Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.

- James Baldwin

Our perception that we have "no time" is one of the distinctive marks of modern Western culture.

- Margaret Visser

The day the child realizes that all adults are imperfect, he becomes an adolescent; the day he forgives them, he becomes an adult; the day he forgives himself, he becomes wise.

- Alden Nowlan

Don't be yourself. Be someone a little nicer.

- Mignon McLaughlin

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**From the Region Director**

Mary Twardokus, Region Director
director@gvpta.org, (585) 657-7722.

**Unit Roundtables**

Two more roundtables will be held for PTA units in our region in February and March. These Roundtables are gatherings for you to informally come together, network with other units, get information, answers to your questions and share ideas. Watch for details in upcoming ECHOs, at GVPTA.org, and in Region emails.

If your unit and school would like to host one of these Roundtables, contact Mary Twardokus at director@gvpta.org or 585-657-7722. All you would need to do is to furnish a meeting room. We would schedule it on a date convenient for your unit.

**“Toot Your Unit’s Horn!”**

Has your PTA unit had a successful program? Event? Fundraiser? Other PTA units would be interested in hearing what has worked for your unit! Upcoming ECHOs will have an article sharing those ideas. Email your successes to webmaster@gvpta.org or call Gary Elling, (585) 225-8237.

Too often we forget to tell others about our successes and all that we do as PTAs. Don’t forget to share those things your unit does in your PTA newsletter, your school’s newsletter, and newspaper articles! Let’s remember to “toot our horn!”

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**Membership**

Kathy Giles, Membership Chair,
membership@gvpta.org

It's outstanding to be in good standing! Congratulations to all of the units who made their first membership dues payments of the year on time - you've kept your place on the "Units in Good Standing" list (and made me, the newbie Membership Chairman, look pretty good, too!). If you haven’t yet made your fall membership dues payment, please send it in as soon as possible so that your unit can stay on the "Good Standing" list too. In early December I will be following up with units who are behind in their payments.

Why is being in good standing so important? The criteria for good standing act as a barometer of the health of your unit. If you have your updated PTA Form A on file for this year, paid your insurance, have updated Bylaws, and have an active membership of at least 25 paid members, your unit is in good standing, i.e. healthy. If your unit isn’t up to speed on those requirements, that is a "heads up" that you might need a bit of support from your regional board. (The GVPTA can assist in a number of ways—from training for your board members to idea swaps for increasing membership and much more.) In addition, keeping your unit in good standing allows the people in your district to benefit from a broad range of PTA programs. For example, the Jenkins Memorial Scholarship is a $3,000 scholarship awarded to a student interested in pursuing a teaching career. To be considered for the award, the student’s PTA must be in good standing.

In October I notified unit Membership Chairmen that I was running a membership challenge to encourage us all to purposely seek out and increase membership this year. I promised something sweet to the unit that had the largest membership increase over this time last year. And the winner is (insert drumroll)
... Brockport Central Schools PTSA, whose first payment was for double the number of memberships they paid in October of 2011. I’d also like to acknowledge Dudley Elementary PTA, whose first dues payment exceeded their total membership for last year by 84%. Way to go! They deserve at least something semi-sweet; watch your mailbox too, Dudley. And finally, a big round of applause for Red Jacket Central PTSA, who won a $25 gift card from the PTA store online when their unit was chosen from among the Early Bird membership award winners (those who made their first dues payment by Oct 20).

Keep up all the good work in your units. If you’ve emailed me about a membership issue and I haven’t reported back, please feel free to send me a reminder and ask for a status update. (For my sanity, be sure to include your unit number and name in the subject line.) Stay tuned for next time – I’ll share some other cool membership awards you can apply for in the spring! Don’t forget to plan your spring membership campaign.

Holiday greetings to all! ■

Principals’ & Presidents’ Dinner

By: Maggie Hannon, Event Coordinator

On Wednesday, November 7th the Genesee Valley Region PTA held its Annual Principal & President Dinner at the Burgundy Basin Inn. Starting our evening off was a School Pep Band from Canandaigua Academy under the supervision of Nick DelVillano. It is great to hear some of our local school districts’ musical talent at our events!

Before we had our wonderful meal, we were able to present two GVPTA awards. The Genesee Valley PTA Awards Committee had a tough time this year choosing the winners since all the nominating PTA units sent in many wonderful people to choose from. The Genesee Valley Administrator Award went to Ms. Rhonda Morien, principal, from Francis Parker School No. 23, Rochester City School District. Mr. J. Ernest DuBois presented the J. Ernest DuBois Educator Award to Ms. Sherrill Moon, a 3rd Grade Teacher at Scribner Road Elementary School, Penfield Central School District.

Both of the PTA units surprised their winners at their own school buildings so the staff and student were able to congratulate them individually.

Please go our website to see how to nominate an Administrator or a Teacher in your school in time for next year’s P&P dinner! We really like to celebrate everyone who is involved in making the student’s succeed in their education and who supports their PTA!

Our guest speaker for the evening was Adele Bovard, Superintendent of Webster School District. Her presentation titled, “Finding the Strength in Family Engagement” was enjoyed by all in the audience. Ms. Bovard’s PowerPoint presentation is available on the GVPTA web.

After dinner we gave recognition to all the new and/or retiring Principals and Superintendents with a NYS PTA gift. It is our hope that next year that we would be able to get more units to attend our P&P dinner. This is a chance to recognize and support our school community members who all work together – Principals, Superintendents, Board of Education Members and PTA units.

I would like to also say thank you to those who selected me as the winner of The GVPTA Ruberta Foster Award. After all the years I have heard all that she had done while in the Genesee Valley PTA, I regret that I have never met her – she died earlier in 2012. However we are lucky to still have in our midst other past PTA members in the Rochester area that are “retired” but still like to receive the ECHO and see what is happening in our PTAs today. It was so nice to sit at the table with Ernest and Carol Winter (past District Director) to hear some great stories that they shared. Maybe we can invite some other past District Directors to our Spring Conference this year so everyone can hear stories from them about their PTA experiences - we all need some motivational boost! ■

Strength_of_Family_Engagement.pdf

Family Engagement Rubric (Webster) www.websterschools.org/files/89492/family%20engagement%20rubric2.pdf

National PTA Family Engagement Resources www.pta.org/programs/FamilyEngagement.cfm

Bylaws Update

by Gene Kinney, genekinney@gvpta.org

This is the third year of an electronic bylaws process called Bylaws EZ. Hopefully by the end of this year all units and councils will have updated their bylaws and paper will be replaced. The electronic process is faster to update and to review bylaws. A unit/council still needs to appoint a small committee to review existing bylaws for changes. An electronic draft is created by going to the bylaws wizard link on www.nyspta.org. Multiple iterations can be made until a draft is ready for voting by the membership. Once the membership approves the draft, the signed cover sheet needs to be sent to the Region Bylaws chair. The Region and NYS PTA bylaws chair will normally review and approve the bylaws within two weeks after the cover sheet is received. An approved electronic bylaws and a paper copy will be returned to the president.

Units or councils should consider creating procedures for documenting operating processes and to provide more specific details on chairmen, events, etc. Sample procedures are on the NYS website. These can be created locally, approved and updated as needed without sending them on to the region or state.

Even with the streamlined process, bylaws only need to be updated every three years. Current bylaws are one of the conditions for a unit to be in good standing for awards or participation in programs such as Reflections. Units that are delinquent or having bylaws expiring on 1/1/2013 include Sodus, Bloomfield, Perkins, Jefferson Avenue Greece Arcadia MS, Brookside and Scribner Road. If any one has questions or need help we are available to work with you. ■
Convention Address by Commissioner King

by Susan Brown, treasurer@gvpta.org

At the 2012 NYS PTA State Convention, Commissioner King spoke about his goals for the department and philosophy with which he guides progress towards those goals. Overriding all of his objectives is the idea that all children need to be college and career ready when they leave school. Today New York State has approximately 75% of its students graduating and far fewer of those meet the definition of college and career ready. Admittedly, this is a pitiful bar for such a high performing state, no less a state with more medical universities than any other in the union.

Commissioner King touted the need for continuous improvement based on a standards map. He argued for professional development, data driven instruction, and increased principal effectiveness. This mantra should come as a surprise for none, since it has been the statement of the Common Core State Standards, Gates Foundation, federal government and state government for the past couple of years. He defended the use of our 3-8 testing program and relayed results as autopsies that may not improve individual health, but may improve the health of the population. He also urged that they be used in tandem with frequent assessment to inform instruction. This philosophy has been the state education department’s defense of testing since NCLB went into place in 2001.

Some things in his speech were more novel. He promoted an improvement in the culture for learning where we protect and advance instruction with the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) as its centerpiece. He advocated for opportunities for the full range of students, both vocational and collegial. He stated that we cannot wait to start until kindergarten. Birth to school age programs need to be in place to help level the playing field for children at risk. Spending money on early childhood initiatives, rather than prisons after children leave school, is good for our society. He argued that we must partner effectively with parents and communities, teachers and principals to meet the needs of our children. When asked how he envisions integrating the various institutions that are part of the department of education with agencies in other departments, however, his response was weak. He commented that NY had not won federal funds to develop improved early childhood initiatives so there were very few things that could be done.

If we are going to be dependent upon federal funds to meet the needs of our children, we will also be beholden to federal strings. People argued strongly for Race to the Top monies and are now complaining about how they do not pay for the initiatives that they mandated, how they require testing and an anticipated narrowing of the curriculum as tests become more important to both teacher and principal ratings, and how administrations are looking at being overwhelmed by the teacher evaluation systems required to be in place. We cannot have it both ways, either we take the money and the rules or we figure out how to work smarter not more expensively to meet the needs the people in our state and for our children.

Together We Can...Reflect the past, Transform today, Inspire tomorrow

The 116th Annual NYS PTA Convention

Parent volunteer leaders represented Genesee Valley Region PTA units among some 321 statewide members, delegates and participants at the New York State PTA’s 116th Annual Convention in Saratoga Springs, November 16 – November 18, 2012. They represent New York’s more than 300,000 PTA members in more than 1,400 schools. State convention delegates set PTA policy – guiding advocacy and the organization’s focus – by voting on resolutions. Delegates learn about current issues in education and children’s condition, network to share best practices, and hear experts and inspirational speakers.

“Every year, the state convention re-energizes and renews PTA’s vision and mission for children and education,” said newly installed NYS PTA President, Lana Ajemian. It was thrilling to know that nearly 1/3 of those in attendance were first-timers, signifying both a recognition of the relevance of the work of this extraordinary group of volunteers as the premier advocacy association for children and families and the hope to contribute to that.”

Convention attendees welcomed NYS Commissioner of Education, Dr. John King, on Friday. King discussed the different initiatives taking place currently in New York including APPR and high stakes testing, and he addressed many questions from the delegates. On Saturday, the 2012
If you have any questions or need help with anything PTA, please contact your Associate Director.

NYS Teacher of the Year Katie Ferguson shared her own inspirational story and knowledge of teaching, David Alan Miller from the Albany Symphony Orchestra spoke about creativity and arts education on Sunday. National PTA Secretary/Treasurer Laura Bay also addressed delegates.

Resolutions discussed, voted on and adopted this year addressed Air Quality Standards in Indoor Ice Arenas and Reducing and Phasing Out the Purchase of Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) Plastic in New York Schools.

Attendees also learned about many issues at convention workshops:

- Convention workshop materials are in the Members Only section of the NYS PTA web, http://nyspta.neric.org/MembersOnly/MembersOnly_TrainingDocuments.cfm
- A convention video slideshow is at www.nyspta.org/Events/Events_Convention.cfm

Monroe County School Boards Association and the Monroe County Education Coalition are good sources of information on issues that face public education. Check out the publications at www.monroe.edu/webpages/mcsba/publications.cfm

Bring Your Questions
Genesee Valley Region officers will conduct Roundtable discussions at various locations throughout the Region, in February, and March. GVPTA.org.

Future Roundtables will be posted on the GVPTA Web.

Upcoming Events, Deadlines and Reminders

**November 15 IRS Form 990**
Filing deadline for 2012 If you haven’t filed please contact Lisa Christoffel, GVPTA Treasurer, treasurer@gvpta.org

**February 17 Founders Day**
nyspta.neric.org/YourPTA/AwardsRecog_FoundersDayAward.cfm

**March is PTA Advocacy Month** and there are many ways PTA members can become involved in advocacy.

**March 17-18, 2013 Leg/Ed Conference**
Legislation/Education Conference, Albany, NY www.nyspta.org/Events/Events_LegEdConf.cfm

**March 2013 Jenkins Interviews**
Jenkins Teacher Scholarship Interviews

**March 31 Membership**
Final payment must be in the NYS PTA office before March 30th. Return unsold cards.

**May 2013 GVPTA Spring Conference**
Spring Conference/Annual Meeting

**July 26-28, 2013 Summer Leadership Conference**
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. www.nyspta.org/Events/Events_SLC.cfm