

October 2008

Dear St. John Academy Parents:

In these uncertain times, we are all thankful that we can provide our children a safe, secure environment to flourish and learn. However, as I discussed during "Back to School Night," Saint John Academy (SJA) and the SJA Parent Teachers Organization (PTO) need your support to create this environment.

The fact of the matter is that tuition alone does not cover the operating costs of SJA. Some of these excess operating costs are born by the Parish (approximately \$250k last year) and some of these costs are borne by the PTO. The PTO provides approximately \$27k in additional funding to SJA that covers activities and programs that would not otherwise exist. Examples are teacher bonuses and training, field trips, technology upgrades, social events, and so forth. The PTO accomplishes this mission through fundraising, and by organizing the parents' volunteer efforts at SJA.

Volunteering

I will be frank: we need a better effort – our volunteers are the same folks over and over again. I have previously discussed the value of volunteering at SJA (shows your commitment to your children, spend time with your children, value added to the school, etc.). I realize that we are all very busy, but the statement, "I don't have the time," is really a statement that "I have other priorities for my time." As I stated above, by sending our children to SJA, we have made an affirmative statement that we want and expect more for our children. To have any moral backing, this expectation must be accompanied by action greater than the mere payment of tuition. What can you do to help?

1. First, parents are reminded that each family is expected to provide 12 hours of volunteer service per school year. A volunteer log book is located in the front office so that everyone can keep track of their volunteer hours.

2. In order to create more specific time periods for specific groups of parents to volunteer, parents should expect their room parents to call them for support during the following months (think of it as a surge effort).

October	7 th Grade Parents	February	3 rd Grade Parents
November	8 th Grade Parents	March	4 th Grade Parents
December	1 st Grade Parents	April	5 th Grade Parents
January	2 nd Grade parents	May	6 th Grade Parents

--- one caveat: Our major fundraiser, in Feb, will require everyone's support

Thus, during October, the 7th Grade Parents should expect be called by the room mothers to provide support to the lunch program, as library readers, recess monitors, etc. We would also

like the parents assigned to a particular month to take the lead for the social activity of the month (not to worry, our social committee chairs, Mary Kushan and Kristin Walker, will provide direction).

3. Moms and Dads. A suggestion: take a day off from your usual day during your designated month. After you take the kids to school, hang out for recess, be a guest reader or lecturer for one of the classes – spend a day at SJA and show your children that you want to be involved with their daily lives beyond just the evening or weekend. Coordinate your day off with the room parents to avoid duplication of effort.

I have touched only upon a few ideas – I know that all of you have creativity and drive to more and sincerely hope that you will take this as a call to action to do so.

Finances and Fundraising

Believe you me, I hate asking for money or trying to locate new sources as much as you dislike being asked. However, the activities and programs that enrich our children's daily school life cost money, and not all of those costs are covered. Hence the need for fundraising.

The PTO's function is not to be a fundraising machine. Sally Foster and the Christmas wreath sales raise some money (approximately \$5k), but do not cross the finish line. In years past, the PTO has conducted an armchair fundraiser (write a check and send it in) or a gala dance. This year, we discussed a combination of "dues" (a start-up sum from each family to keep the budget afloat) and a "big" event in February. Given the current financial turmoil, the collection of "dues" will not be implemented until registration for the next school year. However, we will still hold a "big" event.

Currently the "big" event plan is a PTO sponsored silent auction and a "taste of SJA" dinner, celebrating the many cultures represented at our school. Only your efforts, financially and with your time, will make this event a success. So again, I call upon you for your support.

In conclusion, on behalf of the PTO, we welcome any suggestions you may have regarding volunteerism and fundraising. Please feel free to contact me (michael.isacco@us.army.mil) with any concerns or ideas regarding the topics above, any topic in general. I thank you in advance for your support and I look forward to seeing you throughout the school year.

God Bless,

Mike Isacco
PTO President