From the Region Director

Susan Brown, GVPTA Region Director
director@gvpta.org

Happy New Year! I hope everyone's year has started off well. We are entering an exciting time of year, made even more interesting by our new President and the team he has put into place. That being said, your voice is more important than ever. Advocacy is a key part of PTA's tradition, but remember that it takes different forms. There are at home things parents do for their children like check backpacks and homework or online gradebooks as well as making sure that kids get enough sleep and nutritious food. We do things in our schools like volunteer in classrooms, help with Box Tops fundraisers, book fairs or teacher appreciation day. We do things for our district like being informed about the school budget and voting for board members. We do things at the community, state, and federal level like voting, writing to our representatives about our concerns, and being informed about issues. All of these are important ways to advocate for our children.

Virtual Lobby day is now being thought of as virtual lobby week. We ask members to email legislators during the week of March 6th to tell them about your priorities. If you want to do this through the state PTA website, you can find your state representatives and the 5 advocacy campaigns that we are focusing on http://www.nyspta.org/Advocacy/advocacy_ActionCenter.cfm. Information about the Educational Conference Board’s budget proposal may be found at our state PTA website http://nyspta.org/News/news_ECB-finance-report-120216.cfm. This is what a group of education organizations believe would be an appropriate funding. Our PTA Executive director has shared a preliminary executive budget analysis available at the GVPTA website. Check with your school district to see what their budget proposal is so that you can advocate for the needs of students in your schools as well.

Our new Secretary of Education, Congress and President are sure to change things up for education. See inside for the National statement sent to Betsy DeVos from PTA highlighting our priorities and concerns about education. Sending information to our Senators and Representatives about how important public education is to our children is important. More voices sending this message will help it be heard in this era of big money.

I know that when we speak up about important issues we can implement change. I was part of the push to get Timothy’s law passed. This law mandated mental health coverage parity with physical health coverage. So many people stood up and pushed for this legislation and many people have been helped because their mental health needs have been met and paid for. We can make a difference when we speak up about issues that are important to us.

I wish you happy advocacy,
Susan Brown, Region Director
Treasurer’s Corner
Lisa Christoffel, GVPTA Treasurer
treasurer@gvpta.org

Fundraisers: essential to your work as a PTA, but also the source of many audit concerns raised at the unit level each year and often a pain for the treasurer to stay on top of. Should you allow checks or not? Should you allow cash or not? How do you ensure that all the money collected makes its way to the bank?

Your team should have financial procedures in place that protect your unit from fraud. For instance, you should always have two people count any money collected at a live fundraising event, and both should sign off on the total amount raised. Another safeguard is to have your treasurer deposit the funds as soon as is practically possible. For a full review of appropriate financial procedures, please make sure you are well acquainted with the information in the Finance and Insurance section of the NYS PTA Resource Guide: http://www.nyspta.org/pdf/Resources/ResourceGuide/05-Finance_&_Insurance.pdf.

Not that I mind answering questions, but 90% of the questions I get from unit presidents and treasurers are documented in this guide. It’s really a great resource for you, and I highly encourage you to use it for anything you’re not sure about. And then, you can just contact me to chat about all the great things your unit is doing with the funds you’ve raised!

Nominating Committees
Susan Brown, GVPTA Region Director
director@gvpta.org

It seems impossible that it is that time of year already. Didn’t our school year just start? A nominating committee is an essential component of the PTA unit. Information about your specific unit’s nominating committee may be found in your bylaws, article 7, section 3. Most require three members, one or two from the executive board (i.e. elected officials) and one or two from the general membership. They are tasked with nominating one person for each open office. They can nominate themselves without resigning from the committee. They need to ask individuals if they consent to serve if elected — no point in nominating someone who won’t do the job! Nominations are typically presented at the May or June meeting and voting occurs.

It is vital for PTAs to have new people coming on board. That is why we have term limits of two years. It helps us be inclusive and vibrant. It can be hard to find new officers, but starting early, mentoring new people as they take on roles in the organization and working as a team help. Many people are reluctant to take on new roles. Remember there are multiple training opportunities: State puts on their Summer Leadership Conference in July, our region hosts a leadership academy in August and we at the region level are willing to come out and help train when asked. No one needs to fear being thrown in the deep end of PTA without knowing how to swim.

2017 Stanley Marcus Youth Humanitarian Award PTA Awards
Jill Ehrlinger, Awards Chair, awards@gvpta.org

The Stanley Marcus Humanitarian Award is presented to a junior or senior who best exemplifies the humanitarian principles of Stanley Marcus, who died in 1977 while serving as third vice present of the New York State Congress of Parents and Teachers. He will always be remembered for his humanitarianism and dedication to youth through zealious volunteer community service - the very heart of PTA’s mission. We are very proud to say that Stanley Marcus was from Genesee Valley Region and had been our District Director, so this award is very dear to our region.

This year’s Stanley Marcus Humanitarian Award winner for Genesee Valley Region is Emani Clark from Irondequoit High School, West Irondequoit Central PTSA.

The recipient is chosen for outstanding volunteer community service and having displayed humanitarian principles by word and deed and for the quality of their humanitarian activities rather than just the quantity of extra-curricular activities.

This year what especially impressed the award committee was Emani’s thoughtful acts of kindness and being an emotional support person to others. As Emani has said, “There are many people in this world who could only dream of talking to someone who will listen. It is everyone’s duty to show empathy and lend a hand to someone in need.”

Very well said, Emani! All PTA members understand exactly what you mean.

Congratulations, Emani!

How do I change an officer?

If you need to change the name of an officer—a n officer leaves the organization for some reason—it can be done. You used to file a new Form A. Now we can only file one Form A per year. You complete a mid-year officer change form found in your unit portal.

Enter your portal, click on the name of the person you want to change. It will open a page with contact information about the officer. At the top of the page is a button for a mid-year officer change to click. Type in the new officer information and save the change. If you need to change the name of an officer who left the organization for some reason—other than resignation—please let me know. If the officer leaves for some reason other than resignation, please complete an officer change form found in your unit portal.

If you have any questions, just contact me to chat about any of the great things your unit is doing with the funds you’ve raised!
Greece Council PTA Sports Night

On Thursday, January 26, 2017 five elementary schools in the Greece Central School District participated in the Greece Council PTA sponsored Sports Night. Sports night is an annual event with a sports theme and sport events that are designed to promote family engagement by enabling children to spend a night out with dad, an older brother, uncle, grandfather, any other male role model, and yes, even mom if there are no men that can attend.

Each school organizes events that the kids and their “super men” participate in such as basketball, plastic pin bowling, martial arts demonstrations, and others. In addition, each school receives a visit from a local team or company mascot such as R Thunder and Chuck-E-Cheese. Feedback over the years has been excellent, and each year the kids and “super men” say they wish the night was longer.

Hopefully more schools in Greece will participate in the future so that more kids and their “super men” can enjoy a night of fun together.

Greece Council PTA Good Deeds Awards

On January 10, 2017 at the Greece Central School District Board of Education meeting, the Greece Council PTA awarded good deed awards to 3 Greece School District students. Keith Jackson, Andrew Casab, and Nyah Dawson were awarded gift certificates to Barnes and Noble Bookstores for being nominated for a Good Deed award.

The Greece Council's Good Deed Award program recognizes students whose independent good deed demonstrates the positive values of caring, equality and social justice, integrity, honesty, responsibility, and courage. The award is one way that PTA celebrates the accomplishments and character of students throughout public education. Congratulations to the January recipients for doing a good deed!

National PTA Statement on Betsy DeVos’ Confirmation as U.S. Secretary of Education

ALEXANDRIA, Va., (Feb. 7, 2017)—The following statement can be attributed to National PTA President Laura Bay:

“Today, Betsy DeVos was confirmed as U.S. Secretary of Education. Throughout the confirmation process, National PTA joined other education, civil rights, disabilities and community organizations in expressing strong concerns for Secretary DeVos’ lack of experience with public education; unfamiliarity with the challenges and opportunities facing the nation’s public school students, families and educators; and support of programs that divert critical public school resources.

“National PTA looks forward to informing Secretary DeVos on all of our public policy priorities, including equitable public education for all, healthy and safe schools, protections for our nation’s most vulnerable youth and the importance of family engagement in education. Where we are in alignment, we stand ready to work together, however, policies of the administration that attempt to weaken public education will continue to meet National PTA’s opposition.

“National PTA has long stood and advocated for high-quality public education to ensure all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Our association remains steadfast in our belief that public education must be strengthened with the support of adequate funding and continue to be governed by public officials. We oppose any private school choice system—vouchers, tax credits or deductions—that would divert public school resources.

“In addition to investing in public education, National PTA urges Secretary DeVos to improve the Department of Education’s role in advancing family engagement as a tool to increase student achievement and transform schools and communities. We strongly encourage the administration to carefully consider how family engagement can be integrated into all appropriate policy initiatives that it advances or supports. In particular, we urge the administration to fund the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs) program and for the Department to utilize the appropriate resources to assist in the dissemination of research and best practices to support family engagement in local communities.

“Furthermore, National PTA hopes that Secretary DeVos will ensure continued implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). We also hope she will continue to prioritize stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the law. It is essential that parents and other stakeholders have a seat at the table as states and districts develop new education plans to provide valuable input and hold them accountable.

“National PTA is committed to working collaboratively with Secretary DeVos and the Department of Education to implement these recommendations and advance policies that ensure all children reach their highest potential. Critical progress has been made to improve education, provide educational equity for all children and make sure every child is prepared for long-term success. We cannot go backward.

http://www.pta.org/news/events/newsdetail.cfm?ItemNumber=5116
If you have any questions or need help with anything PTA, please contact an Assistant or 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 to read the latest message.

Additional GVPTA Contacts are listed on the web site

GVPTA Executive Committee 2016-17
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NYS PTA Resources

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

Advocacy
nyspta.org/Advocacy/advocacy_home.cfm
www.nyspta.org/pdf/Advocacy/Advocacy-Guide.pdf

Advocacy Newsbriefs
nyspta.org/Advocacy/advocacy_newsbriefs.cfm

Legislative Program
nyspta.org/Advocacy/advocacy_legislativeprog.cfm

Where We Stand [pdf] - includes current Resolutions and Position Papers
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

Our Children Magazine (National PTA)
http://ptaourchildren.org/

Upcoming Events, Deadlines, and Reminders

Founders Day, February 17, 2017

Virtual Lobby Day
Week of March 6, 2017

NYS PTA Action Center

GVPTA Spring Conference
May TBD

Pay membership dues monthly.

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

Summer Leadership Conference Changes
This year the state has proposed making the Summer Leadership Conference a twenty-four hour event as a trial. I know how valuable this conference has been in the past to me as well as many others. In 2018 the conference will move from Utica, where it has been held for the last decade or so, to Union College in the Schenectady area. Since many of our members may find this a challenge to attend, the western regions are looking at putting together a conference that will be closer to home. We will be looking for input from you over the next year to plan this event.