

Michigan PTSA[®] Bulletin

every child. one voice.

Volume 82 Issue 10

Winter 2006

President's Message

by Barbara Blanchard, President

MICHIGAN HOST TO NATIONAL PTA CONFERENCE

Michigan was recently the host state for the National PTA "Emerging Minority Leadership" Conference. It was held in Detroit with over 140 attending from states nationwide, the Virgin Islands, and our European Congress (these are PTAs in Military schools on Posts/Bases throughout Europe). Some members of the Detroit PTA Council assisted with registration and also attended the conference. MPTSA representatives were Dee Dee Kemp-Jarrett, a Region F Field Service Rep, and Rosemerry Allen, from Southfield PTA Council. Watch for Rosemerry's article on the conference in an upcoming MPTSA Bulletin. I also attended the conference and found it to be one of the best "Grass Roots" conferences PTA has presented.

Our National PTA President, Anna Weselak, and our National PTA Secretary/Treasurer, Chuck Saylor, arrived before the conference to visit Detroit PTA schools. I was pleased to take them to Boynton K-8 and Bennett Elementary. Boynton presented their great programs for enrichment and Bennett performed their cultural dances and songs for us. We also had time to visit with parents and staff and enjoy delicious refreshments!

MPTSA Scholarship The 1st MPTSA Scholarship will be awarded to a high school senior at the 2007 MPTSA Convention. Watch for the application on our website soon. This scholarship is funded with the profits from the sale of DSAs and Michigan PTSA Honorary Life Awards. The amount to be given has not been determined.

Advocacy Day February 15, 2007 Plan now to attend this important Advocacy Day in Lansing. The agenda and registration will be available soon.

Reflections Celebration Plans are being finalized for a special celebration for our Reflections program. Remind your students that entries are due soon. I know you will take the responsibility to have your PTA/PTSA meet the requirements to participate.

Looking for a Holiday project? Cold weather is here! Check with your Principal to see if students are in need of coats, boots, hats or gloves.

Our Health and Wellness Chair and Consultant recently held a meeting for your Health Chair. If your PTA/PTSA needs assistance developing a Healthy Lifestyle program, please contact us. Healthy students are productive learners.

An important part of Ethical Behavior is being a good "role model" and accepting responsibility for our actions. Children "look" up to us. Make sure you like what they see!



Pictured left to right: Shaton Berry, Helen Villareal, Barbara Blanchard, Anna Weselak, Carol Summers and Debryl Ector

**Michigan
PTSA[®]**
Advocacy Day 2007

Join us!

Radisson Hotel

February 15, 2007

Downtown Lansing

**Advocacy Workshops
Lunch with Legislators
Networking with Advocates
from around the State**

Look for registration materials soon via mail and at www.michiganptsa.org

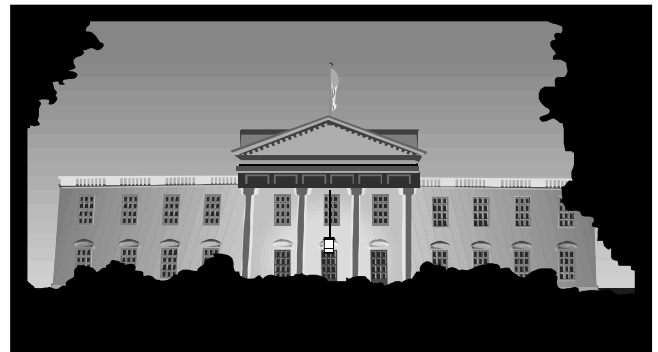
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Capitol Connections

by Kevin McLogan, Legislative Vice President

The defeat of Proposal 5 and the passage of Proposal 2 will have an impact on the funding and delivery of education in this state respectively, but the full extent of the impact is unclear.



We need to examine the political capital that was spent on these proposals. Michigan PTSA joined in a coalition of education groups that supported Proposal 5, and continued its support from the rally of 11,000 in Lansing to the public support of the proposal in the face of opposition from both gubernatorial candidates, virtually every newspaper in the state, and every public service advocacy group except those connected to education.

The passage of Proposal 5 would have prevented cuts in spending that are inevitable, barring a major miracle of a massive economic boom in the waning weeks of 2006.

So now what? Do we just shrug our shoulders and move on? In the face of the consequences, we cannot afford to sit on our hands. The lack of understanding in the way schools are funded, reflected not only in the letters in the papers, but the editorials should give us a roadmap of where we need to start. *We can* educate the public about the way schools are funded. Start with the basics-*the money is paid based on the number of students attending*. It's amazing that few citizens really know even that basic fact.

In the coming months, I will offer up some tips that will help you in your understanding and explanation of school funding.

Stories From the Field...

By Nora Naso, Grosse Ile Preschool PTA President



This was on a field trip to a petting farm, the children got to milk an artificial cow.

Hi, my name is Nora Naso, I was a preschool PTA member in Ohio and recently moved to Grosse Ile, Michigan. When I looked for a preschool group to join in my local area I found there wasn't one, so I thought the best solution was to open one. I did some research about non-profit organizations and found that the PTA was the best.

On April 11th, 2006 I started a non-profit association called Grosse Ile Preschool PTA, also known as GIPPTA. I now have over 20 members and it is growing by the day.

We are an association providing a variety of fun activities, theme parties, and outings for its adult members and their children. We're oriented toward families with children ages newborn till kindergarten. We are also planning Playgroups, Mom's and Couples' Nights, and Service Projects. We're planning on making blankets and pillows for children at Children's Hospital of Detroit.

I think it's a great way to get children involved early and for parents to be involved with them. Children aren't children for very long. To be able to capture that little time, gives us a chance to enjoy our child's youth with them.

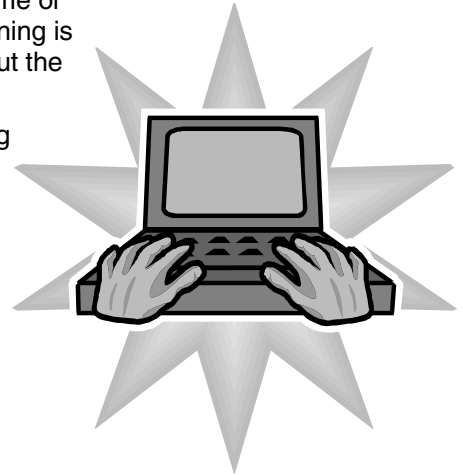
Free PTA Training Anytime!

National PTA's e-learning courses are a chance for members to learn and practice new skills by taking mini-courses via the web. These courses are a step toward achieving PTA's goal of making all members informed advocates by 2020.

Using the internet, a PTA member can access the leadership training at any time of day or night and the courses can be completed at his or her own pace. E-learning is a solution for members looking to expand their skills cost-effectively and without the need to travel.

The courses listed below are available now and offer valuable, relevant training for PTA members.

- Conflict Management
- Effective Advocacy for Your Child
- Grant Writing
- Parliamentary Procedure
- Planning and Goal Setting
- Planning Your PTA Year
- PTA Basics
- Running a Successful Program
- Writing and Proposing PTA Resolutions.



Go to http://www.pta.org/local_leadership_resources.html and then click on Leadership Training on the left hand side of the page. You will need to log in to access these resources. Remember: Your username and password for the National PTA website is on the back of your membership card!

Celebrate Founders Day

To celebrate the anniversary of the first National Mothers Conference in 1897, Child Welfare Day was established on February 17, 1910. This observance grew into Founders Day, designed to call attention to PTA's mission and growing political consciousness, and serve as a rally point for parent-teacher associations to come together and renew their commitment to children.

Founders Day celebrates the PTA's prominence in local, regional, and national activities supporting parent involvement and promoting efforts benefiting all children. On February 17 or throughout the month, celebrate National PTA's founders—Alice McLellan Birney, Phoebe Apperson Hearst, and Selena Sloan Butler—and the importance of your local PTA in the community.

Include one or more of the following ideas in your celebration activities:

- **Present awards to your volunteers.** Distinguished Service Award, Council Member of the Year Award and Michigan Honorary Life Membership are all awards that can be given to honor your volunteers. Go to www.michiganptsa.org and click on the Awards tab for more information.
- **Recognize your milestones.** Craft milestones for your PTA/PTSA; programs you helped establish, resolutions forwarded to your state or National PTA; media coverage; advocacy efforts; or other events.
- **Present an Honorary Life Achievement Award, National PTA's highest honor.** Make a special presentation to your "founders" and other deserving individuals who have promoted children's well-being. Please visit the Parent Involvement area of www.pta.org and click on Awards for an application, or call 1-800-307-4PTA.
- **Prepare remarks to pay tribute to parents and other caregivers, teachers, and student members of your PTA/PTSA.** Ask each group to stand and be recognized for the work they do on behalf of children and youth.
- **Endow the future of PTA.** Consider asking members to make a financial contribution in honor of Founders Day to help endow your state and/or National PTA. Make sure to report your efforts to the state PTA and National PTA.
- **Include students in events.** Make sure to impress upon students the importance of PTA/PTSA in their school.
- **Call your Council or your Field Service Representative for celebration ideas.** Your council members or your state field service representative may have some great ideas that have worked at other PTAs or PTSAs around the state. Email the state office at membership@michiganpta.org if you need their contact information.

Parent-Teacher Conference Savvy

Whether your child is in elementary, middle or high school, asking the right questions can lead to a more productive conference with your child's teacher(s).

1. What is my child learning?
2. How do you know that s/he is learning?
3. In what area does my child need improvement? How can I help my child improve?
4. How are you helping my child improve? How can I help?
5. Are you available to meet one-on-one and discuss my child's needs? When?
6. What are your expectations of my child?
7. Does s/he meet your expectations?
8. What are your academic goals for my child?
9. Does my child meet his/her potential?
10. Does s/he meet the standards? Is s/he on grade level in each subject area?
11. Is my child progressing to the next level?
12. What are the homework requirements?
13. How long would you like my child to spend on homework assignments?
14. I would like to see my child's work.
15. Does my child complete classwork and other tasks on time and regularly?
16. Does my child come prepared to class?
17. Is my child learning English?
18. What is my child's reading level?
19. How are my child's learning skills versus test-taking skills?
20. Does my child have strong communication skills?
21. Does my child work well with others?
22. Does my child have organizational skills?
23. Does my child have conflict resolution skills?
24. How is my child's participation in class?
25. What are my child's strengths and weaknesses?
26. What is my child's learning style?
27. How is my child's attendance?
28. Are there any behavior problems that I should know about?
29. What are the discipline strategies in the school and in your classroom?
30. What strategies do you use for positive reinforcement?
31. What is my child's schedule?
32. How well does my child transition from different activities?
33. Tell me what you know about my child. Who is s/he?
34. What resources are available for kids with learning disabilities?
35. What is your classroom structure?
36. Are you emergency certified?
37. Are you following the standards set out by the Department of Education?

Honoring Achievement

Does your PTA or PTSA have that special volunteer who makes each event run smoother? Does your PTA or PTSA have a great newsletter or website? Does your PTA or PTSA have an outstanding membership campaign idea?

The Michigan PTSA offers many award opportunities for both your individual volunteers and your unit as a whole. Go to the Michigan PTSA website at www.michiganptsa.org for full descriptions and applications for each award below.

Show your volunteers and your unit just how special they are!

Appreciation Awards

Distinguished Service Award
Michigan PTSA Honorary Life Membership
Council Member of the Year

Unit Awards

PTA Member of the Year Award
Council of the Year Award
Outstanding Educator Award
Unit/Council Newsletter Award
Unit/Council Website Award
News Media Award
Outstanding Unit for Parental Involvement Award

Membership Awards

100% Staff ● 100% PTA ● Michigan Honor Roll
Certificate of Achievement ● Bright Ideas Award
Council Achievement Award ● Gold Star Award
Outstanding Student Membership ● Greatest Number of Business and Professional Memberships



Psssst!
Pass It On!

Please pass this and all mailings on to your fellow PTA/PTSA officers and members.

Achieving What's Best for Your Child with Special Needs

If you have a child with special needs, you know first hand how important it is for Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Program meetings to go well. When they do, children with special needs are more likely to be successful. Effective communication means more productive collaboration among educators, parents and service providers.

The Michigan Special Education Medication Program (MSEMP) has a roster of facilitators trained in special education and early intervention issues, terminology, and facilitation techniques adapted to the IFSP and IEP settings. MSEMP can also tailor a workshop or training session to the needs of your school district or parent group. Parents and educators are encouraged to build their skills together.

Neutral Facilitation

When defenses are high, a trained neutral facilitator can help parents and educators work to overcome communication barriers and improve collaboration. Neutral facilitators help participants:

- Hold a fair, inclusive meeting.
- Share control of the outcome.
- Consider all needs and options.
- Decide issues by mutual consent.
- Keep the meeting focused and on track.

Skill Building

By acquiring or polishing the communication skills that make for a successful IFSP/IEP meeting, educators and parents engage each other constructively in the IFSP or IEP process. Doing so, they:

- Create safe discussions.
- Listen for understanding.
- Frame issues neutrally.
- Generate options.
- Seek workable solutions in the child's best interest.

Both facilitation and training services are provided at no charge through MSEMP and are described above. Simply call the MSEMP at 1-800-8RESOLVE to reach the Community Dispute Resolution Center serving your area.

Celebrate Parenting Awareness Month

Parenting Awareness Michigan (PAM) celebrates people raising children and promotes year round parenting education and resources.

Parenting Awareness Michigan Offers

- Materials, assistance, and ideas for individuals or organizations to become involved.
- A link with organizations throughout Michigan embracing PAM goals.
- Increased visibility for parenting programs, resources, and issues.
- Clearinghouse services — PAM materials, assistance, referral, and networking.

Parenting Awareness Michigan, also, offers the PAM Packet, filled with items for use during Parenting Awareness Month (Michigan celebrates the month of March as Parenting Awareness Month) and throughout the year. More complete information can be found at www.preventionnetwork.com, but some of the topics that are covered in the PAM Packet are listed below.

Physical and Emotional Health
 Planning for Parenting Awareness Month
 Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs

Positive Parenting
 Child Development
 Parent Resources via a Help Line

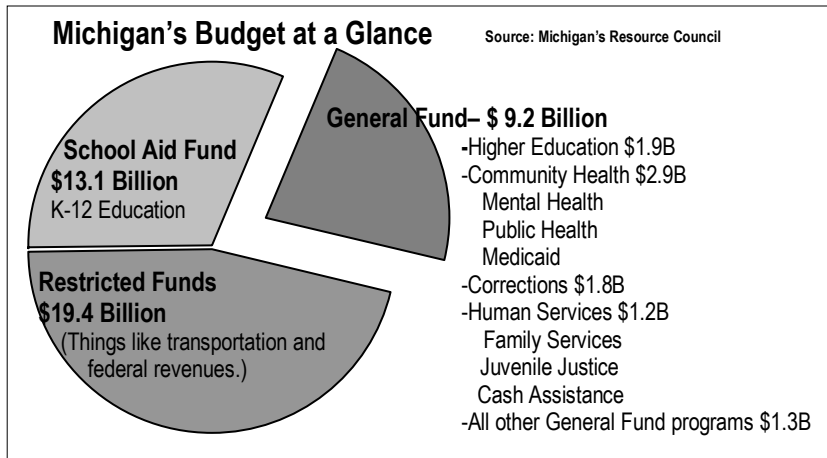
The PAM Packet is available to anyone who signs up for it. Simply, go to www.preventionnetwork.com and click on Programs on the right hand side of the main page. When the new page opens, click on the PAM link. On the top of the PAM page is a link to sign up for the 2007 packet.

Don't miss out on this opportunity; the deadline for signing up is December 22nd!

State Budget Overview for Dummies ☺

by Donna Oser, Executive Director

There has been a lot of talk about our state's budget lately; first because of the confusion around Proposal 5 and now the need to replace the revenue lost by the elimination of the Single Business Tax (SBT). It became obvious towards the end of the Proposal 5 campaign that education funding, and the state budget in general, is far too confusing for the average person to understand. I was fortunate enough to attend a Town Hall Meeting on Tax Reform a few weeks ago and thought much of the information would help demystify the budget and prepare you to better advocate for children. Keep in mind that I am simplifying it in the interest of time and space.



Michigan's Budget is just under \$42 billion. There are two major funds identified, the General Fund and the School Aid Fund. The remaining monies are restricted for specific purposes which are outlined in the constitution, state law or federal law. The pie chart at left gives you a rough idea of the breakdown and an overview of what those monies are spent on.

But where does the money come from? For the most part, taxes, fees and the Federal Government but each fund is different. First, let's set the record straight about the School Aid Fund.

Myths About the School Aid Fund (K-12 Education)

Many people still believe that schools are funded primarily by property taxes. Proposal A, which was passed in 1994, radically changed how we funded our schools. Today, the School Aid Fund is funded by net proceeds from the lottery, a portion of the state sales tax, tobacco and alcohol taxes and small percentages of other taxes. Table 1 provides the details.

- The Homestead Property Tax no longer funds schools. That is a throw back to pre-Proposal A days when Michigan's property taxes were some of the highest in the nation.
- Only a portion of the Sales Tax goes towards schools. Roughly 2/3 of the sales tax goes to K-12 schools. In our poor economy, less money spent on retail items means less money for public education.
- NET revenue from the lottery goes to the School Aid Fund. Last year, that was around \$650 million which would fund our schools for around 9 days.
- "Vice taxes" such as tobacco aren't good long term funding sources for schools because each year fewer people choose to indulge this making the revenue unreliable.

The K-12 funding problem is only going to get worse.

Demands on the K-12 budget are set to outpace revenues by at least 2% every year, this is called a structural deficit. Increasing costs such as retirement, health benefits and fuel combined with reduced revenue translate to a \$4.5 billion dollar deficit over the next ten years.

Table 1: School Aid Fund Revenue

Source	Prior to Reform	After Proposal A
Sales Tax	60% of proceeds from the 4% rate	60% from the 4% rate and 100% from the 2 percentage point increase
Use Tax		All revenue from the 2 percentage point increase
Income Tax		14.4% of collections from the 4.4% rate (down from 4.6%)
Real Estate Transfer Tax		All revenue from the .75% tax
Cigarette Tax (per pack)	\$.02 of the \$.25 tax	63.4% of proceeds from the \$.75 tax
Other Tobacco Products		Proceeds of the 16% tax (on wholesale price)
Liquor Excise Tax	Revenue from the 4% tax	Revenue from the 4% tax
Lottery	Net revenue	Net revenue
State Tax on all Property		6 mills
Local Homestead Property Tax	34 mills (average)	0
Local Non-homestead Property Tax	34 mills (average)	18 mills

Source: Michigan House and Senate Fiscal Agencies, "The Michigan School Aid Act Compiled and Appendices." Appendix A, October, 1994.

The General Fund

Most of Michigan’s \$42 billion budget is restricted for special purposes. The \$9.2 billion General Fund is the only real “discretionary” money available, so allocation of this is what politicians and special interest groups most often argue over. The pie chart at left shows most of what the General Fund pays for; the big ones are higher education, community health, corrections and human services. Because of tax cuts and Michigan’s lagging economy, the General Fund has had cuts every year for the past six years. Even before we talk about the loss of revenue from the Single Business Tax, the General Fund has a projected structural deficit over the next ten years of \$5.9 billion. If no growth revenue solution is identified, cuts would have to be made. It’s hard to imagine making double digit cuts to any of these program areas, it would mean many of the programs Michiganders currently use would no longer exist. For this reason, many people are looking for comprehensive reform of Michigan’s tax structure.

Special Note: Funding for Local Services

Things like local police and fire are paid for primarily by local governments and offset by some federal and state monies. The state portion comes from Local Government Revenue Sharing, and it is NOT part of the General Fund. Some special interest groups like to say it is because when legislators have cut revenue sharing in the past, the savings from those cuts have flowed into the General Fund.

Big Problems Coming with the General Fund

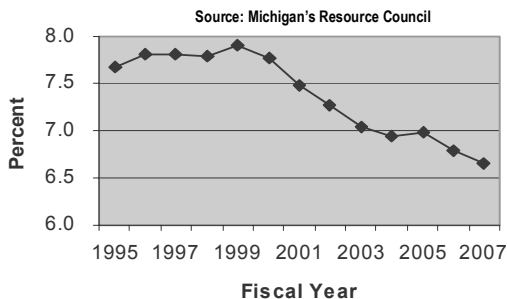
If you’ve been hearing a lot about the SBT, there’s a good reason. When Michigan’s legislature voted to eliminate the Single Business Tax (SBT), they eliminated 1.9 billion dollars from the state’s budget- that equates to 22% of the General Fund Revenue. If this revenue isn’t replaced, it’s going to mean severe cuts in some, if not all, of those areas listed. Here are the fundamental questions around the SBT:

- Do we replace the revenue or radically cut those programs funded by the General Fund?
- Do we replace all of the nearly \$2 billion or only part of it?
- What form of taxation should replace it? A new tax on businesses? A new tax on individuals? A combination?

**Table 2:
Major General Fund Revenues**
Figures are from 2006-07 from State Budget Office.

Tax Type	Revenue
Individual Income	4.2 Billion
Single Business	1.9 Billion
Use Tax	1 Billion
Insurance Tax	270 Million
Cigarette Excise	230 Million
Penalties & Interest	150 Million
Sales Tax	110 Million
Beer/Wine/Liquor	90 Million
Utility Property	80 Million
Oil & Gas	70 Million
Casino Wagering	45 Million

State Taxes as a Percent of Michigan Personal Income



Possible Tax on Services

There is some discussion about taxing services. For the most part, services are things that we think of in terms of hourly labor such as the services of a plumber, mechanic or a lawyer. It would also include things that are not tangible like golfing or going to the movies. Services constitute more than half of our economic activity so this revenue base would grow faster than our current Sales and Use Tax. There is considerable controversy around taxing vital social services such as health care or even education. From a business perspective, a tax on services that results in double taxation (such as the services that go into building a home) would be a significant deterrent to industry.

Possible Changes to Personal Income Tax & Businesses

There is a constitutional revenue limit related to the amount of revenues generated from personal income taxes. In 1995, those revenues were at their limit but for fiscal year 2007 revenue totals are 15% below that cap. (See graph above.) One revenue possibility is raising the rate of personal income tax and increasing the exemption.

Certainly, there is considerable interest in restructuring the Business Tax and how that would look. Business taxes vary greatly and can be based on anything from gross receipts, payroll, or cost of goods to net holdings. The need to create a business friendly state climate and the changing industries of the global economy complicate this process.

These are just a few of the possibilities. We’ll get more information to you as the issue progresses. Remember to stay tuned into the issue so that you’ll be ready to help work on a solution!

Special thanks to The Center for Michigan, Michigan State University and the Citizen’s Research Council for providing much of this information.

Before You Shop... Video Game Tips for Parents

Two-thirds of all 7th through 12th-graders say they have played the controversial Grand Theft Auto game.

—The Kaiser Family Foundation, *Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8–18 Year-olds*, 2005

Do you know what's in that computer or video game your child wants to buy or rent? Just as with movies and TV shows, computer and video games on the market today are created for players of differing ages and maturity levels. Some games have content that may not be suitable for children. As parents, we have a responsibility to guide our children toward games that we decide are appropriate

for them to play. That's why parents should read game reviews, talk to older children and other parents, and try out demos of the games online or in stores before they make a purchase.

In addition to taking these steps, parents should check the ratings on every computer and video game box to help choose the right games for their family. Found on virtually every computer and video game package, the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) ratings provide information about age suitability and describes the content of the game.

For more information and resources, go to www.pta.org and search for Video Game Safety.

Video Game Tips for Parents

Check the ratings. Use both ESRB rating symbols and content descriptors to select appropriate games for your children.

Consider your child's personality, maturity and abilities. Video game ratings provide guidance. Parents should decide which games are appropriate for their children.

Don't stop at the ratings. Speak to older children and other parents, rent before purchasing, read game reviews, and try out demos of games online or in stores where games are sold.

Look closely at the box the game comes in. Most video games have screen shots of the game on the back of the box showing typical scenes from the game. Additional screen shots are available online at game preview websites, such as Game Revolution, GameSpot, or GameSpy.

Know the store's return policy. Check with the store before you make your purchase. Many major retailers will, however, allow parents to return or exchange games sold to their children in violation of store enforcement policies regarding the sale of Mature-rated video games.

Play video games with your children. Playing or observing helps you understand your child's video game experience. Talk to your child and ask him or her about the game, what makes it fun for them, what is the story-line, is the game real or make-believe?

Use parental controls. Check with the manufacturer of your video game system for more information, or ask a video game retail sales associate about the availability of parental controls.

Be cautious with "online-enabled" games. Many popular games can be played with friends (and strangers) over the Internet. Often, these games contain live chat or other user-generated content that is not rated by the ESRB and may not be consistent with the rating assigned to the game.

Be aware of "mods" that can change a game. Downloadable programs ("mods") can alter game content and the game's age-appropriateness. Some mods can contain viruses or spy-ware, making them dangerous predators to your family computer.

Set household media use rules. Establish rules for your children and encourage open communication about their media use so they recognize what you feel is inappropriate content.

ARE YOU IN GOOD STANDING?

- Submitted Unit Dues & Completed Remittance Form
- Minimum of 25 Members Posted
- Bylaws Updated Every Three Years
- Budget & Audit Received by February 28

A Founders Day for Families to Share

by Anna Weselak, NPTA President



Anna M. Weselak,
National PTA President

This February marks PTA's 110th Founders Day. This day commemorates the legacy of PTA's founders Phoebe Apperson Hearst and Alice McLellan Birney, as well as Selena Sloan Butler, the founder of Georgia's Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers, which merged with PTA in 1970. These were women of imagination and courage who understood that everyday people, banded together to accomplish a common mission, could change the world.

PTA has clung close to the mission and purposes of our founders to support parent involvement and work on behalf of all children and families. We have a lot to be proud of, but our work continues. Founders Day is a time of celebration and a chance to renew our commitment to be a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for parents, and a strong advocate for public education.

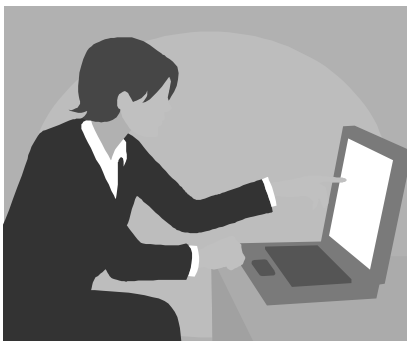
In 2006, PTA decided to extend our celebration to the community by holding its first-ever Take Your Family to School Week during the week of Founders Days. This new event was a great success in welcoming families to get to know their children's world at school. It was an excellent example of the kind of participation our founders hoped PTA would encourage.

Founders Day is February 17. I encourage you to plan and promote your own Take Your Family to School Week events. Look for more information on the event from national and state PTA in the coming weeks and get ready to celebrate PTA.

OMDR Webinars Available! Register Today!

Membership Goes Online!

Learn how your unit can use the Online Membership and Dues Reporting system to maintain officer and membership lists, communicate with members, and more! Webinar lasts approximately one hour. You will need a computer, internet access and a separate phone line to participate.



Register at: http://registration.intercall.com/menu.php?short_name=nationalpta

Dec 8, 2006, 11:00 AM EST
 Dec 12, 2006, 4:00 PM EST
 Dec 14, 2006, 1:00 PM EST
 Dec 18, 2006, 7:00 PM EST
 Jan 3, 2007, 3:00 PM EST
 Jan 4, 2007, 1:00 PM EST
 Jan 8, 2007, 4:00 PM EST
 Jan 10, 2007, 7:00 PM EST

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Region A

Serves Alger, Baraga, Chippewa, Delta, Dickinson, Gogebic, Houghton, Iron, Keweenaw, Luce, Mackinac, Marquette, Menominee, Ontonagan & Schoolcraft counties.

Region B

Serves Alcona, Alpena, Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Crawford, Emmet, Grand Traverse, Iosco, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, Missaukee, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle, Roscommon & Wexford counties.

Regions A & B Vice President

VACANT

Regions A & B Field Service

VACANT

REGION C

Serves Ionia, Kent, Lake, Mason, Muskegon, Newaygo, Oceana & Ottawa counties.

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Help Parents Feel Welcome at School

*H*ave a place or space that belongs to parents. *B*e specific in what you ask of families. Give dates, times, etc. *P*lan activities at various times of the day. *A*llow families to prioritize what activities are most important to them. *M*ake childcare available or include younger children in your plans. *P*ersonalize your invitations and requests and use real language – not jargon. *H*ave an interpreter on hand. *H*ave newsletters, etc., translated into the languages of your families. *O*ffer school-based activities that are fun, such as Mom's Night Out or Family Craft Night. *R*ecognize volunteers and thank people publicly. *C*ommunicate constantly with fliers, newsletters, phone calls, welcome packets, coffee hours. *S*hare good news. *H*ave greeters, meeters, and tour guides on hand when families visit your schools. *C*ultivate volunteers. *I*nvoke the community in. *O*ffer Parent Leadership courses. *C*reate a School Improvement Council where parents can set the agenda. *O*ffer home visits. *P*rovide refreshments and transportation to meetings. *A*sk families what they want or need, and really listen to their answers. *O*ffer programs for both parents and staff together, such as exercise classes, art workshops, and first aid.

Backstage Pass to Student Involvement

by Laura Karasinski, Student Representative

Youth and Legislation—Can They Go Together?

Youth might think that the only time they need to hear talk of legislation and advocacy is during government or civics class, but, in reality, youth can make a difference. Students in upper elementary and middle school can understand issues that affect them and have distinct opinions. Students in high school can even understand issues that affect others and have opinions on those. Students can meet with legislators or write letters or e-mails. They are the future voters of America!

I also wanted to invite youth to attend Advocacy Day on February 15th. There will be a unique student workshop to empower youth to make changes in their communities. You won't want to miss it!

This information is taken from Lisa Klager, Youth Conference member and legislative committee member:

Service-learning is a teaching method that engages young people in solving problems within their schools and communities as part of their academic studies or another type of intentional learning activity.

Examples of service learning:

- Math students make calculations that persuade the local authorities to install a traffic light near their schools so as to reduce accidents at a dangerous corner.
- After-school program participants create a new community garden to “green” their neighborhood as well as deepen their earth science knowledge.
- History students research local heroes identified on plaques in their community and share this knowledge at the annual Memorial Day ceremony.

Let's work on getting youth involved in schools, communities, and advocacy!



Dates to Remember

December

- December 1st**—Reflections Deadline for Unit Dues Paid, 25 Members Posted and Current Bylaws
- December 28th**—Treasurer's Remittance Form Due
- December 28th**—Membership Roster Due
- December 31st**—Unit & Individual Legislative Advocacy Awards Due to State Office

January

- January 9 & 10**—Reflections Drop-Off 10:00a.m. to 2:00p.m. at Walled Lake ESC
- January 28th**—Treasurer's Remittance Form Due
- January 28th**—Membership Roster Due
- January 15th**—Martin Luther King Jr. Day

February

- February 17th**—Founders Day (see article on page 3 of this bulletin)
- February 28th**—Membership Awards Eligibility Form Due
- February 28th**—Treasurer's Remittance Form Due
- February 28th**—Membership Roster Due
- February 4th-5th**—African American Read-In
- February 11th-17th**—PTA Take Your Family to School Week
- Month of February**—Black History Month

March

- March 28th**—Treasurer's Remittance Form Due
- March 28th**—Membership Roster Due
- March 2nd**—NEA's Read Across America (www.nea.org/readacross)
- March 11th**—Daylight Savings Time Begins

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