In Our Founders Day Celebration!

What is Founders Day?

Founders Day, February 17th commemorates the first convention of the National Congress of Mothers, held February 17-19, 1897 in Washington DC. Each February, PTAs nationwide pay special tribute to Alice McLellan Birney and Phoebe Apperson Hearst, co-founders of the National Congress of Mothers, eventually called the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, or PTA. We also remember Selena Sloan Butler, who in 1926 founded the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers, which united with the National PTA in 1970.

In 1910 Mrs. David O. Mears, one of the original members of the Congress suggested that Founders Day should always be observed as a significant anniversary by the National Congress – and everyone concerned with the needs of children and youth. Each year since then PTA members have honored the Founders. Through the Founders Day gift, they have helped ensure ever stronger and more effective local, state, and national parent-teacher action for children.

What is the Free-Will Offering?

A special tradition of PTA Founders Day is the Founders Day gift, a free-will cash offering collected at the Founders Day meeting or an item that’s budgeted in advance by your PTA.

What does it provide?

• 25% to District PTAs--to organize new unit, train leaders & promote PTA publications and special projects.
• 25% to California State PTA—to service new units and councils. Strengthen PTAs, conduct field services in local areas & support leaders and members
• 50% to National PTA—to train leaders, promote contact with educational groups, disseminate materials to further the aims and purposes of PTA, hold conferences & provide extension of parent-teacher services nation-wide.
Ideas for Founders Day

Founders Day is a time to reflect on your PTA’s achievements, examine its current concerns and set goals for the future. The ways to observe Founders Day are limited only by your imagination; there is no one “right” way to celebrate.

Keep in mind that one of the objectives of Founders Day meetings and activities is to increase understanding of the purposed and scope of PTA work—on local, state, and national levels.

Here are some ideas to get you started in planning your Founders Day events:

• Review your membership list to see which parents and teachers haven’t yet joined PTA. Personally invite them, through phone calls or individual letters, to attend your Founders Day celebration and become part of PTAs efforts.

• Is your community particularly concerned about an issue affecting children and youth, for example, alcohol and other drug use, teen pregnancy or AIDS? Focus your meeting on that issue, and ask the entire community to attend. Consider having a panel discussion that includes experts in the field, parents, teachers and students.

• Showcase students’ Reflections projects at your meeting and don’t forget to make students feel welcome to attend.

• Request that your town’s mayor issue a proclamation in honor of PTA’s birthday. Invite the mayor to bring his/her family to your meeting and sign the proclamation during a special ceremony.

• Create a photo collage that highlights events in the history of your PTA. Distribute a list of your PTA’s achievements.

• Start a “PTA Hall of Fame” for persons who have made significant contributions to your PTA.
• Acknowledge outstanding members of your faculty, administration and school staff who have gone the extra mile for PTA.

• Honor community and business leaders who have supported your PTA/PTSA by inviting them to your event and introducing them to your school community.

• Provide a membership table for those people who have not yet joined PTA can enroll.

• Endow the future of PTA. Consider asking members to make a financial contribution in honor of Founders Day your state and/or National PTA.

• Hold a candle lighting ceremony. New Jersey PTA has a candle lighting script. Contact me at historian@capta.org and it will be emailed to you.

• Keep a scrapbook or a display board of all of your PTA activities. Make sure it is displayed at every meeting and activity at your school. It is important to remind your school community the value of PTA and its commitment to children.

Resources: Georgia PTA, New Jersey PTA, Capistrano Unified Council PTSA and California State PTA