

VC ECHOES

An AFTCA and New York Teacher Award Winning Publication

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Two Year Contract Ratified-A Win/Win/Win Situation for Valley Central

The membership of the VCTA overwhelmingly approved, by a vote of 285 to 37, a two year contract, on Monday, December 3rd, covering the period from July 1, 2002-June 30, 2004. This creates a positive atmosphere for the entire Valley Central community, since it is a fair and reasonable settlement for all parties involved.

From the perspective of the VCTA it's a "win" because it continues the process started in the present contract of having us achieve parity with neighboring districts. The leadership of the VCTA kept its promise to our veteran teachers, who have shown professionalism and loyalty to the district and its students, by providing a two step longevity payment at 28

years of service. The contributions by the district to the optical and dental plans were increased and percentages of salary increase across the board rival or even surpass those of our neighboring districts and the larger surrounding area.

The district administration and board of education "win" because a short term agreement addresses their concerns about a sluggish or perhaps recessionary economy following the events of Sept. 11th. It also eliminates potential anxiety and an adversarial environment which could be the result of protracted long term negotiations. There should be a welcome "comfort

zone" that encourages and facilitates instruction and dialogue amongst all parties concerning educa-



tional issues. The students and parents "win" because teachers are free to prepare students for the increasing demands of new and higher standards and more difficult assessments, without undue distraction.

(continued on page two)

The Board of Education also ratified the two year contract proposal at their December 10th meeting

The new contract will be printed and distributed to the membership in the coming months.

The new contract is for the period of
July 1, 2002—June 30, 2004.

The gift of teaching is a peculiar talent, and implies a need and a craving in the teacher himself.

~ John Jay Chapman

From the President InteGrade Pro Woes

Due to an excessive number of InteGrade Pro questions and concerns, I felt it best to answer them in a forum that can provide clarity for all VCTA members simultaneously. First, the InteGrade Pro grade book program has the ability to streamline student progress reports and report cards. The system is not without its flaws, however, and these flaws have yet to be ironed out to the satisfaction of many members. InteGrade Pro does have limits and, unfortunately, does not contain the options necessary for compatibility with all members unique day to day grading procedures. Additionally, BOCES techs have not been overly helpful in assisting VCTA members with understanding and/or adapting this quirky program to our everyday needs. VCTA members who have become proficient at using this program have done so primarily on their own and are now offering in-service programs through Mr. Hunter's office to educate their colleagues.

Second, it is important to note that it is not your responsibility as a VCTA member to learn this new system on your own, but rather the District's responsibility to educate all members regarding this

change in working conditions. VCTA members have taken the high road regarding these changes. Many have attended the voluntary in-service programs offered by the District. Others have worked on their own to understand this new grade book reporting system. I believe most managers have recognized these voluntary efforts and are appreciative of the professionalism and work ethic demonstrated by VCTA members.

Third, the nature of this new reporting procedure is, of course, technical. It requires the use of a computer program and a floppy disk that must be passed between the District's Columbia System and the computer workstation you choose to utilize. Some members have expressed concern to me over the potential pitfalls of disk swapping, as they felt pressure to complete their progress reports and grades while learning this new system in a setting where many classrooms are still without computers. This is not a problem if you are able to utilize a school computer with, of



course, the necessary time to finish this important task. The necessary time to finish this task can be especially problematic since many rooms with computers are utilized for instruction during every period of the school day. In responding to this problem, however, I do not believe it is wise to pass your grade-book's floppy disk between your home computer and one of the District's computer workstations unless you are confident that viruses will not be an issue. Virus programs are expensive, yet far from foolproof. Teaching is a profession that requires a tremendous amount of work that is often accomplished at home. Computer technology represents an added resource and an effective tool that was supposed to make our jobs easier. Well, easier just never seems to come to fruition. We grumble a little, but we have also come to understand that most "assistive" technology has become a rationale for demanding more from the worker bees (i.e., teachers). Nevertheless, destroying all of my personal/family material on my home
(continued on page nine)

Two Year Contract Ratified (continued from front page)

The fair and reasonable nature of the agreement will also not put an unreasonable burden on taxpayers. Parents/taxpayers do understand the importance of quality education, something Valley Central has always

"It is our hope that this will set a tone of continued communication and cooperation for our future."

strived to provide for its students. In the final analysis this process shows that good faith can exist amongst staff, administration, board of education and our communities. It is our hope that this will set a tone of continued communication and cooperation for

our future. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the membership for its support and to wish everyone in the Valley Central community the healthiest and happiest of holidays!

~ Jay Sussdorff

Action Needed on Federal Bills

Several weeks ago, NYSUT unionists and political activists were able to help block congressional leaders from taking a vote to allow President Bush “fast track” powers to rush future trade agreements with minimal review and no chance for changes.

Now, however, leaders in Congress are determined to press a floor vote on this controversial legislation. In its ongoing advocacy to protect workers, NYSUT is encouraging members to tell their representatives they oppose these “fast-track” provisions.

“While thousands of working individuals and their families are trying to rebuild their lives from a weakened economy resulting from the World Trade Center disaster, it is outrageous to push contentious legislation that will negatively impact thousands of American workers and their job security,” said NYSUT Executive Vice President Alan Lubin.

More than 3 million American jobs have been lost since NAFTA was put in place in 1994. This amounts to 2.3% of the work force and job losses six times higher

since 1994 than the rate experienced in the last five years, according to the Economic Policy Institute. Economist Robert Scott says that nearly two of every three trade-related job losses have come from the manufacturing sector.

“Now that we’re in an economic slowdown and the rest of the economy is no longer generating enough jobs to take up the slack, these trade-induced job losses will magnify the downward pressure,” he said. The EPI analysis is particularly troublesome as the Bush administration pushes for “fast-track” authority to extend NAFTA to all of South America.

Nursing Protection

NYSUT and AFT leaders are also urging members to tell representatives to support federal bill that would ban mandatory overtime for nurses. The bipartisan Safe Nursing and Patient Care Act would strictly limit the use of mandatory overtime for nurses in health care facilities. Health care facilities often require nurses to work extra shifts, with no advance notice, to cover staffing shortages. Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals/ NYSUT and AFT have shown the

practice is harmful to nurses and to patients.

“We have laws that limit the number of hours truckers can drive, and we shouldn’t force nurses to work when they’re exhausted, either,” said Lubin.

You use AFT’s toll-free number (800) 839-5276 to reach the US Capitol switchboard and ask to speak with your member of Congress.

When you call...

Thank Congress Members Kelly and Sweeney for their efforts to deliver the entire \$20 billion in federal emergency assistance to New York State as promised by President Bush. Kelly and Sweeney were two of the four Republicans, nationwide, that broke with their party ranks to vote for the promised aid. It’s important that we remember to thank members of our congressional delegation when they vote in favor of our issues.

~ NYSUT’s *The Bottom Line*

Unfair Trade Policies Undermining National Security

We’d have to use foreign-made steel to rebuild the World Trade Center. There’s not enough US manufactured steel to repair US ships and military vehicles, much less handle an infrastructure project such as rebuilding the World Trade Center, United Steelworkers of America President Leo Gerard recently told Bush administration officials and congressional leaders.

“The structural steel industry in America is pretty well shot,”

remarked a USWA spokesperson, who pointed out the industry has suffered 25 bankruptcies, 12 plant closings and 27,000 lost steelworker jobs since 1998—more than 14,000 of them this year alone resulting in the shutdown of more than 12 million tons of steel making capacity. The reason: The U.S. has become the “global dumping ground” for low-cost foreign steel.

“The country’s economic and national security is being totally

undermined for the sake of protecting trade policies that have patently failed,” Gerard said. If action is not taken soon, America “will end up being held hostage to foreign pricing for steel like we are for oil.” (For info and USWA supported solutions go to: www.uswa.org/sra/index.htm.)

~ NYSUT’s *The Bottom Line*



If you currently receive the health buy-out and your spouse's health package is changing in the new year, you should check comparability to ensure that the district's buy-out is covering your out-of-pocket (*and premium*) expenses. If it no longer does, you are entitled to coverage from the district.

If you think that your spouse's insurance package is no longer comparable and you want the health insurance provided by the district, you should :

1. Contact Peter Roden's office (CO), and inform him that you no longer believe that your spouse' health insurance is no longer comparable.
2. Contact VP Rich Steger, 457-5899, and let him know the same.
3. You will be asked to provide a current overview of your spouse's coverage so it can be compared to district coverage.

VP Rich Steger will accompany and represent you at any meetings with CO concerning health coverage if you have made him aware of the situation.

Should you no longer have health insurance from your spouse, you should contact CO immediately so that your district coverage can begin.

Judge Jails Striking New Jersey Teachers

By December 5th, a New Jersey judge had sent more than 80 striking teachers to jail, with the prospect of many more following them, for violating his return-to-work order. It was the first time in more than two decades that striking teachers in the state have been jailed. More than 1,000 teachers and school secretaries in the Middletown district began their walkout Nov. 29. Judge Clarkson Fisher refused in early December to order

the parties to negotiate and said he would continue to conduct hearings with striker and order them jailed if necessary for disobeying his return-to-work order.

The bargaining dispute centers around the school board's demand to increase maximum health insurance premiums by more than \$600 per year, a hike that translates into a pay cut for most teachers.

~ NYSUT *The Bottom Line*



The VCTA Officers
and Executive Council
would like to wish you and yours
a Happy Holiday Season and
a Peaceful New Year.

States Need To Develop Curriculum, Link Tests to Standards

AFT President Calls for 'Quality and Quantity Control' of Tests

Although states have made progress in setting academic standards, no state or the District of Columbia has a fully developed standards-based system that links quality standards to tests, curriculum and accountability measures, according to the American Federation of Teachers' sixth report on states' standards efforts, **Making Standards Matter 2001**. As a result, tests--not standards--often are driving education reforms.

"This year's report shows that states have made tremendous progress in setting standards. But they need to develop standards-based curriculum and make sure that tests are aligned to the standards," said AFT President Sandra Feldman. "If we don't improve on what has been started, we run the risk of undermining support for the movement for higher standards," she added.

"The standards tell you where you want to go, the curriculum is the road map to get there, and the tests tell you how far you've come," Feldman said. "We're closer to our destination, but we're not there yet."

Making Standards Matter 2001 evaluates the clarity and specificity of the 50 states' and D.C.'s standards for elementary, middle and high school levels in four core subjects: English, math, science and social studies. For the first time, the 2001 report looks at whether states have developed at least basic curriculum that is linked to quality standards. The report also examines whether tests in the four subjects are aligned to strong stan-

dards, whether promotion and graduation policies are based on aligned tests, and whether the state requires and funds intervention to help students struggling to meet the standards.

The report shows both good and bad news.

"The good news is that some form of standards-based education reform is firmly in place in every state," Feldman said. "The bad news is that no state is coordinating standards, curriculum, tests and accountability measures. Very few states have developed at least basic curriculum, and most state tests are based on weak standards or don't match what is taught. The system needs a mid-course correction."

Among the findings for this year's report:

Standards: Twenty-nine states and D.C. have generally clear and specific standards for English, math, science and social studies – up from 22 in 1999.

Cohesive standards-based system: No state or D.C. has a cohesive standards-based system that links tests, curriculum and accountability measures to quality standards.

Assessments: Twenty-eight states test students in all four core subjects at least once at the elementary, middle and high school levels – up from 25

in 1999. However, while every state asserts that its tests are linked to its standards, only nine states can actually document that they have aligned tests in the four core subjects at all three grade levels. Thirty-one states and D.C. are administering one or more tests that do not meet AFT criteria for alignment.

Curriculum: No state has a fully developed curriculum for all four subjects. Only nine states have 50 percent or more of the components of a fully developed curriculum--Alabama, California, Illinois, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina and Virginia.

Accountability: Twenty-four states and D.C. require *and* fund intervention for students having trouble meeting standards – down three from 1999. This marks the first drop-off in state support since AFT began tracking these efforts.

Congress is in the final stages of mandating that states test all students in grades 3 through 8 in both reading and math and apply sanctions to those schools where students fail to progress satisfactorily. Feldman said this adds to the urgency for states to develop tests. *(continued on page six)*



"... tests—not standards—often are driving education reforms."

Who Built That Boat?

Looking for a hands-on, educational field trip in the Hudson Valley? Why not book your class aboard the *Clearwater*, a traditionally rigged, wooden sailboat?

You may have seen her 108-foot mast as she cruised along the Hudson River and wondered how she came to be. That takes us back to the mid-1960's, when a group of river lovers and musicians, disgusted at sewage and pollution levels in the waterway, joined forces to promote a cleaner Hudson. To draw attention to the river's plight and get folks back on the water, they built a replica of the Dutch sloops that sailed the Hudson during the 17th-19th centuries.

Thanks to their dedication, the river's health has improved in many ways since the boat's maiden voyage in 1969. Today, the non-profit organization, Clearwater, maintains the mission to protect and restore the Hudson River and related waterways. The group pursues that mission with a three-step

approach: advocacy, musical celebration and education. Environmental education is the boat's main focus.

Each year, thousands of students experience the "Classroom of the Waves" © aboard the sloop *Clearwater*.

A field trip in a class all its own, students and teachers alike will see the river from a new perspective. School groups from 3rd to 12th grade are accepted and they tailor the curriculum accordingly.

Once aboard, students "learn by doing" as they raise the 1-1/2 ton mainsail and help bring aboard local fish using a huge trawl net. Next, they'll delve into various learning stations focusing on invertebrates, fish, navigation, habitat studies, water chemistry, and boat physics. Additional topics may include history and pollution issues.



As a nod to the group's musical history, it's not uncommon to hear a sea shanty or folk song during your trip. The boat sails from mid-April

through mid-November and accesses over 40 ports from Albany to Long Island Sound. An ample crew keeps an eye out for safety. Each 3 or 5 hour sail can take up to 50 passengers, at least two of whom must be teachers. Also available for adult groups.

For an exhilarating, eye-opening adventure, contact the sail coordinator at (845) 454-7673.

See you on the river!

~ Shelley Bedincourt,
On-board Educator,
Clearwater, Inc.

States Need To Develop Curriculum, Link Tests to Standards (continued from page five)

based on quality standards. But she added a cautionary note. We need quality and quantity control of tests," Feldman said. "If Congress requires the tests, it should also require that they be of high quality – and it should pay for that quality."

She cautioned states to heed the lessons from districts across the nation that have experienced a backlash against testing. These criticisms often are legitimate, Feldman said, because of frequent misuse of tests. Often, test results are the sole determinant of a student's readiness to move to the next grade or to graduate, tests are not linked to a curriculum, or support isn't pro-

vided for students struggling to master the material being tested.

To ensure that the tests are high quality and not inappropriately or excessively used, the AFT is recommending:

Quality control: Congress should support its new testing mandate with adequate funding to help ensure that states administer good tests. There should also be a mechanism for independent review of those tests. Many states have devel-



oped standards but lack the resources to develop high-quality tests aligned to those standards. Too often, they rely on generic, off-the-shelf tests.

Quantity control: Congress should work to ensure that the tests will not be layered on top of existing high-quality state and district tests.

~ AFT Press Release

As Poor Families' Pay Increases, So Does Their Kids' School Performance

A new study sure to be of interest to policymakers links income boosts among poor families to higher academic achievement levels by their kids.

Small increases in family income can lead to improvements in social skills, knowledge of colors, letters and shapes, and better vocabulary, according to the study by researchers at Harvard and Baylor universities. While income hikes had little impact on children from non-poor families, family pay boosts made a great difference for children in poverty, Education Week reports. Researchers conclude that the increase is "a power-

ful protective factor for children from poor families."

The researchers analyzed data from the sample of 1,216 families that was collected as part of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development's "Study of Early Child

Care and Youth Development," reports Education Week. The finding appear in the November/December issue of Child Development.

The study appears to support



earlier research on welfare demonstration programs in the 1990s, which showed when family income increases, children do better in school.

~NYSUT *The Bottom Line*

...family pay boosts made a great difference for children in poverty.

Interested in Making More of your Money?

Financial Building Blocks—a program from NYSUT

shows you how by teaching you about TSA's, IRA's, and Personal Finance.

Before scheduling a workshop, we would like to get an estimate of how many people will attend. The Financial Building Blocks session lasts 3 hours from 4:00—7:00 pm with a light dinner provided. Spouses may attend. The last time FBB was offered there was a \$10 fee per participant. If you would be interested in attending, please fill out the form below and return it to Tim Brown, VCTA at the HS.

You will be contacted with more information.

Name _____

Spouse (if attending) _____

Building _____



Attention All NYSTRS Tier Members: Let's change the current FAS Law!

The following was received via e-mail from Eloise Ham, Ramapo TA.

To many teachers, June 17, 1971 has become a very significant date. Why? Because if you began contributing to the New York State Teachers' Retirement System before that date, the current law states that you can choose to use a 3 or a 5 year (whichever is greater) final average salary factor in determining what your retirement pension will be. You can also include your retirement incentive (a lump sum of money given to you by the district) as part of that final average salary. If you began contributing AFTER the above date, you can only use a 3

-year final average salary factor, and you cannot include the incentive. This difference amounts to several hundred dollars a month for life for each member of the retirement system.

NYSUT is well aware of the importance of this issue for many of its members. In fact, during the last legislative session, NYSUT introduced a bill that would allow members of Tiers I,II,III,IV to use the greater of the 3 or 5 year FAS. It will reintroduce the bill for the new 2001-2002 legislative session, but, in order to pass it will need our support. Even if retirement seems far away to you right now, this unfair law will, at some point impact ALL of us in ALL of the tiers if we don't act now to

change it.

Luckily, there is something we can do, and that is, to write to our legislators. With advanced technology and the Internet so easily accessible to all of us, we can now email our legislators directly from the NYSUT web site, www.NYSUT.org. This site will even give you the name of your legislator, if you don't know it, and set you up immediately with an e-mail letterform...all you have to do is write your letter and hit "send". It's as easy as that. Here's a sample letter, which you can copy exactly or personalize to your liking.

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you to request that you do everything in your power as a legislator to change the punitive Final Average Salary (FAS) law that applies to teachers in all tiers of the New York State Teachers' Retirement System; specifically, the statute that allows only certain members of the NYSTRS (those who began contributing BEFORE June 17, 1971) to use their incentive and the choice of either a 3 or 5 year FAS to determine their pension factor.

This divisive law necessarily punishes a good segment of teachers, and I hope you will use your influence to get it revised. I understand that there have been proposals introduced every year to amend the statute, but none of them have advanced out of committee.

Please let me know what can be done to equalize the retirement benefits for all teachers in New York State. Thank you for getting back to me on this matter.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Your Address

From the President Integrate Pro Woes *(continued from page two)*

computer due to a school computer virus is not a sacrifice I am willing to make.

Fourth, the terms and conditions of completing progress reports and report cards has not changed. If the reporting period ends, for example, on Friday, the District cannot mandate the completion of these tasks on the following Monday *(or Tuesday if Monday is not a school day)*. To do so would put the District in a position of mandating

work outside of the regular school day which is a mandatory topic of negotiations. In other words, any change or directive such as this must be negotiated. However, if you are requested to turn in your completed grades early, you may certainly comply as this may assist the grade book coordinator in preparing reports in a timely fashion. If, on the other hand, you are being directed to evaluate Friday exams and assignments, calculate averages, and post grades and

comments for submission by the following Monday, please inform a member of your executive council so that the formal negotiations process may commence.

Note: Any unit member required to work over a weekend or vacation period should submit a claim form (*voucher*) for 1/187th of their annual salary for each day worked.

~ Tim Brown

A Union Carol *(continued from the back page)*

sure that they are protected," responded the Spirit. "Come let us go to the Union party."

In the blink of an eye they were at the Union party where teachers from all buildings in the district filled the room, talking, noshing and smiling a lot.

"Look at those fools. Don't they have anything better to do with their time? Why aren't they working on the contract negotiations?" Trooge complained.

"They are. They are talking about all aspects of their lives and certainly their concerns as educators are being heard. And at the same time they are getting to know their representatives and the reps are hearing the needs of the members. Plus they are getting to know each other better so that they become a more cohesive union."

Trooge pondered what the

Spirit told him. He turned to ask the Spirit another question, but the fading spirit held up his hand and told Trooge it was time to go. Trooge found himself standing outside his classroom, he turned around and saw the third spirit—a darkened hood to a faceless void.

"Are you the spirit of unions future?" Trooge asked. "I'm afraid of what you may be showing me."

The spirit shook its head and brought Trooge to the auditorium where the union was holding a general meeting. A person Trooge didn't know was standing up reading off the concessions that had been made to the administration. There would be pay cuts, health contributions, renewable tenure, and veteran teachers will be forced to retire. The "tiny teachers" left, many talking about leaving teaching altogether for better careers.

"Where is Bill Cratchett? Did

he get tired of the lack of support from teachers like...like me? Why isn't anyone fighting this!? Oh, spirit is this truly our future?" And with that Trooge awoke in his chair, TV still blaring. He went to the weather channel and saw it was the next day. The spirits had done all their work in one night.

Trooge got ready for school and entered the building as a new man. He saw Bill Cratchett in the main office, shook his hand and thanked him for his hard work. He told union representatives that he would see them at the party. He met a "tiny teacher" and offered to help her and talk with her about the importance of being active in the Union. In time, Ebenezer Trooge had become one of the best union representatives. The union stood firm on its issues and teachers; tiny, veteran and retired all benefited.

~ Patti Lunden

Sweatfree School Poster Contest

NYSUT is a partner in the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition's 2002 Sweatfree Poster Contest. This year's theme: "*We can make a difference; say no to child labor and sweatshops.*"

The contest, open to students in public and non-public schools, promotes the cause of schools refusing to buy goods made in sweatshops or using child labor.

Teachers nominate entries from their students' work in four grade categories: K-3, 4-6, 7-9, and 10-12.

Last year, 210 posters from 76 schools were entered. NYSUT awards US Savings Bonds to eight first-prize winners and second-prize winners. Teachers are encouraged to get their students involved now to beat the Feb. 1, 2002 deadline. For more info., call (800) 342-9810 or visit the coalition's Web site at

www.nyslabrel@earthlink.net.



Artist: SARA BECHMAN, 6th Grade
Teacher: Helana Schillan
Falsey Junior High School
57 Rego Park, NY

Highlights of the November VCTA Executive Council Meeting

President's Report

Logo and Shirts distributed Monday- Members who ordered VCTA logo shirts should pay their building rep, who will then forward all payments to Tim Brown.

OUSDHP Minutes- Copies were distributed.

Labor-Religion Coalition Legislation- On Labor Day, Governor Pataki signed legislation amending the General Municipal Law to grant school boards the authority to include labor standards when considering who qualifies as a responsible bidder for apparel bid solicitation (Sweatfree Schools). It allows each of New York's 740 school districts to include labor standards when making purchasing choices for apparel, such as sport uniforms and logo caps. Issues such as working conditions, compensation, the right to unionize and the use of child labor can now be part and parcel of each apparel purchase decision. The NYS School Boards Association has informed its members of the new law and has assigned a staff person to help school boards

draft a policy that incorporates the new law into its bidding process. Information on this legislation was distributed.

Sweatfree School Poster Contest- Entry information was distributed.

Unauthorized Investment Info put in mailboxes- Northwestern Financial Services did not have authorization to distribute their materials in teachers' mailboxes.

2002-2003 School Calendar- A draft copy was distributed. **There was a motion to approve the day before Thanksgiving as a vacation day to adjust the calendar to the contractual 187 assigned days:** Motion carried.

Health and Safety Newsletter- Copies of this NYSUT publication were distributed. It included information on OSHA personal protective equipment (PPE), a healthy buildings web site (www.healthybldgs.com), pesticide notification, and other useful information.

MH Teacher Center minutes- copies were distributed.

Financial Building Blocks- Please



let Tim Brown know if anyone is interested in having a FBB seminar.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to discussion of contract negotiations.

Forms will be distributed to buildings on November 21, 2001. There will be a general meeting on Tuesday, November 27 in the high school auditorium. Voting will take place in each building on Wednesday, November 28, 2001. Absentee ballot procedure will be explained at Tuesday's general meeting.

The next Executive Council meeting was held December 18, 2001 at 3:45 PM at the VCHS Professional Library, Montgomery

Save this date !

**3rd Annual
VCTA Blood Drive
February 28, 2002**

**Valley Central Middle School
Back Gym**

Appointments beginning at 2:00 pm

Call Kathy Manning, RN at the Middle School for appointment



Secretarially Yours

The following article is about another one of our bright, beautiful and intelligent Secretaries. Our Secretarial stars keep shining bright!

Pam Cunningham came to the Valley Central School District in January, 1983. She worked in the guidance office of the High School for two years. Due to child care, she had a two year leave of absence, but returned as the Assistant Principal's Secretary in the Middle School. She worked there four years and then assumed the position of Principal's Secretary at Berea Elementary School. She has enjoyed all of the levels of education that she has worked, but especially enjoys the elementary students. "Berea is a wonderful building to be in, and we consider ourselves the 'Berea Family'. The younger children are filled with excitement and innocence."

Pam has been married to her husband, Allan, four years. She has three children, Lori, the chorus director at Goshen High School, Michael, an architectural landscape graduate, and Kristy, a first year law student. They are all Valley Central graduates. She also has two step sons, Allan, Jr. and Jack, and two grandchildren, Ashley and Cody.



Pam Cunningham

grown worms), and working in her garden. During the winter months crafts and a good book by the fire take their place. Pam loves animals as evidenced by her two dogs, four cats, parrot, two hamsters, and yes, two chickens. She is the President of the Laureate Phi Chapter of Beta Sigma Phi. Pam is appreciative of the many years at Valley Central and the wonderful friends and acquaintances she has made along

the way.

See you next month have a great holiday!

~ Lucy Fox

(Merry) MacNote #2



avowed purpose of keeping children center. *Bravo.*

♥ The stand taken by Frank Colone and Newburgh Teachers' Association regarding mentoring of young teachers in order to improve quality of instruction and to retain the best young minds and hearts in our chosen vocation.

♥ Patti (*Behr*) Lunden's editorial comments on the love of learning. (*November 2001 VC Echoes*). If all teachers could engender in all students learning's love, what a wonderful world...!

Amen...

In reflecting on this time of year, the incomparable Dylan

Thomas speaks of saying "some words to the close and holy darkness." You all will be in those words.

Until next time (in 2002!), keep pushing back the barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you.

Peace (and happy holidays).

~ Kevin McFadden

Retiree Representative

Holiday Nobody asked me, but...

As 2001 winds down, here are some things that make my heart sing:

♥ The settled teacher contract which seems fair to teachers and district which did not generate acrimony or tension, and which allows the schools to go forward with



Advertising Section

These ads will be seen by over 750 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.



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& Voice Mail w/message writing
With Extended Local Area

includes

*all of NY and parts
of PA, NJ, CT, & Mass.*

**Or all this plus Free Nights and
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A Union Carol

Once upon a time in not the too far distant past, lived Ebenezer Trooge, a teacher by profession. Trooge had grown into a cold-hearted selfish man through self-imposed isolation although he was still an effective educator. Trooge kept to himself in the school building spending his lunch periods in his room comparing other teachers' salaries to his own and pondering how much better he could have made out had he chosen a different path in life. One afternoon, union representatives stopped by Trooge's room to invite him to a union party the next day.

"Waste my precious time at your Union party? What has the Union ever done for me? Why it's not even a Union—it's an Association! When I need to deal with that useless Teachers' Association it'll be with Cratchet himself, not with you mere representatives. Union Party—Bah Humbug—get out of my room," he raged.

"Sometimes I wish we could get to choose who we represented," said the first representative.

"That would defeat the purpose of the union, we represent everyone equally, the good, the bad and the ugly," said the other representative. They continued down the hallway inviting members to the party.

Trooge was about to return to his room when he saw tired Bill Cratchet, the president of the union coming down the hallway and called him into the room.

"Tell me about contract negotiations—I pay you good money and I want to know what you are doing for me!" demanded Trooge.

Cratchet slowly smiled as he replied, "Now, Ebenezer, you know that I can't discuss negotiations with you until the General Meeting. However, if you'd like to learn more about the contract, we have room on Council for another representative from this building, we even have a meeting tomorrow, interested?"

"Cratchet, I pay you good dues and I am entitled to your time, I don't need to go to some useless meetings to find

out about my contract!" Trooge replied.

"Then I guess you've made your choice," Cratchet said as he walked down the hallway.

Trooge locked the door to his little world as he headed home for the evening. There he settled in to his supper, watched some TV and fell asleep in the chair. He awoke to a strange sound and immediately thought there must be some students on his lawn tormenting him again. He rubbed his eyes as he saw the figment of his mentor, James Marley, long since retired coming near him. His mentor had taught him everything he knew about the classroom and the Union.

"Ebenezer," moaned the spirit, "don't make the same mistakes that I did."

"Marley, what are you talking about? You made no mistakes, you were a fine educator who kept to himself. You taught me to let the suckers take care of the details of contract agreements while we reap the benefits," responded Ebenezer.

"It is a mistake to think that way. I was wrong, if I could do it over, I would have become a Union representative, made donations to Vote/Cope and taken the time to help with the Union efforts. You will be visited by three more spirits this night," Marley warned. "Listen to them and learn what I never did."

Trooge retired to his room and tried to fall asleep rationalizing that his dream of Marley must have been the result of indigestion. As the clock struck the hour, the first spirit appeared.

"Ebenezer Trooge, awake. I am the spirit of unions past. Touch my sleeve and learn."

Trooge went off with the spirit and before he could ask a question found himself standing in his third grade classroom. There he saw his teacher preparing for class, tired from having worked the night before in a restaurant. Just then the radiator began spewing steam and the teacher went to his cabinet to get his tools to fix the leak.

"Why is he doing that?" asked Scrooge of the spirit.

"His contract calls for it," replied the Spirit, "The administration cut the costs of running the school by expecting the teachers to clean their own rooms including repairing the radiators. They also paid teachers poorly. It was expected that the honor of teaching would make up for the lack of pay. Most teachers had to work at least one other job, like your third grade teacher."

"How...when did it change?" asked Trooge.

"It changed when teachers like this one banded together with other teachers for the benefit of all and negotiated for better pay and working conditions. They walked picket lines for what they believed in and all the teachers of the building got involved," answered the Spirit of Unions Past. "My time is ending, we must go."

Trooge awoke in his bed not sure if he had been dreaming when he noticed a light coming from the other room. There stood a great spirit.

"I am the Spirit of Unions present," said the big man, "Hurry, we have only a short amount of time."

Trooge found himself outside of Bill Cratchet's home. Cratchet was on the phone with the Superintendent while trying to share a meal with his family. He left the table to continue the conversation as it intensified. By the time he returned his food was cold, his children off doing homework and his wife was cleaning up. Another meal had been lost to union business. Cratchet apologized to his family as he explained that he had to go off to a meeting with the central administration in order to protect a tiny teacher.

"What is a tiny teacher," asked Ebenezer.

"The tiny teachers are new to the profession and very vulnerable. They don't know enough about the union or the contract to be aware of their rights. They need Bill Cratchet and the union representatives most, of all teachers, to make

(continued on page nine)