October 2008 Advocacy e-Newsletter

Information gathered by the Education, Environment, Health and Wellness, Parent Involvement, Parenting and Family Life, Media Safety and Special Education Chairs to assist you in your advocacy efforts

Education

- The **AXA Foundation, a Proud National Sponsor of PTA**, offers a signature program, AXA Achievement[sm], which provides resources that help make college possible: access and advice. On August 25, the 2009 AXA Achievement[sm] Scholarship launched 52 scholarships of $10,000 and $25,000 to students across the nation. Application deadline is **December 15, 2008.** Encourage graduating high school seniors to apply. More information and downloadable applications, which can be filled out online, are available at www.axa-achievement.com. A key element of AXA's partnership with PTA is AXA's offer of free workshops to PTA units on topics such as planning for college and other financial issues facing families. Visit the AXA website designed exclusively for PTA members, www.axa-achievement.com/PTA, to learn about the workshops that are available, and speak with your local PTA leadership about having a workshop presented to your PTA unit.
- **October is the Month of the Adolescent:** http://www.nmsa.org/moya/
- **November 16 – 22 is American Education Week:** Parent's day is Tuesday, November 18. There are free parent guides available: http://www.nea.org/parents/parent-guides.html
- **Celebrate the 200th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth this February 2009** with the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission's free classroom poster! The front side, suitable for display, is a portrait of Lincoln. The reverse side contains resources for educators, offering suggestions for incorporating Lincoln's legacy into the classroom. To request this poster, please call (202) 707-6998 or visit http://www.lincolnbicentennial.gov/ and select "Learning About Lincoln." At this site, you can also review key resources, search lesson plans, and find event ideas.

Environment

- **GO GREEN INITIATIVE in New York State:** In 2006, NYS was declared the GO GREEN INITIATIVE state of the year. Since May 2005, over 40 schools throughout NYS have signed onto the Go Green Initiative program.
  G - enerate Compost: Nature's recycling system
  R – ecycle: Recycle whenever possible and use only recycled items
  E – ducate: Teach students to be environmentally responsible
  E – valuate: Be aware and have only positive environmental interactions
  N – ationalize: Decrease new paper production, use recycled.
  The Go Green Initiative is a one of a kind SIMPLE and FULLY COMPREHENSIVE environmental education program designed to create a culture of environmental awareness. The Go Green Initiative unites parents, students, teachers, and administrators in an effort to make real and lasting changes in their school environments that will protect

children and the environment for their future. YOUR SCHOOL and DISTRICT CAN EASILY CREATE THIS ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS PROGRAM. Check out this website: www.gogreeninitiative.org Introduce Your School to the Nationally Acclaimed Go Green Initiative! Up to $500 in seed money can be provided by New York State Association for Reduction, Reuse and Recycling. (NYSAR3) Learn how you can receive funds to start your own program! www.nysar3.org/greening

- **Autumn Testing for Radon in Homes:** Radon is created naturally in the earth. It is a tasteless, colorless, and odorless gas that forms when uranium in the Earth's soil decays. As radon decays, alpha particles are emitted, which can damage cells in the human body. Outdoors, radon gas is diluted in the air and poses little risk. But indoors it can become concentrated and can accumulate to hazardous levels (over 4 pico curies per liter). Radon can enter through crawl spaces, gaps between basement floors, pipes and walls, sump pumps and the water supply. More than ¾ of the New York State bedrock emits moderate to high amounts of radon. Homes can be easily tested for radon emission. EPA approved radon testing kits can be purchased rather cheaply from a local hardware store or other retail outlets. Their price usually includes the cost of having a laboratory analyze the detector and report the findings. http://www.epa.gov/radon001/zonemap/newyork.htm

Health and Wellness

- **Virtual Cafeteria' Teaches Good Eating Habits:** Parents and students can evaluate the school breakfast and lunch menus for the whole month for any school in the district. User's place virtual food items on their tray using their computer mouse. A spreadsheet-like display at the bottom of the frame adds up the nutritional content of the breakfast or lunch as it progresses, taking into account each food item's caloric value, total fat content, sodium, vitamin C, carbohydrates and etc. The cost of each item is displayed to the left of the screen and the total is calculated as items are added to the tray, so parents can give their children exact change to take to school to further discourage the consumption of unnecessary calories.
http://ww.eschoolnews.com/news/showStory.cfm?ArticleID=5909

Parenting and Family Life

- **School Buses and Flashing Lights**: Passing a stopped school bus with flashing red lights anywhere in New York is not only illegal, but dangerous. Flashing red lights mean the bus is picking up or dropping off students. Flashing yellow lights mean the bus is preparing to stop, and serve to warn motorists to slow down. Motorists must stop for buses ***flashing their red lights, whether traveling on single, multilane roadways and school parking lot,*** when approaching the bus from either the front or the rear. The first time fine for illegally passing a school bus is a $250 fine, 5 points on your license, and/or a possible 30 days in jail. *Motorists passing school buses are the second leading cause of student transportation fatalities.* For more information to protect your children: www.saferoutesinfo.org/resources/

- **Autism Speaks is going green**. Many of you may subscribe to Speaking Out, the quarterly newsletter, and you should have received, or will soon receive, your current copy of Speaking Out: Scientifically in the mail. In 2009, Autism Speaks will begin distributing Speaking Out electronically. Below is a link to **the current newsletter** online as a sample of what's to come.
  For those who already receive the newsletter, they will convert your current subscription to an email subscription with the next issue unless they hear from you. If you would like to be added to the electronic distribution list, please fill out our simple **sign-up form** and make sure to check Speaking Out at the bottom (as well as eSpeaks, if you'd also like to receive the Autism Speaks weekly e-newsletter.) For questions about Speaking Out, please email editors@autismspeaks.org