

Lobby Day and Virtual Lobby Day 2016

By Susanne Smoller, NYS PTA Legislation Coordinator

On February 29, 2016, 20 NYS PTA Key and Local Advocacy partners went to Albany to meet with legislative leaders to advocate for issues related to funding our schools, family and community engagement, early childhood education and the heroin/prescription opiate/opioids epidemic.

Following training, which reviewed the advocacy process and details about NYS PTA's positions, this band of dedicated volunteers boarded a bus to the NYS Capitol.

The passionate group of youth and adult advocates met with Senate Education Committee



Chair Senator Marcelino, representatives from Assembly Education Committee Chair Catherine Nolan's office, staff from Senate Majority Leader Flanagan's office, Assembly Leader Carl Heastie's Chief of Staff, and Jere Hochman from the governor's office.

All the representatives were in agreement to restore the GEA (which was approved in the NYS Budget) and the need for everyone to be proactive regarding the opiate epidemic.

Although the representatives were not on board with all of our concerns, they were willing to listen and to work with us to address our concerns.

Our PTA volunteer advocates, representing all parts of our state from Buffalo to Suffolk County, took the time to reach out to their own legislators to provide information on NYS PTA advocacy positions.

At the end of the day, all our advocates will be bringing the issues back to their home communities.

The passion for advocacy came through on Virtual Lobby Day as 3,901 messages went out



via the NYS PTA Action Center to New York's legislative leaders, asking for support on our key issues.

We are proud of our Key and Local Advocacy Partners and all members that continue to "Communicate to Advocate."



INSIDE:

- 2** NYS PTA and National PTA Presidents' Messages
- 3** Education
- 4** Leg/Ed 2016

- 5** Advocacy
- 6** Family Engagement
- 7** Leadership Awards

- 7** Wellness
- 8** Membership
- 9** Special Education Technology

- 10** Share Your Awesome
- 11** Reading and Literacy
- 12** Events Calendar

MESSAGE FROM BONNIE RUSSELL, NYS PTA PRESIDENT

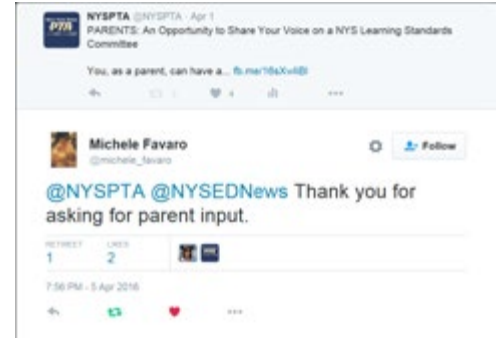


Bonnie's Corner



NYS PTA President Bonnie Russell shares “NYS PTA Response to NYS Adopted Budget” in her “Voice of NYS PTA” blog post.

Click [here](#) to read her latest message.



MESSAGE FROM LAURA BAY, NATIONAL PTA PRESIDENT



Laura's Corner

National PTA President Laura Bay shares “4 Ways to Get Involved in Your Children's Education” in her “One Voice” blog post.

Click [here](#) to read her message.



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What's Up in Education? Everything!

By Catherine M. Romano, NYS PTA Education Coordinator

News media broadly covered the education budget and changes in leadership at the NYS Board of Regents.

More details were revealed at the April 18-19 NYS Board of Regents meeting including:

Chancellor Rosa called for a new committee to use research support to policy decision-making at the Board of Regents. She named Regent Johnson as committee chair, with other members to be named at the May meeting.

Regent Tallon reviewed what funding NYSED did and did not receive at the recent meeting. For NYS PTA, the ask for funding (\$25 million) for an Office of Family and Community Engagement was addressed by a \$2 million allotment within the \$20 million ask for funding Success of Boys and Young Men of Color.

We expect staff hires and scope of work to be released by year end. The budget review PowerPoint is [here](#).

At the April meeting, the Board of Regents authorized a "Seal of Biliteracy". This seal is available to schools, who are empowered to provide this recognition on student diplomas. Schools must establish a committee process to apply for permission to recognize students with established criteria as cited [here](#).

A summary of the Regents discussion and actions related to P-12 policy can be found [here](#) with details below:

- [Standards Review timeline](#)
- [Adoption of Transition Ratings for APPR](#)
- [Two Year Strategy for Academic Intervention Services](#) and [PowerPoint](#)

- [Issues with Receivership and Emergency Regulations for Receivership report](#) and [PowerPoint](#)

Over protests, state removes funding eligibility from improved receivership schools. Click [here](#) to read.

Review of the new EdTPA and certification of new teachers is on the Regents radar; for details click [here](#).

Commissioner Elia had an hour long filmed interview that covered timely issues like the standards review process and timeline, adjustments to assessments, and the need to address many education issues in a thoughtful manner. Watch the full interview to get a perspective on her thoughts [here](#).

Congratulations!

Baldwin Middle School PTA won a \$200 Ticket Monster voucher! We look forward to hearing about the creative way Baldwin Middle School PTA uses this voucher to help grow their membership even more.

SURPRISE! We have a WINNER!

Congratulations!

Baldwin Middle School PTA

Units with an increase in Membership over last year by March 31 were entered into a drawing for a \$200 voucher from Ticket Monster!

Leg/Ed Conference 2016 – *Mission Possible: Act Today for a Better Tomorrow*

By Jane Harsba, NYS PTA Vice President

In February, NYS PTA members gathered to explore the theme of Mission Possible: Act Today for a Better Tomorrow at the 2016 NYS PTA Legislation/Education Conference. Leg/Ed featured:

- 24 hours of non-stop advocacy
- Education leaders and policy-makers
- Inspiring student performance by the EPIC Theatre Ensemble
- Informative workshops
- Hands-on training
- Keynote by Regent Judith Johnson
- Virtual Lobby Day Rally

Click [here](#) to read more.



NYS PTA Leg/Ed Conference Videos

If you were unable to attend our Leg/Ed Conference in Albany, New York, we have videos of General Sessions I, Regent Johnson's Keynote, and the EPIC Theatre performance.

Click [here](#) to watch, or visit our [YouTube channel](#).

Taking Issues to Action

By Susanne Smoller, NYS PTA Legislation Coordinator

March 8, 2016 was Virtual Lobby Day. However, that is not the end of advocacy efforts. NYS PTA is a year round advocacy organization.

We are currently focusing on four issues of importance to our members. These include:

- adequately funding schools
- supporting and funding family engagement initiatives
- fully funding and supporting early childhood education initiatives
- fully funding and implementing heroin and prescription opiates/opioid treatment and prevention initiatives

These concerns affect all communities across our state. NYS PTA has provided resources available on the [advocacy page of our website](#) to help regions, councils and units create local advocacy initiatives.

When you have determined your priorities for advocacy, it is important to see what people and community sectors are allies to your efforts. Bring these people into a planning session and develop an action plan. Think about what you want to happen, who is going to carry out the details, your timeframe, what resources do you need, and how will you communicate your plans to your organization.

Document everything. This will help for future plans and action steps. If you decide to approach a school or elected official, follow up after your meetings. Do your homework in advance of any meeting. Use the NYS PTA positions in [“Where We Stand”](#) to support your efforts. The Advocacy Alert and Legislation Summary documents give specific information and wording you can use as well. Leave talking points and your contact information with the people you are meeting with so they can reach out to you.

Finally, always say thank you. Remember, the NYS PTA Advocacy Team is here to help and support you.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family Involvement vs. Family Engagement

By Kim Blasiak, past Family Engagement Coordinator

Many of us, as parents, think that we’re engaged with our child’s school.

How many of us have brought in the box of tissues or attended PTA meetings, making sure to nod our heads, grab a cookie and head out the door?

We come in and do our one hour of volunteering and we don’t think about the details.

We seem *engaged* because we’re listening, but really, we’re *involved*.

Merriam Webster’s dictionary defines involvement and engagement as:

Involvement: *To enfold or envelope.*

Engagement: *To interlock with; to mesh.*

In order to be engaged, we need to be a part of the process, in a full partnership between home and school.



By being “involved” we are not truly a part of the process. By being “engaged”, we are asking questions and being asked. We are building relationships and working together to improve the welfare of all children.

We need to reach out to the schools and the districts and ask how we can become a partner and part of the process.

For some ideas on how to start, click [here](#).

Practical Ways to Engage and Motivate Volunteers

By Judy Van Haaren, NYS PTA Vice President

Volunteers are the heart and soul of our association. How will you inspire them to return to your meetings each month?

One of the greatest challenges facing a volunteer leader is recruiting and engaging your volunteers to help accomplish project/team/committee goals.

What's more, a good leader recognizes that engaging volunteers is more involved than signing people up to work on a project. It requires leaders to understand what help is needed, what skills and talents are required to accomplish the project, and what form of motivation will truly excite a volunteer to commit to the project.



- Provide meaningful tasks and tell volunteers how their work contributes to the overall success of your PTA's organization or project.
- Give volunteers an orientation that links their participation to the broader mission of the PTA.
- Create positions that achieve diverse tasks.

- Don't assign tasks that are unorganized or waste time; show your volunteers respect.
- Consider the individual PTA volunteer and don't ask a volunteer to do something he or she can't handle.
- Give volunteers clear directions and the necessary tools to perform tasks. Be available to answer questions.
- Seriously consider volunteers' advice and recommendations. Listen.

For more information on this topic and other board-related topics, visit our website [here](#).

Excerpted from the *NYS PTA Resource Guide* – Section 3, Page 33 – The PTA Board.

AWARDS

Youth Humanitarian Award – in Memory of Stanley Marcus

By Helen Hoffman, NYS PTA Awards Specialist

The Stanley Marcus Award is presented to high school junior or senior students who best exemplify the humanitarian principles of Stanley Marcus, who died in 1977 while serving as third vice president of the NYS PTA. He will always be remembered for his humanitarianism and dedication to youth through zealous volunteer community service. PTA believes it is fitting that we honor such service by our young people through this award.

The state winner received a plaque and a \$250 check. Each region winner also receives a plaque acknowledging their success.

This year, eight regions submitted their winning applications to the state. It gives us great pleasure to announce the New York State PTA 2016 Youth Humanitarian Award – in Memory of Stanley Marcus winner is:

Joel Wheeler – Maine Endwell High School, Southeastern Region

We would also like to acknowledge the region winners as follows:

- **Alexandra Baffo** – Smithtown High School West, Suffolk Region
- **Chanel Meyer** – Port Jervis High School, Central Hudson Region
- **Anna Crowell** – Fairport High School, Genesee Valley Region
- **Michaela Beconsall** – Southside High School, Nassau Region
- **Emma Okoniewski** – Wilson Central School, Niagara Region
- **John Cogan** – Colonie Central High School, Northeastern Region
- **Pierre Coupin** – Rye Neck High School, Westchester-East Putnam Region

Congratulations to Joel Wheeler and all the region winners for their accomplishments!!!



Wellness News

By Lucille Vitale, NYS PTA Wellness Coordinator

With the warmer weather finally here and the school year nearly over, Prom is right around the corner.

Many Junior and Senior Prom plans are already under way...but how can you make prom night fun, filled with fond, everlasting memories... and also keep it safe for your teens?

Planning should start by making smart decisions now that will keep prom night safe, low stress AND fun.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has some great tips for prom night so you can plan for a great experience this prom season. Read the entire article [here](#).



Summer vacation plans are already in the minds of many; some people may have already booked their great family trip.

However, with Zika virus possibly breaking out in many vacation hotspots, how can you keep yourself and your family safe?

Knowing about the virus and how to prevent contracting Zika is a great start.

Learn about the virus and ways to prevent it:

- [CDC – About Zika Virus Disease](#)
- [CDC – Zika Virus Prevention](#)

LEAD IN WATER: Pandora's Box

By Anne Ehrlich, NYS PTA Health Specialist

Flint, Michigan has become the poster child for lead contamination of drinking water.

In April 2014, a decision was made to save money by switching Flint's public water source from the Detroit water supply to the Flint River.



The new supply of water was found to have corrosive properties that destroyed the protective coating in pipes, resulting in the leaching of lead into the water.

Since this issue hit the news, testing results from Virginia Tech show levels up to 1,000 ppb. (15 ppb or parts per billion is equivalent to 15 µg/L or micrograms per 1,000 mls.)

A drinking water lead level above 15 ppb is considered "actionable" by the Environmental Protection Administration (EPA).

The EPA reminds us that there is no level of lead in drinking water that should be considered safe.

The regulations are very complicated and the water supply is very complicated.

Lead levels for water leaving a treatment facility, coming from the tap at home, or coming from a school drinking fountain, will all be different and have different regulatory standards.

We live in an old house with well water. We bought a home test kit from the internet department store that starts with "A" and learned that there is no lead in our water.

Moreover, your water at home has different levels of minerals, depending on how long it has been sitting in pipes.

If you take a drink after eight hours of sleep and don't run the water for a while, you may be getting a much bigger dose of lead and whatever else is in your water than if you had drawn the water after washing 10 pounds of home-grown potatoes.

The story of Flint made many of us across the country worried about our own water.

Click [here](#) to read more.

Membership Round-Up at SLC!

By Sean Hannam, NYS PTA Membership Coordinator

Howdy Cowboys and Cowgirls! Come and Ride Into The Future With PTA at the 2016 Summer Leadership Conference this July 22-24 at Utica College.

With so many reasons for our units to advocate for the students across New York State this year, membership is going to be more important than ever. This continued focus on membership and our members can be overwhelming if you don't have the information to do the job right! For that reason, we are offering two different membership workshops this year:

Membership Made Easy – Learn the latest changes to the new online membership

system! We will discuss the paperwork, procedures, deadlines and organizational tips that will make your membership drives successful. Make sure that you have all the correct information and learn all the tips and tricks to make membership easy. By the time you leave this workshop you'll have all the tools and answers you'll need to manage your membership faster and more efficiently than ever before.

Marketing Your PTA To Increase Your Membership – We will discuss the relevance of PTA in today's changing world and how to appeal to a wider group of people. This workshop will help you target specific demographic

groups. You will leave with new ideas and tools to increase your membership and business sponsorships.

We hope you'll saddle up and ride on over to meet the new membership team this July in Utica!



Planning Your Summer Vacation? Carry the Card that Counts!



Did you know that your PTA Membership can help create great family memories?

Your membership card does more than support your PTA. It can be your ticket to special events, vacation spots and family fun.

Are you thinking about an Orlando vacation? Our partner [Orlando Employee Discounts](#) can help. Whether it's a free day at Disney World, a discounted vacation home rental,

free room upgrades, or a customized Orlando vacation package, your PTA membership can help you create a fun-filled family vacation.

Is your family into professional or college sports? Do you have an Adele fan in your house? How about conquering the biggest roller coasters around? Our partner [Ticket Monster](#) can save you money on concert tickets, Yankee (or Red Sox!) games, theme parks and movies.

If you live in or plan to visit the Capital District or Adirondacks, our partners have that covered, too. Ride a zipline or conquer the Treetop Challenge Course at [Mountain](#)



[Ridge Adventure](#) in Glenville, NY. Head up to Lake George and visit [Six Flags Great Escape](#). Order your Great Escape tickets ahead of time and avoid the line.

Joining your local PTA not only benefits your child and helps your school, your PTA membership can also bring your family closer together.

TICKET MONSTER PERKS

**HUGE SAVINGS ON
SPORTS, CONCERTS
AND THEATER
EVENT TICKETS!**



Stress and the Special Ed Parent

By Joyce Cattani, NYS PTA Special Education Specialist

Once parents hear the words “Special Education” they often go into panic mode.

They might have heard people say, “I’m sorry” or “You’re lucky to have a ‘normal’ kid too.” They have now entered a world that they are not prepared for. It is a world full of new terminology.

There is so much to think about and decisions to make. Parents need to learn how to work with special education teachers and other specialists who educate their children. They need

What is a parent to do?

Stop and breathe.

to understand the system of special education and their rights under the law.

They worry. They feel guilty. They feel alone. What is a parent to do? Stop and breathe.

Of the roughly 2.5 million students who currently attend public school in New York, 476,484 (aged 3-21) receive special education services.

Special education is defined as specially designed instruction services or programs to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. It is provided in the most typical setting appropriate for the child and at no cost to parents. Children with disabilities can cost public schools 2-3x times more than those without disabilities.



The federal government originally committed 40% toward IDEA funding. However, the actual amount funded has been no more than 18.5%. To many people, these numbers are just numbers. But for parents all of this only matters to one child, theirs. Click [here](#) to read more.

TECHNOLOGY

Save Your Ice Cream Social and Other Great Reasons to Use Google Drive

By Nori Gartner-Baca, NYS PTA Publications Specialist

The Ice Cream Social is just a few weeks away. Mary is looking for volunteers to staff the event, but Gina is the keeper of the volunteer database. Matt needs to know how much ice cream to order but can’t find last year’s event information. Roz wants a copy of the flyer to send home with students, but her version isn’t the most recent.

What is a unit to do?

Logistical issues like this can derail an event quicker than ice cream melts in the hot sun. However, there is an easy and free way to remedy the situation.

Share documents with [Google Drive](#).

Using Google Drive allows you to access your work anywhere, anytime. Drive speaks all languages.



You won’t have to worry if Gina’s database is in Excel, while you are on a Mac.

Documents are stored in the ‘cloud’ and can be openly edited by multiple users while continuously saving to the original document.

There are never multiple versions and documents are secure. Users can track changes and revisions.

And even better? Drive accounts include 15GB of free storage for a typical user.

So go ahead and send those event photos to the yearbook coordinator and cut out the need for easy-to-lose thumbdrives.

This could just be the time saver your unit needs. You won’t need to wait for someone to email you the file you need, just hit the shared drive and view it instantly.

Can’t remember what was done last year and the former chairperson won’t get in touch? Check the Drive.

The app can be found in both [Apple’s App store](#) and [Google’s Play store](#).



Awesome From Around New York

#NYSPTAAwesome



New York State PTA
Published by Nys Pta 171 · February 11 · 4h

Kudos to the Brittonkill PTSA on this awesome idea for an event to both celebrate the founding of PTA and look toward the future of their association. #NYSPTAAwesome



*Embracing our Past...
Creating our Future*

A visit with PTA Founder Alice McLellan White Binney (a historical re-enactment)

SHARE YOUR STORY!

New York State PTA
www.nyspta.org

Please join us for this special event...
Please join the Brittonkill Parent Teacher Student Association, 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 10th as we celebrate the legacy of our Founders and look ahead to our future.

Through a historical re-enactment, all have an intimate conversation with educator, advocate and National PTA president Alice McLellan Binney to learn about the social issues that led to creation of the National Congress of Mothers, or now called the Parent Teacher Student Association.

Other agenda items include, but are not limited to:

- use of technology to accommodate virtual meetings
- grant opportunities for teachers
- latest information on the PTA's involvement in the elementary principal search
- an update on the International Day device

Legal is needed to help us determine ways that we can BEST SERVE OUR CHILDREN. We host in the Elementary School Library. Homework facilities, computers and special activities are provided, so children are welcome to attend.

in collaboration with PTA Founder Alice McLellan White Binney
Wednesday, Feb. 10, 7:00 PM
Brittonkill Elementary School Library
10000 S. Hug St. 01218

Huth Road PTA
February 5 · 4h

This morning, third graders learned about Sir Isaac Newton from Dr. Bird. He got everyone's attention as he demonstrated the laws of gravity with these fun tricks. Later, the students got to participate in six interactive stations. Ask your third grader about them tonight!



135 Views

Like Comment Share

NYSPTA Retweeted
Milton Terrace Elem @MiltonTerrace · Feb 8
Congrats to #FoundersDay honoree @jenniferusso11 - thanks for all you do! #bscd @NYSPTA #PTAExcellence @MTE_PTA



12

NASSAU REGION IS HEADING TO FLORIDA!

By Jacqueline Wilson, NYS PTA Field Support Coordinator

The Nassau Region PTA E-Cigarettes resolution, which was approved by NYS PTA at our 2014 Annual Convention, is set to be on the floor in Orlando, Florida at the 2016 National PTA Convention this summer.

The dynamic delegation of eight board members will be headed to Orlando, excited to present, support and hopefully celebrate the adoption of this important resolution.

Let's all show them our support and good luck!

- Did your PTA create a program that the school and community can't stop talking about?
- Was your new membership campaign wildly successful?
- Did you meet with lawmakers to tell them what is important to your members?

Don't keep your *Awesome* a secret! Other PTAs need inspiration so they can be just as *Awesome*.

Your unit can help other units unleash their *Awesome*, and create new programs, increase membership, and educate elected officials.

Share your *Awesome* story!

Email your pictures, articles, links to videos, social media posts, flyers, etc. to NYS PTA at NYSPTAAwesome@nyspta.org or share them and use the hashtag #NYSPTAAwesome on social media!

Thanks for being *Awesome*!

PARP – This Year & Next

By Stephanie Avidon, NYS PTA PARP Specialist

PARP, now called **Pick A Reading Partner**, is something every school should consider doing.

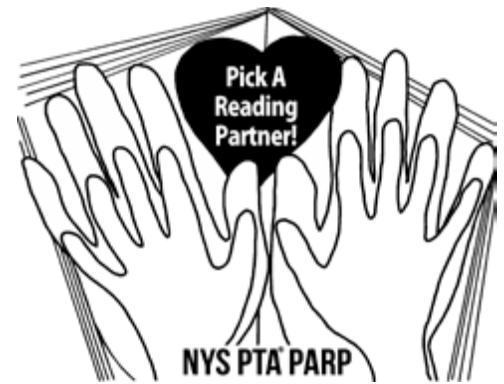
You create the program for as long or as short as you want, to fit into any size budget. Check out the PARP Toolkit online [here](#) in the right-hand column. There are great suggestions for PARP chairs and parents to use to encourage the love of reading and suggestions for reading together.

This year: If you hosted a PARP program this year, consider entering it for a **PARP Award**. The PARP Application for the 2016 Pick A Reading Partner Award is available online

[here](#). Each region selects one winner. NYS PTA then selects one winner from that group to be the 2016 NYS PTA PARP Winner, recognized at the 2016 Annual Convention. All applications must be postmarked by June 15, 2016 and sent to your region director.

Next year: We recently updated and expanded the **“Authors Who Will Answer Children’s Letters”** list (found in Section 5, page 6 of the [PARP Toolkit](#)). This is a cost-free event to add to your PARP program.

Many of these authors will also visit schools – a great PARP program activity. Start planning your budget for next year now and make sure



you have the money to do what you want – an author visit, a special kick-off or closing assembly, give-away items for all the children or the winning class – whatever you want and is appropriate for your school.

If you have any questions, contact your region PARP chair or email me at parp@nyspta.org.

What is Literacy?

By Tamalin Martin, NYS PTA Literacy Specialist



Literacy, in the 21st century, is not just about reading. While literacy, in a traditional definition, is noted as the ability to read and write well; it can also refer to specialized knowledge within a particular area.

Basic literacy is the skill that opens doors to everything else. And yes, the other competencies hinge on this one fundamental element. It

is imperative to be able to read and write well, especially in today’s global society.

Being literate is being more than just reading proficiency. Literacy involves evaluation, assessment and effective management of information within a particular arena. Literacy is the ability and application of skills to effectively connect, interpret and discern the intricacies of the world in which we live. **Literacy is powerful!**

Our society is rapidly changing and the technological skills to keep up are ever-evolving. To succeed, one must be able to problem solve and face the complexities that arise every day.

Our children must learn and be literate in ways that don’t even exist yet. We, as adults, have to teach our children how to persevere and persist in being literate. This means knowing how to struggle and how to work through conflict or situations that are not easy.

Being able to think critically, solve problems and find solutions is essential. Support your

child’s literacy development. Let’s help our children not only survive, but flourish!

Below are a few links for more thought-provoking information on literacy:

[Literacy.org: research and innovation for a more literate world](#)

[Thoughtful Learning: What are literacy skills?](#)

[UNESCO: Education for All Global Monitoring Report, Chapter 6, Understandings of Literacy](#)

[3P Learning: Why is literacy so important?](#)



CALENDAR

TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

MAY 2-6, 2016



SUMMER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

JULY 22-24, 2016

Utica College
Utica, NY



**RIDE INTO THE FUTURE
WITH PTA!**

120TH ANNUAL CONVENTION



NOVEMBER 11-13, 2016

Saratoga Springs, NY

UPCOMING AWARD DEADLINES

May 15, 2016

[Family Engagement Award in Honor of Jami-Beth Knapp](#)

June 15, 2016

[Pick A Reading Partner Award](#)

[Leadership Award in Honor of Jane Skrzypek](#)

[Twin Projects: Teacher Fellowship for Graduate Study in Memory of Richard Gazzola](#)

IMPORTANT MEMBERSHIP DATES

May 31, 2016

Final [membership payments](#) due to state office

June 2016

Final online [membership reimbursement checks](#) sent from state office

July 2016

Insurance certificates sent to paid units with [updated officer information \(Form A\)](#)

FOR OUR LATEST INFORMATION, CONNECT WITH NYS PTA:

