

## Parents Association General Meeting

December 17, 2008

PA President Francesca Di Mauro welcomed the membership and announced that the administration was not in attendance. She distributed copies of the updated PA budget and indicated that she was giving the bi-monthly financial report because the Treasurer, Carlos Brito, was absent for family reasons. The report was brief and parents were asked to save any comments or questions for the next meeting when Mr. Brito would be able to answer them.

Leonisa Ardizzone, Fundraising/Grant Writing (FR/GW) Committee co-chair, talked about Picture Day for the next school year. She made reference to the discussion on the e-group about some parents' dissatisfaction with the vendor used this year. She indicated that no parent had approached her or Tory Frye with a proposal to use a different vendor since the discussion began some six weeks ago. Schools are beginning to reserve dates for photography for next year and if the PA does not do the same it will end up with less desirable dates or with a less desirable vendor. Ms. Ardizzone announced that FR/GW Committee will accept proposals from other vendors at the January 5 committee meeting and that a decision on which photographer to use will need to be made by January 17th. This announcement will be made on the listserv and will be posted on the bulletin board to reach parents not attending the PA meeting.

Francesca Di Mauro announced that Movie Night will take place on Friday, March 6, and will be coordinated by Vickie Taylor and Holly Gould. The goal, she indicated, was for the event to not be too time consuming so that it can be done on a regular basis and become a "fun raiser."

The Multicultural Cookbook was unveiled. It was put together by Susan Saar and Deborah Natale and the proceeds will go to the Fitness and Nutrition Subcommittee. The printing and binding was provided, free of charge, by Willy Peñate. Copies will be sold for \$5 - \$10.

The next fundraising event discussed was School-a-palooza. Tory Frye indicated that the budget had been discussed by the Executive Board and that there was general support for it with the suggestions that the line item for food and drink be reduced from \$200 to \$50 (primarily for popcorn bags) and that donations be procured instead and that 50 t-shirts be produced rather than 70. Ariel Nachmann presented an overview of the event. This year it will be billed as a variety show (rather than a talent show as was the case last year) and it will be held on Saturday, April 4<sup>th</sup> (with a rehearsal on Friday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>). The cafeteria will be available for the event and Stacey Linden and Luisa Diorio will coordinate ticket sales, concessions, a raffle and a fair for children. Ms. Chory will be providing security from 10:00am to closing on the day of the event. Judith Michael will be putting together the program. Mr. Nachmann indicated that he and the other event organizers are hoping for a wider range of ad sales this year. He said there wasn't enough signage and posters last year and they are planning to rectify that. Jim Corona raised the idea of a matinee show and the proposal is under consideration.

The budget was reviewed. The honorarium budget line will be changed to donations since there is a prohibition against giving anyone money for their services or assistance. The expendables budget line includes items such as tape to cover wires and mark the stage. Plans for the t-shirt include a design that does not have a date or year on it so that unsold t-shirts can be saved and sold at future events. The projected income from the raffle was found to be reasonable in light of the fact that \$239 in tickets were sold last year. Mr. Nachmann asserted that the projected income for concessions (\$1,200) was reasonable given last year's take (\$780) and the fact that there will be a bigger push this year to sell concessions items. The ticket price of \$8 was discussed in terms of whether it would be too difficult to do logistically (i.e. producing change). Ariel Nachmann said that the issue had been considered but that it was felt that a \$10 ticket price would be perceived as too expensive. A motion was made to approve the budget (with the food/drink budget line reduced to \$50 and a commitment to make every effort to get the t-shirts made at a lower cost than projected in the budget), was seconded and was passed with no votes against or abstentions.

Sue Seitner presented a fundraising proposal from the Environmental Committee involving the sale of reusable tote bags with an original design by a local artist. The cost per bag would be \$3.60-\$4.00 (\$2.60-\$2.80 for the bag and \$1.00 for printing/pressing) and would be sold for \$10.00. A motion to approve a budget of up to \$500 for an ongoing fundraiser was made, seconded and approved. Suggestions were made as to selling the bags on Cafe Press and on Frank's and Ahn's supermarkets. Proceeds from the fundraiser will go to the Environmental Committee for its ongoing beautification efforts.

Francesca Di Mauro turned the discussion to the Wish List. She reiterated that last year the Wish List was used to fund class trips and "manipulables" – i.e. items that children use in class (in contrast to previous years in which funds were sometimes used for equipment or supplies not directly related to immediate use by children, such as printers). Ms. Di Mauro opened the floor for discussion on whether and/or how the Wish List should be used this year. A parent asked if any sense has been gathered from teachers as to what they want or need on a grade level as a basis for making decisions. Ms. Di Mauro replied that no such sense has been obtained but that she has had conversations with Ms. Chory in which Ms. Chory said that every classroom is going to get a printer and that basic items like toner might be on the wish list. In addition, classroom libraries and field trips (like the annual trip to the New Victory Theater) are high priorities. Several suggestions and ideas were mentioned, such as giving of "mini grants" to classrooms, separating out field trips into a separate fund and using the wish list for classroom contingencies and pooling resources to pay for larger school wide purchases (such as sound equipment, gym equipment, etc). Questions were raised as to what is being lost through budget cuts and what we need to keep. The membership was reminded that the 501c3 is up and running and that it may be the vehicle for raising funds to address serious gaps resulting from budget cuts since it can cover salaries while the PA cannot. The membership was also informed that the Executive Board plans to hold a fundraising retreat in which goals, priorities and approaches can be hashed out. It was suggested that this year may not be the right moment to do things differently. A motion was made to honor the wish list this year and to make every effort to distribute funds as equitably as possible. The motion was seconded and was passed with one vote against and no abstentions.

Ruth Lilienstein-Gatton announced that there are now class parent representatives in the upper school though representatives for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms are still lacking. The representatives will act as a conduit to underrepresented Intermediate School parents. Ms. Lilienstein-Gatton and Kathy Brito are making up a list of the class parent reps. Ms. Di Mauro mentioned that there is going to be a mid-year review breakfast for teachers on January 9<sup>th</sup> to discuss some contentious issues that are emerged over the course of the year. She also mentioned that every class from kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade has a Book Pal (a volunteer who reads once a week for half an hour).

James Goldwasser gave a report for the School Leadership Team. The SLT had met the day before and is awaiting a marked up draft of the Comprehensive Education Plan from the Department of Education. There was discussion at the meeting about the newly established and emerging parents as partners groups and whether these groups will be formalized in the Comprehensive Education Plan. Mr. Goldwasser stressed that the thinking on this question is very preliminary, that it is a work in progress and that decisions will be made at this time on a case by case basis.

James Goldwasser and Leonisa Ardizzone addressed the some of the questions and concerns that some parents voiced about tracking in the lower school. There is sentiment among teachers and administrators in favor of moving away from tracking and there will be a Town Hall meeting in February to discuss some of the larger philosophical issues. Mr. Goldwasser indicated that there also was a spirited and open discussion at the SLT meeting about disciplinary practices at the school and that parents with strong feelings on both sides (status quo vs. anti-status quo) made their views known.

A parent asked whether there is a timeline on transitioning away from tracking and how this was related to teachers' professional development. Leonisa Ardizzone indicated that 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers are pursuing professional development on school-wide enrichment and the "Renzoulli" method but that this was on an ad hoc basis and was not yet a school-wide initiative since the process of getting teacher buy-in (which is crucial) is an ongoing and incremental process.