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

Reflections Program
This year’s Reflection’s theme was “The Magic of a Moment.” The winning entries from the units for this year’s program are now in the process of being judged at the region level. We certainly do have many talented students in our region! The winners from the Genesee Valley Region PTA will be sent on to the New York State competition. The New York State Award winners will be forwarded to the National PTA level.

Don’t have a Reflections Program in your PTA?
Start one now for 2013-14! The Theme will be “Believe, Dream, Inspire.” The PTA Reflections Program is designed to enhance quality arts education. Students in preschool through grade 12 are encouraged to create works of art in the areas of dance choreography, film production, literature, musical composition, photography, and the visual arts for fun and recognition. The program brings families, school and communities together by supporting student success through the arts.

Encourage students to unleash their artistic talents, reflect on the theme and create original works of art. Write a story or script; compose music or a photograph; create a dance, drawing or a painting. It is never too early to start. Some units begin the program in the spring, some in the fall. The deadline for the 2013-14 region level will be December 2013. Allow the theme to inspire creativity and spark imaginations.

For more Reflections information, go to
www.pta.org/reflections. and
www.nyspta.org/YourPTA/
YourPTA_Refections.cfm

Membership
Kathy Giles, Membership Chair,
membership@gvpta.org

It may be cold and snowy outside, but your PTA unit can feel warm and fuzzy knowing you are set to enter the "home stretch" of membership for this year. All of the membership chairmen did a great job at getting their fall payments in, and now should be looking toward the mid-year payment for memberships sold since October. There is no specific due date for a mid-year membership payment, but since the final dues payment deadline is March 31, 2013, the dead of winter is about the halfway point to that.

We have a few incentives for you to consider: there is a Founder’s Day Award that is automatically bestowed on units who enroll and pay for at least 15 members in the month of February. To qualify, you must submit your payment for those members on or before March 1, 2013. There are also some awards you can apply for. If you have at least 10 members enrolled from the community (not parents, teachers or students) you can apply for the President’s Letter of Community Involvement, a prestigious commendation that shows your unit is truly active in your community. There is also a “Focus on Fathers” award certificate—if 25% of your members for the year are male (fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers—they just need that Y chromosome and a desire to be involved in advocating for children and youth) you should apply. And for those units who have aggressively pursued their teachers to join, there is the 100% Teacher Membership Certificate. If you are
interested in more information about any of these awards, or other questions or concerns about your unit’s membership, please contact me. Until next time...stay warm!

NYS PTA Membership page
http://www.nyspta.org/YourPTA/YourPTA_Membership.cfm

PTA Membership Quick-Reference Guide
http://www.pta.org/members/content.cfm?ItemNumber=1099

Schools Under Attack
by Gene Kinney, genekinney@gvpta.org

Most school districts have cut programs and staff over the last two years and the outlook for this year is more of the same. A 2% tax cap (or CPI limit, whichever is less) has caused school districts to spend down any contingency funds and still make cuts. The time pressure, coupled with costs, are causing districts to reevaluate limiting or eliminating programs such as music, arts and gifted education. There have been studies on Mandate relief and improving education but these have not resulted in actions yet. The Federal government, NYS and State Ed have continued to place unfunded or under funded mandates, e.g., APPR and testing, on districts. The State of the State calls for many new education enhancements that are great ideas but will cost more. The Governor’s budget will be released in late January but an increase in education funds is not expected. The Governor has gone on record indicating that current education funding is already too much and school districts must do more with less. It is expected that some funding will be done by competitive grants and that schools viewed in need will be the major recipients of state aid increases.

PTAs need to have a Call to Action. Educate yourself and your members on the issues via meetings and media. Work with your school boards and Superintendents and develop data based facts on the impacts of budget and new initiatives on students. Don’t lose the focus on the positive programs and achievements in your district. Attend budget meetings and information meetings such as NYS PTA Leg / Ed conference on March 16/17. Make your views known to your state representatives—they have local office hours in their districts on Thursdays and Fridays. Consider including school board reps, administrators and teachers in these meetings. Be an advocate for your children. It is time to shift the perception of PTA being a fundraiser back to being a child advocate and partner with other educational providers for student excellence.

The Voice of NYS PTA
For thoughts and commentary from the President of the NYS PTA, Lana Ajemian, on topics of interest to our membership see:
http://nysptapresident.blogspot.com/

Treasurer’s Corner
by Lisa Christoffel, treasurer@gvpta.org

Hello, Unit Treasurers! Hopefully your school year is going well so far! In light of the fact that we’ve had a few PTAs lose their not for profit status with the IRS this year, I wanted to focus a little bit on what PTAs really are in the eyes of the IRS and why completing the 990 is critical to your existence.

In New York, 501 (c)3s are either a public charity or foundation

PTA is a public charity, which requires that a broad base of support provides 1/3 or more of income and not more than 1/3 income from unrelated business income

Things that can jeopardize that 501(c)3 status can be things like lobbying (must be insubstantial), private benefit, political activities, failing to meet filing requirements (this is the 990 issue), failure to operate to fulfill an exempt purpose (we operate as a charity), and unrelated business income should not be funding the PTA.

Let’s talk about the 990s. For most PTAs whose gross receipts (minus the NYS PTA membership part of the dues (the $4 per member)) are under $50,000 annually, there is a very easy postcard that can be done right online, and the acknowledgement for that should be printed and held with your Treasurer books. Even if you have more than $50,000 gross receipts, you still have to do a 990, but it’s the longer form, more like a real tax return. The fiscal year is July 1 to June 30, and the 990 for that year needs to be completed by Nov 15. So, for the 2011 990, it was the fiscal year July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012, and it’s the one you should have completed by Nov 15, 2012. As you hand over the books and leadership at the end of this fiscal year, please be sure you are letting the new Treasurer know about the rules as well. You can get reinstated if you’ve lost your not for profit status, but it’s a lengthy and costly process. It’s far easier to make sure you’re completing these each year. Please let me know if you have any questions at any time!

Tax-Exempt Revocation
The IRS recently issued letters revoking the tax-exempt status of numerous organizations, including many local PTAs, for failure to file information returns for three consecutive years. If your local PTA® received a letter from the IRS stating that your tax-exempt status has been revoked, please follow the instructions in the resources linked below to reinstate your organization’s tax-exempt status.
Echo Newsletter

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March Is PTA Advocacy Month
by Lisa Christoffel, treasurer@gvpta.org

There are many ways PTA members can become involved in advocacy. On March 16 and 17, NYS PTA offers its annual Legislation/Education Conference, providing current information on hot topics and long-standing issues. Presentations and panel discussions are given by New York State Department of Education officials, as well as other education and health partners, and members of the NYS PTA Board of Directors. Open to all interested PTA members, this Conference offers specific advocacy training and ways of accessing resources that can benefit the local PTA and school community.

For those who want to stay longer, on Monday, March 18, we will be going into Albany to meet with lawmakers and advocate for issues NYS PTA believes are important to all the students in New York State. Last year, Greece took three high school students with them, which was a first for the PTA Leg Ed conference, but it went over very well, for students, PTA leaders, and lawmakers. They intend to take students again this year. If you're interested in exploring that at all in your district or if you think you might be interested, but aren’t quite sure what to expect, please contact Lisa Christoffel, treasurer@gvpta.org, for more information.

The overall purpose of PTA is to make every child’s potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children.

nyspta.neric.org/AboutPTA/AboutPTA_Purposes.cfm

Stop Sequestration Toolkit
www.pta.org/advocacy/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3402

The 2013 National PTA Legislative Conference will take place March 12-14, 2013 in the Washington DC area.

PTA Supports Gun-Free Schools

Local Leader Resources
www.pta.org/members/content.cfm?ItemNumber=3094

NYS PTA Information

NYS PTA Publications
http://nyspta.neric.org/YourPTA/YourPTA_Publications.cfm

Advocacy
http://nyspta.neric.org/Advocacy/advocacy_home.cfm

Advocacy Newsbriefs
http://nyspta.neric.org/Advocacy/advocacy_newsbriefs.cfm

Legislative Program
http://nyspta.neric.org/Advocacy/advocacy_legislativeprog.cfm

Where We Stand - includes current
Resolutions and Position Papers

For NYS PTA issues sign up for Capwiz and then Take Action with CAPWIZ
HELP WANTED

Do you have a few hours a month to help advocate for children? Genesee Valley Region PTA is seeking candidates for various positions on the Region Board.

Please call Gene Kinney 585-586-0556 or gekinney@yahoo.com

MONROE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION and the MONROE COUNTY EDUCATION COALITION are good sources of information on issues that face public education.

www.monroe.edu/webpages/mcsba/
webapps.monroe.edu/mcec/

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, on February 6th, and in March. GVPTA.org.

Come and meet with members of other units and members of the Genesee Valley Region Board. Roundtables are great opportunities for PTA members to come together informally, to network with other units, share ideas and information, and get answers to your questions.

Upcoming Events, Deadlines and Reminders

**February 6, GVPTA Roundtable**
A Unit Roundtable will be held Wednesday, Feb. 6th, 7pm at Scribner Road Elementary School cafeteria, 1750 Scribner Road in Penfield.

**February 17 Founders Day**
[nyspta.neric.org/YourPTA/AwardsRecog_FoundersDayAward.cfm](nyspta.neric.org/YourPTA/AwardsRecog_FoundersDayAward.cfm)

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

**March 17-18 Leg/Ed Conference**
Legislation/Education Conference, Albany, NY
[www.nyspta.org/Events/Events_LegEdConf.cfm](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 31st. Return unsold cards to region membership chair.

**May 6 GVPTA Spring Conference**
Spring Conference/Annual Meeting at Glendoveers.

**July 26-28 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.

Additional GVPTA Contacts are listed on the web site