

VC ECHOES

An AFTCA and New York Teacher Award Winning Publication

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Welcome Back, Valley Central!

The crisp (*and hopefully*) cool September morning air, the smell of fresh brewed coffee, the sound of new pencils being sharpened and the squeak of sneakers not yet broken in—these are the beginning of a new school year. The beginning of the year is a magical time—anything is possible. Former VC Superintendent James Coonan always reminded us in his initial address that , “They only send us the best that they have— they’re not keeping the best ones home.” Keeping this in mind –greet each of your new charges with the enthusiasm of a new start. One never knows— this school year could be the turning point in some young life— the year they decide on the course of the rest of their life— the year that it all “clicks” for them and you could be the person who touches their life forever— the wind beneath their wings- anything is possible. Likewise, this could be the year that it all clicks for you— that you know you made the right decision when you chose education as the direction of your life— perhaps one of your new students will touch your life forever—after all, anything is possible. Whether this is your first year, your fifth year, your fifteenth year, or your twenty-fifth year, may your new school year be a fulfillment of the hope and possibility that looms large this September morning.

~Patti Lunden,
Editor



**We make
a living by
what we
get,
but we
make a life
by what we
give.**

~ Winston
Churchill

Ready or Not, It's September!

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk—October 19th

The American Cancer Society's mission can be summed up in three words: Hope. Progress. Answers®.

The "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk" has been the premier event sponsored by the American Cancer Society for the last ten years in the ACS's fight against breast cancer. To date, \$28 million dollars has been raised through this one event. More than 90 walks take place nationwide.

Research advances in drugs for treatment, preventions and in the discovery of the breast cancer gene have happened due to the money raised by this event. The goal of the ACS is to "unravel the mystery of how breast cancer begins, and to see better ways to prevent, detect and treat the disease." But research is not the only goal of this fundraising. The ACS also seeks to spread awareness of the importance of early detection of this disease. Early detection can literally mean the a 50—77% difference in the chances of surviving breast cancer. The ACS sponsors the walk to support advocacy as well making sure cancer is a priority in the hearts and minds of our elected leaders. The funds raised from this walk also provide support so that no woman has to face breast cancer alone. Their free live information network can be accessed at 1.800.ACS.2345 and www.cancer.org.

NYSUT AND ACS Join Forces

The American Cancer Society and New York State United Teachers are partnered again this fall to fight breast cancer.

"We are excited and proud to renew our relationship with ACS this year," said NYSUT First Vice President Antonia Cortese.

Last year more than 7,500 NYSUT members and their families participated, raising \$500,000 to support the American Cancer Society's efforts in breast cancer research, patient services, education and advocacy.

"We hope to do even more this year," Cortese said.

Hudson Valley "Making Strides Walk"

The Hudson Valley area walk will take place on Sunday, October 19th at Woodbury Commons. It is a non-competitive 5K Walk through the Commons. It provides an opportunity for breast cancer survivors and their families, friends and co-workers and many others who want to join the fight against breast cancer. Participants also receive a "fistful" of coupons for stores at Woodbury Commons at registration.

To participate, contact your building team captain and pick up a registration form. Ask everyone you know to help fight breast cancer by sponsoring you as a walker. Donations can also be collected online. You can link directly to your regional Making Strides registration site from www.nysut.org, and registration through the ACS Web site will allow you to designate your pledges under the NYSUT sponsorship umbrella. **BE SURE TO WRITE the local's name following NYSUT in the Team Name (NYSUT: Valley Central Teachers' Association).**

You can "stride with pride" by purchasing the official Making Strides Against Breast Cancer T-shirt. T-shirts are \$12.00 each and pre-printed with your team name or logo. T-shirts can be ordered when you pick up your registration form. T-shirts must be ordered by September 19th.

The Day of the Walk

You will register at the NY-



200,000 women will be diagnosed this year, 40,000 won't survive.

SUT Registration area. Plan on arriving early to park. Registration is from 8:00 am to 9:00 am and the Walk begins at 9:00 am.

NYSUT will provide coffee, tea, juice, and food available for our members. Just look for the NYSUT Banner and plan on meeting your members there on the day of the Walk.

~ Patti Lunden, Editor

Sources: NYSUT, "The Bottom Line" And American Cancer Society

If you would like to be the team captain for one of the elementary buildings—please contact

VCTA Team Co-Coordinators:

**Patti Lunden, HS
VM 7664**

**Maddie Brooks, MS
VM 6611**

*Patti is the HS Team Captain,
Maddie is the MS Team Captain.*

***Make a Difference,
Join Us on October 19th!***

PROTECT YOUR HEALTH—The earlier breast cancer is found, the higher your survival rate!

Being a woman and growing older puts you at risk for breast cancer!

Have annual mammograms beginning at age 40.

Begin monthly breast self-exams at age 20.

Have regular clinical breast exams by your doctor.

Exercise regularly - Maintain a healthy weight— Limit alcohol intake . It's your life— take care of it!

The Questions about “Comparable” Health Coverage— Or Do I have to take the Buy-Out?

Who is entitled to insurance benefits?

As a salaried or full-time employee you are entitled by contract to insurance benefits (*health, dental and optical*). If you are married (*or marry in the future*) your spouse and dependents are also entitled to benefits.

If I am married, am I still entitled to health benefits?

It depends because there is a contractual comparability clause (Article XXV, D.2, pg. 16, Teachers’ Contract) regarding health benefits. (*Dental and optical benefits are not affected by this clause*). The Comparability Clause applies under the given conditions: **You are married and your spouse PROVIDES health coverage for you & that coverage is COMPARABLE.**

What if my spouse does not have health insurance benefits?

If your spouse does not provide insurance for you, you are entitled to family coverage.

What if my spouse’s health insurance is inferior in comparison to the insurance I could get through the District?

If your spouse’s insurance is not comparable you are entitled to insurance through the District.

How is comparability determined?

Comparability is determined by the District through a holistic comparison of both plans. Since plans vary from providing company to provid-

ing company, **you must** provide your insurance summary and booklets to allow for a comprehensive comparison. You should give a copy of the information to the Association, so that the Association can also review the plan as well in case you disagree with the District’s findings. **If you find yourself having to review your spouse’s insurance with the District, you are strongly urged to have Rich Steger present with you. The VCTA negotiated this language with the District and our goal is to protect your right to have the best coverage available to your family.**

What if the District determines my spouse’s health insurance to be comparable, but I disagree?

The contractual agreement allows for arbitration in such instances.

If I am not entitled to District health benefits, what do I get instead?

If your spouse’s coverage is determined to be comparable, and you agree with the finding; you are entitled to the District’s buyout (\$1800).

What if there is a change in my spouse’s insurance and it is no longer comparable or if I get divorced or lose my spouse?

If your marital status or insurance changes at any time, you can regain the District’s coverage immediately. If you have a previously unforeseen health situation, you may be able to regain coverage.

What if my spouse’s insurance is NOT comparable, but I would like to take the buy-out anyway?

You can voluntarily elect to take the District’s buyout if you would like to, as long as you are provided health insurance through another source.

What if I am single, never use my health insurance and would rather have the buy-out. Can I also elect to take it?

Not unless you have an alternate health coverage (*i.e. from another job*). You must show alternate coverage to elect to take the buyout.

What if I have changes but fail to inform the District (For example, you yet married—have comparable coverage by spouse but never tell the District)

You would be committing an act of fraud. The comparability clause is contractual just like your salary. It would be illegal for the District to hire you as a teacher, sign a contract to pay you and then never give you a paycheck. Likewise, you as a VCTA member (*or agency fee payer since this is a closed shop*) are bound by the clauses of the contract. If the District becomes aware that you have not disclosed such information to them—you could be facing legal charges and disciplinary action.

Who can I contact with questions?

Vice President Rich Steger, Walden Elementary VM 5648, 457-5899.

If you are injured while at work, you may be entitled to Worker’s Compensation.

The District’s Worker’s Compensation carrier is:

Wright Risk Management, 377 Oak Street, Garden City, New York 11530-6542.

Give this address to your doctor if you have a workman’s compensation claim.

Marvin Anderman is a Worker’s Compensation attorney. His phone number is 212-227-2300.

Members should contact him (and the VCTA) if they are having problems with a workman’s compensation claim.

FAQ Concerning Health Insurance Choices

What health insurance choices do I have?

You have a federal right to choose an HMO rather than the indemnity plan offered by the District.

What is an indemnity plan?

The indemnity plan offered by the District is the *Orange-Ulster School District Health Plan*. This plan allows you to stay in the Beech Street/ Medichoice network or go outside the network with applied deductibles and 20/80 (*reasonable and customary*) coverage.

What HMO's can I choose from?

You can choose any HMO you'd like, however the VCTA has helped to make three HMO's easily accessible. They are: **Empire-BlueCross/Blue Shield, MVP, & GHI.**

Will I have to pay anything to choose an HMO?

If you choose to use an HMO, the District will pay the dollar amount that they would have paid to indemnity plan to the HMO. You are responsible to pay the difference if the HMO is more. That difference is deducted from your paycheck pre-tax.

If I didn't get a chance to pick up information on the health plans

during the Health/TSA Fair, who should I contact?

If you would like information on the OUSDHP, contact Central Office. If you want information on Empire, MVP or GHI contact Rich Steger at the VCTA office, 457-5899.

What does the VCTA recommend concerning the health plan choices?

That decision is yours to make. *The VCTA wants you to know you have a right to choose, but does not endorse any one plan over another.* Consult your physicians, family, friends, colleagues, or the Internet to help you make your decision. Also ask yourself "What if..." questions, to be certain that doctors and hospitals would be available to you if you needed them in the future.

What if I choose a health plan and then don't like it? Am I stuck with it until I stop working here?

No. You may change your health insurance coverage every year, deciding in October (*the open enrollment period*) to change for the following year. The VCTA hosts an annual Health/TSA fair to let you continually compare coverage options. However, you must stay with the plan through December 31st of



the year, once selected you will not be able to change again until the next October.

If I decide to switch insurance plans, when does the new coverage begin?

If you select a different option this October, it will take effect as of January 1, 2004 will not change unless you select another option next October.

How do I make a change?

Fill out the application form from the HMO you have selected and send it to Polly Conigilio, Payroll Dept. at CO before October 31, 2003.

Who can I contact with questions?

Rich Steger, Vice President who works at Walden Elementary, VM 5648, will be happy to talk with you. Contact him also through the Union Office, 457-5899.



The VCTA does not receive the rates for the HMO insurances until Tuesday, September 2nd (at the earliest) .

The chart comparing the four health plans will be published in the October 2003 issue of the VC ECHOES.

It will also be distributed to buildings.

You must inform the District of your intent to change (an filled out application form for the HMO is enough to do this) by October 31st. Completed forms are sent to Polly Conigilio at CO.

Seventh Annual VCTA Health/ TSA Fair

(see page three and four for information on Health and Comparable Coverage)

The VCTA chose to select a small number of TSA companies on the basis of recommendations from our members and invite them to our annual Health/TSA Fair. These advisors are asked to provide our members with the best advice and investment options according to their needs.

Dave Mazzetti
American Express Financial Advisor
 121 Old Main Str., Fishkill, NY 12524 (845) 896-7520
See our ad

Christopher A. Joy, LUTCF
Joy Insurance & Investments
 639 E. Main St., Middletown, NY 10940 (845) 342-4888

Richard C. Gridley, Investment Consultant
Tax Relief Investments
 72 North Montgomery St., Walden, NY 12586 (845) 778-3147

James Stout, ADVEST
 25 Main Str., Goshen, NY 10924 (845) 294-1300

Al DeLorenzo, Aetna Investment Services, Inc.
 114 Route 17K, Newburgh, NY 12550 (845) 564-3654

If you ever have a problem with one of these companies, please inform the VCTA so that we can re-evaluate their inclusion. You are not limited to using only these companies, you can choose from over 40 vendors in use by VC employees. The VCTA wants to make you well aware of the option of 403(b) and 457(b) plans, but what you do with your money is your own business.

As a courtesy to the District, the VCTA also invites three financial companies with whom they deal extensively:

Ed Hogan , Faculty Services (common remitter for TSA 's)

Vince Mazzetti, Myles Financial Services (handle the Cafeteria 125 Plan)

Joe Laiz, 457(b) Administrator

These are not VCTA selected companies, however, if you should have any problems with them, contact the VCTA so we can let the District know.

Payroll deduction forms submitted for TSA or 403(b) accounts

before November 1st will take effect January 1st,

changes submitted before July 1st will take effect September 1st.

If you missed the Health/TSA Fair and would like information on TSA providers, contact the Union office at 457-5899.

NYS Deferred Compensation Plan (457b)

Now Available to Valley Central!

The VCTA and CO have entered into a side agreement* which makes the NYS Deferred Compensation Plan available to our members. Like the TSA (403b), this plan allows you to shelter money pre-tax for retirement savings. The 457b plan coupled with the 403b has now almost doubled the amount of money that you may shelter! The 457B plan is open for enrollment before Nov. 1st for an January 1st effective date and before July 1st for a September 1st effective date.

*For a review of full language, contact your building representative.

Joe Laiz is the District's Administrator of the Plan.

To obtain more information on the Deferred Compensation Plan:

Toll Free: (800) 422-8463 24 hours a day

Web Site: www.nysdcp.com

Central Office also has informational booklets

The Cafeteria is now in Room 125? . . . The Cafeteria 125 Plan

Although a Cafeteria 125 Plan has nothing to do with food—it does allow you to save money two ways— which may allow you to go to an expensive restaurant with your “found” money! Cafeteria 125 Plans (*also known as Flexible Spending Accounts*) allow you to shelter money from taxes (*NO Federal, State, or FICA*) for the purpose of medical reimbursement or dependent care. The IRS allows a payroll deduction up to \$5000 pre-taxed for dependent care (*Day care for a child or dependent adult so that you can work*). As you pay your pay care provider, you submit receipts and are reimbursed from your Flexible Spending Account. The savings are realized a second time when you file your taxes as that income will not be subject to taxation.

Likewise, you are able to shelter \$2000 for Medical reimbursement of money that you pay for services not covered by insurance (*co-pay, prescription co-pays, dental or optical expenses*). Unlike

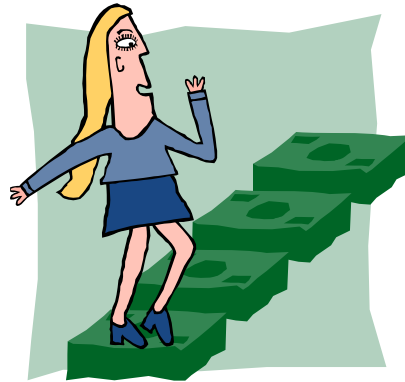
the Dependent Care account, you may claim full reimbursement from your Medical account on the first day of the plan year.

It is important to realize that any money not claimed during the plan year (October 1st—September 30th) is forfeited, so be sure to only shelter money you know you will be using.

The Cafeteria 125 Plan is part of the benefits package the Union negotiated on behalf of its members and should be taken advantage of, if it is beneficial to you.

The District has chosen Myles Financial Services to administer the Cafeteria 125 Plan. You may have already received and signed off on a letter to Myles over the summer. Otherwise you must meet with the representative from Myles even if you don't want to participate in the plans to sign off to that effect.

At these meetings, Myles representatives should only be explaining your options concerning



Cafeteria 125 Plans. Although they offer other financial services, it is not the purpose of this meeting time to promote those products. If you wish to speak to them about such products, they should be making an appointment with you for another time. Should you feel that this is not the case, or you are being pressured to look at other products at that time, contact President Tim Brown at the Union office, 457-5899.

The IRS 2003 rate for mileage reimbursement is: .36 cents per mile.

(Please note this is a decrease from 2002)

Contract Article XD: *“For personal automobile use, teachers who are assigned to more than one (1) school per day shall receive the following compensation mileage reimbursement at the rate used by the IRS.*



From the Vice-President

Common Sense (and Sensibility) (Reprint from Dec. 2002)

I've been remiss. I guess I assumed (*yeah, I know*) that all of my colleagues are omniscient as far as workplace and contractual protocol are concerned—what was I thinking?! Since there have been several concerns and inquiries voiced recently, it might be a propitious time to review some areas where common sense and sensibility would seem to be appropriate. The following list is arranged in no specific priority order.

You need to know your collective bargaining agreement (CBA).

Do you even know where your copy is? When you have a concern, do you peruse your contract to see if pertinent information is in the language? This step alone will often answer your question, address your situation or indicate where to go or how to proceed. Yes, it may take some time to familiarize yourself with the document, and no, the language is not always crystal clear. However, would you teach a class without knowing the subject matter?

We all want the safety and guidelines the CBA provides; let's look it over when we have it. It just makes common sense from this perspective.

Building vs. Association issues

Many issues that are brought to us are **not** association related or addressed in the CBA, but are building/district/administrative policies based on state mandates, laws and/or local prerogatives. Some of these are seemingly obvious, while others may not be. Again, common sense rules. If the differentiation isn't clear to you, check the CBA. If you

don't find applicable language, then it probably isn't association related. Does that mean you can't ask a building rep or officer for clarification? Of course not! (*For example, the softness rating of the available toilet tissue is **not** an association issue. Being required to attend a CSE meeting during your scheduled lunch time would be.*) We are here to maintain your safety, professional integrity and legal rights under the law and your CBA.

You need to be an informed member to make the process work most effectively.

Chain of Command (VCTA)

If you have a question, concern, or beef, see your building rep first. (*Do you know who they are?*) That

rep will attempt to address your situation at that point. If he/she cannot help you directly, he/she will approach one of the officers for assistance. If an officer cannot resolve the situation or needs more information,

he/she will call our NYSUT LRS for assistance. The officers of the association can, will and do voice your concerns with building administrators and at monthly meetings with the district's superintendents. We serve as both filters and advocates for our membership.

Don't be your own worst enemy.

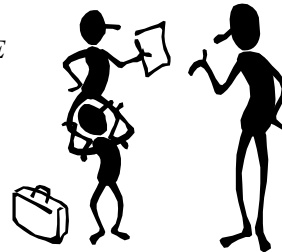
If you are familiar with the CBA and present practices, be aware of any changes, deviations or violations concerning the members in your buildings. Teachers should never agree to a change in working terms or conditions that violates

contractual language or may set a precedent. If you are not sure if a situation falls into this category, talk to your rep and wait until you get an informed answer from your leadership before agreeing to any changes. Just because something "works" for you personally doesn't make it right. In fact, it may very well open the door for others to be put into that same situation which **doesn't** "work" for them. Again, use common sense and think not only of the impact on you but of the impact on others as well.

Meetings with building administration

You do have the right to have an association rep with you when meeting with an administrator. Would it help to know what the meeting is being called for? Absolutely. Can an "innocent" meeting go badly or in an unexpected, negative direction? Sure. Are there times when an emergency situation might not allow for the time to get all the parties together? Yes. You have to exercise good judgment and common sense when faced with this situation. Ask the administrator what the purpose of the meeting is. If it appears to be disciplinary or adversarial, then you should exercise your right. If the meeting seems purely informational or just a casual conversation, why ask for a rep? If an "innocent" meeting goes in an uncomfortable or negative direction, stop and ask that it continue at a later time in the presence of a rep. The presence of a rep is primarily as an observer and, perhaps, mediator. This, in effect, is a safeguard to both parties concerned.

(*continued on page ten*)



"...use common sense and think not only of the impact on you but of the impact on others as well."

About the Effective Teaching Program

The Effective Teaching Program is an example of NYSUT's strong support of ongoing professional development opportunities. ETP courses and workshops provide practical teacher-tested strategies that can help you in your classroom.

ETP instructors are master classroom teachers with extensive training in the content and delivery of these unique courses. Participants may earn three graduate credits from Long Island University (LIU), The College of Saint Rose (CSR), and Aldephi University or may be able to secure inservice credit from their employing district.

The program additionally has received credit recommendations from the New York State Board of Regents Program on Non-collegiate Sponsored Instruction (PONSI).

Courses are available at sites throughout the state, and in your district if you have at least 10 participants, or as part of your district's professional development program.

About the NYSUT Education and Learning Trust

The NYSUT Education and Learning Trust is a 501(c)(3) public trust established by NYSUT to provide educational programs, conferences

and research studies on issues related to teaching and learning. There are several programs that are part of the Trust: the Effective Teaching Program, the School Related Personnel Professional Development Program, New Member Professional Development Program, Advanced Placement Program and Parent Program.

FALL 2003 COURSE CATALOG

The catalog is a 450K PDF file and includes:

- * Complete listings for one-credit and three-credit courses, plus special programs, on-line learning, and more.
- * Course offerings by region, from Suffolk to Syracuse.
- * A registration form to submit via U.S. mail (you may also register online).

REGISTRATION

You may register online or download a form to print and mail. [registration]

CONTACT

For questions about NYSUT's Effective Teaching Program, contact NYSUT via e-mail to ELTmail@nysutmail.org, or call 1-800-528-6208.

WORKSHOPS for Beginning Teachers

- Parent-Teacher Conference: Strategies for Success
- Off to a Good Start: Classroom Management
- Discipline Strategies
- Creating a Positive Environment
- Motivating Student Thinking
- Student Success— Find and Play to Their Strengths
- Strategies for Incorporating the Standards
- Reading Comprehension Strategies
- Study Skills
- Introduction to Cooperative Learning
- Completing the Video Requirement for Certification

**Congratulations to
the Thirty-Three Teachers
who received their Tenure pins today!**

We are very proud of you!

Can You Read Your Paycheck? Would You Have an Easier Time Reading Tea Leaves?

The Valley Central Paycheck is not the easiest document to read. Many folks feel they need an in-service course just to understand their paycheck! Consider the following a primer for your paycheck!

First, begin in the middle...about half way down your paycheck is a series of large boxes. These tell you what you are being paid for. Note that large section is really made up of two halves as the titles appear twice (*i.e.*, “budget code” , *etc.*). **What do these titles mean?**

“Budget Code” - The district presents a budget for vote yearly. They must specify, by code, what they are spending the money on. Each year, a rather thick book is published making public the budget of the district. The budget code represents a line of the district budget.

“Hours/Days” - Is applicable for items paid by an hourly rate or per diem.

“Actual Sal” - The actual gross salary amount per the contract.

“CPP Amount” - Means Current Pay Period—what you are being paid in this paycheck (gross)

“Fisc Amount”- The amount you have been paid for the fiscal year, (July 1st—June 30th)

In the example below, the budget code is for a teacher’s salary. Notice it appears twice on the same line. This teacher received their Master’s Degree. Their paperwork was filed by October 1, so they are entitled to the additional \$3000, moving from the BA scale to the MA scale. Adding the first “Actual Sal” to the second shows the employee that their salary has increased. The employee will receive the full \$3000 over the course of the school year even though payment did not begin until after the school year began. In-Service increases are also paid under this salary code.

Budget Code	Hours/Days	Actual Sal	CPP Amount	Fisc Gross	Budget Code	Hours/Days	Actual Sal	CPP Amount	Fisc Gross
A21101361		50,000	2500.75	17765.01	A21101361		3,000.00	277.00	610.00

Budget Codes Teachers Might Receive in Addition to their Primary Budget Code

A21101160	Kindergarten Scrn	A2330151	Summer School-Ele.
A211015	Home Tutoring	A2330152	Summer School-Sec.
A211018	Sick Day Buy Back	A233115	Evening High School
A211040044	Test Scoring	A285015	Co-Curricular
A2110445	Staff Dev./Curr. Wrt.	A285542	Athletic Events
A2110461	Chaperone—Elem.	A285615	Pool
A2110462	Chaperone—MS	F2110403	Title I-Parenting Cls
A2110463	Chaperone—HS	F2110153	Parent Center
A22501591	CSE– Summer Mtg.		

THE TOP OF YOUR CHECK TELLS YOU:

Name—Tells who you are (Hopefully you already know!)
Emp. # - Employee Number as assigned by District
Soc Sec No.— Check to make sure this is right!
Fed/State—# of deductions you claim for taxes
M/S—Status (Married/Single) you claim for taxes
Prd. Ending— Last day of the two-week cycle
Check Date— Pay date **Check #**- From the District Checkbook
CPP— Current Pay Period **YTD**— Year to Date (Tax Year)

Gross— Before taxes **FICA**— Social Security tax
Medicare— Medicare tax **Fed**-Federal tax **State**— State tax
Net— After taxes and deductions
Retirement —Contributions (*Not required after 10 years in System, Tier IV*)
Loans-From NYSTRS **Arrears**— As assigned by Courts
VCTA— Union Dues distributed to AFT, NYSUT and Local Union
Cr Un— Credit Union deposits, **VT COPE**— Vote/COPE contribution
UNTWAY— United Way Contribution, **Your TSA Co.**—TSA deduction
FLEXMD,FLEXDC— Café. 125, NYSUT –Member Benefits Programs

From the Vice-President Common Sense (and Sensibility) *continued from page four*

Teachers as evaluators

As a teacher, it is not your job to evaluate other staff members. That is an administrative task. Can you be asked for input or information? Yes. Can you defer? Yes. Let the people who are qualified and trained do their jobs. Makes sense, right?

What is an Association?

An association is a professional organization made up of many types of staff-teachers (*active and retired*), school related professionals, secretaries-who join together in strength to support each other in regard to education and labor issues. As a representative of the leadership of the VCTA, I think it is important to make some clarifying statements. We will always support each group under our association umbrella out of respect, loyalty and

concern. We will defend your contractual rights while honoring your past and present contributions to our organization. Together we are the foundation, history, and future of the VCTA. In turn, We expect our members to act with the same honesty, loyalty and respect by recognizing and acting in the spirit of the CBA guidelines, (*i.e., filling positions*). An association works and flourishes only if all its members understand and respect each others' rights and responsibilities. We must work together to grow and become stronger, not undermine our strength and give hope and foothold to those looking for weakness or vulnerability in us.

In closing, I guess the theme of this piece (*can't escape my teacher persona*) is that we have to have common sense and be sensible in our

dealings with each other and district personnel. That means being informed, active, respectful and responsible members of the VCTA. If not, then the old saying that states, "We are own worst enemies.", may very well prove to be accurate.

Here's wishing you and yours safe, healthy, relaxing, rewarding and loving holidays!!

~Jay Sussdorff,
Vice- President

Adding up your days...

You may have received your "Absence Verification Summary" with your "back to school" letter this summer. This summary reflects the days that you were actually absent, and the reason for the absence. There are basically five categories of absence; sick days, illness in family days, bereavement, field trip, and association days.

Each year you are allotted 15 sick days and 3 personal days; whatever you don't use are accumulated. In this example, 63.75 days were accumulated as of June 30, 2000 (1999-2000 school year) and 15 more sick days and 3 personal days, 3 Illness in Family, and 3 Bereavement days were credited for the 2000-2001 school year on July 1, 2000. 7 sick days and 3 personal days were used during that year, so on July 1, 2001 eight more sick days were accumu-

lated for a total of 71.75 (*Personal days would have also accumulated*).

Add 15 more sick days and 3 more personal days as of July 1, 2001 and this person had a total of 89.75 going into the 2001-02 school year.

The reason those 18 days for the new school year weren't reflected on the summary is because they were earned as you work. The only people who wouldn't have the total 18 days for a given school year are those who were out on unpaid leave, such as child care leave, or those who have accumulated more than 185 sick days since the contract caps the sick day

09/21/00 Sick Leave	1.000				
09/23/00 Sick Leave	1.000				
09/25/00 Sick Leave	1.000				
10/02/00 Personal business	1.000				
12/01/00 Sick Leave	1.000				
12/08/00 Personal business	1.000				
01/09/01 Sick Leave	1.000				
02/26/01 Sick Leave	1.000				
03/23/01 Personal business	1.000				
03/30/01 Conference/Workshop	1.000				
04/27/01 Field Trip	0.500				
05/01/01 Sick Leave	1.000				
05/03/01 Association Day	1.000				
05/04/01 Association Day	1.000				

REAS REASON	DAYS	ACCUMULATED	CREDITED	DAYS	CARRY
CODE DESCRIPTION	TAKEN AS OF 06/30/00	ON 07/01/00	ON 07/01/00	AVAIL	FORWARD

1 Sick Leave	7.000	63.750	15	71.750	71.750
2 Sick Leave-Buy Back	0.000	0.000		*.***	*.***
4 Illness in family	0.000	0.000	3	3.000	0.000
5 Bereavement	0.000	0.000	3	3.000	0.000
6 Personal business	3.000	0.000	3	0.000	0.000
7 Conference/Workshop	1.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
9 Field Trip	0.500	0.000		0.000	0.000
13 Association Day	2.000	0.000		0.000	0.000

		13.500			

accumulation at 200 days. That is why that many choose to take advantage of the sick leave buy-back so that they don't accumulate more than 182 days at the end of any year (182+18=200).

Field trip, illness in family and bereavement days are granted when needed and do not accumulate if unused. Association days are utilized by the VCTA Executive Council to attend conferences and the like.

Sept. 1-6 is Union Label Week, and this year's theme is "Unions Build a Better America!"

This Labor Day, the absence of good jobs is a serious concern. The nation has lost more than 2.5 million jobs, many of them good union jobs that are the backbone of our economy and the foundation of America's middle class. Union Label Week is a chance to remind consumers to "look for the union label" in goods and services and to promote the values of fairness and equity in the workplace. For more, go to www.unionlabel.org.

There is a company in the United States - NoSweatApparel - that sells only 100% union-made clothes. If you're looking for union-made casual wear, go to <http://nosweatapparel.com>.



Take a QUACK at winning a MILLION BUCKS!

September 17, 2003—5:30 pm

South Street Seaport

Adoption Hotline: (212) 490-1062

\$5 Adoption Fee gives you a chance win great prizes and provide year-round sports training and Olympic-style competition for children and adults with mental retardation.

**TEACHERS HELPING
TEACHERS FIGHT
AIDS IN AFRICA**



Log-on today! www.aft.org



**You can help support the
AFT-Africa
AIDS Campaign by
purchasing a pin (\$10)
through the VCTA.
Contact Patti Lunden, (HS)
457-5899**

Squelched by blueberries

If I ran my business the way you people operate your schools, I wouldn't be in business very long!"

I stood before an auditorium filled with outraged teachers who were becoming angrier by the minute. My speech had entirely consumed their precious 90 minutes of in-service training. Their initial icy glares had turned to restless agitation. You could cut the hostility with a knife.

I represented a group of business people dedicated to improving public schools. I was an executive at an ice cream company that became famous in the middle 1980's when *People* magazine chose its blueberry flavor as the "Best Ice Cream in America".

I was convinced of two things. First, public schools needed to change; they were archaic selecting and sorting mechanisms designed for the industrial age and out of step with the needs of our emerging "knowledge society." Second, educators were a major part of the problem: they resisted change, hunkered down in their feathered nests, protected by tenure and shielded by a bureaucratic monopoly. They need to look to business. We knew how to produce quality. Zero defects! Total Quality Management! Continuous Improvement!

In retrospect, the speech was perfectly balanced—equal parts ignorance and arrogance.

As soon as I finished, a woman's hand shot up. She appeared polite, pleasant—she was, in fact, a razor-edged, veteran high school English teacher who had been waiting to unload. She began quietly, "We are told, sir, that you manage a company that makes good ice cream."

I smugly replied, "Best ice cream in America, ma'am."

"How nice," she said, "Is it

rich and smooth?"

"Sixteen percent butterfat," I crowed.

"Premium ingredients?" she inquired.

"Super-premium! Nothing but triple A." I was on a roll. I never saw the next line coming.

"Mr. Vollmer," she said, leaning forward with a wicked eyebrow raised to the sky, "when you are standing on your receiving dock and you see an inferior shipment of blueberries arrive, what do you do?"

In the silence of the that room, I could hear the trap snap. I was dead meat, but I wasn't going to lie.

"I send them back."

"That's right!" she barked, "and we can never send back our blueberries. We take them big, small, rich, poor, gifted, exceptional, abused, frightened, confident, homeless, rude, and brilliant. We take them with attention deficient hyperactivity disorder, junior rheumatoid arthritis and English as a second language. We take them all! Every one! And that, Mr. Vollmer, is why it's not a business. It's a school!"

In an explosion, all 290 teachers, principals, bus drivers, aides, custodians and secretaries jumped to their feet and yelled, "Yeah! Blueberries! Blueberries!"

And so began my long transformation. Since then, I have visited hundreds of schools. I have learned that a school is not a business. Schools are unable to control the quality of raw material, they are dependent upon the vagaries of politics for a reliable revenue stream, and they are constantly mauled by a



howling horde of disparate, competing customer groups that would send the best CEO screaming into the night.

None of this negates the need for change. We must change what, when and how we teach to give all children maximum opportunity to thrive in a post-industrial society. But educators cannot do this alone; these changes can occur only with the understanding, trust, permission and active support of the surrounding community. For the most important thing I have learned is that schools reflect the attitudes, beliefs and health of the communities they serve, and therefore, to improve public education means more than changing our schools, it means changing America.

~ Jamie Robert Vollmer,
Fairfield, Iowa



Jennifer? Jessica? Julie?
Oh no, What is her name?

1,003 Great Things about Being a Teacher

Able to memorize thirty-two names
(*nicknames included*)
within the first week of school.

~ from 1,003 Great Things About Being a Teacher
Lisa Birnbach, Ann Hodgman, Patricia Marx

**Do wonderful things happen in your building?
Your classroom?**

Do you know someone we all should know?

Tell your story,

Have it published in the VC ECHOES.

*Have your building representative
help you submit your story:*

Montgomery: Chris Brand **Berea:** Sara Ackerson

Walden: Patty Joy **Maybrook:** Donna Lloyd

EC: Holly Bacon **MS:** Mary Bleau

HS: Patti Lunden

Photos can be submitted in JPEG format or as
color photos which will be scanned and returned.

Contact Patti Lunden, VM # 7664

VCTA Office: 457-5899

The VCTA is full of GREAT PEOPLE...

Let everyone know about them.!

2003-2004 VC ECHOES Deadlines and Publication Dates

Deadline : October 8, 2003 Publication: October 17, 2003

Deadline: December 3, 2003 Publication: December 12, 2003

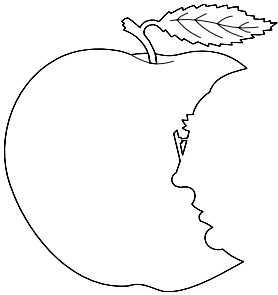
Deadline: February 2, 2004 Publication: February 11, 2004

Deadline April 14, 2004 Publication: April 23, 2004

RETIREE ISSUE: Deadline: May 20, 2004 Publication: May 27, 2004

Deadline: June 7, 2004 Publication: June 16, 2004





*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.

Nomination requires nominator to fill out paperwork.

*Please submit the name of a colleague who you believes
exemplifies the phrase "Great Teacher."*

Colleague's Name _____

Colleague's Building _____

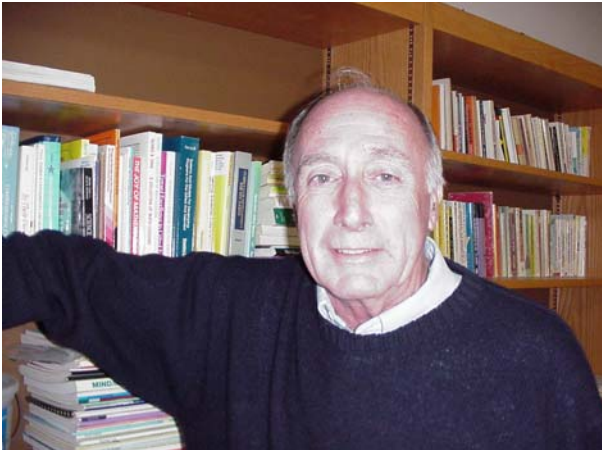
Their Years teaching _____ Their Years at VC _____

Why should this be VC's candidate for Teacher of the Year?

Your Name _____, VM _____

Return this form to your building rep. by October 30th.

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



of my happiness in being able to communicate with the active and retired members of the VC family. With this in mind, let me welcome new teachers and staff members to our school family. VC is a good place to be. You will find helpful and supportive people; do not hesitate to seek their

Greetings from the land of endless summer, the lotus land of retirement. I can't believe that we are about to begin another school year, that the infamous breakfast club, sometimes referred to as

R.O.M.E.O. (Raunchy Old Men Eating Out) is about to begin another year of resolving all problems: social, political, athletic, educational, and assuredly piling it high and deep, that I am into my tenth year of retirement from VCHS, and I still have fire in my belly when it comes to all areas of education. *Tempus fugit.* And in the immortal words of Satchel Page: "Don't look back, time might be catching up." Satch was right, and I'm looking forward to another good year. I continue to teach in the LIFE program at Mt. St. Mary College, doing my best to encourage folks to delve into the glories of Shakespeare. Each year I remind readers of this "back-of-the Echoes" column that any opinions vented here are solely mine and not necessarily those of the VCTA or NYSUT. I am more often in favor of the VCTA and NYSUT, than I am in favor of the dictates of the State Ed. Dept., the commissioner and the self-proclaimed "education" governor", George Elmer Pataki.

The preamble, as always, is too wordy, but it is an outpouring

help. A special return greeting to the veteran teachers and staff—whether you've been here for two or thirty-two years. And finally, hello again to my compatriots in retirement. I assure you all that, as retiree representative to the VCTA, I continue to serve as a watchdog to assure that our retirement benefits continue and possibly expand. Arline Friedman and Orin Segall join me in this endeavor. You can reach me at 845-778-7236.

Luncheon Lowdown-

The 21st annual Retiree Luncheon will be held Wednesday, September 3rd at 12:30 at Camillo's/ Crossroads Restaurant. Last year 96 retirees attended the luncheon. We hope to break 100 this year, as we did in 2001. As of July 31st, 205 announcements had been sent for the Luncheon. This includes all retirees from VC: cafeteria workers, custodians, teachers, nurses, secretaries, paraprofessionals, administrative staff. (*I hope I got them all, or I'll catch grief!*) I'll let you know how it all turns out in the next issue of Echoes. It is always a pleasant time to renew old acquaintances, to re-tell the old stories and to try to figure out why Table #5 is always called last to the buffet table.

Nobody asked me, but...

- When is the state going to figure out that there is too much testing in grade 4 and probably in grade 8?
- Will all the Regents exams be valid this school year or will we have the Physics fiasco of '02 or the Math maelstrom of '03?
- And should all high school students be required to pass all the required Regents exams? Does one size fit all?
- I still see no movement in requiring meaningful one-on-one mentoring for first year teachers.
- Some districts are using the expertise and experience of retired teachers in providing "professional development" mandates for their teachers; some districts aren't.
- Am I getting crankier as the years go on?

Thanks for taking the time to turn to the back pages of this esteemed journal. If I don't canned, I'll see you next time.

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

~ Kevin McFadden,
Retiree Representative

Advertising Section

Ads that appear in the VC ECHOES are seen by the 750 members of the VC Educational Community and their households. If you would like to advertise in the next issue of the VC ECHOES, use the form below.

VALLEY CENTRAL TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

1175 Route 17 K

Montgomery, NY 12549

Tel./Fax: (845) 457-5899

VC ECHOES

ADVERTISEMENT CONTRACT APPLICATION 2003-2004

Business Name _____

Contact Name _____

Address _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Issues ad is to appear in: Sept. 3 _____, Oct. 03 _____, Dec. 03 _____, Feb. 04 _____,
April 04 _____, Retiree Issue (May 04) _____, June 04 _____

***Size of Ad:** _____ \$10 _____ \$20 _____ \$30 _____ \$50 _____ \$100

**Please attach scanner ready ad sketched design.*

Size

1/8th page = \$10 per issue 1/4 page = \$20 per issue 1/3 page = \$30 per issue 1/2 page = \$50 per issue, Full page = \$100 per issue (An additional \$30 first time set up if not scanner ready)

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

By signing this contract you agree to the following:

We = VCTA, You = advertiser

- 1) We reserve the right to deny an application without explanation. We do not accept applications for political advertisements, lest they be considered endorsements. We also reserve the right to cease publishing any ad at any time, refunding any money prepaid for publication. We do not accept advertisements from those who attack the AFL-CIO, AFT, NYSUT, or the VCTA.
- 2) We reserve the right to choose the ads published according to space available per issue, refunding any prepaid money should we choose not to publish the ad in a given issue. Should you choose to terminate this contract prior to its fulfillment, you will be refunded money prepaid for issues not yet printed on the date of termination.
- 3) You agree to provide scanner ready art for the ad or pay the first time set up fee. Should you choose to change your design from a previously submitted design, you agree to provide scanner ready art or be subjected to the set up fee again. The set up fee is applicable to each design rather than business.
- 4) You will receive the page on which your advertisement appears from each issue in which it is published as proof that it was published by fax or mail. You understand the entire issue is provided only to members, however it can be viewed on the VCTA website: www.frontiernet.net/~vcta
- 5) We reserve the right to change the date of publication within 2 calendar weeks.
- 6) You agree to prepay by cash or check (*payable to the Valley Central Teachers' Association*) for the advertisement(s) upon acceptance of this application. You understand that if we owe you a refund due to conditions #1 or #2, you will receive a refund check after the publication of the issue from which your ad was omitted with notification that it was omitted.
- 7) You understand that this contract expires at the end of the school year. You will receive an application for the next year's issues at the end of the contract year. You will be given preference as a returning customer at the discretion of the editor.

Signature _____

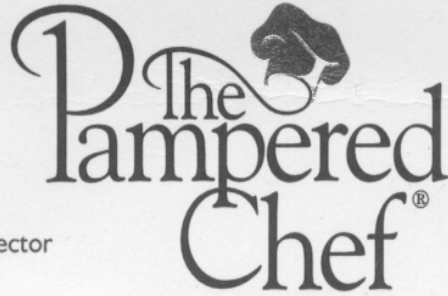
Please Return this form with ad to be scanned or information to: Patricia Lunden, VCTA, 1175 Rte. 17K, Montgomery, NY 12549
Ad can be e-mailed to vcta@frontiernet.net and then check/form sent under separate cover.

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.

192 Hill Avenue
Montgomery, NY 12549
Phone: 845.778.1856

skramer275@aol.com
TOP PERFORMANCE CLUSTER



Kristi A. Kramer
Independent Future Sales Director

THE KITCHEN STORE THAT COMES TO YOUR DOOR®



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gcola@marykay.com

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Service and Accessories for
Honda & Acura
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Newburgh, NY
(845) 561-5984

6-Hour
Accident
Prevention
Course

*Point & Insurance
Reduction Program*

**10% Discount on
Auto Insurance for 3
years
And reduce up to 4
points**



On your Driving Record

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.



- Sports and Work Injuries
- Neck and Lower Back Pain
- Headaches
- Shoulder and Arm Pain
- Muscle Spasms
- Pinched Nerves

CALL TODAY 561-4311
516 Union Avenue New Windsor



"Where people are worth more than money."

17 Walnut Street
Montgomery, NY 12549
(845) 457-5592/457-5862
FAX: (845) 457-3197
HOURS: 8 AM—5 PM
(M-The)
FRIDAY until 5:30 PM

**You help give others a bright future.
Do the same for yourself.**

With a 403(b) plan, money is taken out of your paycheck before taxes and deposited directly into a tax-deferred account.

That makes it a convenient and worry-free way to help make sure your retirement is everything you want it to be. Call your local American Express financial advisor today and learn more about how a 403(b) plan can help you do more.

David J. Mazzetti
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21 Old Main Street
Fishkill, NY 12524
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Complimentary Retirement Kits Available!



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MEMBER BENEFITS
FUEL SAVINGS PROGRAM with HEAT USA
Working to Benefit You

Are you paying too much for heating oil?



Now NYSUT members can receive substantial savings and a FREE full-service contract

Call today to find out how much you can save!
Toll-free 1-888-HEAT-USA

- Average savings of 15-25 cents a gallon
- FREE lifetime full-service contract
- Dependable service from local suppliers
- Prompt emergency service, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day
- FREE annual cleaning, tune-up
- Automatic delivery, credit terms, budget building

Membership is \$25. NYSUT members get their second year free.

Mark your calendar now!

VCTA Fall Fest

Friday,

October 17, 2003

3:00 P.M.—6:00 P.M.

Stony Ford Clubhouse,

Orange County Park

Hors d'oeuvres/Cash Bar

Prizes!!!

This event is free for all active and retired members and their spouses or significant others

**Come spend time with
your old friends
and make some new**

Directions: Stony Ford Country Club is located in Orange County Park. Take 17K through Montgomery to the intersection of 17K and 211. Turn LEFT on to 211, follow through village to Rte 416 (LEFT at Airport). Take 416 and watch for signs for Country Club. It is located at the top of the hill.



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

Valley Central Teachers' Association
1175 Rte. 17K
Montgomery, NY 12549
Tel./Fax: (845) 457-5899

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

Building Representatives

Berea: Carol DeMicco, Sara Ackerson,
Robin Sinclair-Scott,

Maybrook: Donna Lloyd, Linda Siegel

East Coldenham: Holly Bacon, Beth Como

Walden: Patty Joy, Randy Sutter,
Kathy Bordone, Barbara Wutch,
Mary Ellen Mangiamiele

Montgomery: Toni Sperry, Chris Brand

MS: Mary Bleau, Bill Burreto, Tammy Coleman,
Joe Collins, Mary Goldberg,
Marc Sperry, Mike Steele

HS: Maureen Goodenough, Glenn Eckert, Bob Jurgens,
Jean McMahon, Eileen Purcell, Diane Ruggles,
Doug Straebler

Secretarial Representative: Lucy Fox (HS)

Paraprofessional Representative: Kathy Lennon (W)

VC ECHOES Editor
Patricia Lunden, (HS)

NYSUT
www.nysut.org

AFT
www.aft.org

AFL-CIO
www.aflcio.org

Mid-Hudson Teacher Center:
(845) 255-2885

http://www.mhtc.dcoecs.org

Employee Assistance Program
1-800-962-7487

Visit us on the Web!
www.vcta.net

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

Article contributions or Letters to the
Editor for the next issue should be
sent to Patricia Lunden, HS, by
October 8, 2003.

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

VC ECHOES Wins Another Award!

On July 10, 2003, The VC ECHOES won an award in the
Best Editorial Category for the AFTCA Communications Awards.

The winning story was, "On Teacher Absenteeism,"
written by former High School English teacher Heather Ford
from the June 2002 issue of the VC ECHOES.



The AFTCA contest is a national contest.
The VC ECHOES competed with other AFT newsletters
from all over the country and was one of three winners selected.

Camelot...

*In short, there's simply not
A more congenial spot
For happ'ly-ever-aftering
than here In Camelot.*

~Alan Jay Lerner
Every first day of a
new school year, I
return home to
the same question
from my husband; "Did you
get any classes like your
fifth period from that one
year?" It takes me back in
time—I can see their faces,
hear their voices, and re-
member how much I looked
forward to them each day—
and that was twelve years
ago. Individually they were
all really nice kids— as a
whole, they were simply
wonderful. It was the right
time, the right place, the
right relationship. They
were my "camelot" group
and although I've had many
students since whom I have
been just as fond of— I've
yet to have a class like
theirs again.

Whether it is the
Arthurian tales or the Ken-
nedy presidency—"camelot"
is a hard concept to grasp. It

is not quite a place or
time—it is more of an
atmosphere.
VC has a sort of came-
lot atmosphere. Have
you ever tried to ex-
plain where Valley
Central is? Like Came-
lot, Valley Central is
not on a map per se, it
was the name given
when the District was
formed in 1959, when
three districts were
merged into one. Val-
ley Central has had dark
days but we seem to
always pass through
them into brighter times.

Last year at this time, we
only had an interim superin-
tendent. This year as we
begin a new school year we
are fortunate to have Dr.
Richard Hooley at the helm
of our District. We have
new administrators and new
teachers, secretaries and
paraprofessionals in place.
And of course, we have our
veteran staff returning at all
levels— the folks who have
established the atmosphere
of camelot over their years



at Valley Central.

It is always at this
time of year that the air is
fragrant with promise—like
the days preceding a huge
lottery drawing, all it takes
is some hope and a dream.
Hey, you never know! A
new school year holds many
possibilities, may this be
your Camelot year!

~ Patti Lunden,
Editor