

Walt Whitman High School PTSA Meeting  
November 29, 2007

PTSA co-President **Laura Cecala** called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm and thanked the members for accommodating to the new schedule that avoided the week of Thanksgiving.

A parent moved that her name be removed from the October 2007 minutes. That motion carried, as did a motion to approve the revised minutes.

**Report from the SGA President**

**Eve Rosenberg**, president of the Student Government Association, reported on the success of the blood drive, which was organized by her brother. Even though some willing donors had to be turned away because of colds, the blood drive still reached a record high. Another blood drive will be held in the spring. Eve reported on another successful event, the collection of canned food and winter coats for Manna food drive and Parkland Middle School, where former Whitman Assistant Principal Dr. OuYang is now Principal.

The next big SGA event is Whitman Idol, to be held on January 10. The schedule for tryouts will be announced soon.

On December 14, a pizza lunch will be held for new students. Dr. Goodwin noted that new students are still arriving and the SGA might need a cutoff date for new students to fit them in the conference room.

**Guest Resource Teacher: English for Speakers of Other Languages**

**Sonja Maroni**, resource teacher for the ESOL Department, reported that two new students arrived in ESOL yesterday, bringing the total of ESOL students above 90 (about 40% of whom come from Churchill High School). The peak year had 120 ESOL students. There are currently ESOL students from 34 countries, speaking 20 languages. (The number of countries represented at Whitman is higher because not all foreign students are in ESOL.) ESOL classes are divided into five levels, from beginning (1) to advanced (5), and the range of student abilities and grades requires differentiation within each level as well.

Mrs. Maroni praised her team of teachers, including one with dual certification who teaches NSL and U.S. History to ESOL students. ESOL biology is offered through the science department, and in math, ESOL students have the option of taking Algebra I as a 2-period or a 2-year class. Students include some who have had interrupted educations, come from at-risk backgrounds, and have limited academic skills in their native language. Starting with the graduating class of 2009, the ESOL students will need to pass the High School Assessments to graduate. Students also take the TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language], which is helpful for college admission.

The ESOL students feel that they are part of the Whitman community. One way this shows is through International Night, which includes performances and food from many countries

(including a U.S. table for that past couple of years). Maryam Hedayati, the chair of International Night, was introduced, and received expressions of appreciation for the major project she was undertaking.

Dr. Goodwin noted that because our ESOL students are successful, Mrs. Maroni receives fewer staff than other schools with comparable numbers of students. He has been asked to testify soon about the success of the Whitman's Hispanic students, and the ESOL program is a large part of the reason.

### **Principal's Report**

**Alan Goodwin** reported many reasons for celebrating. It was a good season for sports, with many teams making the playoffs. The musical production the prior weekend was thrilling. The graduation date of the afternoon of Thursday, June 5, is good – relatively early and not close to senior banquet. Dr. Goodwin acknowledged Kevin Beverly, who was at the meeting, who was featured in a recent *Washington Post* article about people who give back to their communities.

The school is gearing up for the second semester schedule, capably handled by Jennifer Webster. Two new math courses are planned for next fall: a class that bridges between Geometry and Algebra II, and a class on financial literacy that will be offered in lieu of Consumer Math. The science department is again debating whether to offer a forensics class; it has been popular in other high schools but would require removal of another course from the schedule.

In staff news, Todd Michaels and Elizabeth Keating, Whitman teachers who are married to each other, are expecting a child and awaiting the end of morning sickness.

Dr. Goodwin has no news about next year's population, but with the tight county budget, he expects a spending and a hiring freeze. Each year schools lose staff allocations and have to fight to get them back.

So far the school has been able to avoid portable classrooms, but a recent storage area turned into a classroom in Whittier Woods is at the far end, near the child care center.

Interims to parents of students who need to improve academic performance will be sent on Monday.

The Art Forum to be held tomorrow night with representatives from a number of college and university art departments is worthwhile for students involved in art. Many other high schools are invited to attend.

### **PTSA Committees' and co-Presidents' Reports**

In the absence of **Treasurer Lise Bernhard**, who was unable to attend, Laura Cecala reported that the tax return was filed by the deadline and that there has not been a lot of recent financial activity. A lot of the costs have not yet been incurred.

**Membership** VP **Jay Kaufman** reported that PTSA dues have brought in \$39,900, including a number of student memberships at \$5 each. This is only \$100 less than the budgeted amount.

Laura acknowledged **Emily Bartlett, Jan Hohenboken, Shari Fisher, and Katie Fontana** as Exceptional Viking Volunteers for their excellent work as **Staff Appreciation Committee** chairs, providing refreshments for faculty meetings. Dr. Goodwin noted how popular staff meetings are as a result. He also said that Mr. O'Brien, a long-term substitute and former World War II pilot (!), will be honored at the next faculty meeting.

Additional Exceptional Viking Volunteers recognized this month are the **Networking Chairs**, who have all organized well-attended fall programs and will offer a second program for each grade in the spring:

9<sup>th</sup> – **Bernice Kaufman, Dale Sorcher**

10<sup>th</sup> – **Diana Dempster, Karen Schafer, Nancy Van Meter**

11<sup>th</sup> – **Josie Burke**

12<sup>th</sup> – **Sue Garges, Peggy Keegan, Joan Kristal**

Co-President **Sarah Koines** reported that the **Whitman Website** is continuing to be upgraded. Soon the Career Information Center will have its own link separate from the Guidance link. Other enhancements are also planned. Spread the word to parents and students that this is a useful resource for information about sports, guidance, CIC, PTSA, and calendar. Anyone who sees a problem on the website should send an email to webmaster Hong Wang, who quickly makes corrections.

Sarah reported on the immediate response to the **Laptop Project**, which requested unused laptops, laptop cases, jump drives, and Ethernet cords for students who do not have computers at home. Four laptops have been received and three more are expected, and Whitman parent Peter Dressner is repairing and refurbishing them free of charge. Anyone wishing to donate a laptop should call or email Sarah Koines.

**Liz Sobrino**, Whitman Cluster representative, reported that the Cluster is fine. **Kevin Beverly** said that the NAACP Parent Council did not have a meeting this month.

**Lorraine Driscoll** reported on her new **Traffic Safety Committee**. She invited suggestions of crosswalks or other areas that are troublesome. Past effort has led to some improvement along Whittier in front of the school, and that's not a subject the committee will revisit. Dr. Goodwin said that a recent incident at the intersection of Pyle and River caused a broken hip. He suggested that Lorraine talk to former Whitman parent Wendie Guterl, who tried a couple of years ago to get a traffic signal there. Parent Susan Wexler reported that a meeting will be held the next night at Bannockburn Clubhouse to discuss that intersection.

Laura Cecala gave the **Guidance Advisory Committee** report in place of Beth Isen and Therese Bernstein. The GAC meeting the next day features guidance counselor Rob Putt as speaker. A meeting for juniors and their parents is scheduled for January 24 on the Nuts and Bolts of College Planning. Bekki Sims has been working with a committee of students to organize

lunchtime talks. This Real Deal program will invite outside experts to speak on such student-selected topics as academic pressure and motivation, turning stress into a positive, and managing your parents.

On Monday, December 3, **Whitman Runs the Diner** at the Silver Diner Restaurant in Rockville will feature teachers and students in a fundraiser for Team River Runner, which takes injured veterans kayaking.

**Leslie Shedlin** reported that **Post-Prom** was up and running; the committees are staffed, but more volunteers are always needed – especially parents of 11<sup>th</sup> graders, who can learn the secrets of Post-Prom before their turn to run it. Prom is scheduled for Friday May 30, followed directly by Post Prom starting at 1 am on May 31. A yard sale to raise money for Post-Prom will be held on April 12. Leslie asked parents if they knew businesses who might be interested in being a sponsor or donating prizes; if so, please contact Leslie, Ann Sablosky, or Lisa Parris (post-prom chairs) or Carolyn Kent (raffle chair).

### **New Business**

A parent reported that a *Washington Post* reporter had contacted her daughter through Facebook, after finding her name as an SGA officer on the Whitman website. The reporter wrote an informal message asking for the student's reaction to the sexual orientation portion of the health class. When the parent called him, he explained that Facebook was the only way he could get an answer.

There was a discussion about the ethics of contacting a young teenager via Facebook to quote in a news article. It was pointed out that his Facebook site was entirely open about who he was, but that contact from unknown people is common. Ellen Kominers pointed out that about a year ago Facebook changed its privacy default to total transparency; users may close areas of their site but it has to be a deliberate decision.

Sarah Koines invited parents to take a copy of the list of tutors compiled by whitcom moderator Dave Ermer and a copy of the directory addendum which he compiled as well.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Janice Mehler, Recording Secretary