



VC ECHOES

Valley Central Teachers' Association



Volume 8, Issue 4

February, 2006

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VC's Nancy Brother to Receive Richard H. Aderson Award

This year's recipient of the Richard H. Aderson "Make a Difference" Award is none other than VC's own Mrs. Nancy Brother, nurse (HS) and School Nurse Coordinator.

Nancy has worked at Valley Central for 15 years. As anyone who has had the pleasure of working with her can tell you, she consistently displays dedication, patience, and caring in even the toughest of situations and in her position there is no shortage of those. Despite all of the challenges she faces daily, Mrs. Brother also finds the time to contribute to many noteworthy projects and groups that both directly and indirectly foster education and advocate for children.

Within the school community, Nancy works closely with Frank Jordan and Jim Hession to assist students through various programs and clubs. She is currently very active with Vikings Against Substance Abuse (VASA) which encourages students to avoid dangerous substances and exposes them to safe and fun alternatives to drinking and drugging behaviors. Additionally, Mrs. Brother has worked with Peer Leaders and helped organize jail trips. She particularly enjoys her work with support systems for



Nancy Brother makes a difference every day!

students including bereavement, recovery, and children of alcoholics groups as well as the Girls Group. Perhaps one of her best-known contributions is the Christmas Gifts for Students program which has brought much joy and many smiles to hundreds of children throughout the years.

Mrs. Brother has also contributed to many causes and projects outside of the building that support our educational mission. She coordinates the sale of Daffodils as well as several Denim Days in support of the American Cancer Society. Most recently, she organized a Denim Day for Women's Heart Health at the high school.

(cont'd on page 6)

What Difference Does it Make?

*First they came for the Communists,
and I didn't speak up,
because I wasn't a Communist.
Then they came for the Jews,
and I didn't speak up,
because I wasn't a Jew.
Then they came for the Catholics,
and I didn't speak up,
because I was a Protestant.
Then they came for me,
and by that time there was no one
left to speak up for me.*

by Rev. Martin Niemoller, 1945

When VC ECH-OES past editor, Jim Lignori (retired HS English teacher) published that poem years ago, I was still a new teacher. It was the reason I decided to step up to the plate and become a building representative. The words, "then they came for me," are always in the back of my mind whenever I wonder if I should speak out about something. It was my reason for becoming so active in the union; it struck the chord at the heart of my own reasons for becoming a teacher—to make a difference. When I was a new teacher, I thought it was enough to make a difference in the lives of my students in my classroom. This is still a lofty goal, but I have come to realize that it is possible and necessary to reach beyond the classroom level to make a difference.

It is easy to believe you just can't make a difference. After all, there is so much to attend to each day, how can you be worried about private retirement sys-

tems falling apart, underpaid workers at Wal-Mart (and Sam's Club), farm workers not being able to organize, the war in Iraq continuing on with no end in sight, our government's foreign and domestic policies, the situation in Iran, Israel, Indiana...It's overwhelming and what difference does it make if I'm aware or not. It's not like I can really do anything. I have so much other stuff to worry about...what am I going to do next week in my classroom? Will it snow on the day I've planned a test or activity? How did my kids do on the ELA or Math? How will their scores reflect on me? Will the copier be working when I need it to be? Am I reaching every kid in my classroom? What's the price of gas going to be next week? Sometimes, we get so caught up in the everyday spin of life we lose sight of the big picture.

When Wal-Mart preys on the public by supplementing their low wages on the backs of the American taxpayer, intentionally decimating small business and greedily monopolizing as many markets as possible, refusing to pay a living wage anywhere in the world (*except Germany where the company they absorbed already employed strong labor union workers*), it is important to take a stand.

Don't shop there. It's as easy as that. I know what you're thinking...what difference will that make? Everyone else shops there.

But you can make a difference, word of mouth is the greatest organizing tool we have available. Don't shop there and tell others why you won't shop there. If we all ***stop*** shopping at Wal-Mart, it will make a difference.

Likewise, we can make a difference by insisting on knowing the truth about Iraq, or anything else our government is involved with or by turning on the BBC to see the world's view of the news. Farm workers need to organize. Why should you care? Maybe because they provide the food for our tables? Do you remember when our fields were full of cows and apples instead of McMansions? As our farm industry becomes dust in the wind, consider the ramifications. We are the largest consumer nation on the planet. We are positioning third world nations to hold us hostage through our stomachs. The Middle East already holds us hostage through our gas tanks and furnaces. The outsourcing of America's jobs sells out the futures of our students. How can we stop it? We can't if we do nothing.

Doing something makes a difference. The purpose of education is to help little minds look at the big picture...to wonder and learn about what came before us, and prepare for what

(cont'd pg. 6)

TRS Preretirement Seminars



New York State Teachers' Retirement System

10 Corporate Woods Drive
Albany, New York 12211-2395

(800) 356-3128 or 447-2666 (Albany-area calls)
Web Site: www.nystrs.org

George M. Philip, Executive Director

Preretirement Planning Seminars

These daylong meetings are designed to help active NYSTRS members age 45 and older prepare for retirement. During the course of the day, discussions are devoted to: Retirement System benefits; financial planning; legal affairs; adjusting to retirement; Social Security; and, other pertinent topics. *Please note that these seminars are not designed for one-on-one retirement counseling.* Spouses/companions are eligible to attend. Seminars are held 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., with registration from 8 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. There is no fee to attend, but you must register in advance. **Please see below for information on making a reservation.**

WINTER/SPRING 2006 SCHEDULE

Call 800-356-3128, Ext. 6180 to register.

Call beginning 12/13 for the sites below.		Call beginning 12/15 for the sites below.	
ALBANY February 15 (Wednesday) March 14 (Tuesday) April 5 (Wednesday) NYSTRS Headquarters 10 Corporate Woods Drive	L.I.-MELVILLE January 20 (Friday) April 8 (Saturday) May 10 (Wednesday) Melville Marriott 1350 Old Walt Whitman Rd. Exit 49N of LIE	BUFFALO February 9 (Thursday) March 30 (Thursday) May 9 (Tuesday) Millennium Airport Hotel 2040 Walden Avenue Cheektowaga	ROCHESTER February 10 (Friday) March 23 (Thursday) April 26 (Wednesday) Radisson Inn 175 Jefferson Road Henrietta
FISHKILL January 27 (Friday) March 8 (Wednesday) Holiday Inn Route 9 Exit 13 of I-84	TARRYTOWN March 9 (Thursday) May 5 (Friday) Westchester Marriott 670 White Plains Road	ITHACA April 28 (Friday) The Clarion Triphammer Road & Route 13	SYRACUSE February 23 (Thursday) March 31 (Friday) May 10 (Wednesday) Holiday Inn 7 th North St. & Electronics Parkway, Exit 37 of NYS Thruway (Liverpool)
L.I.-HAUPPAUGE January 21 (Saturday) March 16 (Thursday) April 7 (Friday) May 11 (Thursday) Islandia Marriott Long Island Exit 58 of LIE		OWEGO April 27 (Thursday) Owego Treadway Inn and Conference Center 1100 State Route 17C	UTICA February 24 (Friday) Radisson Hotel 200 Genesee Street

TO MAKE A RESERVATION: Please telephone the Retirement System in Albany at 800-356-3128, Ext. 6180 and specify the seminar above you wish to attend. ***You can only make reservations by calling the Albany office weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4:15 p.m.*** When calling, please provide your Social Security number or EmplID, date of birth, home address, home telephone number, and indicate if your spouse/companion is attending. ***If your spouse/companion is also a member,*** please have the above information for him/her also. After your call we will send you the following information: (1) a letter that confirms your reservation; (2) directions to the meeting; and, (3) the seminar agenda. Please bring this material with you to the seminar, along with photo identification and your most-recent *Benefit Profile*. ***If you make a reservation and subsequently cannot attend, please call the number above as soon as possible to cancel so that we can offer this reservation to another member.***

PLEASE BE PREPARED TO SHOW PHOTO IDENTIFICATION AT SEMINAR REGISTRATION.

Union Hits Governor on Budget Plan

*Executive proposal shorts students, seniors
and the middle class.*

NYSUT leaders blasted Gov. Pataki's budget proposal, saying it will slow educational progress and deny opportunity to hundreds of thousands of students while mortgaging the state's future. NYSUT officers were particularly critical of the governor's failure to acknowledge a potential settlement of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit and his proposal to cut Medicaid.

"The governor has turned his back on equity for New York's public school students, higher education and senior citizens," said NYSUT President Dick Ianuzzi. "His budget might sound sweet in Iowa or New Hampshire, but to millions of New York's public school children and elderly New Yorkers, this budget is a very sad symphony. And it will sound even more off-key to New York's middle-class taxpayers, who'll be stuck paying the bill in the future.

"The governor is putting the burden on middle-class New Yorkers to fund back-loaded tax cuts for the wealthy," Ianuzzi said. "It's reckless and irresponsible to drive the state into the red while ignoring pressing issues like the Campaign for Fiscal Equity decision. And it's reckless and irresponsible to cut aid for children in special education programs."

NYSUT Executive Vice President Alan B. Lubin was especially critical of the governor's proposal to raise the cap on charter schools and provide a tax credit for private school tuition.

"The governor's backdoor voucher plan is just a gimmick to make himself look good to conservatives in other states," Lubin said. "The governor said charter schools work, but the real answer is, we don't know yet. ...In the meantime, charters are draining resources from public school classrooms."

Lubin called the governor's proposal to have the Division of Budget distribute \$375 million in sound basic education aid "a retreat from equity."

Lubin noted it was disappointing that the governor's budget speech made only passing reference to public colleges and universities and community colleges.

"This budget sends a message louder than words: The governor doesn't think public education is worth the investment," Lubin said.

—From NYSUT Leader

January 20, 2006

New Union Site, Blog on NCLB

There are some big flaws in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Law, and many people need to learn the facts about it. The AFT has a new web site and blog:

Web site: www.unionvoice.org/ct/1qec3911qOe/

Blog: www.unionvoice.org/ct/-pqec3911qOB/

These will be used to generate informed discussions among members and the public and to work for constructive changes in the law in time for the 2007 reauthorization. The Web site is part of the AFT campaign, "NCLB: Let's Get it Right."

—From NYSUT Leader

January 20, 2006

Important Information

NYSUT VP Maria Neira is requesting that any teacher who was involved in scoring or proctoring the 3-8 ELA please go to www.NYSUT.org and fill out the survey so NYSUT can make suggestions to the State Education Department based on the experiences of our members.



OUSDHP has a new Executive Director. His name is Ike Lovelass. Mr. Lovelass is hoping to build a stronger relationship between the Plan and its members. He wants members to know that if they are having a problem with the plan, they may contact him to help resolve it. His phone number is 781-4890. His email is ilovelass@ouboces.org.

Active Member Profile Mailing to Begin Mid-February

NYSTRS will start mailing *Active Member Profiles* to its 260,000 active members in mid-February. Due to the volume of statements, the mailing will likely take a month to complete.

If you do not receive your *Profile* by March 31, please contact us. Remember: *Profiles* are prepared only for those who were active members of this System as of June 30, 2005.

The *Profile* will include pension-related information through the end of the most recently completed school year. For the first time, this year's *Profile* will include a service credit history for all active members.

You can register on the NYSTRS website so that you are able to access your benefit profile online. You will need your TRS member number and your Social security number. You register over a secure site. The TRS will mail you a password and then you can access your member benefit profile online.

Nancy Brother to Receive Richard H. Aderson Award (cont'd)

These efforts have raised considerable funds for research and also awareness to important issues. The effects of this work will undoubtedly touch many of our students' lives in the future.

In December, Nancy received an award from the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services for her invaluable contributions to the development of Drug Intervention Training for Educational Professionals (DITEP). In collaboration with NY State Trooper Doug Paquette, she helped to create a program that

would teach educators and related personnel how to recognize the signs and symptoms of drug use. Since its inception in 1997, the program has trained over 5000 people. Trooper Paquette nominated Mrs. Brother for the Law Enforcement Service Award in recognition of her tireless devotion and important work in creating such an effective program.

High School Principal, Mr. Darryl Imperati nominated Nancy for the Richard Aderson honor due to her tireless devotion to the students and the district.

Though no stranger to win-

ning awards, Nancy (1996 NYS School Nurse of the Year) says that this award will always be special to her, especially because she knew and worked with Richard Aderson. "He was a really good guy. He often visited the building to speak with the students. He really cared about the kids." How fitting then, that Mrs. Nancy Brother who has made such a difference in so many lives should be selected for the honor.

(See Press Release pg.10)

—Meghan Rilley

What Difference Does it Make? (cont'd)

the future will be and most importantly, to see the connections between all these things and how they connect to us. Inaction *is* a decision to make a difference, but in a negative way. As large corporations attack employee retirement plans and the Bush administration encourages the privatization of Social Security, we must be cognizant of the impact of such acts on the public sector retirement systems like our own. We have a defined benefit system which means that our benefits are legislated and cannot be diminished. But that does not mean that another tier could not be added that might be a defined contribution system, where the employee is responsible to invest

money for their future. Such a system would not only cause great inequity among members in our profession but would seriously jeopardize the retirement of future teachers. We cannot wait for such action to take place to react; we must voice our opposition to it now. Sure, those future colleagues have yet to be hired, some are still sitting in our classrooms, which is why it is important to act now. Each of us benefits from the actions of another VCTA member who acted for you, back in the 1980's or 1970's. Largely due to their insistence on fair working conditions and decent wages, you benefit from the contracts that were negotiated long before you came to teach

here, you benefit from the activism of unionists from thirty and forty years ago in teaching and fifty, eighty years ago in labor movements. They stood up for you. When our working families cannot bring home a living wage, when too many children in our country go without health coverage and food, when our future is being outsourced, we must return the favor by being willing to stand up for the next generation of union members. You can make a difference. The question is, will you?

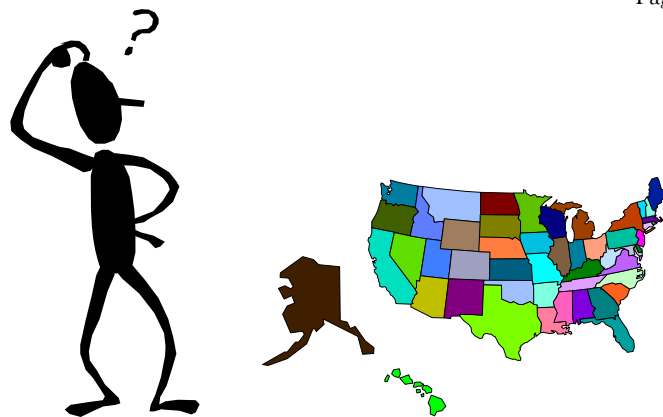
Patti Lunden,
Vice President

Who is “Stupid in America”?

John Stossel recently (January 13, 2006) aired a segment on 20/20 entitled, “Stupid in America.” Basically, his point was to bash public schools, teacher unions and promote charter schools and vouchers. A critique of his journalism would most likely yield a substandard score since he relied on presenting a very slanted one-sided view. His educational experts were Kevin Chavous who is a Representative of the Seventh Ward of Washington, DC ; a champion of charter schools as the way to fix public schools. Of the 75,000 children in the DC area there are 11,000 in 39 charter schools. To Chavous’s credit, he has also championed funding the repair of crumbling buildings and securing funding for private and public education. But you need to wonder why a public servant feels the only way to fix a public system is through privatization that serves a select group of students not subject to the same standards or accountability as their public counterparts? Chavous, by profession, is a lawyer and is a distinguished fellow with the Center for Educational Reform which was founded by Jeanne Allen. This Center champions charter schools as well, and bashes teacher unions and encourages shopping at Wal-Mart mainly because unions oppose it.

Stossel does interview Randi Weingarten, president of NYC’s United Federation of Teachers. The interview makes Weingarten sound as if tenure protects bad teachers so well, the system cannot be rid of them because contractual language ties the hands of administrators. He then interviews Joel Klein, chancellor of the NYC schools, who never taught a day in his life as he came to the job from corporate America. In Klein’s interview he makes the case for school choice by comparing classroom lessons to meals served at restaurants or haircuts by barbers. I find it interesting that Stossel does not interview another NYC educational expert, Jonathan Kozol, author of Savage Inequalities on his views to see if school choice has helped the poor and disadvantaged. Of course, he wouldn’t interview Kozol, who would have good things to say about teachers since Stossel wants to blame teachers for all society’s ills. Isn’t it interesting that teachers are always the root of the problem although teachers don’t run the schools?

One of Stossel’s other experts was Ben Chavis, principal of a charter middle school in Oakland, California. It is called the American Indian Middle School



although Native Americans make up only 20% of the population. Chavis is not an educator by trade; he is a real estate agent. He seems to run his school in the fashion that he experienced school forty years ago. He uses corporal punishment, publicly embarrassing and humiliating children who misbehave. He also refers to them by ethnic slurs as “lazy Mexican”, or “stupid black”. He hires non-certified teachers mostly in their twenties and pays them about \$5000 more a year than the public schools in Oakland. He ranks teachers and children and uses the children as custodians for the grounds. He limits specials by refusing to have computers in the schools, seeing them as roadways to theft and pornography; the arts are after-school clubs, but Chavis does devote time for physical education—forty five minutes of running per day. That’s it—running. It must be the Forrest Gump plan of physical education. Of course, Stossel’s report fails to mention most of this, but the SF Gate ran a more objective piece on Chavis allowing for a fuller view of the entire picture. Is this the model charter school that Stossel is promoting? If this is the model for public education then we are in trouble.

With this portrayal of education broadcast across America, how can we compete? Again, word of mouth is our best tool. Don’t let people bash our profession. We cannot afford to shake our heads and mumble that they don’t know what it is to be in public education. We must shout it from the rooftops. Challenge stupidity in America with the truth. As educators, we know how to present our ideas. We know how to teach people. We must be willing to do so when our schools are challenged, when corporate America is trying to control our public funds and our schools. Our country was founded on the principle that speaking up and speaking out can change the world. We all have a voice; we must be willing to use it.

—Patti Lunden
Vice President

New Teacher Certification Regulations: New Hoops, Hurdles, Rules and Terminology

Gone are the terms “provisional” and “permanent” for people applying for new certificates; in are the terms “initial,” “transitional,” and “professional” certification. Local leaders need to be keenly aware of these changes for they will have profound impact on our newest members for years to come.

Who is impacted?

- All candidates applying for NYS teachers’ certificates on or after February 2, 2004.
- Teachers holding valid Provisional Certificates may still seek Permanent Certification for those provisional certificate titles under the “old” regulations.
- Teachers holding Permanent Certification are not affected unless they apply for additional certification(s).

What will the new certificates be called and for how long are they valid?

- **Initial:** valid for five years from effective date
- **Transitional:** valid for three years from eff. date
- **Professional:** Continuously valid provided that the professional development requirements are met.

To whom does each certificate apply?

- **Initial:** Generally, candidates who are completing baccalaureate or higher degree programs and who have also completed required coursework and student teaching; and who have passed New York State certification tests.
- **Transitional:** Alternative certification candidates with a commitment of employment from a school district.

Professional: Candidates holding initial or transitional certificates and meeting the additional education and experience requirements of the professional certificate.

What are the certificate requirements?

• Initial:

- Baccalaureate degree
- Coursework in liberal arts and sciences, certification area and pedagogy (including student teaching); and
- LAST (Liberal Arts and Sciences Test);
- ATS-W (Assessment of Teaching Skills Test);
- CST (Content Specialty Test) —*Except for certification in speech and language disabilities*

• Professional:

- Master’s Degree;
- 3 years of teaching experience including one year mentored teaching experience; and
- No additional examinations (CST required for speech and language disabilities)

How will certificate titles be different than under the current regulations?

Titles will be aligned with both school subjects and school grade levels in **narrower ranges** than the “old” regulations.

–Taken from NYSUT Elmsford Edge

January 2006

***New teachers: Be sure to check for most current and up-to-date information on certification requirements at the Office of Teaching Initiatives Web site at: www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/

December VCTA Executive Council Meeting Minutes

Paraprofessional Report: Kathy Lennon indicated that there was nothing to report at this time.

Board of Education Report: Kevin McFadden reported that end of year reports were completed and that last night's work session focused on re-districting. There were many who signed up for public participation. Kevin indicated that he thinks the BOE may move toward a vote on re-districting on January 9, 2006.

Dental/Optical Trust: Sandy Strauss stated that usage of the Plan is up and that things are running smoothly.

Old Business: Patti Lunden requested that Mid-Career retirement slips be returned to her if anyone is interested in attending a workshop. This would be for members between 25 and 44 who are interested in planning ahead for retirement. Joe DeVenuto reported on a meeting regarding training for ELA scoring.

New Business: Carol DeMicco reported on heating problems in Berea. Rich Steger will look into this, along with problems in the HS/MS new wing additions. Tim Brown requested that the temperature be documented four times per day. Chris Brand stated that when there were heating problems in Montgomery last year, the offer was made to move to different classrooms.

Carol DeMicco reported that a mini bus has been arriving late at Berea. Discussion followed.

President's Report: Motion to approve and send letter regarding Central Office errors and correspondence to membership carried. Members who have problems with their paychecks should call Patti Lunden at ext. 7664.

ALF news—Patti Lunden, Tim Brown, and Erin Davis attended a local meeting regarding Wal-Mart and its practices.

Involuntary Transfers Language—Article IX of the CBA states that “in the event of involuntary transfer, volunteers will be considered. The Superintendent will decide who is to be transferred based upon his/her opinion of school needs. In the event no volunteers are available or acceptable to the Superintendent, and where the school needs, experience, and qualifications are substantially equal, the teacher with the least length of service will be transferred.” Discussion followed.

MVP Information: A letter stating that Riverside Women's Health PC in Poughkeepsie has terminated their participation with MVP was distributed.

VCTA Apparel ordered—no hats—reimbursement forthcoming.

All-Night Grad Party Donation solicitation attached. Motion to donate \$150 carried.

Thank you from Ginny McFadden regarding Mommie Bill petitions that were turned in.

Cameras: Discussions have taken place with Central Office regarding the placement of cameras in hallways and other areas of the high school and, later, the middle school. Cameras would not be placed in classrooms or bathrooms. We would reach a side agreement that cameras would not be used for evaluating purposes of any of our members. Discussion followed.

—Respectfully Submitted.

Laurie Hey, Secretary

Upcoming VCTA Events and Dates to Remember...

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

8th Annual 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!!**

Retirement Seminar

Who: Anyone retiring
this year or
in the near future

When: Wednesday
February 15th, 2006
4 pm

Where: Berea's library

Hosted by
Christina Howe

Richard H. Aderson "Make a Difference" Award Presentation

Prior to the regularly scheduled Board meeting on Monday, February 13th at 6:30pm in the Administration Building, the public is cordially invited to a reception honoring this year's recipient of the *Richard H. Aderson "Make a Difference"*

Award. Please join us to honor Mrs. Nancy Brother, High School Nurse and School Nurse Coordinator, Valley Central School District. Formal presentation of this Award will follow. Light refreshments will be served.

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

Greetings! February 2, 2006—I can't believe the passage of time. January passed so quickly—we were in Portland and Seattle for about three weeks in January and then for a long weekend in Skaneateles at January's end. We also missed the Credit Union Dinner Dance which we enjoy. I heard that a good time was had by all. Stan, the Credit Union man, and company always do a good job as do Rusty and his crew at Spruce Lodge. I'll preserve my aching knees for next year!

I'm reminded of what a godsend the Credit Union has been for us down through the years and the thanks that is due to the founders and those who have worked on the board over or close to 50 years. Our gratitude also to the staff.

—Retiree Alert!!...(and Active members also!)

Governor Pataki is making noises about

the governor having more control over the state's retirement systems. Bad, bad idea. Let your legislators in Albany know your feelings. Perhaps I will trust the new governor more than George Elmer ("Is this the way to Iowa?") Pataki, but I won't take a chance. Drop a line to your state senator and assemblyman.

—Condolences

To John Cosco (HS) on the death of his father.

Also to the family of Peg Freeman (MS) on her passing.

—Some Good Stuff

I really enjoyed the articles in the last Echoes by Rich Steger, Meghan, and Patti Lunden. Busy people taking the time to share their thoughts on things of importance to kids. How great it would be if more active and retired teachers took some time to share their thoughts in Echoes. I certainly would be happy to give up some of this space for possible sharing of

thoughts on the educational scene. (Now there is an extra motivation for writing—less of Mac's meandering musings!!)

—Retirees on the move

Mid-Hudson Area Retired Teachers Association has some very interesting trips lined up:

Cape May, MOMA in NYC, Saratoga, Shaw Festival/Shakespeare Festival (ah!) in Canada. The brochure was sent out last week. Look it over.

—Amen

January has shut down my creative flow. (What a break for you!) That's it for this time. Until next time, keep pushing back the barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you. Peace.

—Kevin McFadden

Retiree Representative



No one got to see Mac dance this year, but wait until next year!!!



"How great it would be if more active and retired teachers took some time to share their thoughts in Echoes."

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.



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—William Butler Yeats

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Looking to save money?

These discount programs endorsed by New York State United Teachers Member Benefits will save you money!

Simply Certificates

Perfect for gift giving! Gift certificates purchased from Simply Certificates online or by phone are discounted 10 percent for NYSUT members and agency fee payers. You must identify yourself as a NYSUT member to receive the discount. Note: This discount is not valid at Simply Certificates retail locations.



Certificates are accepted at hundreds of participating restaurants, day spas, resorts, golf courses and ski areas. Merchants are located in many areas within New York, as well as in many other states and D.C.

Working Advantage

If you like to save money on entertainment, then this program will interest you. Purchase discounted tickets for movie theaters, video rentals, theme/amusement parks, skiing, Broadway shows, museums and special family events through Working Advantage.

You can order tickets through the mail, Internet or phone. You must identify yourself as a NYSUT member and use the special NYSUT identification number: 704689984.

Lifeline

If you have an older relative living at home, Lifeline can give both of you peace of mind. It's an easy-to-use personal response service that ensures older adults living at home get quick assistance whenever it is needed, 24 hours every day.

A push of a button dials a monitoring center and establishes two-way voice communication. A Lifeline Personal Help Associate communicates with the individual, assesses the situation, summons appropriate help and follows up to ensure help arrived. Lifeline also allows the user to answer the phone without rushing and risking a fall. Additionally, it can give reminders about medications, appointments, etc.

NYSUT members receive discounted pricing. Note: Some communities may offer Lifeline through hospitals or service agencies. You should check with these facilities for availability and pricing.

How to Access

For information about these programs, contact NYSUT Member Benefits: (800) 626-8101, e-mail: benefits@nysutmail.org, or online: www.memberbenefits.nysut.org.

For information about contractual expense reimbursement/endorsement arrangements with endorsed programs, please call NYSUT Member Benefits.

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!!
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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 Riley, HS, by March 24th, 2006.

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

"In Defense of Pensions, Public and Private"

In the January 19th issue of *New York Teacher*, there was a rather lengthy treatment of the issue of keeping pensions safe. We have been witnessing the demise of the private pension for two decades, yet it seems to be more pronounced of late. Now, whether from a sense of paranoia or a realistic view of trends, there has been much ado about the possible future collapse of public pensions as well.

In recent years, there has been a move toward privatization of retirement benefits in the form of 401k and 403b plans and an even larger scale privatization of Social Security which at this point seems to be dead in the water. Such plans are highly susceptible to changes in the Stock Market which is very intimidating to average joes and janes such as myself who have only a limited working knowledge of the system. Now imagine having worked for a corporation for twenty or twenty five years and being told either a) your pensions might not be available to you because we are filing for bankruptcy (incidentally, the executives pensions are generally safeguarded during a bankruptcy) or b) we are freezing pensions effective next year and from that point on your future will rest in a 401k plan. Though you are relatively close to retirement, now your future is uncertain. Is this fitting repayment for decades of loyalty and dedication to your job? Why is it that corporations are no longer willing to live up to their end of the bargain? More importantly, why is this corporate irresponsibility becoming so rampant?

The answers to these questions are varied and complicated. However, one aspect that is glaringly obvious is what I like to call the Wal-Mart factor. Wal-Mart is a corporation that is notorious for treating its employees terribly. One of the company's most infamous practices is holding seminars for its workers instructing them as to how to apply for various forms of public assistance such as Medicaid, Food Stamps, and WIC. Yet Wal-Mart is arguably (?) the most successful and powerful company in the world. Is it possible that other companies are noticing the effect that poor treatment of employees has on the bottom line? Could this trend of cutting and eliminating pensions be indicative of the *worst is yet to come*?

Of concern to many NYS employees is the state of New York State's Public Retirement Systems. Right now, all of them are financially sound and responsible. These systems are also protected by a clause in the state's constitution which says that "the state shall not reduce state pensions once offered." This could however be changed if a state constitutional convention is called. NYSUT has been lobbying against this. We must all be vigilant and do all we can to protect the rights of all workers.

—Meghan Riley
Editor