

Walt Whitman High School PTSA Meeting  
October 16, 2007

PTSA co-President **Sarah Koines** called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. She noted this month's Exceptional Viking Volunteers: **Judy Brookes, Pat Lundelius, and Joan Wolf-Chiaverini** for organizing Welcome to Whitman Night; Treasurer **Lise Bernhard** for preparing the budget, and Recording Secretary **Janice Mehler** for preparing the minutes.

**Report from the SGA President**

**Eve Rosenberg**, president of the Student Government Association, reported that the Homecoming events raised \$20,000 or more. A typical amount is \$16,000-\$18,000; Eve's goal is to match or beat the record of \$21,000.

The seniors emerged victorious in the exciting Battle of the Classes. Magruder High School, which originated the Battle of the Classes, has challenged Whitman to a contest—details yet to be developed.

Eve reported on community service activities. The fall Blood Drive will be open to parents as well as students who are at least 17 years old and 110 pounds. It will take place in the Whitman gym on November 14, from 7:30 am - 2 pm. The sign-up form will be available on Whitman's website. Whitman will also have a Mini-Walk for the Homeless. Former Assistant Principal Dr. OuYang is now Principal of a middle school where students need coats and canned food. There will be collection bins near the main office. Past food drives have supported Manna; this year the food drive will be split between Manna and Dr. OuYang's school.

On October 24, the Student Government Association will begin meeting with the second period representatives.

**Principal's Report**

**Alan Goodwin** reported that about 1500 freshmen, sophomores, and juniors are expected to take the PSAT tomorrow. Seniors should work on college applications during that time. The county pays for freshmen's and sophomores' PSATs, and the school must report on the number who take the test.

The stadium has an expensive new scoreboard,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of which was paid for by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. The school is looking into selling commercial and personal advertisements on the board. Also new and attractive is the planting in the shape of a W in the circle of grass near the concessions area. This donation by the Denchfield family took a work crew three full days.

English teacher Cynthia Skelton will be leaving after the first quarter to accompany her husband to Germany.

The Chinese 1 students had a videoconference that morning with students in Beijing, which has a 12-hour time difference. The schools will alternate talking at 7:30 am and 7:30 pm; in 2 weeks Whitman will talk to the Chinese students at 7:30 pm. The Chinese students typically are only 12 or 13 years old but have studied English for several years.

Whitman's next international relationship will be with Seoul High School, an all-boys school that is ranked #1 or #2 in Korea. They approached Whitman via their 1962 alumni group, which plans to buy video equipment for the school. Three families recently came here from Seoul and stayed with host families. Azerbaijan is also planning to get equipment so that they can teleconference with Whitman.

A letter was sent home today (October 16), reporting that one student has a staphylococcus infection in a hand wound. The county is having the wrestling room sanitized and is getting hand sanitizers for the bathrooms.

### **Guidance at Whitman**

**Fran Landau**, Guidance Resource Teacher, began her presentation by summarizing a brochure about the Walt Whitman Counseling Department and about what guidance counselors do. She noted that much of their work is related to the school calendar: July is a time for questions from parents of rising 9<sup>th</sup> graders and college assistance for rising 12<sup>th</sup> graders. With the start of school, changing student schedules and then providing college information become important, and so on through completing senior student service learning, transition to college meeting, graduation, summer school registration, assigning counselors to incoming students, etc., in May and June. But of course a lot of counseling activities go on year-round, so counselors become good at multi-tasking.

The Montgomery County Public Schools has established student standards in five areas that counselors work on: academic development, personal development, interpersonal development, career [and college] development, and healthy development. At any time, helping individuals in crisis takes precedence. After a Red Flags program on suicide awareness, four students sought help.

This year Whitman benefited from the addition of a half-time counseling slot, which was used to hire Jamie Ahearn to work with all ESOL students. The response to a question about exchange students is that they are often more mature and less likely to need special assistance, and that they are assigned alphabetically to counselors, just as other students are.

### **Co-Presidents' Report**

**Sarah Koines** announced that the PTSA had funds for travel expenses to the Maryland PTA convention and asked parents to let her know if they were interested in attending.

She reported that the individuals who had filed a lawsuit against some of the officers and committee chairs of the PTSA had filed a motion to dismiss with the court prior to the hearing.

She acknowledged Steve Raber of Williams and Connolly, who represented the group pro bono prior to the motion to dismiss.

A parent read a statement from motion to dismiss: "Plaintiffs were surprised to learn at the recent [PTSA meeting] that the [PTSA] directors and officers do not presently have directors and officers liability insurance coverage and that Defendants requested, and were allocated, funds in the amount of \$2,000 from the [PTSA] budget for the purpose of covering their litigation expenses. It weighs heavily on the Plaintiffs' minds that the [PTSA] should expend thousands of dollars, which were voluntarily contributed to fund urgently needed projects to benefit our children's education, on defending Defendants' wrongful actions. In addition, it is not and has never been Plaintiffs' intention to impact negatively in any way upon the support given by the [PTSA] to our children's educational needs, and it is in order to avoid that such should be the consequence of this litigation, that Plaintiffs hereby request that the Court dismiss this action."

After this statement was read, Sean Reilly moved, and Jay Kaufman seconded the motion, to approve the September minutes. The motion carried.

*[Here I have a gap where there was an announcement about getting a Brothers and Sisters \$200 grant for Whitman poetry books, but my notes are garbled. Can you tell me what this was about?]*

### **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer **Lise Bernhard** reported that the budget is tighter than usual this year and asked anyone who might exceed a budget line to let her know in advance. In response to a question about restrictions on fundraising, Sarah Koines explained that the PTSA may not make capital expenditures, but the Pyle Foundation was created for that option. Tyler Whitmore asked whether the foundation's \$40,000 campaign includes funds for more art panels. Dr. Goodwin said that the Foundation is raising that money for a major expenditure for a language lab, and Sarah said that Tyler could apply to the PTSA for a grant. Sarah added that another request for funds might come; 10 acoustical shells are needed for the auditorium, at a cost of \$2,200 each. The PTSA would not be asked to buy all of them.

### **Membership**

Membership vice president **Jay Kaufman** announced that there were about 870 PTSA members, falling short of the goal of 1,000 members. Student memberships account for \$1,800. Jay had sent an email to the nonmembers but did not get much response.

Dr. Goodwin asked how many families have joined whitnet; Sean Reilly replied that he had turned over whitnet membership to Craig Katz and didn't know, but there have never been more than 80% of Whitman families on whitnet.

### **Guidance Advisory Committee**

**Beth Isen**, co-chair of GAC, asked parents to let her know if they think their child is getting unfairly low grades. She reported on an October 10 meeting on students with ADHD and college, which was organized by the American University Academic Center and led by current and former Whitman parents Kathy Schwartz, Nancy Sydnor-Greenberg, and Deborah DeMille-Wagman. Upcoming GAC events are the regular monthly meeting on October 24 at 2:15, with a focus on self-advocacy by special ed students, and a Stressbusters book discussion about *Less Stress, More Success*, written by a former MIT admissions director, to be held on October 30 at 7:30.

### **Montgomery County Council of PTAs**

Representative **Liz Sobrino** reported on MCCPTA's discussion of whether students to what an AP exam should be exempt from taking the final exam. An MCCPTA work group came up with a proposal that would replace the second semester final exam in AP courses with a locally developed end-of-course culminating activity or assessment that would count and 25% of the semester grade. The MCCPTA Grading and Reporting Committee (to which the work group reported) and general membership of the MCCPTA did not support the recommendation, preferring to exempt students from the exam without requiring an alternative culminating activity/assessment. Without taking a formal vote, those attending the Whitman meeting expressed a preference for the MCCPTA version, not the work group version.

### **Conclusion of Meeting**

Sarah Koines encouraged parents to sign up to work on Post-Prom, which will be held on the last Friday in May (or rather, early on Saturday). Dr. Goodwin said that graduation will be held between June 1 and 10; the date will be announced the first week of November. [It was announced that graduation will be on Thursday, June 5, 2008, at 2:30 p.m. at DAR Constitution Hall in Washington D.C.]

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Janice Mehler, Recording Secretary