

VC ECHOES

An AFTCA and New York Teacher Award Winning Publication

Timothy M. Brown, President

Patricia Lunden, Editor

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

AFT/NYSUT Endorse Kerry/Edwards

On the issues that matter most to NYSUT/AFT members:

A Strong Record. The Right Vision.



A Strong Record

John Kerry had had a distinguished career in public service.

- A decorated US Navy combat veteran
- Prosecutor in district attorney office Mass.
- Lieutenant governor of Massachusetts
- US Senate since 1984
- A career 97% AFT voting record
- A career 90% AFL-CIO voting record

~ Consistently opposed private school vouchers

~ Supported programs to underwrite school construction, reduce class size, and improve professional development.

~ Co-authored Nurse Reinvestment Act

~ Fought for union/employee rights for Dept. Homeland Security and for collective bargaining rights for state and municipal public safety officers.

~ Fought for the Patients' Bill of Rights

The Right Vision

- Fully Fund NCLB Act
- Add \$10 billion in education funding to hire more teachers/ shrink class sizes
- Issue bonds for school construction, repair and modernization.
- Expand access to higher education.
- Establish federal program for Americans with catastrophic healthcare expenses to help keep premiums down.
- Reimportation of lower-cost prescription drugs from Canada.
- Extend insurance to all children and low-income adults.
- Resist efforts to privatize Medicare –provide prescription drug benefit
- Establish federal staffing standards –ban mandatory overtime for nurses.
- Send \$25 billion to states to stop layoffs in public service/education by narrowing state budget gaps
- End tax breaks for companies that outsource.
- Provide tax-relief for middle-class and repeal tax breaks for wealthy
- Reverse new overtime regulations that cancel overtime pay for millions of American workers.



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"Political rhetoric from the left or the right has never educated a single child.

Only a highly qualified teacher with skills, tools and support can make the lasting difference we want for our children."

~ Tom Watkins

What's behind NYSUT's Endorsement

This is reprinted from the New York Teacher—September 9, 2004.

They say no good deed goes unpunished. When it comes to politics, no NYSUT endorsement goes uncriticized.

Every two years, NYSUT endorses candidates for the US Congress and the state Legislature. Every four years, those endorsements are expanded to include statewide elections. The process is fairly straightforward.

Members of NYSUT's Political Action Committee and local presidents come to the statewide union's endorsement conference in early August. NYSUT's Legislative Department prepares extensive background information on the candidates.

Voting records on education, health care and labor issues are reviewed. Endorsements are debated. Finally, endorsement recommendations are presented to the NYSUT Board of Directors for a vote.

The most important part of this process is the involvement of local presidents and political activists. While legislators' voting records speak for themselves, only our grassroots unionists can really speak for themselves, only our grassroots unionists can really speak to a local candidates availability and willingness to help. The late Tip O'Neill said: "All politics is local". NYSUT's endorsement conference adheres to that principle. The voice of every region is heard before we make endorsement decisions.

Of course, while everyone is heard, not everyone agrees with the deci-

sions. But the Board, with rare exception, concurs with the recommendations of the Political Action Committee and the local presidents.

The end result is a slate of candidates NYSUT believes will be strong advocates for education, health care and all the issues so important to our members and our state.

This year, we sent a message to 26 Assembly members who did not support the union-backed override of the governor's education funding vetoes in 2003. Despite our endorsement of them in prior elections, we withheld endorsement this year.

Our power to get things done in Albany comes from our size, but it also stems from our refusal to bend on the core principles that unite us.

~ Tom Hobart, NYSUT President

Why the union endorses

This is a reprint from Point of View in the June 2, 2004 New York Teacher.

The column was originally printed in Together, published by the Eden Teachers Association edited by Vanessa Zoll. It responds to a letter from physical education teacher Julie Roses, who questioned the union's endorsement for president: "Not all teachers are Democrats. Not all teachers think poorly of President Bush."

It seems that some people feel misrepresented when their union endorses a candidate whom they oppose.

There are several points to understanding why and how a candidate gets endorsed, but first let us remember that unions are the most democratic of all organizations.

There are many corporate cultures in which you wouldn't dare breathe a word that goes against the political grain of the owner or management. Indeed, I know of one in which the owner insists that his top managers

write a check for the maximum amount in support of his candidate. The managers certainly wouldn't print a letter expressing an opposing point of view.

Those who are put off by a NYSUT or AFT endorsement need to remember that those unions are concerned only with those policies and ideologies that support public education. That is their business and, from everything I can see, they know it well. If you can make a case for how George Bush and his administration have been good for public education, I would like to hear it. But the dialogue should begin and end on topics of public education, health and workplace issues—the ones unions analyze in making their endorsements.

Now, if you have other reasons for supporting another candidate, I respect that, and I believe the union does also. But you cannot expect the union to follow the same reasoning. That would be a mistake.

For example, I believe President Bush's economic policies are reckless;

his foreign policy is exacerbating the terrorist problem, leaving us with a legacy we will never see the end of; and he has been nothing short of a moral train wreck for this country. Compare that with Julie Roses' differing opinion and go figure. Neither of us can claim moral authority. Obviously, morality is a thorny issue. My point is that the unions must not consider other issues when making an endorsement; their opinion should be weighed by members because it provides a valuable perspective.

As a teacher I believe in the mission of public education, and here I do think I know something. The mission requires the support of our public leaders. That will be the compass I use in making my decision this coming November.

~ Mark Vona, Eden Park TA,
Erie County

Faces from the VCTA Annual Fall Fest—September 24th



Peggy Kennedy and Jacqui Schneider, HS



Kristine Thorn and Gayle Gridley, HS



Elaine Keefer, Kathy Manning and Nellie Briggs, HS



Bob Mooney, HS



Maureen Goodenough, HS



VCTA President Tim Brown and Henry Pizzonia, HS



*Martha Santos, Mary Folchetti,
Mary Giogionni, HS*



Joette Hunter, Anna Leo, Star Langlitz, HS



Jed Beukelman, HS



Doug Straebler and Family, HS



Erick Santana and Bill McGreevy



Barbara Palmer and Antoinette Oakes



Keith Sexton, Jennie Meehan and Mike Score



Kerry Meyer and Penny Centers



Paul Cummings and Eileen Purcell



Mary and Dan Failla, Marge Elkin and Joe DeVenuto and Toni Sperry



Keith Sexton, Jennie Meehan and Mike Score



Diane Ruggles and Glenn Taylor



Carla Imbrahim and Donna Barletta



Susan Barry and Astrid Larson



Linda Erichson, VCTA Secretary Laurie Hey, and Tim Brown



Tammy Coleman and Kim Brosius



Patty Joy, VCTA VP Rich Steger and Diana Revoir

Who is Dennis Tracey and Why Should I Help Get Him Elected?



- Dennis Tracey lives in the town of Chester with his wife, Diane and their two daughters.

Like many Hudson Valley residents, Tracey believes we need a balanced better approach to regional growth because overdevelopment threatens our communities. As a longtime homeowner in the area, Tracey knows how hard it is to afford rising taxes. He'll fight to expand STAR to hold down property taxes, reject income and sales tax increases, and prevent Albany from imposing hidden taxes and fees.

- Dennis Tracey has taught social studies in the North Rockland School District for 33 years.

As a teacher, he knows what works and what doesn't in the classroom. He'll fight to make sure more of our education dollars go into the classroom.

- He has served as the president of the North Rockland Teachers Association and has a reputation of working well with school boards. With his help and fiscally prudent approach, the last 13 North Rockland budgets passed.

As an Association president, Tracey is fed up with late state budgets year after year. He'll never stop fighting to force the state's leaders to do their job and pass a good budget on time.

Dennis Tracey is running against Nancy Calhoun in the race for Assembly District #96 which includes the following towns in Northern Rockland and Orange Counties: Blooming Grove, Montgomery, Crawford, New Windsor, Highlands, Woodbury, Chester, Stony Point and Cornwall.

What has Assemblyperson Nancy Calhoun done for you lately? *NOT MUCH!*

On September 20, 2004, Nancy Calhoun joined with Assembly Republicans to vote AGAINST overriding the latest round of Pataki Line Item Vetoes. The override failed by just one vote. Here's the impact of Calhoun's vote:

- State college tuition will increase ANOTHER 4%.
- SUNY Orange will have to cancel courses because of a lack of faculty and staff.
~ SUNY Orange lost nearly half a million dollars in state aid— that's 242 sections of class gone.

In 2003 Nancy Calhoun voted against \$190.50 million for our state's school districts in the 96th Assembly district.

Because of her horrendous voting record against public education, ***Calhoun was not endorsed by NYSUT.*** Her response? *She "doesn't think voters will put much stock in the endorsement."* (Ertelt, T-H Record, 8/6/04). She must have no memory of the D'Amato-Schumer senate contest. Alfonse D'Amato also doubted the importance of a NYSUT endorsement. He lost his seat to Senator Chuck Schumer by approximately the number of votes equal to the NYSUT membership.

Let's show Nancy Calhoun OUR vote matters.

Elect Dennis Tracey for State Assembly. A new voice for a better future.
He's from Orange County. He's a Teacher. He's a member of NYSUT.
He's One of Us!

Contact VCTA President Tim Brown, 457-5899, to help make a difference for Dennis Tracey on Saturday, October 16th.

The First Years in Teaching

What does it mean to have a mentor?

The first years as a new teacher are often the most overwhelming years of our lives. New teachers can't be successful on their own. They need veteran teachers who are willing to not only give assistance when asked, but to also offer ideas and assistance without being asked. New teachers might come to you and ask how did you teach topic X. They may have done it one way, but it didn't work the way they planned. The five minutes of your time mean the world to a new teacher. It is often the difference between being successful and being frustrated. We all learn from failure, but having successful examples and someone to point you in the right direction can reduce the number of failures and increase confidence for the new teacher. New teachers learn some skills from simply observing veteran teachers. I know that my behavior management style is a com-

bination of the styles of two retired teachers, Dan McGinnis and John Robinson. They both commanded respect from their students, but did it with humor and a genuine love for their children. These veteran teachers always made time when I had questions about teaching, the union, or even when it would be the best time to ask the principal for a favor (*Monday morning before school started or Friday afternoon*). They always made it a point to ask how things were going and if I had any questions. Although I was young enough to be their child, they always made me feel like I was an equal. I could always share the events of the day, both positive and negative. They made me feel comfortable. My success is very much due to their efforts. They were just being who they were. They didn't feel that they were going out of their way. They just did what came naturally – TEACHING.

Please remember those teachers who were your mentors, both officially and unofficially. I know that it does take time to help

mentor a new teacher, but the end result is worth every minute. When you teach a student, you are impacting that child's life. When you help teach a teacher you are impacting all the lives of all the students that they will teach.

Thank you to all those teachers who have offered to be a mentor this year and in the years past. Thank you to all those veteran teachers who have used their planning periods to help new teachers. Thank you to those veteran teachers who give more to the new teacher than just a stack of handouts. Thank you to all those teachers who realize that teaching goes beyond the classroom. Thank you to all those teachers that realize learning is a life long experience.

~ Rich Steger,
Vice President

New Member Updates

Tenure-it is one of the goals of every new teacher. It signifies the end of your probationary period. It is awarded after three years of intense scrutiny of every aspect of your teaching ability and professionalism. It is one of the longest and most demanding probationary periods of any career field. Why is Tenure so important? It prevents you from being arbitrarily relieved of your teaching position. It mandates that you receive due process. **Tenure does not guarantee you a job for life.** Until you receive Tenure, you can be relieved of your teaching position at any time. This enables administration to retain only those teachers who have proven that they are professional, dedicated and highly skilled educators.

Sick and Personal Days and Tenure: The Board of Education critically evaluates attendance prior to granting Tenure. They understand that new teachers immune systems are not prepared for the attack of 25 to 30, germ producing, angels under their care. It is our recommendation that you keep track of the days you use. If you are contagious—stay home. If you are feeling under the weather—come to work. You have health coverage, use it! Make sure you have a physical and you address any medical concerns with a physician. Ask your physician if you should get a flu shot.

Remember: Teachers have been denied Tenure based on attendance.

This is a detailed explanation of the new paycheck format.

VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOLS

944 STATE ROUTE 17K
MONTGOMERY, NY 12549

DATE: 09/25/04

Employee Name	Employee Number	SSN	Pay Period	Building	Ref#
SALLY FLOATER 1	2916	999-98-9998 2	08/30/04 - 09/10/04 3	00DIS 4	268126
Earnings	Units	Rate	Current Pay Period	Cal Year To Date	Fis Year To Date
CONTRACT 5			1,678.57	1,678.57	
PER DIEM 6	14.00	80.00			
		Totals	2,798.57	2,798.57	2,798.57

EMPLOYEE INFORMATION:

- Employee Name
- Employee Social Security Number
- Pay Period ending for hourly wages only
- Building the check is being sent to

EARNINGS INFORMATION

- (for Current Pay Period, Calendar Year to Date and Fiscal Year to Date)
- Contract – biweekly salary amount
 - Per Diem wages – coaching and/or chaperone pay would also appear in this area

Deductions	Current Pay Period	Cal Year To Date	Fis Year To Date	Deductions	Current Pay Period	Cal Year To Date	Fis Year To Date
FICA 7	173.51	173.51	173.51	MEDI 8			
FEDERAL 9	256.72	256.72	256.72	10 STATE			
CITY 11	0.00	0.00	0.00	12 457BNYS			
CR UN 13	50.00	50.00	50.00	14 TCHDUES			
TRS 15	83.96	83.96	83.96	16 UNTDWAY			
				Totals	897.31	897.31	897.31

DEDUCTIONS INFORMATION

- (for Current Pay Period, Calendar Year to Date and Fiscal Year to Date)
- FICA – Social Security Tax 6.25%
 - Medicare Tax 1.45%
 - Federal Tax (sheltered for TSA & TRS contributions)
 - State Tax (sheltered for TAS only)
 - City Tax (not applicable)
 - 457BNYS – Deferred Compensation Plan deductions
 - CR UN – Credit Union deductions
 - TCHDUES – Teacher dues deductions
 - TRS – Teacher Retirement System deductions
 - UNTDWAY – United Way deductions

EXEMPTION INFORMATION

- Federal tax exemptions and additional withholdings claimed from W-4
- State tax exemptions and additional withholdings claimed from W-4
- City tax exemptions and additional withholdings (not applicable)

RETIREMENT SYSTEM INFORMATION

- Retirement System, Employee's TRS or ERS number and Tier

CONTRACT SALARY

- Annual Contract Salary as stated on salary agreement

CHECK TOTALS

- Gross Pay
- Deductions – total of all deductions, voluntary and required
- Net Pay = Gross Pay less Deductions
- Direct Deposit – Amount deposited directly into employees bank
- Check Amount = Gross Pay less (Deductions and Direct Deposit)

Exemptions	Additional Withholdings	Retirement Sys	No.	Tier	Contract
FED: M02 17	0.00	TRS 20	full	4	35,250.00 21
STATE: M02 18	0.00				
CITY: 19	0.00				

	22	23	24	25	26
Check Totals	Gross Pay	Deductions	Net Pay	Direct Deposit	Check Amount
	2,798.57	897.31	1,901.26	0.00	1,901.26

THIS DOCUMENT HAS INVISIBLE FLUORESCENT FIBERS - VIEW UNDER BLACK LIGHT - ARTIFICIAL WATERMARK - HOLD AT ANGLE TO VIEW

THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1
944 STATE ROUTE 17K
MONTGOMERY, NEW YORK 12549
PAYROLL ACCOUNT



KeyBank National Association 50-883/219

268126

CHECK NO.

268126

1,901 DOLLARS and 26 CENTS

DATE
09/25/04

AMOUNT
\$ ***1,901.26

PAY TO THE ORDER OF
SALLY FLOATER - 00DIS
123 OLD LANE
OLD CITY, NY 000000

VOID

Jax Phelps
DISTRICT TREASURER

Please make use of the following protocol when contacting Central Office:

On issues of Personnel

- Contract Salary Agreement
- Payment for Earned Credits– Inservice/Graduate
- Interest in Posted Positions

Contact: Pamela Roberts, Human Resources

Issues concerning Special Education

Contact: Arlene Feldman, Elementary
Joanne Dobbins, Secondary

Send a copy to Pamela Roberts



On issues of Curriculum/Instruction

- Course Approval—Inservice/ Graduate
- Proposals for Inservice Courses/Professional Development

Contact: John Hunter, Asst. Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction

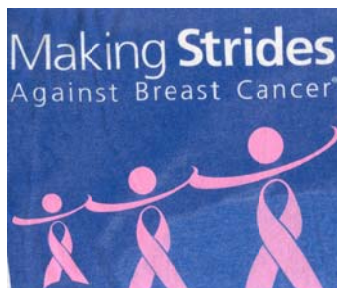
On Business Issues

- Benefits-Health Insurance Enrollment/ OUSDHP Concerns
- Payroll
- Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable

Contact: Christina Howe, Asst. Superintendent for Business

The VCTA recommends you state in writing your request/question and make a copy of anything you send for your own file. Hand deliver and ask for a date stamp at the front desk..

If your problem is not resolved in a timely fashion, please contact your building representative and give him/her a copy of the documentation you sent. The building representative will give the request to the VCTA officers who will try to assist you in resolving the issue.



The **Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk**
takes place October 17, 2004
Woodbury Commons
9:00 am

Please support someone on the VCTA team!

October is Open Enrollment month...

The RATES for the HMO's will not be available until the coming weeks. As soon as they become available they will be distributed. This is beyond the control of the Association and the District. They are being held up by the State.

Making a Change

Before you make any changes be sure that you have checked with your physicians to be sure that they accept that insurance. Also compare the major points of the plan to your current plan. Be sure the services that you utilize are covered. If you decide that you want to change insurance plans, the enrollment form must be in Central Office by October 31st.

Changing to an HMO *

The VCTA Health and TSA Fair provided an opportunity for all VC employees to check out alternatives for Health Insurance. October is the month to change Health Care coverage if you would like to do so. If you picked up an information packet on one of the Health Care companies, then you will find an enrollment form inside. Once you have made a decision - Fill out the enrollment form, make a copy of it, and bring it to Central Office by October 29th. Ask for a date stamp on your copy when you drop it off. Applications go to the attention of Christina Howe/ Jan Phelps. *Your coverage will become effective as of January 1, 2005 and*

continue until you make another change.

Although the Association invited only three Health Care Companies to the Health Fair, by Federal Law you have the right to choose any HMO you prefer. You would need to contact that HMO on your own to arrange for enrollment.

Changing to OUSDHP

If you wish to change from an alternate health care company back to the Orange-Ulster Schools Health Plan, (OUSDHP) contact Mrs. Howe at 457-2400 x 8122 for an enrollment form.

5% Mandatory Contribution

As you are aware your mandatory 5% contribution is being deducted from your pay. The 5% represents the cost of the health plan you've chosen. If the plan costs LESS than OUSDHP, you are being charged 5% of the cost of the plan and the district is paying 95% of the plan. If the plan costs MORE than OUSDHP, then you are being charged 5% of the OUSDHP with the district paying 95% of the cost of the OUSDHP and **additionally** *(as has been the practice)* you will be charged the difference. Since the OUSDHP rates follow the school's fiscal calendar, while the other companies follow the January-December fiscal calendar, OUSDHP costs more than all the other plans until December. No one is being charged a difference. However the other plans' rate increases will take effect in January and then you will be responsible to pay the

difference if the plan you enroll with costs more than OUSDHP. In July when OUSDHP rates are increased, your contribution will be readjusted. Because these are new rates, if you already have Empire, GHI HMO or MVP, the 5% contribution will change with the new rate effective January 1st.

The VCTA does not recommend you choose any one company over the other; we encourage you to consider all your options and choose the coverage that best meets your needs. *You do not need a cover letter to make these changes. Your completed application is your notification. Remember to retain a copy for your records.*

FAQ's

- ☐ **A true HMO is an insurance company which owns the medical practices within its network. The three choices the VCTA has made available are PPO's. (Participating Provider Organization) The doctor's participate by accepting the insurance company rates, but are independent of the insurance company.**
- ☐ **An INDEMITY plan is one which allows the insured to utilize doctors/services outside the network. A PPO requires the insured to utilize doctors/services within the network.**
- ☐ **Questions/ Problems? Contact VP Rich Steger, Walden.**

Health and intellect are the two blessings of life. - Menander

NYSUT pressing union “sign-off”

The Board of Regents is likely to vote next month on a proposal to revise middle-level education. The plan would provide three model districts could use for middle-level schools.

While it mirrors some of NYSUT’s long-stated positions, the union is still seeking clarification on a number of issues.

The three models in the proposal include:

- **Model A:** Available to all schools—it follows existing regulations. Most schools will use this model.
- **Model B:** Available to SURR schools and schools in need of improvement—districts would have to apply to SED for additional flexibility, and the local union would have to be involved in developing that appli-

cation.

- **Model C:** Available to a limited number of schools—it allows considerable flexibility to experiment with new ideas and programs. The district’s application to SED would require sign-off from the local union.

Now, however, the state School Boards Association is working to eliminate the union sign-off provision in Model C. NYSUT is fighting to retain the provision.

The C option calls for thinking outside the box, said Maria Neira, NYSUT second vice president, and that involves risk taking for all involved. It will be critical for the experiments to be conducted and evaluated properly, she said.

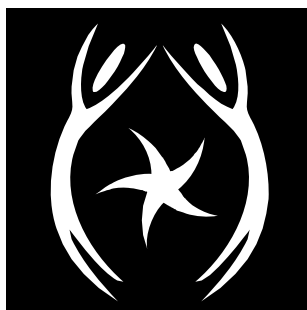


“This requires the ‘buy in’ of all parties, particularly the teachers,” she wrote in a letter to the Board of Regents. “The sign off by the bargaining unit on the district’s application provides a check and balance on the experiments.”

For more on the proposal, go to www.nysut.org.

~ *The NYSUT Leader*

**November 18th
is NYSUT’s
Second Annual Recognition Day
of School Related Professionals.**

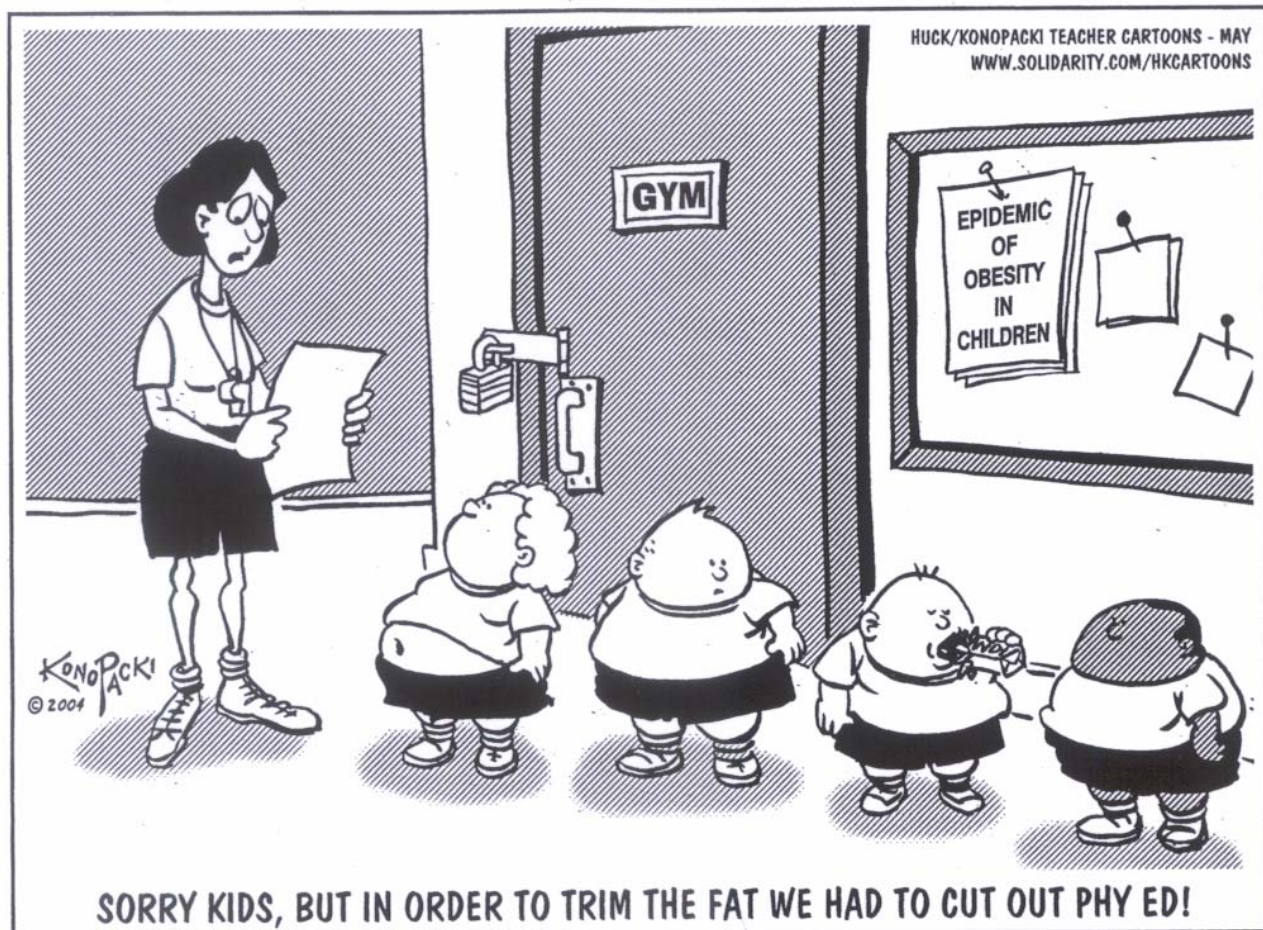


**Be sure to let our
secretaries and paraprofessionals
(and custodians and cafeteria workers)
know how much you
appreciate all that they do.**

**NYSUT Disaster Relief Fund is
still collecting donations to aid
victims of the hurricanes that
hit Florida and southern states.**



**Send contributions to:
NYSUT
Disaster Relief Fund
800 Troy-Schenectady Road
Latham, NY 12110-2455**



Call for Resolutions and Amendments

Deadline for Submitting Proposed Resolutions—January 21

A resolution is submitted on issues that members believe NYSUT should give its attention to. They must be approved by the local association (VCTA) and signed by the President.

Deadline for Submitting amendments to NYSUT Constitution/Bylaws—February 4

A proposed amendment must be submitted in writing to the Board of Directors and be signed by no fewer than 100 members representing at least 5 election districts.

Proposals are published in NY Teacher March 3rd and considered at the RA, April 7-9, 2005.



Education Progress Report

In the modern era, there is an ever-growing number of parents who still find themselves supporting, directly or indirectly, their child, or children, despite the fact that their child or children are aged 50 and above. So it was when recently George and Barbara Bush received the following communication regarding their son, the current United States President.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. G. H. W. Bush,

Once again, it is that time of year when we update the parents of our students on their child's progress, and we regret to inform you that your son, Georgie, is not doing as well as we'd hoped and expected when he embarked on his four-year program at our school. As you are well aware, Georgie was installed as class president at the start of the school year, despite the fact that the majority of his fellow students did not vote for him. We foresaw problems immediately, but were assured by several school board members (who, as we understand it, are friends of your family) that this would not result in any real difficulty. Unfortunately, they have been proven wrong. In the area of scholastic

achievement, despite our best efforts, Georgie is still reading and speaking at a grade level far below our usual standards. At this point, we are not sure if his failure to learn is due to laziness and a lack of ability to apply himself to his studies, or if he simply lacks the intellectual capacity to improve in these areas.

His oral presentations to the class are particularly troubling; it is apparent that Georgie has not read the necessary materials, and he often simply fabricates facts to hide this shortcoming. In oral exams, he tends to repeat the same answers over and over, e.g. "The economy is good; jobs are on their way," indicating a profound failure to keep up with the Current Events portion of the curriculum. Georgie also tends to fabricate elaborate stories about himself - which, admittedly, can sometimes be very amusing. During a school celebration last May, he delighted his fellow students by coming to class in a little "flight suit" (just like the grown-ups wear!), and had everyone in stitches with his story about the family dog having eaten his report card from military preschool!

On the whole, however, Georgie does not play well with other children. His "leadership" in the classroom continues to divide many students, one against the other. Other study groups, such as our French and German-language classes, are no longer willing to cooperate with Georgie's group, even though they have traditionally done so in the past.

Your son also displays a lack of taking responsibility for his failings, and seems unable to appreciate the consequences of his actions. Although he was provided with the best textbooks on the subjects of the Economy, Job Creation, The Environment, et cetera, these books were damaged or completely destroyed within a matter of months. Georgie insists that he "inherited" these books in poor condition, despite all evidence to the contrary. (In fact, these same textbooks were previously used by one of our very best students, who actually returned them in better condition

than he found them!) During his first few weeks with us, Georgie quickly became part of a group of other "problem students."

Despite warnings, he has consistently befriended children whom we consider to be "bad elements," such as Little Kenny Lay and a foreign-exchange student named Chalabi. Both of these youngsters have been expelled from other schools due to their involvement in cheating other students out of their lunch money. We feel that these kinds of relationships can only lead to no good, and hope that you will advise your child accordingly. Georgie often displays aggressive behavior in the schoolyard, and recently assaulted a student in another school district, completely unprovoked. When asked about this incident, Georgie insisted that the other child was armed and dangerous. When investigation

into the matter proved otherwise, Georgie changed his story several times: he was just trying to "democratize" the other child, the other child's school was harboring gang members, and so on. Quite frankly, his story on this topic has so changed from week to week; we simply can't trust his word at all anymore.

Georgie's friends, while not great in number, are very loyal, but tend to be overprotective. If any of the other students point out Georgie's failing grades, these friends simply shout them down and tell them not to speak at all. When Georgie was summoned to the principal's office several weeks ago, he insisted that his "best friend" come with him. We feel that it is in Georgie's best interest to learn to stand up for himself; failure to do so could seriously damage his ability to handle a leadership role in his adult years.

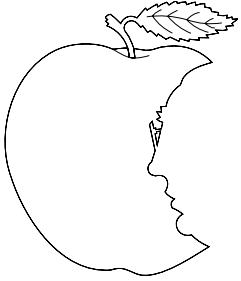
As you are aware, final exams will be held in November, and Georgie's past performance leads us to conclude that he will not be able to achieve the grades necessary to continue on with another four-year term at our institution.

Yours Truly,

Ms. J.Q. Public, Assistant Principal

AFTCA CATALYST news service supplement-- 9/04

**NO
BUSH
VEMBER**



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

Each year the District
in conjunction with the Association
Nominates a teacher to be considered for
NEW YORK STATE TEACHER OF THE YEAR.

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

Name _____

Building _____

Years teaching _____ Years at VC _____

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

Your Name _____ BLDG _____

Return this form to Doug Straebler, HS by October 29th.

Evening Parent Teacher Conferences will be held on

Monday evening, November 22

Elementary 6 pm—8:30 pm.

Middle School 6:30 pm –9:00 pm

High School 6:30 pm—9:00 pm

Remember that attendance at these conferences is contractual

(unlike the voluntary Open House nights),

and if you are absent,

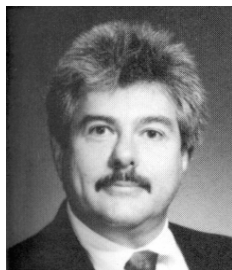
the administration has the right

to require that you

make up the evening another night.

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

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



Richard H. Aderson

“Make A Difference”

2004 Award

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

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

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

1. The award recipient must have demonstrated genuine contribution to the field of education, and a humanistic concern for faculty, students and all persons in education.
2. The award recipient must have a strong record of the achievement of excellence in educational related service to children.
3. The award recipient must be a “living” example of commitment to “Making A Difference” in children’s lives.

Nomination Form on Page 15

ORANGE-ULSTER BOCES

*Richard H. Aderson***"MAKE A DIFFERENCE"****2004 AWARD****NOMINATION FORM**

NOMINEE: _____ DISTRICT: _____

SCHOOL NAME: _____ POSITION: _____

SCHOOL ADDRESS: _____

Using the selection criteria as a guide, please indicate your rationale for this nomination:
(You may use additional paper, as needed.)

NAME OF NOMINATOR: _____ POSITION/ROLE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE #: _____

Return to: Kathleen Heloski
Assistant Director of Professional
Development
BOCES Technology Learning Center
163 Harriman Heights Road
Monroe, NY 10950
Phone: 781-4356 Fax: 774-7323

All nominations must be submitted by **November 15, 2004.**
Please attach all supporting documentation.
Awards will be announced in **January 2005.**

VCTA Executive Council Meeting Highlights—June 2004

Elections—Reps were asked to give names of next year's reps to Laurie Hey.

Jay Sussdorff encouraged members to get out the vote for the second budget vote.

The vote on the VCTA CBA will be held after the VC budget vote.

BOE—Kevin McFadden reported that the last two BOE meetings had been devoted to budget.

D/O Trust—Sandy Strauss reported that the D/O Trust is not anticipating any changes and that we will maintain benefits. Sandy indicated that COBRA information will be available. John Bonagura and Sandy Strauss will continue as trustees for 3 years.

Retirees—Kevin extended thanks to the Executive Committee and negotiators on behalf of retirees.

Standing Committees—Toni Sperry suggested that VoteCope payroll deduction forms be available on Opening Day. Toni will send a slip back to members which confirms their contribution amount and check number. Members who utilize payroll deduction will have their pay stub as their receipt.

Jean McMahon stated that she is

willing to support educational lobbying, but is not willing to support the election of specific political candidates.

Patti Lunden announced that Sunday, October 17 is the annual Breathe Cancer Walk. NYSUT is the 2nd biggest sponsor.

At this point, retirees recognized and presented with VCTA certificates, NYSUT certificates, and NYSUT pins.

President's Report:

The VoteCope reimbursement letter was presented. \$1,100.88 was reimbursed to us, based on our contribution.

VCSD Budget Cut Lists for the Second Vote was attached. We are the lowest spending, per pupil district in Orange County and the 2nd lowest in the Mid-Hudson. Tim Brown encouraged members present to get more community members out to vote, especially those who did not vote the first time the budget was presented.

Teacher Mentors Vacancy Notice was attached.

Interactive Museum Golf Tournament Registration forms were attached. Tim Brown requested that the VCTA take out a journal advertisement, which would take care of

our support of a local event to give us recognition in the community. Motion to allocate \$60 for ad space carried.

OUSDHP minutes were attached. Kevin McFadden reminded those present that Index is our insurer; GHI is the provider network.

The proposed VCTA meeting schedule for 2004-2005 was distributed and discussed. Calendar was moved and carried.

A motion carried to give officers permission to go out and solicit discounted prices on products and services for VCTA members.

The buyout was discussed regarding the new CBA. The district would be obligated to look at the buyout if someone felt that the new contract affects the buyout for them.

There were no grievances filed during the 2003-2004 school year. Tim Brown praised Dr. Hooley for his fairness and professionalism in working with the VCTA this year. Tim also recognized and thanked the VCTA officers for their work.

Upcoming Executive Council Meetings



Tuesday, October 19, 2004
Tuesday, November 16, 2004
Tuesday, December 14, 2004

4:00 pm — HS Professional Library

From the NYSTRS WebSite

Timing is Everything

Once you have made your decision to retire and the countdown begins, you have many important steps to take so you receive all the benefits for which you are eligible.

There are questions to ask, decisions to make and filing dates to meet. These include:

- *When and where to get the best information when the time comes.*
- *When to file your retirement application.*
- *What to do when legislation is pending.*
- *When to make the decision on an option or life insurance for your beneficiary.*
- *When you will receive your first payment.*
- *When is the latest you can change your mind or change your retirement date.*
- *When to file for Social Security benefits if you're eligible.*

This timeline assumes a **July 1** date of retirement, which is typical for members who complete the school year.

Start the process early! Don't wait until the last minute to take action.

Based on the laws in effect as of March 2003

Steps to Take In Your Final School Year

September

Ask your employer or Retirement System delegate to arrange for an STRS presentation on the "retirement process."

Review your contract so you'll know when to notify your district that you intend to retire.

Find out from your business or human resources office if you will be eligible to receive a payment for unused leave or a local retirement incentive.

Attend your last "meet the teacher" night.

October

Beat the spring rush and schedule a personal or video consultation with an STRS representative at a site near you. (It isn't necessary to go to System offices in Albany.)

At the consultation you will be able to:

- Receive benefit estimates based on the salary information you provide.
- Get answers to questions about your benefits, including prior service.
- Obtain System forms and instructions on what to file when.

Claim and purchase (if required) credit for prior New York State public employment or military service. Do this now so your records will be complete when you retire.

November

Contact your financial advisor to assess your finances.

Determine your life insurance needs in retirement and make any needed adjustments.

Review the various STRS benefit payment options if you will need to provide income to a beneficiary who survives you. A summary of your choices can be found in the STRS publication *Maximum or an Option: Your Choice At Retirement*.

December

Discuss with your employer your health insurance coverage in retirement for you and your beneficiary. The Retirement System does not administer health insurance coverage.

If necessary, explore additional private health insurance to supplement your coverage until you are eligible for Medicare.

Set health and nutrition goals for the new year that you can carry into retirement.

Start an exercise program that will help you maintain good health.

January

When you receive your *STRS Benefit Profile*, review the service and salary information for accuracy. Make sure all of your service credit is listed and check that any extra salary has been reported.

If you will be eligible to start receiving Social Security benefits at the end of the school year, contact the Social Security Administration by calling **800-772-1213** or visit their Web site at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/>. (In most cases, you cannot begin collecting Social Security until you are age 62.)

February

Visit our **Web site** to stay informed of legislative proposals that could affect your STRS benefits. Use the on-line pension calculator for an updated estimate of your benefits.

Spend your winter vacation:

- Searching for possible retirement destinations.
- Planning your retirement leisure activities.
- Considering the possibilities for a second career or volunteering.

March

While preparing your federal income tax forms, start calculating the federal tax liability on your estimated retirement income. **Remember, there is no New York State tax on your STRS benefit.**

Decide whether to have your taxes withheld from your benefit payment, or to pay estimated taxes. Indicate your choice when you complete your retirement application in the months ahead. You can change this in the future if the need arises.

April

The filing period for a **July 1** retirement begins in **April**. An application can be filed no sooner than 90 days prior to your effective date of retirement. There is no longer a 30-day waiting period, so you can file as late as the date of your retirement. This increased flexibility allows you more time to make decisions and continue tracking new legislation.

When you decide to file, submit your application by registered or certified mail.

May

Call the System's Hotline at **800-782-0289** or visit the **Web site** to track any state retirement incentive or other legislation that could affect your benefits.

If there is legislation pending, contact the Retirement System to find out what steps to take to maintain your eligibility for any new laws.

Attend your last spring concert.

June

If you haven't already filed, begin preparing your retirement application in anticipation of a July 1 retirement.

Be honored at your retirement dinner and receive farewell wishes.

Correct tests and prepare final grades for the last time.

July

July 1 is your official date of retirement.

July 15 (or 14 days after your retirement date) is the last day to withdraw your service retirement application.

July 31 (or 30 days after your retirement date) is the last day to file a change of benefit payment election form if you need to change the payment choice you made on your retirement application.

July 31 is the direct deposit date for your first benefit payment.

ENJOY YOUR RETIREMENT!!

How To Contact Us:

Call our "Hotline" at **800-782-0289** for forms and the latest news.

**New York State Retirement System
Schedule of In-Person and Video Consultations 2004-2005**

Please be sure to bring the following items to your consultation:

- A photo ID (such as a driver's license);
- Your latest STRS *Benefit Profile*;
- Salary information for your last, current, and future school years; and,
- The amounts of any incentives, bonuses or unused leave.

Albany

800-348-7298, Ext. 6100

In-person Consultations are held year-round.

NYS Teachers' Retirement System, 10 Corporate Woods Drive

Central Valley

800-348-7298, Ext. 6100 Video Consultations are held year-round; call for details.

Central Valley Elementary School, 45 Route 32

Elmsford

800-348-7298, Ext. 6100 Video Consultations are held year-round; call for details. Southern Westchester BOCES, Lower Hudson Regional Information Center, 44 Executive Boulevard

Kingston

845-943-3056 In-person Consultations:

Sept. 30; Oct. 20; Nov. 3, 18; Dec. 9; Jan. 5; Feb. 1, 16; March 10; April 13, 28; May 5 Board of Education, 61 Crown Street

LaGrangeville

800-348-7298, Ext. 6100 Video Consultations are held year-round; call for details. Arlington High School, 1157 Route 55

Liberty

845-292-5400, Ext. 2005 In-person Consultations:

Oct. 7, 26; Nov. 17; Dec. 8; Feb. 2; March 22; April 7; May 3, 18 Liberty Central High School, 125 Buckley Street

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



Greetings

Summer's over, school is in session, VC's retirees continue to traverse the globe, autumn's pied beauty begins to paint our beautiful valleys and mountains—and Mac is back. (*Into each life a little rain must fall*) This year I intend to be less verbose! (*Let's see how long that lasts!*) I remind you all that many of the views presented in this space are mine and do not necessarily reflect the views of NYSUT, VCTA, State Ed. Dept. (*perish the thought*) or Mrs. Calibash. I continue to be grateful to the VCTA for allowing this voice of retirees to be

heard. We continue to be supportive of the work being done by the active teachers, administrators and staff. Valley Central continues to be an excellent school district.

Retiree Luncheon #22 was held at Camillo's Crossroads Restaurant on September 8th. One hundred retirees intended to attend and 95 actually were present. 205 announcements were sent out; 135 responded. Of those unable to attend, 32 sent notes of regret along with some news of their lives after VC. A wonderful time was enjoyed by all those who attended. Our retirees are vital, interesting and interested folks. The vitality of the conversations even kept some tables from hearing John Mirola's call to the buffet lines. John, once again, proved to be a terrific master of ceremonies. He has been the MC for each of the 22 retiree luncheons. The new retirees were joined by those who have been retired as long as 30 years plus. Believe me, those

years rush by.

Nobody asked me, but ...

- This year's state budget delay is the worst ever. It caused many school budgets to be voted down throughout the state. Not only Valley Central's.
- The legislature's failure to override the vetoes of the governor is a disgrace. Libraries especially will suffer.
- Addresses (*snail and e-mail and telephone numbers*) of the governor and legislators appear regularly in the paper. Contact them. Inform them that you disapprove of their actions or lack of action. Also remind them that we will remember and that we vote.

Editor's note—Use the links on the VCTA web page to contact legislators.

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

Life After Valley Central

There are many of our retirees who have retired to live permanently in Florida, North and South Carolina. We hope that they have not suffered during the hurricane season. The following excerpts are from responses to the retiree luncheon, received in August. In ensuing issues of ECHOES, I will try to share other tidbits from life after VC.

~ Dora Blizzard (CO) regrets the long distance (Venice, FL) which keeps her from attending the luncheon. She sends regrets to all.

~ Ditto from Millie Tillson (CO) in Concord, NH.

~ John Napolitano (HS) sends best by phone to all. He and Carol are now on Long Island. The golf is good.

~ Fred Decker (EC) and his wife celebrated their 50th and were away on the luncheon day.

~ Fred Sparks comments that this is his 21st year of retirement. Fred was Maybrook's chief custodian.

~ Rose Meyer (EC) reports that she was in Killarney and touring the Ring of Kerry as part of a two week tour of Britain and Ireland.

~ Jeanne Sharp (MS) sends regards from Albany.

~ Carole Armstrong (CO) spent the summer on their boat and has returned to home base in Venice, FL. Best to all.

~ Ronnie Savino still enjoying desert life in Henderson, NV. Ronnie was unable to be at the luncheon. She has been to several from that long distance.

~ A lengthy letter from Joan Holland (Berea) in Little River, SC.

She sends best to all and continues to love life in South Carolina.

She reports that new retiree Sara Ackerson will be moving to a house around the corner from her. They were 30 year neighbors on Bailey Road and two of Berea's finest.

~ Another lengthy letter from Chris Weslowski (Berea). She and Ed have moved to Conesus Lake to be near their children, who live in the Rochester area. She also reports the arrival in June of Audrey, their first grandchild.

~ Ernie and Diane Spignardo (EC) vacationing on Nantucket on luncheon date. Both are loving retirement.

~ Helen Bischoff (Maybrook) reports from Leesberg, FL that she is still playing golf. She hopes to

make it to the luncheon one of these years.

~ Linda Sisto (MS) writes that she remains busy and asks prayers for Peg Freeman (MS) who is ailing.

~ Marlea Smith (Montgomery), as always, writes a lovely note from Massachusetts, wishing the drive for the luncheon wasn't so long. She sends regards to all.

~ More next time!

Amen

It's great to be back talking to all of you who have reached the back pages. Active or retired, drop me a line with comments, complaints, news of how the column cured your insomnia, etc. 6 Jessup St. Walden, NY 12586 or email gkmcf@aol.com (Who said Mac would never arrive in the 21st century?) Thanks again and . . .

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

Peace.

~ Kevin McFadden,
Retiree Representative

PS. Let it be noted that the promise of brevity was short-lived.

If you're planning to retire in the next ten years, you are strongly advised to meet with the NYS Teachers' Retirement System for a Pre-Retirement Seminar.

The daylong Preretirement Planning Seminars -- open to active members age 45 and older and their spouses/companions -- are designed to help members prepare for retirement. Among the topics discussed during these group sessions are:

**Retirement Income, Payment Options, Adjusting to Retirement,
Legal Considerations, Financial Planning**

Please note: these seminars are not designed for one-on-one retirement counseling.

Seminars are held from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., with registration from 8 to 8:30 a.m. **There is no fee to attend; however, advance registration is required. Call us at 800-356-3128, Ext. 6180 to reserve your seat. (Locally these are the only dates open for the Fall schedule)**

Albany

STRS Headquarters
Tuesday, Nov. 9

Thursday, Dec. 2 10 Corporate Woods Drive, Albany

The 22nd Annual Retiree Luncheon—September 8, 2004



Jan Gridley (HS), Evelyn Strakulski (W), Gen Whitmore, Dolly Micelieli, Ada Metzging (all W) check the Crossroads crowd.



Table 13,12,8,5 (take your pick, they did!) rogues all, in a moment of fairly good behavior: Frank DeSantis (May), Ed Kubina (B), Gene Martin (B)



"Old" canoe buddies and new retirees, Bob Bauer (Mont.) and Jim Lignori (HS) resolve world problems.



Walden ladies in the corner await their lunch: Jen Fox, Joan Ewald, Geri Vermilyea, Jean Larsen and Val Terwilliger.



Gerry Cadzow, Gail Roberto, Kay Sherman Nancy Schmidt, some of Montgomery's finest, react to several concersations.



Hugh (AD) and Pat Hurst (EC) surround new retiree Mary Goldberg (MS)



Three converse, one meditates: John Solan (HS), Jack Matikiewicz (HS), Ernie Pettine (MS), Skip Geiger (MS)



Recounting the old (really old) stories: Rich DiVirgilio, John Cosco, Pat Iorlano (HS trio)



New Retiree Jessica Gregory (May) catches up with Marie Nash (W) and Maryellen Whitmore (CO)



Doc Moran still can't believe Rich Angameyer (Mont).



New retiree Sara Ackerson (B) and Barbara Schmoll (B) listen attentively.



Jim Coonan (CO) converses with new retiree Peg Lyons (Mont) and Sally Schwartz (HS)



Mac smiles after successfully surviving another skirmish with Table 5, 8, 12, 13. Wait till next year!

Photos courtesy of Ginny McFadden.

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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Save up to 50 percent on your favorite magazines and on gift subscriptions. Choose from more than 1,000 titles including *Business Week*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Newsweek*, *Sports Illustrated* and *Smithsonian*. Call **800/877-7238** or visit **www.buymags.com/aft** to obtain a current listing and rates.



10/04

The Credit Union Board has agreed to allow the Financial Group to provide our members with the following new offerings:

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Stop by and pickup a brochure or check it out at www.vcfcu.com



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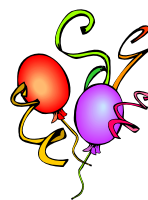
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MLS

Celebrate!

**International Credit Union Day
October 21st**



Cookies will be available in the Faculty Rooms of each Building as a special Thank-You for the Patronage and Loyalty of our Members



Be Heard!
Vote
November 2nd

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FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

VCFCU

"Where people are worth more than money."

17 Walnut Street
Montgomery, NY 12549
(845) 457-5592 / 457-5862
FAX: (845) 457-3197

HOURS:
7:00 AM—5:00 PM
(Mon.—Thurs.)
Friday until 5:30 PM

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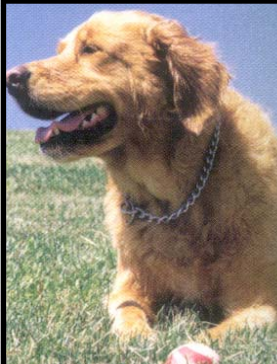


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for children and education
than teachers and teacher unions.*

Valley Central Teachers' Association
1175 Rte. 17K
Montgomery, NY 12549

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

VCTA Executive Council

Berea: Donna Clark, Carol DeMicco, Robin Scott

EC: Holly Bacon, Beth Como

Mavbrook: Donna Lloyd, Sandy Tarallo

Montg.: Gail Nozell, Chris Brand, Toni Sperry

Walden: Kathy Bordone, Patty Joy, Mary Ellen Managiamale, Lori Meyerson

MS: Mary Bleau, Tammy Coleman, Joe Collins, Marc Sperry, Sandy Strauss

HS: Glenn Eckert, Bob Jurgens, Patti Lunden, Mindy Kane, Eileen Purcell, Diane Ruggles, Doug Straebler, Carolyn Zayas

Secretaries: Lucy Fox (HS)

Paraprofessionals: Kathy Lennon (W)

Retirees: Kevin McFadden, Arline Friedman

VC ECHOES Editor

Patricia Lunden, (HS)

NYSUT

www.nysut.org

AFT

www.aft.org

AFL-CIO

www.aflcio.org

Mid-Hudson Teacher Center:

(845) 255-2885

<http://www.mhtrc.dbooces.org>

Employee Assistance Program

1-800-962-7487

Visit us on the Web!

www.vcta.net

Webmaster:

Chris Brand, Montg.

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

**Article contributions or Letters to the
Editor for the next issue should be
sent to Patricia Lunden, HS, by
November 23, 2004.**

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

Damned if you do...

In late August, schools were FINALLY sent their state aid estimates for the year (*nearly FIVE months after it was due!!*) and Valley Central lost over \$300,000 in state aid. This was the second year in a row aid to VC was reduced and it made no sense. I wrote to our state legislators and governor to ask why our aid was being reduced. I have only heard back from Senator Bill Larkin and Assemblyperson Nancy Calhoun. Larkin contacted the SED and explained the cuts were based on the fact that we had declassified some of our special education students so therefore we received less aid. Schools are being "*directed*" from the state and NCLB to lower the number of special education students and then we receive less aid because of it. Secondly our aid was reduced due to projected enrollment which was supposed to be less. Nancy Calhoun's letter literally echoed Senator Larkin's.

When I read the responses, my initial reaction was that we, in education, are damned if we do, damned if we don't. So many costs are beyond the control of a school district—unfunded mandates, product price inflation, healthcare premium costs and the list goes on. Yet, the state aid formula doesn't fairly take this into account and when a school district does what it is being coerced to do — declassify special education students—it loses aid.

So what can we in the classroom do to make a difference? Shake our heads—hide and hope it all goes away? Absolutely not, because teachers may be the best hope our children have to make a difference in how education is funded.

The NCLB has been underfunded and non-funded for the majority of the time that it has been in exis-

tence. If President Bush is re-elected in November, it will probably continue to remain unfunded. Unfunded mandates pass from the federal level to the state level—where the great education governor (*said in great jest*) passes on the mandates which remain unfunded in his budget proposals. The only way to fund these mandates is through local property taxes when federal and state politicians refuse to be supportive.

Last Spring's school budget vote seemed like an echo from the past. Many of us remember the budget fights of 10 years ago. They were ugly. Our school district was characterized as filled with uncaring money grubbers looking to rob senior citizens of their homes. The school district and its staff at every level were attacked in the newspapers and accosted by signs as they drove anywhere in the district. But then it got better. In part because the VCTA stepped up to the plate to protect our district from unfair accusations, to fight for the district's children who were not able to voice their opinion through a vote that directly affected their lives.

A year and a half ago, tens of thousands of people—many of them teachers, paraprofessionals and secretaries—stepped up to the plate again marching on Albany to rally against the governor's budget vetoes that would have placed so many districts—including our own, in dire straights financially. His vetoes were over rode. But this year they were not.

The leaves are falling, the air is crisp and yet it feels like Spring throughout the district, because the budget worries have already begun. In the Wallkill Valley Times, Dr. Hooley was recently thanked for "his" 14% tax increase as if it was his fault. The budget picture for the future is not bright. I believe that unless we are dealing with President Kerry on January 1, 2005, it will continue to dim. Certainly Pataki is not going to change

his ways without major persuasion. And locally, costs will continue to rise and the budget will continue to constrict as we are already working with a net loss of \$1,000,000 dollars in two years. So again, it is time to step up to the plate. We must not wait until April to sell our budget to the community. We must be aware that every thing we do sells our budget to the community. We provide an excellent education to the children of VC with the means we are given; however, that doesn't mean the entire community realizes it and it is our job to help them to. If the teachers, paraprofessional and secretaries of this district make the commitment to get every parent in the district to vote, passing budgets would not be so hard to do. But our job does not end there. Those tax increases are not the fault of our superintendent, they are rolled down from on high in Albany and Washington. The group that politicians in this country should be courting is educators—after all, if we were to organize a grassroots effort, what other group could rival us in awareness, organization and communication? We have wonderful skills in these areas that we apply in our classrooms. And we need to start applying them outside the classroom. the children we teach cannot speak for themselves politically—they need our voices. We can write to our politicians now. We can insist that we be heard. We cannot sit silently hoping one person will speak for all—we must all be willing to speak as one. We must be willing to do all that we can do politically for the mission of public education and we may still be damned if we do, however, we will certainly be damned if we don't.

~ Patti Lunden, Editor