

O' Rourke Middle School PTA

April 2010

President's Post

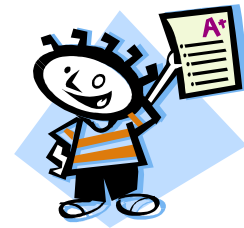
From the PTA President:

Since our last newsletter, we had a fundraiser at Five Guys Burgers in Clifton Park. And thanks to Cheryl Zatt's hard work and all of you who came to support us, we made \$247.91. Still ahead, is our Staff Appreciation Luncheon which is being chaired by Sue Hansen and Tim Sinnenberg. This is always a special event to let our teachers, administration and staff know how much we appreciate all that they do for our children. Later on in May, we will be having our First Variety Show. Mary Carrier and Poppy Picozzi are co chairing this event and they are very excited by the strong student interest and anticipate a great production to follow.

The Eighth Grade Night preparations are going well, and a special thank you to Theresa Brenon and all

of her volunteers. This is a special night for our graduating class, and it is looking like it will be an event that will be enjoyed by all.

Report Cards are coming home on April 20th, and in the envelope you receive you will find a PTA Volunteer form. Please look it over, and see if any of these opportunities would interest you. I know September is a ways away, but it helps with the planning if we have chair people well in advance. Our next PTA meeting is May 10, 2010 at 7pm in our Media Center. This next meeting is especially important because we will be voting on new officers and deciding on fundraising etc.



Continued on page 2

Principal's Piece

Let the Games Begin: April marks the beginning of a challenging testing season for our students. We can debate long and loud over the merit of the exams and their relevance to a rigorous academic program. However, as part of our mandated service we are bound to prepare our students to perform on these assessments to the

best of their ability. We then utilize these instruments as part of the many tools at our disposal to evaluate student performance, make important curricular, placement, and instruction decisions, and compare our school with those around us. These tests formulate just one of the important pieces of the complex puzzle of meas-

ures we utilize to insure that our students are developing properly into independent, self motivated learners.

We have provided for you a calendar of the testing dates and times in a past correspondence.

continued on page 3

Inside this issue:

Taste of Burnt Hills	2
Principal's Piece Continued	3-5
"Random Acts of Kindness"	5



Please join us on May 10 for the PTA meeting

President's Piece Continued

Every parent is welcome, it always amazes me how much we can learn from each other. I realize that some of you may not be able to attend meetings for a variety of reasons. Many of you are overwhelmed with work, other children and just living life, so much so that attending meetings and chairing events is not possible for you. But, please know that your opinions

matter too, you still have a great influence in our school. If at any time you have a comment, suggestion or a concern about our PTA, please feel free to email me at kmckeone1@nycap.rr.c or call me at 399-7024. I value everyone's perspective and know that our PTA will benefit from it as well. Thank you.

Warmly,
Beth McKeone



Taste of Burnt Hills

The BHBL Education foundation is collecting recipes for a cookbook representing the great variety of BH-BL cooking. Please take a few minutes to help us raise funds to continue making a difference for our schools and our students.



Has your school benefited from grants we've given? Yes, you can't walk through any of our schools without seeing the results of the grant requests we've been able to say yes to. Check our website at bhblef.org for a list. Now is the time to share your mom's great dessert, a special salad or that low fat main dish you love. Please share whatever you love to make and eat. We'll add the recipes to our cookbook and make them available to the whole community.

Please send your recipe by April 30th via email to lisa124@msn.com or to BHBL Education Foundation at PO Box 568 Burnt Hills NY 12027

PTA Newsletter - April 2010 – Principal's Corner Continued:

This information can also be accessed on our school's website. Because the State Education Department has compacted the testing dates into a very short spring assessment window, we are concerned that our students will be put under more strain than usual due to the pacing of the schedule. Therefore, we are encouraging parents to be a bit more sensitive to the unusual nature of the schedule and take a few measures at home to relieve some of the stressors. Please consider the following ideas as a way to help your child navigate their way through the rigors of this process:

- Make sure that students get plenty of sleep and rest. Young adolescents may demonstrate a propensity to not want to sleep, but their developmental needs warrant that they require more sleep than the average adult...
- Regular meals and appropriate nutrition can positively enhance a student's development, particularly during a time of stress and strain...
- Frequent hydration, water preferred, can energize the body, stave off unwanted toxins that sap energy, and increase lethargy, as well as stimulate the brain to perform more efficiently...
- Regular, sustained exercise can increase positive blood flow, diminish body toxins, prevent illness and disease, induce uninterrupted sleep, and increase positive brain activity, to name a few...
- Relaxation exercises, hobbies, music, reading, and other forms of stress reducers will help developing adolescents cope with external stressors, while providing them with activities to refocus their negative energy into positive results...
- Daily direct and open communication builds trust and enables children to relieve some of the internal stress that is an integral part of their daily development as an adolescent...

Positive reinforcement and encouragement is one of the most influential factors in helping a child to succeed in the rigorous school setting. Young adolescents want to be noticed, supported, and praised, but they also crave a structured way of life, contrary to their desire to become independent.

Obviously, this is not an exhaustive list of ideas to support the many needs of our children as they navigate the rigorous waters of adolescent development. As parents, you understand your child better than anyone. Your instinctive and intuitive approaches to helping them understand the stressors they face each day and the many ways in which they can deal with those challenges will help them as they grow and develop.

Cyber Safety: Technology has presented each of us with a double edge sword with which to contend as we utilize its vast array of navigational tools to explore the ever expanding world around us or to simply communicate more effectively. The leap into cyberspace may come with a price however as we willingly, or not, open up our lives for myriad of other people to observe and manipulate. Whether we navigate the cyber world using our computers, cell phones, GPS systems, Easy Pass or other devices, we run the risk of having every aspect of our lives scrutinized. Privacy no longer exists once our personal information has hit the airways.

For our children, we are seeing a growing rate of cyber issues that have led to predatory activities, violence, crime, bullying, identity theft, sexual misconduct, and other incidents of misled judgment. Children are exposed to more information than ever that can positively or negatively influence their lives. Their skills to be able to disseminate what is healthy information for them and that which is not are complex and daunting. Their ability to navigate cyber navigation has not developed enough to make the appropriate choices when using these tools. The pressures placed upon them by their peers sometime overwhelm their judgment in making sound cyber choices. They are also less inclined to engage in constructive activities outside of the home, while losing their ability to socialize with others in face to face situations. They are developing other disorders directly or indirectly related to the amount of time they spend using technology, while narrowing their ability to think creatively and act responsibly. Accountability for their actions has eroded and many children are now becoming actively addicted to such tools as texting. Cyber communication in a negative sense has no direct consequences. Therefore children become exceedingly bolder in their ventures. As parents and educators it is becoming more difficult to manage effectively the children's day to day machinations of these instruments.

In 2008 the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services published a series of articles, TV ads, and documentaries on the complex issues surrounding the use of technology for our children. I will try to capture some of that information for you in the brief text below. I hope to have some of this pertinent information and supporting video clips on our website in the near future for your review. Please stay tuned for updates on the progress of that initiative.

Some food for thought regarding technology use and your child (according to 2008 Criminal Justice Services Report):

- "Decide on a strategy to employ with regard to technology use..."
- "Some internet material is unsettling, but unavoidable." Have a plan to minimize this contact and deal with it when it occurs...
- "Instill a sense of caution, not fear when teaching your children to use the Internet..."
- "The good outweighs the bad..."
- "Ask questions...offer thoughts..."

Statistics that will make you take notice:

- 87% of teens aged 12-17 use the Internet...
- 51% use the Internet daily...
- 45% of teens have cell phones and 38% are texting...
- 75% of teens use Internet messaging...

81% of teens play online games...

Some of the risks:

- Online enticement...
- Access to and distribution of pornography and other criminal activities...
- Cyberbullying...
- Identity theft...
- Sexting...

Stalking, pedophilia, and soliciting...

Victimization of Youth:

- "1 in 7 (13%) children received sexual solicitation in the year of the survey..."
- "1 in 3 (34%) had unwanted exposure to pornographic materials..."
- "1 in 11 (9%) were threatened or harassed..."
- "1 in 25 (4%) were aggressively solicited..."

Personal profiles are compromised daily due to the inherent nature of IM software...

You Tube Networking:

"65,000 clips are uploaded daily..."

"100 million clips are viewed daily out pacing MySpace..."

"44% female participation and 56% male..."

"12-17 year olds are the dominant age group participating..."

Dealing with Cyberbullying:

- Be vigilant in monitoring your child's cyber activity...
- Discuss and enforce Internet/technology rules with your children...
- Place your computer in a "family" area for easy viewing, not in private bedrooms...
- Use prescribed blocking technology...
- Check the cyber history on your child's technology regularly...
- Preserve evidence if your child is cyberbullied...
- Enlist the assistance of the service provider...
- Contact the parents of the bully directly...
- Seek the assistance of law enforcement agencies...
- What should parents do?
- "Learn everything you can about computers, the Internet' and related technology..."

***Continued on page 5

Please send news items to:

Hey hansens@aol.com



Thank you Girl Scout Troop #2379 for your participation in "Random Acts of Kindness". Fleece animal blankets were donated to a local animal shelter, books were donated to the CHES Library, PARP book swap and doctors' offices and hospital waiting rooms in our community.



www.bhbl.org

Principal's Post Continued

- "Communicate with your children..."
 - "Place computers in a well trafficked area, not a child's bedroom or a secluded area..."
 - "Ensure that they do not divulge detailed personal information when completing "profiles" and minimize dissemination of this information..."
 - "Keep all accounts in your name..."
 - "Know your child's passwords and screen name and insure that screen names do not provide personal information..."
 - "Consider using computer/Internet management software and set parent controls..."
 - "Periodically review Internet bookmarks, history files, temporary Internet files, keyword searches and determine what it means if these identifiers are cleared..."
- "Know the Internet acronyms, text shorthand and emoticons (netling.com, noslang.com, acronym-

finder.com)..."

Warning Signs:

- "Significant increases in online time..."
- "Receives phone, email, or mail from someone you do not know..."
- "Quickly exits IM, chat, email, websites, and other activities when you are near..."
- "Increase use of slang, explicit language, adverse or unusual knowledge base, frequent withdrawal from family and friends, new set of contacts or friends..."
- "Begins using new screen names or an online account belonging to others..."

"Is reluctant to discuss cyber activities or you concerns..."

Remember the 4 R's: Recognize techniques used by online predators to deceive victims..." Refuse requests for personal information..." Respond assertively if you are ever in an uncomfortable situation online. Exit the

program, log off, or turn off the computer...Report, to a parent or other trusted adult, any suspicious or dangerous contact that makes you uncomfortable..."

Educating children about the value and hazards of the cyber world will go a long way to helping them navigate the airways safely. As much as you may trust your child and their Internet intentions, it is always a good thing to put in safeguards to protect their interests.

Educating children about the value and hazards of the cyber world will go a long way to helping them navigate the airways safely. As much as you may trust your child and their Internet intentions, it is always a good thing to put in safeguards to protect their interests. A simple, innocent venture into cyberspace can often lead to unintended compromises in their lives by others with more aggressive agendas. As we coach our students here at school, once your information is out there in cyber space, it is there forever. So, think before you act and act responsibly.

-Don Germain