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the VOICE

President's Message,

Has this been the oddest January or what? I mean, two weeks off for the holidays, back at work for 2 days and then much of this state is off school for nearly a week or...still! I don't know about you, but something about this time of year makes me feel disconnected from my work and my PTA team. I really tried to put as much work away as possible while my kids were home because they are in high school and well, I feel like I'm getting ready to say goodbye to them. But then the vacation ends and I'm like, where did I leave off?! Let's talk about how to dig back in.

My first recommendation is to reconnect with your board, your committee, your teachers, your principal. Take a minute to send an email, text - or better yet, give people a call. Reaching out and rekindling conversations and talking through plans of work will get you energized and help refocus the group. Is someone you work with amazing and do they go above and beyond? Virginia PTA has a host of awards that you might consider. Volunteers LOVE recognition and shining a light on them is a HUGE THANK YOU and will encourage others to step up. Here's a link to our [awards package](#).

And speaking of connecting - take your PTA to the next level by introducing (or reintroducing) yourself to your state Delegates and Senators. The 2018 General Assembly session began on January 8 and so all your legislators are back at work. If you want to get more information about the GA, click [here](#). You can find links to your legislators, calendars, committee information and so much more! Remember advocacy is at the core of our mission and the backbone of our work. If you want to find a way to make what we do even more meaningful, *advocacy and engagement* is the answer. And Virginia PTA is your hook up to all the information you need - make sure you sign up for our [Take Action advocacy alerts](#).

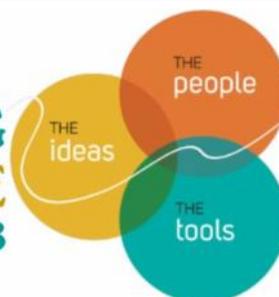
Lastly, remember that we are all doing this TOGETHER! You are part of the oldest and largest volunteer child advocacy association anywhere - and we are here for you. Check in with [your District Director](#) to see what's up around your district. Spend a few minutes on our [Facebook page](#). You know what? Give ME a call! I'm looking to reconnect, too!

If you haven't registered for our Annual Meeting and Advocacy Conference - you still have time! All the links are [on our website](#). We are so excited to announce that our new Secretary of Education, Atif Qarni, will join our National PTA President, Jim Accomando, as a keynote speaker. Shake hands, share ideas, make connections, be heard - I can't wait to see you!

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

Sarah

2018 Virginia PTA ANNUAL MEETING & ADVOCACY CONFERENCE
everychild.one voice.® JANUARY 27-28, 2018



Annual Meeting & Advocacy Conference is Coming Up Fast, But It's Not Too Late to Register!!

You still have time to [register](#) for the 2018 Annual Meeting & Advocacy Conference.

Conference [workshops](#) and table talks provided a great selection of hands-on learning and training opportunities to enhance your leadership skills and learn more about issues affecting children and families. Check out these **Hot Topics, Spotlight and Feature** workshops:

- **Keynote Speakers**
 - Jim Accomando, National PTA President
 - Atif Qarni, Virginia Secretary of Education
- **Hot Topic Workshops**
 - Virginia PTA Legislative Program and General Assembly Actions
 - No Kid "Hangry" Partnering with School Nutrition Program
 - Increasing STEM Literacy through Family Engagement
- **Spotlight Workshops**
 - Empowering Parents of Students with Special Needs
 - Council and Superintendents: Working Together
 - Leveraging Social Media in Advocacy
- **Bonus Sessions**
 - Saturday: Table Talks - learn about Advocacy, Bylaws & Resolutions, First Timers, and PTA University degree.
 - Sunday: Reflections & Inspirations -learn about Influential Leadership by [Courtney Lynch, CEO Lead Star](#), PTA advocate, and New York Times best selling author.

Along with these great workshops, check out the Exhibit Hall to gain ideas and information for fundraising, assemblies and programs for your school. Get the latest ideas for child and school safety, educational programs, health and fitness education and much more. Shop at the Virginia PTA Store and save on shipping costs.

[Register NOW!](#)

Last Call for Citizenship Essays!

There's still time to complete and submit your Citizenship Essay. The theme is "*What Does it Mean to Dream Big*" and is due to your [District Director \(District Locator\)](#) by **February 01, 2018**. This contest is open to all children in grades K-12. State winners will be announced in April. Click [here](#) for application.



Happening Now! Thank a Teacher Art Contest!

The Thank a Teacher Art Contest is open for submissions through **Friday, February 2**. Let's help spread the word about the Virginia Lottery's exciting new opportunity for public school students across Virginia to showcase their original artwork.

With prizes at the elementary, middle and high school levels, there's a chance for students K-12 to get creative! Winners will receive a \$150 gift card, win \$1,000 for their school's art department and have their design featured on thousands of thank-you notes being distributed across the state during National Teacher Appreciation Week 2018.

Please help us [spread the word](#) about the Thank a Teacher Art Contest with teachers and students in your community. Visit www.ThankATeacherVA.com for more.

Thank you for your support!

Membership Database News and Updates

THANK YOU for all of your efforts in setting up your PTAs in the National Database. As one of the 4 pilot states, we are learning a lot and helping to set the standards for the system when it rolls out nationwide.

In response to your feedback (all feedback is useful!), National PTA has released a webpage that helps PTAs get set up and begin to actively use the database - <https://www.pta.org/membershipdatabase>. It walks you through the steps of setting up and even has video tutorials!

We hope that you will find this resource helpful and as always, please reach out to the Virginia PTA office if you need more assistance.

The Smart Talk

We want our children to learn and have fun through technology, and at the same time, stay safe. The Smart Talk provides an interactive experience that guides kids and parents through a series of questions and conversations about topics such as safety, privacy, screen time, social media, texting and cameras. After agreeing on healthy limits together, a personalized, official family agreement can be stored on the computer or printed and posted at home. Visit TheSmartTalk.org to get started.



Take Your Family To School Week - Grant Recipients

Thank you again for your support in promoting the National PTA's "Take Your Family To School Week (TYFTSW)", sponsored by Chrysler & Google Chromebook and in collaboration with National PTA. I'm happy to report the following PTAs in your state have officially been selected to receive our 2018 TYFTSW grants.

- Richard T. Yates Elementary School PTA, Newport News
- David A. Dutrow Elementary School PTA, Newport New

As a reminder, each local PTA will receive a grant for \$1000 to host a Take Your Family to School Week event. The awardees were notified on Friday, December 15th.

Congratulations and thank you for all of your help during this process.

NOVA District PTA Receives National Funding to Host Smart Talk Satellite Event - February 6, 2018, Safer Internet Day!

NOVA District PTA received \$1,000 from National PTA to host a Safer Internet Day Satellite Event, one of five grants nationally, on February 6, 2018, to be held at Luther Jackson Middle School, 3020 Gallows Road, Falls Church. Dinner will begin at 6:00 p.m. and program at 7:00 p.m. [Please register online!](http://www.novadistrictpta.org)

This year's theme is, "**Create, connect and share respect: A better internet starts with you.**" For more information about the program and digital safety expert panel members, please visit: www.novadistrictpta.org

Visit our Website

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STAY CONNECTED

