

PARENTS ASSOCIATION MEETING  
7 PM, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2007  
BAHNIK HALL, PORTLEDGE SCHOOL

BY DANA PAGLIARA, SECRETARY

Approximately 75 parents joined the Executive Council, staff, and faculty at the first Parents Association (PA) meeting of the 2007/2008 school year. Mr. Steve Hahn, Head of School, welcomed those present and began by presenting the new and more clearly defined Mission Statement for the school. The Mission Statement reads, "Portledge is an inclusive community that inspires students to realize their individual potential, master critical academic skills, develop moral courage, and prepare for further learning and global citizenship."

Part of realizing that mission includes parent involvement at every level. Mr. Hahn encouraged parents to seek out the opportunities that are available to them via the various committees, Class Parent positions, and volunteer efforts so critical to the success of these activities. The evenings at Stoddard House with Mr. and Ms. Hahn will continue to serve as another venue for parents of each grade to socialize and share their Portledge experience.

Mr. Hahn also mentioned that the strategic planning session that took place last spring has generated three new staff positions. Ms. Susan Pagano, Director of Marketing and Communications, Alumni Liaison Ms. Tara Askeland, Parents Association Liaison and Event Coordinator, and Ms. Jenna Fox, School Psychologist. Ms. Pagano demonstrated the use of the updated school website to showcase the changes taking place in her department. She will facilitate communication within the three schools and to the parent body with a Portledge Pride newsletter and other means. She will also work on increasing the visibility of Portledge to the surrounding communities, state, and the national college level. Ms. Askeland has also been working in the Advancement Office, as an Advancement Associate and now will add PA Liaison to her list of responsibilities. Parents are asked to contact her with any questions regarding any upcoming events or volunteer areas they wish to join. Ms. Fox joins Portledge as a full-time school psychologist who will be on hand to help students with any concerns or issues they might be facing. She will be working with both faculty and students to educate them on many subject areas such as bullying, dating, violence, college life, etc.

Upon the conclusion of Mr. Hahn's speech, he introduced Betty Ann Roel, three-term President of the PA and a newly elected Trustee. Betty Ann welcomed everyone and noted that the agenda for this first meeting of the PA was really "introduction" and "information." She then presented the members of the Executive Council, who are:

VP for Lower School, PN-PK	Augusta Donahue
VP for Lower School, K-2	Marianna Kirikian
VP for Lower School, 3-5	Ellen Hobbs
VP for Middle School,	Samara Meshel and Mimma Ruiz
VP for Upper School	Linda Miyagi and Alyse Ticker
Secretary	Dana Pagliara

Each one introduced themselves, stated the names and the grades of their children, and gave a brief outline of their volunteer efforts leading up to their current position on the Council. Betty Ann then read the names of this year's Class Parents as those present stood and waved.

Betty Ann explained that this is a year of transition for the PA. The PA Constitution had not been revised since sometime in the 1970's, and thus, needed to be reworked to reflect the growing Portledge community. Betty Ann, Mr. Turk Lewis, Director of Advancement, and Mr. Hahn, worked on creating a revised updated draft of the Constitution this past summer. The revision clarified various participation options for parents and restated its focus on improving communication within the parent community while building on Portledge pride. The new Constitution will be soon available on the new web site. A final draft of the revised Constitution will be presented for approved at the next PA meeting to be held in January 2008.

One of the PA's goals this year is to increase parent participation in the PA by creating new volunteer opportunities. Several new committees and chair positions, such as the Nominating Committee, the Parent Fund Committee, the Faculty & Staff Appreciation Committee, and the Parent Program Committee have been added to the PA structure. A list of those committees, contact information, and their objectives will be listed separately on the website in the near future. All parents were encouraged to participate actively in the PA; they are automatically members. If parents have any questions about joining any committee or volunteering at any event, they are urged to contact the PA Liaison, Ms. Askeland in the Advancement Office.

Founders Day was next on the agenda. Dana Pagliara, Chair, and Carol Hegarty, Co-Chair, urged all parents to attend this school celebration of its past, present, and future taking place on Saturday, September 29<sup>th</sup>. In addition to the now traditional parade, sports, games, and entertainment, there will a special ceremony this year honoring faculty with 25 years of service to Portledge. A mailing had been sent out regarding sponsorship, food ticket and ride bracelet purchases, as well as the day's schedule to all families in August. Additional packets are available at the Advancement Office. The committee chairs for Lunch, Breakfast, Arts and Crafts also introduced themselves. Sign-up sheets for the various committees were passed around for names since parent volunteers are critical to the success of Founders Day.

Ms. Susan Pagano introduced the new website via an overhead projector. She showed the audience how to access the website and its calendar feature broken down by week, month, and year. Each teacher has also been provided with a page which they are responsible for maintaining with new updates and information relevant to their grade. Another new feature is a link to the "heyhills" blog created and maintained by Mr. Phil Hills, the Director of Athletics at Portledge. On the blog he reports on all the games played by the Portledge teams and the particular efforts of individual students. One parent raised a concern that, because a password is not required for access to the blog, the public would have access to detailed information regarding an athletic team's performance since players are named individually in the playback analysis of the games. Mr. Hahn stated this concern would be considered and further reviewed. However, it was noted that athletic games are generally considered in the public domain and are reviewed in the local papers with the same level of detail. In conclusion, Ms. Pagano stated that the website continues to improve with more levels of information becoming available very soon. Other correspondence to parents will be forthcoming this year as the Advancement Office continues to develop its marketing and communication campaign, including a new "Portledge Pride" electronic newsletter.

Betty Ann asked Mr. Lewis to say a few words about the upcoming Annual Fund campaign kick-off, even though it hadn't been listed as an agenda item. Mr. Lewis noted that parent participation is a high priority for the PA this year and the Executive Council has committed to supporting the new structure of the Parent Fund.

Betty Ann concluded the meeting by mentioning that Class Parents will no longer be calling parents early in the morning for snow day closings. Parents are asked to call the Portledge line directly and also to check the website. The information should be posted by 6:30 am. Additionally, the snow-closings will be announced on the local radio and television stations listed in the School Handbooks. If any parent has any question as to whether the school is closed or not, they are asked to call the school phone line and if they for some reason cannot get through, they can call their Class Parent or VP for confirmation. Closings not due to snow will be handled in the same phone chain fashion with Class Parents contacting those in their grades on the telephone directly. Parents were reminded that it is essential that they be sure the school and their Class Parents have their up-to-date contact information.

Finally, parents were reminded to please send in all their forms – most importantly the medical form for their children and to be sure to attend the Back to School night meetings. Parents should continue to check for other important dates which are available on the website or on the calendar that Mr. Hahn's office sent out before school started.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.