

Volunteers

Volunteer Profile New Ipswich PTA

Moms get tough jobs done

Group of mothers provides stability for New Hampshire's oldest parent-teacher association

BY ANNIE CARD

Special to Monadnock Ledger-Transcript

Five New Ipswich stay-at-home moms could as easily be running their own businesses. Instead, they've devoted these years to raising their young children, and helping all the children, teachers, staff and parents of the town's two elementary schools. The five women have a combined 24 children who attend, did attend or will attend Appleton Elementary.

These are the New Ipswich PTA super moms. Board members, President Julie Lampinen, Vice President Tonya Rines, secretary Jennifer Sikkila, treasurer Jody Rautiola, and Tricia Matson, room mother coordinator, lead the organization in meeting its goals.

The New Ipswich PTA was founded in 1913, making it the oldest PTA in New Hampshire, and one of the oldest in the country. More impressive than that, however, is how much this small core of active members accomplish.

Like any successful business, the New Ipswich PTA has a clear mission. "To keep all members of the PTA as well as the community informed of upcoming events and news about your schools and our role in supporting the teachers as well as the children in both Central and Appleton Schools." The PTA is "parents and teachers working together to provide New Ipswich children with programs and up-to-date equipment, facilities and curriculum."

Each year the organization provides \$100 to each elementary school teacher for supplies. It gives \$800 to each grade for field trips and enrichment programs. And it hosts an annual teacher appreciation luncheon and provides gifts for teachers. Last year they also gave \$10,000 toward laptop computers for Central Elementary School, which lacks the space for a dedicated computer lab with desktop computers.

A former PTA member built the NewIpswichpta.com Web site last year. Parents and community members can log on and learn about school and community events.

"People are used to getting information from the Web. Now anyone in New Ipswich can log on and know exactly what we're doing and when and how they can help. We still send home printed notices with the children, but if they get lost, it's all on the Web site. There is no excuse for not knowing what's going on at your kid's school," Rines said.

The Web site informs parents, "The New Ipswich PTA supports the building of a new elementary school 100%. Our kids deserve a safe and up-to-date learning environment."

Rines' son Drew attends fourth grade in one of the portable classrooms, and Lampinen's daughter



PHOTO BY ANNIE CARD

From left, Tonya Rines, PTA vice president, holds water bottles from the group's annual walk-a-thon, Jody Rautiola, treasurer, and Jennifer Sikkila, secretary, are covered in gift wrap from their annual gift wrap and novelties fundraiser, while Board President Julie Lampinen displays a globe. Tricia Matson, room mother coordinator, is missing from photo. Portable classrooms, in the background, are being used this year because part of Appleton Elementary School is shut down due to safety concerns.

Emma's very first day of school was in a portable kindergarten classroom.

The board wants every family with children in Central and Appleton elementary schools to be part of the PTA. Parents can pay the \$4.25 annual family membership and do nothing else. Or they can help out with the book sale, the Christmas bazaar and buy gift wrap or candles from a student participating in that fundraiser. There's a spring walkathon and calendar sales and other events.

There are so many ways to help. "Bake a cake or a batch of brownies once a year for the PTA. Give an hour to one of our fairs. Just do something," Lampinen said. More classroom moms and dads are always needed, too.

Rines estimates only one-third of New Ipswich families with school children are PTA members. "We want 100 percent participation. We are so much better and stronger together. All of us," Rines said. And it's so much fun, they promise. "We work really well together and get things done. Every year it's like that. It

doesn't really matter who is president or whatever from one year to the next, we just all work as a team," Rines said.

Jody Rautiola, treasurer, had been an inactive member for years. "I paid my dues, but that was it. Now that I'm on the board, I love it. It's fun and so rewarding to be involved with the school. I see what a difference it makes to the kids. Kids love it when their parents come to a school function or come into a class to read or help out in any way. The kids are proud when their parents are part of their school."

With her son balanced on her hip, Jennifer Sikkila said it matters that parents are involved. "Everyone is busy, but you have to make time for your kids, time to know the students and staff. It can make a difference in how your kids do in school."

All agreed that because of their work with the PTA they feel comfortable knowing where their kids are all day. "We know all the teachers and staff, and know what is going on in the school."

The year's first PTA meeting is

Sept. 22. The PTA meets on the third Tuesday of every month at Appleton Elementary School. "We really want everyone to come. We have a few teachers who come. More would be even better. Marion Saari, the principal, is always there," Rines said. "The more the merrier. That's where we get all the work done. We need lots more parents. We'd love to have more dads come by. It's almost all moms now."

"Parents who aren't involved with their kids' school just don't know what they're missing," Rines said. To get involved: www.newipswichpta.com.

Annie Card, owner of Annie Card Creative Services, developed her love for stories during her 16 years at Yankee Magazine. As executive director of a nonprofit she founded in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina, she used her photography and storytelling skills to attract money and volunteers. She continues to help nonprofits tell their stories. Have a favorite volunteer in your town? Tell Annie at annie@anniecand.com.

Help Out

WHAT'S NEEDED

Assisted Living Assistance, Peterborough

Volunteers wanted at the Scott-Farrar Home for gardening, reading, crafts, entertainment, play cards or board games, music. 924-3691.

FixIt Program

Volunteers to do minor repairs for elderly persons, and elderly persons needing assistance. 1-800-322-1073, ext. 6168.

Jaffrey-Rindge Women

Volunteers needed to match to organizations' needs. Faith Filiault: 903-2468.

Kitty Rescue, Jaffrey

Volunteers needed to help care for cats/kittens; also clerical, transportation, fostering, fundraising, publicity help needed. No offer of help too small. 532-9444.

RSVP/Monadnock

Contact Kathy Baird at 924-7350 if you are interested in volunteering in any of these areas, or visit www.monadnock-volunteercenter.org for more opportunities.

Drivers Needed: Once a month for a full day to help residents get to appointments and other personal business.

Gardeners: Help with garden maintenance and planting.

Neighbors-In-Deed: Providing companionship and assistance to senior citizens. One to two hours weekly.

Office Support: Various agencies need help with answering phones, greeting clients, and other office operations.

People with disabilities: Assist clients of local agencies with crafts, learning basic computer skills, cook meals, and other activities.

Same Day Surgery: Caring individuals to provide reception and updates to family members about the progress of patients.

Senior Citizens: Help with filling out intake paperwork for programs and services.

Samaritans Hotline

Samaritans of the Monadnock Region are seeking volunteers to help staff their 24-hour hotline in both the Keene and Peterborough areas, offering telephone support to individuals who are in need of someone to talk to about their feeling depressed, lonely, anxious or suicidal. 357-5510.

Sharon Arts Center, Sharon

924-4256, ext. 310. Volunteer for four hours/week for reception and computer tasks. Volunteer for two hours/week to write press releases.

Tutors/Students Needed

For Project LIFT. Adult Ed. program assisting with study for GED exam, math, English, etc. Judy Fournier: 464-5285.

HOW TO SUBMIT

Send us an e-mail with your organization's needs and upcoming volunteer opportunities at volunteers@ledgertranscript.com

LOOKING TO HELP?

If you want to volunteer, but are unsure where you fit in, you can call the Monadnock Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and the Monadnock Volunteer Center at 924-7350.

Hard at Work Photos of volunteer work in the Monadnock region



STAFF PHOTOS BY LIZZ D'ENTREMONT

Tina Somero of New Ipswich stocks the bookshelf at the New Ipswich Green Center while her eight-month-old daughter, Abigail, sleeps peacefully.



Volunteers Jan Schultz, left, and Mary Forte discuss various ways of displaying the "gently used" donated items at the Green Center, located behind the town offices.



Mary Forte stands next to a rack of children's winter clothes, including jackets that are in very good condition for any New Ipswich resident who might want to pick them up free-of-charge.

You have more power than you may realize. Become an advocate and volunteer.

We all can do many things to support our children and adults to make good choices about alcohol and other drugs. In fact, every day citizens are working together to:

- 1 Reduce the availability of and access to alcohol for underage youth
- 2 Develop and implement strategies to reduce binge & underage drinking, use of illegal prescription or other drugs
- 3 Reduce opportunities for youth to drink
- 4 Provide healthy alternatives
- 5 Create an environment where the demand for alcohol and other drugs is lessened.

Every child, parent, student, and community member is affected by substance abuse in our region. These two groups are currently seeking members to serve on the MVP Regional Board. This opportunity promises to be perhaps the most effective way any parent, citizen or young person can have an impact on reducing underage drinking, binge drinking and substance abuse. **We need your help!**

If you'd like to know more about the Regional Board, coalitions and their activities, or other volunteer opportunities, please contact:

Creating Positive Change (CPC) is a local, community-based coalition that, in conjunction with MVP, works to increase local awareness of and the support for programs to reduce substance abuse by our vulnerable youth.

SAM LAFORTUNE
CREATING POSITIVE CHANGE COALITION
(603) 924-4981 • Sam@cpcnh.org



Monadnock Voices for Prevention (MVP) is a regional group dedicated to reducing substance use and abuse among our youth, and, over time, among adults, by addressing the factors in a community that increase the risk of the use of alcohol and other drugs.

KELLY BRIGHAM-STEINER
MONADNOCK VOICES FOR PREVENTION
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