these materials, please visit the **Internet Essentials Partners Portal** to register your PTA® chapter as an **Internet Essentials** partner.
- HELP SPREAD THE WORD:** Actively spread the word and help encourage participation in the **Internet Essentials** program. For example, you can:
  - Share information about **Internet Essentials** by posting on your website, promoting it in newsletters, hanging posters in local club sites, distributing brochures through e-mail distribution or word-of-mouth with board, staff members, and volunteers, and attending local Internet Essentials launch events. Reach out to your local school districts, school principals and other community partners.
  - Use your social media outlets to spread the word to your constituents. Author "Letters to the Editor" in local papers.
- ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION:** Help kids in your schools who you think might qualify for **Internet Essentials** by signing up at **InternetEssentials.com**.

If your child receives free school lunches, you may qualify for Internet Essentials™ from Comcast.

## Bring the Internet home for just \$9.95 a month.

The world has gone digital. Internet service has become essential for success. That's why we created Internet Essentials. It's available to households with children who receive free school lunches under the National School Lunch Program. While participating in Internet Essentials, customers will receive:

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Get fast Internet service so the whole family can enjoy:

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**Sign up today!**

Call toll-free: 1-855-8-INTERNET (1-855-848-6378). For more information visit: [InternetEssentials.com](http://InternetEssentials.com).

## GROW YOUR MEMBERSHIP WITH JUST BETWEEN FRIENDS

Just Between Friends, the official PTA communications and membership management system, can help your unit grow membership and engage parents in your school community to be more involved in your unit's activities. It's easy – use Just Between Friends to communicate with your entire school community; earn revenue share; and manage your membership. *And, Just Between Friends is a FREE, private, secure system!*

### Benefits to your Unit

- **Communicate** – send emails, with attachments and automatic reminders, to your entire school community to keep them updated and get them involved. *Plus, your unit can earn revenue just by sending emails through JBF!*
- **Manage Membership** – easily enter members, print membership cards and develop membership rosters.
- **Create Directories** – JBF is the simplest way to create online or print directories.

### Benefits to your Parents

Just Between Friends is an easy way for parents to manage their family's participation in your unit's activities as well as their other group activities.

- **Personal Household Page** -- When a parent accepts an invitation to join your unit's communications group, they have a private personal online page showing all of their family's events, deadlines and activities related to your unit and other group activities.
- **Customizable Directory** -- No more looking for different directories to find people. With JBF's customizable directory, parents can keep their school directories and personal contacts all in one place.
- **Customizable Calendar** – When your unit emails events and deadlines to parents, the events and deadlines will automatically be posted to the household's calendar. Plus, parents can post personal items to their calendar.

NEW -- [m.JBFnow.com](http://m.JBFnow.com) -- access your private secure JBF account via your web-enabled smart phone!

### Enter your Unit Today

If your unit isn't using Just Between Friends, it's easy to get started. Simply visit [www.JustBetweenFriends.com/PTAquickstart](http://www.JustBetweenFriends.com/PTAquickstart) to enter your unit. Then, visit [www.LearnJBF.com](http://www.LearnJBF.com) for lots of how-to information. If you have questions, please visit [www.JustBetweenFriends.com](http://www.JustBetweenFriends.com) and click on "Contact Us" or call 412-561-0600 x 0 and a knowledgeable, friendly Just Between Friends Customer Support Representative will help.

## MISSOURI PTA ON FACEBOOK

Are you one of the 380 people who follow Missouri PTA on Facebook? If not check us out at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Missouri-PTA/147585775628>. Not only do we utilize this form of social networking to keep our followers informed with the most current up-to-date information, but it is also a great place to network with other PTA members across the state. Visit our wall and let us know what is going on with your unit. We love to hear your stories.

## PTA ADVOCACY: A LEGACY IN LEADERSHIP

National PTA is proud to announce the release of the video *PTA Advocacy: A Legacy in Leadership*. For more than 115 years, PTA has advocated for children and families in education, juvenile justice and children's health. PTA's rich advocacy history and successes, as well as our promising future has been documented in a 5-minute video. This video was designed to be utilized by PTAs to educate and recruit potential members, increase the advocacy of current members and increase sponsorship dollars. You can view the video on NPTA website at <http://www.pta.org/4786.asp>.

## Mark Your Calendar

### November

*PTA Healthy Lifestyles Month*

- 1 Dues to State office
- 8 Election Day
- 11 Veteran's Day
- 17 National Parent Involvement Day
- 24 Thanksgiving

### December

- 1 World AIDS Day
- 1 Dues to State Office
- 1 **Financial forms due to state Office**
- 7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
- 25 Christmas Day

### January

*National Birth Defects Prevention Month*

- 1 New Year's Day
- 1 Dues to state office
- 16 Martin Luther King Day
- 19 Reflections due to state office by 4:30pm

### February

*American Heart Month*

- 1 Dues to state office
- 1 National Freedom Day
- 6-10 National School Counseling week
- 12-18 Take Your Family to School Week
- 17 Founder's Day
- 20 President's Day
- 21 Mardi Gras

### March

- 1 Last day for postmarked dues to count towards awards
- 2 Read Across America Day
- 7 Missouri Principal's Day
- 31 Officer's form due to state office

## FOUNDER'S DAY

Have you made plans to celebrate Founder's Day? Founder's Day is an opportunity to reflect and celebrate all the great things that make up PTA. Chances are many of your members may not realize why and how PTA actually began. Whether you plan something on the actual day, February 17<sup>th</sup>, or some other time during the month, take this opportunity to educate your members about the rich history of PTA. Information on our Founder's can be found at <http://www.pta.org/1164.asp>.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS

Just a little can go a long way. Through donations we are able to do great things.

### Scholarship Fund

Bingham Middle School PTSA  
North Kansas City Council PTA

### Founder's Gift

Raytown Council PTA  
Bingham Middle School PTSA  
Ozark Council PTA

### Building Fund

Bingham Middle School PTSA  
North Kansas City Council PTA  
Truman Patriots Club PTSA

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# Reflections "Diversity Means"

All entries are due no later than 4:30 pm  
Thursday  
January 19, 2012

