



It seems an appropriate place to begin by explaining what many people often ask....which is why do those of us whose children are grown stay involved in PTA? The answer is really very simple. We care deeply about the education and well being of all children and find value in working to ensure that they have the best in all those areas. Somewhere along the way, we got hooked by what PTA is all about and has doing for 111 years.

I got started in PTA, like most, to be actively involved in my children's school and education. Mine are now 27 and 24 but what I have learned is that parenting doesn't end when your children become adults nor does the belief that every child should have the best opportunities to achieve their full potential.

For me the passion for the work we do and support for public education has been shaped by the experiences I had as a student, a teacher and a parent. My vision for the future of this organization is rooted in this passion and I firmly believe that our mission is as relevant today as it was when it was established.

At our Convention recently, I revealed the theme for my tenure as president. I find inspiration in many things but mostly in nature. For those who know me, know that I love to travel and usually have a camera with me all the times. People also know my love for being at the beach so I drew inspiration from that for my theme. I believe an ocean wave can symbolize what we are and can do as an organization. There are many reasons why I enjoy the beach but the most important one is how I feel when I see and hear the ocean waves. Any stress I had is instantly lifted and I come away with a strong sense of renewed energy.

There are so many lessons that one can learn from the ocean, from waves, and those can be applied to what we do. Coincidentally or maybe not, shortly after I began thinking about this I found an article about big wave surfer, Laird Hamilton, titled the Wisdom of the Waves, in which he delineated 10 lessons he has derived from riding waves. One of them is "Go Big or Go Home" where he points out that you can't kind of catch a wave...you either catch it or you don't! It's about making a commitment.

Beyond the lessons one can learn from big wave surfing, there are lessons in the power and energy generated by ocean waves. When waves crash on the shore they reshape the shoreline – the most powerful can change the landscape forever. We must respect the power of the wave...riding with it, not fighting against it.

So how can we relate this to PTA...well, in 111 years we have maintained a commitment to the PTA mission; that PTA is...a powerful voice for all children and youth...a relevant resource for families and communities...and a strong advocate for the education and well-being of every child. Like the wave and the essence of the NYS PTA vision statement, we can focus our energy to shape a better future by making every child's potential a reality and by being respected as the premier organization for parent involvement and advocacy for all children.

And so, the theme of my administration is "The Power to Shape the Future!" and a wave will be symbolic of that theme...and we will continue as we have for so many years to shape a brighter future for all children and youth through our energy and commitment. I am counting on every one of you to be on board for the ride!

Susan Lipman, NYS PTA President