As we near the end of another school year, we have all faced many challenges. It was a year that saw students learning in so many ways and missing out on the many activities and events that help to make their school year special. We will surely look forward to September when ALL of our public schools should be able to open in person and enable our students to “get back to normal”. Colleges and Universities are making plans to hold in person learning across their campuses and hopeful that they can resume the normalcy that allows for students to engage and participate in the numerous activities and events that should be a part of campus life. We have learned a great deal this year about human nature, about resiliency and how much we value each other. Our students and families have lost so much, and this summer, we hope as all celebrate another year of our country’s independence, that we will be able to enjoy it together, with barbeques and travel, parades, little league and pool parties, all of the things we took for granted in the past but will especially cherish this summer.

As we finish the membership year, thank you, thank you to all of you who became members this year. We finished the year with 159 members, just a bit shy of our goal, but an increase over previous years and that is great news for the children and youth of New York. The more voices we have, the more we can speak to their needs in education, health, safety, and welfare. My heartfelt thanks to everyone. A new membership year begins now, and please remember to renew your membership for the coming year. (Click here to join) Think about gifting a membership to a friend, or former PTA member who may no longer be a member of a unit PTA, but you know still wishes to be an active and informed member on issues that affect children and youth. First-time members will receive our Empire State PTSA pin, a choice for which is on Memberhub. If you are not a “new” member but would like to purchase a pin, there is a choice for that in the Empire State Memberhub store.

This November, NYS PTA will be celebrating 125 years of advocacy! Empire State, the first statewide PTA will be celebrating our 42nd anniversary as the first statewide PTA in the nation. We hope you will join us in the celebration at our annual meeting at convention — so stay tuned……..

Speaking of statewide PTAs, did you know that of the 54 chartered Congresses of National PTA, 46 of them have statewide PTAs! Many have names that take on the “nickname” of the state, (like Empire State) such as “Show Me PTA” for Missouri or “Golden State PTA” for California. However, many have some very unusual and creative names that would make you stop and think about where they actually are located. For example, the “Good Life” unit in Nebraska, or the “Flickertail PTA” of North Dakota. It is rewarding to see how many states have engaged and encouraged new members in this way. More members equal more voices and greater advocacy for our children. Regardless of where they are, these statewide units serve an important connection to ensure that anyone, even those without children currently attending school, those whose schools do not have a PTA, or those who are educational partners, can have their voice heard when it comes to important issues across their state and the country that affect the well-being of our children and youth.

In this issue, we are pleased to feature the recipient of our Muriel Berk Award for 2021. Congratulations to Gracemarie Rozea!

On behalf of the Empire State PTSA Executive Committee, Laurie, Kelly, Neil and me, please have a safe and enjoyable summer,

Jacqueline Wilson
ESPTSA President
ESPTSA IS HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE....

Since 2014, the Muriel Berk Service Award has been given to an individual who has shown commitment and leadership in PTA. In 1979, Muriel Berk formed the Empire State PTSA (ESPTSA). Her vision of how to strengthen PTA, coupled with her pursuit of this goal with consistent and constant passion, patience and persistence, continues to serve as an excellent framework for action.

The recipient of this award must be a current member of ESPTSA, exhibited long standing PTA service and be nominated by any ESPTSA member or may self-nominate.

This year’s committee has selected Gracemarie Rozea as the recipient of this prestigious award. She has dedicated many years of service to PTA on many different levels, from her local unit to Region to State, including State President from 2016-18 and ESPTSA President from 2018-20. Gracemarie’s PTA service has strengthened our organization, through her commitment to serve and her mentorship of members. With her eye on the future of PTA, she has mentored many leaders at every level including NYS PTA. She has been a true role model for all PTA members and leaders. Even as a past president, she continues to add her voice to NYS PTA, serving now as a “grassroots” member on several committees.

We thank you Gracemarie, it is an honor to present you with the 2021 Muriel Berk Service Award!

NYS PTA CONVENTION NEWS

Pack your bags, we’re going on a road trip! Easing of Covid restrictions has opened the doors to Convention 2021 in Syracuse! We’ll be both in-person and virtual! So Save the Date, Mark Your Calendars, Put it in your Budget and get ready to be inspired, invigorated, use your voice, share your experiences with PTA advocates from across the state and celebrate 125 years of being an association dedicated to the health and well-being of all children! We’re going to pump it up! So get excited and get ready to celebrate and advocate, in person!

125th NYS PTA Annual Conference and Convention
November 19-21, 2021 at the newly renovated and beautiful Marriott Syracuse Downtown, check it out here!
SHINING A LIGHT ON OUR MEMBERS

Maria DeWald

Over the years of PTA Advocacy starting from when my eldest was in kindergarten in the late seventies through 2008 when I completed my term as NYS PTA President and beyond, it was PTA that showed me the importance of speaking out for education and all children. I literally saw the difference it made over the years whether in tiny or huge ways. The skills I learned those many years ago are with me still and used in countless ways every day in so many circumstances. ESPTSA was a natural way to stay connected long past my own children’s graduation and has been one of the trusted vehicles I still count on to both support the PTA’s efforts and maintain a connection to the important issues of the day.

I will give you an example from just this last month. I still work as the Arts in Education Coordinator at Dutchess County BOCES. That job, by the way, came to me because of PTA and the way I do that job is totally informed and made better because of PTA. That in turn has led to many opportunities to advocate, most recently as a representative of BOCES on our new local MidHudson Arts Council which in turn got me involved in promoting a push for statewide legislation. This has happened so many times in my life. A question comes up, and I know exactly how and where to get a answer! And of course, the wonderful colleagues and friends met along the way are like an extended family who can always be counted on for support. I readily admit that I still call PTA friends if I really must know something about Bylaws or the County Legislature or Parliamentary Procedure or what that state referendum really means!

What more can any of us ask for when joining an organization? It is a trusted source with an admirable mission, knowledgeable and supportive colleagues, and respected advocates and which, doggedly and constantly, gains results for kids! Thank you ESPTSA for helping to keep me connected!

Susan Lipman

I did not think of myself as an advocate when I first started in PTA or even realize that was exactly what I was doing. However, in 35 years in PTA there have been many opportunities to advocate...as a local unit president working with our building principal to support student achievement; speaking at school board meetings about issues that directly affected the education and welfare of children; serving on the NYS PTA Board as the Education chair and President; attending state and national Legislation conferences; speaking with elected officials on Hill visits; and serving on the National PTA Board of Directors and Resolutions Committee. It is so satisfying that the 4 years served on the National Resolutions Committee have culminated in the presentation of 9 resolutions, the review of 315 resolutions and recommendation for rescission of 143 outdated resolutions for consideration at the 2021 virtual National Convention.

It was also exciting to represent PTA on the Suffolk County School Bus Safety Advisory Committee for the implementation of the Stop Arm Camera Program. What could be more important than protecting the lives of children?

Each experience seems to have led to the next and it has been time very well spent! They say, “If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem!” Well, I like to at least try to be part of a solution!

EMPIRE STATE PTSA
159 MEMBERS STRONG!
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!
SHINING A LIGHT ON THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

What does it mean to “shine a light”? Shining a light on our LGBTQ community not only brings these important topics to light, but it also brings the much needed support our community needs including our children. NYS PTA has recognized the importance of exploring, advocating and educating our youth and our community. It is our goal to work closely with the LGBTQ community to address, discuss, and implement some new initiatives to bring more light. We need to work together to hear what our kids needs are, meeting our community where they are, addressing any roadblocks in our schools and community, and ultimately providing support and valuable resources. It is our hope that we can help break the stigma on such issues, and support our community and children the best way we can.

Kevin Lundell
NYS PTA
LGBTQ Consultant

RESOURCES:
NYS PTA: https://nyspta.org/home/programs/diversity-inclusion-equity/
NYS PTA Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/nysptadiversityandinclusion

NYS PTA VIRTUAL SUMMER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

JULY 21, 2021 6:00PM-9:00PM

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

Summer Leadership Conference (known as SLC) is an annual event designed to provide training and programs to all local PTA members, helping them to establish grass-roots advocacy in their schools and preparing them to be key leaders in their education community.

Due to COVID-19, Summer Leadership Conference has been re-imagined for this year to a one-day, three-hour virtual conference, on Wednesday, July 21, 2021.

The schedule will open with a General Session – a presentation on General Child Wellness, three workshop sessions, a Virtual Exhibit Hall, and conclude with prizes! Preview the Workshop titles and descriptions here!

The all-new SLC Virtual Exhibit Hall will open the day of the virtual conference – be sure to check back then to visit the exhibitors!

Registration is NOW OPEN!

“Anyone who does anything to help a child in his life is a hero.” Fred Rogers
Dear Colleagues:

As the school year draws to an end, we would like to take a moment to reflect on all that you have accomplished for New York’s students and their families.

In a year like no other, we witnessed your incredible acts of heroism, compassion, and professionalism. The entire education community has worked so incredibly hard to provide all students with the best education possible in the face of extraordinary, unprecedented challenges. It has been truly awe-inspiring to witness the work you and your colleagues did – and continue to do – every day to ensure that our students receive the instructional and support services they need to thrive.

You set the tone. You modeled the work ethic that your students will one day emulate. No one can do this work alone, and we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to our local boards of education; school and district administrators; classroom teachers; counselors, psychologists, and social workers; bus drivers; maintenance staff; clerical workers; support staff; and, of course, parents and families.

Together, you made certain that our students received not only academic instruction, but tech support, counseling, social and emotional support, healthy meals, and so much more. It has been nothing short of inspirational to behold.

Continue here to read the letter in its entirety.