

VC ECHOES

An AFTCA and New York Teacher Award Winning Publication

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 4

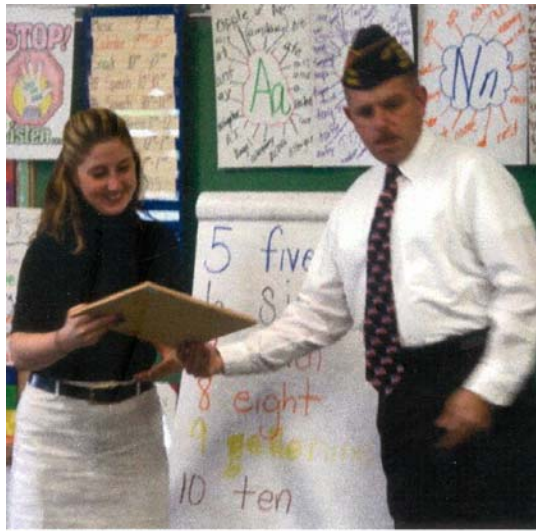
FEBRUARY 2004

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Two VC Teachers Honored by VFW



Jarret Winum, HS



Janet Malloy, Walden Elementary

Jarret Winum (HS) and Janet Malloy (Walden) have both been recently recognized by the Veterans' of Foreign Wars as National Citizenship Education Teacher (s) of the Year. Winum was recognized at the high school level and Malloy at the elementary level.

The award is based on teaching citizenship to students outside the required curriculum.

Janet Malloy

Janet Malloy is a K-1 Special Education teacher in Walden Elementary School. She has been a Valley Central teacher for three years. She was nominated for the award

by Walden Assistant Principal, Ronnie Casillo.

In her letter of nomination, Asst. Principal Casillo noted Malloy's enthusiasm and creativity in the classroom as well as her love of country which permeates many of the lessons she presents to her students. She noted that Malloy is committed to her classroom and her community.

Malloy was presented her plaque in her classroom with her students who joyously responded as she received the award presented to her by a member of the Walden VFW Post 2946.

Jarret Winum

Jarret Winum was nominated for the award by HS Principal, Darryl Imperati. Winum is a member of the High School Social Studies Department and teaches American History, American Revolution, Civil War and Military History. He has also taught Global Studies I and Economics. Winum has been a teacher at Valley Central for five years; he graduated from VC in 1992 and is the son of retired MS English teacher, Larry Winum.

In his letter of nomination, HS Principal Imperati noted that Winum's "love of coun-
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**You can
pay
people to
teach,
but you
can't pay
them to
care.**

~ Marva Collins

Negotiations Update

The VCTA Teachers' Unit Negotiating Team is headed by Jay Sussdorff (VP), Chief Negotiator, Rich Steger (VP) Co-Negotiator and Tim Brown (Pres.), ex-facto member. To this date (January 26), our team has met six times with the district's negotiating team; Dr. Richard Hooley, Superintendent; Mrs. Christina Howe, Assistant Superintendent for Business, and Peter Roden, Retired Assistant Superintendent for Business who lends a historical perspective for the district.

Although formal negotiations do not begin until March 1, 2004, both sides agreed to begin negotiations informally to expedite the process. At this time, the district's lawyer and the NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist are not involved.

Initial Discussions

Jay Sussdorff reported that initial discussions have been based on two major factors— salary and health insurance. "Once a sense of coming to some kind of agreement on these two major items is reached, we (the VCTA team) then plan to move on to other issues brought up by the surveys the membership returned and those brought up in meetings with each building," Sussdorff said.

Sussdorff also noted that, as expected, the district has its own set of issues to discuss outside of our agenda.

Both parties agree that they feel a certain sense of urgency to reach an agreement as the impending state budget doesn't appear favorable for either side's interest. Not that either side wants to rush to settle; both sides feel that the budget will not be propitious to either side.

In this light, Sussdorff

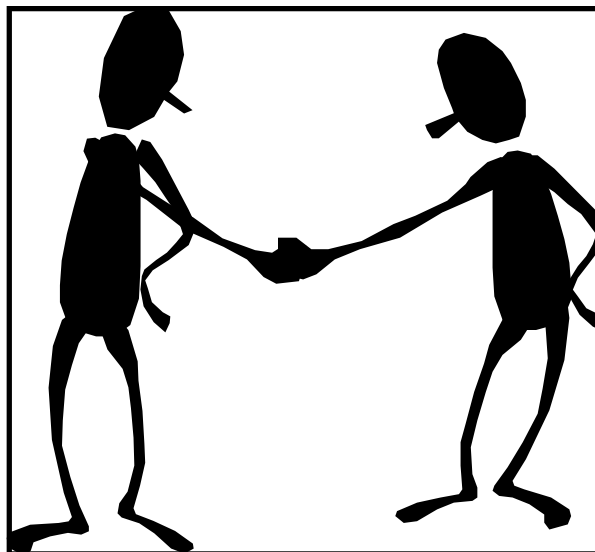
notes that while the negotiations team wants to be responsive to the memberships needs, they are conscious of budgetary constraints and realize we don't exist in a bubble and are affected by state and national issues inside and outside of public education.

Sussdorff reports that the tone of informal negotiations has been collegial. Several scenarios have been pursued and the VCTA negotiations team feel progress is being made and the district team is negotiating in good faith with the Association.

Continuing the Process

The process of informal negotiations will proceed as follows: If a tentative agreement is reached by March 1st the agreement would have to be reviewed by the legal representatives for both sides respectively. The language would already be set in place by this time and it would be more likely that a settlement would be in place when the current Collective Bargaining Agreement expires on June 30, 2004. Both parties see such a scenario as beneficial to all interests. If a tentative agreement is not in place by March 1st, the legal representatives on both sides would likely automatically be involved (which may complicate and slow down progress).

Until a tentative agreement is reached, the specific bargaining information cannot be discussed even with members outside of the negotiating team. When a tentative agreement is reached, it will first be presented to the VCTA executive



council, then to the general membership and then it will be put to a vote. Should this happen before June 30th, the new teachers' contract will begin July 1, 2004 and be in place for the duration agreed to by both sides in negotiation.

Other VCTA Units Settle

The paraprofessionals have settled their contract and the secretarial unit rolled over their contract in agreement that negotiations would begin again once the teachers have settled.

*~ Patti Lunden,
Editor*

***The Hudson Valley Blood Supply is at a
critically low level.
What if someone you loved needed blood
and there was none left?***



**Make a Difference,
Give the Gift of Life!**

***Cookies and Juice –and all you have to give is a pint
of blood!***

**The VCTA proudly sponsors an
Employee Blood Drive**

***February 26, 2004
VCMS Back Gym
1:30—7:00 PM***

**For an Appointment,
Contact Kathy Manning, RN
457-2400 ext. 6017**

Blood collected and snacks provided by

THE HUDSON VALLEY BLOOD BANK

putting children center
vcta

Two VC Teachers Honored by VFW *(continued from page one)*

try and history makes for a superb combination as his lessons truly reflect the ideals of promotion of good citizenship." Winum makes a point each year of including lessons on the American flag with the objective that students learn how to fold the flag, the days to hang the flag and how to show respect to the flag. Each year he also takes his students to West Point where they receive a guided and detailed tour. He also has his students contact their congressmen during his unit on government hoping students will see that they can make their voices heard.

Last year, Winum's classes posted yellow ribbons on

several of the trees on the HS campus in tribute to former VCHS students serving in the military. His students created banners of the names of these service men and women which were hung in the lobby after the war on Iraq had begun. His students also sent care packages to troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. 1992 VCHS graduate, Captain Robert Ben Ezra who was stationed just outside of Baghdad wrote back to the students.

Winum had no idea that Principal Imperati was nominating him for this award and was thrilled to receive the plaque which was presented to him by the Walden VFW Post 2946 during one of his

history classes.

Both Winum and Malloy have won this award at the district level. Their names will now be nominated for regional consideration. Should they win at that level they would then be nominated for the state and then the next level would be the national award. The VCTA proudly salutes the accomplishments of Jarret Winum and Janet Malloy, two dedicated, conscientious and patriotic teachers.

~ Patti Lunden,
Editor

THE POWER (OR NOT) OF YOUR ASSOCIATION

Any teachers' association/union is conceived and created to represent and protect its membership. A contract between that association and the representatives of a school district, the district administration and the board of education, is a living document which can be addressed at any time through the grievance and negotiations processes. That document and those processes have parameters and limitations, however. As an Executive Council with elected officers, we deal with many situations involving contractual language and implementation and those violations which take place in reference to the contract. We do not have control or influence over many matters that are part of federal, state or local district/ board of education policies/laws which are not part of (*or even allowed as part of*) contractual language.

When issues that come up are not contractually related, we still bring, when reasonable and plausi-

ble, whatever forces and influence (*which are within our purview*) to bear on those issues. It is important to note that this Executive Council and its officers are, without doubt, the most responsive to your needs as members of any I have known in my thirty two years in this district. We have always attempted to serve your needs and protect your rights in a day and age when society in general is continually questioning every aspect of the workplace and feels that entitlement is an inherent right to be demanded despite the reality of law and practice.

In response to this service, which we gladly and tenaciously provide to you our members, it is conversely incumbent upon each of you to take nothing for granted. Be educated through reading and knowing your contract, taking the time to read our publication (*Echoes*), familiarizing yourself with the minutes from each month's executive council meetings (*posted in all teachers' rooms*) and keeping in touch with your officers through

your building representatives. It doesn't pay to live in ignorance and then awaken with anger when something finally affects you as an individual. You are the strength of the association, and that strength comes through knowledge and a partnership which works in harmony. We are always here to listen to your questions and concerns, and we feel we have been and will continue to be open to suggestion and responsive to your input.

This organization also runs based on the democratic system. If you are dissatisfied with the way things are being handled, by all means, throw your hat in the ring and be a building representative or run for office.

Yours in service,
Jay Sussdorff, VP

Reminder Regarding Health Insurance

The VCTA holds the Health and TSA Fair each year to ensure that our membership is properly informed regarding the options available regarding health insurance. We do not endorse any company or plan over another. We merely present the pertinent information in a manner that is more easily understood. The VCTA has no control over the changes that Orange Ulster School District Health Plan has made, or will make, in the future. It is not the responsibility of the VCTA to com-

municate changes in the plan to our membership. It is the responsibility of the plan administrators to communicate any changes to the members of the plan in a timely manner. The VCTA in collaboration with the OCTA has done everything in its power to get the information, regarding the switch from Beech Street to GHI as our provider list, out to its membership. We have also worked diligently to ensure that a special enrollment window would be open to allow members to switch insurance carriers if this would benefit their individual situations.

The responsibility for communicating changes in the plan lies with the plan administrators, not with the individual locals. It is my opinion that the plan administrators failed to notify its membership about the change of provider list in a timely manner.

~Rich Steger,
VP

Attention: Orange Ulster School District Health Plan Members—Return this Survey

The Orange County Teachers Association (*Presidents of Teacher Associations throughout the County who meet monthly with NYSUT Regional Staff Representative and ED 14 rep.*) **are compiling a list of Doctors /their area of Practice WHO ARE NOT ACCEPTING the new GHI PPO.**

Please Return this list to Rich Steger VP, (Walden Elementary) by March 12th.

Doctor's Name: _____ Practice: _____

Doctor's Name: _____ Practice: _____

Doctor's Name: _____ Practice: _____

Doctor's Name: _____ Practice: _____

Doctor's Name: _____ Practice: _____

Doctor's Name: _____ Practice: _____

Use the space below, to address any specific problems you have been had since the changes in OUSDHP took effect.

Name _____, Building _____



NYSUT leads AFT endorsement of Kerry

With enthusiastic support from NYSUT, its national affiliate - the American Federation of Teachers - endorsed Sen. John Kerry's run for the Democratic nomination for president.

NYSUT President Tom Hobart said Kerry's popularity with NYSUT members - always very high - has been rising over the past several weeks. "NYSUT members are en-

thusiastic about John Kerry and comfortable he is the right man to win the nomination and defeat George Bush in November," Hobart said.

NYSUT Executive Vice President Alan B. Lubin said Kerry, D-Mass., has a lifetime 97% voting record on AFT issues. In addition, Kerry addressed delegates to NYSUT's Representative Assembly last spring and spoke to the union's members at

a conference in Washington, D.C., in July.

"John Kerry has continually impressed us with his commitment to fight for public education, health care and working families, and with his willingness to champion the rights of employees to form unions and bargain collectively," Lubin said.

The 500,000-member NYSUT does

NYSUT leads AFT endorsement of Kerry

not endorse in national elections. Instead, NYSUT - after taking the political pulse of its membership - makes recommendations to the 1.3-million-member AFT.

The AFT, like NYSUT, has a diverse membership that includes teachers and other school-related professionals, higher education faculty and academic staff, health care professionals and public employees.

AFT President Sandra Feldman said the union concluded Sen. Kerry is best equipped to develop and defend policies that are priorities for its members and the nation, from better health care to increased investment in public services and the workers who provide them.

Feldman emphasized that Sen. Kerry understands public schools, colleges and universities and the union members who work in them. He knows that our members need support if they are going to ensure that every child reaches his or her potential. "He will

make fulfilling these needs a priority," she said.

Lubin said the union has been polling NYSUT members on the presidential race for more than a year. Kerry's support has zoomed as the campaigns of other Democrats faltered.

"This was the right time to throw our support behind the Democrat who is going to take back the White House for millions of working people, not just the millionaires," he said.

The Kerry endorsement immediately unleashes NYSUT's powerful political action operation. NYSUT will mail letters in support of Kerry to its 500,000 members and begin operating phone banks in support of Kerry's candidacy.

In addition to urging members to vote for Kerry, Lubin said, "NYSUT will continue to support union members running as delegates on all slates in the March 2 primary, something the New York ballot allows. Not only do



we want to elect John Kerry, we must have a bigger voice for organized labor at the Democratic Convention."

The NYSUT Leader

Vote Kerry, vote Union March 2



New York is one of 10 states holding its primary election on "Super Tuesday," March 2. NYSUT now has two goals - giving John Kerry a landslide victory and electing NYSUT members as delegates to the Democratic National Convention

in Boston. Many members will be on the ballot as delegates and alternates pledged to other Democratic candidates. Voters in New York can vote for these delegates regardless of the candidate for whom they are slated.

"We have no doubt that when we get to Boston, we'll all be supporting the Democratic nominee," said Alan Lubin, NYSUT executive vice president.



Do You Just Belong?

Are you an active member, the kind that would be missed?
 Or are you just contented that your name is on a list?
 Do you attend the meetings and mingle with the crowd?
 Or did you stay at home and crab long and loud?
 Do you take an active part to help the work along?
 Or are you satisfied to be the kind to “just belong”?
 Do you ever go to visit a member who is sick?
 Or leave the work to just a few and talk about the clique?
 There is quite a program scheduled that means success, if done.
 And it can be accomplished with the help of everyone.
 So attend the meetings regularly and help with hand and heart.
 Don't be just a member, but take an active part.
 Think this over brother, are we right or wrong?
 Are you an active member? Or do you **JUST BELONG**?

~ AFT Catalyst

Join us... THE ANNUAL 40-HOUR FAST

... A time of prayer and reflection,
 sacrifice and action for change.

- Begins Tuesday, March 2, 2004 at 8 pm
- Concludes Thursday, March 4 at noon

*"You shall not withhold the wage of the poor
 and needy laborers ... they are poor and their
 livelihood depends on it."*

~ Deuteronomy 24:14-15



Sponsored by the New York State Labor-Religion Coalition

- **Why 40 hours?** ~ 40 is significant in both religious and labor traditions—40 days of Lent, the Israelites' 40 years in the desert. The 40 hour work week was won only after years of struggle and sacrifice by the labor movement.
- **How do we fast?** ~ Go without solid food for as many of the forty hours as you can. This may mean fasting from one meal or more-or fasting from sunset to sunrise.
- **During the fast, what do we do?** ~ Reflect/pray on the immorality of economic growth based on maintaining a low-wage economy that betrays its workers. Take action to raise the minimum wage, help someone register to vote or call the governor of NYS in support of the Farmworker Omnibus Bill.

- ♦ The Department of Agriculture has recently stated that 108 million US families either have no food in the house or worry about not being able to buy any.

What does it mean to be one of the 108 million, to be part of a US underclass whose labor, while translating into billions in profits for corporations, is just not enough to care for one's family?

- ⇒ You have little money for rent and end up renting a room in a local motel.
- ⇒ You can't get sick because you won't get paid.
- ⇒ You can't get credit, so you "rent to own" paying far more than items are worth
- ⇒ Child care costs eat up any chance you have for getting out of debt.
- ⇒ You don't know how much you'll really earn each week as your provides fewer and more unpredictable hours
- ⇒ If fired you are least likely to qualify for unemployment payments because you didn't work enough hours to qualify

Valley Central Teachers' Association

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

VCTA SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION

To be eligible you must:

- 1) Be either a VCHS graduating senior, or a graduating HS senior whose parent is a VCTA member
- 2) Have an average of 85% or better
- 3) Fill out the following form completely (*type or print*)
- 4) Submit a letter of recommendation from one of your high school teachers. Have it mailed directly to the VCHS c/o Guidance Office at the address above. Your teacher must sign the back of the envelope across the seal.
- 5) Attach a letter, approximately 500 words, in your own handwriting, in which you should indicate something about your hopes and ambitions in life. Also indicate any part-time or summer jobs, how much you saved last year, your plans for this summer and any other information you feel would be of interest to the scholarship committee. This letter is one of the more important parts of your application.

Name _____ ID # (*office use only*) _____

Date _____ Is your parent a VCTA member? _____

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

Age _____ College you plan to attend _____

Major Course of Study _____

Father's Occupation _____ Mother's Occupation _____

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

Comments: (*include unusual expenses, hardships*)

Honors and Awards—Academic:

Honors and Awards other than Academic:

School Activities:

Community Activities:

Mail application to the VCHS c/o Guidance Office, at the address above by May 25, 2004.

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



Why You Should Stop Shopping at Wal-Mart...

~ they are anti-union, anti-public education, anti-worker

- *WalMart pays its clerks about 25% less than its competitors placing their salary below the poverty level. Their employees also pay most or all of their own health benefits.*
- *They work vigorously at union-busting refusing to allow workers to organize.*
- *They drive down their prices by bullying their suppliers. Vlastic pickles bankruptcy filing can be traced to a deal with Wal-Mart. "The giant retailer's low prices often come with a high cost. Wal-Mart's relentless pressure can crush the companies it does business with and force them to send jobs overseas. Are we shopping our way straight to the unemployment line?"*
- *They drive down their prices by using non-documented workers.*
- *In the late 1980's and early 1990's, WalMart trumpeted the claim "Buy American" They have since have doubled their imports from China in the past 5 years. 10% of all China's exports to the USA go to WalMart.*
- *They are the largest company in the world. They are driving their competitor's out of business.*
- *By shopping at Wal-Mart, do you really have choice, or have your choices in fact been made for you?*

*Sources: Is Wal-Mart Good for America? NY Times Nov. 15, 2003
www. I.editthispage.com*

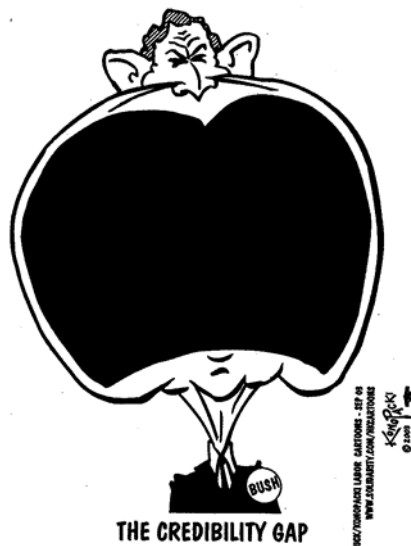
10 Million American Workers are Jobless

Bush Administration Response:

"Outsourcing is just a new way of doing international trade. More things are tradable than were tradable in the past. And that's a good thing."

Economic Report of the President
February 2004

From AFL-CIO website



NYSUT: 'Substantial down payment' needed

NYSUT leaders are calling for a "substantial down payment" toward a statewide remedy in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case, saying a delay would only hurt the progress that children and public schools are making.

In testimony to the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means committees, NYSUT Executive Vice President Alan Lubin said, "The governor has proposed setting aside \$325 million in response to the CFE decision. This is an acknowledgement of the problem, but nowhere near the solution."

Lubin said legislators must look at the schools across the entire state in constructing a new funding formula. "There are school districts where poverty is prevalent and that have similar circumstances to New York

City - not enough books, classes that are too large, and a shortage of qualified, certified teachers," he said.

Last week in response to the CFE's costing out report, Lubin said it "appears to be a strong, extensive analysis of what it is going to take to provide all children in New York - including those in New York City - the education they need and deserve."

Lubin recognized the state's serious financial problems. Still, he said, "A 5-year-old can't put his or her kindergarten year on hold for three years until the state straightens out its fiscal problems. An 8th-grader has to take the state exams this year, regardless of where we are in the business cycle."

Lubin called the proposed executive budget a "significant improvement" over the year before, but said the proposed spending plan falls short of providing school districts - as well as SUNY, CUNY and the state's community colleges - the resources they need. Lubin expressed specific concern over plans to include special education in a new Flex Aid formula; make changes to transportation aid; and weaken the Regents' ruling-making authority.

NYSUT, he said, would also fight to reverse a proposed \$24.4 million cut to BOCES and to win full funding for Teacher Centers, the Mentor-Teacher Internship Program and Teacher Support Aid.

The NYSUT Leader

DON'T LET EXPERIMENTS DERAIL NEEDED FIXES

In testimony before the New York State Commission on Education Reform, NYSUT First Vice President Antonia Cortese called on the commission to focus on fixing the state's school aid funding process and not be "derailed by unproven experiments."

"There are no quick fixes or magic bullets," Cortese said. "We should not be diverted by unproven arrangements, such as private school vouchers and charter schools."

Cortese told the commission that the public school system has proven it can work with the appropriate resources.

"Our public schools can point to many successes," she said. "The Regents' higher standards are leading to positive academic results in

schools across the state. The problem is not with our public school system. The problem is with the system for funding our public schools."

Cortese cited a recent Education Week study that found New York state ranks 36th in the nation in the share of education funding provided by the state. "This shortfall in funding is felt the most by school districts that serve our neediest students," she testified. "The poor academic results in these schools come as no surprise."

In her testimony, Cortese urged the commission to address the CFE decision on a statewide basis, and to ensure accountability and maintenance of effort by districts receiving additional aid under any new funding formula. She also urged the

commission to recognize the importance of attracting and retaining good teachers, and developing programs and funding for recruiting and retaining teachers.

"The research is clear," Cortese said. "Good teaching is the most significant factor in student success. But within the first five years of their careers, nearly 50% of all teachers leave teaching." She stressed that besides fair salaries, teachers need a strong support system and a supportive school climate. To read Cortese's entire testimony, go to the NYSUT Web site, www.nysut.org.

The NYSUT Leader

The VCTA would like to collect information and possibly contact a cellular phone company to find out if we can have a package put together for our members. The following survey will help determine which company is contacted.

Please take a moment to fill out the survey and return it to :

Laurie Hey, MS by March 19th

Cell Phone Use and Effectiveness

Please check off the company you now use:

<input type="checkbox"/> Nextel	<input type="checkbox"/> T-Mobile	<input type="checkbox"/> Sprint
<input type="checkbox"/> ATT	<input type="checkbox"/> Cingular	<input type="checkbox"/> Verizon
<input type="checkbox"/> Cell-One		

On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest) please rate the following:

Reception 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Cust. Serv. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Price/Value 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

COMMENTS

Name / BLDG :

Thank you for your response.



The VCTA Lunch Box Project

As we get ready for Spring to return, we need to help our kids get ready for summer.

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

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

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

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

The food will be delivered to the Montgomery Food Pantry which serves the entire Valley Central Community.

Shooting incident a 'nightmare come true'

Special-education teacher Michael Bennett, a member of the East Greenbush TA, was shot Feb. 9 at Columbia High School in East Greenbush.

A 16-year-old male student was apprehended at the scene after he allegedly fired three shots from a 12-gauge shotgun in a school hallway.

Bennett was treated for his injuries and released from Albany Medical Center Hospital that afternoon.

"My thoughts and prayers - and the

prayers of everyone at New York State United Teachers - go out to the teacher and the teacher's family and colleagues, and all the students at Columbia High School," said NYSUT First Vice President Antonia Cortese, who visited the school with Second Vice President Walter Dunn that same day. "This is everyone's worst nightmare come true. "Violence has no place in our public schools. But, unfortunately, our public schools are a reflection of our society. NYSUT and its members have always fought for the strongest safety measures for students and staff and we will continue to do so. I think everyone has to

realize that nothing is absolutely foolproof. We must redouble our efforts to make sure that all schools are safe and orderly places for learning."

"I also want to stress today that public schools are very, very safe. Incidents involving guns and other weapons are very rare. But, as we see today, we can never let our guard down. One incident can change people's lives forever."

The NYSUT Leader

Elections for VCTA Officers will be held on May 18, 2004.

If you would like to run for office, petitions to collect signatures to run for office will be available from building reps on March 16th. Forms are due by April 20th along with a short biographical statement and photograph (Digital JPEG format, please).

Highlights of the November VCTA Executive Council Meeting

Paraprofessional Report

Kathy Lennon reported on the progress of paraprofessional contract negotiations.

John Bonagura has forwarded parades information to Linda.

Dental/Optical Trust

Jay Sussdorff reported that the dental/optical booklets will be distributed as soon as they are received.

Retirees

Kevin McFadden requested that the teachers join the retirees in phone and e-mail campaign regarding the proposed revisions in the drug plan coverage. (Out of pocket costs will increase) The toll-free number to the Capitol in Washington, DC is 877-331-1223.

Old Business

Jay Sussdorff reported that, hopefully, there will be district-wide computer instruction.

Jay reported that there should be an instruction delivery system based on grade level, K-2 will receive 30 minutes per week, while grades 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 will be project-based and integrated into the classes.

Jay Sussdorff reported on the AIS delay –as of 11/18, classes were to begin. The delay was caused by a delay in grant money. AIS is taking place in all elementary buildings.

Jay Sussdorff reported that the swamp gas at East Coldenham has been tested and found not to be unhealthy. John Bonagura reported that many EC teachers are experiencing headaches and that teachers report many students are coughing and using inhalers and nebulizers. Water in the stream near the building is also extremely high. John will follow up on the situation.

Jay Sussdorff reported that the district is considering a shift of the school day for all elementary build-

ings to alleviate some end-of-the-day problems. Tim Brown reminded the Executive Council that this can be done within reasonable parameters.

Dental/Optical Forms– Jay Sussdorff will give Chris Brand the new forms with the new address and 800-numbers to post on the VCTA website so that the forms can be printed from the website. Jay will also send forms to reps in each of the buildings.

Selling Back Sick Days– This will be discussed at the next cabinet meeting at Central Office.

New Business

Concerns were expressed on the Collaborative Teaching Model; i.e.—there is no common time for teachers to meet. Discussion followed.

Patti Lunden reported that on 10/31 the OUSDHP posted their November meetings to discuss changes. Patti attended the 11/6 meeting in Middletown and outlined what had been changed. Tim Brown said he would attend the 11/20 OUSDHP meeting in Pine Bush. Tim Brown indicate that the VCTA has a side agreement which ensures that the District must make sure that the health coverage is better than or equal to the state plan. (The state plan is not Empire HMO). Discussion followed.

John Bonagura reported that Sue McCarly passed away.

Patty Joy and Patti Lunden attended the NYSTRS Annual Meeting and encourage all members 45 and older to attend a pre-retirement seminar. There is talk of creating a fifth tier. Patti Lunden reminded members that it is important for retirees to apply to TRS for retirement, simply informing the district is not enough. Patti Lunden also pointed out that if



your retirement estimate includes bonuses in regular pay that e money will be recouped from you. This is to stop people from fraudulently inflating FAS. Kevin McFadden reminded members they should remember to inform TRS of any changes of address ore marital status.

Tim Brown reminded members that the lower steps on the salary scale saw a \$300,000 increase over the life of our previous contract. Over the last seven year, something has been done for everyone.

President's Report

NYSTOTY– These nominations involve a lot of work. Building reps will check to see if parties involved are willing to continue with the work involved in the nomination process.

NYS AFL-CIO Scholarship information was distributed.

MHTC activities information was distributed.

Copies of a memo updating the HS staff on the air quality testing of the Haggar Wing and steps taken to remedy the situation was distributed.

AFT information on the NCLB was distributed.

Blood Drive– The annual blood drive will be held on Tuesday, February 26th in the MS Back Gym.

Tim Brown requested a list of community service activities from members.

Highlights of the December VCTA Executive Council Meeting

Paraprofessional Unit

Report:

Para Unit President Kathy Lennon reported that the Para's contract was approved by the Board of Education last night. Kathy indicated that, for bereavement and critical illness, the definition of family now includes mother-in-law and father-in-law in the para contract.

Kathy Lennon requested that the para officer stipend be increased. Previously, the stipend was shared between the para president and the vice president. Now the para unit has four officers who divide the work and the stipend.

Board of Education

Kevin McFadden reported that BOCES reports there is nothing toxic at East Coldenham.

Tim Brown reported that Pamela Roberts has been appointed as the new Assistant Superintendent and will begin on March 1. Art Nugent will be the interim until the end of January. Barbara Galvin will fill in between the time Art Nugent leaves and Pamela Roberts arrives.

Dental/Optical Trust

Jay Sussdorff reported that new booklets are being distributed. Jay also reported that he has sent new forms to be copied. Jay said he would check with Sandy Strauss to see that retirees will be sent new booklets.

Retirees

Kevin McFadden indicated that a general concern has arisen regarding the new Medicare law's effect on pharmacy coverage. Coordination of benefits is up in the air.

Kevin McFadden will be contacting CO concerning OUSDHP info for

retirees.

Old Business

OUSDHP- Express Pharmacy will not service mail-in prescriptions as of January 1. Instead Advance PCS will be handling prescription mail-ins. They will be contacting members by mail.

It was pointed out that GHI has different packages and co-pays. Additionally, GHI-OU is different than GHI HMO. Participants in OUSDHP are requested to inform their doctors that INDECS is still the administrator of the plan.

Tim Brown indicated that at his next cabinet meeting with the superintendents, he would ask Christina Howe to speak to each building.

New Business

Mark Sperry reported the VCTA Defensive Driving course will be offered on March 9 from 4-7 pm. The cost will be \$30. A registration form will be in the December Echoes.

President's Report

NYSTOY Nominations will be sent from the state to CO who then forward them to Tim Brown. The nomination process involves a lot of work for both the nominator and nominee.

NCLB Update copies were distributed.

The VCTA has been nominated for a Community Service Award.

A motion was made by Toni Sperry, seconded by Jay Sussdorff to make a \$100 donation to the All Night Grad Party.

Copies of a Medicare alert and "The Walmartization of America" were



distributed.

Tim Brown requested feedback on cellular phone plans. He would like to contact the leading company and ask if they would put together a plan to give VCTA members a better rate.

A candidate's guide is available for member's interested in National Board Certification.

Reimbursement for bachelor's level credit was discussed since special education teachers may need to take additional coursework to meet HOUSSE requirements.

Patti Joy requested that the light on the classroom telephones light up when there is a message.

Highlights of the January VCTA Executive Council Meeting

Dental Optical Trust

Orin Segall reported that the maximum payable dental benefit on page 13 should be \$1250 per year, not \$1000.

Retirees

Kevin McFadden reported that there are problems for retirees regarding late notice of changes from Orange-Ulster and lack of overlap time.

Kevin McFadden also indicated that the many doctors who were on Beech Street are not on GHI's list.

Tim Brown indicated that Mr. Engles and Mr. Olivo has said to tell doctors that the plan is GHI-BeechStreet. However, if doctors accept GHI-BeechStreet, they must also accept GHI- "others", who do not pay well.

Kevin suggested that a printed list of doctor would be helpful.

Old Business

Tim Brown indicated that discussions have taken place with the Superintendent with regard to a lack of courtesy that some VCTA members have received from Central Office in dealing with health plan problems and issues. Please let Tim know if you continue to experience any discourteous treatment.

The TSA/ Health Fair has been perceived as the job of the officers of the VCTA, but it is not the VCTA's responsibility. We are simply doing what we can to prevent problems and keep people from being misinformed. The OUSDHP is not "our" plan— the VCTA does not have a vote on OUSDHP. Tim indicated that he will request information from Dr. Hooley regarding an exit fee from OUSDHP and if there is an entrance fee for the Empire State Plan.

Patty Joy reported that the light is still not lighting up on the phone in her classroom. Tim Brown indicated that

the company that installed the phone system is no longer in business.

Joe Collins questioned whether collaborative teachers should have coverage when they are out of the classroom (i.e. testing).

Kathy Lennon indicated that a discussion was held regarding raising the stipend for para officers (\$300 for President and \$150 for each other 3 officers). The motion to raise the stipends was made and carried.

Standing Committees

Marc Sperry indicated that there were still a few spots available in the Defensive Driving Course. Contact Marc Sperry if interested.

New Business

Jean McMahon indicated there is no heat in some of the second floor HS rooms. The temperatures have been in the 50's. Jay Sussdorff indicated that the Health and Safety committee has dealt with this. The steam trap is inaccessible without getting architectural diagrams to jackhammer through the floor. The original company who screwed this up should fix this. The problem is being addressed by moving classes.

Mary Goldberg reported on the history of the leaking ceiling in the MS girls' locker room.

Marc Sperry would like to amend the VCTA constitution to allow retirees to vote on our board. Tim Brown indicated that retirees cannot vote on contract, local dues, etc. Arline Friedman indicated that VC is the only district in the ED 14 that allows retirees to sit in on their Executive Council. Mary Goldberg reminded members of Executive Council that we should always keep retirees in consideration as we will all be retirees one day.

Discussion took place regarding staff



split between two buildings. Travel, lunch, and planning time were discussed.

Rich Steger indicated that he would make enrollment forms available for Empire and MVP. The open enrollment period will end January 30th.

Jay Sussdorff indicated that the negotiating team met three and a half hours at their session in early January. The next meeting is scheduled for January 29.

Kevin McFadden reminded members that March 1 is the date members should inform the district of their intent to retire. Contact a building rep for a copy of the form letter.

President's Report

OUSDHP November minutes were distributed. Tim Brown indicated that we insisted that the District offer another enrollment period because of the date changes were made.

There was a motion which carried to send an additional \$50 to the All Night Grad Party. This raises the donation to \$150 which will allow the VCTA logo to be put on t-shirts students receive.

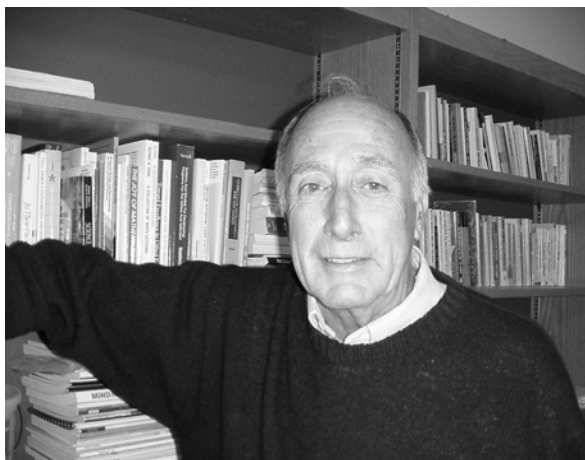
A memo from NYSTRS regarding contract audits and the TRS rep report was distributed.

Benefit Trust— BOE Membership Request. There was discussion as to COBRA status once a BOE member was no longer on the BOE.

Tim Brown would like to send Patty Joy to a seminar on parliamentary procedure in August.

The next meeting of the VCTA executive council is 2/17/2004.

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



nia (Fullerton), Berkeley, Portland and Seattle. It will break up the winter a bit. Spring will find me teaching a course once again in the L.I.F.E. program at Mount St. Mary College. The fire in the belly still burns at three score years and ten.

Condolences

~ to Pete Bergin,

Andy, Cindy, Linda and the grandchildren on the passing of retired nurse-teacher Jan Bergin after an heroic battle with cancer.

Retiree Alert

There have been some changes in health and prescription plan matters. Mostly it involves a different provider who includes many of the Beechstreet providers and is attempting to sign up others. For information, call 212-501-5597. Make sure to read December's Health Beat which has been sent to you by Orange Ulster School District's Health Plan. Also read "Highlights of Health Plan Changes", also sent to you by OUSDHP.

If you were due to receive a new health card and did not receive it, call 1-800-225-0324—ask for Bridget.

Also, if you discover that your doctor is not in the provider list, urge him/her to join the network. It is sometimes more practical to approach his/her office manager.

All those to whom I have spoken in person or on the phone have reported that the prescription plan for retail and mail order is now working well. Any problems, call Advance RX at 1-800-966-5772 (to order refills or check order status.

Refer to your current prescription number).

Nobody asked me, but...

George Bush's desire to spend billions to send someone to the moon, thence to the Mars while the taxpayer struggles to pay for his poorly conceived "No Child Left Behind," and while homeless folks sleep on grates in sub-freezing temperatures—strikes me as pure fantasy and political bushwa.

In attempting to raise the standard of teaching the State Ed. Department is introducing, as of the beginning of February, new certification plans and new requirements for professional development (the 175 hour routine) which will be thrust on teachers who are often overwhelmed with the problems of the everyday teaching-learning process. OY!!

On a more positive note, apparently the January Math A test was at least a fair test

To all teachers pre-K to Post Grad, keep fighting the good fight. If kids learn, it is definitely worth it. To all administrators, keep working as hard as you are to provide teachers with the opportunity to truly teach.

Amen

Thanks to all for listening, for turning to the back pages. And until next time, keep pushing back the barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you. Peace.

~ Kevin McFadden
Retiree Representative

Is it Spring yet?

Greetings from the Jessup Street tundra. These random thoughts are pouring out on January 30. I'm glancing out at a foot of snow in the yard and at a flock of birds stoking up at the feeders to ward off the effect of this 5 or 10 degree day. Yesterday, for the first time in its twelve year history, the Breakfast club had a one day delay due to snowy conditions. When you're retired, a two hour delay just does not cut it! I'm happy to report that the five lads survived Wednesday's shoveling and snow-blowing, although we poured more slowly than usual out of Pat Iorlano's car at the 84 Diner.

A large number of retirees have re-located permanently to the South, and an equally large number winter in the Southland. For myself, as for McFadden's before me, I don't want to be too far from Brooklyn—except, of course, to visit the new generation of McFaddens, the grandkids: Note, Meg and Clair in Skaneateles and Joe in Seattle. Gin and I just returned from Skaneateles (and you think it is cold and snowy here!!) On February 24th, we tae off for about three plus weeks visiting siblings, nephews, nieces, brothers and sisters-in-law, son Matt, daughter-in-law Joan, and grandson Joe—in Southern Califor-

Considering Retirement?

Have you contacted the NYSTRS yet?

In-Person Consultations: Face to face meetings with a System representative allows you discuss your unique situation and leave with a printed estimate of your retirement benefit.

2004 Dates/Local Places : *(Call number at site to make an appointment)*

Albany (800) 348-7298 Appointments are scheduled year round, M-F during business hours

Kingston (845) 339-3000 x 250 : March 11, April 15, 27, May 11, 27

Liberty (845) 292-5400 x 2005: March 24, April 21, May 20

Video consultations: Is identical to an in-person consultation using a computer to computer connection. Call (800) 348-7298 x 6100 to schedule an appointment.

Local Sites: Central Valley Elementary School, Elmsford– Southern Westchester BOCES, Lagrangeville– Arlington High School

Did you know you can (and should) contact NYSTRS as far as ten years in advance of your Retirement?

Pre-Retirement Seminars: Are day-long meetings conducted throughout the state. They are designed to assist active members (and spouses/companions) age 45 or older. Topics covered include: STRS and SS benefits, financial planning, legal issues, taxes and retiring with a state or local incentive. The emotional and social aspects of adjusting to retirement are also discussed. Call (800) 356-3128 x 6180 to register for seminar.

Local Sites: Fishkill, March 19; Tarrytown, April 2, April 30

If I Want to Retire, Who Do I tell?

The District: Notify the district in writing of your intention to retire by March 1st to be eligible for the additional step increment. If this is the first year of eligibility, you will be entitled to the district retirement incentive if you notify by March 1st. The VCTA has provided building reps with a form letter to assist members in composing their notification to the district. The letter is also on the VCTA website.

NYSTRS: Informing the District is not enough. You must apply for retirement benefits with the NYSTRS. If you plan to retire as of July 1, you may file no sooner than 90 days prior. Plan on filing by April 1st. Contact the NYSTRS for forms. The VCTA urges all members to contact the NYSTRS for guidance with this process.

You prepared to teach...Prepare to retire.

Is your best friend retiring this year?

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



The Retiree Edition of the VC ECHOES will be published on May 28, 2004.

Biographies are due by Wednesday, May 14th.

Send them to Patti Lunden, HS.

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

If you're having trouble writing, the following format is usually helpful. Each person is given a maximum of two pages (about 1500 words total), (unless there are extenuating circumstances.) Please try to bear this in mind when writing and sending pictures. If more than one person is writing for a retiree, please try to coordinate your articles, (i.e. one author writes on one aspect of the person, another takes a different topic or view)

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

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

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

Union Phone/Fax: 457-5899 VOICE MAIL x7664



"Care for Kids Campaign"

Join the VCFCU in "adopting" Mickey the Moose for a good cause.

This cuddly terrycloth moose can be purchased for \$5 with all proceeds of each purchase donated to Cancer Research for Children, a Westchester based organization.

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

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

A Special Thanks From Stan Davie

On Thursday, January 15, 2004, I had the privilege to join many other local executives in being "locked up" as part of the annual MDA effort to raise money to send local children with Muscular Dystrophy to an MDA summer camp. Thanks to many VCFCU members who contributed \$560.00 to pay my "bail". The money raised guarantees one full week of MDA camp to one of our local children.



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.

Get experienced assistance with your finances

Now that we're in the New Year, what better time to get your financial house in order? For help in starting, consider enrolling in the Financial Counseling Program through Ernst & Young LLP, available from the Member Benefits department of New York State United Teachers, our statewide union affiliate.

One valuable feature of the program is the toll-free access to Ernst & Young's *Financial Planner Line*. When you call, you can expect

- Objective guidance based on your needs - E&Y sells no financial products,
- Answers to personal or general financial planning questions,
- Follow-up responses to complex issues,
- Action-oriented recommendations, and
- Confidential assistance.



You can call the *Financial Planner Line* weekdays between 9 a.m. and 8 p.m., Eastern Time. But you may be wondering what types of issues they can assist you with. What follows are actual questions the financial counselors have helped members with.

I keep getting further in debt. What can I do?
How can I best invest my tax-deferred annuity?
Do I need a Will?
What kind of financial aid will my child be eligible for?
Do I have enough money to retire?
Should I adjust my tax withholdings?
Should I refinance my home?
Does an account that has "in trust for" count for Medicaid application?
I know I need life insurance, but what kind and how much?
What should I do with this inheritance that I received?
How do I structure my estate to pay the least amount of estate taxes?

The program includes a number of other features. You can request financial analyses targeted to a specific topic and customized to your unique situation. You'll receive E&Y's financial planning newsletter. And you have the option to request an in-person financial planning consultation (you may incur an additional fee for this). No sales pressure on this one—if you do not desire this component, no one will call you. The in-person consultation is activated solely by your request for this service.

The annual fee for this plan is less than \$80. Many NYSUT members have received valuable assistance from this program. If you think you could benefit from experienced, objective financial assistance, take a closer look.

For information, contact NYSUT Member Benefits by calling 1-800-626-8101, e-mailing benefits@nysutmail.org, or logging on to www.memberbenefits.nysut.org.

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It's a great night out—wonderful friends and great food— all a low subsidized price!
Join us next year.
Make plans now.
Mark your calendars for January 29, 2005.



Ask your friends and family to join you!

Also check out our web page to see photos of this year's celebration. It will be under the "Special Events" icon.

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Vice President, Richard Steger (Walden)
Secretary, Laurie Hey (MS)

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*The VC Echoes is the official
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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
April 4, 2003.**

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

What is Arbitration?

Arbitration is an alternative to litigation in which an arbitrator or a panel of arbitrators listen to the positions of the disputing parties in a relatively informal proceeding and then issue a decision on how the situation should be resolved. (Zimmerman Research Guide, www.lexisone.net)

According to Article III, Section D of the CBA, If a grievance cannot be settled after presentation at the Board of Education, the Association and the District submit the grievance to the American Arbitration Association. It is processed in accordance with the Voluntary Labor Arbitration Rules and the arbitrator's decision is final and binding.

55, 65, 90...Hut!

When in doubt, punt.

John Heisman

The point of all the emphasis on test scores in education has been to improve the quality of public education in New York State. Requiring standardized testing was sold as a way of guaranteeing that all children in New York would not only receive a standard education, but also reach a higher level of achievement than previous generations of New York's students. Requiring more children to take the tests; testing more often through the grades, with high stakes testing at grade four and eight; using data analyzed from the test results to revise curriculum and teaching methods, and gradually "upping" the standards by raising passing test scores would eventually ensure the child in Buffalo would learn the same things as the child in Potsdam, Albany, Syracuse and the Hudson Valley. When this emphasis on testing as the way to improve education was conceived, many teachers railed against it insisting that making all students pass

Regents exams would not ensure that standards were truly raised or that all students would pass. An emphasis on testing does not make better students; good, solid teaching makes better students. After all, shouldn't the goal in education be to impart learning that lasts a lifetime as opposed to viewing the end of the test as the end of the road?

The Board of Regents has extended the 55 score as passing for two more years. Students were to have had at least a 65 on the five Regents they are now required to take to earn a Regents diploma which would have been the only diploma available. School districts now have the option of continuing to grant a local diploma if the student passes a Regents with a score between 55-64. Ten points is a wide margin of leeway when it comes to a Regents exam as the June 2003 Math A Regents proved. Undoubtedly, many of the students who took that exam will breathe easier



with this extension. And in the meantime, the Regents will continue to consider test scores and what other options may have to be undertaken if too many students are still scoring under 65 when the extension ends. A wise decision—it sounds as if they may be returning to the drawing board to reconsider the original game plan.

As the players who must abide by their rules, it would be in the interest of the students in our classrooms today and in the next two years to make our voices heard concerning the emphasis on testing.

*~Patti Lunden,
Editor*