

Hunters Horn

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President's Message

I didn't attend a PTA meeting until my fourth year as a parent at Hunters Woods. I'd been a room parent every year, organized class baskets and class parties, gone on field trips, and helped in the classroom. I felt very involved and invested in Hunters Woods. Then, at baseball practice, another mother was leaving to head to the PTA meeting, and she asked if I wanted to go. Over the preceding years I'd considered going, but never felt a real pull. I was already so involved, what else could I do? How much more could there be? Turned out, there was more I could learn about the school, more I could do (without investing much more time), and a lot more children whose lives I could impact.

There were the Principal's monthly reports, offering insight into the planning, yearly schedule, staffing issues (attend the PTA meetings to be the first to learn which teachers are returning next year – and who the new hires are coming in) and insight into the testing plans and schedules. I learned about the grade-wide activities going on in the grades my child had yet to reach, and knew more about what was in store for him. I added my input into what Family Fun activities sounded fun. I learned about ways to help to suit my interests and skills; listening to the reports of those holding positions, I really learned what they did. I saw where the holes were that needed filling and figured out where my efforts could have the most positive impact. I learned about legislative issues affecting my child and his education, as well as that of all children in our County and State. I learned where the PTA spent its money, and my opinion about how to earn and spend that money was heard.

What is there for you at a PTA meeting? There's knowledge, information, and a chance for your voice to be directly heard by the school administration. There's insight into your child's schooling next week, next month and next year. There is the best way to learn what jobs you can do to help your child's school operate at its highest potential. There is the chance for you to learn how fun and easy it is to plan and run a school-wide activity, or figure out which job would best suit your schedule and personality. There is the chance for your voice to impact what school-wide activities there are, when they will happen, and what they will be like. There's the chance to build upon the friendships that begin when children are classmates and teammates, but deepen as you spend time together without the kids.

You can influence the school to suit your and your family's interests. You can offer your service to the administration and staff, who educate your child along with the 1,000 other students who are growing and learning alongside your child.

Over the past twelve years, I've seen engaged parents bring Teacher Mini-Grants, Skate Night, Spelling Bee, improved Book Fairs, International Festival, School Musical Theater, Bingo Night and much more into the Hunters Woods calendar. I've watched parents work to keep other parents informed and connected, raise over three quarters of a million dollars for the school and students, run Family Fun activities for the enjoyment of thousands, give over 2,500 books to children from lower income families, and support and encourage our wonderful teachers, staff and administration, all while making deep friendships and improving their own children's school experiences.

Please, let your voice be heard, let your opinions influence your child's school, and let what you have to give improve the school and school experience for all. Come to one of our remaining two PTA meetings this year. Our second daytime meeting will be held on April 15 at 10am (sign in at the main office to learn meeting location), and our final evening meeting of the school year will be held on May 20 at 7pm in the school library. 📞

Susan Sather, PTA President
president@hwpta.org

DATES TO REMEMBER

Wednesday, April 7	Spring picture day
Friday, April 9	Last day of 3 rd quarter
Monday, April 12	Snow day make up
Wednesday, April 14	Chamber Concert, 7pm
Thursday, April 15	PTA Meeting, 10am
Saturday, April 17	Skate Night, 6-8pm
Week of April 19-23	Office and Clinic Staff Appreciation Week
Week of April 26-30	Spring Book Fair
Thursday, April 29	Primary Science Night
Friday, April 30	Talent Share Performance
Monday, May 3	Teacher Luncheon
Week of May 3-7	Teacher Appreciation Week
Monday, May 17	Rising Kindergarten Orientation
Week of May 17-21	Principal Appreciation Week
Thursday, May 20	PTA Meeting, 7pm
Monday, May 24	Volunteer Luncheon

Skate Night April 17

Join your classmates and friends for another fun-filled evening on the ice, and help raise much needed funds for our school! The PTA's annual private ice skating event for HWES has been scheduled for Saturday April 17 from 6 to 8pm at the Reston Skatequest. Tickets are \$6 in advance, \$7 at the door. Look for more information about this popular event in Tuesday folders and at www.HWPTA.org. 📞

Spring Book Fair April 26-30

Please plan on checking out the terrific selection of books available at the PTA Spring Book Fair, which will be held during the week of April 26-30 in the second grade pod. The book fair will be open during school hours all week and also during the evening on April 29 (Primary Science night).

Students will have the opportunity to visit the book fair during the school day twice that week: once to preview and, for those who wish to do so, once to purchase books. While previewing the books, the students make a wish list to bring home to the parents.

Parents and siblings also are welcome to visit the book fair any time during our open hours. Remember that teacher appreciation week is coming up the week of May 3-7; take the opportunity to look over teacher wish lists of books for the classrooms!

Extra hands are needed to assist with setting up before the book fair starts as well as staffing the book fair for previews and sales during the week. You can sign up to volunteer at the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/HWBookFair>. Thanks from the Book Fair Committee! 📞

2-4-6-8 Who Do We Appreciate?

During the months of April and May, we have the opportunity to thank our wonderful school office and clinic staff, teachers, and administration for all of the hard work they put in at Hunters Woods to make our school an enriching, welcoming and nurturing place for all of our children to learn.

Office and Clinic Staff Appreciation Week is the week of April 19-23, Teacher Appreciation Week is the week of May 3-9, and Principal Appreciation Week is the week of May 17-21; please remember to thank them then. More information will be sent home in upcoming Tuesday folders about some coordinated ways to express our appreciation during those weeks. 📞

Chess Club Travels to Va. Tech

More than 400 individual kids and 20 school teams battled it out at the Virginia State Scholastic Chess Championship March 12-14 in Blacksburg, Virginia. Kevin Xu, the only player from Hunters Woods in the K-3 section, won the 19th place trophy out of a field of more than 100! Upper grades at Hunters Woods had a strong showing with eleven players in the K-5 division. In that division, the Hunters Woods team beat out seventeen other teams to take second place in the state!

Congratulations to all the players who participated in this great event: In the K-3 Division: Kevin Xu (19th place trophy). In the K-5 Division: Jason Lui (6th place individual trophy); Parv Ahuja (14th place individual trophy); Kaizen Conroy (15th place individual trophy); Rehan Madhugiri (38th place individual medal); Joseph Hall; Mandip Bhadra; James Crowley; Akhil Madhugiri; Liam Rowell; Prithvi Narayana; and James Crowley. 🍀

PTA Executive & Chair Opportunities

The PTA is what YOU make it to be! We need YOUR help to make sure that the PTA can continue to offer superior programs, events, and assistance at our school. There is a PTA position or event to match every individual and every schedule. As of press time, the following PTA executive board and committee chair positions are available:

PTA Officers: President Elect, VP Technology Communications, VP Volunteer & Member Services, Corresponding Secretary, Recording Secretary, and Treasurer.

Committee Chairs: After School Activities co-coordinator; Calendar Magnet Design; Chess Club; Chalk 4 Peace; Directory Production; Fall Harvest Festival co-chairs and committee members; Gift Wrap/Fall Fundraiser co-chairs and committee members; Grounds Beautification; Open House Family Dinner; Reflections; Special Education; Spelling Bee; School Supplies; Staff Appreciation; Bus Driver/Crossing Guard Appreciation; Teacher Breakfast (August); Volunteer Appreciation; Yearbook.

Please review the full list of volunteer opportunities on the PTA website at <http://www.hwpta.org>. To volunteer for one of these positions or just find out more about what is involved, please email volunteer@hwpta.org, or come to our next PTA meeting. We need YOU! 🍀

Beach Bash Report

Sometimes, when nobody expects it, a little magic comes to help. This magic came from the willingness of a small group to plan and the last minute support of many. The PTA traditionally has two main fundraisers: a gift wrap sale in the fall, and a silent auction at some point during the year; the last few years it's been held in the spring.

This year, our silent auction found no chair, and while your PTA President would have chaired if a Donations Chair had volunteered to manage donation requests, no one was interested in that position. So as not to have our income seriously threatened, members of the PTA Executive Board decided to throw a modified event, offering the Class Baskets to be raffled at a Family Fun Event. Funds would be raised from event admission and the sale of raffle tickets; no bidding, no checkout, simple. Complicated event plans were dismissed for a simple dance, and a beach theme was selected as our event would fall on the heels of the snowy winter.

Sandy Angel agreed to coordinate the Class Basket effort, and she managed the job beautifully. Class Representatives asked for, and received, bountiful donations from the families at HWES. Alex Rosner managed the day (and evening) long Basket Workshop, where each classroom's representative could come and find all the supplies needed to create the basket(s) from their class's donations. From baskets and filler to shrink wrap and ribbons, the coordinated effort and on-site supplies made creating the baskets fun and easy (and not a financial burden on the

class rep). Alex's eye for design helped make the baskets attractive and appealing to bidders.

Other than booking the DJ, no actual party plans happened until shortly before the event. Two weeks ahead, times for the dance were set and flyers created for Tuesday folders. A week and a half 'til the party is when four members of your PTA Executive Board sat down for lunch and planning; Jennifer Arakelian, Marina Matthes, Kelly Rowell and Susan Sather joined Sandy Angel to plan the party and split up the tasks required to publicize, pre-register, purchase favors, décor and food, and sign up volunteers. Shashi Ravishankar, with the experience of managing many Sock Hops and one 6th Grade party under her belt, offered to head up decorations and be the on-floor manager of the dance.

Everything was going well, except for the signing up of volunteers. The jobs needed to ensure a safe and fun dance were planned; job slots with descriptions and shift times were posted on Volunteer Spot; but almost nobody signed up to help at the party.

Despite notice in Tuesday folders and through PTA email; only four people had signed up to work a shift during the party. While nobody wanted to volunteer, many wanted to come and play. One day prior to the event, 75 families had paid for their pre-registration. PTA events generally draw two-thirds of their attendance from walk-up registration, so we were planning for 225 families, estimating that 300 adults and 400 children would attend. But, outside of the party organizers, only 4 volunteers were willing to help!

Saturday morning, your PTA President sent a "Nagging Email" to ask for volunteers. Then the magic occurred. Within fifteen minutes of the email, there were 28 volunteers. Within an hour, there were over 40, and over a dozen people had shown up at the school to help set up. By the time the party ended, over 70 parents and teens had worked at least one shift. A large majority of party attendees showed up with a yummy dessert to share, and enjoyed their reward of 5 bonus raffle tickets.

The party was a smashing success. The line to purchase walk-in admission was at least three times as long as the pre-registration line. The gym was as full as it could be, and children and adults (even grandparents) were dancing, only stopping to place raffle tickets for their desired baskets and when the music paused while winning names/numbers were announced. All snacks and drinks were included in the price of the family admission, to everyone's enjoyment. A separate seating area with coffee and desserts was set up in the main hallway, so parents could take some time to visit away from the dance floor.

Aside from all the fun had by attendees, the event brought in nearly \$6,000 in profit. Next year, we have both an Auction Chair and Donations Chair lined up to offer a full Silent Auction (and hopefully bring in enough to balance against this year's lowered income). We plan to host an adults-only party and casino night, off of the school campus (no alcohol is allowed on-campus); and hope you'll all join us there. The current goal is to alternate full-blown higher income affairs with Family Fun raffle-only events every other year.

The group who put on this year's event had so much fun working together – except for worrying about the lack of volunteers. We knew parents would show up to help, but it's awfully discouraging to work for hours planning an event but not have people be willing to commit to volunteering one work shift. Please, don't think that someone else will sign up; go ahead and commit to volunteering when you plan to attend an event. Don't want to commit to a specific job and time? A simple "I'll Help" sign up will be offered without a specific time slot or job assignment in future Volunteer Spot sign ups. There are volunteers happy and willing to put in dozens of hours planning Family Fun events – but they need the back up of those who can put in an hour or two on event day. If you offer that support, everyone wins. 🍀