

DRAFT Minutes
Stuyvesant High School Parents' Association General Meeting
Tuesday, April 15, 2003

Co-President Judy Moore called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Co-Presidents' Report. Judy announced that:

- College Night is May 1; orientation for incoming students and families is June 14; graduation is June 25.
- Juniors should ask teachers for college recommendations now. Recommendations are not due until the fall but some teachers set quotas on the number they will write.
- The PA is planning bus trips to colleges next fall.
- Chaperones are needed for a student government-sponsored bus tour of colleges in May.
- Volunteers are needed for the PA Phonathon, May 12–14. Contact Harvey Blumm (e-mail Hblumm@aol.com). Phonathon letters have been mailed; parents who contribute early will not receive phone calls.
- Students can enter the PA's Scholarship Essay Contest by writing a 250–500 word essay on the topic: "Imagine that one day you unlock a secret door at Stuy and discover an entire, unused 11th floor in the building. Explain in detail what you would do with it and why." Five \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded. Deadline is May 1.
- The PA bylaws are being revised. Parents are encouraged to review the revised draft, which was available at the meeting and will be posted on the PA website. Comments should be sent to Melanie Arwin (mgarwin@aol.com), chair of the bylaws committee, by April 28.
- Advocates for Children encourages people to write Governor Pataki to protest school budget cuts. Information is available at the group's website, www.insideschools.com.
- The chancellor's office has sent a letter to parents about SARS (Sudden Acute Respiratory Syndrome).
- The Executive Board received final reports at its April 8 meeting from the special committees on Health and Safety and Political Action. The Health and Safety Committee's report, written by Chairman David Ross, was available at the meeting; Richard Roth, chair of the Political Action Committee, delivered an oral report. The membership accepted the reports without objection.

Minutes. Draft minutes of the March 18 PA general meeting were presented by Jane Ritter, Recording Secretary, who said the preamble to a motion introduced by David Newman would be added to the final version. The minutes were approved as amended.

Treasurer's Report. Donovan Moore noted that the PA is on track to carry over about \$40,000 to next year. He noted that Stuyvesant received generous one-time grants in the past two years.

School Leadership Team. Elizabeth Roistacher said the SLT's April 8 meeting included discussion of (1) moving

the health course from 11th grade to 9th grade so issues of substance abuse and sex can be addressed earlier; (2) annualizing student programming, meaning that courses would last a full year instead of a semester; (3) reviewing the progress of C-30 committees which advise the principal on the hiring of assistant principals, and (4) reviewing rules about where students may congregate during free periods. Elizabeth said the administration had not accepted a proposal on where students can congregate that had been proposed by the School Tone Subcommittee of the SLT. Students are now allowed to congregate on the 1st, 2nd, 5th and 6th floors away from classrooms. She said Principal Stanley Teitel promised further information about enforcement of the rules.

Nominating Committee. Donovan Moore and Carey Meltzer reported that nominations for PA positions had been received and additional names would be taken from the floor. Candidates must be parents of a Stuyvesant student and candidates for treasurer must have experience in financial reporting. Donovan said the Nominating Committee would not recommend candidates. Elections will be held at the May 20 PA General Meeting. The ballot box will be open from 7 p.m. – 9 p.m. with sign-in beginning about 6:30 p.m.; parents must be present to vote; both parents in a family can cast ballots, and parents can vote without staying for the meeting. Donovan said candidates can prepare a one-page statement to distribute at the May 20 meeting. He said candidates in contested races would be given an opportunity to speak, with two minutes allowed for each president or co-president candidate and one minute allowed for candidates for other offices. He asked all candidates to fill out an information sheet.

Nominations were closed after the committee reported names of those who had submitted forms and took additional names from the floor. Candidates are listed on p. 2 of this bulletin.

Russell Pinsley, a member of the nominating committee, made the following motion, with an introductory statement noting that although minority students represent a large portion of the Stuyvesant population, their parents are underrepresented on the Parents' Association:

Whereas, it is the sense of the General Membership that there are significantly underrepresented groups in the Parents' Association;
Therefore, the General Membership urges the leadership of the Executive Committee to use the committee chair appointment process to increase the proportionate number of Executive Committee members from these underrepresented groups.

The motion was seconded. After discussion, the question was called and a vote to close discussion passed. The motion carried with 27 in favor and 15 opposed.

Old Business

Dale Bernstein reported that a resolution tabled at the March general meeting that suggested the PA take specific steps to increase the number of black and Hispanic students at Stuyvesant would not be taken from the table. She said the PA will organize a forum on this issue and asked interested parents to contact her or David Newman.

Program — Substance Abuse Among Teenagers

Panelists were:

- Dr. Alan Hilfer, Director of Internship Training at Maimonides Medical Center and also Assistant Director of the Child and Adolescent Unit.
- Dr. Bruce Phariss, a psychiatrist who holds a subspecialty certification in Addiction Psychiatry. Dr. Phariss is also Clinical Assistant Professor in Psychiatry and Public Health at Weill Medical College of Cornell University and medical director of the Midtown Center for Treatment and Research, the medical college's outpatient substance abuse treatment program.
- Sarah Levithan, a Hunter College student and graduate of Bronx Science High School, who is a recovering addict. Ms. Levithan, an intern at Phoenix House, leads peer groups and parent education seminars. She plans to enter a Master's Degree program for Social Work at Fordham University in the fall after graduating from Hunter College.
- Christina Pultzer is Director of the New York State SPARK office at Stuyvesant. The SPARK office has conflict resolution specialists and student mediators.

Dr. Hilfer—noting he is a parent of a Stuyvesant graduate—said a particular issue at Stuyvesant is that Stuy students feel they can handle anything and often underestimate the effects of alcohol and drugs. He said that his child and other recent graduates told him that the drugs used most often by Stuy students are marijuana and alcohol, although other drugs are available as well. The students told him that using drugs and alcohol is considered a rite of passage and that some kids go to unsupervised parties on weekends to get high. He said the kids commented that substance abuse problems are noticed by parents and school officials only when a student's grades fall. Dr. Hilfer encouraged parents to be involved in the day-to-day lives of their children so that problems will be noticed and addressed early.

Dr. Phariss echoed the need for parents to set limits for their children and be role models. He encouraged parents to learn about substance abuse by reading information on the website of the National Institute on Drug Abuse at

www.drugabuse.gov. He said that teens who smoke are more likely than others to use other drugs or alcohol, and that even teens who drink coffee can get in the habit of using substances to change how they feel—making the use of marijuana or alcohol just another small step. He also said it is rare for anyone to use ecstasy or cocaine without having first used marijuana. He encouraged parents whose children have prescriptions for Ritalin to monitor the child's supply because Ritalin is pharmacologically like cocaine and can be ground up and snorted. Dr. Phariss told parents that changes in behavior can indicate a child is abusing drugs or alcohol. Such changes include withdrawing from family or friends, staying up later at night, withdrawing from hobbies or sports, and showing mood changes, especially on vacations when a child might not be able to maintain his or her substance abuse. He said that if a child is caught stealing or getting into fights, the parents should assume the child is abusing drugs or alcohol. Treatment for a child's substance abuse typically requires the participation of the family.

Sarah Levithan recounted her journey from smoking cigarettes in seventh grade "to be cool" through trying marijuana at 12 years of age to using hallucinogens and cocaine and heroin in high school. Now off drugs for the past 6 1/2 years, she said she was able to hide her drug use from her family and friends because she was smart and they trusted her. In response to a parent's question about getting professional help if a child is suspected of drug abuse, Ms. Levithan suggested the parents require the child to take a drug test because it will demonstrate that the parents are serious about addressing the child's behavior.

Christina Pultzer encouraged parents to take literature available from the SPARK office and led the group in an exercise about how parents might react when a child is suspected of using drugs or alcohol.

In a question-and-answer session, one parent asked how to prepare seniors for the alcohol and drug abuse they may encounter at college. The panelists noted that children are better prepared for such encounters at 19 years of age than when they were in middle school or high school but also said that parents can ask college administrators if they have "dry" dorms and "zero-tolerance" policies. Panelists also said they recognize that teenagers will experiment with alcohol and drugs but that parents must be concerned if substance abuse becomes more than experimentation and leads to changes in behavior and grades. One panelist said parents are not likely to learn about a student's experimentation—and, therefore, should recognize a problem exists if they do find out.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Ritter, Recording Secretary