

# Highcrest Middle School PTO

## General Board Meeting Minutes

September 6, 2006

**Maggie Belliel, PTO Co-President, called the meeting to order at 9:21am**

**Approval of Minutes** – minutes from the May 3, 2006 were approved

### **Welcome by Max McGee, District 39 Superintendent**

Dr. McGee gave a brief welcome to all and reminded us that his full presentation to our PTO will take place at the Nov. 4 meeting. He was delighted that the goal that was set for Highcrest 3 years ago – that Highcrest be a school that the kids “couldn’t wait to get to” – seemed to have been fulfilled. He thanked Cathy Rosen and Elizabeth Brown for their leadership and thanked the parents for their encouragement while helping the kids make the transition to the middle school. He also reported that the data from the District 39 parent survey that was done earlier this spring seemed quite positive.

### **Principal’s Report**

Elizabeth Brown, Assistant Principal, thanked the PTO for the financial contributions toward the updating of the staff lounge. Curriculum Nights are scheduled at 7:00pm on the following days:

5<sup>th</sup> Grade: September 12<sup>th</sup>

6<sup>th</sup> Grade: September 14<sup>th</sup>

She also thanked those parents who volunteered for the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Connections Party.

### **Teacher’s Report**

Hilary Harvey, 5<sup>th</sup> grade social worker, thanked the PTO for the constant support that the Highcrest parents give the faculty and staff. Enrollment for the music program is currently ongoing, and extra forms are in the office if we need them. A parent noted that each class has an “introduction to the instruments day” with their class and that enrollment forms are given at that time also. Maggie Belliel also informed us that those kid coming to school early for music rehearsal can catch the Junior High bus. Finally, Ms. Harvey stated that Linda Lazar, from the Art Department, is looking for volunteers to help hang displays in the cafeteria.

## President's Report

Maggie Belliel reported that there are a few key communication vehicles that the PTO uses:

1. Highcrest Hawk: Peggy Wilson, editor. Distributed electronically monthly. Submit pieces to Peggy by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month for publication in the next month's edition (the October Hawk deadline is Sept. 15). September's edition will be the only hard-copy one of the year; all others will be submitted to the parents via email by either Dr. Rosen or Mrs. Brown.
2. Highcrest Headlines: Monica Creighton, editor. Distributed on yellow paper weekly. Submit pieces to Monica by Wednesday at noon for publication in the next week's edition.
3. Highcrest Website: Carolyn Mitchell, webmaster.  
[www.wilmette39.org/highcrest](http://www.wilmette39.org/highcrest)

She reminded us that when submitting content, it must be school-related (e.g. no Scout meeting announcements) and it must be for the good of the whole school (e.g. don't submit something that only relates to 10-15 families).

There is still an opening for a speaker to come to one of our spring PTO meetings - if anyone has ideas, please contact Maggie. Also the Kelly Miller Circus is coming to Wilmette on September 16<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm and at 5:30pm- this is the major fundraiser for the District 39 Foundation, which supports the PTO's efforts, so she encourages all families to attend.

## Committee Reports

**Treasurer:** Patti Ray noted that if anyone requested a check recently, she would have it to them within a week or so. The turnaround time for checks will be quicker once the school year gets underway. A letter went out to all committees which included a check request form, but these forms will also be kept in the "treasurer's box" in the main office.

**Membership:** Betty Ann Brody-Bucksbaum reported that there had been 423 signups so far. Only PTO members will get Highcrest directories. Betty Ann has the member information in an Excel spreadsheet if any of the committees need access to it.

**Ways & Means:** There will only be 2 PTO fundraisers this year -

1. "Kids are Key" mail campaign

Maria Secaras explained that a mailing will go out in mid-September to all parents, asking for a donation to support the PTO's enrichment efforts. The PTO spends approximately \$60 per child on enrichment, but a donation of any amount will be accepted. Last year 50% of families donated, and this year they are hoping for 75% participation.

A parent reminded us that many employers offer matching contributions when an employee makes a donation to a non-profit group. Another parent noted that last year there was confusion between this donation, and the donation that Room Parents were requesting for teacher gifts - it was asked that Room Parents ensure that parents know what each donation will be used for.

2. Gift Wrap

Stephanie Phelan stated that the Sally Foster catalogs and order forms would arrive home shortly.

Barb Shields talked about the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Highcrest Parents Night Out (which is NOT a fundraiser, but rather a self-funded event - it is not connected with the Kids are Key campaign). It will be held on Friday, November 3, from 7:00-11:00pm at the Doubletree Hotel in Skokie. Tickets are \$40, which includes a light buffet, dancing and a cash bar. The purpose is for parents to meet each other and enjoy a night out together. The invitation will be sent out at the end of September. All 110 teachers & staff are invited, but the PTO sponsors their ticket price - the invitation will offer an opportunity to sponsor a faculty member. Contact Barb for volunteer opportunities.

**Enrichment:** Laurie Cavalier reported that the activities for 5<sup>th</sup> grade will essentially stay the same as last year. She and Beth Miller are working with the teachers to offer 2 separate days for the "Life Begins" event, perhaps at different times of the school year, to better coordinate with when the curriculum is being studied in a particular classroom.

Maggie said that she has received a few questions from parents wondering why there seem to be more in-school events rather than field trips. She cited the high costs of transportation for the trips, and noted that the kids are often gone all day, which cuts into curriculum time.

**Special Events:** The 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Connections party was a success. Volunteers are still needed for Freaky Friday, held on October 27<sup>th</sup>. Though this isn't a "parent-chaperoned" event, there is still a big need for parents to help in many ways.

**Parent Volunteers/Room Parents:** Mary Ellen Laue has the names of many parents who volunteered to help with various committees. Room Parent Positions have been filled for all 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms. There is a Room Parent orientation taking place on Friday, September 8<sup>th</sup> at 9:15am.

**PTO Gift Committee:** Mary Lawler reported that with last year's extra funds, the PTO did the following:

1. purchased 3 concrete benches near the front door
2. refurbished the faculty lounge
3. purchased instructional materials and plants for the Outdoor Classroom
4. purchased a computer cart

**Art Awareness:** Sara Cohan reported that she and Carol Harvey are looking for volunteers to facilitate the Foreign Language art projects during the foreign language classes.

**District 39 Foundation:** There was a reminder to buy tickets for the Kelly Miller Circus to support the Foundation.

A parent asked a question regarding Career Day. This will take place on the morning of Friday, January 26<sup>th</sup>. Kids will visit 4 speakers throughout the course of the morning. As of today, 29 parents have volunteered to speak about their career for the 5<sup>th</sup> graders, and only 9 parents for the 6<sup>th</sup> graders. The Career Day committee is looking for 18 more parent volunteers, and they are hoping to offer the kids engaging presenters as well a diverse group of careers/jobs.

### Thank You's

Maggie stated that though there are many, many parents to thank, this time she wanted to single out 5 individuals for their efforts:

- Peggy Wilson and Sharon Brown – for distributing the Highcrest Hawk over the summer
- Carolyn Mitchell -- for offering to work on the website
- Monica Creighton – for doing the Highcrest Headlines
- Cathy McCullouch – for keeping the flower pots alive all summer

### **Outdoor Classroom Presentation**

Diane Hamilton reported that she and Nancy Herlocker were looking for parent volunteers to supervise the Outdoor Classroom during lunch periods through November- she noted that gardening expertise was not at all a requirement. Small children can accompany a volunteer, as long as the child does not disturb any of the plantings.

A short film (edited by Highcrest students) was shown, which captured how the Outdoor Classroom came about. During the spring of 2004, all 32 classrooms helped to weed and prepare the dirt. All 800 students planted 3 plants each, so that over 1000 prairie plants are now growing in that area. There are tables for picnics, homework projects or games.

Therese Heyek and Beth Drucker noted that the teachers are now incorporating the Outdoor Classroom into their curriculum. The 6<sup>th</sup> graders will have a soil/chemistry curriculum unit that is being written by someone from the Chicago Botanic Garden. The garden is entirely maintained by kids, and Beth will always have a job for a student to do if they ask her. A round of applause was given to Therese and Beth for their efforts with the garden.

**Meeting adjourned at 10:26.**

