



Okte Elementary School

1581 Crescent Road, Clifton Park, NY 12065

**PTA Newsletter
December 2008**

It's hard to believe it is December already...soon we'll all be busy with the hustle and bustle of this Holiday season.

Last month sure kept us all moving. We started off with Parent/Teacher conferences. Hopefully all went well and everyone is on the same page going forward so our children can have a most successful school year possible.

The PTA offered two great family events both headed up by Jennifer Franze, our Family Fun Nights Chairperson. First was McDonald's night, which brought out many families who were so excited to see teachers and staff serving them that night's dinner! Thank you to all of the wonderful volunteer teachers and staff members who helped make our night such a success and of course a big thank you to the families that came and supported this event which in turn brought in \$500.00 for the PTA to use for future events/programs for our children. The second family fun night was Kung Fu Panda Movie Night! Children showed up in their pj's with blankets and enjoyed watching this great movie in the gym. They snacked on popcorn, candy and drinks and a good time was had by all! Thank you Jennifer for all of your hard work on these two great events!

Picture re-takes also took place this month...thank you Lisa Gordon, Fall School Picture Chairperson, for handling this again for us. Everything went smoothly and we can't wait to see the pictures!

By now, all those who wanted to have their names and information included in the directory has received their completed 2008-2009 Student Directory. A big thank you goes to Wendy O'Malley, our School Directory Chairperson, for handling this massive undertaking. Imagine all of the information that needed to be inputted and checked for accuracy! The directory looks great and we're sure everyone is happy that this great resource is at their fingertips!

Although this month is short, we have a lot going on! On Friday December 5th, from 5 to 8pm, join us for our Holiday Craft Celebration. This event will provide many crafters and business owners from the capital district and offer "make and take" crafts for the children to purchase along with cookies and coffee. Donna Cova and Wendy Hacker, our event Co-Chairpeople have been working hard on all of the details to ensure a great night! Please mark your calendars and stop by for some great shopping and family fun!

Next Tuesday night, December 9th, will be the After School Enrichment Program registration in our lobby. *Please be on the lookout for the information packets that will be going home this week!*

Debbie Rivers, our Hospitality Chairperson, is working hard on the upcoming Staff Holiday Luncheon planned for December 11th. Volunteer forms went home recently...please help out when and where you can. This is a great way to show our teachers and staff just how wonderful we think they are and to wish them a wonderful holiday season! To help, please contact Debbie at Doots290@nycap.rr.com.

"Help Us Help You" A lot of time and effort goes into each event and program provided by the PTA. We would appreciate any feedback that you may have to ensure continued success in our planning process. Mary Beth Nafis, our Website Coordinator, has put a feedback form on our website for your use. Please feel free to use this form after each event that you attend to let us know what you think. Every opinion is important and appreciated! Log on to www.shenet.org and click the link to Okte Elementary and then click Okte PTA.

We would like to wish you all a wonderful Holiday Season. If you plan on traveling, please be safe. Enjoy every moment with your loved ones and make great memories!

Pam Kelly and Wendy Reynolds, Okte PTA Co-Presidents

REMINDER

WANTED

Did you attend the Welcome Back BBQ in September? Did you take some great pictures? If so, we would love a copy for the Okte yearbook. Please contact either Mrs. Sofko in 3rd grade or Molly Jacobson at MommaJake@MSN.Com or 373-9917.

REMINDER FROM OUR HEALTH OFFICE

All 2nd and 4th graders and ALL new students to the district need a physical. The physical needs to be dated any time after 9/1/07 to be accepted for this school year. Please submit one as soon as possible.

LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER NEWS

A new brochure giving information and passwords for the many rich databases Shenendehowa subscribes to is available for all Okte families. The brochures were made available at conference days, but if you did not get one, they are available in the main office, the Library Media Center, or they can be sent home upon your request (call 881-0546). These databases can support educational projects at home and provide limitless enrichment opportunities for your children. They are all available through remote access from your home computer, but you will need user names and passwords in the brochure to gain access to them.

Liz Bailey, Library Media Specialist

OKTE RECEIVES GRANT AWARD

In November, Okte was the recipient of the ExxonMobil Educational Alliance Grant. The \$500 grant will be used to support the purchase of audio book PlayAways for our Library Media Center. The PlayAways will enable students to successfully participate in our literacy programs by allowing them to use both visual and auditory modalities of reading.

The C. P. Jolley Mobil Station next to Clifton Park Center nominated Okte for this award. A letter of acceptance has been sent to ExxonMobil and C.P. Jolley. We truly appreciate the support of a local business. Information about this award will also be posted on the district's website.

****School Closing * Delayed Openings * Early Dismissals****

Please check the following sources for information regarding school closings, delayed openings and early dismissals:

- Local radio stations
- Local TV channels
- District website- www.shenet.org
- Times Union Source Line - 446-4000 access code 9191

Please have a back-up plan in place should we have an early dismissal

If there is a delayed opening for whatever reason, the doors to the school will **not** open before 9:55 am for a 1-hour delay and 10:55 am for a 2-hour delay.

Keep this reminder posted in a handy place

WINTER RECESS GUIDELINES

As part of the Okte School Health and Fitness Program, all children are expected to participate in twenty minutes of fresh air activity every day during their outside recess. All students will go out every day unless there is a wind-chill of 20 degrees.

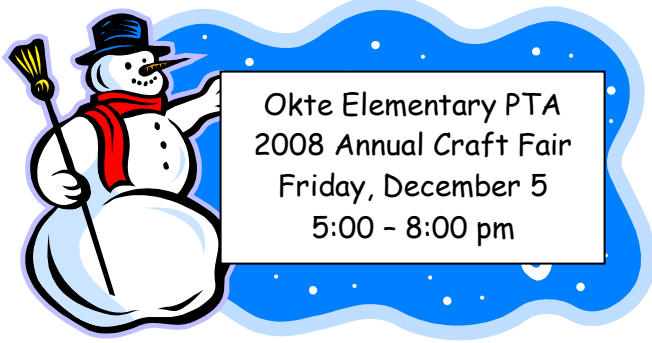
All children must be properly attired for winter weather with boots, hats, gloves and warm coats or jackets. Snow pants are required for those children who wish to play in deep snow. Children should bring extra socks, pants and sweaters in a plastic bag in the event of wet and cold weather emergencies.

PARENTS AND GUARDIANS SHOULD CLEARLY LABEL ALL BOOTS, COATS, JACKETS and LUNCH BOXES

Only those children who have a written medical excuse presented to the school nurse, or who have prior approval from a teacher will be allowed to stay inside during outside lunch recess.

THANK YOU

The PTA would like to thank Samantha Long, Luke Gordon and Erin Kelly for their help at the Monster Mash. These 5th graders are part of the Safety Patrol and during the Monster Mash helped keep the entrance and exit to the Mystery Maze safe and secure. Thank you for your time and helping to keep the children of Okte safe.



****Come see the area's finest crafters****

****Unique gifts for family and friends****

****Children's crafts for sale and to make and take****

****Cookie bake sale and beverages****

****Avoid the crowded malls and traffic****

****Plenty of free parking****



FIFTH GRADE GIVING PROJECT



This year the fifth grade students will continue the tradition of the Holiday Giving Project. The fifth grade students will put together approximately 20 - 25 baskets to be given to families or individuals less fortunate or struggling through the holidays. As the classes make the gifts, we are asking for donations of toiletries, (like the ones you get in hotels) and any gifts that you may like to "regift". Items will be collected in a box in the office. Please have items in by December 12. Again, we would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the Okte Community.

Thank You, Fifth Grade Teachers

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR OKTE STUDENTS FUNDED BY THE PTA

BIRDS OF PREY

Beth Bidwell will do a presentation on December 16 for 5th grade and December 19 for 3rd grade. The Wildlife Institute of Eastern NY is dedicated to providing a variety of informative, interactive programs that reinforce classroom materials and the NYS Learning Standards. They strive to illustrate the connection that humans have with other species and with the environment. They believe that by helping people to gain an appreciation of the natural world, they are better equipped to understand the consequences of their actions and to make responsible choices. The Wildlife Institute encourages people to turn off their televisions and computers and go outside and experience all that nature has to offer. All programs feature live animals including reptiles, amphibians, and/or handicapped, non-releasable birds of prey (hawks, owls, and falcons). Program titles include: Local Wildlife, Adirondack Animals, The Tropical Rainforest, Creatures of the Night, Birds of Prey, and Reptiles and Amphibians.

SLEEPING BEAUTY

On December 17th the 2nd grade will be going to see Sleeping Beauty at the New York State Theater Institute. Sleeping Beauty is a pleasure of story, music, and dance. A much loved and visually exciting production, it is inspired by Kabuki and Noh theatre. While it tells a classic tale, it offers its own final surprise. This world-renowned production has toured to France, Jordan, the Kennedy Center, and the Saratoga Performing Arts Center. Production runs approximately one hour and fifteen minutes.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

December 22nd The Puppet People will come in to do A Christmas Carol. Warm your hearts with Charles Dickens' holiday classic. Watch Mean Ol' Scrooge as he discovers Christmas is not a HUMBUGH! This puppet spectacular features beautiful handcrafted marionettes, shadow puppets, gorgeous masks, lavish costumes, vivid sets, a professional soundtrack that includes many holiday favorites, a giant 9-foot parade puppet and guaranteed smiles! Experience this literary masterpiece that reaches far beyond the holiday season!

PTA FAMILIES GET GAME SMART

Tired of arguing about how much time your child spends online and playing video games? PTA members are the first to get a sneak peek at a new resource for families - GetGameSmart.com. This site provides quick tips that put you in control, need-to-know information about the Internet and gaming safety, plus advice from experts to help you make the right decisions about media use in your home. The official site launches in December, but PTA members can check it out now. Don't miss out-visit GetGameSmart.com.

READING ROCKETS: HEALTHY HEARING

Before children learn to read, they learn the sounds of their language by listening and speaking. These skills provide the foundation for later literacy. A child with hearing impairment has trouble processing or expressing language, and is likely to have difficulty learning to read. An estimated 10-15 percent of all school-aged children have some type of hearing loss. Some of these children are born with a hearing problem, but healthy young children can develop hearing loss at any time as a result of:

- frequent ear infections,
- infectious diseases like measles, meningitis, or flu,
- head injury,
- exposure to loud noise or music.

Many children with acquired hearing loss are not diagnosed properly or early enough. Learn the signs that your child may have developed a hearing problem.

- You have to raise your voice consistently to get your child's attention.
- Your child complains of ear pain or is pulling on his ear.
- Your child watches your face carefully when you are talking and turns his head so that one ear is facing the direction of your voice.
- Your child frequently asks for things to be repeated.
- Your child talks in an unusually soft or loud voice.
- Your child turns up the television or CD player louder than usual.

- Your child confuses sounds that are alike, and is having problems with spelling and phonics.
- Your child seems inattentive at home or at school, and may say he doesn't like school.

If you or your child's teacher suspects that your child has a hearing problem, first visit your pediatrician for a check up. An ear infection requires immediate treatment. Have your child's hearing evaluated by a certified audiologist, who will determine the severity of the hearing loss. If your child acquires a long-term or permanent hearing loss, you should seek out a certified speech-language pathologist who will measure your child's speech and language skills and help develop special remedial programs, if needed.

HEALTHFUL HINTS!

- Seatbelts are only helpful if you use them, so teach your child that it is unacceptable to get into a bus or a car without a seatbelt or booster seat/restraint. This way, even when they carpool, buckling up will become second nature.
- Participating in 60 minutes of moderate activity each day burns off extra energy and contributes to a child's cognitive, physical, social and emotional well being. It would be beneficial for you to also join them outside.
- Teach your child to wash their hands with soap and water or use sanitizer after covering their mouths to cough or sneeze, after going to bathroom and before eating. You will see a significant drop in colds during the year.
- Send your child off to school with a healthy snack and/or lunch, and teach them what foods are healthy and what are not. This will also help children to choose healthy when they buy lunch. Children are taught by example so serve healthy foods at home. Most importantly, sit down together for meals. Studies show that families that eat together eat more nutritiously than those that don't.
- New York blood banks are at a critical low. If you have an hour, make an appointment to donate blood. It is one of the most gratifying feelings in the world. A pint of blood can save up to 3 lives; donate a pint today; call 1-800-688-0900.

DATES TO REMEMBER...

December 5; Holiday Craft Celebration

**December 9; After School Enrichment
Registration**

December 11; Staff Appreciation Luncheon

December 17; PTA Meeting

**December 24 – January 2; Winter Recess,
No School**

**We want you to join us at meetings
BUT**

Money and numbers talk too.

**By paying \$5 to join the National PTA
it shows we care.**

PTA.ORG

Not just our school but all schools.

Together we CAN make a difference!

What would it take to get you to join us at a PTA meeting? Why haven't you been yet? Drop a message at the PTA bulletin board or send a message in an envelope to PTA.

SIMPLE WAYS TO RAISE RESPONSIBLE CHILDREN

Teaching responsibility to your children might not be as familiar as teaching math or reading. However, parents can help children understand what it means to be responsible. Terri Khonsari, a speaker and author of *Raising A Superstar: Simple Strategies to Bring Out the Brilliance in Every Child*, provides four steps for raising a child who understands responsibility.

1. Start giving your children small tasks and chores when they are young. Add to their responsibilities as they get older. Children have a natural desire to help, and you can take advantage of their willingness when they are little. Ask them to take care of certain duties and hold them accountable. Teach them to do things because it helps them and those around them, and not because they get something material from you. Chores can start with very simple things like having them empty trash cans or put their own plate away, and later on they

can graduate to washing the dishes or making the salad for dinner.

2. Model the responsible behavior you want your child to emulate. Children can see right through hypocrisy. If there is a discrepancy between your behavior and your teachings, they will copy your actions rather than follow your words. Be responsible in your own life; show care and dedication toward your job, your family, and the commitments that you make to your children and their school. Do you take care of your responsibilities with passion and show enthusiasm for doing what you need to do? Take care of your responsibilities and show your kids you can have fun at the same time.
3. Communicate with your children about responsible behavior. Let them know when you see them being responsible. Point to specific behaviors that you notice them excelling in. Children don't know what it looks like to be responsible until you tell them and show them.
4. Help them understand what you expect and make them feel they are being rewarded for doing the right thing, even if it is just a pat on the back. This will encourage them to continue being responsible and even strive to improve in other areas. Make responsibility a strong value for your whole family and announce it during your family quality times.
4. Believe in your children and show them that you believe they can be responsible. They will pick up on your belief and tend to fulfill expectations. Encourage your kids to do new things for themselves and for the family, and help them achieve their goals in the right way. Not only you will help them become responsible, you will boost their confidence as well.

It doesn't hurt to have a chart to help remind everyone what their responsibilities are. That way there is no excuse to forget to do homework, feed the cat or take out the trash. As good habits are formed, you will be laying the foundation for your children to grow into dependable, responsible adults.

Terri Khonsari is the best-selling author of *Raising A Superstar: Simple Strategies to Bring Out the Brilliance in Every Child*. To learn more about Terri's work visit <http://www.raisingasuperstar.com/> and sign up for more free tips on raising happy, healthy and successful children.

**Okte PTA
Honorary Life Membership Award Form**

The New York State PTA Honorary Life Membership Award is given to individuals (not couples or groups) in recognition of superior dedication and distinguished service to children and youth in any or all of the following areas: home, school, community and place of worship. Nominees may be chosen from any area, are not required to be PTA members nor be well known beyond their own area of service. Nominees may be a staff member, administrator, parent or community member. The recipient does not become an active member of PTA by this award.

To submit a nominee for consideration by the Okte PTA Honorary Life Membership Award Committee, please fill in the information below. Use the reverse side or a separate piece of paper if needed. Please place the completed form in a sealed envelope marked "Honorary Life Member Committee" and put in the PTA mailbox located in the main office by **Friday, January 9, 2009**.

NAME OF NOMINEE: _____

MEMBERSHIP IN ORGANIZATIONS:

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH:

REASON(S) FOR NOMINATION:

Nominated by: _____ Date: _____

HOLIDAY LUNCHEON AT OKTE

Each year the PTA coordinates a "Holiday Luncheon" for our staff at Okte. The luncheon serves as a way for the school to express their holiday wishes to our teachers & staff. If you would like to volunteer in some way to be part of these wishes please check off something you would like to do below and send it back in to school with your child. The date of the luncheon is Thursday, December 11. A table will be set up by 7:30 a.m. in the lobby at school for you to be able to drop off your dish/drink if need be before work. Thank you.

NAME: _____

STUDENT NAME/TEACHER: _____/_____

PHONE #: _____

_____ I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE AN ENTREE.

_____ I WOULD LIKE TO BAKE A DESSERT.

_____ I WOULD LIKE PROVIDE A BEVERAGE. (IE: WATER, DIET SODA, PUNCH, COFFEE)

Please detach and return with your child to his/her classroom teacher.

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PLEASE JOIN THE PTA!!

Any questions - please call Trish McCarvill, Membership Chair, 373-7988

2008-2009 Okte PTA Membership Form

Names of those joining: (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

Membership Cards will be sent home via your child

Child's name

Teacher- Grade

___ Check here if you are an Okte Staff member

Dues enclosed: \$5.00 for first member, \$3.50 for each additional spouse/family member (grandparents can join too). **Make checks payable to Okte PTA**

Additional Donation \$ _____ Total amount remitted: \$ _____