

# VC ECHOES

An AFTCA and New York Teacher Award Winning Publication

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 5

APRIL 2003

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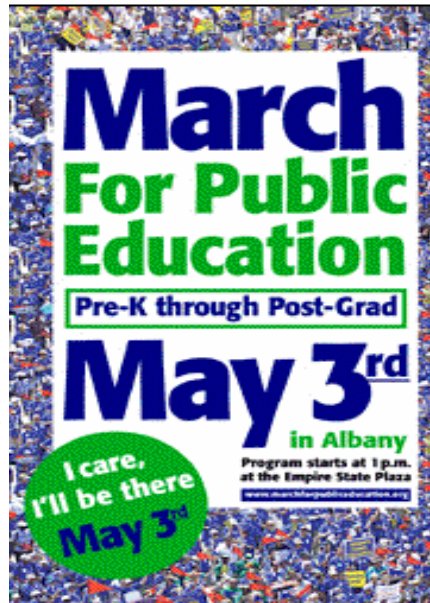
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## March for Public Education

**A**t the NYSUT Representative Assembly, NYSUT spent four days preparing unions from across the state to brace for the fiscal crisis that will affect every child in every school throughout our state. As educators, we care about every child in our district. As parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, brothers, sisters and friends, we care about many children throughout the Hudson Valley and the state. Governor Pataki's proposed Executive Budget fails all these children miserably. Why is it that Pataki has chosen to leave our children behind? Could it be that they have no voice? Well, Governor, you are wrong. These children do have a voice. They have our voice. At a crucial point in our history,

Pataki has chosen to leave our children behind by proposing a pathetic executive budget that does not support mandates from the Board of Regents and the federally imposed mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act. Our children need our voices. They need every member of NYSUT, every day...they need every member of every educational community, every day to speak out to protect their educational future.

A coalition of educational stakeholders has been formed to march on Albany on Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>. This coalition proposes a March for



Public Education, Pre-K through Post-Grad to descend on the mall outside the state capital in an appeal to the legislators of this state to refuse to balance the NYS budget on the backs of our children.

NYSUT proposes that legislators

**BUS departs from East Coldenham Elementary at 9:30 am Saturday, May 3rd**



Soda and Snacks provided on the bus

Vendors (food) and Entertainment available on site

Official Rally/March Time: 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm

Return to VC—by 6:00 pm at the latest  
 Contact your Building Reps today! Bring your spouse and kids!

**Teaching  
 Is the  
 Profession  
 That  
 Creates  
 All  
 Others.**

## Another Successful VCTA Blood Drive thanks to Kathy Manning



*Joanne Capozzolla, MS, is happy to give blood.*



*Jan Kudos has no fear of the needle!*



*Midge Howe, Trinity answers a few questions ...*



*Dr. Richard Hooley, Superintendent, prepares to give a pint of blood. If the VCTA can get him to give blood this easily, negotiations should be no problem!*



*Our fourth annual Blood Drive, held February 27th, was organized by Kathy Manning, RN, MS. Kathy has happily organized all our blood drives and we appreciate her dedication to this worthy cause. Remember, you can donate blood every 55 days! Please do!*

# The 2003 Citizen Budget Advisory Committee and the Valley Central 2003-04 School Budget

Having served as the association representative on the Citizen's Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) for the last several years, I found this year's process to be familiar yet unique. The kinds of communication and representation that occur during these meetings is not "par for the course" for many school districts in our area or the state. Our district should be lauded for providing the opportunity for all of its constituents to take part in the process of formulating a budget; providing information, asking and answering questions, and voicing opinions and concerns in the attempt to get a sense of public sentiment on the issues. Informed decisions are only made based on knowledge and the interchange of and feedback on that knowledge.

This year there were more people from more constituencies involved than at any time I can recall. Why? The Governor's state aid proposals leave districts statewide staring at a major

*"The Governor's state aid proposals leave districts statewide staring at a major loss of revenue..."*

loss of revenue which needs to be recovered through other sources—generally tax increases. This would seem to be patently unfair when the state is also demanding higher standards and mandating more and more services. Just the normal increase in operating costs and new mandated costs in other areas automatically increase a budget from year to year. How does a school district try to provide necessary services and maintain staff and programs without asking the taxpayer to shoulder an uncomfortable share of the burden? The function of the CBAC is to give pertinent feedback

to the administration and the board of education to assist them in making some of those tough decisions.

The CBAC process is divided into four meetings. The first meeting dealt with reviewing the budget format, student enrollment figures and trends, state aid impact and discussion of proposed staffing. The second meeting reviewed priorities and academic imperatives, new program requests and the BOCES budget. During the third meeting the budgets for athletics, special education and operations and maintenance were presented. The final meeting



VCTA VP Jay Sussdorff has served on the CBAC for several years.

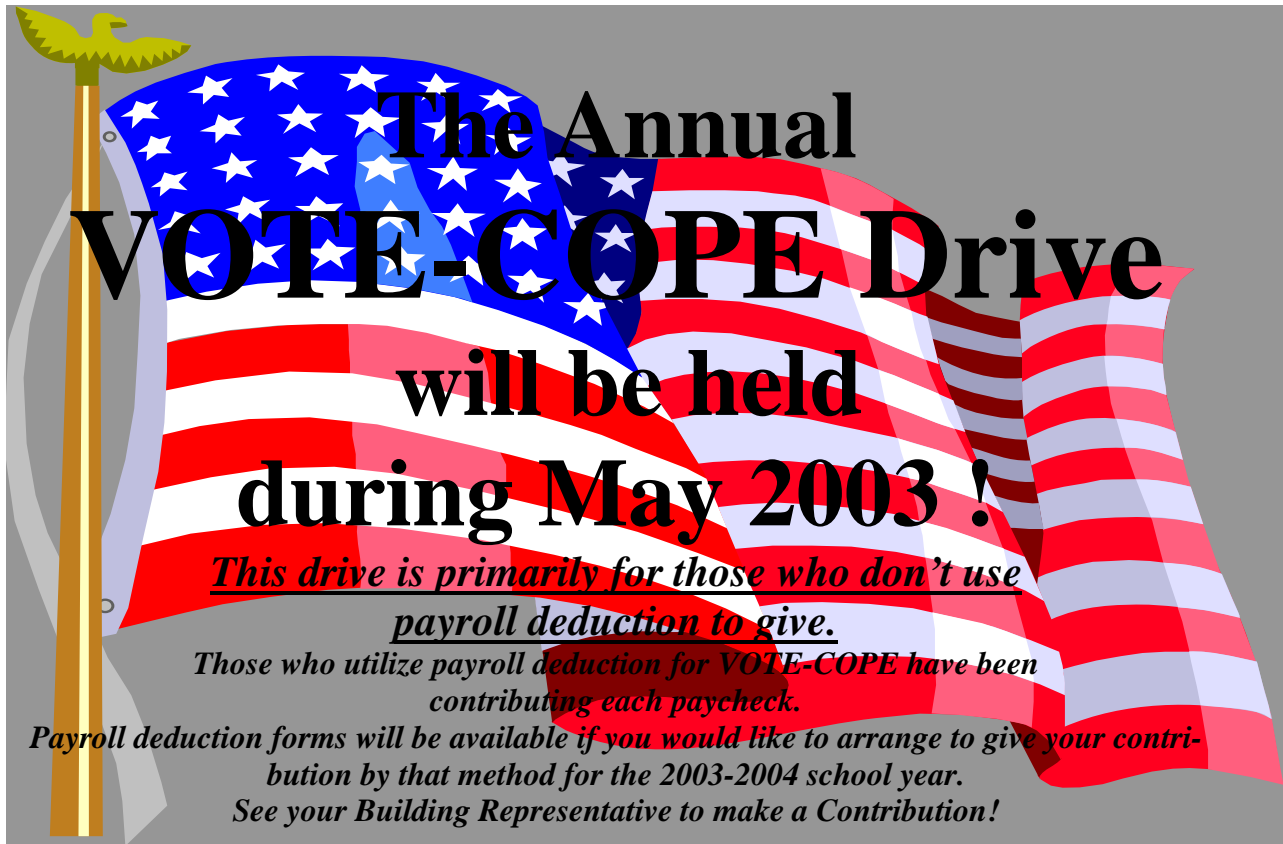
presented a proposed budget based on present programming, staff, and requests aired during the meetings. This tentative budget indicated an 8.37% increase for 2003-2004. Mr. Roden, Assistant Superintendent for Business, also explained revenue sources including the state aid estimate, fund balance application and miscellaneous revenues. He also referred to the estimated tax impact in the district. Unfortunately, since the state aid figure is still an estimate and equalization rates have not yet been established, arriving at an accurate figure for tax increases is a guessing game.

On March 31<sup>st</sup> the BOE and administration met in a special work session to come up with a budget that could be presented to the Valley

Central community. The cutting of staff and programs which presently exist was not done, but several program and staff requests were pared down or eliminated. The result was a drop of approximately 1% in the proposed budget increase. This leaves the figure at around 7.35%, which would translate into a tax increase of under

10%. That figure may seem rather large, but considering the fact that we are looking at approximately 4 million dollars less in revenues as the result of state aid reductions, and that it is considerably less than many other area districts are estimating for their own situations, it is a reasonable figure. Budgetary figures that were presented were very conservative. Obviously all of these parties spent great time and care to be sensitive to the economic situation. What is being presented to the community is a very fiscally responsible budget. Given the importance of children's educations, the quality of education that our students receive and the continual progress and improvement our schools and students have made in meeting higher standards, what better investment can we make for our future and the future of our families and country?

If the budget does not pass and we go to a contingent budget, the law requires an increase of no more than 1.92% plus a student growth factor. This would require extensive cutting from the budget, resulting in large staff layoffs and considerable program cutbacks. All the progress (continued on page seven ) we have made would be under-



**The Annual  
VOTE-COPE Drive  
will be held  
during May 2003 !**

*This drive is primarily for those who don't use  
payroll deduction to give.*

*Those who utilize payroll deduction for VOTE-COPE have been  
contributing each paycheck.*

*Payroll deduction forms will be available if you would like to arrange to give your contri-  
bution by that method for the 2003-2004 school year.*

*See your Building Representative to make a Contribution!*

## Why should you give to VOTE/Cope?

**T**he terms and conditions of your career are affected by politics at all levels - federal, state, and local.

Whether you're directly involved in politics or not, other forces work to change the laws around you. Isn't it better to be in the game rather than watching it?

You have a *Political Action Committee* (PAC) that looks out for your better interests. Your PAC is called Vote/Cope - the **Voice Of Teachers in Education, the Committee On Political Education**. Your PAC helps influence the laws made in Washington, Albany, and in your own backyard.

In Washington, Vote/Cope helps prevent the passage of anti-public education measures like vouchers and tuition tax credits. Vote/Cope helps elect pro-union, pro-public

education Senators and members of Congress.

In Albany, Vote/Cope focuses lawmakers' attention on increased aid to public education, improved pensions, and the elimination of retirement tier inequities. It keeps legislation like the Triborough Amendment (*which continues the terms of expired contracts until successor agreements are negotiated*) and tenure laws intact.

And back home, Vote/Cope supplies the resources necessary to run campaigns for school budget initiatives and elections of pro-public education candidates for school board races. Yes, the single greatest category of Vote/Cope expenditures comes in the form of rebates to locals for these purposes.

When we speak with one voice, we

make a difference. Your PAC gives you the clout you need to strengthen the teaching profession. Smaller class sizes, greater investments in technology and in capital improvements, higher standards and the resources to achieve them are all a part of Vote/Cope. You should be a part of Vote/Cope too.

### **Contribute generously today.**

*~Obtained from the Internet,  
Courtesy of the Rochester Teachers  
Association*

### **VOTE/COPE Solicits and Accepts Only Voluntary Contributions.**

**CONTRIBUTIONS OR GIFTS  
TO VOTE/COPE ARE *NOT*  
TAX DEDUCTIBLE.**

## Committee of 100

**O**n March 11, 2003, the largest group of NYSUT representatives, 750, met with the member of the New York State Legislature. We were there to lobby support for public education, K-12 and Higher Education. We also lobbied for support and protection of critically needed health care services. This day was extremely important because of the devastating impact the current deficit and proposed Executive Budget would have on these programs that are essential to ALL NEW YORKERS!

The attacks of September 11, 2001 and the continuing recession have damaged our economy and severely reduced revenue sources available to federal, state and local governments. An equally important factor in creating the current fiscal crisis, however has been the unprecedented corporate and personal income tax cuts enacted since 1994. These cuts will reduce the State's revenue by over 12 billion dollars this year and 13.5 billion dollars next year! This has been compounded by the fact that in recent years the State has considerably underestimated the size of the deficit. While we all acknowledge the reality of the size of the State Budget Deficit, the proposed Executive Budget does not spread the pain evenly. Everyone will not have to pay their "fair share" because the Executive Budget would not touch personal income tax or corporate tax and giant corporations will continue to take advantage of expensive tax loopholes.

We have a responsibility to our families and future generations to work together to protect and strengthen our public education and health care systems. We, as NYSUT members, must emphasize the importance of the State's responsibility to balance the budget in an

economically sensible manner, a manner in which New York does NOT make those who can least afford it, pay the biggest price!

All four legislators: Ms. Nancy Calhoun, Mr. Tom Kirwan, Mr. Howard Mills and Senator Bill Larkin stated that they would NOT vote for the Executive Budget as it is now and would fight to restore public education funding to, at least, last year's level. This, however, would still be a cut to many school districts' budgets.

All four legislators said that education is their number one priority and they are all trying to find extra money to fund the deficit. Assemblyman Tom Kirwan suggested that the State sell off some of the 18,000 buildings, golf courses, airports, etc. so that the State could get revenue tax from these properties.

Senator Bill Larkin suggested putting VLT's into the eight New York State Racetracks to raise money for education. Senator Larkin is the chairman of the Racing/Gaming committee. He stated that it has been extremely successful in other states. The funding generated by VLT's in Delaware, for example, has resulted in enough to cover about 7% of their state budget costs. In Rhode Island, about 12% of the state's budget comes from VLT revenues.

Racing industry leaders in New York agree, stating that the Larkin bill could generate hundreds of millions of dollars. Another stated that approximately 7,000 jobs would be created by Larkin's VLT plan.

It is estimated that Larkin's

proposal will increase aid to education by approximately 600 million in the first year and by 900 million in the third year.

Assemblyman Howard

Mills states education is his number one priority and is in favor of VLT's at the Race-tracks, but not the casinos. Mr. Mills is not in favor of taxing people



with salaries of \$115,000 and higher. Mr. Mills states we need to be creative with this year's budget. Assemblywoman Nancy Calhoun again seemed to be very informed on the education situation. She felt that a bulk of the monies for education would be restored to at least last year's level. She is for a budget sooner rather than later and is in favor of keeping pre-K programs. She suggested ways in which to raise revenues were (1) to have a possible 1% surcharge on incomes higher than \$200,000, (2) a possible 1 cent tax on each stock share sold, (3) using tobacco money and looking at every possible way to raise money. Ms. Calhoun is pro-education.

Finally, NYSUT wants you to know that on Saturday, May 3rd, we need every person to march on Albany to let the Governor and State Legislators know we will not stand for drastic cuts to the Education budget. This march is sponsored by NYSUT, the State School Board Assoc., State Administrators Association and state-wide community leaders. We need to stand up and be counted in this serious matter!

~ Mary J. Goldberg, MS  
Committee of 100 Delegate

# The VCTA endorses the Valley Central 2003-2004 School Budget.

Voting will be at the Elementary Building that serves  
your voting area from 7:00 am—9:00 pm  
on Tuesday May 20th.

## The VCTA encourages you to VOTE YES!

Also remember to select Board Candidates:

**We are endorsing the re-election of Pasquale Iorlano.**

If you don't live in the Valley Central community, please support  
the school budget vote in your home school district.

All School Budget Votes in NYS are being held May 20th.

*New York's kids need you now more than ever!*

### VCTA Proposed Budget 2003-2004

Retirement	\$1000	Social	\$1500
Membership	\$ 2000	Copy Expenses	\$3000
Audit	\$1000	Equipment	\$4200
Delegates	\$3500	Insurance	\$1000
Administrative	\$5000		
Workshops	\$1000	TOTAL	\$47350
Association	\$ 350		
Public Relations	\$ 500	<b>% Dues Unit # Est. Due Total</b>	
Legal	\$ 300	Full 418	\$100 \$41800
Miscellaneous	\$ 200	3/4 20	\$75 \$ 1500
President	\$6000	1/2 25	\$50 \$ 1250
Vice-President	\$3000	1/4 85	\$25 \$ 2125
Vice-President	\$3000	1/8 45	\$12.5 \$ 563
Secretary	\$3000		
Treasurer	\$3000	Estimates	
Newsletter	\$3000	TOTAL 593	\$47238
Printer	\$ 800		
Sec. Rep.	\$ 550		
Para. Rep.	\$ 450		

**VCTA Elections  
will be held  
Tuesday, May 20th  
in all buildings.**

**Teachers Unit votes for :  
Building Reps.  
VCTA Budget**

**Paraprofessionals  
Vote for :**

**(Para) Building Reps**

## The 2003 Citizen Budget Advisory Committee and the Valley Central 2003-04 School Budget *(continued from page 3)*

mined, and it would decimate our system for several years to come. Given all of this information, it would behoove us to support the budget when we get out to vote on May 20<sup>th</sup>. Balance the immediate effect with what would be the inevitable long term effect of a failed budget. Support education and our students and their (and our) futures. If you have any questions or would like to see any of the information from the CBAC, please feel free to call me and leave a voice mail message (my extension is 7697) or drop me a line via interoffice mail or e-mail me at [jsussdorff@vcmail.ouboces.org](mailto:jsussdorff@vcmail.ouboces.org).

~ Jay Sussdorff,  
Vice President

### Some dates of note:

**Adoption of proposed budget-Monday., April 14**

**Six day budget notice-Monday., May 12**

**Budget vote (statewide)-Tuesday., May 20**

## March for Public Education *(continued from page one)*

*(continued on page 7)*close the loopholes in corporate taxes and impose a temporary tax on the wealthiest taxpayers in New York. NYSUT President, Tom Hobart, has called for the action of “every member (of NYSUT), every day to carry the message of our union to neighbors, communities and legislators”. What is that message? It is simple. The VCTA commits itself to “putting children center” every day. We envision an entire educational community that seeks to this. As VCTA president, I am calling on our entire membership- teachers, secretaries and paraprofessionals to take our message to Albany on Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>. As a member of the Valley Central community, I am calling on all the other stakeholders in this community – board members, administrators, custodians, cafeteria workers, parents and students to join us in this march. Anyone who has a child in public school from Pre-K to Post-Grad *(continued on page 7)*should plan to

spend May 3<sup>rd</sup> in Albany along with anyone who works in the public school system or owns a house or pays taxes in New York State. ***This is not a union rally – but it is a rally our union will attend.*** We will be organizing buses to go to Albany, and building representatives will be contacting the membership to organize. NYSUT President Tom Hobart has called for “members, students and parents to come to Albany and remind the governor and the legislature that New York’s future is in its classrooms. Our children did not get us into this mess, their futures should not be sacrificed to get us out of it.”

The slogan for this rally is: ***“I care, I’ll be there May 3<sup>rd</sup>”.*** The Valley Central community is full of caring people. I hope to see all of them on the buses for Albany on Saturday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

~Tim Brown,  
President

The coalition consists of:

- Conference of Big 5 City School Districts,
- National Education Association NY,
- NYS Association of School Business officials,
- NYS Congress of Parents and Teachers,
- NYS Council of School Superintendents,
- NYS School Boards Association,
- NYSUT,
- The School Administrators Association of NYS,
- The Faculty Council of Community Colleges,
- Friends of CUNY,
- NEA-NY Community College Council,
- NYSUT Council of Community Colleges,
- Professional Staff Congress – CUNY,
- SUNY Faculty Senate,
- Student Assembly SUNY,
- University Faculty Senate – CUNY,
- United University Professions SUNY,
- The Alliance for Quality Education,
- Campaign for Fiscal Equity,
- Capital District Area Labor Federation AFL-CIO,
- Citizen Action,
- Civil Service Employees Association,
- New York State AFL-CIO,
- New York Public Interest Research Group
- PS21-Public Schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## VCTA Represented at NYSUT Representative Assembly

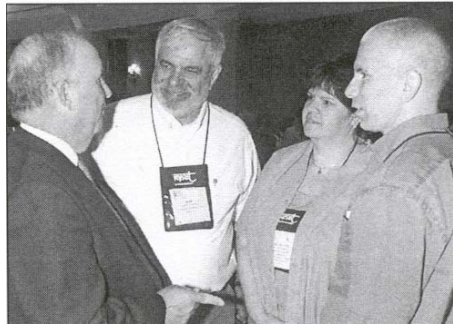
Each year NYSUT holds a Representative Assembly (RA) which provides an opportunity for delegates from around the State to meet to do NYSUT's yearly union business, to hear from speakers on political and educational topics and to review, debate and either pass or defeat proposed legislative resolutions. This year's RA was held in our nation's capital, Washington, DC, which is also home to our national union, the American Federation of Teachers on April 3, 4 and 5. The VCTA was represented by delegates, President Tim Brown, Vice-President Rich Steger, and Editor Patti Lunden. Brown also attended the pre-RA conference for Local Presidents.

### Local Presidents Conference

One of the goals of the Local Presidents conference, and a goal of the RA, was to prepare

presidents and unions for the tough fiscal crisis headed our way from the state budget. Senator Chuck Schumer addressed

the presidents outlining three goals: (1) Full national funding for the IDEA act (2) Full federal funding for the NCLB act, and (3) a \$3,000 tax tuition credit for people with incomes under \$180,000. Ed McElroy, AFT's Treasurer-Secretary, criticized the Bush administration for the loss of 2.5 million jobs and a jobless rate that has increased 43%. He described the tax-cut proposals as the "No Millionaire Left Behind" act and urged



*AFT Treas.-Sec. Speaks to local presidents, including our own president, Tim Brown.*

locals to fight the tax-cut package.

### RA recognizes Shriver

The RA was addressed by many speakers. At the first General Session, Eunice Kennedy Shriver was honored with NYSUT's most pres-

tigious award, the Albert Shanker Award for Distinguished Service. Shriver is the founder and leading force of Special Olympics. She recognized the efforts of Special Education teachers and called for a federal program of student loan forgiveness for special education teachers who stay in the field for at least two years, noting that 40% of special education teachers leave after 5 years.

*(continued on page nine)*

## VC ECHOES Takes Three More Awards!

In The New York Teacher Journalism Contest

### First Award

*Best Article on Health Issues*

"Feeling Blue", January 31, 2002

### Award of Merit

*Best Original Cartoon*

"Air Conditioning", April 30, 2002

### Award of Merit

*Best Front Page or Cover*

January 31, 2002



*VCTA Newsletter Editor, Patti Lunden, receives an award from NYSUT First Vice President Antonia Cortese, and NYSUT President, Tom Hobart, at the New York Teacher Journalism Award Luncheon at the Representative Assembly.*

## VCTA Represented at NYSUT Representative Assembly (continued from page eight)

### Hobart addresses RA

President Tom Hobart addressed the RA at the opening session. He challenged “every member, every day, to carry the message of our union to neighbors, communities and legislators.” Hobart reminded delegates that unions have done great things for our state and nation gaining unemployment insurance, fighting against child labor and insuring worker’s compensation. He stated that the Bush administration is trying to demonize unions as what is wrong with America, and he counters that when people “talk trash about unions, (members) should not be afraid to talk a little truth right back”.

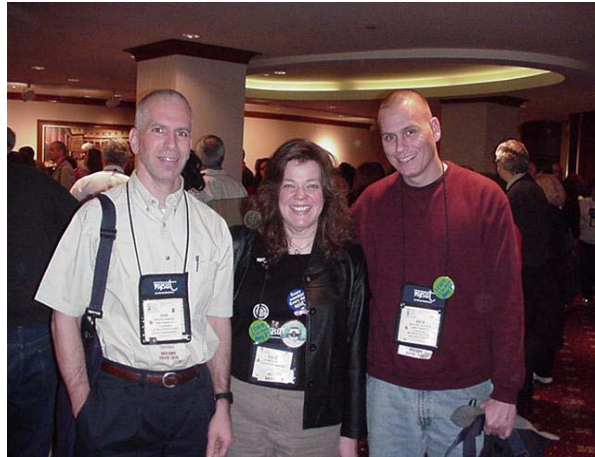
### Hillary Clinton speaks

At the second general session, delegates were addressed by NY’s junior senator, Hillary Clinton. Clinton warned that the real agenda of the NCLB act is to destroy the public school base of the country by setting up high expectations without funding. President Bush’s budget is diverting money from public education to vouchers and tuition tax credits. Clinton noted that “America is mortgaging our future and undermining the quality of education and health care. We will be the first generation of

Americans to leave our country worse off than when we were growing up.” The senator noted the irony of a country making secretive plans to rebuild war-ravaged Iraq—including provisions for good, modern schools and health care for citizens of Iraq—while funds for domestic schools always seem to be first in line for budget cuts.

### Sandra Feldman criticizes tax cuts

AFT President Sandra Feldman also criticized the current administration for failing to provide \$9 billion for the NCLB act while proposing tax cuts that would mean about \$90,000 for every millionaire. Feldman cites a series of harmful budgetary repercussions including a loss of child care support, after-school services, free lunch programs, earned income tax credit and financial aid for college. Feldman also pointed out that the provision of the NCLB act for the annual yearly progress formulas that intend to measure whether schools are



VCTA RA Delegates, President Tim Brown, Editor Patti Lunden, Vice-President Rich Steger

improving fast enough are just plain bizarre.

### Presidential Politics

Presidential hopefuls Gov. Howard Dean and Senator John Kerry also addressed the RA. Dean set three major goals for his first year if elected; balancing the budget, expanding health insurance, and fully funding special education. Dean spent 11 years as governor of Vermont and promised to be an ardent advocate for education and health care. Massachusetts Senator John Kerry called for accountability—of President Bush. He criticized the Bush administration for walking away from its commitment to education and making a

## Patti Lunden Receives Community Service Award



Patti Lunden was selected to receive the Community Service Award for NYSUT’s Election District 13-14. Lunden was recognized for her service to the Association in projects such as starting the VCTA Health/TSA Fair, her union efforts in her positions as building representative, secretary and editor and her implementation of the VCTA Lunch Box project. In addition, Lunden was recognized for her community work through her church.

Lunden will receive her award at a dinner for the ED 13-14. She was recognized in the RA Program booklet and during a recognition of awards at the RA.

## Paraprofessional Receives NYSUT Recognition

**A**nn Bestenheider, a paraprofessional at Walden Elementary received recognition from NYSUT for her nomination as Paraprofessional of the Year.

Ann Bestenheider started as a "Speech Aid" in 1983 intending to work for "only two or three years while looking for a higher paying job". That was almost 20 years ago. She has worked in Montgomery and East Coldenham and eventually settled in five days a week at Walden Elementary. Mrs. Bestenheider says she enjoyed working in the Speech Department so much that she never realized how fast the years were passing and eventually realized that she did not want to leave all the wonderful people with whom she worked. Mrs. Bestenhei-

der has worked with thirteen speech therapists in her nineteen years at Valley Central. "I feel fortunate to have been able to constantly improve my skills," said Mrs. B. of her years of experience.

Of her nomination as NYSUT Paraprofessional of the Year, Mrs. Bestenheider said "I feel honored to have been nominated by my peers. The people here at Valley Central have always been very supportive".

~ Patty Joy  
Walden Elementary School



Ann Bestenheider was nominated for Paraprofessional of the Year.

## VCTA Represented at NYSUT Representative Assembly (continued from page nine)

mockery of the words, "Leave No Child Behind". Kerry noted his "health issue" (*recently having had his prostate removed*) and posed (*continued on page ten*)

the rhetorical question, "Can a man be president of the United States of America without a prostate?"

"Why not?" he joked.

"We've had a number of Republicans who've been president without a heart."

### NYSUT officers speak

NYSUT officers, Treasurer Ivan Tiger and Vice President Alan Lubin addressed the delegates. Ivan Tiger reported that NYSUT has been finding ways to reduce operating costs while increasing member services. This has allowed NYSUT to hold a dues increase to less than 4% over the next two years. NYSUT dues will increase \$9 per year in the next two years beginning September 2003. This is the first increase in ten years. Alan Lubin

addressed the RA encouraging locals to participate in the March for Public Education. Lubin pointed out that members must united in showing the government and general public that public education is something worth demonstrating for. He also warned that President Bush should be thinking about protecting jobs –especially his own.

### Delegates hear from AFL-CIO

John Sweeney, AFL-CIO president echoed this sentiment noting that President Bush's proposed tax cuts of about \$500 billion fail to take into account the \$202.5 billion needed over the next ten years to fully fund Head Start and universal pre-K for needy children and the \$43.5 billion needed for child care and after school programs. "When Bush said No Child Left Behind, did he really mean Every Other Child Left Behind?" Sweeney asked.

Dennis Hughes, NYS

President of the AFL-CIO challenged members to stay the course during these difficult times. He reminded delegates that unions are the people who preserve the way of life that our troops are fighting for in Iraq. He point out that Gov. Pataki has said he is against job-killing taxes, but is he against job-killing cuts? When you make cuts, people lose jobs. Hughes promoted a fair and progressive tax system from the state rather than relying on real estate or sales taxes.

### Commissioner Mills fields questions

Education Commissioner Richard Mills also addressed the RA praising delegates for the work of the union in helping to raise standards and calling for our best efforts in getting state lawmakers to overturn the governor's proposed budget. During his annual question and answer period, Mills disagreed with a Kingston delegate concern -

## Valley Central Teachers' Association

1175 Route 17K • Montgomery, New York 12549 • Telephone/Fax: 845-457-5899 • Internet: www.vcta.net  
*Affiliated with the New York State United Teachers, American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO*

**To be eligible you must:**

- 1) Be either a VCHS graduating senior, or a graduating HS senior whose parent is a VCTA member
- 2) Have an average of 85% or better
- 3) Fill out the following form completely (*type or print*)
- 4) Submit a letter of recommendation from one of your high school teachers. Have it mailed directly to the VCTA at the address above. Your teacher must sign the back of the envelope across the seal.
- 5) Attach a letter, approximately 500 words, in your own handwriting, in which you should indicate something about your hopes and ambitions in life. Also indicate any part-time or summer jobs, how much you saved. *Don't put your name on letter.* last year, your plans for this summer and any other information you feel would be of interest to the scholarship committee. This letter is one of the more important parts of your application.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ ID # (*office use only*) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Is your parent a VCTA member? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a VC student? \_\_\_\_\_ If no, what High School? \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ College you plan to attend \_\_\_\_\_

Major Course of Study \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Mother's Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Siblings living at Home or at College (*first names only*) Age Grade in School or Occupation

Comments: (*include unusual expenses, hardships*)

Honors and Awards—Academic:

Honors and Awards other than Academic:

School Activities:

Community Activities:

**Mail application to the VCTA c/o Tim Brown, at the address above by May 23, 2003.**

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



## VCTA Lunch Box Project Returns

**T**he VCTA is again sponsoring the outreach project called **The VCTA Lunch Box**. The project hopes to provide extra lunch type for the Montgomery Food Pantry. Because there are no programs that provide children with free or reduced lunch during the summer months, food pantries are often in need of such items for families with children.

The VCTA Lunch Box Project is planned to work as follows:

**M** A large tote box has been placed in each school's faculty room and Central Office for the months of May and June. Building Representatives have asked VCTA members and other staff to bring in items geared toward children's lunch: i.e. Peanut butter, Jelly, Juice, Juice boxes, snacks, cookies, fruit cups, pudding cups (*no refrigeration needed*) tuna fish, crackers, spaghetti-o's, etc.

**M** The food is collected on a weekly basis and then distributed to the Montgomery Food Pantry which serves all the

district's children. (*The Montgomery Food Pantry asks its guests if they are residents of the Valley Central School District to give them access to the pantry.*) To make transporting the food easier, volunteers bag the food in shopping bags (*donations of shopping bags are welcome as well!*) once the tote box is full and contact the VCTA office (457-5899) to have the bags collected. Joanne Daniels and Sara Ackerson have volunteered to help collect the food from the elementary schools. Bob Jurgens has volunteered to collect the food from the Middle and High School and Central Office. We could use more volunteers to collect and deliver the food to the Food Pantry. If you would be willing to help, please contact Patti Lunden at 457-5899 or voice mail, 7664.

**M** Monetary donations will also be accepted. This allows the Food pantry to shop at the Hudson Valley Food Bank where they are able to buy items such as milk and meat for distribu-

tion. Checks can be made to "Montgomery Food Pantry" and given to building representatives.

Please help support this project by picking up an extra item or two during your weekly grocery trips from now through the end of the school year. Simply place that item in the tote box in your building. Or make a donation. This effort on your part will mean so much to the children of our District whose families need help to keep them fed. If you would like to continue donating to the Food Pantry throughout the summer and the rest of the year, they are located on Route 208 just past the intersection at 17K heading towards Maybrook. Their hours of operation are Tuesday from 10:00 am—12 Noon and Wednesday from 6:00 pm—8:00 pm. Retirees who would like to help are more than welcome to drop off donations to any of the school buildings.

The VC Staff has long been known for its generosity and caring support of VC's children. The VCTA anticipates that the Lunch Box Project will be a success and our children will benefit.

### Register Your Children For Dental/ Optical Coverage



**For new additions to your family to be covered under the Dental/Optical plan, must call Sandy Strauss at the Middle School, (voice mail ext. 6684)**  
**Do this as soon as possible to avoid any coverage issues.**



## The VCTA Lunch Box Project

Collect lunch and snack items  
for the Montgomery Food Pantry  
to help feed our children lunch this summer.

Just pick up an extra lunch-type non-perishable  
item when you do your weekly shopping from  
now through the end of the school year.

*Tuna Fish, Peanut Butter, Jelly, Condiments,  
Spaghetti-o's, Soup,  
Snack items, Cookies, Juice, Juice boxes,  
Crackers, Mac-n-Cheese, etc.*

**Bring the item(s) to the VCTA Lunch Box located  
in the Faculty Room in your school.**

*If you prefer, a donation can be made to the food pantry.*

***Make checks out to "Montgomery Food Pantry"  
and give to your building representative.***

*If you would like to help to deliver food to the food pantry please contact your Building  
Representative or the VCTA Office, 457-5899*



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

**VCTA Represented at NYSUT Representative Assembly (continued from page ten)**

ing vocational vs. academic education approaches and disagreed with a delegate of the PSC (CUNY) who said minority enrollments had been *(continued on page fourteen)*

affected by the cutting of a CUNY remediation program. He did agree with Syracuse Teachers Association president, Kate McKenna that 4th and 8th grade tests should not be "gatekeeper exams". Mills urged those with additional questions to write to him directly.

**Cortese and Dunn address RA**

On the last day of the RA, delegates were addressed by NYSUT First Vice-President, Antonia Cortese who exhorted the governor and legislature, "Don't fail us now!" This is the theme of a NYSUT report which details the devastating results if proposed cuts to

education go through. Cortese also recognized the efforts of NYSUT in helping to find ways to grandfather paraprofessionals as qualified (under the NCLB act) if they have "tenure" and receive APPR's. She highlighted the community service efforts of NYSUT locals and the success of NYSUT locals in the Walk for a Cure noting that NYSUT had "more walkers and raised more money than any other flagship sponsor."

NYSUT Second Vice President, Walter Dunn, celebrated the 20th anniversary of Member Benefits by noting that this division now covers everything from "free term life insurance for our new members to senior life and long-term care."

Part of Walter Dunn's re-

sponsibilities is to monitor chart school developments. He reported that 40 charter schools are now diverting \$86 million from their home districts. As the current charter schools reach their full enrollment, they will cost their home districts \$214 million more. He called for a moratorium to remain in effect until the state's fiscal crisis ends and the required study of the effectiveness of charter schools is complete.

Dunn recognized the approval of recommendations of the Retiree Task Force on behalf of the union's 130,000 retired members. There are now more retiree delegates and four more seats for retirees on the NYSUT Board of Directors.

**Resolutions passed**

The consideration of reso-

**The VCTA is willing to offer a Defensive Driving Course if enough members and/or spouses are interested.**



The Defensive Driving course can erase points from your NYS Driver's License and lower your car insurance rates.

**If you would be interested in taking the Defensive Driving course, please contact course coordinator, Marc Sperry, MS Guidance, ext. 6013 by sending this form to him by May 16.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ School/ VM ext. \_\_\_\_\_

## VCTA Represented at NYSUT Representative Assembly (continued from page 14)

lutions is also some of the major work of the RA. Resolutions were passed at the RA that will affect PAC activity toward legislation.

(continued on page 15)

Those resolutions call for:

- Preserving Social Security and providing retirees with Medicare drug benefits
- Protect retirees from cuts in health coverage
- Inclusion of 12 weeks paid family leave to every employer with more than 50 employees.
- Restore state aid and institute a surcharge on those earning more than \$200,000
- Extend the current 55 pass grade on Regents exams
- Find fairer ways to report student progress and develop ways to help students performing at the lowest levels.
- Help poor districts to seek funding for the IDEA
- Have school counselors for all children
- Expand library services
- Include full-time certified library specialists in all elementary schools
- Preserve the federal Perkins program
- Watch for any misuse of high stakes testing
- Support a continuum of placements for students with disabilities,
- More professional development, especially for SRP's
- Time during the workday for general ed and special ed teachers to meet and plan lessons,
- RN on every CSE
- Support a congressional study on possible reparations for African Americas
- Seek equity for adjunct part-time faculty at higher ed institutions
- End political appointments of trustees to SUNY, CUNY and community colleges.
- Protect academic freedom
- Study the effect of the end of remediation at CUNY
- Seek increased public funding for academic research
- Seek RN in all schools
- Seek legislation to allow Registered Professional School Nurses to join the NYSTRS
- Lobby for loan forgiveness for those entering the health care profession
- Protect health care workers and other adversely affected by smallpox vaccinations
- Press locals to negotiate for domestic partner health benefits
- Seek legislation that education-related building meet industry air standards
- Eliminate penalties for those forced to retire due to disability
- Lobby for pension enhancements for those living on less than \$10,000 a year.

*~ Report compiled from RA publications produced by the staff of The New York Teacher*

## HERE'S THE NYSUT MESSAGE

**Email them by going to NYSUT's website  
[www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org)**

**Contact your state representatives and urge them to support public schools, colleges and universities.**

\* We need more funding for public education in the state.

\* Solve the \$12 billion state budget deficit by closing corporate tax loopholes and recapturing part of the federal tax windfall for wealthy individuals with a small increase in personal income tax for taxpayers earning more than \$100,000.

\* Urge legislators to restore the \$1.2 billion in aid to local school districts to avoid the tax shift - double-digit increases - to local property owners.

## To All Members of the Armed Forces and Their Families:



**We thank you for your service, dedication and sacrifice. Please know that you are in our thoughts, hearts and prayers.**

*First year HS Math Teacher and Army Reservist Alan Stout left for active duty in Iraq. Please keep him and his family in your thoughts.*

### **NYSUT providing Handbook for Laid-Off School Employees**

With many school districts dealing with uncertain economic times and union members facing layoffs, NYSUT has updated and reissued the resource manual Handbook for Laid-Off School Employees. For members whose service to the district is interrupted, the handbook provides information on issues such as unemployment insurance, health insurance benefits and maintaining membership with NYSUT/AFT. The handbook is available through your regional office, contact VCTA office at 457-5899 for more information.

### **Poll results**

**A** recent poll conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates shows New Yorkers believe that the state spends too little on public education and overwhelmingly reject Governor Pataki's proposed education cuts.

The poll of 460 registered voters found that 53% of voters think New York spends too little on education, while just 10% believe the state

spends too much. Another 24% say the state spends the "right amount." And, when it comes to public higher education, 46% of voters said New York spends too little; 7% said it spends too much; and 32% said the state spends the "right amount."

The poll also shows that upstate and suburban voters reject Governor Pataki's "no new taxes" position. Fifty-nine percent of voters agree that, instead of cutting funding for public schools and colleges, "we

should be asking big corporations and people with the highest incomes to help carry the load by paying their fair share of taxes."

Overall, upstate and suburban voters oppose the Governor's budget plan by a margin of 59% to 21%.

~ *The Bottom Line (NYSUT)*

## LEGISLATORS COULD START RESTORING AID CUTS

New York legislative leaders were promising to return to Albany Monday (April 28) to start passing a state school aid package that would restore much of the \$1.24 billion in education spending that Gov. Pataki axed from his budget proposal.

Passage of restorations will give school districts a chance to revise their local budgets scheduled to go before voters May 20. (Gov. Pataki vetoed a bill passed in the Senate and Assembly last week that would have legally delayed this year's school budget vote for two weeks until June 3. Though they

had not made a decision when the Leader went to press, lawmakers were considering the option to override the veto.)

There has been no formal "3-way" agreement on the entire budget.

Legislative leaders, however, have agreed to spend nearly \$2 billion more than the governor proposed, putting most of this new money into education and health care. There is no agreement yet on revenue

sources.

NYSUT continues working to get as many of the governor's cuts restored through a combination of professional lobbying, an extensive media campaign and grass roots political action. Local leaders and

members can help by contacting legislators. Watch for the latest news and suggestions of how you can help on the Web site at [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org).  
~ *The Bottom Line*  
(NYSUT)



### Lousy Phone Service due to Union Busting

*Verizon's top executives are investing in themselves, not quality phone service for New Yorkers*

Please contact your elected NYS legislators and tell them that Verizon's anti-union practices are resulting in poorer phone service for you. Let them know that the PSC should not be lowering standards which allows Verizon to provide inferior service, lay-off union workers and fatten CEO paychecks, all at the same time.

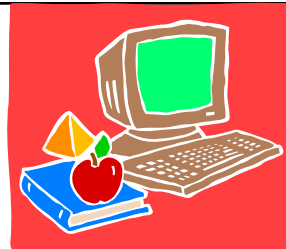
*Support your brothers and sisters in AFL-CIO Local 1120, the Communication Workers of America.  
Speak out today!*

### **Regarding e-mail:**

Will checking and responding become a new responsibility? Will some parents expressing requests for constant communication and feedback? If there is a conflict, will the parent or administrator be able to "tear apart" everything that you have put in writing? Can a negative letter can be placed in a file for failing to respond to an e-mail?

*Email is one of many options for communication.*

**The VCTA Executive Council is advising members to NOT utilize e-mail in communication with parents and students UNTIL a MORE DEFINITIVE ANSWER can be obtained from Central Office regarding our responsibilities, liabilities, expectations and repercussions and the issue can be explored to determine its effect on working conditions.**



## Highlights of the VCTA March Executive Council Meeting

*Due to a Snow Day, the February Executive Council Meeting was cancelled.*

### Secretarial Report

Jay Sussdorff reported, on behalf of Lucy Fox, that Central Office was considering a contract roll-over, but also wanted secretaries to contribute toward health insurance premiums. Lucy Fox does not want to set a precedent without consulting the VCTA.

### Paraprofessional Report

Kathy Lennon reported that the paras and CO have exchanged contract proposals. CO wants an automatic doctor's note for conference day absence. The district is seeking an insurance contribution (toward premium) of 15% for family and 10% for single coverage

### Editor's Report

The deadline for the retiree issue is May 16th. A format for writing retiree articles is included on page 20 of this issue.

Patti Lunden asked if there were any VCTA members who had been called to active duty in Iraq.

### Old Business

Patti Lunden recognized Kathy Manning's efforts for a successful blood drive.

### Standing Committees

Patti Lunden reported that the VCTA Lunchbox will begin in the spring. Informational flyers will be placed in staff mailboxes. A one-time monetary donation will also be taken.

### New Business

Jay Sussdorff is writing an article concerning the budget. Jay indicated that Dr. Hooley made it clear that cutting positions and programs will be avoided at all costs. Jay indicated that community members in attendance have been very sup-

portive of the budget. Tim Brown will type up budget information on index cards to be sent out prior to the budget vote.

Toni Sperry reported that many teachers are contributing to VOTE-Cope through payroll deduction. This list will be sent to a rep from each building. Our goal is a contribution of \$25 each year per teacher, then increasing to \$50— which is only \$2 per paycheck. Toni will send posters to each building. Tim suggested that reps ask building principals for permission to post the posters in offices near mailboxes. (Teacher lavs were suggested). Arline Friedman presented Toni Sperry with the first contribution— a \$100 check from retiree Armand Caputi.

Chris Brand reported that some teachers in Montgomery felt that copy machine expenditures are too high. Discussion followed. There was a motion made by Patty Joy to table this item until the next meeting when a list of names of those willing to serve on copy machine committee will be submitted. Motion was seconded by Jay Sussdorff and carried.

Chris Brand reported that there is no stipend for elementary sound/ lighting work, as there is in the high school. A teacher has been putting in a lot of time performing this task. Tim Brown indicated that this will be addressed at the next cabinet meeting. Teachers are encourage to bring discrepancies such as this one to the attention of the Executive Council.

### President's Report—February 2003

#### Coaching/ Extracurricular Committee:

Mary Goldberg represents coaches, John Bonagura represents extracurricular advisors. A discussion fol-

lowed concerning the inequity between levels (Secondary/ Elementary). Tim Brown stated that you will never get paid what you are worth for extracurricular work. This committee's goal is to address discrepancies in coaching and extra-curricular stipends.

Valley Central Defensive Driving School— This school was advertised in the TH-Record and has nothing to do with the VCSD, it is simply located within the VC community. Marc Sperry requested that information about the VCTA Defensive Driving course be included in the Echoes (see page 5).

Half-Time Teachers and Para Conferences: The VCTA position is that 1/2 time teachers should only be at conferences for 1/2 a day. (However, if someone is seeking a full-time position, they may want to put in a full day).

Retiree Packet: Tim Brown obtained a Retiree packet from Wappingers. He will give it to John Solan to look over. Kevin McFadden felt this was redundant and suggested it is best for each individual to contact NYSTRS. Toni Sperry requested that new reps be given retirement form letters each year. Tim Brown stated that the form letter can be put on the VCTA web page in PDF format.

VOTECope Contributions: 609 for a total of \$8,516.19. Of this amount: 393 teachers gave \$6328.57, 147 retirees gave \$925.57 and 69 paras/ secretaries gave \$1,262.05.

OUSDHP Minutes were distributed. NYSUT Memo on the 2003-04 Executive Budget Proposal were distributed. The NYS AFL-CIO scholarship info was distributed.

Mid-Hudson Teacher Center Minutes were distributed.

(continued on page 18)

## Highlights of the VCTA March Executive Council Meeting *(continued from page 17)*

NYSTRS Summary of Delegate-Board/ Staff Discussion was distributed.

Copies of pay dates for 2003-04 were distributed. Patti Lunden reported that the question concerning the pay period ending and check date has no effect on 10-month employees. Tim Brown encouraged members to participate in Direct Deposit.

### March 2003 President's Day

Sweatfree Schools Legislation has been discussed with Central Office. Central Office is willing to discuss this issue with us and it will be on the agenda for future Cabinet meetings. We would like to attempt to buy from companies that do not promote child labor.

Lights and Sounds Personnel— Copies of a memo, which clarifies the stipend for lights and sound were distributed.

VOTECope—the VCTA was toward the top of the Mid-Hudson list for contributions.

Committee of 100 report was distributed (see page 4). Next year, Laurie Hey will be mentored to take over this role as the Committee of 100 delegate.

Podiatry Union Request— A unionized podiatry group would like us to

support their efforts for equitable reimbursement.

CWA Request— Information regarding Verizon's practices was distributed. Verizon is cutting union jobs while retaining management positions.

All Night Grad Party— A thank you was received for our donation.

March for Public Education— May 3rd ( See page 1)

SRP of the Year— Anna Bestenheider was nominated. A letter from Tom Hobart congratulating Anna was distributed. While Anna was not selected, it is important to promote our members.

VC ECHOES— Patti Lunden reported that the Echoes has won at least one award in the New York Teacher Journalism contest.

Email— There are many concerns about Email. Will checking and responding become a new responsibility? Will some parents expressing requests for constant communication and feedback? If there is a conflict, will the parent or administrator be able to "tear apart" everything that you have put in writing? Jay Sussdorff questioned whether a negative letter can be placed in a file for failing to respond to an email. Email is one of many options for communication. A motion to ad-

vice VCTA members to not utilize email in communication with parents and students until a more definitive answer from CO can be obtained regarding our responsibilities, liabilities, expectations and repercussions. Motion carried.

Conference Day—Patti Lunden reported that some teachers did not receive network training on conference day. At the Feb. PDT meeting John Hunter had indicated that only 3-5 teachers would be affected because of a speaker. However, many other teachers were affected as well. John Hunter has said network training will be provided through in-service. Patti Lunden objected to this on the grounds that training should be provided within the school day. Discussion followed concerning Conference Day. Part of the discussion took place regarding a unit member's right to choose to be an instructor. Patti Lunden stressed the importance of filling out the purple conference evaluation forms.

*The April meeting was held April 15th. The next Executive Council meeting will be held on May 20th in the VCHS Professional Library, Montgomery at 3:45. Executive Council meetings are open to all members.*

## What if 30% of your teachers had a deadly disease?

**W**hat if you could help? Well, you can. This year in South Africa, more than 1,000 teachers will die of AIDS. Hundreds of schoolchildren have lost a parent to the epidemic. Throughout Africa, the statistics tell a similar story— teacher's lives lost and whole education systems endangered.

The AFT has launched a multi-year, multi-country campaign

in partnership with African teacher unions to provide resources to fight the spread of this deadly disease.

You can make a contribution to this cause by purchasing an AFT-AFRICA AIDS Campaign pin for only \$10. The contribution will go directly to union initiatives in Africa to provide resources for HIV/AIDS education, teaching materials and supplies. The pin is a powerful symbol of our efforts to assist the

teachers of Africa in their ongoing efforts to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Pins may be purchased by contacting Patti Lunden, HS. (Voice mail: 7664, email: plunden@vcmail.ocbooces.org) If you would like to help with the VCTA effort in this campaign, let Patti know.



## Is your best friend retiring this year?

*Pay tribute to him or her by writing a short biography of his/her teaching career at VC to be published in the Retiree Special Edition of the VC ECHOES.*



*The Retiree Edition of the VC ECHOES will be published on May 30, 2003.*

*Biographies are due by Wednesday, May 16th.*

*Send them to Patti Lunden, HS.*

*Hard Copies or Disks may be submitted. If submitting on disk, please use Microsoft Word (I have 2000)-Times New Roman 10pt. If submitting digital pictures, please have them in JPEG format.*

**If you're having trouble writing, the following format is usually helpful. Each person is given a maximum of two pages (about 1500 words total), (unless there are extenuating circumstances.) Please try to bear this in mind when writing and sending pictures. If more than one person is writing for a retiree, please try to coordinate your articles, (i.e. one author writes on one aspect of the person, another takes a different topic or view) As editor, I reserve the right, though I try not to exercise it, to make changes as needed-if multiple articles are received and all basically say the same thing—I will contact the authors to consider merging the articles.**

1. Who is this person? Where did they grow up, go to college? What brought them to Valley Central? What is his/her family status (Spouse, Significant other, children?)?
2. When did they begin teaching at Valley Central? Where else have they taught? What have they taught while they have been here? Have they advised or coached any extracurricular activities? Have they been involved with any aspects of the school community? (PTA, Scholarship council) Have they been actively involved in the VCTA?
3. What is unique about this person? What are the contributions they have made in their classroom and outside their classroom?
4. How has this person made a difference to VC: colleagues and students. How will their presence be missed?
5. Where are they headed after they retire? What do they plan to do with their time in retirement? Do they have any hobbies or other careers they plan to pursue? What are they looking forward to most about retirement? What will his/her colleagues miss about them? What do his/her colleagues hope for the retiree?

**PICTURES:** I need at least one picture of the retiree. You may send pictures with the biography, which I will scan and return. (I can scan from old yearbooks, etc.) Artwork (caricatures) are also acceptable and can be scanned. It is great to have pictures from throughout a person's career. I will try to include as many as possible if they are sent. If no pictures are sent, I will contact the retiree to come take his/her picture.

**For more information, contact Editor, Patti Lunden, HS.**

**Union Phone/Fax: 457-5899 VOICE MAIL x7664**

## Mac's Musings...(from the Retiree Side)



**M**y thoughts are very much with the young men and women presently in Iraq. The AFT (UFT) and the NEA report that many teacher reservists have been called up. My thoughts are not only of them, but also are of the classes they have left behind, who are bewildered and distraught at the absence of their teachers who have been and are an integral part of their young lives.

A memo to retirees who taught the graduating classes of 1959 to 1969. These eleven classes are planning a "Return of the Vikings—The First Decade" and are hopeful that many of their teachers might choose to join them on August 30, 2003 at Orange County Park from 12 noon until 7:00 pm. The cost is \$40 and includes all festivities and everlasting food. Due to insurance costs, it will be a BYOB event. (*Bring your own beverages, beer, wine, soda, water, etc.*) There is a chairperson for each of the classes. I am including the info sheet and attendance form with this mailing of Echoes. It sounds like a great idea. I'll be there. Join me. The "Kids" (!!!) will love to see you.

### Nobody asked me, but...

April 1st has come and gone, but there are some April Fool

stories. Again, for the zillionth year, there is no state budget. There is, of course, a huge state deficit, and "the education governor" (who sidestepped looming deficit during his re-election campaign) has recommended cutting aid to education, thus putting school districts in a bind and school kids at a disadvantage. You can't cut state taxes, George, in order to look like "Joe Good Guy" and then pass your problems on to local governments and local school districts.

And the nerve of Senator Joe (*Goodies for Renesselar County*) Bruno to use the war in Iraq as a reason to suggest that teachers cease activism. I'm willing to bet that there will be some pork for the majority leader's district, but we should keep quiet. Give me a break, Senator.

Let me be more positive. There is a strong possibility of a state retirement incentive in the near future, possibly a 55-25 which was available last year to districts who chose to accept it. My usual gripe is that the state opens this window too late. Last year it came from June 3 to August 31. Why not do it now so people can have more time to consider it?

### From Retirees Far and Near:

I received a nice note from Marlea Smith (*Montgomery retiree*), now a winter resident in Florida and Massachusetts resident the rest of the year. Marlea and Fred had three sons who are VC graduates.

Marion Underhill (*HS English retiree*) writes of Spring's rebirth in North Carolina; her prose, as always, a delight to read.

Regular correspondent, Tom Kneiser writes that "the postman bearing my VC Echoes was not quite spring, but close." Tom is retired math chief from the High School.

Bruce Sequin, correspondent from the North Country, notes that we had more snow than he did. Bruce headed up Social studies department in the Middle School.

Frank DeSantis, retired from Maybrook and a charter member of Table 5, called with exciting news about son, Ron, a VC alumnus and master chef, who is director of studies at the Culinary Institute of America. Ron cooked for President and Mrs. Bush at Camp David. Ron will be sharing culinary insights with the Camp David staff. Congratulations! This news set off a series of recollections for Frank and me regarding the various successes of so many VC alums, not only in their careers, but also as fine men and women. We all are blessed to be and to have been a part of their growth and success. More "Life after VC" next time. If I've missed anything, call me at 778-7236.

### A Reminder

If you wish to sign up for a defensive driving course, call Marc Sperry at the Middle School. (*see page 14*)

### Amen

Please keep the VC family members serving in the military in your thoughts and prayers, and until next time... ***Keep pushing back the barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you. Peace.***

~ Kevin MacFadden  
Retiree Representative



**Valley Central**  
**Federal Credit Union**

**Care for Kids  
Campaign**  
*Join the VCFCU in  
"adopting" Louie the  
Lion for a good cause.*

This cuddly terrycloth lion can be purchased for \$5 with \$2.50 of each purchase donated to the Children's Cancer Fund at Westchester Medical Center.

*If you do not wish to purchase a lion, a \$1 donation can be made and your contribution card will be posted on the credit union's "Wall of Honor".*

Purchases can be made at the Credit Union office or see Diane Ruggles, HS (ext. 7686)

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APRIL '03

### 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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Tel./Fax: (845) 457-5899

President, Timothy Brown (HS)  
Vice President, Jay Sussdorff (HS)  
Vice President, Richard Steger (Walden)  
Secretary, Laurie Hey (MS)  
Treasurer, John Bonagura (EC)

**Building Representatives**

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Robin Sinclair-Scott, Joanne Daniels

**Maybrook:** Donna Lloyd, Linda Siegel

**East Coldenham:** Holly Bacon, Beth Como

**Walden:** Patty Joy, Randy Sutter,  
Kathy Bordone, Barbara Wutch

**Montgomery:** Toni Sperry, Chris Brand

**MS:** Mary Bleau, Mary Goldberg, Dana DeMasi  
Marc Sperry, Joe Collins, Mike Steele

**HS:** Heather Ford, Peter Meisel, Glenn Eckert,  
Joe Fracalossi, Jean McMahon, Bob Jurgens

**Secretarial Representative:** Lucy Fox (HS)

**Paraprofessional Representative:** Kathy Lennon (W)

**VC ECHOES Editor**  
Patricia Lunden, (HS)

**NYSUT**

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

**AFT**

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

**AFL-CIO**

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

**Mid-Hudson Teacher Center:**

(845) 255-2885

<http://www.mhtc.dcohes.org>

**Employee Assistance Program**

1-800-962-7487

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

*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, HS, by  
June 6, 2003.**

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

## Heal Thyself

There is a disease that runs rampant in our profession. Its symptoms are easy to read: an urge to close doors, to leave on the bell and arrive last minute, lack of participation in events, lethargic attitudes that make the victim grow dependent on the work of others, and cynicism and criticism that oozes without attempt to treat the cause. The disease causes its victims to try to fade into the walls. They lose their voices. They develop tunnel vision and become delusional, believing that his/hers is the only classroom in the world. They believe that national, state and local policies cannot affect them. Sometimes they even lose their heart.

Thankfully, the disease is not fatal. It is the one disease that the victim has the most control over recovery. Victims of this disease can choose to recover. They can open their classroom door, and look across the hall to see that the person in the other classroom is affected by their actions or inactions. The victim can choose to come early and talk with colleagues about professional issues. The victim can choose to stay a little later and attend a building meeting or a union meeting (all VCTA Executive Council meetings are open to the general membership). The victim can talk with a building representative or association officer and find how the salary and benefits they enjoy were secured through the work of past and present association officers, building representatives, and association members. The victim can remove the blinders that

narrows their field of vision. The victim will see that the shoulders of the Association President or any



other officer, are not wide enough to bear all the weight of responsibility for changes that need to be made at the building, district, state, and national level. The responsibility for those changes that not only need to be, but must be made, has to be borne by each and every member of the Association. The victim, through self examination, can try to diagnose the root cause of their cynicism and prescribe to a regimental treatment to alleviate their pain in a pro-active manner by stepping up to the plate to improve conditions, not through ceaseless whining, but through positive action. Lastly, the victim can find their voice and their heart. The first time they speak from the heart the victims voice may be shaky and a bit weak and speaking may cause sweating. However, the second time it will be easier and in no time at all, their voice will be strong and speaking out for the rights of students, teachers, secretaries, paraprofessionals. Any of those associated with public education will become invigorated and the heart will grow stronger; and as a result the passion for education will grow stronger as well.

one is susceptible to it. It can be avoided. Protect yourself. Step outside your classroom today. Get involved with improving education at your grade level, in your department, in your building, in the community, in the district and at home in your own school district. Become a building representative. Take on a leadership position within the VCTA. Get involved in the state and national level by contacting legislators (easily done through the NYSUT website, [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org).)

On May 3rd, you have an opportunity to fully exercise your heart, your voice and your spirit at the March for Public Education. Join your brothers and sisters of the VCTA and the stakeholders of the Valley Central community as we descend on the capital steps of Albany. Avoid Apathy. Embrace Action. You will not regret it. You will be a better teacher for it. And all will benefit, especially our children.

~ Patti Lunden,  
Editor

The disease is called APATHY. Every-