

# FOCUS Joel Barlow High School PTSA Newsletter



SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2008

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER Welcome!!

Welcome to a new and exciting school year at Joel Barlow High School! In addition to many new faces at the administrative level and in the teaching staff, you have a new PTSA team, and I am honored to serve as President.

We look forward to working with you, the administration and the teachers to achieve our common goal: a high quality education and an enriching environment for each student.

As you know, the PTSA provides a much needed bridge between the parents and the school. It is one of the best ways to learn about issues concerning curriculum, achievement, school policies and concerns. Knowing what is going on within the school is more important than even at the high school level.

When parents are involved, their child's grades are higher and test scores improve, as numerous studies have shown. By volunteering, your child receives life-long benefits and you assist the school in achieving its goal. The National PTSA is asking each parent to volunteer "three (3) hours per year to their children's schools". If each parent at JBHS responds, we will have over 3,000 volunteer hours dedicated to making Barlow and its students the best they can be.

Numerous opportunities are available, at any and all times. One example, as Mr. McMorran has recently mentioned, involves volunteers in the academic lab, which is a classroom where students can make up tests, review for tests, receive help with homework questions or simply get assistance organizing their papers. Others include helping freshmen parents navigate the transition to high school, helping to keep the library open for an hour longer after school, and coordinating a survey to assess ways to improve the PTSA.

I know there are many demands on your time. I also know that these high school years pass by very quickly. Please consider taking an active role in our PTSA and our school.

If you have already joined the PTSA, thank you. If not, please reconsider, join our group and help make JBHS the best school it can be. Check inside this newsletter for information on our next meeting, October 14.

Colleen T. Joyce, *PTSA President*

## FROM THE PRINCIPAL ... Faith In Our Students

"Oh my! Did you see that terrible play? That kid threw the football in the wrong direction. You gotta get him outta there, coach!" I heard this unsolicited advice from an agitated parent in the stands at a football game last year. I was standing on the sidelines with Pam Goodpaster, the Athletic Director. She quietly explained to me that the coach would not be pulling his athlete after a spectacular goof-up. "We'll leave him in for a few more plays. At this point, he needs to keep working. If we pull him now, he will lose his confidence."

That faith in the student should define Barlow. We don't pull the kid when he fails. We leave him in the game to try again. There is a well-known story about Tom Watson, the founder of IBM. One day, he called a young executive into his office to ask him how the company had lost ten million dollars due to an error the rookie made. Feeling terribly ashamed, the young man got up to leave. "Where are you going?" Mr. Watson is said to have asked. "I'm going to get my things and leave." was the exec's reply. "Leave? After I just spent ten million dollars teaching you how to do your job?" The story ends with the young man returning to work.

In a recent article by educational researcher Gerald Bracey, "The Entrepreneurial Thing — We're Only No. 2," Dr. Bracey points out that according to the World Competitiveness Yearbook, the United States ranks first in the world out of 131 countries for having the most competitive economy. In fact, we have ranked first for the last 15 years. One of the reasons he cites is that in America, it's okay to fail so long as you try again. In his words, "It's not clear how, but somehow the United States, in comparison with other nations, makes failure an acceptable option." Now, please don't get me wrong. I am not suddenly saying it's okay to fail.

What I am saying is that if we never allow our students to fail, and to face the consequences of having failed, we are robbing them of apparently necessary experiences. We need to let our kids stay in the game, face their decisions, resolve their own issues, and try again. When our football player — let's call him Bob — threw the ball away, his parents didn't come out of the stands and try to take the next snap in his place. Imagine that for a moment. Onto the field comes Bob's mom, pushing referees and coaches out of her way. She tells her son to go sit on

the bench while she calls the next play. Absurd? Maybe. However, we at the high school take phone calls daily from concerned parents who don't want to see their children struggle with the learning process. Most of us are parents, too, and we fully understand the urge to want to protect our children.

Didn't get an A on that test? Didn't make the varsity team? Didn't get the part you wanted your child to have in the play? Didn't get elected class president? Good for you. What will you do to keep moving beyond this so-called failure? The American thing to do, according to Dr. Bracey, is trying again. He reminds us of the refrain from a song by the band Chumbawamba, "I get knocked down, but I get up again." That's the American way.

When we were kids, our parents and teachers started singing to us when we faced setbacks, or at least my parents did. "Once there was a little ol' ant. Thought he'd move a rubber tree plant ..." Learning to face reality, accept setbacks, accommodate feedback, and get back up again is a skill that no one else can learn for you. You have to face those dark moments yourself. The good news is that, in true American fashion, if you fail enough, eventually you will succeed. Ask that college drop out, Bill Gates.

Tom McMorran, *Principal*

## REMINDER TO PARENTS:

Please subscribe to the Joel Barlow High School Listserv. By following the link below and filling in the proper information, you will receive updates and pertinent information regarding school events and other newsworthy items via email. The direct link to the subscription page for the Listserv is:

<http://lists.getproactivenow.com/mailman/listinfo/barlow-announce>

The link is also available through the Barlow website by typing

<http://www.er9.org/jbhs/index2.html>

and click on the link for "Join Our Listserv".

**The next meeting of the  
2008-2009 PTSA**

**will be held on**

**October 14, 2008**

**from 9:30 am - 11:00 am**

**in Room B109**

**at Joel Barlow High School**

**Please join us!**

**FEATURED SPEAKER: Fred Gervasoni,  
"Navigating the JBHS Website"**

## Dean of Students? What is THAT???

According to the Webster's Dictionary, a dean is "a secondary school administrator in charge of counseling and disciplining students." the denotation of the term "dean" cannot begin to describe the possibilities of what it means to be the Dean of Students and Director of Student Activities at Joel Barlow High School.

When I first read the job description for the position of dean, I couldn't help but notice the verbs describing the responsibilities of the dean. Words such as *organize*, *communicate*, *assist*, *collaborate* and *provide* immediately create a positive connection between the dean and the school community. For me, as the Dean of Students and Director of Activities, I have the opportunity as an educator to engage students in the decision making and the problem solving processes that guide students in the evaluation of their personal choices of conduct and choices of leadership and community responsibilities.

This leads to the question of who is the Dean of Students. I have to say, the title, Dean of Students, is intriguing because of the juxtaposition of the two words, *dean* and *students*. This connection between the two nouns initiated my consideration for how I would begin to define the role of the dean. I define my role by encouraging students to develop skills that will foster integrity, well-being and civic responsibility as they face the challenges of the 21st century. As a result, one of the goals that I have set for myself is to interact daily with ALL students. Being present in the hallways, in the classrooms, and at various events and activities is important to me because I feel that students should know me as someone who is an accessible member of our school community.

Joel Barlow students and I have much in common. I, too, am a learner. As a new member of the Joel Barlow family, I am discovering so much about what it is to be a citizen of this school community, especially as I continue to define myself and my role as Dean of Students and Director of Student Activities. I do *communicate*, I do *collaborate*, and I do *assist* as outlined in the job description, but I also have used the opportunity to exchange ideas and laugh with so many wonderful young adults as I envision who they will become in the next few years.

In many ways, I feel that being the Dean of Students is the best of both worlds in education because I have the advantage of continually witnessing on a daily basis a true sense of collaboration and commitment among administration, faculty, support staff, students and parents.

Mary Ann Sheehy, *Dean of Students/Director of Students*



## Do You Have Three Hours To Spare During The Next School Year?



The National PTA is asking each parent to volunteer just three hours per year to their children's school. Please consider helping out at Joel Barlow High School! Parents are needed in such areas as the school library (helps to keep the library open for an hour longer after school), Academic Lab (supervise students taking make-up exams and help organize school paperwork), and PTSA activities.

Please consider taking an active role in the Joel Barlow PTSA and our school. Contact Colleen Joyce at [ctjoyce1@optonline.net](mailto:ctjoyce1@optonline.net) or call 938-0569.

## Reflections Applications Available October 15

The Reflections Program was started in 1969 by the Colorado PTA and has grown to a nationally recognized program today. It offers students the opportunity to create works of art for fun and recognition. Students are encouraged to create and submit works of art in six areas: dance/choreography, literature, film/video, musical composition, photography, and the visual arts (which includes art forms such as drawing, painting, print making, and collage).

Applications and rules for this year's program will be available in the Guidance Office on October 15, with the deadline set for January 9, 2009. The theme for this year's 2008-2009 program is "Wow!"

Pat Berry, *Reflections Committee*

## Noteworthy News Now Available on Website

JBHS Head of School, Tom McMorran, released a new vehicle of information, *Noteworthy News*, at the recent Region 9 Board of Education meeting. Although it is not an all-inclusive list, it does highlight a sampling of accomplishments, recognition and awards that the Barlow students and staff have achieved.

For those already subscribed to the JBHS Listserv, you may have already received this in your email box. If not, please join the Barlow Listserv (details on page 2). *Noteworthy News* may also be found on the school website at: <http://www.er9.org/jbhs/index2.html>

Items of note: Jack Powers, faculty member and Co-Director of the Writing Center, taught a week-long course called "Reading as Writers" at Fairfield University; the League of Women Voters is working with the social studies teachers and the Debate Team to host a Mock Election on October 6; Cary Glynn, former student representative to the Board of Education, has been appointed to the State Student Advisory Council on Education; faculty members Michael Ecsedy and Jonathan Budd recently received letters of thanks from the State Department of Education for their contributions. For more information, please check your email or school website.

## ReddingREADS Huck: "Now Let's Talk"

Wow! Never in our wildest dreams did we envision 900 copies of *Huck* being snatched up by Redding residents! And so many of them were JBHS students!! On behalf of both the Redding Educational Foundation and the Mark Twain Library, THANK YOU Joel Barlow for embracing Redding's first Community-Wide Read.

Our goal in launching ReddingREADS was to provide an avenue for community conversation through the exploration of a common book. It is wonderful to have JBHS representation in this effort: Janice Garvey and her AP Literature Class will be putting together an evening at the library on October 23rd and the Barlow Players will be making a special performance as well, at the Finale on November 2nd. Additionally, Redding-READS hopes to see many more JBHS faces at the upcoming events:

**THURSDAY, OCT. 2, 3:00 PM**

"Huck's Relationship with Jim" led by Ben Gordon

**THURSDAY, OCT. 9, 7:00 PM**

"The River" led by Bob Liftig

**THURSDAY, OCT. 16, 7:00 PM**

"All Right Then, I'll Go to Hell" led by Catherine Riordan

**THURSDAY, OCT. 23, 7:00 PM**

"Language in Huck" led by Janice Garvey

Finally, the Finale will be held on **Sunday, November 2, at 2:00 pm**. All students and faculty are welcome. Be sure to mark your calendars! For additional information or questions, please call Patsy King, 938-2775.



**JOEL BARLOW HIGH SCHOOL PTSA**  
**MEMBERSHIP/BUZZ BOOK ORDER FORM 2008-09**  
*This form is available online at [www.er9.org/jbhs](http://www.er9.org/jbhs)*



The PTSA sponsors many programs, including the Buzz Book, Senior Scholarships, the Reflections Program, Mini-grants and more. Funding for these activities come from PTSA membership, so please lend your generous support!

PTSA membership is the **only way** to obtain your Buzz Book, an indispensable directory of student and parent names, addresses, and phone numbers. The book will include teacher contacts and pertinent school information. To be listed in the directory, this form (or the online form found at [www.er9.org/jbhs/](http://www.er9.org/jbhs/)) must be completed, signed, and returned by **September 5th**. **By filling out this form, you give permission to the JBHS PTSA to publish the information in the Buzz Book that will be distributed to PTSA members.**

*Did you fill out the online form? Y/N (No need to complete the information below if you completed the online form.)*  
**Children at JBHS and their grade for 2008-09:**

<b>Child's Full Name and Grade</b>	<b>Child's Full Name and Grade</b>	<b>Child's Full Name and Grade</b>
<b>Mother's Full Name:</b> _____		
<b>Address:</b> _____		
<b>Phone Number:</b> _____	<b>Safe Home Family (circle one): Yes / No</b> (see pledge on the back of this form)	
<b>Email address (to publish):</b> _____		
<b>Father's Full Name:</b> _____		
<b>Address:</b> _____ (if different from above)		
<b>Phone Number:</b> _____	<b>Safe Home: (circle one): Yes / No</b>	

**MEMBERSHIP: (check all that apply)**

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Family Membership (includes 2 Buzz Books)           | \$ <u>30.00</u>       |
| 2. Additional Donation in Support of the PTSA Programs | \$ _____              |
| 3. Additional Buzz Books    Number _____ @ \$3.00 ea.  | \$ _____              |
| * Please make checks payable to: JBHS PTSA             | <b>Total</b> \$ _____ |

\_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in receiving PTSA announcements and the Focus newsletter via e-mail  
**My e-mail address is:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I do **not** wish to become a PTSA Member, but I would like my child to be listed in the directory. I understand that I will **not** receive a copy of this directory.

**Parent Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to:**

**Laurie Stone**  
**77 Rock House Road**  
**Easton, CT 06612**

- \* **Make checks payable to JBHS PTSA**
- \* **Buzz Books** will be distributed on Open House night at the PTSA Table.

**Questions:** Contact: **Dana Johnson-** [dana21@optonline.net](mailto:dana21@optonline.net)  
 This form is available at [www.er9.org/jbhs](http://www.er9.org/jbhs)