

Glennallen PTO: Working Together For Schools



Glennallen High School students showing their school spirit. (top to bottom) Kiersten Amrine, Kelti Lorence, Sarah Hall, Falon Mills, Sarah Dorsey, Myra Auble, McKenzie Cyr, Kendall Maslen, Lexus Martin, and Adrienne Hall.

Photo courtesy Sarah Hall

We are all familiar with the famous quote, “It takes a village to raise a child”. The Glennallen Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) believes in this philosophy. They believe that the relationships within the Glennallen community, which includes students, teachers, staff, parents and patrons are all vital to the success of their childrens’ futures. Their purpose is to foster a sense of cooperation, support, pride and enthusiasm by providing a forum for interaction between these stakeholders and by providing support through fundraising activities and the promotion of positive school/community relationships.

Parent/Teacher Organizations are typically run by a Board of Directors and operate under an approved set of Bylaws. The Glennallen PTO Board is Jaime Matthews (President), Wendy Langseth (Vice President), Sara Cook (Secretary), Shannon Saavedra (Treasurer), Sandy McMahan (Teacher Liaison), and Carla Parmenter (High School Parent Representative). The Board meets monthly and holds general meetings each quarter. At the quarterly meetings, the Board updates attendees on what the PTO is working on and gives the parents an opportunity

to be involved. Board members are elected annually at the last regular meeting of the school year.

Glennallen PTO members are parents or guardians of students, patrons, and teachers who take an interest in Glennallen schools. Each active member, which is any member who has attended at least one regular meeting during the school year or who is actively involved in a special committee, has one vote. Member attendance has ranged from 10 to 100 when the meetings are held in conjunction with holiday programs.

When asked why there is a need for a PTO in the Glennallen School District, President Matthews commented, “any school district benefits from parent volunteers, but in particular when there is no city funding. The Copper River School District operates on a tight budget and in some cases funding for projects or events may not be available.” She goes on to say, “we are very involved with the staff at Glennallen Schools and want to assist them in any way we can.”

The Glennallen PTO has been around in some form for over 25 years. It used to be a PTA, where parents paid dues but it

is no longer organized that way. Today, all money is raised via fundraisers. Some of these include a book basket auction, sale of cookbooks, Current orders, and movie nights. PTO also receives donations.

The organization has one main fundraiser each year in addition to several smaller ones. In 2010, the PTO sponsored a book basket auction which also included a silent auction and sales of cook books. This event brought in over \$5,000. Local and out of town vendors participate in this huge event. The grand prize basket was donated by the Glennallen Child Advocacy Center and went for nearly \$500! All of the proceeds from the 2010 auction will go towards the purchase of an electronic sign to advertise important events. This is expected to be in place in the fall of 2011.

There are tremendous benefits to the children of having an active PTO. Children are given an increased sense of school spirit. In 2009, Glennallen Elementary won the prestigious Blue Ribbon Award, given to elementary, middle, and high schools that are either high performing or have improved student achievement to high levels. To honor this achievement, the PTO purchased t-shirts for all the elementary students. They also support Spirit Days. Students who wear their school colors on Fridays get their name entered into a quarterly drawing. Students are rewarded with a root beer float during the lunch hour. This past school year over 100 floats were distributed to spirit ticket winners. The Glennallen PTO also supports the Box Top program by providing incentive for kids to collect box tops. This is especially important as 100% of the money raised from collecting box tops is donated to the Glennallen school libraries. The 2011 goal is to raise \$500.

If there is an opportunity for an educational experience, the organization can help fund that. In 2008, the group funded "World of Reptiles" by naturalist Scott Shupe, one of the nation's leading reptile experts. In 2008, when the CVEA Community Foundation brought the Rachel's Challenge program to the schools, the Glennallen PTO supported both the FOR and KC Clubs through a donation of \$200 to each program. These programs still continue today. The PTO purchases a weekly newsletter for elementary students and holds a holiday shop each December. This event provides the students with an opportunity to share in the joy of holiday giving.

Teacher Appreciation Day is another big event. The Glennallen PTO and the Student Council (STUCO) partner to sponsor teacher appreciation activities. They also partner on movie nights and school picnics. This has been a great way to include the organization's involvement at the high school level.

The Glennallen PTO funds a magnet calendar provided to each student in the entire Copper River School District. This is one way they touch others not in their school. The 2011-2012 magnet will be sponsored by CVEA, CVT, Lake Louise Lodge, and KCAM. Also in 2011, the PTO is planning to kick off the



Holli Nollner, winner of the "Girls World Basket" at the 2010 Book Basket Auction.

Photo by Jaime Matthews

school year with a back to school football Friday spirit day competition. Photos will be taken and submitted for a chance to win a wellness grant for Glennallen schools.

According to Matthews, she became involved with the Glennallen PTO because it was her way, as a working parent, to be involved with the school. Her biggest accomplishment has been to grow closer with the teachers and help make decisions that directly affect the Glennallen schools. She says, "it made me smile this summer when my daughter said, Mom, you are famous in my school, kind of like Sarah Palin; I am not a political person but took this as a compliment from my daughter. She has indicated several times she enjoys me helping and everyone knowing who I am. I often get lots of hugs when I volunteer my time."

Commitments in the organization range from attending monthly meetings to baking a sweet treat for teachers. The more dedicated volunteers they have, the more they can do. If you are interested in participating or would like more information, email glennallenpto@gmail.com. ■