



# The Beacon

Western Region PTA®

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

September 2009

## Region Director Report

Welcome back to school for the 2009-2010 calendar year. The hustle and bustle of gathering last minute school supplies, setting up school lunch accounts, updating medical history, and so on has been in full swing.

By now, with regard to PTA, you should have the following items in place: your calendar, your budget, your officers, your membership cards, and confirming your number count on the website. You should have received your back to school kit, resource manual, and New York State publications.

The annual filing of IRS Form-990 is just around the corner. Enclosed in this newsletter, you will find further instructions on this. Donette Darrow has agreed to continue as an assignee on our Board for issues related to the 990 forms. Her e-mail is 990expert@westernregionpta.org.

Please remember: you must have 2 signatures on every check written on your PTA account. You may have up to 4 authorized signers from your board. Please follow up with your bank as they will require proof of identity of the treasurer and other signers. (Keep in mind that those who may sign checks may not audit the books. You might want to have 3 signers instead of 4.)

I encourage all unit officers and members to browse through the PTA web sites. You will find many resources including the great ideas bank, information on PTA awards programs, legislative links, and so forth. These are the websites:

National PTA ([www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org))  
New York State PTA ([www.nyspta.org](http://www.nyspta.org))  
Western Region PTA ([westernregionpta.org](http://westernregionpta.org)).

We are living in an electronic world that developed for the purpose of time management. An added benefit is reduced paper that complies with the "Go Green Initiative". We applaud the units that have joined the "Just Between Friends"

PTA network but we continue to seek membership from the remaining units. As the membership increases, so will the monetary benefits. Here are some frequently asked questions about Just Between Friends:

- What is it? It is a resource and networking site.
- Who can use it? PTA members only.
- What is the purpose? To facilitate networking among members, keep them informed on important deadlines, and offer monetary benefits back to the units.
- How do I join? E-mail Julia Sheffler: Training1@mailjbf.com

### Important upcoming event dates to remember:

- October 15, 2009: Presidents and Principals Dinner at the Classic V Restaurant; deadline October 9, 2008
- November 4, 2009: Pre-Convention Workshop at Williamsville South High School.
- November 13 -15, 2009: NYS PTA Convention in Saratoga Springs. Registration deadline October 15, 2009.
- December 3, 2009: Reflections deadline.

Warm Regards,

**Maria Eagen**  
**Region Director**  
**Western Region PTA**

**President & Principals  
dinner sign-up form on  
page 6. Deadline is  
October 6, 2009.**

## Reflections 2009-2010

# "Beauty Is..."

Hello all Presidents and Unit Reflections Chairs. It is that time of year again for our annual National PTA Reflections Program.

What an exciting time it is, discovering all our talented students around the region. For those of you who may be new to PTA or to the program, Reflections is a National PTA sponsored Arts program. Each year National PTA sets a theme and based on that theme, all students in grades Prek - 12 can submit entries in the following art categories:

Visual Arts, Literature, Musical Composition,  
Photography, Film Production and Dance Choreography.

This year's theme is "Beauty Is...." Run your local program through October 2009, with judging in your schools done in November. Your winning entries are due to Region level on December 3, 2009. Western Region PTA Reflections drop off is:

December 3, 2009  
Greenacres School, 205 Yorkshire, Tonawanda, NY 14150  
Room 212, enter door #9 from outside

If you have any questions concerning the Reflections program or would like to know how to start a program in your school, contact me.

I look forward to seeing all the great talent we have right here in Western New York!

Diane DeJoseph  
Reflections Chair, WRPTA  
824-0479



### Membership Cards

On the back of your membership card is your user name and password.  
Use these to enter the Members Only section of the NYS PTA website.

## *Tips for successful parent-teacher conferences*

With the beginning of the school year just around the corner, here are some ideas on how a parent/guardian can have a successful parent-teacher conference. An average conference usually takes about 20 minutes. Now I know you are already thinking that 20 minutes isn't nearly enough time to talk about your child. Here are some tips to help you.



1. Remember that the teacher is getting to know your child. Help the teacher to understand anything about the individuality of your child, his needs, and his talents.
2. Before the conference, sit down and talk to your child about what you should ask the teacher. Maybe your child is confused or struggling in a subject. You can get a better understanding of how to help your child.
3. Write down any questions that you would like to talk about ahead of time. This will help to manage your time better.
4. Make sure to be at your conference on time, maybe even a few minutes early.
5. Approach the conference with a positive attitude. Avoid confrontation.
6. While in the conference stay on task in talking about your child and school work. Avoid personal conversations.
7. Be willing to listen to any suggestions that the teacher may have in helping your child to succeed.
8. Bring a note book with you to take notes of the conference. You might want to keep this throughout your child's education. This will help in your child's education and will be fun to look at in the future.
9. Remember to thank your child's teacher. Maybe send the teacher a hand written note expressing your feelings of teamwork.
10. Give your child's teacher all of your communication information. Remember to keep this updated in the event of a phone number or address change.
11. Do not stay beyond your conference time period.
12. Keep a line of communication open with the teacher. Don't wait until your child is struggling or failing before contacting the teacher.
13. Check your child's school work/agenda every day. This helps in knowing how your child is doing in school.

**Bev Cottrell**  
**NYS PTA Parenting and Family Life Chair**  
**parenting.family.life@nyspta.org**

### **Dealing with the mail**

It's great to get mail from our friends, kids, NYS lottery winning department. It's a pain to get mail from catalogue companies, bill collectors, and the charities we care about. Every PTA officer gets a bushel of mail from professional clowns, photo studios, and companies that sell candles and candies. The junk mail goes right into the Abitibi box but we feel guilty about discarding, unopened or unread, the mail from the 3 PTAs. We are trying to be, if not paperless at least not as paperful. When you get PTA mail, including this issue of the *Beacon*, please pass it on to others to read. First pass the pile around the table at your exec meeting, then offer it at a general meeting, then see if the principal is interested. We would be happy to send your *Beacon* as a PDF file attached to email. You are welcome to forward it to anyone you want.

**Anne Ehrlich, Editor**



### **PTA WEBSITES**

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

## PTA SEPTEMBER

It is Fall again and children and their parents are returning to school centered life. By the time of your first PTA meetings, a lot of work has already been done by those who ran your PTA last year.

A PTA in good standing in September has renewed its insurance. If you did this early, your unit enjoyed a discount. Your Form A, communicating to State and National your officers' information, has been filed in timely fashion, enabling your unit to receive membership cards, mailings, and a startup kit. It is not too late to file the form. Do it online. A PTA in good standing has finished the membership filing for the previous year. A PTA in good standing has unexpired bylaws.

Your PTA books are in good order. Your audit committee has done its job and the audited books have been turned over to your incoming treasurer. Your signature cards have been filed with your bank and the proper PTA officers are ready to sign checks. Your 2009 – 2010 budget has already been approved or you are ready to vote on it at your first meetings. With your budget in place, you can plan the necessary fund raising activities to support the programs you run.



Your officers and chairs have gone to Region and State trainings and are inspired, informed, and ready to lead. If you are having trouble justifying the expense of sending your members to PTA Convention, Summer Leadership, or other programs, remember that those who attend will return to your units with new

skills and information that they can present to your membership, providing local training while filling a program slot at your meetings.

You need to work on and adopt a calendar. A well prepared calendar will help you organize your year and meet deadlines for submitting membership dues, returning cards, submitting bylaws, filing IRS Form 990 (November 15 deadline for most units), setting up committees (nominating, audit, budget, fundraising, program, etc.), getting out newsletters. You can use the calendar from one year to transition to the next and guide new officers. Put the deadlines for the PTA awards and scholarships on your calendars. Students and teachers in your districts can benefit from our Jenkins and Gazzola scholarships.

Please use the Western Region PTA Directory to contact Region leaders to help you with problems or questions. Your unit or council will be assigned an Assistant Director. Please contact any WRPTA officer if you have problems or questions.

Have the best PTA year.

**Anne Ehrlich**  
**Treasurer, Western Region PTA**

### Treasurers:

If you missed WRPTA's Summer Leadership training in August, I have some handouts left for unit/council treasurers.

Remember: the treasurer's job includes liability and risk prevention as well as keeping the books and signing the checks.

I am available to answer your questions (or find someone who can!). Please do not hesitate to contact me.

Anne Ehrlich  
Treasurer, WRPTA  
961-8986



You are cordially invited to attend  
Western Region PTA's 38<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Presidents and Principals Dinner



everychild.one voice.®

To be held  
Thursday, October 15, 2009

At  
Classics V

2425 Niagara Falls Boulevard  
Amherst, New York



Social Hour: 6:00pm      \$26.00 per person      Dinner: 7:00pm

The Presidents and Principals Dinner gives all PTA Presidents, PTA Officers, and Board Members, Principals, and School Administrators an opportunity to meet and share ideas. By attending, we also hope you will become acquainted with the Western Region PTA Board Members whom are available throughout the year to provide information and assistance to all the units and councils.

The cost of the dinner includes a garden salad, hot rolls and butter, vegetables, potato, chocolate tuxedo cake, and coffee service.

Your entrée\* choice of:

- Vegetable Lasagna - *Layers of associated vegetables between layered pasta sheets and drizzled alfredo sauce*
- Chicken Francaise - *Battered chicken breast with egg and lemon served with lemon sauce*
- Roast Pork Loin - *Tender pork served with apple sauce*

\*If you have any dietary concerns, please note on form below.

The enclosed reservation form, with a check (2 signatures required on all PTA checks) to cover the full amount, **must be received by Thursday, October 8, 2009.** We regret that no money can be refunded. If you have any questions, please call Kelly Stephenson at 648-6830 or email to membership@nyspta.org.

We look forward to seeing you there!

☐ -----

Please detach this form and return your reservation by October 9<sup>th</sup> to:  
Kelly Stephenson, 4620 Thornwood Court, Hamburg, New York 14075

UNIT # 19- \_\_\_\_\_ UNIT NAME \_\_\_\_\_

| Name  | Position | Dinner Choice |
|-------|----------|---------------|
| _____ | _____    | _____         |
| _____ | _____    | _____         |
| _____ | _____    | _____         |
| _____ | _____    | _____         |
| _____ | _____    | _____         |

Contact person and phone \_\_\_\_\_

(Please copy this form If you have additional attendees please list information on the back.)

## WNY EDUCATION LAW CONFERENCE

I recently attended the Western New York Education Law Conference as a representative of Western Region PTA.

There were many seminars at the conference. They are briefly summarized as follows:

**Stimulus Funds: How "Flexible" are they?** This went into details on criteria for school districts to qualify for stimulus funds.

**Special Education Update: Consent, Consent and .....** This covers a new and very problematical ruling pertaining to revocation of parental consent for provision of special education for students currently receiving special education services.

**Various (Legal) ways to save \$ in the school setting.** This was interesting because it addressed the residency requirement which school districts have and how it costs districts money to educate children who do not live in district.

**Audits and the use of Fund Balances.** Explained Fund balances, reserve funds, capital reserve funds, and audit procedures (which can be used in PTAs as well)

**How to Negotiate Smarter.** Covers union negotiations and how to negotiate any contracts presented

**School Reorganization: The What, Why and Why Not.** Very interesting to brainstorm local school districts and the possibility of consolidation (Which may effect PTA units). Also, if not consolidation, possibly shared services, which would save the dis-

tricts (taxpayers) money.

**What's New in Safeguarding Student Information?** What information can be shared with student transfers, information on sex offenders, health and safety information, and "directory information."

**Looking Up at the High Courts:** Current information on changes to Employment, Gender Discrimination, Search and Seizure, & Special Education.

**Seniority, Layoff and Recall.** Covers seniority, bumping rights of employees, tenure, recall. Important to understand employment (teachers and support staff in your children's schools)

Parents play a key role in the educational success of their children. If you know the inner workings of the schools and how PTAs can assist them in the education of children, then the schools can offer an optimal learning atmosphere for all children.

More information on any of these subjects is available through Western Region PTA or by contacting me at 308-3595.

**Donette Darrow**  
Assignee, WRPTA





## Western Region PTA Calendar – 2009-2010

### September 2009

- Thu 17 Board Meeting - Green Acres Building, Ken-Ton School District
- Wed 30 DEADLINE for Jane Skrzypek Educator of the Year Award

### October 2009

- Thu 15 Presidents and Principals Dinner

### November 2009

- Mon 2 1<sup>st</sup> MEMBERSHIP PAYMENT DUE (NYS PTA)
- Wed 4 Pre-Convention Workshop - Wmsville South HS, Williamsville School District
- Wed 4 Board Meeting - after Pre-Convention Workshop
- Fri-Sun 13-15 NYS PTA Convention - Saratoga

### December 2009

- Thu 3 Reflections drop-off - Greenacres Bldg - Ken Ton School District  
10 AM – 2 PM and 4 PM – 8 PM
- Fri 18 Board Meeting and Holiday Gathering - Maria Eagen's House

### January 2010

- Fri 15 DEADLINE for Jenkins Scholarship Award (NYS PTA)
- Tue 26 Board Meeting - Oracle Charter School, Buffalo School District

### February 2010

- Mon 1 DEADLINE for Youth Humanitarian Award (WRPTA)
- Wed 17 Founders Day Celebration Dinner
- Mon 15 DEADLINE for Phoebe Appearson Hearst Award (National PTA)

### March 2010

- Mon 8 Board Meeting - Ken-Ton School District Building
- Sat 13 Jenkins Scholarship Interviews
- Wed 31 FINAL MEMBERSHIP PAYMENT DUE (NYS PTA)

### April 2010

- Fri 23 Reflections Reception - site TBA – 7 PM
- Thu 29 Board Meeting - Hamburg Central High School, Hamburg School District.

### May 2010

- Sat 1 DEADLINE for Newsletter, Ruth Huber, Spotlight on Youth awards (WRPTA)
- Thu 20 Spring Conference (WRPTA Annual Meeting) - Ken-Ton School District Bldg

### June 2010

- Fri 4 Board Meeting and Picnic – site TBA
- Tue 15 DEADLINE ANNUAL OFFICERS CONTACT INFORMATION ("Form A")
- Tue 15 DEADLINE Leadership (Skrzypek) Award (NYS PTA)
- Mon 21 President's Meeting – site TBA
- Fri-Sun 11-13 National PTA Convention – Memphis, TN

### August 2010

- Wed 18 Summer Leadership Conference (WRPTA) - 7PM - site TBA



## *Neural pathways*

Welcome to the beginning of everything that comes next: the 2009-2010 school year, the rest of your life, whatever.



A teacher I know just had her first children (yes twins). I asked how they were doing and she told me they have very different learning styles. She's a teacher to the core: sees the learning styles in 4 month old babies. She's right of course. In so many ways, we are who we are from the start. Everything that comes after gets its footing in what happens now.

I was reading that some miserably large part of the brain we are born with withers from not being used. It explains why some children unlucky enough to suffer strokes can wind up with no deficit than can be detected without a brain scan. Wouldn't it be amazing to not lose so many of those neurons? I sure could use a reserve supply as I head into the sunset.

We know that it's easy to learn a second language while learning the first one. We know that kids who don't know there is any order or pattern to the world have trouble learning. (Remember Candy-land? How about stacking those plastic doughnuts in size order? Turns out to be really important.)

I was discussing this with my daughter the college graduate. She posed an interesting question: what happens to brains that spend a lot of time with the flat screen? What is the difference in number of cells and the pathways they form if the brain spends less time doing hand-eye exercise (catching a ball, catching a frog, hiding, seeking, jumping rope) and more time with the world on the TV or computer screen? Are the neural pathways different? She wondered if it might even alter eyesight.

I hope we have answers soon and can act on them without anyone getting hurt. You only get one childhood.

September is the beginning of everything that comes next. This September remember that the mission of PTA is to advocate for the benefit of all children. May your PTAs offer more education and fewer candle sales, may your memberships soar, may your parents be incredibly involved, and may your children be interested and interesting and have amazing neural pathways.

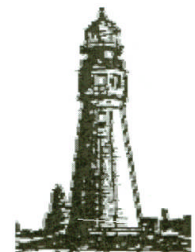
**Anne Ehrlich**  
**Beacon Editor, WRPTA**

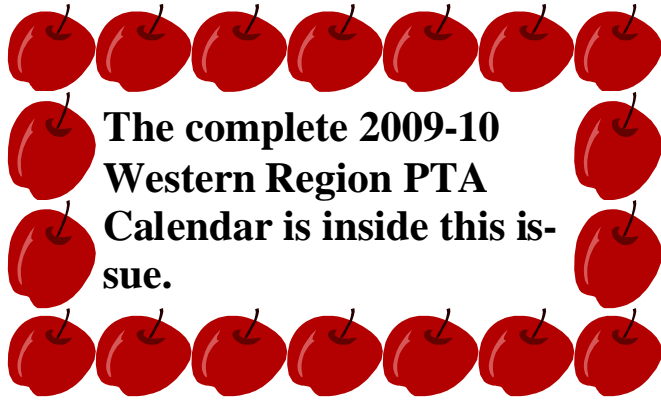
*The same old message: I need your articles about the great programs your PTAs are involved in. Call, text, leave a message: 961-8986 or email me: anneehrlich@yahoo.com .*

## **BYLAWS ARE FUN!**

Have you read your bylaws lately? There is a lot of interesting information and you may actually be amazed at what you didn't know was in your bylaws. Every unit should look over their bylaws yearly even though they are not required to be renewed that year. If you decide to make a change before the expiration date, you can do an amendment to the bylaws. It's really not a difficult process and some people even think it's fun to possess a full knowledge of the bylaws. If you have any questions about your bylaws, I am here to help. I can be reached by email at [kwhitelaw1@aol.com](mailto:kwhitelaw1@aol.com) or by phone at (716) 836-0101.

**Karen Whitelaw**  
**Bylaws Chair, WRPTA**  
**836-0101**





**WESTERN REGION PTA®  
2009-10 OFFICERS**

Director: Maria Eagen  
Associate Directors:  
Christine Coniglio  
Diane DeJoseph  
George Kimble  
Recording Secretary:  
Shirley Lam  
Corresponding Secretary:  
Sue Andrijczuk  
Treasurer: Anne Ehrlich  
Immediate Past Director:  
Etta Czaja

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

Maria Eagen  
Director, Western Region PTA  
3660 Heatherwood Drive  
Hamburg, NY 14075

