

Yonkers Council PTA/PTSA  
Annual Report  
2018

The Yonkers Council of PTA/PTSAs partnered with the Board of Education, the Community, the PTA Boards and Elected Officials throughout the school year. Our goals included strengthening our PTAs by offering multiple Schools of Instruction, helping them with improving parent involvement and thus strengthen our abilities to reach out to the community and rally for support when needed.

The 2017/2018 YCPTA Executive Committee Sally Pinto, as President; Arlene Burlingham as 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President, Sophia Wu as 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President, Mercedes Rios as 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice President, Carlos Macias as Treasurer, Ann Marie Papanagnostou as Corresponding Secretary, Irma Pereira as Recording Secretary and Karen Beltran as Immediate Past President.

In August at the Principal meeting we provided the principals with their PTAs status and Sally Pinto spoke to them about the goals and mission of the PTA. The Advocacy efforts began early for the Yonkers Council of PTA/PTSAs. The Charter School for Educational Excellence requested 421 additional seats for a High School that would require the District to reduce expenditures by approximately \$1.5 million in one year starting 2018-2019 and \$7 million a year by four years. This could result in the loss of staff positions. A public hearing took place on September 13, 2017 for public comment. YCPTA reached out to the YFT and CSEA and Yonkers Council of Administrators to assist in these efforts. We also reached out to each PTA and Principal to have parent representation at the meeting. Along with that, if parents could not attend the meeting we are requested they send a letter via a link on the Yonkers Public Schools Website. Our Advocacy efforts continued throughout the year.

YCPTA reached out to the community at the Annual Yonkers Riverfest on September 16, 2017 where we informed parents about the Yonkers Council of PTA/PTSAs and encouraged them to join their school's PTA. Next to our table was the Board of Education and Yonkers Basics. We are also on the Advisory Board for Yonkers Basics where the effort is to help children grow from zero to three years of age. We assisted the Yonkers Parks Department with their Annual Marathon on September 17<sup>th</sup> by finding volunteers for their water tables. Students were able to get volunteer hours for their efforts and cheer for the runners.

We reached out to the PTAs in the summer of 2017 introducing ourselves and making ourselves accessible and thus starting to build a relationship. We attended the Principals meeting where we encouraged the principals to work closely with their PTA Boards towards the goal of improving parent involvement. Our first meeting of the month was held on September 18<sup>th</sup> at Saunders High School where our guest speaker was Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Edwin Quezada. Dr. Quezada spoke about the start of the school year and answered parents' questions. Meeting minutes once adopted at the next board meeting were posted online for the school year so that parents who could not make it to the YCPTA meetings could be informed as to what occurred at the meetings.

The YCPTA assisted the BOE Registration Office with the School Choice process. We attended School Choice day and introduced ourselves to all the schools represented that day. We greeted the parents and handed them information about PTA and a magnet with our contact information. Parents and YCPTA board members also assisted parents during the balloting process.

The YCPTA met with the Food Services staff along with parents to work on understanding and improving the school breakfast/lunches. The YCPTA had a table at the Celebration of Hispanic Heritage held on October 4<sup>th</sup> where we reached out to families. Karen Beltran, former YCPTA President and WEP Region Director was honored at the event. Yonkers Public Schools and the Yonkers Council of PTA/PTSAs, in collaboration with the Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Board, joined in accepting non-perishable items on October 2<sup>nd</sup> and October 3<sup>rd</sup> at all Yonkers Public Schools. YCPTA also joined in efforts to raise funds for the Texas PTA. Also as a response to these disasters in Texas and Puerto Rico, the YCPTA in conjunction with the Yonkers Public Schools and the Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Board joined in the Disaster Relief Drop off efforts at each of the schools.

The YCPTA/PTSA hosted its Annual School of Instruction on October 10<sup>th</sup> at Lincoln High School. We offered numerous training sessions for the PTA officers from 25 PTAs to kick off the school year. The workshops included a Principal's and President's Roundtable, Fundraising for Big PTA \$, Website Training and Communications, and Treasury 101 Workshop – Financial Do's and Don'ts. The vendor fair included participants from the VIVE School, YSEPTA and companies that offered a variety of enrichment program and fundraising options.

Our first Let's Chat with the Superintendent of the year took place at Enrico Fermi on October 16<sup>th</sup>. This was the second year where the Superintendent met with parents during the day to update them on what was going on in the schools and answer their questions and concerns. The Let's Chat continued through the year at Khalil Gibran, Museum School 25, Patricia DiChiaro School and Gorton High School. Along with the Superintendent of Schools, Deputy Superintendent Andrea Coddett, Director of Registration, Walter Eddie, his staff, the Director of Transportation, the Director of Security, Brian Schulder, Assistant Superintendents Luis Rodriguez, Rose Judon and Dr. Corey Reynolds were on hand to answer specific questions.

The YCPTA/PTSA hosted a Candidate Forum for the City Council President position on October 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:15PM at Saunders Trades and Technical High School. The Forum was moderated by Gary Stern, Engagement and Editorial Editor for the Journal News/Lohud alongside Sally Pinto, President of the YCPTA/PTSA. Parents, students, teachers, staff and Board of Education administration officials attended the event. Along with the Candidate Forum, a list of questions was sent to all those who were running for the City Council. The Candidate Forum was filmed live and shared with the public on Channels 75 and 38 as well as Facebook. The answers from the City Council Member questions were shared with all stakeholders. All stakeholders were encouraged to vote and make their voices heard at the polls. This was communicated via email, Facebook and twitter.

Our advocacy efforts continued with a meeting with Mayor Spano on November 2<sup>nd</sup> to discuss education issues including the funding for Rebuild Yonkers.

The Public Schools honored the PTA/PTSAs at their Annual Dessert Reception held on Monday, December 4<sup>th</sup> at William Boyce Thompson School. This was an opportunity for everyone to meet the new Assistant Superintendent of Schools Dr. Corey W. Reynolds. Dr. Reynolds is also the liaison for the YCPTA.

The Yonkers Council of PTA/PTSAs was honored by the Nepperhan Community Center on Monday, January 15<sup>th</sup> with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Service Award "for the outstanding advocacy work our organization has done on behalf of our parents and their children which has left an indelible mark on this city". The event was held at the Grand Roosevelt Ballroom.

The YCPTA held a variety of workshops on the new Code of Conduct for the Yonkers Public Schools both in Spanish and English. They took place on January 18<sup>th</sup> at Eugenio Maria deHostos MicroSociety School with Dr. Hernandez, Principal and Mr. DelMonte, Assistant Principal, Yonkers Public Schools; on January 28<sup>th</sup> at the Riverfront Library co-sponsored by the NYCLU with Karen Blumenthal, Student Advocacy, Nikki Woods, Education Attorney, NYCLU, and Dr. Hernandez, Principal, YPS.

On February 12<sup>th</sup>, the YCPTA/PTSA along with over 150 parents, students, Board of Education officials, YFT, YCA, CSEA 9169, elected officials both local and state, rallied on the Million Dollar Staircase for more education funding for the Yonkers Public Schools.

Council created a monthly PTA Basics Checklist to assist PTAs throughout the year in performing its activities. This checklist has been mailed to the PTAs and has been posted on the YCPTA/PTSA website. It has been sent via Facebook and tweeted as well.

YCPTA held its monthly meeting at Saunders High School on February 26<sup>th</sup>. The guest speakers were Shannon Sullivan, MPH, CHES from Hope's Door (speaking on abuse) and Beverly Pierce who brought a live demonstration on where teenagers hide drugs called Hidden in Plain Site (speaking on drugs).

The Advocacy Committee met with the newly elected City Council President, Mike Khader to discuss the education budget issues facing the Yonkers Public Schools. The YCPTA joined students on March 14<sup>th</sup> at Lincoln High School in the #YonkersStands against Gun Violence. We continued our community outreach by hosting our monthly YCPTA/PTSA meeting at the Yonkers Partners in Education (YPIE) location. YPIE brings programs to high school students assisting them in their quest for college preparedness. The guest speakers were Sam Wallis, Chief Program Officer and Dr. Andrea Coddett, Deputy Superintendent of Schools. The YCPTA joined Dr. Quezada at his Town Hall Meetings as he explained the 2018 – 2019 Proposed School Budget Presentation to encourage parents to get involved in the process of advocating for their children's education.

The YCPTA partnered with the BOE and YFT in organizing a trip for students, parents, teachers, community members and administration officials to the March for Our Lives to Washington DC on Saturday, March 24<sup>th</sup>. YCPTA also promoted the March for Our Lives occurring locally to NYC and White Plains. YCPTA joined with the Yonkers Public Schools, Mayor Mike Spano and the Yonkers Police Department in the See Something Say Something, Hear Something, Say Something Campaign. School safety and security is everyone's responsibility. Telephone numbers to the Security & School Safety Department, Police Department and National Anonymous Hotline as well as 911 were made available to all.

YCPTA held its monthly meeting at Roosevelt High School on April 9<sup>th</sup>. The guest speakers were Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Edwin Quezada and Alex Servello, Director of Science. Dr. Quezada spoke on the budget. Also on hand were City Council President Mike Khader and City Council Members Michael Sabatino and John Rubbo who also spoke about the budget and the issues facing Yonkers.

YCPTA wrote an open letter to the Governor asking for more funds after the State Adopted their Budget that has made the Yonkers Public School project possible layoffs of 300 positions. We worked in collaboration with the Yonkers Public Schools and sent a letter to the parents asking for their signatures. The letter was addressed to the City Council letting them know that Yonkers Parents have had enough

and that the City of Yonkers has to take care of its children's education. The Advocacy Committee along with the YCPTA Board met with now Senator Mayer, Senator Stewart-Cousins and Assembly Member Pretlow.

The YCPTA Annual Scholarship Dinner took place on April 19<sup>th</sup> at the Ukrainian Center. This year's honoree was outgoing YCPTA President, Sally Pinto. The 150 attendees included Board of Education Trustees, administration, staff, family and friends who enjoyed a nice evening and Silent Auction to raise funds for the various student scholarships.

YCPTA elections were held before the Annual Citizenship Awards on May 10<sup>th</sup>. On May 14<sup>th</sup>, a group of parents along with Board of Education staff participated in a focus group for FIOS and the public television channels on how the channels can better service the community. Sally Pinto attended the Chamber of Commerce breakfast on May 15<sup>th</sup> to introduce YCPTA and let the community know about and invite them to the rallies for education funding for the Yonkers Public Schools.

The YCPTA had a coordinated Advocacy Campaign with 4 scheduled rallies throughout the City of Yonkers. Christina Altomare assisted the YCPTA in doing significant outreach to the PTAs by having them attend the public hearings and the YPS testimony hearings which all took place in the span of 8 days – along with the 4 rallies. Press releases were done and the rally on Central Avenue on May 11<sup>th</sup> made it on to the News 12 and FIOS network. Over 75 parents as well as the Superintendent of Schools Dr. Edwin Quezada and Board of Trustee President Reverend Lopez and Trustee Santana were in attendance. More rallies took place on May 15<sup>th</sup>, May 16<sup>th</sup>, May 21<sup>st</sup>, and May 22<sup>nd</sup>. Parents who attended spoke for more funding for their children's education on May 15<sup>th</sup> and May 21<sup>st</sup>. Parents and students also spoke against the request from the Charter School for Education Excellence for an expansion into a high school at the public hearing held on May 16<sup>th</sup>. Parents and students came out to support the Superintendent's testimony on the YPS budget on May 21<sup>st</sup> and May 22<sup>nd</sup>.

The YCPTA coordinated a letter writing campaign with the elementary schools. The YCPTA participated in Arts Weekend as part of its outreach efforts in the community. We distributed the letters to the community for signatures at this event. A total of 4,000 letters were signed by parents, staff and community members throughout the Yonkers Public Schools asking the City Council to fund the Yonkers Public Schools. Those letters were delivered to the City Council on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. A thank you note was sent to the Yonkers Public Schools families and staff with a picture of those letters placed on Face book. YCPTA also sent a letter to the Governor. Carmen Goodstein, PTA President for Patricia DiChiaro School, Karen Beltran, past President for YCPTA and Past WEPR Director, and Sally Pinto, YCPTA President went to Albany on May 25th and met with the Governor's Education Staff Dan Fuller, Terry Pratt, and Jamie Frank. They also met with Brian from the State Education Department. They were joined in both meetings by Executive Director for the New York State PTA, Kyle Belokopitsky, who assisted in setting up those meetings. They discussed their concerns about the funding for the Yonkers Public Schools and requested more funding from New York State.

The YCPTA met with City Council President Khader, City Council Members Sabatino, Pineda-Isaac, Williams, Merante, Breen and Rubbo. We also met with Mayor Spano, Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senator Mayer, Assembly Member Pretlow, YFT President Samantha Ciriello and Paul Diamond. The focus of these meetings was also to make sure that the Yonkers Public Schools were properly funded for the Yonkers Public School students and that education remained a number one priority. We sent letters to

Regent Johnson and Chancellor Rosa on our opposition to the Charter High School. We also sent letters to the New York State Department of Education Commissioner Elia. We met with Regent Johnson and spoke about our concerns about the expansion of the charter school into a high school.

The Board of Education conducted its annual pre-k lottery waiting list for 5 schools and explained the changes to the new system which will no longer require parents to participate in the annual pre-k lottery waiting list.

The Sports Scholarship will take place on June 12<sup>th</sup> at YMA. YCPTA participated in the Relay for Life on June 9<sup>th</sup> at Gorton High School. Baskets or basket items were donated by Yonkers Council PTA/PTSA, Casimir Pulaski, Palisade Prep, School 22, Yonkers Early Childhood Academy (YECA) and Yonkers Montessori Academy (YMA). The PTA Dessert Reception hosted by the Board of Education will take place on June 11<sup>th</sup> and the new YCPTA Board with new Board President Rob Rijos will be installed on that date. The Honorary Life Memberships will be given to Carlos Macias, Ann Marie Papanagnostou and Mercedes Rios. Carmen Goodstein will receive the Advocate in Action Award and Wendy Nadel, Executive Director of Yonkers Partners in Education (YPIE), will be given the New York State PTA Community Service Award acknowledging their organization's dedication to the children and youth of New York.

The YCPTA also participates or attends a variety of committee meetings including the Yonkers Basics Advisory Board, Instructional Affairs Committee, Audit Budget and Finance Committee, Facilities Committee, Professional Development Committee, Code of Conduct Committee, Board of Education Stated Meetings, City Council Budget Hearings and the Policy Committee meetings. Along with the meetings we attend events such as the Mayor's State of the City, the Val/Sal Breakfast, Wall of Fame at Roosevelt High School, MBK events and Yonkers Basics events just to name a few.

Our communication strategies include twitter, Face book, Blackboard Connect, magnets with our contact information, a web page on the Yonkers Public Schools Website and newsletters. We currently have 1,152 friends on Facebook and are followed by 444 on Twitter. Our first Welcome Newsletter was sent out during the first week of school. It included outreach efforts with the Texas PTA based on the NYS PTAs outreach to them in efforts to assist with the aftermath of Harvey.

The YCPTA created a one page document for all the PTAs which is a basic checklist on what each PTA should be doing on a monthly basis. That document was shared with all the PTAs and the Principals. It can also be easily accessed online on the YCPTA website. It offers quick links that will take the PTAs directly to be able to file their Form A after their elections, the membership payment form to download the form in order to pay their membership dues, and the IRS website to file their taxes. A link to the NYS webinars will also be made available. The entire NYS PTA resource guide can also be accessed on the YCPTA webpage.

We conducted principal surveys where we asked how their PTAs can best advocate for their schools. In collaboration with the Superintendent we will continue the monthly "Let's Chat with the Superintendent" which is held during the day so that parents can share their concerns directly with the Superintendent.

The Yonkers Public Schools website includes a web page for each PTA. Each PTA was asked to designate a contact that would update their PTA website and work with the webmaster at their school.

We held three web page seminars conducted by Mr. Don DeMatteo in August 2017, and two in October 2017.

Most of our publications are in English and Spanish. Our webpage is a work in progress where we seek to continually expand it to include information that the parents will find useful. We include our newsletters, the Let's Chat with the Superintendent Calendar and our Calendar of Events, Parent Resources, Parent Workshops throughout the District, PTA meetings from all the PTAs, Minutes from our meetings and much more.

Submitted by  
Sally Pinto  
President