

# VC ECHOES

An AFTCA and New York Teacher Award Winning Publication

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## NYSUT President Tom Hobart Announces His Retirement

In October, NYSUT President Tom Hobart announced he would not run for President after 16 consecutive terms, a position he has held for 33 years.

Hobart has been the only NYSUT president since the organization was founded in 1973. NYSUT had 100,000 members in 1971, today it boasts nearly a half million members made up of teachers and educational professionals, school related personnel, higher education faculty and staff and health care professionals

"Being elected president of NYSUT changed my life," Hobart wrote in a letter to the union's more than 900 local leaders. "More importantly, NYSUT's success has changed the lives of the hundreds of thousands of members we represent. This is the greatest accomplishment and satisfaction of my union life."

Hobart's term will conclude this April at the Representative Assembly.

At that time a new president will be elected.

When asked for his opinion on Hobart's announcement, VCTA President Tim Brown commented, "Thomas Hobart has been the single most influential component of the largest labor union in New York State for the past 30 years. He has been a successful champion of workers' rights and student achievement. He has also been a tireless advocate for health care reform and has actively supported efforts to eliminate poverty through such noteworthy programs as the Labor-Religion Coalition."

Brown continued, "Tom's retirement presents an opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments and leadership of a person to whom we owe a great deal. Successful organizations understand and accept a premise that no individual can nor should be viewed as in-

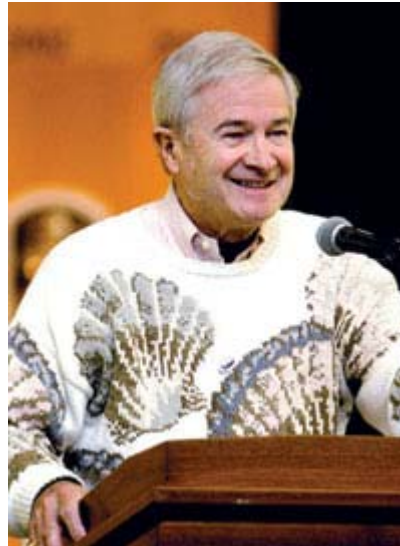


Photo courtesy of New York Teacher

dispensable to a cause that is honorable and just. Thomas Hobart's retirement, however, will undoubtedly test this organizational premise and challenge each of us to reevaluate his/her role within the union. The whole of what we have become is no greater than the sum of all our members."

~ Patti Lunden, Editor

Source: New York Teacher Nov. 18, 2004

**Education can be defined as working with people, young and old, to prepare them to live in the future. The future may be bright. The future may be gray. But, most importantly we must insure that there will be a future.**

**Willard J. Jacobson**

Pursuant to a Legislative Resolution Adopted in  
the New York State Senate and Assembly

Governor George E. Pataki has declared

**November 18, 2004**

New York State  
**School Related Professionals  
Recognition Day**



A day to recognize and honor the school  
support staff who help transport, educate,  
feed, and tend to our children and keep our  
schools clean, safe and offices running  
smoothly.



**THE VCTA RECOGNIZES THE  
JOB WELL DONE EVERYDAY  
BY OUR  
SCHOOL RELATED PROFESSIONALS.**

## VCTA Helps to “Make Strides Against Breast Cancer” October 17, 2004

**O**n October 17, 2004, members of the VCTA family and friends from the HS, MS, Maybrook, Montgomery, Berea and Walden participated in the 5K walk at the Woodbury Common Premium Outlets in Monroe. Participants of the walk helped raise awareness and funds for the fight against breast cancer. Our team ordered t-shirts to mark the event.

That Sunday was a perfect fall day in the Hudson Valley! The sky was full of sunshine and the air

was crisp. Our spirits were high; our enthusiasm was noted with smiles and generous donations. We began our day with a continental breakfast sponsored by NYSUT.

The VCTA team had over 170 members, 100 walkers from the Middle School. The VCMS team consisted of faculty, staff, administrators, parents and students. The students from the National Junior Honor Society raised \$1000 as part of our \$3000 donation. Joining the VCMS team this year was Mrs. Flanagan and her VCHS JV Tennis

Team. We were proud to welcome them on board.

I want to thank all who helped support this worthy cause. I would like to give a special thank you to our VCMS in-house photographer, Mr. Ryder. The spirit of my colleagues and the pride of our community have been acknowledged. Kudos to all !

*~ Thank you,*

*Maddie Brooks, VCMS*



VCMS Team Members

## VCTA Helps to “Make Strides Against Breast Cancer” October 17, 2004



Berea Team  
Members

Walden  
Team  
Members



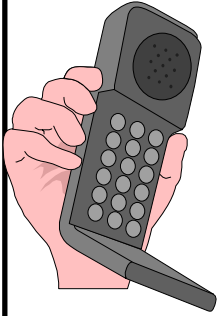
## VCTA Helps to “Make Strides Against Breast Cancer” October 17, 2004



VCHS Team Members

*Thank You  
To all who  
Pledged and Walked.*

*You are Have Helped  
200,000 Women this year  
Make Strides Against Breast Cancer.*

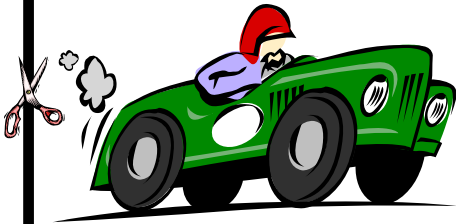


There is an e-mail circulating warning cell phone users that as of January 1, 2005, *Telemarketers will be able to call your cell phone to solicit their goods while eating up your minutes.* It advises you that you should place your cell phone number on the Federal DO NOT CALL registry.

*However, there are a few news reports (CNET, San Diego Union; Dec. 14, 2004) that refute the article stating the it is against federal law for telemarketers to call numbers charged for minutes.*

As the new year approaches, you may want to check into this. You may also want to place your cell phone numbers on the registry just to be safe.

You may place your number(s) on the federal  
**DO NOT CALL Registry** by going to:  
**www.donotcall.gov**



**Do you need to  
 reduce points on your  
 drivers' license?  
 How about dropping the cost of  
 your car insurance  
 by ten percent?!**

Marc Sperry is planning on a Defensive Driving Course for VCTA members and their family members. It will be held in the early part of March 2005.

The cost will be approximately \$30 for the six hour course which will be on two evenings in the Middle School cafeteria.

A light supper will be served each evening.

Course registration is limited. To make an advance reservation, send this form to:  
 Marc Sperry, Middle School

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

## **OUSDHP Survey**

**Has your doctor stopped accepting the OUSDHP plan as a PPO (*for the co-pay*)?**

**Is OUSDHP's connection to GHI the reason?**

**Please return the information below  
To VCTA VP, Rich Steger, Walden ASAP.**

**Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Bldg/VM \_\_\_\_\_**

**Your Doctor's Name \_\_\_\_\_**

**Doctor's Group \_\_\_\_\_**

**Doctor's Specialty \_\_\_\_\_**

**Reason given (if any)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## NYSUT blasts Pataki's veto on reform

**N**YSUT leaders criticized Gov. Pataki's veto of budget reform legislation this week. NYSUT President Tom Hobart said the veto was a setback for the state's schools.

"One of the key provisions of the legislation the governor vetoed is a two-year cycle for school aid," Hobart said. "That cycle would have taken some of the guesswork out of school districts' budgeting processes. It made sense. Vetoing it makes no sense at all."

The governor's short-sighted action

is part of a continuing pattern of vetoes that will hurt education in New York state, said NYSUT Executive Vice President Alan Lubin.

"The governor vetoed spending for SUNY and CUNY earlier this year," Lubin said. "Now he's rejecting a reform that would have brought some rationality to schools all across the state. This flies in the face of any logic."

Lubin noted that with New York's traditionally late state budgets, every year school districts must prepare their budgets without know-

ing what level of state aid they would receive. The two-year cycle would help districts with long-term planning and help them implement educational programs to meet the new Regents standards.

"School districts have to budget in the dark," Lubin said. "The two-year cycle would have thrown a little light on the process, but Gov. Pataki has pulled the plug."

~ *The NYSUT Leader*



### CDC urges good hygiene in schools – WASH YOUR HANDS!

Students and school workers who will miss flu shots this year are being urged to wash their hands more often, and stay home if they get sick. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is reminding schools that good hygiene is the best way, other than vaccines, to prevent the spread of flu and other bugs.

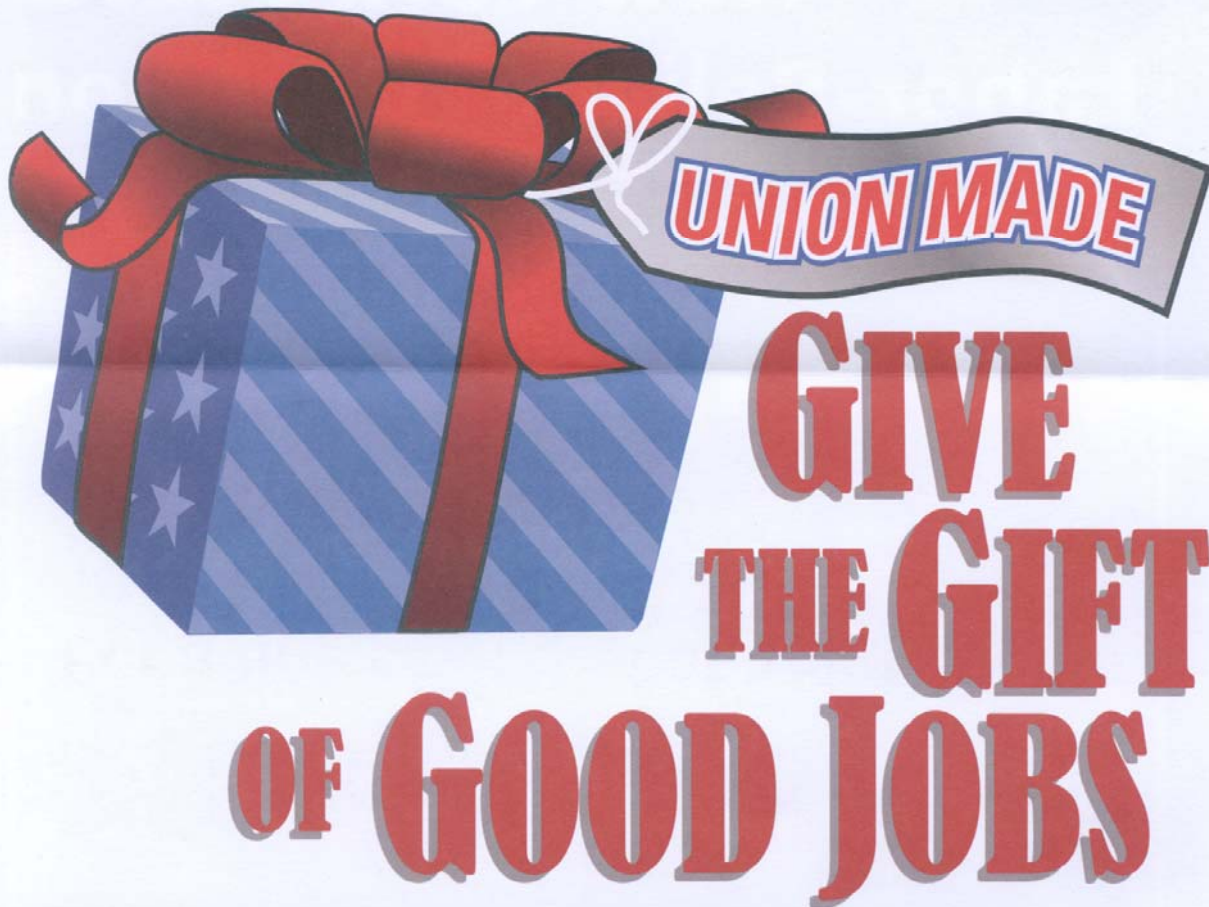
## Save this date !

**Thursday, February 24th**  
**6th Annual**  
**VCTA Blood Drive**  
**Valley Central Middle School**

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



# Shop Union for the Holidays



This holiday season, support good jobs by giving union-made gifts. Your shopping dollars can keep good-paying jobs - with good wages and benefits - in your community.

**For a fine selection of holiday gifts,  
go to: [www.shopunionmade.org](http://www.shopunionmade.org)**

Union Label & Service Trades Dept., AFL-CIO



### NYSUT-Staples Partnership Grants

#### The deadline for application is January 5, 2005

Staples, Inc. donated \$1.00 for every used printer cartridge that was returned to a Staples store in New York State. Staples and NYSUT have entered into a partnership to permit the funds collected in New York State to be distributed through the NYSUT Education and Learning Trust. This is the second round of grants. In the spring of 2004, the first NYSUT-Staples partnership grants were awarded to 34 schools. NYSUT is pleased once again to invite pre-K to grade 12 teachers who are NYSUT members in eligible schools to apply for a grant of \$2,000 each.

Union members can apply for a grant and that the application for a grant includes the signature of the union president as well as that of the school principal.

NYSUT-Staples Partnership Grant Funds are to be used to support enrichment activities that directly impact students.

- Acceptable uses of funds may include purchase of books, materials, equipment under \$500, software, supplies, field trip and assembly financial support, and tutoring services.
- Grant funds may NOT be used to pay substitute costs, teacher travel expenses, or registration for professional development activities for staff or capital improvements.
- Grants will be awarded across the State to reflect geographic distribution.

For more information, contact Bob Massey at 800-342-9810. **All grant award decisions will be made by February 15, 2005.** The application form and answers to frequently asked questions about the grants are at [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org).

### For the first time, worker pay declines as corporate profits increase

The share of the nation's economy — Gross Domestic Product (GDP) — going to wages and salaries fell dramatically over the past four years while the share going to corporate profits rose significantly, according to U.S. Dept. of Commerce data.

The decline in worker's pay for 14 consecutive quarters is unprecedented in the post-World War II era, reported the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. The GDP share fell from 49.5% in 2001 to 45.4% today, a dramatic reduction of 4.1% or about \$500 billion, also unprecedented. Meanwhile, the share of GDP going to corporate profits rose by 2.3% or more than \$250 billion.

Adjusting for inflation, workers' real wage and salary income today is essentially the same as it was in early 2001 while corporate profits increased 40%. Source: [www.cbpp.org/10-29-04pov.htm](http://www.cbpp.org/10-29-04pov.htm)

~ *The NYSUT Leader*

### Health care costs to rise 8% in 2005

Annual cost increases for employer-sponsored health programs show signs of easing slightly, thanks in part to some success with care management and other broad initiatives to control costs. Still, the burden of providing health care coverage for employees and retirees is bigger than ever.

According to the 2005 Towers Perrin Health Care Cost Survey, employers can expect, on average, an 8% increase in health care costs next year. That's the first significant break in the five-year string of double-digit increases for employer-sponsored plans starting in 2000.

Average increases reported during the period from 2000 to 2004 ranged from 12% to 16%. ~ *The NYSUT Leader*

## Report from the NYSTRS Annual Meeting

Prior to this year's annual meeting the NYSTRS held four breakout workshop sessions that we attended.

### Managing Your Membership

The first session was an "Overview of the Using STRS Services to Manage Your Membership". It was presented by Mike Contento and focused on the important tools and programs members can use to make educated decisions on important retirement issues. The Web site was demonstrated, with the newest feature to come – a secure member area where members can log in and link to their own benefit profile and data about beneficiaries as well as utilize a benefits calculator to estimate their own retirement benefit. Members can also access Forms, Publications, and check the status of pending legislation. Contento also demonstrated a video consultation through the computer. Video consultations are available locally at Central Valley and are more accessible than person to person consultations unless a member goes to headquarters at Albany. Contento closed his presentation by letting us know that the STRS is happy to come to districts to make presentations to the membership.

### What's New at the STRS

The next session was "What's New at STRS?" The presenter was John Blatchford. The topics covered were: 1) An overview of the new integrated pension administration system; *this new system was up and running as of August 2004- there have been a few bugs and the STRS sent its apologies to members who were inconvenienced. Some of the advantages of the new system is it provides an interface between the System and employers for more accuracy and better reporting and it provides each member a permanent number no matter how many times they come in and out of the System.* 2) an explanation of the new IRS regulation concerning combined loans; *this new law becomes very tricky and members are warned to be sure they are aware of any tax liability of combined loans before they take one. The basic rules of borrowing are: Must have ¾ to one year credit, can't borrow more than 75% of contribution, can't borrow less than \$1000, can't borrow more than once*

*every 12 months, can't select a loan payment schedule more than 5 years.* 3) A summary of legislative action for 2004; *Retirees can earn up to \$27,500 in public employment per calendar year and transfers from one public retirement system to NYSTRS have been approved. Legislation passed but not yet signed by the governor: Any new legislation affecting benefits will take effect as of June 30<sup>th</sup>; members who earn less than \$2400 a year may take their benefit in one lump sum; Members out on workman's compensation may receive up to 12 months of credit.* and lastly 4) What can be used for Final Average Salary: *Payment reasonably incidental to a fulltime teacher or administrator, payment contingent to performance of such, terms of payment by CBA; coaching, tutoring, summer school, chaperoning, workshops, driver's ed, supervisory duties. Incentives, unused leave, and bonuses cannot be applied to FAS.*

### Seven Deadly Retirement Sins

The third session was "Seven Deadly Retirement Sins" presented by Richard Attwood.

1. Ignoring New York State Teacher's Retirement System Publications and the NYSTRS web site.
2. Basing important retirement decisions on information from the "faculty room guru". We all have them and their information is often wrong.
3. Not taking the time to fully understand the choices made at retirement that cannot be changed after you retire.
4. Not taking the time to actually file for retirement with the system. You must fill out a retirement application with the STRS. If you file late benefits are not retroactive.
5. Delaying retirement benefits after you stop working in order to avoid an age reduction in benefits. If you retire at 55 and delay benefits until age 62 it will take 19 years of benefits to just break even.
6. Not updating your records with the STRS. All changes must be made in writing. Forms are available on the STRS web site.
7. Failure to recognize key retirement thresholds i.e.

One year-death benefits apply  
5 years- vested

10 years- 3% contribution ends (tier 3 & 4)  
20 years- higher calculation for benefits  
30 years – no age reduction taken when calculating benefits  
35 years- no age requirement

What is the cure for any of these sins?  
Make use of STRS resources  
Make an appointment with a STRS representative  
Use the web site [www.nystrs.org](http://www.nystrs.org)  
Read newsletters publications and mailings from the STRS  
Understand your benefits profile  
Attend group presentations and individual consultations

### Benefits Overview

The fourth session was entitled "Benefits Overview" and was presented by Arlene Lindall. It covered "Service Retirement Benefits" which included "Arriving at the Pension Factor", "Age Factor Defined", "Calculation of Final Average Salary". Article 19, the Benefit enhancement was explained, as were the basics of Tiers II, III and IV. It is the recommendation of the STRS that no member retire under Tier III because of reductions that occur at age 62. Tier III members can opt to retire under Tier IV when they apply for retirement. The penalty for members who retire before reaching their minimum age / service years requirement was explained. The "Death Benefit" and "Disability Retirement" at each tier level was also covered in this session.

### Your Estate

The last session presented was "Protecting Your Estate" by Michael Suprunawicz, Esq. He explained the importance of Wills, Health Care Proxy, and Power of Attorney from a legal point of view and made a very strong case for why members must have all of these in addition to their retirement benefits. He suggested all members review the current status of each of these items and then regularly review each as well as ensure that their beneficiaries are updated.

( Continued on page 13)

*I/we would like to "Sponsor an Athlete" or a team from Special Olympics New York in 2005.*

Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of

- Team Sponsor \$1,500
- Sponsor \$250
- Friend \$100
- Other \_\_\_\_\_



**Special Olympics  
New York**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make checks payable to:** Special Olympics New York, Inc.  
**Mail to:** Anthony J. Bifaro  
 New York State United Teachers  
 800 Troy-Schenectady Road  
 Latham, NY 12110

**Or if you would like to use a Credit Card** (please circle)

Visa      Mastercard      American Express      Discover

Acct. # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
 3 digit code \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank You for Your Support!**

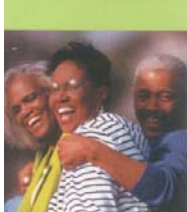
Created by the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation  
 Special Olympics New York, Inc. is Authorized and Accredited by Special Olympics Inc., for the Benefit of Citizens with intellectual disabilities.  
 Special Olympics New York, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Please consult your tax advisor as to the deductibility of your contribution.

**Just Imagine...**

The **joy, love and greatness** you can inspire with a **holiday gift** to Special Olympics New York.

With your contribution, you will help Special Olympics athletes achieve their goals. You will help them experience the thrill of competition, the courage in trying and the joy of achievement.

Turn triumph on the playing field into victories in everyday life and Inspire Greatness in our athletes.



Have questions about your New York State Teachers' Retirement System benefits or retirement planning? Or, are you a retiree looking for NYSTRS resources? Visit [www.nystrs.org](http://www.nystrs.org) for answers.

**Among the features of NYSTRS.org:**

- **Secure Area** - Review your personal NYSTRS account information, including service credit, contributions, loans and beneficiaries
- **Headlines** - Get the latest retirement and benefit information
- **Forms** - Download and print pertinent System forms
- **Legislation** - Track new laws and pending legislation that may impact active members and retirees
- **Calculator** - Estimate your retirement benefit online with this handy tool
- **Publications** - Read the latest edition of our Member's Handbook, Retired Members' Handbook, specialty publications and newsletters
- **Retirement Planning** - Study a host of tools and resources — including a list of upcoming NYSTRS consultations and seminars — to help you plan your financial future

New York State Teachers' Retirement System  
 10 Corporate Woods Drive, Albany, NY 12211  
 518.447.2666 | 800.356.3128 | [www.nystrs.org](http://www.nystrs.org)



## Pre-Retirement Planning Seminars

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

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

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

There is NO fee to attend.

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

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

#### ALBANY

February 16

April 2

May 10

STRS Headquarters

10 Corporate Woods

Albany

#### FISHKILL

January 20

May 12

Holiday Inn

Route 9, Exit 13

Fishkill

#### TARRYTOWN

January 21

May 6

Westchester Marriot

670 White Plains Rd

Tarrytown

**TO MAKE RESERVATION:** Telephone the Retirement System in Albany at our toll-free number for the seminar above you wish to attend. Reservations can only be made by calling the Albany office weekdays between 8:30 am and 4:15 pm. When calling, please provide your Social Security number, date of birth, home address, home and work telephone numbers, and indicate if your spouse/ companion is attending. If your spouse/companion is also a member, please have the above information for him/her also. After your call you will receive: (1) a letter confirming your reservation, (2) a seminar agenda and (3) directions to the meeting. Please bring this material with you along with photo identification and your most recent Benefit Profile. If you make a reservation, but cannot attend, please call the number above so the reservation can be offered to another member.

**BE PREPARED TO SHOW PHOTO IDENTIFICATION.**

## Report from the NYSTRS Annual Meeting (continued)

### General Meeting

At the general meeting several issues were addressed from the delegation. Many of these were explained during the breakout sessions. Sheila Salinger was re-elected to another term as teacher member of the board. She made a statement assuring the membership that as long as the NYSTRS remains a "defined benefit plan" as it is now our benefits are guaranteed.

However Salinger did warn that there is the danger that the STRS could be changed to a "defined compensation plan" which would have a grave effect on retirement benefits. She warned of a bill introduced in the State Assembly that would seek to put a call for a state Constitutional Convention of the November 2005 ballot. Should a

Constitutional Convention be called, everything in the constitution can be negotiated including Article 5, Section 3 which guarantees the State Retirement plans. The NYS Constitution calls for a vote regarding the Constitutional Convention every 20 years, the next vote not due until 2017. This bill uses a "backdoor" method to put the constitution on the table sooner. The politicians for this bill are saying the constitutional convention is necessary to fix the State Budget process. However, Salinger believes this is just an excuse and strongly urges all members to contact their elected state legislators and let them know that they are opposed to a Constitutional Convention. She cited that many mayors and county executives have been complaining that public em-

ployee pensions are bleeding the entities dry. She also noted that about one-third of the States' Legislators belong to the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) which strongly encourages defined contribution plans.

~ Patti Lunden and Patty Joy,  
NYSTRS Reps.

# Highlights of the October VCTA Executive Council Meeting

## Secretarial Report

Arline Friedman reported that Lucy Fox had informed her that the secretaries had negotiated and exchanged some numbers. Things are not looking promising.

## Paraprofessional Report

Kathy Lennon stated that there was nothing to report at this time.

## Board of Education Report

Kevin McFadden reported that Dr. Hanna, from BOCES had been in attendance. Transportation, school lunch program, and summer school reports were presented. The new Tutoring Plan was discussed.

Tim Brown reported that state aid is given if students being tutored are in the building. Tutor rate of pay is \$29 per hour, under the CBA but if there is more than 1 student per teacher (there are 3 per group), that the rate should be at the summer school rate of pay (\$31 per hour). This changes the terms and conditions, but this is a compromise. There is a lead teacher in charge during tutoring.

## Dental/ Optical Trust

Sandy Strauss requested that members notify either Jay Sussdorff, Sandy Strauss, or another member of D/O Trust if they have changes (ie: marriage, birth of a child, etc.). When members send Central Office proof that a child is in college, please remember to send this information to the D/O Trust (or SIDS in Lynbrook) so that claims can continue to be processed.

## Retirees

Kevin McFadden requested that Retiree Reps be aware of retiree desires for a) abolition of Tiers, and b) reinstatement of teachers to Tier 1.

## Old Business

Laurie Hey reported on additional items that members may be confused about regarding the new pay stub format. Flex md is the 5% health contribution. Flex mra is unreimbursed medical (cafeteria plan). Flex 10 is reimbursement for the 1<sup>st</sup> payment of health contribution if it was deducted too soon, if you have 21 pays. Flex 12 is the same as Flex 10, but if you have 25 pays. She also reported on the

amounts of individual and family contribution, both per pay and per year for OUSDHP, Empire and MVP and indicated that these rates are subject to change in January.

Rich Steger reported that information on health coverage is not available yet. OUSDHP may or may not extend enrollment period.

## Standing Committees

Patti Joy indicated that the TRS conference will be on 11/14 and 11/15. She requested that reps ask members in each building for questions of a general nature to be put in writing and forwarded to either her or Patti Lunden (our TRS reps). Kevin McFadden added that NY Teacher has a monthly column which addresses retirement issues. Jay Sussdorff indicated that all buildings should have received retirement consultation schedules. Let us know if your building needs them. The closest site is in Kingston.

## New Business

Joe Collins inquired as to the length of the school day. Tim Brown indicated that the CBA negotiations are based on a 7-hour day.

Robin Sinclair-Scott asked if the VCTA could donate \$100 toward the Corinne Feller Scholarship. **Motion to donate \$250 toward the Corinne Feller Memorial Basketball Tournament: Mary Bleau. Second: Diane Ruggles.** Motion carried.

Robin Sinclair-Scott indicated that a new teacher was told to attend mentor meetings for 30 hours over three years. She asked if coaches and teachers taking graduate courses were excused. Jay Sussdorff indicated that they must make up missed time and that no one is exempted from mentoring. Tim Brown added that the CBA stipulates 1-4 years (until the teacher reaches tenure).

There are no district-supplied flu shots this year.

Gail Nozell raised questions related to in-service course approval. Tim Brown stated that the District has the right to be discerning and that the credits must be in an accredited area. Arline Friedman added that she had a Master's plus 84 credits when she retired.

## President's Report

OUSDHP Minutes- June 27, 2004-

Copies were distributed.

Dennis Tracey Information- Copies of a letter from the VCTA to NYSUT members were distributed. Phone bank assignments and Saturday walks were discussed. Signs were distributed. We will endorse candidates NYSUT has determined to be friendly to education Health and Safety - Copies of a letter regarding a heating problem were distributed. Jay Sussdorff indicated that there are minimum legal temperature requirements.

175 Hour Regulation Clarification-

John Hunter's memo indicated that teachers certified after February 2, 2004 have initial certification and do not have to start work toward the 175 hour requirement until they receive their professional certification. Tim Brown stated that he felt that elementary teachers and secondary teachers should have been separated for opening meeting.

Rich Steger stated that evaluation forms need to be sent to Central Office for feedback- if you feel that staff development was not beneficial, say so. You can't complain if you don't respond.

Building Rep memo to new teachers-

Copies of a letter sent out to new teachers in the HS to introduce them to their Union Buddy was distributed. This is a good way to communicate to our new members.

VCTA Financial Record Review- Copies of a letter were distributed, stating that the VCTA books and/or records are being maintained in proper order and are in balance as of June 30, 2004.

Side Agreements for extra class- Copies were distributed.

John Kerry Information- Information on John Kerry was attached.

Thank Yous- Copies of thank yous were attached. Katie Alexander expressed her thanks for receiving a VCTA scholarship and Armand Caputi expressed his thanks that retiree concerns were remembered during negotiations.

Laptop purchase at \$1571.35- Tim Brown stated that he had asked Chris Mohr to research the purchase of a new VCTA laptop. If possible, it will be more financially reasonable to order  
(continued on page 15)

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



tion. We all suffered the loss of dear friend and colleague Rich DiVirgilio, a man of wonderful good humor and charter member of the Summer Lunch Crew and Chop Busting Society. He will be sorely missed. It is his passing which triggered in me the reflection that friendships like ours should be cherished and nourished. A happy and blessed holiday season to you all.

### Reflective Ramblings

*(uh oh, here we go again!)*

**T**his column is being penned (*literally!*) on November 20, a typical, cloudy and damp gift of November, the type of day that makes this scribe even more reflective than usual. We are just before Thanksgiving and in sight of Hanukkah and Christmas, times that remind me of all I'm thankful for: my blood family, my teaching life, all those who have made up and still make up my VC family. You have my thanks and my undying affec-

### Some Stuff

*(you might be interested in):*

In the June column, I mentioned the need for excellent substitute teachers. Our retirees certainly fill the bill. If you are interested in subbing in VC schools, give Muriel a call at 457-2400 x 8119.

I have been contacted by Mary Ann Wilson of BOCES (*and former VC Assistant Super*) regarding a Community Coalition cooperating with Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Orange County in an Adopt-A-

Match program. One's involvement might be as a mentor or as a fiscal supporter of the program. This would take in VCMS and VCHS. If you are interested in finding out more about the program, please contact me at 6 Jessup St., Walden, NY 12586, or at [GKMCF@aol.com](mailto:GKMCF@aol.com). I have brochures that I will then send to you. If sounds like a program that might interest some of our retirees, who certainly recognize the needs of secondary kids.

Reminder to active teachers planning to retire this school year:

Read again the material in the last issue (*Oct. 2004*) of [VC ECHOES](#) or in a recent past issue of [NY Teacher](#). Both contain a time line of things to do, to learn, to check in NYS Teachers Retirement System and with the Central Office of VC. Always go to the source(s) to avoid any confusion.

### Nobody Asked Me, But...

Thanks to the Board of Regents for planning (*in January*) to once again

## Highlights of the October VCTA Executive Council Meeting

through the school. Tim will check into this option.

Phone Banks at NTA on October 27- Bob Jurgens, Sandy Tarallo, and Kevin McFadden will participate. Directions were attached.

Building Rep Procedures- Jay Sussdorff asked for responses or additional information.

Leave Replacements- Tim Brown requested that reps ask new teachers if anyone has been hired as a leave replacement on salary and is not receiving benefits. Send names to Tim and let him know if the teacher infers any medical costs.

Salary Errors- Tim Brown stated that salary errors may not be fixed until December. He asked members to be patient- you will get the money that is

owed you. He is willing to go to each building, take questions and supporting paperwork and information to Central Office, and meet with Pamela Roberts and Christina Howe. Chris Brand suggested that we see how many people are affected. Jay Sussdorff reminded members to send information directly to either Christina Howe or Pamela Roberts.

Budget 2005-2006- VCTA officers believe that next year's budget will be problematic. Personnel, materials, and supplies may be affected. Reps are asked to get the word out to get next year's budget passed early. This is not a smart time to move around in education (ie: switching tenure areas) due to possible cuts in budget and personnel.

Direct Deposit- Tim Brown indicated that the district is receptive to give and

take. A payroll deduction would be required for discounts to teachers. The district wants mandated direct deposit. (We don't yet know if this is legal). We want the district to allow us to make deposits in more than one bank, not including the Credit Union. Discussion followed.

The next Executive Council meeting will be held December 14th at 4:00 PM at the VCHS Professional Library, Montgomery

*Respectfully submitted,  
Laurie Hey*

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

(continued on page 16)

give teachers five years to obtain their master's degree. This is so important to our young teachers who are deluged with "stuff" during early years of their careers. Perhaps the Board of Regents is beginning to make more sense to this turned-down candidate for a seat at its table (*but you all know that sad story!!*)

Please read the article on page 23 in the Nov. 18 issue of NY Teacher re: "AFT Africa-Aids" which is sponsored by AFT Black Caucus. More info at [www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org). *Editor's Note: The VCTA has pins available for \$10 that support the AFT Africa-Aids project. Contact Patti Lunden for more information.*

I'm very interested in finding out more about President Bush's nominee for Secretary of Education. She worked for him on Education matters during his tenure as Texas' governor. It is my hope that she realizes that you can't merely mandate "No Child Left Behind". It has to be a priority and funded as such. "Mouth honor" does not do the job.

### Life After VC

Tom Kneiser and Bruce Chapin

are exhibiting some of their works at the James Douglas Gallery on Railroad Avenue in Montgomery. Tom uses his incredible computer knowledge and digital imaging in enhancing his beautiful photographs. Tom is the retired Math chairman at VCHS.

Bruce Chapin (*retired from the high school art department*) is an absolute original and renaissance man in every sense of the word. His wide assortment of art forms testify to his enormous talent. The exhibit features two of his wall hangings. Hours: Thursday 10 am to 7 pm; Friday and Saturday 10 am to 5 pm 'till Christmas. 978-1371

Ginny and I caught Tom's exhibit at "Artists in the Garden" at the Vanderbilt Estate in the early autumn. Great stuff.

Kevin Curtis (VC 72) reports of his mother, Olga (Attendance). Kevin is her full-time care-giver. He sends his best in her stead and takes "each day as it comes."

Bea Hines is now residing in Chester, Virginia.

Frank and Mary Digilio (HS) are now full-time Floridians. Boca Raton's gain is our (and my) loss. Frank writes a beautiful letter with regards to all.

Jean (MS) and Larry (HS) Sutter send regards to all. Both have returned from their summer fishing sojourn. Larry still remains in my top ten of super teachers I have known. Who can ever forget the cries of "Photosynthesis" on the 2nd floor?

### Amen

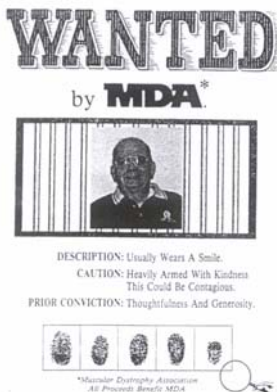
Whatever holiday you celebrate at this time of year, I hope that the much needed peace and justice is a gift to you. Pana and Gramma McFadden will be celebrating this Christmas in Seattle with Joe McFadden who will be two on Christmas Eve (and with his mom and dad, Joan and Matt). I hope Nate (10), Meg (8 1/2) and Claire (2), the Skaneateles' McFadden Molnar's will forgive us. It will be the first time we won't be with them on Christmas. Uncle Chris from Montgomery Elementary will be with them, and they really love that.

This is the last column of '04. Enjoy the holidays and have a happy, healthy '05.

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

~ Kevin McFadden,

Retiree Representative



Dear Friends,

**Please help me!** Once again this year I am being locked up and put in JAIL and need your help raising bail. I have been sentenced to serve time "**behind bars for good**" to raise bail for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. As one of MDA's **Most Wanted Citizens**, on Thursday, January 13, MDA deputies will whisk me away in their paddy wagon and take me to their jail.

Last year, because of your generosity I was able to raise enough money to send one local child afflicted with Muscular Dystrophy to summer camp for an entire week. This year my goal is to raise enough to send 6 **but I can't do it without your help**. Your tax-deductible donation to MDA will continue research into the causes and cures for 43 neuromuscular diseases. Your support of MDA will also help MDA provide services to over 1000 local families, including assisting with the purchase of wheelchairs, leg braces and communication devices, sending local children to MDA summer camps and funding local clinics and support groups.

Thank you in advance for your support. Please send your tax-deductible contributions payable to MDA to me at the **Valley Central Federal Credit Union**.

Sincerely, Stan Davie

**Advertising Section**

These ads will be seen by over 750 members of the VC Educational Community and their households. If you would like to advertise in the next issue of the VC ECHOES, contact Patti Lunden, 457-5899 for rates.



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*May your Holiday Season be full of Love and Joy,*

*And your New Year full of Good Cheer.*

*See you in 2005.*



*~ The Executive Council of the VCTA*

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*Tracy's Kitchen catered the VCTA December Holiday meeting and is highly recommended by the Executive Council!*

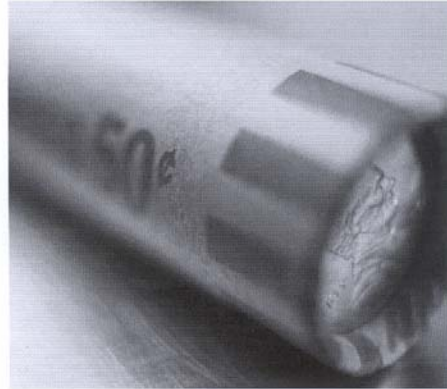
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### NYSUT members enjoy higher interest rates

Since last March, when New York State United Teachers Member Benefits introduced **Preferred Savings Plus<sup>SM</sup> from MetLife Bank**, members have been opening savings accounts and enjoying higher interest rates. MetLife Bank offers NYSUT members and agency fee payers some of the highest interest rates in the country on certificates of deposit, money market accounts and savings accounts.

**How is this possible?** It's a "direct bank" that focuses on personal savings and mortgage solutions rather than transaction (checking) accounts. The overhead incurred by traditional bricks-and-mortar banks is eliminated, which allows MetLife Bank to pass savings to its customers through higher yielding interest rates.



These interest rates are consistently high – they are not "teaser" rates. This puts more money in consumers' pockets. This program also offers convenience – you can bank online, by ATM, by phone or by mail. Accounts are accessible at any ATM across the nation. MetLife Bank does not charge account holders for use of ATMs, and it actually rebates you for other institutions' ATM fees charged for using their ATMs – up to a \$5 monthly reimbursement.

The bank offers high-yield savings products as well as a mortgage program.

- **Money market accounts** – offering rates more than double the national average with the benefits of liquidity and safety; also providing easy access to funds via check, ATM, phone or online. No minimum deposit required. First order of 30 standard checks is free.
- **High-yield savings** – earning some of the highest rates without sacrificing security, ideal for those who may not want or need check access. A minimum deposit of \$50 is required.
- **Certificates of deposit** – helping consumers build solid, disciplined savings by setting aside surplus funds for the long term. Minimum amount of \$1,000 is required.
- **Mortgages** – providing residential mortgages with a best-price guarantee; call or go online to receive a fast, free decision and a guaranteed closing date.

All savings products are FDIC-insured up to \$100,000 per depositor. FDIC regulations provide for separate insurance on joint accounts, which means FDIC would insure \$200,000, assuming each party owns half of the funds in the joint account.

For more information or to open an account, call MetLife Bank toll-free at **1-866-NYSUT 22 (1-866-697-8822)** or log on to [www.memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://www.memberbenefits.nysut.org).

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

Article contributions or Letters to the  
Editor for the next issue should be  
sent to Patti Lunden, HS, by  
January 28th.

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

## NYSUT/ NEA-NY May Become One

A draft of fundamental beliefs that could pave the way for the eventual unification of New York State United Teachers and NEA/NY is scheduled to be discussed by the NYSUT Board of Directors at its regular December meeting.

The document, "Fundamental Beliefs to Create a Single State Union," was hammered out by a team of leaders from NYSUT and NEA/NY. Subject to the approval of each union's governance bodies, "Fundamental Beliefs" is a significant step in the nine-year history of discussions between NEA/NY and NYSUT on possible unification of NEA/NY's 40,000 members with the 500,000-plus members of NYSUT.

NYSUT President Tom Hobart noted that an essential element of the agreement is NEA's willingness to assume all NEA/NY's legacy costs. Legacy costs refer to future NEA expenses that would arise, such as funding staff pensions.

Hobart cautioned that no NYSUT action has been taken, with the upcoming board discussion representing "the start of what would be a thorough and deliberate multi-year process."

"Many details still need to be worked out and agreed to by the unions' governing bodies before unification could take place," Hobart said, stressing that NYSUT is committed to protecting its members' interests at every step of the process.

If "Fundamental Beliefs" is adopted by both organizations, a subsequent step would be drafting constitutional changes reflecting the agreement, although Hobart noted NYSUT's structure would remain intact.

## Let there be peace...

At this season, much lip-service is given to peace. We hear it in the songs we sing, we send it in the cards we mail. "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me..." as the familiar song goes. But do we mean it?

As we end 2004, we are entrenched in Iraq and President Bush has yet to disclose his plan for a peaceful end to the war in which he declared, "Mission Accomplished" so long ago. But we don't have to look half way around the world to see violence. Violence surrounds our lives and the lives of the children we teach daily and, it has for generations. The news reminds us everyday of the violence in our lives—murder, rape, muggings, assaults, gunshots. We pay to be entertained by violence—through movies, television, video games, and even music. Our very actions can beget violence.

On December 3rd, the HS students, faculty and staff packed into the gym for

an hour presentation by Det. Steven McDonald of the NYPD and author Joseph Christoph Arnold. The subject of their presentation was forgiveness. Det. McDonald was shot July 2, 1986 while on duty in Central Park. He was shot three times by a 15 year old boy in the head and neck. He was left permanently paralyzed from the neck down, never to hold his wife or then unborn son again. He had a right to his anger as a victim of such a senseless act of violence. Yet, Det. McDonald found that he needed to forgive his attacker if he were going to be able to get on with his life. He and J. Christoph Arnold give a presentation on nonviolence called, "Breaking the Cycle" to HS students like ours. Det. McDonald told his story in a quiet voice stopping to take air from his breathing machine. The students, literally packed in like sardines, sat so quietly it would have been possible to hear a pin drop. His message was simple: When we are unforgiving we fester an anger



that can do nothing but eat away at the peace we seek. He asked so little of us; to be kind to one another, to forgive the transgressions of others rather than seek revenge.

If we can make a daily effort to forgive others, to be kind, to reject violence as a way of life... when 2004 becomes 2005 the world can change—from the halls of Valley Central to the city streets in Iraq. May peace be yours.

~ Patti Lunden,  
Editor