



Pequannock Township Education Association



CHALKBOARD

November 2011

~President's Message~

I am certainly glad to see the month of October behind us. For many of our members, the past few months have been difficult ones. Many are still dealing with the aftermath of Irene, and many, now, are still without power as a result of the snowstorm last week. Once again, if you are in need of assistance, please contact your Association Representative, or me, directly, and we will do our best to help you by sending out information via our social channels: Facebook, the PTEA Webpage, our e-mail blast, and good old word-of-mouth.

I am hoping for some good weather as many of us head down to the NJEA Convention, next weekend. The Convention is the largest professional development gathering in the country. Tens of thousands of NJEA members will gather to hear speakers such as Education historian Diane Ravitch and Manuel V. Scott, one of the original "Freedom Writers", as well as to take advantage of the free professional development opportunities offered by NJEA. The Morris County Council of Education Associations has a bus traveling to Atlantic City, and they host a wonderful gathering on the Thursday of Convention. See your Association Representative for details. I hope to see you, there!

Our First General Membership Meeting/Member Benefits Fair could have been a casualty of terrible weather, but we had close to one hundred members attend, despite the wind and rain that soaked us from head to toe. Thankfully, the Grand Chalet provided us with delicious, warm food, drinks, and even a cake to satisfy our sweet cravings. Many members won prizes, gift cards and money, and some lucky member got an all-inclusive overnight! What an antidote to stress that will be!

While the unfortunate weather is beyond our control, there are some things in our lives that we can control. One such thing is our say in whom we choose to represent us in our local, state and federal government.

November 8 is Election Day, and this one is of particular importance to those of us who are working to keep the rights of the middle class secure. As your Legislative Team has reported, there are Hedge Fund managers and billionaires who would like nothing better than to end the institution of Public Education. It is their intent to create a privatized education system whose profits would benefit only them. They are not interested in achievement, learning, or children. To that end, they are working hard, and spending a great deal of money to strip our profession of all its rights. They believe that when they have destroyed our union, they will be free to take over education.

But while they may have funds, we have something more important and fundamental. We have the right to vote.

Your Legislative Committee has composed a list of the NJEA endorsed candidates for Tuesday's election. I ask that you vote for the candidates that will support your profession and that will uphold the rights that are legally yours. I ask that you vote for the candidates whom, if they are not educators, will at the very least, preserve the ideals of free and public education.

Wishing you a wonderful November... *Lee Ann*

~Grievance~

Ann Marie Finnen (SJG)

- **FLIA Grievance:** The administration has agreed to give members the option of utilizing their personal time if they are collecting Family Leave Insurance while on an approved leave. Previously, employees were required to use their personal time, which meant that if they returned from their leave at any point during the year, they would have no personal days left to take if necessary. The Board policy which addresses this issue was revised at the October 17 Board meeting. The Association appreciates the Superintendent's willingness to revisit this policy.
- **Elementary Bus Aides Grievance:** The administration has agreed to restore the correct pay to the elementary bus aides. At a Board meeting in the summer, the BOE approved a stipend amount that was far less than these employees had previously earned, and it was calculated using contract language that does not apply to elementary aides. Again, the PTEA leadership is pleased with the outcome of this grievance, and thanks the Superintendent and Board for agreeing to resolve it.
- **Summer Pay Grievance:** As you know, the Association has agreed to a settlement in this grievance. The Board Office has restored the Summer Payment Plan with some modifications, mainly that employees who participate in this plan will now receive one check at the end of June instead of one in July and one in August. By resolving this grievance, the Association also maintains the PTEA Scholarship Program which is primarily funded using interest from the summer pay deductions.
- The PTEA has filed for arbitration in the case of an employee who was rified not in accordance with our negotiated agreement. We are awaiting an arbitration date.

~Negotiations~

Helene Zablocki (PTHS)

We finalized our agreement and distributed new printed contracts to all members last month. During the years of a contract, issues may arise that require "sidebar" agreements; that is, items that are negotiated by both the Association and the Board that the parties agree need resolution.

A few weeks ago, we met with Dr. Trusheim to discuss stipends for new extracurricular positions and then learned from NJEA that any such discussion could be considered "re-opening" the contract and would subject members to the newly legislated increases in medical contributions.

Because we will not jeopardize the two year protection from these increases that we fought so hard for last June, we cancelled all discussion about new positions. Any new position will have to be part of the next bargaining session which begins in January 2013.

Regarding "volunteering" for PTEA members: If you volunteer to work for nothing, you compromise the Association's ability to negotiate fair pay. If teacher A volunteers to advise a club or coach a sport, why would the Board pay teacher A--or teacher B--to do it? Not only are you jeopardizing your own financial standing, you threaten the ability for others to get paid for working. These are difficult times for unions and it is more important than ever to advocate for reasonable contracts and salaries.

Lastly, the Board may not be responsible for insurance protection for students or staff who meets voluntarily. That is a serious liability issue and a great risk for everyone involved.

~PRIDE~

Jamie Dean (NB) & Karen Schiffel (SJG)

Friends of Education nominations are due **December 23, 2011** to Karen Schiffel (SJG) or Jamie Dean (NB). Please include a written description describing why this person deserves this award. We will read it at the dinner when they are honored.

Morris County Poster Contest entries are due **January 10, 2012** to Jamie Dean at NB. Look or ask for the flyer from your AR with the details. This can be completed in school as a project or done at home by the student. We had a student from NB win 2 years ago.

The **Rockaway Mall Project** will be held **April 15-22, 2012**. Time to start collecting student samples! You can also take pictures of students' work and make a binder of it. We'll contact you when the date gets closer with further information such as help to set up/take down and where to send the work.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

County ESP Celebration

The MCCEA cordially invites all secretaries, aides, bus drivers, and custodial/maintenance personnel to attend the annual ESP celebration on Monday, November 14, 2011. It will be held at the Zeris Inn in Mountain Lakes. Registration is 4:00 and the program begins at 4:30, followed by the dinner and award presentation. In the past, this has been a wonderful evening to thank our Education Support Professionals for their hard work and dedication all year long. RSVP to the county office, 973-366-2206.

Food Drive



Priscilla Brown (HV) and Janet Drashinsky (NB) help to sort donations at the First Reformed Church.

The PTEA would like to thank Shop Rite of Lincoln Park for generously donating 200 paper bags for our October Food Drive. We hope our members found the bags to be a helpful reminder to participate in this critical community outreach event. Thank you to all members for your generosity and a special thanks to those who helped deliver and sort the donations on Friday, October 28. The Pequannock Food Pantry is appreciative of our partnership.

Convention

The NJEA Convention is quickly approaching. As you know, this is the largest professional development conference in the world and, as always, this year's line-up of offerings and guest speakers is impressive. All members should have received their convention badge in the mail by now. For those of you attending on Thursday, the MCCEA (our county organization) will host a hospitality suite from 3:30-5:30 in the Crown Ballroom at the Sheraton Convention Center. Hope to see many of you there!

Member Benefits Fair

Thanks to all members who helped to make our first ever Member Benefits Fair a huge success! Your PTEA Secretary, Sue Berardinelli (PTHS) planned this event to coincide with our October general membership meeting. Over 100 members came to the Grand Chalet on Thursday, October 27 and enjoyed a delicious buffet meal while learning about many outstanding benefits of our NJEA membership. Congratulations to all the prize winners, and to Karen Schiffel (SJG) who won our 50/50 raffle to benefit the PTEA Philanthropic Fund. \$135 will go directly to a PTHS graduating senior this year in the form of a PTEA sponsored scholarship. If you would like to contribute to our scholarship fund, send a check made out to PTEA Philanthropic Fund to your PTEA Treasurer, Jeri Asaro (PV). All donations are tax deductible and will be used exclusively for our scholarship program.



Vickie Walsh, NJEA Uniserve Consultant, drawing the winning 50/50 ticket.

NJEA Appointment

Your PTEA Vice President, Ann Marie Finnen (SJG) has been appointed to the NJEA Editorial Committee. She will meet with editors of our NJEA publications (Reporter and Review), the NJEA webmaster and member representatives from other areas of the state throughout the year. This committee supervises our Association publications and reviews printing contracts, advertising rates and policies. It also sets and maintains evaluation standards for articles, illustrations and style, and reviews polling and survey data to determine and recommend issues to be addressed to the membership. The Editorial Committee is always looking for member input. If you have an idea for one of our statewide publications or would like to contribute an article, contact Ann Marie.

Information from NJEA

Prudential will offer open enrollment to anyone who signs up at the NJEA Convention on November 10 and 11, 2011. The value of open enrollment is that the member does not have to answer health questions to qualify.

Members who are already covered under this program may use this opportunity to increase their benefit level by up to \$500 per month without answering health questions. Members may not insure themselves for more than two-thirds of their annual gross salary.

A member must personally attend the convention and receive the special application at booth 1331.

Questions may be asked at 800-704-1365.

Fall Focus

On October 18, PTEA members from the PTHS, PV and SJG attended NJEA's Fall Focus event held at the Zeris Inn in Mountain Lakes. Participants heard from several NJEA endorsed candidates for statewide office, as well as from our NJEA Vice President Wendell Steinhauer. The theme was "Membership Matters," and many topics were discussed, such as membership polling data, the upcoming elections and education reform. Events such as Fall Focus are available to all members, free of charge. Contact a PTEA officer if you'd like more information about getting involved.

~Upcoming Events~

- November 10-11: NJEA Convention in Atlantic City
- November 14: MCCEA ESP Celebration
- November 16: Family Bowling night at the Rockaway Lanes on from 4pm-6pm. See MCCEA website for details.
- January 5: IPD Workshop "Cyber Bullying"
- January 27-28: IPD Overnight Conference at Hamilton Park Hotel and Conference Center, Florham Park, NJ
- February 9: IPD Workshop "Response To Intervention"
- March 8: IPD Workshop "PLC Team Building"
- March 21: "What Do My Dues Do for Me" Workshop at the Hilton Gardens.
- March 29: Minority Leadership & Recruitment Forum and Dessert Reception at Hilton Garden Inn
- May 10: IPD Workshop Web 2.0 at Pequannock Township High School