

Amherst PTA General Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 9, 2007
Second Meeting of the 2007-2008 Academic Year
Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 13, 2007

PTA BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

President: Krista Hanks
Vice- President: Christine Poisson
Treasurer: Anna Rego
Advisor: Beth Hurd
Absent: Kristin Gaughan
Eileen Peters

PTA MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: 17

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:36pm.

Krista Hanks reported on a new National PTA member benefit. Southwest Airlines is now offering a 5% discount off of its Vacation Packages to all PTA members. Krista emphasized that this discount is for the Vacation Packages only, not individual flights. Please see the handout for more detail.

The National PTA required that a local PTA's bylaws are updated every 3 years. Our by-laws have been revised and the general membership was notified thirty days in advance of their voting. The By-Laws were posted on the PTA website. The Amherst PTA By-Laws were voted on and approved by the Amherst PTA.

Vice-President's Report

Christine Poisson reported that publicity for the PTA is ongoing and if any committee chair needs help publicizing their event please contact her at: capoisson@comcast.net or 769-3855.

Secretary's Report

The committee chairs received copies of the September 11, 2007 minutes via e-mail a week prior to the meeting. Copies were also available at the meeting. The September minutes were reviewed. Ellen Roos-Unger moved to accept the minutes. Beth Hurd seconded the motion. The minutes were accepted.

The PTA is also looking for a shadow for the Secretary's position. This is an executive board position. Anyone interested or having questions, please contact Kristin Gaughan at kristinvic@aol.com.

Treasurer's Report

Copies of the Treasurer's report were passed out for review. Anna Rego reported that the magazine drive is currently reporting sales of \$18,000 although this does not reflect on-line orders. Membership has collected \$6100 in dues to date. 90% of the Spring Grants have been paid out to date. The September financial statement was read. Porter Dodge moved to accept the September statement. Ellen Roos-Unger seconded the motion. The August financial statement was approved.

Guest Speaker: Jackie Hockett, Amherst Town Library's Children's Librarian

Miss Jackie did a wonderful job presenting the numerous on-line tools available at the Amherst Public Library.

She began by sharing the times for Fall Story time. They have added an after school story time for ages 4+ for those school-age children still wishing to participate.

She then transitioned into an introduction of the on-line Library Catalog and explained how to access it from home. She then ran through the various databases she has compiled to assist children in their school research projects. Finally, she discussed the many ways to search for books according to interest.

It is apparent from her presentation that Miss Jackie has put countless hours into collecting data and researching ways of making it accessible for our children. Thank you Miss Jackie!

Principal's Report

Clark School / Wilkins School – Gerry St. Amand

- The Wilkins computer lab, which suffered the greatest degree of damage from the August 29 fire, should be fully operational by the end of this week.
- The Amherst Fire Department is presenting safety programs to classes in both schools during "Fire Prevention Week."
- The "Teacher In-Service Day" provided a variety of informative and well-received sessions to all attendees. Ralph Fletcher, the keynote speaker, provided an informative session on "Boys and Writing" and various ways that schools and our culture favor girls and deter boys in their writing skills.
- NECAP assessments, administered in grades three and four at Wilkins in the areas of reading and mathematics, will be completed by early next week.
- Wilkins School will break with tradition for one year and will refrain from conducting the annual, outdoor Halloween parade. Students will also bring costumes from home rather than making them in classrooms. Classroom parties will continue to take place.
- "Global Connect," a new emergency phone notification system, was piloted at Clark/Wilkins in late September. This system can be used for rapid phone notification for any unplanned emergency such as an early dismissal, delayed opening, or cancellation of after school events.
- The Behavior Intervention Team, with dedicated representatives from both schools, has focused on hallway behavior for the first two months of the school year and will examine ways to incorporate the "Shining Stars" program with the behavior skills.
- Thanks to Deanne Cordts, the Clark and Wilkins nurse, Dr. Peter Row, an emergency room physician, and the generosity of the Amherst PTA, nearly all staff members have been trained on the use of the two "defibrillators" that were purchased with PTA funds.
- As part of our focus on literacy, we plan to hold informational coffees for families, starting with the parents of Kindergarten students.
- The Amherst School District Master Plan Committee, with the support of the Amherst School Board, will be presenting a \$3.9 million renovation proposal for Clark, Wilkins, and AMS to voters in March of 2008.
- The annual Magazine Drive proved to be a resounding hit with students, staff members, and families, who all spoke favorably of the benefits of "on-line" purchasing.

- Staff members at Clark/Wilkins will be surveyed to get their ideas and suggestions on how to utilize any fall grants that might be awarded to the schools.

AMS – Porter Dodge

- Porter began by thanking Dotsie Bohan and Susan Durling for a job well done with this year's Magazine Drive. He commented on how smooth the process was and how many parent volunteers came out to help.
- Porter shared that both the 6th and 8th grades are participating in the Environmental Schools this year. He reminded us that last year they decided to stop the program with the 7th grade. He believes that to be a good decision and helped alleviate some financial strain for families and make it a special event for grades 6 and 8. He said that the 8th graders enjoyed their experience and that the 6th graders are looking forward to theirs.
- Porter discussed the testing that is going on in the schools. The kids are finishing up the NECAP's this week. Last year's scores were a bit lower than previous year's. He said that the faculty worked with the students to give them techniques on how to approach the test, and he believes that the kids are taking it much more seriously this year. He is hoping to see improvement in the scores.
- Porter reinforced Gerry's comments on having Ralph Fletcher present at the Teacher in-service Day.
- The drafts of the budgets were due today (10/9) and Porter said that the numbers are pretty flat. Because AMS is overcrowded, though, they will be looking to add two portable classrooms in the fall.
- The sports and extra-curricular programs are underway.
- The school will begin practicing lock-downs and extended evacuation plans.

School Board

Nancy Head provided the following report:

The school board continues to work on updating policies and has begun the budget process. We will be going after four million dollars worth of renovations in March and hope that there are PTA members who would like to help out. Peg Bennett is the publicity chair--anyone interested should telephone her--673-1404 or email peg.bennett@comcast.net (the period between Peg's first and last name is crucial--otherwise the mail goes to a Peg Bennett who is a travel agent in Massachusetts and she will try to sell you a trip).

Committees

Holiday Storytime

Plans are in full swing for the PTA holiday storytime that will be held in Wilkins Gym on Friday December 7 from 6.30 – 8.00pm. Holiday stories will be read by community members and faculty while families can enjoy cocoa and cookies. Anyone interested in helping out on the committee should contact Kristin at kristinvic@aol.com.

Family Science Day

Family Science Day will be on Saturday, November 3rd from 10am-12pm or 1-3pm at the Wilkins Gym. This year's theme is Kitchen Science.

Bellringer

The *Bellringer* is the Amherst PTA's monthly publication and it comes out electronically. The deadline for the November issue is October 15th. Submissions should be made to Ellen Roos-Unger at: ellenbr68@alumni.umass.edu. Maureen Corrigan will be doing the layout for the *Bellringer* this year. A contest to design a new logo for the *Bellringer* is underway. Entries can be submitted through a student's homeroom teacher.

Curriculum Enrichment

Michelle Carracio provided an update on Curriculum Enrichment activity for Wilkins thus far. Most of the programs that we will be sponsoring for this year have been booked or will soon be finalized and booked.

Grade 2: Jim Parks of Wingmasters will be presenting his Birds of Prey presentation in two sessions this month to Grade 2 classes. We have also finalized a return date for February for the Pioneer Living group. We plan to invite Barbara Medlyn from Medlyn Monuments to do her in-class presentations on Rocks and Minerals in the spring.

Grade 3: Dan Grady and his marionettes will perform for Grade 3 classes later this month. Tom Wahle of Techsplorations will return in January to present his weather workshops. Bay Colony Educations will return in May for their presentation on colonial life.

Grade 4: Tom Wahle will also be back with his presentations on Simple Machines in January. Presenters from the Lowell Industrial Park will be back again in April to do their Farm to Factory presentations. And in early January, Jeannie Brett, author and illustrator (and sister of Jan Brett), will visit Wilkins School to work with Grade 4 classes in workshop settings. Details of her visit are still being worked out.

Reflections

Wendy Conway presented information on the Reflections Program. The committee is underway and sending out notices and finding judges. The deadline for submissions is January 4th. The judging will take place on January 16th at 6:30pm, and the ceremony is January 24th at 6:30pm (viewing starts at 6pm).

Adjournment

- The next PTA meeting will be in Tuesday, November 13. The PTA will be welcoming guest speakers from the Literacy Teams at Clark, Wilkins, and AMS.
- Ellen Roos -Unger made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Anna Rego seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:55pm.

Submitted by

Christine Poisson
Vice-President and Notetaker

Kristin Gaughan
Secretary