

*'Go Green Initiative' sprouts up far and wide*

## PTA program at one school now reaches 1.5 million students around the world

In 2002, Walnut Grove Elementary School PTA President Jill Buck began the "Go Green Initiative" (GGI), which soon reached beyond her Pleasanton community to the rest of the world. Currently, the GGI has 113,000 teacher members, 1.5 million student members, and operates in 13 countries. According to its website, the GGI was "designed to create a culture of environmental responsibility on school campuses across the nation."

It all started with schools in Pleasanton, in Northern California. With an increasing push for environmental sustainability, Pleasanton Unified School District (PUSD) implemented various energy-saving, environmentally friendly projects to set an example for everyone.

In the 1990s, Walnut Grove Elementary began a recycling program and created a relationship with Pleasanton Garbage Service that eventually led to recycling programs in all of the district school sites.

In 2004, PUSD's board added an environmental awareness component to its strategic plan, which led to even more ideas for the district to go green. Soon, Walnut Grove Elementary became one of PG&E's first "Solar Schools," providing educational resources such as teacher training and a photovoltaic unit. The unit doesn't generate much electricity, but serves as a model to teach students about solar energy.

Other green initiatives include solar panel installations at several school sites. Because Walnut Grove principal Bill Radulovich (now retired and working in green technology) wanted to actually

implement what students were learning at his school, he developed the "eCoach program."

These eCoaches are chosen by each school site and paid what a sports coach would receive. They're trained each year by NEED and PEAK/Energy Coalition. With the help of an independent energy consultant, the eCoach Coordinator establishes an "energy use baseline" for each school. When energy usage is better than baseline, the school receives eBates – in other words, funding – for any educational purpose. According to Radulovich, the eCoach program saves the district more than \$130,000 in utility bills annually. Due to district budget cutbacks, the eBates have been given to the district's general fund to help alleviate the burden of state cuts.

Another emphasis of PUSD's efforts is hands-on experiences of nature at its school sites. Walnut Grove School has two gardens and murals expressing love for nature. Harvest Park Middle School's ecology club runs a native-plants garden.

PTAs support assemblies to educate students about environmental awareness. Eric Nicholas, the city naturalist – yes, Pleasanton has one – continues to find ways to bring students into nature at local creeks, wilderness areas, and through educational presentations about wildlife. Bringing children closer to nature, as well

as teaching them the value of saving energy and protecting the planet, helps instill a healthy relationship with home.

PUSD's and PTA's efforts show that it isn't impossible to be green and maintain a healthy budget. In fact, it's economical to find ways to reduce energy consumption, and it's healthy for students to see adults taking proactive steps to reduce our carbon footprint. If everyone pitches in, the road to a more sustainable future isn't quite so long.

*~ Melissa Ott, Senior, PTA member  
Amador Valley High School*



**Powering changes:** Melissa Ott and Bill Radulovich stand in a garden at Walnut Grove Elementary School with two types of heliotropes that convert the sun's energy into other forms of energy: sunflowers and a photovoltaic panel on a pole.

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## Nominate the best for your unit

It's not too early to begin looking for qualified people to serve on your PTA's nominating committee. The nominating committee has a tremendous influence on the future of your PTA unit, council and district. These committee members must recognize and seek qualified nominees for the elected leadership of your PTA.

Committee members should be carefully selected.

The nominating committee is the only PTA committee that is not appointed by the president. This committee is elected by the membership at least two months prior to the election of officers. That means that when it's time for elections, finding qualified candidates is easier.

Determining when to elect the committee and how many people to elect is outlined in your unit bylaws. Don't forget to elect alternates in the event an elected committee member cannot attend a committee meeting. Most units should be electing the nominating committee no later than January or February for the election of officers in March or early April.

The committee needs a balance of newer and more experienced PTA members, all of whom should be knowledgeable about PTA. They should also be

- aware of qualified potential nominees;
- familiar with the eligibility requirements and the qualifications necessary for the offices to be filled; and
- willing and able to devote adequate time to the responsibilities involved and to maintain confidentiality.

The election of the nominating committee should not be a popularity contest based on willingness to serve, nor should it consist of the PTA executive board. The PTA president never serves on the committee, and the parliamentarian serves only when elected to serve. The principal may be elected, and should at least be an adviser to the group. No person may serve on the committee for two consecutive years. Be sure to elect your nominating committee wisely.

Don't overlook student and teacher members for both the nominating committee and as officers.

~ *Parliamentarian*

## Resources to guide PTA leaders

### Responding to budget requests

Students can't check books out from the library because the librarian was laid off. Classrooms started the year with fewer supplies. It's easy to see how budget cuts made in Sacramento are now haunting schools.

Due to these drastic cuts school administrators, faculty members and parents often approach PTA leaders with pleas to pay for or supplement the expenditures that districts can no longer afford. The perception is that PTA can and will fund shortfalls through fundraising or from surplus dollars from last year's PTA budget. No doubt, parent leaders feel pressured to immediately say yes, but there are better ways to handle the situation.

The decision isn't one for the president alone. It is an executive board and PTA membership decision. A discussion should take place among board members ending in a recommendation to the membership. The membership approves any financial expenditures by voting on the issues. All these decisions and motions are recorded in the minutes. This process makes it clear to everyone involved that decisions ultimately lie with the members, not personally with the president.

Frank discussions with administrators, faculty representatives and parents are a must.

Be careful: PTA members should not feel obligated to vote in favor of any request. Ensure anonymity by conducting a ballot vote whenever there is a contentious issue. Only current PTA members should be permitted to vote. Since membership recruitment is a year-round activity, the secretary should have an updated membership list at each association meeting.

First and foremost, the executive board of every PTA unit, council or district has a fiduciary responsibility to the organization's membership. All expenditures must be approved by the membership. For guidance, refer to the Toolkit Finance section.

Some school districts ask for signed MOUs (Memorandums of Understanding) from PTAs committing them to multiple-year financial agreements. Toolkit Section 5.8.1 Gifts to Schools, states that as memberships are new every year, "funds cannot be committed from one year to the next." A vote must be taken yearly. Additionally, decisions made by the current board may not encumber those made by future boards. Multiyear contracts do just that.

Toolkit Section 5.9 covers fundraising for PTAs and the requirements each PTA must follow as a tax-exempt organization. All PTA associations benefit from National PTA's corporate umbrella and must follow Internal Revenue Service (IRS) guidelines.

*'Frank discussions with administrators, faculty representatives and parents are a must.'*

Leaders should always keep the PTA 3-to-1 guideline in mind as well: For every one fundraiser there should be at least three non-fundraising programs aimed at helping parents or children, or advocating for school improvements.

During these difficult economic times, PTAs must consider the economic resources of their parents and members, too. Children and their parents are PTA's primary concern and have been for more than 100 years. Remember to contact PTA leaders at the council, district and state levels for assistance as well. The multiple resources PTA offers serve PTA leaders well in every situation.

~ *Leadership Services Commission*



### California State PTA 2010 Legislation Conference

Connecting the Dots: From Issues to Advocacy

**February 21-22, 2010**

Noon Sunday to 5 p.m. Monday

Sacramento

Register at [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org)

## Maximize the impact of your PTA

Now that you've settled into your position and have gotten your PTA and its activities off the ground, I challenge you to reach further and do more. I suspect you are groaning and wondering, "Is she crazy?" Maybe, but I don't think so. I recognize you are a special volunteer and you truly are prepared to do the best for your community's children and families. So let's review how you can maximize the impact of your PTA.

Start by sitting down with your board to plan ways to learn about your membership. Do you use surveys other than the usual volunteer one? What information needs to be gathered so that your PTA can be most – not just more – effective? Do you know the demographics, languages or transportation issues present at your school? What variables do you need to understand to present appropriate quality PTA programming? Brainstorm with your board, the school staff and your principal to reveal all the areas of need. Don't forget to consider who isn't in your membership. That may be a very significant indicator!

How many creative ways can surveys and information be sent out to your communities? We all know "backpack mail" is only as effective as the child feels that day. Not everyone uses the Internet, and some folks don't have the time to send something back to school. A variety of outreach methods will be required to be confident your PTA really reaches the most people possible. Don't ever underestimate the impact of personal contact! Or, that you may need to travel to people to reach them! People

often just need to be asked to become part of the action.

While gathering information about your school, seek new avenues to discover your families' needs and issues. School cultures change often. You may find the population is different each year. Don't retreat to the tired excuse, "We've always done it this way." Take time to ask your current community what they want and need from your PTA. I suspect you might be surprised by the answers. Finally, don't miss the chance to ask them to help with the solutions to their needs.

*'People often just need to be asked to become part of the action.'*

Have you created the opportunity to understand the achievement gap at your school and within your school district? This issue affects each child and every family! Arrange a briefing where your principal and superintendent share the real data on where the gap exists, and why and which children need additional assistance. Armed with that information, your PTA can strategize and target specific needs. This focused attention will help more than a few children. The



results will ripple throughout your school to be felt by staff and families. They will recognize and value the additional commitment on PTA's part for all children, and the gap will close a little.

Do you let everyone know about the good work you do, the lives you touch, the schools you improve? Make sure that you trumpet your efforts before the school board, the district office, the city council, the media and your surrounding schools. Ensure they see the big picture of PTA with the scope of your involvement and commitment to children and families. Use this to build a foundation of understanding and goodwill which you can use to create a groundswell of trusted advocacy when it's critical.

These are proven ways that you can use to assure your PTA maximizes its positive impact. I'd love to hear what new methods you have tried, and how and why they worked. Please contact me at [president@capta.org](mailto:president@capta.org) and look for your story in future articles.

*Jo L. Loss*

Jo Loss, President

### 2009 Toolkit Revised

The *Toolkit* Finance and Forms sections have been revised and reposted on the California State PTA website – [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org).

**Download** the sections and refer to Finance, 5.7.4 Federal Taxes, page 200; and Forms, Workers' Compensation Annual Payroll Report, to view the changes.

**Print and insert** the single pages in your 2009 *Toolkit* print edition included in the 2009 Service Mailing to PTA presidents.

~ Member Services Commission



California State PTA

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## Parents key to success of School Attendance Review Boards panels

In 1987, the Legislature created the State School Attendance Review Board to serve as an advisory group to local SARBs, providing strategies for both early prevention and intensive interventions. California State PTA has continually served on the panel to develop and encourage policies that coordinate school, community and home efforts to improve student attendance and behavior problems.

SARBs are created at the school district or county level to garner the support many students need to improve their school attendance and graduate. Members of local SARB panels meet regularly to combine their expertise and resources on behalf of the students referred to them. The California State PTA's goal is to work with the State SARB to develop statewide policy to help local and county SARBs meet the needs of students.

Community Concerns Vice President Brian Bonner represented PTA at the August 20<sup>th</sup> State SARB meeting. A new statewide partnership between the California Standards Authority (CSA) and school district SARBs was discussed in an effort to reduce Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC). Research clearly shows ethnic minorities are overrepresented in the justice system. Several federal- and state-initiated plans are underway to reduce this disproportionate representation. National PTA has included this con-



More parents are needed to participate in School Attendance Review Boards.

cern as one of its 2009 legislative priorities.\*

When it was discussed how SARBs could be more effective in diverting youth from the juvenile justice system, State SARB members pointed to the importance of the parent representative on the local SARB. The *parent* is listed first in the legislation defining SARB membership. Yet, many local SARBs lack a parent representative.

A parent representative who reflects the school community's ethnic or racial diversity is an asset in the effort to communicate with parents and to provide equitable and quality education for all children. Schools focused on all children are grounded in a solid relationship with parents, and parents can help build similar relationships with other parents. At any school working to improve school attendance and behavior and close the achievement gap, parents are a critical part of the solution.

Parents need to be a part of the SARB team to enable parents to be welcome partners in their children's education, and to ensure the success of children. Building a relationship with families is critical because children are referred to SARB only if they have persistent attendance or behavior problems, and the normal avenues of intervention have not resolved the situation. In order for SARB interventions to succeed, children and families must view them as supportive, not as judgmental or punitive. The parent representative can be essential in involving parents and youth in selecting services and resources, and in developing solutions to school attendance problems.

~ Community Concerns Commission

\*National PTA 2009 Public Policy Agenda, [www.pta.org/PTA\\_PublicPolicyPDF\\_final.pdf](http://www.pta.org/PTA_PublicPolicyPDF_final.pdf)

## Beyond the controversy: The facts and history of charter schools and PTA

Charter schools have become a much-debated fact of life in education in California.

Charter schools make headlines because of the variety of opinions about effectiveness, management and fiscal responsibility. As responsible PTA members and stewards of public education, the facts and history are important to understand how charter schools function.

Charter schools appeared during the 1980s education reform movement that included alternative schools, site-based management, magnet schools, public school choice, privatization, and community-parental empowerment. It is thought the term "charter" originated in the 1970s when New England educator Ray Budde suggested that small groups of teachers be given contracts or "charters" by their local school boards to explore new approaches to education. Minnesota was the first state to pass charter school law. California followed in 1992. By 1995, 19 states had passed laws to create charter schools. By 2003, 40 states, as well as Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, had charter schools. Pres. Bill Clinton called for the creation of 3,000 charters by 2002, and Pres. George W. Bush and Congress supported charter schools with about \$300 million in funding.

The concept behind charter schools is more autonomy, and the belief that their enrollment reflects the satisfaction of parents whose children attend them.

Charter schools are nonsectarian public schools that operate without the many regulations to which traditional public schools must adhere. In California, each charter school creates a performance contract that outlines its mission, program goals, students served, methods of assessment, and ways to measure success. Charters are generally granted for three to five years by a local or county school board or the State Board of Education. These schools are accountable to the chartering agency for their academic results and fiscal practices.

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Would you be willing to serve as a parent representative of your school district's local SARB? If so, contact your county office of education or school district and ask for the SARB chairperson. No special credentials are required, but the following qualities are helpful:

1. Leadership ability.
2. Availability to attend meetings on a regular basis.
3. Experience as a PTA committee chairperson or officer.
4. Knowledge of and experience with high-risk youth.
5. A passion for diverting pupils from the serious consequences of habitual truancy or disorderly behavior at school.
6. An understanding of and respect for individual and group differences, individual and family rights and privacy, and the concept of confidentiality.

In April 2009, the State SARB published a *School Attendance Review Board Handbook* for SARB members. More information about SARB is available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/lr/ai/sb/>.

# California State PTA welcomes a new committee: Diversity and Inclusion

## Make sure everyone can participate

There is nothing as unwelcoming as holding a PTA or school event on a day or evening that holds a special significance to members of your school community. PTAs should always consider holiday and religious, cultural or ethnic observances when planning calendars and events.

*The Communicator*, October 2009 issue, includes two articles entitled *Remaining 2009 Holidays* and *Cultural Observances and 2010 Holidays and Cultural Observances*. Since no list is ever complete, the article also includes additional websites to check for holidays and observances. Just visit the California State PTA website [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org) and click on *The Communicator* button on the homepage to access these significant dates to calendar PTA events that include everyone.

<http://www.capta.org/sections/communication/communicator.cfm>

~ Diversity and Inclusion Committee



Mark Buchman/Twenty-Fourth District PTA

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee plans an inclusion exercise for the California State PTA Board of Managers. Seated, from left, are student member Ciera Lowe, Will Sanford, Carla Niño, David Heredia. Standing, from left, are student member Eric Thompson, Carl Barnes, Chairman Deborah Kemper, Justine Fischer, Maria Elena Huizar, Joanne Martin, Debbie Vincent and Carol-Ann Koch-Weser.

**A**t the March 2009 California State PTA Board of Managers meeting, the emerging minority leaders conference planning committee recommended that a Diversity and Inclusion Committee be established at the state level. The motion passed, and the new committee met at the July and October 2009 Board of Managers meetings in Sacramento.

The committee shall advance inclusion and diversity within the membership and leadership throughout the organization and:

1. Provide representation for emerging leaders;
2. Annually assess the status of the organization with regard to diversity and inclusion;
3. Make recommendations to the Board of Directors that promote and sustain diversity and inclusion at all levels of the California State PTA;
4. Collaborate with other commissions and committees to promote cultural competency within the entire organization;
5. Plan convention workshops that focus on diversity and inclusion; and
6. Plan conferences as needed and approved by the Board of Directors.

## Beyond the controversy: The facts and history of charter schools and PTA

*Continued from page 4*

The official PTA position states: "The California State PTA believes charter schools have a valid place in our public school system because they can provide K-12 students and parents with expanded choices in educational opportunities and may serve as laboratories for programs that can be replicated in other public schools. Public charter schools are most successful when proposed, developed and evaluated in the communities they serve. PTA recognizes that sufficient resources, including facilities, must be provided to charter school students, and to the chartering entity responsible for oversight of charter school performance." (2009 Toolkit, Advocacy section, 4.5.7)

PTA's position also supports the concepts that charter schools must "be held fiscally and academically accountable to the parents and community by the local charter-

ing entity"; that charter schools must "be publicly funded in a manner that is equitable to and does not reduce resources for other public schools in the chartering entity"; that charter schools must "provide a curriculum that is aligned to state academic content standards and offers at least the number of instructional minutes as required by the California State Education Code, and require students to meet the minimum requirements for graduation"; and that charter schools must "involve parents in meaningful decision-making."

California Statistics: As of Feb. 9, 2009 there were 750 charter schools in California attended by 276,000 students. The state's three main support organizations for charter schools are the California Department of Education, the California Charter Schools Association and the Charter Schools Development Center.

The Los Angeles Unified School District is one of many districts involved with implementation and management of charter schools, grabbing many headlines and making it a center of much of the current debate over charter schools in California. US Charter Schools, a consortium of organizations interested in providing accurate information and promising practices about and for charter schools provides a collection of interesting articles on charter schools at [www.uscharterschools.org](http://www.uscharterschools.org).

Ultimately, law and policy regarding charter schools comes through the state legislature and is implemented through local education agencies. PTA members must be informed, involved and part of the dialogue.

~ Education Commission



## Strong membership campaigns keep the momentum going

A PTA membership campaign is more than a short membership drive ending with an ice cream party at the end of October.

- Keep the campaign momentum going throughout the year.
- Plan a boost to your membership campaign with a midyear promotion.
- Set multiple membership goals with target dates throughout the year.

### Reward accomplishments!

- Plan the ice cream or pizza reward party in the fall, but celebrate your many membership successes throughout the year.
- Reward the class with the highest number of returned membership envelopes.
- Honor the class or grade with the highest membership.
- Have parents and/or grandparents who join participate in a drawing to have lunch with their student and their teacher.
- Hold a special luncheon for teachers and staff when 100 percent have joined.
- Hold drawings for “cool stuff” for students who join.

### Connect with your members.

- Thank those who have joined.

- Provide some PTA information with the membership cards when you distribute them. Free PTA brochures are available.
- Inform all members about your PTA programs and projects, and the importance of family involvement in students' education.
- Provide involvement opportunities for your members. Invite members who are not connected to your school to your Founders Day event and other PTA events.
- Students can be members in every PTA, even at an elementary school. Provide them with opportunities to be spokespersons for PTA at your association meetings.
- Identify those who were members last year but have not rejoined. Extend a personal invitation. You might learn something important about how others perceive your PTA. Is your PTA welcoming? Are there numerous opportunities for different kinds of involvement?

Check your bylaws now so that you meet the required first remittance of per capita (membership dues) by the due date set by your district PTA and/or council.

~ Membership Commission

## Parent tip

### Coach your child on making decisions

One way to help children become better at making decisions is to become the “coach” and help children understand how to begin doing this. Children who help make a decision will be more willing to make that decision work. Work with them in learning how to think through these steps to reach their own decisions:

- Discuss the issue of concern. Try to be thorough and objective.
- Decide what the problem is, and have them state it clearly.
- Find out if more information is needed in order to make the decision.
- List the choices available, making sure nothing is overlooked.
- Discuss the possible results of each choice. If necessary, have them make a list of good and bad points for each choice, keeping in mind both long-term and short-term results. List the possible benefits and consequences.
- Discuss how they will feel about each decision in terms of their own values and expectations of themselves and the values of the family.
- Reach the decision together, keeping in mind that younger children need more assistance and teenagers demand more independence.

Children must be allowed to work through and experience the consequences of their decisions. They need praise for making good decisions, and they need to know you are proud of them. There may be times when you dislike or disagree with a decision. At these times, you must make it clear that you love your child, in spite of the decision.

~ Parent Involvement Commission



Help your children as a decision coach, and they'll learn to handle choices adeptly.

## PTA and students

Student membership is an important part of PTA. Students of all ages are eligible to join any PTA or PTSA and are given the same privileges and responsibilities as any other member of the association. Students work together with parents and teachers as a team, developing skills as advocates and community leaders. The California State PTA actively encourages and supports student participation in PTA/PTSA leadership, events and programs at every level of PTA – unit, council, district and state.

Students are eager to be involved in implementing positive change. Inviting students to join PTA/PTSA is an excellent way to encourage their support and participation as stakeholders in their school community. An effective collaboration of students and adults helps to ensure that vital PTA/PTSA programs remain relevant and serve the needs of the students and the school community.

Through their involvement, students benefit as well. They gain leadership skills, receive community service opportunities, and are introduced to the legislative process and the importance of advocating for a cause.

From the grass roots of our local PTAs to the National PTA, students are a vital part of our organization; bringing enthusiasm, energy, fresh ideas and focus to issues that affect them and their communities. Promote student involvement in your PTA today.

~ Student Involvement Committee

## A message from Paul Richman, executive director

### You know you're an advocate if ...

As an association, California State PTA is dedicated to advocating on behalf of all children and families. So, does that mean you have to be an "advocate" to be in PTA?

The answer is: If you're an involved parent or grandparent, you're already an advocate. You've already decided you'll do whatever it takes to help your child succeed.

If you're part of PTA, you're already an advocate, because you've decided you want to help your child – and all children – succeed. That's what we mean when we talk about advocacy at the most fundamental level. If you care deeply about children, about our public education system, about our future workforce, then you most definitely are an advocate.

Some people think of advocacy solely in the context of getting involved on legislative matters – phoning or e-mailing legislators or attending a rally. These are critical forms of advocacy because they call attention to the needs of children. We are strongest when every PTA member speaks with one voice on important state and federal issues.

But there are other forms of advocacy, too. PTAs hold all sorts of activities throughout the year that help children: book drives, clothing drives, college nights and special events with guest speakers who talk about health, safety or literacy – these are all forms of advocacy, too. In all of the advocacy work that you do every day then, here are five

things to consider to help you be even more successful:

**1. Keep learning.** We don't have to be experts to help. We just have to be interested. Seek out information and learn about issues. PTA has many great resources to assist you.

**2. Focus on building relationships.** You can have great ideas and all the facts on your side, but still not achieve what you want to on behalf of children because you haven't reached out to people. Cultivate your relationships – with other parents, with extended family members, with teachers and principals, with local business and community leaders, with your legislators. Help children by bringing more people into your advocacy work.

*'The PTA members I know are always finding new ways to inspire volunteers or raise awareness about important issues affecting children.'*

**3. Be creative.** We have to embrace new ways of communicating, new ideas, new events, new approaches to engage people. This is one of PTA's greatest strengths, because our members are naturally creative. The PTA members I know are always finding new ways to



inspire volunteers or raise awareness about important issues affecting children – and finding new ways to have fun in the process.

**4. Have courage.** It takes courage to stand up when everyone else sits down. As PTA leaders, you're used to that. It takes courage to speak up on behalf of children. It takes courage to call for long-term meaningful changes when everyone else just seems to want a quick fix.

Have courage to call for real change. Remember: Courage, just like enthusiasm, is infectious.

**5. Persevere.** Lastly, stick with it. Positive change doesn't happen overnight. PTA has advocated for children for 112 years. We're not going to go away or stop speaking up for kids whenever we hit a bump in the road. During this past year of massive budget cuts, we've all felt some discouragement – a feeling that our state is moving backward in its commitment to children – but we must persevere. You know you're an advocate if you never stop trying to help your child, and every child, succeed.

### PTA volunteer time benefits California's children by \$414 million

Throughout the state of California, PTA volunteers donate many thousands of hours of time. During the economic crisis volunteers have actually increased their contributions by more than 600,000 hours.

Between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009, PTA volunteer donated 19.8 million hours. These hours have an estimated value exceeding \$414 million.

In 2007-2008 the 19.2 million volunteer hours had an estimated value of nearly \$403 million.

Thank you for the countless hours you put in to help California's children. You are truly "everychild. onevoice."

Units, councils, districts and state PTA track volunteer hours. These hours should include participation in school and com-

munity service or activities benefiting children, unit, council, district, state and National PTA programs, projects, training, and PTA-related travel, telephone, meetings and paperwork time. The totals of volunteer hours are used to raise awareness of all the important work that PTA members accomplish.

~ Historian, Member Services Commission

## Influenza prevention can start in classrooms with PTA help

Each new school year means new school supplies, new clothes, and a renewed focus on good health. No one wants children to get sick and miss school. To help keep children healthy, public health experts and physicians recommend routine immunizations and an annual influenza (flu) vaccine for children ages six months through 18 years. This year, the H1N1 vaccine for certain groups, including school-age children, is also recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Annually, up to 20 percent of people in the United States are infected with the flu. School-aged children are up to four times more likely to be infected than adults. It is especially important to take steps to prevent the spread of flu in schools.

With so much information about flu vaccinations and so many resources to choose from, how can PTAs help?

“PTAs and PTA members can help prevent disease in the classroom and the community by promoting good respiratory hygiene and flu vaccinations,” explains Catherine Flores Martin, executive director of the California Immunization Coalition (CIC). The coalition is a California PTA Allied Agency.

“Influenza viruses, like other respiratory infections, are spread from person-to-person,” Martin explains. She says students, school staff and parents can help prevent



influenza by following these simple recommendations:

- Get vaccinated against seasonal and H1N1 flu.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. Alcohol-based hand gels also kill germs.
- Cover your cough with a tissue or the inside of your elbow.
- Stay home if you're sick for at least 24 hours after the fever has passed.

Germs are hard to see but easy to pick up! They are on desks, keyboards, light switches, phones and doorknobs. Students can help keep classrooms germ-free. As a mom, Martin reminds other parents that teachers welcome donations of alcohol-based hand sanitizer and wet wipes. Boxes of tissues are also appreciated.

In addition, there are many online resources, tools and materials. Below are some favorites. Promote them in PTA newsletters and on PTA websites.

- The California Department of Public Health Immunization Branch has lots of great free downloadable materials for the classroom. Visit its website to view and print them.  
[www.eziz.org/resources/materials\\_fluprevention.html](http://www.eziz.org/resources/materials_fluprevention.html)
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services offers guidance for H1N1, avian and pandemic influenza on [www.flu.gov](http://www.flu.gov) including school-specific information and guidance. Make this website a “favorite!”  
[www.flu.gov/plan/school/index.html](http://www.flu.gov/plan/school/index.html)
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has guidance for schools, child-care programs and colleges posted at [www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu](http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu)
- The California Immunization Coalition offers a variety of current information for community groups – like PTA – on its website at [www.immunizeca.org](http://www.immunizeca.org).

~ Health Commission

### 2009 Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports

## PTAs take home the bronze, silver and gold awards

PTAs swept the winning spots in the 2009 Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Spotlight Awards. The awards were presented by the Anthem Blue Cross Foundation in Sacramento in September. The parent association winners follow.

### GOLD MEDALIST

#### Monroe PTA, Monroe Elementary School, Santa Barbara

The Monroe PTA's interest in children's physical condition began six years ago when only 6.6 percent of fifth-graders could pass the California State Physical Fitness Exam. The PTA raised money to provide a physical education coach to work with students at all grade levels weekly and build a fitness course. Two

years later, 33 percent of fifth-graders passed the exam. Since then the student passage rate has continued to climb. In 2008 46.3 percent of students passed, making Monroe Elementary the district's top school.

Monroe PTA President Cricket Wood said: “The accomplishments we were honored for – improving and enhancing the health and well-being of students at Monroe – are the result of dedication and hard work by generations of PTA board and association members.”

### SILVER MEDALIST

#### North Davis Elementary PTA, North Davis Elementary, Davis

### BRONZE MEDALIST

#### Vista Fundamental PTA, Vista Fundamental School, Simi Valley

Visit the Governor's Council on Fitness website, [www.calgovcouncil.org](http://www.calgovcouncil.org), to review the great programs of these award-winning PTA schools.

When planning any PTA activity, please contact the PTA insurance broker at (800) 733-3036 and consult the *Insurance and Loss Prevention Guide* available on the 2009 Summer Service Mailing CD or in the 2009 November Mailing.

Visit <http://www.pta.bbt-knight.com/> to plan safe, fun PTA activities.



# Outstanding unit engages school community

North Park Elementary PTA, Thirty-Fourth District PTA, Santa Clarita Valley Council PTA, accomplished three major goals last year in membership, art and student involvement.

## Making art from above

Parent volunteers support art doing something wonderful. The unit's 2009 My PTA/PTSA Award application included a description of the art program, sponsored by North Park PTA. The school walls have an impressive array of art on display, and there is an art library on campus stocked with art supplies, musical instruments and exciting lessons. The true beauty of the art program is more than 50 parent art volunteers ("Art Moms") who donate their time, talent and dedication to keep the program running.

A schoolwide art project is held each year. In 2009, the theme "The Sky Horse" was chosen. Conceptual artist Daniel Dancer of Art for the Sky created Sky Horse in a giant living picture made of 1,000 people.

## Moving membership

North Park Elementary PTA started the year off with a friendly membership challenge competing with a neighboring school. The students and parents were



"The Sky Horse" at North Park Elementary School.

Courtesy of Daniel Dancer/www.artforthesky.com

determined to win that challenge and exceeded their goal by 34 percent. As the school population was becoming increasingly diverse, PTA reached out to students and families with special needs by working with the librarian to implement a section of books in the school library related to various special needs. One of the assemblies the PTA hosted was "Schwab Learning and Show Your Spark," where students were able to learn more about learning disabilities and how to manage them. These efforts helped the PTA win the 2009 Outstanding Unit Award.

## Involving students

"Cruisin' With Your Teachers" is a program that fosters interaction between students and teachers. During the school's

Fall Festival students receive five tickets each to be used in a drawing.

Winning students spend time with the teacher of their choice or choose to be principal or assistant principal for a day. One student for each teacher/administrator is drawn. Chosen students enjoy activities such as lunch with a teacher, miniature golf or a trip to a bookstore. This program is very popular with the students and parents.

North Park Elementary PTA received the 2009 My PTA/PTSA Teachers, Administrators and Staff Involvement Award and the Outstanding Unit Award, presented at the 2009 Annual California State PTA Convention.

## New bank of best practices: Priceless

The California State PTA Bank of Best Practices is the new online place to find programs, projects and ideas to support the good work of PTA in your unit and community.

The bank allows everyone to share in the wealth of outstanding projects developed by PTAs and PTSAs throughout California. These tested ideas can be easily duplicated in other units, councils and communities to benefit children, their communities and school staff.

So make a withdrawal by borrowing a great idea for a new project for your PTA. Don't forget to make deposits, too, by sharing programs your PTA has developed.

The bank covers ideas for activities in advocacy, arts, educator involvement, health and fitness, membership, outreach, parent involvement, partnering and student involvement.

Visit [www.capta.org/sections/best-practices](http://www.capta.org/sections/best-practices) to start your best banking practices today.

## Online resource kit for developing partnerships to close the achievement gap

A new California Department of Education resource guide will help schools and school districts partner with public and private agencies for creating student achievement programs. The guide also includes information on how to obtain and analyze data.

Visit CDE's partnership resource site at [www.closingtheachievementgap.org/cs/ctag/print/htdocs/part.htm](http://www.closingtheachievementgap.org/cs/ctag/print/htdocs/part.htm) and become involved in creating student achievement programs.

## Stretch your PTA dollars by purchasing service awards and funding grants and scholarships

Hard-earned PTA funds can do even more. When your unit purchases a service award for a deserving member of the community, you also fund California State PTA scholarships and grants. With one expenditure, you can honor your volunteers and also provide assistance for others across the state!

**There are four service awards available:** Very Special Person Award; Honorary Service Award; Continuing Service Award; and the highest, the Golden Oak. All can be ordered by any PTA at any time. Funds for these awards go directly to the Scholarship and Grant committee for Graduating High School Senior Scholarships; Leadership Development, Arts, Parent Education, Translation Grants; Volunteer, Teacher, School Nurse and Counselor Continuing Education Scholarships; and Healthy Lifestyle Grants.

### Due dates to remember

#### February 1:

##### Scholarships

Graduating High School Seniors

#### November 15:

##### Scholarships

Continuing Education for Credentialed Classroom Teachers and Counselors; Continuing Education for School Nurses; Continuing Education for PTA Volunteers.

**Grants** (for unit, council and district PTAs): Outreach Translation; Cultural Arts; Parent Education; Healthy Lifestyle (funded by donations received at California State PTA Convention).

For more information and applications, look in the *California State PTA Toolkit Programs and Forms Sections* or visit our website at [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org).

~ Honorary Service Award Committee and Scholarship and Grant Committee

## Cleaning for healthy schools: How PTAs can help schools switch to green cleaning to save money, boost student achievement, and safeguard health

By Deborah Moore, Executive Director, Green Schools Initiative

Have you ever had a hard time breathing? Or a cough that wouldn't go away? The American Lung Association's tag line – "When you can't breathe, nothing else matters" – brings home how hard a school day can be for the more than 1 million California children who have asthma. Asthma is the primary cause of hospitalization for California children under age 15, and is the leading cause of school absences due to chronic illness. Teachers and janitors also suffer high rates of work-related asthma.

Alarming, the California Air Resources Board found significant environmental health problems in many California classrooms that exacerbate asthma. Some stem from the cleaning products used. As a result, schoolchildren and staff are unnecessarily exposed to chemicals commonly found in traditional cleaning products, chemicals that have been linked to asthma, cancer, reproductive harm, hormone disruption, and water and air pollution.

While the budget crisis is wreaking havoc on school custodial departments, the good news is that improving indoor air quality (IAQ) in schools through green cleaning programs can actually save schools money and protect the health of custodians, teachers and students, thereby reducing absenteeism and improving academic achievement. Francis Kennedy, a custodial manager from Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District who has asthma, found his health has improved since he made the switch to green cleaners. "Breathing Easier," a Regional Asthma Management and Prevention Initiative (RAMP) report, tells the success stories of school districts in Elk Grove, Fairfield-Suisun and Fresno, and how they improved attendance and saved money through using green cleaners certified by Green Seal or EcoLogo.

The California State PTA adopted the 2007 IAQ in Schools Resolution that encourages PTA units to work with schools to adopt policies and practices that will improve IAQ, such as green cleaning.



### What parents can do.

- Ask your school's principal what cleaning products are used at your school. Use the Green Schools Buying Guide to learn what hazardous chemicals to avoid and how to identify green cleaning products and best practices.
- Work with your school's wellness committee or other groups to implement the Environmental Protection

Agency's Tools for Schools IAQ Program and encourage green cleaning district-wide.

- Encourage your district to adopt a Cleaning for Healthy Schools Policy by sharing green cleaning success stories from schools in California and other states.
- Ensure your district follows California Department of Public Health guidance for proper disinfection practices, avoids over-using disinfectants, and, when possible, selects less-toxic registered disinfectants, such as those with accelerated hydrogen peroxide. Promote proper handwashing with regular soap and water (antibacterial soaps are no more effective and can actually be harmful).
- Avoid bringing in cleaners from home for classroom use that do not meet the school's green guidelines.
- Use green cleaners at home or make your own non-toxic cleaners for pennies. Women's Voices for the Earth has reports and recipes on safe alternatives for household cleaning products.

If you can't breathe, you can't learn. So, make your home and your school a healthy, toxics-free environment!

*Deborah Moore is the Executive Director of the Green Schools Initiative, making K-12 schools across California healthy and sustainable places for kids to work, learn and play.*

### Resources

California PTA Health Commission – [www.capta.org/sections/programs/health.cfm](http://www.capta.org/sections/programs/health.cfm)  
Regional Asthma Management and Prevention – [www.rampasthma.org](http://www.rampasthma.org)  
Green Schools Buying Guide – [www.greenschools.net](http://www.greenschools.net)  
EPA's Tools for Schools – [www.epa.gov/iaq/schools](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools)  
Cleaning for Healthy Schools – [www.cleaningforhealthyschools.org](http://www.cleaningforhealthyschools.org)  
Women's Voices for the Earth – [www.womenandenvironment.org](http://www.womenandenvironment.org)



## How and why

# PTA's indoor air quality resolution

My PTA colleagues and I had been looking at reasons for school absences and were shocked to find that schools are losing \$40.8 million of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) funding due to absences caused by asthma. We know that families need to manage their children's asthma, but that may not be enough. We started to understand triggers and potential triggers in classrooms that can aggravate a person's asthma (teachers have asthma too).

Overall health is important to all who are in classrooms. We felt taking a resolution addressing Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) to our California State PTA delegates at an annual convention was the best way to raise awareness and bring the conversation to a higher level. After all, California State PTA does have nearly 1 million members statewide.

It was October 2006. We took our intent letter and draft to

our Peralta District PTA (Alameda County) meeting for approval before submitting them to the California State PTA for consideration. One of our PTA members, Kathy Peters, stood up and said, "It is about time!" We received our vote of approval and sent the resolution with pages of documentation and research off to the state PTA office.

In February 2007, we received word that our resolution would be presented to delegates for their consideration on the convention floor. Very tragically, Kathy Peters, our veteran PTA volunteer, mother, wife and public school employee passed away March 24 from complications due to asthma. Her passing was justification for our cause. Just four months earlier, Kathy had stood up at the meeting and said, "It's about time!"

At the May 2007 convention, the entire Peralta District delegation arrived wearing buttons



Presenter of the Indoor Air Quality resolution, Jamie Hintzke (at microphone), Pleasanton Council PTA, provides opening arguments in favor of the proposed resolution at the May 2007 Annual California State PTA Convention. Maggie Steele, Peralta District PTA, stands behind the speaker; seated to the right is Pat Sando, 2007-2009 vice president for member services.

bearing Kathy Peters' photograph. YES! It was about time! The resolution was adopted by the delegates and in our minds the resolution on Indoor Air Quality is dedicated to Kathy Peters.

The resolution now gives PTA authority to advocate for IAQ. Pleasanton Council PTA and

Peralta District PTA feel fortunate that we were able to take the time to raise this issue. Over the next two years we intend to focus on educating PTA members and encouraging them to promote the IAQ objectives in their respective school districts.

~ Jamie Hintzke  
Resolutions Committee

## Convention planners are energized, excited and ready to 'Unleash the Power of PTA'

Join us in Sacramento, April 29-May 2, 2010, for the 111<sup>th</sup> Annual California State PTA Convention. In initial planning, as members of the Convention Commission charged to offer a great convention, we recalled our first convention experiences. We reviewed what educated, energized and inspired us. Since we want PTA members to have the same wonderful experiences, we incorporated all the things we loved about ours.

At the 2010 Convention you will also find opportunities for the following.

- Training and learning opportunities at more than 70 workshops.
- Networking with other PTA leaders from around the state.
- Participating in general meetings and share your voice in guiding our organization.

- Visiting the Exhibit Hall and the PTA Store.
- Joining Thursday's rally at the Capitol.
- Embracing, enjoying and being inspired by Reflections participants.
- Becoming engaged in the resolution process.
- Getting inspired by speakers.
- Being awed by students.

Whether you are a first timer (whoo-hoo!) or a seasoned volunteer, there is something for everyone.

Do you want to get everyone excited about convention? View and promote the new convention video posted on the convention web page at [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org). You'll want to send your board, your students and your members! Convention is a legitimate PTA expense. Your PTA district

**Make a \$20 donation to PTA to receive a special pack of supporter ribbons.**

may have leadership grants available. Title 1 Parent Involvement funds included in school site budgets may also be available.

Online registration begins February 2, 2010. Register early to get the best discount. Your badge and tickets will be mailed to you.

The Convention Commission can't wait to meet you in Sacramento. Together we will **Unleash the Power of PTA!** See you there!

~ Convention Commission



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If you are no longer a PTA president, please forward this and all mailings immediately to your successor.

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### PTA IN CALIFORNIA

2327 L Street, Sacramento, California 95816-5014

PH (916) 440-1985 • FAX (916) 440-1986

World Wide Web address <[www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org)> • Email <[info@capta.org](mailto:info@capta.org)>

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President: Jo Loss

Vice President for Communications: Linda Mayo

Editor and photographer: Mark Buchman

Executive Director: Paul Richman

Media and Communications Manager: Alison apRoberts

Design: Pat Ruiz

The mission of the California State PTA is to positively impact the lives of all children and families by representing our members, and empowering and supporting them with skills in advocacy, leadership and communications.

Adopted October 2009

## Upcoming Events

### December 2009

- 1 First remittance of per capita dues

### January 2010

Watch for Convention Registration Book in the mail

- 15 FINAL Resolution & Convention Action Cover Sheet \*
- 22 National PTA Reflections Program entries \*
- 31 Insurance Premiums \*
- 31 Workers' Compensation Annual Payroll Report \*

### February 2010

Early Convention Registration starts

- 1 Graduating High School Senior Scholarships applications\*
- 1 PTA Spotlight Award applications \*
- 17 Founders Day
- 21-22 Legislation Conference in Sacramento

### March 2010

- 1 Phoebe Apperson Hearst Family-School Partnership Award applications due in National PTA office
- 31 Membership Challenge Award \*
- 31 Presidential Award \*

\* due in State PTA office.

**111<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CALIFORNIA STATE PTA CONVENTION**  
**APRIL 29-MAY 2, 2010**  
**SACRAMENTO CONVENTION CENTER**

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