



Pequannock Township Education Association



CHALKBOARD

September 2011

~President's Message~

I often tell people that I am proud to serve as President of the Pequannock Township Education Association. Often, I imagine, they think I am merely spouting platitudes.

The response from this membership to the students and families of Pequannock who have suffered the effects of the hurricane has been overwhelming. As you will read elsewhere in Chalkboard, your efforts have fed, clothed and supplied the members of this community many times over. You have dedicated money, food, clothing, supplies and, most importantly, your time.

So, no: it is not a cliché. I am proud to serve you. Humbly proud. You are exceptional human beings.

We have gotten our first paychecks. There is something very important all members should know about the ratification of the contract: when we ratified, we dodged legislation that would have taken a large chunk of money from our paychecks. We are NOT subject to this legislation, which increases in benefit contributions (thus decreasing your take-home pay), EVERY YEAR. Our contribution amount would be based on TIER FOUR of the contribution schedule! New teachers would also move directly to TIER FOUR. Instead, we have a small increase in contribution percentage in the LAST YEAR of our contract. So while we did not get a money raise, you are saved from legislation that would have reduced your take-home pay. You can read the Q and A, here: NJEA.org - Frequently Asked Questions: www.njea.org

Finally, I'd like to send out special kudos to members who have done some terrific things:

- To Leslie Ulrich, for her extraordinary job coordinating the flood victims' dinner at the First Reformed Church (and to everyone who stepped up to help in any way)
- To Ann Marie Finnen, for coordinating the gift card drive for flood victims
- To Janelle Heise, Laura Higley and Patty Sedran for taking their time to sit and greet parents at the High School and PV School Back-To-School nights

I wish you a productive and growth-filled school year.

Lee Ann Brensinger

~A Note from Your Vice President, Ann Marie Finnen~

When Hurricane Irene hit the week before school opened, your PTEA leadership asked all members who were able to participate in a gift card drive for our neighbors who were affected so drastically by the flooding. You responded overwhelmingly – throughout the first week of school I received donations of over 85 gift cards and cash totaling close to \$2000! Your generosity, at a time when many of you have suffered your own losses, speaks volumes. I am working with the staff in each building to distribute the gift cards directly to families with children attending our schools. Each gift will be a small gesture to show that our thoughts are with those that lost so much.

I originally expected that we would hold a Food Drive soon after the beginning of school. However, after speaking with the Director of the Pequannock Food Pantry, Joyce Ford-Muller, I understand that the pantry's coffers will not need to be replenished until October. I will inform members of the exact days of the drive as soon as possible. We will again need help transporting the donations to the First Reformed Church, and sorting them once they are delivered. Please stay tuned for the details and plan to assist if possible.

Many of you have asked me about PTEA apparel orders. This year, again, I will work with Initial Encounter in Pequannock to order embroidered and silk screened products, including new items. Look for an order form in your mailbox soon.

I am looking for volunteers from all buildings to help with fund raising efforts for our Philanthropic Fund which provides scholarships for graduating Pequannock seniors. You may be aware that the interest from the Summer Payment Plan deductions was what funded these scholarships. If we can no longer count on that funding, we must raise the money in other ways. Who would like to help me with this initiative? Please contact me at SJG if you are willing to get involved, and thank you in advance for your generosity and dedication. I am incredibly proud to represent each and every one of you.

~PRIDE~

Jamie Dean (NB) and Karen Schiffel (SJG)

Can you guess what once again was a great success? Why the annual Ho-Down of course! The crisp and sunny early morning weather quickly became overcast with even a brief sprinkle during the day, but the warm and friendly greetings offered by several members of the PTEA left no one feeling drab.

Special thanks to Sally Belmont, Pat Dean, Janet Drahshinsky, Susan Flood, Megan McBride, Jacleen Rizzi, Amanda Schlesinger, and Patty Sedran for taking part in this community event. The PRIDE booth is always a positive place to be. It was especially fun to see who had the better estimation skills - - the kids or the adults. And let's just say there weren't *any* adults carrying around jugs of candy!

Those who stopped by for their goodie bag and apple also received flyers celebrating the many achievements of our students and teachers, as well as the upcoming PTEA PRIDE events for the 2011 - 2012 school year. Finally, visitors enjoyed viewing photographs of activities from around our district. Thank you to all who helped with those displays.

Please consider marking your calendar for this event in September 2012. In the meantime, remember to visit your PTEA Facebook page and check-in with your building AR's. You don't want to miss out on the good things happening right here in Pequannock Township.

~Grievance~

Ann Marie Finnen (SJG)

During the summer, your PTEA Grievance Committee met with district administration about a variety of issues, and several grievances were filed. If you would like information about the following issues, or if you have any other grievance related questions, please contact your AR, or a member of the Grievance Committee.

Regarding the dissolution of the Summer Payment Plan, the Business Administrator's position is that a "summer payment plan is still available" to employees. However, as you know, the district will no longer

issue checks in July and August. The Association contends that the Board cannot simply end this long standing past practice, and we have proceeded to a Level 2 Grievance. We are awaiting a written response from the Superintendent. If necessary, we will request a Board hearing and/or file for arbitration.

The grievance concerning the Board's Family Leave Insurance Act policies has been resolved. The original policies required employees to utilize personal days if they were on approved leaves and collecting the Family Leave Insurance. The Superintendent agreed to recommend changing the policy to allow employees to utilize personal time only if they so choose, and the Board approved this change at the September 19th Board meeting. We appreciate the cooperation of Dr. Trusheim in accomplishing this change, and are pleased that our members will no longer have to return to work from a leave without any personal days.

As a result of the contract settlement, we have resolved the "movement across the salary guide" grievance. The Association has worked with members and the Board Office to ensure that everyone is paid retroactively for their graduate credits.

Lastly, the Association has requested of the Superintendent that all employees, including custodial/maintenance personnel and bus drivers have access to the district email system. Email is often the most timely and efficient method for sharing information, and we feel it is only equitable that all district employees are able to receive district emails. The administration disagrees. Although this is not a contractual issue, we are hopeful that we will come to an agreement on this issue.

~Insurance~

Laura Higley (PV/PTHS)

On June 28, 2011, new NJ Pension and Benefits legislation went into effect.

The benefits premium sharing had been 1.5% of salary as a result of the 2010 law. The new amount is going to be 3% to 35% of the premium, with the percentage each of us will pay to be based on salary and level of coverage, but at no point less than 1.5% of salary. This deduction will be phased in over 4 years, and everyone is going to be paying a different amount, and a different percentage.

The payment will go into effect when the collective bargaining agreement ends. We dodged a bullet by ratifying our contract. Thank you to the negotiations team and to everyone who voted to ratify.

Our new employee contribution to the pension plan has increased from 5.5% to 6.5% of our base salary, beginning in October. Our contribution will rise to 7.5% over the next 7 years.

There is NO COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) for future retirees, and no further COLA for current retirees. That means that the pension you retire with is the pension you will be getting 30 years later.

There is much more information about the changes to our pension and health insurance contributions at www.njea.org. There is also an article there about the lawsuit NJEA and numerous other unions have filed opposing these legislated changes.

If you are experiencing any problems or concerns with the State Employee Health Benefit Plan, please contact me and I will do my best to help you resolve the issue(s).

~MCCEA~

Diane Wolfe (SJG) and Bill Vivino (HV)

- PTEA members might be interested to know that Tri Co now offers a credit card and check card. They include points for givebacks on purchases. Check out: www.uchooserewards.com
- The Urban Ed committee Conference will be held on November 18 & 19th. Topics will include leadership and Core Content Standards.
- On October 19th there will be a county wide Professional Development Forum about Data collecting on student analysis.
- The Annual Teachers Pension and Annuity Fund (TPAF) Convention will be held on Saturday, October 22. Your PTEA President and Vice President will attend.
- This year MCCEA is hosting its first TENURE CELEBRATION! All members achieving tenure in 2010 and 2011 will be treated to a fabulous Reception at Meadow Wood Manor on October 20, 2011 at 4:30 PM. Contact PTEA President Lee Ann Brensinger (PTHS) to reserve your spot.
- Lastly, something I wish I had when my kids were toddlers...NJEA convention committee will be offering babysitting assistance to members with young children.
- Stay tuned for more county information as Bill Vivino and I will continue to attend meetings at the county level and distribute all current information to your AR's at monthly meetings☺

NJEA Summer Leadership

This past August, seven of your Rep Council members attended NJEA training on a variety of topics. The workshops were spread out over two and a half days and covered current issues regarding Pensions, Benefits, Legal Issues, RTI, and Grievance Processing. We will be sharing this information with all members throughout the year.

Dinner at the First Reformed Church

I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do. ~Edward Everett Hale

It was clear Sunday, Sept. 11, 2011 that the Pequannock Township Education Association recognized that as one they could do something, and as a group they could do even more.

As soon as Irene swooped into our community volunteers gathered together to work individually or as teams to help families gather up and begin to repair the damage that was inflicted upon their lives. As volunteers helped at any given location in town, members of the Pequannock school district were found, assisting at Friendship Hall, buying supplies at Walmart, giving food out from vans, or working side by side with families to help them sort through the rubble that was decimated by Irene's anger.

On Sunday, over 50 PTEA members, along with Dr. Trusheim and PV Principal Sue Schwartz, collaborated to provide a home cooked meal and served over 200 township people. Together with members of the First Reformed Church, our union joined together and a wonderful meal was provided - complete with piano music by Adam Piccoli.

It was amazing to walk into a sea of blue PTEA shirts lined up to serve the meal as well as blue shirts below smiling faces darting quickly around to serve and clean up. In addition, many students joined us to help serve and clean up.

We are one individually, one as a team, and we did not let what we couldn't do interfere with what we could.

SAVE THE DATE!

The first General Membership meeting of the year will be on Thursday, October 27 at the Grand Chalet in Wayne. In addition to the meeting agenda, there will be a Member Benefits Fair with free training from NJEA on all of the benefits our membership provides. A buffet meal will be included at no cost to our members. The Optical Shop, an NJEA member benefits provider, will have a full on-site shop available with single vision glasses for only \$29 for you and any family members. Bring your prescriptions. An optician will also be on site. More information about this event, including how to RSVP will be available soon in all buildings.

CHANGE OF DATE!

The PTEA New Member Welcome scheduled for September 29th is being moved to **October 6th**. It will still take place in the SJG Library Media Center and will begin at 3:30. Please RSVP to the new date to Amanda Schlesinger (SJG) by Friday, September 30th via email... alhsptea@optonline.net.

Representative Assembly

Laura Higley (PV/PTHS)

About 12,000 representatives attended the NEA Representative Assembly in Chicago during the week of July 4. This is the largest Democratic body anywhere. The purpose of the RA is to give all NEA members a voice. This was the first time PTEA chose to participate in the RA – The first time we chose to raise our collective voice for the way we believe NEA should operate. The theme of this year's RA says it best: NEA is standing strong for Our Students, Our Schools, and for America.

PTEA elected Lee Ann Brensinger and Laura Higley to represent our local, to vote for NEA officers, and also to cast votes on a wide variety of policy issues on behalf of PTEA.

Each day of the RA begins with a meeting of the representatives from each state. During these meetings, delegates hash out the issues and hold preliminary votes about policies that will be decided by the entire RA. This year, topics included legislative positions on such matters as juvenile justice, children's health, and employee rights. New business included directing NEA President Van Roekel to meet with President Obama and Education Secretary Duncan and work to correct American educational policy deficiencies, to work to positively change the ESEA. The RA worked very hard to agree on a policy statement regarding Teacher evaluation and accountability. The full agenda and policy statements are listed at NEA.org.

Having seen the important work of the RA, your 2011 representatives are convinced that PTEA must not fail to be represented ever again. Our voice must be heard.

On a personal note, we were so proud to be able to participate in the RA. It was an honor to represent each and every one of you.

Miles for Mike Memorial 5K Run/Walk

This Sunday, Sept. 25th will be the first annual *Miles for Mike Memorial 5K Run/Walk*. Please consider joining our community as we celebrate the life of Mike Coppola.

Kellie Baran, a senior at PTHS and a Girl Scout, has created this event to remember her classmate and friend while earning her Gold Award. Caitlyn Horgan, also a senior at PTHS, is the Vice President for the project in charge of collecting the funds for the scholarship created in Michael's name by his parents. The scholarship is awarded to a graduating senior whom exemplifies the same good morals and character that Mike possessed. The race begins at 8:30 at Greenview Park in Pequannock. Please arrive earlier to sign in and get your goody bag!

Registration forms are located at Pequannock Parks & Rec, Pequannock Schools, & online at <http://register.eliteracingsystems.com/>. You can also register the morning of the race 7:00 AM - 8:15 AM at Greenview Park. The course is the same as The Run for Marge.

Come out for a fun day while celebrating a terrific young man who was taken way too soon. If you don't want to run/walk, but would like to volunteer, please contact Terri Horgan at SJG / NBS or Mary Schumeko at PV.