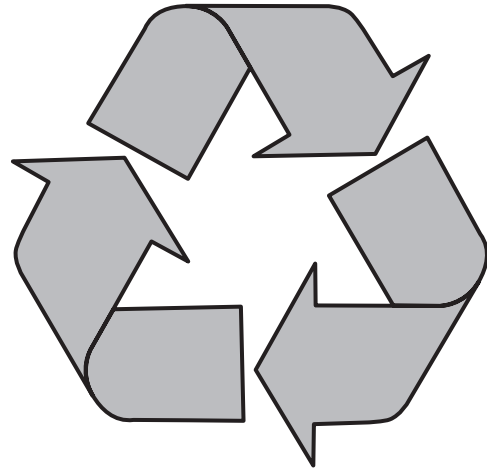


CONTACT

Volume 94, Issue 2
November 2012



MOPTA GOES GREEN



Missouri PTA will begin our “Go Green” initiative this fall. In December all officers whose information was provided to Missouri PTA in March will receive a post card announcing the arrival of the “Winter Packet” to the Members Only section of the website. The Winter Packet is a wealth of information which assures that your unit will have a strong finish to the school year.

Units which need a hard copy will be able to call the Missouri State PTA office and one will be sent out (limit one per unit). We hope that you share our excitement as we look for ways to help our units, save cost and support our environment.

Cover photo:

Pony Express Region School of Information attendees broadening their knowledge and skills.

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

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

PLEASE SHARE THIS MAGAZINE.

Information from this magazine may be excerpted for other PTA publications as long as credit is given to Missouri PTA and any byline that may appear with the item must be included.

National PTA Office: 1250 N. Pitt Street, Alexandria, VA 22314

Phone: 800-307-4782 (4PTA), www.pta.org.

MO PTA 800-328-7330

President's Message By Donna Petiford, Missouri PTA President



*"It takes as much energy to wish as it does to plan."
- Eleanor Roosevelt*

Being thankful is something we learned from the first Thanksgiving, but really, thankfulness does not have a season. When working with volunteers, we need to remember to be especially thankful for their commitment and continued efforts. Being thankful does not have to be elaborate, just sincere. Here are some great ideas that I have borrowed for showing appreciation to the volunteers in your life:

- Write at least 3 quick thank you notes each week (email notes are ok, handwritten notes are better).
- Hand out Hershey's Hugs® and Kisses®.
- Give a 100 Grand® candy bar with a note saying "You're Worth 100 Grand to us!"
- Combine the last two ideas!
- Share a giant cookie with the words "Thank You" iced on it.
- Take pictures throughout the year of volunteers in action and/or have children make a "thank you" video and present these at a Volunteer Appreciation event.

- Thank you notes from children are always appreciated and admired!
- Place a party hat, noisemaker and cupcake (or cake pop) at each chair for a meeting and celebrate everyone's "un-birthday".
- Send email greeting cards (or traditional greeting cards as these are becoming a rare treat).

You may have other great ideas to share as well, if so, please post them to the Missouri PTA Facebook page or the National PTA great idea bank.

While I am on the subject of being thankful, I would like to extend my sincere thank you to everyone who helped make our 2012 Convention and 100th Anniversary celebration a success. Considering all the volunteers who helped coordinate all of the events and all who participated, Missouri PTA has much to be thankful for, and much to look forward to!

As I have said before, 100 years is an achievement few people attain in life. It is similarly rare for organizations. As we go forward we will continue to honor our commitment of advocating for all children and families as we plan (not wish) for a future where all children reach their full potential.

Have a wonderful holiday season!

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

Parents Agree: Funding Shortfalls Shortchange Students, Families, and Communities

By Betsy Landers, President of the National PTA

Much has been made of the divisions pointed out in the **2012 PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools** (<http://www.pdkintl.org/poll/index.htm>) released recently. Public perception varies widely on issues from the college-readiness of all students to school vouchers.

Perhaps more revealing are the issues on which our nation agrees. We agree we need to close the achievement gap, support schools in urban areas, and do something about the lack of financial support plaguing our schools.

In fact, the poll showed lack of funding for education as the No. 1 concern of parents, outdistancing the top response from 10 years ago, drugs and violence in schools. Nationally, 35 percent of responses cited lack of funding as the biggest challenge facing their schools. Among public school parents, 43 percent cited funding as the biggest challenge. Regretfully, the challenge will loom even larger if the \$1.2 trillion in across-the-board cuts Congress agreed to in last summer's debt limit deal materialize this coming January. "Sequestration" would have a potentially devastating impact on public education funding, and would disproportionately affect high need districts already struggling to do much more with far less. Our public education system is facing a very frightening and

very real reality.

What's worse is that lack of funding contributes to so many of the other issues affecting student achievement, whether it's the achievement gap, the dropout rate or even the nutritional value of school lunches. It's no wonder that 70 percent of respondents support giving parents whose children attend a failing school the option of mounting a petition drive to request removal of the teachers and principal.

Enrollment is up. Need is up. Resources are down. With so many struggles, parents and communities must be empowered to drive change, but until education funding becomes a top priority in state capitals and on Capitol Hill, parents need to think beyond their individual communities and advocate for *all* children in every district, across their state and across the nation. The challenges that parents face are shared, as should be fighting for the solutions.

What can you do? A simple phone call or e-mail can make all the difference. Parents must reach out to their legislators and encourage them to prioritize education funding in the face of deep deficit reductions. Parents can also mobilize behind the implementation of Common Core State Standards, which three out of four Americans believe will provide more consistency in education and help the nation compete globally, according to the poll. Parents can also join PTA

so their voice can join with 5 million others speaking out for children in the nation's capital and in state capitals across the country.

The bottom line is that parents *must* be engaged in the process. Education reform, on any scale, will prove unsustainable without the support of parents. Period. In fact, few factors can influence student achievement more than parental engagement. This fact, coupled with their collective voice, empowers parents to be the real agents of change.

As parents, we strive to protect our children from harm and to ensure quality educational opportunities. Change begins in the community, but the nation benefits from change occurring on broader levels. Too many parents believe they don't have the voice or authority to bring about the changes necessary to ensure the success of their children. However, speaking together as one voice — millions of parents nationwide can and will force our elected officials at the local, state and national levels to take notice and prioritize children. Together, we can demand better education that is both equitably financed and reflective of our nation's shared interest.



Missouri PTA and the Kansas City Chiefs have arranged for an exclusive **Missouri PTA Appreciation Discount** for the 2012 season good for **ALL** home games. You have access to these single game tickets months before the general public. Please feel free to share this discount with family/friends/etc.

The discounts listed below can save you anywhere from \$15-25 per ticket with no shipping or handling fees. Pricing has **lowered** in the lower level for 2012 (all tickets are subject to availability).

Upper Level:

Red View: \$39.00
Red 50: \$45.00
TD Zone: \$54.00
Red Reserve: \$59.00
Red Select: \$78.00

Lower Level:

Red Zone (corner): \$80.00
T.D. Zone (end zone): \$69.00

To order tickets, please see the Members Only section of this website for a special discount link for PTA members. The Members Only section is password protected. Your username and password are provided when you activate your new and improved PTA Membership card.

PTA and the IRS

As of 2006 every non-profit organization, including all PTAs, must file a 990 annual information form with the IRS. A three year grace period was extended to all non-profit groups; that three year window has now closed. Effective this year, any non-profit that has not filed for three consecutive years is subject to removal of their non-profit status. To become reinstated non-profit groups that have not filed may have to file a 1023 Application for Non-Profit Status including fees of \$400 and up. Has your PTA filed a 990 this year? While the most detailed and correct information is available through the IRS, here are a few pointers that may help.

Your Fiscal Year

Your PTA's fiscal year is defined in your bylaws. The fiscal year covers a full 12 months and most local PTA years run from July 1-June 30 and others from June 1-May 31 or August 1-July 31. When the fiscal year bridges parts of two calendar years then the corresponding tax year is defined as the first year of those twelve months, such as for the 2010-2011 fiscal year tax year is 2011. If you find a discrepancy between the fiscal year on your bylaws and that which is listed with the IRS, please call the Missouri PTA office and ask for assistance to make the correction.

IRS Filing Deadline

The IRS filing is due the fifteenth day of the fifth month following the close of the fiscal year. If your fiscal year ended June 30, then your filing deadline is November 15th. You can file any time between the close of your fiscal year and the deadline. Do not be late. The IRS is quite serious about imposing penalties and fines for being tardy. If you are genuinely running late you can file an extension for the 990-EZ but not for the 990-N.

Full PTA Name

While the name of your PTA may seem very obvious to you, the IRS has its own labeling system. Since all our local PTAs are part of Missouri PTA and National PTA you will find your PTA listed as "PTA - Missouri Congress-- (local unit name)". Missouri PTA has listed the name we have for your PTA on the Local Unit Information Page included in the pocket folder of the Summer Tool Kit from Missouri PTA.

990-N or 990-EZ?

The 990-N is filed in 2012 by PTAs that brought in \$50,000 or less in gross receipts (which includes all money deposited in your PTA account except the state and national portions of dues) in 2011. This is filed online at <http://epostcard.form990.org/>. If you have an email address and the following information: EIN, official PTA name and alternate names, PTA mailing address (school's address), president's name and address, the PTA's web address if it has one, the PTA fiscal year and proof of the annual income (treasurer's annual report and the Annual Financial Review (audit) report), you will be able to make the 990-N filing in about 15 minutes. If no 990-N has been previously filed the site will give you the option to file for previous years. Once you have filed for any one year, the site will not allow you to file a 990-N for a previous year. Your filing will be confirmed with an email notice. Print off the email and save in PTA records, and forward the email to Missouri PTA. A 990-EZ and Schedule A should be filed in 2012 by PTAs who brought in more than \$50,000 but less than \$500,000 in gross receipts in 2011. These forms are more detailed so plan time to complete them thoroughly; incomplete returns will be rejected. A local PTA is a subordinate

of Missouri PTA; therefore use Missouri PTA's Group Exemption Number (GEN) 2198 on Schedule A, check Box 9 on the first page. Fill in Schedule A Part III using your past treasurers' Annual Financial Reports and/or previous 990 filings. Forms and instructions can be found at www.irs.gov. Filing can be done electronically or on paper, either way save a printed copy. If you chose to have your filing done by a tax expert make sure they have experience with group non-profits.

Letters From the IRS

The IRS makes every attempt to contact a PTA for which there are questions or notifications. Any letter from the IRS can be quite intimidating, however do not hide or throw away the letters. Your PTA should respond promptly before the stated deadline, if the deadline has passed call immediately to explain. Supply the requested information. If there are extenuating circumstances then explain them. Always use the PTA EIN number on all correspondence. Be sure to include copies of the IRS letter and any enclosed signature forms with your new/corrected information as instructed. Be sure to keep copies of all correspondence. If you have received a letter stating you are incurring penalties and fines, respond immediately. Ask about your options. If you have resolved the information but are still facing penalties and fines you can try to request a waiver, reduction and/or payment plan; this is not always possible but it is worth a try.

Be Responsible

Each PTA will have its own standard as to whose individual responsibility it is to file the 990. The outgoing treasurer will know the financial information best, the new treasurer may be called upon to do any follow up work; it may be a project best shared by both treasurers shortly after the close of the fiscal year. No matter who is supposed to take care of it, every board member should be aware of the filing and if the IRS was satisfied. Has your PTA filed a 990 this year?

Copy to Missouri PTA

Every PTA must send a copy of their 990-N email receipt or of their 990-EZ filing to Missouri PTA by December 1st. Copies of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report and the unit's Annual Financial Review (audit) should be sent in as well. The IRS asks Missouri PTA to prove which local PTAs are in good standing, and having these documents on file is our proof of your standing.

Resources

For more information please consult the IRS at www.irs.gov, put key phrases in the search box. Also check the Missouri PTA Summer Tool Kit sent to all presidents, the "Members Only" section of mopta.org, and the National PTA's Quick Reference Guide Money Matters included in the Official PTA Kit sent to presidents upon request. Money Matters can be viewed online at www.pta.org/running_a_pta.asp, follow the link to Quick Reference (user name and password provided when you activate your new and improved PTA membership card). Missouri PTA may also be able to help, call 1-800-328-7330 or email office@mopta.org

Local Springfield Unit “Works Out” to get lean.

The Laura Ingalls Wilder Elementary PTA, began a program in 2009 to address the issue of childhood obesity. This program which started as a “Healthy Lifestyles” program has evolved to include several other options such as Wildcats in-School Training, Green Team-in Training, Step Club and the Lean Green Running Machine 5k and 1 mile Family Fun Run.

They have events that keep parents and students exercising and preparing for another event all year long. The model used by the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society’s Team-In Training inspired their Green Team-In Training which begins each spring in preparation for the 5K/1mile race. The training plan was developed by a certified personal trainer and contains age appropriate exercise to aid the volunteers who man the program after school for 9 weeks. Many families run with their student each week and the vast majority of the participants run the 5k as a family unit. The running

club has grown to 1/3 of the school’s student population. The after-school program is paired with the morning Step-Club program. In this program students and many of their parents walk the track or the hallways each morning before school. A reward necklace is given to each participant; and they receive a new charm for each mile walked. To be sure every student was included, the principal with the help of the PTA does a set of exercises which are performed right after the morning announcements – these exercises were developed in conjunction with the Physical Education program and each day is a different exercise.

The school expands the program each year to add something new and exciting for the students and their families.

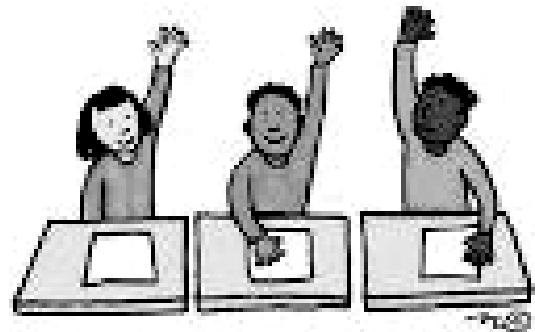
Missouri PTA is proud to present the 2012 Health/Wellness and Safety Education Award to Laura Ingalls Wilder Elementary PTA of Springfield, Missouri.

Student Takes Action – and not just standing on the sidelines.

In January of 2012, the local news in the Kansas City Area, carried a story about a student who was not just going to stand on the sidelines. Jacob Barns, 9th grader at South Valley Jr. High, and member of the South Valley Jr. High PTSA, posted a unique video encouraging other students to stand up against bullying.

The video was featured on the local news that morning, as well as link to his video which he posted to you tube. In his video Jacob gives the facts about suicide and bullying and how it affects people, through the use of post-it notes; while the music “How to Save a Life” by The Fray’s plays in the background. Jacob’s intent was to get the word out and let victims know to hold their heads high.

The video has now had thousands of hits and dozens of likes; and is an extremely close and personal issue for Jacob as a 17-year old friend committed suicide last year.



Jacob is making a difference and will be a positive role model to students not only at South Valley Jr. High in Liberty, Missouri; but also to those around the world who have watched his video and have vowed to make a difference. Missouri PTA is proud to honor Jacob with the Missouri PTA Student Safety Award for 2012.

WAYS to keep your Membership Campaign Blasting Off!

1. **LOCAL MEMBERSHIP CONTEST:** Challenge each existing member to sell just one additional membership and get their membership card number entered in a drawing. The result is a 100% membership increase.
2. **REMIND THEM THEY HAVEN'T JOINED YET:** Attract attention to your second request letter by crumpling it up, then flattening it out and writing in red across the top, "I'm sure this got lost in the pile of paperwork that comes with the start of school!"
3. **FOCUS ON THE ARTS:** Sponsor a concert for instrumental and vocal students or an art show. Use this opportunity as a big promotion night for PTA membership.
4. **GO ON TOUR:** Train a "speaker's bureau" group to go to various groups and speak about the benefits of PTA. Perhaps a parent, teacher and student could share their perspectives.
5. **THE TRAVELING MEMBERSHIP DISPLAY:** Develop a display that highlights the benefits and accomplishments of PTA. Remember to include details on how to join. Make arrangements with local businesses, i.e. banks and grocery stores to have the display in their workplace for a few days then move it to the next business. You will be able to reach those community members that do not frequent school events.
6. **NATIONAL BENEFIT PROVIDERS: ALWAYS...ALWAYS...ALWAYS** be sure to 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 not to the school as a whole.

Missouri PTA Distinguished Service Award

Would you like to recognize and honor an extraordinary person for their service and dedication to PTA? The Missouri PTA Distinguished Service Award is a wonderful way to show gratitude and appreciation for a person's devotion to the children and the purposes of PTA.

The Missouri Distinguished Service Award fee is \$50.00 plus shipping and handling.

This fee is divided equally between the Missouri PTA Scholarship Fund and the Missouri PTA general fund. The award includes a letter of recognition from the state president, a certificate suitable for framing, and a lapel pin. The Award form can be found in the Tool Kit or online at mopta.org at "Forms/Awards." Please allow two weeks for delivery of items.

And the Winners are:

The 2012 Missouri PTA Newsletter Award was awarded to Manor Hill Elementary PTA, Pony Express Region

The 2012 Missouri PTA Website Award was awarded to St. Joseph Council PTA, Pony Express Region

Congratulations

www.mopta.org

MEMBERSHIP AWARDS **DON'T FORGET TO APPLY!** **Deadline April 1st**

Have your unit recognized for its great work by applying for our membership awards. It's easier than you think. Award applications were provided in the tool kit you received last summer and are also available on the state website, www.mopta.org, under "Forms/Applications". Most take no longer than a few minutes to fill out, so what are you waiting for?

Applications must be postmarked by April 1, 2012.

Outstanding Membership Campaign Grant

This award and a check for \$100.00 will be presented to the unit with the best overall membership campaign. Many of you did great things. Let us know how you did it -- you may take the prize AND inspire other units to do the same!

Unit Membership Awards – Exclusive 100 & Silver Acorn

You can qualify for the Exclusive 100 Award in one of these three ways: 100% increase (membership must be doubled from previous year)

- 100 member increase over previous year
- 100% enrollment (memberships equal or exceed school's total enrollment as recorded by the school principal on the application)

Qualify for the Silver Acorn Award in one of two ways:

- membership total equals 75-99% of school's total enrollment as recorded by the school principal on the application
- membership total equals a 75-99% increase over the previous year's recorded membership total

100% Faculty Award/Golden Apple Award

Qualify for this award by having all Full-time Certified personnel within your school as your PTA members. Combined units count faculty for each school within the unit. Along with your unit award, your school principal will also receive a special "Golden Apple" award certificate for the school.

Students Make A Difference Award

This award is presented to the PTSA with the highest percentage of students as PTA members based on the school enrollment as recorded by the school principal on the application. You are required to differentiate between student and adult members on your roster.

Council Membership Awards

- Oak Leaf Award (2% membership increase within council's combined units membership totals from previous year)
- Exclusive 100 Award (increase of 100 members from previous year's recorded council's combined units membership)

Get those applications in and make your unit an Award Winner!

The A B C's of Who to Invite to Join PTA (an oldie, but goodie!)

All family members
Boards of Education, Businesses
Community members & leaders, Crossing guards, Custodians
Drivers of buses, Dads
Everyone who cares about kids
Former PTA members
Graduates from previous years, Grandparents
Health groups & nurses
Interns & student teachers – Include all groups at school
Journalists, Juvenile Court Schools
Kindergarten parents
Librarians
Moms
New families, Neighbors
Officials, Orthodontists (dentists & doctors)
Principals & vice-principals
Quiet, as well as vocal parents – Query everyone
Relatives, Religious & civic leaders
Students, Secretaries, Staff, Service clubs
Teachers & Teacher aides
Umpires & coaches
Veterans, Visitors, Volunteers
...all Voices to make PTA's everychild.onevoice.
Well-Wishers, Wonderful Workers –
Whoever wants to help kids
X out no one - invite everyone
Yard duty, Youth group leaders
Zealously ask and promote PTA!

NPTA Member Benefits

Introducing our newest member
benefit provider !!!



eTrak (powered by Verizon) helps PTA parents *Always Know* their children are safe with its revolutionary new location-tracking device. **For a limited time only, PTA members can order the device for free (regularly \$99).** There is an activation charge of \$39 and a monthly fee of \$15. This lightweight domino-sized device uses highly accurate, patented GPS+ technology to show a child's location on any smartphone or computer. And in the case of an emergency, the device sends messages with its location at the push of a button to multiple recipients.

- **SocialScout™** - Get peace of mind with a new tool to track your child's social networking and mobile phone activity. As a PTA member, you save 10% on SocialScout™, a parental intelligence system that helps you monitor and quickly analyze your child's social networking and mobile phone interactions. Keep your kids safe while safeguarding their privacy and reputation on sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter. Find out:
 - Who are your child's online friends and view new friend requests
 - What's being posted about your child
 - How and when your child is using technology
- **SHARP ELECTRONICS** - The PTA/Sharp Electronics member store is now available to offer you valuable member discounts on Sharp AQUOS Liquid Crystal Televisions and other home electronics products! Every unit is offered at special PTA member pricing, guaranteeing you the lowest possible price.
- **T-MOBILE** – 14% discount off your monthly service charges for new and existing T-Mobile subscribers, plus additional savings for new subscribers.
- **Hertz** - We're at the Airport and in your Neighborhood. The world's largest airport general use car rental brand, operating from approximately 8,500 locations in 146 countries worldwide is proud to offer PTA members benefits like: Savings of up to 20% off rentals, special promotions in addition to your discount and Fee Waived Hertz #1 Club Gold® enrollment—a \$60 savings!
- **METLIFE** - MetLife Auto & Home® has worked with PTA to bring PTA members a group insurance program that comes with special savings and benefits. This program includes competitive benefits and superior discounts for members.

Check out the National PTA, 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.

10 Ways to Get Men More Involved in PTAs

How can we get more men involved? National PTA surveyed nearly 2,700 men in fall 2004 to find out. The findings from that survey have been distilled to 10 ways a local PTA can break down barriers to male involvement and increase male PTA membership.

1. Make the membership pitch relevant to males.

The number one reason why survey respondents joined PTA was “to work to improve the school for the benefit of my child/children.” Therefore, your recruitment materials and your membership pitch should explain how men’s involvement in PTA would benefit their children and their children’s schools. A dad’s involvement in PTA:

- Shows added interest in his child’s education and school activities;
- Shows greater support for his child’s teachers and school; and
- Improves relationships between parents and school personnel.

2. Use specific messaging and advertising aimed at men.

When asked what would encourage men to join PTA, men most frequently answered male-oriented advertising. Eighty-seven percent of the men surveyed believe that PTA values men, but 67 percent don’t believe PTA does a good job promoting male involvement. Be sure to show men’s involvement in your PTA in your communications to members and potential members.

3. Just ask them.

Nearly half of the men who responded to the survey said men don’t join PTA because they aren’t asked. Just asking could pay big dividends in membership recruitment for your PTA! Tips on making “the ask” successful are available in the Go Ahead and Ask handout in the 2005 Annual Resources for PTAs.

4. Ask the women in your PTA to invite the men in their children’s lives to join PTA.

Research reveals that women can influence men to join PTA. More than 90 percent of male PTA members indicated in the survey that their spouses, who were already members, contributed largely to their involvement in PTA. Yet both mom and dad are PTA members in less than 50 percent of families with children in school.

5. Create more volunteer opportunities and special events for dads.

Survey respondents stated a preference for hands-on projects and suggested events such as “dads only” events, school carnivals, sports activities, father-daughter and father-son activities, and back-to-school fests.

6. Emphasize that becoming a PTA member doesn’t necessarily involve a large time commitment.

Seventy-one percent of the males surveyed indicated that “time” is a barrier to male involvement in PTA. It doesn’t have to be, though. When talking about time, they were referring to the time necessary to volunteer. Assure new members that membership is not synonymous with volunteering. Keep this in mind: If they join, they may eventually become volunteers; but if they never become members, they’ll never become volunteers.

7. Give it to ‘em straight.

Almost half of the men surveyed indicated that they want volunteer roles and expectations clearly defined. Telling them the what, when, where, why, and how would make them more likely to join and to volunteer.

8. Communicate with men the way they want to be reached.

Men want fewer meetings, and they want the meetings PTAs do have to be at more convenient times, such as after work. In addition, men want meetings to have a clear agenda and be results-oriented, rather than exploratory sessions on an issue or topic. Men prefer to receive PTA communications in bulleted lists, as summary points, in e-mails, or as quick bits of information in newsletters.

9. Seek male members in the community.

Instead of waiting for men to come to your PTA, take your PTA to where men often meet. Present the PTA message at local service clubs that have a large male contingent, such as Rotary, Kiwanis, or Lions clubs. If men see that other club members support PTA’s work, they might be more likely to join.

10. Recognize and celebrate members.

Publicize your successes. When you start getting more men involved in your PTA, let the community know. Success begets success. Reinforcing men’s contributions, while being mindful of what all members do for PTA, creates a positive atmosphere. Recognize members, thank them often, and celebrate your PTA’s accomplishments and success!

15 Ideas for Family Fitness

Kids these days are spending too much time sitting still, and it’s becoming a major health risk. American children 8 years old and above spend an average of 6.5 hours a day engaging with media technologies including watching TV, using the computer and playing video games. Studies have shown that the more TV kids watch, the more likely they are to be overweight.



Increasing physical activity improves cardiovascular fitness, helps prevent obesity, promotes a healthy lifestyle, boosts self-esteem and confidence, and reduces stress. You don’t need to have a lot of fancy equipment or a membership at a health club—there are many ways to make your family’s lifestyle more active.

To overcome resistance from reluctant youngsters, it helps to make the activity fun. For example, don’t just run with a young child—run like a penguin or hop like a kangaroo! Or have a destination like the park or zoo!

Here are 15 ideas for getting your family on the move:

- Take active vacations (hiking, swimming, skiing).
- At the mall or when running errands, use the stairs rather than the elevator.
- Get pedometers and have a contest to see who takes the most steps in a given week.
- Start a new tradition: take the whole family out for an after-dinner walk around the neighborhood or park.
- Take on active chores as a family (gardening, raking leaves, shoveling snow, or washing the car).
- Spend an afternoon at the local playground.
- Play a sport together (basketball, soccer, baseball, softball, touch football).
- Dance to your favorite music.
- Go for a family bike ride.
- Plant a family garden.
- Play miniature golf.
- Go to the zoo.
- Take the dog for a long walk.
- Whenever possible, walk short distances rather than using your car. When you drive, park a little farther away from the store.
- Play games that your kids love (tag, Simon Says, Red Light Green Light, Duck-Duck Goose)

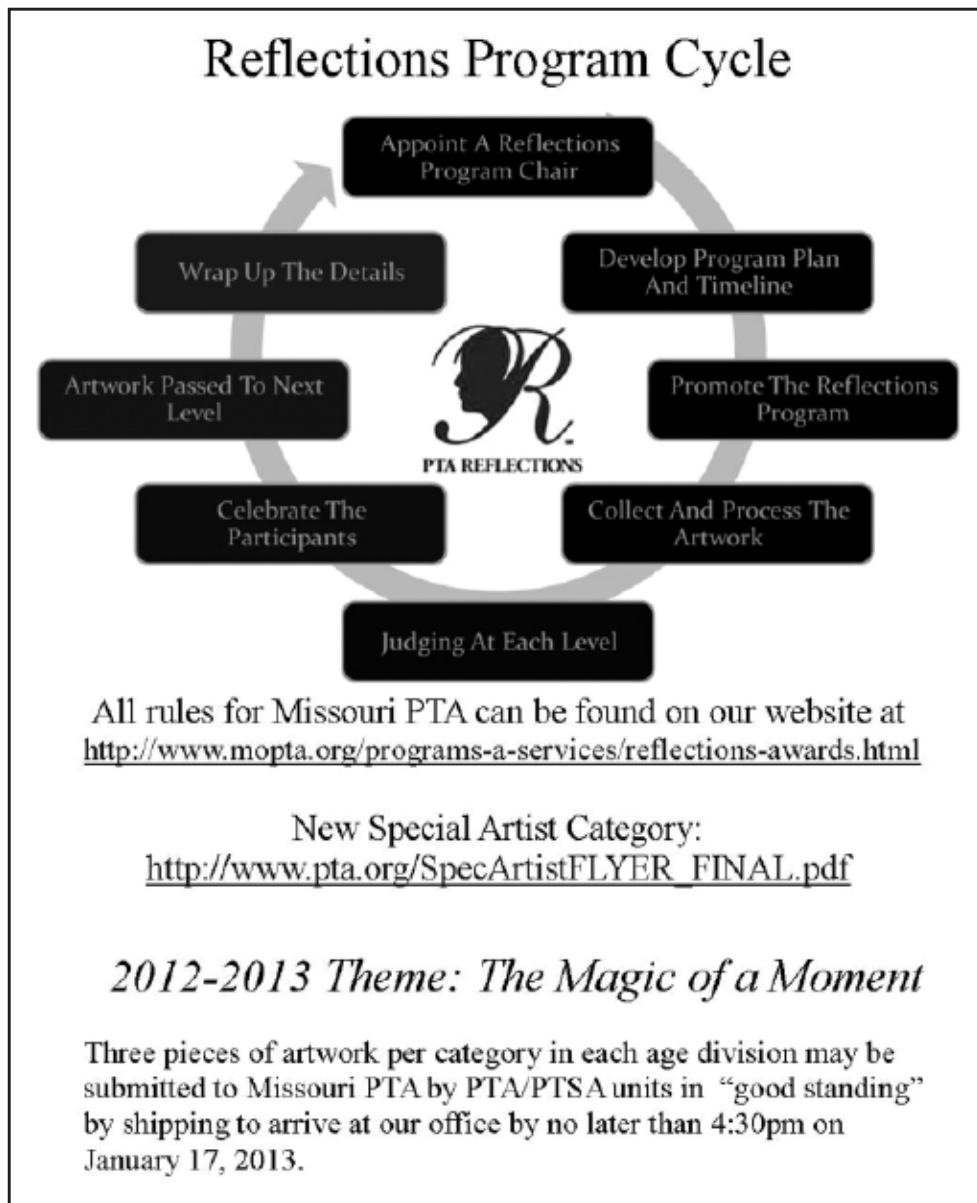
For more information and resources visit www.pta.org and www.parentsaction.org

Reflections – Where Should I Be?

By now many of you have gotten the word out about the Reflections program in your school, the entries are coming in or are just being finished by the students; and you are wondering two things: 1) what have I gotten myself into and 2) what am I supposed to be doing.

Well the answer to the second question is quite simple – you should have your judges lined up and ready to begin judging your entries. I strongly suggest that you have at least two judges per art category. Depending on how many entries you have you might want to have one per art category per age division. Have the judges score the entries for you and select the number of winners. Missouri PTA always has the judges at the state level, select the top 5 winning entries and 5 more for Honorable Mentions. The next thing that I would be doing at this time is making sure you are following the new online process and getting your entries updated and all forms completed and ready to be shipped. Remember the entries and artwork have to be at the Missouri State office on January 17, 2013 at 4:30 pm. As always if you have questions, contact your council Reflections Chair or the Missouri PTA Reflections chair or the Missouri PTA Office.

For the answer to question 1 – in my opinion you have just gotten yourself involved in one of the most rewarding programs ever. The smiles on students faces when they are honored (in whatever method you choose) is priceless. To think that you are giving a student who might not otherwise get the opportunity or might not feel comfortable in voicing their thoughts out loud the opportunity and a medium to express themselves and that others are going to listen, read, or look at what they think is also Priceless.



Remember that Reflections is designed for Students to be able to express themselves in the arts, and each and every student should be honored and applauded for just entering into the program. Support them in any way that you can and Missouri PTA and National PTA will support you in answering your questions the best that we can and everyone will be a winner.

Advocate – Yes You Can

Anyone can advocate. No special skills or in depth knowledge about the legislative process is required. Your passion to be a voice for *everychild* is all that is needed. Pick one or two of the ideas below and become an advocate today.

- Not a member of the JC/DC network? Join today!! The only way to compete with the lobbyist and special interest groups is to join together and shout louder. Forms can be found in the Took kit, Winter Packet or go online to the Missouri PTA webpage, www.mopta.org, and click on the “subscribe to Legislative alerts” in the ‘Act Now’ box on the front page. When legislative alerts arise be sure to take action.
- Education yourself – Did you miss the Legislative workshops at the MOPTA convention? PTA has some great E-Learning tools. Check out the “Writing and Proposing PTA Resolutions” and “Effective Advocacy for Your Child” online at <http://www.pta.org/5117.asp>.
- See if your school is hosting a mock election on Election Day. Ask your child what they are learning and see if the school needs any volunteers on Election Day.
- VOTE!!! During the 2008 Election only 71% of the eligible voters registered to vote. Out of those registered only 63.6% voted. That

means out of every 100 people eligible to vote only 45 actually voted. Your voice does make a difference.

- Does your unit or council have an appointed Legislative Chairman? If not find someone who is willing and interested in legislation and advocacy. Remember PTA was formed over 100 years ago not as a fundraising means for individual schools but as an advocacy organization dedicated to speak out for all children. That’s why we are proudly PTA instead of PTO.

PTA Day at the White House



Past MOPTA President Kathy Nevans, MOPTA VP and Director of Legislation and Advocacy Dorothy Gardner, Past MOPTA President Tina Zubeck

On August 10th 2012 150 PTA members from around the country visited the White House for a briefing with top-level policy members from the White House and Department of Education. Questions submitted from PTA members across the country and those present were broadcast live. You can view the video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=f9Dqdoeu1Z4

So What Are Common Core Standards?

By Dorothy Gardner VP and Director Legislation and Advocacy Chances are you have probably heard of the term “Common Core Standards” but might not be completely sure what it entails. Common Core Standards were developed out of a need to create a standard in education goals that could be implemented in all states. The U.S. Constitution establishes state control over public education. Consequently, current standards in education

varies depending upon which state you reside. This problem was exasperated by the 100% proficient mandate created when No Child Left Behind was signed into law in 2002. Some states took the high road and developed standards with ambitious goals of achievement in mind. Others opted instead to set the bar low in order to allow students to easily pass the proficient mandate. This created inequity with regard to what students were taught from state to state with mandated testing cited as the root of the problem. In Missouri our students must take the MAP test in order to determine proficiently. Both teachers and parents have come to the conclusion this is not the most proficient way to determine whether or not our children are really learning what they should at each grade level. Many say the mandate has created an environment of “teaching to the test” rather than engaging students. Instead the focus should be on making sure all students have the means to be college and career ready upon graduation.

The success of your child once they become an adult does depend on the success of all children with regard to education. We, as a nation, are stronger and more vital when we have a work force adept to meet the challenges of a global economy. In 1995 the U.S. was tied for first in the world when it came to young adults with a college education. By 2004 we had dropped to 14th. Out of 30 industrialized countries, the U.S. ranked 25th in math and 21st in science in 2006. When we talk about jobs and unemployment we really should be talking about education.



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PTA Day at the White House

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The New York Times and Wall Street Journal recently ran stories about companies, both large and small, having difficulty finding qualified applicants to fill open positions. And we aren't talking about a few jobs here and there. Tens of thousands of jobs currently sit unfilled. Colleges and Universities complain about the high rate of freshman requiring remedial classes upon entering college. Clearly something is wrong with the current system.

Common Core Standards (often referred to as CCSS – Common Core State Standards Initiative) is based on the notion that math and reading skills for each grade level should be the same regardless of your zip code. The standards provide a clear definition of what is expected – one that students, parents and teachers can easily understand. The skills needed to be college and career ready will be clearly laid out. Students moving from one district to another, regardless the State should experience a smoother transition. Parents will be able to interact with teachers in a much more engaged manner. Teachers can focus on developing curriculum that promotes a deep understanding of the subject matter rather than 'trying to fit it all in'. The standards will combine the best and highest standards already being utilized in the states that originally set those ambitious goals. Other states will have to incorporate the more strenuous standards. Missouri, especially with the adoption of MSIP5, is one of the states with high standards already set in place. Proponents believe the adoption of common core standards by all states and using the standards as an approach to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (referred to as No Child Left Behind) would eliminate the need for additional testing and replace existing testing.

Currently 48 states and three territories have voluntarily joined Common Core State Standards Initiative. Two organizations representing the states, the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers, are facilitating the initiative. PTA is dedicated to advance these standards by providing training, information and developing resources and tools. You can find these resources along with more in depth information on the Common Core Standards at www.pta.org/common_core_state_standards.asp. Soon the national and state elections will be wrapped up and hopefully our legislators will finally get down to the business of fixing the problems surrounding education. Making sure Common Core Standards are part of the solution will greatly serve our current and future children.

Parents & Teachers . . .

A Keystone Partnership

Wisdom from Parenting Magazine's Mom Congress Conference on Education and Learning

by Angela Vos McCormick, 2012 Missouri Delegate for Parenting Magazine's Mom Congress Conference on Education and Learning

Schools across the country are facing unprecedented budget cuts and challenges while still trying to educate children per stringent government standards. These budget cuts have no boundaries, affecting urban, suburban and rural communities. As federal and state funding to school districts diminish and challenges mount; the urgent need for parental involvement becomes more prevalent in every school. There are many questions that arise from teachers, parents and parent-run volunteer organizations, "How do we get families engaged in our school?"

When I was chosen to represent the state of Missouri in *Parenting* magazine's 3rd Annual Mom Congress Conference on Education and Learning, I did not know what to expect, except that I was about to walk into an opportunity of a lifetime. I looked forward to the insight I would be provided and more significantly contribute to not only my immediate school community, but to education in the state of Missouri. In addition to learning from a group of moms how they contribute to their school communities, I learned that as parents and advocates, we are not alone in our plights to better education for children. Our geographic locations may be different, from Alaska to Maine, Hawaii to the Missouri; however, we all share in the same goal, providing the best learning environment for all children; and with that a determination and timeless dedication to serve as advocates and volunteers. Mom Congress provided a learning experience that stressed the significant role that parental involvement plays in the academic success of our children.

What exactly is Mom Congress? *Parenting* magazine designed the Mom Congress initiative in response to the ever-increasing role parents play in educating children. The goal is to honor and create a network of parents, who are all working towards the same goal, strengthen the nation's school communities. Fifty-one moms were chosen from each state and the District of Columbia to serve as delegates during the conference. The conference provided outstanding opportunities to collaborate on ideas to improve our schools and connect with national leaders in education, editors from *Parenting* magazine, and other Mom Congress Delegates, both past and present. The theme of the 2012 Mom Congress conference, "Teach Me Something New," and was dedicated to fostering the crucial relationship between parents and their children's teachers.

I was chosen due in part for my contributions and dedication to improving local schools. As an education advocate, I restructured, designed and implemented streamlined processes for organizing volunteer parents with the goal of making volunteering easier and the overall process of managing volunteer-run activities more efficient. My most notable contribution to our community followed the Good Friday Tornado of 2011. Within 48 hours of the devastating tornado, she organized a donation center for families within the school

district. Utilizing several outlets, she secured donations of clothing, food, toys, household and personal care items. Currently, I serve on the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan Committee, I am working with school district administrators in the development of a parent-based legislation advocacy committee and I hope to promote and increase family engagement opportunities and bully prevention programs within our schools.

The Mom Congress conference included presentations by several leading education advocates, the most notable, NBC Chief Education Correspondent Rehema Ellis and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. The message was clear by both keynote speakers as well as others that presented during the conference; parent participation is essential, is necessary, is vital to the success of the child and the school.

Our teachers have a difficult role, not only to educate, but often times, must care for the needs of the child beyond the classroom. Parents may wonder where they belong or how they fit into the education process. The number one thing parents need to do is be courageous as they advocate for their child and educate themselves as to the processes within their children's school. Establishing and fostering an open dialogue between parents and teachers is fundamental; with the parent/teacher relationship's constant focus on the child. Before I talk with my children, I ask them to put their listening ears on. As parents, as educators, we must do the same thing; we must put our listening ears on, listening to each other and listening to our children. We must keep in mind that what we do as educators, as parents and as volunteers, the goal is for and about the children.

As budgetary issues loom over school districts; financing and supporting school programs and classrooms present insurmountable challenges to educators. Teachers are still expected to perform and produce successful students while resources become few and far between. School districts and teachers need to be creative in how to incorporate the assistance of parents to fill these gaps. Education needs to be a community effort, not solely a school-driven effort. The key here is to find ways to involve parents within the education process.

How is parental involvement accomplished? How do educators make parents feel welcome within the process? Currently, there is discussion surrounding the Family Engagement in Education Act. If passed, this act would provide resources to school districts across our country to facilitate the involvement of parents within the education process. These resources would include professional development programs for educators on how to bridge the gap between education and parental involvement. In short, schools need to invest in family engagement for parents may very well be the underutilized resource in filling the gaps that budgetary cuts leave behind.

Parents, we have a responsibility too. We may think that we are too busy to become involved in our child's school, where our commitments may prevent us from taking an active role in our children's education. Look at it this way, the report card should not be a surprise or the only means of communication between you and your child's teacher.

Parental involvement in your child's education is simpler than one might think. The first step in getting involved in your child's school is easy, ASK. You will not know where to start or how to become involved if you do not ask to be involved in the school improvement process. Volunteer opportunities do exist within PTA/PTO (parent-run) organizations within schools. These offer a variety of areas for parents to volunteer, with a semblance of flexibility. However, this type of volunteerism is not the only means of involvement; think outside the box, and again, ask how you can become involved.

Becoming involved is as easy as establishing a line of communication with your child's teacher via email or the old fashion way, via a note to your teacher in the backpack. Let your child's teacher know that you are present and you are willing to be there every step of the way through your child's education. Knowing that parental support exists is a significant help for the teacher. Just remember, when approaching teachers and school administrators do not come at them, work alongside them, present a unified front in becoming involved. There is a fine line between being a volunteer parent versus a helicopter parent.

What about working, low income, and/or non-English speaking parents? Both educators and established parent volunteers cannot assume that working, low income, and/or non-English speaking parents do not want to be involved or cannot become involved in their child's school or education. These parents may not know where to start or how to become involved. Established parent volunteers and educators may need to take that extra step and reach out to these families and bridge the gap through communication and inclusion. These fundamental steps can and will play a significant role in establishing relationships with parents who may otherwise feel intimidated or unsure on where they can contribute within their child's school.

In revisiting the theme of the conference, "Teach Me Something New," I can say, without reservation, that I learned a great deal from this experience. As a parent, as a mom, I am not alone in this endeavor to advocate for the best education for my children as well as for children within my state and across the country. It is vital to be involved in my children's education and that no act of volunteerism or involvement is too small. Education is a partnership; education is a family endeavor with great rewards and family engagement and involvement is crucial for success. Secretary of State Arne Duncan, as he addressed the Mom Congress Delegates stated, "When a student walks across the stage to receive their diploma, a whole family walks across the stage," (April 30, 2012, *Parenting* magazine Mom Congress Conference on Education and Learning). As we embark on the journey to graduation and prepare to walk across the stage with our children; we must remember, that journey, that walk, begins in Kindergarten and continues throughout elementary school, middle school and high school. The journey to graduation, the need for parental involvement in education knows no boundaries.

In reading this, I am sure there are parents out there thinking, "I am too busy to volunteer or get involved." As I said, no act of involvement is too small and can start at home. What I also learned during Mom Congress, that the two busiest parents in the world, the President and First Lady, make it a point to attend every Parent/Teacher conference for their children. If they can squeeze communicating with their children's teachers into their packed schedules; I am sure I can manage time to be an active parent in my children's schools.

As a result of my selection to Mom Congress, I have started a blog where I discuss matters pertinent to being a parent. My blog can be found via <http://avmcongressmom.wordpress.com/> Please visit, comment and subscribe.

I'd like to end with a quote by Winston Churchill, "We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give." As a parent, I have one opportunity to influence my children; I hope to be an example to them by being involved and engaged in their education. My focus has always been to make our school community stronger, a beacon of learning, leading by example.

Short Takes

NATIONAL PTA STANDARDS FOR FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

More than 30 years of research shows that family involvement promotes student success. No matter what their family income or background may be, students with involved parents are more likely to

- Earn higher grades and test scores.
- Pass their classes.
- Attend school regularly.
- Have better social skills and adapt well to school and
- Go on to post secondary education.

From this research, National PTA has developed the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships. The standards include 6 parts which can be found at the following link: http://www.pta.org/national_standards.asp

Missouri PTA encourages anyone who is interested in student success to become familiar with these standards and to look for ways to implement them in your school community.

The Parents' Guide to Student Success Available Online!

National PTA^{*} partnered with experts on the Common Core State Standards to create grade by grade guides that reflect the standards adopted by more than 40 states. Individual guides were created for grades K-8 and two were created for grades 9-12 (one for English language arts/literacy and one for mathematics). Eleven guides were created in all. English and Spanish versions are available at this link: <http://www.pta.org/4446.htm>

PARLIAMENTARY TIP

There is some confusion as to the role of the chair in a meeting as it relates to entering the business of the organization. Is it true that the chair cannot make motions and vote? NO, it is not true, but has a grain of truth.

The chair never loses the ordinary rights of membership, including making motions and voting (unless the organization's bylaws constrain their rights). However, while acting as the presiding officer of a group larger than a small committee meeting, the duties of the chairmanship demand that the chair be impartial. Therefore, the chair should not make motions, and should not vote unless the single vote of the chair will change the outcome, or unless the voting is by ballot. This implies the chair votes last if voting by voice or by rising, if at all, to preserve the image of impartiality up to the deciding vote.

COMMITMENT CARDS

National PTA has provided this tool to collect parents' skills, interests, and availability for participation and volunteering. You may have already created your own volunteer interest finder, if so, use those throughout the year to collect information from

Mark Your Calendar

November

PTA Healthy Lifestyles Month

Nation Child Safety Protection Month

- 1 Dues to State Office
- 6 Election Day
- 11 Veteran's Day
- 18 National Parent Involvement Day
- 25 Thanksgiving

December

- 1 Dues to State Office
- 1 AIDS Awareness Day
- 2012 Theme: Leading with Science, Uniting for Action
- 25 Christmas Day
- 31 New Years Eve

January

- 1 Dues to State Office
- 1 New Years Day
- 16 Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday
- 17 Reflection Submissions due to State Office by 4:30pm

parents who may have missed the back to school notices or print some of these for your school or community event. Don't forget to follow up with a phone call, too!

http://www.pta.org/Commitment_Cards.pdf

Three for Me is a PTA program designed to effectively involve parents and families in support of children and their education. This program will help PTAs and parents find different ways to volunteer at home, in school, and in the community—all which support student learning. This way, parents can volunteer when they have time during the day, in the evening or on the weekends.

Three for Me online resources include:

- Creative ways to connect all families to their child's school and education
- Ideas to strengthen home-school-community partnerships
- Resources to motivate parent forum for program and idea sharing
- Helpful ways to track volunteers and the positive impact they are having on student success

Get **Three for Me** started at your school or organization today and put a new face on parent involvement.

Please see this link for more information:

http://www.pta.org/three_for_me.asp

Missouri Congress of Parents & Teachers
Missouri PTA
2101 Burlington St.
Columbia, MO 65202

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Missouri PTA Day at the Edward Jones Dome

Join Missouri PTA members, friends and family as the St Louis Rams take on the San Francisco 49ers and visit the field following the game!

Sunday December 2, 2012

Special pricing and ticket packets are available for this and other home games on Nov. 18 and Dec. 16.

www.stlouisrams.com/groupticketinfo
PROMO CODE: MOPTA