Information from National and New York State PTA and the Genesee Valley Region.

**From the Region Director**

Susan Brown, GVPTA Region Director, director@gvpta.org, ptasusanb@gmail.com, 315-524-4152 (home- not a cell)

Hello!

Welcome to the beginnings of winter. In my third year as your Region Director I want to introduce myself to those both new to PTA and our seasoned veterans. I am charged with overseeing PTAs in eight counties-Wayne, Ontario, Cayuga, Onondaga, Monroe, Livingston, Yates, and Seneca. Our region has grown to include our neighboring eastern area.

As some of you may know, I have been involved in PTA since my son started school- he is 21 now. My daughter just started college at the University of Georgia at Athens this fall. I live and teach special education in Wayne County. I am always amazed at how dedicated my PTA peers are as they work to help make every child’s potential a reality.

I hope your year has gotten off to a great start. As we prepare for our winter months, I would like to remind you about a few things. Your first membership payment was due on October 31. If you have not made it, please do so. The check should represent $4 per member. You may make a check to: NYSPTA, One Wembley Court, Albany, NY 12205. Remember membership is a year-long activity. Continue to grow your unit and submit regular payments to the state office. It is required to stay in good standing.

Your IRS 990 was due on November 15th. If you have not filed it yet, please do so. This is important for maintaining your status as a nonprofit organization. File990.org

Several of our regional members attended the NYS PTA's annual Convention in Saratoga Springs at the beginning of the November. This event is our NYS organization’s business meeting, it showcases the Reflections program and student performance groups, and provides opportunities for learning. It also provides an incredibly valuable opportunity for networking with other PTA leaders and a lot of FUN. Please ensure your unit has funds set aside for leadership development.

Let’s remember that PTA’s mission is to make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children. A piece of empowering families is passing on information that you receive. The ECHO can have a link on your website, Facebook page and/or MemberHub page. You can share it at your meetings or send it out electronically to your members. This is information for everyone.

If your unit needs help with something let us know. We can even come out to you and work with a group to be better able to handle the job that you have undertaken. If you want help, have a question or a concern, please contact me.

Enjoy the holidays.

---

**Patience is also a form of action.**
—Auguste Rodin

Although a democracy must often fight with one hand tied behind its back, it nonetheless has the upper hand.
—Aharon Barak

An investment in knowledge pays the best interest.
—Benjamin Franklin

Honesty is a very expensive gift. Don’t expect it from cheap people.
—Warren Buffett

LISTEN & SILENT are spelled with the same letters.
—Unknown

I never lose. I either win or learn.
—I. M. Pei

Once a year, go someplace you’ve never been before.
—Nelson Mandela

No two persons ever read the same book.
—Edmund Wilson

Patriotism is when love of your own people comes first; nationalism, when hate for people other than your own comes first.
—Charles de Gaulle
CONGRATULATIONS!
Perkins School in Newark won the regional PARP award for their program “Get Your PAW on a good book.” They deserve their congratulations for running a great program that had children reading with parents and community partners!

A PARP Note from Conference
Paige Pye, PARP Chair
parp@gvpta.org

Congratulations to this year’s PARP Award winner:
Lenox PTA (Nassau Region)
“Discover a New Universe with Books”
PARP Region Award Winners
Rensselaer Park Elementary School PTA (Northeastern Region)
“Rensselaer Park Elementary School Reads for the Gold”
Bayview PTA (Suffolk Region)
“Cruising Through a Good Book”
Beekman Elementary PTA (Taconic Region)
“Beekman is WILD About Reading!”
Heim Elementary PTA (Western Region)-
“Be a Gold Medal Reader”
Perkins School (Genesee Valley Region)
“Get Your Paw on a Good Book!”

ADVOCATE

Let’s remember that our mission is around advocacy.

1. Pick an issue that is near and dear to your unit’s heart- recess for every child every day, better quality school lunches, appropriate testing and assessment, suicide, drugs, bullying, adequate school funding, or homework just to name a few.
2. Educate yourself and your community.
3. Work toward helping your community be a better place for children and families.

If you have not set up your WePay account through MemberHub, please do so, if only to make future membership payments. Where it asks for your personal SSN last four digits, we have learned that you may use the organization’s FEIN number.

Treasurer’s Corner
Michael Valicenti, GVPTA Treasurer
treasurer@gvpta.org

990’s – Thank you to all those who completed their 990’s on time. For those units that filed extensions, please try to get the 990 completed as soon as possible. Any units that need assistance with completing the 990 please contact myself or another GVPTA board member.

Monthly reconciliations – monthly reconciliations are required for PTA units. Monthly reconciliations that are reviewed by someone who is not a check signer each month can prevent fraud and theft while insuring full disclosure of a unit’s financial condition.

Please contact me with any questions.

The 2018 New York State PTA Conference, Saratoga, New York
Christopher W. Albrecht, 2018 NYS Teacher of the Year from Brockport

I have the greatest life in the world. I would not trade it for any other. I am a teacher. I spend my days working with kids. This year I have lived the honor of being the 2018 New York State Teacher of the Year. It has been an incredibly unique opportunity to go all over the country to meet extraordinary people, learn, present, represent our profession, and grow as a person and as an educator.

On September 12, 2017, I was named in Albany. A week later, the Brockport Board of Education recognized me. Many current and former students came along with friends, fellow teachers and members of the community. Who put together the most wonderful reception in our cafeteria for this event? The Brockport PTSA did. It made me feel special and loved. When people in a hometown do something like this, it creates joy and unity. Six weeks later, I was honored when the Genesee Valley PTSA asked me to join them at their annual dinner. I am a teacher, not a presenter, and at that time, I was still learning. However, I felt the kindness and interest that PTA always has. A year later, it meant the world to me to present in Saratoga at the 2018 NYS PTA Conference. That was just a few weeks back.
This year’s New York State PTA conference was wonderful. However, for me, it was also special. As I delivered the keynote speech, I recognized two faces that stood out in the crowd. They were not PTA members, but rather they were two Brockport Students: Maddie Cherwonik and Victoria Lesniak. Though I love parents and the PTA, I have devoted my life to our students. Maddie Cherwonik was my 4th grader just a short seven years ago. Seeing them, along with Mrs. Bonisteel, Mrs. Pye, and Mrs. Lesniak (all very active supporters of our very own PTA) took a wonderful event and made it a special moment.

I believe that special moment encapsulates what PTA is all about. A special PTA torch seems to be handed from person to person each year to make a lot of magic come true in our schools. It has happened for decades. I was fortunate to have this event happen on a weekend. It gave me time to talk with many people from around New York State about their PTA groups in their towns. The bottom line is, there are a lot of good people in our communities that care deeply for our schools. It was evident in the sessions and conversations I had at the conference. Genesee Valley PTA was well-represented.

For every parent that goes the extra mile by supporting PTA, thank you. You are supporting a unique group that is wonderful for our students and schools.

Christopher Albrecht
4th Grade Teacher, Fred W. Hill School, Brockport

2018 Convention Workshop
Julia Hope Anello, hope4julia@gmail.com

I had the honor of attending a November 11th workshop “Education Conversations with a Heaping Helping of Empathy” by Amy Hysick, who was both a PTA Parent, teacher, and NYSPTA Education Coordinator, at convention this year. It was very enlightening.

The first part of her workshop, she talked about toxic teaching practices including: teaching to the test, teachers in conflicting roles with their students, and controlling behavior problems in the classroom.

The second half she talked about better practices that she incorporated in her own classroom. She is a high school science teacher. She talked about the stress associated with sitting for the Regents exam at the end of the year.

In order to minimize this stress and normalize the questions that her students will be facing in June, she deconstructed several years of the exam and grouped the questions by subject. Every day she gives the kids a quiz at the beginning of class. She grades them immediately, using an app, and then she goes over them with the class. If the students are unhappy with their grade, they can come and retake the exam after school. She allows students to retake anything given in her class.

In this way, student grades are in their control. The students are happy. The teacher is happy because she has engaged students who control their own fate in her class. She has also normalized the questions that the students will be expected to correctly answer on the Regents. This normalization goes a long way in reducing test anxiety.

She is also able to analyze student strength and weaknesses. She can see where her class needs more help in mastering topic knowledge. Gathering this data through daily assessment makes her a better teacher. The students benefit from this. The students also clearly see where they need to improve their content knowledge.

This teaching practice is an example of how assessments can be used correctly to strengthen students, not stress them out and penalize them. Our children are stressed in school. The No Child Left Behind Act resulted in many teachers “teaching to the test.” For science teachers, this was nothing new. All teachers who teach a subject with a Regents exam must prepare their students to pass. This teacher has chosen to normalize regents questions and take daily assessments. In this way, “teaching to the test” makes perfect sense. She has her finger on the pulse of student knowledge content, she reduces test anxiety by normalizing the
questions students will be expected to know how to answer, and she allows students to retake any assessment given. She knows the purpose of data collection, but she also understands that assessments only measure a moment in time. As a teacher, she is concerned with topic mastery, not when the topic is mastered. Giving students control in this way empowers them to work to their own intrinsic motivation. Students understanding that they have the full support of a teacher keeps them naturally engaged. Knowing that they have the opportunity to fix a bad grade energizes them to work to their potential.

We live in a society that is changing faster than ever before. As a parent it is so important to be a part of the conversation. We have the ability to shape how schools are educating our children. In this one teacher, I was shown a shining example of how to do things right.

It is not our responsibility to tell teachers how to do their jobs, however, we can put pressure on administrators, superintendents and school boards when we see them being done wrong.

As an organization, NYSPTA is fighting everyday to improve student’s educational experience. In our units, we are working to do this in our schools. As parents, we need to continue to do this for our children.

If you have not had the opportunity to take part in the training offered by NYSPTA, in July at Summer Leadership Conference or in November at Convention, I urge you to plan to attend. Being involved helps to educate you on how to better advocate for our children. Attending workshops such as the one, makes one aware of best practices without having to do a ton of background research. They cover so many relevant topics. Topics that help us navigate parenthood, build advocacy and make us better equipped to fight for better education for every child every day.

I hope to see you in July 2019 at the next Summer Leadership Conference.

Your School Budget
Julia Hope Anello, hope4julia@gmail.com

[Editor’s note: It’s important to monitor your school board’s progress on next year’s budget.
This article is repeated from September 2017]

Every May when the School Budget Vote rolls around on that third Tuesday, I always think about getting involved in helping to influence my District’s budget. A useless thought in May, but when is the right time? How does he whole budget process work? What does a year in a school district look like?

The school year begins July first. In late summer, early fall; property taxes are levied and School districts submit their end of year spending information to the State Education Department.

In late fall, your Board of Education is looking for community input for the budget and initial budget development starts.

In late November, early December, the Board of regents releases their State Aid Proposal.

In January, the Governor releases the Executive Budget Proposal, partially based upon the district’s end of year spending.

On March 1st, the Property Tax Cap Calculation is due.

April 1st is the State Budget deadline, which contains School Aid estimates.

Late in April your district's Board of Education approves their budget proposal.

The third Tuesday in May is the School Budget Vote.

The third Tuesday in June is reserved for a Budget Revote, if necessary.

July 1st is the beginning of another school year.

Lots of dates to remember, but if you want your voice heard, if you want to enter the discussion, it is in your best interests to attend the Board of Education meetings and any community forums they may host. Believe me, they ARE looking for your input.

Questions about a PARP Program?
Contact Paige Pye paigepye@gmail.com

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

nyspta.org/home/about/
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 President’s Blog” provides thoughts and commentary from the President of the NYS PTA, Gracemarie Rozea, on topics of interest to our membership. Please click to read the latest message. nysptapresident.blogspot.com/

GVPTA Executive Committee 2018-19

Susan Brown, Region Director director@gvpta.org
Kim Breidenstein, Secretary secretary@gvpta.org
Michael Valicenti, Treasurer treasurer@gvpta.org
Julia Anello, Associate Director hope4julia@gmail.com
Dorothy Petrie, Associate Director petrie03@gmail.com
Rosalind Walker, Associate Director victfit@gmail.com
Gene Kinney, Past Region Director GeneKinney@gvpta.org
Mary Twardokus, Past Region Director MaryTwardokus@gvpta.org

Additional GVPTA Contacts are listed on the web site GVPTA.org facebook

Upcoming Events, Deadlines, and Reminders

GVPTA Reflection's Reception will be Monday, December 10, 2018 at the Brighton Administrative Building, 2035 Monroe Ave, Rochester @ 6pm.

Pay Membership Dues monthly

Legislative Summit & Lobby Day
February 10-11, 2019 Albany, NY
Join fellow advocates from around the state to Lead the Way for all children! more...

Founders Day, February 17, 2017

GVPTA Spring Conference
April-May TBD

PTA Members and Leaders:
Did you know that your PTA unit is an advocacy association—not a booster organization? That means your PTA should focus most of its time implementing the PTA’s mission/vision.

https://nyspta.org/home/about/values-mission-vision/
https://nyspta.org/home/pta-leaders/run-your-pta/
#WhyPTA #PTAProud #DoGoodThingsForKids

Training Materials/Webinars
nyspta.org/home/pta-leaders/trainingmaterials-webinars/

NYS PTA Legislative Priorities 2019

NYSPTA Videos
www.youtube.com/user/NYSPTA/featured

Are You a New PTA Officer?
The Genesee Valley Region PTA is eager to help you with tips and best practices to make your job easier and more successful. Don’t hesitate to contact a GVPTA board member or Susan Brown our region director.