

Frequently Asked Questions about the PTSO

What is the difference between a PTA and a PTSO? Independence vs. Affiliation: the technical differences between a PTA and a PTO are fairly simple. The national PTA is a formal membership organization headquartered in Alexandria, VA with over 100 years history of working for children. Local groups that choose to belong to the PTA must pay dues to the state and national organization and abide by state and national group rules. In return, they get member benefits, and they get a voice in the operations of the larger organization. The national PTA maintains a Washington, D.C., lobbying office, and most state PTAs advocate at their respective state capitals, as well. The PTA carefully protects its name, so that in theory only dues-paying members of the group can call themselves a PTA.

PTO, on the other hand, is a more generic term. It generally represents the thousands of groups that choose to remain independent of the PTA. These are most often single-school groups that operate under their own bylaws and by and large concern themselves with the goings-on at their building or in their town only. Bull Run has a **PTSO**, which includes **students** in its organization and planning.

Why should I join the Bull Run PTSO? Joining the PTSO shows your support of your child(ren), the faculty and staff, the school, and the entire school community. We encourage each family to join the PTSO. All support and involvement are welcome.

If I join, do I have to attend the PTSO meetings? No. All PTSO members and non-members are invited to attend the meetings on the 2nd Monday of each month, in the library at 6:30, but you do NOT have to attend the meetings.

If I join, do I have to volunteer? No, your membership and financial support with the \$12 dues are important to the PTSO's success. Simply joining and supporting the PTSO in this manner is very helpful and greatly appreciated.

Sometimes I am available during the day; other times after school hours. What are the volunteer options? Help is needed for many different times. One of our top goals this year is to provide parent coverage during the school day for the desk in the front lobby. There are also many volunteer opportunities immediately after school and in the evenings. See the membership options form and visit our PTSO website at www.bullruneaglesptso.org for a list of all the events and activities.

If I do volunteer, am I committed to all events? No, you can pick and choose the events for which you wish to volunteer. Pick 1 or 2 or all of them. Participate in what fits you and your family's schedules.

Is there anything I can do at home? On occasion there are some projects that can be done at home such as BoxTop labels to be counted, tickets to be bagged and labeled, posters made, or other activities. Check with a board member and on the website for these opportunities.

Can't I do the same volunteering without being a PTSO member? Yes, you can volunteer without being a member, but a community effort is often easier and more successful. Being a PTSO member brings you into a community of like-minded parents and teachers who are ready to share the work and have fun at the same time. Being a member also gives you direct contact to all PTSO news through emails and/or phone calls that will keep you up-to-date about events, activities and volunteer opportunities.

In the past when I have joined the PTSO and expressed an interest in volunteering, I have never been contacted. Why not? Sometimes a lack of time and people power prevent us from contacting everyone for each event. This does not mean that we don't want your help. Help is always needed and welcomed. If no one contacts you, please contact a board member or committee chairperson. Or, simply show up at the event. There's always a job or two that is waiting for a volunteer.

Is the PTSO's main goal fundraising? We do spend some of our efforts on fundraising, but we also provide the students and community at Bull Run with safe, fun, family-friendly events and activities. Last year, the PTSO sponsored concessions at many home sporting events, two Dances, two Bingos, SpiritWear, Staff Appreciation Week, and more.

How is the money raised by the PTSO spent? Membership dues and fundraising monies are spent in many ways. For instance in years past, money was spent on the SOAR program, the 8th grade end-of-year picnic, snacks for the Science Expo, staff appreciation, a Smart Board, several Senteo systems, just to name a few.

Is there anything else of note that the PTSO has done? We supported a number of events in years past: BoxTops contest, Spirit Nights at many of our popular local area restaurants and businesses, support for the SOAR program, the Geography Bee, and the Science Expo. We organized donations for Operation Turkey food drive during the holidays. When the earthquake disaster hit Haiti, it was our very own Bull Run students that voiced their desire to help provide aid to the Haitians. The PTSO helped our students organize Operation Haiti and assisted in the collection of donations for the Red Cross. And, when the earthquake/tsunami/nuclear disasters hit Japan, our students participated in Operations Caring Critters, a service project collecting Ty Beanie Babies to distribute to the children affected by the disasters. Each of these involved and benefited the students, staff, school community, and the community at large in some way. We hope to continue with some of these same programs, and more, this year.

What are other PTSO's goals for this year? While not all of the year's goals have been planned, this year we hope to continue with many of the aforementioned events and activities. Additionally, we plan to support the Olweus Program and extracurricular clubs. We are open to suggestions and are staying flexible for new plans and programs.

How can I get PTSO information? You can go to our extensive website at www.bullruneaglesptso.org. There, you can enter your email address in the ENEWS and UPDATES box and be notified whenever there are any updates to the website. The PTSO is also on Facebook. You can look for Brms Ptso and "friend" us to get up-to-date information. Information about PTSO events and activities is also available in the front office at Bull Run. Much information will be in the Bull Run Middle School newsletter. If all else fails, contact a board member or committee chairperson. We'll get the information to you as quickly as possible.

Don't forget to visit our PTSO website at www.bullruneaglesptso.org