Often, we think of January as a time to start new traditions, start new goals and letting go of not-so-good (bad) habits in our personal lives. January is a great time to re-energize your PTA life in your school too!

Did you do a needs assessment last spring or fall????

• If Yes, look at the goals that you made from that assessment and see how you are doing and what you need to do before the end of the year to complete your goals.
• If No, it’s not too late! Create a short needs assessment, send it out and make goals based on the answers and plan the rest of your year!

What programs are you thinking about hosting at your school for the rest of the school year??? The programs that your PTA does should always enhance student learning and build family relationships.

• Do the programs meet the needs of the community? In other words, are these the activities the community thinks are needed and wanted?
• Do you have the funds to pay for the programs?
• Do you want to do programs and events but don’t know how to get one started!
• Utah PTA Commissioners are here to help!
• We can come to you and present a program or help you work out the details to get a program or event started
• Or we can connect you with some of our great outside resources to help you put on some fantastic programs!
• Contact one of us! Our info is at the end of this newsletter!

During the 2020-2021 school year, the Commissioners and Specialists of Utah PTA are committed to help “BUILD BRIDGES OF UNDERSTANDING” throughout the state of Utah. Over the year, we will use this newsletter to offer ideas, suggestions, resources, trainings and programs to help your PTA, Community and Family with issues such as: Bullying, Preschool and School Readiness, Parent Engagement, Student Leadership Opportunities, School Safety, Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Student Achievement and High Expectations for All Students.

Each Commission is focused to help your PTA strengthen families in your school community and around Utah by offering programs, resources and tips. We are here to help!! Please reach out to us for any of your needs.

Connect with Commissioners... and Other Leaders of Utah PTA

www.utahpta.org

Facebook - Utah PTA Page, Utah PTA Excellent Elementary Group, Utah PTA Super Secondary Group, Utah PTA Advocacy Group

Instagram
Utah PTA

Twitter
@UtahPTAOneVoice

Pinterest
Utah PTA

YouTube
Utah PTA One Voice
Community Engagement Commission

Community Engagement for many years has worked with the Head Start Program. Head Start is Utah Community Action’s largest program and has been recognized at the state level as the Best Public Preschool in Utah. It is an accredited program delivering comprehensive early education services to income-eligible families in the Salt Lake and Tooele Counties. The program includes Head Start, which serves children ages 3-5, and Early Head Start, which serves children ages 0-3. Head Start and Early Head Start provide educational activities, medical and dental referral services, nutritious meals, and self-reliance services for the entire family. Our program focuses on preparing students for future school success while supporting the whole household.

One of Head Start’s Advantages is the program engages parents and caretakers as their child’s first and foremost educator. Head Start prepares children for Kindergarten, one of the most important transitions for our students. Each year Head Start hosts a Kindergarten Fair, to connect families and students with community resources, learn about parent engagement, the HS curriculum, and families receive support for registering for Kindergarten.

This year, to engage families safely, HS shifted the Kindergarten Fair to a weeklong virtual event. Parents will have access to the “Ready. Set. Go. Kindergarten Week” Website about Kindergarten transition, registration information, district resources, and their school choice. Utah Community Action will also have live streams to connect parents with Kindergarten teachers around the valley. Students will be able to engage in a Learning Jamboree with music, dance, math, and literacy games.

“As a program, we encourage and support families to become advocates and leaders in their community. Through Head Start’s Policy Council, parents can learn more about the Head Start program and help make decisions for our program’s policies and procedures. During our Kindergarten Week, we actively connect our families to community resources, including the State PTA. Educating our families on the importance of engaging in their child’s education through leadership opportunities is one of the many ways we support families in advocating for their student”

To learn more about Utah Community Action visit, https://www.utahca.org


"Come Play with PTA"

Join the Utah Warriors Rugby Team for their 2021 Season Home Opener, on March 27! Come enjoy the return to live sports as the Warriors take on New England. Game starts at 7 PM at the Zions Bank Stadium in Herriman, Utah. Discount tickets for the Utah PTA start at $12!

For more information and to purchase tickets please call Jesse Sanchez @ 801-953-5537.

Education Commission

I just wanted to take a moment to thank you for all that you do for the children of Utah, it has been my privilege to serve beside you for this past year and a half. Desmond Tutu once stated, “Do your little bit of good where you are; it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.” As I have had the opportunity to observe all the service you each individually have provided and the good it has brought to our children, parents and teachers, it truly has changed the face of education in Utah.

As with many things in our lives, other opportunities present themselves where our skills and service may be called for. I found myself in that situation as the superintendent in South Summit School District has left the district for another opportunity and I have been selected to lead the district until a permanent superintendent is appointed. I felt that, because of my past experiences, I would be able to lead them through the remainder of the school year.

As I leave my position as Education Commissioner I thought of Winnie the Pooh as he finds that Christopher Robin has gone to school and is not there. Pooh reminds us, “How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.” I am lucky to call you my friends and will miss you!
Special Needs Specialist

The Family Links Conference is a statewide event for parents of children & adults with disabilities and professionals serving the disability community. This year it will be a Virtual Family Links Conference held on January 20-21, 2021 with presentations each day at 9:30 am, 11:00 am, 6:30 pm and 7:30 pm. The conference will include a Virtual Gallery of resources and businesses helpful for families, Q & A during live sessions, downloadable handouts, and recordings of each presentation for participants to review.

The cost to attend this conference is $10. To seek a scholarship to cover the cost of attendance please email kat@utahparentcenter.org. **Pre-registration is required.**


The conference schedule is as follows:

**Wednesday, January 20th, 2021**
9:30 am – Keynote: “Building Resiliency to Withstand Trauma”
11:00 am “Alternatives to Guardianship & Guardianship Through an Attorney’s Perspective”
6:30 pm “Fostering Emotional & Mental Health for Support through the Psychosocial Well-being of Siblings”
7:30 pm “Tips for Day to Day Positive Behavioral Supports”

**Thursday, January 21st, 2021**
9:30 am – Keynote: “Raising Expectations: Hearing from Self-Advocates” - Speaker’s Network
11:00 am- “The Basics of Telehealth”
6:30 pm- “School Supports under COVID-19”
7:30 pm- “Interactions with the Justice System”

This will be a great conference full of helpful information and resources. If you have any questions, contact the Utah Parent Center at info@utahparentcenter.org or 801-272-1051

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Family Life Commission

Parents, families, educators and communities—there’s no better partnership to assure that all students, pre-K to high school, have the support and resources they need to succeed in school and life. Research shows that students tend to earn higher grades, have better attendance, are more motivated and less likely to drop out when their families are involved in their education.

**Here are four tips parents can do outside the classroom to help their child succeed:**

1. Create a home environment that encourages learning and schoolwork. Establish a daily routine of mealtimes with time for homework, chores and bedtime.
2. Reinforce learning at home and show your child the skills they’re learning are applicable to everyday life. For example, if your child is learning about measurements, solicit help with a recipe.
3. Model the habits of a lifelong learner. Let your child see you reading, writing and using technology.
4. Become an advocate. Sign up to speak to the school board about resources your child’s school and schools in general need to be successful.

Studies also show that parent involvement drops dramatically as students move from elementary school into middle and high school. Yet given the complexities of today’s high schools, this is a time when many students are most in need of parental support and involvement.
You might not understand all the classes your teen is studying, however listening to what is happening outside of class is important. Listen to what your teen is trying to say without immediately judging or offering advice. Encourage your teen to join a club or sport at school. Outside activities are educational and often increase students’ interest in school. Help your teens put their concerns or problems into words and encourage them to try and figure out possible solutions or coping strategies.

The ultimate goal is to help students become self-sufficient managers of their time and resources in order to get the most out of high school. They may need your help even if they don’t realize it. Help them to develop habits and strategies for greater achievement while encouraging them to take increasing responsibility for their work.

Digital Citizenship Specialist

This month I hope we can all reflect on the mission of Collin Kartchner to #SAVETHEKIDS. I was greatly saddened when I heard the news that he had died suddenly in October. I wished that the last time I had texted him on October 21, 2020 that I had told him how grateful I was for everything he was doing for the kids. His sudden death really shocked all of us who work in the area of online safety for kids. And I am sure that it shocked his 261K followers and all who knew him. How I have grieved for the suffering his death has caused his wife, Liz, and their four children!

Collin loved kids and they loved him. They reached out to him. They told him what their parents did not know about the dangers of social media. They actually listened to him. He was entertaining, funny, and heartwarming. Kids did not tune him out when he did an assembly or spoke to them. When they finished listening to a presentation by Collin they wanted to not only follow his advice but follow and connect with him on Instagram.

So Collin, this is the thank you that I did not text you on October 21, 2020. Thank you! Thanks for all the blood, sweat and tears you gave to make this world a better place for kids. Thanks for wearing yourself ragged traveling all over the place and trying to squeeze in as many speaking engagements as you possibly could. Thanks for caring and thanks for sharing your life with the kids you wanted to save. Yours was a special mission that we all can pick up and do for our own kids.

We don’t all have Collin’s speaking talent and his 261K followers. But, we all can love kids just as much as Collin did. We can all give hugs to those kids like Collin taught us. We can all put down our phones when our kids come home from school and give them our full attention. We can all sit around the dinner table without our phones and focus on each other. Late at night, when our kids finally get in the mood to talk to us, we can stay up late and hear about their friends, their challenges, their worries and their fears. We can give them encouragement and tell them what absolute heroes they are for living at such a difficult time in the history of the world. We can also tell them why this is also one of the greatest times to live in the world and how technology can put the power in their hands to spread goodness and hope like never before since the creation of this earth.

So as we enter 2021, I invite you to join me in seeking for greater connections with our children. I hope we will choose to have a common quest to be there for our kids and be willing to share feelings. I am committing to do this and I hope you will too. I know if you are reading this, you are already a fabulous and involved parent. So thank you. You are a real treasure to your children. Best wishes to you for a Happy New Year!
When a spouse joins the military, the family joins also! It is not like kissing the family good-bye in the morning and returning in the evening after a day of work. In the military it is a 24/7 proposition that affects not just the service member, but the family as well. In the past 17 years, our American military service members have been asked to shoulder a heavy responsibility in the defense of our national values. Shouldering these values is as hard on the family as it is on the service member.

The responsibility can entail frequent moves and absences, all involving the family. It has been often said that “the deployed family member isn’t the one serving the ‘hardship’ tour, it is the family at home.” That family carries a significant burden when their military member is away from home.

One of the community institutions that can support the family when the military spouse is deployed is the local school. Schools have a great impact, mostly for good, on the children and families of those ‘left behind.’

In 2001, Utah PTA made a decision to establish a Military Family position on their state board. The purpose of this board member was to reach out to Utah PTA schools and help them better understanding the issues facing children and families who are affected by military service. This had a significantly greater impact on local communities as those serving in National Guard and Reserve units were being activated for service as well as those who were already serving on Active Duty.

Through the effects of a dedicated board member, local PTA units were asked to actively involve military families in their programs. Their activity was found to be a tremendous asset to the working of the local Utah PTA because they found some very unique characteristics of military families that provided benefit to both the PTA and the local school.

Some of the characteristics demonstrated by military families are; (1) a broader knowledge of world events due to the fact that they have moved around considerably, (2) military children have a more positive attitude toward others due to the fact that their life experiences have been broadened by their associations with other cultures and people, and (3) families members are more willing to volunteer their time and efforts in support of school and community due to their experience in service-oriented activities.

Utah PTA developed activities that directly related to military families to provide significant support and diversity to local and state PTA programs. One such program is the annual recognition of the Month of the Military Child each April. Local PTA’s are encouraged to conduct Patriotic activities during the month and the Utah PTA provides an appropriate banner to recognize the value of military children in their schools. Due to the diversity of military children, this is also an excellent way to recognize the diversity of children in Utah PTA schools.

Utah PTA is proud to be a partner to sponsor activities promoting and recognizing military children and families.

Family Engagement Specialist

May we all be safe and well! Thank you for your service to PTA and to children. By the very act of reading this you make yourself part of the solution. Students whose families are engaged at schools succeed more regardless of parental educational level or income.

Only by lifting everyone up will we each be lifted up. At Utah PTA meetings I am reminded that even if your child grows up to become a surgeon if he or she ever need surgery that someone else's child will perform the surgery. Thus we must work to ensure that all children meet their potential.

Please start planning designs for Utah PTA family engagement T-shirt design contest, 2021 due date to be announced. Also, please volunteer for the Utah PTA Family Engagement committee. We promote family engagement, plan and execute programming, train, consult and staff tables at outreach events. Also we have FUN doing these things! Finally if you have questions related to family engagement or would just like to take family engagement in your PTA to the next level, please contact me Marianne McGregor Guelker at (801)577-9775 or familyengagement@utahpta.org. Go PTA! Go family engagement!
Safety Commission

Attention 5th Graders, Parents of 5th Graders, Teachers of 5th Graders. I would like to make you aware of The National Missing Children’s Day Poster Contest. National Missing Children's Day is dedicated to encouraging parents, guardians, caregivers, and others concerned with the well-being of children to make child safety a priority. The commemoration serves as a reminder to continue our efforts to reunite missing children with their families and an occasion to honor those dedicated to this cause. There is a nationwide contest designed to promote awareness among teachers, parents/guardians and children and engage them in discussions about safety.

What is Missing Children’s Day?

- An annual ceremony to recognize the amazing people who helped to protect children.
- These people include law enforcement officers, social workers, prosecutors and everyday people (i.e. teachers, moms, dads, brothers, sisters, neighbors).
- The theme is “Bringing Our Missing Children Home”.
  - There are people in this world that do bad things and break the law.
  - This is why we have police and judges.
  - Sometimes these people do bad things to kids, like take them away from their families.
  - Police can help by searching and helping to return these children to their home.

Questions for Students

- Have you or anyone you love ever been lost before?
- How did you feel?
- Did anyone help you or your loved one home?
- Who found you or your loved one?
- How do you think your family felt?
- Who helped you?
- How your family felt when you were lost?

The Utah Attorney General’s Office will select a winner on the state level who will be honored in a ceremony with Attorney General Sean D. Reyes and will receive a certificate from the Department of Justice. Their poster will then be submitted to the national judging competition.

The national winner will win a trip for themselves, their parents, and their teacher to Washington, D.C. to be honored at the National Missing Children’s Day Ceremony on May 19, 2021.

For more information contact
Michelle Busch-Upwall -- Utah Attorney General's Office -- 801-281-1245 -- mbusch-upwall@agutah.gov


Firearm safety education is crucial to the well-being of Utah’s children. L.E.T.S. Stay Safe is Utah’s firearm safety and violence prevention program that promotes gun safety through education. Formed in partnership with the Utah State Board of Education and the Utah State Legislature, the Utah Attorney General’s Office developed this program to help teachers and parents teach firearm safety by providing teaching materials and safety guidelines for students and children across the state.

Program materials include a 5-minute educational video that teaches children what to do when they find a gun or become aware of a threat at school. The video is accompanied by a 50-minute lesson plan, PowerPoint.
Student Leadership Commission

Our student committee would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year, and we have some exciting things coming that we hope your students will enjoy.

First off, we are kicking off a year of “Kids helping Kids” with The Christmas Box House. This year is their 25th anniversary of helping “children, teens, and young adult who are victims of abuse, neglect, trafficking or are facing homelessness or other risks that no child should have to face.” They have locations across the state, so our students will be able to do service for others just like them, right here in Utah. February and March are statistically the hardest months for our students emotionally, and I find nothing better at helping me rise above my trials than by helping others around me.

Speaking of rising above our problems, our PTSA Student Days at the Capitol have been cancelled, due to the Capitol not being open to the public at this time, and it is also very much up in the air as to what activities will be allowed during the 2021 Legislative Session. We will be providing online/virtual content that you can go through with your students on your own schedules. Our theme will be “Rise Above,” and we will have recorded videos with many of our State political leaders, as well as others, with messages of hope and resilience for our youth. We will also have a mock debate challenge for students to learn some of the processes a bill goes through on the Hill.

State Battle of the Bands is still on for April 24, 2021, at SLCC’s Grand Theatre. Many schools are being creative in their local contests, pre-recording bands, etc., to work around COVID restrictions. Please work with your principals in finding ways the students can still participate consistent with how other assemblies and band performances are occurring at your schools.

Stay kind, and together we can “Rise Above” the chaos of COVID and the cacophony of crisis.

Advocacy VP

2021 Legislative Session coming soon!

The 2021 Legislative Session is right around the corner. From January 19-March 5, 2021 the Utah Legislature will be meeting. The bills that will pass will affect the daily lives of those in Utah, across the state. Utah PTA will have to advocate for our children in a new way. The Capitol is currently being renovated to create larger committee rooms to enable physical distancing, but unfortunately all of our room reservations have currently been cancelled and we are planning on doing everything virtual until we get more information. For some of us this will actually create more opportunities to participate. Legislative leaders have provided ways for participants to offer comment on bills virtually. For citizens outside of the Wasatch front you will be able to offer input on legislation without a trip to the Capitol for the first time ever. We encourage you to join the Utah PTA Legislative Advocacy Committee, Utah PTA Advocacy Facebook group, or the Utah PTA Take Action MemberHub list to keep informed throughout the session. Email LeAnn Wood (leann@utahpta.org) for more information on any of these items. The Utah PTA Take Action List is an email list for Utah PTA Members who would like timely alerts about upcoming legislation. Take Action alerts generally request immediate action from you regarding important legislation. We will ask you to contact your legislators and help them understand how particular bills will affect children and families. We need your participation to be an active voice for Utah’s children. You can follow Utah PTA priority bills at https://www.utahpta.org/bills.
Save the Date!
Utah PTA Day at the Capitol will be held on February 16, 2021. It will be held through virtually and registration will be available after January 1, 2021. Utah PTA Commissioners will share updates on priority legislation in the areas of Community Engagement, Education, Family Life, Health, Individual Development, Safety, & Student Leadership. We will be presenting our Legislative Friend of Children award, and meeting with legislators from across the state.

Tuesday, February 16, 2021 starting at 9:00 AM
Registration is open. Registration for this event is FREE
Participants must pre-register to receive Zoom Invitation
Click here to register or go to
www.utahpta.org/virtual-day-capitol-information-registration

Registration is open to all PTA Members, Superintendents, Principals, Teachers, and anyone else interested in learning about how PTA advocates for all children and how to work with our State Legislators.

Due to the continued closure of the Capitol Complex, PTA Day at the Capitol will be held virtually.

We will begin with a General Meeting to discuss priority bills and then have breakout rooms per region. Some regions may be combined based on participation numbers.
Schedule: (Schedule subject to change based on Legislative Calendar. Please check back here once the 2021 Legislature is in session.)
9:00 - 12:00 - General Meeting
12:00 - 1:00 - Lunch with Legislators - Regions will be assigned virtual breakout rooms
Utah PTA Commissioners Newsletter January 2021

LeAnn Wood
leann@utahpta.org

Advocacy Vice President

Advocacy Resources:
- Legislative VP and Advocacy Training
- Conducting Meet the Candidate Nights
- Fall Advocacy Conference and PTA Day at the Capitol

Committees:
- Chair of Legislative Advocacy Committee (LAC)
- Chair of Commissioners and Resolutions Committee
- Member of Utahans for Public Schools (UTPS)

Any PTA member can join LAC! It is the 4th Wed from 12-2 at the PTA Office. (Aug- Nov, April) It is every Wed at 12 (Jan-March) at the capital during session.

Kris Denison
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Commission Resources:
- Parent Engagement in Schools
- Male Engagement
- Diversity & Inclusivity
- National Standards and Schools of Excellence Programs
- Volunteer recruitment and appreciation
- Teacher Appreciation
- Business and Community Partnerships

Outside Committees:
- Uplift Families Steering Committee
- Family Engagement Workgroup
- Utah Housing Coalition

Sheri Mattle
sheri@utahpta.org

Safety

Commission Resources:
- Basic School Preparedness & Protocols
- Digital Threat Assessments
- Injury prevention and Sports Safety
- Teen Driver/ School Bus Safety
- Preventing Sex Trafficking
- Safety within the school

Outside Committees:
- Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force
- School Readiness Coordinating Council
- Safe Kids Utah
- Utah Gun Coalition

Steve Hirase
steve@utahpta.org

Education

Commission Resources:
- Educational Programs
- Helping parents advocate for Student and School support
- Family Reading Nights
- STEM grants
- Parent training for working with struggling readers

Outside Committees:
- Assessment & Accountability Policy Action Committee
- ESSA Committee of Practitioners
- Promise Partnership Regional Council
- 3rd Grade Reading Initiative Team
- Utah Public Education Coalition
- Uplift Families Education

KUED Reading Program

Cheryl Phipps
cheryl@utahpta.org

Health

Commission Resources:
- Red Ribbon Week
- HOPE week
- Suicide Prevention Activities/ QPR Training
- Healthy Kids Events
- Recess/PE Programs

Outside Committees:
- Utah Suicide Prevention Coalition
- Utah Safe UT App Committee
- Utah Tobacco Free Alliance
- SMART Coalition
- Action for Healthy Kids Coalition
- Parents Empowered工作组
- Coalition for Safe and Healthy Utah
- USAAV/UPAC

Heidi Grimshaw
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Family Life

Commission Resources:
- Family & Child Successes
- Strengthen home & family
- Military Families
- Digital Citizenship
- School Wellness Policies
- Prevent Child Abuse
- Early Childhood Education
- Prevention Education

Outside Committees:
- Uplift Families Advisory committee
- Family Engagement Workgroup
- Utah Foster Care
- Parents Empowered工作组
- White Ribbon Week
- Early Childhood Utah Program
- Prevent Child Abuse Utah

Todd Hougaard
todd@utahpta.org

Student Leadership

Commission Resources:
- How to start a PTSA and Student PTSA Group
- Battle of the Bands
- Teen Safe Driving
- Healthy relationships
- PTSA Student Leadership Conference
- PTSA Student Day at the Capitol

Outside Committees:
- Parents Empowered工作组
- Teen Safe Driving Taskforce
- Healthy relationships/ Safe Dating Taskforce
- KUED Reading Program

Interested in a commission or have questions? Wondering about outside resources or partnerships that could help your PTA? If Yes, contact one of the commissioners! We are happy to help, offer ideas and share resources. We are here to support you!