

PTO involvement connects parents with schools

By Michele Gatien, EHS PTO Marketing Chair

Parents of Edina students make a significant commitment as soon as they enroll their children in the district. As those young people climb onto buses or scramble out of cars, it's a natural impulse to want to stay involved, even as the students seem to gain independence daily. How do parents strike a balance? They get involved in the school PTO, of course!

At the elementary schools PTO's organize volunteers for school activities, raise money to cover school needs outside the budget, provide service learning opportunities and supervise recycling programs, to list just a few activities. Some examples of PTO involvement:



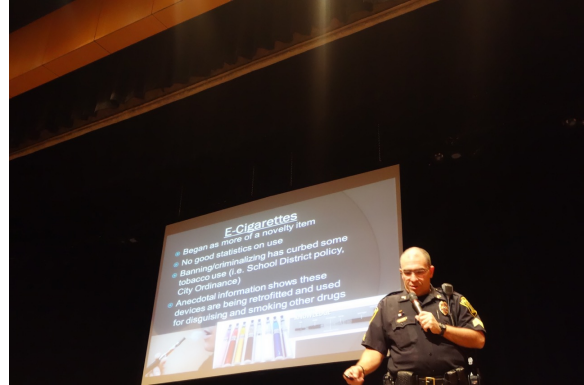
At Highlands, the PTO activities include the Imagination/Science Fair, along with the famous Highlands Carnival, where the theme changes every year but the duck pond always fits in. A PTO run Family Service Fair helps connect the entire Highlands community in the spirit of service to others.

Mark Murray, Normandale's PTO president, points out the mutual benefit of an involved PTO: "Having an active presence in our school demonstrates to our children that their education is a top priority, and in return helps them to engage in a more meaningful way. Likewise, school leaders benefit from this participation because it reinforces their expectations into our homes."

The Cornelia PTO pours abundant energy to plan a super fun parent's Night Out event that raises money to build Leveled Learning Libraries to benefit all learners, along with organizing service opportunities for families through the "Doing Good Together" program.

As children move into the middle school environment, parent involvement changes to reflect young people's growing independence, and desire for social activities with peers that occur in a safe, structured environment. At South View, PTO members organize, provide supervision and sell treats at school parties where students can dunk teachers, dance, race in kayaks in the pool and generally let that energy flow. Valley View PTO members organize the Book Fair and run "The Hive," the after-school hangout where kids can have some down time and work on assignments while enjoying a treat.

The Edina High School PTO provides that last chance to connect with your student as parents learn to allow their almost-grown students to manage their time while meeting stiff academic and extracurricular activity expectations. PTO membership is the only fundraiser, and much of the funds raised by membership go directly back into the school in the form of mini-grants to high school teachers. An example of a impactful mini grant is the portable ventilator and laser cutter funded by the PTO which allows Jodi Ramirez, an EHS Project Lead the Way educator, to demonstrate the laser cut machine in any classroom, including the middle schools, in order to pique student interest in the engineering program (pictured at top). The PTO also hosts numerous parent forums during the year to bring awareness and helpful guidelines to parents on a variety of topics (pictured at right).



Membership in the PTO at every school level provides support directly to your child, and gives parents a window into the excitement and connection of the Edina Public Schools experience. Please support your PTO by making sure you are a member, and participating in the activities. We ARE Edina Public Schools!

For more information about the PTO at individual schools, go to the school's website and click on About [School Name] on the left side menu.