

District 37 Dialogue

National Congress of Parents and Teachers
Illinois PTA – District 37 Publication - Spring: 2010

Nicole Fentem, Director

www.ilpta-d37.org

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From Our Director

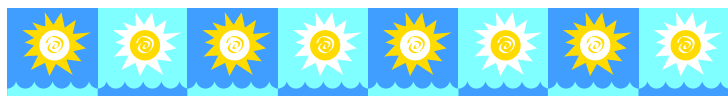
Thank you to everyone for all the time, effort, and hard work that they have expended in the name of PTA. No matter what role you undertook during the past school year, your involvement made a difference in the life of a child. Therefore, you deserve my gratitude.

Plans for the new school year have already begun. New officers have been elected. Executive committees are busy setting their goals and filling their boards. Audits will be completed and budgets will be proposed. Remember that summer is a great time to begin reviewing your bylaws and procedures too.

On August 10th, the presidents are requested to attend a Packet Orientation. Orientation involves the distribution of membership cards and other pertinent information for the upcoming year. It is critical that the president or his/her representative attends. We will also be hosting some additional information sessions that evening for secretaries, treasurers, Reflections, legislation and membership chairs, so please invite these individuals to join you.

Thank you again for your work on behalf of all children. Please take time to relax a little and enjoy the summer!

Nicole



DATES TO REMEMBER

- June 15, 2010 – Money Matters Course, 6:15 PM
Schaumburg Library, SCH
- June 16, 2010 – Advocacy 101 Course, 6 PM
School District 54 Board Room, SCH
- June 25, 2010 – Membership Cards returned to
State office and final dues payment due.
- August 6, 2010 – Local Unit Honor Award
Applications Due to Director
- August 10, 2010 – Packet Orientation, 6 PM
Thomas Middle School, AH
- September 1, 2010 – PTA training, 6 PM
School District 25 Office, AH
- September 2, 2010 – PTA training, 6 PM
School District 25 Office, AH
- September 7, 2010 – PTA training, 6 PM
School District 25 Office, AH
- September 8, 2010 – PTA training, 6 PM
School District 25 Office, AH
- October 18, 2010 – Fall Conference Dinner, 6 PM
The Seville, Streamwood
- March 11-14, 2011 – Illinois PTA Convention
Marriott, Schaumburg

HEALTH & SAFETY– Linda Millar

Health & Safety – make the commitment

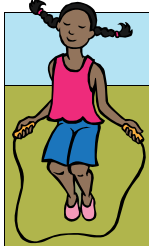
Now is the time when most PTAs are busy trying to fill committee positions for next year. For some PTAs this may even carry over into the summer and the start of next school year.

Do you have an active Health & Safety Committee? Did Health & Safety do more than sponsor a blood drive? One of the Objects of PTA is *to promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school and community* and a National PTA recommendation is *to promote overall healthy habits for healthy lifestyles*.

Consider expanding the role of the Health & Safety committee next year. Make the commitment to encourage healthy lifestyles in your school and to educate your parents on how beneficial healthy lifestyles are for our children and us. Make the commitment and encourage healthy lifestyles in children by offering events that encourage physical activity and healthy eating.

Looking for ideas? Here are some examples of events PTA's around the district did this year to show their commitment:

- Participation in International Walk to School Day in October
- Walk to School Wednesdays
- Family Gym Nights
- Jump for Heart
- Hoops for Heart
- Dances/Sock Hops
- Fun Runs
- Family Fitness Fairs
- Healthy Food Sample Days
- Minutes in Motion – encourages children to move more
- Fruit and Veggie Challenges – encourages kids to eat more fruits and veggies
- Eat your Colors/Eat your Alphabet – encourages healthy eating and variety



Remember, students achieve when families and teachers partner through PTA to ensure children are safe and healthy. Your PTA can lead the way to positive change in your school and community.

TREASURER – Barb Quinn

Summer Money Matters



Time to relax, right? PTA is on "summer vacation" and while you may not be actively engaged in any activities right now, it is a good time to craft a check-list for wrapping up this year and preparing for next year. So, here are some "tips for treasurers":

- Have you written all checks for outstanding expenses for the current fiscal year?
- Have you prepared an "annual report" showing all receipts and expenditures for the current fiscal year?
- Have you prepared the information necessary for the audit?
- Have you prepared the information necessary for the IRS informational return?
- Have you changed the signature cards at the bank to reflect the incoming officers?
- Have you completed an End of Year Report?
- Have you met with the incoming treasurer (if you are not returning to that position)?
- Have you met with the Budget & Finance committee to prepare a tentative budget for the new fiscal year?

In preparing for next year, think about the goals of the PTA and work with the leadership to determine what activities you will undertake to fund those goals.

Each of these items can seem overwhelming, so remember that help is just around the corner! If you are part of a Council, those leaders can be a resource to you, as well as the members of the District Board.



LEADERSHIP – Tom Goodrich



As we close out this school year, some of us are moving on. Others have taken on new or different leadership responsibilities. For those people I say

congratulations! Whether you are a new committee chairperson, executive committee member, or local or council president, have fun with your position and make it the best you can. I have found that one of the paybacks of being involved with PTA is that you can sharpen your leadership skills by interfacing with so many talented parents, teachers and staff.

What makes a good leader? Leaders come in all shapes, styles, and forms. Leaders are rarely (if ever) born. The characteristics of a leader are skills and behaviors that we all know we should be focused on, if we only had the time. Without an investment of time, very few people will have the skills to become the great leaders they envision.

Santa Clara University and the Tom Peters Group developed the following key characteristics of a leader. They are not complex. The characteristics of a leader come through in our day-to-day interactions with those around us.

Key Characteristics of a Leader

- **Honesty** - Display sincerity, integrity, and candor in all your actions. Deceptive behavior will not inspire trust.
- **Competent** - Your actions should be based on reason and moral principles. Do not make decisions based on childlike emotional desires or feelings.
- **Forward-looking** Set goals and have a vision of the future. The vision must be owned throughout the organization. Effective leaders envision what they want and how to get it. They habitually pick priorities stemming from their basic values.
- **Inspiring** - Display confidence in all that you do. By showing endurance in mental, physical, and spiritual stamina, you will

inspire others to reach for new heights. Take charge when necessary.

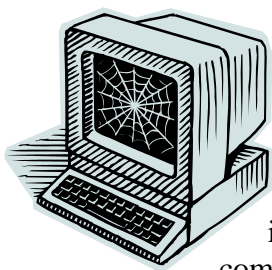
- **Intelligent** - Read, study, and seek challenging assignments.
- **Fair-minded** - Show fair treatment to all people. Prejudice is the enemy of justice. Display empathy by being sensitive to the feelings, values, interests, and well-being of others.
- **Broad-minded** - Seek out diversity.
- **Courageous** - Have the perseverance to accomplish a goal, regardless of the seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Display a confident calmness when under stress.
- **Straightforward** - Use sound judgment to make good decisions at the right time.
- **Imaginative** - Make timely and appropriate changes in your thinking, plans, and methods. Show creativity by thinking of new and better goals, ideas, and solutions to problems. Be innovative!

Developing good leadership skills takes practice and a great deal of time. So what do you do with this information? It's time to refocus on your core as a leader and to spend your time wisely on what you value and the values of the PTA. To achieve a true leadership style you must be able to maintain these traits through good times and bad and to continually focus on the behaviors regardless of the situation.

Have a safe and enjoyable summer!



TECHNOLOGY – Brent Fentem



As you prepare your PTA goals for the next school year, be sure you research the pros and cons of hosting a website for your membership. Determine if it is the right solution for your community to access information quickly and easily. Many units have turned to some form of electronic newsletters being sent to parents for numerous reasons. A website can serve as a place to archive that information so the community can refer to them at a later time as well as from a location other than home where the newsletters are piled up. If someone needs to find the date and time of a PTA event, a website is again a great way to give the community access to this information. There is a plethora of important information that can be made available through a website.

Already have a website? You may want to check out these **Eight Horrible Website Mistakes** as reported from Nielsen Norman Group's useit.com and make sure they aren't happening on the site.

- 1. Poor readability:** (the font is too small or too busy.) Simple is best.
- 2. Non-standard links:** Make links obvious. Use colored, underlined text and do NOT underline other text for emphasis for any reason. Explain what users will find when they click. Make sure they are current links.
- 3. Write for the Web:** Writing for the web means making text **scannable**. Keep text concise; add bullet lists and subheadings; and eliminate jargon and PR-speak.
- 4. Ineffective search:** Make sure page titles are descriptive and text is scannable to help fix this.
- 5. Hard-to-find contact/organization information:** Include all contact information (mail address, phone, e-mail and any other way to contact you) and make it easy to locate.
- 6. Frozen layouts:** Make sure page widths are not fixed. Users should be able to resize the browser window to fit their screen and screen resolution.

7. Poor photo choices: Don't run thumbnail-size photos of big, detailed images. Post photos that include fewer people or objects and less complicated backgrounds. Use close-ups.

8. Annoying the user: The list is long for this one. Some of the worst offenses include:

- **Pop-ups.** Users hate these things.
- **Inconsistency.** Prove the users' expectations right. They should always know what to expect on a website based on their previous experience. They don't like surprises.
- **Not answering the users' questions.** Online behavior is driven largely by the search for answers. Users want them quickly and completely. Predict what the audience will want and make sure the information is there. Rid the site of outdated information.

NEWSLETTER – Michele Sheppard

The end of the school year is a great time to make sure that copies of all your newsletters are stored for the future. You can keep hard copies in a file or keep an electronic version on a USB drive or CD-ROM. Copies of your newsletters are useful in recording the history of the business of your unit.



Your procedure book should also contain copies the newsletters to allow the future newsletter chairs to see what has been done before and gather ideas. In addition, all other information related to publishing the newsletter such as printer used, distribution list, and sources for articles should be recorded. Having an updated procedure book makes a smooth transition for the next year.



MEMBERSHIP



It's time to start planning the upcoming membership year if you haven't already begun. The following information is taken from the Illinois PTA Membership Marketing Guide which is a MUST resource for every PTA and membership chair. It can be found at www.illinoispta.org by clicking on the Membership tab. The information contained here is intended to help you create a successful membership year. Please refer to the Guide for additional information. The National PTA site www.pta.org also has great tools for you to use.

Ready, Set, Start your Membership Plan!

SET MEMBERSHIP GOALS

- A. Research past membership figures for your PTA.
- B. Obtain approximate number of families in your school.
- C. Obtain number of teachers and school staff.
- D. Determine realistic membership increase; work toward that aim.

CREATE YOUR ACTION PLAN

- A. Work with the president to form a creative outreach membership committee that includes the public relations, program, hospitality, and room representative chairman. Discuss membership goals with the teacher representative and the administration. Call your first meeting to set your goals and formulate your plans.
- B. Review your membership roster and determine whom you need to reach. Remember that PTA is for everyone who wants to support our Mission and Objects and wants to advocate for children. In addition to parents and school staff,

reach out to grandparents; preschool parents; businesses; religious leaders; former PTA members, including past board members; School Board members; and parents-to-be.

- C. Review past action plans; determine their success. Continue doing what works, but always add new techniques. Social norms change and it is advantageous to try new methods to increase your membership
- D. Decide the best ways to reach potential members i.e. flyers, emails, phone calls, school events/meetings, and PTA meetings.
- E. Then, you need to create printed materials. You also want to create a short presentation explaining what PTA is and why people should join. Remember not to push people to volunteer. This may turn off many people who feel their lives are too busy already. Get them in the door first, and then let them see how much fun it is.
- F. Remember to plan for the whole year. Your entire PTA board should always be thinking about recruiting new members. Who better to explain the benefits of the PTA than its leaders!
- G. Monitor your results. Track your membership numbers throughout the year. If you are falling short or not reaching a particular group, get your committee back together and change your plans. Remember that you can sign up members throughout the PTA year.

For more information including question and answer time, be sure to attend the District 37 Membership Workshop during Packet Orientation on August 10th, 2010 at Thomas Middle School in Arlington Heights. Registration begins at 6pm. We hope to see you there.

Dues Increase Reminder

Beginning July 1, 2010, the annual dues of the Illinois PTA shall be \$2.00 for every member of each local unit. This is a fifty cent increase.

The total dues sent to State will be \$3.75 each

LEGISLATION

Advocates For All Children

This has been a year of change for many of our PTA advocacy events-- moving toward more "green" methods--PTAs received the traditional October Legislation Mailing on disc rather than on paper, our annual Advocacy Event was moved from Springfield into your own homes with our first PTA Virtual Lobby Week, and we continued to monitor events in Springfield with the famous Bill List published on the Illinois PTA website (www.illinoispta.org) and sent electronically to the Action Network.

This has also been a year of great frustration as we watched the General Assembly leave Springfield without addressing issues of great concern to the Illinois PTA: the crumbling state budget has manifold repercussions in how programs and services are provided to our schools and families across our PTA district. We issued you an invitation to discuss budgetary concerns with YOUR school district leadership throughout the year.

As you begin to plan for activities in the 2010- 2011 year, would you consider some of these events:

- hosting or co-hosting a candidates' forum;
- hosting or co-hosting a school district panel discussion on how budget cuts are impacting your school/school district;
- hosting or co-hosting an advocacy training;
- naming a legislative assistant to review publications of the Illinois PTA who will provide information to your members;
- participating in Virtual Lobby events; or
- joining the Illinois PTA Action Network.

Legislative work can be *the* most rewarding job in the PTA! After all, our work is all about making a difference in the lives of children!

REFLECTIONS – Joan Scovic

2009-2010 Theme:
"Beauty is..."



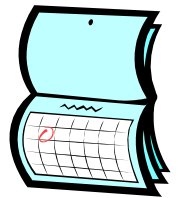
Beauty is a complete year of Reflections in District 37! I would like to once again

Learn more at
PTAReflections.org

congratulate all of the students who participated in the 2009-2010 Reflections Program, as well as the wonderful volunteers who make the program possible at all of the local units. It is truly amazing to see hundreds of artistic works created for this very special program.

That being said, it is not too early to start planning for the 2010-2011 Reflections Program. The theme for next year is "Together We Can." Summer break offers a perfect opportunity for children to write a little something on their long car rides, take a few photographs along the way, or just get inspired by what they see in order to create an artistic project at home.

Local unit Reflections Chairs are all invited to attend the Back to School Reflections Workshop. This informative session will be offered as part of the District 37 packet pick up event scheduled for Tuesday, August 10th at Thomas Middle School in Arlington Heights. This is a very useful event that includes review of the program rules and paperwork, brainstorming, round table discussion among the reflections chairs, and time for Q&A. More information will be forthcoming over the summer months, but in the meantime, please mark your calendars.



Finally, don't forget to wrap up this year the right way, and plan for next year as well. Complete an end of year report, and submit it to your local president, your council chair and to me. It just takes a few moments and it is so helpful to have a history of your committee's work at your school. At the same time, you or the incoming Reflections chair should also complete a plan of work for 2010-2011. Be sure to include supplies such as mat or poster board for mounting projects, cellophane, large manila envelopes, and a new portfolio if you need one. Don't forget recognition items for participants, and printing costs for flyers and paperwork. Your local PTA will use this information when they are budgeting for the school year, so be sure they put some money aside to support the arts for our children.

May you all have an inspiring summer! See you in August.

NATIONAL PTA NEWS

Reprinted from www.pta.org/4223.htm

Summer Break - The Dark Side of the Sun

By Tom Fry

Parents endeavor to stack the odds in our children's favor as much as possible. Seat belts and car seats have become dogma. The mantra of not talking to strangers is nearly ubiquitous. In countless ways we provide to our children the means to protect themselves as much as they are developmentally able. Yet, every day, parents around the world put their children at risk of a certain danger that goes unrecognized; that danger is skin cancer.

The Dark Side EXPOSED

An estimated 10,000 Americans will die from skin cancer this year; that's one person every hour of every day. More than 1 million others (nearly 2 people every second) will be newly diagnosed with the disease.



Skin cancer is the most prevalent form of cancer in the United States today. In fact, it has reached textbook epidemic proportions, especially in the America's Southwest. While the facts are alarming enough, it is the cause of the disease that is truly frightening—ignorance. Skin cancer is largely preventable.

The fluctuations in the ozone hole notwithstanding, researchers have determined that there is a direct correlation between the amount of ultraviolet (UV) exposure that we receive and the likelihood of developing some form of the disease later in life. Think of your skin as a living sponge that absorbs UV radiation from the sun and can never be wrung out; your lifetime exposure is cumulative and nearly 80 percent of your total lifetime UV exposure occurs in the first 18 years of your life.

At some point, our skin, the sponge, cannot further absorb the sun's radiation without causing damage. Studies have indicated that just two blistering sunburns before the age of 20 may double the risk of eventually developing melanoma (a life-threatening type of skin cancer) later in life. Approximately 25 percent of children under 6 years of age, and approximately 50 percent of children under 13 years of age, have experienced at least one painful

sunburn. When that threshold is reached, we put ourselves, and our children, directly into harm's way.

The following are easy-to-implement strategies that help to ensure the daylong sun safety of our children.

Limit the amount of time spent in the sun

Peak sun intensity hours are those times of the day that the sun's rays are at their strongest. Mary Klein Buller, M.A., former executive director of the American Sun Protection Association, explains: "Between the hours of 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. are generally recognized as those times that the sun can cause the most damage. Every effort needs to be made to limit the amount of time spent in direct sunlight during these hours. Playing in the shade is a wonderful means for children to play safely outside during these hours, summer or winter."

Yet, in fall, winter, and spring, parents may be lulled into a false sense of security. They may also mistakenly think that since children are in school during these hours, they are not at risk. How much time does your child spend outside during an average day at school? Does your child's playground provide adequate shade?

Unfortunately, sun safety is not often a consideration in the construction or maintenance of our children's playgrounds. The applicable regulations and standards only passively mention the need for shade. All is not lost though, as local PTAs can be very successful in persuading the local municipalities to reconsider a playground's effectiveness in promoting shade. Several organizations exist that are able to provide the requisite background information. Two of these include KaBOOM! (<http://www.kaboom.org/> or (202) 659-0215) and the National Program for Playground Safety (at their [website](#) or (800) 554-PLAY). In addition, the AMC Cancer Research Center provides a no-cost Sun-Safe School Guide to interested individuals and institutions. This guide effectively details those areas of concern as well as easy-to-implement suggestions for improvement. Call (800) 321-1557 for a free copy. Additional copies are \$1 each.

The bottom line is that if our children are to be outside during these peak sun intensity hours then shade must be available. Just as it is ritual for children to shun contact with strangers, so too must it be second nature that they seek shade.

NATIONAL PTA NEWS, continued

Wear protective clothing

Think of clothing as shade that you wear. Simple decisions about dress can greatly add to the protection of our children. An ideally sun-safe outfit will leave little skin exposed. And don't forget about a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses.

Be wary though of the color and type of fabric you choose. Loosely woven fabrics, like lighter weight cottons, often allow a potentially dangerous amount of radiation through. Darker colors are more adept than lighter colors in absorbing radiation, thereby providing more protection.

In recent years, apparel manufacturers and retailers have begun to address the sun safety of their products and have specifically tested garments to determine the level of protection offered. When shopping for your child's clothes, pay attention to the sun safety claims made by the manufacturer. If a UPF (ultraviolet protection factor) is noted, shop for a maximum rating of 50+. Be aware of erroneous claims though. UPF ratings of more than 50+ do not provide a statistically significant increase in sun protection.

Use sunscreen

Sunscreen, without question or pause, should be used on a daily basis and its use should be as reflexive as putting on a seat belt. Yet, the use of sunscreen is not



foolproof. Not all sunscreens are created equal and their use needs to be closely monitored.

To provide your child with the greatest amount of protection, sunscreens labeled as "broad spectrum" with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 15 or greater should be the first choice. Broad spectrum simply means that the product is designed to block the broadest spectrum of harmful UV radiation. It was long believed that UVA radiation, that is, radiation that causes the skin to tan, did not lead to cancer. Researchers have reconsidered this and now strongly caution against overexposure to either UVA or UVB radiation.

SPF is a ratio that illustrates how long it takes skin to burn. For example, if your child has fair skin, eyes,

and hair and usually burns after 10 minutes of being in the sun, then an SPF 15 would allow your child to go unburned for 150 minutes (10 minutes usual burn time multiplied by SPF 15).

Although children need to be slathered in sunscreen thoroughly and often with a broad spectrum SPF 15 or greater, parents should be aware that no sunscreen blocks an absolute 100 percent of the harmful radiation from the sun.

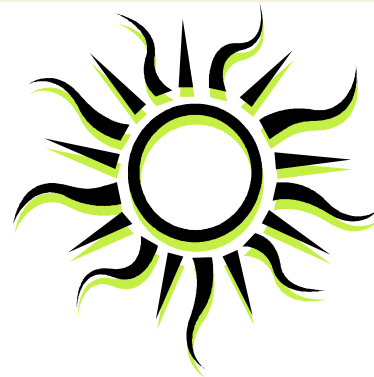
Remember, when skin is exposed to the maximum amount of time the SPF offers protection against, it's time to get out of the sun, no matter the SPF. Reapplying sunscreen doesn't indefinitely extend or enhance the protection.

While the chemical make-up of sunscreens tends to be generally benign in nature, sunscreen should not be applied to infants under 6 months when other forms of protection are available. Yet, use of sunscreen on those less than six months is preferred to no sunscreen at all, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Knowledge: The power to protect

Parents have grand aspirations for their children. No parent wishes a future as a statistic for his or her children. Recognize that the danger of skin cancer exists, and take pro-active and simple steps to protect children today against becoming tomorrow's statistic. A parent armed with the knowledge of the disease and its prevention is a child protected.

Tom Fry is a research assistant and market coordinator for Partners for Health Systems, Inc., a health communication organization, partnered with the AMC Cancer Research Center located in Denver, Colorado. AMC is the nation's largest independent, not-for-profit cancer research facility that focuses exclusively on cancer and chronic disease prevention and control.



DISTRICT 37 COUNCIL CORNER

Arlington Heights Council of PTAs

2009/2010 was a very busy and successful year for the Arlington Heights Council of PTAs. With the help and support from parents, teachers and administration, we provided additional opportunities for our students and general community.

In January, we welcomed Alexis Storch, a Youth Educator at the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center, who shared ways that we can peacefully speak up for those that are experiencing bullying and intolerance within their local and global communities. In March, Arlington Heights Council of PTAs and District 25 sponsored our "Many Dreams, Beautiful World" Cultural Arts Fair with 11 acts and 29 displays celebrating our community's various cultures. In addition, we showcased and honored our council's 61 reflections projects during this fair.

On May 13, 2010, using the proceeds from our past scholarship and grant gala events, memorials and school PTA donations, we awarded \$1,600 scholarships to eight high school students who attended District 25 schools at our 37th Annual PTA Council Scholarship Luncheon. We also used this opportunity to also "pay it forward" and gave ABC/25 Foundation a check of \$4,075 for additional teacher grants in 2010/2011, thanks to the generosity of the Reiss Family. This will allow our school teachers to apply for additional monies to purchase additional equipment to enhance their students learning. Finally, we installed our new PTA Council Executive Board for 2010/2011 at this luncheon event.

We have been very fortunate to have such hard working and dedicated volunteers within our PTA Council for sharing so much of themselves for the students of District 25. Our hats off to you for everything you have done to help us to accomplish so much this past school year. Now, enjoy a relaxing summer and get energized for 2010/2011.

*Sue Coops and Joyce Stenzel
AHC Co-presidents*

DISTRICT 37 BOARD

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
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