

Parent Connection Newsletter

*Lee Hall Elementary School
Newport News, Virginia*

One parent's passion for newsletters turned into a parent involvement machine at Lee Hall Elementary school. The publication, aptly called *The Parent Connection*, is meant to supplement the school's general newsletter of announcements and provide networking opportunities for parents and community organizers.

The idea for the newsletter began during the school's first Action Team for Partnership (ATP) meeting of the year. The ATP leader distributed a survey asking parent volunteers what skills they would be comfortable contributing to the group. A number of parents listed their computer skills, and one parent detailed her passion and aptitude for creating newsletters.

From that meeting, *The Parent Connection* was born. A small team of volunteer writers and designers compiled the first issue in October. Since then, the ATP has published several issues, each one featuring an article about a partnership-oriented event and tips to help parents guide their students' learning at home. In addition, the newsletter features a monthly calendar of events, a community resource box with names and numbers of local organizations of interest to parents, and a Q&A section with a member of the ATP. The newsletter spotlights one volunteer per month, detailing what they've been doing to help the school and encouraging readers to take similar action.

The newsletter is sent to parents and ATP members in both paper and electronic forms. The ATP also posts a copy of the newsletter on the parent involvement bulletin board in the school's lobby.

So far the ATP has given the project high marks. "When I think of parent involvement, Lee Hall has it down," an ATP member said.

The biggest challenges for the group have been printing photographs and dealing

with computer failure. The volunteer reporters had to remember to take a snapshot of an event or person at the end of an interview. The production volunteers had to conquer those inevitable computer glitches. Now, they remember to get the picture and they back up their computer files regularly.

The annual cost of distributing the newsletter, about \$30, was covered by Title I funds. ATP members know that the low cost was heavily subsidized by a highly talented pool of parent volunteers who devoted a lot of time to the project.

Reactions to *The Parent Connection* have been positive. At least one volunteer father featured in the paper planned to brag to his family members. "I am going to save a copy of this to show to my son," he said.

Another parent was impressed by the newsletter's coverage of the schools' work to involve families. "I never knew you did so much with parents. This newsletter helps me to get a better idea of what you are doing with your program."

*Denise Favors
Parent Involvement Specialist
(757) 888-3341
denise.favors@nn.k12.va.us*