

Our Children August-September 2011

President's Message



New Beginnings, Enduring Value

Ahhh, back to school time! Anxious parents and excited students preparing for a new school year—notebooks, pencils, crayons, backpack. All signal a new beginning, a new opportunity to learn and grow. How well I remember getting my three children ready for a new school year! And with each new school year comes the chance to expand our involvement in our children's education through PTA.

I first joined PTA because of my children, Benton, Nicholas, and Mary Frances. And while they have gone on to successful careers, I remain committed to our work, our mission, because of your children—because of every child. What we do has real impact, but that impact is not always understood. We must work harder at demonstrating why PTA's mission is vital to everyone.

Each PTA tackles issues specific to its school and community, those that impact the children within the community. Collectively, we have the opportunity to leave an indelible mark on the lives of every child in this nation. To do so, we must embrace a bolder vision of what PTA can do. Thankfully, numerous communities don't have to worry about high dropout or low literacy rates—but far too many do. Every child deserves the chance to grow to adulthood prepared for success.

In a time when our children face ever-growing challenges, we are the persistent voice speaking on their behalf, our only agenda, their well-being. Because of our large membership, we are able to command the attention of legislators on Capitol Hill and bring about real change. Our Urban Family Engagement Initiative (UFEI) is making significant inroads in urban communities helping parents ensure their children excel in spite of major obstacles in their schools, including lack of funding and resources, safety concerns, and cultural and language barriers.

What you do each and every day as PTA members and leaders makes the difference in the lives of children across this country. We know from decades of research that when families are engaged in their children's education, their children have a greater chance of success. But many people—even PTA leaders—are not aware of just how many different ways our association benefits children, schools, and communities. Once again, *Our Children* presents a completely updated "Back-to-PTA Handbook" of the programs, services, and member benefits National PTA provides to help every PTA serve its members and fulfill our mission.

Pass along this issue. Share the magazine with nonmembers, so that everyone in your school community can become familiar with the value of membership. Let them know that when they become a PTA member, they will join a new world of caring in action, where their voice will be heard.

A heartfelt thank you for what you will do this school year to improve your school and community for all our children! Together, we are making a difference.