



The Beacon

Western Region PTA®

**New York State Congress of Parents and Teachers, Inc.
-Branch of the National-**

March 2009

A Message from the Region Director

The holidays are over and it's time to welcome a new year and get back into old routines. It is a good time to reflect on past mistakes and look ahead to improved ways in dealing with problems. A healthy mind promotes a healthy body and vice versa.



Since our last newsletter, we have had the opportunity to meet with our legislators at the Legislative Breakfast February 7th and celebrated Founders Day February 11th. Articles within this newsletter will provide you with an overview of the events.

As the year progresses, PTA offers many other events. The New York State PTA Legislative Education Conference ("Leg-Ed") took place in Albany February 28th to March 1st. It is at this event that we educate ourselves on the changes in academics along with issues affecting our children's health, safety, and environment and the professional staff surrounding them while they attend school. We also discuss issues affecting our children during times they are not in school, for example the tobacco industry that is currently targeting the younger generation to boost current and future product sales. As advocates for all children, we research these issues carefully and contact the appropriate representatives to present our concerns.

Spring Conference, our annual region meeting, is

approaching as well and scheduled for Wednesday May 20th in the Williamsville School District. As a region, it is our responsibility to provide leadership training that not only assists you with your PTA responsibilities but in life as well. Remember, this is a legitimate PTA expense to allow you this leadership training at a reasonable cost. The representative you choose to attend should be bringing back materials to present and share with your unit. Your comments from previous conferences are taken very seriously and we continually make changes to address them and keep up with the times. Please stay tuned for further details as we are expecting a great turnout

With regard to your units, you should have your nominating committees in place, and budget, calendar, and audit committees on the agenda in accordance with your bylaws.

Finally, the Ruth Huber Award will be given out at Spring Conference. This award honors an upcoming new leader from a Western Region unit. Please check our website for information on how to nominate one of your worthy PTA volunteers and please encourage their participation by sending them to Spring Conference.

I hope the 2009 year will bring new exciting plans for you and your families.

**Maria Eagen
Region Director
Western Region PTA**



February in PTA

During the month of February, PTAs across the nation will gather to celebrate Founders Day. We look back at the determination of two women to improve the lives of our children and youth. Imagine the challenges faced by Alice McLellan Birney and Phoebe Apperson Hearst in gaining support without the benefit of today's technology. Yet in 1897, they were able to join 2000 others from across the country who had gathered in Washington D.C. to share their concerns and call for action. As noted on the National PTA website, "they had a simple idea—to improve the lives and futures of all of our children. As much as other conditions in America may have changed, that idea has not. PTAs keep it alive." We honor the founders of our organization as well as all of our members who continue their efforts.

Let's also use February as a time to look ahead. Our membership drive goes on until March 31. PTA continues to be a powerful voice for all children. It is not too late for parents, staff, and community members to commit their voices. All units are encouraged to achieve the High Five Award by increasing their membership by five members over last year's total. All of the membership awards earned by our units will be presented at the Western Region Spring Conference on Wednesday evening, May 20 hosted by Williamsville PTSA Council.

Patricia Frazier
Membership Chair
Western Region PTA



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☆☆ **Gloria Ashenbrenner Award** ☆☆☆

☆☆ **Pat Hysert** ☆☆☆

☆☆ Gloria Ashenbrenner was a Director of Western Region when we were known as Western District PTA. She set a standard for outstanding service to PTA. Her commitment and dedication to the well being of students and their education was so inspiring that Western Region created an award in her name. ☆☆☆

☆☆ The "Gloria" award is one of the highest honors we present on the Western Region level. It is not given annually but rather on such occasion when there is a need to honor one of our members, who shows a level of commitment to the principles of PTA exemplified by Gloria Ashenbrenner. This makes it a very special award. ☆☆☆

☆☆ This year I was honored to be a part of the committee that decided to award the "Gloria" to one of our fellow board members, Pat Hysert. ☆☆☆

☆☆ Pat has been part of Western Region PTA and on the board of NYS PTA for many years. She is a past Region Director and currently sits on the Executive Committee of NYS PTA as Recording Secretary. Over her years of service, Pat has been a mentor to many and always gives guidance and direction to those of us who follow. She has taken an active role in several PTA resolutions on behalf of all children. ☆☆☆

☆☆ We are pleased to congratulate Pat Hysert on being awarded the Gloria Ashenbrenner award for outstanding service to Western Region PTA! ☆☆☆

☆☆ **Diane DeJoseph** ☆☆☆

☆☆ **Associate Director** ☆☆☆

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FOUNDERS DAY 2009

On February 11, 2009, Western Region PTA celebrated the 112th anniversary of the founding of PTA. The Founders Day dinner was held at Mackey's in West Seneca, attended by both PTA veterans and newcomers. Thanks go to the Founders Day committee: Diane DeJoseph, Christine Coniglio, Patty Frazier, George Kimble, Maggie McCarville, Mary Ann Neyman, Ann Marie Pezone, and Mary Anne Suda.

Please see the PTA fact sheet below. These facts were used at the celebration as an "ice breaker" organized by Patty Frazier. Attendees were given separated questions and answers and asked to circulate in search of a matching set. Experienced PTA members did well at this game. (The answer "seven" has nothing to do with Snow White's small friends.)

Attendees also wrote down their wishes for PTA, to be displayed at Spring Conference.

This was the last Founders Day appearance for PTA Boutique. Going forward, pins and gifts will be available through NYS PTA.

PTA veteran Pat Hysert was awarded the Gloria Aschenbrenner award for outstanding service to Western Region. (See article on page 2.)



PTA Facts

Who was one of the founders of PTA from Georgia? ALICE MCLELLAN BIRNEY
Who was one of the founders of PTA from California? PHOEBE APPERSON HEARST
Where was the first meeting of the National Congress of Mothers held? WASHINGTON, DC
When was Founder's Day established? 1910
What is the date of Founder's Day? FEBRUARY 17
Who founded the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers that merged with PTA in 1970?
SELENA SLOAN BUTLER
Where is the national headquarters of PTA? CHICAGO, IL
How many state congresses make up the National PTA? FIFTY FOUR
What is the official emblem of the PTA? OAK TREE
What is the current PTA tagline? EVERY CHILD, ONE VOICE
Who is the National President-elect? CHUCK SAYLORS
Who is the National President? JAN HARP DOMENE
What month is National PTA Month? OCTOBER
Currently \$3.50, how much were National PTA dues in 1966? TEN CENTS
In honor of the 75th birthday, how was PTA honored? EIGHT CENT POSTAGE STAMP
Which program began in 1969 gives students a chance to create art for fun and recognition? REFLECTIONS
Where will members meet in June for the 2009 PTA National Convention? FORT LAUDERDALE, FL
Which Olympic athlete is the newest National PTA Ambassador? DANA TORRES
When is PTA Membership Month? SEPTEMBER
When did national membership reach 10 million? 1956
What week in February was established to strengthen parent-school partnerships? TAKE YOUR FAMILY TO SCHOOL
What week in May was instituted by National PTA in 1984? TEACHER APPRECIATION
Which state organized the first congress of the National PTA? NEW YORK
Who is the NYS PTA President? SUSAN LIPMAN
Who was the first NYS PTA President? FANNIE BARNES
When did NYS launch a major campaign to eliminate corporal punishment in schools? 1978
Where does Western Region rank in membership numbers among the 16 regions in NYS State? SEVEN

Nominations

(From the NYSPTA Resource Guide)

Serving on a nominating committee is an honor and a privilege. The nominating committee is the PTA's most responsible and sensitive deliberative body. The decisions of the nominating committee will impact on the future of the PTA. It is the only committee which must be elected in accordance with the bylaws.

While a unit or council may choose to appoint or elect other committees, this committee's selection must be by election. No member of the committee may be appointed by any person or group.

The time for election of the nominating committee is usually set at least 30 to 90 days before the election month, depending upon the individual bylaws (see ARTICLE VII, Section 3). However, the election of the committee should take place as early as possible in order to give those elected the maximum amount of time to do a good job. The charge to the nominating committee "to find the best possible nominees for office for the organization" is a serious one. The committee should be given sufficient time to carry out its charge.

To insure the availability of a full committee when it is time to meet, a unit/council may provide for the election of alternates in their bylaws. When alternates are elected, the total number of those nominated for the committee must be at least equal to the number of committee members plus the number of alternates. Election (of the committee members) is by ballot with the nominee(s) receiving the least number of votes being the alternate(s). All members of the committee and the alternates must receive a majority of votes to be elected.

For more information on the committee meeting, contacting the nominees, and reporting the results to the board, please see Section 07 of the New York State PTA Resource Guide.

If you need help with this or any other PTA issue, please contact your Assistant Director.

Kelly Stephenson
Assistant Director



Legislative Breakfast

The Erie County Association of School Boards held its 31st Annual Legislative Breakfast at the Millennium Hotel on February 7, 2009. Continuing the trend of the last 2 years, the meeting was co-sponsored by a growing number of organizations, including Western Region PTA, League of Women Voters, Erie-Niagara School Superintendents Association, WNY School Business Officials, WNY Association of School Personnel Administrators, WNY School Public Relations Association, Instructional Development Advisory Board, Promoting Partnerships in Public Education, and the Committee for Identifying and Developing Educational Leadership.

The meeting was well-attended by the members of the sponsoring organizations. The legislators included New York Assembly members Jane Corwin, Dennis Gabryszak, Sam Hoyt, and Jack Quinn, and Senators Michael Ratzenhofer, William Stachowski, and Dale Volker. Fabiola Friot represented Senator Antoine Thompson.

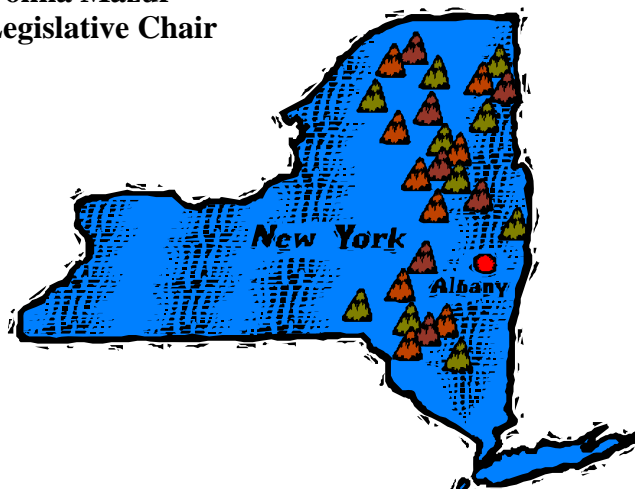
The issues discussed included:

- Pension Reform
- Health Insurance Costs
- Unfunded Mandates
- Special Education

With the economy in decline, money is tight. Pension reform is tied to Wall Street. Health care reform is a problem for everyone. The legislators agreed a national solution is needed.

Our senators and assembly members are sincerely concerned. Let us hope they will fight for our children and their future.

Donna Mazur
Legislative Chair



“Wow...”

Reflections 2008-2009

National PTA Reflections Program 2008-2009

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our Western Region Reflections winners for 2008-2009. They are as follows:

Visual Arts:

Tracy Cheon - Williamsville North HS
Melissa Li - Transit MS
Alexa Rosen - Casey MS
Anna Belous - Heritage Heights Elem.
Gaayathri Varavenkataraman - Maple East Elem.
McKenna Wright - Hamburg Central
Abdullah Haq - Country Parkway Elem.
Jenna Vain - Dodge Elem.

Photography:

Elizabeth Roll - Williamsville North HS
Shannon Winney - Akron
Amanda Bridges - Frontier MS
Rebecca Searns - Transit MS
Patrick Allen - Maple East Elem.
Sarah Swihart - Heim Elem.
Amanda King - Maple West Elem.
Annabella Pollina - Heim Elem.

Film Production:

Addison Sachse - Hamburg Central
Jordon Klumpp - Hamburg Central
Ethan Sachse - Hamburg Central
Jamey Rodemeyer - Heim MS
Jacob Aufschlager - Casey MS
Samantha Maczka - Maple West Elem.

Dance Choreography:

Jessica Calzi - Williamsville East HS
Emma Rothkopf - Heim Elem.

Musical Composition:

Benjamin VanDeWater - Hamburg Central

Sarah Cohn - Kenmore MS
Teagan Faran - Transit MS
Madeline Bell - Heritage Heights Elem.
Gayle Petri - Pinehurst Elem.
Kynnedi Coleman - Heritage Heights Elem.
Noah Webster - Pinehurst Elem.
Luke Schriver - Heritage Heights Elem.

Literature:

Kimberly Kenline - Akron
Richy Qiao - Williamsville East HS
Emily DeRoo - Heim MS
Melissa Li - Transit MS
Julia Ambrose - Hamburg Central
Yuan Yuan Chen - Winchester Elem.
Madison Penetrante - Maple West Elem.
Ellie Gow - Hamburg Central



All of our Western Region winners listed are currently being judged at the State level. We will contact winners once we are notified from NYS PTA.

Please mark your calendars. We will be honoring all of our winners listed above at a reception on

Friday, April 24, 2009
7PM

Winchester Elementary School
695 Harlem Road
West Seneca, NY 14224

Invitations will be sent out in March.

Thank you to all who participated and to every one of our Unit Reflections Chairs!

**Diane DeJoseph, Reflections Chair
Western Region PTA**



How we do it: Williamsville Council Leadership Training

In January, the Williamsville Council hosted their 4th Annual Leadership Training. This year's council theme, Connected and Committed was reflected in the keynote speaker's presentation and the workshops. The Leadership Training is open to all members of the Williamsville PTAs. Units are encouraged to send individuals who may be interested in accepting a leadership role.

All attendees received a folder with the agenda, information from the council and the presenters, and an action plan worksheet. Participants were encouraged to complete the action plan in which they identified three ideas that they can take back to their units and proposed a schedule for implementation. In addition to the information in the folder, members were encouraged to take advantage of the "sharing table." The sharing table offered information from all levels of PTA, handouts from all of the workshops, and program and fundraising ideas. A light buffet dinner and networking was offered before the training began.

Following the opening remarks, keynote speaker Judi Spear of *inVisionit*, a personality assessment firm, focused on behavioral profiles. She offered practical ideas for effectively working with people who exhibit different behavioral styles. This presentation lasted about one hour and ended with one attendee winning a personal *inVisionit* session.

Workshops were held following the speaker. The first session included topics such as marketing the PTA, time management tips, and treasurer basics. In the second session, workshops were conducted roundtable style. Mary Perna Greenwald, Williamsville PTA Council President, held a discussion for unit presidents. Other roundtable topics were school newsletters and current high school issues. The evening concluded with announcements and evaluations. As part of the evaluation, attendees were asked to indicate if they were willing to serve on a council committee or to represent the PTSA on a district committee.

Patricia Frazier
Williamsville Council PTA

How we do it: Family Get Moving Night at North Collins Elementary School

North Collins Elementary PTA hosted its first Family Get Moving Night on Jan. 15 at the elementary school.

The event included activities in the gymnasium - basketball and jumping rope. Elsewhere in the building, scavenger hunts took place that got everyone moving by walking through the entire school. The parents and students looked for health tips and various items located in the building such as signs and decorations.

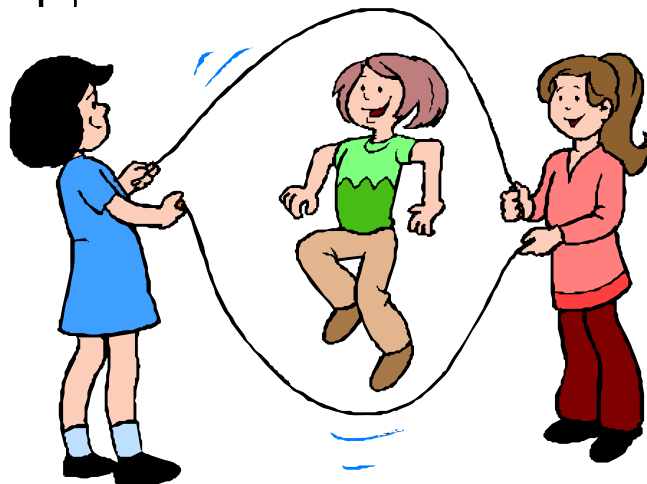
Some of the North Collins High School cheerleaders hosted a demonstration for the students and helped them do a few moves of their own. In the administrative hall, dances were performed and taught to those interested. There also was follow-the-leader for the young children in the hallway. The cafeteria hosted healthy food snacks of various vegetables, apples, water, and juice for the families.

A drawing was also held for those that completed the "Get Moving" scavenger hunt with the winner being Arikka Bley, who won a \$30 gift card to Target. Several other students also received door prizes of various types of balls and jump ropes.

Families were also treated to coupons for discounts on sporting items and water.

Brenda Musacchio, Publicity Chair North Collins Elementary School PTA

(The North Collins Elementary School PTA is focusing its efforts this school year on family activity nights. They have held Math Night, Movie Night, and Get Moving Night. Coming soon: Family Crafts Night. Editor)



Membership News

The NYS State PTA membership theme for 2008-2009 is "Give Your PTA a High Five!".

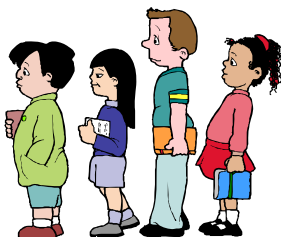


Every unit that adds five members over last year's membership will be awarded a High Five Certificate. As of February, the following units have achieved this goal:

- 19-202 Herbert Hoover Middle
- 19-229 Smallwood Elementary
- 19-237 Sweet Home HS
- 19-243 Forest Elementary
- 19-244 Maple East Elementary
- 19-245 Mill Middle
- 19-257 Country Parkway Elementary
- 19-275 Blasdell Elementary
- 19-276 Pinehurst Elementary
- 19-277 Cloverbank Elementary
- 19-280 Frontier HS
- 19-374 North Collins Elementary
- 19-407 Frontier SEPTA
- 19-428 Oracle Charter

A huge "HIGH FIVE" to these units!

Patricia Frazier
Membership Chair
Western Region
PTA



Bylaws

Congratulations to the following Units for completing their bylaws and getting approval from New York State PTA:

- Alexander
- Edison Elementary
- Heim Elementary
- Kenmore Middle
- Williamsville North

Kudos to your Bylaws Committees for a job well done!

Karen Whitelaw, Bylaws Chair
Western Region



PTA WEBSITES

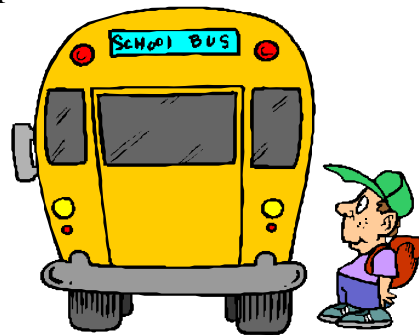
- <http://westernregionpta.org/>
- <http://www.nyspta.org/>
- <http://www.pta.org/>

School buses on New York State roadways

Parents advocate for quality schools to educate their children. To get them to school and return them home safely, many trust a school bus driver and a school bus. Providing a safe bus ride is no small endeavor. A typical school bus sells for \$95,000 to \$100,000, gets only 6 or 7 miles per gallon, and costs over \$3,000 per year to maintain. School transportation officials work tirelessly so that buses meet or exceed strict safety guidelines. But once children board the bus, they travel on New York State roadways and cross New York State bridges. What about this infrastructure? Is it safe? We like to think that our roads and bridges will handle our daily needs without incident. However, roads do fail, and bridges can collapse.

New York State has 17,738 bridges that help all of us travel where we need to go. Of those 17,738 bridges, over a third are considered deficient, based on guidelines used by the New York State Department of Transportation. "Deficient" simply means that the bridge needs some level of maintenance to restore it to higher standards. Steps that are taken when a bridge is rated deficient include posting a lighter weight limit, perhaps making the bridge one way, or closing the bridge. These steps can help to ensure safety, but they are not without cost and aggravation. Consider the school buses. A school bus can't use a bridge with a posted weight limit of less than 15 tons. A closed or posted bridge can cause all traffic to use detours that add miles to the trip, costing time and money.

Rough roads cost us



money as well. Over half the pavement in the state is considered to be only in "fair to poor" condition. That section of road that seems like a washboard isn't only making the ride uncomfortable; it causes increased wear and tear on our vehicles. When our cars and buses fall apart because of a failing infrastructure, we pay at the repair shop.

How are the bridges in your school district? What bridges does your child's bus cross going to and from school? What is the rating of those bridges? The NYS Department of Transportation provides bridge reports at <https://www.nysdot.gov/portal/page/portal/main/bridgedata>.

We often take our bridges and roadways for granted and that can be dangerous! When state funds are tight, infrastructure maintenance is often the first to be cut. Roadways and bridges can fail us and when they do, lives are lost or injuries are sustained. Among the many pictures of the bridge collapse in Minneapolis in August 2007, there is a yellow school bus. Thankfully, no children from that bus were among the 13 who lost their lives.

The Crisis Program advocates for changes that would make our roads and bridges safe and dependable. For more information or to become part of The Crisis Program's Advocacy Network, contact Rich Couch, Director of Advocacy at rcouch@tcpny.org or call 518-860-2287.

(Pat Hysert, NYS PTA Secretary, submitted this article. It was written by Rich Couch, who is the Director of Advocacy for The Crisis Program. He spent 5 years on the advocacy staff of the American Cancer Society and a year on the management staff with the American Lung Association of Northeastern New York. He now directs advocacy programs focused on public safety. The Crisis Program was established in 1988 to advocate for New York State's roads and bridges.)

Editor: Infrastructure

The buzz word of the post finance-as-real-industry economy is “infrastructure.” Over a period of 25 years our economy morphed from one in which people made things they could eat, sit on, drive, or wear into one in which some people got really, really, really rich counting and betting on future money, while a lot of the rest of us earned a living servicing each other in government, schools, hospitals, and prisons. I knew this bogus economy couldn’t last.

So when the “Fed” has lowered interest rates to 0% above prime to stimulate the economy and there is nothing left in the tool chest, before double digit unemployment and deflation hit, we are discussing government spending on infrastructure to make jobs and fix what’s broken. Put people to work repairing bridges and crumbling schools, bringing train travel and internet service up to European standards, protecting and improving water supplies, updating the grid so that if it snows in winter, a million people in Kentucky aren’t without electricity for 2 weeks.



To me the most important infrastructure is people. The foundation of a strong nation is built upon the people who live there. They must be educated. They must understand their government. They must know how to learn. They must have a critical awareness of the world. We heard that spending on education would be protected in these hard times, even increased.

On a cold Saturday headed to the annual Legislative Breakfast, co-sponsored by our Western Region PTA, the Erie County Association of School Boards, the League of Women Voters, and school administrators, NPR reported that a large chunk of the education piece had been excised from the stimulus package in front of the US Senate. Apparently supporting human infrastructure by fixing crumbling schools is not that important a part of a stimulus package.

GM, obliged to present a plan to restructure to qualify for a zillion dollars from the US govern-

ment to avoid bankruptcy, will probably fire 20,000 US workers and another 27,000 around the world. What are we getting for our money? CEO bonuses and shareholder dividends? The fired rank and file (and the laid-off non-GM folks who make the parts) will join those in need of health care coverage. They will not be sending their kids to college. They will not be paying income taxes. They will certainly not be supporting GM since they will be keeping their cars on the road for 15 years. We just hope they will not be forced to live in their cars like some neighbors we have heard about.

I took Amtrak to the LegEd Conference in Albany. I was so happy to be on a comfortable train in America and I was so angry when I got off. For most of the trip, there is one track and passenger trains get to wait while freight trains pass them. I missed the first session of the meeting. In Europe, the trains run on time. That’s what good infrastructure gets you.

Advocacy for children and education will be very hard this year, with the stresses the economy places on our resources. PTA and our school board, teacher, and library allies have a long row to hoe. It has always been a daunting task to pursue our issues. This year will be a particular challenge. We must stand together and keep our eyes on the prize. PTA power!

Anne Ehrlich
Western Region Newsletter Editor

(Some PTA units do not have legislative chairpersons. It is hard enough to get a slate of officers much less chairs. It is particularly important today that you get information to your members about what is happening in Albany and Washington that affects kids and schools. Please contact your AD, the Western Region legislative chair, or any Western Region officer for advice on getting your members informed on critical legislative news. You can get informed through nyspta.org and pta.org .)



Share your experiences with the PTA community in the pages of *The Beacon*. Contact me at anneehrich@yahoo.com or call, text, leave a message at 716-961-8986.

Western Region PTA Calendar

2009

March

Mon	9	7 pm	Board Meeting
Sat	14		Jenkins Scholarship interviews
Tue	31		LAST MEMBERSHIP PAYMNTS DUE

April

Fri	24	7 pm	Reflections Reception
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May

Friday	1		DEADLINE: Newsletter, Spotlight on Youth, Ruth Huber Awards
Wed	6	7 pm	Board Meeting
Wed	20		Spring Conference

June

Thu	11	7 pm	Board Meeting/Picnic
Mon	15		DEADLINE: Annual Officers Contact Information due
Mon	15		Presidents Meeting
Fri - Mon	26 - 29		National PTA Convention: Florida

August

Tue	18	7 pm	Summer Leadership Conference
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WESTERN REGION PTA® 2008 – 09 OFFICERS

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WESTERN REGION PTA®
 NEW YORK STATE CONGRESS
 OF PARENTS & TEACHERS, INC.
 - Branch of the National -

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