Greetings Empire State PTSA Members!

This year has absolutely flown by! As we head towards November and the completion of my first term as the Empire State PTSA president, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the opportunity to represent all who continue to support our PTA mission through their membership in our statewide unit.

Fall and school opening also means that NYS PTA’s 2017 Annual Convention is just around the corner. This year we will be back in beautiful Niagara Falls. An integral part of this exciting weekend is our Empire State PTSA Annual Meeting. This year’s meeting agenda will include the election of your 2017-2018 officers.

This meeting also provides us the opportunity to recognize the recipient of Empire State PTSA’s Muriel Berk Service Award. Be sure to join us to celebrate our 2017 honoree who is an extraordinary member who exemplifies those qualities of passion, patience and persistence of Empire State PTSA founder, Muriel Berk, and who has a rich legacy of contribution at every level of the PTA community.

In order to attend our statewide unit meeting one must be an Empire State PTSA member. Kudos to our NYS PTA officers, staff and Membership Team for further enhancing our electronic membership system and the NYS PTA website to ensure we connect with parents, families, friends and advocates throughout all statewide communities. With the implementation of education reform under ESSA, policy and legislative initiatives related to health, safety, and juvenile protection and evolving school funding challenges still ahead, there is much that needs attention and your voice!

Let’s bring back familiar voices and add new ones. For those continuing as Empire members, I encourage you to ask someone new to join. For those interested in joining us for the first time, help us extend our statewide outreach for every child, to every family and let them know that anyone can go to https://nyspta.force.com/UnitLookup and sign up!

I would like to thank Executive Committee members Joyce Cattani, Tammy Gamble and Lori Fontana for their support this past year. It has been my pleasure to be part of this awesome team! Also, a special thank you to our NYS PTA office staff who are a valuable asset to all of us!

I look forward to seeing you in November and wish all of you safe travel to Niagara Falls!

Warm regards,
Bonnie Russell
Empire State PTSA President
ESPTSA Call to Annual Meeting!

The Annual Meeting of the Empire State PTSA will be a breakfast meeting on Saturday, November 4, from 7:00 to 8:30 a.m. at the NYS PTA Annual Convention. This year the convention will be in Niagara Falls, NY. The breakfast meeting will take place in the Cataract Room in the Convention Center.

In addition to election of officers and a nominating committee, the draft minutes from the 2016 Annual meeting, financial report of the 2016-2017 fiscal year, and the proposed 2017-2018 ESPTSA budget will be presented for approval.

ESPTSA Membership

The 2016-2017 membership was up from the prior year at 155 members (134 for 2015-16). To current members, we are thankful for your support (we are already at 133 members!). This year we are looking to continue to enhance our statewide network in support of public education. So ask your friends to join ESPTSA today to add their voice!

To become a member and pay online, anyone can go to the NYS PTA website www.nyspta.org and click on “Join” from any page or directly at https://nyspta.force.com/UnitLookup. If someone does not wish to pay online then they can still register online and pay in person by mailing a check, or use the traditional method of completing an Empire State PTSA form in our brochure: https://nyspta.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2017-18-Empire-Brochure-FINAL.pdf

Thank you for renewing your membership for the 2017-2018 year, and welcome to our new members. ESPTSA challenges every member not only to renew their membership but to gift a membership to a family member or friend so that we speak for every child with a stronger voice!

2017-2018 Proposed Slate of Officers

On behalf of the Nominating Committee, the following slate of ESPTSA officers for 2017-2018 is presented for your consideration.

President: Bonnie Russell
Vice-President: Joyce Cattani
Secretary: Tammy Gamble
Treasurer: Lori Fontana

The diligence of the Committee, consisting of Joyce Cattani, Chair, Stephanie Fehr and Amany Dgheim is greatly appreciated!

Election of officers will be held at the annual meeting on Saturday November 4, 2017.
Empire State PTSA had the privilege of presenting the second Muriel Berk Service Award at the 2016 annual convention banquet. Below is the testimonial to 2016 recipient, Maria DeWald.

"Since completing her term as state president in 2010, Maria DeWald has attended numerous events and has continued to serve NYS PTA in the position of Partnership Support and as Immediate Past President of ESPTSA. With a strong focus on family engagement initiatives she was a founding member of the NYS Family Engagement Coalition, serving as a member of both the management team and steering committee. She continues her support of this key coalition and its efforts to facilitate adoption of the National Standards for Family School Partnerships in policy by the Board of Regents.

Maria’s dedication to PTA is ongoing and has been appreciated at all levels. She has held numerous local, district and state governance leadership roles. Pre and post NYS PTA state presidency, from 2006 -2011 Maria served on the National PTA Governance Board and received appointments to the national legislation, elections and diversity committees. While on the legislation committee she helped to guide public policy formation on Family Engagement issues in the reauthorization of ESEA/NCLB, the Juvenile Justice Act and IDEA.

In 2011 Maria was appointed to and remains an active member of the NYS Professional Standards and Practices Board for Teaching. While not initially serving this prestigious committee as a representative of NYS PTA, she always made sure PTA’s voice was heard and generously offered to “unofficially” do so with the completion of the term of our former representative, Richard Ahola.

Maria’s deep regard for the significant role of arts education is illustrated by both her volunteer work and professional work. Since 2005 Maria has served on the NYS Association for Arts Education. Through her work as Arts in Education Coordinator for the Dutchess County BOCES she facilitates SED aid reimbursement for arts in Education program in the schools of Dutchess County, identifies and oversees resources for participating schools, and works with statewide coordinators to advocate for the arts integration in the schools.

Maria’s dedication to the welfare of children and youth is evident not only through her service to PTA but also through her life work in the arts and teaching and her extensive community service which includes Board Development Chair for Family Services, Inc. and as a member of the Community Foundation in her home of Dutchess County. She has been recognized with the NYS PTA Honorary Life, Distinguished Service and Diamond Awards, the Pleasant Valley Lions Club of the Blind Award and the Dutchess County Executives Arts in Education Award.

She has long demonstrated her commitment and leadership -- she is an inspiration to all in her passion to assure PTA’s relevance in our work on behalf of every child -- the perfect model for the recipient of this year’s Muriel Berk Service Award. “