

REMARKS BY FIRST LADY ANITA PERRY
TEXAS PTA CONVENTION
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
FEB. 9, 2007
INTRODUCED BY: Michelle Humphreys – president; Texas PTA

Thank you, Michelle. **Welcome!** and **“Viva PTA!”**

I am thrilled that you are convening in San Antonio. On my “very long” list of favorite Texas cities, San Antonio gets top billing.

There is just something about this city that draws you in... a combination of the river, the people, and of course the Mexican food! So any reason to get to San Antonio is a good one in my book! (*pause*)

Tonight we are here to kick off a very important weekend. I want to thank you for the gracious invitation to join such involved Texans and “plugged in” parents.

I also want to thank Michelle Humphreys, executive director Kyle Ward, the PTA board of directors, area presidents and council members...

And thank you to the volunteers and members who devote their time and work so diligently to educate, protect and care for Texas youth.*(pause)*

It's been two years since I have had a child in high school and it's been a few more since I was putting school art work on the refrigerator or making "no crust" peanut butter and jelly sandwiches...

But speaking as a supporter and former member of the PTA, you can always relate to other parents' concerns, experiences, successes ... And as part of the largest child advocacy group in Texas, you can gain so much from the knowledge that is shared and the issues that are addressed.

Roosevelt said, "We cannot **always** build the future for our youth, but we can build **our youth** for the future."

Through the Texas PTA, I believe you do both. You are preparing children for a future of success and education, and you are creating a better world in which they will thrive. *(pause)*

So give yourselves a **pat on the back**, because that is a huge endeavor and one to be proud of! *(pause)*

February is a busy and significant month for Texas PTA members. Not only are you involved in convention, you are also preparing for PTA Day at the state capitol, and you are almost to spring break! **(I know that is essential!)**

Tonight, I want to bring your attention to two critical issues that are also happening this February.

Two critical issues, important to all Texans.... and all parents and teachers.

I'm sure many of you have already bought valentine candy, your children have picked out their valentine cards for classmates; your teens may be busy preparing for Valentine's Day dances, or trying to find that perfect gift for a new boyfriend or girlfriend.

As your children anticipate this special day, there is a conversation that we as parents, educators and friends should have with all children and **specifically our teenagers**, to address an issue that many face daily: Teen Dating Violence.

A survey conducted by The Texas Council on Family Violence found that 75 percent of Texans age 16 to 24 have either personally experienced dating violence or know someone who has.

Nationally, one out of three teens report experiencing some kind of abuse in their romantic relationships, including verbal and emotional abuse. As a mother, these statistics are startling

Unfortunately, no teenager is immune to such violence; and children from all walks of life can become victims of dating violence.

These violent behaviors and patterns can take many forms including physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual abuse. And they cause serious ramifications for victims which often carry through into their adult relationships.

Today, Feb 9th is the final day of Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Awareness Week, but it should be the start of an ongoing conversation and education between you and your children, students or young friends.

To increase awareness, many Texas students are receiving information through the use of teen dating violence awareness and prevention toolkits, developed by the American Bar Association.

These tool kits can be found in many schools across the state and I **encourage** you to find out if your child's school has one.

By becoming informed about the dangers and long term ramifications of teen dating violence, we can empower teens to make a change or help a friend end an abusive cycle.

Through education, we can protect Texas children from the **devastation** of abuse. *(pause)*

98 years ago, when PTA held its first convention, the topics discussed most likely were very different than those we are covering tonight.

Teen dating violence is an issue that has been around since dating began, but it is not something that was readily talked about.

Now, we draw attention to these serious topics in order to bring them to an end. *(pause)*

Another critical issue that was probably not discussed at the 1909 Texas convention but has taken center stage in recent years is... heart disease.

It is an issue significant to **ALL** mothers, **all** Women and equally important for **all** fathers and husbands because it is the leading cause of death of American women and men... **THE LEADING CAUSE.**

Nearly 366,000 women in America die every year of heart disease. That's more than half of the entire Texas PTA.

One in three women will die from heart disease, claiming the lives of more women every year than the next 16 causes of death **combined**.

The scariest fact is that fewer than half of all women are aware that heart disease is the number 1 killer....
And that is the number I would like to change.

I spoke to a friend of mine, Mary Gill, before coming to talk to you and I asked her if I could share her story.

Mary is a wonderful mother of four and a very involved Dallas parent.

One morning she woke up feeling nauseous, nausea like she had not experienced before.

Getting out of bed, she broke out into a cold sweat and as she entered the room where her husband was, she started feeling aches in her shoulders and pains in her back.

Fortunately for Mary, her husband who is an orthopedic surgeon knew that these signs pointed to cardiac crisis. Mary was rushed to the hospital where she underwent heart surgery to remove blockage found in an artery.

In the days after the attack, doctors warned her that her heart had suffered severe damage and that it might never fully recover.

Mary Gill had very few warning signs of heart disease but her mother did have high blood pressure and she had hypertension during her pregnancies.

At the age of 42, she had suffered a heart attack and had severe heart damage.

Mary has now fully recovered and, through healthy diet and exercise, is continuing her life as a busy mother, wife and spokeswoman for the American Heart Association, Go Red campaign.

But Mary is not alone. Of the women who suddenly die from this illness, 63 percent of them have no previous evidence of coronary heart disease.

I'm here to tell you there is something we can **and must** do to raise awareness and protect ourselves and loved ones... because **heart disease can largely be prevented.**

Let me repeat that, **we lose a life every 35 seconds to heart disease, but we don't have to.**

We can reduce our risk through basic lifestyle changes.

I know how hard it is to get out of bed in the morning and go for a walk, or not take that second piece of cake after dinner... but it can make a truly significant difference.

Through these simple actions: Regular exercise, a healthy diet, not smoking, talking with your healthcare professional about your personal risks and controlling weight, high cholesterol, blood pressure and diabetes.... we can help our hearts.

And we can set an example for our children about the importance of physical activity and healthy living.

We all know the dangers and rising rates of childhood obesity, so incorporating daily activity and healthy choices into your lives is essential for Texans young and old.

To help Texans get healthy and stay active, the Governor and I have created the Texas Round-Up Annual 10K & 5K family Run and Festival. It is a great way to encourage physical activity as a parent or teacher and join your children or students in a day of fun.

I want to invite **ALL of you** to join us April 28th for the Texas Round-Up as part of your dedication to living healthier lives.

As Oscar Wilde said, “I am not young enough to know **everything**”.

I know we all know a few “young ones” who think they do! But **we ARE** all “old enough” to know the important things, and your health is one of the **most important**.

So with a group that encompasses 630,000 members ... you are in a position to make an impact, make a change, and alter the conversations that the next PTA convention will have.

I ask that you take these two areas of awareness back to your friends, to your schools, to your children and I ask that you spread the word about heart disease **AND** teen dating violence.

Thank you for allowing me to share these important issues with you at the start of such an exciting and educational weekend.

As the largest child advocacy association in Texas, I know you empower others and enhance the lives of our children, and each other.

Thank you and **“Viva PTA.”**

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