

Walt Whitman High School  
PTSA Meeting Minutes  
October 20, 2009

**Welcome**

PTSA Co-President Sue Kanter welcomed everyone.

**Approval of September Minutes**

September Minutes were approved.

**Student Government Report**

Caroline Kahlenberg, an SGA representative, provided the report.

**Homecoming** was a huge success and raised about \$20,000. There was a lot of school spirit during Homecoming Week and the leadership class is discussing how to improve school spirit during the rest of the year. One idea is to have a spirit day of some kind each month.

**Blood Drive.** The SGA is planning to have a Blood Drive on November 5<sup>th</sup>. Anyone age 16 and up can participate.

**General Assembly meeting.** The SGA was also having a General Assembly meeting this week with delegates from second period classes attending. Topics include school recycling and Box Tops for Education.

**Buddy system for new students.** This program is in the planning, with sophomores, juniors and seniors pairing up with new students.

**Principal's Report**

Assistant Principal Jennifer Webster provided the report since Dr. Goodwin was at the Russian Embassy in Washington in connection with a statue of Walt Whitman that will be unveiled in Russia.

**Presentation about safe driving.** Whitman was host to a media event sponsored by the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration concerning reducing unsafe driving by truckers, bus drivers and passenger car drivers, with an emphasis on teen drivers. The focus was on sharing the road with large vehicles.

**News Literacy Project.** Whitman is continuing to work with the News Literacy Project to bring journalists to the classroom. A major purpose is to get students to think about how news and information is changing in the Digital Age. Journalists are coming to English 12 and AP NSL classes. Teachers have been going above and beyond to work with the journalists and to make this an educational project for students.

**Code Red.** There was an unusual Code Red – unusual because it was in the evening, and the police situation was not right at Whitman but rather in the adjacent neighborhood. A JV football game had just been completed, but police said the building needed to be locked down until they determined that the robbery/shooting suspect was no longer in the area. Coach Kuhn got players and other students into the wrestling room. Dr. Goodwin was at school and oversaw the Code Red. The Code Red lasted for about 20 minutes. In fact it was a good exercise because it showed that teachers and building service people

need to know the protocol for how to lock down building in case it needs to be done again during non-regular school hours when administrators are not always at school. Co-president Sue Kanter noted that one of the most informative sources for the Code Red was the student paper's Black & White.com.

**Swine Flu.** The Swine Flu epidemic has not yet hit Whitman to the degree that it has hit other schools or to the degree that people have feared, but it is still early in the flu season so staff is staying very alert to any news and developments on this topic.

**Enrollment.** Present enrollment at Whitman is 1,946, which is about 80 students over the projected number. Whitman has been absorbing new students relatively easily. We are now past the 25<sup>th</sup> day of school so students are no longer moving to and from honors level classes.

**PSAT/ACT.** 96 percent of 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders took the PSAT exam on November 14<sup>th</sup>. That is an excellent turnout considering that flu and other illnesses have hit hard in some schools. There is some consideration being given to having students take the ACT test in addition to the PSAT, but having both exams around the same time so that students could get a sense of which they should take later in the year to "count" for college. There will be a practice ACT exam on October 31<sup>st</sup> administered by the sports boosters. A practice SAT, also administered by the sports boosters, will be given in December.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Sheila Duncan-Peters provided the report. She said that the PTSA membership dues drive is getting close to budget. She noted that there is no way to get rid of bank services charges because of how many dues checks the PTSA puts through in Sept-Oct..

### **Membership Report**

Membership VP Debbie Flack presented the report. There are 335 members who have paid via the new online option and slightly over 700 members altogether, indicating that many people are finding the online option to be convenient. Overall, there is more than a 36 percent membership rate of Whitman families, which is a bit surprising since it's expected to be higher. In order to increase membership, the PTSA will try to better communicate how money is used to benefit the school. Co-President Sue Kanter pointed out that two years ago the PTSA took in \$40,000 in income but last year only took in \$30,000. This year we are aiming for \$32,000. She noted that there are many opportunities for parents to make donations to the school but that the PTSA should be a priority because it helps the teachers, counselors and students in so many ways as needed. The PTSA is the generalist, compared to other organizations which are the specialists.

### **President's Report**

Co-President Sue Kanter gave the report.

**Request to vote against a resolution.** The PTSA is being asked by cluster school Bannockburn Elementary to support Bannockburn at the MCCPTA to ensure that Bannockburn's bathroom renovations remain a priority.

**T-Mobile coming to speak about cell tower.** T-Mobile will present a proposal at the Nov. 17 PTSA meeting to put a cellular tower and light tower on the baseball field. T-Mobile will invite nearby residents to attend the presentation. The decision on this is made by MCPS.

**School Website.** Work has begun on improving the Whitman website with the help of a graphic designer and web administrator. The PTSA is looking for a web developer who could lead the team.

**Directories.** School directories are out. This is a project of the senior class and will be available for \$6 each (2 for \$10) in the office as well as at certain lunch periods. For the first time, email addresses are being included.

### **Intercultural Committee**

Gloria Olimpio gave the report. About 20 people signed up for the first event and 15 attended. The team is planning to have some coffee get-togethers and to have speakers on legal, financial, and other issues relating to life in America. Other possible events include a lunch at the Italian Embassy, an outing to the Newseum, or a tour of the White House. The committee is made up of a diverse group of parents from many countries in Asia, South America, and Europe

### **11<sup>th</sup> Grade Networking**

There will be an 11<sup>th</sup> Grade Networking Night on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. The topic will be “Risky Business” and the speaker will be Michael Houston, MD, a Child, Adolescent & Adult Psychiatrist and Psychoanalyst. The meeting is geared towards parents of juniors but all parents are welcome to attend.

There was no new business presented and the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm in order to have a speech on the college application process by Katie Malachuk, Whitman '91.

Respectfully submitted by Rebecca Kahlenberg, Co-Recording Secretary