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January 15, 2008

President's Message

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Welcome to a new year! PTA in this district is busy working to support children in many ways. Since there is so much going on, I thought it may be a good idea to provide a summary of the flurry of activities. For a complete listing of available opportunities, detailed information, to view flyers, and to register for events, please be sure to visit our website www.srvcouncilpta.org.

As I have mentioned in the past, PTA provides many parent education opportunities. Coming shortly, on February 23, 2008, The San Ramon Valley Council of PTAs is pleased to bring you [Parenting 2008 and Beyond](#). This community education event will be taking place at the brand new Dougherty Valley High School. The chairperson, Gina Turturici, has been working diligently planning this conference for months. The day will begin at 8:45am with a presentation by our renowned keynote speaker, Madeline Levine. Ms. Levine is well known for her book, *The Price of Privilege*. Following the keynote presentation, there will be 2 break out sessions. Conference attendees can choose the breakout sessions that are of greatest relevance to them. Since this conference is a combined Special Needs and Parent & Community Education event, breakout sessions will cover all areas of interest. Also included in the \$35.00 registration fee is breakfast and lunch. Registration is available online via our website. [Click here](#) to register. Please register early. Space is limited and we expect a sell out crowd.

I'm sure all of you have heard by now about the Governor's budget proposals. PTA is hard at work making sure that the children of our state are as insulated as possible from possible cuts. The PTAs in this valley are particularly active and vocal about protecting the promises made with regard to funding education. We must not move backwards. People ask me all the time, "What can we do?" Well – the

answer is simple. When there is a call to action from your unit legislative representative, please participate. We are planning an [Advocacy Day](#) trip to Sacramento on Wednesday, February 27th. This all day trip is the single most effective, hands-on way that you can participate to make a difference. We will be meeting with legislators and making the voices of our membership heard. The more people that join us, the more of an impact we will have. PTA's influence is in its numbers. Look for more information in this issue of the newsletter. Register to attend the event at our website www.srvcouncilpta.org or [click here](#).

Additionally, and equally as important, we are about to embark upon a massive **letter writing campaign**. Sample letters and contact information for local legislators can soon be found on our website. They will also be available through your unit legislative representatives. When asked, please print and sign these letters and return them to the designated places ASAP. Your elected officials need to know where you stand on the issue of funding in education. Watch for more information on this to come soon.

On Tuesday, February 19 at Coyote Creek Elementary or Thursday, February 21 at Montair Elementary, both from 7-8:30 pm, the school district will be partnering with the PTA and CASA to bring you [Kindergarten Readiness Information Programs](#). Making the decision about kindergarten readiness is a huge undertaking. These informational evenings are designed to provide you with relevant information about kindergarten programs and expectations in this district, as well as readiness issues. Hear from a panel of experts and have an opportunity to ask questions. Both presentations are the same, so plan on attending the evening that is most convenient for you. More information is available on our website www.srvcouncilpta.org. *Registration is required.* [Click here](#) to register.

The above mentioned council-wide activities are in addition to the great work that individual units are doing. Please stay in touch at your local school. Read your newsletter, help where you can, and participate in PTA and school events. No matter what happens with funding, there is no greater way to show your child that their education is important, than to be present at school. Attend parent-teacher conferences, monitor homework, volunteer when you can, and provide support and encouragement. Your children will win every time!

Denise Jennison, President
San Ramon Valley Council of PTAs
president@srvcouncilpta.org

Legislatively Speaking ...

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[Governor's Budget Proposal Spells D-I-S-A-S-T-E-R for Kids](#)

Governor Schwarzenegger's proposal of \$4.4 billion in budget cuts to education would be devastating to public schools and are fundamentally inconsistent with the state's goal of improving student achievement. If implemented, this cut would mean laying off tens of thousands of teachers and result in increases in class size throughout the state.

PTA asks for your help in letting the Governor and key legislators know that we need other solutions to the budget crisis. We are initiating a multi-pronged advocacy effort over the next several months that will include information, letter-writing campaigns and visits. You will see legislative alerts through our council and unit newsletters and emails with more information. Your voice is critical to influencing our legislators. We urge you to take the time to study the issues and contact legislators. It is not an exaggeration that our children's futures depend on resolving the budget crisis without the staggering cuts proposed.

Please visit our council website (www.srvCouncil.org) to see a Legislation Action Alert from the California State PTA, as well as contact information for the governor and our legislators.

Advocacy Day Trip – February 27

If there ever was a year to advocate for children, this is it. Join hundreds of local PTA members on February 27 for Advocacy Day. Sponsored by this council and three other local PTA councils, you will travel by luxury bus to Sacramento to gain insights about budget issues and education reform from knowledgeable and entertaining experts and advocate with legislators about the need to provide children with an adequate education. PTA's strength lies in its numbers of members who vote. Your presence in the Capitol sends a strong message to our legislators about the importance of children and their education. The flier and both online and mail registration is available on our website, www.srvCouncil.org. Note: your local PTA will likely refund all or a portion of the cost of the trip with prior approval.

PTA Legislative Advocacy

Each school PTA has a vice president for legislative advocacy. These dedicated volunteers work with our Council Legislative Advocacy Committee on many advocacy issues, and they can use your help. If you are interested in supporting our efforts, please contact your PTA VP for legislative advocacy, your PTA president or me (at legislation@srvCouncilpta.org).

Please let us know if you have any questions or comments. Thank you for your support of children!

Nancy Vandell, vice president for legislative advocacy

Email: legislation@srvCouncilpta.org



Inspiration: ""Dealing with drug abuse requires a 'system-based approach and a long-term commitment. There is no silver bullet.'" Barry McCaffrey, ex-drug czar, 1996

Happy New Year!

The new year arrives with good reports about adolescent drug use. According to the White House and The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), teens' use of illicit drugs declined again in the 2006-2007. And it declined for all three grade levels surveyed-8th, 10th, and 12th. Further good news: the biggest drop was in 8th graders' use of marijuana, down to 10.3% from 11.7% the year before. Also significant was the drop in 8th grade tobacco use. The researchers report, "Daily cigarette smoking among 8th-graders dropped from 4.0 % to 3.0 %, down from its 10.4 % peak in 1996." The Monitoring the Future Survey is conducted by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research and included 48,000 respondents this time. Ongoing concerns include: steroids and prescription drug abuse did not decline; ecstasy may be on the rise. For the survey data, see "NIDA InfoFacts: High School and Youth Trends,"

[NIDA Infofacts: High School and Youth Trends](#)

Happy Prevention!

Why are we seeing adolescent drug use declining? What is working? Barry McCaffrey had the answer. There is no silver bullet, but a systems-wide approach over 10 years is continuing and is succeeding. Lloyd Johnston, who leads the survey team, credits parents for imposing stricter rules on their teens and credits law enforcement for cracking down on illegal sales of tobacco and alcohol to minors. Dr. Nora Volkow, director of NIDA, said the increase in cigarette prices discourages teen use, especially for younger teens. In addition, credit can be given to the many programs that encourage healthy behaviors. From athletics, to Scouting, volunteer activities, city recreation activities and classroom drug education, teens are surrounded with adults who care about their well-being and who send anti-drug messages in both overt and covert ways. Also influential: popular culture icons like Brittany Spears who ruin their lives with alcohol and other drugs. Teens are perceptive; they are affected by society's belief systems. Today, as opposed to 1996, drug use is less attractive and less acceptable. (Source: Frank Greve, "Teen drug use continues downward slide," Contra Costa Times, December 12, 2007.)

Sobering Thoughts

According to the General Accounting Office, the Federal Government spends \$1.8 billion annually to combat youth drug use and \$71 million to prevent underage alcohol use. (Source: Marin Institute)

Happy Legislation!

Last year, California's AB 346 passed with support from both political parties. It mandates warning labels on "alcopops"-the sweet, soda-popish malt liquors that appeal to new

drinkers, especially girls. Alcoholic energy drinks, alcoholic lemonade, jello shots, and other beverages that are packaged to look like non-alcoholic drinks must now say, "Warning: Contains Alcohol."

Not So Happy Legislation!

Four states are considering lowering the drinking age to 18. Advocates in Florida, Wisconsin, Missouri, and Vermont point out that when the drinking age was raised to 21, the purpose was to reduce teen drinking and that it simply hasn't worked. Like prohibition, they say, it has driven underage drinking underground. They also point out that 18-year olds can vote and serve in the military, so "they should also be able to enjoy a beer or two." Opponents like Mothers Against Drunk Driving point out that raising the drinking age to 21 saved lives. MADD has data to support their argument: "The 21 minimum drinking age law has saved about 900 lives per year as estimated by the National Traffic Highway Administration (NHTSA). In short, there are more than 17,000 people alive today since all states adopted the law in 1988. That's about as many people in a sold-out crowd at a professional basketball game or a medium-sized U.S. college. (Sources: Alex Johnson, "Debate on Lower Drinking Age Bubbling Up," MSNBC, August 14, 2007 and MADD, "Why 21-Brief History of the Drinking Age," Thank you, Contra Costa County Alcohol and Other Drugs Services Division.

["Debate on Lower Drinking Age Bubbling Up"](#)

Parent Education Survey

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The PTA, School District, and several local nonprofit partners are starting to plan for the 2008-09 school year and we want/need your input.

We want to offer you parent education opportunities that meet your needs. Some of you may want information on getting your child ready for Kindergarten, others may be ready to help your children as they are going-off to college, and yet others may be looking at transitioning from being a stay-at-home parent back into the work-force. We have over 30 different parenting topics listed, and room for others, so we would love your input and insight. Please click on the link below to take this 5-minute survey. It will really help with our planning...and we want your input!

<http://www.srvusd.k12.ca.us/survey/TakeSurvey.asp?SurveyID=547>

Questions or comments, please contact:

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Common Sense Media

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Best of 2007

It's been a big year in media for kids and families. While Harry Potter ruled the summer, fall TV and holiday video game releases gave him a run for his money when it was time to make our top picks for the year. Check out the Common Sense Media Editorial Staff's list of 2007 favorites:

Books

Kids: *Toot & Puddle: Let It Snow*, by Holly Hobbie

Tweens: *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, by J.K. Rowling

Teens: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, by Sherman Alexie

Theatrical Movie Releases

Kids: *Enchanted*

Tweens: *Stardust*

Teens: *Juno*

DVDs

Kids: *Ratatouille*

Tweens: *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*

Teens: *The Namesake*

TV

Kids: *Planet Earth*

Tweens: *High School Musical 2*

Teens: *Pushing Daisies*

Games

Kids: *The Jumpstart World Series*

Tweens: *Super Mario Galaxy*

Teens: *Rock Band*

Music

Kids: *Class of 3000: Music Volume One*, by Andre 3000

Tweens: *Wild Hope*, by Mandy Moore

Teens: *Into the Wild Soundtrack*

Web

Kids: *EekoWorld.com*

Tweens: *KidsHealth.org/kid*

Teens: *YouthNoise.com*

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Commonsensemedia.org



Drawing Out the Best In Your Child will be presented on Tuesday, January 29, 2008 from 7pm – 9pm at DiabloVistaMiddle School, MPR. Jon Pearson, an internationally known speaker, learning skills consultant and author will share creative tools to help raise test scores, write better, and retain information longer and show how to use drawing as a powerful language and memory tool.... even if you can't draw a straight line! To register, go to www.srvcouncilpta.org.

Kindergarten Information Nights

Tuesday, February, 19, 2008 or Thursday, February 21, 2008 from 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm
All parents of prospective incoming kindergarteners are invited to attend one of our Kindergarten Informational Nights. A panel of teachers, parents and curriculum experts will discuss the district kindergarten curriculum and readiness issues. Kindergarten has dramatically changed over the years. You will hear information and expectations so you can make the best decision for your child(ren). To register, go to www.srvcouncilpta.org.

Youth-to-Youth Conference

Saturday, March 8, 2008 8:00 am – 10:00 pm at DoughertyValleyHigh School
This is an all day event for children in middle school led by youth. The focus of the conference is harnessing the powerful force of peer pressure and turning it around to become a positive force that encourages youth to live tobacco, alcohol and drug-free lives. The day's activities involve a keynote speaker, team building activities, workshops and family groups. The speaker promotes not only a drug free message but also healthy decisions and choices. The team building activities are large games that are built to encourage teamwork and bond family groups together. The workshops are fun. For more information and to register go the www.srvcasa.org.

She's All That! Conference -

Saturday, February 9, 2008 9:00 am – 3:00 pm at DoughertyValleyHigh School
This is a conference for middle school girls presented by the Soroptimist International of San Ramon Valley. The girls will hear a keynote speaker and attend three of twelve wonderful workshops. For more information and to register visit www.sorptimist-sr.org.

January 2008 Free Legal Workshops

Topic: What You Need to Know about Tenant's Rights

Date: Tuesday, January 15

Location: Monument Futures, 2699 Monument Blvd., # G, Concord

Time: 6 PM

Topic: What You Need to Know About Family Law

Date: Tuesday, January 15

Location: Richmond Public Library, 325 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond

Time: 6 PM

Topic: What You Need to Know About Guardianship Law

Date: Wednesday, January 23
Location: Richmond Public Library, 325 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond
Time: 5:30 PM

Topic: What You Need to Know about Consumer Law
Date: Wednesday, January 23
Location: San Ramon Library, 100 Montgomery Street, San Ramon
Time: 7 PM

Topic: What You Need to Know About Immigration Law
Date: Thursday, January 24
Location: Pittsburg Public Library, 80 Power Avenue, Pittsburg
Time: 6 PM

Conference for Girls

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Over 120 girls and 40 parents have already registered for Soroptimist International's "She's All That!" conference that will be held at Dougherty Valley High School on Saturday, February 9th. There are still spaces left in each of the twelve workshops, but they are filling fast so register today to ensure the workshops your daughter would like to explore are available. Also, there are only 20 spaces left for the afternoon workshops for parents, so you need to register quickly too!!

Plus, remember that the registration fee will increase to \$30 starting January 16th.

Please visit the "She's All That" website at www.soroptimist-sr.org/SAT2008form.htm for more information and to register, or call us at 925-355-2442.

Keynote Speaker for the event is Beth Rypins:

Beth Rypins is a speaker and author of the Fear Free series: Simple Steps To Handle Fear. As a stroke survivor who became two-time whitewater world champion, Beth knows first hand about overcoming obstacles and handling fear. She is renowned worldwide as a kayaker, raft guide, and expedition leader. She has been featured on ABC Sports, ESPN, the Outdoor Life Network, Oxygen, as a spokesperson for Chevy Trucks, and in National Geographic and Outside Magazines.

Girls Will Select 3 of the Following Workshops:

- . Mean Girls
- . Put Your Best Face Forward
- . Straight Talk on Boys, Relationships and Other Teen Issues
- . Bend It, Shape It, Yoga for Girls
- . Self Defense - What Every Girl Should Know
- . Get Your Parents Off Your Back (and On Your Side)
- . Be the Boss - Make Money While Working Less and Having Fun
- . Polishing Up Your "Diamond in the Rough" Manners/Image to Shine Socially
- . You're Okay Just the Way You Are
- . What's on the Menu?
- . Wanna Dance?
- . Exercise Out, Adventure In!

Adults will Attend Both of These Workshops in the Afternoon:

- . The Power Within (Empower and Inspire Your Teen)
- . Teen Talk - How to Keep Them Talking to You Through These Emotional Years

Thank you,

Soroptimist International of San Ramon Valley

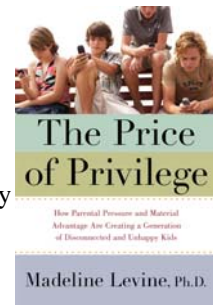
Parenting 2008 and Beyond...

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Registration is now open

Space is limited!

The San Ramon Valley Council of PTAs presents its annual Parenting and Community & Special Needs Conference, *Parenting 2008 and beyond...*, featuring keynote address by Madeline Levine, PhD, author of *The Price of Privilege*, on Saturday, February 23 at Dougherty Valley High School from 8:45am-2:30pm (check-in begins at 7:45am). Visit www.srvCouncilpta.org for more information and to register for this event.



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