Echo Newsletter

Region Director: Sonya Verrillo, director@gvpta.org

March 2020

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

From the Region Director

Sonya Verrillo, GVPTA Region Director, director@gvpta.org
voice/text: 585-330-3991

Many school districts in our area have recently celebrated the first 100 days of school. It’s a great time to take a look at what your unit has done so far this year and plan for what is yet to come. February is the time that all units should also start to think about how they can be successful beyond this year – by setting up their nomination committees, who are responsible for determining the slate of officers that will be up for election in the spring to serve from July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021. The committee should be made up of a mixture of board members and members-at-large (check your unit bylaws for what your numbers of each should be.)


You can find a recording of the webinar there as well as several reference documents that can help your nominating committee do the important work that they need to do.

The region board is also in the midst of our own nomination committee’s work to determine the slate of region officers that will be up for election at our Spring Conference on April 30th. Participating on the region board is a great place to grow your PTA knowledge and leadership skills. Region board members provide advice and support to units all over our region as well as have the opportunity to participate in the work of our state association and attend state events. If you are interested in being a part of our region board next year, please send an email to me at director@gvpta.org. We currently have openings for an Advocacy Chair as well as Assistant Directors, who work with a handful of units throughout the year.

I wish you much success in the second half of the year. Please feel free to reach out to us if you have any questions.

Reflections Art Program in 2020-21

Lynn Moulton, Reflections Chair
ltmoulton@gmail.com

“I Matter Because...” is the next National PTA Reflections theme. Units are encouraged to start planning and implementing their Reflections program now. There’s no need to wait! Start your advertising now and hold spring and/or summer events. Artwork will be due to GVPTA the second week of November 2020.

For more information see https://www.pta.org/home/programs/reflections

G enesee V alley Region PTA

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Greece Community Conversation

The N-Word: Origins, Ownership, and Impact of Language was presented Feb. 3 by Dr. Sean Eversley-Bradwell, Ithaca College. The meeting was exceptionally well attended. The presentation may be viewed on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vTaDE_FIww&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR2qCYyiJx8er1IzWcesc2CuaboYt0s_qrtNdAgaXbEw1rEPx3NEfb4qTo-4Q

... as Maya Angelou put it, when we know better, we should do better. When someone tells you that a term or phrase is more accurate/less hurtful than the one you're using, you now know better. So why not do better? How does it hurt you to NOT hurt another person? ...” Lori Gallagher Witt

From the Literacy Desk

Paige Pye, PARP Chair (paigepye@rochester.rr.com)

Questions? Contact literacy@nyspta.org

Coming soon *new* Financial Literacy Program

Financial Success: Student and Family education on how to be successful with your finances to invest in your future!

NEW 2020 PARP Award Application available online! https://nyspta.org/home/programs/literacy/

Combine your Literacy Program with Family Engagement! Have a great Literacy Program but intimidated by the PARP application? Submit your program ANYWAY and mark it “Do Not Judge”. We want to SHARE your greatness!

Read Across America

March is Reading Month!

See the Scholastic teacher guide for “activities that will motivate students to read while having fun in the process.”

https://www.scholastic.com/content/dam/teachers/blogs/genia-connell/migrated-files/march_ideas.doc


Hopefully, you will find one or two new ideas you want to try to make the month of reading a great celebration of all things books.

NYS PTA Legislative Summit – YOU can make an impact!

The NYS PTA’s Legislative Summit took place February 9-10th in Albany, NY. About 100 people from all over the state came together to be briefed on the current bills impacting education as well as direct training on how to meet with legislators and speak to them about the NYS PTA Priority Issues. Attendees heard from POLITICO New York Education Reporter Nick Niedzwiedek (Twitter @NickNiedz), NYSCOSS Deputy Director Bob Lowry (@robertnlowry), NYSUT Manager of Education Finance Peter Applebee (@nysut) and Interim NYS Commissioner of Education Shannon Tahoe (https://twitter.com/NYSEDNews) about current issues going on in education. We later heard from NYS PTA Executive Director Kyle Belokopitsky and other members of the NYS PTA Advocacy Team Members about the priority issues that would be discussed during the Lobby Day on Monday, Feb 10th. These issues include:

- School aid support for all students
- Opposition to the legalization of recreational marijuana
- Support to ban all flavored tobacco
- Support for increased mental health services for students

You can find the complete briefing sheets for these and other issues that you can communicate to your local legislators at https://nyspta.org/home/advocacy/advocacy-legislative-program/testimonyletters/.

You can find your local politicians and continue to take action by sending communications by signing up at https://nyspta.org/home/advocacy/take-action/.

Participating in the advocacy efforts of our state and national PTA associations is a great way that we can join our individual voices to a significant force for the benefit of all children. Together we are one voice, for every child.
attended Lobby Day, I was petrified! I quickly got used to the topics that we were discussing with lawmakers and at the end of the day I was truly proud of the work that we had accomplished. What I wasn't expecting was the satisfaction I received far after the Legislative Summit/Lobby Day. As I read the news over the subsequent weeks and months that showed different bills and legislation getting passed or rejected, I realized that our NYS PTA voice MATTERS! We have so much to be proud of!!

The reality is that all these great events do have a cost – often both in time and money. Personally, I have found the time investment is SO WORTH IT….it has made me a better leader and advocate for both my children as well as the children in my school, district and state. I would often pay for these events out of my own pocket, but that isn’t viable for many people. Costs associated with attending region, state and national PTA events are a legitimate use of PTA funds. After all, you’re able to receive valuable training and networking with others who are doing the same work that you are doing in your own unit. It’s also a way that units can bring fresh ideas to consider and important information that help to inform members of the greater work on their behalf through PTA. If you don’t already have a line item in your budget to send people to Conferences and Training, I encourage to seriously consider adding it. Even an initial amount of $500 can send 1 person to 1 state event, and then have the attendee report back to the unit on what was learned. You’ll find that it may help you attract and keep volunteers who are willing to lead.

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**Invest in Learning**

Sonya Verrillo, Genesee Valley Region Director
director@gvpta.org

Almost nine years ago, I saw an email from our K-2 building principal about the need for PTA Officers for the following year. If officers weren’t elected, then the unit wouldn’t be able to provide any of the valuable programs and events that our school community was used to. I was a first-time school parent, with my oldest child just finishing his kindergarten year. I had paid dues to our PTA unit in September but hadn’t really attended meetings or been involved during that time. As the emails continued to come weekly, I tentatively sent an email to the current unit president, that I was interested in more information. Of course, by that time, the only position that was left to be filled was President! I agreed to be nominated and was quickly elected by the membership.

Now I was a brand-new unit president with NO IDEA what I was to do! Where did I turn? First to the online resources (especially e-Learning courses) provided by our National PTA and New York State PTA. I reached out and connected with my region director and quickly attended any functions that I could to learn more about how to lead. As I started my term, I strived to setup procedures and expectations that aligned with NYS PTA best practices (most of which is found in our NYS PTA Resource Guide) and that could be carried out even after my term was over.

Since that initial term as president, I completed a second term at that same unit, then went on to serve 2 terms as president at our grade 3-5 elementary unit and am now leading a middle school unit. Some of the greatest training that I have received has come from attending our state PTA events: Summer Leadership Conference (July), State Convention (November) and Legislative Summit (February). The Summer Leadership Conference (often referred to as SLC) is often called PTA Summer Camp/University – it’s a jam-packed time filled with training specifically geared to PTA officers & leaders, although they also have great information valuable for ANY PTA member. Our state convention offers more training, but also focuses on celebrating awards and doing the work of the association in electing officers and passing bylaws and resolutions that guide our advocacy work. (If you want to see a wonderful example of Roberts Rules of Order come alive, it’s at Convention!)

Legislative Summit is a time for members to come together to learn about the issues that are being actively communicated to our state government members…and then share those issues directly with state lawmakers in a Lobby Day at the state capitol the following day. I’ll admit it – the first time I attended Lobby Day, I was petrified! I quickly got used to the topics that we were discussing with lawmakers and at the end of the day I was truly proud of the work that we had accomplished. What I wasn't expecting was the satisfaction I received far after the Legislative Summit/Lobby Day. As I read the news over the subsequent weeks and months that showed different bills and legislation getting passed or rejected, I realized that our NYS PTA voice MATTERS! We have so much to be proud of!!

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Upcoming Events, Deadlines, and Reminders

PTA Roundtables
There will be Roundtables throughout the year. Network with PTA officers, bring questions...get some answers. Next is March 12th. Via ZOOM
https://zoom.us/meeting/register/udMkdu-opzsz7J6AtuFjB6GD8V-khwNFA

April 20, 2020  GVPTA Spring Conference & Annual Meeting

July 18-19  Summer Leadership Conference

Nov 13-15 NYS PTA Convention, Syracuse

Bylaws Reminder
Shevah Faber GVPTA, Bylaws Chair
bylaws@gvpta.org

Are your unit’s bylaws in good standing?
You can check in member hub for the expiration date. If you need a copy of your bylaws email bylaws@gvpta.org. Your units bylaws must be updated every 3 years.

How to update your bylaws
You can update your bylaws, through the Bylaws wizard in memberhub or through the NY State PTA website. Steps to updating your bylaws can be found on page 7 of the NY State PTA resource guide:

Why is this important?
If your unit's bylaws expire, your unit will not be able to participate in PTA programs and will not be eligible for grants and awards.

What if I need help?
Email bylaws@gvpta.org. We are happy to help.

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 Sonya Verrillo, our region director.