

Birchwood PTO Meeting
Wednesday, October 15, 2114
6:30pm
Birchwood Elementary Conference Room

Agenda

Call to Order

Co-President's Report (*Deb Foley, JoMarie Ethier*)

- New PTO Meeting Format
- Update

Officer Reports

- VP for Programs & Services (*Sonya Ward*)
- VP for Fundraising (*Lynn Boler*)
- Treasurer (*Brenda Leto*)
- Secretary (*Kim McClive-Reed*)

Principal's Report (*Deb Berndt*)

Teachers' Liaison Report (*Amy Santandrea, Kathleen Vermilyea*)

Boards of Education Report (*Kevin Laurilliard*)

PTO-to-Board of Ed Liaisons Report

New Business

- Basement Flood
- Monster Mash (*Tara McKenna*)
- PTO Committee Vacancies (*JoMarie Ethier*)
- December Open House (*Deb Foley*)
- Playground (*JoMarie Ethier*)
- Soccer Goals (*Deb Foley*)

Old Business

- Directory

Concluding Comments

Adjournment

Committee Reports

Arts in Education: We had an assembly on September 23rd featuring Chris Poulos, who provided an outstanding program on character education. Teachers will again this year have the opportunity to schedule an individual classroom program by Scotia-Glenville Children's Museum. The science program this year will feature Bubblemania on February 27th to do two assemblies, at 8:15 AM and 9:15 AM. An Underground Railroad Assembly performed by Kim and Reggie Harris is confirmed for Wednesday, January 14th. The exact times in the morning for the two assemblies are in progress. These assemblies qualify for BOCES

reimbursement. A brief description of what Kim and Reggie have to offer, taken from their web site: "Kim and Reggie are a mini-festival of diversity. Combining traditional African-American spiritual and freedom songs with original folk, they sing of life, love the quest for freedom, environment and community." They tell stories of the Underground Railroad through their music. The link for more info is- www.artistsofnote.com/kim-and-reggie-harris/. The committee is also working on scheduling the Birds of prey program for the 4th grade. – Submitted by Cheryl Gerstler, Jennifer Sargent, and Patty Bateman

Communications: Since school started, Pam has successfully delivered two hard-copy editions of the Birchwood Bulletin and 3 electronic copies. The MailChimp email database has been updated. Kim and Pennie are overhauling the website so that only the homepage will display changing information, and the remaining pages will be static information requiring limited updates. They have also begun drafting a Webmaster's Manual. The website is getting a good number of visits. There was a peak of 39 visits on 9/16/14. Between 9/1 and 10/8/14, the average number of visits was 18 per day. Eleven international visitors viewed our site from Canada, South Korea, the Phillipines, Germany, the UK, and Sri Lanka. Shilpa has also updated the Gmail distribution lists. Media Relations coordinator, Laura Mirkovic, successfully coordinated with local media – print and television to cover the Missing Children Bike Ride that made a breakfast pit stop at Birchwood. – Submitted by Kim McClive-Reed

Directory: Birchwood is at 92.6% registered...again at the top of the list out of all Niskayuna schools. Shilpa is finalizing the class lists to include in the directory (reflecting only those students registered with the e-Directory). She hopes to have the completed directory printed this week. THANK YOU SHILPA for all your work. – Submitted by Millie Gnatek

Food and Gift Card Fundraisers:

Schwan's: The application for the Schwan's Fundraiser was submitted and approved. The link to our Birchwood fundraising page link is: <https://www.schwans-cares.com/campaigns/13929-birchwood-elementary-pto>. The campaign runs for 30-45 days. Each individual customer (i.e. parent) chooses the delivery date and time. This is great as it allows parents to customize their orders to suit their everyday or upcoming holiday needs. All orders must be placed online through our campaign link or Schwan's.com with our campaign ID or by calling an 800 number. Existing customers will also need to place their order online or by phone if they wish to contribute to our campaign. All orders must be prepaid (online or by phone). If the customer is not available on the date/time they chose, Schwan's will leave the order in a freezer bag at no additional cost. We will print the PDF flyers/posters that Schwan's has available for us. There is a 61 page product book, also in PDF format that we can make available on our PTO web site. No order forms or money go through the PTO but rather Schwan's directly.

Great Lakes Scrip Gift Cards: Great Lakes Scrip has received all documentation required and we are now waiting for details to move forward. Once approved, we should be able to customize a form that we can print and send home with the kids.

– Submitted by Christina Meservey (Schwan's) and Millie Gnatek (Great Lakes Scrip Gift Cards)

Media Center is still in need of a volunteer for 1000 Book Kid Program. Francesca Hill and Suzanne Brooksby attended a Scholastic book fair workshop and have some great ideas in the works. We have \$1545.25 and \$545.10 is going to expire on 11/26. Francesca will request new catalogs, needs to know who would like a copy of the schedule. – Submitted by Francesca Hill

Monster Mash: Committee consists of Tara McKenna, Jennifer Coso, and Jodi Polsinelli. To date the committee has decorated the PTO bulletin board at Birchwood to promote the event, solicited donations from various companies and attempting to get more, completed sign up genius *****IN NEED OF MORE VOLUNTEERS HERE IS THE LINK www.SignUpGenius.com/go/70A094FADAC2BA02-monster/ and working to recruit more volunteers. We have 7 games planned so far with most of these games staffed.

Prizes for the games were ordered from Oriental Trading. The committee inventoried Monster Mash decorations in the basement and assessed what new decorations we need to replace due to the storage room flood and as a result have begun shopping for new decorations. The storyteller that we used last year has been booked. We have also made arrangements for fire department volunteers to donate their time by hosting a game and 2 trucks. Donations obtained to date include: 200 pumpkins, \$200 donation, \$50 donation, \$10 Oriental Trading gift card, 4 tickets from flight zone (trampoline park), and all paper products supplied by Shoprite. – *Submitted by Tara McKenna*

Nature Park: The Nature Park Sign is in production with color sample for approval expected on 10/14. PDF layouts are emailed 1 day after color sample approval and order will ship 20 days after layout approval. Installation of the shed is still on hold, awaiting approval from State Ed. All necessary paperwork has been submitted by the district. We are optimistic that there will be resolution to this soon (see also NCF Grant update, below). The first Storywalk (Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf) was installed in time for the Back to School BBQ and the committee is looking for feedback on this. We have supplies to install up to 45 page books. We are working to schedule a November committee meeting and anticipate monthly meetings beginning in January. We owe a closeout report to the NCF providing financial report (what we've spent), summary of outcomes (what we accomplished), and assessment of goals (did we accomplish what/more than/less than we said we would). We may need to consider moving forward with purchase of shed so that this grant can be closed out. Visioning is a major goal of the NP committee this year - to establish a consensus vision for the nature park, gardens, and affiliated programming, as well as to determine if/how the NP activities can be best aligned to support the faculty and curricula. – *Submitted by Mike Cooper*

School Banking: A Cap Com rep is coming in for our 10/24 banking day. She can open accounts for anyone new on that day. The committee is exploring ways to communicate with the kindergartners for new members and with other grades to remind them to resume. – *Submitted by Francesca Hill*

School Picture Day took place on Thursday, October 9th. The committee co-chairs coordinated teacher sign-up in the office and sent home the picture order forms in advance, as well as advertised in the bulletin and through posters pinned up at school before Curriculum Night. Additional parent volunteers helped throughout the day. The company changed the way they handled the student's information cards, requiring them to enter some information right before they took the picture, slowing down the process a bit. Due to this change we really needed 25 min for each class. We were not informed of this change in procedure and we appreciate how well the teachers and students handled the delay. Very few students were absent on picture day, we believe only 3. – *Submitted by Tiffanie Wood and Millie Gnatek*

Shopping Rewards Programs: Since August we have earned \$174 from 58 Target Red Card cardholders. Box Tops and Labels for Education sheets are rolling in and at the end of October anyone who has submitted since the start of school will be entered in the drawing for a Zero Gravity Laser Tag game pass. I will notify the PTO who the lucky winner is. We will have one drawing per month through June. Next month the prize will be a \$5 gift card to TCBY. Box Tops must be submitted by November 1 to be included in the December check, so I will submit and send an update when I know what our total is thus far. – *Submitted by Amy Jasiewicz*

Spirit Sale: The committee discussed and agreed that we wanted to meet the demand for generic Niskayuna spirit items, while continuing to offer Birchwood spirit items as well. Items were split into two different offerings for the Fall Sale, featuring Birchwood long sleeve shirt, hoodie, sweatpants, lanyard, and wristlet; as well as Niskayuna magnet, dry fit shirt, rain poncho, chair, blanket and tote bag. As of Tuesday, October 14th, we sold 265 items, totaling \$4,574 in sales. Sales were nearly evenly divided between Birchwood and Niskayuna apparel. Supplemental Niskayuna items did not sell as well. Initial feedback received was the costs were a bit too high for those particular items and lost on the back side of the form. Profit to date based

on those sales alone = \$1,185.25. However, due to up-front cost incurred in the amount of \$2,491.25 for the purchase of wristlets, lanyards and magnets; this places sales currently at -\$1306.00. These three items will be made available for sale at school events throughout the remainder of the year to help recoup funds. Orders were sent to TSS Printing on Monday and orders were emailed to Printz and Patternz Tuesday afternoon. Orders on average take a minimum of two weeks, but less than a month. We should expect delivery of Spirit Wear around Thanksgiving, if not beforehand. At that time, the committee will reconvene to package orders and bag in donated plastic bags, these are currently being requested from Hannaford, Price Chopper, and Stewarts. – *Submitted by Nicole Ladopolous*

Staff Breakfast is Monday, October 20th. Things are on track for this committee. An ad for parents to donate food items has been running in the bulletin, vendor support letters have been given to Hannaford, Price Chopper, Brueggers, Dunkin Donuts, and I will pick up paper products this week. I emailed both ladies who signed up to help with the committee to see who wanted to assist with making an invitation to the staff to attend the breakfast, set-up on Sunday night and clean up on Monday afternoon. I made arrangements through Deb Berndt to have a custodian meet the committee and myself to decorate and set up on Sunday evening before the event for Monday morning. – *Submitted by Tiffanie Wood*

Yearbook: We had our first meeting at the end of September. At that meeting we chose a cover and it has been submitted to Lifetouch. The committee has signed up to design specific pages. Sonya reached out to Suzanne Brooksby to have the homeroom parents take event pictures of classes throughout the year. I will also be reaching out to those homeroom parents for which there are no current classroom page designers. – *Submitted by Millie Gnatek*

Additional Committee Report for October PTO Meeting

Pre-K Program: I will be the contact person for speakers, and Lori will be the contact person for parents. Once the program starts, Erin, Lori and myself will work together to organize each meeting, party, and bus ride. The date of K-registration this year is 1/23/15, so we'll start the program 1/29/15 (Thursday), 8:40-9:10 (gym time), 9:10-9:40 (library time). The art room is not available during that time, so we'll be meeting in the cafeteria. Our tentative meeting dates are: 1/29, 2/5, 2/12, 2/26, 3/5, 3/12, 3/26, 4/2 (party day), 4/16 (practice bus ride, 9:30-11:30). Potential speakers are: principal, nurse, reading specialist, K-teacher, speech therapist, school psychologist, PTO president. We're planning to send out letters at the beginning to December. In the past, we've been given a little trinket to kids at the end of every meeting and goody bags to 4th grade buddies. Mrs. Kirkpatrick and I feel that getting involved in the program itself is a reward. So we're thinking about giving stickers that promote reading to pre-k children at the end of each meeting and give "cool" bookmarks/pens/pencils to 4th grade buddies. This is still up for discussion. - *Submitted by Soyoung Mok*