

VC ECHOES

An AFTCA and New York Teacher Award Winning Publication

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 2

OCTOBER 2003

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

*From the President***Ten Rules Kids Won't Learn in School**

The following is Tim Brown's speech from Opening Day.

In my classroom there is a Rules List posted on the Bulletin Board with the caption: Ten Rules Kids Won't Learn In School. I do not remember the source of this list. I probably received it through email and decided it was appropriate as a discussion piece for high school health students. In preparation for today, however, I have modified and edited the list and renamed it: Ten Rules Kids Do Learn at VC. You see—I believe the Valley Central staff does a pretty good job of teaching these rules. Lets see if you agree.

Rule #1 That Children Should Learn In School:

Life is not fair. If life were fair we would all be born healthy, rich, good looking, smart, athletic and altruistic. Schools, required by law to meet each child's individual needs, are probably the "fairest" institutions in the land. This bears not the slightest resemblance to "real life." Nevertheless, it is not "real life" that educational institutions should model. In-

stead, real life should model the fairness that is constantly demonstrated by schools such as VC. We are a staff that promotes the benefits of fairness by expecting and demanding the same efforts and behaviors from all of our students regardless of their God given talents.

Rule #2: The real world won't care as much about your self-esteem as your school does. Can you believe that many post-graduates across this fine nation of ours are shocked to discover this? It would appear that some child development experts have determined that punitive consequences for irresponsible behaviors are unhealthy. This, of course, bears not the slightest resemblance to effective parenting. The truth is that irresponsible behaviors without appropriate corrective consequences simply result in more irresponsible behaviors that ultimately damage children's self-esteem—often creating victims of those who are responsible, thus damaging their self-esteem. There is a poem that can be purchased in most novelty and card shops titled—The World Needs



More Mean Mothers. It eloquently speaks to this dichotomy between teaching self-indulgence and self-responsibility. The staff here at Valley Central is without a doubt a bunch of mean mothers—and I hope we remain that way—lest we lose an entire generation of students to the pitfalls of self-indulgence.

Rule #3 Your school may be "outcome-based," but life is not. In some schools, you're given as many times as you want to get the answer right. Standards are set low enough so everyone can meet them or, in the case of New York State, manipulated to make the Commissioner look good regardless of outcomes. This, of course, bears not the slightest resemblance to anything outside the State Education Department or Enron.

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A child must feel the flush of victory and the heart-sinking of disappointment before he takes with a will to the tasks distasteful to him and resolves to dance his way through a dull routine of textbooks.
~ Helen Keller

Tests: Memo from the Board of Regents

The following summarizes the actions taken by the Board of Regents on October 8-9, 2003, when the Board:

Decided to keep a local option for a passing score no lower than 55, based on local decision, to give students and schools more time to improve achievement. This provision will be in effect for all students now in high school (students entering grade 9 in 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003) and for those entering grade 9 in the fall of 2004. This action means that these students can meet local diploma requirements by receiving a score of at least 55 on the five required Regents exams, if their district chooses that option.

During this time, a renewed, rigorous statewide effort will be undertaken to lift the achievement of all students to 65 by building on research that shows what works and the accomplishments of people in the schools who are applying what works.

• Despite the significant increase in the number of students with disabilities taking Regents level courses and passing Regents examinations, there still is a significant gap between the performance of special education and general education students, and an even more significant gap for students with disabilities in high need districts versus other districts. Therefore, the Board voted to extend the existing Regents Competency Test (RCT) safety net for

students with disabilities who enter grade 9 through fall 2009. The safety net allows students with disabilities who do not pass a Regents exam to meet the local diploma requirement by passing the corresponding RCT.

The Department will intensify the work to improve performance of urban districts by targeting federal aid and focusing on improving the achievement of students with disabilities, particularly in the Big 5 districts in cooperation with efforts already begun locally.

In November, the Regents will take appropriate regulatory action to amend Commissioner's Regulations relating to diploma and graduation requirements to reflect these two actions approved by the Regents.

- Accepted the report of the Independent Panel on Regents Math A and adopted its major recommendations to revise the standards, curriculum and examination. I recently sent you a field memo that provided more detail on how this action will affect the format of the January 2004 Mathematics A Regents Examination. That memo can be found at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/deputy/Documents/mathafollowup-fm.html>

- Accepted the policy recommendation of the Regents Work Group on Physics concerning future examinations. In November, new passing (65) and passing with distinction (85) scores

will be determined through a standard-setting process, consistent with the recommendations of the workgroup. These scores will be used to create a new conversion chart for the Physical Setting - Physics Regents Examination for January 2004 and beyond. The Regents also asked the Commissioner to provide a proposal in November for addressing the test scores for students who took the Physical Setting - Physics Regents Examination in 2002 and 2003.

In regard to the application of the revised conversion chart for the June 2003 Math A exam, issued August 29, 2003, the revised chart should be applied to the scores of all students who took the exam in June, including those below grade 9 who may have taken this exam as part of an accelerated math program.

A recent press release on these major policy issues, and Commissioner Mills' report to the Board of Regents can be accessed at http://www.oms.nysed.gov/press/testing_policy.htm. The Independent Panel Report on Math A can be accessed at <http://www.regents.nysed.gov/October2003/1003brd3.htm> If you have any questions about this memo, you may send them to emscassess-info@mail.nysed.gov.

Statement from NYSUT regarding Regents' initiatives

Teachers and students in New York State have made remarkable progress toward the higher standards. But it's clear from the problems of recent exams - particularly the Math A and Physics Regents - that the State has not found the right formula for an exam that fairly measures academic achievement. The need for a mid-course adjustment has been apparent to us for many months.

"NYSUT has long supported keeping the 55 as a passing grade for the Re-

gents exams. New York has set a very high standard for students, and we now have two more years to get the resources in place without hurting students who deserve a Regents diploma. This is the right move for the kids.

"Similarly, extending the alternatives for students with disabilities is the only fair and decent path to travel. We'll work with SED to improve achievement levels for these students, but we should not punish disabled students by denying them access to a diploma.

"We're still reviewing all recommendations from the Math A panel. It appears the panel is right on target and consistent with what teachers have been asking for, including a grade by grade curriculum for K through 12.

"NYSUT believes that the Physics Regents, like the other Regents exams, should be a Regents exam, not an advanced placement test. There are a number of advanced placement options for Physics already available. Regents
(continued on page seven)

Ten Rules Kids Won't Learn in School *(continued from page one)*

Rule #4: Sorry, you won't make \$100,000 a year right out of high school. You won't be a vice president or have a personal secretary or presidential intern. You may even have to wear a uniform that doesn't have a designer label. This truth leads to the next rule.

Rule #5: Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Many people have a different word for burger flipping. They call it opportunity, as do many of our students here at VC who work at various local ice cream and fast food establishments. The staff here at VC recognizes that all members of a school community, regardless of job description or salary, are crucial components in the formula to put and keep children center.

Rule #6: If you think your teacher is tough, wait until you get a boss. School personnel have developed the ability to be diplomatic and compassionate while dealing with difficult and sensitive interpersonal and academic issues. In contrast, bosses are unlikely to be diplomatic or patient when evaluating effort and performance. Excuses

or justifications are unwelcome additions that generally fall on deaf ears. What does this mean for our students in a practical sense? It means mommy and daddy will not be able to intervene or bail them out forever—Unless, of course, you are destined for politics and you get pulled over for DWI. I think this may be where the “No Rich Child Left Behind Act” originated. ---- Can you believe that bosses haven't yet fully embraced the concept of a circled 65?

Rule #7 It's not your parents' or teachers' fault if you mess up.

You're responsible. This is the flip side of “it's my life” and “you're not my boss.” As educators, we are called upon to assume responsibilities above and beyond the scope of any other profession. We model this for our students every day.

Rule #8: Before you were born, your parents weren't boring. They got that way paying your bills and listening to you. I have a sign in my room that each student must read. It states: Tired Of Being Hassled By Your Stupid Parents—Move Out, Get A Job, Pay Your Own Bills—Hurry—While You Still Know Everything. What I find most impressive about my students' reactions is—they already get it—most understand and agree. They don't believe it is their parent's responsibility to pay for their college or go bankrupt paying for their expensive “lets impress the in-laws” wedding. I attribute this to a solid base of caring parents within our

VC community and a school staff that promotes the values that make this selfless attitude possible—a milestone achievement in our current materialistic me-oriented culture.

9. **Rule #9:**

Using drugs or joining a gang does not make you cool. This has been and will continue to be one of our most difficult tasks. We must continue to remind students that these behaviors demonstrate a lack of maturity and a lack of concern for the health or welfare of others, especially those who love them the most—since it is those who love them the most that they will hurt the most through these additive and destructive behaviors. Gang members and drug users embrace Rule #1—Life Is Not Fair—and through their selfish and destructive behaviors

ensure that Life Is Not Fair for everyone that cares about them. We must continue to fight to win this battle. Our greatest weapon in this war is the safe environment that we create within these school walls—the fair and consistent creation and enforcement of rules and, most importantly, the modeling of staff members, demonstrating our values to sobriety, civil behavior, and a concern for the impact that these behaviors have on others. Please remember that the words *caring* and *consequences* both begin with C and often belong together.

And Finally, Rule #10 That Children Should Learn In School: Life is not divided into semesters. Sometimes you only get one chance to do it right. For some of our students, this school and its staff represent a beacon of consistency and safety that they do not experience anywhere else. Do not be concerned with the knowledge that the sheer number of students we service and the very secrecy that surrounds many personal issues make student disclosure prohibitive. We do not need to know each individual student's personal problems or struggles to make a difference in their life. The consistency and safety that we create within our classrooms and within each building will demonstrate that we care. Children have an uncanny ability to look beyond the eccentricities of their teachers' unique personalities to the very heart and soul that motivates each. They will know if you care and if you care you will make a difference.

I wish you all a successful year of putting children center and making a difference in both their academic and personal lives.

~ Tim Brown, Pres.

Sometimes you only get one chance to get it right.

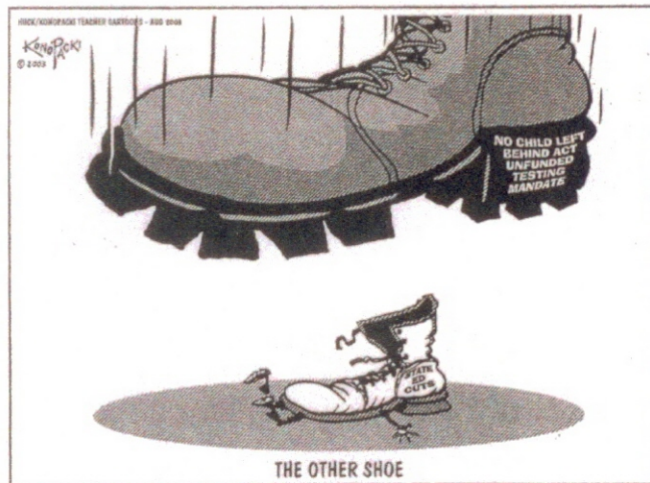
Prez Breaks Promise To Fund Education

The President's budget for overall education funding calls for a meager 0.3% increase, well below his 4% ceiling for domestic spending or the level of inflation, according to the Daily Mislead Archive (www.misleader.org).

Placing education toward the bottom of his budget requests breaks the promise of his first address to a joint session of Congress in 2001 when he claimed education would be "my top priority," said the policy watchdog report.

The President, who has unabash-

edly promoted his "No Child Left Behind" philosophy, is particularly shortchanging Title I funding, the primary program for economically disadvantaged students. His budget request for Title I falls 33% short of what Congress considers full funding under the law.



~ The NYSUT Leader

Regents Adopt New Middle-Level Policy

In July, the Board of Regents approved a new policy statement on middle-level education. The new policy begins to address some of the concerns NYSUT put forth in its award-winning report, *Caught in the Middle*. However, the most recent presentation by State Education Department staff to the Board introduced several models of a new regulatory structure that could give districts complete flexibility to determine such issues as how the 28 learning standards are met in the middle grades, what time requirements (units of study) there would be, the subjects and who would teach them.

Further, the newest policy statement does not address certain key issues previously discussed by NYSUT, such as a grade-by-grade curriculum, the

new middle-level certification that will go into place next September, the importance of smaller class size, and other concerns.

"The Regents recognize that the middle-school years are crucial to students - socially as well as academically," said Antonia Cortese, NYSUT first vice president, "but much remains to be done, and we will be monitoring very closely how this policy is going to be implemented."

Public hearings will be scheduled by November to comment on the alternative models. The Board of Regents will review proposed changes in December and approve the changes in February 2004 for implementation by September 2005. NYSUT will provide information on the dates and places of the hearings as soon as it becomes available.

Briefly, the new policy includes:

- * Middle-level is defined as grades 5-8;
- * Middle-level is a critical time for students in both their personal growth and development and preparation for high school;
- * The middle-level program supports the 28 learning standards;
- * The middle-level grades experience needs to include career exploration; and
- * Pre-service preparation and ongoing professional development of middle-level teachers and administrators is vital.

~ The NYSUT Leader

Get out and Vote!

New Members

As a new member of our statewide union, you have the opportunity to help shape the policies and direction of our organization by making your opinions known to your union representatives and local leaders. Representative democracy is important to our union.

Participating in elections is essential to a healthy democracy. That is why NYSUT is launching a statewide voter registration project. *We want you to be a part of this effort!*

It is very possible that you are not registered to vote. There are several reasons that this may be the case – you may have moved, or your preferred mailing address is not the same as your home address, etc.

Whatever the reason, it is worth the effort to verify your voting status. If you are not sure whether or not you are registered to vote, call your county Board of Elections.



If you are registered to vote but not enrolled in a political party, we urge you to consider enrolling. It does not matter into which party you enroll, but we do believe that joining a party greatly increases your impact on the political process.

Exercise your right to vote - and flex your political muscle.
~ Rich Steger, Vice-Pres.

County Board of Elections Phone Numbers

Orange
845-291-2444
Ulster
845-334-5470
Sullivan
845-794-3000
Dutchess
845-486-2473
Putnam
845-278-6970
Westchester
914-995-5700

Education Delayed Is Education Denied

NYSUT is urging state leaders to rise above politics and ideology and move forward as quickly as possible to implement a statewide remedy to comply with the court's decision in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case.

"A five-year-old can't put her kindergarten year on hold for three years until the state straightens out its fiscal problems," said NYSUT First Vice President Antonia Cortese. "An eighth-grader has to take the state exams this year, regardless of where we are in the business cycle. We can't wait any longer to give all children - regardless of geography - the opportunity for a sound, basic education.

"Education delayed is education denied," she added.

Cortese and United Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten both testified on the issue before the Assembly Education Committee.

In her testimony, Cortese noted the Court of Appeals ruling removed from discussion the question of whether the state must spend more money on education.

"The answer is 'yes' and there is a great deal of work to be done," Cortese said. "We should not be diverted by educational schemes that would undermine the intent of New York's constitution and erode our public schools. There are simply no quick 'fixes.' The best way to improve public schools is to continue to invest in small classes, high standards, well-equipped classrooms and the best teachers - solutions that we know work."

In addition, Cortese implored the Legislature and the governor to ensure that "any new state funding formula passes the twin tests of adequacy and equity." Leaders must take care not to drain resources from school districts that are already providing students with an excellent education, she said.

"That type of Robin Hood approach has the potential to drag high-performing districts down to mediocrity instead of lifting impoverished districts up to excellence," Cortese said. "It would almost certainly lead to public backlash."

Cortese praised the Legislature for consistently fighting for the resources that teachers and others who work in public education need.

~ The NYSUT Leader

New Member Corner

The next three years your professional ability and character will undergo intense scrutiny. The way you conduct your classes, the quality of your lesson plans, and the degree of professionalism you exhibit during your duty assignments are just a few of the many things that determine when or if you will receive tenure. During these years, you can be dismissed without rea-

son.

Attendance is often underestimated in regard to the granting of tenure. Sick days should be used when you are too ill to teach or if you are contagious. Please be aware that tenure has been delayed and denied when numerous sick days are used.

Tenure does not guarantee your position for life. Tenure simply means that you can't be arbi-

trarily dismissed. You are legally entitled to due process.



Rich Steger, VP

Labor-Religion Coalition Lauds Anti-Sweatshop Sports Gear Law

For the third consecutive year, the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition, co-chaired by NYSUT President Tom Hobart, applauded Gov. Pataki for signing a bill that enhances the state's leadership in the anti-sweatshop, socially responsible business movement.

New York laws passed in 2001 and 2002 allow school districts, SUNY and CUNY to buy apparel from sweat-free vendors. The new law expands the scope to include sports equipment.

"Many soccer balls and footballs that will be used by students in

New York schools are imported from Pakistan, India, China or Indonesia," said Elisa Meredith, Sweatfree Schools Coordinator for the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition. "Only minimal progress has been made in the sports equipment industry since inhumane working conditions and use of child labor were exposed in the 1990's."

This law allows New York's 720 school districts and 84 public colleges to consider the health and well-being of the workers who make sports equipment as purchasing decisions are made. The law authorizes schools and colleges to require certification that products are manufactured according to

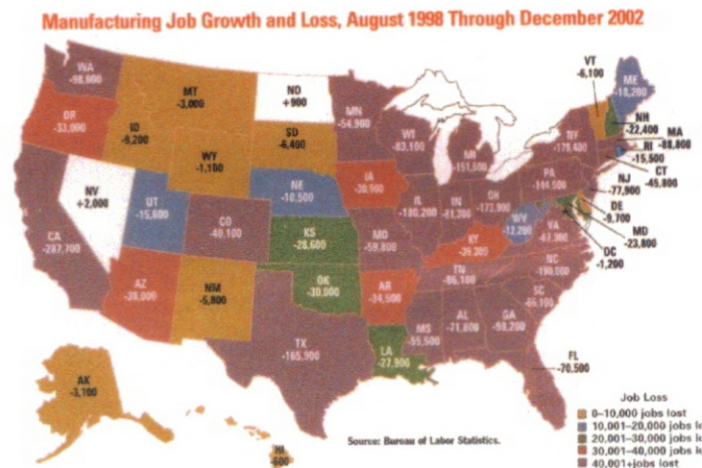
fair labor standards without child labor. Contractors can be required to provide information about working conditions, compensation, the use of child labor and the right to form a union.

In 1998, the Labor-Religion Coalition initiated its "Sweatfree New York Schools Campaign." It focuses on purchases made by tax-supported institutions rather than the purchasing habits of individual consumers.

~ The NYSUT Leader

Bush Presides Over Massive Job Losses

Without jobs, there is no economic recovery for working families. As of early August, the U.S. economy had 3.2 million fewer private-sector jobs than when President George W. Bush took office in early 2000. The manufacturing sector alone has lost 2.5 million jobs. On the campaign fundraising trail, Bush insists the economy is recovering. In reality, Bush is on track to become the first president since Herbert Hoover to preside over a decline in total employment.



Orange Ulster School District Health Plan Will Change

The OUSDHP has proposed changes and are awaiting state approval to implement the following:

- The Calendar Year Maximum Benefit will change from \$300,000 to \$500,000
- Drug Benefit to increase to 5/20/30 from 5/15/25
- Hospital will be 100% with a \$500 ded. (increase from \$250)
- Out patient Hospital will be \$35 in network co-pay
- \$70 out of network from \$25/\$50
- Mail-In Prescriptions: Instead of getting 3 months for the price of one month -
You will get 3 months for the price of one and a half

Statement from NYSUT regarding Regents' initiatives (continued from page two)

credit should be available to every student willing to study hard and do the work.

"These recommendations are a good step forward toward finding the best way to accurately measure academic progress, especially the commitment to more teacher involvement in the test development process. The Regents' exams - and any other statewide assessment - should be developed by teachers, tested by teachers, reviewed by teachers, and approved by teachers.

"Teachers support higher standards and testing. We want those standards clear and tests to be a fair assessment of

what's going on in the classroom. New York has a proud 100-year tradition of Regents exams that challenge students and fairly measure academic achievement. These recommendations are a start toward restoring that tradition of fair, accurate Regents examinations."

*Antonia Cortese
First Vice President
New York State United Teachers*

October is Open Enrollment month...

The VCTA Health and TSA Fair provided an opportunity for all VC employees to check out alternatives for Health Insurance. October is the month to change Health Care coverage if you would like to do so. If you picked up an information packet on one of the Health Care companies, then you will find an enrollment form inside. Fill out the enrollment form and send it to Polly Conigilo at Central Office by October 31st. *Your coverage will become effective as of January 1, 2004 and continue until you make another change.*

If you wish to change from an alternate health care company back to the Orange-Ulster Schools

Health Plan, contact Jan Phelps at CO for an enrollment form.

Before you make any changes be sure that you have checked with your physicians to be sure that they accept that insurance. Also compare the major points of the plan to your current plan. Be sure the services that you utilize are covered. If you decide that you want to change insurance plans, fill out the enrollment form and send it to Jan Phelps, at CO by Oct. 31.

Although the Association invited only three Health Care Companies to the Health Fair, by Federal Law you have the right to choose any HMO you prefer. You would need to con-

tact that HMO on your own to arrange for enrollment. Be aware that the District will only pay a single or family rate equal (or less) to the Orange-Ulster School District Plan. **That rate is \$419 for single coverage and \$916 for family coverage.** (This is the monthly rate that is paid on your behalf twelve months a year by the District.) **The VCTA does not recommend you choose any one company over the other; we encourage you to consider all your options and choose the coverage that best meets your needs.**

Your application for coverage is "in writing" notification required by CO.

HMO Rates for 2004

GHI

The co-pay for the GHI plan is \$15. The drug plan is \$5/\$10/\$20 with no annual cap.

The rate for GHI is \$340.06 for single coverage and \$867.13 for family coverage per month. Neither plan requires a contribution from the participant.

MVP HMO

The HMO plan being offered by MVP is the same as last year. The drug cost is \$5 for generic and \$20 brand and \$40 for non-formulary drugs.

The rate for MVP for single coverage is \$338.88 which is less than what the District is paying. Therefore single coverage on MVP will not cost anything toward premium. Family Coverage is \$876. Neither plan requires a contribution from the participant.

Empire Blue Cross/ Blue Shield require a contribution from the participant.

The Drug Plan is increasing from \$10/20/30. While the amount this plan costs is more than OUSDHP, the amount of the difference is far less than it was.

Mid-Hudson Rate: The rate for single coverage \$ 349 which is less than the District is paying and the rate for family coverage is \$933 which is more than what the District is paying. IF YOU CHOOSE EMPIRE FAMILY Coverage, you pay about \$17 (a month) for six months deducted pretz from your pay. (This comes to roughly \$6.50 a check)

If you choose the Empire Plan which requires a contribution, you will be charged the difference from January to June. If the OUSDHP rates should increase in July 2004 and that increase is more than the premium rate of Empire, you would not have to make a contribution for the remainder of the year 2004.

A Comparison of Health Plans

(for specific details, consult the plan overview provided by each company)

<p>OUSDHP \$419/ \$916 (\$300/800 - deductible) Co-Pay Individual (80% R&C) \$4875/pers. or \$8000/fam. Individ Out Pock Max \$1000/Family Max \$1800 Calendar Max: \$500,000-Lifetime Max. Unlimited</p>	<p>\$338.88/ \$876 MVP In Network Only No Lifetime Maximum</p>	<p>\$340.06/ \$867.13 GHI HMO Only In Network</p>	<p>\$348/\$933 EMPIRE Direct HMO In Network Only No Lifetime Maximum</p>
<p>In Network/ Out of Network OFFICE VISITS \$15 copay / Ded. + 80% (r/c) Eye Exams Not Covered Well Baby/Child No Copay/ resp. for any chrg (see schedule) over R&C Routine Exams 19-49 1/ 3 years/No benefit 50+: 1 / 2 years/ No benefit (Pap/Mammo- different schedule) Mammography 100% in hospital only Hospital 100%/ \$250 ded per adm. 80% of R&C out pt. \$35/\$70 Alcohol/Sub 100% 4 weeks/ 6 wks per year (inpatient) (out net) 100% R&C-\$250 ded. Mental Health(pre-cert.)No Copay-100 day (Inpatient) cal/80% up to 30 days + ded. (not cert.)50% up to 30 days+ded. Emergency100% following a \$25 per day ded. waived if admitted Accident -within 72 hrs\ Illness (life threat) Surgery Alcohol/Sub(Outpatient) 100% (60 visit limit)/100% R&C-\$25 per day ded Mental Health \$15 co pay - 100 visits/ 50%-out patient 30visits Labor/Delivery 100% / 80% of R&C Pre/Post Natal 20%/ Ded +80% of R&C *Labs 100% in hospital (out pt)(S25 ded per day.) *XRAY 100% in hospital (out pt) (\$25 Ded. per day) *Radiology 100% in hospital (out pt) (\$25 Ded. per day) Radiation/Chemo 100% in hospital Durable Med. Not covered Diabetic Supp. Not covered (?) *Physical Therapy 100% (\$25 day ded.)if following hosp. or surg. Chiropractic Visits \$15/80% RC (100% if reach out pocket max. Must pre-cert. Before 16th visit or pay 50%) Hospice 100% Home/Health 100% Ambulance 100% (\$50 per trip limit) Nursing Home 100%/180 days per year Acupuncture DNA Nutritional Counsel DNA Prescrip Drug \$5generic/\$20preferred/\$30non preferred *if in a non-network hosp. then \$50 per day ded. - if not in hospital ,then not covered</p>	<p>\$15 Copay 1 every other year No charge \$15/In System only \$15/In System only \$15/ In System only \$15 (100% in hosp)/ 80% R&C No Charge/80% R&C No Charge Detox/ 80% R&C No Charge Short Term, Acute, Crisis/ 80% R&C \$50 – waived if admitted \$15 per visit (limit 60)/80% of R&C \$15 1st visit \$25 ea visit 2-5 50% or \$45 (less) visits 6-20 100%/80% of R&C Pre = \$15 / 80% of R&C \$15 per visit /80% of R &C \$15 per visit(100% in hosp.) / 80% of R&C No charge 20% as copay/ 50% of R&C \$15 copay per visit (2 month max)/ 80% of R&C \$15 copay with referral Covered \$15 copay per visit/ 80% of R&C 100% Covered DNA DNA \$5generic/\$20 brand/\$40 non-formulary Can mail order 90 day supply at 60 day price</p>	<p>\$15 copay \$15 copay No Copay \$15 Gyn. No Copay (2x w/out referral) Pap Smear free No Copay No Copay No Copay 30 days No Copay 30 days \$35– waived if admitted \$15/60 visits \$15 visit 1-5 \$25 vists 6-20 No Copay \$15 No Copay No Copay 20% Copay/\$1500 annual max. \$15 Copay \$15 30 visits/60 days \$15 Copay Covered Covered 100% Covered up to 6 visits \$10 ea 2 visits \$10 each \$5 generic/\$ 10 preferred/\$20 nonpreferred</p>	<p>\$15 copay Not Covered No Copay \$15 copay (Well Woman, no PCP referral needed) No copay No copay (unlimited days) No copay/ 7days detox per year No Copay/ 30 days \$35 copay waived if admitted No Copay/60 visits(incl. 20 family visits \$25 copay / 20 visits No Copay \$15 Copay first visit only No Copay No Copay No Copay \$15 Copay Up to 30 visits inpatient & 30 out \$15 Copay No Copay, 210 days lifetime No Copay 200 visits/year NO Copay No Copay/ 60 day per year Covered DNA DNA \$10generic/\$20brand/\$30 non formulary Occup./speech/Vision Therapy \$5/ total 30visits</p>

The VCTA Executive Council
Would like to wish
Dr. MaryAnn Wilson,
Assistant Superintendent
for Personnel and Pupil Services
Good Luck
as she leaves Valley Central .

Dr. Wilson begins her new position December 1st.



HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS NEEDED: WEIGH IN ON THE TESTS

The State Education Department's Office of State Assessment is seeking high school teachers to participate on teacher review committees, and this is an opportunity for NYSUT members to contribute to the discussion on state assessments, said Antonia Cortese, NYSUT first vice president.

The purpose of the committees is to conduct a final review of the Regents examinations for each administration period, beginning with the January 2004 tests. This process was piloted with the August Regents exams and it worked very well, according to the SED. Complete information and a copy of the teacher review application is available at www.emsc.nysed.gov. The deadline for January exams is Oct. 20.

Committee members will come to the SED to review Regents exams paying particular attention to:

- * Clarity of language to facilitate students' understanding of directions, instructions and prompts;
- * Assure that there is only one correct response for each test item;
- * Assure that spelling and grammar are accurate; and
- * That the layout of the test as a whole minimizes student anxiety (e.g., ensures that challenging items are placed throughout the test, not clustered in any one section).

Teachers who wish to participate on the committees should have:

- * Taught in the target subject within the last three years; and
- * Not been involved in the SED's test development process in the last seven years.

Following a test run in August, the first committees will review the following exams after they are administered in January: Comprehensive English; Mathematics B; Comprehensive French; Physical Setting/Chemistry; Comprehensive Spanish; Physical Setting/Earth Science; Global History and Geography; Physical Setting/Physics; Living Environment; Sequential Mathematics, Course III; Mathematics A; and, United States History and Government.

Compensation: \$150 honorarium and reimbursement of travel expenses.

Teachers are responsible for their own meals.

For an application, go to www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/testing/hsimportantnotices.html. Download and print the application. Complete it and fax it to Judi Golombiski at 518-473-7737.

Call for Resolutions and Amendments

Jan. 14 is the deadline for submitting proposed resolutions and amendments to the NYSUT Constitution or Bylaws to be considered by the 2004 Representative Assembly, Mar. 25-27, in New York City.

Proposed resolutions must be approved by the local or retiree council general membership or executive board and signed by the local or council president. They must be received in writing at NYSUT's Office of the President by close of business Jan. 14. Each proposed

amendment to the Constitution or Bylaws must be submitted in writing to the Board of Directors, signed by no fewer than 100 members representing at least five election districts, by the close of business Jan. 14. Look for forms in the Convention Call mailing, scheduled to go out the week of Nov. 14. Proposed Amendments to the Constitution or Bylaws and Proposed Resolutions will be published in the Feb. 25 issue of *New York Teacher*. Note that resolutions reaffirming current NYSUT policy will be published, but they will not be acted on by the RA.



How Did We Ever Survive?

Looking back, to our younger years it's hard to believe that we have lived as long as we have. As children, we would ride in cars with no seat belts or air bags. Riding in the back of an open pickup truck on a warm day was always a special treat.

Our baby cribs were covered with bright-colored lead-based paint. We had no childproof lids on medicine bottles, doors, or cabinets, and when we rode our bikes, we had no helmets.



We drank water from the garden hose and not from a bottle.

We would spend hours building our wagons and carts out of scraps and then rode them down a hill, only to find out we forgot the brakes.

After running into the bushes a few times we learned to solve the problem.

We would leave home in the morning and play all day, as long as we were back when the streetlights came on. No one was able to reach us all day. We played many street games and sometimes we got hurt a little.

We ate candy, cake, bread with real butter, and drank sugar soda but we were never overweight; we were always outside playing.

Little League had tryouts and not everyone made the team.

Those who didn't had to learn to deal with disappointment.

Some students weren't as smart as others so they failed a grade and were held back to repeat the same grade.

The generations from those times produced some of the best risk-takers and problem solvers. We had the freedom, failure, success and responsibility, and we learned how to deal with it all...

*~ From the Internet,
Submitted by Antoinette Oakes, HS*



**We're looking for a few great teachers...
And we know they're in VC Classrooms.**

Each year the District
in conjunction with the Association
Nominates a teacher to be considered for
NEW YORK STATE TEACHER OF THE YEAR.
*Please submit the name of a colleague who you believes
exemplifies the phrase "Great Teacher."*

Name _____

Building _____

Years teaching _____ Years at VC _____

Please tell us why you think this person should be VC's candidate:

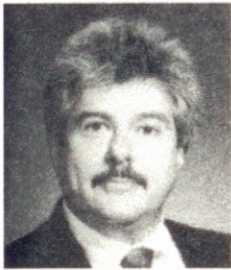
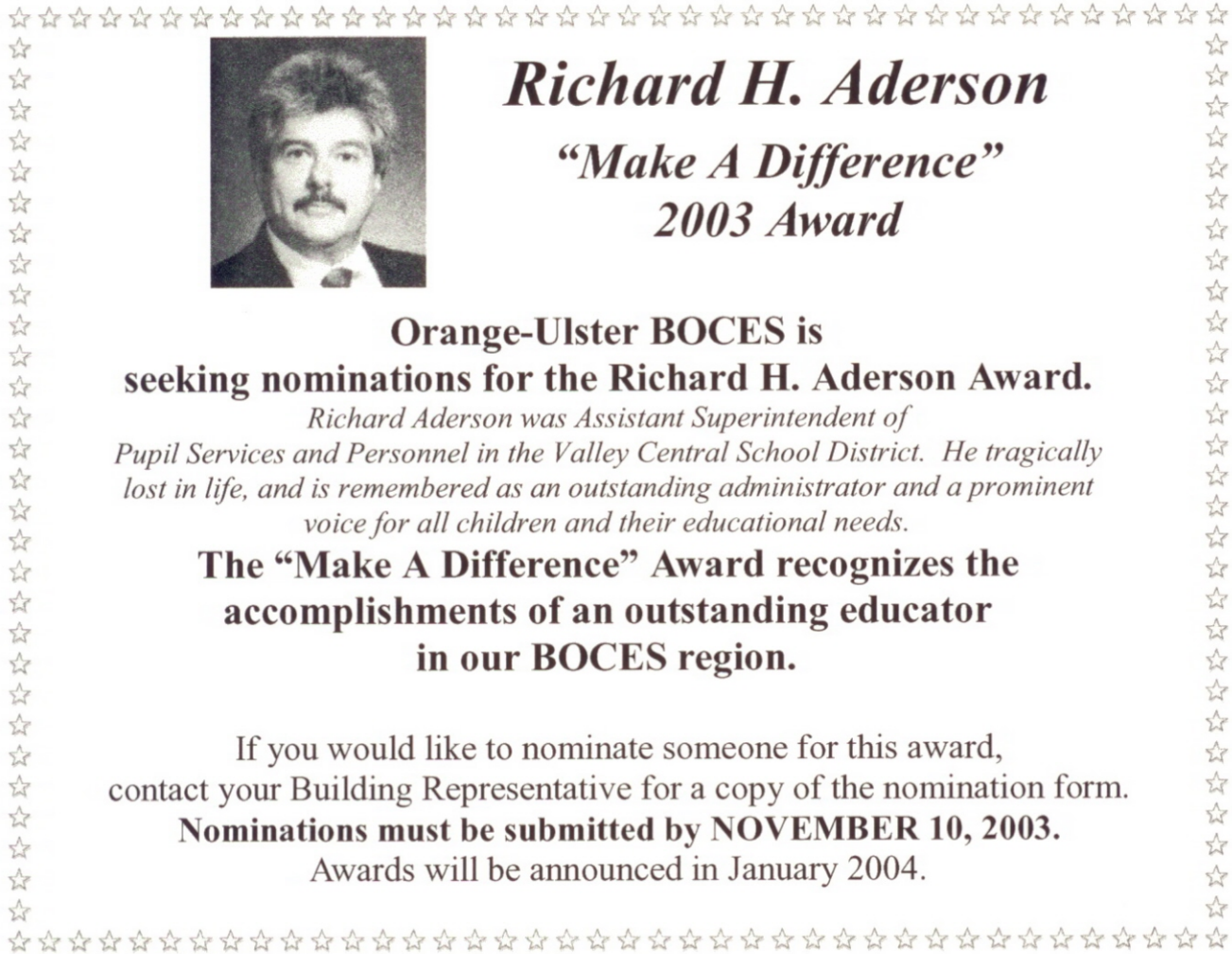
Your Name _____ BLDG _____

Return this form to Doug Straebler, HS by October 30th.

Evening Parent Teacher Conferences will be held on
Monday evening, November 24
Elementary 6 pm—8:30 pm.
Middle School 6:30 pm –9:00 pm
High School 6:30 pm—9:00 pm
Remember that attendance at these conferences is contractual
(unlike the voluntary Open House nights),
and if you are absent,
the administration has the right to require that you make up the evening another night.

Members are strongly encouraged to keep careful records of any professional development.

If you are having problems getting credit for professional development, contact your building representative .



Richard H. Aderson

***“Make A Difference”
2003 Award***

Orange-Ulster BOCES is seeking nominations for the Richard H. Aderson Award.

Richard Aderson was Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Services and Personnel in the Valley Central School District. He tragically lost in life, and is remembered as an outstanding administrator and a prominent voice for all children and their educational needs.

The “Make A Difference” Award recognizes the accomplishments of an outstanding educator in our BOCES region.

If you would like to nominate someone for this award, contact your Building Representative for a copy of the nomination form.

Nominations must be submitted by NOVEMBER 10, 2003.

Awards will be announced in January 2004.

Notes from Recent Retirees

Dear VCTA Executive Council and Members,

Thank you for the delicious dinner, gift and kind words. It has been my pleasure to know and work with you.

Sincerely,

Pat Darney

Dear Laurie-Please extend my thanks to Tim and the VCTA members. Thank you for the certificate, gift and dinner invitation in recognition of my retirement. I have had a wonderful career at Valley Central and the privilege of working with talented and dedicated people.

With many thanks,

Janice Borland

Dear John (Bonagura),

Please extend my gratitude to the Executive Board and Members of the Valley Central Teachers' Association for the generous retirement check. I have enjoyed being a member of the Valley Central Teachers Association. It has been a pleasure to work with so many fine people who have always shown the highest regard for young people and their education. I look forward to retirement and leave with many fond memories of my years at Valley Central.

Again, thank you very much.

*Sincerely,
Nancy M. Schmidt*

Dear Members of the VCTA,

Thank you so much for inviting my husband, Ralph, and I to your annual dinner at Spruce Lodge. We enjoyed ourselves very much and the food was delicious.

Thank you also for the certificate honoring my forthcoming retirement and the \$100 check. I shall miss VC and all the friends I have made. I think of all of you as family.

Sincerely,

Patty Depew

Dear Tim,

Please extend my thanks once again to the VCTA Executive Board.

The generous check, plus the beautiful framed certificate and dinner, too ... what a treat for a "seasoned" veteran!

Though I'm retiring, VC will always be near and dear to me.

Sincerest regards,

Connie DeSantis

VCTA Executive Council Meeting Highlights—June 10th '03

Tim Brown recognized and presented VCTA certificates, NYSUT pins and certificates, and checks to the following retirees: Janice Borland, Nancy Schmidt, Pat Darney, Connie DeSantis, Kathy Takvam, and Alan Takvam. Lucy Fox also presented the above items to Patti DePew. Additional presentations were made to officers and editor by Tim and to Tim by Jay Sussdorff, on behalf of the other officers and editor.

Secretarial Report

Lucy Fox reported that negotiations are taking place to roll over the contract. A meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 12 at Central Office. The secretaries will stand firm on salaries and will wait until the VCTA negotiations, if necessary.

Paraprofessional Report

Kathy Lennon reported that, in negotiations the paras turned down a very low offer from the district and that the paras will meet with their team and decide where to go from there.

2. Tim Brown stated that he felt that the paras and secretaries would not reach agreements with the district until the VCTA does, as well. Additionally, Tim pointed out that our custodial unit is among the poorest paid in the county and stressed that we support all bargaining units.

Elections Report

1. VC budget vote results:
1396 'yes', 753 'no', 34 blank, 50 absentee

2. BOE vote results:
Joy Crist 1293/Patsy Iorlano 1180
Steve Bocker 575/Steve Mosensen 489

Board of Education Report

1 John Bonagura reported that retirees and staff with 25 years of experience in the district were honored at last night's BOE meeting.

2. John reported that Mike Steele (MS) received an award from Orange County Middle School Administrators Association for his work with middle-school students.

3. John reported that 33 teachers received tenure.

Dental/ Optical Trust

1. Sandy Strauss reported that new benefit pamphlets were distributed today.

2. Sandy indicated that benefits have been increased substantially. Yearly benefits have been increased from \$1000 to \$1250. These changes will go into effect July 1. Blue booklets will hopefully be ready for distribution at September's convocation. Retirees will have their booklets mailed to them. Cobra letters will be sent out by the end of this week.

3. Motion to reappoint two dental/optical members to three-year terms: Melanie McNaughton (EC) and Jay Sussdorff (HS): Toni Sperry. Second: Patty Joy. Motion carried.

Retirees

1. Kevin McFadden reported that the 21st annual retiree luncheon will be held on Wednesday, September 3 at Crossroads. Last year 95 retirees attended the luncheon.

2. Kevin reported that retirees have been asked to send Vote Cope contributions directly to Toni Sperry.

3. Kevin thanked the VCTA for continuing to include the retirees.

President's Report

Motion to approve five scholarships at \$400 each: Carol DeMicco. Second: Jay Sussdorff. Motion carried.

2. Motion to approve 2003-2004 VCTA Executive Council Meeting dates: Jay Sussdorff. Second: Mary Goldberg. Motion carried.

3.457(b) Draft Language- Copies were distributed. 457(b) will allow you to double the amount of money you can shelter. This plan has been available to state employees, but has only been recently offered to teachers.

a)2 dates to change companies- Notify Central Office 7/1 for changes effective 9/1, and 11/1 for 1/1 changes.

b)Once you put your letter in for retirement, you will automatically be allowed to make changes to your payroll deduction.

c)Companies will be limited to 40. Right now 37 companies are being utilized. After the first year (to allow for members returning from leave), if the number of companies go over 40, the Executive Council and officers will recommend which companies will remain.

d)Unlike 403b, you can access 457(b) money immediately after retirement.

e)Toni Sperry requested that, once we sign this, a meeting will be scheduled in September to present information and answer questions.

f)Tim Brown indicated that a representative from the 457(b) plan will have a booth at our opening day health and investment fair. He will be able to answer questions and if there is enough interest, we can invite him in on a specific day.

g)A toll-free information number will be printed in [VCEchoes](#).

h) Tim indicated that this is expected to be signed within the next week.

i)Kathy Takvam spoke of the benefits and positive aspects of 457s.

j)Mary Goldberg reported how helpful Peter Roden was when she and her husband met with him regarding retirement issues.

4.Takvam Side Agreement- Copies were attached. This issue has been resolved; Kathy got her money. The District demanded doctor's notes (**with a diagnosis**) for any day she was out

(even non-consecutive). The district automatically withheld her pay. Tim stated that he feels

the District has no right to know your personal health history. There are certain

privacy issues involved. When you call in sick, you do not need to provide information

other than the type of day you are taking (a sick day, a personal day, a bereavement day, a

conference day, etc.). Kathy reported that Mary Ann Wilson repeatedly called Kathy's doctor's office. Tim indicated that doctors should refuse any requests for information. He also indicated that the district may request a doctor's note for a single day, it doesn't violate the contract, but you are not required to provide a note. Likewise, the only time you are required to provide a reason for a personal day request is if it is on the bookend of a holiday. Legally, the District has the right to send you to a doctor of their choice to have you examined. This has happened before. However, the VCTA position is that while the District can send you to a doctor of their

VCTA Executive Council Meeting Highlights June '03 (continued)

choice, this doctor can confer with your doctor and that the District's doctor can either agree or disagree with your doctor, but that your personal information (diagnosis, etc.) should not be forwarded or shared with the BOE, Superintendent, etc. Tim indicated that members should contact a building rep if there are any questions or problems.

a) Steve Berman indicated that the District has the right (Sec. 913 Ed. Law) to send you to a physician of their choosing for a physical to determine your fitness to work. If you are called for an exam, call Tim.

5. Montgomery Elementary Late Bus Side Agreement- Copies were distributed. Discussion followed. Tim Brown indicated that nothing has been signed. He instructed the Montgomery building reps to bring this issue back to their building and let Tim know the results by Thursday. Tim does not want to make this decision, he wants the Montgomery teachers to decide which solution they prefer. Rich Steger will attend the meeting in Montgomery on Thursday.

6. Hudson Valley Area Labor Federation- "Political Coordination Roundtable" rep- Information was distributed. These meetings take place on a monthly basis. Let Tim Brown know if you would like this to be your committee

assignment for next year.

7. Making Strides Against Breast Cancer- Information was distributed. Patti Lunden will be our local Team Coordinator.

8. Governor's Veto Vote- Information to call legislators (regarding recent budget votes) was distributed. Please post this information in buildings, copy, and put in mailboxes. It is crucial to make these calls- tallies are kept. Thank Tom Kirwan, Tom Morahan, and Bill Larkin for their support of the recent budget vote in Albany. Call Nancy Calhoun and Howard Mills to express your outrage regarding their refusal to override the Governor's irresponsible vetoes.

9. Proposed new regulations in reporting liability for retiree healthcare- Information was distributed. Tim Brown will try to get more specific information on this. We will probably have a letter-writing campaign.

10. Walden Report Cards- Walden has been told that report cards must be turned in within 2 days. CBA language says 2 ½ days. Tim indicated that he will discuss this with Dr. Hooley. Joe Collins reported that the Middle School math final is on June 19 and that grades must be exported on the 19th, although the last day of the quarter is the 24th.

11. PDT Interest- Patti Lunden will be

stepping down from the Professional Development Team. If someone is interested in serving on this committee, let Tim Brown know. Selection is solely made by Executive Council.

12. Application form available for "State Professional Standards and Practices Board for Teaching"- See Tim Brown if you are interested.

13. AFT Magazine- The AFT magazine is American Educator. Call NYSUT if you are not receiving this magazine.

14. Elementary early dismissal- Tim polled elementary building reps to determine if buses were late at the end of the previous school year. Tim will see if he can get the dismissal time back to 11:30.

15. Tim and John Bonagura will meet to discuss incentive for Vote Cope payroll deduction participation.

16. Computer teachers- Tim Brown indicated that technical issues are being pushed on teachers.

17. Para Reps- Tim would like para reps to attend OCTP meetings next year.

18. OUSDHP viability- Peter Roden will share this information with Tim.

VCTA Executive Council Meeting Highlights—Sept. 16, 2003

Board of Education Report

1. Kevin McFadden reported that the BOE meeting consisted primarily of summer principals' reports.
2. BOE President- Mr. Santo, Vice President- Mr. Tierney

G. Editor's Report

1. Patti Lunden reported that the September issue of VC Echoes has been distributed.
2. Echoes should be distributed to teachers, paras, principals, and secretaries, with a copy provided to each building's cafeteria and custodial staff.

Dental/ Optical Trust

1. Jay Sussdorff reported that new dental booklets will be arriving soon. Benefits have been increased.

Retirees

1. Kevin McFadden reported that 92 retirees attended the luncheon on the first day of school.

Old Business

1. Patti Lunden reported that the Breast Cancer walk will take place on October 19.
2. Patti reported that the AFT Africa AIDS campaign is raising money through the sale of pins, which are \$10. Contact Patti if you are interested.
3. Laurie Hey reminded reps to pick up informational packets, which contain information and form letters pertaining to childcare leave and retirement, a surviving spouse checklist, and general information on unions. Please share this information with building members as needed and contact Laurie if you need

replacement copies.

Standing Committees

1. PDT- Toni Sperry reported that high school representation is needed on PDT. Inservice credit is given for serving on this committee. Eileen Purcell indicated that perhaps she could serve on PDT beginning in November.
2. Vote-Cope- Our goal is to have the entire staff participating in payroll deduction.
3. VCTA Shirts/Hats- There will be 2 or 3 versions to choose from and will be union-made in the USA. A \$2 discount as a VCTA union promotion was discussed. Gail Nozell indicated that she will do this as her committee.

New Business

VCTA Executive Council Meeting Highlights—Sept. 16, 2003

1. Carol DeMicco asked what constituted reasonable travel time between buildings. Tim Brown indicated that you must be reimbursed for mileage and travel time should not cut into planning or lunch. Jay Sussdorff indicated that he and Rich Steger will be looking over schedules by the end of the month. Jay requested that anyone with scheduling concerns should contact him.

2. Chris Brand asked for clarification regarding how AIS and lunch/recess time is being addressed in other elementary buildings. Discussion followed.

3. Kathy Bordone reported that kindergarten teachers were told that they had to have their rooms ready for kindergarten orientation. Teachers are paid to come in for orientation, but not for getting their rooms ready. Discussion followed. Please contact Tim Brown if anyone is being written up for not having their room ready.

M. President's Report

1. Committee assignments were reviewed. Reps must attend 8 out of 10 Exec. Council meetings and do their committee assignment in order to have their local dues (\$100) refunded at the end of the year.

2. 457 and 403b Side Agreement and contact information- Copies of the side agreement were distributed. Payroll deduction forms must be submitted prior to November 1st for a January 1st effective date and before July 1st for a September 1st effective date. The New York State Deferred Compensation Plan website is www.nysdcp.com and their toll-free phone number is (800) 422-8463, 24 hours a day. Personalized assistance is available 8-11 a.m. Monday through

Friday and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays, except holidays.

3. Corinne Feller Letter- promotional items- Tim Brown asked for suggestions. John Bonagura reported that the Haggar golf tournament would not take place, but inquired if we would be interested in contributing our donation to scholarship. **Motion to contribute our regular Haggar donation to the scholarship committee: Jay Sussdorff. Second: Marc Sperry.**

4. OUSDHP Minutes- copies were distributed.

5. Superintendent's Effective Communication Letter- copies were distributed. Please check your voice mail and respond in a timely manner. Check your e-mail regularly, but you may use your own discretion as to whether you respond by phone, face-to-face conference, etc. Keep in mind that when you communicate by e-mail that you may not necessarily be communicating with the student's parent.

6. Superintendent's Montgomery Bus Letter- copies were distributed.

7. VCTA Scholarship Winners- Donald Brooks Scholarship was received by Jen Hembury. VCTA Scholarships were received by Amanda Farley, Kristen Casey, Lauren McPhillips, and Janelle Nodhtufl.

8. Retiree Thank you notes to VCTA: Janice Borland, Pat Darney, Patty DePew, Connie DeSantis, Nancy Schmidt. Copies were attached.

9. Payroll Deduction Numbers- a. Berea 28

b. Walden 31 (11 more cash or check) out of 44

c. MS 56 or 51% (up from 27 or 25%) out of 110

10. Integrate Pro Suggestions- Reps were asked to poll the teachers in their buildings for suggestions as to what they would like

integrate pro to do that it currently doesn't. BOCES can address these suggestions.

11. New Member Forms- John Bonagura reported that new members need to fill out forms for NYSUT, even if they've taught in another district.

12. Para/Sec Stipends/Dues-

13. Community Service Award Information- Please send Tim Brown a list of things that teachers do (for the end of the year).

14. NYSTeacher of the Year- The deadline is October 30 (in Echoes). Send applications to Doug Straebler in the high school.

15. Nancy Schmidt won the Dean's Award of Excellence. The district will pay for the 2 individuals, who did the nomination work, to attend. Discussion followed. **Motion: A maximum of \$100 for recognition of VCTA members when they win an award can be utilized at the discretion of the officers of the VCTA: Chris Brand. Second: Toni Sperry.** Motion carried.

16. Parent Conference Day- Copies of Dr. Hooley's memo were distributed. Parent conferences will take place during the day on Tuesday, November 25 and during the evening on Monday, November 24. All teachers are required to be in attendance.

17. OUSDHP- Copies of Christina Howe's memo were distributed. It contained information on OUSDHP and listed website addresses and contact phone numbers for new instructional staff. Copies of OUSDHP Board of Directors Meeting minutes were distributed.

Pataki Signs Pension Deduction Bill For VOTE-Cope

Gov. George Pataki last week signed a new law to allow members of the state and city Teachers' Retirement Systems to make automatic contributions to VOTE-COPE through pension-check deductions. This will make it much easier for politically-active retirees to participate in NYSUT's voluntary political action fund.

Before now, only in-service NYSUT members have been able to make automatic contributions through payroll deduction - sometimes known as a "check-off" - if the employer agreed to do it. But retirees—representing about 130,000 of NYSUT's 500,000 members - did not have the option.

"We know that participation rates are much higher in the hundreds of districts that offer payroll deduction," said NYSUT Executive Vice President Alan Lubin. NYSUT fought

hard for the legislation and Lubin anticipates a corresponding rise in retiree participation as a result of the new law.

"Our retiree activists have been asking for this for years," Lubin said. "It will make life much easier for our VOTE-COPE coordinators, as well as our individual members."

Lubin stressed that retirees are not required to contribute and can revoke their automatic contribution authorization at any time. The law only affects members in the city and state TRS. "We will try to expand it to cover all members next year," Lubin said.

VOTE-COPE is NYSUT's non-partisan political action arm funded entirely by voluntary contributions from members. The fund, which topped \$4.5 million last year, is used to support union-backed candidates for office and strengthen political action programs on

all levels - national, state and local.

Lubin said VOTE-COPE benefits all NYSUT members, in-service and retired. In recent years, the fund has helped win a permanent and automatic cost-of-living adjustment for public employee pensions. Much of NYSUT's legislative agenda addresses retiree issues, particularly at the federal level, such as protecting Medicare and Social Security and controlling the cost of prescription drugs.

"Whenever I meet with retirees, I remind them 'You may be retired from your profession, but you're never retired from political action,'" Lubin said.

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



Greetings -

For those of you not at the luncheon who did not get Echoes' first copy of the school year, '03-'04, welcome. Ninety-two retirees attended the luncheon, one hundred twenty responded one way or the other, two hundred five received notices of the 21st annual retiree luncheon. More on the luncheon later.

Off my chest! -

This latest epistle is being written on October 10, 2003 the day that the Times Herald Record informs us that Commissioner Richard Mills of the beloved State Education Depart-

ment has instituted a "mid-course adjustment" on "Regents passing graduation grade of 55". Needless to say, I am in high dudgeon regarding this. First, and foremost, the whole "raising standards" routine was flawed from the start. The concept can't be argued with, but the process lacked thought and "real" input from teachers. Indeed, window dressing was provided by the Commissioner's "dog and pony" shows circa 1995, but the process was a huge mistake. I recall a retired teacher who mentioned this at his interview for a seat on the Board of Regents. He did not get the seat. (Of course, he is also a crabby, outspoken, cantankerous old geezer). Enough said. Now if only the Commissioner would give fourth and eighth grade teachers a break by spreading around the state testing, I would applaud his efforts.

Nobody asked me, but...

- As I read of school tax numbers in the county, it

strikes me that the VC School Board and the Superintendent and Staff are doing a prudent job budget-wise, no matter the moans and groans from some quarters.

- John Mirola, the only M.C. the retiree luncheon has ever had in 21 years, gets better with each passing year.
- VC's staff, in the words of Dr. Moran, former superintendent, at each of his 18 school openings, continues to be the best in the state.

Voices from the Past -

The conversations at the luncheon reminded me that the vitality of our retired teachers, administrators and staff members continue in their retirement. The notes received from many who could not attend the luncheon also attest to this dynamic group of retirees. Many are em-

Mac's Musings ... *(from the Retiree Side)* (continued from page sixteen)

bracing other careers (part-time, or, in some cases, full-time), others are traveling to all parts of the globe, some are helping out with grandchildren, still others are deeply involved in volunteer work. Those who have experienced physical problems continue to show the indomitable spirit which made them such wonderful school people. I'd like to share some examples of "Life after VC" in this column and in next issue's column.

- Rosa Boyd (HS) reports that she and Gil (HS) now have 11 grandchildren. She is heavily involved in volunteer work: OCCC Alumni Board, Women's University Club, The Interactive Museum, Sons and Daughters of Italy, etc. Gil continues his mastery on the links and on the streams, often fishing with Larry Sutter (HS) and John Olsen (HS and Cornwall HS), a former VCTA president.
- Sue McCarley (Berea), still

as chipper as ever (even in her wheelchair), sends regards to all and thanks to Echoes. Sue continues to be a real inspiration to me.

- Fil Bernatowicz was at the luncheon but also sent a note with her reply. Fil continues to sub in kindergarten at her beloved Berea, and sends word of returning from a cross-country rail trip to California to visit son, Joe and his family. Joe, Vincent and Lynn, Fil's kids, are all VC grads. The grandkids are a joy.
- Kay VanTran (Nurse) and Doug have been in Massachusetts for seven years. Their children (four VC grads- all happy and successful) and grandchildren live within one hour of them.
- Ruth Kirk (Walden) is now permanently settled in Florida and sends regards to all.

- Tony Cimorelli (Berea) settled in Myrtle Beach and is working at a great golf course three days a week. He says it is Paradise.

More after-VC reports next time.

Amen!

Thanks again for coming to the back pages when you know I'll be ranting and raving about something. The fire in my belly refuses to be extinguished, which pleases me, but may be burdensome to you.

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

~ Kevin McFadden
Retiree Representative

If you're planning to retire in the next five years, you are strongly advised to meet with the NYS Teachers' Retirement System. In-Person Consultations and Video Consultations dates are posted in your building.

Also check the NYSTRS website:

www.nystrs.org

WORKMAN'S COMPENSATION

All medical services for any work related injury should be billed under workers' compensation and not your private insurance plan.

The claims administrator for the plan is:
WRIGHT RISK MANAGEMENT Co., Inc.
100 Charles Lindbergh Blvd.
Uniondale, New York 11553
(516) 750-9416

If you lose time from work because of this injury, you MUST inform Theresa Miller at CO.

Retiree Luncheon—September 4, 2002



Ralph Depew (EC), John Schmolli (Walden) and former super "Doc" Bill Moran react to John Mirola's annual joke.



Old friends recounting past school stories. Jane Depew and Anne Stone (MS), Trudy Flax (HS) and Pupil Personnel "maestro", Leo Flax.



New retiree, Nancy Schmidt (Montgomery) joins Jan and Joe Legere at luncheon.



New retiree, Connie DeSantis (Walden) and Gerry Cadzow (Montgomery) enjoy a quiet moment.



Table # 5 (now promoted to Table #8) plots more mischief. Pictured are Ed Kubina (Berea), Frank DeSantis (Maybrook), Rich Angemayer (Montgomery) and Gene Martin (Walden)

Photos on pages 21-22 courtesy of Ginny McFadden.

Retiree Luncheon—September 3, 2003



Retired elementary gals swap some old stories.



Joan Ewald and Jean Larsen (Walden) await the arrival of the third musketeer, Jeri Vermilyea.



Bill Cocks (MS) asks to check Bruce Sequin's (MS) planbook - from 1971.



Middle School's Anne Stone brings out smiles of high school's Jack Matikiewicz, Middle School's Bruce Sequin and former Assistant Superintendent and luncheon (21 years!) MC, John Mirola.



Retired high school stalwarts are graced by the presence of Walden's Marie Nash.



6:00 AM- "Mac" ponders upcoming meeting at Table #5 - at Luncheon.

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.

NYSUT Legal Service Plan helps thousands

The NYSUT Legal Service Plan can help resolve everyday situations before they become legal problems. That's why more than 60,000 New York State United Teachers members are covered under this plan.

When you enroll, you'll receive a toll-free number to the plan's National Legal Office, where you can call for unlimited legal advice and assistance at no charge. The National Legal Office is staffed by attorneys with expertise in real estate, domestic relations, family law, civil litigation, foreclosure, bankruptcy, business law, criminal law, landlord/tenant situations, wills/trusts/estates, elder law, personal injury and vehicle/traffic law.

Many times, these attorneys can resolve your situation by writing a letter or making a phone call on your behalf, at no charge. If other assistance is warranted, they will refer you to a plan participating attorney located in your area. The plan has participating attorneys across the country. These attorneys will charge plan members \$125 an hour or 40 percent off their usual hourly fee, whichever is lower.

The plan also provides a free simple Will each year of plan enrollment. You'll receive coupons for free office

consultations. An informative newsletter, *Preventive Law Guide*, features consumer-oriented articles and is sent three times each year. The National Legal Office will review, at no cost to you, legal documents up to six pages in length, such as purchase agreements, loan agreements and real estate documents.

- **Landlord problems?**
- **Noisy neighbors?**
- **Purchasing a house?**
- **Drawing up a Will?**
- **Speeding ticket?**

For a number of common personal legal matters, such as a real estate transaction, misdemeanor, traffic violation, separation and divorce, the attorneys will charge no more than the guaranteed maximum fees assigned to each matter.

Retiree members can choose between the Legal Service Plan and the Retiree

Legal Service Plan, which features slight variations in benefit levels.

In addition, optional riders can be purchased with either plan to provide legal coverage in the specialized areas of elder law and business protection.

Priced at \$70 a year (\$36 for the retiree plan), you can't afford not to look into this valuable benefit. For information and an enrollment form, contact NYSUT Member Benefits at 800-626-8101, e-mail benefits@nysutmail.org, or log on to www.memberbenefits.nysut.org.



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.

Computer Purchase Program for Union Members

Get everything you need to begin computing after only one phone call or online visit. We offer new equipment by leading manufacturers. Save big whether you pay in full or finance over time. Call **1-877-208-7167** or visit **www.aft.ecp2.com** for product details.



10/03

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

Article contributions or Letters to the Editor for the next issue should be sent to Patricia Lunden, HS, by December 1, 2003.

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

Days Out

According to Article XXII of the Teachers' contract, a teacher is entitled to utilize:

Sick Leave—for personal illness. 15 days per year, may accumulate up to 200.

Critical Illness in Family—3 days per year. Family is defined as mother, father, sister, brother, children living outside the household; or a member of the family living within the household.

Bereavement—3 days with in the event of death in family (as above). 1 day is granted for a member of the family outside the above relationships.

Personal Business—3 days are allowed per year. Except in emergency, 48 hours advance notice must be given to the principal. No teacher will be absent for personal business immediately preceding or following vacation or holiday periods unless the reason is stated and approved by the Superintendent Any teacher who does not participate in the attendance incentive shall have his unused personal days accumulate as sick days.

Jury Duty—A teacher who is required to serve on jury duty will receive full salary during the period of such service less an amount equal to the compensation paid the teacher for such duty, provided the teacher selects the call-in method of fulfilling the jury duty obligation and reports to work on those days not required to report for jury duty.

When calling in an absence, use one of the above as your reason for absence.

Walking with Cavemen

Recently, the Discovery Channel aired a wonderful program called "Walking With Cavemen". In a two hour time frame the history of humans is explored from 4,000,000 BCE to 37,000 BCE. The overall theme which carries through the program is that survival of the fittest depended as much on cognitive fitness as much as physical fitness. To survive humans had to be able to imagine, to analyze a problem, conceive of a solution and then solve the problem. It all happened by trial and error, without learning standards or standardized testing. Can you imagine that in a period of about 27,000 years human beings were able to go from being dependent on herd location and the chance growing of wild grain—to being able to settle the Nile Valley, domesticate animals, and farm. In another 5,000 years they were able to build pyramids 450 feet high—an engineering feat that would not be surpassed for another 7,000 years. How were they able to accomplish this? It must have had to do with their learning process. They told stories of the day. They told stories of the past. They built community around a fire. When they met a people different from them-

selves—they learned what they could from them and adapted that learning to their own lives. But of the utmost importance, they took the time to imagine, the time to think.

There is a lot they educators can learn from the prehistoric past

- Schools need a sense of community— from the classroom to the administration to the townspeople— we all need to feel as if we are in this together—one clan so to speak ready to bring the wonders of our world to the next generation.
- We need to be tell stories of the past— to tell stories of the day. We need to have the time to sit and stare into the communal fire so to stretch our imaginations.
- We need to be able to meet other people who are different—who do things differently and adapt what we learn from them to our own lives.
- We need to recognize that a tool (like a standardized test) is just a tool. Did Paleolithic man spend 10 months practicing spear throwing for only one hunt? Of course, he didn't—he would never survive that way. Learning to hunt and perfecting the hunt was a day to day



process that added to the overall quality of life. Its goal was not a shot deal on a given day. We need to approach the education of our next generation with this in mind. Their education should not be reduced to the achievement of a single score—their education should be a process which adds to the quality of their present and future life.

For all of our advancement, in all of our modernity, have we any chance of accomplishing the feats of greatness accomplished by our ancestors? It seems that our only hope lies in how much we will allow our children to think and imagine beyond the task of a single test. For their sake and for ours, hopefully it will be enough time.

~ Patti Lunden,
Editor