



VC ECHOES



Happy Holidays from the Valley Central Teachers' Association!



Volume 8, Issue 3

December, 2005

Inside this issue:

Mentoring	2
Phys Ed. and the Writing Initiative	3
Important Info	5
Medicare Part D	6
Montgomery Peer Mediation Team	7
A Predator in Your Classroom?	8
De-Personalized Education?	9
VCTA Minutes October	10
Upcoming VCTA Events	11
NYSTRS Meeting Report	12
Mac's Musings	13
Advertisements	16
Reflection and Remembrance	18

VCTA Team Makes Strides Against Breast Cancer

The VCTA Team joined thousands of other walkers on October 16, 2005 to make strides against breast cancer. This was the fourth year NY-SUT was a flagship sponsor of the Making Strides Walk which was held in several regions throughout the state. NYSUT distributed pink armbands to members to wear in honor of Sandy Feldman, AFT President from 1997-2004. Feldman lost her battle with breast cancer this past September.

This was the tenth walk coordinated by the American Cancer Society in the Hudson Valley at Woodbury Common. There were 182,000 walkers in NY and NJ who helped raise \$13.6 million dollars according to the American Cancer Society of the Hudson Valley. The VCTA contributed about \$9425 to that total with \$1925 in t-shirt sales, \$1156 from a dress down day coordinated by Nancy Brother, RN (HS) through the school nurses and \$6344 collected in pledges by our walkers. Many thanks to our building coordinators; MS-Maddie Brooks, Montgomery-Christine Giudice, Maybrook-Donna Lloyd, EC-Holly Bacon, Berea-Robin Scott and Walden- Rich Steger, who helped to disseminate



VC's own Carolyn Zayas and Sandra Creter ready to make strides!

information about the walk, sold t-shirts and signed up participants. Without their help, the VCTA effort would not have been so successful.

The money donated to the American Cancer Society through this walk goes for the advocacy, education, research and support in the fight against breast cancer. The disease affects 200,000 women a year (and 1000 men); about 1 of every 8 women will be affected. Of those, 1 in every 5 will lose their life to the disease. The goal of the Making Strides effort is to keep walking until a cure is found for breast cancer. Hopefully, the VCTA will continue walking until that goal is reached.

*-Patti Lunden (HS)
VP and Team Coordinator*

Mentoring

Mentoring is an important aspect of helping new teachers to grow in their craft. It is a way of helping them to acclimate to the profession and to the district. Certainly many veteran teachers can recall a teacher who mentored them, whether in a formal program or not. Mentoring is a passing of the torch from generation to generation in this profession in which we can often feel so isolated from our colleagues—it also helps new teachers to bond to colleagues whom they may be working with the majority of their professional life.

Valley Central had a mentoring program before it was required by the state. Once required by the state, the District negotiated with the VCTA to include mentoring as a condition of employment for new teachers in the 2004-2008 Collective Bargaining Agreement. The contract language outlined a program consisting of two components- the VIP – Viking Induction Program, a 2-3 day orientation for VC teachers in their probationary years and Mentoring- a 30 hour program for one to four years. It was agreed that the “substance and orientation of the classes would be planned collaboratively with the Association.” (CBA, p8) For the first year, 2004-2005 the VCTA took the position of letting the

District plan and run the program with the intention that we would then collaborate on changes as needed for 2005-06. After all, the District had a mentoring program already in place and Dr. Hooley had shared his ideas for VIP with the Association. Discussions were held during the 04-05 year with the VCTA regarding the program, but there was no real collaboration in planning for 05-06. In August 2005, President Tim Brown received an itinerary for the VIP Program. The VCTA had been allotted a half hour presentation. Tim Brown asked to be allowed to attend the entire VIP program so that we could experience its substance first hand and make suggestions for the next year. At the same time, it came to the VCTA’s attention that the District was excusing teachers from participating in the mentoring program even in their first year. At that point, Tim Brown met with Dr. Hooley to inform him that we felt the contract language regarding mentoring was not being followed. As with many issues we have encountered, Dr. Hooley was willing to meet us at the bargaining table, bypassing the filing of a grievance.

At the bargaining table, the original contract language was examined and discussed. A side agreement was reached clarifying the language. It was agreed that the mentoring program would be



renamed VMP (Viking Mentoring Program) to help better distinguish it from the VIP. It was agreed upon that all teachers newly hired to the district, despite previous teaching experience, must participate in the VIP year one and year two. The VMP would be required of all newly hired unit members for one year, the only exception being members exempt from tenure criteria. The VCTA felt that it was important that all first year members needed to be acclimated to the district and their building; to learn the nuts and bolts of VC. We felt it was not responsible for members to have no formal mentoring in their first year with the district. Criteria were established to examine a member’s continuation in the VMP for his/her second year.

(continued on page 6)

A Physical Education Teacher Struggles with the District Writing Initiative

All special area teachers are required to have students write for their courses. These writing assignments must be included in the grading formula. I understand that writing is one facet of education that our students need to master. Additionally, there are many other areas that students must master or at least experience in a valuable manner. Reading, math, science, social studies, art, music, and physical education are some of the other valuable components of a student's education.

As a physical education teacher at the elementary level, I am very concerned about the new writing requirement. At the elementary level, the Valley Central School District schedules students to receive physical education for a maximum of 80 minutes each week; the national recommendation is for 120 minutes per week. To ask my students to complete a writing assignment during class would reduce the already limited time students have to be engaged in quality physical activity. I was advised that I could assign the writing task as homework. The only homework I will ever assign is that the students should go home and play! Students are sitting in classes for six hours each day and their classroom teachers assign them homework. I believe it is harmful to the students educationally and physically for more writing to be assigned as homework or given during a physical education class.

Academic subjects are often incorporated in my classes, but students are still physically active. For example, students may be asked to complete a challenge (a math problem, spelling word, or answer a question to get back into a tag game instead of being eliminated.) Listening skills and critical thinking skills are reinforced in every class. If we are being told that the Board of Education wants fitness to be the focus of our physical education program, then reducing the amount of time children have to be physically active is contradictory to that goal.

There is also concern that this may not be the only district-wide initiative that infringes on my area of educational discipline. For now, I am being told to incorporate writing into my physical education curriculum, but will the day come when we are told to have students sit and read during physical education? Will we be asked to have students engage in math or science activities during physical education? How will students be challenged to be physically active during a reading, math or science activity? If it is okay to introduce writing into my curriculum, isn't it okay to introduce physical education into other academic disciplines as well? Will we now be asked to have students engage in math or science activity during physical education?

Students who have great difficulty with writing are sometimes able to shine in art, music or physical education. These areas are often the one place where they are successful and feel validated as students. Bringing writing exercises into special-area classes like physical education might possibly be destroying the only area of comfort they know as students.

(cont'd on page 4)



“ ...Will the day come when we are told to have students sit and read during physical education?”



Physical Education of the Future...?

Struggling with the District Writing Initiative *(continued)*

If regular classroom teachers are not required to teach special area subjects during their class time, then special area teachers should not be asked to teach classroom subjects during their limited class time. I do not believe this writing requirement is "putting our children center." All teachers have valuable subjects to cover and their class time keeps getting reduced as directives such as the writing initiative are imposed.

I am very aware that my opinions and educational philosophy will meet with some criticism. I am also aware that it would be easier to be quiet and "go with the flow". I believe it is my responsibility, as a teacher, to advocate for children. Is this writing initiative indicative of "putting our children center?"

Research may show that students who write more often achieve better test scores, but research also shows that students who are physically fit and healthy are absent from school less often, are more attentive and do better academically than their inactive counterparts.

~~Rich Steger
Vice President VCTA



*A Special Thank You
to all who participated in*

VCTA FALL FEST 2005

*It was once again a wonderful
success thanks to all of you!*

We appreciate your continued support!

Important Information

Attention ELA and math test scorers:

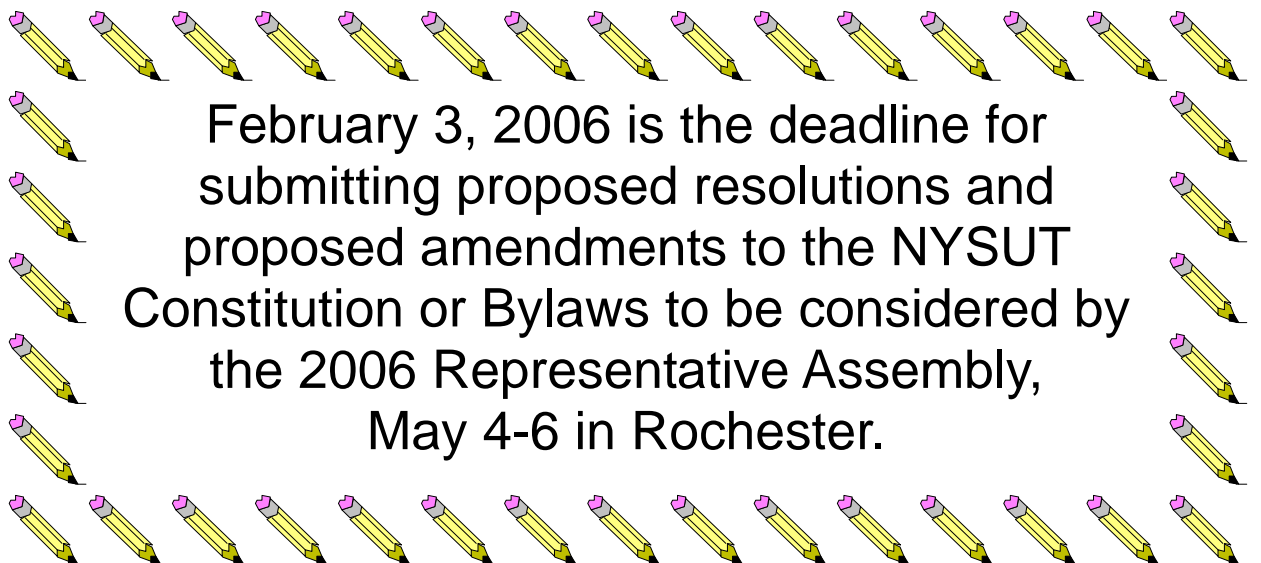
Teachers DO NOT have to "pass" a qualifying test in order to score the grades 3-8 ELA and math tests. If you have been told that you must pass a test, this is incorrect information.



Green Cleaning
in '06!



All schools will be required to use environmentally sensitive cleaning and maintenance products beginning in September 2006.



February 3, 2006 is the deadline for submitting proposed resolutions and proposed amendments to the NYSUT Constitution or Bylaws to be considered by the 2006 Representative Assembly, May 4-6 in Rochester.

Attention Retirees: Medicare Part D inquiries

Implementation of the new Medicare law is under way and has been generating a lot of questions from retired members around the state. Employers are required to notify retired members in writing this fall as to whether their prescription drug benefits meet the creditability standard as outlined in the new Medicare law.

It is critically important that members look for the words “creditable coverage” and save this document.

NYSUT retirees may now enjoy the benefits of a one-stop interactive web site that provides straight answers on health care benefits for older adults and people with disabilities, available through a partnership between NYSUT and the Medicare Rights Center.

Medicare Interactive is now available to NYSUT members at:

www.medicareinteractive.org/nysut.

NYSUT members can sign up for “Dear Marci,” MRC’s free, weekly e-

newsletter, through the web site under MI Community. If you have specific questions that cannot be answered by the web site, you may call the Medicare Rights Center at:

1-800-MEDICARE

or

1-800-333-4114.

—From NYSUT Leader
October 7, 2005

Mentoring (cont’d on page 6)

It was agreed that in the Year Two component of mentoring when a 15 hour project would be required, that graduate courses could be utilized to satisfy this requirement and that the member would receive salary credit as normal for the graduate course although it was being used to fulfill this requirement. Lastly it was agreed that VIP and VMP curriculum would be developed and mutually agreed upon by the District and the Association.

VIP/VMP instructors would be mutually selected by the District and Association and mentors would be selected in consultation with the Association president.

The VCTA feels this side agreement defines the role of the VCTA in VIP and VMP more clearly and we look forward to the opportunity to help our newest members as they settle into the Valley Central School District. Since mentoring is part of the district’s professional development plan which is governed by the professional development team whose majority is made up of VCTA members, the program will be monitored through the professional development team this year. Also the VCTA will appoint a VIP/VMP liaison to the district to be certain that this new language is followed as written.

It is gratifying to note that this negotiation went smoothly as both the VCTA and District are dedicated to helping our newest teachers today become strong veteran teachers tomorrow.

Patti Lunden, VP

Montgomery Elementary Lends a Helping Hand

Montgomery Elementary's Peer Mediation team, supervised by Melinda Sulzbach, School Social Worker; Kathi Russo, Paraprofessional; and Adrienne Hershfield, School Psychologist, coordinated a fundraiser for the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

The Peer Mediators were responsible for collecting the money from each classroom on a weekly basis. A few stuffed animals were also donated by M.E.S. children to

give to the displaced children of the Gulf coast.

Thanks to the generosity of Montgomery Elementary School's students, families, and staff, Montgomery Elementary collected a total of \$2,400 which was presented to Ms. Teri Walker from the American Red Cross. The Peer Mediation team is proud to assist people whose lives were impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

*—Adrienne Hershfield,
School Psychologist*



Montgomery Elementary's Peer Mediation Team with members of the American Red Cross

School Related Professionals Recognition Day

November 18th, 2005

The VCTA would like to salute all of
VC's hardworking and dedicated
School Related Professionals on a job well-done!

We appreciate you each and every day!!



Was there a predator in your classroom today?

The Valley Central School District kicked off American Education Week with a parent visitation day. This day has been stopped in many districts because of numerous safety concerns. It is obvious that Valley Central has chosen to ignore these safety concerns.

What could be so wrong with a parent visitation day? Well, the world has changed and not necessarily for the better. In today's climate of high inflation rates, it is often necessary for both parents to work. Not so many years ago, the majority of our households had only one parent working. Today, most have both parents working at least one, if not two jobs. When our children see a stream of adults (because we don't know if they are actually parents) walking into the school or classroom and their mom or dad doesn't come, it breaks their hearts. Five and six year olds don't understand that mommy or daddy can't take the time off because, unfortunately, they don't get paid if they don't work. The purpose of this day does not outweigh the unintentional hurt to our students.

Visitation days have also placed school districts between feuding parents. It would be nice if we could put on our rose-colored glasses and pretend that schools were perfect caretakers— but we are not. Court orders regarding contact or visitation rights can be a nightmare for public schools. Many children are unaware of these restrictions. On parent visitation day it is very easy for any parent to sign in at the front desk and go to the classroom. Is it possible or even

probable that we are naively providing an opportunity and environment in which feuding parents might place their wants over the needs of their child? How does a school district monitor this? What will we say to the legal custodial parent when their child is missing?

Perhaps even more unsettling is the question: How do we know if the individual signing in at the front desk is, in fact, the legal guardian/parent of a child in the building? Yes, Valley Central, like every other community, has registered sex offenders living within its borders. We frequently receive updated information regarding registered sex offenders who live within our district. Of course, there are those who have not registered or have not yet been prosecuted. How difficult would it be for one of these predators to sign in with a false name and enter one of our buildings on parent visitation day? Are we just waiting for a tragic event to devastate the life of a young child?

Within our elementary buildings, adults have naively used student restrooms on parent visitation days and election days. This is inappropriate. If the adult asks, they are directed to the staff restroom, but most do not ask. Most adults using the student bathrooms mean no harm. Nevertheless, it does make the students feel uncomfortable. It only takes one adult with devious intentions to destroy a childhood, if not a life.

Parent visitation day is not the only time these concerns are an issue. Any time voting takes place

within our buildings; these same school buildings are open to the public. We take great precautions every other day of the year to ensure the safety of our children. Why is it acceptable to put their safety aside for a few days each year?

How dare the district put the children of our community at risk? This is far from putting children center. This puts their emotional well-being and safety in jeopardy. Teachers value parental involvement and certainly welcome parents in the classroom. Nevertheless, monitoring hundreds of adults entering the building when students are present is a monumental if not impossible task. We have a responsibility to ensure that our children's school environment is safe every day.

These concerns have been brought up on numerous occasions to central office and little has been done to rectify these situations. The district is failing our children by allowing their safety to be in jeopardy *any* day of the year. If we say nothing, are we not failing our children, too?

—Rich Steger,
Vice President

De-Personalized Education?

During the Breaking Ranks presentation on Superintendent's Conference Day, high school teachers were inundated with all sorts of information and recommendations for High School Reform. The presentation definitely provided food for thought. The speaker's most striking point, for me, was when he described the "experiment" conducted by another high school: all of the students' names were written on index cards and hung up in the gym. Each teacher had to walk around the gym and place an X on the index cards of students that they knew something personal about. When all teachers had made their marks, 60% of the students had no X's on their cards. My eyes welled up at hearing this statistic and I know that it struck others as well from ensuing discussions. I started to think about the sheer size of the student body enrolled at VCHS and quickly decided conducting the same scenario would be impractical. If we did though, would we have similar results to the aforementioned school?

The depersonalization of education is a problem that we must all be aware of and strive to combat as much as possible. With a high school our size, this is admittedly a daunting task. However, we do have help in tackling this issue. The Valley Central High School PTSA organized and hosted "Student Achievement Recognition Night" on November 16, 2005. This event used to be a breakfast that took place during the school day. The PTSA has created a truly special evening that allows teachers to say something to a student that they might not normally get the chance to say and for that student to be recognized for their outstanding characteristics in front of their friends and family members. It was a wonderful, heartwarming evening that I will not soon forget and will participate in every year.

That said, there was something about it that disheartened me: only 43 out of the 120+ faculty members nominated a student and wrote a statement about the individual. Few teachers attended the 45 minute event. I know all too well that educators are very

busy people and that they have many demands placed upon them between professional and personal life that may preclude them from attending nighttime functions. Though we may not all be able to attend, we should all endeavor to take time out and nominate a deserving student. We have an opportunity with this event to personalize education for over 120 students at once and sadly many of us have not taken advantage of it.

The Valley Central PTSA plans to hold another "Student Achievement Recognition Night" in the spring. The 'T' in PTSA stands for teachers and we can all contribute by becoming members and participating in things like Recognition Night. Likewise every other building has a Parent-Teacher Association that every teacher may support by joining. If you haven't yet joined a Parent-Teacher Association, please consider doing so and supporting their efforts to personalize education. By doing this you are also supporting our goals as educators and helping to address a problem that we all lament.

—Meghan Rilley
Editor



"If you haven't yet joined a Parent-Teacher Association, please consider doing so and supporting their efforts to personalize education."

October VCTA Executive Council Meeting Minutes

Secretarial Report: Lucy Fox reported on situations dealing with particular personnel.

Paraprofessional Report: Kathy Lennon reported that Cathy Muller (W) is the new treasurer for the para unit.

Board of Education Report: Kevin McFadden indicated that there was nothing to report at this time.

Retirees: Kevin McFadden stated that the UAW gave up \$4 billion to GM in health benefits so that they don't lose their jobs. He further stated that this makes it easier for employers to cut benefits (and retiree benefits) if not in CBA. Kevin also distributed form letters for members to sign asking legislators to support the "Mommie Bill" for tier reinstatement. Tim Brown will make copies for **reps** to distribute and collect at the next faculty meeting.

Old Business: Patti Lunden reported that the Breast Cancer Walk on Sunday was successful. If anyone still has money to turn in, it may be sent to either Kingston or Patti. She requested that building coordinators let her know what the rough total was for each building. Nurses in each building are accepting \$5 donations for members wishing to participate in Dress Down on 10/21.

New Business: Laurie Hey reminded members about Fall Fest. This is the first year that we have had to pay to use the facility. Attendance is encouraged. VCTA shirts are available for those who would like to order them. Samples and order forms will be in each building. These items are union-made in the USA, not by children in another country. This makes them a bit more expensive, but this is not a fund raiser and there is no pressure for anyone to buy anything.

President's Report: Elementary Community Outreach : Volunteers are needed to stuff envelopes. We will get permission to send the envelopes home with the students. NCLB Highly Qualified Requirements: The law is silent regarding those teachers who do not meet highly qualified requirements. Pay dates for coaching positions—copies were attached. NYSUT Hurricane Relief Fund: Thank You from Tom Hobart—Copies were attached. Hudson Catskill CLC Election Day Flyer and final endorsements—copies were attached. Medicare Part D Inquiries: Copies were attached. SRP Recognition Day is November 18th. On September 9th, the Board of Regents passes a temporary amendment (expired June 20, 2007) permitting (not mandating) school districts to use up to (2) conference days per year for scoring state assessments (ie. Grades 3-8) Tim Brown indicated that there is an error in the salary table for Steps 22 and 23 and that it is being corrected. Step 22 will be corrected this year.

—Respectfully Submitted.

Laurie Hey, Secretary

Upcoming VCTA Events...

*Here's Your Chance to
Give the gift of life!!!*



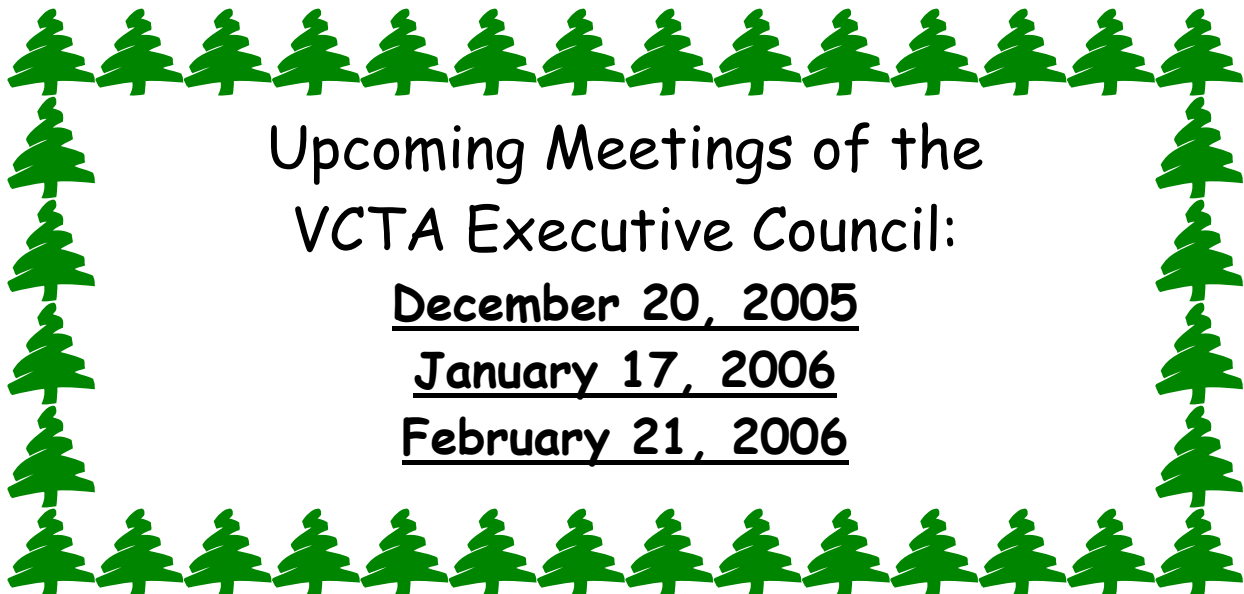
VCTA Blood Drive

Date: February 23, 2006

Time: 1:30 pm– 7 pm

Place: Valley Central Middle School Library

Call Kathy Manning at ext. 6017 to sign up!!



Upcoming Meetings of the
VCTA Executive Council:

December 20, 2005

January 17, 2006

February 21, 2006

NYSTRS Holds Its 85th Annual Meeting on November 13-14

Joseph McLaughlin was re-elected to a sixth term as a teacher member of the Board of Directors for the Retirement System. McLaughlin has been a teacher for 39 years, 33 of which were spent in the Harrison School District. He has served on the Board since 1990. He is one of three teacher members on the Board of Directors—Michael Korn and Sheila Salinger are the other two. The Board of Directors is made up of ten members and oversee the operation of the Retirement System. The teacher members are not compensated for serving on the Board. The topics of the workshops presented by the retirement system this year included Social Security Benefits; how to get the highest possible pension legally; the impact of divorce on your retirement, and the two biggest decisions to consider before retiring.

Social Security

The highlights from the Social Security presentation included considering the impact of retiring before age 62. It was pointed out that Social Security estimates are based on the assumption that a person will work to at least 62, so that retiring earlier may throw off the estimates. It was also pointed out that if a person should become disabled and need to access disability social security, they must have contributed to the system within the last five years of becoming disabled; should someone have retired at 55 and become disabled at 61 they would not be able to access disability. However, it is not necessary to work at full salary to contribute- you can make as little as \$4000 in 2005 and reach maximum Social Security credit. Lastly, it was pointed out that working for 35 years is the best way to maximize

your Social Security benefit-- remember to count all the years you worked prior to getting your teaching job. Your social security benefit is based on your highest 35 years of salary. The VCTA have some booklets regarding Social Security from NYSTRS—contact either Patti Lunden or Patty Joy.

How to Get the Highest Pension

Getting the highest pension possible legally depends on a few factors—being sure that you have been credited for all service. If you ever worked as a NYS employee (parks services, for example) and could have contributed to a NYS retirement system you could claim that prior credit. Or if you subbed before you became a teacher and had more than twenty days in one school year, you could be credited for that time (Tier III and IV, there is a cost- but it may be well worth your investment). You can also transfer any membership you may have previously had in any one of the NYS retirement systems to the NYSTRS. You may also apply for military credit or reinstatement to an earlier tier. Teachers called to active duty between 9/11/01 and 12/31/05 do not have to purchase the military credit.

Lastly, the way to maximize your pension is to increase your FAS through stipends other than your contract salary—coaching, summer school, extra-curricular all increase your FAS. It is generally best to do these in the last three years of teaching. You want to make sure that you do not suffer any unnecessary reductions in your pension due to retiring before you've hit required milestones in your tier. For more information on this presentation, go to www.nystrs.org, hit

Delegates and scroll down to the titles for the power point presentation on this topic.

The Impact of Divorce on Retirement

Basically, a Domestic Relations Order (DRO) which is part of the final decree of divorce will indicate how a person's retirement may be divided in case of divorce because a person's retirement is considered part of the marital assets. A DRO may affect decisions such as in-service benefit paid to a former spouse, it may require that a person decide on certain retirement options, or require the member to purchase life insurance. In addition to this there is also the dividing of the retirement benefit. There are two basic formulas for deciding this; either the sum certain model- which pays a specific amount each month or the straight percentage- which pays a certain percentage of the benefit each month. The annual benefit is determined according to the Majaukas formula which will either divide the benefit over the course of the entire time worked, or the time worked while married. Some points to consider – payments to the alternate payee by the retirement system cease once that payee is deceased –a former spouse may not name a beneficiary; a former spouse may not collect the retirement until you retire—a DRO cannot force you to retire at a certain age. For more information on this presentation, go to www.nystrs.org, hit Delegates and scroll down to the titles for the power point presentation on this topic. Contact Patti Lunden for a pamphlet regarding DRO's or access it at the NYSTRS website- legal publications.

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

Greetings! Although this musing will probably reach you after Thanksgiving and before Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa, I am writing it on November 20, a beautiful, sun-filled gift of a sometimes—cruel month. My mind is in a state of reverie as I muse on Thanksgivings past and on all that I have to be thankful for.

—Thanks and Thanksgivings...

My mind wanders to the kids' Thanksgivings of my early years, to the McFadden-Murphy-Mulroy-Briordy Turkey Days at my Aunt Gus's house in Brooklyn—talk about a wild Irish group!! I recollect my high school Thanksgiving mornings at Fordham's Jack Coffee Field for the annual Xavier—Fordham Prep game and bragging rights for the next year. There followed the seven monastic years and joyful Thanksgivings not with family but with commu-

nity. Then the teaching years and Thanksgiving mornings at Brooklyn College Field for the annual clash between Brooklyn Prep (where I began my teaching career) and St. John's Prep (and standing back to back with Father Billy Finn of St. John's to keep the two sides apart!!!) Then the married and family years at Ginny's grandmother's house or the McFadden manse, or at the Malankowski domicile in Tappan with the next generation raking all of Dzia-dzia's leaves—all wonderful times that helped define who we are and who I am. I am most grateful for that past.

And now my special thanks in the present for a very patient wife, three kids who make me proud every day, a wonderful daughter-in-law and son-in-law, four super grandchildren (and another on the way) who remind me each day of the beauty of life and of life's cycles.

And great gratitude finally to you, my active and retired brothers and sisters in my Valley Central family who have made the past forty years both joyful and meaningful for me. Thanks.

—Condolences

Our sympathy to Kay Sherman (Mont) on the death of her mother and to the Bartles on the death of their father: Jan Borland (MS and Maybrook retiree), Eric and Tinker at the high school, Mike at the middle school, Sue at Montgomery, Guy who taught for several years at the high school back in the day — and to Joann, Mary, and Nancy. All are VC grads. As Mrs. Bartle said to me, "my teaching family."

—Life After VC

—Bruce Seguin (MS) was elected as a councilman in the North Country.

—Val Terwilliger (B) had a wonderful time cruising the Mississippi. She reports that a teacher may travel at the regular price and be accompanied by a person who can cruise at half price. (cont'd on pg 14)



Mac counts his blessings!



"And great gratitude to you, my active and retired brothers and sisters in my VC family who have made the past forty years both joyful and meaningful for me"

Mac's Musing (from the Retiree Side)... (cont'd)

—Life After VC (cont'd)

If anyone is interested, let me know and I will have Val get you further info.

—Ed Rechterovic (MS) sighted golfing in South Carolina this past week and totally enjoying his first autumn of retirement. I wonder if he ran into Tony Cimorelli (B) or John Napolitano (HS), two South Carolina residents and boosters.

—Theresa Miller (CO) retired on Friday. She and husband Dan moved to Florida on Saturday. Theresa was the receptionist at Central Office and the pleasant, welcoming face of Valley Central to many of us these past years. Have a wonderful retirement!

—Teresa Concors (EC) will be retiring at the end of the semester. She has been a great teacher for VC and is a former senior class president at the high school. (Dare I say “back in the day,” Teresa?) Enjoy your well-deserved retirement.

—I spoke to the University Women's Group in Middletown on November 6th and in the audience were retirees Rosa Boyd (HS), Celia Cornwell (HS), Arline Friedman (HS), Sally Schwartz (HS), and active teachers Diane Ruggles (HS), June

Voegelin (HS), Nellie Briggs (HS), and Liz Papesca (HS). Retiree JoAnn Ryder is president of the group. It was a most enjoyable experience—and I hope I didn't forget anyone, or I will be in big trouble! Speaking of Sally, she is teaching several classes of Biology at Mount Saint Mary College.

—John Cosco (HS) is teaching an American History class at Orange County Community College.

—More next time!!!

—Nobody asked me, but...

—Monroe-Woodbury has been blessed with the appointment of Joe DiLorenzo as superintendent of schools. Joe began his teaching career in 1973 in the English department of VCHS. He also served as English chairman after you—know—whom retired. After six months, he became a High School Assistant Principal. After leaving VC in '96, he became an AP at Port Jervis, then principal at Highland HS, then back to Port as HS principal, assistant superintendent for instruction, and finally superintendent at Port. Joe is a hard worker and straight shooter who puts kids center. He will do a fine job.

—Ginny McFadden (MS) is most grateful to all the active teachers who took the time to fill out the form supporting the legislation

regarding Retirees for Tier I, also known as the “Forgotten Mommies.” It is hoped that Bills S3518 and A5131 will finally (after seven years) be moved out of Committee onto the floor where the politicians are saying there is support. Ginny is forwarding all forms to the committee and welcomes any late entries.

—I am reminded again, after the UAW gave back so much to GM, that it is very important to be both strong and vigilant. I assure you that I will continue to be both.

—Amen

As the holidays approach us—both solemn and festive—my wish for all of you is joy and peace in your work and in your lives outside of school. With Dylan Thomas, I'll remember you all in the “close and holy darkness” of this time of year.

Thanks again for turning to the back pages. I'll see you again in '06 and wish you well in the new year. Until then, keep pushing back the barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you. Peace.

—Kevin McFadden

Retiree Representative

NYSTRS Holds Its 85th Annual Meeting on November 13-14 (cont'd)

(cont'd on pg. 15)

The Two Biggest Decisions to Consider in Retirement

The first is are you emotionally ready to retire and the second are you financially ready to retire? There are many other decisions to make about your retirement which is dependent on your individual situation. To get the best advice, you should consult the retirement system if you are between three and five years from retirement. Definitely consult them if you are considering retirement this year! If you are ten years from retirement it is also worth attending a pre-retirement seminar. Information on these can be accessed at the NYSTRS website.

Overview of the NYSTRS 2005

The fact that the NYSTRS is a "Defined Benefit Plan" was emphasized. This means that by virtue of the NYS Constitution our benefits cannot be reduced or diminished. This means that no matter what economic times befall us, our benefits are not in jeopardy ; this is not true of defined contribution plans such as TIAA-CREF. The NYSTRS is the 8th largest retirement system in country, 18th in the world. There are over 260,000 active members; 200,000 which are in Tier IV. There are over 120,000 retired members with a benefit payroll of \$4.1 billion dollars. New legislation for 2005 included three bills-one that provides for an in-service benefit to be paid to members killed in active duty in

the military, one that provides that any active member called to military duty between 9/11/01-12/31/05 can receive cost free credit for that duty and one that states that any legislation affecting system benefits take effect no later than 6/30 in the year the legislation is enacted. Also, changes were made to make loan applications more flexible. So far there is no state retirement incentive for 2006. The NYSTRS may be accessed by phone or by the web. Members may monitor their own account on the web by registering in the secure area. Lastly, members are reminded that benefit profiles will be mailed out in the beginning of the new year. Check your beneficiary to be sure it is up to date—you don't want your beneficiary to be your ex-spouse's new love do you? Or your mom and dad—if you've been married for twenty years?

We had an opportunity to speak with the Assistant Director of the System and he is interested in speaking to mid-career members (age 27-44) about retirement as he feels that there is much that can be done during this time period to lay a firm foundation for retirement. We discussed such a presentation at VC. At this time we would like to get an idea of how many members would be interested in attending such a presentation. If you would be interested, please fill out the form below and return it to Patti Lunden (HS) or Patty Joy (Walden) by January 30th.

—Patti Lunden
Vice President

I'm INTERESTED in attending the
MID-CAREER RETIREMENT PRESENTATION!
PLEASE FORWARD ME MORE INFORMATION!

NAME _____

BUILDING _____

VOICE MAIL _____

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 Meghan Riley, 457-5899 for rates.



R.J. Smith Realty

Bus. (845) 561-2095 x-402

E-mail: markjtierney@rjsmithrealty.com
730 Broadway, Newburgh, NY 12550

MARK J. TIERNEY
Associate Broker



Andrew Buscetto
Associate Financial Advisor
with the practice of
David J. Mazzetti

Mazzetti and Associates
A financial advisory practice of
Ameriprise Financial Services, Inc.
25 Market Street, Suite 501
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601
Bus: 845.454.3021
Fax: 845.454.0737
andrew.x.buscetto@ampf.com

An Ameriprise associated franchise



Robin Briand
INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT
459 Goodwill Road
Montgomery, NY 12549
Home: (845) 457-4063
Office: (845) 457-2400 Ext. 6610
rbriand@HVC.RR.com

Memory Keeping at Its Best

**"A teacher's constant task is to take a roomful of live wires and see to it that they are grounded."
—E.C. McKenzie**



Valley Central Federal Credit Union

is a non-profit organization owned by you and operated solely, "For Your Best Interest".

Here at the credit union you will receive personalized service. We are here to address all your financial needs, so be sure to take advantage of our services. If you are not a member, we invite you to fill out a membership application to join our credit union family.

"Where people are worth more than money."

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

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 Meghan Riley, 457-5899 for rates.

Homeowner Tips for Surviving Freezing Weather

Heavy snow and bitter cold can lead to serious problems for property owners, including frozen pipes and home fires. To help ride out the winter's storms, MetLife® Auto & Home offers a free brochure, "Surviving Severe Cold Weather," which explains how to avoid much of the distress and inconvenience that winter weather can bring. The brochure is available by calling MetLife at 800-638-5433.

"The best defense is preparation," explained Bob Smith, Vice President and Chief Claim Officer of MetLife Auto & Home. "Most winter insurance claims that we receive are related to frozen pipes and downspouts, ice dams on roofs, and frozen tree limbs that fall on vehicles and homes. Experience has shown us that some of these problems could have been prevented, which is why it's important to take precautions to ensure the safety of your property and, most importantly, your loved ones."

Tips to avoid damages from winter weather:

- Keep sidewalks and entrances to your home free from ice and snow.
- Keep the house heated to a minimum of 65 degrees.
- Keep cupboard doors open below sinks.
- Turn on hot and cold faucets enough to let them drip slowly.
- Identify the location for the main water shutoff in your home.
- Keep garage doors closed.
- Remove dead tree branches that could damage your house.
- Close flues in fireplace when not in use.



In addition, according to the National Fire Prevention Association, nearly two-thirds of all residential fires occur during the winter months. From too many lights plugged into an outlet to a portable-heating device placed too close to curtains or a blanket, there are many opportunities for a fire to start. Many of these fires could be prevented simply by considering some basic issues of home fire safety. To help property owners rekindle their knowledge of the basics, MetLife Auto & Home offers a free brochure called "Up in Smoke!," which is also available by calling 800-638-5433.

MetLife Auto & Home is endorsed by New York State United Teachers Member Benefits. For free, no-obligation auto and home* insurance quotes that include special group rates**, call 800-GET-MET 1 (800-438-6381). Please have your current policies on hand when calling.

* Home insurance is available in most states to those who qualify.

** Available in most states to those who qualify.

Coverage, underwritten by MetLife Auto & Home, is available in most states to those who qualify. In Texas, real property policies are provided by Metropolitan Lloyds Insurance Company of Texas, Irving, TX. In Texas, auto policies are provided by either Metropolitan Property and Casualty Insurance Company, Metropolitan General Insurance Company, Metropolitan Casualty Insurance Company, Metropolitan Direct Property and Casualty Insurance Company, all of Warwick, RI, or GAINSCO County Mutual Insurance Company, Fort Worth, TX, through an arrangement with Metropolitan Property and Casualty Insurance Company. In some instances, special arrangements for coverage have been made with other carriers.

MetLife Auto & Home is a brand of Metropolitan Property and Casualty Insurance Company and its Affiliates, Warwick, RI. L0301CV0U(exp0107)MPC-LD

For information about this program or for information about contractual expense reimbursement/endorsement arrangements with endorsed providers, please call NYSUT Member Benefits at 800-626-8101, e-mail benefits@nysutmail.org, or visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE
VALLEY CENTRAL TEACHERS'
ASSOCIATION!

putting children center
vcta



1175 State Route 17K
Montgomery, NY 12549
Tel./Fax: (845) 457-5899

WE'RE ON THE WEB!!
WWW.VCTA.NET

President, Timothy Brown (HS) VM 7613
Vice President, Richard Steger (Walden) VM 5648
Vice President, Patti Lunden (HS) VM 7664
Secretary, Laurie Hey (MS) VM 6646
Treasurer, John Bonagura (EC) VM 2604

VCTA Executive Council
Building Representatives

Berea: Donna Clark, Erin Davis, Robin Sinclair-Scott, Carol DeMicco (alternate)

East Coldenham: Holly Bacon, Elizabeth Como

Maybrook: Donna Lloyd, Sandy Tarallo

Montgomery: Chris Brand, Gail Nozell, Toni Sperry, Mike Gonzales (alternate)

Walden: Kathy Bordone, Patricia Joy, Mary Ellen Mangiamele, Lori Myerson

Middle School: Mary Bleau, Tammy Coleman, Joe Collins, Joe DeVenuto, Linda English, Sandy Strauss

High School: Glenn Eckert, Bob Jurgens, Mindy Kane, Eileen Purcell, Meghan Rilley, Diane Ruggles, Doug Straebler, Carolyn Zayas, Glenn Taylor (alternate)

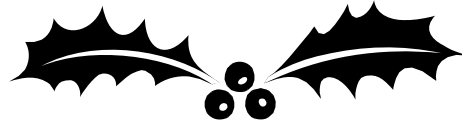
Secretarial Representative: Lucy Fox (HS)

Paraprofessional Representative: Kathy Lennon (W)

The VC Echoes is the official publication of the Valley Central Teachers' 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 Meghan Rilley, HS, by January 27, 2006.

Any articles submitted to the VC Echoes will also be posted on the VCTA web site.



*"Tis the Season...
for Reflection and Remembrance"*

The holiday season is upon us once again; with each passing year, time seems to move ever faster. That is unless you are five years old, then time seems to stand still! This is a wonderful time of year that many people see as an opportunity to spend special time with family and friends. Regardless of how, and if, we celebrate the holidays, they signal the end of yet another year. Whenever we find ourselves at the end of a road, we tend to reflect on where we have been and dream of where we will go next.

While reflection is a very important part of life for everyone, it is especially useful to educators. The constant reevaluation of our methods and strategies helps us to develop and hone our skills. It helps us to be better teachers and become true professionals. Likewise at this time of year, it is helpful to reflect on our relationships with our colleagues. Teaching is by nature an isolated profession and this was the hardest adjustment for me at the beginning of my career. I have learned that it does not have to be this way. The friendships that I have made at Valley Central are some of the best that I will ever have. Through the most stressful of times, they are the people who will help you laugh, smile, and cope. Whether you are a new teacher or a seasoned veteran, the value of these connections cannot be overstated. It truly hit me when I attended the retirement dinner two years ago and saw the deep and abiding affection and friendship between people who worked together at VC for twenty years or more. Such ties are truly a blessing and something that I reflect on often.

As we look back on 2005, we must also look outside of our community and remember those who have lost their lives fighting for our country overseas. On December 1st, we lost ten more young Marines in Iraq. This is a harsh reality anytime, but particularly devastating during a time for hope, peace, and joy. Remember their families and friends and honor their ultimate sacrifice. As the reasons behind the war slide ever farther from memory, we must all hope for a rapid end to the violence and a safe return home for our brave men and women.

—Meghan Rilley
Editor