

Raven About Rice

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Inside this issue:

Principal's Corner	2
You Need to Know..	2
Book Fair Info	3
Global Warming	4
Note from Asst. Principal	7
Conquering Mealtime	7



Check out the Rice Middle School PTA Website at: www.RicePTA.org

PTA President Letter By Amy Newell

Happy New Year!

Hopefully you had a restful break and are ready to begin the New Year. This is a great time to begin new projects and make resolutions. The PTA is sponsoring a fantastic program on January 26 during the lunch hour that every parent should consider attending. Our speakers will be talking about the importance of eating together as a family and providing insight on how families can make quick, delicious, and healthy meals. Our guest speaker, Dr. Susan Sugerman will be talking about the values of eating as family and will also remind us about normal (as opposed to destructive and dangerous) behaviors for our teenagers.

One of our priorities this year in the PTA is helping parents communicate with their children. Mealtime is a great place to start. Yes, it is hard to find time every night when all members of the family can sit down to eat. So maybe your family is going to start with one meal a week.

The Benefits of Eating Together

The Family Who Eats Together Stays Together
By Becky Hand, Licensed & Registered Dietician
http://sparkpeople.com/resource/nutrition_articles.asp?id=439

Reason #1: Communication and Well-Being
Conversations during the meal provide opportunities for the family to bond, plan, connect, and learn from one another. It's a chance to share information and news of the day, as well as give extra attention to your children and teens. Family meals foster warmth, security and love, as well as feelings of belonging. It can be a unifying experience for all.

Reason #2: Model Manners (and more)
Family mealtime is the perfect opportunity to display appropriate table manners, meal etiquette, and social skills. Keep the mood light, relaxed, and loving. Try not to instruct or criticize—lead by example.

Reason # 3: Expand Their World...One Food at a Time
Encourage your children to try new foods, without forcing, coercing, or bribing. Introduce a new food along with some of the stand-by favorites. Remember that it can take 8-10 exposures to a new food before it is accepted, so be patient.

Reason #4: Nourish

Meals prepared and eaten at home are usually more nutritious and healthy.

Reason #5: Become Self-Sufficient

Children today are missing out on the importance of knowing how to plan and prepare meals.

Reason #6: Prevent Destructive Behaviors

Research shows that frequent family dinners (five or more a week), are associated with lower rates of smoking, drinking, and illegal drug use in pre-teens and teenagers when compared to families that eat together two or fewer times per week. Even as older children's schedules get more complicated, it is important to make an effort to eat meals together. Scheduling is a must.

Reason #7: Improve Grades

Children do better in school when they eat more meals with their parents and family. Teenagers who eat dinner four or more times per week with their families have higher academic performance compared with teenagers who eat with their families two or fewer times per week.

Reason # 8: Save Money

Meals purchased away from home cost two to four times more than meals prepared at home.

As an added incentive – the PTA will be **catering lunch from Jason's Deli**. Don't miss this opportunity to join your friends, meet new friends, and maybe even learn something new that will benefit your family. To ensure that we have enough food, please take time to let us know if you can attend. Additional information about the program and how you can RSVP are included in this newsletter and on our website. The Program starts at Noon on January 26 – I look forward to seeing you there.



Principal's Corner by Gail Stelter

A New Year!

The New Year stretches before me like a clean sheet of paper – unblemished, holding the potential for great opportunities and accomplishments! As we move into the second semester, we are starting to write on that paper and plan for the 2007/2008 school year. This is an exciting time!

Our students are beginning to plan for the future also. Sixth graders all take Exploratory for one semester to “explore” some of the elective options they can choose from in seventh and eighth grade. Encourage your student's interests – the ground is being prepared for future choices! Our eighth graders will be making four-year plans and this will begin to form their future opportunities. Continue talking to your student about their dreams and possible career paths. They may not end up exactly where they planned, but if they aim high and dream big, they will travel to far and wonderful places! But most of all, remember to enjoy these wonderful middle school years with your child. Middle schoolers have their own thoughts and opinions, care deeply about the environment and those less fortunate and are very interesting people! I hope you all have a wonderful New Year!

Yearbook Ordering Information - Deadline End of January

Not sure if you ordered a book? Can't remember if you paid for your child's yearbook? Each 6th period teacher has a copy of the list of students who have purchased and paid for a yearbook. Your child may check with him/her to see if his/her name is listed. If your child's name isn't on the list, please contact Jostens to place and pay for your order.

To order the 2006-2007 Rice Middle School Yearbook, you may use one of the following options:

1. Call Jostens Direct Ordering at 1-866-282-1516. Tell them that you are with Rice Middle School in Plano, TX, job 40974. The customer service representative will accept your payment over the phone.
2. Visit www.shop.jostens.com to order your book. Select Rice Middle School in Plano, TX. If you have your original letter, you may enter the number from that letter. Otherwise, select “Create a New Order” to be directed to the order form.

It's fast, easy, and painless! Pay for your book today to guarantee delivery. All orders must be received before the end of January.

YOU NEED TO KNOW...

Jasper PTSA presents

“You need to know.....the latest information on Substance Abuse”

with Jennifer Barker, Plano ISD Drug Specialist, and
Narcotics Detective, Paul Martinez, Plano Police Department.

Jasper High School

Thursday January 11th, 7:00 pm

in the Jasper Meeting Room (1st floor across from the main office)

Questions? Contact Julia Shanklin, VP-Programs Jasper PTSA,
juliashanklin@yahoo.com

Book Fair is Coming

Please encourage your children to start saving their change to purchase books at the Rice Book Fair, January 23rd through January 26th. It's just not possible to have too many books!!!

Proceeds from the book fair support our efforts to make the Rice Library a comfortable, inviting place for our students and to make our last minute library book purchases each year.

**Candy Sales every Friday at
3:30 after school in the 6th
and 7th/8th pod areas!
Prices \$.25-\$1.50.**



**Raven's Nest
The Rice School Store**

OPEN: Tues and Thurs
7:50 – 8:30 am in the atrium outside the office

- We have poster board, pens, pencils, pencil lead, erasers, note-book paper, markers, steno pads, floppy discs, audio tapes, graph paper, you name it!
- We apologize, but we are sold out of the ever popular maroon vinyl pencil bags. Look for them at the start of school in 2007!

Kroger Supports Rice...let's support Kroger

Also, Kroger partnership cards and stickers are available in the front office. If you already have a Kroger card, please make sure you have a sticker coded for Rice.

Thank YOU—The Holiday Lunch for our Staff

In December our PTA hosted a holiday lunch for all of the staff. The committee led by Melissa Galownia did a great job in planning the meal which was catered by Carrabas. The homemade desserts were yummy and the decorations were quite festive. Our PTA, through donations from our families, paid for the lunch. A few of the many nice thank you notes we received from the staff include:

The luncheon was wonderful. Thank you so much for thinking about us at this busy time of year.

Thank you so much for the fabulous luncheon from Carrabas and all the fabulous things you do for us!

Thank you for the great lunch and all your support! You guys are the best PTA ever! Muchas Gracias!

Thank you so much for all the help you've given us! You are so great! We have the best PTA.

You guys are so awesome! Thanks for everything you do for us!
Thank you for everything – your work is a blessing.

Global Warming is Real and is Happening Now

Casey Magnuson

Texas PTA Environmental Chairman

Dear Texas PTA Members:

The science is settled: global warming is real, it is happening now, and its impacts can already be seen. Scientists tell us that the window of opportunity to change course is rapidly closing.

The Lone Star State leads the nation in emissions of carbon dioxide - the most prevalent greenhouse gas that causes global warming. We emit 71 percent more carbon dioxide than the #2 state - California - even though we have about half the population. In fact, if Texas were a country, it would rank as the 7th largest emitter in the world.

The time to act is now. Other states and nations are taking action, but Texas has done next to nothing to address this problem. We need your help. Read on to learn more about global warming and how you can do your part to turn the tide.

Global Warming: The Facts

Global warming is real and its impacts can already be seen. The scientific debate has long been settled: the massive amounts of greenhouse gases - mostly carbon dioxide - that is produced by burning fossil fuels is adding to the atmospheric layer that keeps our Earth warm.

As the Earth warms, the global climate changes. Weather becomes more extreme. Some regions will become drier - some wetter. Some regions will be hotter, and some cooler. The consistent theme is CHANGE, and some of those changes will be very disruptive to our civilization. The sea level may rise. Rainfall patterns in agricultural areas may be altered. Species' migration patterns will change.

[Learn more about global warming science](http://www.fightglobalwarming.com/page.cfm?tagID=273) (www.fightglobalwarming.com/page.cfm?tagID=273)

In Texas, experts predict that places that are hot and dry will be hotter and drier. Places that are hot and wet will be hotter and wetter. And our coastal counties - much of which is less than 5 feet above sea level, would be inundated and uninhabitable with even the most conservative increase in sea level.

[Learn more about the likely impacts of Global Warming on Texas](http://www.environmentaldefense.org/article.cfm?contentID=5239) (www.environmentaldefense.org/article.cfm?contentID=5239)

Scientists predict that if we keep our current energy habits, we will soon reach a point where many global warming consequences will be unavoidable. But the future is not set in stone. There are changes that each of us can make to reduce the amount of energy we use and, therefore, reduce the amount of greenhouse gas pollution each of us produces.

What you can do

Learn the simple ways to reduce your global warming pollution. Together we'll make progress if we each do our part to conserve energy and cut global warming pollution.

- **Pick a Better Light Bulb** - The next generation of light bulbs is here! New bulbs called compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) produce high-quality light and last up to 15 times as long. It may seem like small change - but if every household replaced just three 60-watt incandescent bulbs with better bulbs, it would be equivalent to taking 3.5 million cars off the road! Also, CFLs save you money. A 20-watt CFL, which screws into an ordinary light socket, is just as bright as a 60-watt incandescent. Today's CFLs are dramatically better than a few years ago. You won't miss your incandescent bulbs. We're asking you to pledge to switch at least one bulb in the coming year. [Learn about earth-friendly light bulbs](http://www.fightglobalwarming.com/page.cfm?tagID=608) (www.fightglobalwarming.com/page.cfm?tagID=608)

- **Fuel-Saving Driving Guide** - Many of us don't have a choice about driving, but a few simple tips can make a difference. Watching how you drive can improve your car's mileage per gallon, cutting global warming pollution and saving you anywhere from \$200 to \$500 each year. We urge you to make special efforts to avoid unnecessary idling, especially around our schools. [Find out how you can drive more efficiently](http://www.fightglobalwarming.com/page.cfm?tagID=268) (www.fightglobalwarming.com/page.cfm?tagID=268)

- **Save Energy and Money at Home** - The energy we use at home accounts for about a fifth of U.S. global warming pollution. That means making smart choices at home matters. Find out what you can do about heating, cooling and appliances. [Learn more about home energy tips](http://www.fightglobalwarming.com/page.cfm?tagID=267) (www.fightglobalwarming.com/page.cfm?tagID=267)

- **Educate Your Community about Global Warming** - Many of you have had the same comment: Americans would act on global warming if they understood the human costs. That's why we suggest you follow this link to learn more about global warming dangers to our economy, our health and our industries. [Find out more about global warming](http://www.fightglobalwarming.com/) (www.fightglobalwarming.com/)

"Getting to know what different adults do in the way of work, play, or community service will expand teenagers' horizons with realistic images of adulthood."

Outside Role Models in the Lives of Teenagers

By Kathleen Cushman

From the National PTA Magazine

Stop for a moment and count up the teenagers you know who aren't your own kids. When was the last time you spoke with one of them, and what did you talk about? For teenagers, your answer to that question matters a lot. Teenagers say that adults who aren't their parents often influence them just as strongly as—or even more than—their own mothers or fathers.

You might have young relatives who come to you for advice about college or about finding a job. Maybe you notice that your regular babysitter has red eyes when you get home, and you ask how things are going with her boyfriend. Maybe a neighbor's kid seems to be alone a lot on weekends, so you stop to say hello on your way down the street. Or perhaps you hire a high school student to help you over the summer, and you teach him a few things about the work that you do.

People like you can reinforce a parent's lessons, without the tensions of the parent-child relationship. You can provide kids with alternative perspectives and experiences, too—a way to be different, a means to excel, an outlook that will get them through hard times.

You're not quite a parent and not quite a teacher when you act as an outside role model for teenagers. You may not always make a teenager's list of favorite adults. But as kids navigate their adolescence, your interest and action can give a crucial boost to their growing maturity and independence.

The search for identity

Adolescents often find their strongest role models in outside people like you, especially when they have a chance to do something with you, such as go on a camping trip, attend an art exhibition, or check out a computer fair. You might think of these activities as fun and not as mentoring, but they have many important consequences for teenagers:

- They give kids the chance to have positive experiences that stretch them mentally or physically.
- They help teenagers see the world from an adult perspective that doesn't come from their parents. And as teenagers watch how you respond to different situations, they will reflect on their own lives and habits.
- They can help teenagers find their way in life. Getting to know what different adults do in the way of work, play, or community service will expand teenagers' horizons with realistic images of adulthood.

Teenagers appreciate it when you find the time to teach them new skills or offer support and coaching when they need it. If you spend time working on your car, you might invite a young neighbor to keep you company. Or perhaps you could help a high school senior with the daunting research and organization it takes to apply to college.

Your teenagers' friends

If you have teenagers of your own, it's worth the effort to get to know their friends, and to give your teenagers opportunities to spend time with the parents of their friends. Adolescents receive several important benefits from getting to know other kids' parents:

- They have another standard against which to compare their parents. Kids who think their parents are the strictest in the neighborhood may benefit from getting to know the views of other adults. And adolescents who are embarrassed by their parents may find that a friend actually considers their parents interesting.
- Spending time in other parents' company may free teenagers to bring up topics they may not yet want to talk about with their own parents. With matters like college, careers, and even romance, teenagers often want to have an adult's perspective, without the uncomfortable feeling of parental scrutiny.

Knowing another adult besides their parents can give teenagers a sense that someone outside their immediate family is keeping an eye out for them. Just like everyone else, adolescents need to know that they matter to other people.

Continued on Page 6

Outside Role Models in the Lives of Teenagers-Continued

Talking to other teenagers can sometimes give you a clearer sense of what's going on in the world of your own kids, who might not care to share even the harmless details with you. At the same time, you can talk more openly to other young people about things you think are important, helping clear the static that makes it hard for teenagers to hear their own parents. Just one caution: Don't try too hard to talk with kids while they are socializing with your own teenagers. It's better to take advantage of random moments when your presence is not intrusive.

Take the first steps

If you don't have teenagers in your own family, you might not know how to reach out and get to know teenagers. They might seem alien and hostile, part of a world you don't understand or even want to know about. But by taking it one step at a time, you can find things that connect you despite your differences. You could ask at a nearby high school whether there is a need for tutors or mentors. Or you might offer to help out at a youth sports league in the community, or with the church youth group.

Remember, the power that parents hold over their children can sometimes complicate their ability to effectively help their children during the teenage years. Someone like you might step in at just the right moment, giving a young person the space to open up, talk, and connect. And both of you just might learn things about each other that neither of you ever imagined.

Rice Middle School PTA Website

www.ricepta.org

If you have not seen the new PTA website, take a look! The entire site has been redesigned to provide parents a fast resource to information about what is happening at our school. The goal is to provide information on this site that helps parents and students stay in touch with activities and opportunities available at Rice Middle School and with our PTA.

We would like to thank **Fujiko Yamamoto Robledo** for all of the hours she has spent redesigning the web site. She has worked with our PTA Communications Chairman, **Lynnette Berry** to create a site that parents can easily navigate. If you have any suggestions for items you would like to see included on the web site, please contact Lynnette Berry at 972-396-5441 or netteb@swbell.net.

The Mission of the PTA

- To support and speak on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community, and before governmental bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children
- To assist parents in developing the skills they need to raise and protect their children
- To encourage parent and public involvement in the public schools of this nation.

“Conquering Mealtime Madness” PTA Presentation and Complimentary Lunch, Friday, Jan. 26 at noon.

The Rice PTA invites its members to enjoy a complimentary lunch and presentation to better understand how to “Conquer Mealtime Madness” in your every day life. Presented by Dr. Susan Sugerma on Friday, January 26 at noon in the Rice Library, this discussion will stress the importance of family meals and provide helpful tips on ways to fix fast, healthy meals for your busy family.

It’s Not Just Dinner With the Family...

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University has proven consistently that the more often children eat dinner with their family, the less likely they are to smoke, drink or use drugs. The conversations that take place during dinner will help you learn more about your children’s lives and better understand the challenges they face.

Please join us on Friday, January 26 at noon for a complimentary Jason’s Deli boxed lunch at Rice Middle School in the library to learn more about all of the surprising statistics concerning the importance of family mealtime together.

We are fortunate to have as our speaker, Dr. Susan Sugerma who speaks frequently about the value of family mealtime as well as providing resources to help families fix fast, healthy meals. She has many years of experience in adolescent medicine both as a Board-certified Pediatrician and as a staff physician in College Health at SMU.

Look for your Evite to R.S.V.P or email Denee Delich at d.delich@sbcglobal.net or 972-377-4451
“It is not just a meal....It’s for Posterity”

Note from the Assistant Principal

Happy New Year! Hopefully everyone had a restful holiday break and is ready to tackle the 2nd semester.

This is the time to make that New Year’s Resolution and why not start with school?

Students can start focusing on ways they can make their time at Rice beneficial. This can be through grade improvement by concentrating on ways to improve those low grades, auditioning for the Spring Play on February 26th, or trying out for the Rice Track Team later this semester. There are many positive ways for students to be more involved at Rice and we encourage each student to look at how they can make their time here very memorable.

There are also many ways parents can resolve to help out at Rice. This can be through joining the PTA, volunteering to help out their child’s teachers, checking up on their child each night to make sure they are completing their homework and keeping up with their grades, or attending the various after school activities with their children (Open House is at 6:30 on Feb. 6th). We believe that our students show more pride in their work and school when their parents are more active in their child’s school.

There are many resolutions that fade away after the first week of the New Year (how’s the diet going?). Go ahead and add Rice Middle School to the top of your resolution list and help us continue to be the “Number One Rated Middle School in North Texas.”

Thanks for your support!
Chris Glasscock

TEXAS PTA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE from Margareta Coveney

Happy New Year to all from your legislative chairman. Instead of me restating everything already available to you, I will provide some resources you can use. You can go onto the Texas PTA website at www.txpta.org for your Texas contacts and the Federal contacts. There is lots of interesting stuff there to read if you want to learn about the legislative process. If you want to go to the member's only section you must use the username and password on your 06/07 membership card, stapled to you Rice PTA Directory. If you cannot find this contact me and I will email it to you. Another great source is the Plano Council of PTA's at www.planopta.org. In their last Newsletter they gave us the news that the State Board of Education passed the 4 x 4 rule. This means that they have increased the number of math and science credits, as well as the total number of credits, that students must earn to receive a diploma.

Texas PTA Legislative Day is in Austin on February 28. There will be people from Plano going down, and we will have appointments with our local delegation. If you are interested in attending please contact me.

TEXAS PTA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:

Another campaign season has ended, thankfully, and it's time to make our voices heard with the new and not so new members of the Texas Legislature. The next Texas Legislative Session begins January 9, 2007; and many issues affecting the welfare of the children of Texas will be considered. The following issues are Texas PTA positions that may be addressed in the next legislative session.

Improve indoor air quality of school buses.

Several studies report that children riding school buses are exposed to high concentrations of fine particles and other toxic substances inside the bus due to the intrusion of the buses' own emissions into the bus cabin. While school buses continue to be the safest way to transport children, the emissions from their diesel engines contribute to a host of health effects, including dizziness, nausea, increased incidence and severity of asthma attacks, and chronic bronchitis. To clean up Texas' more than 35,000 school buses, the state should help school districts by accelerating their bus "replacement" timelines and by retrofitting middle-aged buses with advanced filter technology to clean up diesel exhaust.

Strengthen child passenger restraint laws.

Texas PTA supports an upgrade to our current Child Occupant Protection Law governing the use of child safety seat devices. Motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of unintentional injury-related death among children ages 14 and under. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the American Academy of Pediatrics, as well as other injury prevention experts tell us that children need to be in booster seats from the time they outgrow a car seat until they're about 8 years old and about 57" tall. It is time to close this significant gap in Texas' child occupant protection law.

Expand the smoking cessation and prevention programs statewide.

Texas PTA supports a statewide comprehensive tobacco prevention and cessation program to include school-based and community-based programs, media and enforcement.

Tobacco costs more than \$6.4 billion in health care and lost productivity in Texas each year. Texas ranks 40 percent in spending for tobacco prevention. Exposure to secondhand smoke is associated with an increased risk for sudden infant death syndrome, asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia in young children.

Texas PTA supports expansion of the successful Texas Prevention Initiative, a Center for Disease Control modeled program in Baytown.

Promote improved school nutrition laws.

Texas PTA supports improved school nutrition laws to protect the integrity of the school breakfast and lunch program to promote children's health, well-being and academic success. Research shows healthy eating habits can improve attendance, energy levels, classroom participation, school behavior, test scores and academic success.

Because good health is linked to learning ability, it is critical to ensure tomorrow's adults develop healthy bodies and healthy minds through good nutrition.

Oppose vouchers.

Texas PTA supports our system of public education as the major vehicle for perpetuating the basic values of a democratic system of government. This system must be strengthened and continue to be governed by public officials accountable to the public and supported by adequate funding.

Texas PTA opposes voucher systems or tuition credits for nonpublic school tuition and other education-related expenses.

If you have any questions or want to get involved please contact me.

Margareta Coveney, PTA Legislative Chairman
texascoves@comcast.net