

PTSA Meeting for Tuesday, February 17, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm by Molly Jackman, PTSA President

I. Announcements/Business

- A. After Prom: Jennifer Tripodi explained to the audience that the After Prom is a FREE event for ALL seniors and a guest, sponsored by the PTSA. It runs from midnight until 5am, directly following the Prom. It is a safe, alcohol and drug free and FUN activity! It is paid for by the Gift Wrap fundraiser that takes place over the winter holidays, Valentine's Day and Mother's Day. Cash donations are also accepted to help cover the costs of the event.

We need parents from ALL classes to volunteer, not only for the remaining gift wrap opportunities but to especially now help with the After Prom event.

Between 100-150 volunteers are needed.

Contact Jennifer Tripodi at Jennifer.M.Tripodi@Lmco.com

- B. The Einstein Directory IS available! Check the front office of the school for copies if you still have not received one.
- C. College Fair for Historically Black Colleges: over 70 colleges and universities attended this NEW college fair on Wednesday, February 18. It was open to ALL students of Einstein and the community.
- D. It is BAJA FRESH FEBRUARY! Please eat at BAJA FRESH during the month of February and part of the proceeds will go to Einstein!
- E. Quantum Quest Newsletter help needed: Looking for help with Spanish translation. Please contact Connie Raab at raabc@starpower.net if you can help or know of someone who could help.
- F. Teacher Appreciation: Thanks to Martha Kaiser and Cindy Eicher for their amazing efforts at organizing a wonderful teacher appreciation event in early February. Thank you to all who helped and offered donations!

G. Nominating Committee for PTSA officers: please contact Molly Jackman at the jackman5@aol.com if you are interested in serving on the Nominating Committee to help recruit new PTSA officers.

H. Taste of Einstein: Debbie Brody reminded the audience that this event is scheduled for March 6 from 6:00 to 9:00pm. It is a wonderful celebration of the diversity of our school, with great food and entertainment!

It is FREE if you bring a dish to share; otherwise it is \$5 per family. Debbie encouraged families to bring dishes to share rather than paying the \$5.

Volunteers are needed to help with this evening. Please contact Debbie Brody at debrajbrody@earthlink.net

I. A reminder that Einstein collects Sniders receipts. We receive 1% of the total bill which equals between \$700-1000 each year. Please bring in your Sniders receipts to the box in the front office of the school.

II. Guest speakers

Emily Sudbrink, Vice President for Programs introduced a panel including:

Officer Troy Tippet, 4th District Gang Unit, Montgomery County Police
Wayne Ferrell, Field Security Coordinator, MCPS

Luis Cardona, Youth Violence Prevention Coordinator, Dept. of Health and Human Services

Officer Beardsley, 4th District Gang Unit, Montgomery County Police

Carson Henry, Community Connections Director, YMCA Youth & Family Services

Other experts present...

Mr. Fernandez, Principal

Ms. Jasper, Assistant Principal

Mr. Barnes, Security Team Leader

Officer D'Albora, Educational Facilities Officer for AEHS

Commander Demme, 4D District Commander, Montgomery County Police

Opening comments from the panel included:

A brief picture of gang activity in Montgomery County was presented:

There are 35-40 active gangs in Montgomery County with approximately 1000 members.

Various gangs include MS13, SUR13, The Bloods, and the Latin Kings.

Warning signs that may alert parents to involvement:

Drug and alcohol involvement

Sliding grades

Movement to a different crowd, of youth you have not met, and your child is reluctant for you to meet

Out late at night

Absenteeism

Having expensive items you know you did not purchase for them.

Law enforcement officials are implementing a three-pronged program in dealing with gang activity:

1. Enforcement
2. Intervention
3. Prevention

Our cluster IS safe and secure. We have a great security team at Einstein that works in partnership with the area police department and other government programs.

Einstein definitely offers a safe learning environment for our children!

It's great to have parents attend PTSA meetings such as tonight as a sign of their commitment to their kids.

Parents need to take primary role in dealing with their children.

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services is available to support parents but it is not able to take over their responsibility to their own children.

Keeping the lines of communication open, especially listening to our kids and responding to their needs is KEY.

Community Connections offers structured activities and positive connections for our kids in an after school program.

Activities included, to name just a few: movies, laser tag, football, ice skating, tutoring, chess, fitness training, discussion groups, snacks and time to hang out in a safe environment.

Community Connections meets in the Einstein dining hall which becomes more like a big living room after school. Girls and boys are welcome!

The panel then took questions and comments from the audience.

1. How much effort is being expended to reach back to middle school and even elementary school to find early signs of gang activity?

There is an increase in gang behavior in middle and even elementary school so prevention efforts are also increasing to meet the needs of students at these levels.

A special comment was made to alert parents to “skipping parties” which often involve underage drinking, drugs and sexual assaults of girls.

Know your neighbors. Tell them to call if they see your kids at home during the school day.

A three-part parent workshop on gang awareness and prevention is available through the Parent Academy and MCPS Safe and Drug-Free Schools.

Contact Emily Sudbrink for details at ee.sudbrink@verizon.net

2. Does MCPS provide any staff training to the elementary and middle school level about gang activity and its warning signs?

Yes, there are gang awareness and prevention workshops on both levels.

3. Connie Raab stated that she is helping to organize a Silver Spring Safety/Crime Prevention Summit, to be held in either May or next fall. It will include 11 Silver Spring neighborhoods and their high schools. The goal is to develop alternatives/action plans to address some of the crime issues in Silver Spring. For more information, contact Connie Raab at

raabc@starpower.net

4. The county is looking into multi-generational after school programs to better address the after school needs of families with children of different school levels/ages.

The last 45 minutes were spent in small group breakouts. People broke into 4 small groups, each with parents, a facilitator, a translator, one of our panelists and an additional guest expert. Discussion questions were...

- 1, What concerns do you have for your student, the community?
2. What signs do you see of gang activity?
3. What resources are available?
4. Where are the gaps?

Some concerns that surfaced:

- Disruptive, lewd and “crazy” behavior on the Ride-on buses close to school. Kids would rather walk than ride them. Parents not sure who to address this with.
- Kids congregating along Newport Mill Road and around “ice cream truck.”
- “Friends of friends” in gangs. Afraid to address this with students directly.
- Students unable to participate in afterschool activities due to having to be responsible for younger siblings. Or due to ineligibility.
- “Skipping” parties. Kids who get dropped off at school but don’t even enter the building. Or kids saying they are at an afterschool activity, but don’t go.
- Peer pressure ---to smoke pot, to skip school.
- Not aware of calendar eg half days or emergency closings.
- Poor communication between parents and students. Parents not sure how to talk to teens.
- Not understanding technology used by teens, ie Myspace, Facebook, texting.
- Transportation concerns with students coming from all over DCC
- Police unable to “force” kids to go back to school. No truancy law in County.

It seems from the recorders’ notes, that the groups talked more about parenting strategies to address concerns than looking at available County or other resources. Some examples of ideas:

- Know your teen’s friends, where they live and who their parents are.

- Keep your teen busy with productive activity.
- Know who to talk to or contact at Einstein about student.
- Check Facebook page, texts.
- Talk to teen. More importantly, listen to teen!
- Have an afterschool program that is multi-age, so that sibs can be in the same place and both be doing something productive.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm.

Submitted by Mary Murphy, Emily Sudbrink and Molly Jackman