

PTA General Meeting in March
3/27/23

Call the Meeting to Order/Welcome at 7:30 pm.

1. Welcome (Geoff)
 1. We have a very timely presentation tonight.
 2. Intro of BE Smart presenter, Kelly Johnson, MSW PCC.
 3. We're also joined by Sheriff Sean Casey.
2. Be SMART
 1. Important for us to acknowledge the news that came out of Nashville, TN today. It's a collective trauma for us as a country.
 2. We're here to talk about how to keep kids safer. Not talking about politics or laws tonight.
 3. Some of us may be gun owners, some may not. We can agree that we want all kids to grow up happy and healthy.
 4. Firearms are the leading cause of death for children in the U.S. It's a public health crisis.
 5. 4.6M children live in a household with at least one loaded and unlocked gun.
 6. In incidents of gunfire on school grounds, 78% of shooters under 18 obtained gun from their own home or home of relatives or friends.
 7. We know that most gun owners are responsible.
 8. So many tragedies are the result of unsecured guns.
 9. BeSMARTforKids.org has lots of great resources.
 10. SMART = Secure, Model, Ask, Recognize, Tell
 1. Secure: guns should be stored locked and unloaded w/ammunition separate
 1. Store in gun safe, lock box/locker, console/vehicle gun safe, gun case, trigger lock, cable lock; lower cost options can be disabled by a teenager
 2. In ALX, if you get a permit to carry a gun, you are issued a gun lock.
 3. Unsecured guns contribute to the 380K guns owned by private individuals being stolen every year
 2. Model: It's an adult's responsibility to make sure kids cannot get their hands on a gun.
 1. Majority of children in homes with a gun are aware of where their parents store their gun
 2. Keep language simple: "If you see a gun, don't touch it and tell an adult."
 3. Ask about unsecured guns in other homes

1. Make it a part of general safety conversation.
2. Email or text. Make it a habit. “We’re a gun-free house” or “We are gun owners but keep the gun stored and locked”
4. Recognize the role of guns in suicide
 1. Most people who attempt suicide to not die unless they use a gun
 2. 2/3 of gun deaths in the U.S. are by suicide
 3. 90% of suicide attempts w/a gun result in death
 4. National Suicide Prevention Line: 1-800-273-8255 (24 hrs/day)
 5. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988
 6. Trevor Project
5. Tell everyone you know to Be SMART
 1. Text SMART to 64433 to learn more
 2. Consider at least 3 people that you want to share the Be SMART message with right now
 3. Share resources w/your pediatrician
11. Contact: Andrew Corso, BeSmartALX@gmail.com
12. Several locations in ALX offer free gun locks
13. **Question from parent: What is your language for talking to your kids about guns and playdates?** On the Be SMART website (BeSMARTforKids.org), there is sample language you can use.
14. **Question from parent: How do you keep track of who you’ve asked and who you haven’t asked?** Notes app could be helpful.
15. **Question from teacher: What do you do if they say they have a gun and it’s unsecure?** You could offer to provide one of the more affordable locks like a cable lock. Or the kid doesn’t get to go to that house; or you could invite that child to your house.
16. **Sheriff Casey:**
 1. Our primary responsibility is the jail and courthouse.
 2. This was the first time I saw the presentation. I’m here to learn and pass on this kind of info.
 3. We do give out gun and trigger locks.
 4. If you have a conversation that makes you concerned and don’t know how to handle it, Sheriff Casey can help you navigate it. He’s giving out his card. His email address is sean.casey@alexandriava.gov.
 5. VA has red flag laws that say a gun can be removed from an unsafe house.
3. Meeting minutes from last Monday’s PTA meeting w/Dr. Kay-Wyatt – *approved*
4. Principal’s Updates
 1. Spring break and a Teacher Work Day are coming up

2. Math and Science Night on April 20th at GMES, 6:30 pm; more info will be coming
5. Chair Updates
 1. Programs (Julie)
 1. No new updates
 2. If you are in cooking, there's one more session this week.
 3. Other programs wrapped up last week.
 2. Fundraising (Brooke)
 1. Get ready for lots of Dragon Fest and Party on the Patio emails!
 3. Outreach/Modernization (Geoff) – no updates but we're trying to schedule an update from ACPS staff on the swing space
 4. PTAC (Geoff)
 1. Notes from last meeting will be posted on the GMES PTA website
 5. Other updates (Geoff)
 1. Start plugging open houses for families with rising kindergartners; tell them all the great things about GMES
 2. Gardens rep wasn't ready to present tonight but hopefully will at the next meeting
 6. Yearbook (Katie Goode)
 1. 5th grade ads – only takes 10 minutes
 2. Cover contest and all designs will be incorporated
 7. George Washington MS looking for PTA members, as well (Catherine Estes)
 8. Future PTA Meetings
 1. April (4/24) PTA Meeting – Modernization and swing space
 2. May (5/22) PTA Meeting – Ms. Heckel (academic coach) will join; new officers and year-end wrap up
0. Meeting adjourned at 8:21 pm.