

# VC ECHOES

An AFTCA and New York Teacher Award Winning Publication

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 9

MAY 31, 2002

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## Governor signs the Early Retirement Incentive Programs into Law

The Early Retirement Incentive Programs have been signed into law at the urging of the AFL-CIO Pension Task Force, co-chaired by NYSUT Executive Vice President Alan Lubin. Chapter 69 of the Laws of 2002 allows eligible members to take advantage of **ONE** of the following Early Retirement Incentive Programs detailed below.

### Age 55/25 Year Early Retirement Incentive Program

In addition to the "traditional" ERI program (see below), a new program has been enacted that enables all members who (a) were in active service on 2/1/02 and who remained in active service through 6/3/02; AND (b) are age 55 or older with at least 25

years of service to retire without penalty, provided such members must retire during the "open period." For school districts the "open period" is between June 3, 2002 and August 31, 2002. Retirement applications must be filed by members within 14 days of the effective date of retirement.

SUNY, CUNY and the Community College boards of trustees must set the commencement date of the 90 day "open period," but such commencement date shall not occur later than January 1, 2003.

All employers are required to provide the Age 55/25 Year Early Retirement Incentive Plan to all eligible employees, except those employees who are deemed necessary for the maintenance

of the "public health and safety."

### "Traditional" Early Retirement Incentive Program

While the "traditional" ERI still provides up to three years of additional service credit, several provisions in this year's ERI are **DIFFERENT** from programs enacted in prior years.

#### **School Districts**

As in the past, individual school districts will have to "opt" into the ERI program and "target" the eligible title or titles for inclusion thereunder. However, districts are NOT required to demonstrate the 50% savings required in the past.

*(continued on page two)*

**Thank You,  
All Members of  
The Valley Central Teachers' Association  
And the Wider Valley Central Family,  
Active and Retired,  
Who put Service above Self,  
Representing and Defending our Country  
In all Branches of Military Service.**



**Wisdom is  
knowing what  
to do next;  
Skill is  
knowing how  
to do it,  
and  
Virtue is  
doing it.**

*David Starr Jordan*

## Looking Ahead: NYSUT Hosts Information Sessions on the NYS Mentor Teacher-Internship Grants

**N**YSUT's Division of Research and Educational Services will be hosting information sessions on state grants for the 2002-2003 NYS Mentor Teacher-Internship Program (MTIP) for local leaders, teachers, staff developers, and other school district and BOCES personnel who will be involved in the MTIP proposal development process. At the session you will review the MTIP grant proposal guidelines, receive samples on mentoring programs currently being implemented, and receive practical advice on implementing a quality mentoring program. Dates and times are listed below.

Many local districts are looking ahead to February 2004, when changes in SED's Commissioner's regulations will require that all first year teachers participate in a mentoring program to meet the requirement for professional certification. With \$6 million made available in the 2002-2003 budget, the New York State Mentor Teacher-Internship program will offer a competitive state grant that will en-

able local school districts or BOCES to develop and implement a mentoring/induction program. Current state law requires that the MTIP be collectively bargained.

Specifically, the MTIP will provide mentoring and support to teachers in their first or second year of teaching to enhance their skills in a supportive environment. Research has documented the benefits of participation in quality mentoring programs for both new and experienced teachers. New teachers develop sound instructional practices, learn effective classroom management techniques, and focus on student achievement earlier. Experienced teachers benefit from sharing their skills and expertise, provide the emotional support new teachers need in the critical first year, and have the opportunity to reflect on their own thinking about teaching and learning. More importantly, with a planned induction into teaching, we increase the likelihood that beginning teachers will remain in the profession and in those schools that need fully prepared and qualified teachers the most.

SED will give special consideration

to proposals submitted by districts with one or more schools under registration review (SURR schools), and or schools in need of improvement or corrective action. The school administration and local teacher's bargaining agent must jointly develop proposals. The tentative application submission date for MTIP proposals is July 13, 2002.

Proposals must include the essential program components listed below:

- Focus on the mentor/intern relationship
- Release time for interns and mentors
- Selection and training of mentors and interns
- Defined role and activities for the mentors and interns
- Clearly described role of building principals
- How the program will be managed and evaluated

**M i d - H u d s o n .**  
June 5, 2002. 4:00-6:00 p.m. Holiday Inn. Fishkill, 542 Route 9, Fishkill, NY 12524. (845) 896-6281

## Governor signs the Early Retirement Incentive Programs into Law (continued from page one)

The school boards are still required to adopt a resolution which sets an "open period." The "open period" cannot exceed 90 days nor be less than 30 days. The board must make the election to provide this benefit before July 26, 2002. The "open period" set by the board cannot extend beyond August 31, 2002.

To be eligible for inclusion in the ERI, members must be at least 50 years of age with at least 10 years of service credit. Members opting to retire before "normal retirement

age," as determined by their tier status, would receive reduced benefits.

Members designated for inclusion in the ERI will receive one month of additional service credit for each year of service. The maximum amount of additional service credit afforded in this legislation is 36 months.

As in prior years, the additional service credit provided under the ERI increases the maximum pension percentage that members in Tiers I

and II can use in calculating final average salary. The service credit afforded hereunder is on top of the two years of additional service credit already provided to members under the Benefit Enhancements signed into law in 2000.

The ERI, at employer option, MAY be used in conjunction with a local incentive.

## Retirement 'Boom' Is Really a Bust, Report Says

**E**ven as the stock market soared in the 1990s, middle-income workers' retirement wealth fell, according to a chilling new study by the Economic Policy Institute

Only the very richest Americans saw their retirement wealth increase, while those retiring over the next two decades actually are more likely than their predecessors to live in poverty, the analysis shows.

*Retirement Insecurity: The Income Shortfalls Awaiting the Soon-to-Retire*, released May 2, highlights the importance of working families' campaign to protect and strengthen Social Security, the only source of retirement income that—unlike the stock market—is guaranteed, life-long and rises with inflation.

More than 40 percent of households headed by someone between the ages of 47 and 64 will not be able to replace even half of their pre-retirement income once they stop working. Nearly 20 percent will

have retirement income below the poverty line, according to a study by author Edward Wolff, a New York University economist.

“What should have been the best of times turns into something closer to the worst of times, when you look closely at what really happened to retirement wealth,” says Wolff. In 1998, every group of near-retirees except those at the very top lost ground compared with their counterparts in 1983, he found. The wealthy benefited from the shift away from defined-benefit pension plans to defined-contribution retirement plans, such as 401(k)s—though middle- and lower-income workers did not, Wolff says.

“This study sheds a whole new light on the debate over Social Security,” EPI President Jeff Faux says. “It shows we’ve been trying to fix the part of the retirement system that’s

not broken.”

President George W. Bush and his Big Business allies have proposed partially privatizing Social Security, a move that would cut benefits or raise the retirement age or both.

Meanwhile, the scandal-ridden collapse of Enron has shown that workers cannot rely on 401(k) plans for a secure retirement.

“It’s time to stop talking about shifting Social Security money to private accounts and start talking about how we can make sure that working Americans will have adequate pensions that will enable them to live decently in retirement,” says Faux.

~ from AFL-CIO Web Site

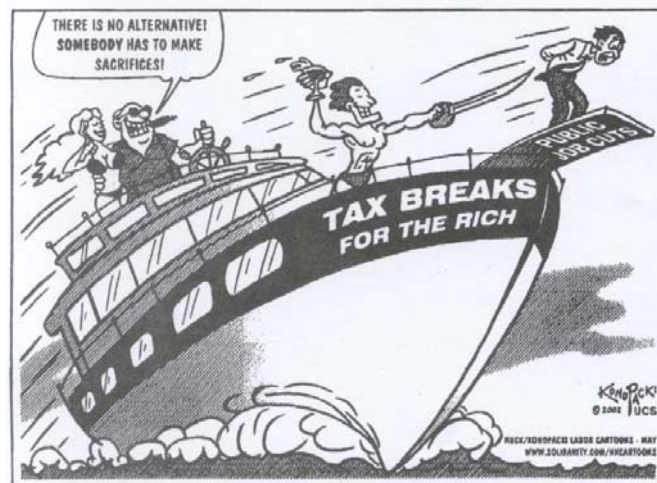


**Living on less than half:** Between 1989 and 1998, the share of households whose projected retirement income is less than half of their pre-retirement income rose sharply, from 30 percent to 43 percent.

• **The shrinking middle:** For households at the median, retirement wealth declined by 11 percent between 1983 and 1998.

• **Losing ground:** For all groups of pre-retirees with combined retirement wealth of \$999,999 or less, that wealth has shrunk between 11 percent and 32 percent since 1983.

~ from AFL-CIO Web Site



## RECESSION: It Ain't Over 'Til It's Over

**G**overnment officials said recently the recession is coming to an end but, for millions of jobless workers and millions facing probable layoffs, the hard times are just beginning.

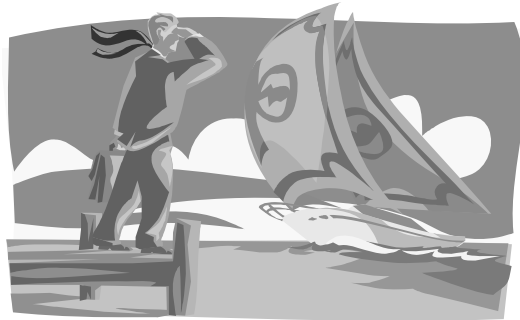
The economic stimulus package passed by Congress in March was disappointing at best, with only a 13-week extension of unemployment benefits and no provisions for health care coverage for the jobless. Meanwhile, business lobbyists obtained \$50 billion in tax benefits from the bill.

Labor's call to address the continuing loss of manufacturing

jobs was ignored, according to John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO.

In January, the Labor Department said the nation's unemployment rate was 5.6%, as 89,000 jobs disappeared that month. The AFL-CIO estimates more than 1.5 million jobs have been lost since Sept. 11, but another 1.1 million had been lost in the first nine months of that year.

Sweeney said the end of a recession does not automatically translate into an expanding job mar-



ket; tax cuts for the wealthy do not create jobs for the victims of the recession. But the Bush administration continues to pursue the trickle-down policies it has resurrected from the Reagan years, he said.

~ *From NYSUT The Bottom Line*

## NOT ON OUR WATCH

**An outside contractor - not federal employees of the Immigration and Naturalization Service - was responsible for the visas that were mailed to terrorists six months after they hijacked two airplanes and flew them into the World Trade Center. "There are two worlds, one of unaccountable contractors, such as ACS, and the world of dedicated federal employees," said Bobby Harnage Sr., president of American Federation of Government Employees.**

## Education Key To National Security: Poll

**M**ost Americans believe educational spending is key to building a stronger national security, according to a recent poll.

Eighty-five percent of respondents to the poll conducted by the Committee for Education Funding said our country's need for stronger national security is "good reason" to increase federal education spending. Fifty-three percent

classified it as a "very good reason." Also, after military and homeland security, 38% of respondents chose education as their top federal priority. This was followed by prescription drug benefits for the elderly and tax cuts. The CEF is a non-profit coalition of more than 100 educational organizations.

~ *NYSUT The Bottom Line*



## Changes In State Aid May Boost Construction Costs

**A**fter many school districts have made long-term commitments to building and repair projects, changes in the way state reimbursement for those projects is distributed - basically taking longer to pay - could increase the financial cost.

If school administrators had hoped to pay off construction debts on an accelerated schedule to save money, they could now be penalized if they don't conform with the state's extended payment schedule. Many school districts expanded and scheduled their building plans to take advantage of a two-year,

10% increase in building aid offered from 1998-2000 as part of a state initiative to improve facilities. To fund the incentive program, the state would need either more money or more time to pay. In the current economic climate, the money is not available.

~ *From NYSUT The Bottom Line*

## State Budget Is 'Done,' But Work Is Not Finished

**T**he final state budget provides some much-needed relief for schools, but it still falls short in support for higher education, union leaders said, and lobbying efforts will keep up the pressure on lawmakers.

"The job's not done," said NYSUT Executive Vice President Alan Lubin. "SUNY, CUNY and our community colleges desperately need operating funds so the campuses can avoid layoffs and program cuts."

The fight for more higher ed funding will be an important part of NYSUT's Committee of 100 lobby day on June 4, Lubin said. NYSUT activists also will be lobby-

ing for pension legislation, program bills for NYSUT's Federation of Nurses and Health Professionals - which did gain a crucial cost-of-living increase for members in home health care and visiting nurse services - and other improvements.

The \$14.6 billion school aid package adds funding for teacher centers and the state's mentor-teacher program, and restores separate aid categories for BOCES and special education programs.

The budget also continues the state's commitment to help raise teachers' salaries and provide targeted funding for the Big Five city school districts.

"This is a critical step to-

ward attracting more qualified certified teachers and starting to close the performance gap," Lubin said. "It should help our New York City members settle their long-overdue contract."

"Obviously, New York is still reeling from Sept. 11," Lubin said. "But the state cannot use Sept. 11 as an excuse for failing SUNY and CUNY, and for not providing school districts with enough to fund programs and ease the burden on local property taxpayers. This budget will help, but it's not enough."

~ *From NYSUT The Bottom Line*

## School Budgets Pass At Rate Of 89%

**C**itizens across the state went to the polls May 21 to vote on school district budgets and to elect school board members. Statewide, 89% of budgets passed, a slight drop from last year's passage rate of 92% but still higher than the 82% average for all years since 1969.

Given the late and inadequate state budget, and uncertainty over the economy, the 89% rate is an exceptional vote of confidence in the schools, NYSUT leaders said.

"The statewide school

budget votes prove one thing: New Yorkers want strong schools," said Alan Lubin, NYSUT executive vice president. "Despite these difficult times - or perhaps because of them - voters recognized that better schools mean a better future for all of us.

"Even in those school districts where budgets were defeated, our sense is that the 'No' votes did not result from voter dissatisfaction with the quality of education," he said. "Rather, voters expressed their frustration at a specific local issue

or at higher property taxes due to inadequate state aid."

Still, even one budget defeat is too many, and NYSUT is acting to help budgets succeed if voters get a second shot. Districts whose voters rejected a proposed budget now have two choices: submit a second budget to voters or adopt a contingency budget. If the voters reject a second budget proposal, the board of education must adopt a contingency budget. Most spending is capped under a

( *continued on page six* )

## NYSUT Members Talk About Teaching

**M**ore than 100 NYSUT members and school administrators from the Hudson Valley met with the Board of Regents in Poughkeepsie regarding the best ways to strengthen teaching. The educators sat at tables, each with at least one Regent or State Education Department official, and told their stories.

"It was a good idea to have Regents sit across the table from the people on the front lines," said Barry Kaufman, president of the Poughkeepsie Public Schools TA. He said the Regents shared many of the positions presented by union members, but, "On some points, we simply had to agree to disagree."

Carol Slotkin, NYSUT Board member and president of the Western Sullivan United Teachers and SRPs, said, "It was a good chance for all these people to get together, and I think they heard what had to be said."

Among the numerous steps recommended by working teachers

for the Board to strengthen teaching:

- Support improvements in teacher pensions, school discipline and working conditions to help attract and retain certified, qualified teachers
- Support increased state aid to make teachers' salaries more competitive, especially in districts where the pay gap is largest.



- Support a state stipend for national board certification, and encourage districts to use the Teachers for Tomorrow component that provides incentives for national board certified

teachers to teach in low-performing schools.

- Ensure that colleges and universities invest fully in their teacher education programs.

~ NYSUT *The Bottom Line*

- Continue financial assistance to districts for school building renovation and construction.
- Endorse legislation to eliminate pension penalties on retired teachers who return to the classroom.

## School Budgets Pass At Rate Of 89% (continued from page five)

contingency budget; for the coming year, increases under a contingency budget are capped at 3.36%. A letter has been sent to presidents of teachers unions where budgets went down, offering NYSUT's help if their districts submit a second proposal to voters.

In seven of the state's 38 BOCES regions, all school district budgets passed. Districts in some portions of the Southern Tier and Hudson Valley encountered greater difficulty in winning voter approval than in the past. For example, the

Schuyler-Chemung-Tioga BOCES territory had the lowest passing rate of any region - 57 percent. A total of seven districts in Orange and Ulster counties suffered defeats. In Suffolk County, voters rejected 14 district budgets, up from just six a year ago. "The overwhelming support for school budgets across the state should send a clear message to Albany," Lubin said. "New Yorkers are willing to support better public schools and invest in our children, but they expect more funding from the state.

"Our enthusiasm for the high budget pass rate, however, is dampened by the knowledge that many of the budgets that passed contained harmful program cuts and devastating layoffs of teachers and staff," he said. "Many of these cuts would not have been necessary had the state enacted a stronger education budget - and provided that state aid earlier. This would have minimized the confusion for many voters.

~ NYSUT *The Bottom Line*

## Casual Days and Penny Harvest Yield Great Results at Walden

The fundraising efforts which we reported in the June 2000 edition of VC Echoes described how some very simple activities resulted in great charitable contributions for the VC community. We are pleased to give an update as we complete our fourth year of our programs to aid others.

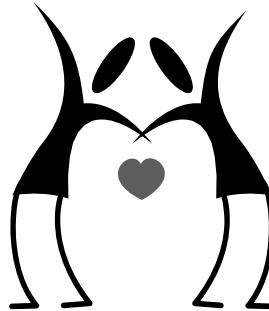
Earlier this year, we reached our "\$10,000 plus" mark, and we continue to be overwhelmed by the generosity of everyone on staff. Custodians, paraprofessionals, teachers and administrators are all involved in giving, and our unified efforts have been another indication of the family spirit which is typical of Walden Elementary School.

Since September, we've sent contributions to the Montgomery Food Pantry, the American Cancer Society, the Walden Community Playground, Tomorrow's Children's Fund, VC All Night Grad Party, the Town of Montgomery Volunteer Ambulance Corps, VC Scholarship Council and St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. Our last "Causal Day" of this year will benefit the Josephine Louise Library and will be sent in memory of teacher and former WES parent Barbara Plato. We have also given

contributions this year to some of our families in Walden who have faced overwhelming obstacles.

We are proud of the WES folks who exemplify the spirit of caring and giving which is evident in all our VC schools.

~ *Connie DeSantis  
and Barbara Wutch,  
WES Fundraising  
Coordinators*



## Berea Elementary Students Put on "Annie"

On May 3, 2002, the Berea Elementary Drama Club did a superb production of "Annie." The show was produced and directed by Mrs. Jessica Borner and Mr. Bill Carter, fourth grade teachers. The stage director was Mrs. Mar Routson, BOCES teacher and choreography

was done by Mrs. Denise Carter, a dance teacher with the Hudson Valley Conservatory.

The Drama club held auditions for the play last October and had been practicing for the play every Wednesday after school.

The Drama club extends

their gratitude once again to thank all the teachers, parents and students for all their hard work this year.

~ *Sara Ackerson,  
Berea Elementary*

## Thanks from the Valley Central Federal Credit Union "Where people are worth more than money"

Thanks to all VCFCU members and VCHS students who participated in our recent "Credit Unions Care for Kids" campaign. The credit union sold terrycloth puppies and a portion of the purchase price was donated to a children's charity.

Due to the VC generosity, we were able to donate \$500 to the Children's Cancer Fund at Westchester Medical Center. This money will go to continued research

in the field of pediatric cancer and will help children who have cancer and their families.

~ *Diane Ruggles,  
High School*



## **AP SPANISH TRAINING - CAN YOU HELP?**

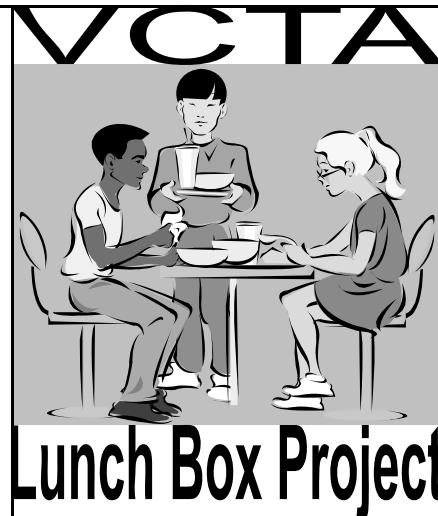
**This summer the NYSUT Education and Learning Trust will be training experienced AP Spanish teachers to train other Spanish teachers to teach the AP Spanish course. The training will be Aug. 16-21 at Roaring Brook Ranch in Lake George. ELT is seeking applicants from all areas of the state and welcomes recommendations from local leaders.**

For further information or to recommend someone please contact Roslyn Brown at the NYSUT Education and Learning Trust, (800) 528-6208 or [rbrown@nysutmail.org](mailto:rbrown@nysutmail.org).

**There are 199 Valley Central families who use the Montgomery Food Pantry.**

*Some of their children probably are sitting in your classroom.*

**You help them to learn,  
now help them to live.**



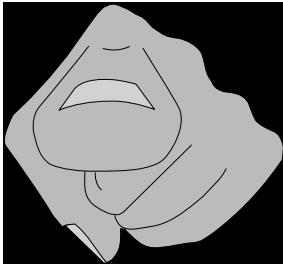
**Please donate an item to the Montgomery Food Pantry.**

**Food items for children are appropriate.**

*Donation boxes are located in the faculty room of each building. Donations are being accepted through the end of June.*

*It takes only a minute to buy an item to donate and another minute to place it in the donation box.*

**Thank you for your continued support of  
this community.**



**Wish you could have a say on what teachers do for  
Superintendent's Conference Days?**

**Interested in Professional Development?**

**Want to earn in-service credit for attending meetings?**

The VCTA is looking for a few strong-willed, union-minded members who are willing to serve on the Professional Development Team.

The team meets monthly at CO, (from 3:45—5:00),  
you'll earn in-service credit for attending.

*Professional Development Teams were legislated to give teachers the majority voice.*

If you would be willing to serve,  
Contact VCTA President Tim Brown, HS x 7613  
Or through the Union Office, 457-5899.

**SEEKING PRESENTERS FOR  
INSERVICE CONFERENCE**



**The deadline for proposals for the  
21st annual Statewide Conference  
on In-service Education  
is June 7.**

*Teachers, staff developers, school administrators and higher education faculty  
are encouraged to submit proposals for workshops for the conference,  
"Strengthening Teaching and Learning"  
scheduled for Nov. 17-19.*

**Application forms are available at [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org).**

## Highlights of the April VCTA Executive Council Meeting

### President's Report:

The upcoming budget vote and Board of Education election was discussed. The VCTA will mail NYSUT members in the district a reminder to vote yes for the budget.

The VCTA received a refund check for \$1289.35 which represents the maximum allowable 20% rebate of contributions received from the VCTA through payroll deduction from September 2000 through December 2001 of \$6446.75. The goal of the VCTA is have each member contribute \$25 through payroll deduction. (Our current average is \$9.60 per member) Tim Brown pointed out that our younger members now make 3% more than they would have and our older members will collect 4% more in retirement salary. Our retirees benefited from the COLA. This was all thanks to VOTE/Cope. Carol DeMicco suggested that a poster highlighting the positive results of VOTE/Cope would be beneficial during the contribution drive. Toni Sperry will head this year's drive to be held May 13 -24.

A motion was made and carried to donate \$250 to the Corinne Feller Memorial Fund. The VCTA logo will be featured on t-shirts distributed to the 8K participants and our logo will be on the web site with a link to our web site.

A list of vacancy notices was distributed. Tim Brown indicated that the District is faced with the need to make cuts. The BOE will not open up a retirement incentive as a matter of course. Teachers who will be retiring at the end of this school year are: Beatrice Hines, Phyllis Maier, Janet Sharp, John Solan and Elena Stahl. Tiffani Lillo raised the question of seniority in regard to involuntary transfer. Tim Brown indicated that Central Office would consider voluntary transfer requests before making involuntary transfers. Seniority is determined by hire date. Carol DeMicco asked about the status of those teachers returning from childcare leave. The CBA guarantees those teachers a position, however it may not be the same position as they had before they left.

A memo from Peter Roden concerning the retirement incentive was distributed.

The Mid-Hudson Teacher Center minutes were distributed.

Registration information for an Assessment workshop was distributed.

A memo concerning a celebration of those employees who had 25 years of service to the district and/or were retiring was distributed from Mary Ann Wilson.

Nomination information was distributed for the Living the Legacy award from the AFT.

Mini-Grant applications for the MHTC were distributed.

A lengthy discussion was had concerning the United Way. The United Way thanked the District and featured the District logo at an awards presentation with no specific mention of the teachers or the VCTA logo. The teachers donated 90% of the District's contribution to the United Way. Tim Brown requested feedback to the following: 1) Should the VCTA request "equal billing" with the district so teachers get the credit due them? 2) Should the VCTA run our own United Way campaign and send a VCTA check as opposed to a District check? 3) Do we encourage VCTA members to do something else positive for the area instead of donating to the United Way?

Copies of the OUSDHP were distributed. INDECS is currently in process of creating a database which would allow individuals to access their own claims.

### Secretarial Unit Report

A grievance is being presented to the BOE on a dispute concerning work hours.

### Elections Report

Randy Sutter reported that all the officers were nominated for re-election without any opposition. Voting will take place for officers and the budget in each building on May 21. Building rep votes should be held the same day. Each building is entitled to 1 teacher rep per every 15 teachers or fraction thereof.

### Board of Education

John Bonagura reported that the BOE met in executive session to discuss hiring someone to head the search for a new superintendent.

The District's proposed budget is \$55

million. Dr. Nugent spoke against forming a district hockey team at a cost of \$28,000 because he could not justify spending that money for a hockey team while teaching positions were being cut. The BOE voted against forming a hockey team at this time.

John Hunter presented the school's report card. Middle School scores across the state are a difficulty, and still a concern for our district.

Scott Warner requested a 3 meter diving board be installed at the pool, at no cost to the district.

### Editor's Report

Patti Lunden apologized for the lateness of the March issue. There were problems with the copier.

### Dental/Optical

Jay Sussdorff reported there were no problems with the audit. The Board is in need of a new member as John Solan is retiring.

### Old Business

Patti Lunden distributed Lunch Box information and posters. This program will run through the end of the school year. Elementary representatives should call JoAnn Daniels when their lunch box is full. MS/ HS representatives should notify Patti Lunden.

### New Business

Tim Brown suggested we place building fund monies in a separate account for future use.

NYSUT dues will be \$232 next year. AFT dues tentatively will be \$142.40 and local dues will stay the same, \$100.

A motion carried to publish the VCTA budget in the ECHOES.

John Bonagura announced the EC will celebrate its 40th anniversary on April 19th.

Four teachers have resigned from Night School, another is staying with reservation.

*The May VCTA meeting was held on May 21. The June VCTA meeting will be held June 11 at the Spruce Lodge at 4 PM. A dinner for reps and retirees follows.*



## A Bushel and A Peck

**G**enes do come true! Transmission of innate strength of character or trait is passed down from generation to generation. Here at Walden Elementary School, our very own Joan Zellmer reflects the power of that inheritance. Joan not only teaches children to count but most importantly she teaches them what counts most. What a wonderful surprise for us on the morning of March 22, 2002. Some VCHS cast members from the HS musical production, Guys and Dolls, came to perform select songs from the musical. Joan's daughter, Christine Napolitano, just happened to dazzle us with a special presentation of the character, Miss Adelaide. She was also dazzling during her performance on stage at the high school. Joan's mother, Adele, was able to see the performance at WES. Joan's father used to playfully bounce his granddaughter, Christine, on his knee and voice, "A Bushel and A Peck." How could they have gone wrong?

It appears Christine mirrors Joan's sense of excellence in

anything she does. If we train up our children in the way they are to go we are assured of continued successes. Dreams do come true.

~ Jeanne Marie Flanagan,  
Walden Elementary



VCHS Student Christine Napolitano with her grandmother, Adele and her mom, WES's Joan Zellmer.

### Thanks "A Bushel and A Peck"

*"Miss Adelaide" wishes to thank all the faculty and staff at Valley Central for their support during her performance in the musical production of Guys and Dolls. It was an unforgettable experience.*

*A special thank you to all her music teachers starting with Mrs. Sharon Satkowski at Walden Elementary and continuing through to HS with Mrs. Kimberly Carver. Thank you for the opportunity to express herself in song. You "Guys" are all "Dolls".*

~ Christine Napolitano  
Class of 2002

## Secretarially yours . . .

**V**alley Central Secretaries have always taken an active roll in our Valley Central "family". Patty Depew is a perfect example of this "loyalty" to our school district. I would like to thank Patty and every other secretary who help our "family" grow and gives unselfishly of themselves.

Patty is the High School Principal's Secretary to Robert Klein. She started working as a secretary at Valley Central in the High School Main Office in May, 1988, after being an "at home" mom for twenty four years. During that time she was an active member

and past president of East Coldenham PTO, an officer in the Middle School Parent Organization, and President of the Valley Central Scholarship Council. She was also Chairman of the Antique & Art Show in 1981 and 1988 and has worked on the show for many years. Patty was promoted to Principal's Secretary by Joe DiBello in January, 1993. Her four children all graduated from VC and all have successful careers. Her daughter, Jennifer Lynn, is a VCHS Math teacher. *(It is no secret who Patty's favorite teacher is!)* Patty and her husband Ralph *(who is head custodian at East Coldenham Elementary*

*School)* have three adorable grandchildren who keep them very busy. Their hobbies include walking, dancing, boating on the Hudson, baby sitting, and volunteering at her church.



~ Lucy Fox  
Secretarial Unit Rep.



**A**s we look toward independence and self-reliance, - the Paraprofessionals met for a reorganization meeting at which nominations for Officers were held. On May 16th an election was held and ballots counted. The result is as follows:

Kathy Lennon, WES, President  
Virginia Frisbie, EC, V.Pres.  
Debbie Zwart, VCHS, Treasurer  
Lorraine Mann, Maybrook, Secretary  
Congratulations to our new officers who will be taking their positions as of July 1, 2002

Below are some interesting facts, quotes and information with regard to Paraprofessionals, nationwide.

**From: Webster's Dictionary**

para-pro-fes-sion-al  
Pronunciation: -pr&-'fesh-n&l, -'fe-sh&-n&l: a trained aide who assists a professional person (as a teacher or doctor)- paraprofessional adjective

**From: <http://www.stetsonassociates.com/pages/paraprofessional.html>**

"Instructional support by trained paraprofessionals is invaluable to student success."

As members of NYSUT, we are affiliate members of the AFT and this is what they have to say about Paraprofessionals:

*The following was published by the American Federation of Teachers, Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel, AFL-CIO*

"Excited by the idea of working in edu-

cation but not sure if you want to be a teacher? Then consider becoming an education paraprofessional. The experience may help you decide to become a teacher. Or, the satisfaction you receive may make you decide upon a life-long career as an education paraprofessional. Either way, the opportunities have never been greater."

**EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK**

The demand for education paraprofessionals has increased steadily since the first teacher assistant entered public school classrooms during the 1950s. Today that demand is fueled by a nationwide education reform movement, which calls for more paraprofessionals to help teachers make classroom instruction more effective, efficient and tailored to the individual needs of students. Also, more and more of today's education paraprofessionals are moving into the teaching ranks, thus opening even more positions for newcomers.

**SALARY AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT**

Education paraprofessionals are usually paid on an hourly basis and they normally work during the nine to 10 months that schools are in session. Salaries average about \$8 per hour; salaries range from as low as minimum wage to as high as \$20 per hour. Salaries as well as opportunities for career advancement continue to improve, due in large part, to the efforts of AFT/PSRP and other organizations that work on behalf of education paraprofessionals. For example, in many places AFT/PSRP has negotiated with employers for "career ladders" that allow paraprofessionals to earn more money as they acquire new skills and take on more responsibility. Often, AFT/PSRP has negotiated tuition reimbursement or special training to help paraprofessionals acquire the skills

needed to improve their positions or even to attain state teaching licenses or certificates."

Our (AFT/PSRP) membership benefits include:

- Free liability insurance, free accidental death insurance, and discounts on other insurance plans
- Access to legal services for job-related cases
- Publications designed especially for education paraprofessional
- Conferences and workshops on educational issues
- Discounts on travel, prescriptions, magazines subscriptions and car rental
- For other member benefits options visit the AFT PLUS Web page

AFT/PSRP also works for its members by improving salaries, benefits and working conditions through negotiations with local employers and through lobbying at the state and national levels of government.

In addition, AFT/PSRP is one of the nation's leading advocates of education reform and the restructuring of our schools to provide for more individualized instruction of students. AFT/PSRP advocacy will continue to create a greater demand and even better career opportunities for education paraprofessionals in the years ahead.

**We all are professional in our fields of endeavor, be it assisting teachers, technical support, clerical work or monitor duty. We are professionals at our work which is that of facilitating the student.**

~ Mary Nally,  
HS

**SRP JOB, CAREER DEVELOPMENT SURVEY UNDERWAY**

School-related professionals contribute to the delivery of quality educational services in their schools, yet frequently do so with limited training and career development opportunities.

During the months of May and June, NYSUT will conduct a telephone survey of the job and career development needs of its school-related professionals. Beginning with teacher aides/monitors and teaching assistants, the Polling Center will survey all eight job categories - administrative, office and clerical; custodial, janitorial and maintenance; food service, transportation, security and nursing/medical. The information gathered from the surveys will be used to design and deliver programs to meet those needs.

## The Reading Tree

**K**arin Warnke Lyons retired from teaching after many years at Walden Elementary in the fall of 2000. The promise of new endeavors was cut short with her untimely death this past fall. Our sisters of charity, Connie DeSantis and Sharon Satkowski planned a life-promoting tribute to remember Karin. An early Arbor Day ceremony on April 26 blessed our hurting hearts with the oil of gladness. With a quiet power of inner knowing, Diana Shiner offered a wonderful meditation. Then, Gail Brach explained how Karin's passion for reading, especially Newbury or Caldecott authors who could make many magical moments in Karin's life as well as in the lives of Karin's students. Gail also showed the several books on hand that she chose with the donated monies from staff members, trusting that they will delight children with information and hopefully inspire them with their colorful illustrations and fun facts. Our future Grammy award winner, John Robinson, musically ministered to the

sad side of our souls with Karin's favorite song, "You've Got A Friend." The words from that treasured tune, "winter, spring, summer or fall," will take root in the life of our Reading tree. Vickie Vermilyea selected a white weeping cherry tree to be planted outside the classroom where Karin once taught. Saint Theodore wrote, "A tree once caused our death, but now a tree brings life. This tree does not cast us out of paradise, but opens the way for our return." Karin's beloved husband, Paul, was able to return and movingly shared his views of Karin's love for teaching, the intricate fabric of friends at Walden Elementary School and the personal support of the community. He kindly expressed his delight in the placement of the tree and reminisced about Karin's reading as her first love. Her daughters, Rebecca and Amanda, and her sister Bing, were also present for the dedication. The Warnke/



*The Karin Warnke Lyons Family and Reading Tree at WES*

Lyons family was also informed that morning of how Diana Shiner met her future husband, Dean at Karin's memorial service. The fidelity of friendship and the divine principle that love is eternal will always abide in the lives of the faithful. I would also like to acknowledge and thank, Walden Donuts Plus, for donating the delicious donuts which added to the breakfast that followed.

*~ Jeanne Marie Flanagan  
Walden Elementary School*

## Mac Note IV



**Ave atque vale—at least for this school year— I think. . .**

**I**'m never sure when the last issue appears. (*Editor's note: The last issue for this year will be out June 21, 2002 !*)

Thanks for going to the back pages, thanks for your support of and reactions to the column. Thanks to the Breakfast Club guys for pointing out repeated examples of pomposity in Mac's Musings. Thanks to the officers of the VCTA for allowing a retiree voice on these pages, and special thanks to Orin Segall

and Arline Friedman for their efforts for all retirees and for joining me as retiree reps on the executive committee.

### **Some dates to remember. . .**

Check the dates for retirement parties on other pages of this distinguished epistle.

- Retire Luncheon on Wednesday, September 4th at Camillo's Crossroads. Info to retirees at end of August in the Summer Musings.
- V.W. Haggart Memorial Golf Tournament— August 19 at Otterkill. All profits go to scholarships for VCHS Graduates. (*Last year \$3000 went to Kelly Vogelin and \$3000 went to Kate Rode*) Info. To follow from VWH Committee.

### **A last thought . . .**

I was reminded this past week of a statement attributed to Thomas Aquinas: "Peace is the tranquility of order."

How true this can be in the classroom. If a framework is presented to kids and adhered to by the teacher, classroom management becomes much easier and peace and learning can and do exist. Verb. sap. sat. (*A bit bombastic, I know, but I'm convinced it works.*)

### **Amen . . .**

Thanks, Patti Lunden, patient and kindly editor.

***And until next time, keep pushing back the barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you. Peace.***

*~ Kevin McFadden  
Retiree Representative*

**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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## A Life Insurance Policy for You

The basic premise of life insurance is simple - your beneficiary receives a death benefit when you die. Then why are there so many kinds of life insurance? The reason is because people use it differently for various circumstances. New York State United Teachers Member Benefits offers four distinct life insurance policies.

**Term Life Insurance** is purchased for a specific period of time, or a "term." Benefits are paid to a beneficiary only when the insured dies within the specified period. Coverage is guaranteed renewable to age 70. The coverage amount reduces by 50 percent at age 65. Applicants must be under age 65 and can apply for up to \$500,000 in coverage. Financial experts consider Term to be the most economical type of life insurance because it is "pure" insurance. In addition to providing a death benefit to beneficiaries, term life may be your best value as a means of insuring your mortgage.

**Senior Term Life Insurance** is designed for people between the ages of 65 and 84. Coverage amounts are lower than the Term Life Insurance plan, as financial obligations are generally lower in later years. Depending on age at issue, applicants may choose up to \$30,000 in coverage. Coverage decreases with age and ends at age 85.

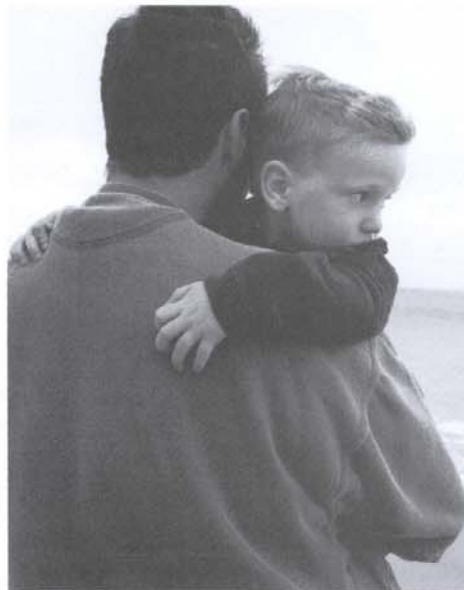
If you are looking for a cash value plan, NYSUT offers two distinct options. Both are based on universal life insurance structures. **NYSUT Variable Universal Life Insurance** is "permanent" insurance; it contains both insurance and cash value accumulation. You can choose to invest your cash value in fixed and/or variable investment options. You have premium

payment flexibility. Death benefits are level or increasing. At age 100, the life insurance coverage ends and you receive the account value. Applicants must be between the ages of 21 and 80. The minimum face value amount offered is \$50,000; the maximum is \$500,000. Loans are available.

If you prefer not having to make investment choices, the **NYSUT WrapPlan® Term Life**

**Coordination Program** may be an option for you. This product "wraps" around existing term life insurance coverage to restore full coverage when term life insurance decreases or terminates. While there are no investment options, guaranteed interest rates provide cash accumulation. At age 95, the life insurance coverage ends and you receive the account value. Applicants must be age 65 or under and can apply for up to \$300,000. Loans are available.

For more information, call NYSUT Member Benefits at 1-800-626-8101, e-mail [benefits@nysutmail.org](mailto:benefits@nysutmail.org), or visit the Web site [www.memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://www.memberbenefits.nysut.org).





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*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 Patricia Lunden  
at the HS by June 11, 2002.**

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

**Method of Payment (CBA Article XVII)**

Teachers have the option of receiving their salary in either 21 or 25 payments based on the yearly calendar. A form is available in the principal's office for any teacher wish-

ing to change to either of the above options. Such forms must be completed and submit-

ted to the payroll office by **June 15th.**

Teachers also have the option of being paid via direct deposit.

## Tiny Bubbles

Recently, I was reading the label on a bottle of my kid's bubbles. It said: *Contents made in US, Bottle, liner and label made in the US. Assembled in Mexico.*

My immediate thought was, "Why?" How could a company pay American workers to make the product, its packaging but then not pay to have an American worker put the product in the package. I mean how much more effort could it take? How much effort had to go into packaging the product and its pre-made packaging and shipping it to Mexico so that Mexican workers can put the product together? Obviously there must be a cost savings, or the bubble company wouldn't make the effort. Which leads me to wonder just how much are they pay-

ing the Mexican worker to put the product in the bottle. I can't imagine it is a living wage; according to Richard Trumka, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO, since 1993 the average hourly compensation for a Mexican manufacturing worker has fallen 36%, from \$2.40 to only \$1.51, including benefits. This is one-eleventh what a comparable US worker earns. The wages are even worse for the sweatshops. At a Zenith plant in Reynosa, a worker brings home about 69 cents an hour. Many of the factories have denied the workers the right to organize and the Mexican government fails to enforce its own laws concerning this.

Putting aside the fact that this bubble company is not producing a thoroughly USA product



despite its red, white and blue bottle; my concern is global. The Mexican muralists,

Diego Rivera and Jose Orozco decried this treatment in the 1920's...the same time America's labor movement was taking hold. Yet, Mexico's labor movement did not find its grasp as the USA's did and as American union members, it is crucial for us to be conscious of the fact that the union fight is not just limited to this school, this profession, or even this country.

~ Patti Lunden, Editor