



Louise Archer Elementary School PTA
General PTA Meeting - January 14, 2025

Call to Order: 7:04pm

Principal's Report - Michelle Makrigiorgos & Jennifer Condra

- **Midyear Mark/End of 2nd Quarter:**
 - Happy New Year! We're moving forward with enthusiasm, as January 28th marks the end of the second quarter, which is also a full school day, followed by a teacher workday on the 29th. This signifies the midpoint of the academic year. Between now and February 7th, we will be conducting assessments to gauge student progress since the start of the year. We will hold internal meetings to evaluate if the growth is meeting our expectations and adjust our teaching strategies as needed to keep everyone on track.
 - If you have any questions about these assessments, please don't hesitate to contact the teachers. We will share any important information, but please note that this will primarily be for internal use and not something sent home.
- **Construction/Renovation Update**
 - Believe it or not, we are nearing the end of our renovations after two and a half years! I spoke with our field supervisor, who mentioned they plan to move out by the end of the month. The work they've done is remarkable, and while there are still some punch list items to complete, they will continue checking in.
 - The grass is starting to grow under the snow, and I'm hopeful that as the weather warms up in the next month or two, we'll be able to enjoy being outside again.
- **Shoutout to Custodians**
 - Lastly, I want to give a shout-out to our phenomenal custodial team. They've done an outstanding job cleaning this large building without additional staffing. Every corner of our campus has been attended to, and they've worked hard to maintain cleanliness, even outside where the snowplows have caused some mess. I always appreciate their efforts behind the scenes, especially when the kids and we are not around.

Special Guest Speaker – Emily McDermott

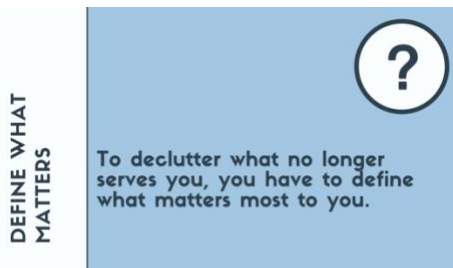
Creator/Host of the top 1% globally ranked podcast *Moms Overcoming Overwhelm*



Today, we're going to discuss The Four Things Clutter Takes Away from Busy Parents as part of January's 'Get Organized Month'. Let's take a moment to define clutter, as it's essential to understand what it truly means. Clutter is anything that is kept, even though not used, needed, or wanted. Clutter encompasses anything that does not serve you or the person you want to become.

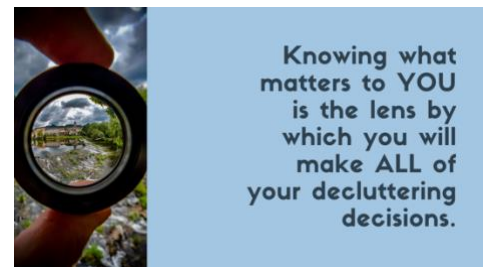
As women, we often carry aspirational clutter, representing a past phase of our lives when we had more time. Many people hold on to crafting supplies for scrapbooking projects they no longer pursue or clothes from a time when they were a different size. We tend to cling to items that once defined us, but they no longer serve a purpose in our current lives.

There's also the issue of having too much stuff in too small a space, leading to cluttered areas. I recently heard about the "Monica closet" from Friends, where everything is crammed in and ready to fall out. Or perhaps you have a "doom room," where you stash everything when guests arrive and simply close the door—no judgment here! My favorite definition of clutter is the physical manifestation of unmade decisions fueled by procrastination. It's easier to shove things aside rather than decide what to do with them.



As we begin the decluttering process, it's crucial to understand what truly matters to you. What holds significance for you might differ greatly from someone else. For instance, I have a friend in the military who has collected around 50 coffee mugs from various states, a cherished memento from her travels. I wouldn't dream of telling her she has too many because those mugs are important to her.

Ultimately, what matters most to us forms the lens through which we evaluate our decluttering choices. It's vital to revisit this perspective, especially when we find ourselves hesitating to part with items due to emotional attachments or perceived value. We often tell ourselves things like, "I spent so much money on this," "I might need it someday," or "My grandmother gave this to me." These thoughts can hinder our ability to let go.



Today, we're going to discuss the four aspects of clutter that are taking away from us. These are often the intangible factors we don't usually consider. While we buy items and use them, clutter is robbing us of our time, peace, health, and energy.



We often overlook how the things that occupy our space also consume our time. We need to store them, locate them, and maintain them. For instance, how many times have we misplaced our phone? We find ourselves shifting piles around just to clean underneath them, which leads to what I call the "stuff shuffle." With less stuff, we have less to manage.

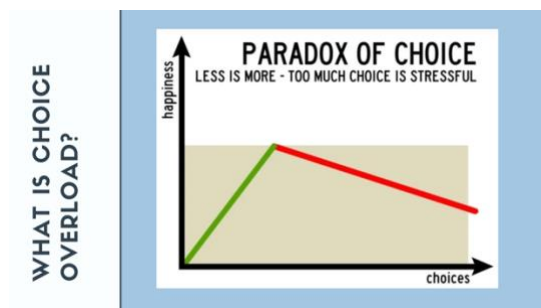
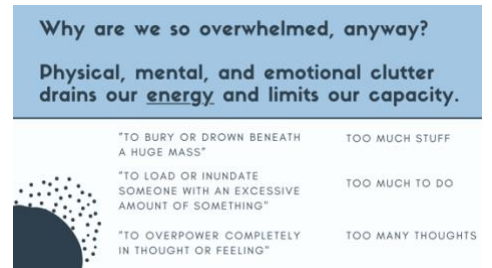
I love this statistic from the National Cleaning Institute: decluttering can reduce housework by 40%. As someone who dislikes housework, having fewer items in my home makes cleaning a much simpler task. We also shouldn't forget the time spent both buying and returning items

My personal motto is that simplicity is my sanity. During my struggle with postpartum anxiety, I yearned for simplicity in every aspect—my routines, meals, and everything else. Researchers discovered that women who considered their homes disorganized had higher stress levels in their saliva compared to those who didn't. These women also reported greater levels of depression and found it harder to transition from work to home, often dreading the chaos waiting for them.



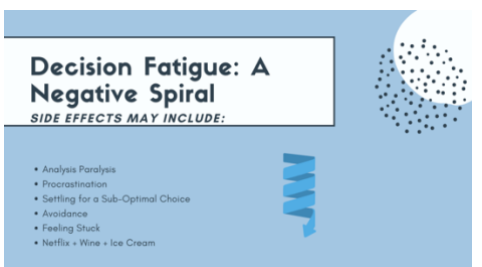
Interestingly, men in the study did not experience the same increase in cortisol levels, likely because women in the U.S. tend to manage home organization. If you have a partner with different clutter tolerances, you might find clutter drives you crazy while they remain unfazed. Clutter also impacts our children's well-being; it creates a visual and tactile overload for them. When kids scatter their toys, it may seem like they're bored and in need of more toys, but they're often just overwhelmed by the sheer volume of stuff around them. Research shows that having fewer toys can lead to deeper play experiences.

Understanding why we feel overwhelmed is crucial. Overwhelm can be defined as being buried beneath a massive load—like laundry piling up—or inundated with too much to do, leading to mental clutter. I'd like to touch on another issue: how our energy is being drained, partly due to decision fatigue. This concept stems from choice overload. While having choices is generally positive, too many options can lead to dissatisfaction. For example, at a restaurant with just a couple of options—like hamburgers and hot dogs—you might feel comfortable, but at a place like Cheesecake Factory, with its thick menu, decision-making becomes overwhelming. Eventually, too many choices can lead to decreased happiness and increased decision fatigue.



The health impacts of clutter are significant; for example, a messy bedroom can disrupt your sleep. Here's a quick quiz: if you find yourself in a cluttered kitchen and can choose between cookies, carrots, and crackers, which would you pick? Most would choose cookies, and that's precisely what the research found—when overwhelmed by mess, people tend to gravitate toward unhealthy options. Clutter symbolizes unfinished tasks, and in a chaotic kitchen, you might feel the pressure of chores like signing forms, doing dishes, or planning dinner, leading to feelings of overwhelm.

I recently came across a fascinating statistic: in 1976, grocery stores had 9,000 unique items, but now that number has skyrocketed to over 40,000. However, we tend to stick to just 150 to 200 items. This phenomenon, known as choice overload, surrounds us constantly. This leads us to the concept of decision fatigue, which refers to the diminishing quality of our decisions over time. We supposedly make about 35,000 decisions each day, and as parents, that number likely increases since we make choices for our kids as well.



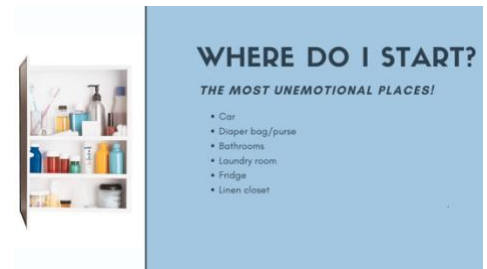
Picture this: at the start of the day, we have the most energy, though it's probably not even at 100%. As the day progresses, our energy diminishes while the number of decisions increases—what am I wearing? What will my kids have for lunch? What's for dinner? By the time evening arrives, if my husband wants to discuss taxes, I might feel overwhelmed and want to say, "No, I can't make any more decisions right now."

The consequences of decision fatigue can be quite significant. For instance, buying socks for my children is a perfect example. My grandmother had four kids and would simply take them to one store, buy socks, and head home. In contrast, we now browse Amazon, read countless reviews, and easily end up lost in the process. After two hours of deliberation, our kids still don't have socks because we are consumed by too many choices and the fear of making the wrong decision.



So, why is decluttering so challenging? It often involves emotional attachments. For example, my husband gifted me a drinkware item for Christmas. Initially, I appreciated it, but over time, nostalgia set in. I began to feel guilty about letting it go, fearing it would imply I didn't love him anymore. We accumulate layers of meaning over time, making it harder to part with belongings.

To tackle this, I suggest starting in the least emotional areas possible. Aim for the highest ratio of trash to sentimental items. Consider decluttering your car, where you might find wrappers and library books that are either trash or need to be organized. Other spaces like your purse, bathroom medicine cabinet, or fridge are also good places to start.



Remember the 5 C's

CHECK YOUR CONSUMPTION
Decluttering can't be effective if you keep bringing a ton of stuff into your house! Ruthlessly unsubscribe and understand your shopping triggers.

CONSIDER THE COST
Clutter's cost goes beyond what you paid with your dollars. You are paying with your time, energy, focus, and attention.

COMPREHEND YOUR CAPACITY

COMPLY WITH THE CONTAINER RULE
Decluttering can't be effective if you keep bringing a ton of stuff into your house!

CHOICES = COMPLEXITY
The more stuff you have, the more choices, the more decisions you need to make. Simplify your stuff to simplify your life.

Remember the 5 C's

Remember the 5 C's of decluttering (screenshot below). Check your consumption: If you're constantly bringing things into your home, it may contribute to the feeling of being overwhelmed. Unsubscribe from emails, especially retail ones that clutter your inbox.

Your consumption habits, as many people tell me, have led to a constant cycle of decluttering. This may stem from the influx of items into your home. If you keep bringing things in, it's nearly impossible to manage the clutter. Remember, we are spending our time, focus, and attention, so it's essential to understand our capacity and what we can realistically manage in this season of motherhood, which may differ from other times.

The container rule is a fundamental concept I teach; it involves setting an artificial boundary for specific categories of items. For example, my kids have "treasure boxes" in which they typically hold trinkets they receive from birthday parties, dentists, and other random places. When one gets full, they must play a game called "love, like, maybe or no" This encourages them to make decisions about what to keep. If they receive more items from a party, instead of allowing a larger container, we maintain a limit based on what is important.

We must establish boundaries to prevent our homes from overflowing with stuff. Remember, the more choices we have, the more complex it is to simplify our lives. It's important to observe what our kids play with. Using the container rule, we can set a limit on how many stuffed animals they keep. Kids are surprisingly good at making choices within set boundaries since they experience limits in other areas of their lives.

If they're struggling to decide, we can use the "out of sight, out of mind" approach. Store toys they don't play with as much in a container they can't see through and give it 30 to 90 days. If they ask for something, you can return it. Observe their interest in items over time; if they stop asking, it indicates they might not need it.

When it comes to sentimental items, it's essential to remember that preserving a memory doesn't mean keeping the physical object. The story behind an item is what matters most. Sometimes, you might want to keep certain pieces but consider why you're holding onto them. You might find it easier to let go of many things by focusing on the meaning rather than the item itself. Display only the best sentimental items instead of letting them gather dust in a box.

These are just a few ways I can assist you. I release new episodes every Thursday. If you're a podcast listener, I keep my interviews around 30 minutes or less and solo episodes to 15 minutes or less, so you can easily fit them into your day. I also invite you to join my free Facebook group or participate in my virtual or in-person coaching sessions. If there's a particular area in your home that's causing you stress, I'm here to assist you through the decluttering process. It's all about decision-making, which can be difficult due to the emotions involved or the narratives we create about ourselves. I'm here to support you every step of the way.

Additionally, I facilitate a free Facebook group where we conduct biweekly decluttering challenges. We spend five days a week decluttering for just 15 minutes each day. I also offer both in-home and virtual decluttering coaching. The in-home sessions typically last three to four hours, depending on your specific situation, like whether you have a preschooler or need to work around nap times.

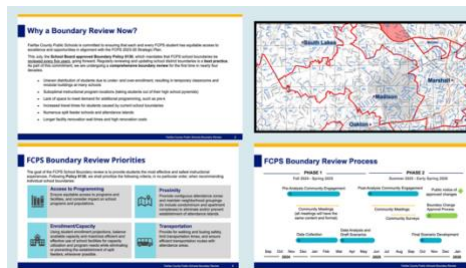
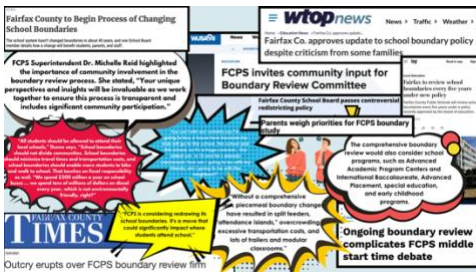
Treasurer's Report - Sabiha Khan

- Current Status:
 - Balance October 30, 2024: \$28,587
 - Balance December 31, 2024: \$23,308
- Income: \$8,735
 - Membership Dues & Donations: \$5,872 YTD
 - Dining for Dollars: \$1,413 YTD
 - School Photos: \$1,450 YTD
 - Silent Auction: \$4,900 (January)
- Community Events:
 - Sock Hop: +\$780

- Expenses: \$12,564
 - Student Support: \$1,452 YTD (Cultural programs, Azzara Fund)
 - Parent/Teacher/School Support: \$9,457 YTD (Ed. Licenses., Classroom Funds, Mini Grants, School Directory, Supply Closet)
 - Teacher/Staff Appreciation: \$700 YTD (Open House Staff Party)
 - PTA Admin: \$955 YTD (Website, Ins.)
- Student Programs: Income \$9,975 (expect to balance out)
- Outstanding checks/payments: ~\$1,380
 - Classroom funds, Supply closet, PTA admin, Student Prog. Registration
- Working Balance: ~\$11,953
 - \$23,308 – (\$1,380 [outstanding payments] +\$9,975 [classroom prog.]
- Upcoming Fundraisers: Read-a-thon, LA5K, Pizza Bingo

President’s Report & Program Announcements – Liz Young

- **Community Boundary Review Meetings**
 - If you did not get a chance to attend an in-person Community Boundary Review Meeting, please consider participating in the upcoming virtual meetings. This is a chance for Fairfax County families to have a say in decisions that affect their children’s education.



• Updates from Committees:

○ Spring Before/After School Programs - Kinny Jeng*

- Does your student like sports, art, coding, chess, or yoga? Check out these and other fun before and after-school activities offered by our PTA in partnership with several Louise Archer teachers and local organizations.
- Registration runs from Monday, 1/13 until Sunday, 1/26. Some activities have very limited enrollment so don't delay! Visit [Click here](#) for information and registration.
- Please email laesprogramcoordinator@gmail.com if you have any questions



○ **International Night - Arvind Jairam***

- LAES PTA is proud to announce: International Night 2025
- Friday, February 21st 6-8pm in the cafeteria (set-up time for presenting families: 5pm)
- If you would like to host a booth to present a country, culture & traditions to the school body, please email us by February 14th to register, including your family name, country and best contact method. Internationalnight@louisearcherpta.org
 - If more than one family chooses the same country, the first registering family will be given the option to choose if to collaborate.



○ **Sunshine Times Newspaper - Linnea Osborne**

- The Sunshine Times serves as the student newspaper, showcasing a variety of student contributions. We welcome all types of submissions, such as written pieces, artwork, puzzles, and even comic strips. Submissions can range from stories and poems—both factual and fictional—to travel guides and restaurant reviews. Last year, we received over 50 entries, and everything is accepted as long as it is not offensive. This opportunity is open to students from kindergarten through sixth grade. We're not seeking perfection; we're looking for authenticity that reflects our student community.
- Please remember to submit your work by January 27th. We've streamlined the submission process through a Google form, which is linked in the flyer sent out right before winter break, as well as in the Sunbeam emails.
- Each student featured in the newspaper will receive a personal copy, and each classroom will receive two copies. Additional copies will be available in the front office and the library, ensuring that everyone has a chance to see it.
- Regarding the number of issues this year, we plan to publish one issue, which is scheduled for March or April time frame. This year, we're also introducing a newspaper club, where some students will take an active role in compiling the submissions into the publication. This will help us refine the process. If you have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to ask.

**THE SUNSHINE TIMES - STUDENT NEWSPAPER SUBMISSIONS
DUE JANUARY 27TH!**

THE SUNSHINE TIMES IS A STUDENT NEWSPAPER INTENDED TO BE A CREATIVE OUTLET FOR BUDDING WRITERS, PHOTOGRAPHERS, AND ARTISTS. ALL STUDENTS K-6TH GRADE ARE ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE!

TOP 5 REASONS TO WRITE FOR THE SUNSHINE TIMES

1. See your name in **PRINT!**
2. Get a **HARD COPY** of the newspaper to bring home!
3. Write (or draw!) about **ANYTHING!**
4. **SHARE** something new and exciting!
5. Improve your writing skills while **HAVING FUN!**

Students can write about school/class activities, vacations, local events, sports coverage, travel/book/movie/music/art reviews, interviews, puzzles, Spanish-language columns, poetry, cartoons, advice columns – all ideas are welcome!

GUIDELINES

- Students are not obligated to participate in every issue.
- Only **one submission** is allowed per student per issue. However, we will accept a complementary photograph/drawing with any article.
- All articles must be **sent electronically** in a word document on or before the specified deadline – **January 27, 2025**
- Only submissions **approved by a parent or guardian** will be accepted. No editing will be done to the documents submitted.
- There is no limit on the number of words, however, we ask parents to use discretion and guide their children about using clear and concise language.
- Students submitting drawings or cartoons must send scans of their work. We will treat them like pictures in the paper. (If you need help scanning, please let us know.)
- All articles must be submitted with a suggested title.
- Additional information available on the Louise Archer PTA website (<https://louisearcherpta.org/the-sunshine-times-student-newspaper/>)

CONTENT SUBMISSION

Link to send your submission by January 27, 2025:
<https://tinyurl.com/4vff4xch>

The Sunshine Times
See your name in the student newspaper!

News article

Story

Poem

Drawing

Painting

Photograph

Advice

Recipe

Comic strip

Game

Puzzle

Anything!

Submit by January 27

- **LA5K Update - April Brown***
 - The LA5K t-shirt contest coming soon; stay tuned for details!
- **Mini Grants - Cathy Chen***
 - We will kick off the second round of mini grant requests in the next few weeks
- **Original Works - Cathy Chen***
 - Students are working hard on their artwork. Please remind your child that his or her artwork is due to Ms. Edwards by February 21st.
- **Reminder to Volunteer**
 - Just a reminder: The PTA offers year-round volunteer opportunities, including mid-year, summer, and chair positions. We encourage you to consider volunteering!
 - Red represents available positions for this year, while blue arrows signify openings for the next school year.
- **Stock The Fridge - Tooba Malik***
 - It's time to show the Louise Archer teachers and staff our appreciation! We will be "Stocking the Fridge" and the Teachers Lounges with snacks for the Staff Developmental Day - January 29, 2025.
 - Please consider signing up for the following spots to show our love to the LAES teachers and staff. And if you do volunteer, please deliver them to LAES Teacher Lounge on Monday, January 27th between 8:30-10:30 am. Or items can be dropped off at Tooba Malik's house through Sunday, January 26. Please contact toobamerium786@gmail.com to coordinate the drop off.
 - If you think we are missing anything essential that you want to donate, please add a comment in the "other" choice.

Executive Committee
President - Liz Young
Vice President - Tooba Malik
Treasurer - Sabiha Khan
Secretary - Katie Nevitt

Fundraising Events
LA5K Chair - April Brown
Pizza Bingo - Andrea LoBalbo
Silent Auction - Liz Young

Community Fundraisers
Dining for Dollars - Corrie Pratt
Original Works - Cathy Chen
Spirit Wear - Molly Peng
Yearbook - Lauren Schuttloffel

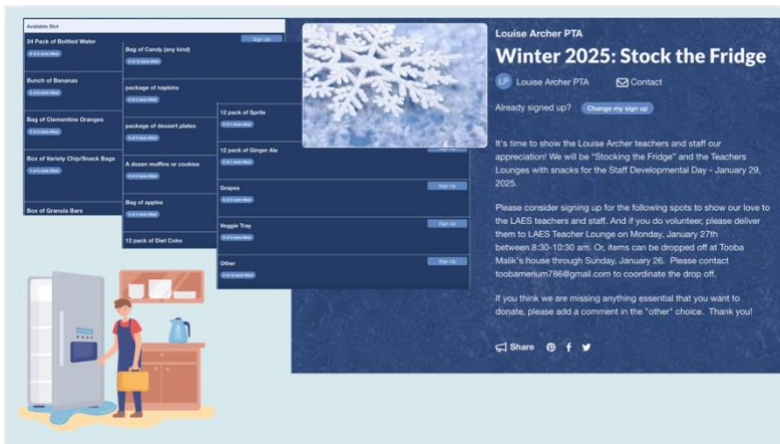
Community Events
Faculty Volleyball Game - Lauren Padgett
Field Day - Shannon Aimone
International Night - Arvind Jairam (Feb 21 co-chair)
Readathon - Katie Nevitt
Sixth Grade Celebration Chair - Lynde Herzburg
Skate Night - Erin Berk
Sock Hop - Molly Peng
STEAM Fair - Erin Simpler
Walking Wednesdays/Safe Routes - Craig Floyd

Hospitality & Teacher Appreciation
Holiday Cookie Carry - Lauren Padgett
Summer Playdate Coordinator (rising 3rd) - (25-26 SY)
Summer Playdate Coordinator (rising K) - (25-26 SY)
Sunshine Committee - Linnea Osborne
Teacher Appreciation Week & Luncheon - Tooba Malik

School Support
Before/After School Programs - Kinny Jeng
MiniGrants - Cathy Chen
Supply Closet - Peggy Femenella

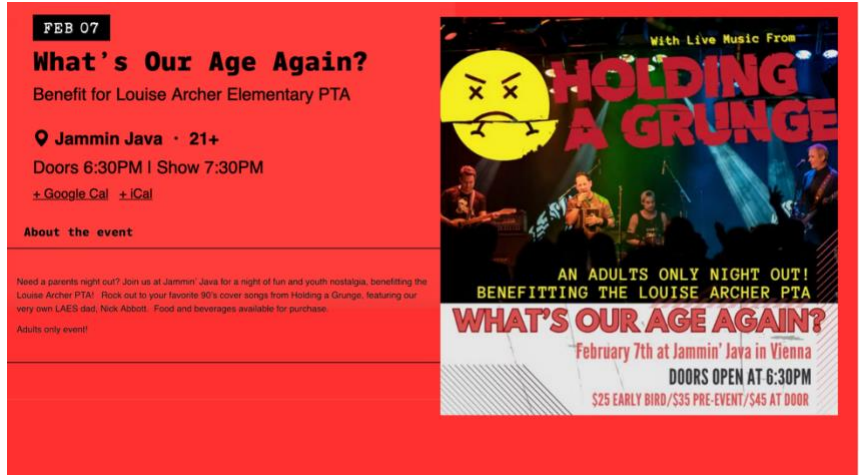
Student Support
Cultural Arts - Melissa Gervasio
Reflections - (25-26 SY)
School Supplies - Nina Kofman
Sunshine Times - Linnea Osborne

PTA Administration
Audit Committee - Steve Soliday
Directory Chair - Teresa Wheatley
Facebook Page Admin - Katie Nevitt
Loyalty Rewards - Steve Soliday
Membership and Donations (25-26 SY)
Nominating Committee (24-25 SY)
SEPTA Liaison (Special Education PTA) (25-26 SY)
Superintendent Family Connection Group Liaison - Tooba Malik
Volunteer Chair (24-25 SY)
Webmaster/Sunbeam - Steve Soliday



- **Shameless Self Promotion: What's Our Age Again? Benefit for Louise Archer ES**

- A group of friends is organizing a fundraising event for parents on February 7th, featuring the 90s band "Holding a Grudge," led by Nick Abbott, Evie's dad.
- They have sold nearly 50% of the \$25 tickets, with the event running from 7:30pm to 10:00pm.
- The PTA will receive proceeds, with nearly \$1,000 already raised through pre-sales.
- A 50/50 raffle will also take place, with ticket prices set at \$10 for ten or \$20 for twenty.
- Approximately 100 attendees are expected as of today, and early bird ticket sales may be extended beyond tomorrow.



- **Upcoming Events:**

- January 15: Dining for Dollars - Church Street Pizza (4-8pm)
- January 20: Student Holiday
- January 28: End of 2nd Quarter (NO early release)
- January 29: Student Holiday
- February 7: What's Our Age Again? Benefit for Louise Archer ES
- February 12: PTA General Meeting via Zoom @ 7:00pm



- **Questions: (none)**

- **Call to Close: 8:06pm**

Did you know that you can sync the PTA calendar with your Google, Apple, Microsoft, and many other personal calendars? The PTA calendar includes essential dates such as school holidays, early release times, and all planned PTA events.

Go to <https://louisearcherpta.org/calendar/> or use the QR code below:

PUT THIS ON YOUR CALENDAR!

LOUISE ARCHER ELEMENTARY PTA