

Walt Whitman HS PTSA Meeting
October 17, 2006
Minutes

Laura Cecala, PTSA Co-President, called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM. The minutes from the September meeting were approved.

Chloe Bethel, SGA President, gave the SGA report. She asked that parents continue sending in Box Tops and ink cartridges. The proceeds from the box tops benefit Washington Grove ES, the proceeds from the ink cartridges benefit Whitman. She reviewed the schedule for homecoming week (October 30-November 5) and reported that while there are enough chaperones for the dance, there is still a need for parent volunteers to help with set up and break down. She also reported that the new Whitman mascot will be introduced at the homecoming game. A new costume was recently purchased for \$950 (the old costume was inadvertently thrown out several years ago). The SGA has raised \$350 but is looking for donations to help cover the remaining \$600.

Marjorie Scott, from the Whitman Art Dept., reported on the fifth annual Art School Forum, scheduled for Wednesday November 29, from 5-7:30 PM in the Whitman cafeteria. The forum is an opportunity for students and parents to meet with representatives from colleges offering specialized art programs in the visual arts. The schools attend by invitation and 19 schools have responded so far with more RSVPs expected. Students and parents will hear a presentation by each school and then will have an opportunity to visit the individual schools at their tables. In addition to talking about their programs, the school representatives share information on portfolio preparation, financial aid and scholarships and so on. The forum is open to sophomores and juniors as well as seniors. At Whitman's invitation, Students and parents from other area high schools also attend.

Sue Schneider from the PTSA's new Student Service Learning (SSL) Committee (other members are Terri Silver and Debbie Feldman) and Courtney Osborne, Social Studies teacher, reported on what has happened as a result of recommendations from the SSL committee for the Middle States Accreditation review process. That committee, chaired by Bob Mathis, and including staff, students, and parents, identified SSL as an area that could be improved, specifically the quantity and quality of the SSL experience for Whitman students. There is some concern that while many students significantly exceed the required hours, some seniors lack the hours required to graduate as they approach graduation. Margie Geisler, the transcript secretary, will continue to track and record SSL hours, but Ms. Osborne will be the new SSL Student Liaison. Ms. Osborn plans to initiate a SSL Council of Students that will meet once a month and will have student representatives from all the schools teams and clubs. The council will plan monthly SSL events that students can choose to participate in. Other ideas include posting SSL opportunities in the community more frequently on Whitnet, creating an interactive calendar of SSL opportunities, sending out a newsletter, holding a service fair, adding a link to better SSL information on the school web site, expanding SSL information in the

student handbook, and getting more information out to parents at Back to School Night and other events. The goal is for Whitman to become a “community of service”.

Dr. Goodwin reported that both the Black and White and Eidolon, Whitman’s literary magazine, both recently won awards and that several Whitman students recently won NCTE recognition for essays they had written. He reported that a group of students will be visiting Johnson Space Center in November and that some of those students may have the opportunity to speak to astronauts in space. He reported that Bob Mathis will be leaving for England at the end of October for six-weeks as part of a teacher exchange program. Dr. Goodwin announced that he will be accompanying Dr. Weast to Japan for a conference from November 11-November 16. This follows the Middle States visit November 8-10. Dr. Goodwin distributed a list of the colleges that last year’s seniors are now attending, noting how many different schools are listed. Dr. Goodwin asked for feedback on the new traffic pattern in the morning. He reported that a staff member will continue to be outside during drop off to assist student pedestrians in navigating the changed set up safely. Finally Dr. Goodwin announced that he has hired a new guidance counselor who has high school experience.

Laura Cecala recognized Wendie Guterl and Tyler Whitmore as part of an effort to celebrate Exceptional Viking Volunteers. The two have chaired membership this year, which has exceeded budget and is still going strong. 966 families, 87 students, and 20 teachers have joined to date.

Lise Bernhard gave the Treasurer’s Report. To date the PTSA ha brought in \$41,000 in dues and contributions. Examples of some expenses to date include partially funding Bob Mathis’s trip to London to teach (to assist with his Fulbright grant), contributing to the purchase of the new school mascot, and some costs associated with staff appreciation.

Beth Isen reported for the Guidance Advisory Committee (GAC). She and Deborah DeMille-Wagman recently testified before the School Board, citing the 300 to 1 student to counselor ratio and asking for additional guidance support. The School Board was hearing testimony from the clusters on budget issues. Beth also announced that at the October 25 GAC meeting, Molly McAllister will speak about special education issues, and that Fran Landau will speak to the PTSA in November about the range of issues guidance counselors deal with in addition to college applications.

Bekki Simms reminded everyone that a discussion of the book “The Overachievers” by Alexandra Robbins is scheduled for October 30 at 7:30 PM in the Media Center.

Mary Staley reported on two resolutions from MCCPTA. The state graduation requirement for SSL hours has been 75 hours, however Montgomery County had been granted an exception and allowed to require 60. MSDE has now asked MCPS to require the full 75 hours and has asked that this take effect with this year’s tenth graders. The resolution from MCCPTA states that since it is in eighth grade that students learn about graduation requirements that this year’s eighth graders should be the first class required to earn the additional hours. Parents were in agreement with the resolution therefore

Whitman will vote to support the resolution at the October 24 MCCPTA Delegates Assembly. The second resolution dealt with Health Technicians. Most schools have health room coverage for 5-6 hours daily, however the MCCPTA resolution states that this may be insufficient and that MCPS should increase coverage so that there is someone on duty in every health room from 1/2 hour before school starts to 1/2 hour after school ends. Dr. Goodwin said that while use of the health room at Whitman is very low at those times, there may be other schools in need of he additional coverage. No position was taken on that resolution.

Laura Cecala mentioned two programs scheduled for Monday October 23. The first is a town hall meeting on depression, open to parents and teens and being held at Bethesda Chevy Chase HS at 7:30 PM. The other is a community education event at the AFI Silver Theater in Silver Spring starting at 6:30. At that event Mark Fisher will talk about his July 30 2006 Washington Post article, "Are You a Toxic Parent".

Upcoming Networking Nights were announced, October 25 for 9th and 10th grades and November 13 for 11th and 12th grades. Intercultural Night will be held on November 2.

Sarah Koines encouraged parents to look at the school web site. The PTSA hired a web site company to revise the Whitman web site over the summer. Hong Wang, a Whitman teacher, has been working on improving and maintaining the site and its links to the PTSA, booster clubs, etc.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.

The next PTSA meeting is scheduled for Tuesday November 21.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Judson
Co-recording Secretary