

# VC ECHOES

An AFTCA and New York Teacher Award Winning Publication

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 3

DECEMBER 2003

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## Maybrook Elementary School Celebrates 80 Years!

**A**fter many months of preparation, Maybrook Elementary School held its 80th Anniversary Celebration on October 24, 2003. One of our district's oldest buildings, many changes have been made within the building since the high school graduating class, but one thing remains the same. The building retains its charm and warmth as a small community school. Some people found this to be true and others rediscovered it. But whether it was a child learning some of his/her school's history within the village of Maybrook, or an alumni returning to reminisce about the way things were, it was certainly a special day for all.



*Patsy Iorlano, an alumnus of Maybrook HS and retired VCHS teacher, and current member of the BOE, shares some memories with those who attended the 80th Anniversary Celebration.*

The festivities began during the school day with an assembly of old high school cheers performed by the two kindergarten classes. Then each grade sang a special song learned in

Music class with Carolyn Lahue. During the evening celebration, second graders returned to enchant the audience of about 400 people with "From Then Till" *(continued on page 5)*

## Negotiations Have Begun

**T**he current VCTA Teacher's Unit Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) ends on June 30, 2004. According to the CBA (*Article II, 1*) the two bargaining parties,

the VCTA and the District, "agree to exchange proposals no later than March 1st, or the next school day when March 1st is not a school day, immediately preceding the expiration of this agreement." Both VCTA

President Tim Brown and Superintendent Dr. Richard Hooley have agreed to enter into "informal negotiations", which basically means the two sides have agreed to begin discussions toward a settlement. *(continued on page 6)*

**By  
learning  
you will  
teach;**

**By  
teaching  
you will  
learn.**

*~Latin proverb*

## “MAKING STRIDES” Against Breast Cancer– A Personal Reflection

I decided to become a part of the 2003 Making Strides Breast Cancer Walk back in September 2002. Looking back I must admit my decision had less to do with breast cancer and was more of a personal goal. I had been overweight and out of shape for a good portion of my life and, approaching 40, I had undertaken a vigorous weight loss/exercise program and wanted to be able to participate easily in the Walk.

When I attended the NYSUT Representative Assembly in April 2003, the American Cancer Society was present since NYSUT had signed on to the Walk as one of its flagship sponsor. I eagerly signed up to be a team coordinator for the VCTA since I had intended to participate in the Walk anyway. If NYSUT was sponsoring the Walk, I now had all the more reason to participate proudly as a union member.

In May 2003, I excitedly approached and reached my weight loss goal losing 96.7 pounds in 39 weeks. Such a weight loss is life changing in many ways, and health

wise I felt better than I ever had in my life. Never would I have imagined the call I would get from my primary care doctor two days after my routine mammogram for my 40th birthday. Nor would I realize that I would not only participate in the Walk as a union member and team coordinator but as a cancer survivor. Nor would I have realized just how important the Making Strides Walk would become to me.

There is a book about Breast Cancer entitled, First You Cry, by Betty Rollin. I would amend that title as First, You Realize the Doctor is Talking About You Then You Cry. On May 27, 2002, I had a routine mammogram—two days later I was sitting with my doctor, a hematologist from Crystal Run Healthcare, who happens to also be an oncologist, and has been my physician for 11 years. He began telling me how disturbing the mammogram was to him telling me that he strongly suspected if I did not yet have cancer throughout my left breast I would eventually. A stereo tactic biopsy was arranged at the Ray Moody Breast Center at the Horton Pavilion and eleven days

later my doctor’s suspicion was confirmed. I had cancerous cell in all the biopsy samples and I definitely had to face surgery. As I undertook my fight against cancer, I armed myself with the best weapon a teacher could find...a book entitled, The Breast Book by Susan Love. I also did research through breast cancer websites, including the American Cancer Society website. I had the love and support of my husband, my children, my mother, my church family and my VC family. I had all I needed to map out my treatment— a sentinel lymph node biopsy and a bilateral mastectomy with immediate reconstruction. I had the surgery in July here at the Orange Regional Medical Center with local doctors from Crystal Run Health Care, Orange Surgical Group and the Horton Pavilion. I spent the better part of the summer recovering and looked forward to the kick-off breakfast for the “Making Strides” Walk.

Like many people, I give to many charitable organizations to aid in medical research and like most I don’t usually give much thought past the contribution. Often media cover-



Just part of the VCTA “Making Strides” Team: Mary Starro, Lorraine Mann, Danielle Scarano, Jackie Scarano, Missy Sofia, Danielle Amen, Etta Maxwell, Peggy Lyons, Meryln Tyson, Eileen Schwope, Bill Greene, Ryan Fitts, Tammy Ryder, Christine Giudice, Jen Levine, Rich Steger, Patti Lunden, Gail Nozell, Adrienne Herschfield, Kathy Lennon, Eileen Dietz, Carole Fitts, Jill Sutter, Donna Barletta, Anne Sussdorff, Rob Casper, Connie DeSantis, and Melanie MacNaughton. Photo was taken by Jen Cimorelli.

## “MAKING STRIDES” Against Breast Cancer– A Personal Reflection (continued from page two)



Montgomery's Making Strides Team.

(continued on page 3)

age about cutting edge medical research will not make mention of where the funding came for said research. On the contrary, media coverage concerning fundraising for medical causes can focus on how much of the money actually is spent on research and, while such a topic



Berea's Walkers: Robin Scott, Gail Roberto, Maura Crown and Anita Feller

should be covered, it can also have a negative effect on the fundraising and thereby, a negative effect on the medical research. By attending the break-

fast, I was educated as to how the fundraising makes a difference.

As I walked into the Inn at Central Valley on Wednesday, August 6th, I noted empty tennis shoes with pink laces on the sidewalk, a poignant reminder of the 40,000 American women of the 200,000 diagnosed with breast cancer each year who don't survive. We were addressed by survivors, representatives from flagship sponsors and medical professionals. As a newly educated breast cancer survivor I could personally relate to the strides be-



Ryan Fitts, MS student with his mom, Carole Fitts, HS

ing made through research funded by ordinary women, men and children collecting pledges and walking 5 kilometers. I attended the breakfast with VC team coordinator Maddie Brooks (MS) who has been organizing the impressive Middle School team for the Walk for years. In my experience fighting cancer, I spoke with many other survivors, some who had survived for twenty years, others a matter of months. I was able to see the direct effect and progression of research and to see how it made a difference in my treatment and outcome. I was swept by an overwhelming feeling of gratitude to all those who have participated in these Walks, for the difference it made in my life. Maddie and I set about the task of putting together a VCTA team and we ended up on the morning of the Walk, October 19th at Woodbury Commons with 147 participants, 82 of that number from the MS alone. Of the 82 members of the MS team, 37 were NJHS students. It literally poured buckets of cold rain that morning from the beginning of the Walk at 9:00 am to the end of the (continued on page 4)

## Making Strides Against Breast Cancer– A Personal Reflection (continued from page three)



From the East Coldenham Team: Denise Burretto, Donna Barletta, Melanie MacNaughton and Carla Imbrahim.



Maybrook's Team includes Mary Starro and son, Bill Greene, Eileen Schwope, Donna Lloyd, Jackie Scarano and Anne Sussdorff.

5K at 11:00 am. But all the rain in the world did not dampen the 7,000 participants who raised nearly \$735,000 (over \$500,000 from NY-SUT members according to NY-SUT).

The goal of the American Cancer Society is a lofty one, to ensure that our daughters, nieces and female students will have breast cancer eradicated during their lifetime. Such a goal seems insurmountable. But I imagine the goal of wiping out polio and smallpox also seemed insurmountable when it

was initially suggested yet it was achieved. It is my sincere hope that the goal of the American Cancer Society will also be achieved and to that end I will continue to participate in the Walk in the future forever grateful to the all who have taken those steps before me.

~ Patti Lunden,  
Editor

*It's about survival. It's about protecting those we love. And it's about remembering those for whom the cures did not come soon enough. ~ACS*



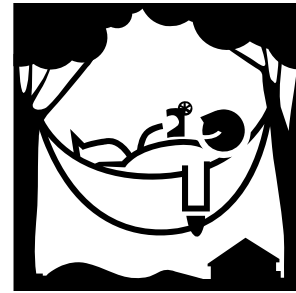
Part of the MS Team

## A Report from the NYSTRS Delegates

The Annual meeting of Delegates on Nov. 16 and Nov. 17. Michael Corn was re-elected to his position as a teacher delegate on the Executive Board without opposition. We were able to attend seminars on Benefit Overviews and Pre-Retirement Seminars. Benefit Overview was very informative and certainly a point emphasized was the importance of filing for retirement. Many members think that notifying the district is enough and it was pointed out that if a member files late, lost payment cannot be recouped. In regard to the suggestion last year at a VCTA meeting concerning the VCTA providing reps with a folder regarding retirement, we would advise against this as it is a members best bet to deal directly with the NYSTRS and we would not want to be liable for misinformation. It is best to advise members from the district's point of view and the un-

ion's point of view that they deal directly with the NYSTRS and that they be sure to apply for retirement (*forms can be downloaded from the NYSTRS website*) (*April 2<sup>nd</sup> is the earliest to apply for a July 1 retirement*). The Pre-Retirement Session was very informative and we believe all members should plan to attend a pre-retirement session any time from age 45 on, certainly within the last 5 years before retirement so they may lay the firmest of plans for their retirement.

The Delegate-Board Answer Session was most informative. Of great concern to the NYSTRS is the fact that now that many of the Tier I members have retired, many districts are taking retirement incentive money and applying it to members salaries in varied and creative ways (i.e. 1] One district hires a teacher upon notification of their intent to retire in the next three



years, for a position in summer school that pays \$5000 per summer for 50 hours work. You may only get this job by indicating a date of retirement. 2] Another district gives a "career" payment one time from step 15 to the last year of service.). This money "I pay you to go away" as Sheila Salinger put it may not be added to a member's salary to boost the FAS. Only money used for teaching salary may be applied (Tiers II, III, IV). The System is scrutinizing "spikes" in salary for the FAS cal-(*continued on page*

## Maybrook Elementary School Celebrates 80 Years!

(*continued from page one*)

Now" and many of them joined the fifth grade class in the singing of the Maybrook High School Alma Mater.

Principal Anne Sussdorff welcomed everyone, introduced speakers who shared memories, and community leaders who presented the school with a wall hanging saluting the school for 80 years of academic excellence. Then all were invited to browse around the building and visit the classrooms which were filled with projects and photographic displays: Grade 1- Maybrook as a Railroad Community, Grade 2- Maybrook as a Farming Community, Grade 3- Topographical Maps of Maybrook Then and Now, Grade 4- History of May-

brook School from Then until Now, and Grade 5- The History of Maybrook.

Students also participated in the creation of a beautiful mural of the school, including the fashions and automobiles of the earlier period, largely through the talent and efforts of art teacher Marion Schenck. Math students, under the direction of Michelle Glucksnis, produced a time line of important school events. So many people helped committee members; Anne Sussdorff, Eileen Schwope, Laurie Hughes, Linda Weiner, Sandy Tarallo, Jackie Scarano, Jeanne Cassel, Michelle Glucksnis, and Jan Borland to provide a very rewarding evening including classroom

teachers special area teachers, para-professionals, secretarial and custodial staff, as well as members of the community and alumni.

The evening concluded with refreshments in the gymnasium where groups of people continued to share stories of days gone by. One last memorable moment was when Ralph Aiello, president and salutatorian of the Maybrook High School Class of 1931, made it a point to thank all the teachers who have served the Maybrook community throughout the years and commend them for all they have contributed.

~ Donna Lloyd  
Maybrook VCTA

## Negotiations Have Begun *(continued from page one)*



The VCTA Negotiating Team is President Tim Brown, VP Jay Sussdorff and VP Rich Steger.

“Informal” means that the negotiators for both sides are meeting without the district’s lawyer or our NY-SUT LRS, Steve Berman, being present. Although Berman is not present at meetings, he is consulted by the VCTA team regularly.

The VCTA Negotiators were appointed at the October 21, 2003 Executive Council meeting. President Tim Brown is automatically an “ex-facto” member of the negotiating team. Jay Sussdorff, part of the 2002 team was appointed

as chief negotiator and Rich Steger was appointed as the second negotiator. Brown has 18 years teaching experience in the district and has been part of the Executive Council since the early 1990’s serving as building representative, vice president and president of the Association since 1998? He has been involved in three previous contract negotiations. Sussdorff has taught in the district for 32 years, has been on the Executive Council since 1996 and has served as Vice Presi-

dent since 1998. In his position as VP, Sussdorff has overseen health and safety concerns, represented the VCTA on the district committee for budget and is in charge of secondary concerns. Steger has been teaching at VC since 1992 and has been part of the executive council since 1995 serving as VP for the last 6 years. Steger has been in charge of health insurance and investment, new member and elementary issues. The Teachers’ Unit *(continued on page 11)*

## Save this date !

**Thursday, February 26th**  
**5th Annual**  
**VCTA Blood Drive**  
 Valley Central Middle School  
 Back Gym

*Appointments 1:30 pm—7:00 pm*  
 Call Kathy Manning, RN at the Middle School for appointment



## The VCTA Fall Fest Was Held October 17, 2003



1)

1. As always, food was plentiful at the VCTA Fall Fest.

2. The Straebler Family (Ben, Doug (HS), and Claire (Goshen HS) ) was happy to attend.

3. The High School won for the building with the highest percentage of member attendance. Pictured here: Nellie Briggs, Gayle Gridley, Cecilia Cornwell, June Vogelin, Peter and Jane Meisel, Joe Fracalossi, Terri Campbell, JoAnn Ryder, Diane Ruggles, Jay Sussdorff and Henry Pizzonia.

2



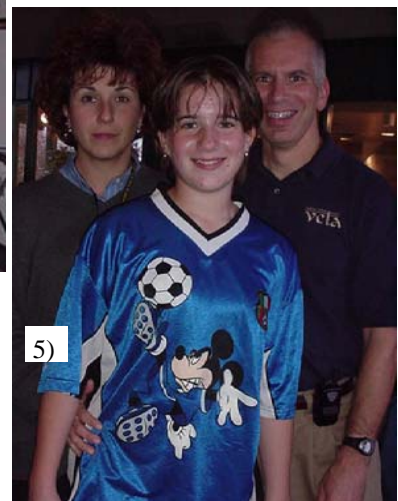
3



4)

## The VCTA Fall Fest Was Held October 17, 2003

- 1) Also from the HS: Bill McGreevy, Veronica Hebbard, MJ Hebbard, Lisa Aguilera, Barb Palmer, Gina Strolla, Roberta Betanzos
- 2) From the Ms and Montgomery: Shawn Carrozza, Kathy Phillips, Priscilla Brundage, Patty Taegder, Bill Greene, Jane Dionne, Lisa Paulus
- 43A mixed table: Joe DeVenuto, MaryEllen Managiamele, Connie DeSantis, Donna Barletta, Tim Brown, Patty Joy and Barbara Wutch
- 4) The Brown Family: Theresa, Tim and MS student, Tessa.



4)

5)

## The VCTA Fall Fest Was Held October 17, 2003



1) From Berea and Maybrook: Eillen Schwope, Donna Lloyd, Erin Davis, Fil Bernatowicz, Gail Roberto, Carol DeMiccio, Jean Cask, Lisa Daly, Pat Darney, Sara Ackerson

1)



The VCTA has always been about family. Enjoying themselves, are Bill (Middletown HS) and Diane Ruggles.

2)



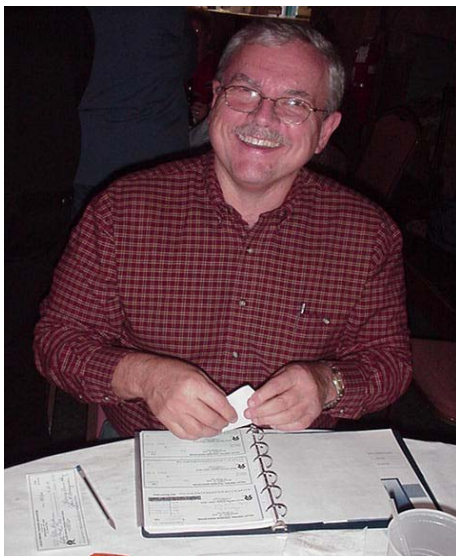
3)

Longtime friends, Peggy Kennedy and Bob Mooney (both HS) listen intently to conversation at their table.

## The VCTA Fall Fest Was Held October 17, 2003



From the MS: Linda Erickson, Kelly Abioduh, and Secretary Laurie Hey.



By the look on his face you would think paying the VCTA's bills are part of Treasurer Bonagura's favorite task. Joining John from EC were Kathy Sahl and Diane Spignardo.



Have you spent the year wondering if Rich Steger managed to make any friends in his building? Knowing Rich to be an extremely pleasant fellow, the Echoes is happy to report that Barbara Wutch, Mary Ellen Manigamele and Connie DeSantis accompanied Rich this year.

## Negotiations Have Begun *(continued from page five)*

includes classroom teachers, Nurses/ Nurse Teachers, Library teachers, guidance counselors, speech correction teachers, department chairpersons, department supervisors, school psychologists, attendance teachers, student assistance counselors and school social workers.

Negotiating on behalf of the district are Superintendent Dr. Richard Hooley, Assistant Superintendent Christina Howe and retired Assistant Superintendent Peter Roden.

The VCTA team is hopeful that informal negotiations will bear fruit. If a settlement cannot be reached before March 1, 2004 then formal negotiations will be entered

into at that time. Both President Brown and Dr. Hooley have agreed that settling the contract before the current CBA expires on June 30, 2004 is in the best interest of the Association, the district and ultimately the community we jointly serve. Brown has stated, "It is in the best interest of all involved to settle this contract in light of the upcoming political season. I believe that George Pataki will make education the scapegoat for all the state's woes and will be seeking his political pound of flesh to punish teachers, in particular. He was mad as hell about our March for Public Education which helped persuade legislators to restore the massive cuts to education he had proposed

in last year's budget and I believe he intends to make us pay dearly as evidenced in suggestions of a Tier V for the retirement system, and the recent backhanded SUNY tuition increase."

Negotiators will be reporting to the VCTA Executive Council and in turn, Building Reps will be keeping members informed through building meetings. Articles will be appearing in the VC ECHOES as well. A general meeting will be called to present the membership with a tentative agreement when one is reached.

~ Patti Lunden,  
Editor

Do



by

**you need to  
reduce points on your  
drivers' license?**

***How about dropping the cost of  
your car insurance  
ten percent!***

Marc Sperry is planning on a Defensive Driving Course for VCTA members and their family members.

Tuesday, March 9/ Wednesday, March 10

4:00 pm— 7:00 pm

Middle School Cafeteria

Cost: \$30 per person (Light Refreshment will be served)

Registration: *First Come, First Served*

by March 1, 2004

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Building \_\_\_\_\_, VM \_\_\_\_\_

Family Members Attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Return this form with your check payable to: DMDI

\$30/ person—Send to Marc Sperry, Middle School by March 1, 2004

## A Report from the NYSTRS Delegates *(continued from page five)*

*eleven*) culation. Sometimes they don't find the problem until after a member has started to collect retirement moneys and then the member is liable to repay any over-payment made because of a FAS that includes such bonus money. Longevity payments do not apply to this as it becomes part of base salary and does not "drop off". Another concern is extended day latch-key "babysitting" programs. Only salary from teaching assignments (*and the point was made that most co-curricular and coaching posi-*

*tions fall within this category as do most chaperone payments*) may be applied to FAS. It appears scrutiny will increase as Tier II's begin to retire.

There was no talk of the rumors we have heard concerning a state incentive. Michael Corn spoke to the oncoming political climate. Mayor Bloomberg of NYC has publically suggested a Tier V. Corn is calling for a rallying of the troops to fight this as vigorously as possible as it goes against the tide

of the legislature we have been lobbying for in regard to tier equity. Corn said that it should be assumed that teachers and education will become the political whipping boy as we move closer to the State Budget proposals.

*~ Patti Lunden and  
Patty Joy, NYSTRS reps.*

## BUY UNION FOR THE HOLIDAYS, ONLINE!

You're just not the type to give a holiday gift that was made in a sweatshop.

This year, you can shop with your conscience at The Union Shop Online - the AFL-CIO's retail store featuring top-quality, union-made-in-the-USA clothing and gifts.

Click on [www.aflcio.org/shop](http://www.aflcio.org/shop) or [www.unionvoice.org/ct/zdqp\\_641W1NL/](http://www.unionvoice.org/ct/zdqp_641W1NL/) to browse for everything from fleece jackets, books and music to the perfect red wagon for the child in your life.

In addition to The Union Shop Online you can visit the new online mall at [www.nosweatshop.com](http://www.nosweatshop.com), where you'll find union-made apparel from Justice Clothing, No Sweat Apparel, SweatX, Union Jean and Apparel Union Threads and Unionwear.

\* CLOTHING: At The Union Shop Online you'll find dozens of gifts that carry the values of social and economic justice. Check out the cozy fleece, baseball jackets and knit watch caps - proudly

made by UNITE members.

\* HOLIDAY CARDS: Send your holiday greetings with justice-inspired, GCIU-printed seasonal, Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa cards that will show you care.

\* MUGS: Need to stuff some stockings? People love sipping cider from our "Got a Boss? Get a Union" and "Make Your Voice Heard" mugs.

\* ORNAMENTS: Deck the halls with a union-made, antiqued bronze tone star, dangling from a red ribbon and wrapped in a plush black bag.

\* RED WAGON: Put smiles on little faces with the classic Radio Flyer red wagon - just like the one you probably used to have. They come in two sizes, including a junior size just right for towing or stowing stuffed animals and other treasures.

\* VIDEO & MUSIC: Time off during the holidays? Pop in a video or DVD with a justice-for-workers theme - maybe "Newsies" or "The Full Monty" - or listen to a CD that has powerful message with the music, like "Drop the Debt."

\* BOOKS: And don't miss The Union Shop Online's books, from classics to contemporary hot sellers like Al Franken's Lies and the Lying Liars Who Tell Them, and Molly Ivins' Bushwhacked.

More union shopping stops ...

\* You can also find union-made goods at Justice Clothing, [www.justiceclothing.com](http://www.justiceclothing.com).

\* For heavy duty clothing and other union-made goods, visit the United Brotherhood of Carpenters Union Warehouse at [www.carpenters.org](http://www.carpenters.org).

\* The Labor Heritage Foundation offers music, films, posters and other items at [www.laborheritage.org](http://www.laborheritage.org).

For worker and union-friendly books of all sorts, including children's books, try the labor book catalog at [www.unionist.com](http://www.unionist.com).

*~ The NYSUT Leader*

## **News from NYSUT– all articles from The NYSUT Leader**

### **NEW INCENTIVE FOR NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION**

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards may be able to award up to six semester hours of graduate credit in education to teachers who have achieved national board certification since 1997 and those who will complete the process in the future. The American Council on Education recommended the credit award based on an independent review of the certification process. The recommendation underscores the rigor and quality of the national board certification process, the ACE said.

More information should be available by the end of the year.

### **CERTIFICATION VIDEOCONFERENCES AVAILABLE**

NYSUT Educational Services staff have resumed the videoconferences on teacher certification from the Albert Shanker Conference Center to regional offices and BOCES sites.

Developed with the NYSUT New Member Program, the sessions provide new members with information on obtaining provisional and permanent certification, as well as news on what's in store for teachers when new regulations go into effect in 2004. Regional offices will be alerting locals to upcoming videoconference dates throughout the rest of the school year.

### **PUBLIC SUPPORT STRONG FOR NATIONAL HEALTH CARE**

In poll after poll, Americans underscore the importance of the health care issue.

A year ago, fewer than half wanted a taxpayer-funded health care system run by the government. Today, according to an ABC-Washington Post poll, public support for a universal health care system that would give government-run coverage to everyone has risen to 62%, and less than a third (32%) of the public would choose to continue with the present employer-based system.

### **JOINT REPORT: NO EVIDENCE OF CHARTER SCHOOL SUCCESS**

Plenty of proof of devastating fiscal impact, however there is no conclusive evidence that New York's charter schools are improving student achievement. Charter schools are, however, a heavy financial burden on many school districts, triggering tax increases and major program cuts that hurt students in traditional public schools, an analysis of the state's five-year charter school experiment shows.

The report, *Not So Fast*, was prepared and released jointly by NYSUT, the New York State School Boards Association and the National Education Association-New York.

The State Education Department's study of the first five years of the charter experiment was delivered to the Board of Regents just days after the independent analysis was released. SED's report echoed some of the NYSUT report's concerns - most notably that there is not enough data to reach conclusions on performance. However, the SED report claimed minimal fiscal impact on local districts, contradicting the evidence presented in the union's report.

The NYSUT, NYSSBA, NEA-NY study calls for a moratorium on the creation of any new charter schools. New York's projected \$6 billion budget deficit, the fiscal implications of meeting the Court of Appeals' order in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case, and the financial strain already placed on school districts means no more money should be taken from school districts to create charter schools, it said.

"New York should not and must not expand the number of charter schools until more convincing long-term evidence of their effectiveness and viability is presented, and remedies to protect traditional public schools from financial disaster are adopted," the report said.

The analysis examined 23 of New York's 51 existing charter schools and the nine districts that fund them. The most significant problem, the education organizations found, is a poorly thought-out funding formula that miscalculates the expenses that school districts face and rewards charter schools with a disproportionate share of funding.

## Pre-Retirement Planning Seminars

Discussions are devoted to: financial planning, taxes, legal affairs, adjusting to retirement, Social Security and Retirement System Benefits and other topics. *This is not one-on-one counseling.*

### Members age 45 and older and spouses/companions are eligible to attend.

Seminars are held 8:30 am to 4:00 pm with registration from 8:00 to 8:30 am.

The fee to attend is \$10.00 for members and \$5.00 for a non-member spouse/companion

*These sessions are most beneficial to members planning to retire in the next 5-10 years. Don't wait till your last year to attend.*

### Call Toll Free 1-800-356-3128, ext. 6180

ALBANY	FISHKILL	TARRYTOWN
January 16	January 30	April 2
February 27	March 19	April 30
March 13		

**TO MAKE RESERVATION:** Telephone the Retirement System in Albany at our toll-free number for the seminar above you wish to attend. Reservations can only be made by calling the Albany office weekdays between 8:30 am and 4:15 pm. When calling, please provide your Social Security number, date of birth, home address, home and work telephone numbers, and indicate if your spouse/ companion is attending. If your spouse/companion is also a member, please have the above information for him/her also. At the time of your call you will receive instructions on paying the seminar fee noted above. We request that your payment, by check, reach us no later than three weeks after the date of your call. Your reservation may be cancelled and made available to other members if you are unable to meet this deadline. Once payment is received, a seminar agenda and a letter confirming reservation which you should bring to the seminar.

*The seminar fee is non-refundable. BE PREPARED TO SHOW PHOTO IDENTIFICATION.*

## Half is Greater than Whole



The Stars and Stripes flew over a log school house as early as 1812 in Colrain,

Mass. In the late 1800's, James B. Upham, a patriot, wanted schoolchildren to show love for the country. He asked them to save their pennies to buy American flags for schools. His idea was popular with both children and adults, and within a year they raised enough money to purchase thousands of flags. Today as a patriotic custom, the flag is still flown near schools when classes are in session.

And sometimes, the flag is

lowered and flown halfway down at half staff or half mast. It is an expression to honor the death of someone in the community. It says you are loved and will be remembered. This tribute took place this past month on November 17, 2003 in the Valley Central School District.

As I was driving past VCHS with my daughter, Maryellen, to go to the Middle School, I noticed the flag at half mast. I thought of my son, Mitchell, who was already at the High School and then it dawned on me that the flag was for my son, Mark. Fourteen years had passed that Sunday, November 16th, since the East Coldenham Elementary School Disaster. The district's avenue of compassion touched my soul as well as the flowers that were

sent from my Walden Elementary School family to my new teaching position in the Middle School.

This radiant flag has been flown for my dad who fought in WWII. I also thought of this banner of love flying at half staff for Mary Ellen Provenzana who died this past summer. As a former teacher at Montgomery Elementary, I remember Mary Ellen so often recited the Pledge of Allegiance inside her classroom for her students to have the chance to learn and grow. Half, indeed, is greater than whole.

*~ Jeanne Marie Flanagan,  
Middle School*

**The NYS AFL-CIO sponsors a four year scholarship to a 2004 graduating senior whose parent is a member of an AFL-CIO union and who intends to pursue a career in labor relations or a related field. See your Building Representative (*it was received at the Nov. VCTA meeting*) for the Scholarship Application. It is due by April 15, 2004.**

## Highlights of the October VCTA Executive Council Meeting

The October VCTA Meeting was held October 21, 2003.

**Secretary's Report:** A Fall Fest thank you was received from Peg Kennedy.

**Board of Education Report:** End of year reports were addressed and the search for a new Assistant Superintendent for Personnel was discussed. Tim Brown indicated that he has chosen 2 people to sit on the interview committee.

**Dental/Optical Trust:** Members should refer to Dental/Optical booklets before contacting D/O reps. Building Reps were asked to be sure Dental/Optical forms have the new address. Chris Brand will look into having dental/optical forms on the website.

**Retirees:** Arline Friedman reported on the Middletown Area Retired Teachers Fall Luncheon. There is an alert regarding proposed drug plan legislation. If there should become prescription drug coverage under Medicare, when you turn 65, your own health insurance would no longer cover you. There would be no coordination of benefits. The recommendation is that we write letters against this proposal. Form letters are available on the NYSUT web page. Tim Brown and Chris Brand are discussing a link on the VCTA website that would connect to NYSUT's website.

### Old Business

Patti Lunden reported that the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk was held on Sunday, October 19 at Woodbury Commons. There were 9000 walkers from the Mid-Hudson. 142 were from VC (with 82 of those the MS including 37 students).

Tim Brown asked for suggestions as to what teachers need Intergrade Pro to do for them so requests can be made to BOCES. Chris Brand asked if the AIS had yet been addressed. Jay Sussdorff indicated that it was and the CO would look into it and get back to us. AIS at Montgomery will not start until 11/18. The teachers want to work with the students and can't yet. Joe Collins indicated that collaborative teachers often are not provided substitutes despite IEP's calling for a collaborative teacher. Tim Brown said he would look into this.

### Standing Committees

Toni Sperry requested a list of VOTE Cope Contributors. John Bonagura has a list, which Toni will distribute to each building's VOTE Cope rep. Tim Brown indicated that such a list should include names and no other information.

### New Business

Holly Bacon inquired as to the status of the sinkhole situation at EC. Jay Sussdorff indicated that at the District Health and Safety Meeting October 9th, the building was deemed safe to occupy by the appropriate authorities.

Holly Bacon reported that swamp gas is coming into EC. She indicated that she had emailed Harvey Gregory about the situation and OSHA was there on 10/19. The staff has not been informed and people have been getting sick. Tim Brown will look into this. Toni Sperry inquired as to how each building addresses computer time, whether each building has a specific amount of computer time, and if there is a district computer curriculum. Tammy Coleman indicated that one had been developed (nothing happened with it); a second one was created (and canned). Mary Ellen Mangiamele indicated that a curriculum (a modified version of a BOCES curriculum) will come eventually. Standardization will be addressed. Rich Steger will look over the schedules. We can ask for standardization and a philosophy of the program. Additionally, Chris Brand indicated that computer techs won't touch the Apples. Tim Brown requested that teachers outline and inform him of problems.

Joe Collins mentioned that the BEDS forms had a "Highly Qualified" bubble. Patti Lunden indicated that HOUSSE is a 1st draft from the State. She gave an overview of how points are determined. Carol DeMicco questioned "high quality in-service" as indicated on the BEDS form. Tim Brown indicated that any in-service plan is better than no plan, but we will not tolerate a filibuster. The VCTA, by state mandate, has majority interest on this committee. Mary Bleau indicated that PDT distributes surveys, but not all teachers respond. Additionally, some programs are mandated, so we have no control over that aspect. Eileen Purcell has offered to serve on the PDT. Tim Brown indicated that we can get people from NYSUT and Central Labor to offer some of these programs.

Patty Joy reported that busing at Walden is a concern. It was announced at a PTO meeting that the day will be shifted next year. Reps volunteered from each building to distribute MHTC materials. Carol DeMicco indicated that she was still waiting to hear from CO about her incorrect sick day buy-back. Tammy Coleman questioned a new teacher's placement on the pay scale. Tim Brown indicated that the district can place a teacher where they want on the pay scale. Jay Sussdorff will address undergraduate credits in negotiations.

### President's Report

Copies of OUSDHP minutes were distrib-

uted. Para/Secretary Stipend/Dues—John Bonagura will figure out how much income is taken from these units. Tim Brown is compiling



information to apply for the NYSUT Community Service Award for the VCTA. Information was distributed on Woodbury Commons Teacher Discounts. Show your NYSUT ID card at the customer service desk at the tower or at the food court information booth.

Copies of an email concerning Montgomery's Teachers' Closets was distributed. Tim Brown suggested that teachers put things in sealed containers so mice do not become a problem. Jay Sussdorff reminded reps that the District only wants Computer equipment plugged into orange colored outlets. Chris Brand reported that a mousetrap was put in the kindergarten room without telling him. If anyone has ideas to utilize money from the AFL-CIO who will sponsor workshops, let Tim Brown know.

Tim Brown officially thanked those who helped out with the VCTA Welcome Back/Fall Fest Party. A special thanks was offered to Laurie Hey for organizing the event. Approximately 100 people attended. Is there any interest in a March into Spring party?

**Negotiations:** Tim Brown reported that we are going to enter into "informal" negotiations. Christina Howe, Peter Roden and Dr. Hooley will represent the District. Patti Lunden made a motion to appoint Jay Sussdorff as chief negotiator and Rich Steger as second. (Tim Brown is ex-facto negotiator as president) Motion was seconded by Patty Joy and carried.

**VOTE Cope:** Tim Brown will make a presentation at the next middle school meeting. Eileen Purcell stated that veteran teachers at the high school are also asking what VOTE Cope is for. VOTE Cope does not always endorse one party; they look only at voting records on educational issues.

VCTA Meetings are considered general meetings and therefore open to all members.

**Meetings were held November 18th and December 9th. The January meeting will be held January 20, 2004 at 3:45pm in the VCHS Professional Library.**

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



my own dealings with several of their staffers. Beth Quinn's columns (*November 17th and November 24th*) brought joy to my heart. As I did in last issue's column, Beth takes the commissioner to task on the Regents and entire testing debacle. She writes of organizations formed to protest Dr. Mills' dictates. (*Editor's note: www.timeoutfromtesting.org*)

Read and take action.

### Salve!

This musing occurs on the twenty-fourth of November and probably will reach you in mid-December. As you know, this time of year makes this correspondent even more reflective than usual. Thanksgiving reminds me in so many ways that I have much to be grateful for, and part of that gratitude—as I have said before—is due to the active and retired members of the VC family: those with whom I labored in the trenches, those active teachers and administrators and staff people who continue to inspire me as they pursue the goal of inspiring kids to learn, to grow in wisdom and knowledge. This community has been and continues to be well served by our school family.

The advent of Hanukkah, Christmas, the festival of lights, the conclusion of Ramadan speak to me of the need for peace, the need for justice. So often one feels frustrated and terribly limited in achieving these globally. My wish for all of you is that all of us can achieve our separate peace.

Some special thanks to folks who make our lives a little easier: the paras, the secretaries, the cafeteria crews, the custodians and maintenance guys, the credit union crew, the greeters and hall monitors. Schools could not run without you. Finally, thanks to the officers of the VCTA and to the beloved editor of Echoes.

### Hooray!!

I have not always appreciated the Times Herald Record's views and reporting on things educational, although I have appreciated Mike Levine's honesty and

### Retiree Alert

The "education governor" (*you all remember George Elmer?*) has vetoed a bill passed by both Senate and Assembly which would have guaranteed retiree health benefits. Write him, call him, fax him. Say "Bad George".

#### **The Honorable George Pataki**

**Governor of State of NY**

**Executive Chamber**

**Albany, NY 12224**

**(518) 474-1041**

**[www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org) (click on contact your legislators and fill in)**

Be aware that we have been protected year to year, but a permanent state guarantee is much more desirable.

### Everybody Alert

It has come to my attention that the state is considering instituting a Tier 5 for retirement purposes. This would only be for new hires, but it is a terrible idea for NY teachers. Recall how benefits declined as Tier 2, Tier 3, and Tier 4 were adopted. Be ready, active and retired teachers, to protest this possibility. Don't let our elected officials (assemblymen, state senators, governor) sneak this type of legislation by us.

### Voices from the Past (Luncheon Notes)

Tom Kneiser announces Photo Graphics, the Digital Eye. Tom (retired HS) can be reached at [www.kcomps.com](http://www.kcomps.com). (PS. Tom, McF's now have voice mail!!) Good luck, Tom, in your new endeavor.

Mary Ellen Whitmore (CO) had a wonderful Alaska cruise.

Dolly Micieli sent greetings to all.

Anna Brooks (HS) sends her best from her hometown of Gloversville; she has had several terrific trips and is enjoying her grandchildren.

Dora Blizard (CO) sent a cheery note, and I ran into her, in town from Florida for her brother-in-law's birthday.

Norma Manning (HS) unable to attend this year, sends regards to all.

Retired Super Art Nugent was vacationing in Nova Scotia on luncheon date. He informs that retirement is "wonderful".

More in February!

### Best Wishes

To Mary Ann Wilson in her new BO-CES position.

### Condolences

To Marilyn Smith on the death of her husband, Dan. Thanks for your note, Marilyn.

To the family of Sue McCarley on her passing. As I said earlier this year, Sue inspired me in her feisty resignation to her illness in the last few years. She was a fighter. Rest in peace.

### Amen

Have a wonderful holiday, Until next year (*in 2004!*), keep pushing back the barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you.

**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.



*May your Holiday Season be full of Cheer,*

*And your New Year full of Joy.*

*~ The Executive Council of the VCTA*

*Take advantage of new rates in this new year!*

**Passbook Loan Rates have been reduced from 6.5% to 4.0%!**

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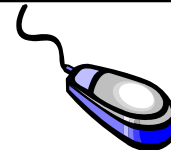


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The Valley Central Federal Credit Union has been designated as a Community Based Outlet by the **IRS**. This allows us to make available all necessary federal income tax forms. If you need a standard form, or an unusual form, we have it.

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*Check out the new financial calculator page  
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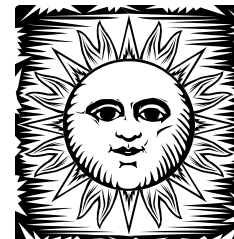


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*New York State United Teachers Member Benefits offers three new discount programs. Each will save you money!*

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Perfect for holiday time! If you're stumped about a gift for Aunt Sadie, Simply Certificates has the answer! Gift certificates purchased on-line or by phone are discounted 10 percent for NYSUT members. You must identify yourself as a NYSUT member to receive the discount. Note: This discount is not valid at Simply Certificates retail locations.

Certificates are accepted at hundreds of participating restaurants, day spas, resorts, golf courses and ski areas. Merchants are located in many areas within New York, as well as in 14 other states and D.C. Participation in the downstate area will be expanded in the near future. Request a merchant listing from NYSUT Member Benefits.

#### Working Advantage

If you like to save money on entertainment, then this program will interest you. Purchase discounted tickets for movie theaters, video rentals, theme/amusement parks, Broadway shows, museums and special family events through Working Advantage.

You can order tickets through the mail, Internet or phone. You must identify

yourself as a NYSUT member and use the special NYSUT identification number.

#### Lifeline

If you have an older relative living at home, Lifeline can give both of you peace of mind. It's an easy-to-use personal response service that ensures older adults living at home get quick assistance whenever it is needed, 24 hours every day.



A push of a button dials a monitoring center and establishes two-way voice communication. A Lifeline representative communicates with the individual, assesses the situation, summons appropriate help and follows up to ensure help arrived. Lifeline allows the user to answer the phone without rushing and

risking a fall. It can give reminders about medications, appointments, etc.

NYSUT members receive discounted pricing. Note: Some communities may offer Lifeline through hospitals or service agencies. You should check with these facilities for availability and pricing.

For information and ID numbers for these programs, contact NYSUT Member Benefits: **1-800-626-8101**, e-mail: [benefits@nysutmail.org](mailto:benefits@nysutmail.org), or on-line: [www.memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://www.memberbenefits.nysut.org).

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for children and education  
than teachers and teacher unions.*

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1175 Rte. 17K  
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Vice President, Jay Sussdorff (HS)  
Vice President, Richard Steger (Walden)  
Secretary, Laurie Hey (MS)  
Treasurer, John Bonagura (EC)

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**Patricia Lunden, (HS)**

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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 Patti Lunden, HS, by  
February 1, 2003.**

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

**Getting Paid for your Credits**

According to the Collective Bargaining Agreement, teachers receive \$42 per credit hour for all course beyond the BA (max. 30) and the MA (max. 60). BA credits are paid in blocks of six. MA in blocks of three. (Each credit hour is 15 seat hours– so an MA block is 45 hours)

In-service course hours are bankable and can be accrued.

In order to be paid for credits, courses forms must be filed– Course forms are available in each building and are to be submitted to the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction prior to beginning study.

At the end of the course, a transcript from the institution of higher learning, or a certificate of completion from the in-service course (*and/or signing of the original course approval form by the instructor in the appropriate box*) is to be submitted to the Assistant Superintendent for Personnel so that the hours may be properly credited to you. This is to be done by October 1st or March 1st of each year.

Once you have accumulated enough hours, payroll is informed that you are due either (1) payment for a block of credits, or (2) advancement to the next salary scale. You will be paid for additional credits until you have reached a new salary scale. Any credits you accrue after reaching that scale will be counted anew. (*In other words, you start at BA. You are paid as you finish graduate courses toward your Masters. You achieve your Masters. You take more graduate and inservice courses. They count as Masters plus 3, 6, 9, etc. You reach MA + 30. You take more credits. They count as MA+30, plus 3, 6, 9, etc.*) Once you reach MA+60, you may continue to take more credits. However they must be approved by the superintendent.

Once your transcript, completion form and original approval forms has been submitted by the appropriate deadline, it is the good faith assumption of the Association that payment will start in a timely manner. The amount your pay is to increase is adjusted and prorated so that you do not lose any money due you. (*For example, you complete your MA by August 30th, submit transcripts by Oct. 1st but don't see the pay increase until the end of December– The increase in pay will reflect the amount your salary increased for Sept. through June, even if payment did not begin in September*)

**As in all matters of professional documentation, the Association strongly suggests that you keep a copy of all documentation submitted to Central Office for your own reference and in case of misunderstandings.**

## Remembering Days of Old

*Should auld acquaintance be  
forgot and never brought to  
mind?*

*Should auld acquaintance be  
forgot and days of auld lang  
syne?*

As 2003 fades in the dawn of 2004, I wonder if the days of old will be forgot as we enter a presidential election year when the political soup starts to warm. And how warm will that soup become as education is thrown in as a main ingredient of political races?

George W. Bush will undoubtedly be talking education, and discussing his misguided NCLB Act which has put heat on public education without a true grasp on the positive outcomes of its many requirements. It seems to have caused more headaches for school districts than it has cured. Ron Paige, Bush's top man on education, stated recently on CNN that

he believes that the solution to the NCLB act is vouchers for public schools. George Pataki, our education governor, has taken out his carving knives, obviously hungry for a piece of teacher hide. He is not keeping his intentions secret as he seems bent on making educators his "political whipping boy" any opportunity that he can. NYC's Mayor Bloomberg is also getting in the act, publicly calling for a Tier V in the State Retirement System. As the State budget fight begins, it is certain that the current federal administration will continue to NOT fund its educational mandates, passing the buck to the state. Likewise, the state will certainly, as it always has, pass the buck to the local level.

Auld Lang Syne has long been the song that is sung as one year passes into the next– that time when we



reflect on the past year and look forward to the promise of the next. If the political climate of 2004 is as hot as seems to be promised, it will be important for educators throughout the state and nation to remind politicians of days of old– being willing to rally and march for public education, being willing to make our voices heard when politicians take cheap pot shots at our profession for political gains. And most importantly, being willing to vote out those who would bring harm to the profession we dedicate ourselves to.

*~ Patti Lunden,  
Editor*