

VC ECHOES

Valley Central Teachers' Association
Special Retiree Edition

Volume 8, Issue 6

June, 2006

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How much do you know about your 2006 VC Retirees?

1. Who started a Parents' Association for wrestling called MAD (Moms and Dads for wrestling)?



7. Which retiree moved to the US after living in a Polish camp for displaced persons as a child?



2. Which retiree has a very soft spot for stray pets?



8. Who spent their summers opening the eyes of her students to the world beyond Orange County?



3. Who will move to Las Vegas after retirement?



4. Which retiree did VC almost lose to a career in aerospace engineering?

9. Which retiree has the distinction of being the "professional everyone wanted in their classroom?"



10. Which retiree was a foster parent to 25 Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees in addition to her own two children?



5. Who loves archeology and dreams of one day going on a dinosaur dig?

6. Which retiree would spend Saturday night attending her students' recitals, plays, birthday parties, and concerts?



11. Who developed an interest in origami and taught it to her students?



(answers on page 5)

Bidding VCTA Building Rep Toni Sperry a Long and Healthy Retirement

If you know Toni Sperry, she's probably been a thorn in your side at least once. (Look, she teaches kids to open with a good topic sentence that will grab the reader's attention.) I vowed that the theme for Mrs. Sperry's retirement would be: "Oh the things you made us do at Montgomery Elementary!" Because of Mrs. Sperry, we wore feather masks for the Mardi Gras parade, dressed up in Halloween costumes and Hawaiian garb, donated to VOTE-COPE (could you say no?), allowed children to buy Valentine candy lips, and put up with all sorts of trinkets from the school store. There was one year she made every class in the schools study a particular country. Another year, we had states. There were assemblies. One male teacher even wore a dress at school because of Mrs. Sperry! At one point, she ran the VCTA Blood Drive. Need I say more?

Seriously, the former First Lady of Walden stands up for what she believes in which is whatever is good for the children of Montgomery Elementary School, the community, or the teachers of Valley Central. Mrs. Sperry started the Montgomery Elementary School Student Council. That group of children is elected by the student body and meets to further the needs of the student population. It's a great lesson in the democratic process. There are campaigns, speeches, and elections. This past summer two basketball nets were erected on the MES playground with funds provided by the Student Council. Hundreds of dollars have been raised during the past years from the school store run by the Student Council. (This money has provided our school with many extras and has donated as much to charities selected by the children.) The flowers that enhance downtown Montgomery every spring/summer is another Student Council project. Every spring the Student Council and the third grade fill the flower barrels on Montgomery sidewalks.



Children in Mrs. Sperry's class can expect to benefit from her artistic talents. Her bulletin boards are famous for being done by the children under her guidance. She got into origami and then taught many lessons that her children loved. Her children read and do math at a pace the rest of us envy.

When new teachers come to Montgomery's third grade, they are immediately protected by Mrs. Sperry. Under her wing, they get a tour of third grade's many materials. They are told to be sure to use certain novels, pick up the pace so as to cover the curriculum, and join the Credit Union.

On a personal note: It was all Harvey's fault! In the spring of 1982, Harvey told me that I was going from fourth grade to third grade to work in the rooms with the folding door on the other side of Mrs. Sperry. Leaving my student teacher in charge, I ventured down the hall to check out the room of the only teacher who ever called a meeting to say to me in front of everyone, "You were wrong." I heard the music before I got there. Inside the folding door was open. Two third grade classes and a special ed class were exercising to music "Step together. Step. Step together. Step." A pregnant Patty Taegder was bouncing to the music with Merylyn Tyson at her side. It all seemed quite normal to them as Toni Sperry led.

I worried all summer.

(cont'd on pg.3)

Toni Sperry Retires... (cont'd from pg 2)

And then in September I quickly learned that I had lucked out. I was with one of our most hardworking teachers. Toni Sperry has strong beliefs, but is easy to work with. If she says she'll do something, it gets done. She listens. (She really does.) Her gruff exterior belies a caring interior. In the 23 years to follow, she kept our third grade on course and provided balance. We shared materials, ideas, stories about our families, and concerns about our children, those at home and in school. As with any good relationship, most things were up for discussion, but some things were not. (Last year's marathon trip to the Science Museum in Queens was not up for repetition this year.) Toni valued the curriculum, but the children were to have a childhood that provided art, exercise, fun, fresh air, and community service.

I watched and envied as Toni traveled. The woman knows how to live. She's been to France, Germany, New Orleans, Florida, and more. A four day weekend? Toni's been to London.

I doubt that retirement for Mrs. Sperry will be a sit down affair. Now that Marc has rested, she'll

have him up and going. They've moved from one Walden home to another; so there's an ongoing project. There are plans to visit China. Not talk; plans. There will be more trips to Broadway with her sisters. Trips to Florida. Visits to New Hampshire to cheer on Chris and Felicia's children. More time with son David and grandson David. Time for more art lessons and time for painting.

As she teaches, so she lives. Toni Sperry packed an awful lot of fun and learning into 32 years of teaching in Valley Central. Retirement? Watch out.

All of us wish Mrs. Sperry a future as rich as the past!!!

—Submitted by

Al Schmidt



VCTA Secretary Unit Representative Lucy Fox to Retire

Lucy was born in Brooklyn and grew up in the Bronx. She attended New York City Public Schools and Bronx Community College. Lucy lived in the Bronx until 1974 and then moved into a home in Middletown, NY. Lucy married Larry in 1963 and has 2 natural children and 3 foster children. They also have 4 grandchildren and one on the way. Lucy and Larry have lived in Montgomery since 1977.

Lucy began her career at Wallkill High School, where she spent 5 years. In 1983 Lucy took the civil service test to become a secretary. Valley Central had a vacancy and so began her career at Valley Central. Lucy started working in the Guidance Office with Irma Feld and when Irma retired, I started to work with Lucy. Lucy has been the President of the Secretarial Unit of the VCTA since 1987. She attended Cornell University Ext at Newburgh to take courses in Labor Relations and also attended many workshops that NYSUT offered. She always tried to be the best representative that the secretaries could have.

Lucy has always tried to help make Valley Central High School a better place to work. Lucy sat on many committees over her years at Valley Central including committees for hiring purposes, school safety committee, and space committee. Lucy worked for many principals: Victor Haggar, Joseph DiBello, Robert Klein, and of course Darryl Imperati. She was not just an employee but also a friend and mentor. She created a Parents Association for Wrestling called MAD (Moms and Dads for Wrestling). She offered people a cup of coffee and a snack who attended the wrestling matches. This organization still exists today. Larry took pictures of all the wrestlers and at their dinner offered the pictures free to all the wrestlers. They were very involved in this sport for five years.



Lucy has made a difference at Valley Central High School because she is always trying to make things better. She has listened to everyone's problems and tried to solve them. I think Valley Central is a better place because of her. Her expertise on the computer and helping people will be sorely missed.

Lucy plans to enjoy her retirement teaching Hebrew School, taking care of her grandchildren, traveling, and sleeping later in the mornings.

~ Submitted by

Dottie Malley, HS

VCTA Building Rep Melanie MacNaughton to Retire from EC

The East Coldenham Faculty and Staff wish Melanie MacNaughton an exciting, restful, and healthy retirement. Melanie came to East Coldenham many years ago from Montgomery Elementary and decided to stay on with us until now.

Melanie is married to Wayne MacNaughton, a recently retired music teacher from Goshen, and they have two sons, Scott and Craig. They live in the village of Montgomery. While at Coldenham, Melanie has been teaching first grade. She runs a tight ship in her classroom and her students always have fond memories of being in her class. She has had an active role in helping to produce the annual first grade holiday program. During the past two years, Melanie has continued to coordinate East Coldenham's long tradition of sending cards and cookies to the veterans at the Castle Point Veteran's Hospital in November for Veteran's Day and again in February for Valentine's Day..

Running and jogging have been fun and relaxing activities for Melanie outside of school. One can often see her with her dog jogging around the village in the morning hours.

Melanie has been an active member of the VCTA, serving as Building Rep from time to time, and has also been a valuable member of the executive board of the Dental-Optical Trust for many years.

After retirement, Melanie and her husband will be relocating Las Vegas, where they have built a



new home and are in the process of finalizing the decorative amenities. Their son, Craig, lives and works there. Second son, Scott, was recently married and lives in New Jersey. Melanie and Wayne will soon be grandparents of twins. They are very excited about this. Of course they will be going back and forth quite often to be with their new grandchildren.

We, at East Coldenham, will miss Melanie, and we wish her well. We hope for a visit from time to time when she is visiting the grandkids.

–Submitted by

John Bonagura

Treasurer, VCTA

How much do you know about your 2006 VC retirees? Quiz Answers...

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Lucy Fox | 6. Janis Flood | 11. Toni Sperry |
| 2. Jean Cook | 7. Henia Zanetti | |
| 3. Melanie MacNaughton | 8. June Voegelin | |
| 4. Wesley Love | 9. Joan Zellmer | |
| 5. Janet Fabiano | 10. Penny Centers | |

Henia Zanetti Retires from the Middle School



After thirty three years of dedicated service to the students and community of VC, Henia Zanetti will be bidding her final farewell this June. Her retirement will leave a void in the halls of the middle school as well as in the hearts of her students and coworkers.

Personally, Henia has been an inspiration to me, as well as my mentor and dear friend. When I received word twelve years ago, that I was moving from East Coldenham to the middle school, I cried. I thought that the middle school was the most difficult and challenging part of the educational system, a collection of raging hormones and emotional highs and lows. Henia showed me the ropes, guided me through the difficult situations, and helped in any way that she could. As a result of her patience and guidance, I became rather attached to those challenging students with their raging hormones and struggle for identity and have happily remained a member of the middle school staff.

I am among a large group of new teachers that Henia has guided and aided as they adapted to the middle school environment. As team leader, she would voluntarily take the most unruly students, deal with unpleasant parental situations and be the one to do without when we were short of books. She was also invaluable in helping new teachers ease into their new assignments. She always had a willing ear to listen to problems, and advice to dispense, whether you agreed with it or not.

Many of Henia's coworkers don't know that her young life was not an easy one. She was the child of Polish immigrants who moved to this country after living in a camp for displaced persons. As a young child growing up in Pine Bush, she lived without many of the comforts that were common among her peers. This experience made her strong and outspoken as well as determined to make a good life for herself. After graduating, Henia took some courses at OCCC and worked at a local bank. It was several years after high school that she decided to complete her education and become a teacher.

She completed her student teaching experiences in Walden Elementary under the guidance of Diane Spignardo and at the middle school with Evelyn Strakul-

ski. After completing her student teaching at VC, she was hired as a sixth grade teacher where she taught for two years. She then moved to the seventh grade where she taught for many years before once again returning to the sixth grade. During her years at the middle school, her association with students reached beyond the classroom. For three years, 1975-1978, she coached modified softball, JV softball, modified soccer, JV soccer and modified basketball. Additionally, she became a member of many committees including the BLT, and New Compact for Learning. Henia has also served her colleagues as a representative for the VCTA. She has held the position of Sixth Grade Blue Team Leader for the past eleven years. As a team leader, she has been a vital member of the middle school educational council.

Henia plans to trade in walking the halls of VCMS for walking the beaches of Florida where she plans to reside after her retirement. She and her husband, Michael, will be close to son, Michael, and his wife Heather, along with her "little prince", grandson Nicholas. I'm sure she won't remain in Florida all year. She will return to visit her son, Daniel, his wife, Krystal, and her "little princess", Alina who reside in Pine Bush. Her youngest son, Kevin, is currently in New Orleans. I'm sure she will make some frequent visits there, as well.

We hope that when she does return, tanned and relaxed, she will stop in to VCMS to reminisce with her former colleagues. I'm sure that her colleagues will agree that her presence in the halls will be sorely missed. No longer will she be assuming her post outside room 215, directing traffic during the changing of classes. No longer will she be conducting team meetings, keeping us abreast of the latest VCMS news. No longer will she be fixing our VCRs when we can't manage to make a picture appear. No longer will she be there to share her professional wisdom or offer her friendship. Although she will no longer be visible in our halls, her influence in our lives will continue to thrive.

—Submitted by

Laurie DiLorenzo

VC Loses an Icon: Penny Centers Retires

Many of us are probably familiar with the quote from Henry Brooks Adams. *"A teacher affects eternity, he can never tell where his influence ends"* There is among us, a teacher who exemplifies what this quote truly means. Penny Center's easy going Southern charm is the first thing most people notice about her. However, underneath this gentle persona lies an incredible intellect, ingenuity and, razor-sharp sense of humor. This petite little lady, most often wearing fabulous shoes and great accessories, has a strength inside of her that defies description.

In the eight years I have worked with her, I have always been impressed with her command of Social Studies, but what was even more amazing to me was the way she could create an atmosphere in the classroom that I can only describe as magical. Her soft Southern drawl and her famous "Kentucky Stories" always weaved important life lessons and parallels with historical events which resulted in more than the students learning the lesson of the day. They were learning lessons to prepare them for a lifetime. Many students return to tell her years later, that at difficult turning points in their lives, they remembered a story she had told them, and that it had made all the difference.

This master teacher, dual certified in K-8 and Special Education has traveled a long way from the rural Kentucky Farm where she was the oldest of seven siblings. Penny or Ella, which is her real name, was the

daughter of sharecroppers, her mother Lucille and her father Roger Clayton Reffitt a World II veteran. Growing up, Penny who was quite the tomboy, often helped to pump water from the well and hunt squirrels in the winter to help feed the large family during difficult times. When Penny was a senior in high school, she met Frank Centers. He had graduated five years before her and she was a little intimidated at the attention this popular, valedictorian, Navy Veteran and legendary "ladies man" was paying to her. On top of all of these attributes, he also had a 1964 Corvette Stingray Convertible! It was obvious that he could already see in her the amazing person we all know her to be. Penny graduated from high school on June 7th and she and Frank were married on June 30th, only two weeks later. She was 18 years old. Frank and Penny moved to Pikeville, Kentucky where they would begin their life together.

When Penny and Frank had their first child, a son they named Shawn, Penny began a journey that would test her strength and eventually lead her to the career she has today. Shawn was born with Moebius syndrome, a rare developmental disorder present at birth that is characterized by facial paralysis. Affected individuals are not able to smile or frown because two important cranial nerves are absent or not fully developed. In some instances, this syndrome may also be associated with physical problems such as Club Foot, which Shawn also had. Penny, only 19 at the time, in the days prior to the internet, researched everything she could about the medical problems her first child was struggling with. When Shawn was

to enter 1st grade, the school in their district suggested he be placed in a self contained special education classroom. In what would become true Penny fashion, she refused to accept this, knowing that this was the first year of Special Education Law 94-142 and that a regular education classroom was the best place for her son. Penny traveled to the University of Kentucky to have Shawn tested. This little boy, who had struggled to speak, and who was almost denied entry into a regular education class, is today known as Dr. Shawn Centers, founding diplomat of the American Board of Holistic Medicine, Osteopathic Pediatrician and Clinical Director of the Osteopathic Center for Children in San Diego, California. Frank and Penny also welcomed a 2nd child 3 years after Shawn was born, a daughter, Taunya who was, as Penny describes, "an easy baby" who excelled in both athletics and academics. Taunya received an accounting degree from Mount Saint Mary College and today lives in Pine Bush with her husband Kevin and their 5 year old daughter, Ashlynn.

Penny's research in special education inspired her to continue her own education to become a teacher. During this time, on top of being a parent and a full-time student, she found time to rescue a baby squirrel that needed to be fed every two hours to survive. Often this meant bringing the squirrel, only as big as her thumb, to class in her pocket to feed with a tiny bottle. The local newspaper got a hold of this story and soon Penny's photo appeared in the newspaper with her feeding the baby squirrel, making her quite the local celebrity. (cont'd pg 8)

Penny Centers (cont'd from pg 7)

Her career at Valley Central began 21 years ago as a leave replacement in the Middle School. Frank had been transferred to New York from Kentucky by AT&T. During the span of her career at Valley Central, Penny has taught self contained classes in many subject areas, resource room, and most recently, Collaborative Classes. Those of us who were lucky enough to teach with her, cannot imagine life here at VC without her. Doug Straebler expressed it well. "I had the privilege of teaching a collaborative class with Penny for six consecutive years. Teaching collaboratively with Penny taught me a great many things; Not least of which were patience, sympathy, compassion, tolerance and lest we forget a fair few stories about her home state of Kentucky. In the years I taught with Penny I discovered that she truly has a gift for connecting with students; especially those who fall through the cracks or are dismissed as not worth the trouble. I had the pleasure to watch Penny bring out the best in students who had never been inspired to try hard. I was disappointed not to have a collaborative class with Penny in this, her final year. I will miss her warmth, her friendliness and of course her southern charm." One of Penny's closest friends, Margaret Vass, said; "She has been my friend and my therapist! Her calm manner always helps any situation. She is the Feng Shui of Valley Central!

When I asked colleagues and staff what they remember most about Penny, everyone expressed what an amazing and kind person

and well-respected teacher she is, however, they also most always mentioned her "style"! Penny's famous ability to accessorize has cemented her as Valley Central's resident Fashionista! When you ask her where she bought any of her outfits, she will often tell you "Sally's Boutique" This is Penny language for the Salvation Army! I, myself, have been the lucky recipient of many of these one-of-a-kind outfits that Penny handed down to me. I enjoy wearing what I refer to as my "Penny Centers Collection"!

As if it weren't enough to be a mother, wife, teacher, fashion maven, and political news hound, Penny also found the time to be a Foster Parent to 25 Vietnamese and Cambodian Refugees. Penny learned to cook Vietnamese cuisine and she and Frank delved into learning about their culture. These now grown children, often return to visit her today, counted among them are mechanical engineers, computer developers, and successful businessmen.

One of the most important days in Penny's life was September 11th, 2000 when Taunya gave birth to Ashlynn, her granddaughter. Ashlynn, now five years old going on 25, is the spitting image of Penny in both appearance and in personality. She is the light of Penny's life. Penny's son-in-law, Kevin, has to often travel in his profession. Penny is looking forward to finally having the time to travel with Taunya, Kevin and Ashlynn. She is also looking forward to traveling to San Diego to spend time with Shawn and his family.

In everyone's life, there will be times of inordinate sadness. Valentines Day of 2003 was that day for Penny. Her husband of 37 and half years finally lost his valiant battle with Melanoma. Frank had been diagnosed with Stage 4 Malignant Melanoma in 2000. Penny and Frank never gave up hope and traveled to Sloan Kettering in New York City for clinical trials and treatments. I remember Penny coming in to work each day after staying up all night to take care of Frank. Her commitment to both him, and to her students was awe-inspiring. When my mother passed away a few months before Frank, Penny traveled down to Westchester to be with me at her wake after a long day of work which had been preceded by a long night of caring for Frank. The amount of energy required for this without days of sleep is more than a hardship, it is almost humanly impossible. She came to be there for me. This is beyond compassion and integrity. This is Penny Centers.

I asked Penny what things she will not miss when she retires and she paused for quite a while before saying "Paperwork...all that paper work!". Things she is looking forward to are; "sleeping past 5 if I want to, traveling with my family, gardening, maybe learning ballroom dancing, and spending time with Ashlynn". Penny is also pondering a return to graduate school to possibly pursue a degree in counseling. She will miss the students, however she plans on subbing and taking her time to see if she wants to return to Kentucky where her mother and a lot of her

(cont'd pg. 12)

WELL-BEHAVED WOMEN RARELY MAKE HISTORY

A tribute to Jean Cook

Jean Cook has been Berea's librarian for the last eleven years. There are so many aspects to Jean: Jean the teacher-librarian, Jean the book-lover, Jean the cook, Jean the gardener, Jean the wife, parent and grandparent.

Jean has the ability to energize you with her passion for life. She makes the most of every moment when visiting with a friend, whether through a quiet phone call or a short walk. She faces a sorrowful event and brings light and hope to the resolution.

Her love of gardening, crafting and cooking all demonstrate her gift for creating a warm and inviting home for family and friends. She is comfortable with herself. She has an innate way of making people feel comfortable. A stranger isn't a stranger very long when around Jean. And her hospitality extends to the animal kingdom as well. She has a soft heart for stray pets. Every cat in the Cook household has a story, and Jean tells those stories very well.

Her curiosity and love for learning are evident when you are around Jean. She surrounds herself with people who stimulate intriguing conversations, whether it is the arts, homemaking, travel, or Monday Night Football! She plans to take courses to keep her interests alive.

There is a saying that describes Jean's quick wit and feistiness ... "Well behaved women rarely make history!" Her determined and optimistic spirit makes me wonder what her picket sign would have said had she marched as a suffragette. Not to say



that Jean would purposely break the law. She **does try very hard** to stay within the speed limits in her Mustang.

Jean doesn't care to be in the spotlight, so she allows all those around her to shine in her stead. She is an inspiration to many as she advocates for our students and her profession. She supports and nurtures her family and all her friends, of which there are many.

Jean, best wishes on a retirement that will be very long and very healthy. We know you have so much more you can and will contribute. We will miss you.

—Submitted By

Carol DeMicco and Joyce Zawistowski

Janet Fabiano Retires from VCHS

I will miss nothing, but remember all the wonderful times at Valley Central with some of the most wonderful students it has been my pleasure to know."

Janet has been in education for 29 years. She began as a 1st grade teacher in a Spanish-speaking school in Oceanhill-Brownsville during the heights of the riots. From there, she taught 1st through 12th grade in Corning, New York while raising her 2 children, Hope and Blythe. Janet received her Bachelor's degree from St. Joseph's College for Women in Brooklyn, New York. She earned a Masters in Education from Elmira College and from SUNY Brockport. After her last child started school, Janet worked in Marine Park Jr., High School, while pursuing her Administrative Certification.

After she and her family moved to the Hudson Valley, Janet became an Assistant Principal at Eldred High School in Sullivan County. She then made the switch to Valley Central High School in 1996 where she has been for the last ten years. While teaching foreign language at Valley Central High School, Janet also served as Summer School Principal from the 2000-2004 summer sessions. Janet enjoyed summer school; she felt it afforded her the opportunity to work with the best staff assembled by any administrator. She felt a special connection to the kids that attended summer school and enjoyed this administrative position immensely.



Janet's future plans include a permanent move to her home in the Adirondack Mountains and reconnecting with nature alongside her husband, Frank. One additional dream that Janet hopes to accomplish is to go on a dinosaur dig, as she has always loved history and archeology. She also looks forward to spending much of her time with her two daughters, and of course with her grand-daughter, Kenzie, who is the love of her life. Just ask Janet how little Kenzie is doing, and you will see her face light up as she regales you with tales of this little angel of hers!

Janet says that she can now begin her second life doing anything that she wants to do. But I have a funny feeling- once a teacher always a teacher! It never ends! Buena suerte Fab, we will miss you!

—Submitted by

Pamela Dixon (HS)

*The VCTA extends congratulations and best wishes to
Geraldine Comicz from Montgomery Elementary
who will be retiring in September 2006.*

A Long and Healthy Retirement to Janis Flood...

Janis Harford followed in the footsteps of her mother and became a teacher following her graduation from SUNY Geneseo in 1969. Her first teaching job was in Newburgh, a far different setting from the one-room schoolhouse in which her mom had taught. She arrived here at VC in the mid-1980s as Janis Flood, having married Bob, a Newburgh teacher (who retired several years ago). She had been at home for many years raising three children: Bobby, Leigh, and Christopher, but she was ready to return to the trenches and pursue her passion for teaching.

Now, twenty-two years later, Jan, as she is called by those who love her, is following one of her many spiritual axioms, “to thine own self, be true”: she has decided to retire.

The sixth grade has been a better place with Jan in it. We have grown accustomed to her bear collection, (stuffed, not live), and her cluttered desk, her Fritos bags and her cans of Diet Coke, her stories of doggie mayhem and mishap, and her great smile and hugs. The students she has taught have been embraced by her dedication to her profession and they, in turn, have embraced her with respect and loyalty. Jan truly puts children center.

With a wee bit of envy in our not-quite-ready-to-retire hearts, we wish Jan a long and happy retirement, pursuing her new passions in life: grandchildren Brianna and Bob-Bob, line-dancing, and birds, (live, not stuffed). We know she plans to read, garden, and travel. We think she may someday even work again, (though not as a substitute). We wonder if once in a while she’ll put on that afternoon pot of coffee that Bob has had ready for her every day since his retirement. (We hope she stays away from cans of tomatoes!)

Jan is leaving us with wonderful memories, and for them, we thank her. We’d like to leave her with this:

May love and laughter light your days

and warm your heart and home.

May good and faithful friends be yours

wherever you may roam.

May peace and plenty bless your world

with joy that long endures.

May all life’s passing seasons

bring the best to you and yours.

–Submitted by

Linda Cavanaugh
Middle School



Jan Flood: My Favorite Teacher

Jan Flood, a teacher at the Middle School, is retiring in June after 22 years of teaching sixth grade. Along with being a phenomenal educator to so many children throughout the years, she proved herself to be a positive role model and confidant to everyone in her life, including her students. Her dedication went beyond the classroom; she would spend a Saturday night attending her students' recitals, plays, birthday parties and concerts when they invited her to come. Her students and her own children always came first and their best interests were always in her mind. She had a rule when it came to being a teacher; it was to be fair, friendly and firm. This is a rule that she still

believes in today and it's a rule that I took to heart when I was starting my career as a teacher. Mrs. Flood was one of my favorite teachers. I learned so much from her and she helped to make me the person that I am today. Not only is Jan Flood a teacher, she is also my mother, and I can only hope that in my teaching career, I can be a fraction of the teacher she is. The middle school is losing a terrific person this year, both as a teacher and a mother. I wish her the best of luck.

—Submitted by

Leigh Legare

Penny Centers (cont'd from pg. 8)

family and friends still live. She told me. "As a woman you spend so much of your life in a role...wife, mother, teacher.".. "I want to do what I *want* to do, not what I *have* to do". Penny paused for a moment, and then added; "Like, if I wanted to buy and wear a pair of red shoes....I could just do it!"

Penny is known for giving, not lending, student's money for lunch. When they attempt to pay her back she instead tells them; "Do me a favor, someday in the future, buy lunch for someone else." Throughout the year, students will come up to her in the hall when they are passing by and smile and tell her "I did it". Not only did she give them lunch, she gave them the sense of fulfillment that one feels when doing for others, starting a ripple of kindness that spreads in many directions over space and time. I believe that even though Penny will not be here every single day after this school year, her influence on all of us at Valley Central will never end.

—Submitted by

Lisa Korpics, HS



A Class Act, Wes Love Says Goodbye to Valley Central High School

My heroes have always been teachers. As a Valley Central graduate and teacher, I have consistently tried to emulate those heroes in thought and action. Whether it is Janet DiBello's love for literature, Kevin McFadden's exactness, or Jay Sussdorff's ease with people, that's what inspired me. We are a product of all the great people we meet. Well, sad to say I never had Wes Love as a teacher, but his impact is just as powerful. From him, I have learned how to value students. You have more than just numbers in front of you, so be the leader and model the desired behavior. After modeling that desired behavior for 34 years, "The Love Doctor" prepares to make his exit.

Wes was born in Centermoreland, Pennsylvania and received degrees from Gordon College and New Paltz on his way to a career in aerospace engineering. Imagine that, Happy Valley without a little Love, but due to a change in plans and many prayers he entered the teaching profession in 1971. Under the title of teacher he has worn many hats. He is a cheerleader, confidant, master of physics, counselor, and a semi-good joke teller. He is also the consummate family man with a wife who also teaches and two beautiful children. He also has a strong bond with his 54 year-old sister and 87 year-old parents who are still going strong! It's no doubt that he got his honesty and sincerity from them.

Wes Love is a spiritual man who actively professes his faith and credits that for helping him recover from a grave disease he suffered a few years back. Other than prayer, his secret to longevity is basic: "Take one day at a time." His other maxim is "This too shall pass." Simple words from a great man whom I have never heard say a disparaging word or complain to or about others. Anyone that knows him can expect that warm pat on the back and honest feedback. He is not one to mince words. In our interview, he stressed that new teachers need to establish themselves early as well-prepared and knowledgeable. It is imperative that



teachers build a high level of trust with students and peers. His advice to older, established teachers is to teach with passion, hold to values, and teach integrity.

The future is bright for Wes as he anticipates many vacations to his cottage to enjoy boating, water skiing, gardening, and puttering around the house. He can be found in the Credit Union to help you with all your financial needs starting in the fall. He will serve in the capacity of assistant manager. Also, a return to teaching is another venue he may explore. Another important hobby he can now track is the best team in professional football: the Dallas Cowboys! Wes is a die-hard fan and rightfully so.

Wes will be missed because he helped set the standard for excellence that defined the Valley Central family. We as a staff need to uphold that tradition because this is a great place to work. Ask Wes and he will tell you it's not about him; it's about us and what we could do together—not one piece is greater than the whole. His humble spirit and natural ability to put kids center are what mattered most.

—Submitted by

Bob Jurgens, HS

VCTA Building Rep

June Voegelin Says ‘Adios’ to VC and ‘Hola’ to Retirement

June Voegelin’s teaching career, like life, has been a circle, both starting and ending here at VC. It was here at Valley Central that June first did her student teaching under the gentle and wise tutelage of Mirta Tapanes. Though a Middletown rather than Valley Central graduate, June was among the first to begin VC’s tradition of hiring from its own graduates and successful student teachers when she was brought in to teach for another member of the language department, Christine Cuomo as she recovered from the first of two vocal chord surgeries. (Another current department member and VC graduate would later fill in for Christine’s second medical leave, but that is a story for a different retirement still many years away...) June’s first fulltime job was, alas, not in this district, but rather across the river in Wappingers Falls. It would be eleven years—and the serendipitous intervention of former VC English teacher, Bob Ciganek—before she would again return to Valley Central.

For more than 20 years June has been sharing her love of foreign languages, of learning and of traveling with our district’s students. She has taught everything from basic Spanish vocabulary to using and understanding advanced grammar such as the pluperfect subjunctive. Though never called upon to have to use it in school, June became certified to teach French and has recently begun learning Italian. Her interest in language learning is closely tied to her interest in traveling. For over ten years June

(along with long-time colleague and friend Ceil Cornwell) took time from her summers to open the eyes of many of her students to a world beyond Orange County New York that was not only breathtaking and exciting to visit, but also an arena open to their future educational and career choices.

What does the future hold for June? Long days of gardening at her home here in Montgomery and at her lakeside cabin getaway. Relaxing evenings of reading and crocheting curled up in either of those homes built with love and sweat and tears—but mostly love—by she and her husband, Bill. Spending discipline-free days with her two daughters—now dear friends—Emma and Kelly, and whatever family they may add to the Voegelin homesteads. More travel, of course, and if she listens to her heart—and her department supervisor—perhaps mentoring and supervising for a nearby college so that she can impart upon another generation of teachers her common sense and her personal and professional integrity.

The Valley Central foreign language department has been truly blessed by many wonderful teachers, June being one of the best. It has been our pleasure to have had the opportunity of working with, sharing and learning from her, and my great privilege to call her friend.

—Submitted by

Liz Papesca (HS)



Joan Zellmer Joins Valley Central Retirees

Walden Elementary School's Remedial Math teacher, Joan Zellmer, will be retiring in June 2006.

Joan was always a welcome and familiar face to Walden Elementary School students and faculty. For many years, Joan was known to many as our "professional substitute." Teachers always considered Joan the professional everyone wanted in their classroom when they could not be there. We were all pleased to return to school to see a well-organized folder with corrected work, important notes and a personal note from Joan with any information we needed to know. These were all signs that Joan had been in the classroom, that all went well and learning thrived.

Joan was born on Long Island and raised in Goshen, New York. She earned both her B.S. and M.S. in Education at SUNY Oneonta. In September 1972, before the now "famous" state testing, Joan started teaching in the Port Jervis School District. After the birth of her two children and living in Walden, Joan became anxious to return to teaching. Wanting to be with her children as much as possible, Joan applied at Valley Central as a substitute. In September 1984, it was Walden Elementary School's good fortune to welcome Joan as a part of our "Walden Family."

As the years, passed, Joan's family blossomed. Her son John graduated from Delhi and Utica—Rome College. Her daughter Christine Graduated in May from SUNY Purchase. Joan has a wonderful husband George, three step-children—Bryan, Gina, and Julia, a step-grandson, Devin and another step-grandchild due in August.

While working and raising a family, Joan and George have been planning for their retirement. They purchased a home with lots of land in Hamlin Pennsylvania. It is there that they plan to spend some weekends and vacation time to relax and un-

wind. In the future they hope to make Hamlin their permanent home where their children and grandchildren can visit often.

Joan also has some other personal plans for her retirement. She plans to do some gardening, reading, and "shop till I drop" activities. Joan also plans to "nap every afternoon" and to "reconnect" with people that she hasn't seen as often as she would have liked while she was working.

All of her friends at Walden Elementary School will miss Joan. We hope that she enjoys this well-deserved new chapter in life. We also hope that she remembers with fondness all her friends and all the great personal and professional experiences shared over the past twenty-two years.

Best of luck in all that the future brings!

—Submitted by

Nancy Neumann and Lenette Walsh



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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 June 9th, 2006.

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



On Retirement.... A Reflection

*"Like as the waves make toward the pebbled shore, so do
our minutes hasten..."*

Thanks, Will.

This time of year always makes me very aware of the passage of time, as the beginning of sonnet #60 attests. And, fortuitously or not, a visit to Cape May this past week echoed in my mind the words of the Bard. It struck me that oncoming retirement has much in common with the oncoming waves of the ocean. There is an inevitability, a beauty, a sense of wonder.

The thought of retirement is always there—flowing toward us, always something beautiful, something wonderful for another day, not today, and then it's here—the wave on the shore.

May the retirees of 2006 find the same joy, reward, and contentment in retirement as have so many of us who have gone before.

Welcome to the ranks of retirees!

~~Kevin McFadden

Retiree Representative