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# the VOICE

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## **President's Message,**

Happy April, PTA people!

Can you believe we are in the homestretch of another school year?! This one is bittersweet for me since our senior is graduating...and both the kids will (thankfully) be working this summer. I'll have to figure out how to squeeze in some time with them as their schedules allow.

At Virginia PTA, your Board of Directors is getting ready for our May board meetings where we will consider next year's budget, welcome new District Directors, review programs and, our favorite, recognize our student award winners at our Spring Awards Ceremony! You've no doubt heard of Reflections, our student arts program. Maybe you've even had a winner. But did you know we offer other student programs? We award scholarships to deserving seniors, host an incredible citizenship essay competition and even a student recipe contest - Power Plates. We are so super proud of all our students!

Recognizing your students is awesome - but none of this would be possible without the blood, sweat and tears of our volunteers. You are really at the heart of what we do. As you move through the last few membership meetings of the year, [recognizing the work of your fellow volunteers is so important](#) - not just because of what they have done, but because it inspires others to dig in, too. It takes a village to build a strong bridge between school and home.

Over the last month, I have done some really cool and moving stuff because of PTA. In March, your Virginia delegation went to Washington DC for the National PTA Legislation Conference - and we met with nearly all our Congressional representatives. We lobbied for more money for our schools, reasonable and thoughtful gun violence prevention measures and grants for all kinds of mental health and school safety programs. We did it - we pushed all those programs through in the recently-signed omnibus budget bill. Read more about this huge win below!

Around Virginia, you may have seen that our Secretary of Education is traveling around on his listening tour. Thanks to our relationship with his office, we were able to get many of our PTA's a personal visit from him to talk about what's happening in their school. If you are interested in meeting with the Secretary of Education, reach out to [your district director](#) or send me a note at [president@vapta.org](mailto:president@vapta.org).

So, in closing, I just want to tell you that even though much of your work is focused on supporting the student, teachers and parents in your own building, the fact that you do it as part of PTA, increases our local, state and national footprint. Our brand is strong. We ARE the voice of the parent in your town, in Virginia and Washington, DC. We are #PTAProud. Thank you for all the work you do.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sarah".

Sarah

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## **Save the Date for Summer Leadership Training 2018**

Join Virginia PTA leaders, local officers, and volunteers for a day of leadership training, workshops, round-tables and networking designed to help you succeed in your PTA leadership role - in your area!

Stay tuned for more details!

- Saturday, July 21 - Northside High School, Roanoke
- Saturday, July 28 - King George High, King George
- Saturday, August 4 - Freedom High, Chantilly (South Riding)
- Saturday, August 11 - Jolliff Middle, Chesapeake

Share this [flyer](#) with your PTA leaders and members.

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## **"Thank a Teacher" Campaign Kicks Off Today!**

Teacher Appreciation Week (May 7-11) is right around the corner. We're partnering with the Virginia Lottery for the third year in a row to celebrate with the "[Thank a Teacher](#)" campaign. As a refresher, "Thank a Teacher" encourages students, parents and the general public to send thank-you notes to public school teachers,

recognizing them for their hard work and dedication.

Thanks to your support, the 2017 “Thank a Teacher” campaign resulted in more than 38,000 thank-you notes sent to public school teachers across the Commonwealth. You’re the best! [Click here](#) to watch last year’s winner, Sarah Stultz, find out she won the grand prize in a surprise visit from the Virginia Lottery.



Teacher Appreciation Week

In 2018, we’re asking local PTAs to join us again in thanking our wonderful teachers for all they do. With your help, we are confident we can get even more participants and thank-you notes this year.

As you organize your Teacher Appreciation Week activities, check out the resources from The Virginia Lottery. You can download the [“Thank a Teacher” PTA Toolkit](#), which includes helpful resources such as email templates and posts you can share on social media to spread the word.

Now is also the perfect time to order complimentary printed thank-you notes from the Lottery. This year’s notecards feature original designs from three public school students. Nearly 1,000 entries were received for the inaugural Virginia Lottery Art Contest. Here are the names of the students and links to their awesome artwork:

[Sahasra Vishwanathan](#), 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, Kiln Creek Elementary School, Newport News

[Cleo Scott](#), 7<sup>th</sup> grade, Albert Hill Middle School, Richmond

[Isabel Lee](#), 9<sup>th</sup> grade, Battlefield High School, Prince William County

Teachers who receive a thank-you note will receive the chance to win fun prizes, including Virginia vacation packages courtesy of the Virginia Tourism Corporation, four round-trip train tickets from Amtrak and the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, or a \$500 VISA gift card from the Virginia Lottery.

When it comes to education, the Virginia Lottery is game. All profits benefit K-12 public education.

We’ll share more information on the “Thank a Teacher” campaign in the coming weeks, so be on the lookout!

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## Action for Healthy Kids Grant Application Deadline Extended

Calling all local PTA leaders: Do you want to make your school a healthier learning environment? Apply now for a \$1,000 grant through Action for Healthy Kids to bring nutrition and physical activity programs to your child’s school. Applications are due on **April 13**. Visit [www.ParentsforHealthyKids.org/grants](http://www.ParentsforHealthyKids.org/grants) for more information.

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# Virginia529<sup>SM</sup>

Virginia529 wants to remind everyone now is the time to enroll in the Prepaid529 plan. Prepaid529 gives Virginia families the opportunity to prepay the cost of tomorrow’s college tuition. Rather than waiting to see what your loved ones’ tuition bill will amount to, you can embrace peace of mind by prepaying their tuition with Prepaid529. Prepaid529 enrollment has been extended through the middle of April! Sign up now!

Virginia529 would like to be a part of your next PTA meeting or school event to discuss how the program can benefit the families at your schools. Whether you want to hear more about the PrePaid529 program or all of the other benefits of Virginia529, we’d be happy to speak with your community. If you would like to request a speaker for your next event, have materials sent for your students, or would like to learn more about our flexible, affordable tax-advantaged college savings programs, just visit our website at [www.virginia529.com/invite](http://www.virginia529.com/invite).

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## Membership Database News and Updates

Beginning July 2, National PTA’s database will be ready to receive your PTA’s 2018-2019 membership records. PTAs already setup in the database – it should be an easy transition. For those of you who are part of PTAs that are not yet set up in the database, now is the time! **Beat the fall rush- GET YOUR DATABASE SET UP NOW!** National has created a great resource to help with database usage- <https://www.pta.org/membershipdatabase> - it walks you through the steps and even has video tutorials! The database will be down from June 15 to July 1 for conversion to the new year so, please, don’t wait.

Virginia PTA will be conducting Summer Leadership Training around the state that includes database training, so plan to attend a training location nearest you:

- July 21, 2018 (Roanoke)
- July 28, 2018 (Fredericksburg)
- August 4, 2018 (Northern VA)
- August 11, 2018 (Southeastern)

Need training or have questions? Membership Database training will be provided at each of the upcoming summer leadership training locations.

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## Planning Your Membership for 2018-2019

Setting goals is an important part of creating your plan for next year. Questions are an important part of creating a framework. A key component to engagement is communication. When deciding on your goals, think about how to best communicate with your member families. What information you will need? Do you call/email/mail your families? Begin building your plan with an empty calendar- starting by filling in your annual activities, then pencil in a few new ideas.

First priority is to get your families to join. Think about how you are going to communicate to your families on joining. What memberships are you going to offer? Think about how you might want to position your membership options to best support your families and your schools. There will be a statewide email and social media campaign to “rejoin your PTA” beginning in July. Kick-off your school based membership drive before school starts so members can rejoin early and you can devote more attention to gaining new members when school starts.

Beginning July 2, the database will be ready for members for the 2018-2019 school year. Try sending a communication before the end of the school year with some of your scheduled activities to get some interest and volunteers. Send pre-addressed envelopes with membership forms. Does your school have an activity for incoming students? That is a great place to recruit new members!

As always, if there is anything that we can help you with, please reach out to the Virginia PTA office at (804) 264-1234 or email [info@vapta.org](mailto:info@vapta.org).

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## Big Win for National PTA Advocacy Efforts on Capitol Hill

On March 14th, while many students across the United States were walking out to remember the student lives lost to gun violence and ask for action to reduce gun violence, the Virginia PTA joined with State PTA leaders from across the country to meet, in person, with our US Representatives and Senators on Capitol Hill to ask for gun violence prevention legislation as well as federal funding to support mental health programs, school safety resources, statewide family engagement centers and physical and digital infrastructure improvements for aging school buildings.

Congress' 2018 bi-partisan omnibus spending bill or Consolidated Appropriations Act (approved 256-167 by the House and 65-32 by the Senate and signed by the President) included ALL of the National PTAs priorities including:

- \$70.9 billion in funding for the Department of Education, a \$2.6 increase above the FY2017 level
- \$15.8 billion for Title I at risk and low income funding, a \$300 million increase over FY2017 level
- \$12.3 billion for IDEA special education state grants, a \$275 million increase over the FY2017 level
- \$1.1 billion for Student Support and Academic Achievement State Grants (Title IV-A), \$700 million above the FY2017 level
- \$10 million for the Statewide Family Engagement Centers, which have not been funded since FY10
- \$50 million in grants for the STOP School Violence Act
- Repeal of the Dickey amendment that bans CDC research on gun violence
- Improvements to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS)

Here are some resources that you may find helpful as you work with your elected representatives on advocacy issues that are important for your community:

- [National PTA Hill 2018 Ask](#)
  - [National PTA Legislative Checklist](#)
  - [National PTA 2018 Bill Endorsements](#)
  - [Statewide Family Engagement Centers](#)
  - [Title IV-A ESSA Infographic](#)
  - [Rebuild America's Schools Act \(H.R.2475\)](#)
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## Virginia PTA Scholarship Winners!

Virginia PTA is proud to award scholarships totaling \$10,000 to 10 graduating Virginia high school students. [Congratulations!](#)

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## Citizenship Essay Winners - "What Does it Mean to Dream Big?"

Congratulations to the [following students](#) for their winning entries in the 2018 Citizenship Essay Contest! All first through third place winners will receive a cash award from the Virginia PTA. First place winners are invited to attend the Virginia PTA Student Recognition ceremony on May 6. Thank you to all of our amazing students who submitted essays, as well as the parents, teachers and PTA volunteers who supported and encouraged them.

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## Deadline Extended to Submit the Winning 2019 Citizenship Essay Theme Win \$25 Gift Certificate to the Virginia PTA Store

We are excited by the record number of Citizenship Essays having been submitted and anxiously await the results of this year's contest! In looking forward to next year, we would love for you to share your ideas for next year's Citizenship Essay Theme! Virginia PTA is committed to promoting a sense of citizenship and responsibility in the lives of our children – tomorrow's leaders. To demonstrate the value that Virginia PTA places on good citizenship, we are proud to sponsor, support, and encourage Virginia students to write an essay for the Citizenship Essay Contest. If you have a great theme to suggest for next year's contest, please submit it to Sharon Abernathy, Virginia PTA Secretary, at [secretary@vapta.org](mailto:secretary@vapta.org) before **April 27, 2018**. The winning theme will be announced at the Virginia PTA Annual Awards Banquet in May.

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## District Annual Meetings

If it's spring, it's time for your District Annual Meeting! Have you been to your district meeting? This is your year! It's a great place to get an update, meet some other leaders and be recognized for your hard work! Check out the listings of those meetings:

- April 18 - Hunt District
- April 22 - Patriot District
- April 29 - Northern VA District
- April 28 - Southeastern District

Contact your District Director for more information. Don't know your district or need an email, click [here](#).

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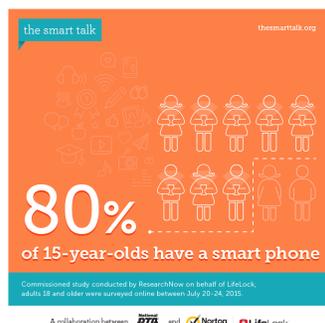
## Policy on Mental Health Safety Net Resolution

Suicide affects everyone and, unfortunately, chances are we all know someone who has taken their own life as a result of a mental health issue. Sadly, suicide has become an increasingly serious problem for the youth in our schools. Teen suicide is an alarming problem that may be prevented. Sometimes our young people fail to realize that their problems can be dealt with and see suicide as a "solution." Our schools can help our children recognize that help is available in many forms.

We need to have the Virginia Department of Education work with all of the agencies that serve the youth of our state to update policies, procedures and protocols to reflect what current research reveals to us about prevention and treatment of mental health issues leading up to suicide attempts/completions.

Our Mental Health Safety Net Resolution is a critical first step in beginning to address the needs of our youth with "Safety Net Meetings" and "Safety Net Plans" for our students experiencing depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and other mental illnesses. We urge our school districts to mirror what we seek to happen at the state level, by creating policies, procedures and protocols to save our children's lives.

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## The Smart Talk

[The Smart Talk](#) is an online contract that gets parents and kids together for a conversation about being responsible with new technology. Put your internet rules in writing today! Visit [TheSmartTalk.org](#) to get started.

Visit our Website

Virginia PTA | (804) 264-1234 | (804) 264-4014 | info@vapta.org | www.vapta.org

STAY CONNECTED

