

# Fourth District Legislative Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT ADVOCACY TEAM

MAY 2011

## 6 tips for building advocates



Among our many wonderful speakers at the Fourth District Sacramento Safari this year was our own California State PTA President Jo Loss, who spoke to our group about the importance of PTA's grassroots advocacy efforts. She reminded our advocates that during these critical, crucial, and desperate times, committed local advocates can be "scarier than the average bear" to our legislators. Loss contended that while parents terrify legislators in general, knowledgeable, committed ones like those making up our Fourth District PTA delegation in Sacramento make their knees knock – and that's a good thing!

Loss reminded our group that no amount of fundraising equals the impact of one piece of legislation. To best leverage our advocacy resources, we need to continue to encourage our PTA members to become effective advocates for children, youth, and families. She spoke of these recommended steps:

### 1. Target your approach.

It may seem overwhelming if you try to convey too big a picture for people to understand. Discover a passion or need of the person you want to approach to spark an interest in taking action. Rather than attempting to offer all relevant legislation in one big gulp, present bite-sized portions that focus on a specific issue of importance.

### 2. Focus on one.

Start by bringing one individual along to advocacy events. Then they will bring one, who will bring another, etc. The work that you do is more relationship-based than anything else. You must build a trusting and respecting relationship before you can push people out of their comfort zones and into battle.

### 3. Model and assist.

Around PTA, you often hear volunteers being told, "It will be easy" and "We'll help you" to garner participation. But you must do more with advocacy. Remember you are starting at a place where the majority will tell you they are uncomfortable. That is a tough place to start. Hold hands and walk through the process in real time. Involvement in advocacy is not, and never will be, an academic process.

## Calendar of Events

### For next year:

If you are not returning as your unit or council Legislation & Advocacy Chairman next year, please be sure to pass along your information from this year to your successor. The CAPTA job description can be found in the online Toolkit (page 419) at [capta.org](http://capta.org), and additional local resources are available at [fourthdistrictpta.org](http://fourthdistrictpta.org) under the Advocacy tab.

Sacramento Safari takes place every March. When your incoming Executive Board is planning the 2011-12 budget, have them include a line item for this important event (about \$550) to ensure your group's participation.

### 4. Demystify the process.

As much as you would like people to be impressed with advocacy work, you need to be very careful about how you approach your messaging. Coming to Sacramento to speak to the Honorable Senator Corbett is a lot scarier than spending part of a Friday morning at the local strip mall having coffee with Ellen Corbett. Many will think that meeting with government officials is semi-mysterious – and 100% out of their skill set. You need to present matter-of-fact advice on how they can make personal contact with their elected representatives in a way that's natural and meaningful for everyone.

### 5. Make it appealing.

We need to do this with all PTA jobs. Perhaps we need to explore different roles within advocacy – the technically-oriented person can organize the website and letter templates, or the person with experience in coordinating group arrangements can charter the bus. Then value those people for what they do, and say thank you for every little contribution.

### 6. If not them, who?

If all else fails, play the guilt card. I have no pride when it comes to making a difference for children. Seriously, sometimes we all need to be reminded of how important each of us is to the whole, and how each of us has a role in advocacy. People who lose touch with that concept may need to see an issue illustrated right in their own community to become engaged.

In her concluding remarks, Loss had this to say to the PTA advocates assembled:

“Thank you for the work you are here to do, the efforts you make in Fourth District, and mostly for recognizing the need to speak for all children. There will always be a place for the important work you do, representing the children and families so that everyone has an equal voice, seeing that no child is ever denied support and left to feel that they weren’t rich enough, big enough, or loud enough to be considered. They will always know that PTA is making sure that they have hopes and dreams for their future. You and I recognize how vital this is to our society and we will engage and inspire the future. The children we touch today will make sure that they pay it forward to improve the lives of their children since they will want the best for their families, too.

*“No amount of fundraising equals the impact of one piece of legislation.”*

*-Jo A. S. Loss  
California State  
PTA President*

“You are the ones that Alice Birney meant more than a hundred years ago when she said, ‘Let us have no more croaking as to what cannot be done; let us see what can be done, and above all, see that it is done.’ Thank you from all the children and families whose lives you enhance.”

## Resolutions passed at 2011 California State PTA Annual Convention

Resolutions supporting Public Access Defibrillator (PAD) programs and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education were adopted by delegates at the 112th Annual California State PTA Convention in Long Beach. When delegates vote to approve resolutions at the annual state PTA convention, they establish policy and direction for PTA action, and authority for PTA positions on issues of concern to the PTA and its members. Resolutions are crucial to PTA actions. During the past four years alone, resolutions have been cited more than 75 times as the authority for the association to support at least 63 legislative bills. Here are the “resolved” statements from the two adopted resolutions:

### **Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Awareness**

**1 RESOLVED**, That California State PTA urges its units, councils, and districts to encourage local schools and school

### **Ask the Advocacy Team**

If you have any questions concerning advocacy issues, please contact us at: [advocacy@fourthdistrictpta.org](mailto:advocacy@fourthdistrictpta.org).

### **Key PTA Links**

[www.fourthdistrictpta.org](http://www.fourthdistrictpta.org) – Click on **Advocacy**

[www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org) – Select from menu: **Programs and**

**Services: Advocacy** and **Children’s Issues: Legislation**

[www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org) – Click on **Take Action**

districts to support the acquisition of AEDs for the school campus; and be it further

**2 RESOLVED**, That the California State PTA urges its units, councils, and districts to encourage local schools and school districts to implement Public Access Defibrillator Programs that include maintenance, testing and designated site staff training requirements; and be it further

**3 RESOLVED**, That the California State PTA urges its units, councils and districts to encourage local schools and school districts to collaborate with organizations and foundations to assist with the purchase of AEDs and the implementation of Public Access Defibrillator Programs that include training, testing, and records management.

### **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education**

**1 RESOLVED**, That the California State PTA, its units, councils and districts work with policymakers, business and educators to support efforts to improve STEM education, enabling more students to acquire skills for access to higher education and employment in the 21st century workforce; and be it further

**2 RESOLVED (as amended)**, That the California State PTA, its units, councils and districts support efforts to identify and eliminate barriers to access to and participation in quality STEM education so that every child, without regard to disability, gender, ethnicity or socioeconomic status, can succeed, and no subgroup is underrepresented in our state's and nation's STEM workforce, and be it further

**3 RESOLVED**, That the California State PTA, its units, councils and districts support legislation for recruitment, innovative training, and professional development for STEM educators; and be it further

**4 RESOLVED**, That the California State PTA, its units, councils and districts encourage the integration of science, technology, engineering and mathematics into everyday activities; and be it further

**5 RESOLVED**, That the California State PTA, its units, councils and districts increase awareness of opportunities available to students educated in STEM careers; and be it further

**6 RESOLVED**, That the California State PTA submit this resolution to the National PTA for consideration at the National PTA convention.