

Ridgewood High School Home and School Association

General Membership Meeting Minutes

March 10, 2009

Welcome and Approval of February 10 Meeting Minutes – Elizabeth Resnick, HSA President

Elizabeth welcomed everyone to the General Membership Meeting and proposed the February 10, 2009 Meeting Minutes be voted on for approval. The Minutes were approved by all those present.

Global Learning Classroom – Jack Lorenz, RHS Principal and Eliza Brush & Lewie Peterson, Learning Team Chaperones

The Learning Team is comprised of students from around the world learning about each other, other countries and the similarities and differences in education. The students with the Global Learning Classroom have been in Ridgewood since the end of February and will be leaving Saturday, March 14. The Global Learning Classroom Program was created 12 years ago by administrators at Anderson High School in the Shetland Islands with the intent of “developing communication skills locally, nationally and internationally.” The students who are involved in the program are high school age.

This year’s topic is “Student Leadership”. The Learning Team has already been to Sweden, Germany, Australia, South Africa and the Czech Republic. The goal of the team has been to determine what engages students and how students learn. “What positively influences students in school? What drives learning and how do you promote that?” The information the team gathers at each of the schools and countries they visit is research based.

The main approach of the Global Learning Team is to gather information through focus groups with students. They also do one on one interviews with teachers. The team also does case studies. In June, the team will make a presentation of its overall findings to its administrators in the Shetland Islands. Some of the observations the team has made to date is that having “freedom” in course selection and having a variety of courses to choose from is key to motivating students. While at RHS, the team has noted the strong sense of expectations that students expressed. It is notable that so many of the RHS students strive for excellence in all their pursuits both academic and extracurricular. The team has also been impressed by the strong participation in extracurricular activities.

Some of the students participating with this Learning Team are high school students who are taking a gap year while in high school, a few of the students are taking courses on-line. Others are doing it as a “gap year” after high school before going on to university.

An observation the team made which is somewhat unique to American students is the number of choices they have available to them. Both in academic courses and in extracurricular activities, American students have a lot to choose from which can be very engaging and yet can be overwhelming. The team noted that some students felt stressed trying to balance all that they have going on. One of the key observations of the Learning Team is that those students who are able to select their classes and who can choose to participate in extracurricular activities that they are interested in seem to be more motivated and to take on greater leadership roles.

Project Graduation – What? Why? – Lisa Diss & Patty O’Herlihy, Project Graduation 2009 co-chairs

Project Graduation is a RHS tradition that began more than 30 years ago. It was initiated nationally by PTA’s to provide safe options for graduating students. It is a mainstay in most high schools. RHS’s Project Graduation is an all inclusive event for the graduating senior class and is dependent on parent volunteers who coordinate and sponsor all the events. The intent of Project Graduation is not to “out –do” the year before.

Project Graduation begins with the “wrecking ball”. The parents of the junior class take apart the Project Graduation ensemble at BF the day after the celebration. As much of the material as possible is saved to be reused for the following year. An entire trailer is stocked with things that can be salvaged for the following Project Graduation.

The money raised throughout the year for Project Graduation is spent primarily on entertainment for the kids so that they have a safe and memorable graduation night. The kids are entertained for 10 hours from the dinner dance until 6 a.m. the next morning.

The activities for the senior class that are organized by the school administration and the students are the formal Senior portrait, the Senior Class Photo, the Senior Yearbook, the Pasta Dinner and Slide Show which occur throughout the fall. In the spring there is the Senior Prom, the Yearbook Signing Party and finally the Graduation Ceremony.

The activities that are organized by Project Graduation take place when the Graduation Ceremony is over. The Ceremony begins at 5 p.m. which is followed by an Iced Tea Reception. The graduates board buses that take them to the dinner dance which lasts until midnight. They return by bus to RHS and have 30 minutes to change into casual clothes and then check into BF for a party that lasts until 6 a.m. BF is transformed from a gym, hallway and cafeteria into a

themed environment for the overnight party. Everything is built and decorated by the parents. Refreshments and entertainment are provided throughout the night. Parents chaperone both the dinner dance and the activities at BF.

The final event planned by Project Graduation is their First RHS Reunion, a brunch the day after Thanksgiving hosted at RHS. All the Project Graduation activities are funded through, class dues of \$100 per person, a Fashion Show and Auction, several fundraisers and donations collected during the year. All RHS families were mailed invitations to this year's Fashion Show which will be held on Sunday, April 5 at the Sheridan Crossroads in Mahwah.

Principal's Report – Jack Lorenz

As you can well imagine, the Administrative Team is facing the challenge of making cuts to its budget while sustaining the level of excellence at RHS. Meeting the reduced budget takes a lot of energy and takes a toll on morale but at the heart of the matter is how to best serve the students. At the next RHS HSA meeting on April 14, there will be a presentation of what these changes will be.

The Master Schedule is being worked on. 95% of the students have registered for their 2009/2010 classes on Naviance. At the end of April the proposed schedules will be mailed out to all students.

The Smart Boards were installed yesterday and the faculty training has begun. The teachers are very excited to use the Smart Boards in the classrooms.

The re-registration of all RHS students has begun and to date only about 45 families or so have not resubmitted all the necessary documents. From this point on, all entering freshman will submit the required documentation when registering.

Vice-President's Report – Rola Baddoura

The RHS HSA Bylaws and Constitution have been revised to reflect the changes that have taken place in the HSA organization. The key changes are:

- Expansion of the size of the Executive Board to include a Communication Chair and a Development Committee Chair
- The 1 year term restriction for the President has been removed.*
- All Executive Board members (except for the 1st Vice President, who is the Principal of RHS) shall now serve a term of 1 year and may be re-elected for one additional consecutive term of 1 year.*

* It is to be the intent of the HSA Nominating Committee to select an HSA member, other than the person currently serving that position on the Executive Board. However, if a candidate cannot be found, the Nominating Committee may propose that the Executive Board member serve an additional 1 year term in that position.

- A Class Representative Financial Coordinator position has been added on the Board. The role of that financial coordinator is to assist the Treasurer in his duties and to interface with Project Graduation and class Representatives to ensure that appropriate records are maintained.

- A RHS Cares Committee has been added to the Board to provide support to members of the RHS community and their immediate households in times of crisis.

The Revised HSA Constitution and Bylaws have been available for all to review on the HSA website. The HSA Bylaws Committee held a meeting last Tuesday night, March 3 for anyone to come to have questions answered about the revisions that were being proposed in the Bylaws. Rola would like to thank all those volunteers who sat on the Bylaws Committee including Maura Etna, Sara Erwin, Michele Lenhard, Wendy Wong, Amy Scher, and Elizabeth Resnick. Rola would also like to thank the past HSA Presidents, Fran Ekblom and Beth Jorgensen, whose review and comments on the proposed revisions were invaluable.

Rola proposed that the Revised RHS HSA Constitution and By-Laws be voted on for approval by all those present. Rola stated that if they were approved they would be put in effect June 2009. Caroline Barr seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and all 35 HSA members present voted for the approval of the Revised Bylaws and Constitution.

Guidance Report – Jeff Nyhuis

2,680 requests for transcripts have been processed for the Senior class. To date 57 seniors have committed to a college or university.

College Night is March 18 from 7 – 9 p.m. in the RHS Campus Center. Over 100 colleges will be represented. This is a great opportunity for juniors and their parents to meet college representatives and get on lists for mailings.

Last week was HSPA testing for juniors. This is a state required test that takes place over 3 days.

The last day for students to register for the A.P. tests is March 23. Students who wish to register can do so on the Community Pass site.

Sophomores and juniors interested in learning more about applying to be a Peer Counselor are invited to presentations on March 16, 18 and 19 during unit lunch.

The College Speaker Series, which is hosted by the Guidance Department in conjunction with the REF, is scheduled for May 14 from 7 – 9. The speaker will be Peter Van Buskirk and the presentation is entitled “The Admissions Game”. Peter is a very dynamic speaker and presents a unique format. Students and parents are encouraged to attend this very informative presentation about the college admission process.

Teacher’s Report – Donna Antonellis

Donna would like to again thank the HSA for their generosity and hospitality in providing refreshments before the faculty meetings.

All the laptops and computers have been updated to interface with computers the students have at home.

The SAT dates are listed in the RHS Booster Calendar, please make sure that your students are aware of the deadlines to register for the tests. It is also important to note that the next test date is May 2 which is the last Saturday of the April break.

Board of Education Report – Joseph Vallerini

Next month Dr. Fishbein and Angelo DiSimone will have the details of the budget that will be put before the voters in April. Tomorrow the State of New Jersey Board of Education will announce monies going to each of the school districts.

The BOE has had to cut \$2.5 million in the budget. Please be aware that it may be as bad next year as well with continued cuts in financing.

The Ridgewood schools will be open on April 27. April recess has been shortened because one additional snow day was needed that was not allotted in the calendar.

BOE Communication Forum Update – Laurie Goodman

The Communication Forum was hosted by the BOE on March 3. Approximately 20 residents attended and most were parents who had children in the school system. The Board had hoped to get more taxpayers who do not have children in the school system to get their feedback on how to best communicate with that population.

A report is being compiled and will be presented. Laurie Goodman and Joseph Vallerini are both on the BOE Communication Committee and they welcome your thoughts, concerns and questions.

President’s Report – Elizabeth Resnick

Federated Update - At the March Federated Meeting, Dr. Fishbein gave an overview of the budget process and the cuts that will need to be made in light of the \$2.5 million deficit. More details will be presented in April. Another important topic discussed at the meeting was pedestrian safety which is a primary concern at all the Ridgewood schools, including RHS. It was also decided at the meeting that the proceeds from the Wizard's game would be kept within the district in light of the budget cuts the BOE is facing. Federated has not yet determined exactly where within the district the money will be directed.

Ridgewood Education Foundation Update - \$5,000 in grants have been awarded this spring. RHS received funding for 2 grants one entitled "Electrifying the Strings" and the other for Chinese Calligraphy & Japanese Art. The REF is happy to announce that \$16,000 was raised from the volunteers who helped with the Barclay's golf tournament this past summer.

Communications/Webmaster - Sara Erwin

The HSA enews is going out to over 1,600 families now!

Development Committee – Theresa Callaghan & Katie VanSaun

The RHS parent social that was hosted on Friday night, March 6 that featured a live band was great fun for those who attended. Thank everyone for their support for this worthwhile event.

Nominating Committee – Patty Mullen & Carol Rapaport

The Committee will be meeting to prepare the slate for the 2009/2010 HSA Executive Board. The Committee consists of 6 HSA members who represent a cross section of town and whose children are in various grades at RHS. The Committee has been gathering names of those interested in sitting on the Board. If you are interested in one of the Board positions or know someone who is, please contact Patty or Carol. The slate will be presented at the April 14 HSA meeting and voted on at the May 12 meeting.

Legacy Program – Linda Diorio

The Legacy Program was initiated fairly recently at RHS. It is similar to the Birthday Book Program at the Ridgewood elementary schools. Participating in the program is a wonderful way to enhance the library collection. The RHS Librarian, Donna Antonellis, has compiled a "Wish List" for the RHS Library that parents and students can choose from to donate to the library for all the RHS students to benefit from.

RHS Cares – Kate Douglass and Anne Zusy

RHS Cares will be providing dinners for a RHS family for the entire month of April. Volunteers are needed to cook, please contact Kate if you would be able to help.

If anyone knows of a family in need, particularly if teachers or the Administration is aware of a student whose family is struggling, please contact Kate. All matters will be handled confidentially.

Safety Program – Rose Boniello & Dan Schwaim

There is extreme concern for the safety of our students as they cross over Ridgewood Ave. from Brookside Road. The students are crossing the road while the traffic on Ridgewood Ave. has the green light. Many kids are oblivious to the traffic, texting on their phones, listening to their ipods or immersed in conversation. We as parents need to remind our kids, even at the ages they are, to look before crossing the road.

The most effective solution may be to have a crossing guard at the Ridgewood Ave. crosswalk. Another easy fix is for parents and student to leave earlier to avoid traffic.

Jack and the administration will push to educate our students about pedestrian safety and will talk to the Student Production students to do a public announcement campaign.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Please note the next RHS HSA meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 14 at 7:30 p.m. in the *RHS Campus Center*.

In attendance:

Kate Douglass, Rose Boniello, Carol Rapaport, Laurie Goodman, Joseph Carey, Linda Diorio, Mahmoud Hamza, Jeff Nyhuis, Basil Pizzuto, Jack Lorenz, Karen Lorenz, Terri McAteer, Lynn Granski, Elizabeth Gordon, Elizabeth Resnick, Amy Davidson, Joseph Vallerini, Bob Hutton, Marianne Bennett, Audrey Fink, Caroline Barr, Dan Schwaim, Wendy Wong, Cheryl Sabbath, Lisa Diss, Patty O'Herlihy, Fay Mehran, Sara Erwin, Rola Baddoura, Lynn Granski, Lisa Gible, Michele Lehnard, Patty Mullen, Nancy Stewart, Eugeria Manuel, Yvonne Francis, Theresa Callaghan, Annie Zusy, Gihan Hamza, Katie Van Saun, Donna Antonellis