NEW YORK PARENT TEACHER SUMMER 2021

What's in this newsletter:

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT - 2, 3
WELCOME BACK TO “NORMAL” - 5
JUST RELAX THIS SUMMER! - 6
SUMMER READING - 7
WHY SHOULD EVERY PTA INCLUDE YOUTH? - 8
MEET OUR YOUTH MEMBERS! - 9
RELAX, REVIVE, RECONNECT - 10
SUMMERTIME ACTIVITIES - 11
SHINING A LIGHT ON THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY - 13
SHARING THE DOOR HANDLE: CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS - 14
MUSIC & ARTS EDUCATION - 15
WHY LEADERSHIP TRAINING? - 16
FUNDRAISING FOR A SMALL PTA - 17, 18
GOOD APPLE MEMBERSHIP GROWTH AWARDS - 20, 21
Like all of you, I got involved in PTA because of my children. I wanted to see what was going on in their school beyond the main lobby, and I wanted to meet the teachers and other parents too. I never would have guessed that those early days of volunteering would set me on the path to where I am today... President of New York State PTA! Those early days were about making a difference for my own children and now, here I am, shining a light on EVERY child with one voice. Sometimes, to be honest, I just have to pinch myself!

In April, 2020, I got the call that I never would have imagined receiving back when my oldest started kindergarten. On the other end was the NYS PTA Nominating Committee Chair, asking if I would accept the nomination for the office of President! As much as I never saw myself in that position, it began to seem more and more conceivable, as the years ticked by, and I became more and more involved. By the time I picked up the phone that day, I realized how much I really did want to do it and how very excited I was for all of the possibilities ahead!

Immediately, I started to brainstorm and make plans. I bought a special journal so that I could write down all of my thoughts. Stuck at home because of the pandemic, I had plenty of time to focus on my ideas and reflections. I chose my presidential theme and worked with a friend to design my pin. Every time I looked at my logo, it made me happy, and my heart soared. I couldn’t wait for November, when I would be elected and installed at our annual convention, and I even started working on my speech. Despite the horror of Covid-19, I was full of enthusiasm and gusto!

I share all of this because only 2 ½ months later, on July 6, 2020, the unthinkable happened. While at the beach with my son, I collapsed, and my entire right side and tongue went numb. I was having a stroke! I was completely aware of what was going on, and it was terrifying. I was whisked away by ambulance and, as I lay on the gurney, I could only think of my family, and would I survive? And then, later, as I lay in the ER, I couldn’t help but think that my dream of becoming state president would be shattered.

Fast forward one year and I am absolutely overjoyed to report that I have made a miraculous recovery. I am truly blessed, and I take nothing for granted. Focusing on my family and PTA, and keeping my goals in sight, very much helped in my recuperation. I never gave up hope and I pushed myself to overcome my health issues and to build my strength and stamina.

That said, I now suffer from anxiety and panic attacks. Every day, I live with the fear of having another stroke and, if I do suffer a second one, I worry that I won’t recover as well the next time. Every. Single. Day!

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Until this past year, I never understood what others with anxiety and mental health issues go through. I just didn't get it. But I do now, and it's nothing to hide or to be ashamed of. It's real life and it's my new reality. I'm one of the lucky ones because I'm getting the help I need, and I have an outstanding support system. We must do better for our children and youth who aren't as fortunate and who don't have access to the same resources. We must continue to provide educational opportunities for parents and peers so that they can learn what to look for and how to recognize when someone needs help. NYS PTA is committed to this work, and we will continue to advocate for school-based mental health services and programs for students.

I feel privileged to be your president. It is a true honor to represent the children and families in New York State and I hold this position in reverence. I take my responsibilities very seriously. I am proud of the collaborative relationship that we have with Dr. Betty Rosa, Commissioner of Education, and the State Education Department. We meet monthly to discuss the most important issues and concerns for parents and students, and they listen intently. I am grateful for the many opportunities this role affords me and I pledge to always do my best on your behalf.

Wishing you good luck and much success as you begin the new school year. Take advantage of the many resources we provide to assist you and please feel free to reach out if you need any additional guidance. Remember, we’re here for you and we’re stronger together!

Be the beacon to inspire and bring hope to others, as you shine a light on every child with one voice!! Thank you for all you do!!
Reading Checkup is the tool for Community Organizations to help families support children’s literacy at home.

Learning Ovations’ Reading Checkup is a web-based tool that empowers the adults at home to deliver rigorous, individualized literacy instruction to all children in their care.

How It Works
1. Children take two brief online quizzes that identify their reading needs.
2. Reading Checkup recommends how much time to spend on four different types of activities.
3. Families get individualized, research-based activities for their children.

Reading Checkup Includes
- Access to Reading Checkup website, customized for families in the communities
- Assessments
- Instructional recommendations
- Free learning activities
- Training and support for organization staff
- Spanish language version of the tool
- Data on engagement and student growth on a per school and per zip-code level

Who It’s For
Community organizations invested in 3rd grade reading outcomes and supporting families with literacy at home.

Save the Date!
Virtual CELEBRATION OF THE ARTS
OCTOBER 2, 2021
10:00am - 11:00 am

Because drop off should always be see you later, not goodbye
Welcome Back to “Normal”

Kim Blasiak, NYS PTA Outreach Coordinator

In March 2020, our lives changed overnight - leaving students and families to figure out a new “normal”, consisting of remote school and empty classrooms. PTA meetings went remote. We navigated those first few months with caution, and soon became experts in Zoom, Google Meet, and Webex. Families and students became well-versed in remote socialization and side-texting. Now we need to relearn how to function in the new school year. Students will be heading back to the classrooms this fall. For many PTA units, that may mean the start of in-person meetings. This may feel awkward at first, especially after being on a computer. As we welcome back our families we should be aware of some basics when it comes to our new post-pandemic “normal”. Understand that not everyone will feel completely safe in person. People have lost friends and family members and they may not want to be out in public just yet.

To start, you may want to offer a continued virtual option for your meetings. This will not only include those who don't feel safe, it will welcome anyone unable to attend a meeting due to lack of childcare and time. Make sure to have all participants introduce themselves and keep in mind that the live participants may not want to shake hands just yet. Have one person in charge of monitoring the chat screen. That way the people at home can also feel heard.

While conducting your meetings, assume not everyone knows the programs you offer. For example, you may start to talk about your upcoming fall festival, but new families may not know what it entails. You can’t get volunteers if they don’t know what they would be volunteering for. Explaining the events and programs will also help you avoid times when the PTA board has a conversation between themselves and doesn’t include the rest of the participants. This is a sure way to scare off any possible volunteers and potential future board members. Don’t alienate anyone.

Seek opinions and avoid the phrase “We’ve always done it this way’. If we learned one thing during Covid, we need to adapt to survive. Ask your school community what they think of the programs and events. Send out a survey at the beginning of the school year. This also makes community members feel vested in the process. Make sure to thank people for their opinions and responses and never dismiss someone if you don’t agree.

Make sure to utilize your board and volunteers. Many units during Covid were unable to fully function, or one person from the PTA may have been going into buildings to get things done. Moving forward you need to be a team. Trust your committee chairs. Delegate work to your board. People don’t want to volunteer when they see one person in charge of everything. It not only puts people off, it prevents you from recruiting replacements for the future when you leave. People don’t want to become involved if they don’t feel welcome and appreciated, and a team gets more accomplished than a single person.

Finally, enjoy the time back. We all missed the sounds of the hallways and classrooms. I know I missed the sound of my four children leaving for the bus each morning. This may be an emotional time for you, and you should allow yourself some grace. Embrace the new “normal” and welcome back to school.
Just RELAX this summer!

With this roller-coaster of a school year finally over, the summer break provides time to intentionally create opportunities to decompress, reconnect with each other, and relax! We know the importance of exercise for maintaining our physical health -- and we need to be just as active at maintaining our mental health!

Your mental health affects how you cope with stress, relate to others, and make choices about your body’s overall health and well-being. Engaging in physical activity, making sure to connect to others, and getting enough sleep are a few ways to promote good mental health -- and here are a few more ideas for you:

https://www.ehstoday.com/health/article/21916993/10-ways-to-relax-this-summer

https://www.theodysseyonline.com/24-activities-for-fun-and-relaxing-summer

https://www.readunwritten.com/2015/06/04/5-relaxing-summer-activities/


EXPLORE FREE LEARNING RESOURCES

As a NYS PTA partner, HMH® helps keep your students learning and growing at grade level across disciplines with free activities, lessons, downloadable items, and videos for learners in grades K-12.

CLICK to Download NOW!
Summer is the time all parents fear that our children are losing ground with reading. We all know the struggle to get those summer reading lists completed. However, summer can be the time for fun ways to encourage reading and literacy without the struggle. Here are a few ideas that may help.

Many community libraries and museums offer “Story Walks”, a great way to get our younger children outside and share a story. For older children, it gives them a chance to see their friends and have some exercise, suggest a walking book club. This may also encourage them to complete their summer reading.

Our local library does a “Drive-In Storytime”. This could be a great neighborhood activity. Have children decorate large boxes as cars to sit in during a story-time, a bonus could be an outdoor movie after the story time.

For your summer vacation and to offset some of the “are we there yet” complaints consider a travel bingo. For the younger travelers the image as well as the word could be included to gain familiarity with new vocabulary. We all have our GPS, but have your children help map the trip. They’ll learn how to read a map and when they begin to complain about the length of the drive, they can study the map to determine how much further and possible rest stops and landmarks.

These are a few ways to keep reading and literacy fun this summer. Just remember all reading is good and helps build skills.
Why should every PTA include Youth?

Melissa Cancro, NYS PTA Secretary and Designated Officer for Bylaws and Youth

Did you know that you do not have to be a PTSA or SEPTSA to have youth involved? As a former Region membership chair, I shared this fact with PTAs during our trainings. When I shared this tidbit, some PTA leaders looked shocked. Students involved? Sometimes this was followed by questions like how does this work? What if someone is trying to win an election and sign up the kids for their votes? How do we involve kids in meetings?

Let’s look at some of these concerns and address them. First off, you probably already have some kids attending your meetings. I know because when my kids were younger they came to all sorts of PTA functions. I can’t top the day I had to speak to our incoming teachers at our district about the PTA. I wasn’t able to get a babysitter and packed my preschooler’s bag with toys and snacks. I looked over during my speech to see my daughter showing our Assistant Superintendent all the Barbies she had packed. Of course, they were all naked. Luckily our Assistant Superintendent and the new teachers had a good laugh.

So if they are already there, why not include them? I have worked with elementary kids for seven years. One thing I know is that they have opinions about everything and they are not afraid to share their opinion. If we are supposed to be advocating for kids, why are they left out of the conversation?

And I know if you are like Melissa that meeting would be chaos. Yes, I recognize inviting kids in will make it messy. Kids are great with some structure. You could ask your student to greet PTA members as they come in. They can man the sign-in table and hand out agendas and reports. They can help with hospitality.

For younger kids, they have short attention spans. It is best to have their input at the beginning of the meeting. If you are planning a school event, you could ask them to vote on a theme or pick between some activities. It is best to give them two choices. Make sure that you are willing to do either choice. Don’t put in a choice you have no intention of doing because you will lose their trust. As the meeting goes on incorporate some program ideas for kids. Have kids work on their Reflections submissions in a corner of the room. Have some PARP (Parents as Reading Partner) activities. Ask some high school students to do a fun activity with the kids.

Having kids there will also keep the meeting moving! Who doesn’t want to wrap up a meeting in an hour!

For middle school and high school students, they have endless possibilities. They are capable on being on committees and serving in lots of ways. Want to refresh your PTA’s social media? Ask a high school to up your PTA’s Memes game or create some fun challenges to gain more interaction. Challenge your art students to create flyers for your events. Look for student advocates. Train them in advocacy and bring them to your school board and legislative meetings. Legislators love talking and having photo ops with kids. If students feel welcome by the PTA, they will bring concerns and ideas to you.

Students could even be officers in the PTA, like a Vice President. You must be 18 years old to hold the office of President, Secretary or Treasurer due to the fiscal responsibilities attached to these positions.

Make sure to offer community service hours for their PTA work. Working with adults in the PTA is a great addition to any college application!

For the last concern, students as voting members who might sway an election. If you need to use kids to win in that way, you already lost. To be a leader, you have to have the membership behind you. It goes against the PTA mission to advocate for kids by using them for your gain.

NYS PTA models this commitment to youth by having two Youth Members on the Governance Team Board. This year we welcomed Sydney Prescott and Zach Gioppo as our Youth Members. Sydney and Zach chair our Youth Committee which has youth members from each region. Our goal is to have youth representation across New York State. It is my great pleasure to work with each and every one of these future leaders.

This is one of my strong beliefs. We are always looking for the future leaders of our organization. Our future leaders are here. They are just in a form that most of us do not recognize. They are kids and youth. They have something to say if we would just take the time to listen. PTA will be stronger for it!

PTSA is Parent Teacher Student Association

SEPTSA is Special Education Parent Teacher Student Association
Give a Big Welcome to NYS PTA’s Youth Members!

Sydney Prescott is from the Genesee Valley Region and attends school in Victor, NY. She has just graduated this year. Next school year Sydney will be going to Carnegie Mellon University to study chemistry and possibly French. In addition to PTA, she participates in many clubs including Youth Court, robotics, theater and Girls Scouts. She is passionate about environmental advocacy and leadership.

Zach Gioppo is a rising senior at Proctor High School in Utica. He is from the Leatherstocking Region. Zach is an Eagle Scout for BSA Troop 14 New Hartford. Since 3rd grade, he has been playing bass both upright and electric for his school. Zach is also a swimmer and diver for his school and club teams. His hobbies are camping, hiking, computers, dabbles in programming, and photography. He is interested in political science and participates in the Model UN at school.
Relax…Revive…Reconnect!
Simple tips to engage with your community over the summer

Lissa Zukoff, NYS PTA Family Engagement Coordinator

Happy Summer! We all made it through a difficult year, and are ready to unwind and spend some time in the sunshine with loved ones, but we also know it is time to prepare for the year ahead. There is no reason we can't lay the groundwork for a great year, while also finding the time to relax. First up; re-establishing community connections. After months of virtual meetings and distance learning, many of us are feeling disconnected; Here are some quick and easy ways to reconnect, as we transition from a virtual world to a face-to-face one:

Connect with Families:
Create a Flat Stanley version of your school mascot and email to families. Ask them to send in pictures of the mascot's adventures. Post the pictures on social media, send in a newsletter, or create a collage for back to school. It's an easy and fun way to keep in touch while we are all apart over the summer.

Connect with Leaders:
Join the two NYS Facebook Groups - NYS PTA Leaders and NYS PTA Diversity, Inclusion and Outreach. Share what has worked for you, and learn from other leaders around the state. By working together we can help create a diverse, enthusiastic environment for our membership.

Connect with Teachers:
There are some teachers and school related professionals still in school, working with students who are attending summer school or who receive Extended School Year services.

Connect with Neighbors:
Sometimes the most important connections are those we aren't directly a part of. Share this information on your social media and web pages, so that anyone who needs it can easily access the information - Find Your Local Food Bank; NYS/Crisis Text Line Partnership; Domestic Violence - New York State Domestic Violence Hotlines; National Suicide Prevention Lifeline; The Trevor Project — Saving Young LGBTQ Lives

Connect with Yourself:
Take a short break from PTA (yes, I said it!); spend time with family and friends, do something that makes you smile, read that book you haven't had time to, finish the craft project you started during quarantine. Put an out-of-office message with an alternate contact on your email, forward your PTA messages to a leader you trust, and give yourself permission to relax for a bit.

Connect with Lissa:
I am really excited to work with all of you as the Family Engagement Coordinator for the NYS PTA. I'm here to be a resource and support, so don't hesitate to reach out to me at family.engagement@nyspta.org with questions, concerns, or just to introduce yourself. If something relating to family engagement has worked well for your unit or council, feel free to share. I can't wait to hear from you!
Summertime can be a challenging time for children with special needs. Some children will qualify for ESY (Extended School Year), and some students will not. For families of students with special needs, summer can be challenging because the routine and schedule they have been following have changed. Here are some ideas that might help keep your child engaged, active and happy during their break from school.

Summer Programs At Your Local Library – Check out your local library for summer programs. Usually, your library will have a summer reading program that may include incentives for children to finish books on the summer reading list. They also have hands-on arts and craft programs, computers set up with educational games, and puzzles or board games to borrow. The best part is that it is usually free. You can give your child an opportunity to explore their local library and look through an assortment of books.

Trips To The Zoo/Aquarium – Try to find a zoo/aquarium that has an opportunity to touch the animals. For instance, a petting zoo where children can pet a baby goat or touch starfish in a touch tank at the aquarium. Interaction helps with sensory and connecting with the animals. Your child can have an opportunity to learn about different animals and their environments.

Water and Sand Play At Home – Set up water and sand stations in the backyard. You can use various tubs/containers or anything that can hold water or sand. In each container, put in different water toys, cups, shovels, pails, squirt toys and let them play away. You can even turn on the sprinklers and let your child run through them. It will not only be fun but a great way to cool off during the hot summer.

Chalk Art – Chalk art is a great way to allow your child to become creative. You might be able to sneak in some learning, too. Encourage kids to be creative and draw whatever they want. You can sneak in some learning by having them practice their spelling by asking them to label their drawings, ask them to draw shapes, or ask them to tell you a story about their picture.

Gardening – Gardening is a way to have children work with their hands while learning about how things grow. You can help them track the growth of whatever they plant. Give your child the responsibility of taking care of what they are growing.

Set Up A Tent – You can set up a tent indoors or outdoors. Indoors was always our preference. No bugs! You do not need to have a tent. Have your child help make the tent out of blankets and pillows. Your tent might turn into a fort or castle but, who cares! As long as they are having fun. Pack a picnic-style lunch and eat under your tent for a different eating experience.

The most important thing to remember is to have fun and relax. Sometimes things will not go according to your plans, that's ok. From my own experience with my children with special needs, I learned that sometimes our best memories came when things did not go according to plan.
PARENTS:
Are you looking for a way to ensure your kids have access to safe, fun physical activity with their friends this year? Become a champion for tennis in your community.

Visit usta.com/EasternSchoolTennis to learn more.

NYS PTA 125th Annual Convention
November 19 - 21, 2021
Syracuse, New York
Syracuse Downtown Marriott
100 East Onondaga Street, Syracuse NY 13202
What does it mean to “shine a light”? Shining a light on our LGTBQ+ community not only brings these important topics to light, but it also brings the much needed support our community needs including our children.

The 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 LGTBQ+ 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 at, 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.

RESOURCES


NYS PTA: https://nyspta.org/home/programs/diversity-inclusion-equity/

NYS PTA Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/nysptadiversityandinclusion
Sharing the Door Handle:
Graduating from Culturally-Responsive to Antiracist Advocacy

Cristina Arroyo Rodriguez, NYS PTA Juvenile Protection Specialist

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) has been resurrected since the 1960’s affirmative action boom, due in part to today’s politically charged climate and recent events such as the murder of George Floyd. Activism and advocacy for social justice have moved into the school arena, as school districts across the state have been talking about DEI at board meetings, sharing statements about their commitment to DEI, and creating DEI task forces.

All of this critical work has been partially precipitated by the disproportionate toll the pandemic has had on black, hispanic, AAPI, neuro-diverse and economically disadvantaged communities.

In April, the Board of Regents drafted a DEI Call to Action, which among other suggestions, asked schools to adopt a culturally-responsive and -sustaining framework in recognition of inequities in our school systems. They detailed that “schools must create opportunities for all students to learn from multiple perspectives.”

Even though culturally-relevant frameworks should help students achieve academically, maintain their cultural integrity, and recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities, this is not always the case in practice. Schools that adopt a culturally-responsive education focus on legitimizing, validating, and utilizing students’ cultural knowledge and heritage, creating positive connections and interactions often fail to speak about why they are doing this – a key component to the success of this work.

New York State is (wonderfully) one of the most diverse states in the nation, and yet still boasts the highest level of school segregation. Diversity and cultural advocacy is not enough. Celebrating differences is not enough. Opening the door to black and brown children, parents, and teachers is not enough.

As a child advocacy institution, PTA needs to engage these critical topics head on. While DEI aims to liberate all disenfranchised groups - including neuro-diverse, LGBTQ+, immigrant, etc. - strategic and nuanced solutions need to be implemented for each of these groups, as universal strategies have historically failed.

Anti-racist advocacy is about sustainable and radical change—in other words, it addresses the roots of the inequities rather than the symptoms. Lack of diverse membership, low membership in diverse schools, single-pronged approaches to fundraising, and low participation and attendance are all symptoms of the problem. Hence, culturally-relevant advocacy needs to be supported by antiracist advocacy – they go hand in hand.

It all starts with evaluating our own history, leadership, and policies. How has a national legacy of racial oppression informed our policies and culture today? Even if they seem colorblind, how have our practices led to inequitable outcomes? Are we ready to commit to a fair system for our black and brown children? Are we ready to share that door handle?

You can read more at the NYS PTA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion webpage here: https://nyspta.org/home/programs/diversity-inclusion-equity/
As you could imagine, this past school year has had devastating effects on the availability of instruction in music and the arts in many school districts. Although there are strong NYS music and art education standards, which have been written into the Part 100 regulations, music and the arts have not been codified into NYS Education Law, as mandated on the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

As a result, many districts across the state view regulations for these subjects as “suggestions,” slashing or eliminating access to music and art programs completely. This year in particular, I can think of three school districts whose music programs were substantially reduced -- including the one I teach in. Because state education law is not in alignment with federal ESSA law, this reduction of equitable access to a robust education in music and the arts is nothing new in many of our big schools districts, and others strapped for cash. The 2020-21 school year placed a greater spotlight on this problem.

Since the passage of ESSA, and in particular over the past two years, music, art, and theatre education organizations throughout New York State have been heavily advocating for an alignment of the verbiage used in NYS Education Law (written in 1951 and 1958) to ESSA.

These efforts would add “music and the arts” to the list of common branch subjects, aligning state law with federal law. Headway was made in early 2020 with advocacy for the introduction of “same As” bills - S.5770/A.9660 - which would have moved Music and the Arts from Regulatory to Statutory subjects, giving them “stand alone” status as established in the federal ESSA standards as well as in the New York State Standards for the Arts.

Recently, these bills have been reintroduced as S.4525/A.1788, which would make New York State the first to follow the federal standards for music and the arts education in ESSA. Similar advocacy efforts took place during early March 2021, and once again, they were well-received.

I had the privilege of advocating with the Nassau Music Educators Association delegation virtually, and by day’s end, most Nassau Region legislators were on board as co-sponsors of their respective house’s bill. However, these new “same as” bills have not been moved out of the committee.

The New York State Alliance for Arts Education, which advocates heavily for all music and arts education organizations throughout the state, has recently reached out to NYS PTA for support in pushing these two bills out of committee and onto the Assembly and Senate floors for a vote. Imagine my excitement when I finally felt like I could use both my NYS PTA and my music educator voices to continue to advocate for equitable access to arts education across the state!

Further steps in music and the arts advocacy in the state will revolve around making sure that these subjects are taught by a NYS certified Music K-12, Art K-12, Theatre K-12 or Dance K-12 educator.

Right now, the regulations and education law do not mandate this, which has allowed districts to get “wiggly” with how they satisfy the Part 100 seat time regulations. But that’s a conversation for another day.

Simply put. NYS Education Law is out of alignment with federal ESSA law in terms of music and arts education, and the passage of S.4525/A.1788 would be a major step in the right direction to rectifying this.

And NYS PTA Advocacy is on it!
A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent. —Douglas MacArthur

Many of us have experienced jobs that may require training throughout the year. When it comes to advancement or obtaining a new position where you will take on a role of authority, you may need to begin a series of additional trainings in leadership and management.

So, too, with PTA. Every successful organization has to have well-trained members. As PTA members we speak for children and youth and believe in, and fight for, fair and equitable public education for all. We can only be successful if we believe in the structure of our organization and how it functions. This is why we ask our members to be trained in PTA practices and policies, informed on critical issues, and prepared to step up to a leadership role. We should all be willing to learn and to help our PTA do its best for our children. Training is one of the ways that NYS PTA can assist you.

Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other. — John F. Kennedy

NYS PTA holds three major events during the year, each focused on training our current members and future PTA leaders. These conferences allow for attendees to network with other PTA members from across the state and share best practices and successes.

Legislative Summit – held in February to help our PTA members to become strong advocates and learn about the specific issues that are critical to the welfare of children and youth. We help our members learn how to work with, and talk to, our state officials about the need to enact laws and regulations that will protect our children and enhance their educational opportunities.

Summer Leadership Conference - held in July, we offer a wide variety of workshops on topics from advocacy to diversity, as well as leadership, job-training, education, and specialized programs.

NYS PTA Annual Convention – held in November, this event gives members the opportunity to see the business side of NYS PTA where they can debate things like resolutions and bylaws. In addition, Convention includes workshops and the opportunity to hear from influential leaders in education.

Closer to home, your Region PTA has opportunities for trainings throughout the year. In addition, they reach out to leaders to identify unit members who wish to take an active role on the Region PTA. You can check your Region’s website for specific information on these opportunities.

These conferences are not only available for those who want to take on a leadership role, but can benefit all members. We also understand, however, that it is sometimes challenging for members to be able to attend these events in person, so NYS PTA now offers virtual access to events and webinars.

You can view current webinars and recordings of virtual events here: https://nyspta.org/home/pta-leaders/trainingmaterials-webinars/leadership-webinar-series/.

We want to make our trainings accessible to all who have the desire to stay informed as well as for those potential leaders among our members.

Leaders will be those who empower others. —Bill Gates

Our children need the strength of our PTAs, and to ensure their continued success we need members who are informed, educated in our mission, and willing to step up to lead our organization.
As fundraising chair for an elementary school PTA with a yearly budget of about $5,000, I discovered a “formula for success” and unexpected benefits from what I now think of as a PTA outreach to our school’s students and families:

1. First, I drew upon the previous fundraising experiences shared by other PTA officers. Like pointing out that the PTA received 40% or less of the profits from some fundraisers vs. 50% from others, to positive (and negative) experiences with specific fundraising organizations.

2. Next, I gathered together all of the brochures sent to the PTA by fundraising organizations. I also looked online and requested brochures and samples from additional fundraising organizations or updated versions from the old brochures in our boxes.

3. I requested time at the first or second PTA meeting to have the PTA members decide what fundraising we would like to do during the year. We placed the fundraising brochures at the tables for arriving members to peruse on their way into the meeting. I also passed out a list of the fundraisers with a short description, the average cost per item, the % the PTA would receive, and any special considerations or interests, such as peanut-free, soy-based, ecologically-friendly.

4. We discussed the pros and cons of the possible fundraisers and the timing, as well as which ones would help us reach the fundraising budget goals for the year.

5. For the PTA with a budget of about $5,000, we decided to run a “holiday” fundraiser for with items costing approximately $25 a piece, as our first of two fundraisers for the year. This particular one yielded 40% profit for the PTA, but with the larger ticket price per item, we were consistently able to earn about $3,000, thus funding the budget lines we needed to cover early on.

6. In the Spring, we ran a second “holiday” fundraiser for using a local chocolate fundraising company. The offering included items priced as low as $2, which allowed a lot more participation by students and more families as a result. This fundraiser was less profitable, but with a profit margin of 50%, it allowed the PTA to earn the remainder of the budget needed of about $1,500-2,000.

7. We also applied for NYS tax exemption for the PTA, now standard when a new PTA unit is chartered, but it made a big difference for participants who enjoyed saving on tax, and for students and their caretakers for tallying the amounts to request from participants.

8. Finally, one of our fundraising partners recommended that we have an only two-week period for participation. There was always room for submitting late orders, but the short period encouraged participants to work on the fundraiser right away rather than forget and allowed us to time it closer to the holiday dates and avoid Thanksgiving.

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This turned out to be a winning formula:
Running these two fundraisers for several years running led to families asking us to continue them, as they really liked the items of these two themes and wanted to continue to gift or enjoy them.

While fewer families participated in the first fundraiser and there was a lower profit margin, this meant there were fewer items to handle and the needed budget was earned early in the year.

Two different fundraisers allowed more participation overall and we met a broader variety of families. We were able to successfully change up each fundraiser to a different organization with similarly priced items for each time slot, although we were careful to use an organization that included some of the items people had grown to rely on for gift giving.

This fundraising formula had some unexpected benefits:
The fundraising encouraged families to interact with and appreciate the PTA, as we called each participating family to arrange for pickup or delivery. After their positive interaction with the PTA, many of these families were now open to be contacted by the PTA for volunteer needs or membership.

Choosing fundraisers with easy to add up item prices and no sales taxes led to greater student involvement with filling out the fundraiser spreadsheets, and the students were helpful in checking the math on the sheets, leading to fewer order errors.

The fundraisers required that at least two PTA members work closely together to check the fundraising sheets, match the money received with the money due, and to coordinate contacting with each participating student’s family for pickup or delivery of the ordered items.

Finally, it was all PTA hands on deck for checking each order against the order sheets and handing out the items to students and families on pickup day and to deliver the items to homes. This fostered working positively together within the PTA and between the PTA and the school and the students, families and teachers, a process best facilitated by kindness, enthusiasm, patience, and tapping into the skills of each PTA member.

As a result of these positive fundraising experiences, more students and their families felt involved in the PTA, the PTA members and officers worked better together and better with the school, and the PTA was able to focus on the PTA agenda such as art, science, and math nights, providing money to the library for new books and to the classrooms.
**NYS PTA Announces the 2021 recipient of the Family Engagement Award in Honor of Jami-Beth Knapp**

**Congratulations to Maple East Elementary School PTA Executive Committee, Western Region**

2020-2021 Executive Committee members:
- Sue Petras, Alecia Jarzynko, Mike Chen, Kristin Frost,
- Laura Stratton, Annie Pritchard, Elizabeth Astridge,
- Sara Frizalone, Carrie O’Brien, Debbie Guglielmi, and
- Jennifer Drexinger

**Family Engagement Award in Honor of Jami-Beth Knapp**

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**Save the Date!**

Virtual

CELEBRATION OF THE ARTS

OCTOBER 2, 2021
10:00am - 11:00 am
GOOD APPLE
MEMBERSHIP GROWTH AWARDS

Mary Sotomayor, NYS PTA Membership Coordinator

NYS PTA celebrates our PTAs who achieved membership growth in 2020-21!

Check out all of our Membership badge award winners for 2020-21 here.

HIGHEST ACHIEVERS

1st Place: 12-374 Johnstown Junior Senior HS PTSA (239% growth)
2nd Place: 15-392 Jamesville Elementary School PTA (165% growth)
3rd Place: 12-362 South Colonie Special Education PTA (142% growth)

10-103 William S. Covert PTA
12-216 Albany High School PTSA
12-362 South Colonie Special Education PTA
12-374 Johnstown Junior Senior High School PTSA
15-392 Jamesville Elementary School PTA
18-395 Hastings SEPTA
18-399 Hendrick Hudson HS PTSA

Continued on next page
GOOD APPLE
MEMBERSHIP GROWTH AWARDS

Continued from previous page

04-239 Richard P. Connor PTA
04-268 Monroe Woodbury Senior High School PTA
04-303 GHR SEPTSA
05-040 Lindenhurst Senior HS PTSA
05-084 West Islip High School PTSA
05-087 Beach Street MS PTA
05-094 Half Hollow Hills HS East PTA
05-100 Harborfields High School PTSA
05-138 Fifth Avenue Elem. School PTA
05-144 Elwood Secondary PTSA
05-379 Longwood SEPTA
05-412 Cherry Avenue Elem. School PTA
05-458 Longwood Middle School PTSA
05-564 Pat Med SEPTA
06-111 Hugh R Jones PTA
06-381 Burton Street Elementary School PTA
10-080 Oceanside High School PTA
10-459 Massapequa SEPTA
10-491 Lynbrook SEPTA
12-077 Glenmont Elementary School PTA
12-260 William H. Barton Intermediate Sh.PTA
14-125 Calvin U. Smith Elementary PTA
15-200 Jennie F. Snapp MS PTSA
15-237 Whitney Point PTA
17-279 Saugerties J/SHS PTSA
17-320 Roy C. Ketcham High School PTSA
18-133 Chappaqua PTA
18-207 Irvington-On-Hudson PTSA
18-322 Pocantico Hills Central School PTA
18-338 R. J. Bailey School PTA

05-180 Dogwood Elem School PTA
05-307 Quogue School PTA
05-404 Sayville SEPTA
05-463 John M Marshall Elementary School PTA
05-513 Bayport-Bluepoint High School PTSA
07-199 Honeoye Falls-Lima PTA
10-093 Baldwin Senior High School PTSA
10-162 Seafood Manor PTA
10-166 Forest Lake PTA
12-263 Malta Avenue PTA
12-325 Albany School Of Humanities PTA
12-337 Shaker Junior High School PTSA
12-383 Caroline Street PTA
15-254 Onondaga Road Elementary School PTA
17-317 Vassar Kinry PTA
17-318 John Jay High School PTSA
18-351 Buchanan-Verplanck PTA
18-392 Ossining High School PTSA
18-403 Denzel Washington School of the Arts PTSA