

VC ECHOES

Volume 11, Issue 2

Valley Central Teachers' Association

October, 2008

NYSUT-ENDORSED CANDIDATES



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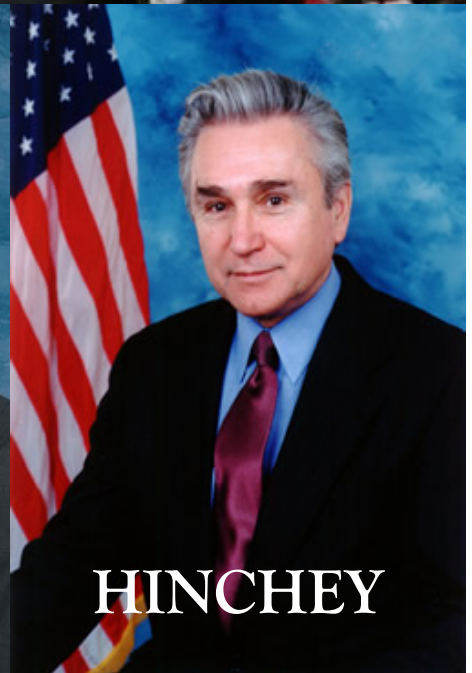
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Volume 11, Issue 2

October, 2008

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VC Echoes is
a NYSUT
and AFT
Award-
winning

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Want to Contribute to the Next Issue?

*Article contributions or Letters to the Editor
should be sent to
Meghan Riley, HS, by November 21st, 2008*

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

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

NYSUT-Endorsed Candidates

From top left: State Assembly Candidates: District 96 Richard Randazzo, District 97 Annie Rabbitt, District 98 Aileen Gunther, District 100 Tom Kirwan,

State Senate Candidates: District 39 William Larkin, District 42 John Bonacic

State Assembly: photos left
District 96: Richard Randazzo
District 97: Annie Rabbitt
District 98: Aileen Gunther
District 100: Tom Kirwan

State Senate:
District 39: William Larkin, Jr.
District 42: John Bonacic



Perception is Everything

This summer the Times-Herald Record (July 20, 2008) reported that the Hasidic community had secured \$10.5 million in federal and state grant money to construct a women's center for their community. The article stated that, "women's services center stands as a testament to the grant-seeking ingenuity and political savvy of the leaders of this community of 21,000 people". Many residents of Orange County are left wondering why or how this could be achieved. No matter what your personal opinion of the Kiryas Joel community, credit must be given to them for their ability to sway political favor. Just how do they do it?

Without diving into the political workings of that community, one thing is certain, perception is everything. How do they do it? Any resident of Orange County will answer, "they vote in a block". Perception is everything. But is there any guarantee that every Hasidic who walks into a voting booth votes the way everyone thinks he/she is going to? It's all about perception. If we all believe that this community can secure \$10.5 million in federal and state grants, they are successful in their perception.

Perception is more important now than ever. George W. Bush leaves office after his eight years with America in \$456 trillion in debt and the stock market in crisis. Our economy is not better off than eight years ago. In the last few weeks we have watched a global economic meltdown that started here in the US under his watch. The VCTA was relieved in June to have the contract settled. In light of the last few weeks we are even more relieved to have our contract settled. The rumblings about the next budget year are beginning as we wait and watch Albany deal with our current year. Whatever decisions that the national and state legislatures make in this economy, children must continue to be educated. Educators must continue to be paid. Schools will need to be run. But perception is everything.

Why would the TH Record feel it so necessary to publish all the payroll records of local school districts last week? Because the Record knows that schools are an easy mark to arouse local emotion. Teachers suffer from the perception of the public

who see our jobs as easy, with few hours and long paid vacations. And the Record knows that schools are easy to cut since they are the only public budget that taxpayers can vote on. Students are a constituent group who cannot vote. They need our voice to speak for them. It will certainly be tempting to find local relief to the economic situation by blaming schoolchildren for needing an education. It is important to be long sighted in this economy. Pundits continue to say that we must hold tight in this market for the long haul. The same is true of education. We must hold on and look far to the horizon so rash decisions are not made to find temporary and short-sighted solutions.

Imagine how successful NYSUT members could be if we could command that same level of perception as the Hasidic community. Perception becomes reality. Our VOTE-COPE funds are used to fund NYSUT political activity in local, state and national politics. By law, these funds are separate from our dues and made by the voluntary contribution of our members. Our funds carry forward lobbying efforts that impact issues that are important to educators and healthcare workers. They impact issues that are important to unions, children and social justice. Can we guarantee that NYSUT members will be perceived as a force of political sway?

The way to do this is to make our voices heard and to create a perception of a united vote that will carry the political sway needed to make a difference for issues important to us as educators. We can own that sway, but only if members will recognize and appreciate the recommendations of the NYSUT slate and the reason behind them. NYSUT makes recommendations for the election of candidates based on their education record. VOTE-COPE, contrary to popular perception, endorses candidates on both sides of the aisle. As the largest state union, NYSUT is in a position to be envied for our political savvy. But more importantly, NYSUT is in a position to make the voices of our future heard as we take the needs of the next generation into consideration as we enter the voting booth this November 4th.

—Patti Lunden, HS

Excellence, Thy Name is Valley Central!

Debra Calvino Wins Excellence Award

Imagine an educator who goes above and beyond for his/her students. Imagine a teacher who is willing to spend countless hours outside the classroom to give his/her students the best possible education inside the classroom. Imagine someone who considers each student of highest value and will do whatever it takes to reach even the most difficult one. Sound idealistic? Sounds LARGER THAN LIFE? Maybe so, but a very SMALL person meets these criteria and a lot more!

Debra Calvino is a teacher who has impacted literally thousands of students both in and out of the classroom. I have never seen a teacher take their role as educator, mentor and even friend more seriously. She puts her whole heart into each task every day. She has taken students who did everything possible not to learn and found unique and creative ways to reach them. She has taken students who didn't even believe in themselves and shown them dignity and respect and a path to success. She sets high standards for each of her students but also faithfully guides them to meet these expectations.

Deb Calvino has had a great influence on all those around her. She balances the many demands of being a department supervisor and yet finds time to listen and take care of any personal issues. In my twenty plus years at Valley Central, I don't think anyone has affected me to the degree that she has. I have consistently watched her treat each student as if they were the only one that matters. Her determination to reach every student is unmatched. Over the years, I have gleaned a lot from her and in my mind she has set the bar for what a truly exceptional educator is. She daily demonstrates true professionalism and a passion for education. I cannot think of a more deserving recipient for the Dean's Award for Excellence in Teaching. Congratulations, Deb! I am proud to have you as my mentor and friend.

—Gail Quitoni, HS, Math teacher



John Hunter Wins Excellence Award

Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, John Hunter received the Dean's Award for Excellence in Administration, one of three VC recipients this year. Mr. Hunter has worn just about every hat you can wear in education over the course of his 35 year (and counting!) career.

John started as a teacher in 1973 under Principal Vic Haggar, who hired him the day before convocation! He taught at both VCHS and VCMS in the social studies departments. Mr. Hunter started working on his administrative degree very slowly. Once he finished, an opportunity presented itself at Minisink Valley: an assistant principal position. Since there were no similar prospects at the time at VC, John accepted. Getting his first experience in another district helped to give Mr. Hunter a fresh perspective on administration.

Once there was an opening at VC, John jumped at the chance to come home and has been here ever since. He has been an assistant principal, principal, Assistant and Deputy Superintendent at Valley Central School District. (cont'd on pg 5)

John Hunter (cont'd from page 4)

When you speak to him about his work at VC, it is plain to see that he loves this district and community.

In fact, Mr. Hunter thinks of VC as the “best kept secret in the Hudson Valley.” He loves to work with his colleagues in the Valley Central community. This is especially evident in his work with the district-wide curriculum committees that he established to open the lines of communication across our many buildings. John works tirelessly with these committees to try to align curriculum, develop new ideas, and facilitate dialogue between teachers at all levels. He has shown that he is willing to work with all of the stakeholders in education to ensure maximum benefit for all of our students. These are the marks of an excellent administrator.

It is wonderful to see such dedication and loyalty to VC rewarded with this prestigious award. Mr. Hunter demonstrates excellence in administration by keeping an open mind, being flexible, and exemplifying a strong commitment to the community as well as the school district.

—Meghan Rilley, HS, Soc. St.



*VC's Excellence in Education Award Winners:
John Hunter, Debra Calvino, and Pasquale Iorlano*

Pasquale Iorlano Wins Excellence Award

In what will most likely be his final year as a member of the Board of Education, Pasquale Iorlano has been awarded the Award for Excellence in School Board Service. A fine honor for a fine man who has served the Valley Central School District in one capacity or another since 1963!

Shortly after teaching at VCHS for 34 years, Mr. Iorlano was elected to a seat on the Board of Education. He has served on the Board for ten years. Pasquale decided to get involved in order to give back to the district that nurtured him throughout his life. As a grandfather, father, teacher, and lifelong community member, he understands how important education is to the children of Valley Central and what it takes to meet their needs while attempting to minimize the burden to local taxpayers.

Mr. Iorlano is a team player who will voice his concerns if he does not agree. He advocates for the children and devotes his time and energy to guiding the district and the students to success. Pasquale has had the unique opportunity to view education from the classroom as both student and teacher, as an administrator when he was summer school principal, and now as a member of the school board. He has made a selfless commitment to the Valley Central School District that demonstrates dedication, perseverance, and a spirit of volunteerism which is unmatched—the embodiment of excellence.

—Meghan Rilley, HS, Soc. St.

Congratulations...

to all of our Dean's Award for Excellence winners! We are so blessed to count you among our ranks. Your dedication and loyalty to Valley Central are shining examples to all of us.

Your Pension is Safe

(Sept. 30, 2008) – If the recent reports regarding the financial markets have you concerned, rest assured your NYSTRS retirement benefit is guaranteed and safe.

Funds used to pay your benefits come into the Retirement System through employer contributions, member contributions and investment income. NYSTRS invests the employer and member contributions throughout a member's working career and accumulates the assets necessary to provide a fully funded benefit in retirement. This method is called *advance funding*.

Because the Retirement System invests in a well-diversified portfolio, when one company or asset class underperforms, the stability of the other asset classes offset that negative performance. The System's Retirement Board, staff and outside consultants continually monitor our asset allocations and make adjustments as necessary.

The bottom line: Sufficient funds are on hand to pay promised NYSTRS benefits. For more information about the status of public pension funds in today's economy, see the recent [press statement](#) issued by the National Association of State Retirement Administrators (NASRA) and the National Council on Teacher Retirement (NCTR). Highlights from the statement include:

- Public pension fund benefits are safe and secure because they are highly diversified and invested with a long-term focus.
- Pension fund investments in companies making headlines are just a small fraction of their overall portfolios.
- Public pension funds are designed to withstand market fluctuations as we are currently experiencing and have successfully endured many other past financial upheavals.
- State and local pension funds have the liquidity needed to pay promised benefits for the near term and the accumulated assets and funding mechanisms to pay them for the long term.

Pension funds provide essential liquidity and capital to the financial markets, helping to aid their recovery. *From NYSTRS website.*

Got Questions?!?

If you have any questions that you would like to ask the NYSTRS Delegate Board/Staff at the upcoming NYSTRS Annual Meeting and Election, please send them to VCSD NYSTRS representative Patti Lunden, HS by November 7th.



UNION SPOTLIGHT



Know Your Contract:

Want a new challenge? Need a change of pace? Did you know that you can request a transfer to a vacant or new position?

Article VIII, Section D on page 9 of your Collective Bargaining Agreement states:

"A member may submit to the Human Resources Administrator a request for transfer which will remain active for one (1) year from the date of such notice unless withdrawn by the member. There shall be no limitations on the number of such requests a member may submit."

See Article VIII for more information!

In the News...

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 September 12th and September 25th editions of *New York Teacher*.

Mandatory Overtime (NYT, 9/12/08, p 8): Governor Patterson signed a "bill that will end mandatory overtime for nurses in hospitals and other health care facilities. The law will go into effect next July 1." Although this is a step in the right direction, more legislation is needed; the problem with the bill is that it does not stipulate the maximum number of hours that can be worked. Historically, nurses have been required to fill in overtime shortages on short notice even when administrators knew well in advance of the impending shortage. Nurses have had to leave their own children unsupervised when management has forced them to remain "at the end of the scheduled work shift." This practice has led to overly fatigued nurses caring for patients and, of course, "driving home exhausted, unsafe at the wheel." These types of strong arm tactics are why unions exist. Nurses have come a long way with regard to compensation and benefits, but the battle for other forms of fair treatment is too often a chronic struggle.

Privatizing Public Jobs (NYT, 9/25/08, p 2): After a Long Island district attempted to privatize its bus services, putting 41 local union bus drivers out of work, "an administrative law judge with the Public Employment Relations Board...ordered the school district to reinstate the union drivers; in April, a ruling by PERB affirmed that order." Despite their legal loss, the district is appealing the PERB decision. Apparently, loyalty to local workers does not exist in this particular district. Why not eliminate all of the local jobs that pay local taxpayers who in turn contribute to the local tax base to keep local infrastructure and school running properly?



*Brown Tackles
the Issues*

Education and Labor—How They Stand (NYT, 9/12/08, p. 5): The NYT summarized Senator Obama's and Senator McCain's views on issues important to NYSUT members. These topics included Education, Labor, Health Care, Taxes, Iraq and Energy. I encourage each of you to avoid blind partisan voting by evaluating these candidates based on their views and promises. It is important to note that John McCain has a 17% voting record with the AFL-CIO. This means that McCain voted against labor legislation important to organized labor 83% of the time. For a detailed summary of the candidates' views, visit www.vcta.net and follow the links to the AFT's campaign site. Once you log in, select the link "Candidate Comparison Sheets and Mailers" in the right column.

—Tim Brown, HS

Richard H. Aderson

"Make A Difference"

2008 Award

Orange-Ulster BOCES is seeking
nominations for the
Richard H. Aderson Award.

If you wish to nominate someone,
please visit www.vcta.net to
download the nomination form.

Go to the announcements page and
select the link.

Project Linus

Providing Security Through Blankets

Over the past five years at Berea Elementary School after the second quarter has ended, a group of teachers get together for two hours after school to do something special. The teachers cut 8½ inch muslin squares, cut freezer paper to fit the muslin squares, iron the muslin to the freezer paper, count the prepared 8½ inch muslin squares which reach a total of between 350 to 400 squares.

What is special about that you might ask? It's the beginning steps of making a quilt for Project Linus. A quilt that is filled with love which will comfort a child in crisis, injured at a hospital, or in a shelter.

Each class picks their own theme and each student draws and colors their own 8½ inch square. The squares are then sewn by volunteers and just like that you have a quilt. At Berea the quilts are displayed in the school until the end of June. The quilts are then delivered to Project Linus to be distributed to children in crisis.

The quilts the classes make go to children that are in hospitals, shelters, social service agencies, or to a child in crisis. The Project Linus mission is to provide love, a sense of security, warmth and comfort to children who are seriously ill, traumatized or otherwise in need, through the gift of a new, homemade blanket. Project Linus is a 100% volunteer program. Project Linus provides a rewarding and fun service opportunity for interested people in local communities, for the benefit of children.

Are you up to the challenge to help a child?

There are people who will say, "I don't know how to sew". Project Linus knows that and is willing to take your donations of muslin, freezer paper, batting, fabric, yarn, fabric markers or fleece. No sewing involved there.



Center Photo: First grade quilt entitled, *Self Portrait*

Do you know a child that needs a blanket? Need more information on how you can have your class make squares for a quilt? Contact me at edavis@vcmail.ouboces.org

For more information on Project Linus visit the Orange County web site at: www.orgsites.com/ny/projectlinusocny, or the national website www.projectlinus.org.

—Erin Davis, VCTA Treasurer,
Berea and MS, Physical Education



Above: Kite Quilt created by third graders

Professional Responsibility

Our latest Collective Bargaining Agreement includes the words “professional responsibility.” These words are embedded in Article 15, Section G of the Contract which reads as follows: “Both the District and Association agree that professional responsibility is a core value within the Valley Central School District and vital to District growth. This value cannot always be managed within the limits of the established work day. Notwithstanding, it is understood and appreciated that members will find themselves involved in projects and efforts that stretch beyond the normal and expected. This is the nature of excellence in education and what propels this District.”

First, let me state that the Valley Central staff models this core value better than any other school staff in our area. My monthly meetings with other Orange County presidents and, of course, my direct knowledge of your commitment to children and education leave no doubts in my mind as to the accuracy of this boast. We are certainly professionals, which is defined as a person who is expert at his or her work. Responsibility is defined as a person or thing for which one is responsible. A student is a responsibility to his/her teachers. *Now remember...a student is a person...not a thing...even those few students who may try our patience on a daily basis are not things.* Responsibility is also defined as reliability or dependability. Staff members in Valley Central have consistently modeled the characteristics of reliability and dependability while meeting their professional responsibility to this community and its children. If the very nature of being a professional is to be expert at our work, then to be or do otherwise would certainly make us unprofessional. We were once reminded from this very stage that every year our community sends us the best that they have. They don’t keep the best ones home. In turn, we must also send these children home to their families with our best efforts having also been extended. This is the essence of professional responsibility.

What, however, constitutes our best efforts? Every few years District and Association leaders meet to negotiate new terms and conditions of employment. We work diligently to improve language that will define responsibilities and improve our profession. But in the end, what is written into a contract are just words that may or may not have meaning to the parties involved. The truth is that what truly defines excellence can never be written into a Collective Bargaining Agreement. For example:

- What can mere words written within a Contract do to instill within a disgruntled or lackluster employee a desire or passion for the work they have been hired to do?
- What can mere words written within a Contract do to instill within a disgruntled or lackluster employee a love for children, learning, teaching or education?
- What can mere words written within a Contract do to instill within a disgruntled or lackluster employee a willingness to work collaboratively with colleagues, supervisors or subordinates?
- How can mere words written within a Contract change narcissism into altruism?

Excellence is not created within the words of a Contract. Excellence is an evolutionary process that combines and transforms talent and passion into what we commonly call professional responsibility.

Some people, primarily those who work outside the education profession, believe public school jobs are easy. This may be because they see that teachers are scheduled for 187 working days per year for seven hours per day. This inaccurate perception of the extensive responsibilities inherent in our profession can, at times, infuriate us. Why is it that some people outside the circle of education cannot or will not recognize the extensive efforts and, at times, sacrifices that must continually be made to be successful in a profession for which the demands are increasing annually?

(cont'd on page 10)

Professional Responsibility (cont'd from page 9)

There are, of course, the obvious generic reasons: the need to find a scapegoat for student and parental shortcomings or the fact that public employees have some level of job security even in the most trying of economic times. These generic reasons, however, are generally out of our immediate control. If we follow the same advice that we would likely offer our students, we would be left with the following plan of action: Let go of the things we cannot control and focus our efforts on those things that we can change.

It is my belief that there are two primary reasons for some of the public's misguided and inaccurate perceptions regarding education and educators that we, as educators, can actually address. First, we must do the little things—the daily things—consistently and correctly before outsiders will be inclined to look at or assess the big picture. Second, we are only as strong—pragmatically and perceptually—as our weakest link. Whether we like it or not, we will always be judged in the public by our weakest, laziest and most disgruntled member. History teaches us that a lifetime of success will often be overshadowed by a single mistake. For example, President William Clinton's personal indiscretions will forever overshadow his political accomplishments. President George W. Bush's...well, there's really not enough time...let it suffice for me to say that President Bush got his wish—I'm confident that we can all agree, in part, that it is important to *"educate our childrens."* Unfortunately, perception is reality to the perceiver. If the public's perception is negative, each of us owes it to ourselves and to our colleagues to help change that perception through personal and professional growth. Each of us has a responsibility to look in the mirror and ask the question: Do I model behaviors that represent the best qualities of professional responsibility? This question should not instill within us an unhealthy form of self-doubt; instead, it should lead to a healthy form of self-reflection that promotes personal and professional growth.

Some questions relevant to self-reflection are simple, concrete and measurable. Others are more

complex, highlighting the fact that, although successful teaching and learning are measurable activities to some extent, teaching and learning are also art forms with many variables. The answers we discover in response to our self-reflection questions, however, may be a clear indication as to why our profession continually struggles with community perceptions. To illustrate, I would like to share with you some of the questions I have asked myself throughout the years. I have divided them into four categories.

Category 1—Being There: Do I arrive to work on time? Do I remain until the end of the official work day? Do I think students, parents, colleagues or supervisors fail to notice my actions with regard to these two questions? I can think of only 2 reasons that these patterns of behavior could exist: (1) I have a complete lack of concern for professional responsibility, or (2) my work is always completed within the confines of the on-site work day. If the second reason is accurate, I should certainly reference reason number one for self-reflection and ask myself: How is the community's perception wrong regarding my work day and work year? Remember—we are all judged by our weakest link...it is not fair...but that is our reality.

Category 2—A Call to Duty: Do I take my non-teaching duties and responsibilities seriously? Do I make myself available outside regular class hours for students in need? Do I supervise the hallways or address other issues seemingly unrelated to my classroom or do I think such responsibilities are beneath me? How do my actions with regard to these responsibilities impact the community's perceptions of me and my profession? Imagine the following scenario: You and your family are traveling by car—your car breaks down and suddenly you are stranded on a busy and dangerous highway—your vehicle is disabled and you have young children in the back seat with no safe place to exit them. A police officer drives by—doesn't even stop. You assume he just did not notice you. You dial 911 on your cell phone and are connected to the officer's dispatcher.

(cont'd on pg 11)

Professional Responsibility (cont'd from page 10)

You are told that police officer's professional responsibility is to "catch criminals" and that it would be a waste of time for him/her to perform menial tasks involving disabled vehicles. How would this impact your perceptions of this officer and, by association, his profession? Yes...police officers are also judged by their weakest link. Being a public servant is a special job. It is these very actions that some perceive to be beneath them that often define us in the eyes of the public, in the eyes of those outside the education circle, as caring or callous. Which perception do we wish to nourish?

Category 3—Take Control: Do I take my curriculum responsibilities seriously enough? Do my students and their parents respect me for my work? Do complaints or the lack of complaints stem from responsible professionalism? Neither of these responses would necessarily be indicative of my success or failure. Two very different types of teachers might receive multiple complaints: (1) those teachers who are disgruntled and lackluster and (2) those teachers who are taskmasters and refuse to enable or accept student failure. Likewise, there are two very different types of teachers who might receive few or no complaints: (1) those teachers who strive for excellence from both their students and themselves on a daily basis and (2) those who are lackluster, demanding little or nothing from their students regardless of the degree of difficulty inherent in the course level... students tend to not complain if they don't have to do anything or if they will earn an A with little or no effort. There exist easy classes in which much learning takes place. There are also difficult classes in which no learning takes place. The class title, type of class or the class's inherent degree of academic difficulty should have no bearing on the teaching and learning that takes place within that classroom. We all can and do make a difference in the lives of our students. I have often told my students when they complain about one of us that they are in control of their destiny; they decide how much they will or will not get out of a class based on what they are willing to put into that class. How can we possibly judge

ourselves, our teaching or our professionalism, by any other standard? Like our students, we must also accept that we are in control of our destiny. We get out of our profession what we put into it. We are as professional as we choose to be. We are as responsible as we choose to be.

Category 4—Me vs. We: A final question I have posed for self-reflection is: Do I have a good rapport with my colleagues? Sometimes I pretend that this is unimportant. I have come to the conclusion that anyone who makes this claim, including myself, is deceiving him or herself. The most obvious and common reason for disillusionment and bitterness is feeling unimportant, insignificant or unappreciated. This can only happen in association to our relationships with other human beings. In the final analysis we need collaboration and collegiality to make the entire educational experience successful for our students. Disgruntled, disillusioned and bitter people have difficulty working with others. Furthermore, we do not need prima-donnas, princes, princesses or any other form of educational royalty within our field; we are in need of professionals whose oath of responsibility will protect, promote and preserve the sanctity of public education and the children for whom this public institution is their only path to success.

As I listened to Barak Obama's DNC acceptance speech last week, I was pleased to hear his concern for future generations. He stated that "we have an obligation to work on behalf of the next generation." As he uttered these words I realized that no group of people on this earth works harder or more passionately on behalf of the next generation than teachers and other education employees. The responsibility placed upon our shoulders is awesome and, hopefully, awe inspiring. In meeting this awesome responsibility we must consistently hold on to our professionalism, especially during those times when we are tempted to care the least. It is imperative that each year we renew our sense of responsibility and professionalism in lieu of this awesome challenge.

(cont'd on page 12)

Responsibility (cont'd from 11) Mac's Musings

Our students depend upon us and for many of them, we are their best and their last hope. Here's to another year of being the best that we can be every single day. Here's to another year of Valley Central staff demonstrating our professional responsibility by putting children center every single day of this new school year. Have a great year!

—Tim Brown, VCTA President, HS

Citations:

Obama, Barak. *Nomination Acceptance Speech. Democratic National Convention. Denver, Colorado. 28 Aug. 2008.*

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SAY NO TO WAL-MART!

Once again Wal-Mart has attacked worker rights by closing "a tire and lube center in Canada where workers had voted to organize." It would appear that Wal-Mart's primary goal is to form a tyrannical third world type entrepreneurial dictatorship in which management/owners become rich while workers remain poor and uninsured. Well—as long as Mrs. Wal-Mart and her children have health insurance and enough money to pay the serfs for their menial labors—who cares? Isn't that what serfs are for? Please shop anywhere but Wal-Mart—especially at the stores owned by the parents of our students. Visit www.vcta.net and scroll to the bottom of the home page for a link to the full story.

☹Nobody Asked Me, But...

I probably should not be writing the column today (September 18) because my tolerance is low (and my blood pressure is probably high). I'm so ticked off at things political, economic, and those areas of civility that touch on man's inhumanity to man. It strikes me that what we hear in the political arena is the politicians two basic rules: Get elected and then get re-elected. In the economics sphere greed continues to rule and we the people get stuck with the bill. Civility continues to suffer as we read of corruption, crime, and an extraordinary lack of respect for other people.

And yet, into this morass each morning thousands of teachers, staff members and administrators open their doors and their hearts to kids who are the center of our vocations. They, the students, are given knowledge, basic understanding and insight into the wisdom of the ages. We do push back the barriers of ignorance. We are people for others, though the headlines will never proclaim it. "And so it goes."

☹Be Alert...

With the terrible economic news of the past weeks comes a brief comment from the state's comptroller that the pension system has taken a hit as did all such systems, but that our benefits will not be affected. Good, but we must be vigilant in this time of borrowing from Peter to bail out Paul that our system is not touched. I have no good faith in our politicians, so we must stand up and shout "NO" if they want to borrow from us. "A word to the wise is sufficient."

☹Kudos to...

John Hunter, Debbie Santora Calvino, and Pat Iorlano on being honored for excellence. See other article in this issue. All are long-time members of the VC family, and all are most deserving of this honor.

(cont'd on page 13)

Mac's Musings (from the Retiree Side)... (cont'd from 12)

Condolences

Two very special members of our VC family have passed away. Long-time guidance director/pupil personnel director/grant writer/Fac totum Leo Flax whose career from the end of WWII until the 80s found him teaching, coaching, counseling, and administering. He literally did the work of ten. He is one of those mentors who allowed me "to learn the awareness that could not be taught." Our deepest sympathy to Trudy, Debbie, Donna and to Leo's brother and sister.

I've been remembering Richie each day since his passing. Richie Reynolds was in so many ways Valley Central's finest. Once he met you, he never forgot you. He always greeted you—by name!!—even 30 or more years after his graduation. Even on those days when I was at my grouchiest, a chat with Richie would put a smile on my face. Montgomery and VC will never be the same with out him. Our condolences to all the Reynolds family.

Life after VC...

The Retiree Luncheon was held on September 3 at Spruce Lodge. This was the 26th year of this event, and the ever-young John Mirola was sterling again as the MC. Our numbers were up from last year when we had 68 present. This year we had 80 present. I received about 140 responses and some 30 who could not attend called or sent notes or brief messages. As mentioned in the last ECHOES, I will share some comments from those notes or calls. Those present were, as always, feisty—they send their best to fellow retirees and to VC's active members. There is, indeed, life after VC.

Peg Lyons is back doing some part-time teaching and sends regards. **Gen Fox** is off on a trip to western New York. **Theresa Miller** will be at her grandson's first birthday celebration the week after the luncheon. She sends regards from Ocala, FL. **Pat Darney** is off white water rafting and visiting in Florida and NC. **John Buhr** just became a first-time grandfather. **Ed Saunders** sends his best and is in good health in the far reaches of Mt. Upton. **Fred Sparks** was not able to get to the luncheon, but never fails to send a brief note. **Bob Mooney** is off some-

where and even more busy than usual. Nice note from **Anna Brooks** in Gloversville. **Marilyn McKay** is down south at a BMW road rally. More "After VC Life" in the next issue. Can you hardly wait?!

A Special Celebration

Mike Bellarosa, VC's athletic director, may well be the successor to the legendary Michael Todd as an organizer of huge events. On the afternoon/evening of September 5th, there was a very special event in conjunction with the opening of '08 football season. The game ball was dropped in by parachute and presented to recent NY Hall of Fame inductee, Dr. William Moran, VC's superintendent from 1963 until 1981—an education superstar. The evening also honored '68's head coach, John Napolitano and his assistants, a group which included Joe Di Bello, George Coates, Bill Tucci, and Matt Rechterovic. VC's family was at its best for this splendid celebration.

Amen!

Thanks for turning once again to the back pages. Keep pushing back the barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you. Peace.

—Kevin McFadden, Retiree Rep.



Congratulations, Mac on another wonderful Retiree Luncheon! Thank you for all you do!

To the Editor: A Thank You to the VCTA

This is a long overdue, but no less heartfelt thank you to the Valley Central Teachers' Association for the wonderful celebration held for the 2008 retirees in June. The meal was delicious, the gifts and compliments were generous, and the company was wonderful. It was an event I will never forget, and I especially appreciated Tim Brown's kind words about my role in "The Union". He knows more than most people how close to my heart organized labor is, and how I longed to stay more actively involved, but couldn't.

I encourage all members of the VCTA, whether new or "seasoned", to get involved in the VCTA. "The Union" is not just the group of people who meet once a month or the few who negotiate a contract. It is all of us, well, all of you, now, and every member can contribute in some way to help accomplish the enormous amount of work that is completed each and every day by just a handful of people. The purpose of the VCTA is not only to represent its members, it's also about "Putting Children Center" as so beautifully represented by Patti Lunden's artwork on the cover of the September VC ECHOES. Working with the VCTA is rewarding and mind-opening, and I encourage you to investigate the possibility.

Today I had the pleasure of attending my first Retiree Luncheon, which has been held on the first day of instruction for over 25 years. There were 80 retired teachers in attendance! For the first time, I "felt" retired, and it was a fine yet bittersweet feeling. I so miss my friends and colleagues in Grade 6, especially my POWER Team "sisters", and as I sat and socialized, (with some people who retired before I started at VCMS 33 years ago), I could not keep my mind from wandering. How many children had walked into and out of Room 221 already? Did they have a good first day? Were they siblings or children of someone I'd taught over the years? Did they want to sit in the recliner that I left behind? Will they be OK? I'm told those musings will lessen as time goes by. However, I hope the memories never do.

Again, I send my thanks for the June event along with my best wishes to my friends and colleagues still in the trenches. I hope you have a wonderful year!

As for me, I am off to Charleston, SC for a week, dodging three hurricanes, but that's nothing if you can teach sixth graders for 32 years, right?

Fondly,

Linda Fame Cavanaugh, New VC Retiree

Jane Dionne former building rep and Hemingway enthusiast will be presenting at the Nick Adams Society-Hemingway Conference this month at Lake Placid.

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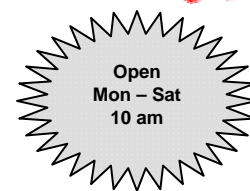
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Fall Fest 2008: And a good time was had by all!!!

