

PTA FOUNDER'S DAY

By Jean Hovey, Executive Director

What is Founder's Day? In 1910, Founders Day was established as February 17. This is the day we celebrate PTA's history – a time to reflect on the past and look toward our roots. Florida PTA celebrated 93 years of advocacy at the July 2016 Leadership Convention.

120 Years of Advocacy for PTA! Alice McLellan Birney and Phoebe Apperson Hearst held the first meeting of the National Congress of Mothers in Washington, D.C., in February 1897. The group was concerned with the education, health and safety of children and youth. In 1908, the organization officially changed its name to the National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Associations; today it's known as the National PTA. There are over four million PTA members in the nation. **PTA is the largest volunteer organization in the United States with one purpose - - TO SERVE CHILDREN, THEIR FAMILIES, AND THEIR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES.**

The first local unit in Florida was the West Riverside PTA, organized in 1914, in Jacksonville. The Florida PTA began in 1921, with an organizational meeting in Jacksonville. It wasn't until 1923 that Florida PTA became an official branch of the National PTA. The Charter was granted on April 14, 1923. We were the 45th state to become a branch of the National PTA. Our first state president was Mrs. F. E. Godfrey, of Orlando, who was elected in 1922. During Mrs. Godfrey's administration, Florida PTA worked to strengthen the local units and for the establishment of lunchrooms in our schools.

Florida PTA Honorary Life Memberships began in 1924, as a way to help the treasury. The first Honorary Life Membership was given to D. P. Davis of Tampa; Thomas Edison was the first man to receive an Honorary Life Membership! The money from the Honorary Life Memberships now assists in awarding The Florida PTA Scholarships to graduating high school students.

In 1927, the Colored Congress of Parents and Teachers was organized in Florida. In 1968, the two organizations become one organization. In 1933, we changed our name to the Florida Congress of Parents and Teachers, Inc.

Annual conventions have been held throughout the state, every year except 1943 (during WW2). Resolutions and position statements are adopted - all for the purpose of impacting the lives of children. Our first Building Fund Luncheon was in 1971 and in 1993, the Scholarship Fund Luncheon replaced it. We have had many serve as an honorary membership chair, including, but not limited to, many of Florida's Governors, The Blue Angels and Burt Reynolds. During the Great Depression, Florida and Texas were the only states with membership increases. At that time Florida had 385 associations (local units) with 26,570 members. Today, our membership continues to steadily grow, with 263,000 members, as of June 30, 2016 and 1,420 local units. In 2010, at the last stand-alone convention in Orlando, Florida, the membership voted to combine Leadership and Convention. Leadership Conference began as Summer Institute in the late 1930s.

In 1938, the State PTA Office was established in the Orange County Vocational School Building, with a full-time secretary, Mrs. A. G. Wagner, who remained on the job for 25 years! In April 1952, the Florida PTA purchased its own building, located at 1020 Legion Place. The land for the building was donated by the City of Orlando. The building is no longer standing. It has been replaced by a high rise building on the corner of I-4 and Ivanhoe in Downtown Orlando. Our current State Office on Central Orlando Parkway began construction in 1969, and opened officially in early 1971.

The Florida Parent Teacher Magazine began in 1927. All of the historical issues are on file in the State Office. In 1948, *Lest We Forget* was published. The book contains historical information on Florida PTA from 1923 – 1948. In 1996, the Florida PTA was successful in getting Parent Involvement added as the 8th goal of Blueprint 2000. In 1997, the Florida PTA began its History Walk of Fame. The Walk of Fame is located at the Orlando office. The first brick was presented to Sandy Traeger, Florida PTA President, 1996-1998.

We continue to promote the health, safety and education of ALL children. In the past, PTA has been instrumental in the creation of a school lunch program, providing for smaller-scale school lunch efforts as early as 1912, and advocating for a national program for years before it was established in 1946. Just as parents in 1910 were urged to supervise their children's attendance at vaudeville shows, today's parents advocate for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), as well as "recess" every day.

Our world is very different than that of our founders. However, the dedication of all PTA volunteers is not that different. Today, our members are not the cookie brigade or mere fundraisers, we actively participate in our local unit, in accountability, developing school programs, volunteering at school and voicing our concerns in the legislative arena, from our local School District, to Tallahassee and Washington, D.C.

Many of the same issues that prompted the beginnings of PTA are still prevalent today along with more complex and diverse matters, which must be addressed for the benefit of all children. Our history has much value - by recalling and preserving the events of the past, we can determine progress and chart our future.

PTA is the voice, urging everyone to act responsibly for *ALL* children. Together, *every child.one voice.*