

FROM THE CO-CHAIRS: MARY ANN ASHTON (HS) & JAN COUCH (JH)

Technology, Athletics, Nominations

Parents at the March PTSO Forum heard from principals Steve Donovan and Craig Hardimon (see reports later in this newsletter), and Margaret Murray, Management Information Specialist for the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District, demonstrated an on-line emergency card for the audience. Rather than filling out two sets of emergency cards by hand, families throughout the district will log into a secure “parent portal” of the school district’s student information system and complete the information on line. The program was piloted by Douglas School families last September, and families at R. J. Grey Junior High will have the opportunity to use the system later this spring.

Advantages of the system include that the data is more accurate than when handwritten information is transcribed and entered into the database, and that families can easily update their information throughout the year should there be changes in work or cell phone numbers. Parents in the pilot reported that this was easier and more convenient for them than the traditional procedure, but recommended that the access codes be sent out on the first day of school rather than during the summer before school resumed. In response to an audience question, Ms. Murray said that there were 20 families of 500 at Douglas who reported language difficulties with completing the card, and they were encouraged to come into school where staff members could provide assistance. Additionally, Douglas opened its computer lab during fall curriculum nights to provide additional access.

Our next forum is scheduled for Wednesday, April 11 at Acton Memorial

Library at 12 noon. Our featured speaker will be Steve Desy, Athletic Director for Acton-Boxborough. On Thursday, May 10, we will hold our annual PTSO business meeting at the R. J. Grey Junior High auditorium, followed by our “Surviving the College Search,” which features a panel of AB seniors with a parent/guardian describing their experiences with the college process.

Nominations Open for the 2007–2008 Regional PTSO Board

Nominations are now open for Board positions for next year’s Regional PTSO. If you would like to be involved, or would like to nominate someone else (with their prior approval!), please contact the Nominating Committee via Dawn Gomez at Gomezd@us.ibm.com or 978-264-9686 by April 9. The proposed slate of Board members will be distributed in the May *PTSO News* and voted on at our Annual PTSO Business Meeting in May. Job descriptions of each of these positions are posted on our

website. Feel free to contact any Board member with questions about a particular position.

PTSO Board positions include:

- Co-Chairpersons (HS/JH)
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Directories (HS /JH)
- Gardening (HS)
- Interschool Council (HS/JH)
- Membership (HS/JH)
- Newcomer Welcoming (HS/JH)
- Newsletter
- Nominating
- Project Graduation
- Volunteer Coordinators (HS/JH)
- Fundraising

Mary Ann Ashton, ABRHS Co-Chair
MABAshton@aol.com
978.263.4399

Jan Couch, RJGJHS Co-Chair
JCCouch@comcast.net
978.263.2118

Thank You for Paying Your 2006–2007 PTSO Membership Dues

Thank you to the 353 families who responded to our recent dues reminder letter. \$10,265 in membership dues was collected in February and March as a result, for a total of \$22,173 for this school year. The principals of the Junior High and High Schools will soon be presented with checks from the PTSO to support activities in our schools. If you haven’t yet joined the PSTO and would like to, it’s not too late. Membership checks (\$25 for the year) are payable to ABRPTSO and sent to: ABRPTSO, Box 912, Acton, MA. 01720. Thank you very much for your support!

Membership Co-Chairs — Holly Ben-Joseph (HS) & Alice Tam (JH)

When Teens Host a Party at Home

With spring just around the corner followed by the summer break, end of year parties, proms and other festivities and gatherings will be common. The PTSO and CAFY have come together to offer some suggestions to consider when your teen decides to host a party. Parents and teens should work together to provide a setting that is both safe and fun, and it is important for teens to take responsibility for this activity. The teenage years are filled with memorable experiences, opportunities and choices, and as parents/guardians and members of this community, we hope to provide a safe atmosphere for our children.

The Guidelines listed below are taken from a variety of web resources for you to consider with your teen.

1. Set party ground rules with your teen before the party.

- Let your teen know what you expect and agree to the rules together. Let your teenager decide how these rules can be conveyed to guests.
- Select an area in the house where guests will be comfortable and proper supervision can be maintained. Establish areas that are off-limits. Beware that the yard and garage are potential problem areas.
- Tell your neighbors about the party in advance.
- Consider co-hosting a party with other parents or invite other parents to help chaperone.
- Anticipate situation, which might occur at parties and discuss specific ways of handling them with your teen.
- Do not allow purses, backpacks, open bottles/cans to be brought in to party area. This will discourage teens from bringing in alcohol or another drug.

2. Limit attendance and hours. Specific hours and a smaller group are easier to manage.

- Agree to a guest list prior to the party.
- Establish a starting time and ending time so parents will know when to expect their teens to return home.

- Send invitations or have your teen call each guest personally.
- Be available for parents of guests to contact you for information.
- Only one entrance/exit may be used. Have a responsible adult at the entrance/exit door.
- Discourage guests from leaving and returning during the party.
- Circulate during the party. You may want to check off-limits areas frequently.
- Be aware of problem guests and be prepared to ask them to leave.
- Do not accept party crashers.

3. Provide entertainment

- Have snacks and non-alcoholic beverages available
- Play movies or party games
- Play dance music.
- Have plenty of places to sit and talk.

4. Never provide alcohol to guests under 21. It is illegal to offer alcohol to guests under 21 or to allow guests under 21 to use alcohol in your home.

- Be alert to signs of drug or alcohol use.
- Ask any teen who tries to bring alcohol or drugs to the party or who does not comply with party rules to leave. Notify the teen's parents.

- Call the police if unwanted guests refuse to leave or if their parents cannot be reached.
- If alcohol is found among the teens at the party, confiscate it and contact parents of all teens in attendance to alert them to the issue and assure the teens' safe arrival home.
- Never let anyone drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Notify the parents of any teenager who arrives at the party drunk or under the influence of another drug to ensure his/her safe transportation home.
- Remember that spontaneous, open parties are more difficult to control than planned parties. If things get out of hand, be ready to call other parents or the police department for assistance.

5. Be aware of social host liability laws.

Under social host liability law, adults who serve or provide alcohol to a person under the age of 21 can be held criminally liable if that minor is killed or injured, or kills or injures another person.

*Linda Minkoff and Clare Harlow,
Community Alliance for Youth (CAFY)*

Mary Ann Ashton and Jan Couch, PTSO

For more information, see:

http://www.alcoholpolicymd.com/pdf/Wisconsin_Parents_Guide.pdf

<http://www.jtnn.org/partytips.asp>

FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Steve Donovan

Achievements

On Saturday, March 3, 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 Honolulu, Hawaii. Congratulations to team members Sarah Zhang, Jyoti Jasrasaria, George Hong, Albert Chuang, Liz Petillo, Sue Zhang, David Richards, Gwen Davis and Yi Liu, and to coach Andy Crick for this outstanding accomplishment. It's the team's seventh state championship in a row.

A-B's entry in the Massachusetts Drama Festival, *A Piece of My Heart*, directed by Andrea Southwick, was selected to advance to the semi-final round on March 17 and then to the state level of competition which begins on March 29th. Juniors Kiki Boyles, Lura Chamberlain, Jennie Carrington and Claudia Contrada were named to the all-star cast in the preliminary round and/or semi-final round, and the A-B production also received recognition for lighting, sound and set design.

The ABRHS Science Team came in 2nd at the Massachusetts Science Olympiad competition on March 17th. Thirty two teams from across the state participated at the event, held at Framingham State College.

Seniors Jeff Fuhrer, Brett Herrick and Rosanna Xia and junior Jyoti Jasrasaria were selected to participate in the Massachusetts All State Music Festival in Boston March 22-24, culminating in a performance with the best high school musicians in Massachusetts in Symphony Hall on March 24.

A-B's team of George Mossessian, Prabhat Putchakayala and Scott Ames placed first in the second annual WPI Computer Programming Competition, up from fourth place last year.

The 2006-07 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.

The most recent recipients of the Principal's Recognition Award for service to school and community are Mairin Gulliver, Kate Pellegriti, Jay Prasad and Sierra Young.

Academic Integrity Committee

A faculty committee has been meeting since last year to update the procedures around cheating, plagiarism and other academic integrity issues. When the procedure is finalized, it will be introduced to students and their families and will be included in the 2007-08 Student Handbook.

Follow-up on the Semi-Formal

As I communicated in my March 5th email message to parents, several students were involved in alcohol-related incidents at the semi-formal dance held at the Holiday Inn in Boxborough. A sincere thank you to the many parents and students who have come forward to express their appreciation to the assistant principals and faculty chaperones for their handling of the difficult events at the semi-formal. Keeping the safety of all students in mind, they worked cooperatively to secure vehicles and the safe transport of students who were under the influence. Their efforts are to be commended.

Although large gatherings and off-campus events are challenging from a supervisory perspective, we do believe there is a place for some of these events. However, in an effort to keep students safe, we will continue to review the logistics of school-sponsored events. Issues of transportation,

It's a Date / ABRHS

APRIL

- 4 VOICE Heritage Day (see article)
- 5 Early dismissal for students
- 6 No school – Good Friday
- 9 End of Term 3
- 16-20 Spring Recess
- 23 School Council meeting 6:00 p.m.
- 24 Homeroom – report cards distributed
- 24 National Honor Society Induction 7:30 p.m.
- 26 Senior Class meeting – 3rd period
- 26 Physical Education and Health Awareness Day (see article)
- 27-29 Spring Play

MAY

- 2 Awards Night 7:00 p.m.
- 4 Senior Breakfast and Community Service Day
- 5 SATs administered
- 7 Senior Internship begins
- 7 Advanced Placement Exams begin
- 8 ABRHS Spring Concert 7:30 p.m.

ticket sales, and age-appropriateness will continue to be considered as we go forward.

There were disciplinary consequences for the students found to have been involved with the alcohol-related incidents at the semi-formal. Many parents of the students involved have been extremely

ABRHS CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Daily announcements at the High School are posted on the website at <http://ab.mec.edu/abrhs/>.

(Click on *Announcements* to the right of *Quick Links*.) They are not emailed out as they are at the Junior High School.

supportive of our efforts by encouraging their students to own their behavior, accept and serve their consequences, and learn from their choices. I appreciate that support.

Some parents have questioned the administration's handling of the events and consequences. When students choose to bring alcohol to school-sponsored events or attend events under the influence, they threaten the safety of all who attend the events. I expect the parent community to work *with* us in our efforts to educate students about the consequences of their actions.

Parent support, particularly of administrators who routinely monitor events to insure student safety, is absolutely necessary for us to continue to have successful and safe school-sponsored events in the future.

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 8
English final exams (in class) – June 13 & 14
- Last day of classes for grades 9–11 – June 14
- Exams for 1st and 2nd period classes – June 15
- Exams for 3rd and 4th period classes – June 18
- Exams for 5th and 6th period classes – June 19
- Exams for 7th and 8th period classes – June 20

Course Planning for 2007–2008

Students have selected their courses for next year. Students received a printed copy of their course selections through their English classes on March 12 to check for accuracy. Any changes in the selections must be made by April 30th 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

VOICE Heritage Day

VOICE (Valuing Others in an Inclusive and Caring Environment) is a high school initiative to celebrate diversity and encourage mutual respect in our school community. The VOICE Committee is planning a Heritage Day which will be held during Periods 4 through 7 on Wednesday, April 4. Groups of students and teachers will create displays about their common cultures (from a country, region, state or city), and cultural performances will be shared. Students and faculty are encouraged to attend the festival during their lunch period that day to enjoy the richness of our community. The event will take place in the school library. For more information, contact Librarian Renee Voorhees at rvoorhees@mail.ab.mec.edu.

Physical Education and Health Awareness Day

On April 26th, the Acton Boxborough Physical Education Department will be hosting its 3rd annual Physical Education and Health Awareness Day for all students and faculty. This day is devoted to opening the eyes and ears of the students about a variety of issues related to their health and well-being. The department's goal is to educate students about health, prevention and the resources that are available to them in their community. It will include interactive exhibits, mini-workshops, demonstrations, massage therapy, screenings, etc. Exhibitors will include: Melanoma Foundation, American Lung Association, American Heart Association, Massachusetts State Police, Eastern Mountain Sports, Emerson Hospital, Acton Health Department, SADD, Yoga For Teens, nutrition information and licensed massage therapists. For more information, contact Suzanne Hoag at shoag@mail.ab.mec.edu.

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 wishing to host a student must follow the procedure outlined in the Student Handbook (Guests – page 42).

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 Mary Ann Ashton (MABAshton@aol.com) 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 some of our former Peer Tutors are enrolled in other courses this term, we are very fortunate to have some new faces among our ranks! Along with our "veteran" tutors, these students are also very talented, conscientious, patient and kind. We recognize and sincerely thank those who are assisting the Academic Support Center program: Kiki Boyles, Erika Buckle, Joshua Cintolo, Lauren Crofton-Macdonald, Vanessa DeMelo, Rhonda Duan, Marissa Evans, Matthew Ford, Ingrid Gunther, Jessica Hatch, Anton Li, Phil Licari, Bryan MacDonald, Meghan Magee, Kelsey Meidell, Emily O'Brien, Elizabeth Olliver, Hannah Pinsky, Christina Proulx, Yura Pyatnychko, Emily Reuman, Lauren Rodda, Svetlana Romanova, Dipal Savla, Tina Sun and Sergy Tsitlenko.

– Jacalyn Starr

FROM THE ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS

Larry Fliegelman and Megan Hatt

World Language Week

This annual celebration kicked off the month of March at R.J. Grey, beginning with two performances by Tony Vacca and the World Rhythms Band. We also heard morning announcements in several different language. 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.

“Annie Warbucks”

Congratulations to the cast, crew, directors, producers, and everyone involved in the Junior High musical, “Annie Warbucks.” For six performances, the cast and crew transported us back to the Great Depression to watch Daddy Warbucks fight to keep Annie and fall in love. Months of hard work paid off in these quality shows. Many thanks go to directors and producers Samantha Hammel, Liza Levy, Bob Specian, Peggy Barach, Bonnie Maserang, and their assistants for providing this opportunity for R.J. Grey students to be involved in such a fine production.

Project Wellness

Our sixth 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.

8th to 9th Transition

Our eighth graders have begun the process of registering for courses at the High School. Parents attended a meeting on March 14 and, on March 16, 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 30. Students interested in attending Minuteman Regional High School are also involved in registration for their programs.

MCAS

Both 7th and 8th Graders took the English Language Arts Exam during the third week of March.

It's a Date / RJGJHS

APRIL

- 2 MCAS-ELA Long Composition, Grade 7 Make Up
- 4 Student Council Meeting, 12:22 PM
- 6 No School – Good Friday
- 9 End of Term 3
- 10 School Council Meeting, 7-8:30 PM
- 16-20 No School – Spring Break
- 25 Parents/Guardians of 6th Graders Presentation at ABRHS, 7-9:00 PM

MAY

- 1 Grade 8 Class Picture
- 2 Student Council Meeting, 12:22 PM
- 4 Grade 7 Dance, 6:30-8:30 PM
- 8 School Council Meeting, 7-8:30 PM
- 14-25 MCAS Testing, Grades 7 & 8
- 15 Spring Band Concert, 7:30 PM
- 22 Spring Choral Concert, 7:30 PM
- 23 Student Council Officer Election, Grade 7
- 25 Great East Music Festival
- 28 No School – Memorial Day
- 29 Midterm Reports Mailed

JUNE

- 6 Student Council, 12:22 PM
- 7 6th Grade Social, 7-8:30 PM
- 8 High School Graduation

Project Graduation • April 2007 Update

Roche Bros. Fundraiser!

Roche Bros. is sponsoring the 7th Annual Receipt Collection Day on **Friday, May 4th from 4-7p.m.** Project Graduation will receive 5% of all grocery receipts (we do not take your credit card receipt – just your grocery receipt) collected by our volunteers. Roche Brothers now sells gift cards! *Please consider buying **gift cards** that come in denominations of \$10, \$25, \$50 and \$100 for future shopping*—this is where we benefit the most. They can be redeemed at any time. Gift cards can be ordered in advance (*see form below*). Questions can be directed to Debbie Clough at 978-266-0153 or Debbie_clough@verizon.net.

The Junior Trunk

Help us create “**The Junior Trunk**”, a trunk containing dorm room essentials-towel, sheets, bathroom carrier, gift cards, etc. With your help by purchasing store bought gift cards or items, we will be able to raffle off this trunk to a senior at Project Graduation. Interested in contributing items for the Junior Trunk? Please contact Mary Allard at Lmmc31@comcast.net.

Volunteers and Donations are still needed

Project Graduation 2007 is well underway, but we still need your support. Please consider volunteering your time with this wonderful and fun event. Contact Bitzy Wilson at Bwilson@comcast.net. If you have already volunteered (thank you!) and we haven't gotten back to you yet, don't worry, we will in a few weeks.

Donations and matching donations can be made using the form below: Please make checks payable to Project Graduation, c/o ABRPTSO, P.O. Box 912, Acton, MA 01720

For Project Graduation 2007 information, contact **Patti Foye** at pcfoye@verizon.net.

IMPORTANT FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS:

CORI forms are mandatory for all adults involved with Project Graduation.

A CORI FORM must be filled, processed and on file at ABRHS by May 4, 2007. This is mandatory for all adults volunteering their time at Project Graduation. Please complete a CORI form in the presence of Deb Trench at the High School Main Office (photo id needed) 7:00am–3:30pm on weekdays! Or during extended hours on April 11th and 25th from 3:30 to 7:30pm. Anyone who was CORI'ed as of June 30, 2006 is good for three years.

Project Graduation 2007 Volunteer Form

Sign me up! I'd like to volunteer in the following area(s):

- Food Planning Set up Lighting Food Serving Entertainment
 Crafts Junior Trunk Items Casino Chaperone Photography
 Challenge Games Theme Design/Decorating

OR No preference, just want to help out.

Name _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please send this form to:

Project Graduation, c/o ABRPTSO, P.O. Box 912, Acton, MA 01720
or let Bitzy Wilson know of your interest at Bwilson@comcast.net.

Roche Bros. Gift Card Order Form

Name _____

Phone _____

Address _____

Amount \$ _____

Please mail your check, payable to Roche Bros., to: Project Graduation, PO Box 912, Acton, MA 01720. **Checks must be received no later than 5/3/07.** Gift certificates over \$100.00 will be hand delivered.

School Committee News

Michael Coppolino, Chair

The Regional School Committee met on March 1st and on March 15, when it re-voted the ABRSD FY '08 Budget. The good news from the Governor's Office is that the proposed budget, commonly referred to as House 1, includes approximate 25% and 40% increases in the revenues for the Region and APS, respectively, compared to what we had anticipated for Chapter 70 funding. With those increases being strong likelihoods, the Regional SC voted to use some of this additional Chapter 70 funding to add two additional teachers at the high school and provide directed study stipends, both to further address the State's 990-hour mandate. We also voted to add staffing at the junior high school in World Languages which will help reduce, to a small degree, burgeoning class size, plus we voted to replace some outdated technology in grades 7-12 as well as some maintenance equipment whose lease payments will come from the operating budget. Of course, if the increased funding does not materialize, we will reduce the budgets accordingly, but local legislators we have spoken with

directly feel that a reduction by the House and/or Senate is quite unlikely.

Also, Principal Steve Donovan provided a verbal report on the recent tumultuous incident at the high school semi-formal, which was held at the Boxboro Holiday Inn on March 2, dispelling rumors and clarifying events, as well as consequences that the 16 students who were suspended incurred. Numerous School Committee members expressed extreme disappointment with these students and some families for "looking the other way." We were extremely fortunate, as a community, not to have lost any children due to drunk driving. The administration assured the public that they will be taking appropriate precautions at future social events, should they even occur.

Please attend Acton's Annual Town Meeting in the ABRHS Auditorium, which begins officially on April 9, after convening briefly on April 2. The meeting is rescheduled to the 9th in honor of Passover.

As always, the public is welcome to attend. All School Committee Members can be contacted at: AB_School_Committee@mail.ab.mec.edu.

Upcoming School Committee Meetings

MAY

- 3** AB Regional SC:
7:30 PM,
RJ Grey JHS Library
- 17** Acton Public SC:
7:30 PM,
Merriam School

A Midsummer Night's Dream Continues Season for Proscenium Circus, April 27-29

It's time to laugh and relax with Shakespeare's most delightful comedy, A Midsummer Night's Dream. Presented by Proscenium Circus, the A-B drama club, this 90-minute adaptation by Diane Timmerman depicts the adventures of four young lovers, a group of amateur actors in a moonlit forest—and their interactions with the mischievous fairies who inhabit it. It is directed by Janet Neely, who directs at many small professional theaters in the Boston area.

The production runs for one weekend only: Friday, April 27, at 7:30pm; Saturday, April 28 at 3:00 & 7:30pm; Sunday, April 29 at 3:00pm. Purchase tickets via cash or check at: Roche Bros., West Acton Market, and Tedeschi's Food Shop on 2A; online via credit card at MKTix.com. Please note: ABSAF pass holders, school staff, and PC season ticket holders must reserve tickets through ABDrama.org. For more information, contact PC Advisor Linda Potter: lpotter@mail.ab.mec.edu or (978) 264-4700 x3584.

www.abdrama.org



PTSO News

<http://abrptso.ab.mec.edu>

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

Acton-Boxborough Regional High School
Acton, MA 01720

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PTSO CALENDAR

Wednesday, April 11 • Noon
Acton Memorial Library
PTSO Forum with Steve Desy
ABRHS Athletic Director

Thursday, May 10 • 7:00 PM
RJG Jr. High Auditorium
Annual PTSO Business Meeting
(vote on board & budget)

7:30 PM
“Surviving the College Search”
presentation sponsored by the
PTSO and Counseling Department

Are you reading this newsletter online?

**If not, check it out at <http://abrptso.ab.mec.edu/newsletters.htm>
From this site, you can also join the PTSO email list!**

Submission DEADLINE for the May 1 Newsletter is April 12th.
Please contact Beth at BPetr@verizon.net or 978-263-7208.