

### Sherry Rudolph, candidate for Advocacy Director

It's the immediate needs of your own child and his or her classmates that serve as the catalyst for PTA involvement. But I've found that the heritage and history of both national PTA and Washington State PTA are what keeps those of us with kids past school age still passionate about serving this organization.

My service began in 1998 at my children's elementary school in Oregon, where the volunteers built an art docent infrastructure that allowed every child to track and record his or her yearly progress. I was able to describe it to my new Washington PTA community once I moved here. (People love to be able to contribute. Be a leader that embraces new voices and new ideas ... there are giving volunteers inside those lonely new neighbors!)

It wasn't until my kids were at the secondary level that I volunteered for board positions – emergency preparedness chair and staff appreciation, both because of an in-person ask. I said yes because my previous exposure to “the scary middle school PTA” was looking lost one day and the PTA Vice President upon discovering I was new, immediately lead me on a tour and took an interest in me and my child.

What I like to call my “ah ha advocacy moment” came when I began serving on our school district's Rights & Responsibilities committee with students, law enforcement, human services and administrators. Conveniently my job was geographically close and ended 30 minutes before our PTA's Council meetings, so I volunteered to be the board member that attended those. I shared some of the poignant needs from the disciplinary stories and realized there was no one previously voicing these family struggles. The importance of shared decision-making and going above and beyond to make sure every voice is at the table became the heart of my service.

My goal as Advocacy Director is to increase our true statewide engagement in advocacy and for every member to realize that they are advocates; whether they are volunteering in the classroom or speaking at a school board meeting. Building up the volunteer leaders on the Advocacy Committee and the local Advocacy Chairs across our state is another path toward sustaining this organization for another 115 years.

I look forward to contributing to the vision of WSPTA while serving leaders and ultimately ....Every Child with One Voice.