

Illinois PTA[®] Bulletin

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"Reach for the future by reaching for the horizon"

Have you given any thought to what you will be doing ten years from now? Five years? Or even one year? I know that I haven't at this time, but I know that I should be looking at what will be best for me. Don't get me wrong, I have made some financial plans, but I haven't really looked at where I want to be. I've had the opportunity to travel around this country and look at different places. I love Illinois. I was born and raised here. I would miss the holidays if there wasn't snow (or at least cold), but I do love the warmth of the southwest.



Jean Razunas
Illinois PTA President

My point is this — what kind of plans have we made for our children's future? Have we done everything we could to see that *all* children have an equal education? Have you made contact with your state or federal legislators and asked them what they are doing to see that all children have an equitable education? Have you talked with other parents about the importance of reaching out to their legislators and urging them to support funding that will ensure a quality education for all children?

Now that the elections are over with for various positions in government, I urge you to make yourself aware of those members of government who have an effect on children – be it your alderman/councilman, mayor, governor, congressman, senator, and surely the president – and urge them to do all they can to ensure the future of children.

We cannot wait ten years, five years, or even a year, to see that there is equitable funding for education. Make that personal contact and let them know that CHILDREN ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ASSET OF AMERICA. They are this country's future. We need to provide them with an education that will ensure that they have the capabilities of leading productive lives.

The recent election turned out record numbers of voters, many of them new registrants. Don't stop there. Do your part – be active role models for your children.

Act Now! Don't wait for tomorrow!

Reach for the horizon that is ahead of you.

Hugs,

Jean Razunas

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Jan Harp Domene
PTA National President

One Easy Resolution

Many of us will (try to) keep resolutions for New Year's. Some of these resolutions will be to do things we're already doing, but perhaps better, or at least more often. Other resolutions will be to try something new, to explore the world beyond the borders we know. One resolution will help you do a little bit of both—and help boost involvement in our schools at the same time. All you need is access to the Internet, and a little bit of time, literally whenever it fits your schedule.

PTA has always been exceptionally good about connecting people who are passionate about helping children be successful and healthy—but now we have technology that allows us to connect those people in a whole new way. I want you to resolve with me to embrace the possibilities of online social networking, because it's not just for our kids anymore.

If you haven't visited the PTA pages on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Fotki, you haven't seen the amazing online community that continues to grow there every single day. You'll find postings and pictures and videos of people who are sharing ideas, inspiration, and lots and lots of information. You can even communicate with PTA's leadership, including myself.

For anyone unfamiliar with the sites that millions of people (and most of our children) have been using, PTA is launching an entire series of introductory videos to help you get acquainted with social networking. Leaders can learn how to establish a Facebook presence for their local units, and how to reach out to their community and connect with the national office once they do. And absolutely anyone interested in supporting our nation's children can learn why this new form of communication is so important, and just the few simple steps it takes to get involved.

So as you resolve to bring more people into your PTA this New Year, check out:

<http://pta-tv.org>

(with the username "ptacommunity" and password "1pta1"—just click "enter" to watch each video) to see how easy it is to be part of our online community. And I'll see you on Facebook!

Jan Harp Domene
PTA National President

Congratulations! Illinois PTA Unit Wins Take Your Family to School Week Award

PTA Take Your Family to School Week is easy to implement, but more importantly, the event embodies one of PTA's founding principles: When it comes to children's education, the best way to get involved is to become part of the school community.

When schools open their doors to all families, and parents put aside their other commitments, children get to see that their education is valued, families earn a unique perspective on students' school days, and educators gain a new way to build positive partnerships with entire families.

PTA Take Your Family to School Week, February 8-14, 2009, is just one of the PTA programs revitalizing parent involvement in education. PTA has worked to bring families and schools together since its founding on February 17, 1897. As we celebrate our founders' vision during Take Your Family to School Week—and support its implementation with awards of \$1,897—be sure you take time to connect families and schools on behalf of children, right where it matters most—in children's own classrooms.

Over the last couple months, the PTA national office received more than 600 applications for the \$1,897 Awards, presented by PTA Proud National Sponsor AXA Foundation, whose signature program, AXA Achievementsm, provides resources that help make college possible for America's youth.

And now, Illinois PTA is proud to announce a winner of the 2009 Take Your Family to School Awards from our very own:

Lakewood Falls Elementary PTA in Plainfield Illinois PTA District 22

Take Your Family to School Week has been supported by education and community leaders, including Secretary Margaret Spellings, U.S. Department of Education; the National School Boards Association; the National Association of Secondary School Principals; and the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

TEN YEARS OF PROGRESS

Submitted by: Gretchen L. McDowell, State Legislation Consultant, Illinois PTA

What is life like for children in Illinois who are in the foster care system or have found themselves in the juvenile court system?

Ten years ago, the Illinois PTA adopted recommendations presented in a report to our convention on how to improve the care of the children in the juvenile justice system. These are printed in the front of our “Green Book” – the Illinois PTA Legislation Platform and have guided our advocacy in these areas ever since.

Now, we are excited to be offering a new report with recommendations to the 2009 convention body, which will reflect both the continuing needs for our children in the system and the progress Illinois has made to improve the lives of these youth.

The report will be presented at our convention, and our delegates will have an opportunity to adopt the recommendations of the report.

Legislation

Illinois PTA Position: Opposing Leasing of the Illinois Lottery

Submitted by: Gretchen L. McDowell, State Legislation Consultant, Illinois PTA

The Illinois PTA State Board of Managers on September 13, 2008, took a position in opposition to leasing or sale of the Illinois Lottery.



In taking this position, amongst others, the following issues were considered:

- The present plan would lease 80 % of the lottery for 50 years for an expected upfront \$10 billion dollars, with a set-aside of an amount expected to continue the availability of \$600 million dollars each year for the education budget for approximately 25 years. The present plan provides that the remainder of the lease monies would be used for capital projects.
- At the end of 50 years, the 20 % of the lottery remaining with the State would have to achieve an amount equal to \$600 million to replace the money in the education budget.

Since presently, all the profits from the Lottery are placed in the Common School Fund, that would mean that any growth in the fund beyond \$600 million would be lost to that fund in future years (especially if there is an actual expectation that the Lottery would grow over the next 25 years).

- The lease of the lottery does nothing to provide a stable, consistent form of revenue or added funds for the education of our children.
- The lease of the lottery does nothing to provide the funds needed to reform the state’s tax policy to allow for reform of education funding, or provide property tax relief in the education funding portion of local property taxes.

In order for any entity to pay the upfront \$10 billion cost of the lease, it would seem that that entity will be required to greatly expand gambling based on the lottery in Illinois.

The Illinois PTA supports, and will continue to support, the provisions of SB 750 at best, or SB 2288 secondly, as the only plans that will allow the state to fund the foundation level our schools need as a minimum, based on the findings of the Education Funding Advisory Board (EFAB).

Again, the Illinois PTA recognizes that we need more revenue than the leasing proposal would provide for education. We also need to reform our tax policy (which the SB 750 proposal does) in order to move toward more equitable education funding across the state. Finally, more revenue is needed to fund higher education and other state services as well as to provide funds to address the State’s structural deficit.

Market the PTA in Your School

Marketing PTA needs to be a planned, active, undertaking. Membership in PTA is a commodity and needs to be positively advertised. It's up to you to promote this vital organization. Use the Illinois PTA *Membership Marketing Guide* and the 2008-2009 National PTA *Membership Kit* as resources in your campaign for an increase in PTA membership.

Top Ten Ways to Actively Market PTA

10. Form a membership committee. Include at-large PTA members with the membership chairman and board members.
9. Choose a theme for the year and plan how you will implement it.
Set a goal and plan how you will achieve it. *My challenge to you is 25 new members over last year's count.*
8. In cooperation with the school district, include a membership form in the school registration packet.
7. Set up a membership table at PTA and school events. Prepare and display a poster listing your PTA events and benefits, which were of value to the students in your school. Place it on the membership table.
6. Make a flyer including the information on the poster and include it with your membership forms or letters of invitation to join PTA.
5. Make a list of past PTA members and send them an invitation to join along with the flyer.
4. Put the flyer in the teacher's lounge. Purchase a subscription to the *Illinois PTA Bulletin* and *Our Children* for the teachers and administration. The "T" in PTA is important and their support is vital. The funds will be well spent!
3. Take time at a PTA meeting or school event (arrange with administration) to use the introductory speech in the Local Unit Packet to tell those in attendance about PTA and its advantages.
2. Extend your hand and say "Welcome" at every PTA and school event. Identify yourself as "PTA."
1. **Smile and "Just Ask."**



National PTA unveils another online resource for today's parent by introducing *PTA Radio*—an online radio show focused on education and family issues while providing easy, real-life tips and information.

Anyone can listen to *PTA Radio* on-demand and catch a quick show online at their leisure with the click of a mouse. Show lengths range from 5 – 10 minutes and features interviews with different national experts every other week.

The first series of shows focus on male involvement tips and highlight a different partner of PTA's Men Organized to Raise Engagement (MORE) alliance. The shows are hosted by Rae Pica, an author and international education expert specializing in early childhood physical activity; and Chuck Saylor, National PTA's first-ever male president-elect.

The inaugural *PTA Radio* show is called, "Getting Dads into the School Setting," and includes an interview with Bryan Davis, Director of All Pro Dad—a fatherhood program of Family First and formed of current and former NFL players and coaches who call attention to the importance of fatherhood.

Parents and child advocates can listen to *PTA Radio* by visiting <http://www.pta.org/>.

<http://www.jackstreet.com/jackstreet/WMBKpta.davis.cfm>.

PTA's website also highlights other male involvement information at http://www.pta.org/pta_more.asp.



Families can enjoy watching movies together while also supporting PTA. The PTA Video Store at www.pta.org or www.ptavideostore.com carries movies for all ages, including family favorites and new releases. PTA, in partnership with Harmony Digital Media Consortium, LLC and Hewlett-Packard, has launched this video store as a resource for parents to find family oriented video entertainment. The store contains movies and television content rated G, PG and PG-13 only. No previews are available at the store for PG-13 movies or television content.

RESOLUTION REWIND

Submitted by: Rhonda G. Jenkins, Illinois PTA Resolutions Chairman

Resolutions 1947

WHEREAS, The Illinois Congress of Parents and Teachers is a vital force in the Welfare of Children and Youth; and

WHEREAS, All children are our children; and

WHEREAS, We want for every child the highest advantages for growth, and development according to his special needs; and

WHEREAS, In unity there is strength to face the demanding tasks to which destiny summons us; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That we, the members of the Illinois Congress of Parents and Teachers, recognize fully our opportunities and responsibilities as we work with increased zeal in all parent-teacher activities, moving steadily forward toward all our regular objectives; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we place our major emphasis on school education, health, world understanding, and parent and family life education, in harmony with the ...National Congress of Parents and Teachers:

1. School Education

In view of the recognized crisis facing our whole program of education it is necessary that much progress be made in the financial support of schools and in securing qualified personnel. We must assure teachers that salaries will be adequate to provide an opportunity for personal growth, economic security, and reasonable advancement...

Schools must help our boys and girls become intelligent and responsible citizens, who will have a genuine respect for the dignity and worth of every human being. We believe that equality of educational opportunity for all youth in Illinois can be achieved only by adequate reorganization of our school taxation program...

3. World Understanding

Statesmen alone cannot guarantee a peaceful world. We need to accept our adult responsibility to our children in helping them build world understanding and good will for the future peace of the world...

1948-1949

1. Public Money for Public Schools

We believe that public money should be used only for public education. Our public schools are the greatest unifying force in our society. In them, more than in any other institution, race, religion, nationality, and other differences among individuals and groups of individuals are minimized. Aid to non-public schools of any type would tend to weaken our public school system and to break the wall of separation between church and state... We insist that whatever federal aid congress may give to the states for education be used in the support of public education only.

Isn't it interesting how some things never change? Since the 1940's we have been advocating for school funding issues and other issues that have become valid again in the present.

Resolutions for the 2009 Illinois PTA Convention are due by January 1, 2009. If you have an issue that you feel needs to be brought to light, please see your local unit packet for details or contact me.

Rhonda G. Jenkins, Illinois PTA Resolutions Chairman
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Convention Is Just Around the Corner

Submitted by: Connie Mc Elyea, General Arrangements Coordinator

The Program Committee reviewed evaluations from the immediate past convention and is committed to continue with items that were successful, and to try new things. We are planning this convention with your suggestions in mind and being creative at the same time. We will be offering a limited number of workshops per session and all workshops will relate to Diversity, Leadership or Membership. PTA Courses will be offered various times throughout convention. Once again, the successful box lunches will be offered on Friday and Saturday.

We will kick off convention early on Thursday evening by hosting three pre-convention workshops. Workshops include: "Welcome Leaders" which provides an opportunity for presidents to chat with our state president in an informal setting; "Train the Trainers" provides the opportunity for pre-selected delegates to be trained in teaching PTA courses; and finally, "All Aboard" provides insight as to what it is like to serve on the Illinois PTA State Board of Managers.

Exhibits will be on Friday **only** from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.: delegates admittance is free. Non-PTA members will be allowed in for a fee. Friday afternoon will offer two workshop sessions, awards dinner, and to close the evening: our second annual celebration event!

Saturday will be filled with three workshop sessions, Artist's Showcase, and General Sessions. Also, this will be the day to exercise your privilege as a PTA member to elect the Illinois PTA 2009-2011 officers, and the Board Development and Nominating Committee. **Reminder, you must be registered by 1:45 p.m. on Saturday to be entitled to cast a ballot in the election.**

Sunday will start early with the Healthy Kidz Event (formerly known as Healthy Kidz Walk). The walk has been revised due to the unpredictable weather in mid-March! We will offer one last workshop session and close convention with a luncheon and installation of the 2009-2011 officers. The annual Student Award Celebration to honor and recognize our Scholarship and Reflections recipients will be held in the afternoon.



We are proud to announce that:

Chuck Saylor will be the National Representative at our 2009 State Convention, being held March 13-15, 2009 in Naperville, Illinois .

Charles J. "Chuck" Saylor is PTA's first-ever male national president-elect. He was elected in June 2007 to a two-year term and has been a PTA member for almost 20 years.

Saylor joined PTA when his oldest son Matthew (now 24 years old) was in the first grade at Woodland Elementary in Greer, S.C. That's when he and his wife Teresa began volunteering and they haven't slowed down since. Saylor has held numerous PTA positions including: local unit President, PTA District President, South Carolina PTA Vice President, Treasurer and President as well as most recently PTA National Secretary-Treasurer (2005-2007) and many more.

Saylor states: "My motivation is to get parents and family members involved in the educational system showing them that even a little time spent in the school is a valuable investment. I truly believe that a child will succeed if a parent is involved."

Saylor has been in the construction industry for over 17 years and is currently Vice President for the Construction Management Division of M.B. Kahn Construction, a national top 10 education contractor. Saylor also serves on a number of national, state, and community boards. He is a trustee for the School District of Greenville County, S.C., serving two years as board chair and is a former board member for Greenville Technical College.

“Reaching New Horizons”

Illinois PTA 107th Annual Convention

March 13 - 15, 2009

Holiday Inn Select Naperville Hotel & Conference Center

Naperville, IL 60563

Additional Convention Information:

Pre-Convention Registration Fee includes Friday evening dinner.

1 – 2 delegates: \$80.00 per person

3 – 4 delegates: \$75.00 per person

5 + delegates: \$70.00 per person

Child’s registration: \$25.00 per child and includes Friday evening dinner.

Note: To qualify for the reduced rate, all registrations must be submitted in same envelope.

On-Site Registration Fee does not include Friday evening dinner.

\$100 per person

For Hotel Reservations contact:

Holiday Inn Select Naperville Hotel & Conference Center

1801 Naper Blvd.

Naperville, IL 60563

Tel (630) 505-4900

Room Rates - \$99.00 plus tax currently 10.4%. Check-in time is 3:00 p.m. Delegates must **reserve rooms by February 23, 2009**, to guarantee the special rate is provided. When calling to make reservations, mention Illinois PTA to receive the guaranteed rate. The hotel will accept PTA checks.

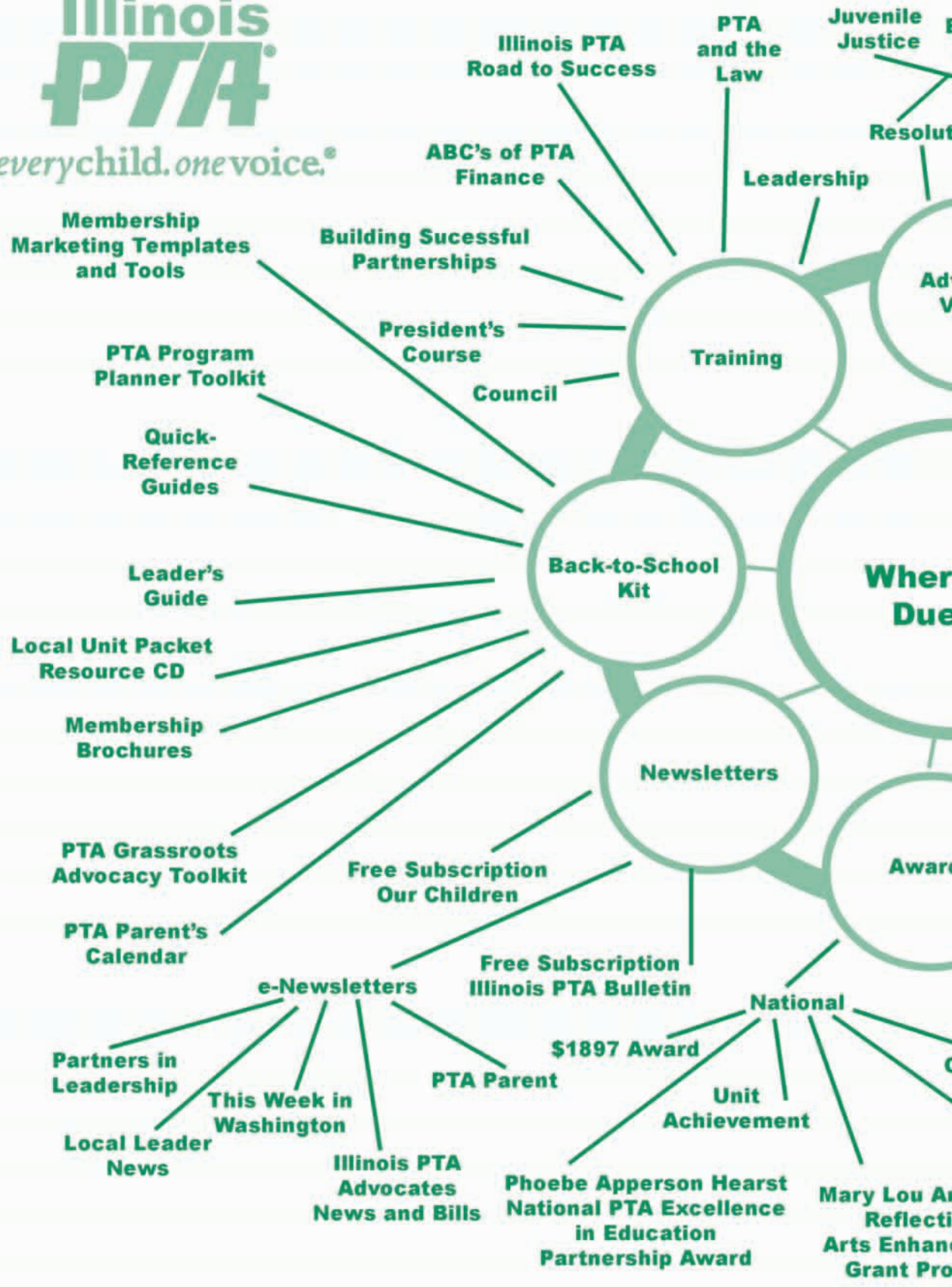
Convention is an investment in your PTA and a great motivator for you. Meeting with delegates throughout the state that have the same objects and purposes is a wonderful experience. There are opportunities for training as well as opportunities for personal growth. Join us and discover how to increase membership, sharpen your leadership skills, and interact with PTA members from all over Illinois.

More information regarding convention will be posted on the Illinois PTA website, www.illinoispta.org, or in future editions of the Illinois PTA BULLETIN.

Connie Mc Elyea, General Arrangements Coordinator

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The Value of PTA

Founders Day Is February 17th What Is Your PTA Doing to Celebrate?

Founders Day is a reminder of the substantial role that PTA has played locally, regionally, and nationally in supporting parent involvement and working on behalf of all children and families. It's a time to reflect and take pride in our many accomplishments, and to renew our commitment to be a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for parents, and a strong advocate for public education.

PTA's founders Phoebe Apperson Hearst and Alice McLellan Birney, and the founder of Georgia's Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers, Selena Sloan Butler, were women of imagination and courage. They understood the power of individual action, worked beyond the accepted barriers of their day, and took action to literally change the world.

They had a simple idea—to improve the lives and futures of all of our children. As much as other conditions in America may have changed, that idea has not. PTAs keep it alive.

Today, PTA is the largest volunteer child advocacy organization in the nation. Our members represent the ethnic diversity of our nation, and they come from the ranks of traditional families, single-parent households, blended families, grandparents, and other caring adults. Together, we continue to serve as the conscience of the country for children and youth.

2009 National Legislative Conference

Washington DC
March 11-12, 2009

On March 11-12, 2009, PTA will hold its annual National Legislative Conference in Washington DC. The two-day Conference will inspire and educate its attendees; whether you are a seasoned veteran or new to federal and state advocacy, PTA has workshops and guest speakers planned for them to learn. Registration is open to any PTA member who wants to get involved, so start planning now!

Registration for the 2009 National Legislative Conference (which includes Wednesday breakfast, lunch and breaks, Thursday lunch and conference materials) will be \$250 per person, plus hotel for two nights.

Check www.pta.org for information about hotel costs and the conference schedule. Online registration opened the first week in December.

2009 PTA National Convention

113th Annual PTA National Convention & Exhibition
Friday, June 26–Monday, June 29, 2009

Greater Ft. Lauderdale Broward County Convention Center, Ft. Lauderdale, FL

Join thousands of parents, teachers, students, and leaders who come to national convention each year to enhance their skills, connections, and success!

- **Education:** Choose from 30+ workshops
- **Exhibits:** Visit more than 200 exhibits
- **Issues:** Raise your voice on national business and emerging issues
- **Resources:** Gather 100s of ideas, handouts, giveaways; interact with 1,000s of other PTA leaders from around the country

Registration and hotel information will be available March 2009. For more information to help you plan, please email nptameetings@pta.org.

No Child Left Behind Update

Submitted by: Margie Skirvin, Education Issues, IL PTA

In March of each year, most children in Illinois public schools take the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT). In grades 3 – 8 the students are tested in Reading and Math, while students in some grade levels also take tests in Science and Writing. High school juniors take the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE). In the fall of each year parents receive reports of their child's scores as well as a Report Card for the schools attended.

How does this relate to the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law? When this law was passed there was much discussion about the need for school districts to look at the students who were falling between the cracks and failing to learn. Most school districts have made curriculum changes and put increased effort into supporting students who need help.

Every state has assessments to test the level of learning of the students in the state. In 2008, 62.5% of the students in each school and district in Illinois were expected to meet the Illinois Learning Standards. In addition, students in subgroups who share such factors as race, limited English proficiency, low family income, or learning disability were expected to reach the 62.5% pass rate. If all of the subgroups don't pass, the school or district does not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Next year the pass rate for schools will increase to 70%.

Last year when the pass rate was 55%, about a quarter of the schools in Illinois didn't achieve AYP. This year the number of schools which failed to make AYP was nearly a third. The bar will keep moving up until 2014, when all students across the country will be expected to meet standards for their states.

This year, 79.1% of Illinois elementary students met the state standards, up slightly from last year. High school students in Illinois did about the same on PSAE this year as last – 52.5% met the state standards. From these numbers you can see how high schools are having difficulty achieving AYP, with penalties including school reorganization being imposed by the state.

This article is just a brief overview of the current NCLB situation. There are many issues involved with the implementation of this law including overemphasis on testing, expectation of similar scores from students who do not speak English or have learning disabilities, and the rapid upward climb of school pass rates. Several changes to NCLB have been suggested but its reauthorization in Congress has been delayed.

You can find report card data for any Illinois public school or district at:

<http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite/getSearchCriteria.aspx>

Many school districts have links to their data on their web sites.

Recently, The Daily Herald newspaper had several articles about Illinois testing and the impact on students and school districts – you should be able to find them online if you would like to learn more.

Clearly NCLB will be an increasingly big issue for our public schools.



National PTA Awards Your PTA deserves it!

Submitted by: Lillian Ball, ILPTA Parent Involvement and Education Chairman

It has been proven that when families are involved in their children's learning both at home and at school, their children do better in school. As your Parent Involvement and Education Chairman, I would like to assist you and your local units in achieving this goal. This year will bring about new and exciting changes to better the PTA programs so that we can obtain more parent involvement on every level.

One implementation that has taken place this year is the National PTA award system. It has become easier to apply for the parent involvement awards for the local units. The introduction of the Phoebe Apperson Hearst Family-School Partnership Awards is taking on a new role that will benefit all local units. This award will combine the three awards which would have required three applications, now you can apply for three awards with one application. But remember, you must apply. After December 31, 2008, PTA will no longer accept applications for Parent Involvement Schools of Excellence Certification as an individual award. If you have already begun or would like to begin the certification process, please note that you will have until December 31, 2008 to submit your application. For those already certified you will retain that honor through your original three-year term. The new certification program will be continued in the new Phoebe Apperson Hearst Family-School Partnership Award. Please note that these are National PTA recognitions, but you will be recognized and will shine in the Illinois PTA.

The three awards involved that you may apply for are:

Outstanding Family-School Partnership Award (for exemplary implementation of the National Standards, one local PTA will receive a monetary award of \$2,000)

Family-School Partnership Award of Excellence (for representing the best in one of the six National Standards, six local PTAs will each receive monetary awards of \$500)

Family-School Partnership Award of Merit (for demonstrating commitment to building partnerships, all local PTAs that apply will receive a certificate of recognition).

In order to obtain any award your local unit must be in good standing and you must apply. Don't see defeat before you try it, **apply today**. There are no fees, there is just one application. The deadline for all three awards is February 28, 2009 to the Illinois PTA Parent Involvement Chairman, Lillian Ball 18756 Sherman St., Lansing, IL 60438 and March 1, 2009 to the National PTA office. For additional information, please contact Lillian Ball at volunteer1996@sbcglobal.net or go to www.pta.org and download the application.

What Are the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships?

Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community—Families are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

Standard 2: Communicating effectively—Families and school staff engage in regular, two-way, meaningful communication about student learning

Standard 3: Supporting student success—Families and school staff continuously collaborate to support students’ learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

Standard 4: Speaking up for every child—Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

Standard 5: Sharing power—Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

Standard 6: Collaborating with community—Families and school staff collaborate with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation

National Standards for Family-School Partnerships



Food Allergies

Submitted by: Terry Christenson, Health and Environmental Concerns Chairman

Food allergies are on the rise among school-aged children and although the common reactions are sometimes just a cough or sneeze, these allergenic reactions lead to more than 30,000 emergency room visits a year.

Symptoms of a food allergy usually begin immediately, seldom more than 2 hours after eating. Key symptoms include hives, hoarse voice, wheezing, and in severe reactions, decreased blood pressure and blocked airways. Other symptoms include abdominal pain, diarrhea, difficulty swallowing, angioedema (where there is a swelling of eyelids, face, lips and tongue), nasal congestion, itching, vomiting and runny nose. **Anaphylaxis** is a severe whole body allergic reaction that can result in death if not treated immediately. If you have a child with oral allergy syndrome that has had an anaphylactic reaction, ask your doctor if the child needs to carry injectable epinephrine. Anyone diagnosed with a food allergy should carry and know how to use injectable pens at all times.

The only proven **treatment** for a food allergy is to **avoid the food**. If you suspect you or your child have a food allergy consult an allergy specialist. Avoiding the offending foods may be easy if the food is uncommon or easily identified, however, success may involve a severely restricted diet and often requires diligent reading of all packages' ingredients.

What Local PTAs Can Do

Local PTA units can work to educate parents, teachers, administrators and students in the prevention and treatment of allergy episodes. Legislators have asked that beginning with the 2009-2010 school year, teacher's institutes include instruction on prevalent student chronic health conditions. The aim of these institutes is to inform teachers of life threatening conditions such as allergies and anaphylaxis. Parents, teachers and students should be encouraged to learn the symptoms of allergies and learn how to get help immediately.

If parents are preparing to send their child with food allergies to school they should talk to other parents of food allergic kids. Encourage them to find out how schools handle students' food allergies. Compare notes and share tips. Parents should include all allergy information on their medical forms. Parents should talk to their children, stress the importance of following all food allergy rules they've been taught. Encourage them to talk to a teacher if they are concerned or have questions about how to stay safe at school. Most important, provide children with medical alert bracelets. There are many websites that can provide bracelets.

Schools, Parents and Legislators Unite to Fight the Battle of Peanut Allergies

With peanut allergies being one of the most common food allergies, schools have recently been debating about banning peanut butter; some schools are creating "peanut free zones" to help prevent allergic reactions. These are areas in the cafeteria and throughout the school where nut products are banned. Some schools are going nut-free altogether. Many schools feel that instead of completely banning peanut butter, schools could ban outside peanuts and peanut butter. That simply means that students could not bring peanuts or peanut butter into school with them. The cafeteria can still contain these items, however it would be more controlled because the staff would know which children received the peanuts and peanut butter. Then students with peanut allergies can be seated at a separate allergy table.

Whatever action your PTA takes it is important to know that parents should work with the school system, their child's classmates and other parents to make sure everyone involved understands just how serious this can be. There are many products available to schools including flashcards to teach children and those who provide care for them about avoidance and staying safe with a nut and peanut allergy. There are free signs for schools to download to promote peanut allergy awareness. There are non-profit organizations providing online support groups, recipes, newsletters and parent educational tools that families can use to get the help they need. PTAs can be vital in educating the public about food allergies and making everyone more aware of the potential danger allergies can cause.

Why are more kids developing peanut allergies? That's the big question, and no one has come up with a confident answer. Researchers have pointed to two likely reasons behind the rise in severe peanut allergies in children: Genetic predisposition and unnecessary exposure to processed foods.

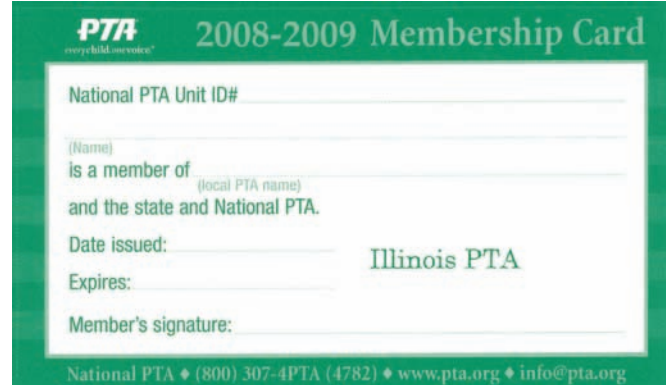
For further information about food allergies log onto:

www.foodallergysmart.org

www.foodallergy.org

HOW IMPORTANT is your PTA Membership Card?

- ◆ It identifies you as a member of your PTA.
- ◆ It allows you to be eligible to hold office in PTA/PTSA.
- ◆ It allows you to vote at local, state, and national meetings.
- ◆ It is needed when a ballot vote is conducted.
- ◆ It's your identification at conventions, conferences, and study courses.



Online Membership Data Reporting (OMDR)

PTA is in the process of transforming OMDR into OMDR Plus, powered by Just Between Friends.

The capabilities of OMDR Plus address the challenges of running a PTA unit on a daily basis and growing it into a strong, meaningful organization. But it also takes the perspective of the individual PTA members, who are trying to manage very busy lives. OMDR Plus provides tools to help run your PTA more effectively but also offers personal tools to help you manage your day-to-day tasks and stay organized, saving time and headaches. Functions that are already available include:

- A communication system for delivering critical information to parents in the school, both via email and on the web. Parents can use the system to communicate with each other.
- Directory capabilities that automate the creation of print directories. There are also online directories that are private and very secure, with powerful search capabilities.
- A method to designate which PTA leaders and volunteers can use which parts of the system – to make sure that you can share the tasks while restricting volunteers to their own area.
- Personal tools for busy parents, including: 1) a central place for information from all of the groups to which they belong (both school and non-school related), 2) a central place for membership directories and rosters for those groups, 3) reminders of events, deadlines, etc., for all groups, 4) email reminders of important personal events—birthdays, anniversaries, etc., and 6) a tool to track cards and gifts they give and receive.

Currently under development is the first phase of volunteer management capability, scheduled to be available by the end of calendar year 2008.

There is no charge to anyone for all of this capability. The cost of development and ongoing support will be borne by National PTA, Proud National Sponsors of PTA, and other family friendly companies that support PTA's mission. In fact, the system is set up to deliver revenue shares to local, state and national PTA units.

States and units can begin using the communications, directory and membership management capabilities immediately.

To get your unit signed up, simply go to www.justbetweenfriends.com/2008quickstart. You will need your unit's National PTA id number. Other required and optional information is detailed on the website. For questions on getting started, contact Julia Sheffler at Just Between Friends, jfsheffler@justbetweenfriends.net or (412) 561-0500, or Scott Brody at National PTA, sbrody@pta.org.

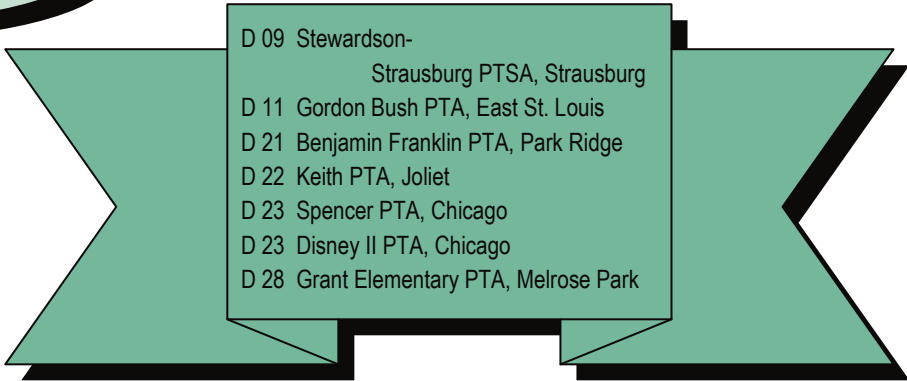
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