

## Membership Tips to Share

Increasing PTA Membership in our local units is something each unit tries to do each year. These units have been successful in their membership efforts. Here are some of their membership ideas that they have agreed to share with us. IPPC was formed with the idea of information sharing.....



Here at Peterson we attach our membership to our school directory. Only members get to receive them. Also, we encourage all our volunteers to be members also. We do two drives, once in the summer and then another one in the fall.

Kathy Oesterreich, Peterson PTA President



PTA's may want to look outside of their school for memberships, like vendors they use, stores from in their area. I was going to do this but we will save this for next year so we can try to still up our membership in 09/10, that will be hard to do but we already are coming up with ideas & sources. They also can make sure that all teachers and other staff members (secretary's, nurse, guidance, etc.) have joined since these are the people that usually benefit from the pta's.

This year we had a back to school luncheon for the teachers and placed a teachers membership form on their seats at their tables. The membership to them was \$5.00 and we informed them of all the wonderful plans we had for them this year along with letting them know that without membership in our PTSA they would not be considered for any grant money. My goal this year is to have 100% teacher participation.

Our principal is total appreciative of what we do and is very helpful and encouraging. She knows that everything that we do is to improve our school & make the kids happy.

Christie Schepp, Granger PTSA President



For our PTA, communication was the key. Last year, we worked hard to simply communicate our existence. We still get many people who do not/did not know the IPSN PTA existed. We established our own website within the district's site and used this for updates and general information. We also had a few very active and vocal members who helped spread the word. We asked all PTA's to create a Special Needs Liaison position, although this wasn't really established until the end of last year and we are still filling positions at schools early this year. Prior to that, I also asked the PTA's to include our meeting dates in their newsletters and/or listserv announcements. Another method of communication that seemed to work well for us was putting our meeting dates and times on the district calendar. Anyone can go in and submit something for the district calendar and it will get posted pending approval.

Our meeting attendance is also very high, with many meetings having approximately 30 - 40 members or more in attendance. Dr. Daeschner also came to speak at some of our meetings, and that was a huge draw and we also saw membership increase after that. We also have speakers at every meeting who will give presentations on topics relevant to our special needs families.

Because we are a district PTA and not school specific, many of these things may be unique to our PTA. However, the common denominator in all of our efforts was communication. In fact, many members of our PTA have commented through a recent survey we did, and through personal emails to members of our board, on how happy they are with the communication within IPSN PTA. Without these communication efforts and some vocal members in our PTA (who now sit on the executive committee) we probably would not have experienced such an increase.

Lori Price, IPSN PTA President



- Membership Form is Posted to the website
- Top 10 Reasons for Joining the Patterson PTA is sent out via the list serve
- Room Parents/ Party Assistants and Committee Chairs are all required to be PTA members by virtue of our standing rules
- Membership reminders are posted to the weekly list serve
- A bulletin board on reasons why to Join PTA is displayed

Laura McDonnell, Patterson PTA President



- Remind members that PTA membership is annual.
- Do not send in membership forms in the Spring packet that goes home with each child containing school registration papers. We have found that parents either assume they have signed up or sign up twice. In any case, accounts for the current year are being audited and closed and these membership dues are receivables for the next year. Having the checks lying around of course is a big no-no.
- Arrange to have plenty of convenient opportunities to sign up -Meet and Greet, curriculum night, any Fall social event, newsletter, website and listserv.
- Ensure all members of the executive board are members and then at the first executive board meeting ask them to promote membership within their volunteer groups as well.
- Attempt to have 100 % staff membership-the building principal (and we have had three in as many years) are a great catalyst in this process.
- Share with parents at different formal and informal forums the use of volunteerism, funds and membership. I find that on there is lower awareness of what the PTA (beyond the local unit) does. My favorite 2 examples are the STOP arm on school buses and the voting site change initiatives of the PTA.

- Tracking membership-better communication of these numbers between the Membership Chair and the Executive committee.
- Discreet follow-up where the slip is perhaps inadvertent.
- One of the things we have not done but may like to do this year is reach out to community members, businesses and parents who have had strong interest and leadership in our PTA but have no elementary age kids.
- Lastly, woo with words, thanks and a gentle reminder that this is for our children.

Radhika Bhandari, Fry PTA President



I think we can attribute Young membership to a great group of parents who are willing to step up and take the lead on so many wonderful activities we provide as a PTA. Events like the Fall Fest, Movie Night, Waubonsie Tailgate, Young Daughter's Dance, Young Son's Night and the 5K Run for Fun have gotten more people than ever involved and coming out to participate in PTA sponsored events. We also encourage all of our staff to become members as well.

Sue Rasmus, Young PTA President



At Steck, we found it helpful to:

(1) Assign a board member to serve as membership chairperson

Membership is so important that we assigned our first vice-president to the task, starting in 2005. Not every member will volunteer, but chances are every volunteer will join. We view our strength as a unit to be directly correlated to the size and participation of our membership. We continue to ask people to join throughout the year and post our membership goal (100%) in the lobby for everyone to see. It still eludes us, but we try!

(2) Examine barriers to participation

Barriers can be economic, family-related, language-related, or "comfort"-related. For example, we instituted free membership for families qualifying for the free and reduced lunch program. We changed our forms to include a spot for dads to sign up (and yes, dads signed up to chair committees!), partnered with Heritage YMCA to provide childcare during key events, and focused on planning events which whole families could attend. We also initiated separate orientations for general volunteers and ELL parents. We also assigned three different board members to specifically serve as the point person/liaison to committee chairs, room parents, and general volunteers. Be outgoing and meet as many people as you can. When people offer to help, take them up on it. The sooner, the better! Encourage your chairs to use their committee volunteers. There's nothing worse than volunteering and never being given the chance to help. We also tailor things to fit our volunteers' time and interests. We welcome new ideas and are willing to try new things.

## (2) Tie your activities to the school's goals and objectives

Make yourself and your local unit relevant. What value do you provide? How are you supporting education and child welfare? For example, we expanded our programs and support of reading, writing and math initiatives/goals in the School Improvement Plan. We surveyed our members and found many join Steck PTA because they want to support their children and their education, their child's teachers, and the school.

## (3) Communicate

We can't overemphasize the importance of communicating. We explain that what we do supports children's education and welfare. We discovered that many people didn't know our PTA pays for all assemblies, field trips, educational resources, Accelerated Reader, loaned clothing items for playground/lunch accidents....so we started to communicate and emphasize these things. After an assembly, for example, we'll post information to our website and include a newsletter article about it to inform parents about its positive impact upon children.

We also communicate early with incoming Kindergarten parents. We capture email addresses during orientation and follow-up to let new parents know the benefits of membership in Steck PTA, how to join, how to order school supplies, and how to volunteer. It also provides incoming parents an avenue to ask follow-up questions should any arise over the summer.

We recognize all those who help out in any way, however large or small. Every contribution of time and talent matters.

We encourage two-way communication via surveys, forms, and Q&As in our newsletter called "Your Turn". An "Idea Box" has just been implemented as another avenue to encourage member input.

## (4) Check In

We ask ourselves, "How well do we know our community?" "What would be helpful for us to know about our families to better serve and engage them?" We ask for feedback and pay attention to the input. Take a look at programs and their relevance to parents with students who have IEP plans or 504 plans. What about those who participate in the gifted program or English Language Learning program? Do community members need translation into other languages? How welcoming are we to those with preschool or younger children at home? What can we do to enable participation? What types of activities are most appealing to our community and the most successful?

Robin Church, Former Steck PTA President



- Review the Membership Marketing Guides you receive from State and National PTAs.

- Membership in PTA is everyone's responsibility, including all officers and members.
- Ask your members to ask one more person to join.
- Acknowledge similarities and differences across your membership.
- Target those groups who are underrepresented in your organization.
- Focus on the needs of your school.
- Set realistic goals. (Challenge your unit to add 25 new members this year.)
- Examine barriers to membership.
- Identify your clients, but also look beyond to grandparents, mayors, and civic leaders.
- Tell families what you do for children at your school. Don't assume they know.
- Offer programs and events that will appeal to a wide variety of families.
- Offer programs and events that will appeal to underrepresented populations.
- Put together a membership marketing team and deploy your PR person and newsletter editor.
- Use some creative ideas to promote membership. Pick a theme.
- Post your membership.
- Make a speech about PTA. (One is available on the local unit diskette.) Advertise your PTA.
- Create opportunities to talk about PTA without creating more meetings.
- Have greeters at PTA meetings.
- Ask people to join.
- Say thank you for your members and your volunteers.
- Think about why you joined PTA and convey those thoughts to others.

Mary Ann Daugherty, Illinois PTA Membership Chairperson



- \* Increase communication to families during membership drive periods.
- \* Increase incentives for families to join, ie. Only those who join the PTA will get a directory. Families may also purchase a directory for the same cost as a standard membership fee.
- \* Sharing with your school community all that your PTA does for their school. Article in PTA newsletter listing all of the programs that the PTA supports and runs.
- \* Having both a spring and fall membership drive, the focus for the fall being to follow up with those families who have not joined yet.
- \* Requesting time to speak at staff meetings to encourage 100% staff participation.
- \* Inviting community leaders to join such as mayors, councilmen and HOA board.
- \* Having membership tables at all school/PTA events during the month of September.
- \* Translating all membership forms to serve the diverse languages that are a part of your school community.
- \* Providing services and programs that appeal to the diversity of your community and make families more inclined to join because they feel welcome.
- \* Continue to provide strong leadership, be inclusive and welcoming and embrace the vision and objectives of PTA overall.

Jean Donovan, PTA District 36 Director