Eco Newsletter

This newsletter provides information from New York State PTA and Genesee Valley Region.

From the Region Director

Lisa Christoffel, GVPTA Region Director
director@gvpta.org

I hope everyone’s Thanksgiving weekend was family- and fun-filled! We had a houseful of family for most of the week, then we traveled to Michigan to stay with close friends who might as well be family. We can go 2 or 3 years without seeing them, but as soon as we do, it’s like they never left. Comfortable and just….right. It reminded me of why I stay involved with PTA. I got into PTA because of my love for my oldest son, who was struggling with his behaviors, and I wanted to know how to advocate for him. I have stayed for over 15 years now for love of the mission and vision of PTA for every child, as well as the significantly positive relationships I have built through my PTA efforts. I have used what I’ve learned in PTA to expand my education efforts into board membership: I’ve been on my board of education for the past 2 years now. PTA has given me a lot, and I hope I’ve given back just a little in return.

As we look back at the first third of our school year, the first half of your PTA’s year, reflect on all the good things you’ve done to benefit the kids in your schools and in New York State. Give thanks for all the people around you who care just as much as you do that all of our children are getting a high quality education. Make it a goal to sincerely thank someone each day of December. Gratitude comes back tenfold, and you’ll get back much more than you give when you appreciate those around you!

Speaking of gratitude, thank you to those members from Genesee Valley who attended the NYS PTA convention in Niagara Falls in mid-November. I know it’s a busy time of year, and your willingness to travel and support the efforts of NYS PTA are appreciated!

One of my key takeaways from that weekend was that our schools are going to have a very difficult budget year this year and for several years to come. The tax cap is likely to be somewhere between 0% and 0.3%. That means our schools will not be able to raise the needed funds, and our class sizes, programs, and extracurricular activities are at risk. Moreover, if the $15/hour minimum wage passes in 2017, our salaries and benefits costs in the schools are going to increase significantly, which will mean even more staffing and program cuts.

This year, as we prepare to head into the year-end holidays and festivities, we are ramping up on budget season in the schools. Please go to your board meetings, hear what’s at stake, make your voice heard there for what your community wants and make your voice heard in Albany. Your local district is going to be severely hampered in its ability to improve the situation without help from the Legislature and the NYS budget because of the tax cap and an inability to raise revenues. Please don’t ignore the advocacy alerts that will start coming your way in January: stand up for our kids and express your concerns for the fiscal health of our schools.

Thank you for all you do in your schools and in New York State to support our kids!

Give back this season and grow with National PTA! On Tuesday, Dec. 1—make a gift on Giving Tuesday to keep National PTA strong and growing so we can make a difference for all children.
Treasurer’s Corner
Susan Brown, GVPTA Treasurer
treasurer@gvpta.org

I recently attended the PTA’s annual State Convention where I attended a workshop on Insurance. One of the most important things the presenters, our State Treasurer, Neil Johanning, and insurance provider, Robert Welch, talked about was Debit Cards.

Debit cards are an area where many instances of problems have occurred. A debit card automatically pulls money from a bank account without the checks of a check signed by two people. Some examples of misuse have included:

- Picking up a couple of coffees for the treasurer and president for a meeting while other attendees get nothing. You can provide snacks at a PTA meeting, but they have to be offered equally to everyone.
- Paying for a child’s braces.
- Getting grocery items or other materials for the card holder.
- Paying for an order that includes both personal and PTA items where the individual does not pay sales tax on her personal items and may or may not pay back the account.

These all are examples of either misuse of funds or fraud. When it comes to fraud or misuse of funds, you do not hear people say, “I never trusted that person.” Perpetrators are our most trusted people. We need to protect ourselves and our PTAs. If your unit has a debit card, cancel it. There are better ways to meet your needs. Check advances to make purchases will work. Night deposits can be made without a card. If you have a question about protecting your PTA’s funds email me at ptasusanb@gmail.com and I can help.

Have a great holiday season!

Bylaws & Procedures
Stephany Fuchs, Bylaws Chair
bylaws@gvpta.org

Bylaws and procedures are the foundation of your unit or council. Bylaws expire every three years, but can be updated or amended during that time. It is important to keep them up-to-date by reviewing them annually. All changes to your unit or council bylaws must be adopted by your general membership and your membership must be given 30 days notice of the meeting at which the bylaws will be voted on. If your bylaws are about to expire or are expired, you can quickly and easily update them using Bylaws EZ. Instructions are available when you click on the Bylaws EZ link on the NYS PTA website. Please send the cover sheet to the Region Bylaws Chair after members adopt the bylaws to start the state approval process.

Procedures are also important and they should complement your bylaws. Your procedures document your unit or council’s monthly or yearly operations and they can be changed and updated at any time. Your procedures can describe the roles of your executive board and committees in more detail than the bylaws. They can explain how to run events or how to reimburse people for expenses. The procedures you create will help your unit or council maintain consistency and avoid confusion. Refer to the NY State Resource Guide for examples of procedures.

Awards
Jill Ehrlinger, Awards Chair
awards@gvpta.org

Are you looking to recognize someone incredible in your PTA? Or do you know of a student who is planning to go into the wonderful profession of teaching? There are several scholarships and awards from NYS PTA to help! Units must be in good standing (paid insurance, 25 members, and current bylaws) to be eligible.

- Jenkins Memorial Scholarship for Teacher Education – Deadline December 15
- Youth Humanitarian Award in Memory of Stanley Marcus – Deadline January 31
- Parents As Reading Partners Award – Deadline June 15
- Leadership Award in Honor of Jane Skrzypek – Deadline June 15
- Teacher Fellowship for Graduate Study in Memory of Richard Gazzola – Deadline June 15
- Advocate in Action Award – No Deadline
- NYS PTA Honorary Life Membership – No Deadline
- NYS PTA Distinguished Service Award – No Deadline
- Gold Oak Award – No Deadline
- Diamond Award – No Deadline

For more information on all these awards, go to nyspta.org/YourPTA/AwardsRecog_AwardsDeadlines.cfm.

This year, the NYS PTA Teacher Fellowship for Graduate Study in Memory of Richard Gazzola goes to one of our own educators, from West Ridge Elementary School in Greece, Lyn Walker.

Sonya Verrillo, Associate Director, was awarded the GVPTA Ruberta Foster Leadership Award, by a committee of previous Award recipients.

The PTA is...
- A powerful voice for all children,
- A relevant resource for families and communities, and
- A strong advocate for the education and well-being of every child

CARRY THE CARD
THAT COUNTS

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**Convention**

Julia Hope Anello, Membership Chair

[membership@gvpta.org](mailto:membership@gvpta.org)

While at Convention, I had the honor of having both a president to president lunch, and a president to president workshop, hosted by NYSPTA president Bonnie Russel. If you haven’t had a chance to be around her, you should definitely find the opportunity. She is so many things; spunky, eloquent, knowledgeable, kind, empowering and motivational; just to name a few.

Her workshop was fantastic. She connected with us all. She did so in such a way that quickly had the room opening up; sharing our struggles and triumphs and working to solve each other’s hurdles to success. It simply amazed me that she was able to do this in about ten minutes. We spent the next hour and twenty minutes digging in and problem solving. This happened in such a synergistic way, that not one of us left without feeling absolutely rejuvenated and energized to try our new approaches.

She challenged us to come up with a top ten list of best practices that have yielded success for us at the unit level, and I challenge you to do the same. This can be anything from building membership, to gaining meeting attendance, running a productive event or building family engagement. If you accept my challenge, please send me your list to [membership@gvpta.org](mailto:membership@gvpta.org) Please let me know if your school is rural, urban or suburban as well!

**Reflections**

Julia Hope Anello, Reflections Chair

[reflections@gvpta.org](mailto:reflections@gvpta.org)

I recently accepted the chair position for Reflections on the Genesee Valley Region PTA board. I am excited to help support all of the GVPTA region units in creating wonderful and successful Reflection programs. If you are currently involved in Reflections, I look forward to seeing what you are doing at your schools. Reflections is truly an opportunity to be amazed at the beauty and ingenuity of our children. This wonderful program allows our children an outlet of expression that many cannot find the equal to elsewhere. Reflections supports creativity in a society that often downsizes the importance of art in its many forms.

I am eager to assist you in any way that I can. If your unit has questions or is interested in pursuing a Reflections program of your own please contact me; I can find answers, help with direction, and walk your through the process. [Reflections@gvpta.org](mailto:Reflections@gvpta.org)

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**PARP Unit Focus**

Julia Hope Anello, Membership Chair

[membership@gvpta.org](mailto:membership@gvpta.org)

At Perkins school in Newark, we have a very new, but dedicated and eager PTA board. We immediately decided that our school would greatly benefit from having a PARP program. (Pick a Reading Partner)

We knew it would be difficult to convince our school, so we circumvented this by putting many things together ourselves. We really focused on getting a cohesive PARP program into place. We first applied to add Book It! into our school. Next we talked with our local library, and came up with sheets for the librarians to sign at each visit; ten visits net our students a free ice cream from the cafeteria.

We then organized a book swap; kids bring in their gently used books and receive tickets. However many books they bring in, they get that number of tickets. Each ticket is good for choosing a different gently used book. We are pairing movie night with the corresponding book; in December watching the Grinch who stole Christmas, then reading the book during intermission. Sending the kids home with Grinch trivia from the book - which they may just have to visit the library to answer. If they send in their answered trivia sheet, we send them home a Grinch bookmark.

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**Introducing...Our Children Magazine Online!**

**Our Children Magazine** has gotten a makeover! It’s now completely online and mobile-friendly. And we’ve put a fresh spin on our content!

Go to [PTAOurChildren.org](http://PTAOurChildren.org) for tips and info to help you support your child’s academic success and well-being.

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**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](http://nyspta.nERIC.org/AboutPTA/AboutPTA_Purposes.cfm)
From the Brockport PTSA

Here are excerpts from the monthly Brockport PTSA FOCUS newsletters submitted by Lynn Moulton.

Brockport PTSA kicked off the new school year with the first in our Speaker Series of meetings. Jim Liebow, Robin Boody and Mike Falkenstein provided a dinner of pizza, salad, apples, and milk so parents could have a taste of school lunches.

Check out the new PTSA web site at BrockportCentralPTSA.org!

"Fish in a Tree" author Lynda Mulhally Hunt connected with Hill School students via Skype in October thanks to PTSA.

The OMS book fair was a great success and we were able to provide the library with $300 in books and $117 was donated for students in need.

The 119th Annual NYS PTA Convention was held in November and three Brockport PTA delegates attended. They were among some 320 statewide participants. Delegates learn about current issues in education that affect children, network to share best practices, and hear experts and inspirational speakers (like Ashli Skur Dreher, winner of the 2014 Teacher of the Year and Kent Knappenberger, who won the Grammy Music Educator Award, who delivered an inspirational speech advocating for the arts and especially the impact of music for children in our schools).

PTSA supported Safe School Ambassador (SSA) training by funding lunch and refreshments for the student attendees. The program teaches 5-12 grade students intervention skills to prevent situations from escalating including learning about adult support that is available in their school.

The PTA Reflections art program for K-5th grade students promotes visual, photographic, and literary art to the theme of "Let Your Imagination Fly". A workshop was held in early November and a showing of the art submissions will be held in early December.

PTSA helped support BCSD's 2nd Annual Free Spaghetti Dinner with Social Media Presentation and Kids Night In.

PTSA organized a reception for the Veterans that attend Barclay's annual Veterans Day Recognition Day.

PTSA organized a tour of the Transportation Department and Director of Transportation, Milt Waye, spoke with the group about driver training, bus repairs, routing, and concerns.

At the Region’s annual PTA Partnership Dinner, November 4th, Susan Sullivan, Greece, received the J. Ernest Dubois Educator Award. Patrick Case, Canandaigua, received the Administrator Award. Everyone had a great time!
If you have any questions or need help with anything PTA, please contact an Associate Director, Officer, or the Region Director.

“The Voice of NYS PTA” page/blog provides thoughts and commentary from the President of the NYS PTA, Bonnie Russell, on topics of interest to our membership. Please click here to read the latest message. nysptapresident.blogspot.com/2015/11/

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

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

Where We Stand - includes current Resolutions and Position Papers

Upcoming Events, Deadlines, and Reminders

**Reflections Deadline**
Check [GVPTA.org](http://GVPTA.org) for schedule and pick-up locations.

**March is PTA Advocacy Month**
Legislation/Education Conference
http://nyspta.org/Events/Events_LegEdConf.cfm
Feb. 27-28, 2016, Albany, NY

NYS PTA Lobby Day 2016
Feb. 28-29, 2016, Albany, NY

**Online Membership is HERE!**
Sean Hannam, NYS PTA Membership Coordinator
Did you know that you can now become a member of any unit in the NYS PTA online?
Check with your unit for their direct registration link and become a member today!
Check our Online Membership System Resource Guide for Units (pdf) and Frequently Asked Questions (pdf) for more information.

nyspta.org/YourPTA/YourPTA_Membership_Unit.Lookupup.cfm

Units need to send in dues even if they have not added the names to their database.

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.

Ontario Wayne GVPTA Seneca Livingston one voice.
Genesee Valley Region Yates every child. Monroe