

# PTSO News

April 2006  
Volume 19  
Number 7



Newsletter of the Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools Parent-Teacher-Student Organization

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RPTSO Web Site: <http://abrptso.ab.mec.edu/>

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## FROM THE CHAIRS:

Beth Petr – ABRHS Co-Chair

Jan Couch – RJGJH Co-Chair

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### March Forum with Science Department

#### Chair David McClung

The March PTSO Forum featured a presentation by the Regional Science Department Chairperson, Mr. David McClung.

Science at the Junior High is heterogeneously grouped and based on SciencePlus, a two year general science curriculum. It introduces students to a variety of scientific disciplines and is very process oriented. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum includes: Scientific Method/Inquiry Skills, Environmental Interactions, Diversity of Life, Astronomy, and The Restless Earth. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade program includes: Life Processes, Particles, Physics, and Continuity of Life.

At the High School, science is homogeneously grouped, with the exception of some elective courses. A traditional sequence of full year classes and some electives are offered, including:

#### Core Subjects:

- Earth Science,
- Biology,
- Chemistry,
- Physics

#### Full Year Electives:

- AP Biology,
- AP Chemistry,
- AP Environmental Science,
- SciTech

#### Semester Electives:

- BioEthics,
- Anatomy & Physiology,
- The Human Body,

- Science and the Environment

Core subjects are leveled – Honors (H), Accelerated & Enriched (AE), College Preparatory (CP), and Standard Preparatory (SP).

Mr. McClung also talked about the increasing use of technology in the Science department including: computers with probes for data acquisition and analysis, teacher websites to support classes, a variety of simulation software, WebQuests, and the AP Environmental Science Online class. This last class is new this year and is considered a “hybrid” online class because it meets once a week in the lab at night and the rest of the instruction is online. This is the only online class offered by our high school at this time. It is an AP (Advanced Placement) class taken by very motivated students in their junior or senior year. It has been exciting because several teachers want to use some of the components for other classes. Some students really enjoy the online class and may even learn better than in a traditional class because they are taking ownership of the learning on their own. They are not just taking mindless notes from a lecture. This type of learning is not for all students, but it is another new avenue to try.

At the end of the year, a full assessment of this online class will be done (one method will be to see how the students score on the AP exam) and discussion will take place about future online classes. This new teaching method is of interest to a number of teachers and students.

Parents had a number of questions about the tracking and sequence of science classes through the High School, and particularly about the relationship that a student’s math class/ability has to

what science course they may take. There is a strong correlation between a student's math and science abilities. There are many variations possible, but it is essential to have the appropriate math skills to be successful in many of the science courses. Questions about these requirements should be addressed to the student's science teacher or Mr. McClung, sooner rather than later in the High School path.

For more information, see the Science Department's website at <http://ab.mec.edu/abrhs/science/index.html>

### **February Forum with Assistant Superintendent Susan Horn**

Our February Forum took place after the last newsletter deadline due to vacation. Assistant Superintendent Susan Horn was our speaker and she spoke about how she "touches many aspects of school life" with all of the various hats that she wears.

The Curriculum Committee meets 5 or 6 times a year with the regional and building leaders, principals, and two parents. This helps Mrs. Horn keep in touch with what is happening in the seven school buildings. Every department and school has created an action plan that is expected to be online in the future.

Professional Development is another key area for Mrs. Horn. There are many experts among the staff in our school systems and efforts are made to share this in-house expertise as much as possible. The High School has two ½ days during the year, and the K-12 system has one full day during the year (in March) set aside for professional development. Organizing these activities is a very time consuming, but rewarding, task.

Each school has a "New Teacher Mentoring" program that is especially important given the increasing number of teachers that we have retiring in the upcoming years. This is a "major" issue facing our schools right now. Particularly given that we ask our regional teachers to teach more classes per day, pay them slightly less, and teach larger class sizes than towns comparable to us, it is difficult for AB to hire and hold onto some of the best teachers. We are seeing some new teachers come to AB because of our excellent reputation and supportive environment, but they do not stay for the

long term because they can earn more and work with less students in other school systems.

Dr. Carolyn Imperato's Wellness Coordinator position is another focus for Mrs. Horn. In addition to the wonderful new "wellness" section of the school website:

<http://ab.mec.edu/wellness/wellness.shtml>

Dr. Imperato works on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Project Wellness for the 7<sup>th</sup> graders, and various student and/or parent education presentations. School systems are mandated by the No Child Left Behind laws to have a Wellness policy, although funding is not specifically provided. Our Wellness Coordinator is funded this year by a grant and there is concern that this is not a permanent source for such an important position.

A number of technical initiatives also fall under Mrs. Horn's long list of responsibilities. A program is being piloted by one of our elementary schools, one 7<sup>th</sup> grade and one 10<sup>th</sup> grade English class, that uses a computer program to score students' writing compositions. Students appear to like the program and are writing more than usual, however teachers feel it may be grading their work too easily. Whiz scanning pens are being utilized in a Junior High study skills class and a special education class. These amazing items actually read text out loud and then can download it into a computer. These are just two examples of a number of tech initiatives being worked on.

MCAS testing is also a major focus for Mrs. Horn. Although AB does exceedingly well, there is always room for attention and work. It is important to strike a balance between doing well on the tests and keeping it all in perspective.

Mrs. Horn had a long list of activities that she was involved in, making for a very interesting presentation. She concluded enthusiastically by saying, "Education is not about filling the bucket, but lighting people's fire in education."

### **THANK YOU!**

Thank you to everyone who paid their \$25 PTSO dues for the 2005-2006 year. We will be presenting a check to the principals from the PTSO at the April Forum. It's not too late to contribute!! Checks may be payable to ABRPTSO, and mailed to ABRPTSO Dues, P.O. Box 912, Acton, MA 01720.

Beth and Jan

# ABRHS NEWS

## FROM THE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Steve Donovan

### • Achievements

On Saturday, March 4, our Academic Decathlon team took first place in the Massachusetts Academic Decathlon competition. The team will now compete in the United States tournament in April in San Antonio, Texas. Congratulations to team members Kevin Liou, Alex Kazberouk, Lucy Li, Albert Chuang, Blaise Nothern, Matt Kagan, Monica Jimenez, Jocelyn Richard and Ariel Klein, and to coach Andy Crick for this outstanding accomplishment. It's the team's sixth state championship in a row.

A-B's entry in the Massachusetts Drama Festival, *The Midnight Caller*, directed by Andrea Southwick, was selected to advance to the semi-final round scheduled for March 18. Seniors Kate Hanselman and Taylor Ferry and sophomore Maya Cookson were named to the all-star cast in the preliminary round.

The Spectrum, A-B's student newspaper, recently received an award for Excellence in Sports Writing in the Suffolk University Greater Boston High School Newspaper Competition. Senior Brian Callahan is the editor of the sports section.

Junior Michelle Frazee and sophomore Yi Liu were selected to perform in the Massachusetts All State Music Festival in Boston March 16 – 18.

A-B's team of Tom Petr, Prabhat Putchakayala and Scott Ames placed fourth in the first annual WPI Computer Programming Competition.

The 2005-06 ABRHS winter athletic season was an exciting and successful time for many of our teams. We are proud of all our teams for their dedication, sportsmanship and outstanding efforts. Our indoor track team won the state championship, and coaches Dave James and Ryan Steege were named Division I Coaches of the Year by the Boston Globe.

The most recent recipients of the Principal's Recognition Award for service to school and community are senior Sam Bosbach and juniors Kate Brady, Lynn Liu and Sruthi Valluri.

### • End of Year Schedule

Assuming we will have no additional snow days for the remainder of the year, the end of year schedule will be as follows:

Graduation - June 2

English final exams (in class) – June 12 & 13

Last day of classes for grades 9 - 11 - June 13

Exams for 1st and 2nd period classes - June 14

Exams for 3rd and 4th period classes - June 15

Exams for 5th and 6th period classes - June 16

Exams for 7th and 8th period classes - June 19

### • Course planning for 2006-2007

Students have selected their courses for next year. Students received a printed copy of their course selections through their social studies class on March 14 to check for accuracy. Any changes in the selections must be made by April 28<sup>th</sup> using the form available in the Counseling Center. After all changes are entered, the administration will begin to build a master schedule based on student course selections.

– Steve Donovan

### Student Visitors to the High School

Occasionally students want to bring a guest to visit the high school for a day. Visitors are not permitted on standardized testing days. Students hosting a guest must follow the procedure outlined in the Student Handbook (Guests – pg 39).

### ABRHS School Council Openings

There are three openings for parents on the ABRHS School Council for next year. The School Council meets monthly and acts as an advisory body for the principal. The School Council also has responsibility for approving a School Improvement Plan each year and monitoring progress against the plan. Any parent interested in running for one of these positions should forward a brief statement about his or her background and interests to Beth Petr at [bpetr@verizon.net](mailto:bpetr@verizon.net) by May 1. Election ballots will be included in the June issue of the PTSO newsletter with a voting deadline of mid-June.

### From the Academic Support Center

While many of our former Peer Tutors are taking other courses this term and our seniors are anticipating their graduation from high school, the Academic Support Center is very fortunate to have some new, talented and conscientious students who have joined our program. Fortunately, some tutors are continuing to help for another semester. We recognize, appreciate and sincerely thank those who are assisting during the third term: Sindhu Amugothu, Eugenie Armangau, Kate Brady, Doug Breuer, Isobel Brown, Emily Coll, Kyra Correa-Berg, Amy Corron, Lee Dietterich, Kathleen Fallon, Matt Finley, Julia Geller-McGrath, Theresa Glaser, Ingrid Gunther, Shaina Haber, James Hayward, Brett Herrick, George Hong, DeDe Horvath, Jessica Janus, Jyoti Jasarasia, Rashmi Jasarasia, Irina Khurana, Val Kravis, Nisanth Krishnamurthy, Anton Li, Lucy Li, Mary Li, Meghan Magee, Garry Margolis, Kelsey Meidell, Andrew Musacchio, Hilary Nicholson-Gross, Erin Nicolle, Kate Pellegriti, Esther Pinsky, Kyle Pochini, Nicola Rentschler, Jackie Ritter, Laura Rodda, Katelyn Saaristo, Scott Seger, Rebecca Wang, Ty Wilson, and Sarah Zhang.

### Students Perform at Carnegie Hall

Elisabeth Malin and Angela Gan, both seniors and members of the Madrigal Singers, performed at Carnegie Hall with the American Choral Directors Association Eastern Division High School Honors Choir on February 18. Among the 250-member Honor Choir, Elisabeth and Angela were chosen from over 1000 students who auditioned in the spring of 2005.

# RJGJHS NEWS

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## FROM THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

Larry Fliegelman and Megan Hatt

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### World Language Week

This annual celebration kicked off the month of March at R.J. Grey, beginning with two performances by Del Smart, a Caribbean performer. Throughout the week, students worked to figure out the answers to World Language trivia each morning during the announcements. Once again the European Breakfast was a tasty treat. Thank you to the World Language staff and the many parent/guardian volunteers who helped to make this week a success.

### “Honk, Jr.”

Congratulations to the cast, crew, directors, producers, and everyone involved in the Junior High musical, “Honk Jr.” For six performances, the cast of ducks, geese, frogs, swans, and a cat entertained the enthralled audience. Months of hard work paid off in these quality shows. Many thanks go to directors and producers Perry Allison, Jen Moss, Nicole Murphy, Baloo Patel, Sally Lewis, Donna Rizza, Heather Wilson and their assistants for providing this opportunity for R.J. Grey students to be involved in such a fine production.

### Project Wellness

Our fifth annual Project Wellness Day for seventh grade students and their parents/guardians was a big success. Held at Merrimack College, participants attended workshops on a number of topics to promote communication and trust between adults and teens, self-esteem, and healthy lifestyles. Topics included: “How to Perform Your Best Under Pressure,” “What Are You Trying to Say’ Building Good Communication Between Parents and Children,” “Personal Safety and Self Defense,” and “How to Create a Stress Toolbox.” The program ended with a keynote performance by Chris Poulos, a World Champion Bicycle Stunt Rider. Using music, commentary, audience participation, and extreme stunts, Chris conveyed the message of anti-violence, positive thinking, education, teamwork, and success.

### 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> Transition

Our eighth graders have begun the process of registering for courses at the High School. Parents attended a meeting on March 15 and, on March 22, an assembly for eighth grade students was held at ABRHS to review the scheduling process. Eighth grade teachers will make recommendations for course selections on Pupil Course Request (PCR) forms during the week of March 31. Students interested in attending Minuteman Regional

High School are also involved in registration for their programs.

### MCAS

Both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Graders took the English Language Arts Exam at the end of March. In May, students will take additional MCAS exams according to the following schedule:

5/15 - 7 History Tryout & 8 Math I

5/15 - 7 Math I & 8 Math II

5/17 - 7 Math II & 8 Science I

5/18 - 8 Science II



**Mark Your Calendars!:** On Friday, May 5 from 4 – 7 p.m., we are hosting a fundraiser sponsored by Roche Bros. They will generously donate 5% of all collected receipts during that time. Also, we benefit the most when you buy a gift certificate for future shopping. Gift certificates can also be ordered in advance and they will be hand delivered to you. For more information, see next month's (May) newsletter or send an e-mail to [ABProjGrad06@gmail.com](mailto:ABProjGrad06@gmail.com).

**Volunteers Needed: June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006:** If you haven't had a chance to sign up to become a volunteer, it's not too late. Hundreds of parents and community members are needed each year to pull off this event and we'd love to have you be part of the team. If you have already signed up, called, or sent an e-mail to volunteer and haven't been contacted, please send a message to Bitzy Wilson ([BWilson@comcast.net](mailto:BWilson@comcast.net)) or [ABProjGrad06@gmail.com](mailto:ABProjGrad06@gmail.com). We don't want to miss anyone!

**The Junior Trunk:** We would like to create a trunk containing a collection of dorm essentials-towels, bed sheets, bathroom carrier etc. This trunk will be raffled off to a Senior at Project Graduation. Interested in contributing items for the Junior Trunk? Please contact Michele Adelman at [adelnet@comcast.com](mailto:adelnet@comcast.com) or at (978)264-4002.

**Project Graduation Website:** Visit our website at [www.abprojectgrad.org](http://www.abprojectgrad.org).

**CORI forms:** Any adult planning on volunteering at Project Graduation during the event or needs to be on school premises for the same must have a CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) form processed by the High School. A **photo ID is now required** with a CORI application completed in the presence of Deb Trench in the High School main office. All previously processed CORIs will expire at the end of June 2006. Processing can take up to several weeks; it's important that you start the process as soon as possible.

**You will need to complete the CORI form in the presence of Deb Trentsch in the High School main office and bring along a photo ID. Deb Trentsch is available:**

- Monday-Friday, 7:00a.m.-3:15p.m
- April 11<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 am-7:30 pm (extended hours)

**Deadline for CORI submission is May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2006.**

**Matching Donations:** Did you know that Project Graduation is a **"501c3 Tax-Exempt Organization"**? Not only are your generous contributions tax deductible, but if your company or business has a matching donation program, Project Graduation benefits with an additional gift. Check with your HR department. Send in the company matching donation form with your donation and we'll handle the rest. Please make checks payable to:  
Project Graduation, c/o ABRPTSO, P.O Box 912, Acton, MA 01720.

For Project Grad information, contact **Shaila Golikeri, Chair (978-635-9867 or [ABProjGrad06@gmail.com](mailto:ABProjGrad06@gmail.com))**

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### **Project Graduation Volunteer Form**

- |  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Set up        | <input type="checkbox"/> Challenge games         | <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food Serving  | <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> Theme Design/Decorating | <input type="checkbox"/> Crafts             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Casino        | <input type="checkbox"/> Chaperone     | <input type="checkbox"/> Photography             | <input type="checkbox"/> Junior Trunk Items |

**OR**

- No preference, just want to help out.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this form to: Project Graduation, c/o ABRPTSO, P.O Box 912, Acton, MA 01720.

# Regional School Calendars

## High School Dates of Interest

### **April**

- April 1 SATs administered
- April 3 First night of Acton Town Meeting
- April 5 MCAS Long Composition - makeup (grade 10)
- April 7 Early dismissal for students
- April 13 Homeroom – report cards distributed
- April 14 No school – Good Friday
- April 17 - 21 Spring Recess
- April 24 School Council meeting, 6:00 p.m.
- April 25 National Honor Society Induction, 7:30 p.m.
- April 26 Senior Class meeting – 3<sup>rd</sup> period
- April 28 Senior Breakfast and Community Service Day
- April 28 Hope in Haiti (Fundraising social sponsored by Jacqueline Arnoldy's French classes)

### **May**

- May 1 Senior Internship begins
- May 1 Advanced Placement Exams begin
- May 2 ABRHS Spring Concert, 7:30 p.m.
- May 3 Awards Night, 7:00 p.m.
- May 6 SATs administered

## Junior High School Dates of Interest

### **April**

- April 5 MCAS – ELA Long Composition, Grade 7 Make-up day
- April 5 Student Council Meeting, 12:22 p.m.
- April 11 School Council Meeting, 7-8:30 p.m.
- April 14 No school – Good Friday
- April 17-21 No school – Spring Recess
- April 26 Parents/Guardians of 6th Graders Presentation at ABRHS, 7-9:00 p.m.

### **May**

- May 2 Grade 8 Class Picture
- May 3 Student Council Meeting, 12:22 p.m.
- May 5 Grade 7 Dance, 6:30– 8:30 p.m.
- May 9 School Council Meeting, 7:00– 8:30 p.m.
- May 15 June 2 MCAS Testing, Grades 7 & 8
- May 16 Spring Choral Concert, 7:30 p.m.
- May 23 Spring Band Concert, 7:30 p.m.
- May 24 Student Council Officer Elections, Grade 7
- May 24 Midterm Reports Mailed
- May 26 Great East Music Festival
- May 29 No school – Memorial Day

## **SCHOOL COMMITTEE NEWS**

### **FROM THE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

#### **Michael J. Coppolino, Chair**

At its February meeting, the Regional School Committee continued to review policies and procedures, including those dealing with Personnel, Negotiations and Instruction. Spearheaded by Becky Neville and Marie Altieri, this tedious but necessary task should be completed and posted to the District web site by June 2006.

The web site has received a recent upgrade, which contains additional financial information that is more easily accessible and understandable for parents and other interested citizens. The Electronic Information Sub-Committee, comprised of Sharon Smith-McManus, John Ryder, and led by Becky Neville, has compiled and synthesized District data that is displayed via graphs and spreadsheets. Please contact any of them with your thoughts and suggestions.

The latest information from Beacon Hill is that we will not have the House budget until the end of April, well after Acton Town Meeting, which begins Monday, April 3. We are hopeful that Representative Jamie Eldridge's bill, the Governor's Proposed budget or similar legislation is accepted, which will help the Region's finances greatly. Whereas final figures on state aid will not be available prior to ATM, the ALG (Acton Leadership Group) has recommended to its member Boards (Selectmen, School Committees and Finance Committee) that budgets reflect a 15% increase in State aid. Each Board agreed, realizing full well that there is a remote chance that if state funding comes in below that level, we may

need special Town Meetings in Acton and Boxborough to revise assessments. This is very unlikely, yet possible.

Of special note to the community was the recent grand opening of Danny's Place, this area's premier youth center. Located in the Merriam Building on the central campus, across the street from the junior high, the former gym has been transformed splendidly into an appealing gathering spot for Acton and Boxborough youths. Over 2,000 people visited during its opening weekend, and we hope that many junior high and high school students frequent the facility to relax, play video games, listen to music or just hang out with friends.

Please attend your upcoming Town Meeting to express your sentiments and to vote your concerns. Experience democracy in New England at its finest!

The next A-B Regional School Committee meeting will be May 4 at 7:30 p.m. in the RJ Grey Junior High School library. Please contact me, as well as other school committee members, via phone or e-mail at any time. All of our contact information can be found on the District web site at: <http://www.ab.mec.edu/about/members.shtml>.

– Michael J. Coppolino  
Chairman, Acton-Boxborough Regional School Committee

## **STAY INFORMED: PTSO E-Mail Loop**

Are you in the loop?

The PTSO e-mail loops are used throughout your child's regional years (grades 7-12) to pass along last minute notices, reminders, and other information. We will advance your e-mail address to the corresponding grade levels of your children, but this only works if you keep your email address updated! To join or update your info, go to our website at: <http://abrptso.ab.mec.edu/getinvolved.htm>. Please check off the year of graduation for each child in your household. Some messages are sent to only a particular grade. The High School Principal does not have an email list (no "Grey Matters" or electronic distribution of daily announcements) so it is important that incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade families sign up if they are not already on the list, and have email access. JH questions about the PTSO email list can be addressed to Jan at JCCouch@comcast.net. HS questions can be addressed to Beth at BPetr@verizon.net.

Thank you to the 250 regional families who signed up to switch from receiving a paper PTSO newsletter in their mailbox to reading it on our website. This saves us money, paper and volunteer hours! If you would like to join this list, go to the "getinvolved" site above, enter your email address, and hit GO. On

the left of the screen (below the grade level boxes) is a box to check for "E-Newsletter only". Everyone on the PTSO email list will be sent a link to the current newsletter as soon as it is posted on our website. The E-Newsletter is the same document as the paper copy mailed monthly to all families.

## **Nominations for the '06-'07 PTSO Board**

Nominations are now open for Board positions for next year for the Regional PTSO. If you would like to be involved, or would like to nominate someone else (with their prior approval!), please contact Beth Petr (978-263-7208) or Jan Couch (978-263-2118) by **April 9th**. The proposed slate of Board members will be distributed in the May PTSO Newsletter and voted on at our Annual PTSO Evening Meeting in May. Board positions include: Chairperson (HS), First Vice Chair (JH), Secretary, Treasurer, Project Graduation, Nominating, Inter-School Council Rep, Volunteer Coordinator, Newsletter Editor, Directories, Fundraising, Gardening, Publicity, Newcomer Welcoming, Membership, and AB Alumni Association. Many of these are filled with co-chairs. Although some members would like to stay in their current positions, there are openings. Consider getting involved!

## **Acton Annual Town Meeting**

Begins Monday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>

Continues until business is completed

7:00 p.m. in the AB Regional High School Auditorium

For more information, contact Acton's Town Clerk at 978-264-9615.

## **Boxborough Annual Town Meeting**

Begins Monday, May 8<sup>th</sup>

7:30 p.m. at the Blanchard School

For more information, contact Boxborough's Town Clerk at 978-263-1116.

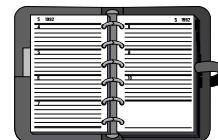
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**PTSO News**  
**Acton-Boxborough Regional High School**  
**Acton, MA 01720**

**Tuesday, April 11<sup>th</sup>**  
**PTSO Forum**

12:00 Noon  
Acton Memorial Library

## **PTSO CALENDAR**



- |          |           |  |
|----------|-----------|--|
| April 10 | 7:30 p.m. | <b>PTSO Board Meeting (open to the public)</b><br>ABRHS Library  |
| April 11 | 12 Noon   | <b>PTSO Forum</b><br>Acton Memorial Library  |
| May 11   | 7:00 p.m. | <b>PTSO Annual Business Meeting (open to the public)</b><br><b>RJG Junior High School</b> Auditorium   |
| May 11   | 7:30 p.m. | <b>“Surviving the College Search” Presentation</b><br>with panel of AB seniors and a parent/guardian<br><b>RJG Junior High School</b> Auditorium |

**JOIN THE PTSO EMAIL LIST! Sign up at <http://abrptso.ab.mec.edu/>**

THE DEADLINE FOR ARTICLE SUBMISSION FOR THE MAY NEWSLETTER IS WEDNESDAY APRIL 12.

This issue is scheduled to be mailed to families on April 27.

Articles for consideration may be sent to [BPetr@verizon.net](mailto:BPetr@verizon.net) or [JCCouch@comcast.net](mailto:JCCouch@comcast.net).