

## **TCGIS PTO Meeting Minutes** **January 4, 2010**

**Attendees:** Leslie Walker, Gina Vader, Rebecca Johnson, Kate Olson, Kari Swedberg, Michelle Sheire, Linda Michel, Renee Moelders, Molly McBeath, Heidi Zimmermann, Kami Blackwell Kinney, Michelle Nellis, Chris Weimholt, Lisa Antony-Thomas, Britta Walker, Elena Heindl, Nicole Grenz, Liane Gale.

**Location:** Davanni's, Cleveland & Grand, St. Paul

The meeting was called to order by PTO president Leslie Watson at 6:35 p.m.

**Call for New Business.** Leslie Watson requested to strike the School Board Report from the agenda as Kim Kompel, the Parent Liaison of TCGIS School Board was unable to attend the meeting. Instead, that time slot would be taken up by Britta Walker, Chair of the Parent Outreach Committee for a committee update and to present marketing ideas for Maskenball.

**Approval of Agenda.** Britta Walker moved to accept the amended agenda, Lisa Antony-Thomas seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of December Minutes.** Kate Olson moved to accept the December minutes, Britta Walker seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

**Treasurer Report.** Treasurer Molly McBeath provided a brief summary on the financial status of the PTO. Previously outstanding bills, e.g. for clothing have been paid; enough money is set aside to pay for the damage deposit and the Wabasha cave rental for Maskenball. Not all funds set aside for teachers in the fall have been spent and also the director Annika Fjelstad has not asked for funds yet. A question addressed the teacher's coffee vs. hospitality coffee. Molly McBeath replied that she subtracts money paid by the teachers from the total invoice; the rest is considered hospitality coffee, which is paid for by the school. The system appears to be working. The landscape architect will only charge us if the plan he created for the outdoor space is being used; otherwise, it will be considered *pro bono* work.

**Parent Outreach Committee.** Britta Walker recapped the committee meeting that took place just before the PTO meeting. The main discussion points were to determine the role of the committee besides the support it provides for new families by recognizing that there is a continued need to reach out to parents. The discussion focused on communication in general and the committee being a bridge to facilitate communication between parents and administration, providing opportunities for informal meetings of families, and supporting and marketing events like Great Gatherings and Maskenball, or posting comments on websites like greatschools.org for a balanced view of the school. A specific marketing idea for Maskenball was a phone tree to communicate with the parents in a personal way. Gina Vader mentioned that an Open House for Charter Schools will take place on January 9 at the River Center, St. Paul and that it would be beneficial for the school to have some parent volunteers take on some shifts.

### **Maskenball Planning**

Leslie Watson had prepared a Maskenball Planning Document that was being used as a guideline for ensuing discussion.

**Budget.** How many people will come? Four gold sponsors were supplied with free tickets. Thirteen tickets have been sold so far. Current budgeting assumes 160 tickets (130 regular, 30 staff) to be sold, which are needed to break even. Total capacity is 250. Ticket policy for volunteers was discussed. Last year, all volunteers, including event organizers paid for their tickets. Leslie Watson suggested doing this again. Outside volunteer recruitment was discussed to free up parent volunteers. If outside volunteers are recruited they need to be supplied with food, maybe a boxed lunch, which would be an additional catering expense. The questions on how many volunteers are needed, who will find them, who will be coordinating them and what should they do were addressed. Volunteers would be needed especially for setting up, and general errand running. Rebecca Johnson suggested that we could use about 4-6 volunteers maybe more beforehand, for set-up. Linda Michel knows an interested Girl Scout group consisting of 10 or more high school juniors and seniors, that needs service hours; the group leader and maybe the co-leader would accompany the girls, so they would be supervised.

**Marketing to Parents.** How do we get the message out? A short discussion ensued about marketing strategies to parents, i.e. e-mail vs. personal phone call. Britta Walker expressed her opinion that a personal phone call, as a different mode of communication would make a larger impact. Also, parents need to be made aware to follow links at the PTO website. Both Gina Vader and Britta Walker volunteered to show up in costume on Friday mornings or at pick-up. The online auction itself created a lot of buzz and interest in Maskenball last year.

**Set-Up.** We can start at 4:30 pm latest, and earlier if nothing else is scheduled beforehand. Gina Vader volunteered to be the Caves contact person.

**Guest Database.** Renee Moelders volunteered to manage the guest database. Guests need to be tracked by name. Everybody will get a bidder number assigned. Everybody will get a packet in form of a newspaper, that will contain the program, inserts with auction sites, complimentary drink ticket, tickets to various raffles if previously purchased. All information will need to be in the database, and the packets will be assembled according to guest database. The issuing of nametags was discussed. Britta Walker stated that nametags should be obligatory during all events, but because of costumes and outside guests, Maskenball may not be the best event for nametags. An idea for a name hunt on the other hand received great reception. **Lisa Antony-Thomas, Chris Weimholt, Britta Walker, Kami Blackwell Kinney, Renee Moelders** volunteered to put together the guest packets as well as the raffle tickets.

**Sponsors' Tables.** Molly McBeath will connect with Nina Roelofs, Executive Director of the German American Chamber of Commerce (GACC) on how they would like to have their sponsor signage as Luebbert Kruizenga, President of the Board appears to have specific ideas. Still in the works as potential sponsors are Inver Grove Volkswagen and Schuler Shoes. An additional possibility might be Grand Avenue Business Association (through Lisa Erickson). Lisa Anthony-Thomas volunteered as coordinator.

**Marketing.** Maskenball was advertised in the December GAI Newsletter and could be re-advertised in the February Newsletter. Leslie Watson will take care of this. Gina Vader also recommended that the announcement postcards should be handed out during information sessions to incoming parents. Kinderclub personnel should be informed that they qualify for discounted staff tickets. Information should be sent to GAI Kinderstube coordinator. GACC should be sent a reminder too, including a ticket order form. Leslie Watson summarized marketing ideas in order to develop a cohesive strategy on how to market Maskenball to the community:

- Phone tree
- Weekly teasers of some kind (Gina Vader, Britta Walker)
- A mobile display with historic pictures with captions, countdown,
- Presentation during the State of the School event
- Sending out an initial Maskenball package and repeated paper fliers to families in February.

Kindergarten teacher Elena Heindl volunteered to communicate with the KG parents. To what extent do the teachers acknowledge Maskenball? Michelle Nellis mentioned that she informed staff about Maskenball during the staff meeting earlier that day and also encouraged the PTO to send a member to a staff meeting to advertise Maskenball.

Kami Blackwell Kinney volunteered to participate in a Marketing Sub-Committee that will coordinate all marketing efforts. She also volunteered to contact all Classroom Parents and through the Classroom Support Committee also contact teachers. Group event forms and donation forms will be distributed to teachers, will be put in the front office and will be available online. Britta Walker will assemble information and assignment for the phone tree and will implement deadlines; Gina Vader will work with Britta Walker to assemble the message. Packages will be assembled and send out next Monday. Paper Invitations should be sent out to KG parents and to outside people that may be interested in attending or donating, parents should be aware that PTO will send out invitations per request.

**Teacher Raffle.** Raffle tickets will be \$2.00 per ticket, the name of a teacher is entered in the raffle for a two-night getaway to New Ulm. Raffles could be sold ahead of time, so that even parents who will not come could purchase raffle tickets.

**Live Auction.** Should we do this at all? Is complicated by the fact that there are several rooms in the Caves. All will be together for the strings ensemble, and a speech by Annika Fjelstad. The live auction could follow. What should be auctioned? Auctions that have a personal connection to the school, or unique items, e.g. a dinner with Annika Fjelstad, the Vulcan truck ride. Live auction items need to be marketed beforehand.

**Kids' Art:** Has traditionally been a good live auction item. The arts teacher Amy Lenburg is willing to work with the kids on a school-wide project. The current idea is that each child would do a self-portrait on a 4x6 little canvas. Selected portraits would be put together into several collages, which could be framed. Wood frames could be inexpensively bought from Ikea or we could have them framed. How large would these collages be? One large 16 x 20 collage for the live auction, maybe even larger and some smaller ones for the silent auction. One idea was to provide one to director Annika Fjelstad to beautify her office. A discussion followed whether portraits would be the right theme for the Kids' Art project and other types of art projects were discussed. It was decided that Linda Michel would go back to Amy Lenburg for further discussions.

**Wall of Wine.** Lisa Erickson (Grand Avenue Business Association) will help with the wall of wine raffle. The goal is to collect 72 bottles of wine through donations.

**Mugs.** Mugs are in-hand, white with blue logo, and look good. They will be sold for \$25 by the cigarette girls (Lisa Antony-Thomas and sisters) and will contain something of similar value.

**Heads or Tails.** Party Gambling game, you pay to play, choose head or tails, advance to further rounds if you guess right, until one person is left for a cash prize. The last five survivors could get a

prize also, for example, a bottle of wine.

**Auction Specifics.** One section of the auction will be closed early maybe at 7:50 p.m. Volunteers are needed to move the table to the side because that auction table sits on the dance floor.

**Background Music.** Maybe through iPod? Gina Vader will be in contact with Rich Mattson. Gina will also find out if a tuned piano is available in the Caves (needed for string ensemble)?

**MCs.** Michael Sampson volunteered to again be an emcee. Shall we have two emcees this year? Sue Burke Westacott knows a professional DJ, who also has experience in being emcee and will follow up with him.

**King & Queen.** Discussion, whether this should be done again, as we have different kinds of costumes this year. One voice in favor wanted to award a prize to the people who best embraced the Spirit of Maskenball. How to award? Last year we had two secret judges.

**Table Decorations.** Some decorating items come with the catering; Gina Vader suggested to use these free items; just a vase with three flowers (roses) needed to be added, which could be had for under \$2.50. Kate Olson offered that she could get flowers for wholesale minus 10% through her husband.

**Doors.** Once doors open, what will be the flow? This was a problem last year. The coat check is right there. Shall we give out the packets beforehand? What if people forget their packet? Maskenball information will be sent home, tickets will be distributed at the site.

**Welcome Table.** Who will be welcoming guests to the event? Should be the hosts, core members of the PTO. Gina Vader volunteered to be a Greeter. Effective greeters are deemed necessary to inform guests about event details, e.g. bidder number. Other go-to people (maybe identifiable through boutonnieres) should be available for questions during the event. Cigarette girls could fulfill this role also. Classroom parents could also staff the welcome table.

**Volunteer Coordinator.** Rebecca Johnson volunteered to be the volunteer coordinator.

**Catering.** Kari Swedberg asked whether the letter to the caterer was o.k. All thought so.

**Proceeds.** A short discussion ensued on how to handle the proceeds that night and over the weekend. Who will be in charge of the money during the event? Rebecca Johnson volunteered her sister to monitor the cash box during the event. Molly McBeath will work out a cash handling protocol with other Committee members.

**Parking.** A reminder should be sent out to let people know where to park.

**ATM.** The closest ATM needs to be located.

**Cave Tours.** String ensemble kids could do the 7:30 p.m. tour. The Caves rental comes with two tours (50 people each). No tours between 8 and 9 p.m. Should we pay to have extra tours after 9 p.m.; how many people are interested in taking a tour?

Meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.