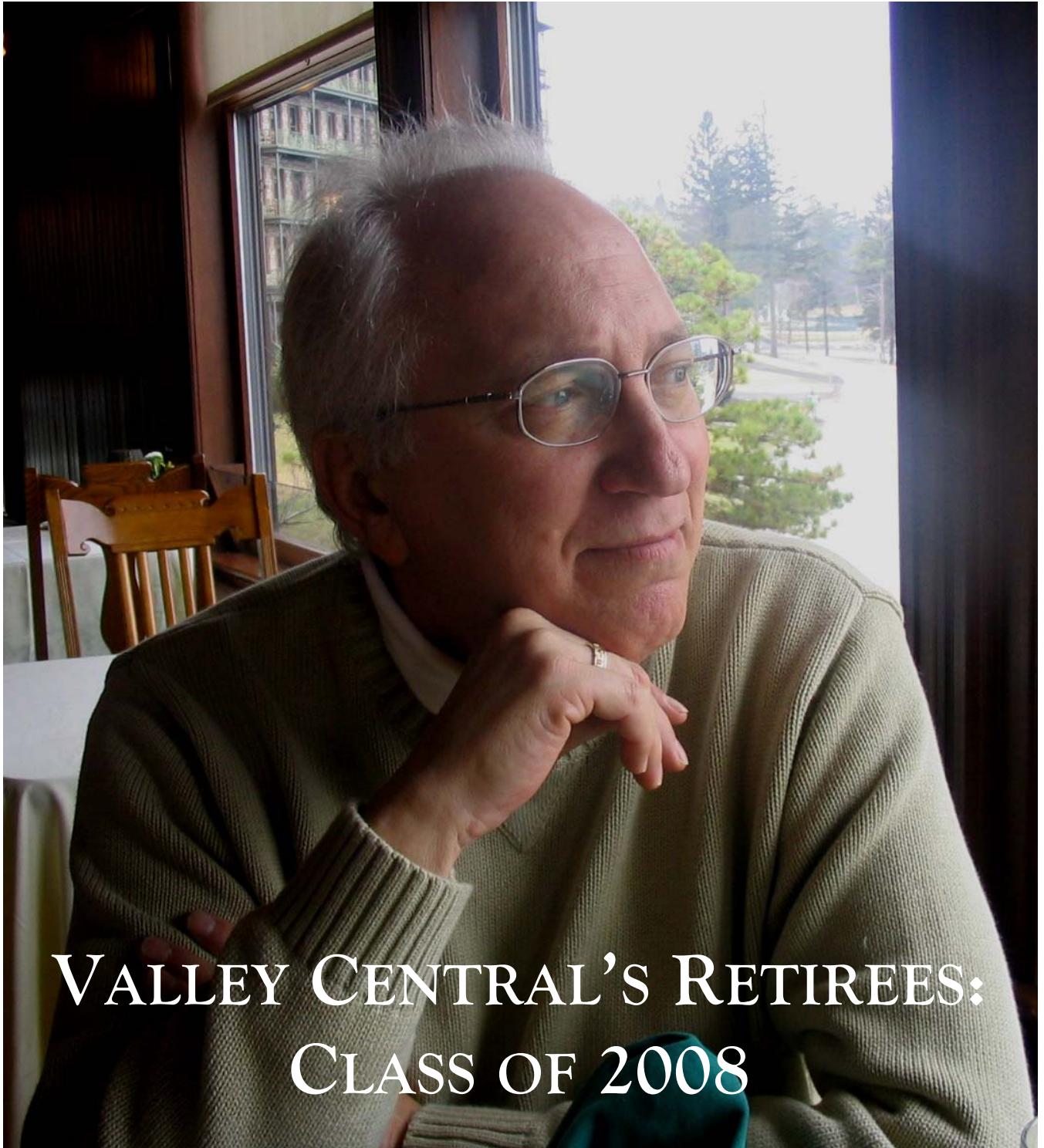


## VC ECHOES

*Volume 10, Issue 6*

*Valley Central Teachers' Association*

*May, 2008*



**VALLEY CENTRAL'S RETIREES:  
CLASS OF 2008**



Volume 10, Issue 6  
May, 2008

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Valley Central Teachers' Association  
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Montgomery, NY 12549

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*Article contributions or Letters to the Editor should be sent to Meghan Riley, HS, by May 30th, 2008*

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

**VCTA Activist Sandy Strauss to Retire**

I have had the pleasure of spending the last twenty-six years working with Sandy Strauss in many capacities. Teacher, mentor, coach, union representative, and union co-leader are all positions that Sandy has filled in his own kind, thoughtful, and thorough way.

Sandy has been a teacher for all children of any level or ability. He made them feel welcome and wanted. Mr. Strauss was also a teacher who was not afraid to change. When asked to do something new or different, he would do the necessary preparation and proceed to work with his students in a way that both taught them and allowed them to have fun.

Sandy Strauss approached the needs of the VCTA with the same thoughtful and thorough ways. As a multiple term vice-president and building representative, Sandy was a source of information and advice about any matter that a VCTA member could possibly inquire about. When he fought for you, Sandy always brought his "A" game: you could not ask for a better man to be there, supporting and advising you, in a time of crisis.

So Sandy will soon leave his students and fellow faculty members/workers at the Valley Central School District, but he will never be forgotten. As he moves on to new and different venues in life, we all wish Sandy a long, happy, and healthy retirement.

—Joseph DeVenuto, VCMS

## Sandy Strauss Is Retiring!?!

**S**andy Strauss is retiring from Valley Central Middle School, and he will be irreplaceable.

In the past 35 years, Sandy Strauss has spent more hours on the Valley Central campus than anyone has spent or will ever spend. Typically, Sandy arrives at 7 am and finally exits the premises around 9 pm. And don't forget Saturdays!

Trying to summarize Sandy's career at VC is like trying to write a one-paragraph review of the collected works of Shakespeare. Where to begin?

Here is a brief account of how Sandy has put in his time:

- In the classroom he has informed, inspired, and "Straussersized" generations of delighted and appreciative six-graders.
- He has been the Chairman of the Valley Central Dental and Optical Trust for 23 years.
- He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Valley Central Federal Credit Union.
- For 21 years, he was head coach of the varsity softball team.
- He successfully coached varsity wrestling and varsity soccer in his younger years. He was, is, and will ever be the "Voice of the Vikings," sports announcer extraordinaire.
- Sandy was the driving force behind naming the new science wing for William Cocks, single-handedly writing the proposal, presenting his idea before the school board, arranging for the ceremony, writing the text for a bronze plaque, and getting the plaque made.
- Sandy has been the confidante of coworkers and administrators.
- In 2005, Sandy was honored as the recipient of the PTA Founder's Day Award for his innumerable contributions to Valley Central Middle School.
- He fills the soda machine and takes your word for it when you tell him the machine ripped you

off.

Sandy cares deeply about his students. My older son had a blast in Sandy's class a decade ago. Nightly at the supper table, he regaled us with Strauss stories. Dozens of years later, Sandy will remember a former student's face and class nickname. He holds sacred the roles of "teacher" and of schools in the life of a community. In my 27 years of working with Sandy, I've come to really enjoy his company, his sense of humor, his practical advice, and his devotion to everything that is Valley Central.

On behalf of my colleagues, I wish Sandy the restful and joyful retirement that he so richly deserves.



–Gene Mueller, MS

## From Buckets to Bobbins – A Fond Farewell

Patricia “Patty” DeRosa has been a district employee since 1990. She began her journey at Valley Central in the High School kitchen and for the past fifteen years has worked as a custodian at Berea Elementary School. I am sure all will agree that “they don’t come any better than Patty.”

Patty has been married to her husband, Larry, also a retired Valley Central Employee, for thirty-five years. She boasts of her two sons, Jim and Jay, and her four beautiful grandchildren with pride. She always has plenty of pictures to share with the “Berea Family.”

Patty has many hobbies to keep her busy after she ends her day at Berea. Patty loves frogs and has many battery operated specimens which croak and talk. It “brightens” our day when she shares these animated amphibians. Maybe that is why anytime anyone needs a hand, she “hops” right to it. She also collects key chains and has many from all over the world. Sewing is one of her passions and she has made many items for the staff. She is an excellent seamstress and helped decorate the faculty lounge with beautiful pillows. Patty’s earrings are a conversation piece. They are always coordinated with her outfit and she has quite a variety. Camping is also a favorite past-time for her. She and her husband can be seen lounging by the campfire at Winding Hills enjoying a refreshing drink on a warm balmy evening. The paddleboats are not quite her thing, although she has been seen out on the lake looking for turtles and frogs with her life jacket snug around her neck. The Tasmanian Devil is her favorite cartoon character and she has fashioned her work habits around him as she “whirls” around the building getting jobs done.

On gloomy days, Patty’s friendly outgoing personality has spread sunshine throughout our building. She has a wonderful rapport with all who know her. She is respected by the entire staff and they appreciate her going the extra mile, with a smile, to accommodate all that is asked of her. Her shoe size may only be a seven, but it will take a much larger size to fill her shoes here at Berea. Patty will

be missed by everyone at Berea. Patty, trade in those rubber gloves and bucket, cleaning supplies and school checks for many years of



sleeping late, relaxing, and following your dreams.

Be sure to visit and keep in touch and best wishes always from your “Berea Family.” –Pam Cunningham.

*Berea Elementary*

### “She brought a WHAT???”

“She brought a WHAT???” That was my first recollection of Patricia DeRosa (Patty) when I came to Berea 12 years ago. Harvey Gregory gave me a piano when I left East Coldenham and it had to be moved to Berea. After recovering from her dismay, Patty pitched right in and helped and has been helping ever since. Needless to say she will be missed.

Known to Berea students as “Miss Patty”, she is often seen tying shoes, opening milk containers, and listening to the children’s jokes and stories. She is known to the faculty and staff as a “friend”. “Miss Patty” is a friend that will be deeply missed.

We hope your retirement will be filled with peace, fun, and enjoyment. We are sure that you will have that and much more, especially with your pride and joys... your grandchildren.

–Donna Clark, Berea

## Irreplaceable Lenny

“ Jack of all Trades. Resourceful. Reliable. Generous. Strong. Great. Tool Man. Informative. Fisherman. Conscientious. Dependable. Comedian. Helpful. Caring. Jolly. Happy. Caring. Cynical. Fun. Reliable. Joker. Screw. Red Ribbon. Handy. Kind. Bob the Builder. Teaser. Con-artist. Wiz. Imp. Thoughtful. Friendly. Humorous. Wise Guy. Crafty. #1 (not 5). Handy. Hard worker. Selfless. Multi-talented.” These are the words Lenny’s friends and colleagues at Berea gave me when I asked them for one word to describe Lenny.

Lenny Simpson started working for Valley Central School District in 1963 (he must have been 4 years old) at Walden Elementary School. Forty-five years later, Lenny is retiring on August 1, 2008. Lenny started working at Berea before it was finished being built in 1969 and has been at Berea ever since.

He went to school at Balmville, West St. & Chestnut St. schools in Newburgh, and New Paltz, Marlboro and Valley Central Schools. When asked why so many, Lenny said that he moved a lot. His favorite subjects were metal shop and wood shop where he was known for being the only one to use his bare hands instead of pliers on the grinder machine.

Lenny was somewhat mischievous in his younger years. He enjoyed scaring the girls with his mechanical owl claw, rode a bicycle through the wet cement at the newly built East Coldenham School and jumped out the windows into the courtyard at the High School.

A passionate fisherman, Lenny loves to spend his free time on the lakes upstate in one of his two boats or on his best friend Gene’s boat on the Hudson River. Lenny loves nature and has seen the effects of acid rain on the lakes and fish firsthand. The biggest fish Lenny caught was a 42” pike from a dock on Saranac Lake. But the best catch in Lenny’s life was his wife, Louise, who enjoys fishing, going to comedy shows, movies and traveling with him.

Lenny Simpson can fix anything and is a genius when it comes to home repairs, doing anything mechanical, building, assembling, and electronic repairs. His garages are full of tools. He has about a dozen good T.V.’s and didn’t pay a penny for one of them because he took them from people who were throwing them out and refurbished them. We couldn’t begin to count the number of times teachers have asked Lenny to fix or restore something in their classroom and like magic he repairs anything. This is how he got the nickname of “Bob the Builder.” Can he fix it? YES HE CAN!

When asked what he will do when he retires Lenny said he’ll probably do some work. I know a lot of teachers and co-workers at Berea who’d love to keep Lenny busy with handy man jobs around their homes. That is, if we can get him to put down his fishing pole.

Lenny said that he hates when people say “we’ll miss you” instead of “I’ll miss you” but after talking to all of Lenny’s friends and colleagues at Berea, I can state without any doubt or trepidation, WE WILL ALL MISS YOU, IRREPLACEABLE LENNY SIMPSON!

- Denise Bromm



## A Woman of Many Talents: Eileen Schwope Retires

I have taught second grade with Eileen Schwope for twenty years in Maybrook Elementary. She is one of the most special people I have had the honor and pleasure to call a friend.

Eileen grew up on a family owned farm in Montgomery, NY. She was a 1961 graduate of Valley Central. Then she went to New Paltz College where she received a BS degree, and a permanent teaching certificate. She also did graduate work to receive 30+ credits.

Eileen started teaching at Montgomery Elementary in 1965 in a fourth grade classroom. Her sister, Della, was a student in fifth grade. Her brother, John, was in first, and her brother, Jimmy, was in kindergarten. The other fourth grade teacher, Kay Degnan, had been Eileen's fifth grade teacher when she was a Montgomery Elementary student!

Eileen taught fourth, third, and then second grade in Montgomery until 1973. She was also a VCTA building rep. In 1973 Eileen left to have her first child, Charles. Mary Monahan, who is retiring from Montgomery this year, had been Eileen's student teacher. She took over Eileen's class at that time.

Eileen lived in Bullville, where she still resides today. She has been married to her husband, Charlie, for over forty years. They have three children. Their son, Charles, lives in Dallas, Texas with his wife Kristine, and their two children. Debbie lives in Port Jervis with her husband, Jim, and two sons. Lee Ann lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

When Eileen's youngest, Lee Ann, went to kindergarten in 1985, Eileen was hired for a morning kindergarten class in Berea Elementary. She worked there for two years. In 1987 she joined the Maybrook family, and she has been in second grade ever since!! She has also been the yearbook editor for nineteen years, has served on Child Study Team, and the Building Level Team.

Eileen is a member of the Amy Bull Crist Reading Council, and the winner of two mini grants for books from the Council. In addition, she has worked with 4-H Council and uses her many, many talents to help other children with projects. She helps judge at the Orange County Fair. Those years as the farmer's daughter paid off!

Eileen plans to spend retirement relaxing. She will

visit family, which will mean many hours on airplanes. As an avid reader, Eileen said she could read a good book all day. Those airport layovers will give her plenty of time to do that.

One important destination will be Texas, where she will spend time with her two precious grandchildren. Another destination will be a NASCAR race. Lee Ann will surely be there, too. She said she may even get to the Daytona 500. Who knows? Maybe she will drive IN the Daytona 500.

Eileen is an extremely talented crafter. She loves to sew, crochet, knit, quilt, and embroider. She has plans to finish two quilts and then begin new ones. She wants to make one for each of her daughters. In between, she plans to take an art lesson from her sister-in-law, Shawn Dell Joyce, just for fun. Then, when she has some down time, Eileen will do bookwork and the taxes for her husband's business "in a leisurely fashion."

Eileen said teaching has been an important part of her life, and she will miss the interaction with her students and with the staff, "but it is time to move on."

Eileen Schwope is unique in so many ways. Our faculty room will never be the same. She cleans up the room, the refrigerator, and the bulletin boards. She keeps us supplied with paper goods and utensils. She monitors our salt intake to keep us healthy. Especially important and memorable are the baked goods she keeps us supplied with. We are her willing guinea pigs for her inventive recipes!!

Compassion is Eileen's middle name. She always takes care of others. *(Continued on page 7)*



## Eileen Schwope (Continued from page 6)

When she is not making a handmade gift for someone, she is reading a good book and then trading it with others. You can always count on her to set up a special party, baby shower, etc..

All student teachers and new teachers are taken under her wing. They know they can count on her to give them guidance.

There isn't anything Eileen would not do to help others, whether in her classroom, personal life, or for a colleague. Her heart is huge.

I know after twenty years, I will have to make some major adjustments! I will have to start putting my old brain to work. I will have to remember things for myself. I will have to find everything I have lost for myself. I will have to face the faculty room clock to be sure to arise from my chair on time. Seriously, though, Eileen has been very special in my life. Working without her will leave a void in my day!

Personally, Eileen has been there for me during these twenty years. I have had some very difficult times in my life, with both my own health and with the death of my first husband. I missed a "fair"

amount of work. My pillar of strength through these difficult times was Eileen. She helped me by being my "liaison" between my classroom and my home. She would be knocking on my house door with meals. Best of all, she would have a smile, a cup of coffee, and conversation!

Eileen has also been there to share in the celebrations! She honored me by being a bride's maid for me when I remarried.

Eileen is forever there—for anyone, anytime, anyplace, for any reason.

Eileen, you are forever unique, forever special, and will be forever missed. You are MY forever friend. I wish you nothing but fun, good health, happiness, the best of times, and memory-making with your family!!! *—Linda Draughn*

## Join the Friends for Josh Team on June 14, 2008!

The 2008 **Rock Hill Run & Ramble** to benefit the **Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of America** will be held on Saturday, June 14, 2008. Registration is at 7AM and the 5K race will begin at 9AM from the Frontier Insurance building located between exits 109 and 110 off of Route 17E.

This year's **R-4 Patient Fund** will benefit 19 year old **Josh DePew** of Walden, NY. Josh was recently diagnosed with leukemia and is currently undergoing treatment. Josh is a 2007 graduate of Valley Central School District in Montgomery, NY and was attending Southern Connecticut University on a partial baseball scholarship majoring in business management until he became ill.

Please come out and support Josh by running or walking with the **Friends for Josh Team** on Saturday, June 14, 2008. Registration info, Raffle tickets and pledge sheets are available by contacting **Debbie Smith** at 629-8617, **Angie Lynch** 457-5898 or **Lisa Coney** 791-5036 or a VCMS ([lconey@vcmail.ouboces.org](mailto:lconey@vcmail.ouboces.org))

## The End of an Era at Montgomery Elementary

**A**s the School Social Worker and School Psychologist at Montgomery Elementary School, we have had the pleasure of working with four special colleagues who are joining the ranks of the retired. Each woman will be missed and we are grateful for the unique qualities that they brought to Valley Central over the years.

### *DID YOU KNOW?*

....that **JANE DIONNE**, our Reading Teacher, has been working at MES and sharing her love of reading over the years with a plethora of students? Jane has been a Union Representative for our building and is always willing to go the “extra mile” for our staff. Professionally speaking, Jane was the first teacher trained in Reading Recovery at Montgomery when it was introduced to our district. Her enthusiasm and dedication to her craft is evident as she patiently works with children struggling to acquire reading skills. She truly instills a love of reading in all children – and this will be Jane’s legacy.

### *WOULD YOU EVEN THINK?*

....that **JULIE GOLDSMITH** has worked at Valley Central for 32 years? Although she’s taught in grades K-5; Julie found her niche in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Her low-key attitude and the care she shows for her students is admirable. Julie gladly opens her doors to retirees and parents to assist her with bulletin boards and class lessons. Julie’s willingness to take on student teachers and “pay it forward” demonstrates her dedication to education.

### *HAVE YOU HEARD?*

.... that, after many dedicated years of service, a beloved 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher, **PATTY TAEGDER**, is leaving us? Patty’s professionalism, calm demeanor, and her special way with students are known to be her trademarks. Over the years, Patty has been instrumental in putting children center by working diligently in the classroom and opening lines of communication with parents. She has volunteered her time to mentor colleagues and participate on numerous committees. Patty’s legacy is her kindness and warmth which have touched her MES colleagues, and positively impacted numerous students who have passed through her doors. She surely will be remembered at Montgomery.

### *COULD IT BE?*

....that we won’t hear **MARY MONAHAN’S** laughter emanating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade hallway? Mary is a vibrant and humorous colleague, as well as a dedicated teacher. Her positive energy touches everyone around her and lingers like her perfume which she refreshes during 2<sup>nd</sup> grade prep! YUM! During her many years at MES, Mary has put on many a production – that is with her students. She has had them read stories and put on shows for their parents. What a proud moment for all. They say laughter is the best medicine....if that’s true, Mary will live to be 102! Mary Monahan will be missed by students and colleagues alike. Former students often share that Mrs. Monahan ranks as one of their favorites. This will be her legacy.

### *CAN YOU TELL?*

....that these four women will be missed at Montgomery Elementary School? As educators, they have touched the lives of thousands of students with their warmth, genuine caring, and unique teaching styles. Jane, Julie, Patty, and Mary have been an asset to the M.E.S. staff and we wish each of them all the best in their retirement!

–By Melinda Sulzbach, School Social Worker and Adrienne Hershfield, School Psychologist

## Jane Dionne Leaving Montgomery Elementary

**O**ur dear reading teacher and friend, Jane Dionne, is retiring after fifteen years at Montgomery Elementary School.

Born and raised in Greensboro, North Carolina, Jane attended Immaculate Heart of Mary Academy (grades 1 - 9), Notre Dame High School, Sacred Heart Jr. College, and Belmont Abbey (where she received her Bachelor's degree in Sociology). She attended Appalachian State University where she received her certification in Special Education Master's and Educational Specialist's degree in Reading.

Jane began her teaching career in Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools, where she taught elementary school, middle school, and high school history. Later she moved to the Appalachian Mountains in North Carolina where she taught Special Education. After moving to NYC, she taught in public and Catholic schools. Finally, Jane came to make her home at Montgomery Elementary School as a remedial reading and Reading Recovery teacher. In addition, she was a college adjunct professor at The State University of New York, New Paltz for fifteen years in the Elementary Education Department, teaching both undergraduate and graduate classes. Jane continued her education as a student in the English department at SUNY, New Paltz. While a student of English, she traveled to Key West, Kentucky, the Bahamas, France

and Italy, presenting research and students' work with Ernest Hemingway, Elizabeth Madox Roberts and Richard Aldington. Jane's research and our students' work has been published in scholarly journals; a group of her students' work resides in the Hemingway Room at the JFK Library in Boston.

Jane has many hobbies. Her favorite hobbies are quilting and sewing. It was a joy for her to make baby quilts for her new grandchildren this year. She also enjoys knitting, crocheting and card making. She plans to learn weaving and culinary, as she works alongside her older brother.

Jane's future plans include living in her hometown of Greensboro, North Carolina and spending more time with her extended family. She looks forward to traveling the world with her daughter while caring for her grandchildren. Finally, she plans on publishing a teaching's guide to Ernest Hemingway's Nick Adam's stories.

Jane has passed on her love of reading to many Montgomery Elementary School children. The children will truly miss her. Her friends at MES will also miss her, especially her "exuberant" laughter and cheery smile. Finally, the Reading Department will miss their "Mother hen." May your path be paved with God's blessings, Jane! —*Your Friends at*

*Montgomery Elementary*



*Montgomery's Fab Four:*

*Mary Monaham*

*Jane Dionne*

*Julie Goldsmith*

*Patty Taegder*

## Mary Monahan Retiring

Mary Monahan, our friend and colleague, is joining us in retirement this year after thirty-five years in the Valley Central School District.

Mary attended high school at St. Vincent Ferrer High School in New York City. She moved to Gardiner in her senior year and graduated from Wallkill High School. Mary continued on to college and received her Associate's degree from Ulster Community College. Her Bachelor's and Master's Degrees were received at State University of New York at New Paltz.

Mary's teaching career began at Walden Elementary School where she taught 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. She came to Montgomery Elementary School where she has taught 2<sup>nd</sup> grade except for one year when she looped to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

Mary's love for literature and writing has inspired many of her students throughout the years at

## Julie and Patty

**T**wo of my closest friends and most dedicated colleagues at Montgomery Elementary have decided to join the ranks of "The Retired."

Both are local residents. Both are VC graduates who decided to "give back" to their district and their community. And "give back" they did, above and beyond! They have been putting children center for a composite of over 60 years of service!

After graduating from Valley Central, Patricia Taegder attended Orange County Community College, Mount Saint Mary and SUNY New Paltz to complete her course of study. Patty began her teaching career at Montgomery Elementary in 1973 and has continued exclusively at Montgomery for 34 years!

Patty had taught Kindergarten, third and first grades with equal expertise and it has always been obvious how much she has enjoyed the children.

Mrs. Taegder is an excellent teacher. I can personally attest to this excellence in teaching. As a second grade teacher, I was able to see firsthand the positive results from her students the following year.

Patty has always been loved by the children,

Montgomery Elementary School. She has also inspired many student teachers to "carry on the torch." Over the years, Mary has enjoyed putting on presentations with her classes such as "Drakestail" puppet show, "Earth Day" skits and the musicals "Peter Rabbit" and "One to Grow On."

Mary's compassion for animals is evident by the many stray cats she has taken in from her neighborhood. Her favorite place to spend free time is at the gym where she is an avid racquet ball player.

You can always tell if Mary is coming down the hallway by her bubbling voice and joyous laughter. She has always extended herself to new faculty and staff with a warm smile. MES is Mary's extended family that she loves and will miss! And, we will miss her too! Good luck in all your future endeavors, Mary! *—Joan Grippo, Montgomery*

parents and colleagues alike and she will surely be missed by all.

However, Patty recently attended her daughter Lauren's wedding and is looking forward to spending more time with her family. This she deserves.

Julie Goldsmith attended Orange County Community College and The University of Bridgeport in her course of study. She began at Valley Central as a fifth grade teacher in Maybrook before coming to Montgomery. She then taught kindergarten and has been teaching second grade since 1988. Only slightly interrupting her career for her daughter and twin sons, Julie has given 32 years of service to Valley Central!

Julie, too, has enjoyed the children and has been a wonderful asset to our district. She's looking forward to spending more quality time with her family at their up-state hide-away home. She has done a wonderful job and she, too, deserves the rest.

So although it is sad to lose such fantastic talent, it is remarkable to think of how many have benefited from such talent. I know that I can speak for my colleagues when I say that we are proud to have worked with these two wonderful ladies. They have made us and those in their profession very proud. And with that being said, we bid them farewell and wish them the very best that retirement has to offer.

*—Mary Monahan, Montgomery*

## Walden Elementary Bids a Fond Farewell to Five!

**F**ive familiar faces will be leaving the Walden Elementary Family this June. Having served the Valley Central School District and its children for a combined total of 164 years, four veteran teachers and our head custodian will begin a new journey at the end of this school year. Eddie DeGroot, Barbara Wutch, Nancy Neumann, Luba Melnik-Brown and Regina Crossley will depart with the outgoing 5th grade class of 2008.



A celebration of their careers will be held on June 20<sup>th</sup> as we wish them well in their new lives of leisure.

It will certainly be a challenge to fill the empty halls they leave behind. It is without doubt that the WES community will miss them. We asked each of them what they would miss most about Walden Elementary School...

**Regina Crossley:** *"When I think about leaving Walden there are so many things I know I will miss. I have been fortunate to work with wonderful people who have become life long friends, and I know I will miss beginning and ending each school day with them. I will miss the sights and sounds that make WES such a terrific place to work. The smiling faces, encouraging words, hugs and laughter will be irreplaceable!"*

**Eddie DeGroot:** *"I will miss coming to school and interacting and working with the kids."* When asked about his favorite jobs here, he indicated that he is always happy to perform whatever tasks are required of him whether they are things he would normally enjoy doing or not.

**Luba Melnik-Brown:** *"I will miss being a part of the friendly, caring people who fill the halls of this wonderful old building. However, I intend to return often and join in our breakfast celebrations. I will especially miss seeing the astonishment of children when they first mix yellow and blue paint, their wonder at cutting and opening their first symmetrical heart and the joy at seeing and feeling their first glazed clay bowl. I will miss the magic and love that has come to me through teaching children art."*

**Nancy Neumann:** *"There are many things that I will miss about Walden Elementary School. For thirty-three years WES has been like a second home to me. So many friends have shared important parts of my life with me. These friends have made the difficult times easier and the happy times even better. I will miss seeing them daily, but they will always remain in my heart. And what do I say about the children? They have been such an important part of my life. Along with the teaching, I will miss looking at 'every-day' events through the eyes of a child. I hope that I have spent enough time with them to keep some of those feelings with me. I look back on my years at Walden Elementary School and smile. What more could a person hope for?"*

**Barbara Wutch:** *"There are several things I will miss about working at Walden Elementary School. I will miss the 'good mornings', the 'have a nice days', and the 'enjoy the weekends' that I have heard over the years. The most important things about these words are that they are sincere and come from the most dedicated, caring and generous group of people I have ever known. I am grateful and proud to count them as my friends and will miss seeing them daily."*

—MaryEllen Raskopf Mangiamele, Walden

## Regina Crossley



**C**heery, always "put-together", third grade teacher Mrs. Regina Crossley was born Regina Flannery, the oldest of four children to Dr. and Mrs. James Flannery in Goshen, NY. A 1970 graduate of Newburgh Free Academy, Regina earned her BA at Boston College in 1974 and her Masters degree in Education from the same institution the following year.

Regina began her teaching career in September of 1975 at Berea Elementary School as a special education teacher in a self-contained classroom. In the summer of 1977, she married Doug Crossley. After three years at Berea, she and Doug began their family. When Regina returned to work after her first maternity leave (for son, Ryan), in 1979, she was assigned to the Middle School, where she taught a 15:1 class for the next three years. After their daughter, Katie was born, and Regina returned to work in September of 1983, it was to Walden Elementary where she taught a 15:1 class for twenty-one years, and more recently, a third grade class for four years, rounding out her twenty-five year "stint" at this building.

In 2004, Mrs. Crossley decided to give the regular education classroom a try. When I asked why she made the move, she said, "I've always felt that change can be positive and I was searching for a new challenge to make my final years as exciting as my initial years were." She has been teaching third grade for the past four years, and meeting the challenge with her usual grace and poise. She was granted tenure for regular education in 2006.

Regina's family is a great source of pride for her as it has been throughout her teaching career. She and Doug have three children who kept them busy as they juggled family and careers over the years. Today they are all grown and gainfully employed! Ryan, their oldest son, is a Supervisor for Sciame Construction in Manhattan, emulating his father who owns his own construction company. Katie, their second child, and only daughter is a practicing lawyer with a Manhattan firm, Goodwin Procter. Their youngest child, a son, Colin, is a broker with the Prebon Agency in Jersey City.

Mrs. Crossley retires this June, having served the students of the Valley Central School District for thirty-one years. It will be difficult to fill her shoes. Her professional demeanor paired with her obvious concern and genuine caring for students and staff alike will be sorely missed. In her retirement Regina plans to spend more time with friends and family. She hopes to divide her new-found spare time between that and volunteer work as well as "the 3 G's"; Golf, Great books and Gardening.

I asked Regina if she had any other thoughts she would like to share. Her response points to the simpler times of our district. "I was hired when there were only five special education teachers for the whole district!" she said. Today Valley Central School District employs about 70 special education teachers, none of them more dedicated or caring than Walden's own Mrs. Regina Crossley.

Wherever her future endeavors lead her, we at Walden Elementary know that our loss will be the gain of whatever group(s) of people she chooses to spend her time with. She will undoubtedly make herself as invaluable to them as she has been to us.

**Best Wishes for a long and happy retirement!**

*MaryEllen Raskopf Mangiamele, Walden*



## Barbara Wutch

**B**arbara is a great teacher! Born Barbara Morea in the Bronx, she lived there until her family moved to Washingtonville when she was fourteen years old. Her love of children and a desire to make a difference in their lives pointed her in the direction of elementary education as a profession. After graduating from Washingtonville High School in 1969, Barbara attended Orange County Community College. Later, she continued her education at SUNY New Paltz, ultimately earning her MS in Elementary Education.

Barbara began working in the Valley Central School District right away, subbing in 1974. In 1975 she began teaching her own class, grade one at Walden Elementary School. She taught first grade for one year. The following year she moved on to third grade in the same school building, and to Room 11. Room 11 has been hers ever since. How fortunate some 700 students have been over the past thirty-one years to have shared that room with her, experiencing her caring and warmth, benefiting from her knowledge and simply learning to enjoy learning!

While inhabiting Room 11, Barbara has forged many friendships, and acted as an excellent team-member at the third grade level. She worked closely for years with long-time friend and recent retiree, Connie DeSantis whose class was across the hall in Room 10. She has shared her expertise with several younger teachers in that room and currently works alongside another friend and fellow 2008 retiree, Regina Crossley. We have all been fortunate to work with her for as many or as few years as we were allotted.

Always an active member of the school community, in the early years Barbara served on various textbook committees, principal's council and professional develop-



ment teams. She also served as a building rep for the VCTA. In more recent years, she has coordinated the "Casual Day" fund-raisers at Walden Elementary, which resulted in the donation of thousands of dollars to many worthy causes including the American Cancer Society and Valley Central Scholarship Council.

As well as being an invaluable member of the Walden Elementary family, Barbara is a beloved wife and mom. She and her husband Rick live in the village of Walden. Their combined family includes Rick's daughter, Stacey, a beautiful grandson, Giani and Barbara's daughter, a former Walden Elementary School student and VC graduate, Janine. During her school years, Janine turned Barbara into a proud softball and soccer mom. Today Barbara's pride and joy is a practicing attorney, serving as an assistant D.A. in Rockland County. Last October, Janine married Drew Uszenski, another VC alumnus.

Barbara is a treasured friend. She is someone you can talk to because she listens. She is someone you can lean on when you need support because she has an unbelievable inner strength. She is someone you can trust. She is someone you can laugh with (over just about everything). Barbara has certainly touched each of our lives in a special way.

And now Barbara becomes a deserving retiree. She looks forward to spending more time with her family and traveling. She and Rick enjoy vacationing with her sister Karen and her family. Barbara has many interests; reading, cooking, gardening... (she'll even admit to shopping sprees and line dancing!), so she is sure to stay busy. Barbara, whatever it is you want to do, now you can do it whenever you want. Enjoy every minute!

**Here's to a long and happy retirement!**

—Donna Lloyd, Maybrook

—MaryEllen Raskopf Mangiamele, Walden



## Eddie DeGroot: The End of an Era

**E**ddie DeGroot has been in this building since he was 5 years old. Not as a custodian of course; it was Kindergarten that first brought Eddie to Walden. His teacher was Mrs. Schoonmaker. Ask him about her and he will share with you a story or two. Eddie has been a part of VCSD pretty much his whole life. As a matter of fact he was here even before we became a district. He attended school in several buildings throughout the area. He even attended a school where our faculty parking lot is today. Ask him and he will share with you the stories of where many of the old school buildings stood.

Today, you can still find Eddie at Walden Elementary. He's no longer in Kindergarten. Instead, he is the Head Custodian. He is our constant. Here's a little trivia for you: Did you know that Walden Elementary used to be heated with coal? Just ask Eddie. He will share with you the stories of the days when coal was delivered to our school. Not only that, ask him and he'll show you where the old coal bin was.

In 1962, Eddie was hired as a custodian by Superintendent Dr. Moran, and in 1984 he was promoted to Head Custodian. Throughout his career Eddie has worked with hundreds of teachers and administrators. Mention a name or ask him about Mr. Sparrow, Mr. Schmoll, Mrs. Mills, or Mrs. Czinkota and he'll share with you a story or anecdote. Get here early enough in the morning and you can even share a cup of coffee with him too.

It's not just stories that Eddie shares with us at Walden Elementary. Eddie is very generous with his time and knowledge. Ask Eddie for a map to be hung in your room and soon you will be teaching about the world. Ask Eddie for light bulbs and soon your room will be illuminated. Ask Eddie to set up for a concert and that night your audience will have chairs. Ask Eddie what to do when the power goes out and he can show you every circuit breaker and explain how they all work together.



Eddie has been here and taken good care of this building for a large part of his life. He has always taken great personal pride in his work, and in this building, and it shows. Because of Eddie's efforts our students are able to play safely on our well maintained playgrounds and we can all enjoy working in a clean and pleasant environment. We can be proud to come to work every day and enjoy our carefully groomed grounds.

Walden Elementary has gone through many changes over the years with additions and renovations. For the past 46 years Eddie has been here supervising and maintaining these changes. When Eddie DeGroot retires this year, Walden Elementary will be faced with a huge change that will be felt by the entire Walden family. When Eddie leaves, he will take a little of our history with him, but he will leave behind a legacy of hard work, loyalty and dedication.

**Valley Central is as much a part of Eddie as Eddie is a part of Valley Central. Eddie will be greatly missed at Walden Elementary and not soon forgotten. We wish him the best and hope he enjoys retirement as much as he has enjoyed his many years here at Walden.**

*—Kerry Devine and Nancy Phelps, Walden*

## Luba Melnik



**Y**es, Walden Elementary School will be bidding a fond, yet very sad farewell, to our master art teacher, Luba Melnik. The halls of Walden will not look the same without the wonderful works of art Walden's students have created for 36 years under the guidance and inspiration of "Ms. Melnik." Luba's colleagues will not know what to do without a dear friend who can just whip up a sketch of this or a poster of that at a moment's notice, and always with a smile. And not the Mona Lisa smile – Luba is a genuine friend to all.

A little about Luba: She was born in Austria and, as a young child, traveled across the ocean with her parents and sisters to Elmira, New York, to establish a new life in America, while learning their new language, English! Luba grew up in Elmira and her artistic talent was "discovered" by a second grade teacher who figured out that this little blondie could certainly draw and was particularly good at designing dresses. Luba may have wanted to pursue that fashion design career path but another Elmira High student, Tommy Hilfiger, beat her to the punch! So, the fashion world's loss was Valley Central's gain!

In 1972, after graduating from SUNY New Paltz, Luba was hired to teach art in the middle school. Then Luba spent some years going to the various elementary schools in Valley Central before finally finding her "home" at Walden Elementary School. Luba's creativity and talent have been evident at Walden ever since.

Kids love going to art class each week. There are always exciting projects going on in the "Art Room", not just cutting and coloring. Kids can't wait to sculpt bowls, do 3-D cave paintings, do weaving projects, experiment with watercolors and charcoal and of course, make their Egyptian mummies. Many of Luba's fellow teachers are astounded by the things that students do and create under Ms. Melnik's guidance. Luba's gentle and caring manner, as well as her discerning eye, has nurtured many budding artists at Walden. Often, Luba could find talent and ability in children who struggled with other aspects of their school or everyday lives. These kids could express themselves through the mediums that Luba exposed them to.

In her "other" life, Luba is Mrs. Peter Brown and lives in New Paltz with her family. When asked what plans she has for that well-deserved retirement, Luba has said that she is looking forward to spending lots of time with her daughter, Kate and her son, Alex and daughter-in-law, Nichole. She also plans on spending lots of time devoted to the three G's: Gardening, Gastronomy and Golf. Luba has that artistic touch when it comes to gardening and her flower beds are just magnificent. Of course, she and Peter will be devoting lots of time to finding the next-best-restaurant on the eastern seaboard, if they can squeeze that into their busy golf schedule. Luba promises she will not forget her Walden golfing friends and will try to pencil them in once in a while.

All at Walden and at Valley Central will miss Luba terribly but wish her the very best in her retirement. This new phase of Luba's life will be yet another brush stroke on a wonderful career.

### **Comments from students upon learning that "Ms. Melnik" would be retiring:**

"She can't retire!!!"

"Can't she please just stay for a few more years???"

"She makes art soooooo fun for all of us."

"She encourages us to do our best."

"She's so pretty and nice!"

"She inspires me."

"She makes art come to life!"

–Sharon Satkowski, Walden



## Nancy Neumann



I first met Nancy Neumann when my son was in her first grade class in 1982. She was Nancy Kline then and like any little boy with a pretty teacher he was smitten. I was so pleased that she was his teacher. In the beginning he wasn't so sure about school but it wasn't long before he wanted to go to school everyday and always had lots to tell when he got home. In 1986 I was pleased that my daughter also had Nancy for her first grade teacher. It was a wonderful year for her as well. Nancy made first grade fun then and she still does now. She has given every child that has walked through her classroom door something special that makes them want to come back to visit and many of her students have done just that.

Nancy was born in upstate New York and as a child her family settled in Fishkill. She attended public school and upon graduation went to SUNY New Paltz where she received both her Bachelors and Masters degrees. Nancy student taught second grade at Walden Elementary School and I guess you could say "the rest is history." Nancy subbed the first year after graduation during the 1974-75 school year. She began teaching first grade in the fall of 1975. After a year in first grade she spent 3 years in third grade and 2 years in second. She then returned to first grade, her first love and where she started, and has been there ever since.

Over the years Nancy has served on her share of committees, some of them numerous times. She has often been our first grade Principal's Council rep. and keeps us posted on all of those things we need to know. She has been our official "field trip coordinator" for many years. Her first grade colleagues at WES will miss her organizational skills. When we need to know something or can't find something Nancy always knows what or where it is. She would probably win the award (if one were given) for being the earliest to arrive on a daily basis as she comes in with the cafeteria workers and custodians. She has always been willing to lend a hand or share an idea when someone needs it.

Nancy married Frank Neumann in October of 1998 and has two step-children, Pam, John and John's wife Jennifer. Jake the cat is also part of the family. After retirement Nancy plans to relax, read and especially enjoy not getting up before daylight. Her next "job" is to help figure out where they will eventually relocate to. They plan to do some traveling; a cruise to Bermuda and a trip to the Grand Canyon are already on the calendar.

On a personal note I will miss Nancy terribly. Not only did she give two of my children such a wonderful first grade experience but she has been a tremendous help to me as a first grade teacher as well. It has been a pleasure to have worked with her and to be able to call her a friend. Enjoy your retirement, dear friend, you have earned it. On behalf of all your students, colleagues and friends at WES, both past and present, we say

**THANK YOU and HAPPY RETIREMENT!**



–Stephanie Collins, Walden

## Many Voices Say It Better

Imagine the Middle School's sixth grade hallway in September 2008. A new crop of students arrive, wide-eyed and eager, meeting their new teachers and preparing for a new experience. All will be as it's been for countless years before. However, there will be a void, of course. The teachers will know and feel it. Something is different, someone's missing...we'll realize the loss.

Linda Fame Cavanaugh is retiring in June, after 32 fruitful years as a middle school teacher. Linda has worked in the Middle School for her entire career. During this time, she has taken her job to heart with consummate compassion, creativity, and comic relief.

Although the past few years have brought some personal challenges and difficulties, Linda never let that affect her role as an educator and nurturer. And this is the true character of a professional.

Like all good teachers, she has been a beacon lighting the educational path. Everyone she's touched, colleagues and students alike, have caught the flame and carried it forward. This is her legacy. What more can we ask from a teacher and a friend?

—Maddie Brooks & Roger Flaum

*"Take some quiet time to meditate on where you have been and where you want to go."*

"I recall (not so clearly) those good ole days with Ed, Jim, and so many others. We really knew how to have fun. There's no one I'd rather be retiring with. Love you always."—Sandy Strauss

"Before I began working in the Middle School, I used to see Henia and Linda vigorously walking up and down 17K. I admired their energy and dedication (by exercising during their lunch break). Later, I learned they were actually walking to Richard's for ice cream."

—Laurie DiLorenzo

"I had so much fun when we went to dinner at Friday's, and I dropped my fork on your foot. I still have the picture of your ripped tights!"—Carolyn Thorp



"When I became a teacher, I wanted to have an impact on students. My first year teaching at VCMS, Linda introduced herself and made me feel welcome. She also told me how I was the student teacher in her daughter's first grade class and how Sarah had saved all the crafts that we did. It was a great feeling to be recognized by an experienced teacher and to have touched someone's life. I still wonder if Linda danced around doing the Native American dances we learned in that unit and beat on the drum."—Merry Zapka

"While I was student teaching, Linda told my supervisor that sixth grade was the perfect grade for me. At that time, I thought there was no way I'd ever teach sixth grade. For 3 years now, I have had the privilege of working across the hall from Linda, which hasn't been so great for her because I have a loud voice."—Derek DeVoe

"I remember when we went to Theatreworks to see "Freedom Train" on a cold, dreary winter day. We both had our coats on because it was chilly in the theater. We sat next to each other, and before we knew it, we were leaning against each other and fell asleep."—Angela Verini

Linda: You remind me so much of myself sometimes.

Dana: Why?

Linda: You're a wise guy. It's an "Onlyies" thing.

~Dana Sorbello

*(Continued on page 18)*

## Many Voices Say It Better (Continued from page 17)

“Linda and I get into the best laughing fits. Once, at a restaurant, she laughed so hard she spit her chocolate mousse right across the table onto me!”—**Carolyn Baker**

“I will never forget your kindness shortly after my mother passed away. Thank you for your wisdom, laughs, time, and advice.”—**Aileen Swift**

“The depth of a friendship – how much it means to us...depends upon how many parts of ourselves a friend sees, shares, and validates. Having Linda as my friend provided me with an opportunity to grow. True friends help us grow during difficult times, even when we prefer to stay right where we are. Follow your dreams.”—**Maddie Brooks**

“Of all my school wives, Linda’s been around the longest. She’s had my back since my first week teaching, and she’s still there, bailing me out when necessary.” —**Roger Flaum**

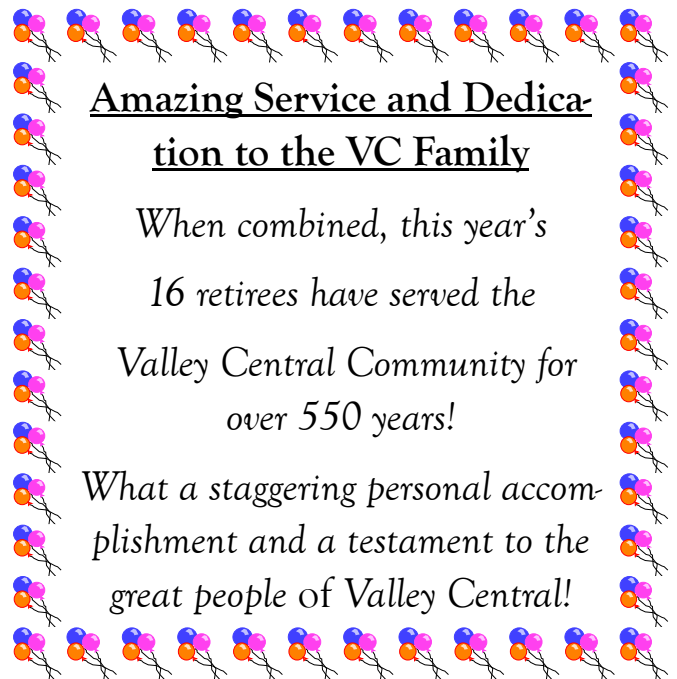
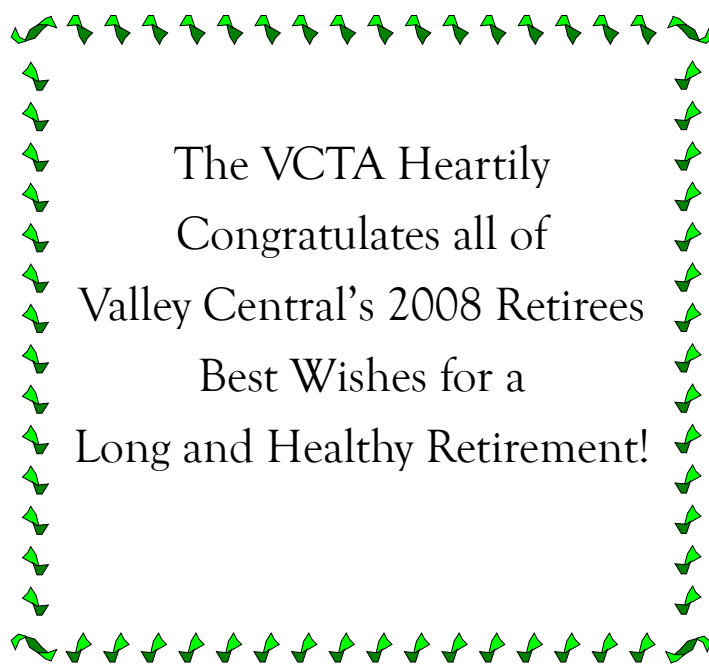
“I will always remember Linda’s funny stories and anecdotes she told during team meetings. She always kept us laughing. Linda’s laugh alone was contagious.” —**Cathy DeGraw**

“You will surely be missed! You were always willing to offer a helping hand or words of advice when needed. Enjoy your retirement...you certainly have earned it.”—**Karen Gonyo**

“Lucky Linda, we love you so...your time is now, so go-go-go!!!” —**Sean Ryder**

“Linda and I had fun teaching The Secret Garden together. There isn’t a time that passes that I don’t recall our gardening tool lesson...specifically a hoe and how we laughed, and laughed, and laughed!”

—**Lisa DeBeauvernet**



## Diana McElroy Retired from Middle School

It was a “bittersweet” farewell for Diana McElroy when she retired in December from her Guidance secretary position in the middle school. Diana belonged to the middle school family for 16 years. Prior to joining VCMS Diana worked in the Goshen School District as a paraprofessional in the cafeteria, the classroom and finally in the Attendance Department.

Diana was raised in Nanuet, New York where she attended school and met her husband Ted. Diana and Ted were married on 9/24/66. They moved to Campbell Hall in 1977 where they raised their 2 sons; Tom, who is currently working as an architect in San Francisco and Ted who is employed in sales in New York City. While her boys were growing up Diana volunteered with the PTA on many interesting projects. Diana is actively involved in her church and is also a member of the Tri County Association of Office Professionals. Her love for wildlife and animals is evident as soon as you get to know Diana. Rusty, the family dog, is also a much loved member of her family. Her yard is a haven for birds and both her and Ted have a weakness for stray cats. They claim they don’t intend to take them in but before you know it there’s a covered sleeping area and dishes of food on the back deck!

While many people enjoy some of the new television programming, Diana prefers to watch the history channel and animal planet. She would love to revisit Italy where her family’s roots are and some of her family members currently reside. Diana and Ted recently attended a couple of classes on fly fishing organized by our own Jim Allen and are looking forward to enjoying successful fishing adventures. Diana plans to continue her love for art by taking water color classes at BOCES starting in May. Some of her hobbies include knitting, crocheting, reading, gardening, and cooking. Diana hopes to spend time with her many retired friends from her years in the Goshen School District.

In addition to being the “voice” of Valley Central, Diana has been referred to by many as the heart and soul of the middle school. She touches the lives of everyone she comes in contact with. She was always an example of professionalism. Whether it’s a teacher, parent, student or co-worker, Diana displayed



patience and understanding and was willing to help in any way she could. The Guidance secretaries are the first to come in contact with a student in distress and her caring, soft-spoken manner provided a safe and comfortable place for them while they waited to speak with a counselor. At the beginning of many school years, Diana collected Monarch caterpillars and students and staff enjoyed watching them develop into beautiful butterflies which we then released. While we always got our work done there was often time for laughter and fun. Jo-Ann and I have many fond memories of working with Diana. Sometimes laughing through the stress and pressure was the only way we could accomplish what we needed to get done. We have become life-long friends and our unique working relationship is unforgettable.

Diana’s husband, Ted has been retired for a few years and they are both enjoying the time they spend together. They are involved in volunteer work at the local Humane Society and are looking forward to getting their hands dirty in their gardens with no time constraints as the nice weather arrives. When asked “what do you plan to do when you retire?” Diana always responded “anything I want”! Guess that says it all. On behalf of the middle school staff we wish Diana much happiness and a long and healthy retirement.

—Jo-Ann Capozella

—Donna Suydam

## Nellie Briggs Retires After 31 Years at VC!

**W**hile many of you know Nellie Briggs as a long-time math teacher at VCHS, this soft-spoken woman with a heart of gold is much more multi-faceted than most people realize. Upon graduation from high school, Nellie's guidance counselor offered her three career choices: nurse (couldn't stand the sight of blood), secretary (couldn't type), or teacher. Nellie had toyed with the idea of opening a diner or a café, but it was understood that members of her family went to college. Originally from LaGrange, Nellie attended Arlington High School, Dutchess Community College, Oswego and New Paltz colleges, and was hired by this school district in 1974. She has taught here her entire career and will finish her 31st and final year in June. Nellie has taught numerous levels of math, including all forms and levels of Geometry, Sequential 1, 2 and 3A, Math A, Algebra, and Consumer Math. She has outlasted six superintendents, six principals, and five department chairs. Nellie has "fond" memories of Middle States, Effective Schools, Compact for Learning, Safe Schools, and No Child Left Behind initiatives—not to mention changes in the math curriculum too numerous to mention or fathom.

While Nellie is officially a member of the Math Department at the high school, she is an honorary and beloved denizen of the Foreign Language Department, having spent over 15 years in the Haggart Wing. She often explains, as she serves up her famous mashed potato cake to the "professeurs" and "profesores," around her, that Math *is* a foreign language to most students!

Nellie began teaching in Room 227 and has shared rooms with other notable retirees, including Fred Radl (to whom she introduced colored chalk), Frank Wallner (our beloved Father Frank), Tom Knieser (King of the Computer Lab), and JoAnn Ryder (Queen of Organization). An early riser by habit, Nellie can be seen regularly arriving to school as the doors are unlocked at 6 a.m. for an early morning swim before heading to her classroom to set up for the day. In fact, she and Patty Davis used to teach a life guarding class, taking students to Stewart Air Base long before the idea of having a pool on site was even conceived.

In addition to being a dedicated teacher, Nellie has given greatly of her time. Does some group need help? Count on Nellie to be there. Nellie has helped with setup of the Senior-Faculty BBQ since its inception, and can be seen in the cafeteria bright and early helping whip up the end-of-the-year faculty breakfast. Each year Nellie not only bakes and helps clean up after our Ad Hoc Holiday Party, but also delivers the leftovers to an area church or soup kitchen. In and around Fishkill, Nellie has helped the needy and elderly clean up and fix their homes through the "Rebuilding Together" program, assisted with John Jay HS sports dinners, and volunteered as a Girl Scout leader.

Nellie has fond memories of her early years at the high school and the TGIF parties. She has enjoyed the resurgence of socializing at the high school, especially the payday "Coffee Talks." Nellie has started to clean out her file cabinets and yes..... throw out those mimeo math sheets!!!

Nellie will miss the positive energy of most of the students, many of her colleagues, and the VC pool. She will not miss being surrounded by all the shades of blue, the bells, raising standards by lowering the passing grade to 40 percent, grading papers at 10 p.m. and on the weekends, and the Sunday night "get ready for school" routine.

All of us at the high school wish Nellie a happy, healthy, and long retirement with her husband, Rich. Nellie is looking forward to the wedding of her son, Preston, in September, and the return of her daughter, Sally, from her two-year stint in the Peace Corps in Samoa in December. Happy traveling and relaxing in your retirement Nellie—we will miss you!  
*—Liz Papesca and Diane Ruggles, HS*



## Peg Kennedy: A Class Act

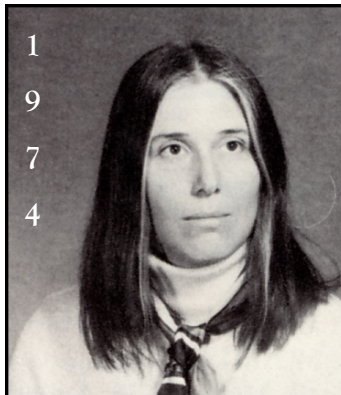
**W**hen I came to Valley Central in 1985, I was fortunate enough to have been surrounded by exceptional veteran teachers who would forever serve as my role models. Among them was Margaret “Peg” Kennedy—teacher and chairperson of the Art Department. From the beginning, Peg was always a highly respected teacher who, when she spoke, people listened—listened because what she had to say or offer was always in everyone’s best interests.

Whether she was in the classroom, faculty room, or at Educational Council meetings, her poise, self-control, and knowledge always radiated through. In 1989, Peg approached me to be a chaperone on the spring trip to Europe. I eagerly agreed and went on the trip with Peg, Patti Lunden, and Bob Mooney. (Chris Pelella was a student on that first trip!!) Never in my mind would I think that 20 years and 18 trips later.....that I still would be traveling with this wonderful woman who I have come to know and admire more and more each year! I will never forget the countless memories that have been created from every trip. From these memories, I can get Peggy to laugh to the point of tears, and she knows it! I can always confide in her and get advice on almost any aspect of life.

Most people see Peggy whizzing through the hallways, but I wonder if they really know who she is. As Peg retires from Valley Central, we lose one of the last remaining pillars of the old Valley Central—the Valley Central we loved—the people—the passion—the unselfish concern for others. Peg is a role model that so many of us aspire to be like.

Peg has found new meaning in her life with her fiancé, Bruce, her two wonderful daughters, and two grandsons that will, no doubt, keep her busy. I truly wish Peg all the best in retirement. I will never forget how she has enriched my life and the lives of so many others.

—Rob Sassi, High School



## A Fond Farewell to Peggy

**P**eggy Kennedy arrived in the Town of Crawford 35 years ago. She was 25 years old, had a BFA from Pratt Institute and was a new mother. With her first husband, Patrick, Peggy bought a barn which would become her home. Their daughter, Gretchen was about 6 months old, and Patrick had accepted a job as an Orange County Community College professor of art. Peggy heard they needed an art teacher down the road at a high school named Valley Central. Before she knew it, she had accepted a job which would be her job for the next 35 years. In those years she would have her second daughter, Teegan; and although her first marriage ended, she would spend 14 years with Paul O’Reilly until his untimely death in 1993. In 2000, Peggy would discover that she had a benign brain tumor. She underwent successful surgery to have it removed. Peggy weathered the storms in her life with grace seeking to find lessons to learn and share with others around her to help them weather the challenges that they faced.

Peggy began teaching studio art and crafts with Jan Gridley as her department chair, and Carol Maas as a colleague. She would go on to teach Drawing and Painting, AP Art and Ceramics and Advanced Ceramics. Shortly after Jan’s retirement, Peggy would assume the role of department chairperson. It was a role that she would have for most of her career at VCHS. Under Peggy’s guidance the high school art department would grow from three to its present seven teachers. Peggy oversaw the creation of many courses, and the redesigning of all the art rooms. No matter how many art teachers have come and gone through those 35 years Peggy had a clear vision of creating a department that offered fine art and design that would allow students to grow as artists and realize their dream of studying art professionally.

Peggy always spent time getting to know her students and coming up with creative ways to engage their interest. Over the course of her 35 years, Peggy has taught students to hook rugs and weave on a

(continued on page 22)

## A Fond Farewell to Peggy (Continued from page 21)

floor loom, to draw and paint live bunnies, to write letters to themselves to be opened in the future, and to sculpt Santas, angels and wizards in clay. Besides teaching, Peggy also started an arts/crafts club in the early part of her career. The major event for that club was to visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Soho each year on a Saturday afternoon. Once after a food fight, Peggy organized a school wide food drive. After the collapse of the EC wall, Peggy organized a school wide fundraiser to plant a memorial garden, organizing art students to design and plant it. In 1991, Peggy began the VCHS chapter of the National Art Honor Society. That year she held the first Senior show which was senior work displayed in the hallway outside the art room for a few days. This evolved into the Festival of the Arts which features a showing of Senior and department work. Peggy is best known for her European trips. She has been taking students and several teachers to Europe for Spring break for over 25 years. Peggy hoped that the trips gave students an opportunity to see the world beyond Valley Central and would inspire a sense of curiosity about the rest of the world.

Peggy has always taken on new projects and looks forward to planning a wedding—for herself—this fall. Peggy will marry Bruce Terwilliger in October. She will also be spending more time with her daughters, grandchildren and in her studio. As we wish Peggy the best life has to offer we as a department would like to share our favorite memories...

*“I met Peggy as a freshman, she was my Studio art teacher. She was a caring teacher and part of the reason I decided to study art and become an art teacher. When I returned as a teacher, Peggy became a big part of my professional and personal life. She planned my wedding and baby showers, and was the first friend to hold my daughter on her birthday. She stood by me at the loss of a brother, a father and stayed by my side during my surgery to remove breast cancer. She has been an influence on much of my life and has taught me many lessons. I look forward to the challenge of carrying on the high standard that she established for our department and am happy that Peggy will be moving into an exciting new stage of her life.”* —Patti Lunden

*“After 35 years of teaching, Peggy Kennedy will leave us with some fond memories. I have learned a lot from her as a teacher and I have always noticed how kindhearted she is towards her students. Getting to know them personally is important to her, and she really cares about them.*

*Her love of travel is something that she has tried to instill in the students who went to Europe for many years. To realize we are part of something global is important and there is a whole world out there outside of our comfort zone to learn from. One of the moments that stands out in my mind is when I told her about my fear of heights after going to the top of Blarney Castle in Ireland. After my experience, I figured I just wouldn't do something like that again. Her response was that she makes sure to do the things she fears until she doesn't fear them anymore. Those are words to live by.*

*So now I wish her the best in her new life after retirement. She has much to look forward to. Time for family and creating art, the ability to travel whenever she would like and plenty of time to dust all the stuff she collects.”* —Karen Teig

*“I haven't known Peggy for very long, but in the short time I have known her I have learned how intelligent and creative she is. Being that this is my first year at Valley Central, honestly I was a little nervous and anxious about teaching at the high school level. I found that I could always turn to any one of the art teachers for help and advice.*

*Peggy always seemed to know the right thing to say when I wasn't sure what to do in different situations. She always gave me great advice, not only about discipline issues or classroom management, but also helpful hints for art projects.*



*Continued on page 23)*

## A Fond Farewell to Peggy (Continued from page 22)

She has so many creative ideas and knows so much about what she is teaching that I am glad I got to be a part of her last year, here at Valley Central. Hopefully I will be able to continue some of Peggy's art traditions, the knowledge I've gained, and her creativity with my future students!"

–Trisha Appel

"I met Peggy while I was a long term sub for Patti Lunden because her son John was about to be born into this world. Peg taught in the classroom next to me and I felt that she trusted me because she never bothered me. She let me figure out what I needed to do and when all was said and done it was her recommendation that was the reason I am teaching here today. Peg was a phenomenal influence in my daughter Lizzy's art life. As her painting teacher she set the bar for how high she could go and Lizzy produced. Frequently, Lizzy, who is now in her senior year in college, still refers to how influential Peggy was. As a friend she is irreplaceable. As a mentor she is irreplaceable." –Jacqui Schneider

"I first met Peggy when I was a timid sophomore at VC. She immediately took me under her wing and mentored me throughout the remainder of my high school career. I remember how disappointed she and the other art teachers were when I said that I wanted to be a vet...little did I know at the time that they would be the inspiration that led me to where I am today. When prom time rolled around, she asked me who I was going with and I had no idea. She and Patti Lunden, the dynamic art duo, made it their mission to find me "the date". They pulled out the big picture and started narrowing down the choices. Even though I ended up finding the lucky man myself, I think a lot of their offer and efforts.

After I graduated, I made sure to pop in and see Peggy on a yearly basis and show her the work that I've been doing in college. She always encouraged me to come back and show my portfolio at the festival of the arts. When I finally got my masters and teacher's certification, they kept in touch with me so that I would be notified as soon as a position became available.

Once at VC as a teacher myself, Peggy became a mentor, lunch buddy, and traveling companion. At first it was strange for me to call her by her first name, but I'm finally used to it now. Some would say that is due to the



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amount of respect you have for a person.

Here are just some of the things I will miss about Peggy... how she tied in her love of animals into almost every project...her words of wisdom....you name it, she knows about it... the beaver lawsuit (one of the most stupid law suits imaginable)... tips on the

newest Dr. Oz advice... her ability to juggle her finances... Christmas parties at her house... her e-bay collections (she taught me all I need to know)... and childhood stories of her parents being giant bears that locked her in her room at night.

Mostly, I will miss seeing her each day...but I am happy that she spending her time on new advantages...I look forward to lunch dates!" –Star Langlitz



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She is a friend and mother to many  
Has given a great deal of herself to countless  
Teacher for 35 years, learner for eternity  
She has endured tremendous pain and grew from it  
A life of giving is now metamorphosis into a life of living  
It is now time to truly live your life unlike you have lived it before...

Enjoy!...

HMP

(–Carol Ann Kronyak)

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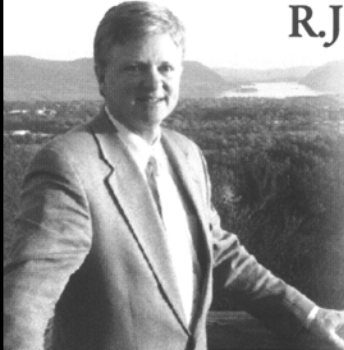
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## On Retirement: A Reflection

In my youth, we often sang a song that went like this: “The bear went over the mountain and what do you think he saw? He saw another mountain, etc. etc.” I’ve been thinking about that antique ditty as I contemplated the upcoming retirement of some of our colleagues. I’ve found that I’m a lot like the bear and the mountains are akin to the adventures and challenges of retired life. The retirees-to-be have certainly conquered mountains in the past: piles of paper work, state testing, yet another five year plan and on and on. The mountains of retirement are easier climbs: travel, sleeping late, taking courses for fun and not for jumping to the next column. Wonderful adventures, pleasant challenges lie ahead. Dryden once said that “none but the



brave deserve the fair.” You have been brave; now you deserve the fair: a happy, healthy, care-free retirement. We welcome you into the ranks of the retirees!

—Kevin McFadden,  
Retiree Representative

## ATTENTION NEW RETIREES!! STAY CONNECTED TO THE VCTA

Don’t forget that when you retire, you are still a part of the VCTA. Retirees are blessed to have Kevin McFadden and Arline Friedman representing them on the Executive Council.

Arline is the retiree VOTE-COPE Coordinator. Mac organizes the Retiree Luncheon and he mails the ECHOES out to retirees. He is also a regular at Board of Education meetings. Retirees could not ask for better representation!

Please go to [www.vcta.net](http://www.vcta.net) to access the new retirees preference form. You can select to receive the VC ECHOES next year via regular mail or e-mail. Please fill out the form and send it to Meghan Riley, HS or e-mail me with your preference and address at: [mrilley@vcmail.oubores.org](mailto:mrilley@vcmail.oubores.org). We want to help you stay connected!

## Remember When Our Retirees Were New Teachers... ?

Some of us aren’t old enough to remember the world as it was 30 years ago! These are some of pop culture’s highlights of 1978, when most of our retirees were in the early stages of their careers and still mastering the craft.

