

Raven About Rice

Volume 4 Issue 7
February 2007

PTA President Letter By Amy Newell

HARDSHIP COMMITTEE & HARDSHIP FUND

questions about either project, please feel free to contact me.

Principal's Corner by Gail Stelter

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The Rice PTA is organizing a Hardship Committee to help families that need special attention because of a family emergency. The committee will be able to help provide meals and other services that might ease a little of the burden a family experiences when they are living through a crisis. If you would like to be a part of this special committee, or if you know of a family that might benefit from its services, please contact **Stephanie Ismond, Hardship Committee Chairman, 972-335-9015.**

In addition to the Hardship Committee we are establishing a Hardship Fund. Occasionally there are families at Rice who go through a very difficult time and find themselves facing a financial crisis. In an effort to provide some assistance to these families we are establishing a Hardship Fund. **Donations to this special fund will be used to help families with the expenses of school.** These families might need assistance with school supplies, lunches, or academic programs. While the items purchased with these funds might be minimal, the impact for the children can be enormous.

The Hardship Fund will be kept in an account through the Rice Campus and will be administered by Principal, Gail Stelter. **If you would like to make a tax deductible donation to this special fund,** please send a check made payable to Rice Campus and include it with an envelope addressed to Gail Stelter and send it to the school office.

We are very fortunate that we live in a caring community. Our goal in establishing a Hardship Committee and Hardship Fund is to make sure that we have the resources in place to help the families in our school community as needed. If you have any

Even though January and February are dreary and cold, it is warm and exciting inside Rice Middle School! Seventh graders are poised to take the Writing TAKS on February 20th, the counselors are busy talking to students and parents about course requests, and the administrators are starting to plan for next year. The P.T.A. is putting together a fun evening for the school social on February 16th and is working to help support the school in so many ways.

I hope you had the opportunity to visit our Open House on February 6th. We are so proud of our school, our students and our teachers! Plano ISD is a wonderful school district for students and teachers and you can see the evidence of that when you visit our campus. Thank you for your support of your children's education.

"There are no passengers on Spaceship Earth. Everybody's crew." Marshall McLuhana

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



SAGE – Special and Gifted Education

By Pam Seeger, Plano PTA Council Chairman

The Special and Gifted Education (SAGE) Committee was established by the Plano Council of PTAs to meet a growing need for parents and teachers of exceptional learners to reach out and share with each other in ways that benefit every student. In the past two years, many Plano campuses have include the SAGE position on their local PTAs to serve as a single point contact for relevant information, communication and participation in campus and District activities. The network between the local SAGE chairmen, the council SAGE committee and PISD exists to encourage sharing of ideas and best practices in teaching all kinds of learners. If you are interested in the issues that face diverse learners or SAGE activities, visit the SAGE link at www.planopta.org . If you wish to be on our SAGE email list, or become a SAGE family in touch with other families with similar interests/ challenges, download our SAGE interest form, also found on our webpages. If you are interested in being a local SAGE chairman for your campus PTA, talk with your PTA president today.

(The Rice PTA President, Amy Newell, may be reached at newell52@aol.com or 972-335-5860.)



Candy Sales every Friday at 3:30 after school in the 6th and 7th/8th pod areas! Prices \$.25-\$.75.

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.

**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, notebook 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!

The Rice Winter Social

Let it Glow! Let it Glow! Let it Glow!

Friday, February 16, 2007

6th Grade Party: 6-7:30pm
7th & 8th Grade Party: 8-9:30

Purchase Advance Tickets:

\$5 at Lunch Feb. 14th, 15th & 16th
OR
\$7 at the door

Ticket Price Includes:

DJ, Nacho Bar, Dessert, Soda, Glow Necklace & Fun!

Bring extra \$ to purchase tickets for:

Glow & Light Up Gadgets & Toys! Fun Candy! Activities Too!

Drawings for Prizes at each party! Cool Black Light Activities!

Wear anything that flashes or glows!

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.



Save the Date!

Girls to Women Health and Wellness presents,
In conjunction with
Dallas Children's Theater's world premiere of
The Secret Life of Girls

Roots and Wings: Building Resilience in Children and Teens

With Kenneth R. Ginsburg, MD, MS Ed

**A workshop for parents, educators, clergy, youth group leaders,
coaches, and anyone who cares about youth**

Saturday, April 14th, 2007

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Medical City Hospital Conference Facility

Advance registration \$50

On-site registration \$60

Kenneth R. Ginsburg MD, MS Ed, is an Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. He practices Social Adolescent Medicine: medicine with special attention to prevention and the recognition that social problems and stressors impact health. His methods equip parents, educators, and community leaders with the needed skills to prepare children for a safe passage through adolescence. He teaches how to raise resilient children who can deal with stress in an increasingly complex world. Participants will leave with a better understanding of adolescent development and how we can interact more effectively with young people to help them to solve their own problems.

The recipient of numerous awards, Dr. Ginsburg lectures widely to parent and professional audiences. His highly acclaimed books for parents include, "But I'm Almost Thirteen: An Action Plan to Raise a Responsible Adolescent," (McGraw-Hill) "A Parent's Guide to Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Your Child Roots and Wings," (American Academy of Pediatrics) and "Less Stress, More Success," coauthored with Marilee Jones, The Admissions Dean from MIT (American Academy of Pediatrics).

For information or to register, contact us at Girls to Women Health and Wellness
972-733-6565 or info@gtw-health.com

Attention Rice Parents!

2007-2008 RICE PTA EXECUTIVE BOARD

If you are interested in becoming an officer on the Rice Middle School PTA Executive Board for the school year 2007-2008, we want to hear from you. We are currently accepting nominations for the following positions:

President

1st Vice President - Membership

2nd Vice President - Programs Chairman

3rd Vice President – Ways & Means

4th Vice President - Volunteers

Secretary

Treasurer

We are excited to welcome new members to our board!
Training and support are provided for all positions – no experience necessary.

Please fill out the section below and return this form to the Rice Office no later than Thursday, February 15th.

If you have any questions or would like additional information
about any of these positions, please contact:
Sue Story, Chairman, Rice Nominating Committee, 972-618-6523 or sue.story@verizon.net.

Name _____

Phone Number _____

Children: _____ Cell/Work Number _____

I am interested in the following positions:

Please list any previous PTA positions or responsibilities:

**Substance Abuse Seminar
For Plano Students & Parents**

By Kathy Tinkler, Rice PTA Youth & Safety Chairman

It is very scary to know that substance abuse continues to rise in both middle schools and high schools and every student is a target. There are so many different drugs easily available to our kids and most parents don't recognize or know about these drug dangers. We don't even know what they look like. Did you know that a new trend in pulling our kids into drugs is through technology like their cell phones? Make it a family priority to come to a free, public community forum on Substance Abuse and educate yourselves.

Remember, knowledge is power!

You Are Invited...

The Substance Abuse Coalition of Collin County and Plano West Senior High School present a free community forum and mock teen bedroom. Parents and students are urged to attend a program that will discuss current substance abuse trends and facts. A mock teen bedroom with hidden drug paraphernalia will be exhibited to help parents discover whether their student has a substance abuse problem. The program will be held on Tuesday, February 27 at 7 PM in the Plano West Senior High Auditorium, (west side of building) at 5601 West Parker Road. For more information, contact Jennifer Barker at 469-752-9726 or Jennifer.Barker@pisd.edu. This program is free and open to the public.

Happy Valentine's Day!

From the Rice PTA

SCHOOL VOUCHERS

The 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.

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

10 Reasons to Oppose Private School Vouchers

1. **Texas cannot afford to finance private education as well as public education .**
There would be only two ways to pay for vouchers—take money from already under funded public schools or raise taxes. Both are unacceptable.
2. **Tax dollars for private education won't fix student achievement problems at public schools .**
The best way to assist all low-performing students is by strengthening their public schools and addressing individual learning problems directly. Vouchers could take away tax dollars from the public schools where children have the greatest needs.
3. **A voucher would be a ticket to nowhere for most children.**
Private schools can choose to accept or reject any student, and many have long waiting lists and only admit top students. On average, religious schools reject 67% of all applicants. Elite private schools reject nearly 90% of applicants. "Choice" does not reside with parents but with private school admissions committees.
4. **Parents have an expanding array of choices for the public school their child attends.**
Among the many public school options, parents may transfer their child to another public school in the same or a neighboring school district, or enroll their child in a public magnet school, public charter school, school to work program, or an evening high school.
5. **Vouchers don't create a "competitive marketplace."**
Competition is based on an even playing field; there is no fair competition when "competitors" play by different rules. Public schools have to accept all applicants, private schools don't. Private schools are not required to provide transportation, special education, bilingual education, free and reduced price lunches, and many other programs that public schools provide.
6. **The State of Texas should not spend tax dollars to pilot test a bad idea.**
Tax-funded pilot projects should only be conducted to test good ideas. Vouchers are a bad idea! A pilot voucher program would not be a "lifeboat" for some students, as claimed. A voucher system would be the Titanic, draining needed funds from public schools where most of the students would remain.
7. **Vouchers would destroy the "private" in private schools.**
Parents of children in private schools don't want the status quo disturbed for their children—they want their schools to be truly private. Private schools accepting tax-funded vouchers would become subject to government regulation. Schools likely would have to change admission requirements, implement state-required testing, comply with discipline and expulsion laws, and allow voucher students to be exempted from religious activities.
8. **Inserting the word "private" doesn't make a school good.**
There is no proof that private school vouchers would improve students' academic performance. In fact, students attending private schools under the Milwaukee and Cleveland voucher programs did not outperform their public school peers.
9. **Vouchers would promote further religious and economic stratification in our society.**
Private elementary and secondary schools have been founded primarily by two types of entities: (1) religious denominations seeking to teach academics interwoven with their religious doctrine, and (2) wealthier parents wanting to give their children an advantage over other children. Tax-funded vouchers for private schools would increase divisions between rich and poor and among different religions, threatening the future of our American democracy.
10. **Public policy should respect parental choice but provide for all students.**
The best public policy is to provide parents with even more choices within the public schools, which serve 94.5% of Texas children. Legislators should concentrate on making all public schools stronger, safer, more challenging and accountable. Public tax dollars should be spent only to improve public schools—not to assist the small number of parents who choose to enroll their children in private academies or religious schools.

Clean School Bus Update

The Texas State PTA has partnered with Environmental Defense, a national environmental advocacy group, to spur Texas legislators to fund a program that helps Texas school districts retrofit or replace older, polluting buses. School buses are the safest way for children to get to school. But they're not as healthy as they can be. Recent studies have shown that particulate pollution emitted by diesel school buses actually gets inside the school cabin and has been measured as high as 10 times the pollution levels found outside the bus. We are urging that the state adequately fund the "Texas Clean School Bus Program," established in 2005, but left unfunded. If the Legislature provides funding next year, this program will help schools speed up their "replacement" timelines or retrofit older buses with advanced filter technology to clean up exhaust. You can learn more about the [issue here](http://www.environmentaldefense.org/article.cfm?contentid=5340) (www.environmentaldefense.org/article.cfm?contentid=5340).

The initiative to fund a clean school bus program has built up steam this year. In August, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality recommended funding for this program. In September, three parents of school children testified at a legislative Budget hearing in support of a well-funded school bus program. The Texas PTA has identified clean school buses as a legislative priority for 2007. Along with our partners, we are convincing other civic, health, business and environmental groups to lend their support for funding. With your help we can convince the Legislature to get this program adequately funded. December, January and February will be critical months for shoring up support for the clean school bus initiative. When the time comes for action, we will let you know. Letters and calls from constituents to our elected State legislators in support of state funding to "clean" our polluting school buses will be essential. We urge you to stay tuned through the PTA's legislative alerts for opportunities to get involved. (e-mail your name and e-mail address to communications@txpta.org to join)

In addition to the Texas PTA, the Greater Houston Partnership, the Houston Independent School District, Children at Risk and the Houston Clean School Bus Program support state funding for cleaner school buses. Additional partners will be voicing their support as we proceed with the legislative process. It will be helpful to have school districts indicate the need for additional state funding to clean up our dirty, diesel buses. If you are interested in helping, ask your school district to pass a "Texas Clean School Bus Program" resolution or to establish state funding of the "Texas Clean School Bus Program" as a legislative priority.

In response to PTA's mission to "support and speak on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community and before governmental agencies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children", the Texas PTA has partnered with Environmental Defense, to raise awareness about diesel exhaust exposure to students who ride school buses, and the Stop Global Warming organization's Virtual March, to raise awareness about global warming.

All of these environmentally educational activities follow the principles of the Go Green Initiative (GGI). If your school is not signed up, please go to www.gogreeninitiative.org and join the Texas schools that are going GREEN! To see if your school is on the list, [click here](http://www.txpta.org/members/enviro-GoGreenSchools.html). (www.txpta.org/members/enviro-GoGreenSchools.html) Go to the [Stop Global Warming](http://www.stopglobalwarming.org/sgw_partner.asp?655394) Web site (www.stopglobalwarming.org/sgw_partner.asp?655394) and get signed up. Texas PTA is a partner now!

Thanks to Texas PTA Environmental Committee members Ramon Alvarez and Betin Santos with Environmental Defense for helping with this environmental alert.

Casey Magnuson
Texas PTA Environmental Chairman
everychild.onevoice

environment@txpta.org

[Join Go Green Initiative](http://www.gogreeninitiative.org/register.html) (www.gogreeninitiative.org/register.html)

[Stop Global Warming](http://www.stopglobalwarming.org/sgw_partner.asp?655394) (www.stopglobalwarming.org/sgw_partner.asp?655394)

ATTENTION: RICE PARENTS

Dear Rice Parents,

I would like to inform everyone of an upcoming event happening at Rice to help out two teachers and their family. The staff and PTA at Rice will be sponsoring a blood drive to help the Tucker Family. Please, read the following insert written by Jason Tucker, Rice Music Director, and Jennifer Tucker Penny, 7th & 8th Grade PACE language teacher, about their father's medical crisis.

Larry Tucker, Plano ISD's Executive Director of Fine Arts and Academic Programs, has been in the hospital intermittently over the past two months due to chronic anemia brought on by Scleroderma, a rare and incurable autoimmune disease that affects the skin, certain internal organs, and connective tissues. After numerous tests, doctors have found the cause of his low red blood cells and are working to treat it. However, both the process and treatment have required numerous blood transfusions, and more transfusions are likely in the coming weeks.

Larry has been part of the Plano ISD family since 1981, when he opened Plano East Senior High as its first band director. He has continued his serve to our district as an administrator since 1989. Earlier this year, he was featured in our District Digest for his upcoming recognition as Texas Music Administrator of the Year. Larry's wife, Marion, is a sixth-grade teacher at Wilson Middle School. In addition, his two children, Jason Tucker and Jennifer Penny, are both teachers at Rice Middle School. His daughter-in-law, Cyndi Tucker, is also a teacher at Wilson Middle School.

In support of Larry and his family, we will be sponsoring a blood drive on February 12th at Rice Middle School. Anyone who gives blood at this time will not only be helping many people in need, but also helping the Tucker family. Every unit donated will be credited to Larry's account to offset the expenses of his ongoing treatment.

Of course, you may also donate at any Carter Bloodcare location in the DFW area. You will need to following information to make sure your gift is properly credited:

Name of Designee: Charles Larry Tucker

Date of Birth: 7-19-50

Hospital: Medical Center of Plano

On behalf of the Tucker family, we thank you for your considerate thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

Blood transfusions are quite costly and in an effort to help relieve some of the financial burden the Tucker family is facing, a blood drive is being held at Rice Middle School on a coach/bus in the parking lot on **February 12th from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m** where all credits from donations will go to Larry Tucker. If you would like to participate follow the link below to schedule a time.

<http://iwebb.carterbloodcare.org/pls/iwebb/adrv?pdz=75038&pdr=DRV0257348>

Thanks,
Amy Newell
Rice PTA President