

# CouncilConnections

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ICPT 37

## Message from the Illinois PTA President

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NOVEMBER – a month of transition.

NOVEMBER – a month for us to give thanks.

Transition occurs when things move from one area or scope to another – like the weather. It's not snowing yet but who knows when it will occur – perhaps November.

We give thanks for all that we cherish – our family, friends, and most importantly for the ideals that we, as PTA members, hold dear.

Each of us should remember that PTA was established over 100 years ago to make things better for ALL children. I have often wondered why people start 'another' organization to make things 'better' for children when they could have joined with PTA to 'get the job done'. Any school can, and should, have a parent organization that it can rely upon for a volunteer base, support, and the knowledge that comes with being a parent. Who better to know what a child wants than a parent? I have read over the last month about how you don't need a PTA to get things for your school and I always have to ask what's happening with the taxes that I pay that is earmarked for schools. What's wrong that I should have to volunteer to do another fundraising project? The other parent organizations who work on this just don't get it I guess. The best way to make things better now and in the future is to make sure that all children have an equitable education – that's right – an education where all of today's and tomorrow's youth have the same educational benefits. Start asking your legislators (newly elected or incumbents) what they are doing for education.

Many times in our lives we have made transitions – school, marriage, births, new jobs, and, perhaps, even the loss of someone. As PTA members we look to each other in determining how transitions will affect our lives. Will we be able to work thru new ideas, new positions on our boards, and new programs that may be available but that we are wary of utilizing because we're unsure of how they will turn out. Do we change the way we prepare our organization – its officers, board, and members – in meeting the needs of the future? Sometimes we have to make the change so that the work of the organization will move forward smoothly and efficiently. Only time will tell if what we do today has an effect on tomorrow's youth. Look at your organization to see if you are meeting the needs of your membership. Perhaps now is a time for transition.

I guess that transition isn't new to anyone, but it can be a good thing. I guess that each new day will show me more and more what I have to be thankful for in this world.

THANKS PTA

Hugs,  
Jean Razunas  
*Illinois PTA President*

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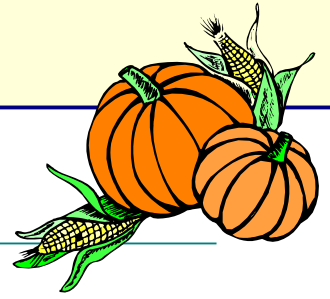
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## Cultural Arts

### **Q: How do I know what cultural events our school should do?**

A: Cultural Arts chairmen can work with the principal and staff to identify topics of interest or areas of concern in the school. If there are issues such as bullying, stereotyping, or other social/behavior issues, there are several programs out there that help to educate students by using talented artists that use engaging programs to relate students to these topics and how to handle them. Or, if there are special curriculums of interest for this year, there are many historical, writing, storytelling, or science related programs etc. that can help support those curriculums (for example, Feb. 12, 2009 is Lincoln's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday so it might be a good year to talk about Abe!). Most importantly is to have programs that are timely to what your school needs and that are also interesting and/or helpful to the kids!

### **Q: Where can I find a list of vendors for our Cultural Arts programs?**

A: There are several places that you can go for help finding a vendor such as:

- Previous Cultural Arts Chairmen in your PTA (you may even have a committee binder with information)
- Contact another school's Cultural Arts Chairmen (see the School Directory given to each Local Unit President)
- Attend the Illinois PTA Convention! At the convention, vendors of all kinds as well as performances and artist fairs are often held at convention. This can be a great place to get ideas or share ideas!
- Attend an artist "event" or "fair". One example of such event is the "Centre East Showcase" event that is held in September of each year ([http://www.centreeast.org/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Store\\_Code=CE&Category\\_Code=showcase](http://www.centreeast.org/mm5/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Store_Code=CE&Category_Code=showcase)). Cost is approximately \$50 generally.
- Email the STC Cultural Arts Chairman ([jennmaze@gmail.com](mailto:jennmaze@gmail.com)) who has attended showcases or events to gather information.
- Visit websites of performing arts venues such as these and research artists/programs/performances (these are just a few examples, but several sites exist in the Chicago area):
  - <http://www.centreeast.org>
  - <http://www.urbangateways.org/>
  - <http://www.chicagoartistsresource.org/>

### **Q: What are the state guidelines for the arts in Illinois?**

A: Visit the website [http://www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/fine\\_arts/standards.htm](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/fine_arts/standards.htm) that shows details on each of the 3 following state goals for the arts. Schools know these state goals and know what your school may need. Working with the staff at your school can help supplement this year's curriculum with these cultural arts programs through your PTA.

- STATE GOAL 25: Know the language of the arts.
- STATE GOAL 26: Through creating and performing, understand how works of art are produced.
- STATE GOAL 27: Understand the role of the arts in civilizations, past and present.

Jenn Maze  
*STC Cultural Arts Chair*

## Armstrong School

*Volunteer* \Vol`un\*teer\", v. i. To enter into, or offer for, any service of one's own free will, without solicitation or compulsion; as, he volunteered in that undertaking.

Source: Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary (1913)

At age 15, I decided I wanted to be a candy striper at a local hospital. To do this, I had to get a social security number, then travel to downtown Chicago to fill out forms for a worker's permit...TO VOLUNTEER. There were no paychecks, no tips, no travel reimbursements, no tax benefits involved. I used my allowance and lunch money to get to and from the hospital via the CTA every weekend. That, to me, was the definition of volunteering...sacrificing to help make someone's life easier or better. This was over 30 years ago, but for me, it was a defining period in my life. I always knew I would return to volunteer work later in life, after my career was established and my children were grown, but I never expected volunteering would bring me to the PTA. I try to bring that same spirit to my current position as PTA President at Armstrong School.

Recently, I overheard someone say this about PTA: "If you want me to do that much work, you should pay me". Frankly, I was stunned. I know times are different now, but should money drive everything we do? Obviously, the answer is "no". If that were the case, there would be no PTA.

If you currently volunteer your time to the PTA, stop and think about why you do it. Tap into the feelings you had after helping at the first few events you attended. If you are not bringing that attitude to everything you do today, ask yourself "why?". Are you hesitant to ask for help? Are you doing too much? Are you doing it for the wrong reasons? Can others tell you are burned out? If so, you may be scaring away people who would like to volunteer by making comments like the one I overheard. Or perhaps you appear frustrated and overwhelmed all the time? If you appear to be struggling, how can you inspire others?

Give yourself an attitude check. Find someone you can mentor. Ask them to help with one event and stay by their side throughout the event, coaching and praising their efforts. Don't forget to say "Thank you" to your fellow volunteers when the event is over. The time you spend guiding them can come back to you in many ways. Not only will you have help when you need it, you might start feeling that joy again.

Alternately, if you still find purpose in your work with PTA, find someone to share those good feelings with. Invite a neighbor or friend's parents to a meeting or event. Offer to carpool. If they can't make it this month, ask again in a month or two. Spread the word after a meeting by highlighting upcoming events. Let everyone know that simple everyday things are the only skills they need...serving beverages and snacks, setting up tables, collecting tickets, helping children find age-appropriate books...again, very simple things. If everyone gives a little, we can benefit a lot.

Giving of yourself to help others...isn't that why we're here?

Christine Bock  
*Armstrong PTA President*

## Blackwell School

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### *GOALS*

When I took on the PTA president job last year, my goal was to get by without falling behind.

As the mother of four, I found the first few weeks were fairly overwhelming and a challenge to my not so great organizational skills. But I found help and encouragement from my friends who were past board members, past presidents and most of all, our treasurer. They knew all the answers and were never bothered when I called them for help. I made it through year one and never fell behind. I reached my goal – with a lot of help!

This year, my goal was to add more to our PTA agenda without blowing the budget or overwhelming myself, my family or our volunteers. I have taken on a few more committees which have added to the craziness of the first few weeks. But I know there are calmer waters and exciting times ahead. We are planning a Multi Cultural Night for the first time at Blackwell. Our goal is to bring together our diverse community. We have added several more hot lunch days and are receiving record numbers of participants. We have shared new ideas for membership to help increase our numbers. We closely examined our committees and budget this summer and asked “do we really need that” and “can we afford that”. We are anticipating out fundraising numbers to be lower because of the economy so we have carefully planned to meet our goals. But as I learned last year, we will need a lot of help!

It is always satisfying to watch a committee of volunteers come together to get a job done. We are fortunate at Blackwell to have a wonderful group of PTA members that rise to the challenge every time. We strive to reach our goals – together.

*Claudia Bellinger,  
Blackwell PTA President*

## Collins School

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### **Fundraising Ideas**

I'm sure we're all feeling the crunch of the economic crisis and profits earned from PTA fundraising is no exception. At Collins, we're experimenting with additional fundraising ideas such as the “scrip” program. Families purchase gift certificates for use at national and local retailers where they currently shop such as JCPenney, Kohls, Shell, Exxon/Mobil Gas, Pizza Hut, Subway, Lowe's, etc. Retailers offer the gift certificates to schools at a discount. Families purchase the gift certificates at full face value and redeem them for full face value. The school keeps the difference as profit. We've just launched the program in time for the holidays. We'll keep you posted as to how this works out for us.

Another way we're trying to generate more PTA dollars is a pizza day once a month in addition to our weekly hot lunch program. Parents appreciate not having to make lunches and we appreciate the funds!

If you need more funds to run your PTA programs and you're able to manage it, we recommend looking into other ways to generate money that your school may not have thought to do.

It's worth a try as every penny counts.

*Rhonda Riefski,  
Collins School PTA Co-President*

## Churchill School

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Churchill School recently held their first Family Fun Night of the 2008-09 school year. At our Fun Night, we painted pumpkins, had crafts at tables for children of all ages to participate in and face painters. As always at our PTA events we had free popcorn to hand out that was made all night by our principal, Dr. Gaska (thank you). To try and make this a whole family night we offered pizza and drinks and snacks for purchase. We ordered and sold over \$250.00 in pizza that night. Offering pizza and drinks for purchase is a good way to offset a free night for the community.

In the beginning of October, Churchill school participated in the National Walk To School Day. I contacted the Pioneer Press, which came out and took pictures and put a picture on the front cover of the Hoffman Review as well as having an article in the Schaumburg paper. The Hoffman Estates and Schaumburg Police were present and handed out safe routes to parents and students as well as pencils and stickers. We will definitely participate in this event next year and recommend other schools participating as well, we had a good time even in the rain.

We have lots of upcoming events, including the Kung Fu Panda showing and our next Family Fun Night in December.

I want to say that I was so scared starting out this year as President, not knowing what I got myself into, but I have absolutely found a side of me that I never knew. I have been more organized, positive and a leader for my team and the staff and students at Churchill school. Thank you to all of my friends that I have met through PTA for telling me I can do this.

Tina Rommel,  
*Churchill School PTA President*

## PTA Radio Tips for More Men Involved

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PTA Radio's sophomore show continues the first series of shows that focus on male involvement tips in an in-depth interview with a father involvement expert from the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI)—a partner organization of PTA's Men Organized to Raise Engagement (MORE) alliance.

The show, called "What a Difference a Dad Makes," features an interview with Vincent DiCaro, Director of Public Affairs at NFI. DiCaro provides insight on basic fathering skills, confidence and strengths.

Anyone can listen to PTA Radio on-demand and catch a quick show online at their leisure with the click of a mouse. Show lengths range from 5-10 minutes and features interviews with different national experts every other week.

The shows are hosted by Rae Pica, an author and international education expert specializing in early childhood physical activity; and Chuck Saylor, National PTA's first-ever male president-elect.

Parents and child advocates can listen to PTA Radio by visiting [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org) or at [www.jackstreet.com/jackstreet/WMBKpta.dicaro.cfm](http://www.jackstreet.com/jackstreet/WMBKpta.dicaro.cfm). PTA's website also highlights other male involvement information at [www.pta.org/pta\\_more.asp](http://www.pta.org/pta_more.asp).

*from PTA.org*

## **Let's Think About PTA Membership**

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**M**ore volunteers available!

**E**ligible for Illinois PTA Membership Awards

**M**ore teachers, administrators, and community members involved in PTA

**B**uilds leadership

**E**nhances the educational environment

**R**ecruiting members makes your PTA stronger

**S**chool communication is stronger because of PTA

**H**elping children is the PTA Mission

**I**llinois PTA increases your voice in Springfield and Washington, DC

**P**TA advocates for ALL children

*from the Illinois PTA Bulletin, Fall 2008*