

VC ECHOES

An AFTCA and New York Teacher Award Winning Publication

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Welcome Back ...

The air is getting cooler; the leaves are tinted with change; the stores are all running their sales; families are thinking fondly back to their summer vacations; our legislators and other politicians have yet again failed to do the job they were elected to do on time; it must be September, and we all know this brings bittersweet feelings as we begin another, or in many cases, our first year of teaching. We'll rue the passing of yet another seemingly short-lived summer, whether we worked those second and third jobs and/or spent as much time as possible with our friends, families and colleagues. We'll realize that those people who retired really aren't going to be there when we walk back in for the first day of a new year. We'll have to deal with more unrealistic or at least poorly thought out laws and policies (NCLB?). We'll be inundated with political rhetoric from both sides of the Presidential election; will we ever have a real choice? We'll be faced with the ever more challenging task of educating the students who are put in our charge. What is life without challenge, without politics, without everyone else knowing how our jobs should be done? Boring!! Instead, let's look at the flip side.

We are part of the greatest occupation, or rather calling, one could assume. We teach-knowledge, critical thinking, civics and civil behavior, creativity, collaborative and independent thinking and activity, and most important of all, a respect and love for learning. Have you ever stopped learning? Isn't every new day, every new student,



every lesson, even if it didn't meet all your expectations, every new experience in and out of the classroom, a piece of the unending process we are part of as human beings?

On a more practical level, we have a solid new four year contract. Our buildings will be in their usual excellent shape as we begin a new year. We have a staff of teachers that is dedicated and incomparable in its ability to educate. You have an association that cares about its membership and works extremely hard to make your job and the conditions you work under fair and comfortable.

We wish you a successful 2004-05 school year and pledge to work to continue to make teaching and learning your major focus. Acquaint yourselves with your building representatives and your contract. Work with your colleagues and think about the affect of what you do on all of them. Love your work and work to make your students love it too.

Good health and good teaching to you.

~ Jay Sussdorff
Vice President

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The important thing is not so much that every child should be taught, as that every child should be given the wish to learn.

~John Labbock

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk—October 17th

The two greatest risk factors for breast cancer are being a woman and growing older.

The "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk" has been the premier event sponsored by the American Cancer Society for the last ten years in the ACS's fight against breast cancer. New York State United Teachers will again be a statewide flagship sponsor in this fall's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer walks. Last year, more than 5,000 NYSUT team walkers raised nearly \$600,000 for the American Cancer Society's major fund-raiser. The VCTA team had about 150 participants, including many MS students.

"We're extremely proud so many of our members took part, either walking or donating money, for this important cause," said NYSUT First Vice President Antonia Cortese, who oversaw the union's ACS effort and joined a large union contingent in Albany. The money raised is used for ACS research, education, patient support and advocacy programs to defeat the disease.

Research advances in drugs for treatment, preventions and in the discovery of the breast cancer gene have happened due to the money raised by this event. The goal of the ACS is to "unravel the mystery of how breast cancer begins, and to see better ways to prevent, detect and treat the disease." But research is not the only goal of this fundraising. The ACS also seeks to spread awareness of the importance of early detection of this disease. Early detection can literally mean the difference of 50—77% difference in the chances of surviving breast cancer. The ACS sponsors the walk to support advocacy as

well making sure cancer is a priority in the hearts and minds of our elected leaders. The funds raised from this walk also provide support so that no woman has to face breast cancer alone. Their free live information network can be accessed at 1.800.ACS.2345 and www.cancer.org.

Hudson Valley "Making Strides Walk"

The Hudson Valley area walk will take place on Sunday, October 17th at Woodbury Commons. It is a non-competitive 5K Walk through the Commons. It provides an opportunity for breast cancer survivors and their families, friends and co-workers and many others who want to join the fight against breast cancer. Participants also receive a map they can trade for 170 coupons (*good for one year!*) for stores at Woodbury Commons.

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

You can "stride with pride" by purchasing the official Making Strides Against Breast Cancer T-shirt. T-shirts are \$12.00 each and pre-printed with the VCTA logo. T-shirts can be ordered when you pick up your registration form. T-shirts must be ordered by September 10th.



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

The Day of the Walk

You will register at the ACS Registration area. Plan on arriving early to park. Registration starts at 7:45 AM. Survivors can pick up special T-shirts at the Survivors table. The Walk begins at 9:00 AM. It takes about an hour or so to complete. NYSUT will provide coffee, tea, juice, and food and pins for our members. After you register, just look for the NYSUT Banner and plan on meeting your members there on the day of the Walk.

VCTA Team Co-ordinators:

Patti Lunden, HS (VM 7664)
Maddie Brooks, MS (VM 6611)
Rich Steger, Walden
Holly Bacon, East Coldenham
Robin Sinclair-Scott, Berea
Christine Giudice, Montgomery
 _____, Maybrook

***Make a Difference,
Join Us on October 17th!***

~ Patti Lunden, Editor

Sources: NYSUT

And American Cancer Society

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

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

Have annual mammograms beginning at age 40.

Begin monthly breast self-exams at age 20.

Have regular clinical breast exams by your doctor.

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

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

Who is entitled to insurance benefits?

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

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

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

What if my spouse does not have health insurance benefits?

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

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

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

How is comparability determined?

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

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

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

The contractual agreement allows for arbitration in such instances.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Who can I contact with questions?
Vice President Rich Steger, Walden Elementary VM 5648, 457-5899.

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

The District's Worker's Compensation carrier is:

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

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

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

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

FAQ Concerning Health Insurance Choices

What health insurance choices do I have?

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

What is an indemnity plan?

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

What HMO's can I choose from?

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

Will I have to pay anything to choose an HMO?

If you choose to use an HMO, the District will pay the dollar amount that they would have paid to indemnity plan to the HMO. You are responsible to pay the difference if the HMO is more. That difference is deducted from your paycheck pre-tax. (*This is in addition to the 5% already deducted toward health insurance*).

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

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

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

What does the VCTA recommend concerning the health plan choices?

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

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

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



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

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

If you select a different option this October, it will take effect as of January 1, 2005 will not change unless you select another option next October.

How do I make a change?

Fill out the application form from the HMO you have selected and send it to Polly Conigilio, Payroll Dept. at CO before October 29, 2004.

Who can I contact with questions?

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



The VCTA does not receive the rates for the HMO insurances until sometime in September .

The chart comparing the four health plans will be published in the October 2004 issue of the VC ECHOES.

It will also be distributed to buildings.

**You must inform the District of your intent to change
(an filled out application form for the HMO is enough to do this)
by October 29th. Completed forms are sent to Polly Conigilio at CO.**

Eighth Annual VCTA Health/ TSA Fair

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

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

Dave Mazzetti
American Express Financial Advisor
 25 Market Street, Poughkeepsie, NY
See our ad

(845)454-3021

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

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

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

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

Jacqueline Dufrene, EDWARD JONES
 159 Ward Street, Montgomery, NY 12549 **(845) 457-5379**

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

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

Ed Hogan, Faculty Services (common remitter for TSA's) / **Vince Mazzetti, Myles Financial Services** (handle the Cafeteria 125 Plan) / **Joe Laiz, 457(b) Administrator**
These are not VCTA selected companies, however, if you should have any problems with them, contact the VCTA so we can let the District know.

Payroll deduction forms submitted for TSA or 403(b) accounts
before November 1st will take effect January 1st,
changes submitted before July 1st will take effect September 1st.
If you missed the Health/TSA Fair and would like information on TSA providers,
contact the Union office at 457-5899.

NYS Deferred Compensation Plan (457b)

Available to VCTA members!

The NYS Deferred Compensation Plan is available to our members. Like the TSA (403b), this plan allows you to shelter money pre-tax for retirement savings. The 457b plan coupled with the 403b has now almost doubled the amount of money that you may shelter! The 457B plan is open for enrollment before Nov. 1st for an January 1st effective date and before July 1st for a September 1st effective date. *For a review of full language, contact your building representative.

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

To obtain more information on the Deferred Compensation Plan:

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

Web Site: www.nysdcp.com

Central Office also has informational booklets

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

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

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

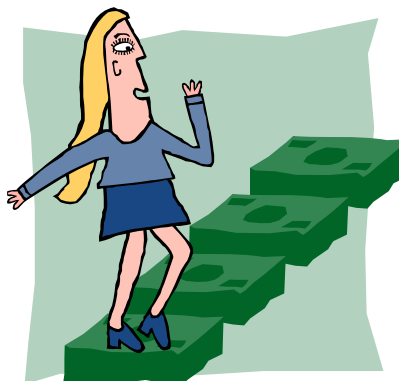
the Dependent Care account, you may claim full reimbursement from your Medical account on the first day of the plan year.

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

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

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

At these meetings, Myles representatives should only be explaining your options concerning Cafeteria 125 Plans. Although they



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

The IRS 2004 rate for mileage reimbursement is: 37.5 cents per mile.

(Please note this is an increase from 2003)

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



Bush Budget Shortchanges School Children—Again

A preview of President George W. Bush's education budget for next fiscal year reveals the White House funding proposal once again shortchanges programs to help students succeed in school, according to figures obtained by AFT.

Congress has promised some \$19.3 billion for the Title I program that helps schools educate disadvantaged students. But Bush's budget proposal only provides \$12.5 billion, a \$6.8 billion funding gap that breaks the Bush administration's promise to improve public education through reduced class size and implement other educational improvements, AFT says, citing budget figures recently released by the Congressional Research Service. The funding is crucial to

schools aiming to accomplish the goals required by the No Child Left Behind Act—the education reform law Bush has championed.

"The White House and Congress can't have it both ways—tout the law as a giant step forward but deny billions of dollars to carry out its requirements," says AFT President Sandra Feldman, who backs the standards and accountability required by the No Child Left Behind law but says they are being threatened because of serious underfunding.

School districts could reduce class sizes and implement other methods to improve education if Bush did not seek to shortchange schools by \$6.8 billion, AFT shows in a state-by-state analysis of the shortfall's impact. For example, California schools could fund smaller class sizes for 1.1 million students with

its share of the funding shortfall; in Texas, more than 85,000 additional students could participate in pre-kindergarten classes; and in Florida, more than 46,000 uncertified teachers could become certified.

In all, 7.3 million children nationwide could attend smaller classes, more than 934,000 children could have access to pre-kindergarten classes and more than 908,000 teachers, currently in classrooms without certification, could become certified if federal funding were adequate, says AFT.

"If we want to reap the benefits of this important law, we must...focus on—and support—the programs that improve student achievement," says Feldman.

~ AFL-CIO Website August 2, 2004

NYSUT drops endorsement of legislators who voted against override

New York State United Teachers has endorsed 197 candidates running for Congress and the state Legislature. The union announced that 26 Assembly Republicans who had received NYSUT's endorsement in 2002 lost the union's 2004 endorsement because they refused to join last year's override of \$1 billion in cuts to public education. "NYSUT supports candidates who support the issues our members care about," said NYSUT President Thomas Y. Hobart, Jr. "In NYSUT's history, there has perhaps been no bigger vote than last year's override of the governor's veto of increased funding for public education. These Assembly

Republicans made a choice to put their own political interests ahead of New York's children. They chose to cut education and raise local property taxes. They have not earned our endorsement."

The 500,000-plus member NYSUT, the state's largest union, endorsed U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer's re-election bid back in March, while NYSUT's national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers, endorsed Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry last month.

"NYSUT members - and all New Yorkers - could not ask for a harder-working senator and a more effective voice in Washington than Chuck Schumer," Executive Vice President Alan B. Lubin said. "Our two top priorities are to

elect John Kerry president and to return Chuck Schumer to the Senate."



In state races, NYSUT's Board of Directors, acting on recommendations from the union's regional and state political action committees, endorsed 48 Republicans and 125 Democrats for state Legislature. The union examined lawmakers' votes on 61 bills to determine whether to issue an endorsement. Lubin noted NYSUT backs candi-
(continued on page 10)

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

We are very proud of you!

District:

Shane Regan	Physical Education
Fran Whitney	Blind/Visually Handicapped

HS

Kimberly Star Langlitz	Art
Henry Pizzonia	Science
Rachael Garland	Math
Elaine Keefer	Math
Melynda Kane	Guidance Counselor
Alicia Voss	Social Studies
Holly Kaser	Special Education

HS/MS

Carmen Maher	Foreign Language
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MS

Kathryn Foti	Art
Jennifer Trojan	Art
Nicholas Longo	Technology
Agnes Gath	Mathematics
Laura Magee	Music
Lauren Abbate	Psychologist
Melanie Belgiovene	Science
Nancy Fabrizio	Science
Nancy DeGraw	Special Education

Berea

Chatarina Palme	Elementary
Kristina Storaska	Elementary
Victoria Vermilyea	Elementary
Evan Zangerle	Music
Maura Crown	Spec. Ed.

Maybrook

Candia Baxter	Library
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Montgomery

Leigh Legare	Elementary
Elizabeth Michella	Elementary
Debra Peet	Elementary
Heidi Carson	Special Ed.
Priscilla Brundage	Elementary

Walden

Lori Velez	Elementary
Janet Molloy	Special Ed.
Lori Meyerson	Phys. Ed.

Also received tenure this past year:

District

Nancy Drennan	Gift/Talented
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MS

Merry Zapka	Elementary
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Exciting News!

Not only will you get paid ... you'll be able to understand your paycheck!

New Paycheck Format!

Usually VC teachers returned and were excited to get paid, after a long summer without a check, but then confusion set in as they tried to make heads or tails out of the check stub. This year, Central Office has employed a new system that will actually spell out the account line from which pay is being drawn or from which pay is being deducted. For example, when you chaperone it will no longer be A2112462 but it will say "Chaperone". Also in the middle of your check, there will be a box labeled "contract" and below it will be your contract salary for the year which was entered by the Personnel office. Be sure to check this box against your signed contract for the year.



Direct Deposit

If you have Direct Deposit, check to be sure the check is being sent to the correct bank. If you would like to sign up for Direct Deposit, you may do so through October 1st. See your building principal for the form. Direct Deposit saves you a trip to the bank, and a trip into school if a payday falls on a snow day!

Getting Paid for Credits Earned

If you have earned credits and have put in for an adjustment to your salary, you may not see it reflected in your paycheck right away. By contract, official transcripts must be sent to the Superintendent's office by October 1st or March 1st of each year. Pay is usually adjusted after those dates. The amount owed to the person is paid for the year throughout the remainder of the paychecks. For example, if you just finished your Master's degree this summer, when your salary is adjusted to the higher scale you will receive the full difference over the course of the rest of the year's paychecks.

Any new system is bound to have a bug or glitch, should you experience something wrong with you paycheck, contact your building representative/ building principal and Payroll. And remember, patience is a virtue! The mistake will be rectified and the Association can help you clear up the problem.

Adding up your days...

Last June you received your "Absence Verification Summary". This summary reflects the days that you were actually absent, and the reason for the absence. There are basically five categories of absence; sick days, illness in family days, bereavement, field trip, and association days. That summary took you to just about the end of last year. If you were absent after receiving that summary subtract those days from the total of the summary carried forward to this year. Each year you are allotted 15 sick days and 3 personal days; these 18 days are "earned as you work". Since most of us will work the entire year and have a bank of unused days, it is not usually a problem to consider those days as "ours" at the beginning of the year. The only people who wouldn't have the total 18 days for a given school year are those who go out on unpaid

leave, such as child care leave, or those who have accumulated more than 185 sick days since the past contract capped the sick day accumulation at 200 days. Should a non-tenured teacher leave the employ of the district prior to completion of the school year, the sick-leave is prorated.

In our new contract, Article XXII, A allows us to now accumulate 300 days. This has two benefits. The first is the addition of 100 more days available to a member (members will begin accumulating those additional days beginning this year—so if you begin the year with 185 days, you begin to accumulate toward 300) in case of a catastrophic illness. All members beyond their third year of service to the district are protected by Article XXII, C which provides for payment of the salary less the difference of the substitute's salary for one year if all sick days have been used. The other

benefit of the accumulation of 100 more days is payment upon retirement. At a rate of \$40 more a day, a member who accumulates 300 days will yield an additional \$4000 of pay for unused sick time.



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

If you think there is an error in the amount of days you have accumulated, contact your building representative to help you look into the marker.

NYSUT drops endorsement ... (continued from page seven)

dates on both sides of the aisle who have been supportive of public schools, colleges and health care and labor issues, despite a difficult economic and budget environment.

"We are obviously frustrated by the lack of a resolution to the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case," Lubin said. "But our endorsements reflect the long-term track records of support and our working relationships with these legislators. We're confident the state's leaders will ultimately ensure all schools have the resources they need."

In other action, the NYSUT Board of Directors endorsed 21

Democrats and three Republicans in congressional races. Notably, NYSUT is endorsing Republican John "Randy" Kuhl in the 29th congressional district race to succeed retiring U.S. Congressman Amory Houghton. NYSUT made an early endorsement of Democrat Frank Barbaro in his campaign to defeat Republican U.S. Congressman Vito Fossella.

The union declined to make endorsements in five congressional races, either because there is an open seat or the incumbent has a poor record of support for public education and organized labor.

Lubin noted that candidates covet NYSUT's endorsement, only partly because of the union's financial support.

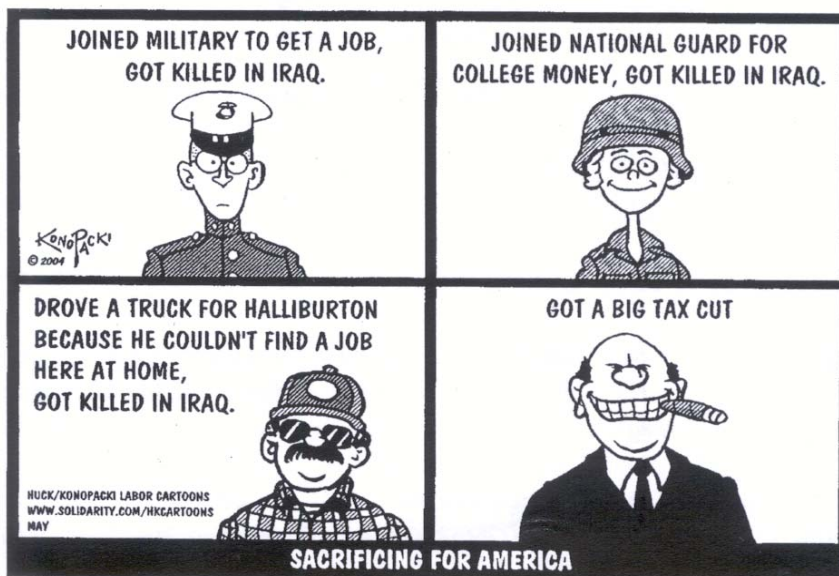
"NYSUT members live and vote in virtually every zip code of the state," Lubin said. "They're passionate about the issues and they actively volunteer their time to campaign for candidates willing to fight for public education, health care and the rights of working families."

Lubin added the union's phone bank network - the largest in the state - will make up to 300,000 phone calls in the weeks leading to Election Day on behalf of NYSUT-endorsed candidates.

Rep. Calhoun responds to being dropped by NYSUT

Republican Nancy Calhoun R-C- Washingtonville responded to the lost endorsement by saying that 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 now Senator Chuck Schumer by approximately the number of votes equal to the NYSUT membership. NYSUT has endorsed Dennis Tracy-D for the Assembly seat. NYSUT has also endorsed Assembly members Aileen Gunther-D, Tom Kirwan, R-C, and Kevin Cahill—D. It has also endorsed NY Senators John Bonacic R-C, Bill Larkin, R-C and Thomas Morahan.

"The top 1% of Americans—people who make an average of \$1 million a year—will receive more than \$1 TRILLION in total tax breaks from Bush's three tax cuts or an average of \$50,000 in new tax cuts every year. And 95% of corporations pay less than 5% of their income in taxes with 60% paying no taxes whatsoever, all while their profits expanded, according to the US General Accounting Office.
~ AFTCA CATALYST



VCTA Executive Council Meetings

All VCTA Executive Council Meetings are General Meetings to which the entire membership is invited. The meetings are held* at the Professional Library at the HS, and are called to order at 3:45 PM.

Tuesday, September 21, 2004
Tuesday, October 19, 2004
Tuesday, November 16, 2004
Tuesday, December 14, 2004
Tuesday, January 18, 2005
Tuesday, February 15, 2005
Tuesday, March 15, 2005
Tuesday, April 19, 2005
Tuesday, May 17, 2005
*** Tuesday, June 7, 2005**

** The June Meeting is a dinner meeting held at Spruce Lodge. New Retirees are congratulated at 4:00 PM, dinner is served at 4:30 PM, and the meeting is called to order at about 5:00 PM. If you wish to attend the dinner, call Laurie Hey, 457-5899 and she will tell you the cost.*

Teachers' Pay Dates 2004-2005 :

September 10	March 11
September 24	March 23
October 08	April 8
October 22	April 21
November 05	May 06
November 19	May 20
December 03	June 03
December 10-Health Buyout	June 10-Health Buyout
December 17	June 17 (Reg&Multi)
December 31-No Voluntary Deductions	
January 14	
January 28	
February 11	
February 25	

TEACHERS HELPING TEACHERS FIGHT AIDS IN AFRICA

Log-on today! www.aft.org



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

Board of Education Meetings 2004-2005

September 13, 27
 October 12, 25
 November 8, 22
 December 13
 January 10, 24
 February 14, 28
 March 14
 April 4, 18
 May 9, 23
 June 13

All the meetings are held at the Administration Building Board Room at 7:00 PM. Student presentations when scheduled begin at 6:45PM

Edward J. McElroy New AFT Prez

AFT convention delegates have elected Edward J. McElroy as the union's new president, along with a new secretary-treasurer, executive vice president and a slate of 39 vice presidents. Elected with McElroy for the two additional top officer slots in balloting held July 16 were Nat LaCour as AFT secretary-treasurer and Antonia "Toni" Cortese, an AFT vice president from New York, as the union's new executive vice president. McElroy, first elected AFT secretary-treasurer in 1992, succeeds Sandra Feldman, who for health reasons did not run for another term. He is a former president of the Warwick (R.I.) Teachers Un-

ion and the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers, and he served as president of the Rhode Island AFL-CIO from 1977 until 1992.

McElroy was elected to the AFL-CIO executive council in November 2001. McElroy also chairs the AFL-CIO's Department for Professional Employees, a coalition of 25 national unions representing more than 4 million professional, technical and administrative professionals.

LaCour, the AFT's executive vice president since 1998, has chaired a number of key AFT committees and initiatives, including the executive council's organizing committee, the council's ad hoc committee on affiliate accountability,

and the AFT task force on health-care.



LaCour for many years was president of AFT's New Orleans affiliate, the United Teachers of New Orleans, and a longtime vice president on AFT's executive council. Cortese has served as an officer of the New York State United Teachers since 1973 and has been responsible for NY-SUT's division of research and educational services. She also is a longtime member of the AFT executive council and a vice president of the New York State AFL-CIO.

NCLB: Where does the AFT stand?

Two years ago, when President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the American Federation of Teachers was optimistic. The legislation—though far from perfect—embraced a number of positive measures the AFT has long championed, particularly accountability for the progress of all students and high standards around core academic subjects. The AFT, along with our state and local affiliates, has worked since the bill's passage with the U. S. Department of Education, state and local education authorities, and others in the civil rights and education communities to help achieve the positive goals of NCLB, despite misgivings over some aspects of the law. But we are increasingly concerned not only that these laudable goals cannot be achieved but also that the considerable progress our schools have made will be stymied if the Department of Education does not move quickly. The Department must address growing concerns and implement the law in a manner that solves serious problems and is consistent with the intent of the legislation—without the overlay of ideology. If the Department does not take action, we believe that the U. S. Congress, which overwhelmingly supported the legislation, should do so.

The AFT remains firmly committed to NCLB's goals and supportive of the framework that embraces standards and accountability and the guarantee of a high-quality education for all of our children. We support quality assessments, disaggregation of data that focuses attention on the needs of

children who require additional help, the requirement that all children be taught by highly qualified teachers and that paraprofessionals be well prepared to assist in the classroom.

But the numerous outstanding implementation issues threaten to undermine these goals.

Even as it has not addressed many legitimate concerns, the Department has issued counterproductive regulations and guidance in a number of areas. For example, the Department issued guidance stating that supplemental service providers under the act are not required to function in a manner consistent with federal nondiscrimination laws.

The Department also has issued guidance saying that states may choose whether to offer a high, objective, uniform state standard of evaluation to determine if a teacher is highly qualified. The law, however, clearly provides that the states must offer this option.

The Department has not addressed the issue of what happens to teachers who are not "highly qualified" by the 2005-06 school year—as the law requires—because many states have failed to develop the objective standard of evaluation required by the law. Nor has the Department addressed what will happen to paraprofessionals who are unable to demonstrate their qualifications by 2006 because states and districts have yet to develop the assessments required by the act. Teachers and paraprofessionals should not be punished because states fail to take actions required by the law.

The Department has not adequately dealt with the particular difficulties that middle school and special education teachers, who already are certified, have in meeting the highly qualified standard.

The Department has not taken adequate steps to ensure that states are appropriately assessing students who are learning to speak English but are not yet proficient. Nor has the Department adequately addressed the assessment of children with disabilities.

Throughout the reauthorization process, the AFT and others raised serious concerns about the validity of the formula used to determine adequate yearly progress—and we have continued to do so since enactment. This issue must be addressed. Further, the Department has not provided consistent guidelines and standards for states to apply when developing their assessment plans. Consequently, there are wide variations among states with respect to the numbers of schools on needs improvement lists.

Underlying all these issues that need to be addressed is the pervasive problem of underfunding. The Department and the administration continue to insist that the funding needed to implement the law is adequate. Yet the experience of state and local districts, and that of educators and parents involved in efforts to implement the law's many challenging requirements, suggests otherwise. Prompt action to address these problems must be taken if the hopes that so many had for the goals of this important legislation are to be realized, and if the education of our nation's children is to be helped, not harmed.

From AFT Website

It's Charlotte Bradford's notion that schoolteachers petition for higher salaries at the wrong time of the year. "If they'd wait till the beginning of August—just past halfway in the kids' summer vacations— to make their plea, parents would give them anything they asked for on the first request!"
~ Bennett Cerf

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

Do you know someone we all should know?

Tell your story,

Have it published in the VC ECHOES.

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

Montgomery: Chris Brand **Berea:** Carol DeMicco

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

EC: Holly Bacon **MS:** Joe Collins

HS: Eileen Purcell

Sec. Lucy Fox (HS) **Paras:** Kathy Lennon (Walden)

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

Contact Patti Lunden, VM # 7664

VCTA Office: 457-5899

The VCTA is full of GREAT PEOPLE...

Let everyone know about them.!

2004-2005 VC ECHOES Deadlines and Publication Dates

Deadline : September 30, 2004 Publication: October 8, 2004

Deadline: November 23, 2004 Publication: December 3, 2004

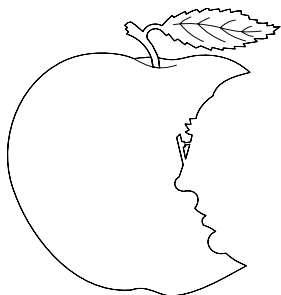
Deadline: January 28, 2005 Publication: February 4, 2005

Deadline March 23, 2005 Publication: April 8, 2005

RETIREE ISSUE: Deadline: May 13, 2005 Publication: May 26, 2005

Deadline: June 10, 2005 Publication: June 17, 2005





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

Each year the District
in conjunction with the Association
nominates a teacher to be considered for

NEW YORK STATE TEACHER OF THE YEAR.

Nomination requires nominator to fill out paperwork.

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

Colleague's Name _____

Colleague's Building _____

His/Hers Years teaching _____ His/Hers Years at VC _____

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

Your Name _____, VM _____

Return this form to your building rep. by October 29th.

Putting Children Where?

A few years ago, the VCTA adopted the motto “Putting Children Center” as part of our logo. Undoubtedly, it has caused a few people to ask, “Putting Children Where?” The more familiar phrase is “Putting Children First”. This was even on a banner at Central Office. Of course, “first” denotes a place value—children first, then who is second? Certainly whoever occupies last place feels badly. No one likes to be in last place. The image of putting children center eliminates any place value. All members of the Valley Central Teachers’ Association—teachers, secretaries, paraprofessionals are part of a circle surrounding our children. They are the focus, *the center*, of our attention and efforts. And while this is the motto of the VCTA, the circle can be expanded to include all the other stakeholders in our district—our custodians, cafeteria workers, Board of Education, parents, community members, building administrators, district administrators, central office staff and superintendents. That is the beauty of a circle as opposed to a line. A circle can be expanded by taking a few steps back and welcoming someone to stand shoulder to shoulder with us. We can look across the circle and see the other members of our same team. With a line, someone stands either in front of you, or in back or you... and there is always a line leader the rest of the line

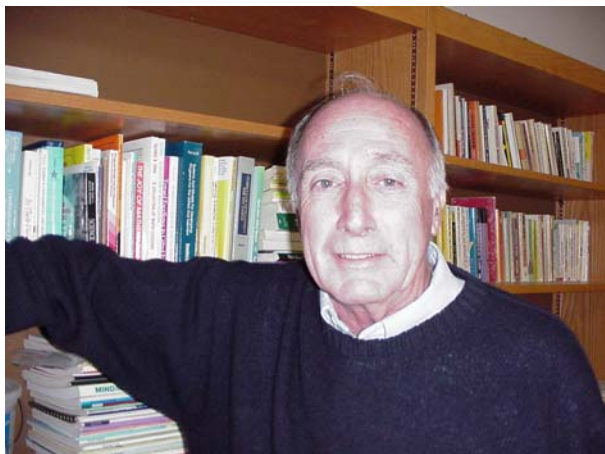
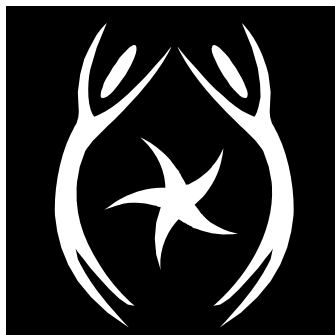


is dependant on.

Putting Children Center. It is a good motto to recall throughout the school year. Children are our focus, not test scores. Children are our focus and their well-being and education the driving force behind our decisions inside and outside of the classroom. They are the reason that take on political battles on their behalf, the reason we protect the rights of our members and the integrity of our contracts. They are the reason that we watchdog building conditions, working conditions and learning environments. We stand in a circle, member to member, no first place, no last...keeping our children in the center so that they may continue to learn and grow, laugh and play, think and reason.

One day they will be ready to leave their place in the center and step into the circle so that the cycle of excellence in education that has been part of the proud history of the VCTA continues into its future.

~ Patti Lunden,
Editor



Where's Mac's Musings?

Kevin McFadden is busy organizing the VC Retiree Luncheon on September 8th! His column will appear in the October Echoes.

Advertising Section

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

VALLEY CENTRAL TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

1175 Route 17 K

Montgomery, NY 12549

Tel./Fax: (845) 457-5899

VC ECHOES

ADVERTISEMENT CONTRACT APPLICATION

Business Name _____

Contact Name _____

Address _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Issues ad is to appear in: Sept. _____, Oct. _____, Dec. _____, Feb. _____,

April _____, Retiree Issue (May) _____, June _____

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

**Please attach scanner ready ad sketched design.*

Siz

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

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

By signing this contract you agree to the following:

We = VCTA, You=advertiser

1) We reserve the right to deny an application without explanation. We do not accept applications for political advertisements, lest they be considered endorsements. We also reserve the right to cease publishing any ad at any time, refunding any money prepaid for publication. We do not accept advertisements from those who attack the AFL-CIO, AFT, NYSUT, or the VCTA.

2) We reserve the right to choose the ads published according to space available per issue, refunding any prepaid money should we choose not to publish the ad in a given issue. Should you choose to terminate this contract prior to its fulfillment, you will be refunded money prepaid for issues not yet printed on the date of termination.

3) You agree to provide scanner ready art for the ad or pay the first time set up fee. Should you choose to change your design from a previously submitted design, you agree to provide scanner ready art or be subjected to the set up fee again. The set up fee is applicable to each design rather than business.

4) You will receive the page on which your advertisement appears from each issue in which it is published as proof that it was published by fax or mail. You understand the entire issue is provided only to members, however it can be viewed on the VCTA website: www.frontiernet.net/~vcta

5) We reserve the right to change the date of publication within 2 calendar weeks.

6) You agree to prepay by cash or check (*payable to the Valley Central Teachers' Association*) for the advertisement(s) upon acceptance of this application. You understand that if we owe you a refund due to conditions #1 or #2, you will receive a refund check after the publication of the issue from which your ad was omitted with notification that it was omitted.

7) You understand that this contract expires at the end of the school year. You will receive an application for the next year's issues at the end of the contract year. You will be given preference as a returning customer at the discretion of the editor.

Signature _____

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

Advertising Section

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

Gems

A metaphor is like a simile.
 What the public thinks depends on what the public hears.
 Bargains are something you won't use at a price you can't resist.
 Drive the way you wish your children would.
 A Freudian slip is when you say one thing and mean your mother.
 A meeting is an event where minutes are kept, but hours are lost.
 It's hard to be a leader these days. You don't know if people are following you or chasing you.



Educational travel

The adventure of a lifetime.
 Bring six students and travel free.

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Mention AFT when calling.
 Call today for your free EF video and tour planning kit.

eftours.com



A Union of Professionals
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9/04

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**Newburgh, NY
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*Point & Insurance
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 (845) 567-6306
gcola@marykay.com

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.



R.J. Smith Realty

Bus. (845) 561-2095 x-2
Cell (914) 213-9393
E-mail: markjtierney@rjsmithrealty.com
730 Broadway, Newburgh, NY 12550

MARK J. TIERNEY
Associate Broker

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FAX: (845) 457-3197
HOURS: 8 AM—5 PM
(M-The)
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**You help give others a bright future.
Do the same for yourself.**

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

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Mark your calendar now!

VCTA Fall Fest

Friday

September 24, 2004

3:00 P.M.—6:00 P.M.

Stony Ford Clubhouse,
Orange County Park
Hors d'oeuvres/Cash Bar
Prizes!!!

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

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

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



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

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

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

VCTA Executive Council
Building Representatives

Berea: Carol DeMicco, Robin Scott, Donna Clark

Maybrook: Donna Lloyd, Sandy Tarallo

East Coldenham: Holly Bacon, Beth Como

Walden: Patty Joy, Kathy Bordone, Lori Myerson,
Mary Ellen Mangiamale,

Montgomery: Gail Nozell, Toni Sperry, Chris Brand

MS: Mary Bleau, Joe DeVenuto, Tammy Coleman,
Joe Collins, Marc Sperry, Mike Steele

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

Secretarial Representative: Lucy Fox (HS)

Paraprofessional Representative: Kathy Lennon (W)

VC ECHOES Editor
Patricia Lunden, (HS)

NYSUT

www.nysut.org

AFT

www.aft.org

AFL-CIO

www.aflcio.org

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

<http://www.mhtc.dcohes.org>

Employee Assistance Program
1-800-962-7487

Visit us on the Web!
www.vcta.net

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

**Article contributions or Letters to the
Editor for the next issue should be
sent to Patti Lunden, HS, by
September 30, 2004.**

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

Hey... Where's my new Contract?



Teacher Bargaining Unit Contracts will be delivered to Building Representatives to distribute. You should receive it in your building in the next few days.

Our annual VCTA giveaway this year is an insulated travel mug. It has also been delivered to building reps. You should receive it in your building today.

Swimming Lessons

*"Swimmers are like tea bags
the longer they are in water
the stronger they get..."*
Swim City

As I write this in the heart of the summer, my kids are bugging me to go swimming... again. I've spent a lot of time at the water so far this summer—lakes, pools, oceans and I've had some time to think about swimming. And a lot of time to think about teaching. Which has brought me to the conclusion that teaching and swimming have a lot in common.

First, you have to get into a bathing suit to go swimming—and the first time you go out for the season you might be a little self-conscious about how you look. Stepping up and talking to a new class puts even the most seasoned veteran into an uncomfortable position. But eventually you get used to getting in that bathing suit and standing up in front of that new class (not at the same time, of course—because that's a nightmare, unless you teach swimming).

Next you have to figure out how exactly

you're going to get into the water—will you just dip a toe or are you going to just jump off the side and get in all at once? Eventually both methods get you into the pool...although you don't want to wait too long to get in—or you might miss out on a lot of great swim time. And if you jump too many times, too often— you might not have the stamina to stay in the pool the whole time. It's all a matter of pacing.

Once you get used to the water, the method you use to swim will come naturally and you'll learn how to keep your head above the water—although at first you wonder if you'll ever get the hang of it. No matter how much you study swimming, think about swimming before you're actually in the pool—the best preparation for swimming is swimming—the more you swim, the stronger a swimmer you'll become. You do have to be brave enough to venture out of the shallow end and into the deeper water. You need to learn how to swim with others in the water—not bumping into them, or causing too much wake that they can't



do their own swimming. Sometimes when swimmers start all swimming in the same direction, fast and furious, a whirlpool can develop and before you know it you're swept up in it. As soothing as the water can be—undercurrents and riptides can develop and you need to know survive them.

It's important to take some time out of the water—to sit on the edge of the water and see your reflection—think about your swimming. Those times of reflection can be as refreshing as your time in the water.

In the end, it's best to remember that it's all a matter of sink or swim—just keep moving your legs and smile. . . Before you know it you're swimming like a fish.

Have a great year.

~ Patti Lunden,
Editor