

## **J. B. Watkins Elementary School PTA Meeting Minutes September 13, 2011**

The General Membership Meeting of J.B. Watkins PTA began at 7:00 p.m. on September 13, 2011. The following people were present: Niki Mason, Stephanie Gonzalez, Colleen Kopidis, Dawn Owen, Angela Castillo, Shelley Neofotistos, Janet Evans, Beth Gray, Deb Dudley, Josh Kurz, Jo Woodlief, Christy Davis, Amanda Bracey, Holly Wray, Brittany Krebs, Michele Tiller, Rusty Tiller, Kelly Kaze, Jarica Davis, Susan Hesch, Julia Trebour, Brittany Krebs, Adrienne Haskins, John Gates, Loren Constantino, Steve Constantino, Will Mason, Jennifer Powers, Lynn Thompson, Meredith Karluk, Shannon Brown, Dana Gates, Maggi Lewis, Catharine Anderson, Anne Counoupas, Kristen Beazle, Kathy Burnette, Sara Johnson-Ward, Lisa Rossi, Barbara Cohen, Sidney Newt, Marlene Scott, Jason Benedict, Jen Loue, Debbie Walker, Beth Gray, Michelle Quiram, Celia Neff, Sheila Ellison, Kara Fetsko, JoAnna Anderson, Caryn Persinger, Mark Persinger, Angela Barteo, Gretchen Reid-Brooks, DeAnne Watson, Jennifer Siegel, James Skinner, Tammi Slovinsky, Laurie Valerio, Becky Rose, Missy Mabie, Alfred Cobbs, Rosemarie Curley, Nina Perkins, Gabrielle Taliaferro, Leann Owings, Annette Bashensky, Jennifer Boehman, Kris Perko and Martha Gundel.

### **Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Niki Mason, President. Niki welcomed everyone to a new school year and thanked everyone for coming to the meeting.

### **Officer Reports**

#### **President: Niki Mason**

Niki again welcomed everyone and asked that when speakers and chair persons speak, that they come to the front of the room, announce their name and committee, and direct their voice towards all in the room and towards the Secretary, Dawn Owen.

- Stated Rules - Niki reported that she would like to establish Stated Rules for the PTA meetings. This would be a document with general meeting guidelines covering items such as agenda timelines, requests for money, etc. Niki will work with the PTA Board and Committee Chairs to establish these guidelines.
- Back-to-School – Niki asked that Committee Chairs try to attend both Back-to-School nights on September 15 and 22 so that we have a PTA presence at these events and can inform parents with regard to what each committee does and the events they coordinate.
- My Coke Rewards – Niki mentioned that we do not have a chair person for My Coke Rewards. Anyone interested should contact Niki Mason.
- nList – In order to get more parents on nList, this year forms will be given to the teachers at Back-to-School night to pass out to the parents.
- Copies to Office – Anyone making copies of flyers or for any events at the school should make a copy for Dr. Scott so that she will be informed and able to answer questions should anyone call in with questions.
- List of Attendees – For any before and after school activities that your child is involved in, please send a note into the main office so that Dr. Scott and the office have on file.
- Committee Goals – Niki asked that the Committee Chairs share and submit goals for their committee.

#### **Vice President: Stephanie Gonzalez**

Stephanie mentioned that the PTA typically sponsors two events a year, one in the Fall and one in the Spring. For the Fall program, the school usually invites an author to visit, and that she is working with

Mallory Smith on this. She asked for any suggestions for events for the Spring program; submit suggestions to [stephgonz@hotmail.com](mailto:stephgonz@hotmail.com).

### **Secretary: Dawn Owen**

Dawn asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes of the final PTA meeting on June 13, 2011 since the minutes have been available on the PTA website since June. No corrections or additions were made, so the minutes stand approved as written. She also reported that minutes from tonight's meeting would be available on the website for viewing shortly. Those minutes, as well as minutes from the Back-to-School night, will be voted for approval at the next PTA meeting.

### **Treasurer: Niki Mason for Colleen Kopidis**

Niki reminded Committee Chairs that Check Request Forms are available on the PTA website and are necessary for reimbursement, or in the office in the PTA crate in "Treasurer Forms". Instructions on how to fill out the form are on the PTA website. Niki also mentioned that the PTA passed its annual audit for the period covering July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011.

### **Administrators Report**

**Dr. Scott** spoke first and welcomed everyone back to a new school year. She said that she was proud of the students and that the Kindergarten students were doing well and was able to get off the bus and walk to their classrooms on their own.

She then introduced two new faculty members: Ms. Debbie Walker and Mr. Jason Benedict as the new Assistant Principals.

She then thanked the teachers for their participation in tonight's meeting and they stood up and introduced themselves as follows:

Kathy Burnette – representing Kindergarten  
Adrienne Haskins – representing 1<sup>st</sup> Grade  
Beth Gray – representing 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade  
Janet Evans – representing 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade  
John Paul Gates – physical education

Finally, she thanked the PTA for the staff appreciation breakfast on the staff's first day back to school, and thanked PTA for all their support.

### **Teacher Liaison: Beth Gray**

Beth Gray stood up and introduced herself as the teacher liaison for the lower elementary grades. A representative for the upper grades has not yet been assigned.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **Blood Drives: Deb Dudley**

PTA holds two blood drives per year, with the first one being scheduled for Thursday, November 3, from 3-7 p.m. Flyers with more information and sign-ups will be coming out in October. Deb mentioned that this year's blood drive is very important as blood supplies are low, and that we would like this blood drive to be the biggest ever. Anyone age 16 and older can participate.

#### **Box Tops (General Mills): Kris Perko**

Kris indicated that she would like shoe box/Kleenex box donations so that a box can be placed in each classroom for box top collection. She is looking for helpers to help collect the box tops from each classroom and help with counting. It was also suggested that parents try to solicit the help of family and friends and see if they would be willing to bring in a shoebox to their workplace to help collect more box tops for our school. Contact Kris @ [kxp129@aol.com](mailto:kxp129@aol.com) if you wish to donate or help out.

Adrienne Haskins mentioned that General Mills would be willing to provide small, snack-sized boxes of cereal to the school, which would increase the number of box tops collected.

Maggi Lewis mentioned that room parents could help collect and count box tops for their classrooms as part of their room parent responsibilities.

It was noted that Campbells soup labels can still be collected, but those are collected by the school (vs. PTA) and should be turned into the main office.

**Chess Club: Anne Counoupas**

Anne mentioned that the Chess Club begins October 7 and meets 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of each month (11/4, 12/9, 1/6, 2/3, 3/2, 3/30, 5/4 & 6/1). It is open to all students and all levels are welcome. There is a sign-up sheet in the school newsletter, The Lantern. Cost is \$2/child.

**County Council: Sara Ward**

Sara read her report from last night's meeting as follows:

Last night was the first meeting of the Chesterfield County Council of PTAs. Mrs. Petit offered a couple of books as recommended reading for parents. Those titles are: *Education Nation: Six Leading Edges of Innovation in our Schools* and *Schools Cannot Do It Alone*.

The PTA school representatives from the Midlothian District had a breakout session with School Board Rep Patricia Carpenter. Ms. Carpenter was prepared to address the many issues that J.B. Watkins is facing and offered to have a meeting with parents in the next few weeks. She could not attend this meeting because she had to be in attendance at the School Board meeting tonight. She did state that ground breaking will happen in October and that the priority will be to have the 8 classrooms ready by next summer for fall occupancy. She also stated that she is having the School Safety Officer look into problems related to safety and trailers.

**Cultural Arts/Reflections: Michelle Quiram**

Michelle reported that this program is part of a national cultural arts program and that the topic for this year is "Diversity Means..." The categories for this program are Visual Arts, Literature, Film Production, Dance, Photography and Music Composition. The program will be split into 2 groups: Kindergarten thru 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and 3<sup>rd</sup> thru 5<sup>th</sup> grade. All entries are due October 28. Winners will be announced in November and an award ceremony will be held in November as well.

**Fit Kids: Maggi Lewis**

Maggi reported that Fit Kids is an after-school physical education program that runs all year, and that they work closely with Mr. Gates to coordinate the program. This program piloted last year and was a huge success and is now in three schools and also gives money back to the PTA.

**Green Team: Catharine Anderson**

Catherine reported that the Green Team started four years ago. The Green Team consists of coaches and 5<sup>th</sup> graders who spread the word about recycling throughout the school, and host various events. This year, due to high interest, there will be two groups – one group each semester consisting of five kids per 5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. The group meets once a week and is in charge of Green Tip announcements and educating other students.

Catharine mentioned that they are looking for volunteer coaches. Please contact Catharine at [greencatharine@gmail.com](mailto:greencatharine@gmail.com) if interested

Items being recycled this year are drink pouches (bin in cafeteria) glue sticks (bins placed in every classroom); bottle caps, batteries (no rechargeables) and print cartridges. The bins for those are at the main entrance. Pouches and glue sticks earn \$0.02/ea.

Wednesday, October 5 is International Walk to School Day, in which our school will participate as we have in the past. Last year, we had over 100 J.B. Watkins students walk to school. The possibility of a Walking Wednesdays program was mentioned so that kids could walk (with a parent or adult of course) to school all year.

**Grounds: Angela Castillo**

Adopt-A-Spot is a project which occurs twice a year, where all are invited to come and pick up trash around the school. The first date is on Sunday, October 16 and will be around 2 p.m. Pansy Day will be on October 16 as well and Angela asked for donations of pansies to be brought to school by Friday, October 14.

Niki mentioned that parents should read The Lantern newsletter that comes out every Friday. It is online at [www.jbwatkinspta.com](http://www.jbwatkinspta.com) and has tons of information with regard to school events such as this. The deadline for submitting articles for The Lantern is on Wednesdays.

**Health and Safety: John Paul Gates for Ginger Grizzard**

Mr. Gates reported that the Jog Walk/Run starts on Monday, September 19 and will be every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:40-9:00 a.m.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Dash in Disguise Fun Run is scheduled for Saturday, October 29 at 8 am. This is a fun family event with 5k and 1-mile runs in your favorite Halloween costume!

**Lunch Buddies: Niki Mason for Melanie Suddreth**

So far, we have 50 volunteers for the Lunch Buddy Program. At this time, we are scheduling three volunteers per shift (3 shifts each day). We still have openings and are hoping to get more parent volunteers. Contact Melanie Suddreth at [msudds@verizon.net](mailto:msudds@verizon.net) for more information or to sign up.

**Membership: Julia Trebour**

Julia reported that we currently have 317 members, and just received another 120 membership envelopes today. We are hoping for 100% participation. The class with the highest participation wins a pizza party.

**Candela's Nights: Brittany Krebs**

Brittany reported that the Candela's night last Spring was a huge success, so it will now be a monthly event. Candela's nights are scheduled for the first Monday of every month: October 3, December 5, February 6, March 5, April 2 and May 7. Candela's donates 20% of all profits from the evening to the PTA.

**Chick-Fil-A: Laurie Valerio**

Chick-Fil-A nights have been scheduled for October 25, November 22, January 24, February 28, March 27 & May 22. Parent help is requested to help with the wheel (where kids spin the wheel for prizes) and there will be two shifts: 6-7 p.m. and 7-8 p.m.

**Monkey Joe's Nights: Laurie Valerio**

Laurie reported that the Monkey Joe's nights have been scheduled for October 7, December 9, February 24, and April 6, from 5-8 pm.

**Newsletter: Dawn Owen**

The quarterly PTA newsletter, The Coalminer, will be coming out around October 1, and will be posted on the PTA website. Please submit PTA-related articles to Dawn at [dawn.owen@hotmail.com](mailto:dawn.owen@hotmail.com) by Tuesday, September 27. A notice will be sent out via nList and Facebook when the newsletter is available online.

**Pumpkin Lighting Festival: Barbara Cohen**

The festival is on Friday, October 28 and will be held in conjunction with the Book Fair. The Pumpkin Festival is a mini fall festival whereby each class will carve and decorate a pumpkin that Friday and they will be lit and displayed for the festival that evening. The committee is meeting next week to map out all the details.

**Room Parent Liaison: Maggi Lewis**

Maggi reported that the first meeting will be held after Back-to-School nights. Maggi will meet with the room parents to discuss their responsibilities as liaison between the classroom and the PTA. Room parents coordinate classroom parties, carnival baskets, etc.

**Spirit Wear: Sara Ward**

Sara reported that gross sales for the first week of Spirit Wear and the Back-to-School morning totaled \$1,451.54. There is now a display case outside the cafeteria with the new Spirit Wear. The official school

logo and colors were used this year. Spirit Wear will be sold at both Back-to-School nights and credit cards are now accepted.

The promotional offer for one adult item and one children's item ends this Friday, September 16. Please contact Sara if you have any questions (name & contact info on order forms).

**Staff Appreciation: Shelley Neofotistos**

The purpose of this committee is to support and coordinate grade level luncheons for the staff of J.B. Watkins. Each grade will sponsor a luncheon/breakfast/snack for a total of six events.

The first tentative date for a 5<sup>th</sup> grade sponsored lunch is on October 18. Other dates have not yet been finalized. Throughout the year there will also be a number of other activities, treats, and surprises to express our appreciation to the staff.

**Student Directory: Niki Mason for Betty Jo Fulghum**

The goal is to have the Student Directory out as soon as possible.

All forms already returned have been alphabetized and are ready to key (deadline to return forms is this Friday, September 16) and last forms will be added in this weekend.

Ads for the directory will be sold until October 7th. If you know someone with a home-based business or that works in the community, let them know this is a great way to reach all Watkins families. The cost is \$35 for a half page (4 1/4" x 5 1/2") and \$50 for whole page (8 1/2" x 5 1/2"). Ads need to be sent to Betty Jo Fulghum in word format (or able to insert to a word document). Any questions, please contact Betty Jo at [jofulghum@comcast.net](mailto:jofulghum@comcast.net).

**Volunteers: DeAnne Watson**

DeAnne reported that we have collected 89 volunteer forms thus far and that more volunteers are needed to help out with the various events and activities the PTA has planned throughout the school year. Please contact DeAnne at [Watson\\_deanne@yahoo.com](mailto:Watson_deanne@yahoo.com) if you wish to volunteer.

**Watkins Friends: Dana Gates**

Dana reported that the goal of this committee is to provide support to new families at J.B. Watkins and community outreach. We currently have two outreach programs – a Denim Drive in which all donated denim will go to Goodwill, and a Back to School Supplies drive which helps provide school supplies to J.B. Watkins students and sister schools. The Denim Drive deadline is Friday, September 16. The Back to School Supplies drive deadline is Friday, September 30.

Dana is also soliciting ideas for the next program/drive (used books & clothes, Vets Day celebration).

**Ways & Means: Lisa Rossi**

Cherrydale Fundraising Packages went home with children today. The sale lasts for approximately two weeks and is a great way for us to earn money for the school, so we ask that parents encourage their child(ren) to participate.

Lisa highlighted some positive aspects of this fundraiser:

1. The school gets 50% of money from sales.
2. Cherrydale offers online ordering to make it easier to sell to out-of-town family and friends.
3. Half of the items in the catalog are priced at \$10 or less, making it affordable.
4. By using a new vendor this year, we have added more items to the sale, including giftware, candles, magazine subscriptions, snack foods, etc.
5. The money raised during this sale helps support various programs, including the AR program, Fall author visit, staff appreciation, teacher checks, assignment books for 3rd-5th graders, and more.

Lisa is looking for a co-chair for the Ways and Means Fundraising committee to help with order distribution, etc. Please contact Lisa at [lwrossi@bellsouth.net](mailto:lwrossi@bellsouth.net) if you are interested.

**Website: Gretchen Reid-Brooks**

Gretchen asked that parents look at the PTA website and provide feedback. She has someone working on a new banner for the website. PTA meeting minutes, newsletters and the calendar of events can be found at [www.jbwatkinspta.com](http://www.jbwatkinspta.com). Parents can also follow the PTA on Facebook and Twitter. The PTA currently has 461 members on Facebook.

**WEP (Watkins Enrichment Program): Maggi Lewis**

This after-school program will continue in both the fall and spring of this school year with each session lasting 6 weeks. The 1<sup>st</sup> session starts on October 5, but there will be no WEP on Wednesday, October 25 due to early release. Registration forms will be sent home with students next week.

Kids will get to try a variety of activities this year, including science, cooking, ceramics and more!

A reminder: identification will still be necessary to sign out children from the program to ensure their safety.

**New Business**

**Race to Nowhere documentary** – Catharine Anderson spoke to the importance of this documentary which addresses the issue of children being pushed too hard. Dr. Scott had a viewing for teachers & parents the week before school started, but not all could attend. Catharine asked whether PTA would be willing to fund the cost of renting the documentary at \$100/day. PTA will look into renting the documentary and where/when the viewings will be held. Dr. Scott mentioned that parents will be informed of the new homework policies by their child's teacher at Back-to-School night.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Field Trip**– Brittany Krebs addressed the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade field trip to Jamestown, which was canceled last year due to the downturn in the economy and financial hardship being faced by many families. Brittany mentioned the possibility of organizing a fundraiser and/or getting funds from PTA to help fund the cost of the Jamestown field trip.

A parent spoke to the issue that while 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Jamestown trip was canceled due to the economic downturn, field trips for other grades did not get canceled. Dr. Scott responded by saying that the Jamestown field trip is not part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade curriculum, but was graciously offered by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers to get students excited about 4<sup>th</sup> grade Virginia history. Janet Evans (on behalf of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers) said that the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers decided it would be best to cancel the field trip to be fair to those that could not attend, and that they did have the Jamestown Outreach program come to the school so that kids received the same instructional, hands-on experience that they would have received at Jamestown, but at a much lower cost. There are no for the Jamestown Field trip this year either.

**Trailer Issues/Security & Renovations** – Dr. Scott introduced Mr. David Myers, Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance, and Mr. Tim Bullis, Community Relations, to provide some factual information with regard to J.B. Watkins and Chesterfield County, and to address parents' concerns with regard to trailer safety and renovation timeline.

The first issue addressed was over-crowding at J.B. Watkins. Current enrollment at J.B. Watkins is 1,029 students and the school has a capacity of 739 students. Mr. Bullis mentioned that this issue goes back to 1980 in Chesterfield County and that trailers have been added to many schools to address over-crowding issues. From 1990-2000, enrollment went up 1,100 students per year in Chesterfield County. When the renovation plans for J.B. Watkins were approved back in 2004, the yearly growth was underestimated. The enrollment at J.B. Watkins is now projected to go up by 100 students per year. While the addition of the 8-classroom building will help alleviate over-crowding, we will still be at or over capacity. The long-term solution would be the addition of a new elementary school in the area, however, steep budget cuts have hampered the County's ability to construct any new schools. With the over-crowding issue expected to worsen in the next few years at J.B. Watkins due to the desirability of the area and of the school, the trailers will more than likely remain for the long term.

Parents spoke to the possibility of redistricting to alleviate over-crowding. Mr. Bullis said this was not in the works as most schools in the area are also at or over capacity. Another parent spoke to the possibility of leasing another building and busing students to that facility. Mr. Bullis mentioned that was not an option either due to the cost of leasing/renting a building and the lack of funds due to budget cuts.

Mr. Bullis also addressed parents' concern with regard to the waivers which allow students out-of-area to attend J.B. Watkins. He indicated that over the past 5 years, there have only been 48-75 waivers. Even if those students were not allowed to attend, that would only eliminate 30 students total because of the number of students that have waived out of JBW.

One parent spoke to the issue of why some 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classrooms were in the outside trailers and not in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade round, and why two 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers were placed there instead. Dr. Scott explained that careful consideration was given to each move, and that they did their best to ensure that teachers working together as a team were kept together in the same location.

Another parent voiced concern about the issue that in spite of the fact that Chesterfield County schools are at or over capacity, more funds were allocated to other counties and that the needs of J.B. Watkins are not being taken into consideration. Mr. Bullis mentioned that the renovations had been moved up only one year and that the time lag between approval and actual renovations is typically about 5 years.

Renovations are scheduled to begin some time in October, with a projected completion date of Fall 2013. The plan is to start with the construction of the outside classrooms/building first. From there, they will move to the renovations inside. Most of the inside renovations will be completed during the summer so as to minimize disruption.

The next issue addressed was trailer safety. One parent spoke to the fact that she has a child in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade that is in an outside trailer. Of concern to this parent is the public access to the trailers, the trailer doors not being locked at all times, no monitors/cameras in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Round where students enter the building, and that the students will be exposed to the construction workers when the renovations begin. The parent suggested the idea of putting a fence around the trailer area, as well as installing security cameras inside the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Round.

Another parent expressed their desire to have a presentation with a well laid-out plan which would identify construction timelines, exactly where the construction would be taking place, the proximity of the construction in relation to the trailer classrooms, and what could be done to address parents concerns about child safety.

Mr. David Myers mentioned that the school has procedures in place which cannot be shared due to confidentiality and the possibility of compromise. Since the start of school last Tuesday, two random safety audits have been conducted – both audits found the school, teachers and buildings in compliance. All trailer doors were locked, the buddy system was in place for kids leaving trailers and entering the building, and the trailer without a window was being used as a staff workroom. He felt that installing a fence around the perimeter of the trailers would send the wrong message and mentioned that 50% of other Chesterfield county schools have outside classrooms without a fence. He also assured parents that a background check is performed on all construction workers that will be on-site, and that fencing would be installed around the construction areas.

Mr. Bullis mentioned that they would be glad to have another meeting at the school to address all the issues/concerns, with the architect, construction company and project manager in attendance so that parents get a detailed explanation of what will take place, when it will take place, and the safety precautions that will be put into place to ensure child safety. Niki Mason mentioned that Mrs. Carpenter of the County Council would also be willing to come to a meeting to address parents' questions and concerns.

Lastly, another parent voiced their opinion that while parent's fears and concerns about safety are understood, J.B. Watkins is a very safe environment and that the teachers and staff are all on board to protect our children and ensure their safety at all times. She encouraged parents to get involved and help out in the classrooms as much as possible so that the teachers could direct more of their time and energy to educating our children.

### **Announcements**

The next PTA meeting will be October 13, 2011 at 7 p.m. in the Library

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 p.m.