

CouncilConnections

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Message from the Illinois PTA President

Things You Need to Know?

Across the land we are getting ready to celebrate Black History Month, President's Day and, for most, Valentine's Day. At a time when this nation has elected its first black president, it is appropriate that we honor those Americans who helped to form this nation. One day celebrates those president's who had milestones in their terms George Washington, the first United States President, and Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president, who led this country during one of the most trying times of our nation – the Civil War.



We in Illinois are honored to be the homeland for the sixteenth president whose 200th birthday celebration will occur on February 12. At 9:30 am on that date his most famous speech – The Gettysburg Address – will be recited across this country by students. I urge all Illinois citizens to take the few minutes on that date and read this message that is relevant today – equality of opportunity, freedom, and democracy. Will you be one of those people?

The United States Postal Service in cooperation with bicentennial supporters has sent out to those enrolled brochures on two honorees. Dr. Anna Julia Cooper, activist, feminist, scholar, author, and teacher – a woman who for her 105 years used her 'voice' to gain access to classes not allowed for 'females especially African American ones'. She became a teacher who taught in elementary and high school, and served as president of the Frelinghuysen University. She battled racism and sexism to ensure that all students would have the right to receive a quality education and that all women's voices would be heard. You will soon see her likeness on a postage stamp as she becomes the 32nd stamp in the Black Heritage series.

And who can forget Valentine's Day! What better time to express our love for mankind – not only our own but those around the world. If you're reading this message, you have the opportunity to "send" love around the world by emailing all of your contacts and telling them how much they mean to you and what a difference their presence in your life has meant.

Big Hug All,
Jean
Illinois PTA President

For further information: Dr. Anna Julia Cooper: USPS Education Programs
Her books: *A Voice from the South* by a Black Woman of the South or *The Third Step*
Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Plans: www.abrahamlincoln200.org

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Corresponding Secretary

My responsibilities as the corresponding secretary include conducting communications, maintaining a roster of membership and other duties or tasks that are delegated to me. As an elected officer of the executive committee I am responsible to help plan, guide, educate and support all the members of the Schaumburg Council of PTAs.

It is an honor to serve as an STC officer. This is my third year as an officer and my 7th year on the STC board, (it goes so fast)! I truly enjoy being part of this special group; I get to work with people like you! Once your president term is over, please consider a position on the STC Board. As President Barak Obama said, "When you choose to serve -- whether it's your nation, your community or simply your neighborhood -- you are connected to that fundamental American ideal that we want life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness not just for ourselves, but for all Americans. That's why it's called the American dream." Thank you for your service and making a difference in our schools! A special thank you to **Mary Kay for being our fabulous leader!**

Kathy Pritscher
STC Corresponding Secretary

Adolph Link School

When I first took on the role as president of our PTA, I, like several other presidents have mentioned, wanted to be sure I kept on top of things and not fall behind. I have been so pleasantly surprised so far this year. I have found that because of all the great volunteers, the PTA really runs itself. As events or fundraisers approach, I find that everything is being taken care of very efficiently. I sometimes think I should be more overwhelmed, but I am realizing that having good volunteers makes the leader's job much easier.

We started off our school year with a family movie night, and I think everyone just enjoys getting together after the long summer break. We also hosted a reception for kindergarten parents before our first PTA meeting to get them acquainted with our PTA. We had a decent turnout; I was hoping for more, but will try again next fall. We kicked off the holiday season with Link Family Day where we host a pancake breakfast, holiday shop, and Scholastic Book Fair. I like these types of events the best because the whole family can attend.

Link PTA has really focused on environmental education this year. We have a space in the office where parents can send in batteries, ink cartridges, lids, and crayons among other things. It works well because parents can just drop items off in the office at their convenience. We are also having a monthly waste free lunch, and the families really seem to be making the effort to pack a waste free lunch. Each month we give away a Wrap-n-Mat (reusable sandwich wrap) to a student who participates, and we have had enough interest to sell these as well.

I am looking forward to a busy second half of the school year which includes our Fun Fair, Spring Fling, Celebrate Learning Night, and hopefully a Community Closet clothing drive.

Christine Kawalek
Link PTA President

John Muir School

Keeping up the good work...

As some of you may know, at John Muir we started the year with sad news. We lost an invaluable member who had been a vital part of our PTA and STC for the last several years. Vicki Berko was also this year's VP and a great inspiration for everyone who had the chance to know her. She always gave her best and she always had a big smile on her face. The entire John Muir community will miss her greatly and she will always have a place in our hearts. Now more than ever, we need to keep up the good work for the children Vicki loved so much.

Our PTA seems to be on track as far as membership goes and we are only 20 memberships away from meeting this year's goal. Yet, that final push seems to be harder at this point. Our hopes are set on the conferences at the beginning of the month, in order to recruit the last few members. Following the suggestion of "just asking"... would any of you like to join John Muir PTA? The membership fee is just \$5.

Staying on track with the budget has proven to be a challenge for our PTA. Due to the economy, our fall fundraiser was not as successful as expected and we've had to compensate the difference with other fundraising activities that were not planned at the beginning of the year. So far, we have been able to keep up.

Although we've had our challenges, I can proudly say that our PTA is one of those in the district with the most programs, there's always something going on. We've had assemblies with speakers talking to the children about different topics and we've had free events that have been enjoyed very much by all. That makes us very happy!!! With some tweaking, we are sure that we will meet our goals for this year. We'll use this year's experience to plan for next year, since the economy will most likely take some time to recover. We must be positive and plan accordingly.

Grazia Cortes
Muir PTA President

Lincoln Prairie School

Lincoln Prairie welcomes new families each year to our community and felt that some type of "buddy system" would help many with this transition. So this is the first year that we worked hard over the summer to form a group of parent liaisons/sponsors for this purpose. Many families stepped forward to sponsor an incoming new family because they remembered just how lost they were their first year at LP. Questions like "Do parents attend the Whole School Meetings?" or "What is PDT?" are just a couple of the questions having a mentor family helps with. Our sponsors were given only the names of their incoming family and then created a welcoming letter introducing themselves along with their contact information in case the family wanted to meet over the summer. The letters were sent out through the office staff that first week back in August so that all information was kept confidential and that way the incoming families were given the choice whether or not to make that connection. On the actual day of the back to school picnic our sponsor families wore nametags identifying themselves as sponsors so that they could be easily spotted by our new community members. We are hoping that many new families that benefited from this committee will then return to be sponsors themselves in the future.

Lincoln Prairie is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year and we as a PTSA are constantly striving to grow and flourish with new programs like this in order to meet the needs of our community members.

Brandy Krupa
Lincoln Prairie School PTSA President

Aldrin School

“Get on Board and Catch the Wave with the Aldrin PTA”

We chose a surfing theme for this school year at Aldrin. Our bulletin board is filled with surf boards that represent this year’s membership, and our Board members have been outfitted with beach themed name tags to identify them at PTA events.

We set 4 goals to guide us through the year, and to give us some direction. We are on our way to achieving each of these goals through the efforts of many dedicated volunteers.

- **Increase our General Membership**
The membership committee has run a fabulous campaign in an effort to increase our membership over last year, and as of January, we are up 60 members!
- **Increase the number of parents directly involved on standing committees.**
We have been so pleased to see many new faces take an active role in our PTA by volunteering their time to assist on various committees. We are especially excited to have 10 members either chair, or co-chair, a committee who had never done so before. They took on the responsibility of coordinating our Entertainment Book Sale, Reflections Program, Book Fair, Dominick’s Fund Raiser, Community Closet Committee, Health & Safety Committee, Birthday Book Committee, and Roller Skating Parties.
- **Continue to provide quality programs & events that focus on the educational enrichment of all Aldrin students.**
We are working toward reaching this goal by sponsoring the Reflections Program, 3 Book Fairs, a Reading Recognition Program, and several Assemblies throughout the school year. In addition, we will be distributing a Birthday Book to every student to recognize their special day, and assisting with the Celebrate Reading and Writing Program sponsored by the district.
- **Provide opportunities for our students, staff and parents to come together as a community.**

This goal has become even more significant in the uncertain times we find ourselves living in. Having a place to come together, and feel a sense of belonging during difficult times can help lift our spirits and provide reassurance. We are working toward reaching this goal by hosting a Winter Carnival, Roller Skating Parties, Holiday Gift Shop, Reading Recognition Dinner, Family Fun Nights, Book Fairs and Ice Cream Social. The Community Closet Committee has provided our Aldrin families with the opportunity to reach out to those in need through donations of clothing to the district Community Closet. We had an overwhelming response to the first “drop off” event, and plan to host more in the near future.

By having our Aldrin parents and Aldrin staff “on board,” forming a coordinated effort, we hope to make the 2008-2009 school year a success; filled with learning, and fun, and fond memories for our students.

Sharon Janega
Gail Jones
Aldrin PTA Co-Presidents

Enders-Salk School

This has been a challenging year for our PTA ...our fundraising events came up a little short and so we've modified our expenses and activities that we had planned for this year. More and more people of our volunteer pool are working full/time, looking for work, picking up more hours, going back to school and in general having less time to help. This is also true at many other schools and organizations, we are not unique in these respects.

More and more we have to be aware of the tough economic times are families are experiencing. It is very important that we keep this in mind when planning our activities, we have to be more creative in our planning. This year instead of our annual December Holiday Shoppe we made it into a combination of a small Holiday Bizarre with a Holiday Movie night. The weather was frightful and our turnout was lower than expected but all who attended commented how nice it was to do something like this to treat our children and families to a free movie with their friends. Think about how much it costs for a family of 4 or 5 to go see a movie at the movie theater.

This gets me to thinking about what other fun, free or low cost events we can host for our families. I would like to see us host more movie nights since our first one turned out so well. How about a family game night where we provide the board games and the music and snacks for sale? Last year we hosted a multicultural potluck that was a great success plus it was free event for our families. We will definitely do that again.

This year our PTA will again host our Annual Family Social later this month. The theme this year is Pirate Adventures. It is not a free event but it is still an evening of fun and enjoyment with a DJ, dancing, food, games, etc. for our families at a relatively small expense. During these times, there are few who would not appreciate a fun night with the family that does not hurt your pocketbook too much. I expect we will have a great turnout, and let's all hope for better times ahead.

I wish you all the best!

Claudia Baranowski
Enders-Salk PTA

Addams Junior High School

It has been a great year at Addams so far! I want to highlight a few new things we are doing. This year, our school has implemented PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports). The PTA has supported this very effective initiative by offering students the opportunity to use Crusader Cash, which they receive for exhibiting positive behaviors, to purchase items from the School Store. We also provide support for the PBIS reward assemblies by providing funds for motivational speakers.

In the late fall, we sponsored a sportswear design contest and we have Addams sweatshirts now with a student-designed logo! We are also planning to revive a program to provide healthy snacks to all students during all or part of the testing week. We are lucky to have support from the administration and staff at Addams.

Merydith Brostoff
Addams PTA President

STC Newsletter Questions for February

“What does your school do for their Back to School Picnic?”

This was the first year Einstein did a back to school event. It wasn't a picnic as much as an evening where kids and parents come to meet the teacher and bring their school supplies. My first grader, who had some jitters, loved that she got an advance look at her room before the first day. PTA was also on hand that night to sell memberships, treat day punch cards, yearbooks and spirit wear. One area that I felt was an opportunity for change was that I worked at a table for most of the night when I wanted to be wandering around school with my little one. Everyone has heard me say that sometimes we get so wrapped up working for all children that our own kids take a backseat. I've never felt that as keenly as I did on Back To School Night. My suggestion would be to either have A LOT of volunteers that can be counted on to work the shift they agree to, or to not have much that has to be manned by volunteers at the picnic so you can spend time with your kids.
Good Question!

Mary Kay Prusnick
2008-09 President
Schaumburg Township Council of PTAs

We hold our Back to School BBQ the last Saturday before school starts from 11 - 2:00. We have tables set up for membership, spirit wear, Environmental Education (No Waste Lunch), Market Day and Reflections so the parents can see what these are all about. We have dad's grilling and sell hamburgers and hotdogs (chips and drinks). All parents are there to help - but we try and focus on the Dad's for the BBQ. There is a moon walk (or two) and the firemen, navy and police usually come by for a while. The kids love to use the fire hose.

In years past we let everyone in the school to see where their classrooms are, but the doors were always locked. This year we will have the rooms ready, and will ask the students to bring their supplies and put them in their desks that day. This will be nice for everyone to see the classrooms and meet most of the teachers. PTA members will be on hand to watch over classrooms where the teachers cannot make it to the BBQ. We usually have a pretty nice turn out of staff, though. It's a good time, and a nice kick-off to the school year.

Nancy Kazmer
Campanelli PTA Co-President

Our back to school picnic has been something LP has been doing since we first opened our doors 10 years ago. It started out just as a gathering where folks would bring picnic baskets and outdoor games to be shared by all. As of recent though we now use the picnic as an 8th grade fundraiser and all the 8th graders and parents do the ordering, cooking and serving of hot dogs and hamburgers to over 700 people. This night is also a night where you bring your school supplies in and get somewhat settled in your classroom before the first big day back. We have sign up for PTSA run things like room reps, and various other open committees as well. This is also a time for our “New Family Liaisons” to meet up with their assigned incoming families, show them around, and introduce them to other community members. We also try very hard to get the word out to our alumni and it is great when they come share an evening with us and search for their little handprints still on their locker from years ago, before heading back to college/high school for the year. Our LP Picnic has definitely grown over the years as our community grows but it is still an evening where we feel like a small one room classroom of family and friends no matter how many pack the park that evening.

I hope everyone who hasn't started this tradition in their community yet strives to do so because you will not be disappointed. The memories are definitely worth all the hard work!

Brandy Krupa
Lincoln Prairie PTSA President

If we do have a back to school picnic it has been done the first Sunday when we are back in school. This year we did an ice-cream social to coincide with picking up school supply kits before school started

RoseAnne Caboor
Fairview PTA President

This school year was my first year of organizing the back to school picnic along with another parent. I know in the past they had bingo games with prizes, a representative from the Schaumburg Fire Department came by, and there were other games organized for the kids to play. This school year, we tried the bingo, no one really wanted to play. It actually seemed like the kids were just happy to run around and play, perhaps see friends they haven't seen all summer, the parents socialized including having time to meet their child's teacher, and pizza, soda, ice cream were served (it had to be paid for). Although simple, I think it accomplished its goal of reconnecting the families to the school, as well as everyone having some fun. We might try different activities for the fall, not sure what just yet!

Carla Sorich
Michael Collins PTA Co-President

Each year, our PTA hosts a back to school event called Hoover Happening. We have inflatables for the kids to jump/ride/slide on, we sell food, we have the Cub Scouts do temporary tatoos, Girl Scouts do face painting, and we have a DJ. This year we had State Rep Fred Crespo greet all

the kids and parents, as well as the Chicago Storm Soccer team giving tips and autographs. The DJ usually has some sort of games (ie: Hula Hoop contest etc) and a great time is had by all. We have had much success with our membership table that is there on the day of the event. For food we have had Pizza, soda, chips and Candy. If anyone is interested in more info, please contact Donna Boomgarden at hooverptapres@sbcglobal.net.

Donna Boomgarden
Hoover PTA President

“How do you handle the Free and Reduced Lunch kids when you offer your Hot Lunch program?”

At Hoover, we have several of the kids on the free or reduced lunch program order the hot lunches. Otherwise, they do not receive them. There has been talk of "subsidizing" them, but we haven't come up with any good ideas for that.

Donna Boomgarden
Hoover PTA President

Hot lunch should be paid for in full by all students/families. It isn't fair that families have to pay in full when other students would get the hot food at a discount, so we leave it as everyone is treated equal.

Tina Rommel
Churchill PTA President

We have discussed this topic a number of times and the majority of our PTA still feels that it is not appropriate for us to make exceptions at this time. We are committed to offering a number of free food opportunities to all the children throughout the year and to insuring there are a number of affordable choices on each of our menus. We have consistently had a number of free and reduced fee families participate in the hot lunch program, although over all, our orders have decreased since the beginning of the year due to the economic stress on all of our families.

Michelle Mussman
2nd VP Enders-Salk

“Does your school have an Everybody Counts program and what does it do?”

I have to report that we only received two responses to this question. One school only runs the program every other year due to the expense. Both programs seem to be based on hiring speakers or performers, such as a wheelchair basketball team. If anyone has more information they would like to share, I would be happy to forward it on. Thank you!