



VC ECHOES

Valley Central Teachers' Association



Volume 8, Issue 7

June, 2006

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Valley Central's Union Trade Workers

For The Best Results: Hire Local—Buy Local



VCSD Building and Grounds Crew: Fellow Unionists and Community Members

The VCTA Thanks the Following Union Craftsmen for Their Quality Renovations of the VCTA Office:

From Back Row (left to right): Ryan Schmidt, Devin Tanenbaum, Craig Capwell, Chris Hetlyn, Roger Williams, Charlie Munger, Justin McCarthy, and Mike Curley

**Buy
Union!**

Union Office: Union Made in the USA

The VCTA would like to thank members of maintenance and grounds who did an incredible job of renovating the VCTA office space earlier this year. Roger Williams served as the project supervisor and under his direction our office now looks like a professional work space that can more adequately support our child-centered educational endeavors. Devin Tannenbaum, Craig Capwell, Justin McCarthy, Mike Curley, Chris Hetlyn, Ryan Schmidt, and Charlie Munger were all members of the renovation crew. This project included the installation of a floor and ceiling, electrical upgrades (including lighting, phone and computer lines), as well as the construction and installation of handmade shelves, work spaces and bulletin boards.

Valley Central's maintenance and custodial workers are union brothers and sisters. They are affiliated with the CSEA, Local 1000 AFSCME, AFL-CIO, *Valley Central School District Unit—Orange County Local 836*. In hiring "our own," we hired the best. We hired professionals who are charged with the upkeep of the most important buildings in our community—the buildings that house our most precious and fragile resource—our community's children. In hiring our own, we received craftsmanship that is second to none from fellow unionists who believe in the rights of workers. Maybe Wal-Mart will learn this lesson some day! *Shop anywhere but Wal-Mart.*

Roger and his crew took great pride in their quality work. They went above and beyond with every detail of the renovations, treating this project like their own homes. Please offer each of these crew members your thanks, along with Steve Puntar and Dee Holmes for their supportive role, when you see them throughout the year, and feel free to stop in and observe the results of their professionalism and fine craftsmanship at your union made union office.

—Tim Brown

A Farewell To Harms

Each year I have the honor and privilege of writing a few words of thanks and reflection that I am sure many of you never read nor understand. So I am either witty, boring, or witty and boring. Most of you will probably opt for the middle answer, but you are still stuck with me for two more years.

As the 2005-6 school year ends I would like to wish all of our new retirees a long, healthy and happy retirement; *live long and prosper*. Congratulations to Meghan Riley for an outstanding job in her first year as Editor of your VC Echoes. Meghan will soon be a mama, but plans no vacation from her union work. I would like to thank your elected building representatives who have been ever-vigilant on your behalf. Building representatives are listed on your union webpage: www.vcta.net. I would also like to thank our longtime Vote-Cope Coordinator, Toni Sperry from Montgomery Elementary; this years Vote-Cope Coordinator, Robin Sinclair-Scott from Berea Elementary; and your building Vote-Cope liaisons (Eileen Purcell, HS; Tammy Coleman, MS; Erin Davis, Berea; Holly Bacon, EC; Donna Lloyd, Maybrook; Gail Nozell, MES; Mary Ellen Mangiamiele, Walden) for their efforts. Once again, the VCTA was awarded the Abel Blattman Award at this year's Representative Assembly for its political action contributions. It is through these contributions that the VCTA, NYSUT and AFT can effectively keep children center.

Your union officers (Rich, Patti, Laurie, and John) continue to watchdog working conditions while promoting our child-centered education philosophy. The past two years have been a particularly difficult term of office for your elected representatives, particularly Rich and Patti, who have shouldered the brunt of the workload on your behalf. Despite the increased workload and increased vigilance inherent with recent changes, our relationship with management and the Board Of Education remains cooperative and effective. Persistence, open communication and honesty reduce the harm that can be

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A Farewell To Harms (continued from page 2)

caused by adversity; in fact, these three qualities help to ensure that adversity ultimately results in growth and improved respect and empathy for opposing view points. As we usher out the trials and tribulations of the past two years, however, it is my hope that we can more effectively get back to our primary mission of serving children without distraction.

With all of the recent turmoil and hustle and bustle we have experienced, it is likely that many of you have neglected to congratulate one another for all that you do every day. I am proud to work within public education and within this school district; I am proud to be your colleague; I am proud to note that the collaborative efforts of over 700 VCTA members on behalf of children and the community have been recognized by our NYSUT leaders in Albany, resulting in an award of distinction for the VCTA. At the NYSUT Representative Assembly on May 6th, I was honored to accept NYSUT's Community Service Award on your behalf for all of your generous donations of time, money and creativity. Please accept my best wishes for a restful break that returns you to work in September with renewed vigor and passion for the art of teaching.

–Tim Brown

Committee of 100 Report

The Committee of 100 convened for the second time this year on May 23rd to lobby New York State elected officials in Albany on behalf of public education. Our 1st priority was to thank our local political leaders for their veto overrides of Governor Pataki's extreme education cuts and his attempts to reallocate public tax dollars to charter and voucher schemes. In an unprecedented bipartisan effort, both Republicans and Democrats rallied to protect public education funding from a governor who has set his sights on the White House and is more interested in catering to the Iowa and New Hampshire caucuses than serving his New York constituents. Without these overrides, local property taxes would have been more dramatically affected.

The governor has proposed to double the number of charter schools throughout the state. The financial impact of this type of change would effectively preordain continued financial problems for affected public schools through strained resources and defeated budgets. The Albany City School System is currently in crisis because of the theft of a large portion of its operating budget—funds that are being reallocated to for-profit charter schools that have yet to prove their worth or effectiveness. Current charter school legislation provides charter schools with greater benefits and less accountability than their local public school counterparts. Each year public school teachers try to impart an important message to their students: along with rights come responsibilities. It appears that this message has become the rallying cry of public school critics lobbying for charter and voucher schemes. The problem with their message is that they do not appear to want this message or standard to apply to charter schools that are exempt from many of the mandates and restrictions that apply to their public school counterparts.

There were numerous areas of concern that necessitated lobbying efforts on behalf of K-12 and higher education, health care, labor and retirement issues. Some of these efforts included supporting:

- The enactment of a 55/25 Retirement Program;
- A permanent health insurance moratorium;
- Universal health coverage; and
- Permanent COLA improvements for our most senior retirees.

For a full review of our lobbying efforts visit the NYSUT web page at www.nysut.org. Your VOTE-COPE contributions on behalf of children and public education make these efforts possible.

(–cont'd on page 10)

Standing Up for Our Children

The VCTA has recently received some criticism in the local newspaper for taking a strong stand against Georgiana Angilieri being elected to the Board of Education. She was one of five candidates running for three open school board seats. School board members set goals and policy for the school district. This is an enormous responsibility that requires a commitment far beyond monthly meetings. A school board member's leadership has a direct influence on the quality and content of the education of our children. It is imperative then that individuals seeking such a position be unequivocally devoted to pursuing policies that not only meet the needs of our children, but also provide for their best interests and ensure them access to the best possible futures.

The VCTA had a vice president attend all CABC, (Citizens Advisory Budget Committee) meetings, as it has since the committee was formed many years ago. At these meetings, Ms. Angilieri stated that we should propose the contingency budget for the 2006-2007 school year, as the contingency budget was already increasing taxes enough. She also felt that the Literacy Collaborative Program was not needed and too expensive. This is a research-based program that will result in all teachers, K-8, being trained through consistent on-going and in-depth professional development at their own school building by a district teacher. The outcome of this program will be children who are stronger readers and writers across the district— skills that are necessary for success. She repeatedly complained that her school taxes were too high to teach teachers how to teach reading. However, this is the most cost-effective method of ensuring that all K-8 teachers have been rigorously trained in literacy strategies that will benefit our students. This form of professional development is the most fiscally responsible choice for the students, teachers, **and** the taxpayers. Historically, Valley Central has not risen above a second lowest per pupil expenditure in the county. How long are we supposed to continue cutting and/or ignoring programs that will help our children because of poor funding? We all dislike that our taxes continue to rise; but until the state tax structure and funding for public education changes, our taxes will continue to increase even if a contingency budget is adopted.

In her Candidates Biography, Ms. Angilieri stated that parents are settling for a public school education because their taxes are too high and therefore they can't afford to send their children to a private school. She also stated that she wanted to bring the same quality of education available at private schools to Valley Central. Is Ms. Angilieri aware that private schools do not have to meet the same high standards that public schools must? This implies that she believes private schools are better than Valley Central Schools. Personally, I choose to send my children to Valley Central. I actually moved into the district so that my children would have the opportunity to be a part of this fantastic community. I was impressed not only by the quality of the education, but by the genuine love and concern for the children by the teachers and staff throughout our school district. Many of my family members and friends have also moved into the Valley Central School District because of its excellent reputation.

Ms. Angilieri further stated that only 42% of our students go on to a four-year college. This is a deceptive and inaccurate statistic. In reality, 83% of VC graduates go on to college—two-year or four-year. How many choose to go to a two-year college first for other reasons such as saving money? How many opt to go on to a technical school to pursue their career of choice? Saying only 42% achieve this goal in VCSD is very misleading and demeaning to our students who have made other educated decisions regarding their post-VCSD education. Furthermore, Ms. Angilieri misquoted another BOE candidate's statement regarding this

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Standing Up for Our Children (cont'd from page 4)

issue. She attributed Mr. Iorlano with saying that all kids don't need a high school diploma. This is not what Mr. Iorlano said! Mr. Iorlano specifically stated that college was not for everyone. Ms. Angilieri's inaccurate statement was published six days before the election, preventing Mr. Iorlano from correcting her blatant error before voting was to take place.

Ms. Angilieri also made a statement indicating her philosophy that physical education should only be one day per week. This shows an obvious lack of understanding of state and federal mandates. Moreover, we are all aware of the childhood obesity epidemic. This problem would only increase with a reduction in time for children to be active. When children are physically fit, they are healthier and therefore are absent less which is directly linked to increased academic achievement. Physical education also teaches children the importance of being fit and healthy which helps them to develop healthy habits for life. State and federal mandates aside, what message would it send to our children to dramatically cut back on physical education?

Ms. Angilieri also claimed that the art program lacked variety and that she already had too many pinch pots and landscapes (which, though hopefully inadvertent, was a public criticism/attack upon one of our colleagues). I see the art program at all levels being widely varied with the types of projects students complete. I would also hope that she could see some progression with the projects. At different grade levels, the focus of a landscape will be different. The lesson may concentrate on the ele-

ments of art, different artists' interpretations, or both. These statements by Ms. Angilieri show a fundamental lack of understanding of curriculum and pedagogy. These statements also reveal a very negative and manipulative persona.

Ms. Angilieri stated at the candidates debate held at Berea Elementary that she believed "extras" such as music and sports should be paid for independently by each child's parents. When she was criticized for this position, however, she seemed to backtrack and be more interested in damage control than admitting the truth of her words. The very nature of public education is to ensure that all children receive equal opportunities—not for the rich to excel and leave their poor counterparts behind while they are forced to look on from the sidelines because dad/mom was recently laid off from work.

The VCTA took such a strong stand against Ms. Angilieri's bid for a position on the Valley Central Board of Education because her candidacy would not have been in the best interest of our children. Some in the media have said that we were unprofessional for taking our stand. I disagree. We must always advocate for our children. When the day comes that we as a union of educators choose silence over putting children center, we have failed. Not taking the position we took would have been extremely unprofessional and a disservice to our children.

Stand proud and sing loud. —Rich Steger,
Vice President, VCTA

The Valley Central Federal Credit Union

Thanks for your Support of This Year's Credit Union's Care for Kids Campaign!

Thanks to all members of the Valley Central School District who contributed to our annual "Credit Unions Care for Kids" Campaign! A donation of \$545.00 was made to Children's Cancer Fund, our designated children's charity. This year's mascot, Lindsay the Lamb, was very popular. Thanks to all who purchased the stuffed lamb and to those who made donations. **Special Thanks to Diane Ruggles at the high school for her efforts in this fundraiser. We look forward to your continued support next year!**

Sincerely, Stan Davie, Manager

How to Check your Contract Salary Agreement

Your contract salary agreement should list:

- **Your base salary** (compare with p. 23 of the contract, 2006-2007 schedule)
 - ⇒ Look at the salary in the appropriate column
 - ⇒ Make sure that your step was increased by one increment.

Step 22 and Step 23 are wrong in the CBA, due to a clerical error that was the fault of the VCTA. They should read as follows:

	BA	BA+30	MA	MA+30	MA+60
22	74,231	77,185	78,970	81,915	84,893
23	74,231	77,185	78,970	81,915	84,893

Longevity (compare with p. 12 of the CBA, Article XIX, Section F)

- The numbers presented are the exact numbers you should see (Not added to past years; Previous longevity was added to the salary schedule this year)
- ⇒ Example: On Step 15, the longevity is \$200.
- Longevity step should **match** your salary step

Credits

- Divide the dollar amount by \$46 and that should equal the number of credits for which you are being paid. (The number under "Step" is not reflective of the number of credits you have)
- ⇒ Example: \$552 divided by \$46 = 12 credits
- NOTE: Before your Master's degree, credits are paid in blocks of six. After your Master's, they are paid in blocks of three. Also, it takes 15 in-service hours to equal one credit, so you must accumulate 45 hours before receiving payment for in-service hours.
- Credits submitted before March 1, 2006 will appear on salary agreements for 2006-07.
- Any credits earned after March 1, should be submitted before October 1, 2006 to be credited for the beginning of the 2006-7 school year. Those additional credits will result in a salary adjustment that will be reflected in your paycheck between September 8 and November 1, 2006. If this change occurs on November 1, these additional credits will be equally divided between the remaining pays throughout the school year.
- Column changes (MA to MA+30) are effective as soon as you submit the transcript. This change should be reflected in your paycheck

within two pay periods.

- Unofficial transcripts (pending official) are accepted by Human Resources for column and credit changes.

Miscellaneous

- Department Chair/Super
- One to Five members (exclusive of chair) \$1500
- Six to Ten members (exclusive of chair) \$2000
- Eleven or More members (w/o chair) \$2500
- Supervisor \$4500

Guidance, Psychologists

- Add 10% to base salary

Nurses

- Elementary: 75% of applicable salary of the BA column
- Secondary: 75% of applicable salary of the BA+30 column
- Masters in Nursing: 75% of applicable salary of the MA column
- Nurse Coordinator: Add 10% to base salary

⇒ **No Extra-Curricular or Coaching Stipends Should be Listed on the Contract Salary Agreement.** *These are separate contract agreements.*

⇒ If you believe you have a mistake on your Contract Salary Agreement, do not sign/return it.

⇒ Contact Patti Lunden, VP (457-5899; VM 7664 or email) and she will go over it with you and help you obtain a correct agreement from Human Resources.

Selecting 22 or 26 Pays

Each year you are given the option of selecting 22 or 26 pays for the school year. If you select 26 pays, the district will hold money you are earning in their account and issue you a multi-check on June 22, 2007 that is actually one check consisting of five pays (taxed individually). Some members feel that this is a good way to budget for summer. However, the district is gaining interest on money that you are earning. *(You don't get paid the interest on the money because you've elected to allow the district to hold your money).*

Currently, the VCTA and the District are in disagreement regarding an issue concerning a member who selected 26 pays this year. The member was overpaid for the 2004-05 and 2005-6 school year due to a District error. Human Resources discovered their mistake 9 days before this year ended. Because the member had chosen 26 pays the District believes it has the right to correct the mistake for the 2005-06 pay by subtracting the amount of money from the member's multi-check. The VCTA vehemently disagrees based on a 1969 decision by the Commissioner of Education. The VCTA holds that the member earned the money through the year and that the District must reach a reasonable agreement with the member according to the decision of the Commissioner. In theory, if a member had been overpaid by \$12,000 and was due a multi-pay of \$14,000 (which they had budgeted as summer money), would the District take \$12,000 out of the pay leaving only \$2000 to live on through 10 weeks of summer? Based on this actual incident, it is assumed the District would do so, to be fair and consistent with all members. At this point, the District has acted as it believed it could and has taken the member's money without a signed agreement or consent of the member, and the VCTA has turned the matter over to NYSUT Attorneys to determine whether the matter can be pursued to the level of the Commissioner. The member has lost an amount of money that she had counted on as summer money due to an error by Human Resources. In the meantime, the District is not taking the overpayment for 2004-05 from the member's pay this year, but will reach an agreement with the member for next year to pay that amount back.

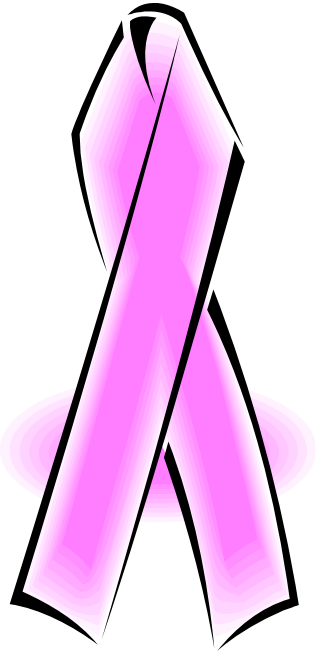
The VCTA has always advised that our members select the lower paycheck option and save the money themselves so that they may earn interest on their money. In light of the above situation, the VCTA is strongly urging its members to select the lower paycheck option and save their own money. That way, should such incident occur in the future, the District will have no choice other than to reach a reasonable agreement with the employee affected.

The Valley Central Federal Credit Union (VCFCU, 457-5592) offers Vacation Accounts for member's to save summer money. The VCFCU is a payroll deduction, so you can have money go there as well as be direct deposited to another bank. If you select 22 pays, as the VCTA strongly advises, but want the amount you would have received in the 26 pay option, use the following formula to determine the amount you should be saving:

- ⇒ Multiply the net pay of your first check by 22. ($\$1950 \text{ net} \times 22 = \$42,900 \text{ net}$)
- ⇒ Divide that amount by 26. ($\$42,900 \text{ net} \text{ divided by } 26 = \1650 net)
- ⇒ Subtract that amount from your net pay. ($\$1950 - \$1650 = \$300 \text{ net}$)
- ⇒ The result is what you should save from each of the 22 checks. (\$300) At the end of the year you will have saved the net amount of a multi-check and you will have earned interest on your own money! ($\$300 \times 22 = \$6,600 \text{ plus interest}$)

—Patti Lunden, Vice President

Important Information



Save the Date!
Making Strides Walk
October 15th, 2006
Woodbury Commons

*Look for information on
Opening Day!*

Attention Secondary Level Teachers!!!

Have you heard all the buzz about high school reform?

*Do you have definite ideas and opinions
about issues like freshman academies and flexible scheduling?*

NYSUT is currently shaping its position on this important issue.
Your input is invaluable.

Please go to www.nysut.org and complete the new survey.



Got Mods? Maybe Not This Summer...

The district mission statement, “Children First”, came to mind recently when discussing summer school.

Over the past eight years as a summer school teacher, I have been proud to be part of a district that puts children first for twelve months a year. Lately, however, there seems to be a new, unspoken mission statement, “Putting Money First”. Because of this, it has been decided that we can only put children first ten months a year. For the first time in the history of the summer school program, special education has been deemed unnecessary and removed from the summer school budget. This administrative decision saved the district \$7,920.00 in teacher salaries. Was \$1000.00 of this new-found money given to the out-of-district summer school principal in the form of a raise in order to make VC more “competitive?”

Central Office and their attorneys have explained that the law states IEP’s are written for a ten-month school year. Furthermore, summer school is a privilege, not a right. Are we to assume that this privilege is only extended to the least needy rather than the entire student body? Adhering to a ten month IEP means no testing modifications during summer school for any student with special needs.

This situation begs the question, will special education students, especially graduating seniors, and their parents be made aware that there are no test modifications for summer classes this year upon registration? Is this really putting children first and leveling the playing field? The VCTA advocates putting children center twelve months a year in all of our endeavors.

–Lisa Aguilera, High School

Mrs. Coney’s Home and Careers Class

The Nationwide Stock Market Contest ended May 11, 2006. Unfortunately, none of Mrs. Coney’s classes won, but they had fun tracking their cyber investment portfolios over the course of twelve weeks. The contest began February 16th and out of 102 classes nationwide who participated in the contest, only 60 had any growth or gain in their portfolios. Our Valley Central MS classes’ standings and percentage of gain or loss in their portfolios are as follows:

- 9th period— Coney’s Cronies ended up in 22nd place with a gain of 4.07%
- 6th period— The Sasquatches ended up in 74th place with a loss of 2.29%
- 3rd period – The Benjamins ended up in 92nd place with a loss of 6.01%

The enthusiasm grew in the 9th period class as our standing rose to 9th place before the Spring Break. Thanks to James Dzurilla for his dedication in checking our portfolio daily, recording changes and reporting the standings to the class. We had hoped for our class to rise to the top over vacation, but were disappointed when our class’s standing had declined.

In addition to the lessons the students learned about being financially responsible, they learned that diversification or balancing a portfolio is one of the most critical tasks when building a portfolio. They also realized that it is important to include bonds in a portfolio, as bonds act inversely to stocks, in a market as we are currently experiencing.

Hopefully we will get another chance to participate in Smith Barney’s Stock Contest next year.

–Joe DeVenuto (MS)

Committee of 100 Report: (cont'd from page 3)

Finally, I would like to mention two items of interest that may in part explain why New York State taxpayers are experiencing difficulty in changing or modifying their current school funding practices. First, some elected officials, particularly those who represent large urban areas such as New York City, are reluctant to explore an income tax formula because the vast majority of their constituents are renters—currently not required to contribute. Second, there are currently 552 billion dollars worth of assets that are off the tax rolls due to legal tax exempt status loopholes. Although some of this is certainly legitimate, much of it is also an abuse of our current system that shortchanges towns, villages and public schools. The elimination of these loopholes could bring tremendous relief to local property tax burdens. New York State Senator John Bonacic of the 42nd Senate District is leading the charge to help close some of these loopholes, thus ending some of the most egregious abuses. Please support elected officials who support public education. Remember, NYSUT's yearly endorsements are based solely on candidates' voting records on education, health and labor issues.

—Tim Brown

April VCTA Executive Council Meeting Minutes

Paraprofessional Report: Kathy Lennon reported that 7 paraprofessionals will begin negotiations May 4th.

Editor's Report: Meghan Riley indicated that the deadline for retiree issue submissions is May 12th.

Retirees: Kevin McFadden reported that Trudy Whitmore, a history teacher who retired in 1979, died at the age of 92. .

Elections Report: 1) Doug Straebler reported that everything is in order for next month's elections. 2) Tim Brown indicated that sheets will be distributed to each building for election of VCTA officers and

voting on VCTA budget. Voting will take place on 5/16. Building rep elections should also be done by that date.

Standing Committees: 1) Patti Lunden stated that the VCTA Lunchbox Project was outlined in the last Echoes issue. 2) Kevin McFadden indicated that a large number of VC retirees volunteer at the Montgomery food pantry.

New Business: 1) Arline Friedman reported that she and Diane Ruggles attended a meeting regarding identity theft. She indicated that your social security number should not be used as a health insurance identification number. 2) Joe DeVenuto reported that input has been requested regarding writing prompts. Discussion followed. 3) Robin Sinclair-Scott reported that tentative VOTE-COPE dates are 5/1-5/12. \$50.00 is suggested donation. 4) Robin Sinclair-Scott indicated that Candidate's Night will be at Berea on May 1.

President's Report: 1) NYSUT Community Service Award to be presented to VCTA at the Representative Assembly May 6th. 2) Summer Positions Update—Tim Brown stated that Valley Central teachers get priority for summer positions. 3) 2005-2006 VCTA Budget: Tim Brown proposed that local dues be raised \$10 this year and \$10 next year. We have no control over NYSUT and AFT dues. Toni Sperry suggested that reps should get a raise next year. Patti Lunden stated that reps receive a refund of local dues—if the VCTA budget passes, reps will receive an additional \$10. Arline Friedman stated that there is a distinction between a salary and a refund of dues. Discussion followed. Motion to put VCTA budget out before the membership: Kathy Bordone. Second: Diane Ruggles. Motion carried. 4) School Budget: The VCTA will send postcards and letters to NYSUT members who live in the district. Phone lists were distributed. Members were instructed to make calls the day before from either the VCTA office, home, or cell phone, but not from school phones. 5) Tentative Health Language—Article XXV, Section B—Copies were attached. Tim Brown explained the tentative changes in language.

—Respectfully Submitted. Laurie Hey, Secretary

Walking the Walk: NYSUT Representative Assembly 2006

The Representative Assembly (RA) is the yearly meeting of NYSUT. Each local sends a contingent of delegates. The VCTA delegates are the officers. This year, President Tim Brown and Vice-Presidents, Rich Steger and Patti Lunden attended the RA in downtown Rochester, NY from May 4-6. President Brown also attended the Local President's Conference which preceded the RA. The theme of this year's RA was "Walking the Walk". Over the course of three days NYSUT officers, state and national politicians and NYSUT award winners made presentations to the delegation that numbered nearly three thousand delegates.

The RA theme centered on not just talking about what needs to be done in education and healthcare but actually doing the work to get it done, hence, "walking the walk." There were two major actions to walk the walk at this RA; first, the unification of NYSUT and NEA-NY. By a unanimous vote, the NYSUT delegates voted to allow NEA-NY to merge with us, thereby forming the largest state union. The two unions will be one on September 1, 2006 and NYSUT's membership will increase from 535,000 to 570,000. As one union we will also become a mighty force for political action. The second major action of the RA was to continue to raise funds for Hurricane relief. Although two major hurricanes devastated our AFT brothers and sisters in southern states at the beginning of the school year, much relief is still needed. About \$116,000 was raised during the RA through raffles and fundraisers increasing the NYSUT total relief effort to \$640,000. This money was being directed to the AFT Relief effort and the delegation was addressed by United Teachers of New Orleans President Brenda Mitchell who described how she had she grabbed her jacket and jewelry and set off for Houston to wait out the storm. When she returned to her New Orleans home, only the foundation, studs and some ceramic tile from her kitchen remained. In a video presentation, President Mitchell showed the devastation to New Orleans public schools. Of 134 public schools, only 4 have re-opened and there has been a major effort by the federal government to establish charter schools in the place of public schools in New Orleans. NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi asked the delegates to remind our members that contributions could still be made to the relief effort and that the NYSUT goal was to reach \$1million dollars (see the website: www.nysut.org). NYSUT President Emeritus Tom Hobart congratulated all members on their efforts thus far, noting that until this drive the most that had ever been raised for relief efforts was \$90,000. The Valley Central Teachers Association was recognized for our contribution of \$2875.

Politicians who addressed the RA were US Senator Hillary Clinton, US Rep. Louise Slaughter, State Comptroller Alan Hevesi, NYS Senate Minroity Leader, David Patterson and State Education Commissioner, Dick Mills. Hillary Clinton's address stressed the need to improve education and health care and to speak loud in Washington on the issues important to the working families of this country. Louise Slaughter addressed the President's conference, urging local Presidents to speak out regarding NCLB and Title I funding. Alan Hevesi stressed the need to protect pensions from federal legislation that would reduce our benefits as private corporations have. David Patterson, who is running for lieutenant governor, intends to use that platform to keep a promise to his sixth grade teacher to do something with his knowledge—he presented himself as a staunch supporter of public education. Finally Dick Mills urged support for the Regents' proposal of full day kindergarten and universal pre-K at ages 3-4 and was questioned about AIS requirements.

NYSUT Officers also addressed the delegates. President Dick Iannuzzi warned that we still need to be mindful of the push for vouchers and watchdog abuses of testing and scoring, as well as the push to eliminate higher ed positions through online courses and abusing part-timers.

(cont'd on page 12)

Walking the Walk: NYSUT Representative Assembly 2006 (cont'd from page 8)

He urged the monitoring of health care, rights of school related professionals and security of NYSUT's current and future retirees. He also spoke of the need to protect our pension plan from those who would attack it. Executive Vice President Alan Lubin praised the political action that had added billions of dollars back into the education budget. First Vice President Maria Neira presented her vision for the upcoming year that includes improving assessments, AIS, early education, school safety, ensuring that the union is part of the debate over high school reform and expanding professional development. Second Vice president Kathleen Donahue acknowledged the multi-faceted union that NYSUT has become—citing it as a powerful teachers union, SRP union, healthcare union, retiree union, of locals large and small with one focus working toward the goals of equity, justice and fairness for the working men, women and families of NYS. Secretary-Treasurer Ivan Tiger announced that NYSUT has grown by 100,000 new members over the last five years and continues to remain financially strong.

There were other presentations to the delegation by award recipients and social justice initiatives such as the Fair Trade Project of the Labor Religion Coalition. There were also award presentations for locals. The VCTA received Journalism awards recognizing the writing of Vice Presidents Jay Sussdorff and Rich Steger. The VCTA was also recognized for our VOTE-Cope contributions and for the community service of our members.

The other major work of the delegation is to consider the resolutions proposed as a part of the NYSUT Legislative agenda for the upcoming year. There were 118 resolutions considered and prioritized. There were also 15 resolutions reaffirmed.

The NYSUT RA is always an energizing yearly event for our union and we will continue to walk the walk at Valley Central as we keep our children center.

—Patti Lunden, Vice President

Brown at The RA:

Is Brown clapping or praying? In either case, he is probably praying that the RA ends soon, or is clapping because it finally has ended.



Issues for New Resolutions at the RA: Part of NYSUT's Legislative Agenda

- Early education
- School Funding
- AIS regulations
- Class size
- Funding of NCLB
- Elementary Testing Week
- Tighter controls on charter school establishment
- Foreign Language Teacher Education
- Support for school counselors, psychologists and social workers
- Financial backing for SUNY/CUNY
- Salary Equity for part time professors
- Funding of services for disabled students at SUNY/CUNY
- Having Registered Nurses in every building
- Encouraging Avian Flu Emergency plans
- Recommending Maximum Classroom temperatures
- Violence prevention for health care workers
- Using compact fluorescent light bulbs
- Addressing Indoor Air quality for children
- Protecting teachers from students not immunized
- Review of safety for school science labs
- Called for an annual SRP recognition day
- Push SED to require SRP training programs for TA's
- Addressed SRP-student ratios
- Pushed for a living wage for SRP's
- Protect therapists, counselors from having jobs contracted out

- Defending Defined Benefit pensions
- Improvements Medicare Part D
- Additional service credit for 3% contributions beyond 10 years
- Improving COLA
- Pension credit for summer programs and Peace Corps
- Elimination of accrued interest when buying back ERS service
- Allow purchase of military credit same terms as non-military credit
- Protecting Immigrant rights
- Promoting Fair Trade
- Citing Wal-Mart for its treatment of employees
- Promoting the use of union stores
- Promoting release time for local leaders
- Further investigate domestic partner benefits
- Allow School Districts to actively promote passage of school budgets.
- The following resolutions had been presented in past years and are being reaffirmed:
- Teacher Center Funding
- Retirement credit for non-public school service
- Out of State service credit
- Tier I Equity
- Allow Veterans to receive military credit
- 55/25 Retirement Tiers III, IV
- Healthy Teens Act
- BOCES reimbursement policies

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

—Chalk up another year

Hard to believe, but another school year is about to bite the dust. As I write this on the 5th of June, there are three weeks of school left before VC's Class of 2006 takes its last walk on the John Marone Athletic Field. I have two classes left in this quarter's Life Program at the Mount—a teaching gig I still enjoy immensely. Then I'll teach an Elderhostel course from July 30th to August 5th at the Mount. The years move along so swiftly—and they do add up! On June 10th I will attend my 55th reunion from Xavier High School in the city. When Tim Brown suggests that I must be old, he is not far wrong. But, as he well knows, my voice is still very loud and sharp! (For which I am most grateful)

—Some Incoming

—An e-mail from gadfly photog and art show maven, Tom Knieser, reminding me of the

Newburgh River Walk Art Exhibit. Thanks, Tom.

—An e-mail from Bruce Seguin. He is recovering not as fast as he would wish, but steadily.

—A note from Marilyn Smith with a newspaper clipping of a letter from a Florida namesake of mine re: education in the Sunshine State.

—Some Reflections

—I'm sure that you can imagine my indignation at the coverage of our local daily and weekly concerning code of conduct reports from the state. What garbage. As long as the Record publishes, their headlines will do more to alarm and incite than to enlighten and instruct. I applaud our teachers, administrators, and staff people for providing safe and secure learning venues.

—I had the opportunity to interview four VC Seniors for the VW Haggar Scholarship. As in the last eight years, VC can be proud of

these bright young men and women.

—My condolences to the family of Trudy Whitmore (HS), longtime history teacher at the high school. She retired in '72. She was also the longtime advisor to Gradus Honoris.

—A Reminder and Amen

—Best wishes to our 2006 retirees. Ad multos annos and much happiness. You deserve only the best.

—And for our new retirees, mark your calendars for Wednesday, Sept. 6th. That will be the date for this year's Retiree Luncheon. More information will follow this summer in the Summer Musings.

—My thanks to all of you who turn to the back pages and put up with my musings and murmurings. And thanks to the VCTA for giving us retirees this space. Finally, thanks to Arline Friedman and Orin Segall for keeping me and us abreast of



The Year in Review and new updates with Mac!

retiree matters and concerns.

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

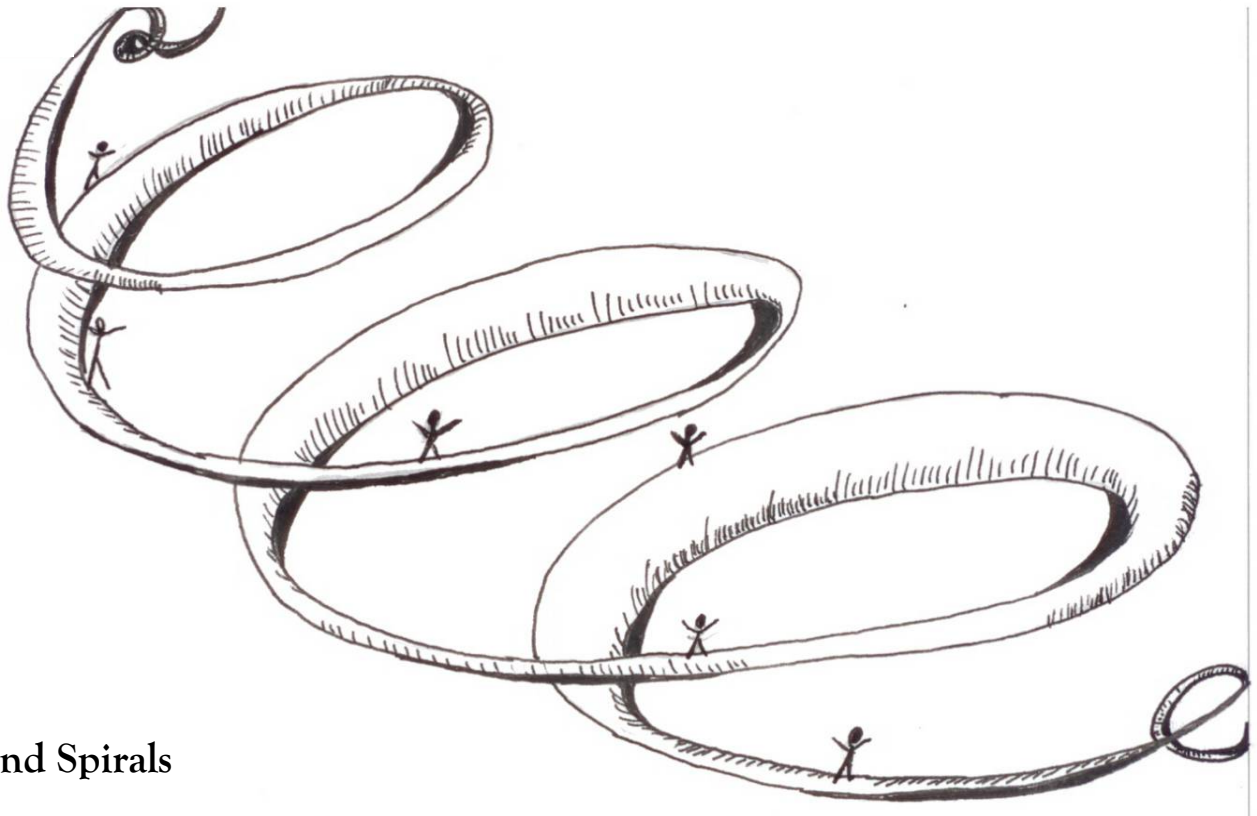
—Kevin McFadden
Retiree Representative



**SAVE THE
DATE!!!**

**Retiree
Luncheon
2006**

September 6th



Ruts and Spirals

Ask any teacher in June how his or her school year was and undoubtedly, he or she will reply that the year just flew by. Once you've taught for a year or two you understand the rhythm of the year, and it can feel quite cyclic. The problem with cycles is that they don't allow for much growth as you pass through the same process again and again...and again. And after too many times around the bend, the cycle becomes no more than a rut. Ruts are not desirable because ruts don't require any changes, one just follows the same path around and around – no coloring outside the lines, so to speak.

The wonderful thing about teaching is that every year begins and ends, and there is always next year. We talk about “next year” as if it is in the far-off future, but we all know next year will begin sometime in August for us as we imagine how great our new year will be. The summer gives us time to reflect and catch our breath, to dream how we can build upon the previous year's achievements. It is easy for those outside the profession to think that all we do is open up the filing cabinet and take out the September file. But teaching requires constant re-learning and thinking again about what and how we are teaching and what and how our kids are learning.

So, while the year may seem cyclic, the growth that occurs as we do this re-thinking and re-learning, sets our feet outside the path of that cycle onto new ground. And what may have initially looked like a circle actually becomes a spiral. Spirals are desirable because there is growth in a spiral. The only way to change a circle into a spiral is to jump off the path and try a new way—coloring outside the line, so to speak. A circle, a rut, may be deep but it never expands. A spiral has no choice other than to expand.

It is difficult to close up a room for the summer without turning our thoughts to next September already. But take the time to breathe deeply, rest and reflect this summer so that in September you are ready to develop the art of your teaching to a new level—ready to step past the path already established and forge new paths to help put children center yet another year.

—Patti Lunden, Vice-President



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.**

SUMMER 2006 SCHEDULE

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

Call beginning May 9 for the sites below.		Call beginning May 11 for the sites below.	
ALBANY July 6 (Thursday) August 15 (Tuesday) NYSTRS Headquarters 10 Corporate Woods Drive	L.I.-MELVILLE July 12 (Wednesday) August 10 (Thursday) August 30 (Wednesday) Melville Marriott 1350 Old Walt Whitman Rd. Exit 49N of LIE	ALEXANDRIA BAY August 7 (Monday) Riveredge Resort Hotel 17 Holland Street	OWEGO July 27 (Thursday) Owego Treadway Inn and Conference Center 1100 State Route 17C
FISHKILL August 17 (Thursday) Holiday Inn Route 9 Exit 13 of I-84	SUFFERN August 16 (Wednesday) Holiday Inn Three Executive Blvd. Exit 14B, NYS Thruway	BUFFALO July 19 (Wednesday) August 2 (Wednesday) Millennium Airport Hotel 2040 Walden Avenue Cheektowaga	ROCHESTER July 25 (Tuesday) August 22 (Tuesday) Radisson Hotel Airport 175 Jefferson Road Henrietta
LAKE PLACID July 17 (Monday) Hilton Lake Placid Resort One Mirror Lake Drive	TARRYTOWN August 31 (Thursday) Westchester Marriott 670 White Plains Road	DUNKIRK August 1 (Thursday) Clarion Hotel 30 Lake Shore Drive East	SYRACUSE July 26 (Wednesday) August 24 (Thursday) Holiday Inn 7 th North St. & Electronics Parkway, Exit 37 of NYS Thruway (Liverpool)
L.I.-HAUPPAUGE July 13 (Thursday) August 9 (Wednesday) Islandia Marriott Long Island Exit 58 of LIE		ITHACA July 20 (Thursday) The Clarion Triphammer Road & Route 13	UTICA August 23 (Wednesday) 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.

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These ads will be seen by over 900 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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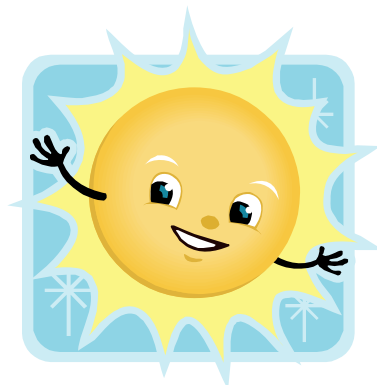
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The VC Echoes is the official publication of the Valley Central Teachers' Association—Local 3076—and is published regularly throughout the school year.

Article contributions or Letters to the Editor for the next issue should be sent to Meghan Riley, HS, by July 15, 2006.

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

Summer Vacation



It's That Time of Year Again....

June: this time of year is always bittersweet for me. On the one hand, I feel very ready for a nice break from teaching to re-charge my batteries, re-plan my courses, and drink some lemonade on the deck. At the same time, I know that I will miss teaching, my colleagues, and students within hours of turning in my key. This is especially true this year as I know that I will not be returning until September 2007.

Though I won't be back in the classroom in September, I will still be editing the VC Echoes and continuing my union work (education!). This has been a wonderful and successful year. I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience that I have gotten and I look forward to improving the Echoes next year and beyond. If you have any suggestions for article topics or wish to submit articles, please contact me.

I want to thank all of the building reps who have helped me to distribute the Echoes throughout the year— Erin Davis (Berea), Holly Bacon (EC), Donna Lloyd (Maybrook), Gail Nozell (Montgomery), Patti Joy (Walden), and Mary Bleau (MS).

I would also like to thank the VCTA officers—Tim, Patti, Rich, Laurie, and John—for all of their guidance and assistance throughout the year. I am in awe of their tireless work and dedication to the members of the Association and their students.

If anyone has an article or editorial they wish to publish in the September issue, please submit it by 15 July if possible.

—Meghan Riley