Planning for a great school year

Summer is in full swing and I hope you and your family are enjoying the long hot days. This time of year is my favorite! I enjoy spending time with my husband and daughter swimming and going on vacation. I also love this time of year because planning for the upcoming year in PTA begins.

I have served on my local PTA unit’s board in several positions - Programs Chair, Recording Secretary, Fundraising, and President. I have also served on the Independence Council board in leadership positions. My daughter will begin Kindergarten this school year and I am looking forward to joining their PTA and offering my help.

Making a plan will provide your board and unit with important information and events to look forward to for the upcoming year. Here are some quick tips to help get you started -

1. List your goals for the upcoming school year for your PTA. This will help guide your planning of programs for families.
2. Decide on a theme for the year - use a quote that will guide the work you will do. You can also use an image for your logo. Last year our Council’s theme was “Who Can Make a Difference? You!” The image we used for our logo was owls in a tree, with each branch containing the name of each individual school/unit in our district.
3. Grab a calendar and start planning your events with the help of your Executive Board. Be sure to include programs, fundraising, membership drives, celebrations, nominating for the next year’s board positions, installation of officers, etc.
4. Think about the best time to hold your events. Consider what may affect your attendance - the time of year (daylight hours, weather), any holidays, availability of organizers/performers/guests, and other activities that may clash with the date, for example sports and community events.
5. Now is the time to make changes. Eliminate events/activities that have low family and volunteer participation or are time intensive with little benefit.
6. Review your unit's Bylaws and standing rules.
7. Plan your budget with your Budget Committee. Review last year’s budget and make needed changes.

Planning ahead will only help create a more successful school year and PTA involvement. Remember the most important thing is that people enjoy themselves and feel part of the school community. Happy planning!!

Paula McKinney | Missouri PTA Event Planner | paulam@mopta.org
Mark Your Calendar

School of Excellence Enrollment
April 1 – Oct 1, 2016

Deadline to submit Resolutions to Missouri PTA
Oct 21, 2016

Unit in Good Standing fiscal year-end report, annual financial review, and copy of IRS filing due to state office
Dec 1, 2016

Reflections Entries due to Missouri PTA
December 17, 2016

National PTA Legislative Conference
March 7-9, 2017

Save the date and budget now!
Friday, April 28 to Sunday, April 30, 2017
Stoney Creek Hotel and Conference Center
2601 S. Providence Rd., | Columbia, MO 65203

Missouri PTA 2017 Convention
Visit www.MoPTA.org for more information

10th Annual MO Safe Schools and Colleges Conference
September 27 - 29, 2016 Tan-Tar-A, Osage Beach
Learn more ways to keep your students safe at the 10th Annual MO Safe Schools and Colleges Conference hosted by MSBA's Center for Education Safety.

Featuring Keynote Speaker:
Lt. Col. Dave Grossman
An internationally recognized scholar, author, soldier and speaker who is one of the world’s foremost experts in the field of human aggression and violence.

Session topics will include:
- Crisis Communication
- Mental Health
- Behavioral Risk Assessments
- Severe Weather
- Cyber Security
- Radicalization

See Lt. Col Dave Grossman on Thursday, September 27 with a Special One-Day Price of $99.

www.moces.org
Registration opens June 13 at www.moces.org or call 800-221-6722.
I was invited to attend the Shoal Creek Elementary PTA’s final meeting of the year and they were installing their new officers, wrapping up the treasurer’s report AND sharing all the committees recap reports for the year. What made this so wonderful was that each committee chair was asked to share a high and a low. This, in my opinion, really expanded the conversation by challenging the chairs to think a little more in depth. The reports given by the committee chairs were thoughtful and heartfelt. By the end of the meeting I came away with the notion that I had heard their PTA story. There were smiles at the highs and nods acknowledging the lows. Everyone left that meeting knowing they had done great things for children in their school and their community. Their story, told a chapter at a time by each committee chair, demonstrated that families, teachers and the community, when they come together engaged under the single purpose of making sure every child has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential, can achieve great heights.

So again I ask – What is your story? I know mine is still being written. But I have great aspirations to spread the message that membership in PTA is a game changer for kids. It’s both worthwhile and relevant. Remember when you plan out your goals and events for this coming year that you are actually beginning the outline of what will become your PTA story.

Memorialize your commitment to children: Pave the Path to Education! We invite you to support National PTA by donating an engraved brick to the courtyard of PTAs headquarters in Alexandria, Va. To learn more, visit our website, PTA.org/BricksPaveThePath

Building a Better Meeting
Proper parliamentary procedure works in your favor to keep a meeting running smoothly. This workshop is presented by professional registered parliamentarians and includes a Q&A session. October 15th, 9am - noon. At Independence Hilton Garden Inn, $30 (includes continental breakfast and workshop materials) Register Here

Enrollment is open for the School of Excellence Through the School of Excellence Program your PTA and school will gain new ways to engage families in school decision-making, such as improvements to programs, practices and policies related to education, health, safety or the arts. Contact excellence@pta.org or call (800)307-4782 for more info. Enroll before Oct. 1 for the 2016-2017 school year.

Shoal Creek Elementary PTA truly celebrated their achievements, their story. There were smiles at the highs and nods acknowledging the lows. Everyone left that meeting knowing they had done great things for children in their school and their community. Their story, told a chapter at a time by each committee chair, demonstrated that families, teachers and the community, when they come together engaged under the single purpose of making sure every child has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential, can achieve great heights.

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There are 3 main types of distraction

**Visual**
- Taking your eyes off the road

**Manual**
- Taking your hands off the wheel

**Cognitive**
- Taking your mind off what you are doing

**Potential Distractions While Driving**

Dorothy Gardner | Missouri PTA President | dorothyg@mopta.org
I hope you are having a fantastic summer - taking some time to relax and spending time with family and friends. I know my family is trying to cram in as much activity as we can this summer.

Even as busy as we are, it’s easy to forget how quickly the summer will fly by. It’s important to start thinking about a plan for a great year, because it doesn’t happen by accident.

It is a great idea to meet with your team over the summer to finalize plans and get everyone on board so you hit the ground running. Also, take time to discuss your communication plans. Visit your website to get it ready for the new school year.

Take a look at your newsletter and social media. Are there changes you can make now before your schedule gets too crazy? Don’t forget to plan how you are going to utilize social media to advertise your first events and your membership campaign. With some planning and forethought, you will be well prepared for a fantastic year.

Facebook is a great way to do social media marketing for your PTA, especially parents. The platform allows you to promote your PTA, connect with people online and share what is important to your members.

Post a Disclosure Statement
Set up rules of etiquette for your PTA’s Facebook page so that everyone knows the rules and can help make it a safe place for sharing information. Check out National PTA’s Social Media Policy for a sample policy disclosure.

When you are not having to focus on planning events, running membership drives, or running fundraisers, summer is a great opportunity to work on creating your PTA website. Wordpress is a great tool for website building. There are two versions: Wordpress.com and Wordpress.org. Wordpress.com is a free option to create a website. It is a very user-friendly tool; it takes you step by step through picking your theme and setting everything up. After the initial setup, they have tutorials that allow you to learn how to manage your website and add to it. Wordpress.org is for serious website-builders. It is a paid version, and has more options for plug-ins and website upgrades. If you aren’t sure if your website will be worth investing in, you can start with the free version at wordpress.com and then move it over to wordpress.org if it takes off. Happy building!
As we start our school year, we always encourage our children to start the year on the right foot to have a good school year. As a unit leader you need to make sure your unit starts their school year off on the right foot also – to do this you need to make sure your unit is a unit in good standing. What does it mean to be a unit in good standing?

1. Adheres to the Purposes and basic policies of PTA;
2. Remits national and state dues to the state PTA monthly;
3. Your Bylaws have been reviewed in the last three years and are current. If you don’t know what your bylaws review date is you can contact the office, the Vice President and Director of Field Service, or the State Procedures and Bylaws Chair to determine your bylaws date. If your bylaws are out of date, you can contact your regional director for assistance in amending and submitting updated bylaws.
4. Missouri PTA must have received your unit’s fiscal year-end report by December 1st, 2015.
5. Missouri PTA must have received a copy of your annual financial review by December 1st, 2015.
6. Missouri PTA must have received a copy of your IRS submission by December 1st, 2015.
7. Missouri PTA must have received your officers for the 2016-2017 school year. Even if your officers are returning, you must submit them to Missouri PTA. The easiest way is to use the incoming officers form.
8. Meets other criteria as may be prescribed by the state PTA.

These are the criteria as written in your bylaws, you as unit leaders are responsible for making sure your unit meets these criteria each and every year. If you have missed one of the deadlines your unit is not in good standing until you have submitted the required item(s). So for example, if you missed the deadline of March 31st, you can submit your officers to the Missouri PTA office now and once those have been received your unit will be back in good standing. Remember, to be in good standing your units must have turned in all required documentation.

Missouri PTA has implemented a system of online notification, that allows each of our units the ability to review your status at any given time. If you need your login ID to our website, which will allow you to see all of this information, you can contact the office, your regional director or the Vice President and Director of Field Service.

Just like you ask your students to do the best that they can in regards to their school work, so must we do our due diligence in making sure we put our best foot forward in running our PTA.

It’s that time of year again! The 2016-2017 National PTA Official Back-To-School Kit is finally here! As always, it’s jam-packed with tools, resources and info—all specially designed to help you run your PTA. It’s a one-stop click for everything you need to know.

For the second year, the kit is completely digital and mobile-friendly. This means you can view the website from your phone, tablet or other mobile devices. Having the Back-To-School Kit with you while you’re on the go is a big perk. We guarantee it will help you be more efficient and productive as a PTA leader.

Registration is a very simple process. Starting June 27, here is the process to get access to the kit:

1. Go to PTAKit.org. President Laura Bay's welcome video and the homepage are open to everyone.
2. Once you begin to use the site, you’ll be prompted to register. There is also a “REGISTRATION” tab on the top right corner of the homepage.
3. Fill out all of the required information.
4. Once you’ve completed your registration, you’ll receive an email with a link. Click the link to set a username and password.
5. After your username and password are set, you can access all areas of the Back-to-School Kit.

Questions? For a Back-to-School Kit FAQ, log onto PTA.org/BTSKit or contact us at BackToSchool@PTA.org.

Your 2016-2017 Back-To-School Kit Is Officially Live!
The Missouri Legislature has wrapped up this term. Missouri PTA has been following Bills pertinent to the children of Missouri. We were successful in the passage of several bills (and had our amendment added to a Bill we opposed) that are currently waiting Governor Nixon’s signature. I would like to highlight those Bills that may be signed into law. I have included actions Missouri PTA took on each. Thank you to everyone who called and emailed our elected officials and please continue to do so in the coming year.

**HB 1995**, Cornejo (R-064), would amend the current law regarding 1st degree murder and youth under 18. Currently Missouri’s law is in violation of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Miller v. Alabama (2012) that ruled mandatory life without eligibility for parole for youth was unconstitutional for individuals under 18. The U.S. Supreme Court extended this ruling retroactively on January 25, 2016. HB 1995 eliminates life without parole for children, establishes sentencing terms between 25-40 years, requires judges and parole boards consideration of youth-related mitigating factors, and creates a procedure for those previously sentenced to petition for review. We do not support **SB 590** and **HB 2084**. These bills sentence those who are 16 and older to a minimum of 50 years and those under 16 a minimum of 35 years. PTA sides with the long-standing Juvenile Justice philosophy that rehabilitation should take precedence over punishment. SB 590 and HB 2084 both essentially impose a life sentence. PTA’s position on these issues is based on the [Position Statement Child Safety and Protection](https://www.mopta.org/legislation(statement-child-safety-protection). Missouri PTA testified at the committee hearing in the house in support of HB 1995. Missouri PTA issued a JC/DC action alert in opposition to SB 590 and a JC/DC action alert in support of HB 1995. SB 590 passed the Senate. End of Session: SB 590 passed both houses. While it contained amendments from it’s original form, MoPTA has concern over the language and has issued an alert asking Governor Nixon to veto SB 590.

**HB 1562**, Haahr (R-134), would expand the definition with regard to child trafficking by adding the word ‘advertising the availability of’; PTA addresses the issue of child trafficking through the [Resolution Child Trafficking](https://www.mopta.org/legislation/child-trafficking) and supports such measures to deter recruitment. Missouri PTA issued a JC/DC action alert to support this bill. HB 1562 passed the House and Senate. This bill is now moving through the conference process. End of Session: Passed both the House and Senate and is currently waiting Governor Nixon’s signature.

**SB 748**, Nasheed (D-5), **HB 1583**, Allen (R-100), **HB 1384**, English (I-068), and **SB 728**, Sifton (D-1), would strengthen the current bullying law by expanding language to include actions that interfere with a student’s educational performance, opportunities or benefits. Additionally it requires the law be applied to all students without exception. Cyberbullying is also defined and included in this act. PTA supports this action through both the [MOPTA Resolution Bullying](https://www.mopta.org/legislation/bullying) and the [NPTA Resolution Against Bullying](https://www.npta.org/legislation/bullying). MOPTA issued a JC/DC Action Alert for HB 1583. HB 1583 passed the House. End of Session: 1583 passed both House and Senate is currently waiting Governor Nixon’s signature.

**SB 646**, Schupp (D24), **HB 1546**, Lauer (R-032), and **HB 1656**, Dunn (D-023), requires school districts to develop a suicide awareness plan and directs the department of elementary and secondary education to develop guidelines for schools to adopt a youth suicide policy. PTA supports plans that work to provide special preventative services in school through the [Child Safety and Protection](https://www.mopta.org/legislation/child-safety-protection) and the [Resolution Youth Suicide Prevention](https://www.mopta.org/legislation/youth-suicide-prevention). Missouri PTA testified at a senate committee hearing in support of SB 646. A JC/DC Action Alert was sent to support both HB 1546 and SB 646. HB 1546 passed the House and SB 646 passed the Senate. End of Session: Passed by House and Senate awaiting Governor Nixon’s approval.

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#MembershipMondays

It is strongly encouraged that your PTA develops a member value proposition. The value proposition helps determine what the value of membership is to the individual member.

Talking points for joining PTA

Christine Kent | Missouri PTA Student Involvement Chair | christinek@mopta.org

Membership doesn’t and shouldn’t just end with a child’s school career, it should continue well after and for all children, supporting future generations to come. By being a PTA/PTSA member, our voices are heard collectively and increased member numbers aid in legislative strength on the State and National PTA levels.

Membership gets you a seat at the table with school decision-makers and legislative chairs. If you are committed to improving your school, you should be a member. And as an added perk, there are also bonus benefits that each member is entitled to just for being a PTA/PTSA member - like TeenSafe, LifeLock and Staples to name a few.

Wondering how to join your local PTSA? Contact the PTSA president or board at the school.

How to be an active member -
• Ask what they are planning for the year.
• Obtain the PTSA calendar of events and meeting dates.
• Volunteer to help in a committee or a board position.
• Read articles and news provided on www.mopta.org and www.pta.org websites.
• Subscribe to the JC/DC network (Advocacy action alerts)
• Take part in surveys
• Go to a meeting or ALL of the meetings

As a Student, Why should I join PTA/PTSA?
At all grade levels, but especially the secondary grade level – student voices are an important part of the conversation as equal members with an equal vote. Having a PTSA membership can also be a helpful part of your leadership resume, developing leadership skills in your school and community. Membership provides an opportunity to learn and act upon advocacy issues that affect your education – now, and in the future. As a student leader, you will learn essential skills like public speaking, teamwork, event planning and more.

As a Teacher/School Administrator, Why should I join PTA/PTSA?
As a teacher or a school administrator, you are already doing so much for students. Teachers are the bridge between parents and students in developing meaningful life skills and education, that’s why the “T” is in the middle of PTA. Why not show further support of our future leaders in advocating for children, as well, by joining a PTA/PTSA?

As a Parent or Family Member, Why should I join PTA/PTSA?
As a family member, supporting and caring for your child’s well being and education is a given during school, however, there are more issues concerning children outside of school that PTA/PTSA continues to tackle on a grander scale. Topics that include Powdered Alcohol, children in adult prisons, texting while driving and many more serious child related issues.

As a Community Member/Business, Why should I join PTA/PTSA?
Community businesses also have a vested interest in joining and supporting their local PTA/PTSA. Every child is a potential customer and/or employee.
Plan PTA Programs with Pizzazz

Nothing sparks up a membership meeting more than mixing it up with a program. Sure we need to conduct business but what really gets members in the door is something exciting or informative. Everyone's busy and if we are going to ask them to squeeze another event into their schedule they better be getting some bang for their time. Check out the Missouri PTA Programs and Special Events section of the Tool Kit when you sit down to plan out the upcoming year.

When February rolls around and it's cold outside but you still need to elect officers how about hosting a PTA birthday party. February 17 marks PTA’s Founders Day. The mission Alice Birney and Phoebe Apperson Hearst (a Missourian) began in 1897 should be both revered and celebrated. Before them children had no voice. Bring cake to the party and honor exemplary volunteers with the Distinguished Service Award. Recognize the students who participated in the Reflections program. Make it a PTA birthday party to remember.

And remember the PTA Reflections Program. Both parents and teachers can support the arts by encouraging students to express their creative side by addressing the Reflections theme “What Is Your Story?” Challenge parents to share their story with their own child in an effort to get the conversation rolling on the topic. Ask teachers to hold a brief brainstorming session in class followed up by all the different avenues they could utilize to express their story through the arts. And celebrate all the wonderful work the students create. This award winning program awes and amazes.

PTA Fundraising Marketplace

While PTA’s main purpose is not one of fundraising, we understand the need for PTAs to fundraise. Shortfalls in both federal and state budgets have placed the burden on PTAs to fill the gap. Especially when it comes to providing programing. The PTA Fundraising Marketplace is full of fundraising options you may not have heard before. You’ll find information on:

- The 0 Calorie Fundraiser which helps you raise funds by collecting gently worn, used or new shoes.
- The Children’s Bookstore gives you all the benefits of the traditional book fair without the hassle of set up, collections, and delivery.
- Flower Power Fundraising ships directly to your supporters with no minimum order.
- Race for Education is a turn-key race event that not only raises funds but promotes a healthy lifestyle.

These are just a few of the great fundraisers available. If you need to raise funds but just aren’t sure which fundraiser would best fit your needs, or you are just tired of doing the same fundraiser and want to try something new, check out the PTA Fundraising Marketplace.
The Social Media Expert

Kristina Wilmoth | Missouri PTA PR Chair | kristinaw@mopta.org

My day job entails managing programming for a poverty-addressing project in Springfield, MO. I work to engage our community to be part of the momentum built as a result of the rehabilitation and opening of a community hub (a former elementary school, left empty for years). It’s an inspirational story (you can conduct an internet search and find newscasts, articles, and videos about The Fairbanks/Amy Blansit/Drew Lewis Foundation/Northwest Project) but the big picture has never been my inspiration. My inspiration lies in the hugs I receive from children each week when neighbors arrive for programming. My inspiration is the conversations I have with those that have less, yet give more. I’m inspired by the mom that makes me laugh by simply seeing joy in each program while her child’s unnamed disability takes over his body more each week. I watch families as they leave and go home after programming and I miss them immediately.

I watch my own children serve, create friendships, and ask questions that I have no answer for. I don’t know why some families struggle with generational poverty. Sure, I know the research and I’ve read the books, but I still don’t know why. I don’t know why my childhood was so different but I know my place now and it’s to live where I’m inspired. Saturday, 6/25/16, we moved our family of 8 to one of the most impoverished and crime-saturated neighborhoods in Springfield and I’ve never felt more welcomed and inspired. I’ve had neighbors over for meals, 20 people volunteered to help us move, and gifts have been left at my doorstep each day since moving. I’ve never felt so immediately absorbed into the fabric of neighborhood.

I’m inspired by people who trump adversity with tenacity and live to tell me their stories. What’s your inspiration?

I’m independent and driven. Supportive and empathetic doer.

My favorite dinner out is Japanese Hibachi vegetables and sushi. As a vegetarian, I appreciate restaurants that cook in front of me so I can see the prep.

What makes you stand out? Many times, my brightly colored hair stands out...but most people look twice when I walk by with a kid, and then another, and then four more.

What are you learning this year? Creating peace as a ‘default’ so it’s effortless for my house and home.

What is a goal you have this year? Purge 50% of my household items. I am at about 25% right now.

What is a proud accomplishment? Receiving my Master’s Degree.

Something interesting you’ve done this year? In the last 12 months, my husband and I have adopted 3 children from foster care.

Favorite TV shows: I Love Lucy, Sex In The City, and Dr. Who.
Favorite Music/Band: Norah Jones, Diana Krall, Christina Perri
Favorite Books: Twilight Series and Harry Potter Series
Favorite Activities/Hobbies: Writing, blogging, volunteering as PR manager for non-profit organizations

Take time to gain perspective. If your goals are set up right, life will feel successful and your soul at peace. -Kristina Wilmoth