President’s Message – Carol Kocivar
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When my kids were a lot younger, the teacher in their elementary school would raise his hand like this and the class would magically become quiet.

Let me see if it works here.

Ok, now I have your attention.

Hold still for a moment. I want to add this snapshot to my collection.

One more time. Everyone smile and say "PTA"

Got it!

Thank you!

Yes. I am a little obsessed...I have been taking pictures at almost every opportunity to capture this term with the PTA.

Now ....I know what you are thinking.

Is she really going stand up there and show us every photo she has taken for the last two years?

No... But I am going to show you a little cameo appearance by someone who reminds me why I volunteer.

That was my 3 year old grand daughter... with a little prompting from her grandpa.

I hope it captures in a small way why we are PTA volunteers.

It is the about the dreams we have for our children. The future we imagine.

Whether it is supporting the teacher in our child's class or volunteering in the reflections program or helping with a science fair or safety program, there are hundreds of thousands of parents just like you with the same hopes and dreams for a better life for all our children.

Our children really are living in that world where the jobs in their future may not yet exist ...in fact...may not yet even been imagined.

And it is our responsibility ...yes, I said responsibility...to give them the skills to live in that world.

Throughout California, I have heard some amazing stories about PTA and what you do in your school to change the world for a child.

And how that act of kindness ... your act of kindness...creates the next generation of PTA volunteers.

A volunteer in Fresno told me she was shopping and heard a young woman call out to her...Mrs. PTA, Mrs. PTA.

She looked around and saw a young woman she did not recognize.

This woman came up and thanked Mrs. PTA for an act of kindness many years ago in an elementary school.

Mrs. PTA had helped this girl go to a school dinner that she could not pay for herself.

That woman now has children of her own.

She is volunteering in her school PTA in large part to return that PTA act of kindness.

To help another child.
Pay it forward.

Another parent told us that when she was a little girl she could not see the chalkboard and could not do her assignments.

Her mother could not afford glasses.

The mom attended a PTA meeting and explained the situation.

It was through the help of the PTA this child got glasses.

The little girl promised herself that when she grew up she would return the favor.

And now she is volunteering in her school so that she may help others.

Pay it forward.

The retired superintendent in my school district always supported PTA and encouraged all the principals in her district to support parents and the PTA.

And it was because when she was a senior in high school, the PTA gave her a scholarship to help her attend college.

Pay it forward.

Why do we volunteer?

We all know it sure isn't the money.

Here is what one working mom says.

"I recall my own mother at my school and how happy it made me to see her there. I want my children to have that same memory - that their mom was involved and that she wanted to make a difference at their school.

She said,

"I started out in PTA for MY kids, but I've stayed involved for ALL of the children, and I am paid generously in smiles and hugs.

Then she said:

My former career didn't have that kind of benefit package!"

Pay it forward.

And it is not just these individual stories.

School by school and throughout California, it is what PTA can do for an entire generation of new parents and an entire generation of children.

Times change. Our schools change. The demographics of our parents change.

Our School Smarts parent engagement program is one example of our organizational commitment to the next generation of parents.

Moms and dads--many who don't speak English as their primary language--report a dramatic increase in understanding the school system and how to help their children.

Parents are more involved in their children's schools and feel the School Smarts creates a real sense of community.

One parent summed up the experience by saying:

"It doesn't matter what language you speak as long as you're an involved parent."

Pay it forward.

Stepping up and becoming a leader in PTA can take us out of our comfort zone.

But one thing I have learned through PTA is "Don't be afraid to speak up for children."

That is the proud legacy of PTA.

For more than 100 years, PTA leaders have identified a need and taken action.

From advocating for child labor laws and the creation of kindergarten to supporting small class size and arts and school health programs and funding for our schools, the PTA has never been afraid to speak up for children.

And this past year was no exception.

When others may have felt it was more politic to play it safe, the PTA was not afraid to speak out for adequate funding for our schools--and helped write and campaign for an initiative to increase funding for every local school in California.

When I first volunteered in my child's elementary school to raise a couple of thousand dollars to pay for our music teacher, I never imagined spending a year of my life engaged in a statewide campaign to raise $10 billion for our schools.
Well...just among us in this room, let me tell you, it was a little scary.

Things can get tough in a political campaign.

But I had a personal life experience that helped me.

How many of you have ever been a kids soccer game and watched the referee in a tight game?

Maybe a little yelling from the sidelines?

Maybe a little questioning of the referee's mental and visual acuity?

Sound like California politics?

One of the best preparations for a statewide political campaign was what I did years ago on soccer fields in San Francisco.

You see...when my kids were little, I was that soccer referee.

Now I want to show you a couple of my favorite campaign pictures. And the music I associate with this experience.

I am reminded again and again that now more than ever, the children of California need the PTA.

Funding for our schools has now dropped from 47th in the nation to 49th in the nation.

Our children still have the largest class sizes and the fewest counselors and fewest librarians.

Funding for pre school education has been slashed.

Important health and social services for communities need to be restored.

Now, more than ever, the children of California need the PTA.

PTA is the largest and most consistent voice for adequate school funding.

The parent who sells gift-wrap to pay for school supplies quickly learns the system is broken and can't be fixed one local school fundraiser at a time.

It takes all of us working together and that is the strength of the PTA.

With a more than 100-year track record, PTA is not a one-trick pony or the reform of the day.

PTA builds community – school by school---and that community includes our teachers.

I believe a great strength of the PTA is spelled out in our name: Parent TEACHER Association.

Unlike new reform groups who pride themselves in “taking on the teachers” and quite frankly blame teachers for problems caused by the education budget crisis, the PTA at its core values our teachers.

We are the Parent Teacher Association.

As we enter a new term and a new time for PTA,

Let me share a few things I have learned:

Don't be afraid to speak up for children.

Don't be afraid to move out of your comfort zone.

Don't be afraid to help lead the PTA in our efforts to improve the lives of a new generation of children.

Don’t forget to value our teachers.

And never ever forget that ordinary people together can do extraordinary things.

Thank you for all you do and all you will do for California's children.

Imagine...just imagine...what we all can do together as PTA.