

# VC ECHOES

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 8

MAY 24, 2000

## VCTA Teacher named an Orange County Woman of Achievement



*Orange County Woman of Achievement, Diane Ruggles. Diane is the Chairperson of the Career Development and Occupational Studies Department at the HS.*

**D**iane Ruggles, Chairperson of the Career Development and Occupational Studies Department at the HS was named an Orange County Woman of Achievement for the year 2000, in the category of education. She was honored at a dinner on May 10, 2000, at Anthony's Pier Nine with the other Orange County women named in the nine categories of nomination. Diane was recognized for service to the community, both here

at Valley Central and the larger Orange County community, and for her educational leadership. Diane was instrumental in the formation and development of the Community-as-School (CAS) program. The Community-as-School program reaches out to students at risk and provides a unique and highly specialized educational alternative which has opened up an avenue for

these students to obtain a diploma. She started this program six years ago with HS Assistant Principal, Don Crispell, and has developed it into a model program for the state and country.

Diane has made a difference to the Orange County community through her service as a board member on the Brittany Miller Foundation which offers financial and emotional support to families with children who have had or are currently being treated for cancer. Diane is cur-

rently involved in the Children's Cancer Research Fund of Westchester and the Horton Healthcare Foundation. It is a major goal of Diane's to see the establishment of a pediatric cancer care unit at Horton Hospital in Middletown.

At the HS, Diane is well known as "cherub" leader. She refers to all her students, regular day-school and Community-as-School, as "cherubs" and strives to provide an excellent learning experience for each acting as teacher, mother, counselor, boss  
(continued on page 8)



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Marc Newman wins Award	2
VCHS Capabilities Day	4
VCTA Blood Drive Success	4
2nd Feller Tournament	7
HS gets KISS-ed	7
Better Dental Coverage	9
International Literacy Project	10
NYSUT RA 2000	12
Letter from VCFCU	13
State Budget is a Winner	14
VCTA Celebration	15
State Retirement Incentive	18
VCTA Letter Campaign	18

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- From the President, p. 2
- Good Health and Safe Environment, p. 5
- Play by the Rules, Commissioner Mills, p. 8
- Pay Teachers Minimum Wage, p. 9
- HS PTSA Golf Tournament Registration, p. 11
- Scholarship Council seeks donations, p. 13
- VOTE /COPE drive begins, p. 14
- VCTA Executive Board Highlights, p. 16-17.
- Mac's Musings, p. 18

## Marc Newman receives NYSUT award

**M**arc Newman was recently named as a local recipient of the Community Service Award by NYSUT's Officers and Board of Directors for our Election District (E.D. 14). This award was created in 1992 to recognize the contribution of NYSUT members to the growth and well being of the communities where they live and work. Marc was lauded for his work with the American Legion, the Village of Montgomery, Valley Central Middle School and the New York State Council for Social Studies. The selection and confirmation committee said in its letter to Marc, "Your tireless efforts have touched the lives of many and en-

hanced the overall quality of life in your community. Your dedication and commitment exemplify the best of our members. You are applauded and congratulated for volunteering your time, talent and energy." We too, the members of the VCTA and the communities that comprise the Valley Central School District, congratulate Marc on his achievement.

Marc's name was shown on the screen at the Saturday, April 8th, General Session of the 2000 Representative Assembly in N.Y.C. A plaque will also be presented to Marc at a date and time to be announced.

~ Jay Sussdorff



Marc Newman in his infamous role as "General Montgomery".

## From the President: Classified Politically Incorrect

**A**t a March 6 District budget meeting it was indicated that the Valley Central faculty has embraced the District's collaborative model of inclusive education and that this model is working wonderfully. I found myself wondering if there was another VC school district I was unaware of. Although the collaborative model has merit, it is not mandated as we have often been told, nor do the vast majority of staff members embrace this model as the panacea often presented to the public. The collaborative model is one of many meritorious options available to meet the rigorous demands of educating all of our youth and, therefore, should be presented as such.

If special and regular edu-

cation children are to be truly served, we must be willing to ask the tough and necessary questions. For example, are our policies motivated by money, political correctness, legislative mandates, etc.? Does the collaborative model work equally well in all schools? Does school size matter? Does class size matter? Does the collaborative model work equally well at all grade levels? Are collaborative classrooms properly staffed? Is common planning time provided to collaborative teachers? Are resource

*Although the collaborative model has merit, it has not been mandated...*

room students placed in collaborative settings as a substitute for resource assistance? Is it possible for a special education teacher without a chemistry degree to be an equal partner in the planning, teaching,

and evaluation of a Regents chemistry class, or have we simply managed to hire a \$50,000 teaching assistant? Would smaller class sizes accomplish the same goal more effectively?

Collaborative teaching models can and do have merit, but they are also fraught with pitfalls and abuses that must be addressed rather than ignored. At NYSUT's 2000 Representative Assembly in New York City, proposed resolution 12: *Educating Students with Disabilities in the Least Restrictive Environment*, attempts to address both the merits and dangers of inclusive education in a practical manner. Following are some excerpts.

... While the decision to place a student in regular education (continued on page three) classes is based on the individual needs of the student, various admin-

## ***From the President:*** **Classified Politically Incorrect** (continued from page two)

*istrative decisions are resulting in disproportionate numbers of these students being placed in these classes. Teachers throughout the state have informed NYSUT about regular classes in which students with disabilities comprise over 50 percent of the students enrolled in the class.*

*The large numbers of students with diverse learning and behavioral needs often affect the quality of instruction for all students in the class. Regular education teachers frequently report that they are having difficulty addressing the diversity of needs of these students, especially in exceptionally large class enrollments. Moreover, general education teachers are having difficulty coordinating with school personnel in arranging for and effectively implementing the broad range of support services and aids and programs that are to be provided to these students according to their IEP's.*

*NYSUT believes that the education needs of the general education student must be considered in placement of students with disabilities in general classrooms. The decision to place a disabled student in a general education class should be based both on the judgment that such placement will be of educational benefit to the disabled student and on the judgment that such placement will not have an adverse effect on the education of other students in the classroom. (Read the March 6, 2000 New York Teacher for a full reading of this resolution.)*

It would appear that valid and necessary questions permeating the special education bureaucracy today include: Are we offering special education students a Cadillac education while offering regular education students a Yugo? I realize

questions such as this are considered politically incorrect, but whether we like it or not, such questions are on the minds of the majority of educational professionals, as well as many parents. These questions can create discomfort and anger, often resulting in defensive posturing and personal testimonials and questions such as, "I have a special needs child (student/friend), how can you say this?"

I can certainly understand and relate to these questions and concerns. As a poor rural kid growing up in a depressed farming community, I get defensive about the apparent inequities between opportunities offered to suburban and urban children over those raised in poor rural areas. I do not expect any child to suffer for the benefit of another child. I expect educational institutions to do what is right for all children, both special and regular education children. I do not expect special education children to be denied needed services. Nor do I expect regular education children's academic achievement to become a lesson in mediocrity simply because we refuse to admit that the methods by which we have chosen to accomplish this difficult but honorable task may lack pragmatism, or at least be unrealistic for many children when viewed in a holistic manner.

When viewed holistically, the collaborative model is simply one of many forms of detracking designed to include classified students in the regular education setting. James E. Rosenbaum, a professor of sociology, education, and social policy at Northwestern Uni-

versity, questions the entire practice of detracking. Following are some excerpts from his Winter 1999-2000

AFT American Educator article, "*If Tracking Is Bad, Is Detracking Better?*"

- *Detracking creates a situation where teachers can't use whole-class time to meet the needs of faster or slower students and can't give individual attention to middle students. It is hard to find any winners in terms of instruction.*
- *Although advocates speak confidently about creating higher standards for slower students, detracking creates a situation where equity argues against high standards for faster and slower students alike. For faster students, extra assignments that would challenge them seem unfair and arbitrary. For slower students, high achievement standards are unfair unless the class can wait while they master the material - and this would be unfair to the rest of the class. As a result, faster students rarely need to exert much effort, and slower students rarely get enough time to meet achievement standards.*
- *It [detracking] transformed teaching from difficult to impossible. It transformed the ideal of equal instruction for all into practices offering less instruction for all. It trans-* (continued on page six)
- 
- *formed faster students from motivated allies to disengaged threats. And it transformed teachers from detracking enthusiasts into advocates for a return to tracking.*



## VCHS Celebrates 4th Annual Capabilities Day



*Karen Baker, HS Paraprofessional, and her son, Nicolas Baker, were presenters at the VCHS Celebration of Capabilities Day*

Valley Central High School celebrated its fourth annual Celebration of Capabilities Day on April 13, 2000, organized by Barbara Palmer, Chairperson of the HS Special Education Department and Karen Baker, Paraprofessional.

The purpose of Capabilities Day is to help foster acceptance of those who experience challenges different from the typical student by providing students and staff with increased knowledge, awareness and sen-

sitivity towards people with disabilities in the hope that by providing information about a variety of disabilities, students can more readily understand the difficulties faced by those who live daily with those challenges. To achieve this, teachers were asked to volunteer either by allowing speakers to address their classes or by bringing their classes to activities or assemblies. These activities included ways to simulate physical challenges; many faculty, staff and students were able to travel the crowded hallways in wheel chairs thanks to the donation of the chairs by Consolidated Medical Supplies. In some classes there were discussions of current event articles relating to disabilities, while others received information on the Americans with Disabilities Act was discussed. Some students were involved in discussions about the adaptations that have to be made as well as items that are used by those with physical challenges to make their lives easier.

*"The only disability  
in life is a bad attitude."  
Scott Hamilton*

This year's speakers included Patricia Arnott who is a physical therapist assistant and

Helen Yankanin, who is an occupational therapist. They spoke about the types of therapies that they perform and the goals they strive to reach in using those therapies on persons with physical challenges. Tina Shevetone of Canine Companions brought a seeing eye dog. The dog is trained to assist deaf, blind or physically challenged people with daily living tasks like turning on a light switch or answering a phone; tasks that many of us take for granted. The dog is also sent to nursing homes to provide company for the residents. Sharon Miller, an advocate from Crystal Run Village, addressed the Americans with Disabilities Act which protects the rights of those who are physically challenged. Edward Bartz, editor and founder of Cap Abilities magazine addressed the English classes. Using a computer to speak, Mr. Bartz explained to students that he is able to live a full life running his magazine and enjoying time with his friends and his girlfriend despite  
(continued on page seven)

that fact that his Cerebral Palsy has forced him to be confined to a wheelchair. Town of Montgomery D.A.R.E. Officer Keith Lipsey, who owns the Lipsey Karate School,

## VCTA Blood Drive is a success

The VCTA held its first annual Blood Drive on Thursday, March 2nd from 1:30 - 7:30 PM in the back gym at the Middle School. The drive was coordinated and run by Middle School Nurse and VCTA Executive Council member, Kathy Manning. Kathy decided to organize the drive in response to the needs of the Mid-Hudson Blood Bank whose supply of blood was running dangerously low.

There were enough time slots for 44 people to donate, and all were filled very quickly. Not only did VCTA members donate, but so did administrators and students. Kathy Manning looks forward to organizing another drive next year. *Thanks for doing a great job, Kathy.*



*Two High School teachers, Sandra Creter and Jane Hillis donate the gift of life - blood.*



## On Good Health and a Safe Environment...

**A**re you aware of the fact that over 70% of all instructional space in public schools outside of NYC was built between the '50s and '70s (1900s, that is)? Given that fact, is it any wonder that schools are running into health and safety risks, old and overworked systems (plumbing, HVAC, electrical, roofing), and space and ergonomic limitations? How many of these schools are considering, in the midst of, or about to begin construction and renovation projects on one or more of the buildings in their districts? As teachers and as individuals, we should be aware of the facts provided to us by NYSUT in regard to these projects. School districts want these projects to cause as little disruption as possible to the day to day educational process, but, as we all know, the best laid plans often go astray and not all people are sensitive to their surroundings.

There needs to be an understanding among all the parties involved that the goals achieved through sane and safe means are the ultimate goals we all would like to reach. Please be aware of some of the following items as our project here at Valley Central begins in the near future:

- there should be a clear description of the project and its budget
- a timeline should be provided indicating jobs to be

performed, the hours work will take place, restricted dates (for testing as an example)

- the site supervisor(s) should be identified-he/she should insure construction activities and hazards do not affect building occupants
- how will air pollution be controlled and HVAC systems be protected from contamination
- how will noise levels be controlled/minimized
- will there be adequate cleanup and disposal of debris
- are construction materials and work areas isolated from occupied areas of the building
- how will construction materials be secured

*"There needs to be an understanding among all parties involved that the goals achieved through sane and safe means ..."*

- are MSDSs provided
- fire safety systems and exits must be maintained or alternates provided
- building security must be addressed

dressed

- are union representatives or outside experts allowed to inspect sites and/or conduct tests

As is the case in all other aspects of life, communication is the key to success. Our district has provided us with much of the above information and will continue to communicate with us as the projects get under way in our buildings. If you have any concerns or feel that the spirit or practice



of the above items is not being properly followed, please make us aware of those concerns. We hope that the construction and renovation in your building goes smoothly and according to plan within the time frame we are hoping to achieve. If we are lucky, most of the intrusive work will be done in the summer when things are at least less busy and the buildings less populated. Also, remember to have patience as we undergo these changes.

*~ Jay Sussdorff*

**If you have any topics you would like to see covered or questions you would like answered on health or the working environment, please submit them to Patti Lunden, Editor at the HS.**

*Until next time, may you enjoy good health and a safe environment!*

## ***From the President:*** **Classified Politically Incorrect** (continued from page three)

- *While tracking often has bad outcomes, detracking is not necessarily better. Researchers who have played a role in criticizing tracking must also consider the potential problems of detracking. Until such studies are done, high school practitioners should be cautious about proceeding to detracking reforms just because they sound appealing. There is too much at stake, and there is great risk of unanticipated negative outcomes.*

It would appear, however, that whenever someone is brazen enough to question any of the practices of special education, s/he is immediately labeled (by some) as one of those anti-special education people. This, however, seems a little harsh. If someone questions the validity of Regents exams or Commissioner Mills' new regents graduation requirements, is s/he necessarily labeled anti-standards or anti-education? No one seems to question an athletic institution's premise that some participants will achieve a higher level of skill/expertise than others. In fact, baseball has an accepted tracking system that includes the major leagues as well as several minor league categories. Although the tracking systems utilized within sports and education are functionally different and therefore, difficult to compare, their motivations and philosophies are, nevertheless, similar and should not be ignored. No one would be foolhardy enough to propose that the New York Yankees replace ten of their defending world championship players with ten new players who were unable to start on their respective high school baseball teams. The overall impact of this

heterogeneous athletic grouping on individual player performance and the overall team record would be indisputably negative. Yet, in education we expect this same concept to miraculously work.

Perhaps the real educational bias lies in the belief that all children should be the same, rather than accepting their unique differences and talents. All children can learn, just as all children can play baseball. All children, however, do not learn (*educationally or athletically*) at the same pace, in the same manner, or to the same degree. We may lose an entire generation of learners if we do not accept this, and insure that our methodologies are both caring and pragmatic rather than simply politically correct.

Spending money, time, and effort on special education is a must, both ethically and financially. I have never met an anti-special education teacher or an anti-special education parent. I have, however, met many in these categories who question the rationality of many special education mandates and practices, including but not limited to their fairness, equity, functionality, and prohibitive cost factors. We all know that educated children, regardless of their abilities, are less

costly to society than uneducated children. Like the poster says: "If you think education is expensive, try ignoring it."



costly to society than uneducated children. If doubling this figure to \$16,400 improved student results on standardized tests by 5%, would the local community tax payer, and state and federal lawmakers say "go for it; it's money well spent." Or would we hear the cliché, "it's not cost effective?" Do

we always ask the tough question (s): What will be the impact on the individual, his or her fellow students, and the community? Or are we afraid to voice these questions in politically explosive situations, thus ignoring the facts in favor of peace, harmony, and political correctness?

*Editorial,*  
*Tim Brown*

*Perhaps the real educational bias lies in the belief that all children should be the same, rather than accepting their unique differences and talents...*

costly to society than uneducated children. Like the poster says: "If you think education is expensive, try ignoring it."

No decision, however, can be made in a vacuum. The average

## Corinne Feller Memorial Basketball Challenge is a Success



**C**orinne Feller was a 1998 graduate of Valley Central who passed away on January 17, 1999, after a long battle with ovarian cancer. Corinne was an excellent stu-

dent throughout her educational career which began at Montgomery Elementary School. She was a star athlete who played soccer, basketball and ran track. She was a wonderful person who is loved and missed by many who remember her

fondly. Corinne is the daughter of Ron and Anita Feller: Anita is a member of the paraprofessional staff at Berea Elementary.

On April 8, 2000, the second annual Corinne Feller Basketball Challenge took place. The event teamed up former coaches and family members of Corinne to challenge media personalities from Cable 6 News and WRRV Radio.

The Basketball Challenge raised \$2000 to be awarded to a student athlete. This year's game was a great success and enjoyable for both the players and the spectators, especially the coaches team who won the game.

On behalf of the Feller family, I would like to thank everyone who attended or simply made a donation. I would also like to extend our gratitude to the Valley Central School District for providing the use of the facilities and custodial services.

Plans are already underway for the third annual Corinne Feller Basketball Challenge. If you would like to help, please contact me at the HS.

~ Ryan M. Phelps, HS  
Varsity Girls Basketball Coach

## High School is "KISS-ed" on a weekly basis

**T**he High School has grown fond of its weekly KISS. The KISS (Keeping its School Safe) Program tries to foster awareness among the students and staff of the building that non-violence is a conscious choice that should be made on a daily basis. The program collects prizes that will be awarded if the building is violence free. If a fight occurs the top prizes are returned, when all the

prizes that remain have been awarded, the KISS program sponsors "would've, should've, could've" drawings to make the point the when people are violent everybody loses. A "Morals and Manners" secret agent is sent out each week to "catch" someone using good morals and manners.

Another facet of the KISS program is the *Teacher/Staff of the Week Award* sponsored by the Fam-

ily and Consumer Science Department. Students nominate a favorite teacher or staff member that they would like recognized for their kindness with a special treat prepared and delivered by the Culinary class. The quality and dedication of our faculty and staff is obvious by the length of our waiting list!

~ Marie Fasulo, HS

## VCHS Celebrates 4th Annual Capabilities Day (continued from page four)

performed Tae Kwon Do with the VCHS Martial Arts club and his student, Nicolas Baker. Nicolas, a seven year old Berea Elementary student who has Cerebral Palsy, uses Lofstran crutches to ambulate. He takes Karate lessons with Officer Lipsey, who is a certified Handicapable Martial Arts Instructor. Karen Baker, Nicolas' mother, spoke about the adaptations required for Nicolas and tried to help students understand the challenges he faces. HS Principal Robert Klein

addressed classes as the parent of a physically handicapped daughter. The Sign Language class performed a skit in a Spanish class that had been learning about food terms and ordering in a restaurant. At the end of the skit the Spanish class applauded; they had to be reminded that if the sign language students were really deaf, they wouldn't have heard the applause.

Capabilities Day is set aside each year to help us all learn

more about each other's differences so that we can all celebrate one another's capabilities.

~ Karen Baker and  
Barbara Palmer, HS

## Commissioner Mills, Play by the Rules ....

**A**s teachers we are constantly trying to reinforce fair play, good sportsmanship, and honesty. How many times have we intervened when Johnny or Mary quickly changed the rules of the game to avoid losing? As teachers we struggle to enforce the rules of the game. After all, isn't that what helps to make us honest and decent human beings?

Can you guess who is **NOT** playing by the rules? Did you get the answer? Why yes, it is the NYS Education Department, led by none other than Commissioner Mills. This can't be true! Are they not the great leaders of our educational system? When and how did this happen, you ask? It happened during the scoring of the Fourth Grade ELA test. Consider the following examples:

- The students were asked to include a title, but if it didn't fit

the writing sample, points were taken off. If a student neglected to include a title, **No** points were allowed to be deducted!

- If the students started to paragraph their writing sample and then made a mistake, points were deducted. If a student neglected to paragraph, **No** points were allowed to be deducted.

- The scorers were given examples of "zero" work. When the



usually found some reason **Not** to give the sample a "zero" score.

How are teachers supposed to prepare students for the test when the rules were changed long after the test was taken? Commissioner Mills, you asked us to raise the standards. We

did! Don't ask us to play your game if you are going to change the rules when you don't like the outcome. As we have always told our students – you won't make any friends this way!

~ Rich Steger

*How are teachers supposed to prepare students for a test when the rules are changed long after the test was taken?*

scorers came across what was exactly the same as the "zero" work, the final decision from the State Education staff

## VCTA Teacher named Orange County Woman of Achievement (continued from page one)

and friend, all in the same day. She has a great capacity to handle all types of students making her a role model for others to follow. As an education professional, Diane's interests extend beyond Room 101 and the CAS office; Diane is an active member of the Woman's University Club and its Scholarship Committee. The Woman's University Club sponsors financial scholarships for graduating females who are recognized for their leadership roles in their school and community.

Diane's life recalls Proverb 31:20, "Her palm she has stretched out to the afflicted one, and her hands she has thrust out to the poor

one." Her active involvement in Orange County's programs and efforts to improve the lives of those struggling with cancer reflects the selfless nature of Diane Ruggles.

If a society is in fact judged by the treatment of its poor, Diane's compassion for her students– (poor academically or materially) – may be witnessed in every class session.

Diane is not only an Orange County Woman of Achievement, she is certainly a Valley Central Woman of Achievement. It was an honor to nominate Diane, and an even greater honor to speak for Diane at the dinner on May 10th.

Truly a master teacher, Diane is the model of the subjects she teaches. Always in focus, Diane is a fine model as a concerned citizen, loving wife and mother, and gifted teacher.

**Congratulations, Diane**

*You bring us honor!*

~ Robert Ciganek,  
Retired HS and

Robert Mooney, HS



## Benefit Fund increasing dental benefits...



**O**n April 10, 2000 the VCTA Benefit Fund Board of Trustees voted to increase benefits to all its members in their dental coverage. The increases have been spread out to cover many areas, and all members will receive a listing of these plan improvements sometime in June. All increases will be effective as of July 1, 2000.

The Board of Trustees also chose to extend coverage for any dependent child enrolled full time in a college or university from the present age of 23 to the age of 25. This brings coverage for enrolled dependent students in line with Orange-Ulster Health Insurance Policy.

Trustee Al Schmidt from Montgomery Elementary School will be stepping down from the Trust at the end of June. The Board of Trustees is therefore looking for a replacement. Anyone interested in serving as a Trustee of the VCTA Benefit Fund should contact John Solan, Trust Secretary, at the HS no later than the end of May.

The Trust members would like to express their sincere thanks to Al Schmidt for the many years he served so diligently as a Trustee. The Board and all VCTA members owe Al a big thank you for a job well done.

*~ John Solan,  
VCTA Benefit  
Trust Secretary*

## Pay Teachers Minimum Wage...

**T**he next time someone begins a conversation with, "Teachers are paid too much money," relate this story to them.

A parent complaining to another parent while waiting to vote on a recent school budget.... "I'm fed up with teachers and their hefty salaries for only 9 months work! What we need here is a little perspective. If I had my way, I'd pay teachers baby-sitting wages. That's right...instead of paying these outrageous taxes, I'd give them \$3.00 an hour. And, I'm only paying for five hours, not planning time and lunch. That would be \$15.00 a day."

He continued, "Each parent should pay \$15.00 a day for these teachers to baby sit their children. Even if they have more than one child, it's still cheaper than private daycare. Now how many children do they teach – maybe 25? That's \$15.00 x 25 = \$375 per day. But remember they only work 180

days a year. I'm not paying them for all the vacations. So, that's \$375 x 180 = \$67,500." Banging his calculator, he proclaims, "Just a minute, my calculator must need new batteries."

Another parent had been listening to the conversation and asked, "What about those who have ten years of experience and a master's degree? Or those who teach Special Education?"

He thought for a moment and then responded.

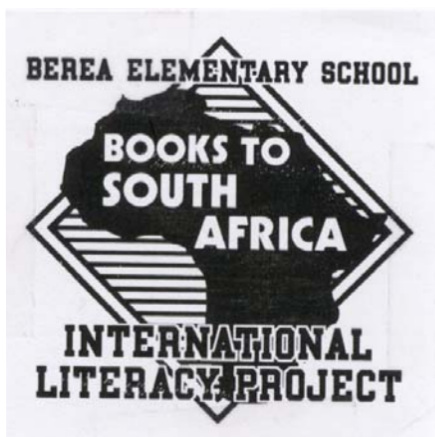
"Well, maybe to be fair, teachers could get the minimum wage. We can round that off to about \$6.00 an hour, times 5 hours, times 25 children. \$6.00 x 5 x 25...that's...\$750 a day (WHAT?!?) times 180 days. That's \$135,000."

"Hey wait a minute, there's something wrong here...."

*~From the Internet, submitted by  
Erin Davis, Berea*

**There is  
no  
M or E  
in  
UNION,  
only  
U  
and  
I.**

## Elementary Schools Support International Literacy Project



Christopher McFadden, former VC math teacher and alumnus, is the inspiration for the International Literacy Project initiated at Berea and supported by East Coldenham, Maybrook, Montgomery, and Walden Elementary Schools. Chris is currently a Peace Corp volunteer in South Africa, serving as a teacher/mentor at three village elementary schools in Mangabo, Kauletsi, and Witfontein.

The objective of the project is to collect hard cover books and send them to these schools where they will become the seeds of the first English libraries. Since conditions in African villages are very primitive, teaching materials and books are extremely limited. English is introduced to children in third grade, but resources are so scarce that teachers do not even have single copies of books to read to the children.

Chris is the son of recently retired teachers, Ginny and Kevin McFadden. Ginny was a writing teacher at VCMS and Kevin was an English teacher and Department Supervisor at VCHS. Both are re-

spected as outstanding educators and for the deep concern they have shown towards others. It is no surprise then, that their son, Chris, should follow their example and bring his professional expertise to children and fellow teachers who are so much in need of it. After graduating from VCHS in 1989, Chris received a B.A. in History from LeMoyne College in Syracuse and then pursued graduate studies at Russell Sage College in Albany. Remedial math students at Berea, East Coldenham and Montgomery were fortunate to have him as their teacher for several years.

Chris seemed to love this teaching, but was called to an even greater challenge, and in February 1999, he left for South Africa. After three months of training/orientation and the study of the Setswana language, he received his assignment in the Northern Province, taking up residence in the village of Seleka.

*Chris McFadden's reaction to the International Literacy Project, (in South African parlance) "What wonderful people that side!"*

Thabo, his name in Setswana, means happiness or delight. When he heard of this project he was delighted that his former students and colleagues are working towards sending books, including dictionaries, to his present schools. His reaction (in South African parlance) was, "What wonderful people that side!"

In addition to collecting used books, teachers and students are also involved in raising money to cover the cost of shipping, which runs about \$1.00 per pound. It is their

hope to involve the entire community in the project, and announcements were made in newspapers and on local radio and TV stations during the month of April. A book receptacle is set up in the lobby at



*The lobby at Berea Elementary School boasts a beautiful African display; Piggy Bank, ready and waiting; and box after box of books ready to be shipped to Africa.*

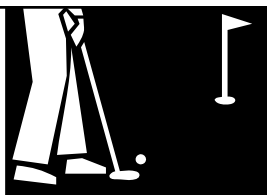
Berea Elementary, as well as a large piggy bank where donations can be made. Parents are helping with publicity and designing an exhibit in the lobby display case with information on Africa.

Faculties at several schools hope to raise money by sponsoring the project for one of their monthly casual attire days. Anyone wishing to support Chris's efforts in South Africa, can bring donations to Berea or any of the other elementary schools. Additional information can be obtained from Maureen Radl at 457-3191.

*~ Maureen Radl,  
Berea*

*My wife, Annette, and I would like to thank the VCHS Sunshine Fund for the beautiful fruit basket. The passing of Annette's mother was stressful and the kindness shown was greatly appreciated.*

*Jim Tate*



**Valley Central High School PTSA  
Annual Golf Tournament  
Registration Form**

**At:** Winding Hills Executive Golf Course  
**Where:** Route 17K, Montgomery  
**When:** June 3, 2000 *Rain Date: June 17th*  
**Time:** Check in – 8:30 am  
Shotgun Start – 9:00 am

**Cost:** \$45 per person (includes 18 holes of golf,  
continental breakfast,  
and lunch)

**Carts are available at \$10 per cart (quantity is limited)**

**MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: VCHS PTSA**

*Pre-registration is required.*

**Deadline to Register: May 30, 2000**

**For more information, call 361-3884**

Please Print

**Team:** Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Captain \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

YES, please reserve ONE golf cart. An additional \$10 is enclosed.

\_\_\_\_\_ Additional golf carts may be available.

Check in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ is attached.

*Please make checks payable to VCHS PTSA.*

This form may be left in the PTSA mailbox located in the VCHS Main Office.

Be sure to label the envelope PTSA Golf Tournament.

## VCTA Officers attend NYSUT RA 2000



VCTA President Tim Brown takes notes on his laptop during one of the General Session's at the NYSUT Representative Assembly.

The first time I heard about the NYSUT RA I had no idea what past Association President, John Solan, was talking about. To me an RA was someone who helped you out in your college dorm. Three years later, I have learned that an RA is an educational, worthwhile and important experience in the life of the local union. RA stands for Representative Assembly and it is an annual gathering of delegates from NYSUT's locals who spend three days listening to speakers, recognizing excellence, setting policy, passing resolutions to be submitted to legislators and becoming more educated about the important and positive effect that unionism has had on New York's schools. This year's RA was held at the Hilton Hotel in NYC. It began with a conference for Local Presidents, attended by Tim Brown, on Wednesday, April 5th and continued through Saturday, April 8th. The delegates from the VCTA were President Tim Brown, Vice President Rich Steger and myself. Overall 3,000 people attended the RA.

The slate of speakers was impressive as were the speakers themselves. Senate hopeful, First Lady Hillary Clinton stated that she didn't think there was any more important issue than education; NY AFL-CIO leader, Dennis Hughes noted "as a labor movement it is our job to help you teach our children"; NYSUT President Tom Hobart declared the most important task for NYSUT in the year 2000 was to

elect Al Gore as President of the US; AFT Secretary-Treasurer Ed McElroy called for teachers and other school workers to be honored for what they do; State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer advocated increased aid for school safety and more control over the Internet;



First Lady Hillary Clinton stated that "villifying teachers to score political points does not educate children."

NYC Public Advocate Mark Green announced that he is planning a summit of educators and business leaders to discuss the need for smaller class size, NYSUT Vice President Alan Lubin spoke about the power of grass roots political action, State Comptroller H. Carl McCall asked why we had to "fight each year for what our children desperately need" and stated that NYSUT makes a difference in Albany; both Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno, and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver spoke on the topic of safe schools, but by their speeches it was made clear that they are still far apart in their approach to the problem; Regents Chancellor Carl Hayden called for politicians to finally get around to putting children's interests first; NYSUT Vice President Antonia Cortese questioned the disproportionate reality of teachers who touch the lives of America's children being paid only \$40,000 a year, while a CEO can earn millions in one year; NYS Teacher of the Year, Marilyn Lance urged her colleagues to remember why they entered the profession when times get



Comptroller H. Carl McCall expressed frustration with politicians who play politics with children's education.

tough; NYS SRP of the Year Lou-Ann Coleman gave a speech that flaunted her fiery union spirit, Nat'l Board of Professional Teaching Standards chair, Barbara Kelley called for teachers to continue voice the



Sen. Charles Schumer stated "that the US will not stay a pre-eminent power if we are not the best educated".

educational needs of New York's children; NYS Commissioner of Education Richard Mills praised NY's teachers for helping to lift children to higher standards; NYSUT Vice President Walter Dunn advised any local that foresees a charter school looming in its district to immediately seek the help of the state union; and NYS Senator Charles Schumer stated that for the nation to survive, teachers must be held in the same regard as doctors and lawyers, and stated they should not only be paid more, but they should be supported more by legislators who set policy for them. Notably absent from the list was former Senate hopeful and NYC Mayor Rudy Guiliani.

NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Fred Nauman was honored as the 100,000 retiree. A tribute was paid to his forty years of service to education most them as a NYSUT officer. NYSUT President Tom Hobart described Fred as "a trusted friend, and colleague and vocal advocate for our members." Fred stated that "I am changing how I spend my days, but not the goals and the philosophy by which I've lived". Ivan Tiger was elected as the new Secretary-Treasurer to succeed Nauman.

~ Patti Lunden

Photos: New York Teacher (except for T. Brown photo)



Fred Nauman and his wife, two sons, daughter-in-law and granddaughter.

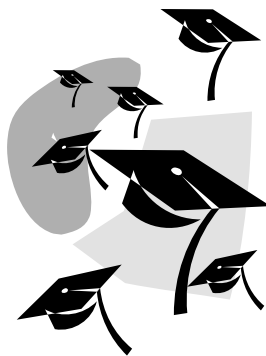
**The Valley Central Scholarship Council is sponsoring a Goods and Services Auction on  
November 3, 2000 at the Valley Central High School.**

*The Scholarship Council is a nonprofit organization; it provides scholarships to Valley Central graduating seniors seeking higher education. In the Council's thirty-six year history, over \$490,000 have been given to graduating seniors.*

**We are seeking donations that can be auctioned at our event. We would be most appreciative if your organization chose to donate an item. A receipt can be sent to you for tax purposes.**

*On behalf of the Valley Central Class of 2001,  
we thank you for your generosity.*

*Donna Barletta and Paula Balz*



*Co-chairpersons; Goods and Services Auction*

*Please send donations to:*

**Valley Central Scholarship Council**

**ATTN: Paula Balz**

**Valley Central High School**

**1175 Rte. 17K**

**Montgomery, NY 12549**

## **An Open Letter to the Staff of the Valley Central School District**

### ***On the Occasion of the 38th Anniversary Of the Valley Central Federal Credit Union***



On April 25, 1962, a group of far-sighted employees of the Valley Central School District signed the papers necessary for the establishment of the Valley Central Federal Credit Union (VCFCU). With the joint support of the administration and the employees and family members of the Valley Central School District, your credit union has continued to grow and expand.

The Board of Directors of the VCFCU would like to take the occasion of its 38th anniversary to thank its members for their confidence in the credit union movement and specifically its support of your own credit union. Because of your loyalty, VCFCU is now a \$5,000,000-plus financial institution with more than 1,250 members. Over the past 38 years, more than 9,800 loans have been granted to you, the members, totaling more than over \$34,000,000 used for a variety of purposes. As we have expanded in size and scope we have also been able to increase the services available to our members, such as Certificates of Deposit, IRAs, Travelers Cheques, Checking Accounts, Direct Deposit, Electronic Transfers and Debit Cards. Additionally, we have purchased our own building and expanded our hours of operation.

As your credit union looks to the future we envision such additional advancements as having our own Web page, as well as offering on line banking and bill paying services. We are always open to any suggestions you might have regarding additional services.

If you have benefited from your membership, we would encourage you to tell others about it so that they might also enjoy the benefits of membership. If you have any concerns that we should be aware of, please feel free to let us know. Remember, the credit union motto is and always will be **"Where People are Worth More than Money."**

*Stan Davie, Manager*



## State Budget is a winner, VC Budget passes

**T**he Legislature has passed the State Budget for 2000-2001. This is the first time in many years that the State has had a budget in place so early. The school aid budget increase (\$1.2 *billion*) is the largest increase in school aid in NYS history. VCTA President Tim Brown has stated that he believes that this is due in large part to VOTE/COPE, the political arm of NYSUT. The State budget specifically increases Teacher Center support, restores the Teacher Mentor Intern program, provides \$1 million for the Albert Shanker National Board for Professional Certification, and restores aid for BOCES and other programs. In addition, the budget creates a new teacher retention

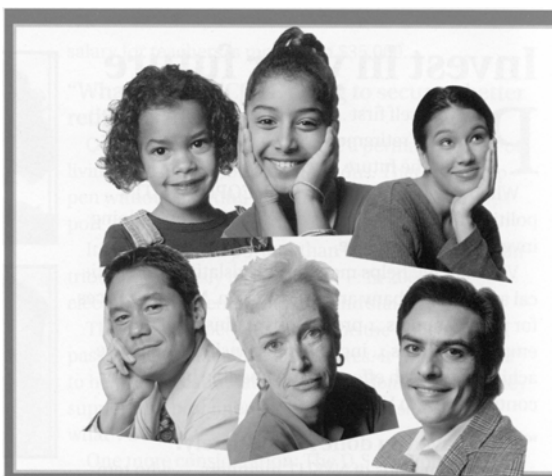
and recruitment program, "Teachers of Tomorrow", as well as working to restore full time faculty positions in the State's University system.

On May 16, 2000 Valley Central's proposed budget passed by nearly a 400 vote margin. This was certainly a relief for both the District and the Association since new restrictions have been placed on Districts when budgets failed. The Association supported the budget vote by mailing a letter to all residents of the District who are members of NYSUT asking for their support for the budget and endorsing Board of Education candidate, Michael Bellarosa. Mr. Bellarosa is an English teacher in the Cornwall School District, a VC graduate, a 39 year VC resident and an active VC Commu-

nity member. He is also a public education advocate, and NYSUT member. Mr. Bellarosa won one of the two vacant seats by receiving over 1400 votes. The second seat was won by Mr. Kevin Reidy, who is also a VC graduate.

President Tim Brown said, "I am very pleased that the VCTA endorsed candidate has not only won a position on the BOE each year we have endorsed someone, but also has gotten, each time, the most votes." The VCTA has endorsed candidates during the last two elections, and plans to continue to do so in future elections when candidates demonstrate a love for children and public education.

## VOTE/COPE Drive Begins



**Invest in your  
future ...**

**Give to VOTE/COPE.**

nysut

vote  
COPE

**T**his year's VOTE/COPE Drive is officially taking place during the last two weeks of May, although some VCTA members have gotten a head start by electing payroll deduction of their contribution last September. Toni Sperry, (Montgomery) is our VOTE/COPE coordinator and your Building Representatives will be contacting you for a donation. Retirees can mail contributions to the VCTA Office (*address on back page*).

VOTE/COPE is the Committee on Political Education, the non-partisan political arm of the New York State United Teachers. It coordinates the voluntary contributions of members throughout the state and makes contributions to NYSUT-endorsed candidates and NYSUT-supported general campaign committees. Those contributions do make a difference. In 1999, VOTE/COPE helped to secure legislation to reinstate Tier I members. VOTE/COPE secured more than \$100 million in new state aid to districts to help children achieve the new academic standards. VOTE/COPE led the charge for better terms and conditions of employment that has helped raise the average starting salary for new teachers from \$14,000 in 1984 to \$35,000 in 1999.

This November, we will elect a President, Congress and state legislators. As education is becoming a forefront issue in the election, contributing to VOTE/COPE is more important than ever. Those elected officials set policies and pass laws that will affect our working conditions, benefits, salaries, and pensions. VOTE/COPE will help to support those candidates who have demonstrated that they support the best interests of our profession.

The recommended contribution is \$25, although any contribution is appreciated. You can also sign up for payroll deduction for next year at this time. Many of the members who have had payroll deduction this year have said that they feel it is the best way to give. It amounts to about \$1 a paycheck, is convenient and makes investing in your future easy.

VOTE/COPE reflects NYSUT's commitment to the grassroots involvement of its members. The US Chamber of Commerce has announced it is investing at least \$5 million in candidates it considers "friendly" to business. It has stated that it is doing this to directly counter the growing political influence of unions. **Give to VOTE/COPE.**



## VCTA First Annual *Celebration of Retirees & Recognition of Achievements*

The VCTA's first annual Celebration of our Retiring Members and Recognition of Achievements held at Spruce Lodge on May 7, 2000, was a great event. Every building was represented by members (*active and retired*), and members from building administration, central administration and the BOE were also present. It was a lovely afternoon filled with friends, family, and food. Thirteen members of Valley Central's family were congratulated for a variety of achievements, while our seven retirees were both roasted and toasted for their 185 combined years of service to Valley Central.



*Retirees 2000: John Buhr, Marilyn McKay, Christine Weslowski, Helen and Dan McGinnis, Sally Grodin and Marty Dank*



*Honorees Kevin McFadden and Diane Ruggles are joined by Tom Kneiser (Retired HS) and Derek Taylor (HS).*



*VCTA Officers: Treasurer, John Bonagura; VP, Jay Sussdorff; Secretary, Patti Lunden; President, Tim Brown; VP, Rich Steger.*



*Maybrook Elementary was well represented.*



*Jeanne Marie Flanagan receives a certificate recognizing her achievement. In the March edition of the VC ECHOES, it was reported that Jeanne Marie was seeking membership to the NYS Academy for Learning and Teaching. Jeanne Marie has since been accepted.*

## March VCTA Executive Council Highlights

The VCTA is proceeding with multiple grievances against the District. One is on the issue of TSA's. The second grievance is on behalf of a member who is seeking a salary adjustment for earning a Master's Degree. The third grievance concerns the denial of personal days for a member who attended a conference, while a fourth grievance is on behalf of a member who has been denied a personal day preceding Spring Recess.

Tim Brown and Jay Sussdorff have been attending the District Budget meetings. It is likely that the budget will be in the vicinity of \$47 million dollars which is an increase of 11.88%, but because of fund balance, other revenue sources, interest earned on money borrowed for the Bond Project, and STAR; most people will either have little difference or no difference in their taxes.

The VCTA and the District are discussing possible scenarios for handling AIS (Academic Intervention Services) requirements at the three levels. There is no formal agreement yet and nothing will be signed without Executive Council's consent.

The importance of VOTE COPE was discussed. Toni Sperry, VOTE COPE Drive Chairperson, reported that the Association received a rebate check of \$474.72 from last year's drive. A portion of that money was added to the donation to the Westchester Teacher's Fund.

The VCTA will be participating in phone banks for this Fall's elections for President, Senator, etc.

Marc Newman, HS, has won the NY-SUT Community Service Award for Election District 14.

The NYS Teacher of the Year application was received three days before it was due. It was our intent to nominate someone, but the lateness of the application makes that impossible to do this year. Tim Brown asked representatives to consider nominees for next year and the process will begin in September 2000.

The VC ECHOES was recognized again

in the AFTCA, a national publication for newsletter editors.

The ELA scoring controversy over whether or not teachers had to go if there was a snow day has been settled. Dr. Nugent has said that position was wrong and that teachers would not have to go if there was a snow day.

Tim Brown attended the Committee of 100. Tim Brown reported that both the Republicans and the Democrats are positive about the State Budget, and he is hopeful that it will pass and not hold up state aid to school districts.

Peter Meisel is representing the Association at a Regional Forum on Special Education.

Tim Brown, Rich Steger, and Nancy Brother represented the Association on the Search Committee for the Assistant Superintendent for Personnel.

The Secretarial unit may seek a desk audit from Civil Service to determine if paraprofessionals are doing secretarial work but not being paid as secretaries.

The District is seeking to amend the Secretarial contract so that upon their sixth anniversary of employment they would be eligible for their 3<sup>rd</sup> week of vacation instead of having to wait until their seventh year is done.

The final copy of the Para contract has been signed.

The Para Grievance concerning Labor Day has been settled. The settlement reached provides for an extra paid snow day in the 2000-01 school year, increasing their count from 4 to 5, a year earlier than the contract called for the increase.

There is a rally for COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) for Retirement on May 9th.

The VCTA will be distributing a form letter on the topic of Tier Equalization addressed to the governor.

Kathy Manning was recognized for her work on the VCTA Blood Drive. Her efforts were applauded.

In answer to a question about night school, NYSUT advised that contract



Walden Elementary's Building Representatives:  
Barbara Winchell, Randy Sutter, and Brenda Newman

language would govern scheduling.

The State Ed. Dept. has advised that on the issue of the PDP committee only the BOE can change the numbers on the committee and that the Union must have the majority number and the District cannot dictate how many members per building are on the committee.

Teachers who give workshops during a Conference Day should ask for compensation for prep time before agreeing to give the workshop. Compensation could be in the form of money or as time-off.

A situation arose which tested the contract language on comparability. A member who had taken the buy-out because they believed that their spouse's insurance was comparable found out that the insurance was not comparable and that they would not be covered at a specific facility needed for a life-threatening situation. Mr. Roden was very cooperative and concerned about the well being of the member and spouse. The Association and District signed a side agreement in which the District extended coverage that did not have to be contractually given. Tim Brown stated that overall the District has been easier to deal with on many issues since Dr. Nugent became Superintendent, despite disagreements on previously discussed topics.

*The General Membership may attend VCTA meetings: there is time for "public participation" by members, during the "new business" portion of the meeting.*

## April VCTA Executive Council Highlights

The VOTE ?COPE drive will be held during the last two weeks of May. A building volunteer will collect the donations. Tim Brown stated that we just got the biggest increase in state aid in state history for education in the proposed budget and he believes that this is due to VOTE COPE.

A presentation was made to the BOE at the last Board meeting concerning the current grievances on behalf of Jane Dionne and Laurie Hey. There is another grievance being filed on behalf of a member seeking a personal day to attend Olympic trials.

A letter has been sent to CO on behalf of the guidance counselors attending extra evening functions which have not been negotiated. Beginning the next school year, the VCTA will enforce the contract on this issue unless an agreement can be reached.

There is a speculative State Retirement incentive being considered by the State Legislature.

To date, Diana Shiner has volunteered to run for TRS rep along with John Solan and Kathy Takvam.

Peter Meisel attended a Regional Forum with Commissioner Mills who pushed the standards and left no time for questions following his presentation. Peter found the forum disappointing as he felt it did not give educators who are dealing with the standards on a daily basis any time to address real concerns.

The District has hired Mary Ann Wilson as the Assistant Superintendent for Business. Tim Brown has expressed his concerns to Dr. Nugent over how the search process was handled.

Tim Brown, Rich Steger and Patti Lunden attended the NYSUT Representative Assembly. Information bulletins on various topics and tests required by the NYS Standards were obtained at the RA and can be sent to members if they would like them.

The Public Relations committee is distributing a survey on the Adopt a Highway program.

Chaperone pay for the elementary stage productions was discussed. Tim Brown stated that the Association position is that the salaries for coaches and extra-curricular activities are not commensurate with the work invested in the position. Salaries however, are unlikely to change if staff continues to volunteer at these rates.

Chaperone pay for the trips that extend past the school day was clarified. If the trip originates during the school day and extends past school hours then there is no pay. For example, on a trip that starts on a Thursday and ends on Saturday, chaperone pay would be given for Saturday only since it is not a school day. However, paras receive chaperone pay for their evening hours. The advisor of groups are never paid chaperone pay for trips as it is considered part of their duties.

Al Shanker grants for National Board Certification are available.

AFL-CIO members working for Time Warner Cable are seeking support in their contract fight with management.

A discussion ensued as to how a retirement village like Village at Goodwill may affect future school budget votes.

35 teachers and 4 administrators have received tenure.

Kevin McFadden expressed disappointment in the reaction of retiree groups to the Resolution submitted by the VCTA concerning reinstatement to Tier I for already retired members, but vowed to keep fighting for this.

Central Office will be asked that when cards/ booklets for the Health Plan are made available to active members they also be sent to retirees at the same time.



*Montgomery Building Rep., Toni Sperry, reviews the President's Agenda before the meeting begins.*

Patti Lunden suggested that anyone with questions go to the Beech Street web site.

Rich Steger reported that at the RA, it was strongly suggested that locals get involved with the community. If anyone has any suggestions please contact the PR committee.

Suggestions were given for how the VCTA could participate in Montgomery Day, Walden Day and Maybrook Day.

A discussion ensued about creating a tutor list of members who would be willing to tutor students and the pros and cons of tutoring within the same district, school building, class. Sandy Carroll warned that teachers should not tutor their own students as this could be interpreted as a conflict of interest.

**When we are  
fighting  
for employee rights,  
We are  
putting  
children center.  
~ Tim Brown**

## State May Offer a Retirement Incentive

**A**t the present time the NYS Legislature is considering a two-part legislative bill that, if passed, would affect all members of the NYSTRS. The first proposal is a retirement incentive which calls for Tier I and II members to receive 1 month of credit for each year of service up to 24 years should they agree to stay for one year past their first year of eligibility. The second part of the proposal calls for Tier III and IV to only have to pay the 3% contribution for ten years. If passed, any Tier III or IV member

who already has been a member for ten years would no longer have to contribute but would not be reimbursed for any years over ten.

Both the District and the Association are waiting to hear more about the proposed incentive. The District did agree to participate in the State Retirement incentive in 1986, 1991 and 1992. If a VC employee wanted to take the State incentive the District incentive must be forfeited. Should the proposed legislation be made law, it would apply to all members of the state retirement systems which would

include secretaries and paraprofessionals who are members of the NYSERS.

If you would like to encourage your state legislators to pass this bill, contact them via the NYSUT web site, [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org). When the site opens, simply click on "fax your legislator" and you can easily write an e-mail which you can send to all your legislators.

## VCTA Sponsors Letter Writing Campaign on Tier Equity

**T**he VCTA sponsored a resolution at the NYSUT RA on the topic of Tier Reinstatement for retirees who had once had Tier I status but lost it when they left the NYSTRS and rejoined after the formation of other Tiers. However, it was withdrawn as the Pension and Retirement Committee wanted to focus on presenting resolutions to the NYS Legislature that concerned the issue of a Permanent Cola (*see p. 19*). It will

be submitted again next year.

In the meantime, author of the resolution, Kevin McFadden, has penned a letter to be sent to Gov. George Pataki asking him to end the discrimination caused by the inequities between the Tiers. During your June Faculty Meeting you will hear from your Building Reps that the VCTA is sponsoring a letter writing campaign to send hundreds of these letters to Gov. Pataki so he will take notice.

Sending the letter is easy. Simply write in your return address, sign it, put it in an envelope addressed to Gov. Pataki, put a stamp on it and mail it. Sure, it adds another errand to a sometime unending list of things to do and it will cost you 33 cents, but should the Governor do the right thing – *it will be a worthwhile investment.*



## Mac's Musings (from the Retiree side)

good is that NYSUT is making the COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) for all retirees the main focus of its proposed legislative package. This will benefit all retired and active members. Bravo! Although battled for by VCTA's reps, (Tim Brown, Rich Steger and Patti Lunden), reinstatement to Tier I for those already retired will not be a priority in the NYSUT legislative package. Needless to say, I disagree with NYSUT, but thank

our reps for their support.

As some of you know, (*and as Patti Lunden wishes me to report*), I was interviewed by a subcommittee of the NYS Assembly for the Regents seat in the Ninth Judicial District. The interview went very well; I stressed the need for a Regent who had spent his career in the educational trenches. A gentleman from Westchester got the seat (so much for the trenches!) In the words of the immortal Vonne-

**T**he recent RA of NYSUT in New York City presented this retiree with good and bad news. The



## Mac's Musings (from the Retiree side) *(continued from page sixteen)*

gut, "And so it goes."

*Editor's Note: Once again, the State had a chance to make a real improvement in the education of its children, and once again, they have missed a golden opportunity. Certainly the new Regent for the 9th District will try his best, but it is the belief of the VCTA that Kevin McFadden would have been the better choice.*

### Letters, Calls, Chance Encounters, Whatever...

Ran into a whole crowd of retired teachers (Kay Sherman, Alice Gutter, Gen Whitmore, Ginny McFadden (whom I also run into regularly at our home), Carolyn Post, Ada Metzinger, Ruth McMahon, and Jan Gridley who were attentively listening to a talk on Shakespeare's Sonnets!

Received a lovely Easter card and thank you note for ECH-OES from Mirta Tapanes (retired HS Spanish) in Hialeah, Fla. Mirta is one of the most caring teachers I ever met.

Had a phone call and a few good laughs with Frank DeSantis (retired from Maybrook Elementary) who reminded me of two professions and two professionals whom I forgot: Son, Ron is one of 50 master chefs in the US and a professor/administrator at Culinary Institute; Son, Mike is a Captain/

Pilot with United Airlines. Frank continues his tax business from his winter quarters in Florida.

A note from Howard Feldsher (retired MS Music) includes an announcement of his being recognized as the "15th Annual Distinguished Member of the Year" in recognition of his many years of service to Temple Sinai in Middletown. Congratulations, Howard. Howard also serves on the Executive Board at Temple Sinai.

Had a nice phone chat with Val Terwilliger (retired from Berea) who reported receiving a letter from my son, Chris in South Africa. Val not only taught Chris, but was also his colleague at Berea Elementary. Val is well and busy, like most retirees.

A news-filled letter arrived from Fil Bernatowicz announcing the birth of twins to Fil's son, Joseph, and his wife, Sandy. Sandy is a former Reading teacher at Walden Elementary. Joe and Sandy (with the addition of Sarah and Jonathan) now have four little ones under four years of age. Fil and Henry spent a month with them in California, traveling coast to coast and back by train. Fil, as always, sounds wonderful.

### Reminders....

I will be attending the COLA Rally in Albany on May 9th to encourage our legislators to do the right thing and make the COLA law.

*Editor's Note: Kevin and the eight VC retirees who attended the Rally were among more than 5,000 NYSUT members – nearly 100 busloads of teachers and other public school employees who rallied at the State Capitol Building.*

Testimonial Dinner honoring 20 + year trustee of Village of Walden, Marty Besedesky, retired Social Studies Chair at the Middle School. The gala event will be held at Magnanini Winery in Wallkill on May 31st.

### Exit...

**Thanks for getting this far and until next time, keep pushing back the barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you. Peace!**

~ Kevin McFadden

## The importance of a Permanent COLA

Ask most people about COLA and you'd probably get a recommendation about which brand of soft drink is the true cola. Ask a retiree and they'll say that COLA means every thing to them. COLA stands for Cost of Living Adjustment. The reason a COLA is so important is because it will provide an increase in every state retiree's benefits. When you retire, the TRS system tells you what your benefit will be, a number – \$30,000 let's say. That \$30,000 may

seem like a decent amount the year you retire, but prices double every six years so that \$30,000 wouldn't buy as much ten, twenty or thirty years later. There are 4,000 retired teachers whose pensions are less than \$10,000 a year. A COLA will make a cost of living adjustment to raise the value of retirees' pensions to help make their pensions equitable with the current cost of living. The legislation being considered will not provide for a one-time COLA, but a permanent COLA so that as the cost of living rises in the

future, so will retiree pensions without having to wait for legislation. This is not just a benefit for people who are already retired, but benefit now active teachers as they retire in the future as well. People are living longer and longer and retirement should allow each of us to live comfortably in our golden years.

*Editor's Note: It appears that our State legislators will be doing the right thing and passing the Permanent COLA hopefully by the end of this legislative session.*

## Advertising Section

These ads will be seen by over 727 members of the VC Educational Community and their households. If you would like to advertise in the next issue of the VC ECHOES, contact Patti Lunden, 457-5899 for rates.

**Stock  
Bonds  
Mutual Funds**

**James R. Stout**  
Investment Executive

**Charles E. Carnes**  
Retirement Planning Specialist  
Vice President - Investments

**Retirement  
Planning  
Estate  
Planning  
College  
Planning**

**ADVEST, INC.**  
A Subsidiary of The Advest Group, Inc.  
Member: New York, American and  
Other Principal Stock Exchanges

**Advest**  
Serving investors since 1898

90 Crystal Run Road  
Middletown, NY 10941  
Tel: (914) 692-0060  
Toll Free: (800) 488-4463  
Fax: (914) 692-0050

**FORMULA  
H  
MOTORWORKS INC.**

Tel.  
(914) 344-5511

**Service and Accessories for  
Honda & Acura  
Automobiles**

**HONDA  
Power  
Equipment**

794 Rte. 17M (1/4 mile east of Rte. 302) Middletown, NY 10940  
Owned and operated by Brian Baker (VC class of '80)  
and Jeff Baker (VC class of '73). Established in 1988.

**SAVE**  
**up to 30% OFF**  
**these National Hotel Brands.**

**AFT Members receive**  
**discounts up to 30%**  
**off rates at over 4,000**  
**hotels in North America.**  
**Call the toll-free numbers**  
**listed below and mention**  
**your AFT PLUS member ID**  
**number: 20952.**



800-268-2195



800-769-0939



800-682-1071



800-462-8035



800-545-5545



877-202-8814

Rates subject to availability, blackout rates apply.

VALID UNTIL 7/00



**Have you ever  
wondered why you  
are paying so much  
for auto insurance?**

*The truth is...*

You may be paying more than you should  
**AND** still not getting the coverage you need

**We may be able to save you up to 30% Off**  
**Nationwide, Allstate & State Farm Rates.**

We represent an array of top rated insurance companies...*not just one.*  
This way, we "shop" for our customers...saving them valuable time and money. We do not  
believe in the "one size fits all" philosophy.

*Call Joy Insurance for a no-obligation quote on your savings.*

**JOY INSURANCE**

*"Where Orange County Turns for Auto Insurance"*

**AUTO • HOME • LIFE • BUSINESS • FINANCIAL PRODUCTS**

*Proudly Representing*

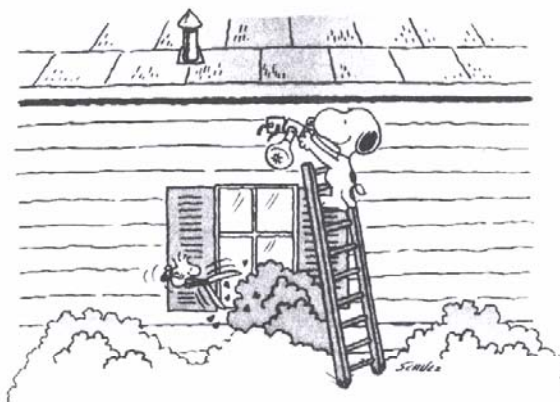
✓Hartford ✓Metropolitan ✓Travelers ✓Progressive ✓Preferred Mutual  
✓National Grange Mutual ✓Zurich ✓Maryland Casualty ✓reliance  
✓And Many Other Insurance Companies to Meet Needs

**639 East Main Street • Middletown • 342-4888**



## STOP a Thief in the Night

**D**etermined thieves can break into just about any home, but if you follow these tips, you can make entry a lot more difficult for them.



- **Keep doors locked at all times.** It sounds simple enough, but you'd be surprised at the number of home burglaries where intruders enter through an unlocked door, garage or patio. Install deadbolt locks because they provide the best protection for the least money.
- **Keep windows and sliding-glass doors locked.** Basement windows are a popular point of entry for intruders. You can secure a sliding-glass door with a broomstick or lumber laid across the door track when the door is closed.
- **Thieves generally target homes with poor outdoor lighting.** Outside flood lighting reduces your risk of burglary by highlighting the exterior of your home at night. Use light timers on inside and outside lights to give the impression that someone is home.
- **For greater peace of mind, invest in a professionally installed alarm system.**
- **So you have a dog?** Loudly barking dogs attract attention a burglar doesn't want.
- **Leave a radio or television set on when you're out because the sound of voices can send an intruder elsewhere.**
- **Have peepholes in all solid doors.** Don't rely on chain locks to see who is at the door, for such locks can easily be forced open once a door is ajar.

- **Keep trees and shrubbery trimmed.** Overgrown bushes give a burglar more privacy.
- **Have someone collect mail and newspapers, or have delivery stopped while you're on extended trips.**
- **Don't be predictable.**

Thieves head straight for the bedroom when they enter the house. That's where most people keep their valuables. A jewelry box is an obvious hiding place. Be creative in stashing your valuables, or keep them in a safe-deposit box.

- **Thieves look for easy-to-carry items that can be quickly converted into cash: jewelry, silver and electronic equipment.** Invest in a table/desk bolt for stereos, VCRs and computers. If it's too much of a hassle to steal, most robbers won't go to the trouble.

There's no doubt that theft can disrupt your life. By following the above steps and preparing in advance, you can help decrease your chances. Plus, you can get quality insurance for your home and property by simply calling the NYSUT Benefit Trust-endorsed METPAY<sup>SM</sup> program at 1 800 GET-MET 1 (1-800-438-6381) today. You'll speak with a knowledgeable METPAY Insurance Consultant who can answer your questions and assist you in applying for coverage through the program. What's more, if you have a home security system installed, you may qualify for a premium discount.

**Call 1 800 GET-MET 1 today!**

### MetLife<sup>®</sup> Auto & Home

MetLife Auto & Home is a brand of Metropolitan Property and Casualty Insurance Company and its Affiliates, Warwick, RI

METPAY, underwritten by MetLife Auto & Home, is available in most states to those who qualify. In Texas, homeowners coverage is provided by Metropolitan Lloyds Insurance Company of Texas. In some instances, special arrangements for coverage have been made with other carriers.



*There are no greater advocates  
for children and education  
than teachers and teacher unions.*

## Valley Central Teachers' Association

**Tel./Fax. (914) 457-5899**

President, Timothy Brown (HS)  
Vice President, Jay Sussdorff (HS)  
Vice President, Richard Steger (Walden)  
Secretary, Patricia Lunden (HS)  
Treasurer, John Bonagura (EC)

### Building Representatives

**Berea:** Carol DeMicco, Sara Akerson,  
Bryan Guidice

**Maybrook:** Donna Lloyd, Sandy Tarallo

**East Coldenham:** Donna Barletta, Sandy Carroll

**Walden:** Barbara Winchell, Randy Sutter,  
Brenda Newman

**Montgomery:** Toni Sperry, Kathy Takvam

**MS:** Laurie Hey, Mary Bleau, Mary Goldberg,  
Joe DeVenuto, Marc Sperry, Mike Steele  
Kathy Manning

**HS:** Arline Friedman, Jane Hillis, Peter Meisel,  
Glenn Eckert, Dennis Delfino, Bob Jurgens

### Newsletter Editor

Patricia Lunden, (HS)

Email: [vcta@frontiernet.net](mailto:vcta@frontiernet.net)

NYSUT

[www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org)

AFT

[www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org)

Mid-Hudson Teacher Center:

(914) 255-2885

[Http://www.mhtc.dcboces.org](http://www.mhtc.dcboces.org)

Employee Assistance Program

1-800-962-7487

**Visit us on the Web!**  
[www.frontiernet.net/  
~vcta](http://www.frontiernet.net/vcta)

*The VC Echoes is the official  
publication of the Valley Central  
Teacher's Association – Local  
3076 and is published regularly  
throughout the school year.*

**Article contributions or Letters to  
the Editor for the next issue  
should be sent to Patti Lunden at  
the HS by June 7, 2000 .**

*Any articles submitted to the VC  
Echoes will also be posted on the  
VCTA Web page.*

## Negotiations

*As a member of the VCTA, you are represented in negotiations with the District concerning compensation, working conditions and benefits. Formal negotiations for a new contract take place six months before the contract expires and continue until an agreement is reached. The VCTA appoints negotiators who, along with the President, represent the interests of the teachers' bargaining unit. (Secretarial Representatives negotiate for the Secretarial unit, and Paraprofessional Representatives negotiate for the Paraprofessional unit.) However, issues may arise after a contract has been settled. It is then up to the President, in consultation with the Executive Council, to negotiate any changes in compensation, working conditions and/or benefits. The President then signs a "side agreement" with the District.*

*An individual may not negotiate with the District concerning compensation, working conditions or benefits without the presence of the President of the VCTA. Such an action undermines the Collective Bargaining Agreement and may be damaging to other members. To do so is considered an "improper practice" and the District may be charged with such should it engage in such discussions.*

## The Beginning of the End...

Each school year is a lot like a roller coaster. Just before the ride begins, you wait in anticipation – how will the ride be this time... hopefully it's the best you've ever had. It starts to move slowly, just like the month of September as you get to know your new students. Then it whips you through the first set of ups and downs and by the time you gather your wits about you it is nearly time for Winter Break and you wonder where the last few months went. January and February are like those quick whips and turns with the havoc that snow days create on your lesson plans. After the whips and turns of every

roller coaster there is always the lull, which any teacher can identify as that period of time waiting for Spring Break. And finally, you begin the big ascent which will end of the ride in a flurry of tests and grades sprinkled with paperwork.

The end of the year can be so busy, filled with field trips, meetings, review, (lots of review) tests, year-end reports and accounting. Soon, your "kids" will go on to become somebody else's "kids." But in the days before they do, before you find yourself buried in paperwork, take a moment to stop and reflect on what you have done this year. You have undoubtedly made a difference in the life of Valley



Central's children. It is an awesome responsibility we are given as teachers, bridging the future to the past. As Henry Adams said so eloquently, you have affected eternity without even knowing where your influence will stop. That's why it is important to stop and see the good things you have done before this year is but another memory.

*~ Patti Lunden*