

## Foreword

For the first time in over forty years, capital improvements are being done to Central School during the summer of 2012.<sup>1</sup> These much needed improvements include new electricity, lighting, plumbing, heating, the installation of central air conditioning, replacement of broken fixtures, and asbestos abatement. In preparation for this major construction, all PTO (“Parent Teacher Organization”) and school items were moved to public storage.

Taking inventory of our PTO items inspired a desire to document the history of Central PTO, create a pictorial record all PTO items<sup>2</sup>, and to provide a factual background reflecting the significance of donated artwork, memorials, landscaping, and other PTO items. We hope that future PTO members will enjoy as well as add to this record.

## Brief History of Central PTO

In 1874, the first school, a two-room building, was built in Riverside and located on Forest Avenue. In 1884, to accommodate the growing student population, a 3-story school was built on the site where Central School is located.

The first parent organization was formed in 1893 as an Art League interested in “beautifying the school and awakening in children the love of art.” Annual membership fees of 50 cents for adults and 10 cents for children provided a fund to purchase pictures. Artwork and sculptures also were donated by community members including the Della Robia Bambini<sup>3</sup>, now located inside Central’s main entrance.

In 1896, the school burned down a week before classes were to begin. C.F. Whittlesey, a New York architect, designed the present Central School in a Romanesque style. The new school included the main section with the arched entryway, the Bell Tower, and the east wing. The entryway is a replica of the golden arched doorway to Louis Sullivan’s 1893 World’s Fair Transportation Building. In 1914, Central School was expanded to include the west tower and west wing. Until 1918, all children in Riverside from kindergarten through high school attended Central School.

A Mother’s Teacher’s Council was organized in 1923 to encourage a spirit of cooperation between parents in promoting the best interests of the school and community. The Room Parent program, which worked in collaboration with the teachers, became a part of the Council in the 1920s. Similarly, the Little Symphony program, which began in 1927, continues to this day. The Council later became the Central PTA (“Parent Teacher Association”).

The objects of the PTA, as contained in the PTA Bylaws, were the following: 1) To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, community, and place of worship; 2) To raise the standards of home life; 3) To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth; 4) To bring into closer relation the home and the school, that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth; and 5) To develop between

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<sup>1</sup> The last time capital improvements were done at Central was in 1968; the interior was completely remodeled to improve safety standards and add library facilities and classrooms.

<sup>2</sup> A hard copy of the pictorial and history can be found in the Central Library. The Principal and PTO President also have copies.

<sup>3</sup> The Bambini were donated by Dan and Julia Marshall Richardson in 1899.

educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, social, and spiritual efforts. Safety of the children has been a concern from the beginning as the PTA worked to secure gates at the railroad crossing.

Over the years, Central PTA had sponsored many events including carnivals, movie benefits, variety shows, square dances, luncheons, dinners, bake sales, and book fairs. These events have raised funds to purchase supplementary books, artwork, educational and play equipments, films, and audio-visual materials.<sup>4</sup>

In 1994, Central PTA incorporated as a non-profit organization.<sup>5</sup> While the Board desired to end its affiliation with the PTA, access to affordable insurance prevented this from happening. This issue was revisited again in 1996 when the Illinois PTA objected to a two-year fundraising program for the Reading Garden. Again, concerns about access to affordable insurance prevented any change. In 1999, “PTO Today” offered the first comprehensive, affordable insurance policy outside of the PTA.

By 2001, Central PTA had 27 Committees. The majority of the committees focused on educational programs<sup>6</sup> and recreational/social opportunities,<sup>7</sup> many of which continue through today. The PTA also published the school newspaper, the school directory and the school calendar.<sup>8</sup> To belong to the PTA, each member paid \$3.25 per member, totaling about \$750 annually. Part of the dues was used to support state and national lobbying efforts.

In 2007, Central PTA convened a committee to investigate the feasibility of converting Central PTA to a PTO.<sup>9</sup> The committee reported that the main difference between a PTA and PTO was affiliation (PTA has state and national arms) versus independence (PTO is an independently run parent group operating under its own bylaws). The committee also found that the lack of affordable insurance outside of a PTA was a non-issue; the PTO Today Plus organization offered the most cost effective and comprehensive insurance policy. Finally, the committee found that the focus of Central’s parent group was on the educational experience within our school and district, rather than advocacy on a national scale.<sup>10</sup>

On November 11, 2008, Central PTA formally voted to dissolve itself and form Central PTO. All parents, teachers, and staff automatically are members of the PTO and there are no dues to pay. Central PTO’s objects, as included in the PTO bylaws, are the following: 1) To make

4 The early school and parent organization history through 1975 was largely based upon the following document: “A Brief History of the Riverside Public Schools” by Joan Shurtleff and Rita McNally (1975).

5 See Central PTA Minutes (2007-8).

6 Educational programs included Cultural Arts, Library, Living Classroom/Reading Garden, Little Symphony, Read to Succeed, Reflections, Young Authors, and Young Entrepreneurs. See PTA Handbook (2000-2001).

7 Social/recreational programs included the following: Fifth Grade Activities, Halloween Play, Ice Cream Social, Ice Skating Party, Kindergarten Tea, and the Roller Skating Party. Other committees included Birthday Board, Calendar, Hospitality, Kids Care, Newspaper, PTA Handbook, Room Parent Volunteers, Spirit Wear, Teacher Appreciation Luncheon, and Teacher Appreciation Week. The four fundraisers used to fund these programs were Aunt Diana’s Fudge Sale, Book Fair, Gift Wrap and Market Day. See PTA Handbook (2000-2001).

8 See PTA Handbook (2000-2001).

9 See Central PTA Minutes (2007-8).

10 See Central PTA Minutes, 2007-8

possible academic, cultural, and recreational opportunities which are otherwise beyond the means of the school district; 2) To build a sense of community among parents and staff; 3) To educate and support parents in their role as advocates for their child's education; and for the education of all children in the district; and 4) To facilitate communication between parents, principal, and school board.<sup>11</sup> These objects continue as the mission of our PTO.

In 2009, in an effort to become more environmentally conscious, Central School and Central PTO went paperless. Specifically, the school and PTO disseminated information electronically in two major ways: 1) via E-Backpack from Principal Dr. Limperis,<sup>12</sup> and 2) via Feedblitz from Central PTO.<sup>13</sup> In February 2011, the PTO added a new Board position of "Communications Director" to oversee the rapid growth of electronic communications.<sup>14</sup> The PTO continued to find ways to go paperless including the creation of an electronic school directory in 2011, and in 2012, the capability to electronically complete committee applications and room parent forms. In February 2012, Central PTO had its own Facebook page.<sup>15</sup>

Today, the PTO continues to sponsor cultural, educational and social programs which enrich the students' educational experience.<sup>16</sup> This parent group, which started in 1893 as an Art League to inspire the love of art of children, has grown to over 50 Committees.<sup>17</sup> The PTO has funded these programs and other items beneficial to the Central School community including the current playground, artwork, recess and gym equipment, landscaping, science and music materials, memorials, and hundreds of books for the Central Library. Many of these items are contained in the attached pictorial record.

Our PTO is strong and vibrant due to the many wonderful parent volunteers, teachers, and staff working in collaboration with each other for the benefit of the children. Our programs will continue to evolve organically based upon the needs and interests of our school community.

We apologize for any errors or omissions in the compilation of this history and pictorial record.

Molly Carl, Amy Jacksic, and Jeannine Glavas (March 2012)

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<sup>11</sup> See Central PTO Bylaws.

<sup>12</sup> See [www.district96.org/central](http://www.district96.org/central)

<sup>13</sup> See [www.centralptonews.org](http://www.centralptonews.org).

<sup>14</sup> See Minutes from February 9, 2011 PTO Meeting.

<sup>15</sup> See [www.facebook.com/pages/Central-Elementary-PTO/104699259657755](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Central-Elementary-PTO/104699259657755).

<sup>16</sup> In 2012, 405 students, Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> Grade, were enrolled at Central School.

<sup>17</sup> Cultural Arts remains prominent with programs such as Artist-in-Residence, Classroom Artwork Presentations, and Classroom Field Trips. However, other new programs driven by our school community have developed including Great Books/Flying Carpet Club, Riverside Area Inclusion Network, ("R.A.I.N."), Science-in-the-Can, Science Fair, Yearbook, and Environmental Concerns. See the 2011-12 Calendar or visit [www.centralptonews.org](http://www.centralptonews.org) for a complete list of Central PTO Committees.