

PLEASE NOTE: THE FOLLOWING IS A SUMMARY OF THE MEETING.
OFFICIAL MINUTES WILL BE POSTED ONCE APPROVED
BY THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP AT THE NEXT MEETING.

MIAMI PALMETTO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL PTSA
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
OCTOBER 15, 2008

The meeting was called to order by President Andrea Shosfy at 9:12 a.m. at an alternate location, the Pinecrest Community Center. Ms. Shosfy stated that the adjacent Miami-Dade Public Library was open today and members are welcome to take a tour after the meeting.

Principal's Report: Principal Howard Weiner commented that this is the first time he has visited the Pinecrest Community Center and it is a wonderful facility. He was glad we had such a large turn out today for the meeting.

He then presented a "good news" general announcement: Sixteen-year old Junior Noah Gray was interviewed this morning on CNN by John Roberts. Noah is in our TV production class and the interview was about a project he started last year called "Virgin Voting." The project encourages young people to register to vote and exercise their right to vote. If you visit VirginVoting.com, you will see a video documentary Noah made, learn about a video contest to document your first time voting (giving you a chance to win a \$500 Apple gift card), and be able to purchase a "You Never Forget Your First Time Voting" t-shirt. Our whole school community is very proud of Noah and, since he has press credentials, he will be covering the last Presidential debate tonight. The only negative was that CNN called our school "Palm Meadow" High School.

Today at school, 9th graders are participating in an anti-bullying curriculum this morning. Tenth graders and some juniors are taking the PSAT. The other 11th graders are taking a practice math test. Seniors enjoyed breakfast in the Pawvilion and are participating in some other Senior activities in the gym.

As you know, the marquee which the PTSA purchased for the school a number of years ago has not been working. A replacement marquee has been ordered and should be up in the next 90 days. The \$18,000 cost of the marquee will be covered by the MDCPS Maintenance Department at no cost to the school. The new parts will be retrofitted to the existing marquee and they are of a better quality.

PTSA Corresponding Secretary Hal Rosenfeld questioned why visitors to the school's website had to go through several steps to access the PTSA website. As a result, we edited the links on the top of the school's page and now visitors can link directly to the PTSA website.

The 50th anniversary party is this weekend with a sock hop planned for Friday night, a picnic on Saturday, and a gala Saturday evening. Around three hundred people are expected to participate in the weekend events. Mr. Weiner thanked the Anniversary Committee which has been working for almost a year on this project. He invited members to stop by the front of the school and take a look at the personalized bricks installed last week as part of our Buy a Brick campaign. They reflect a celebration of students, staff, and alumni at Palmetto. Finally, he reminded everyone that the College Fair is scheduled for October 27th and all students and parents are invited.

Introductions: Ms. Shosfy recognized and introduced attendees who are running for Village of Pinecrest council positions: For mayor, Cindy Lerner and Gail Serota; for Seat 1, Jennifer Wollmann and Mike Guilford; and for Seat 3, Nancy Harter. Current Seat 4 council member, Joe Corradino, was also acknowledged.

Approve Minutes: The minutes of the September 17, 2008, General Membership Meeting were presented. A motion was made by Karen Kett to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded and approved without corrections.

Treasurer's Report/Committee Reports:

Book Sale: Third Vice President Becky Herget thanked co-chairs, Jennifer Wollmann and Lynne Schaefer, for the fantastic job they did on the Book Sale. The PTSA worked with Borders for the first time and they gave us a 5% incentive, which we were able to meet. We made over \$21,000 and that money will be going into a request to amend the budget which we will hear about later.

Membership/Donations: Ms. Herget reported that we have enrolled over 1,200 members so far which exceeds last year's number. We have received almost \$18,000 in donations even in these difficult economic times. Last year, we received approximately \$10,000 in donations.

Treasurer's Report: On behalf of Treasurer Isabel McBrayer, Ms. Herget distributed copies of the proposed budget amendment. The amendment increases the income generated by the Book Sale to the actual funds realized so we can move the extra money into Special Projects – Unallocated 2008-2009. A motion was made by Randi Trazenfeld to accept the proposed 2008-2009 budget as amended. Lynne Schaefer seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

50th Anniversary Weekend: Second Vice President Nancy Harter said about 200 guests are expected at Friday night's Sock Hop, approximately 300 at Saturday's picnic, and 140-160 at the Saturday night gala. If you want a ticket to any of these events, you need to get to the school's Activity Office soon. Financially, all events are breaking even or making a small profit. The \$5,000 in 'seed money' the PTSA gave last year to the Anniversary Committee will be paid back in full. A committee report is planned for our next meeting. Ms. Shosfy added that we need a few volunteers to help when people come to pick up their packets on Friday evening and Saturday morning. Let her know if you can help. Finally, Ms. Herget is selling 50th Anniversary t-shirts on behalf of the Football Booster Club.

Taste of Pinecrest: Ms. Caryn Boren advised that the first meeting was planned for next Monday. The event is scheduled to be held on March 8, 2009. This year, the planning committee hopes to get more school clubs involved. She will have an update at the next meeting.

EESAC: Ms. Harter reported that EESAC met on Monday to figure out a distribution plan for the funds MPSH received as a result of being an "A" school. They are trying to equitably spread the money between the faculty and staff at the school and have made a recommendation that the faculty must approve at their meeting this afternoon. In addition, the Legislature has reduced the EESAC funds this year.

Old Business: There was no old business.

New Business:

Special Projects: Co-chair Jennifer Wollmann explained that this was the second year the PTSA has coordinated the pooling and distribution of funds with EESAC and the Principal's account. Last year, we had \$21,000 in requests. This year, request total \$51,000. She distributed two spread sheets for members to review. Since EESAC funds from the State have been cut dramatically, it was decided they would cover professional development fund requests only. Due to budget cuts, all of the Principal's requests for funds were denied last year by the District. The Village of Pinecrest generously awarded \$10,000 to the school. A big part of the technology requests will be paid by the Village funds.

Ms. Wollmann asks that the membership approve \$25,000 to be allocated on the budget to Special Projects – Unallocated as listed on the spread sheets. The membership reviewed the spreadsheets as Ms. Wollmann explained various items (tech requests, smart boards, special reading project books, overhead projectors, etc.). The first page of the spreadsheet lists the requests made and the second sheet explains how we will be paying for them.

A request was made for recycling bins in support of the Dream in Green's Green School Challenge (dreaminggreen.org), but co-chair, Cecilia Prah, suggested to Science Department Chair Pam Shlachtmann that kids bring in their old Miami-Dade County recycling bins (in good condition and clean) once they receive the new recycling cans (saving \$1,600). In response to a question, Ms. Shosfy advised that the DCSB has approved allowing schools to advertise. She explained that Mr. Weiner is working with EESAC on this. As a PTSA, we can consider

acknowledging local businesses on our marquee and still be respectful of our neighbors. Ms. Harter made a motion to approve up to \$25,000 from Special Projects – Unallocated 2008-2009 to pay for the requests on the MPSH 2008-2009 Special Projects spreadsheets. The motion was seconded by Karen Kett and approved unanimously.

College Fair: Co-chair Barbara Davis announced the event is scheduled for Monday, October 27th from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the gym and is open to the community. Junior Parent Night will be held that same date starting at 7 p.m. in the auditorium. CAP representative, Sally Coords, has advised that about 90 colleges will be represented by staff, alumni, or student/parent representatives. If your child can't come, she recommends parents come alone. Ms. Davis' child graduates this year, so her co-chair, Barbara Toland, will need help with next year's event. They need volunteers to help set up at 1 p.m. in the gym on the 27th. Baked goods need to be dropped off by 6 p.m.; and, at 7 p.m., they need "helping hands" volunteers.

Holiday Luncheon: Debbie Rosenthal informed us that the Holiday Luncheon is scheduled for Thursday, December 11th, during both lunches. Karen Rosen is co-chair for the event. The Omega Singers and band will perform. Ms. Rosenthal passed around a sign-up sheet for volunteers to donate food, desserts, and drinks, and to provide help setting up, serving, and cleaning up. Set up will start at 7:30 a.m.

Newsletter: Ms. Shosfy told us that the next newsletter comes out the end of November and an email will be sent soon with deadline information.

State Convention: We were told by Parliamentarian Randi Trazenfeld that the Florida PTA conference will be held from November 7th through 9th at the Daytona Beach Hilton. Our PTSA is a local unit of the Dade County PTA. We want 2 parents and/or students to attend on our behalf. You will meet 1,000 plus delegates from all over the state. Legislators usually attend, as well. The convention includes many work shops on leadership training, increasing membership, children's health, predators in the community, etc. Jennifer Wollmann said our conference fees have already been paid and the PTSA has funds to pay for accommodations, etc. Please see Ms. Trazenfeld if you are interested. This year's main issue is to focus on child labor laws. Many kids from South and Central America end up being brought here illegally and are exploited and abused. Packets are available for you to inspect.

Miscellaneous: Ms. Shosfy advised parents of senior students that the Florida PTA/PTSA offers 4 scholarships that students can apply for: (1) Fine Arts; (2) Community/Junior College; (3) Vocational/Technical; and (4) Annual Scholarship. Ms. Coords has more information on the application deadline, etc. The deadline for Reflections is October 17th. If you are interested, we have Official School Calendars for sale at \$3.00 each.

Guest Speaker – The College Process: Ms. Shosfy introduced Ms. Toby Rose, President of Toby Rose's College Prep, Inc. Ms. Rose started by stating that the process changes every year. Most parents and students ask, "What does it take to get into college?" She said colleges look at the type of courses that your child takes (honors, AP, IB) and if they will count towards college credits or not. At Palmetto, course selections for the following year are usually made by the end of February. In addition, changes can be made 4 weeks into the next school year. She recommends you get your kids to start thinking now about their future schedules.

Many students are taking the PSAT today. It is a 2 ½ hour test composed of 3 sections: verbal (critical reasoning); math (Algebra I and II and Geometry); and writing (really, English grammar). Colleges buy the PSAT list of the names of the kids that score high on the test and send information to them. Receiving those college solicitations is a great way to motivate your kids. In your student's junior year, this test really counts and is your only chance to receive a merit scholarship. It is only a \$2,000 award but every college in the World will want your child. If the colleges tell you that they do not count the writing sections of the PSAT or SAT, they are lying. The SAT is a 5 hour test with two 5 minute breaks. It is a test of endurance. A perfect score on all 3 sections of the SAT is 2400. Colleges do look at all 3 sections. For example, UF tends to look for kids that have scored high in the writing section. If juniors score high on the PSAT and have prepared for the writing section, they are ready to take the SAT early (October, November, etc.) rather than when taking AP exams in May.

Before taking any of these tests, she recommends kids go to bed early the night before. For the SAT, take 2 candy bars with you to eat during the breaks. Dress in comfortable, loose

clothes in layers in case the air conditioning in the test area is not working or is working too well (why am I so cold?). Have a good breakfast, but don't push fluids in the morning (because they will either have to go to the bathroom or be thinking about it).

Because the State of Florida is so much lower than other states (49th or 50th) in per student funding, the Florida index to win a merit scholarship is 214. In the Northeast or California, it is 230 out of 240. We get a break.

Colleges are now looking at every child's Facebook page. They are looking for kids drinking, having sex, etc. The stress from the college application process and for the best grades is horrible. She feels kids are over pressured and on a merry go round: test after test, FCAT, etc. Students need something to help them relax and nurture their souls. Ms. Rose stated she is glad that there is no valedictorian anymore.

In her opinion, the essay is the deciding factor on whether your child gets into college or not. Besides the GPA and SAT scores, they are looking for something in your child that is deeply inside them. You want to find the best fit for your child so you don't get that "I hate it and I want to come home" the first semester. Parents need to be disciplined as to how you handle certain situations. Your kids will hate you this year and won't love you until they are 25 years old. You need to speak to your kids about sex, drinking, AIDs, etc. Your kids are doing things that you don't know about. You need to be informed.

Online college applications have made the process harder, not easier. They take 10 to 25 hours to do. Students must write the essay from their gut. For example, one child was a new citizen and wrote about how proud they were to become a US citizen. A couple of kids had a mother who was a very private person. The children felt that they didn't know her. Eventually, the mom disclosed she was taken at 8 years old and put in the Vietnamese killing fields. She was finally rescued at 16 years old. She suffered terrible abuses. She wound up taking the children see to the killing fields. Of course, the essay doesn't have to be that extreme. A child recently wrote about a grandparent that died. They should write about their feelings and who they are.

Seniors must take hardcore classes - "no senioritis." Ms. Rose prefers Palmetto over Coral Reef's IB program. She feels that the IB program is too much pressure. Colleges will look at your child's AP classes the same as an IB program. She recommends you get them involved in leadership programs early. The recommendation letters from the guidance counselors are not seen by parents. So, be proactive and make sure that your student knows their guidance counselor. Have your child ask questions and get to know them

The ACT is primarily a test required in the Midwest. It tests what your child has learned in school while the SAT is more of a predictor of how well they will do in college. ACT can be used in place of SAT II tests or FCAT. She suggests taking both even though she feels SAT has more weight. In regard to community service hours, colleges prefer seeing that your child has been a leader consistently over 2 or 3 years, rather than lots of hours in numerous events. Service hours can be outside of school. Colleges look for leadership and commitment. Things that are different and unique.

It is easier for your child to get into Florida schools and some other schools if they apply in the summer. UF's deadline is November 1st. She recommends taking 2 calculators to the SAT and do not take any of these tests if they are sick or emotionally upset (death in the family, boyfriend problems, etc.).

Finally, she advised that colleges do not average the SAT scores. They take the best of all sections no matter how many times the student takes the test. Ms. Rose agreed to stay after the meeting to answer additional questions from members.

Ms. Shosfy announced that our next General Membership Meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 19th, at 9:00 a.m. in the Media Center.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by
Roxy Lancellata, Recording Secretary

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