

Spotlight on Fourth District PTA

Serving every child is more than just a slogan for Fourth District PTA. This year saw the establishment of the first PTA unit at an Orange County juvenile detention school.

Rio Contiguo PTSA, which serves the alternative high school at a juvenile correctional facility in the City of Orange, was chartered in August. Teachers and probation officers are serving as PTSA officers, while other teachers, administrators, staff members, probation staff and Fourth District PTA parents have signed up as members. Students are represented by a Student Council member.

“We have a three-pronged approach in working with this PTSA,” said Patty Christiansen, Fourth District PTA president. “The first is to provide parent education for the parents and for the students, many of whom have children. Second, we will promote a Reflections Program as a way to give these young people a voice in their community. And finally, we will focus on teacher appreciation, because these educators – who have a real love for what they are doing – don’t get enough thanks for their work.”

“The young people at this school come from difficult backgrounds, and what they find at Rio Contiguo is hope for a better future,” said Patty Christiansen.

The new PTSA plans to reach out to parents during visiting hours and has set up a display in the school office to provide brochures and information. The group will also be encouraging parent participation by scheduling speakers on topics of interest.

Newly elected PTSA President Maria Straith, a special education teacher at the school, said the focus at Rio Contiguo is bringing families together so the students will have good support when they leave.

“PTA will be a good resource to help us do that,” she said. “We’re planning to set up scholarships for the students and a Reflections Program. PTA will provide programs that we wouldn’t have had access to otherwise.” Susan Kinzinger, the Fourth District PTA counselor to Rio Contiguo PTSA, said about 25 Fourth District PTA mem-

bers have joined Rios’ unit and plan to provide art materials, classroom supplies, sports equipment and other needs for the school. Fourth District PTA has waived its portion of membership dues from the new unit.

“We are very excited about the PTSA,” said Rio Contiguo Principal LaDay Smith. “Everyone on our staff is ecstatic. Maintaining parental involvement is the key, and this will provide important new resources. The need was there, and now it’s being filled.”

The correctional facility houses about 125 youth, ages 15 to 17, most of whom are incarcerated for substance abuse violations. The students generally stay for about six months.

“The young people at this school come from difficult backgrounds, and what they find at Rio Contiguo is hope for a better future,” Christiansen said. “We want to empower their parents by teaching them successful parenting skills, so that when the students return to their homes, that hope doesn’t disappear.”

PTA Keeps Fighting Budget Cuts



Barbara Ledterman, PTA vice-president for education, at a budget press event: “When parents are asked to help fund basic programs and services at our schools, it’s a clear sign we have cut too deeply.”



It's All About Attitude

It is all about attitude ... how is yours? As a leader, and, yes, we are all leaders in one way or another, we have a responsibility to check in with ourselves and check our attitude. One of my favorite quotes is: "Attitudes are contagious. Are yours worth catching?" It is from Dennis and Wendy Mannering, who are keynote speakers for corporate America.

This quote is a very useful tool and a way to check in with yourself. People gravitate to those individuals who have a clear vision and direction and who demonstrate a passion for what they believe in.

Just ask yourself, "Would I want to join me or my cause given my attitude?"

Competition for Volunteers

There is lots of competition in the marketplace for recruiting volunteer time. There are many reasons, if you choose, to look at life's circumstances as a glass half-empty, and you will attract those people who will also chime in and spin the negative attitude. This will create an atmosphere where many will feel helpless and eventually leave or transfer their feelings to anger and finger pointing. Think about it. Why would anyone in their right mind want to jump on a sinking ship when all they are hearing is how bad it is?

"You are on the front line in units, councils and districts throughout the state, and you can make the difference in the number of volunteers who are willing to speak up on behalf of children and families."

But when you view your cause as a glass that is half-full, it brings with it huge potential. A belief begins to flourish among the group that anything is possible. Now, that is a ship people are looking for and are absolutely willing to sail.

Attitude and PTA

Your attitude is so important in your PTA role. You are on the front line in units, councils and districts throughout the state and you can make the difference in the number of volunteers who are willing to speak up on behalf of children and families. You have heard and will continue to hear the negative spin on what is wrong with the economy, but we cannot get caught up in the gloom and doom. I am not suggesting that we hide our heads in the sand from the realities in our nation. But if we want to change our current destinations, we must stay focused on our purpose and remember we stand for children and for what is necessary to ensure their future success.

Hold the Torch for Children

Yes, I am speaking about membership and outreach: We need to spread the PTA word. That means we need to spread it farther than our schoolhouse doors. Hold the torch for children high in your local community; remind all of them that our purpose is clear. We are building a better future for our children. The adults in every community are the architects of that plan. As adults we hold in our hands the future of our children.

Our PTA volunteers, for nearly 112 years, were willing to walk the talk for children and remind others of their responsibility. It was not always good economic times for them, either, but through clear purpose they brought incredible policy changes to our state and nation.

It didn't and doesn't matter to PTA what is politically popular. What matters is the effect our decisions have on children and our future. Our state and our nation will be strong once again as long as we have the vision, the voice and the collective commitment to plan for the future. Children are our most precious treasure, and no one knows that better than PTA. We have a proud legacy to uphold and, together, let's show California what is at the heart of PTA!

everychild. onevoice.

Identifying the Next PTA Leaders

Identifying PTA leaders for the upcoming term has a lasting effect on the success of your PTA.

January marks the beginning of the nomination and election process for PTAs. Your bylaws indicate when the nominating committee should be elected by the association and at which association meeting the officers are elected. However, before individuals can be nominated and elected, the nominating committee needs a good pool of potential candidates to consider for officer positions. Where does the committee find those promising future leaders?

First, consider that perpetuating a clique makes people feel unwelcome; make a conscious effort to include newcomers and those who express interest. “We’ve-always-done-it-this-way” attitudes tell others their creativity will not be appreciated. The existing board members might well contribute their experience in new roles. For example, the treasurer might be a good candidate for auditor; a past president might make a wonderful parliamentarian.

Teachers and principals can often provide names of involved and positive parents. Keep track of folks who step up to volunteer when the lines get long or boxes need unpacking at events. Make a practice of saying “yes” when people ask if they can help – even if it means you have nothing to do but sit there and cheer them on.

Watch for individuals who are willing to be mentored and attend conventions and/or other PTA training opportunities to learn more about PTA and officer responsibilities. In addition, secondary PTAs may ask the unit presidents and principals at feeder schools for potential nominees.

A GOOD LEADER:

- ◆ Has basic PTA knowledge and a willingness to learn;
- ◆ Believes in people and helps others achieve goals;
- ◆ Communicates well;
- ◆ Attends training opportunities;
- ◆ Delegates responsibility;
- ◆ Is willing to do the job others are unable to do.

Individuals considered for nomination to officer positions should be considered because they believe in PTA’s mission and possess the qualifications and skills necessary for the responsibilities of the position. Don’t be swayed because someone wants to be nominated for a certain position or thinks posts are allocated as favors or seniority perks. PTA is not the place for personal agendas.

A review of the PTA’s Professional Governance Standards provides a list of expectations for officers and executive board members (see *California*

State PTA Toolkit 2.3.9). Nominating committee deliberations must include a discussion of these expectations, the job responsibilities of the position, and the skill sets and personal traits needed to effectively serve in the position and within the board as a whole.

With an up-to-date membership list and a list of the PTA members who have volunteered to help with PTA activities over the past year, the committee can *then* generate a list of members who meet the established criteria and select the best-qualified candidate for each officer position.

It’s okay to leave an officer position vacant; including someone in name only or as a “warm body” just to fill out the slate is counterproductive. An empty spot on the slate can sometimes be the encouragement a qualified person needs to step forward, which could be a better solution than electing someone who lacks the experience and skills needed.

Leadership Commission

SAVE THE DATE!
110th Annual CONVENTION
April 30 - May 3, 2009
San Jose McEnery Convention Center

The PTA Power of ONE... Making a Difference

California State **PTA**[®]
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Be inspired
Visit the PTA Store and Exhibit Hall
Increase your POWER as a volunteer
Network with and learn from other PTA leaders
Participate in the business of the association – vote on resolutions
Learn more about important issues affecting children and families
Make a difference!

Register
between
February 2-
April 20

On-site
registration
required after
April 20

Suggestions for Nominating Committees

It's time to elect the nominating committee. Think it's too early? Check your association's bylaws, which reads:

Article V – Officers and Their Election

The nominating committee shall be elected at least two months prior to the annual election meeting. The committee shall serve until the annual election meeting.

If the annual election meeting is in March, the committee must be elected at an association meeting in December or January. The report of the committee must be submitted to the membership at least thirty days prior to the annual election meeting.

The purpose of the nominating committee is to recognize and seek qualified nominees for the elected leadership of the PTA. The members of the committee have a tremendous influence on the future of the PTA and should be selected carefully.

The committee must:

- Study carefully the qualifications of members before presenting the name as a nominee.
- Check the membership list to be sure each nominee is a member of the association.
- Remember that committee discussion is left in the meeting room.

The committee must not:

- Submit nominees because they are friends of committee members.
- Nominate people with the thought that it is a good way to get them more involved in the PTA.
- Repeat what was said in the committee meeting to anyone.
- Report the results of the nominating committee until they have been publicized through the proper channels.

Individuals on the committee should:

- Accept nomination to an office only if they are sincerely interested in the purposes of the association.

In assessing candidates' qualifications for office, the committee should consider only objective, PTA-relevant information. Parking-lot or soccer-field gossip is just gossip.

Resources:

California State PTA Toolkit
The Communicator, January 2008
Bylaws for Local PTA/PTSA Units

Bylaws Committee

Serving on Accreditation Committees

Accreditation is integral to a school's cycle of assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring, and reassessment based on student achievement. The process involves first a detailed self-study by the school and the help of a document that is called *Focus on Learning*.

The self-study is designed to help the school involve all school personnel and the community in determining the purpose of the school and school-wide expectations in learning.

The work may take a period of one to two years to complete, with the development of a school-wide action plan that addresses identified areas for improvement.

A trained visiting committee spends time at the school reviewing the self-study and evaluating the level of learning through interviews with all stakeholders, observation, and viewing students' work. The visiting committee prepares a report, reviews the findings with the school personnel and community, then forwards to the Accreditation Commission its recommendation for action. The Commission is the grantor of the term of accreditation.

PTA is represented on the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Accreditation Commission. The commission's purpose is twofold:

- To foster excellence in elementary, secondary, adult, and postsecondary education by encouraging school improvement through a process of continuing evaluation, and
- To recognize, by accreditation, schools that meet an acceptable

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A Message from Paul Richman, Executive Director

Parent Engagement – A Partial Cure for the Budget-Cut Blues



Budget cuts will dominate discussions in both your local schools and in the state's legislative chambers this year. As Californians, we face the threat of unprecedented funding cuts to our schools and to children's services.

California State PTA will continue to do all we can to advocate for a state budget solution that includes new revenues to prevent deeper, more harmful cuts to children. It won't be easy in these tough economic and political times, but it's our mission and – with the help of a million passionate voices like yours – we'll keep at it. After all, resourcefulness and persistence are two hallmarks of the PTA way.

Budget crisis or not, though, we must also continue to look for windows of opportunity to help raise the level of achievement for all of our students. As numerous studies have pointed out, in addition to adequate funding, we still need to make thoughtful reforms to our education system.

And that brings me to one major education-reform topic that the research time and again has shown has a positive impact on the achievement of all students – a reform that does not carry a high price tag and yet has the potential to bring schools and communities together.

What is this great reform? It's building stronger family-school partnerships. It's creating more meaningful parent, family and community engagement in the lives of children.

As a PTA leader you live it and promote it every day. It's a reform that should be at the top of any reform wish-list.

According to the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, students with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, are more likely to:

- Earn higher grades and test scores, and enroll in higher-level programs;
- Be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits;
- Attend school regularly;
- Have better social skills, show improved behavior, and adapt well to school; and
- Graduate and go on to post-secondary education.

We know that where students have one or more engaged parents or adults in their lives; where those parents or

adults feel welcomed at the school site and encouraged to play a meaningful role; where the culture and language of families is respected; and where families are given support and strategies to assist their children at home ... *we know those children will achieve more.*

And, according to noted researcher Anne T. Henderson, "The positive effects of parent involvement are greatest for low-income students."

New research also tells us that parents of children at high-performing schools perceive that their schools communicate with them more effectively than parents at lower performing schools. A recent report called *One Dream, Two Realities* which looked at the results of surveys and focus groups involving more than 1,000 high school parents concluded that, "regardless of incomes, education, and performance at the school, parents believe that their involvement is central to their child's academic success. But only parents from higher performing schools feel they are regularly and meaningfully engaged in the academic success of their children."

Devastating budget cuts or not, there is an opportunity for us to stay true to our core values as an association and to work even more actively with school leaders and staff to build stronger school-home connections, to improve communications, and to help families guide their children's learning.

At the state level, our Parent Involvement Commission has been working hard to develop and provide resources and information, and to reach out and partner with a broad spectrum of groups and organizations to promote parent and family engagement. We will also continue working to elevate meaningful parent and family engagement to the top of the list of statewide education reforms that must be pursued. We need programs and policies that advance and support local efforts.

We know it won't all happen overnight, but we also know that our association will not rest until it does happen. The research is too powerful to ignore.

Your PTA's dedication to bringing more parents, families and schools together can be that constant light even in these darkest of budget times.

How Important Is Your School Library?



Very important!

Substantial research shows that a school library with a rich collection of books and other media materials, adequate funding, and appropriate staffing has a strong positive impact on improved literacy and overall academic achievement. The school library has an important role in preparing students to live and learn in a world of information. School libraries ensure that students and teachers are effective users of ideas and information by providing:

- ◆ Intellectual and physical access to materials in all formats;
- ◆ Instruction that fosters competence and stimulates interest in reading, viewing, and using information and ideas; and
- ◆ Learning strategies, designed with other educators, that meet the needs of individual students.

The California Department of Education Online School Library Survey has collected information and statistics that provide the following by-the-numbers snapshot of school libraries in California:

- ◆ **97** – percent of California public schools that have a place designated as “the library.”
- ◆ **24** – percent of California public schools that have a credentialed teacher librarian on campus part-time or longer, most at the high school level.
- ◆ **17.9** – the average number of school library books per student, kindergarten through grade 12.
- ◆ **1993** – the average copyright date of a California school library nonfiction book in 2006-07.
- ◆ **\$21.10** – the average cost of a children’s or young adult hardcover book in 2008.
- ◆ **89** – percent of the 5,287 school libraries responding to the Online School Library Survey that reported having electronic and automated circulation systems.
- ◆ **81** – percent of school libraries that reported providing access to the Internet.
- ◆ **75, 93, and 98** – percents of elementary, middle and high schools, respectively, that reported providing access to the Internet.
- ◆ **28** – the average number of hours per week that a California school library is open to students. Seventy-six percent of school libraries are open during breaks, 71 percent are open during lunch, and 61 percent are open before school.
- ◆ **10** – percent of school libraries that are available during summer school.

State funding for California school libraries began in 1998 with the passage of the California School Library Act. This legislation established the first ongoing allocation for planned, methodical development of school library collections. Assembly Bill 825 (Chapter 871, Statutes of 2004) moved state library funding into a new categorical block grant, the School and Library Improvement Block Grant. This block grant is the primary source of library funding for 44 percent of California public schools. The second-most important source of school library funding is school fundraising activities.

Additional information about California public school libraries can be found on the School Libraries Web site at www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/lb. Further information about the School Library and Improvement Block Grant can be found at www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/ca/schoollibrary.asp.

Education Commission

Make PTA Visible Using PTA's Logo

How can we make PTA better known in our community? PTA has a standardized logo to enhance name recognition and to help bring to mind PTA's many accomplishments.

How can we use PTA's logo to increase participation in PTA? PTA events enhance community participation in school activities and benefit students and the school.

When parents and caring adults participate in children's education, children do better in school and the school climate is improved.

- ◆ In planning a PTA event, include the community. Let people know that PTA is a partner with the school to help children succeed.

- ◆ Use PTA's logo to reinforce PTA's role in bringing many parties together.
- ◆ Include the PTA logo on your website.
- ◆ Remember to put up a banner or a sign with the PTA logo on it at all PTA sponsored events.

Try having a PTA awareness day at the school and in the community to show pride in being a member of PTA. First, pick a date. Keep it simple by putting a sign up on your school marquee, on bulletin boards, in newsletters, and in flyers. Use the PTA logo in publicizing the event. Coordinate a date with other schools in the neighborhood, or with the help of your council and district PTA presidents, throughout the entire

school district. Notify the media, the newspapers, and the community's businesses.

And then, dig through your drawers and closets. Encourage your school community to wear a PTA T-shirt, hat, pin or button. Carry a PTA tote bag, mug or pad wherever you go. And whenever people ask, tell them that you are a proud member of PTA.

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Communications Commission

Help us make **PTA** familiar to everyone!

PTA Seeks Parcel Tax Reform

Delegates at the 2008 California State PTA Convention adopted a resolution – Local School Parcel Tax Measure Threshold Reduction – calling on PTAs at the state, district, council, and unit levels to support legislation and ballot measures to lower the two-thirds threshold presently required to pass local school parcel tax measures to a 55% supermajority.

Passed by voters in 1978, Proposition 13 allows local government, including school districts, to levy non *ad valorem* taxes if two-thirds of voters approve. Parcel tax payments are generally a flat fee on each parcel rather than on the assessed value of the property. The proceeds are almost always tied to education programs rather than construction.

California State PTA believes that education funding must be a top priority. Surveys show that California voters agree. In 2000, voters passed Proposition 39 which lowered to 55% the threshold for passing local education-facility bond measures. PTA believes the parcel tax threshold should conform to the same level. This would not, in itself, raise taxes, but would simply allow for local choice and control over local education funding.

PTA supports efforts to provide adequate funding for education to meet state standards. However, current state

budget practices are falling short of this goal. Local school district parcel taxes allow community leaders to solicit support from local voters for dedicated revenue to apply to specified local education priorities.

The current two-thirds requirement allows a small minority of voters to prevent a community from having the kind of school system a majority of the community envisions. PTA believes that situation needs to be corrected and will work actively to support and partner with coalitions to bring about a lowering of the threshold.

In addition to the 12 statewide ballot measures on the November 4, 2008 general election ballot, voters decided 380 local ballot measures. According to the most recent information from the Secretary of State, 21 of these measures were local school parcel taxes. Four of those measures failed to achieve the necessary two-thirds vote for approval. Some came very close, but all exceeded the 55% threshold that local school bonds enjoy.

For a copy of the convention resolution see:
www.capta.org/sections/advocacy/downloads/Resolution-2008-02-Adopted.pdf

Legislation Team

Closing the Achievement Gap

PTA believes that all children and youth should have the opportunity – and share the responsibility – to develop their abilities to their fullest potential. But some groups of children consistently lag behind. To begin to close the achievement gap, schools must connect with families and provide a culturally relevant education to help all students.

As EdSource explains: “The achievement gap stems from both home- and school-based factors. It exists before students ever cross the school threshold.”

EdSource reports:

While “poverty does not cause low achievement, it does set the conditions for it. Students living in poverty are more likely to be exposed to factors known to affect achievement, such as:

- ◆ Lack of access to proper nutrition, health care, and decent housing;
- ◆ Exposure to substance abuse and high-crime communities.”

“The cultural background of both students and educators can also play a role in student achievement.”

Narrowing the achievement gap requires a multi-faceted approach that includes:

- ◆ Adequacy in educational funding;
- ◆ Establishing and funding a statewide longitudinal data system for children;
- ◆ Preparation and retention of highly qualified teachers and administrators in all schools;
- ◆ Meaningful staff development;
- ◆ Additional help for underperforming students;
- ◆ Meaningful parent/community partnerships with the schools.

When there is an abiding belief that all children can achieve, accompanied by a comprehensive curriculum and a support system of educators, parents, and community working together, narrowing the achievement gap can become a reality.

For more information about the achievement gap, visit www.edsource.org.

Education Commission

Website Offers Tools to Close Achievement Gap

The California Department of Education’s “Closing the Achievement Gap Web Site” is now available to individuals, schools, and communities throughout California. The site contains a wealth of information — research, reports, events, and other news — specifically related to understanding and addressing California’s achievement gap.

Check it out at: www.closingtheachievementgap.org

FOUNDERS DAY February 17th



Founders Day is a perfect time to renew the dedication to the Purposes of the PTA that were defined by PTA’s Founders more than a century ago. For more than 100 years, the PTA has promoted the education, health, and safety of children, youth, and families.

Each year in February, PTA honors the three founders as well as past and present PTA leaders.

The vision of PTA’s founders has been realized in many ways, and now it is up to present PTA members to continue the vision.

This year, use your Founders Day event to help raise awareness of the issues facing children and youth in your community and to honor your PTA volunteers.

You can find planning tips as well as celebration ideas that include students, school, and families on the California State PTA website under “Founders Day” www.capta.org.

PTA Take Your Family to School Week, February 8-14, 2009

CONGRATULATIONS!

California 2009 Take Your Family to School Award Winners

Paul Ecke Central PTA
Encinitas

College View School PTA
Glendale

Torrance Elementary PTA, Inc.
Torrance

Tulsa Street PTA
Granada Hills

Promoting family involvement in children's education has been at the heart of PTA since its founding in February 1897. Take Your Family to School Week and the \$1,897 Awards honor and continue that legacy.

PTA Take Your Family to School Week is easy to implement, but more importantly, the event embodies one of PTA's founding principles: When it comes to children's education, the best way to get involved is to become part of the school community.

When schools open their doors to all families, and parents put aside their other commitments, children get to see that their education is valued, families earn a unique perspective on students' school days, and educators gain a new way to build positive partnerships with entire families.

You can find Take Your Family to School Week event ideas at www.pta.org



Five Reasons to Attend the California State PTA Legislation Conference

- Hear about current legislative issues directly from Sacramento insiders.
- Learn how to effectively communicate with legislators.
- Find out how the budget will impact your child.
- Help us carry the PTA message to new legislators.
- And ...
- Discover the power of our united PTA voice!

Join us for
the Annual California State PTA Legislation Conference
in Sacramento

February 22-24, 2009 and
Stand Up For Children!

Check our website www.capta.org for registration details.

Energize Your Membership Campaign!

Membership activities are a year-round endeavor. They require reaching out continually to new families, teachers, and other potential members in our school and communities. Share with potential members the value of being part of PTA — the nation's original and premier parent involvement group for schools, and a driving force in local, state and national education policies and programs.

Did you know that PTA members spend quality time with their families through family involvement activities at home and at school?

Did you know that PTA members make the world a better place by improving education opportunities for all children?

It is important that we remind members of the PTA difference. Let's make sure they know how to take advantage of the resources, benefits, scholarships and grants, trainings,

and programs that come from being part of a national and state structure.

Here are a few ideas to assist you in energizing your membership campaign:

- ◆ Arrange to have a PTA table at upcoming events where families and community members can learn more about PTA and become members.
- ◆ Encourage all board members to be welcoming, to mingle and introduce themselves to all at PTA and school events.
- ◆ Make personal phone calls to those families who have not yet joined. Let them know that PTA continues to work hard to help their student be successful in school. For those families who are not fluent in English, recruit members who speak the languages of your community to make personal phone call invitations.
- ◆ Use the PTA or school newsletter, e-mail, website or marquee for PTA information.

- ◆ Translate all messages and invitations into the languages of your community.
- ◆ Join PTAs across the country in connecting parents to their children's school experiences. Be part of PTA Take Your Family to School Week, February 8-14, 2009. Learn more at www.pta.org/take_your_family_to_school.asp.
- ◆ Customize promotional materials for your PTA from National PTA's website: <http://www.pta.org/1452.htm>.
- ◆ Visit California State PTA's website for membership information and articles that can help you in your recruitment and outreach efforts: www.capta.org/sections/membership/ideas.cfm.

Good luck with your ongoing membership campaign. Let's join together to reach our goal for 2008-2009:

A Million Voices for Children!

Membership Committee

Serving on Accreditation Committees

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level of quality in accordance with established criteria.

The commission extends its services to over 4,000 public, independent, church-related, and proprietary elementary, junior high, and middle or intermediate schools, high schools, adult schools, regional occupational centers, vocational skills centers and supplementary education programs.

There are thousands of educators who serve on the visiting teams to ensure the quality and integrity of the time-honored criteria of the WASC process for quality

schools. It has been said that serving as a visiting team member is by far the best professional development opportunity available in education today.

PTA members can have an important role in helping parents understand the accreditation process and in serving on the school self-study committees. Parent and community involvement is vital to the whole process of reviewing the school's purpose and school-wide student goals (expected school-wide learning results).

Education Commission

Poetry Year Kicks Off at Crittenden Middle School

Crittenden Middle School in Mountain View is hosting a year of poetry activities after receiving a grant from national PTA. Crittenden PTA was selected for the Mary Lou Anderson Reflections Arts Enhancement Grant Program.

After learning they were awarded the grant, the Crittenden PTA began coordinating a "Poetry Year." By having students, parents, teachers and community members share the experience of reading, writing and listening to poetry, they hope to strengthen the links between the various stakeholders in their school.

Poetry Year began with the Poem of the Week program. Each week a different poem is read during announcements, sent home in backpack mail to parents, distributed to teachers and posted in the library. Each poem comes with a "Poetry Challenge," prompting students to write their own poem and submit it. Students' poems are displayed in the library and at parent-attended events such as the book fair and parent-teacher conferences.

Since Crittenden's mascot is a panther, one of the first poems of the week was "The Panther" by Ogden Nash. Many students responded with their own panther poems, including this one by a 6th-grader:

*Jaguars and leopards
And lions are fine,
But none beat the panther
Who's just sublime.*

Poems of the week are tied to events at school: song lyrics for the week of the Autumn Dance; a poem called "The Running Girl" the week of the Walk-a-Thon fundraiser; poems about chocolate the week of Halloween.

Teachers join in by giving students encouragement to respond to the poetry challenge and by submitting their students' work.

The cornerstone of the program is a poet-in-residence who will lead poetry-writing workshops

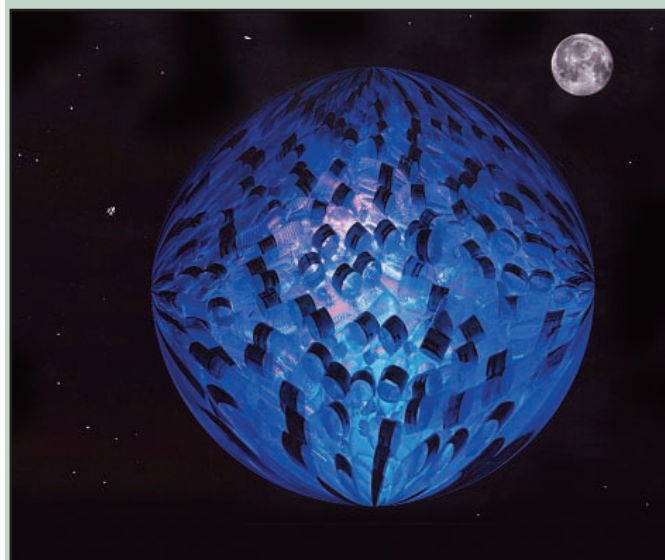
for all 7th-graders at the school beginning in January. If funding allows, the poet-in-residence will also go into classrooms at other grade levels and will lead a poetry-slam performance night for students, teachers and families.

Other poetry activities include the lunchtime arts and crafts club making frames for the poetry displayed in the library, a VIP poetry reading to bring community members into the school to present their favorite poems, and "Art Connection" activities to link the poems to visual arts such as photography and drawing.

The Poetry Year enrichment activities at Crittenden Middle School, through their variety and accessibility, will allow members of the school community new ways to express themselves and to understand each other.

– By Julie Scott
Reflections Committee

Reflections Program Finalist 2007-2008



PHOTOGRAPHY
MIDDLE-JUNIOR DIVISION: Grades 6-8

Alex Maas
23rd District
Corona Fundamental Intermediate PTSA
8th Grade
Recycling... "Save the Bottles, Save the World"

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- √ Beverage Ware
- √ Pens, Pencils & Paper
- √ Binders for the *Toolkit* and
Annual Resources for PTAs
- √ Special Items

**Be sure to check the website
for specials and new items**

Upcoming Events

January

- 15 Insurance Premiums Due
- 15 Final Resolutions Due
- 23 Reflections Program Entries Due to State Office
- 31 Workers' Compensation Annual Payroll Report Due

February

- 1 Graduating High School Senior Scholarship Applications Due
- 1 My PTA/PTSA Award Applications Due
- 2 Early Convention Registration Starts
- 8-14 PTA Take Your Family to School Week
- 17 Founders Day!
- 22-24 Legislation Conference - Sacramento

**110th Annual California State PTA Convention
April 30-May 3, 2009
San Jose Convention Center**

**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 reprinted in PTA unit, council and district newsletters only. Please credit the California State PTA.

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January 2009, Official newsletter of the California State PTA, Volume 71, No. 3. Five issues published annually. Subscription rate \$5.00. Circulation 4,800. ©2008 California Congress of Parents, Teachers, and Students, Inc. All rights reserved. PTA® is a registered service mark of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers.

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The mission of the California State PTA is to positively impact the lives of all children and families by representing our members and empowering and supporting them with skills in advocacy, leadership and communications.

Adopted July 2007

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