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AT&T Wireless Presents \$10,000 Grant to California State PTA for Parent Involvement



Jan Harp Domene, California State PTA President; Denise Baumbach, Vice President/General Manager, AT&T Wireless, Sacramento and Nancy Adalian, California State PTA-Vice President for Parenting Education



Denise Baumbach, Vice President/General Manager, AT&T Wireless, Sacramento, with Nancy Adalian, California State PTA Vice President for Parenting Education, and members of the California State PTA Parenting Education Commission

A \$10,000 grant from AT&T Wireless, in conjunction with the AT&T Foundation, launched the California State PTA's "Parents Empowering Parents" (PEP) Program to improve parent involvement through communication. The PEP Program will provide information, the latest statistics, resources, project ideas, camera-ready newsletter articles, and materials for parent discussion meetings to local PTAs throughout California. A comprehensive resource guide, available in English and Spanish, will be a key component of the program.

The \$10,000 grant was presented by AT&T Wireless Vice President/General Manager Denise Baumbach to California State PTA President Jan Harp Domene on January 9, 2003 in Sacramento.

"We believe that children and parents are California's richest resources, and through our grant, hope to play a small role in promoting healthy family communication which is essential in building parent and public involvement in our schools and communities," said Denise Baumbach, Vice President/General Manager, AT&T Wireless, Sacramento.

"We appreciate that AT&T Wireless recognizes the importance of communication between parents and their children and parents and their children's schools," stated

California State PTA President Domene. "Through the generous support of AT&T Wireless and its commitment as a community partner, we will be able to provide the PEP Program to every PTA school and its leadership in California."

"The Parents Empowering Parents Program will be unveiled in May 2003 to delegates at the California State PTA's annual convention in Sacramento. Our convention includes a full day Parent Symposium open to PTA and non-PTA parents. This is the second year PTA has offered the Parent Symposium," noted California State PTA Vice President for Parenting Education Nancy Adalian. "The PEP Program includes training at the convention as well as 10 trainings throughout the state. This project has the commitment of the California State PTA, whose leaders will continue to update the information on a yearly basis."

Attending the California State PTA Board of Managers luncheon presentation at the Sheraton Grand Hotel in Sacramento were representatives from AT&T Wireless and the California State PTA Board of Directors and advisory board members, regional PTA district presidents, and PTA commissioners from throughout California.

Homework Tips for Parents

Make sure your child has a quiet, well-lit place to do homework. Avoid having your child do homework with the television on or in places with other distractions, such as people coming and going.

Make sure the materials your child needs, such as paper, pencils and a dictionary, are available. Ask your child if special materials will be needed for some projects and get them in advance.

Help your child with time management. Establish a set time each day for doing homework. Don't let your child leave homework until just before bedtime. Think about using a weekend morning or afternoon for working on big projects, especially if the project involves getting together with classmates.

Be positive about homework. Tell your child how important school is. The attitude you express about homework will be the attitude your child acquires.

When your child does homework, you do homework. Show your child that the skills they are learning are related to things you do as an adult. If your child is reading, you read too. If your child is doing math, balance your checkbook.

When your child asks for help, provide guidance, not answers. Giving answers means your child will not learn the material. Too much help teaches your child that when things are difficult, someone will do the work for him or her.

When the teacher asks that you play a role in homework, do it. Cooperate with the teacher. It shows your child that the school and home are a team. Follow the directions given by the teacher.

If homework is meant to be done by your child alone, stay away. Too much parent involvement can prevent homework from having some positive effects. Homework is a great way for children to develop independent, lifelong learning skills.

Stay informed. Talk with your child's teacher. Make sure you know the purpose of homework and what your child's class rules are.

Help your child figure out what is hard homework and what is easy homework. Have your child do the hard work first. This will mean he will be most alert when facing the biggest challenges. Easy material will seem to go fast when fatigue begins to set in.

Watch your child for signs of failure and frustration. Let your child take a short break if she is having trouble keeping her mind on an assignment.

Reward progress in homework. If your child has been successful in homework completion and is working hard, celebrate that success with a special event (e.g., pizza, a walk, a trip to the park) to reinforce the positive effort.

Math Homework Tips

1. Encourage your child to use a daily math assignment book.
2. Follow the progress your child is making in math. Check with your child daily about his homework.

3. If you don't understand your child's math assignments, engage in frequent communication with his or her teacher.
4. If your child is experiencing problems in math, contact the teacher to learn whether he or she is working at grade level and what can be done at home to help improve academic progress.
5. Request that your child's teacher schedule after-school math tutoring sessions if your child really needs help.
6. Advocate with the principal for the use of research-based peer tutoring programs for math. These tutoring programs have proven results, and students really enjoy them.
7. Use household chores as opportunities for reinforcing math learning such as cooking and repair activities.
8. Try to be aware of how your child is being taught math, and don't teach strategies and shortcuts that conflict with the approach the teacher is using. Check in with the teacher and ask what you can do to help. Ask the teacher about online resources that you can use with your child at home.
9. At the beginning of the year, ask your child's teacher for a list of suggestions that will enable you to help your child with math homework.

Helping Your Child Learn to Read

When children become good readers in the early grades, they are more likely to become better learners throughout their school years and beyond. Learning to read is hard work for children. Fortunately, research is now available that suggests how to give each child a good start in reading.

Becoming a reader involves the development of important skills, including learning to:

- use language in conversation
- listen and respond to stories read aloud
- recognize and name the letters of the alphabet
- listen to the sounds of spoken language
- connect sounds to letters to figure out the "code" of reading
- read often so that recognizing words becomes easy and automatic
- learn and use new words
- understand what is read

Preschool and kindergarten teachers set the stage for your child to learn to read with some critical early skills. First, second, and third grade teachers then take up the task of building the skills that children will use every day for the rest of their lives.

As a parent, you can help by understanding what teachers are teaching and by asking questions about your child's progress and the classroom reading program. You can also help your children become readers. Learning to read takes practice, more practice than children get during the school day.

Parenting Education Committee



From the President...

We're All in This Together

The work that PTA does is of great importance. The advocacy, the programs, the services to our units, councils, and PTA districts are of a value that far exceeds any monetary figure. We work for our children and give more of our time and money than we can often afford. We do it because it matters to the children.

Along with limited grants and sponsorships from foundations and corporations, our membership numbers have previously given California State PTA the revenue we have needed to sustain services and programs. Just as you have noticed the fiscal "crunch" at home and school, we also notice how it effects our PTA finances. Just as we have tightened our budgets, corporations and foundations up and down this state, who have been so supportive, have also tightened their spending. We find ourselves looking for additional revenue.

Over the past year California State PTA cut the operating budget by 25% without cutting any programs or services. We have downsized our state PTA office staff by 15%. Meetings have been shortened and the board of managers is working more efficiently. We continue to pursue sponsorship and grant money.

This administration made a promise that there would be no dues increase on the state level, and we intend to keep that commitment. Therefore, we must look for other funding sources.

We have established a donation request program. This simple donation request program gives us a source which is totally voluntary. I know that you give freely of your time and money already. I applaud all you do, and thank you. I encourage you to keep up the good work. You truly make a difference in the lives of children. If you can give California State PTA a donation, we would truly appreciate it.

The donation request program will be an ongoing program via our newsletter and Web site. Anyone who is interested in participating may do so by sending their personal check or credit card information to California State PTA at 930 Georgia Street, Los Angeles, California 90015. All donations are tax deductible. Please help us continue the work we do. Remember, we can't do this without you, we're all in this together!

Jan Harp Domene, California State PTA President
everychild. onevoice

("DONATION FORM" is on Page 7 of this issue.)

Should PTA Be Fundraising?

PTAs are often called upon to finance school programs and purchase needed equipment that tight school budgets don't allow—and it is up to each PTA to decide what it should do in these instances. National PTA is not opposed to, nor does it have a position statement on, fund-raising for PTA activities, but rather it provides guidelines to help parent groups as they make decisions regarding fundraisers for appropriate programs/projects. However, fundraising should not be a PTA's primary involvement in the school community.

Our nation laid the foundation more than 150 years ago for every child to have access to a free, quality public education. The quality of a child's education should not depend on where he lives, the economic status of his parents or community, or the ability of a parent group to raise supplemental education funds. As PTAs we should be concerned,

and we should voice those concerns, that school communities and other parent groups are being led and encouraged to make up for financial shortcomings.

As PTA members, we all have the responsibility to raise awareness in our communities about important topics such as adequate funding, quality education, and equity of opportunity. This type of advocacy has the potential of having much greater, and longer-lasting, impact than any individual fund-raiser at any individual school. It speaks to our focus: **everychild. onevoice.**

Shirley Igo, National PTA President



Tips for Meeting the Press

National PTA has created “Tips for Meeting the Press.” These tips are especially helpful when the press members contact PTAs on controversial topics such as “how state budget cuts will affect a school district” or “which programs will be cut from a local school.” Be informed. Attend school site council and school board meetings, PTA unit and council and PTA district meetings. Review PTA Position Statements found in the *California State PTA Toolkit* and *National PTA Annual Resources for PTAs*. Visit the Advocacy Web page of the California State PTA Web site <www.capta.org/Advocacy/> for current PTA positions on proposed legislation, recent PTA Legislative Alerts and the latest issue of “Sacramento Update.” Contact your PTA district president or the California State PTA Legislation Team by telephone at 916.442.5667 or by Email at <leginfo@capta.org> for the latest information.

Tips...

- **Be realistic** – Think news value, not fluff. We need the press. Understand the press (news values, local philosophy, key players, competition).
- **Be prepared** – Increase your media consciousness and analyze the news. Keep up-to-date information readily available. Delay the interview, if necessary, by asking questions and asking when the deadline is, then do your homework. Know your PTA’s name, the Web address, phone number, program/event overview, audience served, etc.
- **Be accessible** – Return media calls promptly. Be sensitive to a reporter’s deadline. Work on building long-term media relationships. Avoid “no comment.” Always explain why you can’t comment. For example, “I’m sorry, but it is our policy not to comment on....”
- **Be honest** – Be credible. Never compromise the accuracy of your response.
- **Be quotable** – Use plain English. Try to create a catch phrase or memorable line. Avoid jargon. What do you want people to remember about your interview?
- **Be in control** – Keeping the interview under control should be your first priority. Have an objective going into the interview. Ask questions, as well as answer them. Answer with positive, informative statements. Bridge from question to your message. Buy “thinking time” if you need a few seconds to get an answer together. For example, repeat the question or use an introductory phrase like, “I’m really glad to have the opportunity to talk with you about that, because it’s something I’ve thought about a great deal.”
- **Be careful** – Don’t speak “off the record.” Address repetitive questions with, “As I’ve already told you.” Listen to the reporter. Beware of negatively phrased questions. Avoid over-answering.
- **Be innovative** – Make sure your story is news. Cater to the needs of video and photo opportunities. Provide human interest; include prominent figures. Make it timely.
- **Be assertive** – Talk about important issues with editors or reporters. Tell them about your expertise. Treat each reporter individually- learn each reporter’s personal interests and what “beat” or area each covers. Write letters to the editor.
- **Don’t worry...be happy** – Be warm and friendly. Be yourself; try not to sound pompous or condescending. Smile. And last, but not least, have a good time.

For more information about working with the press, see the Media Outreach topic (Topic 6.2.8) in the **Communications** section of the *California State PTA Toolkit*, also available on the California State PTA Web site at

<www.capta.org/Resources/Toolkit.html>.

*Source: Marketing PTA – The PTA Difference
National PTA Multi-State Conference 2002
Communications Commission*

You Count!

Collection of volunteer hours is a tedious, repetitive task. Why do we continue to do it? Who cares how many volunteer hours accumulate each year?

Collection of hours is important to our organization for many reasons; maintaining federal tax exemption is one of the most important. An organization granted nonprofit charitable status must receive one-third of its support from the general public. Valuation of service hours expended in carrying out the purposes for which it was formed will positively effect the public support ratio of PTA.

Volunteer hours can be reported in the narrative portion of the IRS 990 report and can also be placed on your PTA’s financial statements. From information provided by nonprofit charitable organizations, the IRS publishes a figure, adjusted annually, that attributes a dollar value to volunteer hours donated. This enables PTAs to publish an annual tabulation of the collective value of volunteer hours which has been returned as a donation to local communities and statewide.

Advertising the value of volunteer hours expended by PTA can be a valuable marketing and publicity tool and raises the public’s awareness of the organization. Frequently, foundation grantors request the number of volunteer hours an organization expends annually when considering apportionment of grant funds. The volunteer value helps a foundation understand the extent of a group’s parent involvement, support and commitment to their own purposes which aides the grantors in determining the amount of assistance to award.

So keep counting!

Tabulate your hours!

Calculate your value!

Share your commitment!

Member Services Commission

Paying PTA Bills Between Meetings

Bylaws For Local PTA/PTSA Units, Article VIII, Section 2c. states, “May authorize payment of other unbudgeted association bills not to exceed a cumulative total of *(write out amount)* and *(\$ show figure)* between meetings of the association. Ratification of payment of these bills must occur at the next association meeting and must be recorded in the association minutes.”

What exactly does this mean? When you adopt the annual budget at the beginning of the fiscal year, you are **NOT** authorizing expenditure of the money. A budget is a financial representation of the estimated costs of planned activities and programs a PTA/PTSA expects to put on during a specific time period. It is a guideline for estimating income and expenditures. An expense is first estimated, then actuated, then the budget is adjusted accordingly, if necessary, as the PTA year proceeds. This budget must be presented to and approved (or adopted) by the general membership.

As the PTA program continues, expenses are incurred. Each expense must be approved by the membership, either before the expenditure or after. Despite the best planning, expenses will occur between meetings and it is not always convenient to wait until the next association to pay the bill or to repay the person who spent the funds. Article VIII, Section 2c. provides a leeway to pay unexpected expenses without waiting for prior approval.

The treasurer must keep a tally of bills paid without prior authorization between meetings to ensure the total amount does not exceed the limit specified in the bylaws. All bills to be paid must be presented with receipts. The amounts paid are then ratified by the membership at the next scheduled association meeting.

Further information may be found in your bylaws, the *California State PTA Toolkit*, and National PTA’s *Annual Resources for PTAs*.

Bylaws Committee

Using Intuition in Making Decisions

A growing body of research shows that when a key decision must be made rapidly, intuition often beats rational, careful analysis.

Researchers have studied many professionals, including stockbrokers, firefighters, and policemen who often must make rapid decisions. Despite intense training in “proper” decision-making, these professionals don’t always use rational decision-making models to weigh alternatives in high stakes situations. They can’t. Information flies at them too fast. Sometimes the information is imperfect and often it is contradictory. Yet, they act decisively.

Without realizing it, our brains pick up a lot of vital information and can process it at astonishingly fast levels. When faced with situations that demand rapid decisions, our seemingly intuitive choices are often right on the mark. Thus, a firefighter often “knows” to retreat mere moments before a floor collapses.

Most PTA decisions do not have to be made on-the-spot-of-the-moment but you may be faced with a situation when speaking in public or answering questions in a public forum. When you must make quick decisions with less-than-perfect information, your brain is processing a great deal more than you realize. Develop trust in your intuition strengthened by knowledge and training.

Prepare yourself with sound PTA knowledge by reviewing materials received from National PTA and California State PTA and by attending the California State PTA convention and other training opportunities.

Leadership Services Commission

Recursos Hispanos para Educación de Temprano Niñez hasta Educación Postsecundaria

La página del Internet (Web site) de la Casa Blanca sobre Excelencia en Educación para Hispano Americanos ha sido desarrollado por la administración del Presidente Bush para proveer información sobre educación de temprano niñez tan como una otra variedad de temas. Se ofrece información en inglés y español a <www.yesican.gov>.

La PTA Nacional ofrece información sobre su Programa de Servicios Externo Hispano a <www.pta.org>. Se encuentre una colección de “Recursos en Español” que promociona involucración de padres en una variedad de áreas a <www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/spanish/index.asp>.

Hispanic Resources for Early Education to Post Secondary Education

The “White House Initiative on Education Excellence for Hispanic Americans” Web site has been created by President Bush’s administration to provide information on early childhood to post secondary education as well as a variety of other topics. Information is offered in English and Spanish at <www.yesican.gov>.

The National PTA offers information about its Hispanic Outreach Program at <www.pta.org>. A collection of “Resources in Spanish” which promote parent involvement in a variety of areas is posted at <www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/spanish/index.asp>.

From the Membership Committee...

Mid Year Membership Check List

Make sure all members have received their membership cards promptly. Don't let this difficult—but important—task fall by the wayside.

Alphabetize and retain returned membership envelopes.

Update the membership list as new members are enrolled. Provide copies of the list for the president, secretary and treasurer. Retain a copy for the membership procedure book.

Verify that all board members both elected and appointed positions have joined as required in the bylaws.

Invite new families to join throughout the year.

Organize a group to make personal contacts with those who have not yet joined.

Write articles for the PTA newsletter and the PTA or school Web site. Include information so prospective members know who to contact for enrollment purposes.

Have a membership table at every event and encourage those who have not joined to do so at this time.

Use the local newspaper to promote "PTA is for everyone." Don't forget to provide contact information.

Evaluate progress made to date or thus far and plan new approaches as needed.

PTA has a wealth of information to assist you in reaching your membership goals. PTA resources include the *California State PTA Toolkit*, National PTA's *Annual Resources for PTAs*, Web sites: <www.capta.org> and <www.pta.org>.

Other sites that have information of interest include

<www.tenet.edu/volunteer>

<www.gmu.edu/student/csl/recruit.html> and

<www.volunteertoday.com>.

Recruiting and Retaining Members

Building PTA memberships depends upon more than just recruiting members. It is important to think about ways to encourage participation and support of PTA events.

Successful recruitment begins by:

- Acknowledging differences and similarities within your membership;
- Learning to understand and accept those differences;
- Practicing respect;
- Involving the under-represented groups in your PTA;
- Discussing honestly what is needed for PTA and your school to be most effective for all students and families. It's okay to talk about ethnic, cultural or religious differences, people with physical challenges, single parenting, blended families, economics or other differences that may exist in your school community;
- Setting realistic goals. There are no magical membership or outreach answers;
- Recognizing each PTA unit is different and unique; and
- Being aware of barriers and considering ways to overcome them.

As you move forward, you may face challenges in attracting new members, but don't get discouraged. Keep evaluating your progress and try something new if what you are doing is not working.

Resource: California State PTA Toolkit

Pay Tribute to Deserving Volunteers

The California State PTA's Honorary Service Award (HSA) Program is the perfect way to recognize an individual or an organization for their service to children and youth. In fact, every year thousands of these awards are bestowed on deserving volunteers by PTA units, councils and districts throughout the state.

Each time an award is ordered from the California State PTA office, a donation is made in the name of the recipient. These donations provide funds for the scholarship and grant program as defined in the *California State PTA Toolkit*.

The HSA Program includes the Honorary Service Award (HSA), the Continuing Service Award (CSA), the Very Special Person Award (VSP), and the most prestigious the Golden Oak Service Award. An individual or organization may receive more than one HSA, CSA, VSP, Golden Oak Service Award, or donation made in his/her/the organization's name.

In addition to public acknowledgment, the deserving volunteer would be honored to know that the award provided a donation to fund continuing education scholarships and grants to promote parenting education, translation, and cultural arts in PTA units, councils and districts.

To find out more about each award, the criteria for presentation, and how to get started, see the "Job Description for Honorary Service Award" on page 483 of the *California State PTA Toolkit*.

HSA Selection Committee



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Available soon...

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If you are no longer a PTA president,
please forward this and all mailings
immediately to your successor.

Articles appearing in this newsletter may be
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The mission of the California State PTA is to
represent our members and to empower and sup-
port them with skills in advocacy, leadership and
communication to positively impact the lives of all
children. *Adopted March 1999.*

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