

VC ECHOES



Valley Central Teachers' Association

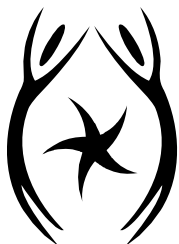
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Inside this issue:

Fond Farewell to Darryl Imperati	2
Two Roads Diverged	4
VC Tea Party	6
RA Report	6
In the News	7
TRS Patties	9
VC Star: Kathi Russo	10
Executive Council	10
Save the Date	11
VCTA News	12
Mac's Musings	13
Advertisements	14
ECHOES Awards	18

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Publication!*



VCTA 2006-07: Our Year in Pictures



VC Bids a Fond Farewell to Darryl Imperati and Family

As another school year quickly winds down, each of us balances the excitement of well-deserved rest and revitalization that comes with summer vacation and the challenge of knowing that, when we return to school next year, it will be with absences from our daily lives, due to retirement or relocation, of colleagues who have grown old with us. For me, this dichotomy of emotions comes most poignantly in the move of Darryl Imperati to Simpsonville, South Carolina to become the principal of Woodmont High School in Greenville, SC. Over the years that Darryl has been at Valley Central, I have day after day been inspired by his friendship, his teaching, his leadership, and his wit and wisdom. As Darryl leaves Valley Central and commences with the next phase of his life, I am honored to share my perspective on his 21-year tenure at Valley Central.

Darryl graduated from Marist College in 1985, which is the year he and his future bride, Maria, began dating. He immediately started working in a temporary position at IBM. As with everything Darryl has done, he was successful, developing an idea that IBM implemented and earning a monetary award in doing so. Darryl's "temporary" position turned into an offer of permanent employment and created his first professional dilemma: following a dream of working with people or taking a safer, yet for him, less fulfilling path of working with "things". Encouraged by his parents to put his love of history, politics and people into a teaching career, Darryl chose to follow his dream. The Valley Central community has been the beneficiary ever since.

Of course, following his dream meant going back to school, and off to SUNY New Paltz Darryl went to earn his teaching degree. Thus the budding career of a teacher and a budding romance began, both destined for greatness. While Maria was a senior at Marist in 1986-87, Darryl was pursuing both his educational certification and Maria. Known for his ability to drive from points A to B in record time, Darryl would race from morning classes at New Paltz to Marist for lunch with Maria at Skinner's Bar in Poughkeepsie before both would return for afternoon classes. Darryl's determination and persistence eventually paid off on both endeavors. Darryl earned his teaching degree from SUNY New Paltz in 1987. He proposed to Maria and they were married in 1989. Later they would be blessed with three beautiful daughters, Cristiana, Angela and Juliana, who now grace our classrooms at the elementary and secondary level.

In the spring of 1987, fate would send Darryl to "a place called the Valley Central School District in Montgomery, New York." He had never heard of the place! His cooperating teacher was Arline (Schnee) Friedman, a person he still credits with influencing his instructional

style. At the conclusion of the school year, Darryl taught summer school at Valley Central and eventually High School Principal Joe Di Bello offered him a job teaching Spanish for the 1987-88 school year. Darryl first declined the position, but relented after being told he would become, in the near future, a Social Studies teacher at Valley Central. Prophetically, Joe Di Bello went on to say that Darryl was meant to teach at Valley Central and that from what Joe could see in him and his teaching, Darryl would one day "sit in his chair".

Darryl's career in education has been one of risk-taking, innovation and involvement. He is a master teacher, beloved by students and admired by colleagues. Quickly blending his love of and desire to teach history with his role as a Spanish teacher, Darryl's creativity went to work developing curriculum and teaching a class called Latin American History, which he taught in the Spanish language. Students enrolled in the class were able to receive either a credit in language or history. Darryl went on to teach Social Studies full-time, eventually becoming chairperson of the department. Throughout his career, Darryl seldom missed a prom, school play or event. He had parts in several student plays, as well as key roles in all faculty plays. Always available to help with student causes, Darryl has lip synched, Jell-O wrestled, and prepared and served pasta as a Santini brother. At various points during his career, he was the advisor of freshman class, SGA, and Mock Trial. He even managed to find time to work in the Credit Union, where our friendship began 20 years ago, and earn his administrative degree at SUNY New Paltz.

Darryl thrives on being involved with people and his participation inspired instructional creativity; students loved being in his classes, which were known to be both challenging and enjoyable. I clearly remember students voicing their sadness at the announcement of Mr. Imperati's move from the classroom to assistant principal. Upon his appointment as assistant principal, then Board of Education member Alice Morilla, several of whose children Darryl taught, said that her only problem with Mr. Imperati becoming assistant principal was that he would no longer be available to teach her younger children.

Like his classroom career, Darryl's eight years as assistant principal earned him the reputation of being firm, but fair. A strong disciplinarian, Darryl instituted several new and tough discipline procedures, including Saturday detention. Even with these effective practices, students often left Mr. Imperati's office with a handshake and a smile, and the satisfaction of knowing that their consequence was just. Likewise, teachers felt that student discipline was being handled properly and that Darryl's efforts to lead the school with a

(cont'd on page 3)

VC Bids a Fond Farewell to Darryl Imperati and Family (cont'd from pg 2)

disciplined learning environment were supportive of instructional goals in the classroom. Darryl also reinforced positive student behavior and his tireless work with such organizations as the Scholarship Council and All-Night Grad reflect these efforts. In his book *Leadership*, Rudy Giuliani writes that “Leadership works both ways: it is a privilege, but it carries responsibilities—from imposing a structure suitable to an organization’s purpose, to forming a team of people who bring out the best in each other, to taking the right, unexpected risks. A leader must develop strong beliefs, articulate and act on those beliefs, and be accountable for the results.” Giuliani’s words certainly describe Darryl’s leadership style.

Darryl’s last four years at the helm of Valley Central High School as principal—principal teacher—have brought the same trials and successes as past educational endeavors. Attempting to run a large and growing high school with an increasingly diverse and rapidly expanding community would challenge even the most accomplished leaders, and Darryl has certainly been challenged by the convergence of many events. Through it all, he has been steadfast in his belief in the Valley Central family—staff, students, parents, and administration, including himself—to live up to their part of the challenge. According to Robert F. Kennedy, “Few are willing to brave the disapproval of their fellows, the censure of their colleagues, the wrath of their society. Moral courage is a rarer commodity than bravery in battle or great intelligence. Yet it is the one essential vital quality for those who seek to change a world that yields most painfully to change.”

Darryl Imperati has guided us with wisdom and been supportive of programs and ideas that benefited the well-being of students and adults in his charge. Never asking someone to do something he would not do himself, and always guided by the principle of doing what is right rather than expedient, I have personally witnessed him deal with several crises that have threatened the health and welfare of students, staff, and/or parents with compassion and understanding. The words of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. seem apropos, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy”. No one ever questioned where Darryl Imperati stands—right behind us as a support or right in front of us as a shield.

As I reflect upon Darryl’s contributions to Valley Central, I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the significant contributions of the entire Imperati family to the VC community, and to Darryl’s success, by understanding that the busy schedule of a high school principal would mean sacrificing precious time together at home. Maria and the girls would often eat dinner in the faculty

room to be able to spend more time with Darryl and Darryl always included his family in events at school so that they could spend more time with him. Despite the craziness of his schedule, Darryl never forgets his number one priority is to be a devoted and loving husband to Maria and father to Cristi, Angela, and Juliana.

John F. Kennedy said that he was “certain that after the dust of centuries has passed over our cities, we, too, will be remembered not for victories or defeats in battle or politics, but for our contribution to the human spirit”. Darryl has positively contributed to the spirit of the Valley Central family for 21 years, and will continue to do so even in his absence. I know that I speak for the full Valley Central family when I say to my best friend, Darryl Imperati, and his family, our sincerest wishes for continued personal and professional health, happiness, and success go with you as you venture to South Carolina. Valley Central’s loss is definitely Woodmont High School’s gain! We will miss you.



— Joe Fracalossi, HS

Two Roads Diverged...

There are times in life when you realize that you are stuck at a fork in the road. Lately, it's just a gut feeling that the Valley Central School District has indeed arrived at such a fork. In the larger view, it also feels like our nation has arrived at that fork. And the road we take as a nation, a state and a District will certainly make all the difference. *Much of the following information is taken from a presentation high school teachers saw from the following website: www.fischbowl.com*

Educators look forward to summer as a time to recharge for a new year. It is usually a time of reflection. It must become a time of projection as well. Our world is changing but that is nothing new. Our world has been changing since the Paleolithic age. It took about 10,000 years (give or take) for Paleolithic humans to figure out that if they could control fire, they could control their world. Change has been exponential ever since.

By the time a graduate of the Class of 2007 is in his/her third year of college, half of what he/she learned in his/her freshman year will be outdated. It is predicted that by 2013 a supercomputer will be in existence that will have a greater computation capacity than the human brain. By 2023, 1,000 computers will exceed the capabilities of the human brain. By 2049, 1,000 computers will exceed the computational capabilities of the human race! (source at end) Part of our reflection/projection must address how we are to prepare our students for this world.

The World is Flat

We live in a flat-world. Okay, what does that mean?

- **It means** that we can call for service on our computer, internet server, iPod, and be instantly connected to someone in India willing to work harder and accept less money as they improve their standard of living.
- **It means** that we can have an MRI in Middletown or Newburgh at 3:00pm that is being read by a doctor in India or China at 3:00am (our time) with information being instantly sent back to our doctor for the 8:00 am phone call we are expecting.
- **It means** that in our childhood we were told to finish our dinner because people in India and China were starving. Today we need to tell our children to finish their homework because people in India and China are starving for their jobs!
- **It means** that we are teaching a generation that will have 10-14 different jobs before they are 38 years

old. The top projected 10 jobs in 2010 didn't exist in 2004.

- **It means** that we are preparing students for jobs that don't exist, technologies that haven't been invented yet, and to solve problems we don't even know are problems yet.
- **It means** that there are 2.7 billion searches on Google daily. To whom were our questions asked B.G. (Before Google)? Can you even recall a time without Google?

The future sits in all of our hands, it is an awesome responsibility.

Education is one of the few professions where outsiders are allowed to tell us how to do our jobs. Can you imagine doctors being told how to practice by Federal and State legislators—being judged by how many patients died or survived? Where is their NPLD (No Patient Left Dead) act? What if one day a year 95% of their patients had to be well or they would be identified as a PINI (Practice In Need of Improvement)? It is absurd. They are doctors. They know their practice better than politicians. They hold a single life in their hands—the decisions they make can give life or end it.

Who knows our practice better than us? We are the ones who live it everyday. We hold the futures of 30-150 students in our hands. We make constant decisions affecting those futures and sometimes we are held to ridiculous standards that frustrate us and hold us back. We cannot allow that to happen any longer. Change is exponential.

Finally, the outcry against the NCLB is gaining momentum. The AFT, NEA, NYSUT and many others are making noise about the damage NCLB is doing to this generation of learners. And the politicians are beginning to listen. We must lend our voice and be heard if we are to help our nation choose the path to follow.

Our District is creating an Accountability Task Force. If you haven't heard much about it yet, don't worry, you will. It will permeate our existence in the next school year. John Hunter, Deputy Superintendent, asked for your union leadership to sit on this committee. Your officers are becoming versed—we as a District are at a fork in the road. We can allow the data collected through state tests to judge us or we can take that data along with data we collect through our own benchmark tools and use it to shape and change our future and (*cont'd on pg 5*)

Two Roads Diverged... (cont'd from page 4)

positively affect the children in our classrooms. The VCTA is wary that such data is not just used as an evaluation tool in judging (and misjudging teachers) and so has written a side agreement with the District that the data will be used to improve instruction and curriculum and not to evaluate teachers.

Our state is changing the way it views education. Gov. Spitzer has given us one of the biggest educational funding packages ever. He is putting his money where his mouth is. We must be sure that money is put toward programs that will put our students on the cutting edge of innovation. The District budget passed by about a 65% margin. The community has supported our last few budgets by this margin.

Our District has become a leader in communicating the budget to the community. By holding CAB meetings and through many other efforts the budget is well advertised and has been since the time of Asst. Superintendent Peter Roden. This year's budget was conservative at best. There were no big program initiatives presented. Our per pupil spending remains in last place in a three county area. We are not the poorest community in the three county area—yet we spend the least.

Publicly, we are touted for getting a lot of bang for our buck. That is a direct result of a long standing tradition of pride and dedication from the employees of the VC school district. But change is exponential and it is time to make the bang bigger by adding more bucks. We are one of the largest districts in Orange County, and we are the last to be adding security cameras. We are the last district without Class XP although our administration has recently said that it will be coming, just not next year.

Our budget was modest and small changes were placed in it that are positive. However we have arrived at the time when our District leaders need to take brave steps to propose more innovative changes, test their leadership skills and take this community into the 21st century before it is too late. Wouldn't it would be nice if our kids to work so hard and not haveto always settle for last place (or second to last place)?

So how do we best prepare our children for this global, flat world?

The answer to the question lies in and be-

yond NCLB and funding. Bottom line, if our children are going to succeed in the world of the future, they must be able to adapt, change and think on their feet. They must be able to innovate. Ideation and thinking will be key to creating a market that will produce idea-based goods and create knowledge jobs that will sustain this generation. We need to use data to inspire innovative teaching that helps children learn how to think, analyze and synthesize and not let it be used to crucify public education.

We cannot support ideation and thinking with aged-out technology and by eliminating planetarium kits from our yearly elementary budget. We must inspire our children to dream and to think. This is not easy work. And we do not have time to wait. Change is exponential. In 1850, 90% of American workers worked in Agriculture; today 3-4% do. (Friedman, p. 232) Yet, our country's school year is still based upon this agricultural calendar. Change is not easy, and in education change seems to take forever. At Valley Central, change is even slower. But the rest of the world is changing and we cannot wait one hundred fifty years to address the needs of the generation of learners sitting in our classrooms next September.

Staring at the Stars

Hopefully, this summer you will find plenty of time to reflect upon your last year and plan for your next. Take the time to sit under the stars of the summer night and dream about what the world may be for the children who are given to your charge. The District is at a fork in the road, we can travel the road we have always gone down and say that "we just can't do that because..." Or we can take the road less traveled, and change our thinking as we forge paths in new directions. Each one of us has a responsibility to choose a road, to look at the path we are being asked to travel and to ask if it leads to a place where we put the children of this District center so that they can in turn lead us into the future. We must choose carefully as we know that it does make all the difference.

—Patti Lunden, VP, HS

<http://thefischbowl.blogspot.com/2006/08/did-you-know.html>

Friedman, Thomas. The World is Flat. A brief history of the 21st century. Farar, Straus, and Giroux, New York, NY. 2005.

VC Tea Party Averted—Founding Fathers Retain Their Place In History

Our VC bus drivers can be proud of the manner in which they have conducted themselves during their struggle to obtain a fair contract settlement with their British-based employer, First Student Inc. While passing a strike vote by a 90% margin, drivers vowed to NOT let their actions interfere with our students' exam schedule. Perhaps it is the "British" that can learn something about being a gentleman or a lady from our union brothers and sisters at Local 445.

In another union-sponsored democratic action, our drivers selected Monday, June 11 as the official strike date by a 4 to 1 margin. In keeping with their honorable behavior—behavior worthy of the VCTA logo's, "putting children center" slogan—the drivers chose to publicize this date to provide families with sufficient time to develop alternate transportation plans. By Monday morning, June 10, the strike was averted. First Student Inc. will return to the negotiating table two more times this month. There has been a perceived change in First Student's attitude and, therefore, hopefully a new desire on their part to be fair. The support provided to our union brothers and sisters—our local taxpaying mothers and fathers—has been instrumental in bringing this change about. When we stand together we are strong. When we stand alone we can be bullied by those who wish to take advantage of us for corporate profits. Let's keep Halliburton and Wal-Mart copycats out of VC Country.

Although I must say that I was looking forward to the VC Tea Party—one that would have put the Boston Tea Party to shame, I am hopeful that this new development will end in a fair settlement for our VC bus drivers and is not just a ploy on the part of First Student, Inc. to finish the current work year without incident. If it is a ploy, First Student Inc. can look forward to future Tea Party that will make our Founding Fathers proud!

To explore the problems that First Student Inc. has created for school districts throughout the U.S., check out the following Internet site:

www.firststudentwatch.info.

—Tim Brown

2007 RA Report:

Every year NYSUT hosts a Representative Assembly (RA) to address union business and decision making and to honor it's own. The VCTA has five delegates to the RA (the officers are the elected delegates). This year, President Tim Brown and Vice President Patti Lunden attended the RA in Washington, DC from April 25-28. The political resolutions package was debated and voted upon and there were many reports from the officers of our state union and our national affiliates. This was a historic RA because it was the first one since the merging of NYSUT and NEA/NY.

President Tim Brown accepted many honors on behalf of the VCTA. We were awarded a community service award as an organization, the Echoes won two awards in competition with other locals our size, and we were recognized for our memberships VOTE-Cope participation.

There are many speakers at the RA and sound-bytes from most are included below. These were collected from articles in the RA Reporter—the official news source for the RA written and produced on site by the NY Teacher staff. Check out the VCTA webpage to view a photo gallery from the RA.

From NYSUT President Dick Iannuzzi:

"In failing to find the elusive 'perfect' evaluative tool, they have seized upon an imperfect measure—the standardized test — and tried to pass it off as a cure for what ails education and even what ails society as a whole," Iannuzzi said to cheers. He stressed that educators must be accountable for what they can control in the classroom and should expect to be accountable for their performance. "But anyone who has ever been in a classroom — and I was for 34 years — knows that what happens at school depends on many factors well beyond the schoolhouse door, and can never be understood through a standardized test alone."

AFT President Ed McElroy:

In speaking about the upcoming presidential election in 2008 McElroy encouraged delegates to dedicate themselves to electing someone "who represents the honest, decent, hardworking" people of the nation.

NEA Secretary-Treasurer Lily Elkeson

"We are family," she said. "We share the same DNA. We believe in the mission of public schools. It's a mission that's written in our hearts." (cont'd on pg 8)

In the News...



Brown Tackles
the Issues

This issue's column focuses on current developments that affect teachers throughout New York State. In this installment of *In the News...*, VCTA President Tim Brown summarizes and comments on issues discussed in the May 24, 2007 issue of *New York Teacher*.

Mandated Reporting: According to NYSUT (NYT, May 24, pp. 5-6), districts are legally required to have a written policy on child abuse reporting and are also required to train staff with regard to this. As mandated reporters, this should be common knowledge to all VCTA members. It would be a mistake, however, for members to believe that their task is completed once they have reported their suspicions to their supervisor or principal. It is, in fact, every VCTA member's responsibility to ENSURE "that a report is...made to the Central Register." A telephone call to the Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (800-635-1522) "must also be followed by a written report, on the official form, within 48 hours."

Why the paranoia regarding procedure? First, this procedure ensures that our neediest children remain the center of our focus and do not get lost in the shuffle of our increasingly hectic daily responsibilities. Second, don't assume that a supervisor is as responsible or concerned for our students as you are—remember the Middletown fiasco! Finally, and sadly, there are supervisors/administrators who, when confronted with a problem that might cause them discomfort, scapegoat subordinates in an attempt to protect themselves from public criticism. This is what happened in Bedford Hills, New York. Protect your children/students and protect yourself. You are often the best last hope for a child in need and if things go wrong or criticism is forthcoming, rather than support, you might just get thrown under the bus for your efforts. But we are not Bedford Hills...or are we?

Where have all the administrators gone...long time ago... There was a time when staff always knew where their administrator was. S/he was standing out in front of their staff, protecting them from unfair criticism and attacks. In return, staff demonstrated loyalty by protecting the back of their leader, who stood on the front lines...a first defense against ignorance and scapegoating tactics. Unfortunately, it would appear

that every (wo)man for him/herself is the new flavor of the day. When the going gets tough...the tough know when to sacrifice their pawns...I long for the good old days. So much for family—what in Hades has gone wrong with common sense?

Uninsured New Yorkers: 2.8 million New Yorkers are currently without health insurance (NYT, May 24, p. 6). Although no one can perfectly predict the outcomes of proposed health care reforms that might address this inequity, there are some moral truths that are eternal and should, therefore, be our eternal guiding light in addressing this problem. Our grandparents should not have to suffer without their prescription medicine because they are on fixed incomes and cannot afford to purchase it. No parent should have to experience the death of their child because they are uninsured and cannot afford medical services. I have a dream that one day solicitations for donations to the "Little Johnny Doe Leukemia Fund" will be unnecessary because the richest nation on earth has truly decided that "No Child Will Be Left Behind."

Nutrition, Obesity and Physical Activity: NYSUT has endorsed Governor Spitzer's plan to fight early "childhood obesity by establishing nutritional standards for food and beverages served in schools, requiring more physical education and by stopping the sale of junk food during the school day" (NYT, May 24, p. 7). Unfortunately, new gym space for physical education and extra curricular activities was the first item eliminated from our last building project. I have a dream that public school facilities such as Valley Central will one day be as extensive and modern as those at the Orange County Jail. Let's do the next bond project right! Additionally, members of our VC Nutritional Staff Association are working hard every day—for compensation that would shock most *illegals*—to provide our students with nutritious meals. Unfortunately, like most other public schools across America, the supplies they are given to work with could make some third world nations shudder. In the words of the famous Jim Tate (retired HS math teacher): (*cont'd on pg 8*)

In the News... (Cont'd. from pg 7)

"You can't make chicken salad out of chicken (...?...)." Our cafeteria workers do an outstanding job every day. Like teachers, they must work with the materials that are provided.

I have a dream that one day all school food supplies will be shipped to prisons and all prison food supplies will be shipped to public schools. NOTE: Our nutritional staff began negotiations with the District for a successor agreement on June 11. As of June 30, 2007 they will be working without a current contract. The starting hourly rate of pay for our part-time nutritional staff is \$8.40 per hour.

The ATF is Coming for Teachers: According to NYSUT President, Dick Iannuzzi, "too many critics of public education use report card results—splashed across the pages of newspapers in New York—as an opportunity to play the blame game. They fail to understand that the report cards—while providing an important service—are merely a snapshot in time that cannot give a complete picture of day-to-day reality in a classroom" (NYT, May 24, p. 8). The real question here at VC as the VCTA attempts to support the District's efforts to initiate the ATF (Accountability Task Force) is—Will data be used to refocus and improve instruction or will data be used to scapegoat those of us in the trenches charged with performing miracles on a daily basis?

As we all know, classroom observations primarily take the form of administrative obligatory tasks that are sorely lacking in substance or follow-up mentoring for the purpose of supporting staff and improving instruction. We are currently working on a side agreement with Central Office that would prevent raw data from being another invalid benchmark by which teachers are judged and (un)tenured. Data, rather than being a brainless, but certainly not painless, tool for assessing instruction, should instead be a tool utilized to improve the teaching and learning process. Make no mistake; data can be a useful tool. Data by itself, however, may be useless information if the big picture is not assessed. Let's hope ATF doesn't come to represent *All Teachers' Fault* (or) *Administrators' & Teachers' Fault*.

—Tim Brown, VCTA President

2007 RA Report: (cont'd from pg 6)

NYSUT Executive Vice President Alan Lubin

"One thin dime," said Lubin, who heads the union's Legislative Department. "All we're asking for is an increase in federal funding for education by 10 cents on a dollar." The current federal education commitment is about 6 cents of every dollar invested. We are NYSUT," Lubin said. "In fighting for fully funding education, we can change the country."

First Vice President Maria Neira

"We are no longer educating 'the whole child,'" Neira said to great applause. "We are educating the 'fill-in-the-bubble child.'" Neira continued, "There is growing evidence that the over-emphasis on test scores is narrowing the curriculum." "Effective classroom practices have been replaced by 'test prep' instruction."

NY AFL-CIO President Denis Hughes

New York State AFL-CIO President Denis Hughes thanked NYSUT leaders for their indefatigable support and underscored the importance of leadership. "You provide leadership on so many different levels," he told RA delegates. "Your leadership in the classroom changes people's lives, and you make tremendous contributions within the community."

US Senator Hillary Clinton

"To this White House, so much of what you do is invisible," Clinton said, "but you're not invisible to me, to NYSUT or the governor and you're not going to be invisible to the next president of the United States." "When I'm president, our schools will be at the top of the national agenda."

NYS Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli

He outlined an ambitious agenda and vision for his new role, from protecting the integrity of public pensions and Social Security to building a better quality of life for all Americans. DiNapoli promised that a crisis like the pension deficit in New Jersey "won't happen on my watch."

NYS Governor Eliot Spitzer

"We've gone from a society where the most remarkable creation was the middle class, who shared the success of the community, to a society who has forgotten those not doing well," Spitzer said. If we are to compete and generate creativity so the next technological advance will be created and produced here, "we must educate our children."

—Patti Lunden, HS, RA delegate

TRS Patties...All about NYSTRS

FAQ's about Retirement:

Q. Is 55/25 legislation coming? What will it mean?

A. 55/25 legislation is still being pushed but neither the Senate nor Assembly has proposed or acted on any bills since Gov. Pataki vetoed the bill last summer. The word is that there is hope that when introduced again it will pass the Senate and Assembly (it did the first time) and be signed into law by Gov. Spitzer. If enacted into law, it would mean that members in Tiers 2,3,and 4 would be able to retire without penalty at age 55 with 25 years of service. Presently, members must reach age 55 with at least 30 years of service. If a member turns 55 with less than 30 years of service, they must wait until they either accrue 30 years or turn 62, whichever comes first to avoid any penalty.



Q. If I work extra months in the summer for summer school does that lengthen my time counted toward retirement?

A. NO, the retirement system counts a school year as 9-12 months. So if from July 1, 2007- June 30, 2008 you work summer school and the regular school year, even though it is less than 12 months, it is more than 9 months and is considered one year's worth of service.

—Patti Lunden, HS

TRS Representative

Know your TRS! It's never too late (or early)!

Retiring, Soon? Start Planning Now!

This summer visit the NYSTRS website (www.nystrs.org).

- If you are retiring in less than three years—make a consultation appointment with the Retirement System!
- If you are 10 years from retirement—attend a Pre-Retirement seminar this summer.
- If you are planning to retire next year—be sure to watch the video, Countdown to Retirement on the NYSTRS website.

Wondering what the New York State Teachers' Retirement System is all about?

Retirement Seminar—The VCTA Executive Council has approved hosting another Retirement Seminar.

Look for information on the VCTA website (www.vcta.net) and in the September 2007 edition of Echoes.

VC Star: Kathi Russo honored by Orange County Youth Bureau

Congratulations to Kathi Russo for receiving the Orange County Youth Bureau School Professionals Award. This honor is awarded to an individual “whose job performance exemplifies dedication and commitment to students” and who is “a role model to youth... involved in activities that promote positive youth development beyond the classroom.” Kathi was nominated by one of her students for her unconditional dedication and love of her job.

In her 20 years of service to the Valley Central School district she has worked as a paraprofessional in many different job titles including Kindergarten, Library, Special Education, and Collaborative Para. Kathi was also the founder of the Building Safety committee. Her credits also include Drama club, Peer mediator/facilitator and Building level team committee. She not only serves the children of Montgomery Elementary but has also contributed to the community as PTA president of East Coldenham, 4H leader, Girl Scout leader and Coach of little league baseball, soccer, and basketball. Many children return to Montgomery Elementary to thank Kathi for her motivation and support during their school years. A couple students under the influence of her Drama coaching have even gone on to be in commercials! She is a great asset to the Valley Central family, which is proud and fortunate to have her.

—Respectfully Submitted, C.Larsen, Montgomery Elementary



HELP NEEDED! Do you know a VC Star?

The best ECHOES pieces are those that highlight outstanding members, like Kathi, and their accomplishments. That's where you come in... If you know someone who should be recognized, please e-mail mrilley@vcmail.oubores.org or let one of your building reps know.

Help us to showcase the wonderful people of Valley Central!

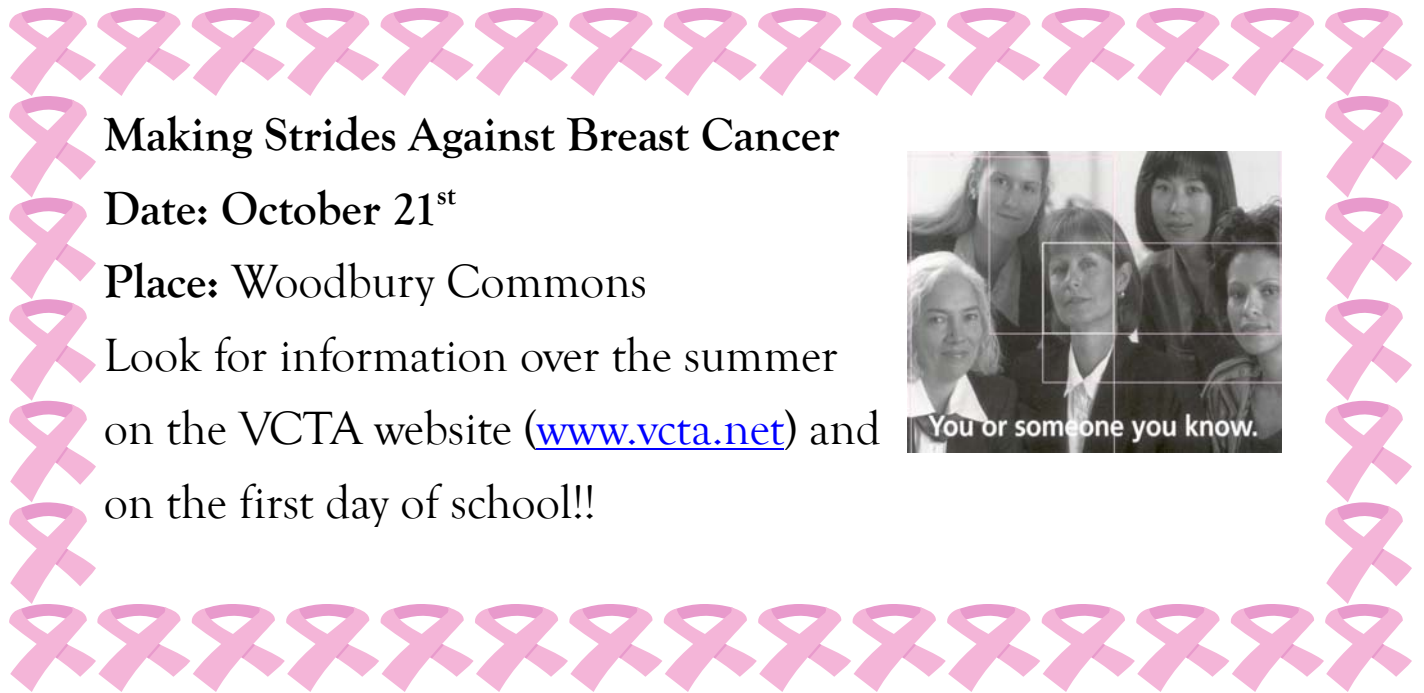
Thank you Executive Council 2006-07...

Our Executive Council is made up of Building Representatives and Alternates, the Association officers, the chair of the Para and Secretarial units and two retiree representatives. They attend a meeting two hours per month (sometimes longer) on your behalf to make decisions affecting the Association and membership, to set direction and discuss issues relative to the membership. They also serve on committees for the Association, run building meetings and host building visits from the officers. They make themselves available to the members in their buildings to answer questions and are the eyes and ears of the union in their buildings. They have knocked on doors to help elect politicians, they have collected thousands of dollars in donations from members for outreach, they have made phone calls to pass the budget and elect BOE members and they have organized the membership to attend BOE meetings when our union brothers and sisters in other units needed our support. As officers, we know all we have to do is ask and they will help us achieve any goal. We are proud to serve with the membership of this Executive Council. They are dedicated to putting children center and helping Valley Central become an excellent place to work, live and learn. It is an honor to work with these individuals and we humbly offer our gratitude for a job well done this year. Thank you!



The VCTA Officers Tim Brown, Rich Steger, Patti Lunden, Laurie Hey and John Bonagura

Save the Date...



Making Strides Against Breast Cancer

Date: October 21st

Place: Woodbury Commons

Look for information over the summer on the VCTA website (www.vcta.net) and on the first day of school!!



CSE Workshop Coming

The VCTA will be hosting a CSE Workshop given by NYSUT to help all members understand what rights and responsibilities they have as members of CSEs.

Be sure to attend!!!

Stay tuned for more information in the fall....



FUN FUN FUN!

VCTA Fall Fest 2007

Date: October 19th,

Place: Otterkill

Country Club

Look for more details in September's VC ECHOES....



VCTA News

May 2007 VCTA Local Outreach

The Valley Central Teachers Association raised \$2,948 during May for local outreach and support. \$1,352 was raised for the Montgomery Food Pantry and \$1,596 was raised for the Joe Savage Memorial Scholarship. VCTA members offer their deepest sympathy to the Savage family for their loss.



VCTA Pres. Tim Brown stands with volunteers at the Montgomery Food Pantry. St. Andrew's Church in Walden staffs the Pantry this month.

VC'S RETIREES: CLASS OF 2007



From Left: John Bonagura (EC), Kay Bauer (May), Sandy Tarallo (May), Joyce Zawistowski (HS), June Guidry (EC), Eileen Wojehowski (MS), Beverly Slomka (MS), Rosemary Rothwell (EC)

THE VCTA EXTENDS BEST WISHES FOR A LONG, HAPPY, AND HEALTHY RETIREMENT!

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

Nobody asked me, but...

I have been thinking a lot, as this school year winds down, about VC history (about which folks too little) and about a sense of family. We have spoken of "VC family" over the course of the 43 years that I've been part of said family. Our "history" tells me that we have been and are a family in every sense of the word. Families have differences of opinion, often stated in loud proclamations, moments when disagreements become strident, but families move on, concern for another reigns, civility takes over. That's been our history, and this old curmudgeon trusts that it is also our future.

In the last few weeks I have interviewed three wonderful VC seniors for the Haggar scholarship—bright articulate, pleasant young women of whom the VC family can be justly proud; I have been at a book discussion and signing by alumni authors from VC (Jan Cheripko '69 and Chris Forman '73)—fine work from both and a great sense of pride for all of us. I rejoice at 92's Matt Morris's ERA and 6-2 record for the San Francisco Giants. We bade farewell to Darryl Imperati, our high school principal at a "roast and

toast" with a mixture of laughter and sorrow; we hear of celebrations for retirees at Maybrook, the middle school, East Coldenham, Joyce (the incomparable librarian at the high school). VC's graduation once again will be the finest in the land. So much to be proud of in our family!!! Our thanks to family members now retiring and moving on to new and exciting chapters in their lives. How much they have given to VC!

Some more stuff that's been on my mind...

I'm rally ticked off at Eliot Spitzer, governor for his backing of charter schools which are unproven and which drain aid from schools in districts they non-perform. See the June 7 edition of NY TEACHER: New Covenant School in Albany. Kids abandoned, teachers screwed over. Shameful.

NCLB is a waste of 4 good letters. Mandates without aid are fruitless and unjust. Over-testing should not be confused with improvement.

In this day and age when so much is expected of young teachers, mentoring and modeling are absolute necessities, so that we do not lose the best and the bright-

est from our work which is so important to our communities.

Retiree Alert!

The annual retiree luncheon (the 25th annual retiree luncheon!!! Cue the trumpets!) will be held on Wednesday, September 5th. It is my hope to hold it at the Crossroads as we have for many years. There is much construction at the crossroads of 17K and 208. I'll check with Chris Camillo and send out the Summer Musings with all particulars in the muddle of July. Mark your calendars for September 5th.

Amen!

My apologies for an overabundance of bombast, the occasional pomposity, and any failed Irish wit. It has been a pleasure to be able still to talk to you five or six times a year for the past ten years or so. You are all in my thoughts and prayers—and I will continue to be watchful re: all things of importance to retirees.

My thanks to Orin Segall and Arline Friedman for alerting me to retiree issues and for sitting in on Executive Council of the VCTA with me.

Thanks to the hardworking officers of the VCTA (Tim, Rich, Patti, Laurie and



John) for their concern for retirees and for allowing me this space to spout.

Special thanks to our fine, no longer rookie editor, Meghan Rilley, who has to read this stuff in what passes for McFadden penmanship. (You know how I am about computers, typewriters, processors and anything mechanical, electrical practical, etc.) And thanks, Meg, for allowing us to get know Liam—far and away the most mellow fellow at Exec Council meetings. He is a winner.

And finally, good night Mrs. Calabash, wherever you are. I hope to be back to seeing you all in September. 'Til then, keep pushing back barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you. Peace.

~Mac

The Forgotten Mommies Bill (A7696) is still stuck in the Assembly. Call Speaker Sheldon Silver at 518-455-3791/ Assemblywoman Nancy Calhoun at 564-1330. The forgotten mommies are female teachers who were treated unjustly when tier reinstatement was passed.

Advertising Section

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.



*Let us help put
you on the MAP!*

In efforts to expand communications with members, NYSUT Member Benefits Trust is introducing MAP, the Member Assistance Program. Just as maps assist by providing direction, MAP team members will assist Member Benefits and vice versa.

By joining MAP, you'll be among the first to hear about new, endorsed programs and program updates. You'll receive special offers from Member Benefits or its endorsed program providers. You'll help Member Benefits test potential new programs and provide feedback. Your opinions will be solicited on new programs under consideration.

MAP is an e-mail based program. Member Benefits will not share your e-mail address with outside interests other than endorsed program providers and only under controlled circumstances. Member Benefits will oversee the frequency of e-mail communications to ensure you will not be bombarded.

MAPpers will receive e-mail communications from Member Benefits and occasionally from its providers of endorsed programs. Once a program provider receives approval from Member Benefits to send you an offer or information, the vendor will be required to destroy the e-mail listing after sending the communication.

This exciting, new program allows you to help shape future programs and services exclusively available to you and your colleagues.

Join by July 2, 2007 and you will be entered into a drawing to receive one of two Kodak Easy-Share digital cameras. To join, log on to www.memberbenefits.nysut.org, or call **(800) 626-8101**. You will be asked to provide your name, address, local association, e-mail address and NYSUT Member ID number, found on your membership card or by calling Member Benefits.

Help make a difference. Become a MAP team member.

For information about this program or about contractual expense reimbursement/endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please call NYSUT Member Benefits Trust at (800) 626-8101, e-mail benefits@nysutmail.org, visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org, or refer to your NYSUT Member Benefits Trust Summary Plan Description.



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NYSUT Social Services

As a union, NYSUT continually searches for ways to improve the professional and personal lives of its members. Our Social Services program is confidential and free, and offers assessments and advocacy, referrals and reassurance to in-service and retired members. The program goal is to help members with concerns about their lives and their families.

Social Services provides highly competent and experienced professional staff and a national database of resources. It is another key component in the safety net of support members receive from their organization.

NYSUT Social Services identify resources and provides information in reference to the following needs:

- Adaptive Equipment
- Adult Day Care
- Advocacy
- Assistance for Disabilities
- Caregiving Advice
- Crisis Intervention
- Debt Counseling Referrals
- Family & Couples Therapy
- Geriatric Consultations
- Homecare Referrals
- Impartial Advice
- Information on Health and Mental Health Topics
- Medicare and Medicaid Questions
- Mental Health Counseling Resources
- Nursing Homes
- Respite Care
- Retirement Living Options
- Substance Abuse Treatment Options
- Support Groups
- Telephone Support
- Transportation
- Useful Websites

Let NYSUT Social Services assist you.

Please call 1-800-342-9810, ext. 6206

or

Email us at: socsvcs@nysutmail.org

Confidential - No Cost - Available to In-service & Retired members and their families

Scott Hicks, LCSW - Laurie Kupperstein, MS - Ani Shahinian, LCSW

Andrea Tersigni, Admin Assistant



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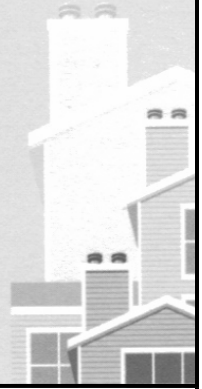
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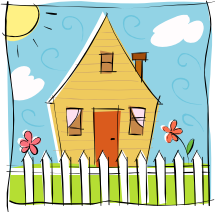
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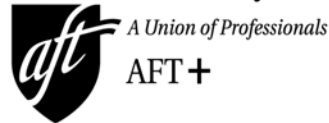
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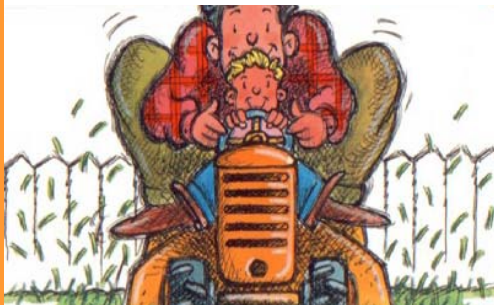
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President, Timothy Brown (HS) VM 7613
Vice President, Richard Steger (Walden) VM 5648
Vice President, Patti Lunden (HS) VM 7664
Secretary, Laurie Hey (MS) VM 6646
Treasurer, John Bonagura (EC) VM 2604

VCTA Executive Council Building Representatives

- **Berea:** Erin Davis, Robin Sinclair-Scott, Carol DeMicco
- **East Coldenham:** Holly Bacon, Denise Pagliocca
- **Maybrook:** Donna Lloyd, Sandy Tarallo
- **Montgomery:** Gail Nozell, Jane Dionne, Melinda Sulzbach, Mike Gonzales (A)
- **Walden:** Kathy Bordone, Patricia Joy, Mary Ellen Mangiamele, Lori Myerson
- **Middle School:** Mary Bleau, Tammy Coleman, Joe Collins, Joe DeVenuto, Sandy Strauss
- **High School:** Bob Jurgens, Mindy Kane, Peter Meisel, Christine Mello, Antoinette Oakes, Eileen Purcell, Meghan Riley, Diane Ruggles, Carolyn Zayas, Lisa Aguilera (A), Jennie Meehan (A), Kerri Meyer (A), Keith Sexton (A), Glenn Taylor (A)
- **Secretarial Representative:** Pamela Cunningham (B)
- **Paraprofessional Representative:** Kathy Lennon (W)

The VC Echoes is the official publication of the Valley Central Teachers' Association—Local 3076—and is published regularly throughout the school year.

Article contributions or Letters to the Editor for the next issue should be sent to Meghan Riley, HS, by August 17, 2007.

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

VC ECHOES Wins Awards

The VC ECHOES has won several awards this year in the NY Teacher and AFT Journalism Competitions. In the NY Teacher contest, locals compete against other locals of similar size throughout New York State. The AFT competition judges entries from across the country. Of special note with this year's awards is the fact that three of the winning submissions were from non-officers: Lisa Korpics, Gene Mueller, and Meghan Riley. It would be wonderful to see that number grow larger next year, so please, keep those great articles coming!



NY Teacher Awards:

- First Award— Best Feature Story by Lisa Korpics, "Penny Centers Retires"
- First Award— New members' issues, by Patti Lunden, "What difference does it make?"

AFT Awards:

- First Award— Best Layout/Graphics, John Hall Cover Page, October 2006
- Award of Merit— Best Web Site, designed and maintained by Tim Brown, www.vcta.net
- Award of Merit— Unique Performance, by Patti Lunden and Rich Steger, New Member Booklet
- Award of Merit— Best Editorial by Meghan Riley, "Charter Schools are not Smarter Schools"
- Honorable Mention— Best Feature Story by Gene Mueller, "Remembering Ernie Pettine"
- Honorable Mention— Best Art or Photo by Patti Lunden, "VADIR Cartoon"

Links to all articles can be found on the home page at www.vcta.net.

If you have an article for September's ECHOES, please e-mail it to me, in MSWord format, at mrilley@vcmail.oubores.org by 17 August 2007.

Enjoy your summer!