

## **Minutes of the November 7, 2007 PACA Meeting:**

**Columbus Academy parents in attendance:** Evelyn Kelley Antoine, Jay Beatley, Michael Bender, Tammy Bender, Ken Brown, Sara Browning, Ron Dean, Beth Fisher, Erich Hunker, Jeff Jeffers, Leanne Keith, Lexie Lazarus, Sarah Merkey, Beverly Moore, Lisa Newmark, Tamara Nicola, Femi Obikunle, Susan Pickering, Eric Ransom, Donna Simmons, Joyce Simson, Lynne Souba, Kathy Turner, Mary Jo Vara, and Cynthia Zeigler.

**Introduction:** At 8:05 a.m., PACA Board President Joyce Simson called to order the meeting, held in the Trustees' Room. Per the previously distributed Agenda, she introduced two guest speakers, Michael Bender, Chair of the Development subcommittee of the Columbus Academy Board of Trustees and a CA parent, and Gary Williams, interim head of the Upper School and former Director of CA College Counseling. Each had been invited to speak to the group before regular PACA business was discussed.

**Guest Speaker Michael Bender:** Michael explained that his subcommittee has responsibility for planning related to CA's Annual Fund. He thanked CA parents for all past, current and future gifts to the Annual Fund.

The Annual Fund is a critical part of the operating budget, funding 6% of it last year. Michael emphasized that real spending tradeoffs occur when Annual Fund goals are not met.

Last year, his subcommittee developed a robust strategic plan. Research contributing to the strategic plan included a benchmark study of the best independent schools in the nation. Michael shared with the group that our Annual Fund contributing 6% of last year's operating budget falls below our target peer group, which typically sees annual fund giving generating almost 9% of their budgets. The new strategic plan includes a 2013 goal of Annual Fund reaching that 9% level. That means the \$1,200,000 raised last year will need to almost double to \$2,200,000 in 2013.

Michael's subcommittee is focused on increasing both the number of donors and the dollars raised per gift to reach the 2013 goal. He emphasized that CA Trustees will take the lead by increasing their individual Annual Fund gifts. However, there is a concerted effort by his subcommittee and CA's Development Office to grow "leadership" and "significant" donor gifts.

With regards to the benchmark study, there is good news: the peer group of independent schools averages only 64% of their donor community giving to their annual campaigns. CA beats this figure, with over 70% of our donor pool donating to the Annual Fund.

How will new Annual Fund dollars be spent? Michael's subcommittee's strategic plan has recommended more spending on teacher salaries, innovative educational programs and aid to achieve increased socio-economic diversity in our student population.

Michael acknowledged that “giving is a personal decision” and encouraged parents to think about what we can achieve for our students on an accelerated basis by increasing Annual Fund gifts.

Erich Hunker, Assistant Headmaster, added several interesting points to Michael’s presentation, including: (a) parents of students who have received scholarships are more likely to contribute to the Annual Fund than non-scholarship families; (b) parents of US students, particularly senior class students, give less to the Annual Fund than the overall parent group; and (c) parent giving to the Annual Fund drops off significantly when students graduate from CA.

Joyce emphasized the challenge to grow the Annual Fund in the face of some of the information shared by Erich. She reminded the group that “we are ambassadors” and need to support the Annual Fund.

Michael thanked the group and encouraged parents to contact either he, Erich Hunker or Erin Saurborn with questions, ideas or comments related to his Subcommittee’s work.

**Guest Speaker Gary Williams:** Gary retired seven years ago from CA. However, he was more than willing to return on an interim basis when contacted by John Mackenzie last summer. Gary loves CA students and “that is why (sic) he is back”.

Gary discussed a recent report he gave to the Board of Trustees. His number one observation is that there is too much stress in the Upper School. It is related primarily to the college application process. This college search stress is not restricted to US students. His faculty feels enormous pressure from student requests for recommendation letters (the trend towards early decision applications compresses the time available to write these important letters). Gary also sees and meets with stressed out parents. He finds all of this a disturbing trend. On top of college admission-related anxiety is what he observes to be stress generated by the Junior Speech assignment and first time US exams for new CA students.

Gary realized none of the factors creating stress will go away, although he hopes there will be a shift away from selective colleges encouraging early applications in future years. He is investigating ways to help the CA community manage the stress. He is investigating implementing a program developed in Boston that would involve faculty training, student study teams and parent education.

Parent Donna Simmons commented that MS students could also benefit from stress reduction training. Faculty Recognition co-chair Leanne Keith commented that Gary’s ideas represent life skills training, an idea she supports.

Joyce thanked Gary for his presentation. As a parent of an US student, she knows that our best faculty are inundated with requests for recommendation letters in the early part of the school year.

**Approval of Minutes:** The PACA Board meeting minutes of October 3, 2007, previously emailed to Board Members were approved as sent.

**Report from PACA Treasurer, Mary Jo Vara:** Mary Jo distributed hard copies of PACA's end of October 2007 financial position. Through October 31st, total PACA net income was \$48,349.

Mary Jo pointed out that the recent Charlie David fundraiser exceeded its forecast, raising more than \$50,000!

Current budget shortfalls include PACA's store, Viking Corner. Kathy Turner, one of three Viking Corner Co-Chairs, reminded the group that significant start up costs had occurred but were expected. The current net loss for the store is forecasted to be reversed prior to PACA's budget year end (see Committee Reports section below for more information regarding Viking Corner).

Joyce told the group that she had decided not to ask the Board of Trustees to reimburse PACA for \$7,500 in Viking Corner start up expenses. Instead, she will recognize it as a PACA gift to CA at year end.

### **Committee Reports:**

Kathy Turner, Co-Chair of Viking Corner, announced a November 30<sup>th</sup> liquidation sale of excess merchandise. She and her Co-Chairs are working hard to determine what merchandise Viking Corner needs to sell. For example, Columbus School for Girls store sells a fair amount of basic school supplies. However, Viking Corner has seen slow sales for this category.

Kathy reported that the ranks of parent volunteers available to staff the store has been "okay, not great". Joyce thanked Kathy and her Co-Chairs, Carol Aronowitz and Stephanie Leader, for their hard work during this first year of operations.

Volunteers Chair Evelyn Kelley Antoine reported that some PACA Committee Chairs are finding that parents who indicated interest in volunteering via PACA's Volunteer Interest Form (completed by most families last summer) are declining to help when contacted. She continues to help Co-Chairs when asked.

Eric Ransom, Co-Chair of Arts, reminded the group that the Faculty and Parent Talent Show will be February 23rd. His committee has begun discussions with CA's arts-related faculty members. These conversations include the possibility of hiring an outside arts consultant to visit campus. The purpose of such a visit would be to gain an outside perspective on how CA displays art on and around campus.

Beth Fisher, Co-Chair of Service, updated the group on her committee's ongoing projects. They have had plenty of "great" volunteers. However, the annual clothing and toy drive has not generated as many toys for needy children as previous years.

Lynne Souba reported that SCRIP orders were due in a few days. She is very pleased to have secured two corporate orders for SCRIP cards. Also, the SCRIP team has added six new volunteers to their ranks!

Tamara Nicola, Co-Chair of PACA's Book Fair, thanked everyone who purchased and/or volunteered at this year's event. Her final tally indicates \$4,700 in net income. She is also proud of the in-kind contributions of the Book Fair. A large number of books were donated to CA libraries. Also, more than 130 books were donated to PACA's Service project for needy children. Joyce thanked Tamara and her team for their hard work this year.

Joyce reported that Lisa Newmark has replaced Laura Bowen as PACA Communications Chair. She thanked Lisa for her willingness to take on an additional volunteer role for PACA.

Evelyn Kelley-Antoine and Joyce reported for the Antiques Show. The Committee has received word from LS leadership (based on faculty and parent feedback) that the Class Collections project needs to raise funds via a raffle versus a silent auction format. Many on the Antiques Show Committee were surprised by this recommendation. They want to raise as much money as possible for PACA. Jeff Jeffers, LS Head Father, explained that faculty, in particular, wanted all LS children to have the opportunity to win a Class Collection item (because all LS students work on these items as part of the Art curriculum). He believes that last year's Class Collections revenues of \$15,000 can be matched or surpassed by a supported raffle. He cited his experience conducting a dozen or so charity auctions a year for other groups, including private schools. These auctions are complemented by the presence of "community-building" raffle fundraisers. Joyce said that Lower School leadership's desire to change the Class Collections fundraiser is analogous to goals set for CA's Annual Fund: we want as many people in our CA community to participate in order to achieve our fundraising goals.

The Faculty Recognition Committee Chairpersons, Bev Moore and Leanne Keith, reminded the group of the upcoming faculty cookie project, December 14<sup>th</sup>. They asked for more parent volunteers to bake and prepare holiday cookies.

Jay Beatley, a CA parent responsible for ticket sales to the 25<sup>th</sup> annual Charlie David dinner, reported on the recent event. Adding to Mary Jo Vara's earlier comments, he expects a possible "record year" for the project. He added that there is a "tremendous benefit by bringing together the CA community" at the fundraiser.

LS Fair Chair-elect Sarah Merkey updated the group on the project. They are currently seeking more parent volunteers to help plan activities for the Fair.

Jeff Jeffers reported excellent weather contributing to the success of the October 14<sup>th</sup> LS Fall Festival. He believes one third to one half of the LS community came to the event! He appreciated the assistance of many good volunteers running games and crafts for the children.

With committee reports finished, Joyce concluded the meeting at 9:55 a.m.

Submitted by Sara Browning, PACA Secretary