

VC ECHOES

Volume 12, Issue 6

Valley Central Teachers' Association

Special Retiree Edition

VALLEY CENTRAL'S 2010 RETIREES



The VCTA heartily congratulates all of Valley Central's 2010 retirees from all bargaining units! Best wishes for a happy and healthy retirement!

There are no greater advocates for children and education than teachers and teacher unions.

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*VC Echoes is
a NYSUT
and AFT
Award-
winning
Publication!*

Valley Central Teachers' Association

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*The VC Echoes is the official publication
of the Valley Central Teachers' Associa-
tion—Local 3076—and is published
regularly during the school year. Any
articles submitted to the VC Echoes will
also be posted on the VCTA web site.*

Mac's Musings: On Retirement: A Reflection

Some seventeen years ago, the "R" word began to haunt me, to intrude its presence on my last years, years where I was still happy and content with my teaching life of some 37 years. Then came an incentive from the state. Should I or shouldn't I? Was I ready? Was it time? Apparently the answer was "yes" to the big "R"!!

The "R" word has been replaced by a whole batch of "R" words and that, in the words of the poet, "has made all the difference." Let me share with you the new "R's" that I have experienced in the last seventeen years: Refreshed, Rejuvenated, Reinvigorated, Recalcitrant, Rejoicing, Restored, etc., etc., etc. May you new Retirees experience all these and your own batches of new "R's". I'm sure you will for you deserve them since you have been, for many years, men and women for others. Welcome to the ranks of retirees.

—Mac



STAY CONNECTED to the VCTA: Send your address to Meghan Rilley at mrilley@vcmail.ouboces.org to receive the ECHOES in retirement.

Shawn Carrozza

Shawn's professional and personal involvement with sports, health, and teaching are no surprise. Her mother was a high school teacher, advisor, and coach of many sports and extra-curricular activities. Her father was a professional baseball player for the Brooklyn Dodgers. Her husband, Frank, is the Athletic Director at Minisink Valley High School, and her son is an assistant coach at Misericordia University and the head coach for women's soccer at King College. Her daughter, Michelle, is a college guidance counselor and hospital administrator for research grants. Both her brother and sister are teachers.

Growing up in the Juniata Valley in Pennsylvania, Shawn participated in cheerleading, band, drama, and basketball. In West Chester State College, she was a member of the women's varsity gymnastics team. She received her BS from East Stroudsburg University. Shawn holds permanent certification as a Health & Physical Education teacher in both Pennsylvania and New York.

As a teacher, Shawn has worked at Burke Catholic High School and Orange County Community College before settling in our middle school for the last 24 years. Working as a physical education teacher and a health teacher, she has also coached soccer, basketball, softball, tennis, gymnastics, and cheerleading. In addition, she is a VCTA building representative, on the Emergency Response Building Team, and a member of the Fund Raising Committees, and the VCTA Scholarship Council.

Shawn has been my friend, my confidant, and (unbeknownst to her) my mentor for many years. I admire her courage, conviction, and compassion, as well as her sense of style!

I had the gift many years ago of having her teach one period in my room. The observation taught me a great deal about her field of expertise in both content and the art of teaching. Thanks to her, I can recognize the track marks of an IV drug user when I see them! Thanks to her, I absorbed a yearlong lesson in patience and professionalism as she dealt with the same trying students I had.

Shawn has a sense of playfulness and whimsy and a competitive spirit that have served her well in both her professional and personal lives. She has initiated (and

been the brunt of) various practical jokes around the building, and no, I won't tell you which ones!

Shawn also taught me that going out for lunch on Fridays, "just to get out of the building" was all about maintaining perspective and having time to bond. George, at Carmela's, always worries when one of us doesn't show, but I think Shawn is his particular favorite.

Retirement should be a wonderful time of exploration and freedom for Shawn. For one thing, she will no longer have to wear a watch! I have never known anyone who had so much bad luck with them. It seemed that no matter what kind of timepiece she had, it would get lost, broken, or go flying off her arm in the middle of making a point during a lecture. Luckily, she never seriously injured a student during her passionate presentations about health issues.

Shawn's plans for retirement include moving to Lancaster, PA, relaxing on the Jersey shore, spending time with her grandchildren, Cristian and Danica, in Texas, and (if that isn't enough) keeping active with biking, tennis, and swimming wherever she is. We're going to miss having you in the building, but Shawn, you have many lessons to teach me about having a great retirement!

Shawn's parting thoughts and wishes are these: I will miss all the good friends and colleagues I have made in Valley Central and other Orange County schools throughout the years. I will miss working with children at different levels who have shared their joys and sorrows with me. I will miss talking with colleagues about families and experiences. And I will miss de-stressing on Friday afternoons!

I know that our children are in the hands of very dedicated, caring, and enthusiastic teachers who make differences in children's lives everyday.

Get close to the students you teach – they show you the hopes of the future and the reality of the world through youthful eyes.

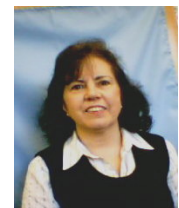


Painting a Picture of Marion Suarez-Schenck

It is with mixed feelings that we celebrate the retirement of Marion Suarez-Schenck—sadness at losing the talent of one of our district's finest art teachers; happiness at knowing that wherever she goes or whatever she does, Marion will continue to touch the lives of many, as she has throughout all our elementary schools.

Let me paint you a picture of not only a great art teacher, but also a sweet, kind person who is well respected and loved by both her colleagues and students.

Marion has been a part of the Valley Central School District family for twelve years, starting out part time in Maybrook, East Coldenham, Montgomery and Berea Elementary Schools, and most recently full time in her last two years here in Walden Elementary School. Previously, she had worked fifteen years in the Newburgh School District as a middle school art teacher. *(continued on page 5)*



Mary Devitt

Mary Devitt is a beloved member of the East Coldenham staff. Currently she is teaching fifth grade. She has also taught kindergarten, first, and second grades at East Coldenham. Mary has earned her stripes and has always been a team player as she has been asked to carry on as a leave replacement, take the helm for a mid-year retirement position, and assume the responsibility of learning the curriculum and teaching strategies for a new grade level.

Education for Mary has gone in many directions in many fields. She has been an active member of our Valley Central community long before teaching at East Coldenham. First, Mary was a student at Valley Central. She started her school career in kindergarten at what is now the Eckman Insurance Building. Mary went to school in the Academy Building for first, second and third grade. In fourth grade, Mary was up the street at the Grange Hall. Before centralization, Montgomery Elementary School was Montgomery High School. Mary went to school there from 5th through 12th grade.

After Mary graduated she became an active citizen in our community. Through the years Mary always focused her attentions toward education. She has made some significant contributions that help make our community be the special vibrant place that it is. Mary was part of the "Save the Academy" committee when the building was slated to be sold for private use. Our Montgomery Academy was the third academy to be organized in the state of New York. In 1967 Mary was part of a committee, with the help of Amy Bull Crist that



established the Montgomery Nursery School. Mary served on the board and taught at the school. This is a nonprofit nursery school that is still going strong teaching our youngest students each year. Mary has also been on the board of directors for the Montessori School of Balmville. Mary was elected to be the first President of the Parish Council at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Montgomery. She was a religious education instructor for thirteen years. Mary was also a youth group leader. Mary was a substitute often for foreign language classes in the middle school and high school. Mary has substituted in all elementary schools. She was a kindergarten leave replacement in Montgomery Elementary the last year Valley Central had half day sessions. In 2001 Mary shared her love of learning and teaching with the world outside of Montgomery. She studied French in France for three months. Then Mary was a volunteer with "Cross Cultural Solutions." She taught English in India. All of these accomplishments were before we even knew her at East Coldenham.

Mary has been asked recently by some in our building, "So what are you going to do now?" Mary just looks at them and gives a little smile. I for one can't wait to see what will be the next project on Mary Devitt's list. I would bet that it will be something to do with her community and something that will help others educationally. Good luck Mary, we will miss your smile at East Coldenham.

—Respectfully submitted by Sandy Carroll

Happy Retirement Gail Karlsen!

Gail Karlsen, R.N. is retiring after 16 years of working for Valley Central School District. During that time she worked at Harmony Christian School, as well as a few years at Most Precious Blood School.

Who is Gail? Gail is a great, dynamic wife, mother, nurse, and friend. She is happily married to Christopher Karlsen for 35 years. She has two wonderful children; Christopher and Stephen. Stephen is married to Hope, and has given Gail two of the best grandchildren; Gavin and Connor.

Gail's dream of nursing began in 1976, when she went to school to become an LPN. Soon her dreams became bigger, and in 1981 after schooling at the University of Alaska and SUNY Orange, Gail be-

came a Registered Professional Nurse. Critical Nursing was Gail's calling. Gail worked in Critical Care for over 15 years before the call to school nursing became part of her dream. In 1996, Gail was hired to work between Harmony Christian School and Most Precious Blood School. Though not sure of this new adventure, Gail continued to work in Critical Care for a few more years. With a full-time position now available at Harmony Christian, Gail finally had a home in school nursing. With her "permanent" home, the student's at Harmony Christian became her "kids." Gail is one of the lucky school nurses who is able to see the growth, development, and education of her students from kindergarten until 12th grade.

(cont'd on page 7)

Roger Flaum

"If there is any kindness I can show, or any good I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not deter or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again." -William Penn

The time has come to bid farewell, and as painful as it is, memories never leave us. When we think of Roger, we think of many things. Roger is insightful, trustworthy, intelligent, and resourceful. His family means the world to him. His daughters have grown to be beautiful college students of whom he is extremely proud. Roger sets high standards for his students. His expectations are higher than most students are used to and it always takes a while for the students to get used to his expectations. Eventually they figure out that the bare minimum is not acceptable in his class, and they begin to put forth more effort and rise to his expectations. It is the wise student who figures out that he is not pushing them for himself, but for themselves. One of the students on our team this year already figured this out. When he heard that Roger was retiring, he just stood staring at me with his mouth hanging open saying nothing. This in itself was quite an unusual act, however, the student turned to me and said, "Mr. Flaum can't retire. I was just telling all the kids in fifth grade about the best science teacher in sixth grade." He meant it and this is the kind of impact Roger makes on his students.

Roger's humor and good natured, easy going temperament is another invaluable asset. There isn't a team meeting that Roger hasn't had us laughing, even if it is with one of his one-liners that we've all heard before. Roger can laugh at many things, even himself, but it is the days when we've seen him "snort" that are the most memorable. One exceptionally funny memory was on a trip to Imax some years ago when one of our students became wedged in a movie chair in a folded position. The child was not hurt, but only "stuck" and between Ed Rechterovic, Jan Flood, Sandy Strauss, Roger, Aileen, and myself, we were talking, trying to get a message chain-style to get the house lights up. It was quite an experience. Roger still laughs about it now when we bring it up.

Over the years, the female sixth grade teachers

who work with Roger have been referred to here at VC, fondly as his "school wives." I guess by working together after all of these years, we have earned this title. We do know him quite well, and he can be quite predictable.

Roger is an avid hiker, collects wild mushrooms, and forages for many other wild plants. He is a tea drinker; no coffee for him. If you're not feeling well, there is a good chance Roger has a natural cure he can recommend. He is the man to see if there is a need for a letter from Santa, or gift tags written in calligraphy, or even a note for the Easter Bunny. If there is an assignment or topic that our own children are curious about, they always want to speak to Roger. In fact, there isn't a paper, essay, parent letter, or Sunshine note that doesn't pass Roger's desk without being proofread first. We attribute our A's to him!

Roger is an awesome story teller. We love to hear him talk about his days when he traveled and backpacked across Europe. He also used to drive a taxi in New York City. Aileen figures this is why he drives like he does. I tend to agree. Now our school year comes to a close and we have to adjust to the fact that we will no longer have Roger here every morning to open our door as he walks down the hall with his pony tail and his smile. The calendar he received for the holidays was one of places to travel. We hope he gets the chance to visit many of them and send us beautiful pictures with him clicking his heels in the sunset. Roger. A friend, a colleague, a mentor, an educator, and a man not to be forgotten.

—Submitted by: Lisa DeBeauvernet &
Aileen Swift



Painting a Picture of Marion Suarez-Schenck

Marion attended OCCC and is a graduate of SUNY New Paltz. Marion has worked as a professor at SUNY New Paltz as well as a supervisor, coordinator of placement and seminar instructor of student teachers. Marion possesses a great belief in her Catholic faith and has been actively involved in church ministry for many years.

On a personal level, Marion resides in Walden with her husband, Grady, an electrical engineer manager, with whom she shares a love of twenty-five years of renovating their 106 year old farm house, her daughter, Christine and her dog, Daisy. Marion's hobbies include skiing, raising chickens, ducks and rabbits, drawing and painting with pastels, oils and watercolors. She has won numerous 1st place and honorable mentions for her work. Marion also has an art studio where she has taught art classes for twenty-two years for both adults and children. She will continue to teach these classes and hopes to add more during her retirement years.

Marion has done extensive traveling both in the states and abroad, most recently to China. She has incorporated her travel experiences into her art lessons as could be seen this year in her outstanding boardroom displays of her student's Chinese themed artwork. *(continued on page 7)*

The 6th Grade ROASTING & TOASTING ROGER FLAUM

After spanning three decades in the teaching profession and crossing the paths of many, one is sure that there would be plenty that can be said of any individual-but, ironically, as you read on you will see that there is a common thread to the enigma we call Roger Flaum ☺

- “There hasn’t been a “Santa Letter” that Roger missed for my kids. I have saved every one of them. When I think of Roger I think of many strong qualities that I admire. His random acts of kindness like when a student does not have cash; He gives him \$20.00 at Medieval Times. He has always said “we’ll cover it” when a student doesn’t have cash. This is inspiring especially when I found out that he has volunteered at the soup kitchen. Aileen Swift
- “Roger is one of the funniest people I have ever met. He is always the first to come up with a joke or pun. Another lasting memory I will have of Roger is his quotes: “Stop running.” “Can’t hear ya.” And everyone’s favorite, “Pick me! Pick me!” I will miss having him across the hall.” —Carolyn Thorp
- “The saying goes, “you know it’s not over ‘til the fat lady sings”. Well, we always knew the school year was officially over when Roger did his cartwheel in the hallway. (Of course, not so much in the last few years!) I’m also going to have to learn to open my own door in the morning. Roger, being the first one in on the sixth grade hallway, opens my door every morning. (Who’s going to get in early to do that now? Chuck, maybe?)” —Laurie DiLorenzo
- “I am so happy that I actually got to experience at least some of ALL that is Roger and didn’t have to “wonder” if the rumors were true! I certainly enjoyed and had a blast working with you this year R.F... Retirement will not get you out of getting me my herbs. YOU WILL BE MISSED! But, do ENJOY! —Rita Flood
- “Thanks for doing a superior job with the afternoon announcements. You are welcome to drop in to do them at anytime.” —Russ Burns
- “I am glad that he is finally leaving. He has held it over our heads for years now and I am so happy he is finally going. Now, I will be the tallest one in the school. Seriously, I will miss him a lot. Probably the funniest guy I ever met, Roger’s ability to tell jokes and his quick wit make him one that I always have had fun with. Even though they are little, his shoes will be hard ones to fill. P.S. I am working on a Roger Flaum bobble-head doll to be in stores this summer.” Chuck Tudor
- “Thank you for all the years of support and friendship. May God Bless you with many happy years of retirement. Hope it is an adventure.” —Diane Savage
- “Thank you, Roger. You were my first mentor – the

one who showed me the ropes. You have always given me anything I needed – advice, a helping hand, rock samples, a laugh, a hug, your friendship. Your legacy will remain from pahoehoe to folded napkin tricks, from phases of the moon to “the Roger gesture”. You’ll always be here in our hearts. —Caloryn Baker (not a typo!)

- “I will always remember on the last day of school how you jump up and click your heels. Now, you can jump up and click your heels everyday. Enjoy every minute of your retirement. Best Wishes. — Valerie Grippo
- “Working with Roger has been an absolute pleasure”.

Memorable saying:

Student: Mr. Flaum, am I your favorite student?

Mr. Flaum: No, you’re my 2nd favorite student?

Student: Then who is your favorite:

Mr. Flaum: EVERYBODY ELSE.....

—Frank DiPasqua

- “I will always remember Roger with his early morning cup of tea with honey, his random shouts of “can’t hear ya” coming from his classroom, and of course his last day of school leaps down the sixth grade hallway! —Karen Gonyo
- “Those that know Roger, know that he has a way with knowing the oddest facts and tid-bits of information. In my 6th Grade year as his student, I can recall learning the terms asterisk, ampersand, ellipsis, and even spoonerism. To this day I still can recite my prepositions. I wonder what he will do IN his spare time after he retires from teaching.” —Derek DeVoe
- “I admire Roger’s ability to find humor in everything. He has always reminded me that we do the best we can for our students while we’re here, but it’s what we do when we go home at night that really matters. My favorite line from Roger’s beginning of the year speech to both parents and students is “I teach and Mrs. D. tells me how to do it.” *(cont’d on pg 7)* How much more collaborative does it get? From Flaum’s theory of why the sky is blue-“Elves come out early and paint it, of course”. “The “P” is silent, just like the “P” in water.” When the students responded there’s no “P” in water, your response was always, “I guess you haven’t been to the county pool.” I fondly call these predictable jokes – “Flaumisms”. Finally, your hero Albert Einstein-Roger, you will be missed. You have been a trusted friend who I’ve learned from and admired as an educator. Enjoy your retirement! It’s been well earned.” —Lisa DeBeauvernet
- “Mr. Flaum, Master of the adjectives and puns. You will be missed more than you know...but our aim is getting better...Have a glorious retirement. And be

Roasting Roger Flaum (from page 6)

back every day by 2:30 for the announcements!"

—Dan McDonald

- "Roger shared his classroom with me when I first started teaching. He has always been a very supportive colleague. Enjoy your retirement!" —Diane Colangelo
- "Roger, Mr. Flaum, which is what I called him as a student the one year he taught Math. It was a pleasure having him. Roger always had a way of knowing interesting facts that he loved to share with us! If you ever need a pen ask Roger, he'll respond, "Of course I have a pen, I'm a teacher." Roger, thank you for being a great teacher and for the two great years as a colleague." —Jenn (Hembury) Jackson
- "I think of Roger as a wise-guy with a big heart...a hippy from days of yore...someone always ready for fun & adventures...an organizer...someone with an opinion about just about everything!!! LOL...and a good person to have as my friend! Enjoy your retirement Roger – you earned it in spades!! We will miss you..." —Love, Pat Gorman
- "THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS STRANGERS JUST FRIENDS WE HAVEN'T MET YET." "A valuable insight Roger has shared with colleagues & students throughout the years. One that reflects Roger's moral code, that we should all allow ourselves the opportunity to be open with and not judge others. That in fact,

respect each person with fairness, dignity and humanely and the worst thing that could happen is gaining a friend! I've also always admired Roger's ability to remain true to his beliefs about education, examples that should be set, treatment of our environment and the Earth, despite views of others around him. Roger is a good sport as he has graciously "sparred" with me over the years regarding thousands of things, but each of us leaving these matches laughing & even having learned to appreciate one another all the more. But, perhaps the greatest thing Roger has ever taught me is that as long as you have a cough drop in your purse, you will never starve!" —Dana Sorbello

Rockin', repeatedly funny, witty & sarcastic

Open-Minded, yet opinionated

Gregarious, not to mention gorgeous!

Everybody Loves You and your Pony Tail – You'll both be Missed J

Retire Well Mr. Flaum – Make New Memories, Remember the Old!

Here's To You R.F.!!!

Marion Suarez-Schenck

During the last two years, Marion has spent many hours setting up her art extravaganza of beautifully displayed pieces of student work for all of the community to enjoy on the day of the school budget vote. Many faculty and student heads have turned to admire her students' artwork that she so proudly displayed in the halls of our school throughout the rest of the school year as well. Her elementary art colleagues will always remember her sharing of the many enjoyable student art projects she brought to the art department meetings.

Marion has much to be proud of, but I think if you were to ask her about her greatest accomplishment, it would be the raising of her beautiful daughter, Christine, for whom she took five years off from work to be with. She will proudly tell you that Christine is pursuing her dream of becoming a scientist as she continues her studies as a graduate student at Columbia university, majoring in biochemistry.

Valley Central will miss not only Marion's art teaching talent but also her warm, gentle demeanor, her quick thoughtfulness at lending a helping hand and her comforting words of encouragement in time of need. It has been an honor to know and work with Marion. We wish Marion the best in her retirement and know she will continue to paint more beautiful pictures with her palette of life.

—Nancy Donaldson, WES

Gail Karlsen (from pg 4)

Helping these students be "healthy and ready to learn" was her goal, and her success is shown in all the healthy and well educated children who have graduated and moved on from Harmony Christian. Her years devoted to the health and safety of the students at Harmony Christian School will truly be missed.

As a school nursing colleague, Gail will also be missed. From our school nurse dinner meetings, to our monthly school nurse meetings, to our frequent calls to see how all is going, Gail has always provided her expertise, laughter, and kindness.

So, what will Gail do now? Well, her hobbies include flower arranging, crafts, reading, and as Gail put it "just making things!" Her retirement plans include traveling and working per diem. I know Germany will be a frequent travel spot for Gail and her husband, as Christopher, Hope and her two delightful grandchildren reside there. Where this retirement adventure will lead, who knows, but it is sure to be grand.

Here's to you Gail and may your retirement be filled with love, excitement, and joyous wonders!

--Connie Griffin, R.N., Maybrook

Ruthanne Giattino

Ruthanne Giattino will be sadly missed by her students and friends as she retires in June this year. After teaching for several years in the Marlboro School District, she began her career at East Coldenham in 1997 as a leave replacement in a 12:1:1 class. The following year she became a special education teacher in the first collaborative class at EC, working with John Buhr in the fourth grade. She and John formed the perfect team, and were often called “the married couple.” After only two years, Ruthanne was honored by her students with a yearbook dedication. Her students spoke of her kindness and her determination to help them all to be successful. During the next few years, Ruthanne moved as a collaborative teacher to the fifth grade, and eventually made the switch to regular education. After another year, she returned to fourth grade where she has spent the last eight years. As the science specialist in fourth grade, she has devoted many long hours to preparing her students for the NYS Science test. This meant setting up ramp races and electric circuits as well as calibrating measurement stations. Her students’ scores were a testament to her hard work and dedication.

Ruthanne often took her students beyond the fourth grade curriculum, making sure that they appreciated the beauty around them. Every year her students would plant tulip bulbs around East Coldenham, and then track the seasonal changes through the program Journey North. We all look forward to these tulips each spring.

Fire Up the Camper!

“Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit.” —Desiderata

Of all the quotes in this crazy world, this one is directly opposite to how Anne Wilkins lives her life. When I was asked to write this retirement piece, I jumped at the chance to write a few things about our friend, Anne.

First and foremost, Anne is one of the kindest people I have met in my 16 years here. In such a loud and hectic work environment, she weathered every storm with that classic smile and words of encouragement. Teachers not only teach students, but they teach adults as well. In our business, the responsibilities are immense and we rarely get to exchange pleasantries and tell people how we feel about them. Anne Wilkins ALWAYS exemplified a humanistic approach to this business that helped one forget about the myriad of issues we face as educators. Countless times Anne has modeled the behavior we all should have instead of being that loud and aggressive person referenced above. This lesson is one I work on daily! Okay, more work is needed, but this is about Anne not me.

Sharing a room with her a season or two I learned a lot about her background and the stories she would tell about the love of her life, Jay, and how to approach various situations with common sense and decency.

Using the “Read to Feed” program, Ruthanne raised her students’ awareness of world hunger. By committing to read a certain number of books each month, they were able to raise money to help feed underdeveloped communities.

Ruthanne served on the Professional Development Team for many years and was involved in bringing educational opportunities to VC. She has been just as busy and committed to children outside of school. As a member of the United Methodist Church of Milton and Marlboro, she served as school superintendent, teacher, and a member of the choir.

From science experiments and beautiful tulips to Hawaiian Day and Gingerbread houses, Ruthanne’s students will miss her very much. Our staff will miss her caring manner and willingness to help at any time. We all wish Ruthanne well in her retirement, whether they be busy days or days filled with relaxation.

—Kathy Sahl & Beth Como

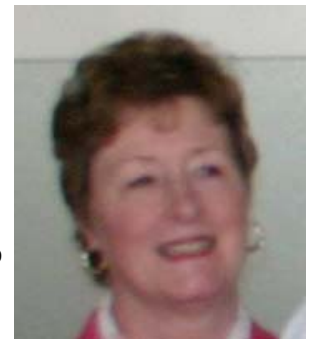


(continued on page 9) I really marvel about all the things she has done in her life—especially working in business, teaching, and the prospect of a third career! That no quit attitude is something she will undoubtedly pass down to her grandchildren!

As all of our friends “Graduate” to retirement, the impact of each is felt differently. In Anne’s case, we will miss her salutations and genuine concern for our welfare and that of our families. Even though she entered the business late, her lessons will resonate for years after. My parents always taught me that when you show anger, the lesson is anger. Anne took the worst this job had to offer sometimes and always gave back her best.

Well, another friend is moving on as the rest of us trudge toward our own retirement. This is the greatest profession in the world, but folks like Anne make it that much better! Thanks!

Faithfully Submitted by Bob Jurgens



Dianne Paolo

East Coldenham Elementary is saying goodbye to longtime teacher, Mrs. Dianne Paolo. Dianne has taught in the Valley Central School District for 33 years. She started her career at Maybrook Elementary, where she had also been a student teacher. She then moved to Berea Elementary for a short time before she came to East Coldenham, where she has remained. Dianne has taught kindergarten, first, and second grades. She has mixed feelings about retiring from a career she loves. Kindergarten has been her favorite grade level to teach. She acknowledges her wonderful para, Barb Zupa, for all of her help over the years. Dianne's love of teaching has given her students rich and varied experiences while they were in her classroom.

Dianne grew up in Saugerties, NY. From the time she was a little girl, she knew she wanted to be a teacher. She fulfilled her dream by attending Mt. St. Mary's college for her BA in education, and SUNY New Paltz for her Master's degree. She resides in Walkkill with her husband, Rich. After retiring, she looks forward to traveling to Chicago to visit with her daughter Karianne, her son-in-law Joe, and Oscar the "granddog." Aimee, her youngest daughter, lives nearby in Poughkeepsie. Dianne is also looking forward to spending more time with her mother and rekindling old friendships.

The outdoors is Dianne's first love. She enjoys hiking, biking, and kayaking. She is looking forward to climbing more Catskill and Adirondack peaks and would like to volunteer at Mohonk Preserve. During the winter

months, she can be seen cross country skiing. Traveling is also on her agenda. She has visited many places already, including China, Thailand, and Turkey.

Dianne, we wish you all the best of health and happiness as you start a new chapter in your life "Retirement." Remember the Inca Trail in Peru is waiting for you! God bless and best wishes.

—Carol DeMicco, Mel Murphy, Barbara Zupa



Gee Whiz, Mrs. Gizz!

Linda Gizzarelli has been an exemplary teacher in the business department for 14 years. Her students affectionately call her "Mrs. Gizz." Her colleagues would say she is always impeccably well dressed, endlessly conscientious and forever patient.

In turn, Mrs. Gizzarelli deeply believes that "each student should be treated as the individual they are." Little did she know that when she came in as a substitute for Diane Ruggles, that his "temporary" position would last so long.

Mrs. Gizzarelli says she will very much miss her friends in the business department. "It has been such a positive experience to work closely each day with Dianne Ruggles, Gail Blaine and Scott Kramer. They are cherished friends."

For their part, everyone in Linda's department will miss her as well. Dianne Ruggles stated that Linda has been a valued colleague and confidante. For example, both have endured 14 years of chocolate celibacy during Lent, made possible by mutual support.

On a more serious note, Mrs. Ruggles and Mrs. Gizzarelli shared many students in common and together provided a network of caring and support for students who really needed extra assistance. They are both pleased about that.

There may be no more students at VC being overheard to say "Gee whiz, Mrs. Gizz" but you know that none of them will forget her. And neither will we. —Anne Wilkins



Ann Steele

As the 2009-2010 school year comes to a close so does a dynasty at the Middle School. It is with heavy hearts that we bid farewell to Ann Steele. Ann has been a special education teacher for 28 years, has served as the Special Education department chairperson for the past 14 years, has been a mentor for the Mentoring Program, and established and advised the middle school yearbook club. Throughout her tenure at Valley Central, Ann earned the respect of colleagues, parents, administration, and most importantly her students.

Ann's experiences as a special education teacher have been as diverse as the population of students she has served during her tenure. She has remained steadfast in her convictions, which has always been most apparent in her determination to support students who faced difficult challenges. Ann has always had a unique and sensible approach to addressing the needs of her students. The academic environment she created, fostered student learning and allowed her students to reach their full potential. The foundation of her classroom is one that has always been based on mutual trust between student and teacher; where honesty, moral integrity, individual character, and dignity are stressed.

As department chairperson, Ann has always led by example. She has inspired special education teachers in our department to overcome both personal and professional obstacles. Through her caring approach, Ann has had a positive impact on every member of our department.

There has never been a time that Ann has not remained loyal to her staff or to her students. She has continuously demonstrated leadership abilities, listened to the suggestions and concerns of her staff members, and made decisions that were in the best interest of the department as a whole. Ann has never been less than a take-charge lady, capable of juggling multiple tasks with grace and ease.

All of us have been privileged to observe examples of Ann's many talents. Her diligence and work ethic will leave a lasting impression upon us. She has always positively influenced the overall attitude of the faculty and students in the Middle School. She has never strayed from her convictions as a chairperson, colleague, or as an educator, thus she leaves behind a legacy and a career to be proud of.

—Anne McKallen & Dana Sorbello



Mike Steele is Retiring from the Middle School

Our friend Mike Steele is retiring from Valley Central this June after 37 years of teaching. Mike and Anne Steele have worked together in the special ed. department for three decades. Most days, they drive in together, entering the building chuckling and talking pleasantly. At the end of the day, they leave together in the same pleasant way. How fitting that they should retire together this year!

Mike is much appreciated by all of us for his easygoing and friendly manner. Mike's classroom is always warm and welcoming. There's hot coffee brewing in his backroom, a big bag of apples in his fridge, and baseball posters on the wall. For two decades, it's been my first stop every morning: caffeine and sports talk.

I have always been impressed with Mike's teaching style. He's calm, and he speaks slowly and deliberately to his students. Back before these constant and insidious state tests, Mike used to bring his afternoon classes out for kickball. Watching him encouraging the kids and keeping the game fun and lively was inspiring. His Thanksgiving feasts have been especially impressive. They do it up big: roasting a turkey in the oven, preparing

all of the fixings, and then hosting a wonderful gathering of students, administrators, and other lucky invitees.

When Mike retires, we should be able to track him down easily enough. If he's not at a Yankee or Ranger game, we'll check the nearby bodies of water. He just bought a fishing boat. Happy fishing, Mike.

—Gene Mueller



Margaret Vass

When you first think of Margaret Vass, you think of her bubbly personality and her infectious laugh. As we think back about all the memories Margaret has brought to the hallways of Valley Central, her genuine caring for all has been illustrated by her many accomplishments here at Valley Central. Margaret came to work here first as a classroom paraprofessional at the high school. She was a paraprofessional for Rosa Boyd, Penny Centers and Barbara Palmer's resource room classes. She was so inspired by this experience that she went back to college to become a special education teacher. She accomplished her goal and was hired eighteen years ago as a special education teacher where she taught in the resource room at Valley Central High School. As time went on and the collaborative program grew, Margaret took on Global Studies, Government and Economics classes and worked with Lisa Korpics, Doug Straebler, Chris Forman and Mike Fitts. Margaret continued to expand her challenges by teaching collaborative classes in Living Environment with Tom Moglia and then when he retired, Jeff Schaper. Throughout all of this, Margaret had a close knit relationship with all of her collaborative teachers. She was able to inspire all students both regular and special education to meet the challenges they faced in the classroom. From analyzing DBQ's in Global, to surviving the dissections in Living Environment,

Margaret was really given an opportunity to handle anything that life threw her way. One time, in the middle school, Margaret assisted a student during testing by reading a German test to the student. One of Margaret's biggest challenges was that Margaret returned back to work after having a severe stroke. This is a further testimony to the strength of Margaret's character.

Margaret's wonderful sense of humor and caring for all will be missed by her department, staff and students. Thanks for the memories. We will miss you very much!

We wish you all the best in your retirement!



—Barbara Palmer,
Gina Strolla,
and Leeanne Walsh



Albert Wright

Albert Wright, Buddy, is the guy that one loves having as a neighbor. Having been his classroom neighbor for a good number of years we have enjoyed his perspective and insight to the challenge of teaching seniors. A fan of the underdog, Buddy never retreated from his core values. His passion and concern for the welfare of people, (students in particular) was far reaching. What else have we learned? Cinco De Mayo is a holiday for all, tall tales are a good way to get everyone's attention, and most importantly, all children can learn.

Buddy always has 2 books, The New York Times and an opinion, in hand. His taste runs deeper than the Hudson. From NYC to Mexico he has an appreciation for all people and humanity. Although soft spoken at times, when he spoke up in a crowded room, people took notice. Albert Wright and his eclectic room design will be missed by students and staff. Thank you Buddy and enjoy retirement.

—Maureen Goodenough and Robert Lee

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