

Fellow parents,

It's hard to believe another school year has come and gone and the Class of 2019 has already finished their classes. Before the rest of the students finish up and we take full advantage of the Summer Break, I wanted to share some year-end thoughts.

We are extremely fortunate to have our children attend one of the nicest facilities in the Mid-Atlantic. The new building is beautiful and appointed with the best possible equipment to ensure our children have not only the best educational opportunities, but an overall well-rounded high school experience. While this is extremely important, it pales in comparison to the importance of the real asset of our schools...the faculty and staff. After 13 years in the system and as I send my first child off to college, I can confidently tell you there is no group more dedicated to the health and well-being of our children than the people in our school system. From the day they enter elementary school until they walk the stage on their way to adulthood, the educators, administration and staff are dedicated to our kids. Over my past two years as PTSO President, I've had the opportunity to work closely with Principal Bathras, various teachers and members of the counseling staff. I've had the chance to see the inner workings of the school and a glimpse into what can and can't be done for our kids. On behalf of the PTSO officers, I applaud Mr. Bathras, the faculty and staff at Severna Park High School for their continued effort in molding, supporting and caring for our children. Their commitment goes well beyond simply providing academic instruction.

One of the biggest initiatives in support of our students' overall well-being and the largest single expense of the annual PTSO budget is the STAR (Students Taking Action Responsibly) Program. The STAR Program is a student lead but joint effort with the school staff designed to promote a positive and healthy learning environment by improving decision-making strategies, enhancing self-esteem and increasing the use of mental health resources to prevent destructive behaviors. Incoming Freshmen are introduced to the concepts during their first Advisory class of the year. It's then carried throughout their high school career in lessons in their weekly advisory class, STAR week in April, mental health lessons in the Health curriculum (suicide prevention and depression) and student assemblies with nationally renowned guest speakers. Next year will be no different, Mr. Bathras and the team are already working on next year's speaker and activities with the STAR student ambassadors. I would encourage you to ask your children about STAR activities.

The school, the Severna Park community, local youth and other organizations, mental health agencies, churches and related support systems all play a collective role in providing support for our children as they grow up in our community. The PTSO is obviously committed to supporting these efforts as well. Please feel free to reach out to me, incoming President Barbara Brandeen or any other member of the PTSO board at any time with questions or comments.

We hope everyone has a relaxing and restful summer. See you after Labor Day.

Sincerely,

Kurt Ivey on behalf of the SPSHS PTSO