

## Charlton Heights PTA 1958-1983

### Twenty Five Years of Parents and Teachers working together for kids

The Charlton Heights PTA was conceived in the Pashley School Auditorium with an organizational meeting, and born only four days later with the election of the first slate of officers on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1958. The PTA was off and running under the leadership of Mrs. Stanley Acker, and except for a small stumble at the end of the '67-'68 school year, it is running still.

Before the building was opened, in the fall of '59, the Gazette was saying "a problem has arisen...about children walking along Old Stage Road because it is heavily traveled." On 9/8/58 "Charlton Heights PTA requests sidewalks." Despite the fact that sidewalks never became a reality, Mr. Dunham cannot remember an incident of any Charlton Heights student being struck by a car going to or from school, yet old worries stick with us and many of the concerns of that first PTA have been echoed through the years.

Delays in construction kept the building from opening in the fall and classes continued to be held in temporary space in the Episcopal Hall and the Ballston Lake Elementary School building. Not having a building didn't keep the PTA from sponsoring a new Boy Scout troop, and the Gazette tells us that troop 54 set off on its first hike on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1959.

In February the PTA was hearing from the manager of operations at WGY about how to "bring your favorite programs back, support the educational series, and be assured that excellent programs will be retained." Children were watching cartoons, and parents were worried about what effect this would have on the younger generation.

Finally, the headline appeared "New Charlton Hts. School Scheduled to open Feb. 16." The final coat of paint wasn't on the walls, but they were able to hold meetings in the new home of the PTA, the School Board was promising a crossing guard for the school, and in April Mr. and Mrs. Peter Pileggi were elected as co-presidents for the 1959-60 school year. Enthusiasm was high in this new building with a chance to do programs that would touch the needs of the Charlton Heights community. The district was still growing and Mrs. Speer, the principal, was projecting six kindergarten classes, the school board was planning to build a new Junior High School, and the PTA was raising money at a bake sale at Slim's Market on Route 50. Whatever happened to Slim's?

Fall of '59 saw the beginning of Cub Pack 4, work by parents to set up the playground, a talk by the district's reading specialist at the Oct. meeting and a square dance called by Mr. George Schacher in the gym. Mr. Joseph Kirschman was the advisor to the newly formed safety patrol, and Mrs. Myron Nazar, program chairman, had arranged for a demonstration of Ukrainian Folk Dancing for the February Meeting of the PTA. Board meetings were held in the homes of the members, and everyone was complaining about the driveway at the school that was an obstacle course of cracks and potholes. It would eventually have to be dug up and completely replaced. The year flew by and new officers were installed in April for the following year.

Mr. and Mrs. Donald Miller presided over a PTA which welcomed “Mr. Dunham, who teaches Sixth grade and is not new to our system but has just returned from a year of teaching in Okinawa” and a number of other teachers, none of whom appear on the current roster. The group was still sponsoring bake sales and was very interested in safety programs for bicyclists and walkers as there were still no sidewalks. Something new was in the air and Charlton Heights wanted to be part of it. The district was experimenting with teaching by TV. Gifts to the school were being discussed. Bicycle racks, a movie screen for the stage and landscaping were under consideration. The idea of concrete gifts to the school was popular and has resulted in the gift of: shrubs for the courtyard, stage curtains, a microscope, the metal letters spelling out the school name, three bicycle racks, the amplifier in the cafeteria, the Kindergarten playground slide, a movie screen on stage, the creative playground, library books for preschool, a microfiche reader for the library, a deacon’s bench, a picnic table for the courtyard, and the announcement case near the school office. There are surely more, but this gives a flavor of the items donated to the school by the PTA as an organization.

Glenville was booming and the schools were still too small. In September of ’61 “Glenhaven, Charlton, School Additions Slated” was a headline in the Union Star. The Superintendent of Schools and his staff moved into their new space at the former Gleason School, and the district’s first grades were meeting in the high school. PTA went on with programming of Square Dance lessons for adults, films for the pre-school parents group “terrible twos and trusting threes, and frustrating fours and fascinating fives, and a program called “Sex education for Moms and Dads.” The principal announced the beginning of an experiment at the fourth, fifth and sixth grade levels to set aside activity periods from 8:45 – 10:25 each morning. “During these periods we will concentrate as much instrumental music instruction as possible. Remedial reading instruction and chorus will be offered during this time. Other activities will be in the nature of enrichment...In addition to the above mentioned activities there will be a program based on ornithology, one stressing geography through stamp study, an opportunity to sculpture in various media...There will be study hall situations for those children who are too burdened by their regular daily studies to participate in any of the special areas.”

The Founder’s Day dinner was held in the High School Cafeteria and tickets were \$1.50. Those interested could call Mrs. Pileggi at Ext. 9-3937. Home room mothers assisted the teachers with parties, field trips, and special projects. We still enjoy parties and special projects, but we wonder what a field trip was? The treasurer’s report showed an income of \$501.45 and expenses of \$414.49.

1962-63 saw the appointment of Mr. James Dunham as Assistant Principal.

The next few years saw the continuation of many PTA programs and some additions such as the school pictures sale and the purchase of bulletin boards for the new cafeteria. The new addition was complete and the building looked much as we see it today.

During the mid sixties the PTA looked to subjects beyond the Elementary School concerns and reached out to its community with a developing concern for educational legislation, programs about the plan to build a new swimming pool at the senior high, development of the Parkside Y, and pros and cons of extending the school year. Mrs. Speer retired and was replaced by Jim Dunham with the beginning of the 1965-66 school year.

PTA was still concerned with safety, with nutrition and with the best possible education for our children.

In 1973 bus safety was a topic presented to parents in a novel way. Parents rode their children's bus routes on their way to a meeting where bus drivers narrated a slide presentation of transportation situations around the district, and drivers, the principal, and the school district business administrator answered questions.

The early seventies were a time of building communication from home to school and back again. The good communication which we take for granted had to be built up by people who cared. An important part of the communication grew from increased volunteerism in the schools as well as from PTA programs such as the one in 1972 which helped parents understand the "Special Services" offered in the areas of speech, hearing and tutorial reading. The speakers were Dorothy Kelsey who had been at Charlton Heights since 1965, Emily Speer, and Richard Bennett who had also come to the school district in 1965 after working at Mohonasen Central School and St. Peter's Hospital for retarded children. Mrs. Kelsey and Mr. Bennett are still helping our children to feel good about themselves in 1983.

The later '70's saw some ambitious projects undertaken by PTA including the map of the United States painted on the playground. The planning and securing of materials were the work of PTA adults, but the painting of the map was the work of the children of the school who had the satisfaction of a major project done and the chance to learn some geography in the bargain. Learning through fun was a recurring theme in these years with the Colonial Crafts day which brought artisans together at the school for the children to see in action. Quilting, bee keeping, rug making and much more was brought to the children at no expense to the school district and with no lost time for long bus trips to a museum. Innovation and a can do attitude have been hallmarks of the Charlton Heights PTA from its beginning. When Carol and Bob Fagan wanted a theater program for the students of Charlton Heights, they created it from nothing with the help of other caring parents. They created a program that accepts any child who wants to try out involving a great number of parents as well. This Little People's Theater reaches out to the community and may encourage other schools to try something new and ambitious. Others have joined in to keep the theater going and growing with original scripts and music, impressive costumes and a happy experience for as many as 140 children.

Two of the special people who had much to do with the excitement of the late seventies are no longer with us, but Eileen Briggs and Carol Fagan left us a legacy of their commitment to children and their community. Little People's Theater is strong and in good hands, and the programs for children in their early years and evidence of the way this PTA reaches out to its community. Eileen had a special interest in the pre-school program at Charlton Heights and beyond that in the screening program for Kindergarten called Roundup. Her work included the preparation of materials for the screening program which are used district wide.

In this twenty fifth anniversary year of the founding of the PTA at Charlton Heights, it is fitting that we should be celebrating the awarding of a special honor to this unit as the outstanding PTA chapter for 1981-82. The honor was earned through 25 years of dedication to children and the community by hundreds of people.

## Charlton Heights PTA Presidents

1958-59	Mrs. Stanley Acker
1959-60	Mr. and Mrs. Peter Pileggi
1960-61	Mr. and Mrs. Donald Miller
1961-62	Mrs. Peter Pileggi
1962-63	Mr. Thomas Ashe
1963-64	Mr. and Mrs. Dominic Marchesiello
1964-65	Mr. and Mrs. Ward Little
1965-66	Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Lemiesz
1966-67	Mrs. William Collier
1967-68	Mrs. William Collier
1968-69	Mr. Clark Briggs
1969-70	Mrs. Judy Gough
1970-71	Mrs. Peter Prosper
1971-72	Mrs. Peter Prosper
1972-73	Mrs. Janet Hopkins
1973-74	Mrs. Diana Soltys
1974-75	Mrs. Katherine Moulton
1975-76	Mrs. Katherine Moulton
1976-77	Mrs. Diane Sabourin
1977-78	Mrs. Gail Pearsall
1978-79	Mr. and Mrs. Robert Fenton
1979-80	Mr. and Mrs. Robert Fenton
1980-81	Mr. and Mrs. Robert Fagan
1981-82	Mrs. Jackie Preddice, Mrs. Judy Smith
1982-83	Mrs. Jackie Preddice, Mrs. Judy Smith

All of these men and women would extend their thanks to the board and committee members who did the work to make Charlton Heights an outstanding PTA chapter. Hopes and ideas come to nothing without the willing hands to make them a reality.