From the Region Director

Lisa Christoffel, GVPTA Region Director
director@gvpta.org

Expectations. We all have them: of ourselves, of our family members, of others. Very often, you’re a product of the expectations your families/teachers/influential adults had about you when you were a child. The choices you make throughout your life are often governed by what you believe is expected of you.

Recently, I attended the NYS School Boards Association convention. The keynote speaker was a young man named Wes Moore. He told us a story about two boys with the same name being raised a few streets apart in Baltimore. He even wrote a book about it, which I highly recommend, “The Other Wes Moore.”

While the expectations of the first Wes were high, the other Wes did not get the same support. Despite losing his father when he was three and getting into trouble as a young man, the Wes who’s loved ones refused to let him fall through the cracks eventually ended up at Johns Hopkins University, followed by a Rhodes scholarship and study at Oxford.

The other Wes Moore who had lived a few streets away is now serving a life sentence in prison for committing armed robbery, and killing an off-duty police officer trying to earn extra money for his five-person family by working as a security guard.

Wes started off his keynote speech to us by thanking all the BOE members and superintendents present for their focus on ensuring that every child who walks through our public school doors is taken care of and given expectations for success. As I sat listening to this inspiring young man, I realized that both of my volunteer “jobs”: my school board position and my work with PTA, had the potential to positively impact all those ‘other’ Wes Moore’s out there. After all, our tagline is everychild.onevoice.™

Before we get caught up in the activities of the holiday season, let’s take a moment to do a self-assessment, and ensure that the work we’re doing does indeed reflect everychild.onevoice.™ That we are advocating for all children, and we’re helping to put policies and processes in place in our schools such that our ‘other’ Wes Moore’s in our schools are getting the supports they need to help them make better choices.

Thank you for all you do for our children! Have a happy holiday season!

Convention 2014 update

Lisa Christoffel, GVPTA Region Director
director@gvpta.org

For those of you who missed NYS PTA Convention 2014, hopefully you can get there next year…in Niagara Falls! We had a great time. Genesee Valley Region volunteers helped to get all attendees signed in and on the right path to get the most out of the convention. Thank you to Sonya Verrillo, Gene Kinney, Antonia Beaty, Susan Brown, and the team from Audubon School #33! You all did a fantastic job at registration and did our Region proud!

We got some great information at Convention from some great keynote speakers: Chancellor Merryl Tisch, the 2015 Teacher of the Year—Charles Giglio, Major General Barre Price from National PTA, and Pam Allyn, Executive Director of Litworld.

We had some spirited discussions about proposed Resolutions regarding HIPPA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) education and health care proxy forms, e-cigarettes, and social host laws. We had some very interesting vendors and got some new fundraising ideas. We had all kinds of cool stuff to buy in the PTA Store (go, Gail!), including Peppermint Pig! And we attended workshops providing great information on topics that ranged from running effective meetings, to how to keep students engaged
in schools, to current trends and changes going on in education through technology, legal changes, and multiple pathways to graduation. Most of the presentations eventually get loaded into the members only section of the NYS PTA website. Please go online and check them out when they get posted, so that you can at least get some of the plethora of information that was made available to Convention attendees.

Once again, I urge you to budget for some of your members to attend NYS events and bring the information back to your unit. Convention organizers spend hundreds of hours putting together information designed to help you do your PTA work more effectively, and to help you understand how best to advocate for every child, one voice.

New York State Convention

Susan Brown, GVPTA Associate Director
SusanBrown@gvpta.org

The 118th NYS PTA Convention provided a variety of experiences to the attendees. There were workshops to take, keynote speakers with their presentations and debate and voting on resolutions. I always enjoy this conference because it provides an opportunity to share your voice with the leadership. It is the grassroots operation of our organization showcasing its power. It encourages networking between people. New ideas to invigorate your PTA are shared.

I was particularly glad to be able to hear Charles Giglio’s presentation. Mr. Giglio is the 2015 New York State Teacher of the Year. After listening to him I knew he was a good teacher, not just because of his comments about providing a prep school education to poor students and ensuring that they have opportunities to travel to the Metropolitan Museum, Rome (as in Italy) and Greece, but because of his ability to tell stories. I think a big part of being a teacher is being able to tell stories.

A few themes ran throughout his presentation. He asked that parents teach optimism. In a time when there is a great deal of global unrest, this is especially important. Optimism gives children a reason to learn. He stressed the importance of the relationship forged between teachers and parents, saying, “Parents are important to the mission in the classroom.” He highlighted the challenge of today’s standards. He sees the important standards being work ethic and the practice of civil virtues rather than being able to pass a Regents’ exam. Interestingly he identified one of the problems with today’s education as the absence of a path other than the Regents diploma. I am sure he would approve of the new alternate pathway to graduation which allows exchanging one of the social studies exams for a CTE (Career and Technical Education) test.

Mr. Giglio was a delightful speaker who kept the audience engaged for a full hour. I wish you all could have been there. Next year’s convention is in Niagara Falls. It is definitely worth putting into your budget money to send someone to this fantastic learning opportunity that the state puts together on your behalf.

Convention First-Timers

Antonia Beaty, GVPTA Assistant Director
Audubon School #33 PTA had six members who attended this year’s state convention, five of whom were 1st timer’s. We all had the opportunity to work the registration booth and learned a lot about PTA resolutions. Most importantly we learned what it really means to be a voice for all children.

Region Members Quoted

Region members Gene Kinney and Sonya Verrillo were quoted in an article on the NYS PTA Convention appearing in the Saratogian. More...

Reflections Submissions

Reflections submissions will be collected the 1st week of December at these regional locations

Lisa Christoffel, Greece, NY
(585) 802-3197, director@gvpta.org
Call or email to arrange drop off time Dec 3 to Dec 7.

Susan Brown, Ontario, NY
(315) 524-4152, ptasusanb@gmail.com
Call or email to arrange drop off time Dec 3 to Dec 7.

Mary Twardokus, Bloomfield, NY
Monday, Dec 1 or Wed Dec 3 during the day, or call (585) 657-7722 to arrange another appointment.

GVPTA Leadership Award

The GVPTA Ruberta Foster Leadership Award was presented to Susan Brown at the November 17th Region Board meeting.
PTA Partnership Dinner

Over 80 Genesee Valley Region members attended the Annual PTA Partnership dinner Wednesday, November 5th at the Rochester Airport Marriott Hotel.

The Region's J. Ernest DuBois Educator Award was presented to Kathi O'Leary, English Village, Greece. This award recognizes an active educator (classroom teacher, librarian, or counselor) who works directly with students, is an active PTA member who is serving or has served at least one year of the past three years on the unit’s executive board or is serving in a capacity that furthers the mission of PTA, has made a commitment to PTA and a commitment to all children.

The Region’s PTA’s Administrator Award was presented to David Richardson, Principal from Greece’s Athena High School. The Administrator Award recognizes an exceptional administrator who demonstrates a commitment to education and to the children and families in his/her school, his/her district, his/her community.

Nominations for these two awards are accepted prior to the annual Partnership Dinner. Please plan on nominating an exceptional Teacher and Administrator for next year’s awards.

gvpta.org/site4/index.php/your-pta/awards

For more information contact the GVPTA Awards Chair, Mary Twardokus, at awards@gvpta.org or call 585-657-7722.

From the Membership Chair

Kathy Giles GVPTA Region Membership Chair
KathyGiles@gvpta.org or membership@gvpta.org

Our Genesee Valley Region membership got off to a great start with many units making membership a priority and working hard to get those cards sold and paid for. While we did not quite match last year’s membership by the October 31 deadline, we are now above last year’s total with 10,378 members to date, with only a handful of units who still need to send their first dues payment. Please remember to mail early and mail often to keep your membership records up to date.

We had 29 units qualify for the Early Bird Award (paying for at least 50% of last year’s total membership by October 20). Those units were entered into a drawing at the State convention and we are pleased to congratulate Greece Arcadia Middle School PTSA (07-274) for being selected as the winner of the State Early Bird Award for the Genesee Valley Region. We also have 21 units that have already reached 100% or more of last year’s enrollment and 6 units that have made 2 or more payments and requested additional cards.

I also want to congratulate the three units that won our Region’s "Super Starter Award", an extra membership incentive from GVPTA. The award recognizes units who have reached at least 120% of last year’s membership by the Oct 31 deadline. We had six units qualify for the award, and the top three, based on percentage of increase over last year, were Greece Olympia High School PTSA (07-232), Bloomfield PTSA (07-214) and Red Jacket PTSA (07-206). These units will each receive a $25 gift card from GVPTA. Keep those Region incentives in mind for the upcoming months!

Two quick reminders to units: Know where you are sending stuff - membership dues payments are sent directly to the State PTA office in Albany (two signatures on your check, please) and requests for additional membership cards are submitted to me at membership@gvpta.org. Also, please remember to go online to nyspta.org and confirm that you have received your membership cards. You must also do this every time you get additional cards.

I encourage you to keep up with your membership campaign during the coming months. Some ideas:

- Take a team approach - each member ask someone new to join
- Holiday hook - invite people to purchase a membership as a holiday gift for a grandparent, friend or neighbor
- High visibility - have a PTA table at sports games, concerts or other school events

Please share your best ideas for increasing membership too. We can do it together!
If you have any questions or need help with anything PTA, please contact an Associate Director or the Region Director.

GVPTA Executive Committee

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Additional GVPTA Contacts are listed on the web site

NYS PTA Resources

NYS PTA Publications (Fast Facts, Our Children)
http://nyspta.neric.org/YourPTA/YourPTA_Publications.cfm

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

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

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

Where We Stand - includes current Resolutions and Position Papers

NYSPTA Common Core Learning Standards video
by Dr. Bob Aloise
vimeo.com/88579145

For NYS PTA issues sign up for Capwiz and then Take Action with CAPWIZ
The New York State PTA Resource Guide is available for your use as a PTA member.
nyspta.org/YourPTA/YourPTA_ResourceGuide.cfm

NYS PTA Publications

NYS PTA Dues
New membership dues should be mailed each month.

Reflections Pickup Dec 3-7
At various regional locations

Tax Filing
If your Unit has not filed a 2013 990-N, 990-EZ with Schedule A, or full 990, for the fiscal year July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014, please contact the Region Treasurer, Jill Ehrlinger, treasurer@gvpta.org. It is not necessary to file a New York State tax return.

School District Budget Planning
Now is time for units to advocate for students as most school districts continue their annual budgeting process. Attend Board meetings, provide input, collect good information, and communicate with your membership to ensure the best choices are made.

Legislation/Education Conference
February 28-March 1, 2015
nyspta.org/Events/Events_LegEdConf.cfm

NYS PTA Lobby Day 2015
March is PTA Advocacy Month!

Together, we can emphasize that the greatest gift a parent can give is his or her time. To help in this effort, National PTA has made downloadable resources including a sample web ad and Facebook cover available for state and local PTA use.

Support the work of PTAs throughout the country and encourage others to show their support by becoming members and donating to the PTA.