

# VC ECHOES

Volume 14, Issue 5

Valley Central Teachers' Association

June 2012

## VC'S RETIREEE CLASS OF 2012



## SIMPLY THE BEST

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

**In this issue:**

Congratulations	2
Stephanie Collins	3
Dennis Delfino	4
Kathy Gorman	5
Ray Loeb	6
Gene Mueller	7
Kathryn Phillips	8
1982: Look Back	9
Linda Siegel	10
On Retirement	12

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**Articles or Contributions should be sent to Meghan Rilley, HS, by 20 August 2012**

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*The VC Echoes is the official publication of the Valley Central Teachers' Association—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.*

# Congratulations!



The VCTA heartily congratulates all of Valley Central's 2012 retirees!

We wish you a happy and healthy retirement!

Thank you for your service to the District and Community!

## **Congratulations Stephanie Collins on Your Retirement!**

**S**tephanie began her teaching career in Education at the Newburgh Jewish Community Center teaching Nursery School for seven years (1969 - 1976). She then came to Walden as the Director of the Walden Daycare Center for two years. Valley Nursery School was her next experience from 1983 - 1988.

In 1988, Stephanie's career came full circle when she became a kindergarten teacher at Walden Elementary School, the school which she graduated from. Four years later Stephanie joined our first grade family.

Stephanie has opened her classroom and willingly shared her knowledge and helped many student teachers begin their careers.

Stephanie is also very involved in many committees at our school. She has been a parent and teacher representative for P.T.O; she has been our secretary for B.L.T, now known as S.A.T. She is on

the Safety Committee and has been on Principal's Council. Stephanie was also the creator



Walden Elementary  
First Grade Teacher  
2012

Stephanie is very involved with her church. She is the secretary at many meetings. She is also the Vice President of her lake club in Sullivan County. She will surely be able to enjoy

her down time now at the lake without worrying about planning lessons!

Stephanie and her husband John were fortunate enough to have three wonderful children (two sons and a daughter). Greg and Lisa have two children—Morgan and Lindsay. Allison is



Walden Elementary  
Kindergarten Teacher  
1988

**Hip! Hip!  
Hooray!  
Cheers to  
Stephanie Collins  
on her decision to  
retire this year.**

married to Chad. Brian and Lauren are expecting grandchild number three this summer which probably helped Stephanie make her final retirement decision. She will be babysitting in the fall. Stephanie plans on spending more time with her grandchildren and children.

We have all enjoyed sharing families, schoolwork and fun with Stephanie throughout the years. She said she loved coming to work because she worked with great people. (We already knew that). Stephanie is quoted as saying, "It is humbling to think of how many students' lives I have touched in 38 years and I have hopefully made a difference, at least in a small way, for each of them."

Stephanie, you have made a difference in all our lives. May you have a healthy, happy retirement. Please enjoy the lake and your family; you deserve it!

—Submitted by Stephanie's "Teammates":  
Tara Boss, Stacey DeSantis & Lenette Walsh

## **Renaissance Man: Dennis Delfino Retires**

**A**s another school year comes to an end, VC Echoes honors the careers of dedicated professionals who have given so much of their lives and hearts to the Valley Central community. High School science teacher, Dennis Delfino, my friend and colleague, retires at the end of this school year. As I ponder my words to share with you about Dennis, I realize that many beyond the High School may not know him well. Like many teachers, Dennis prefers to fly below the radar and, day in and out without fanfare, do his best to develop America's future. Now it's time to put Dennis on the radar screen...just a bit.

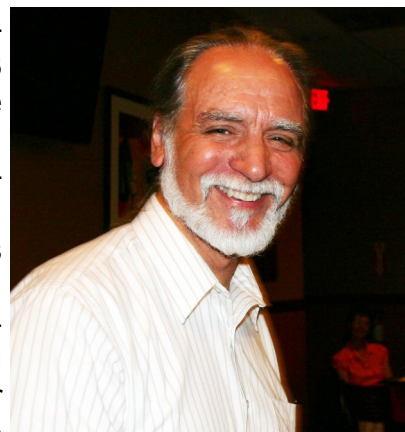
Dennis' path to VC was a bit more circuitous than most. Coming from a hardworking and traditional family that owned a construction business, upon graduation from high school, Dennis was handed a Union book from his Dad who stated, "Here's your money for college." Dennis' college plans were postponed when he was called to service in the Vietnam war, where he worked as a jet mechanic in the Naval Air Force. After four years in the military, earning a full GI Bill scholarship, Dennis continued his education, earning a degree in biology. He began his research career in the micro lab at New York Medical College and then Lederle Labs, a division of American Cyanamid, where he did research and development in the medical and pharmaceutical branch. During that time, Dennis met and married the love of his life, Cheryl, and they began their family—sons Dominick, Christopher, and Nicholas.

When the daily travel routine began to conflict with new family obligations, Dennis briefly returned to the construction business before accepting a position at BOCES teaching building and construction. While at BOCES, Dennis also taught in their Police Academy. After six years, Cheryl suggested that Dennis apply for a chemistry teaching position, to which Dennis replied, "I'll try that for a year

or two." Thus began Dennis' 18 year tenure in the Valley Central Science Department.

During his Valley Central years, Dennis utilized his myriad life and career experiences to capture the hearts and minds of students and colleagues. When you enter Dennis' classroom, you find an accomplished storyteller mesmerizing students as he weaves tales from his life to make science come alive. What's Dennis' secret to a spellbinding story? "Like science fiction...I mix in just enough truth to make the story believable," he says with a mischievous smile. His stories have enticed all levels of students—reaching and teaching the most motivated to much more reticent learners with his down-to-earth, laid back approach and always relating to students. Whether it was Regents Chemistry, Regents Biology, or VC's local course, Elements of Science, Dennis accepted and succeeded in the instructional challenges.

Dennis regularly makes himself available to do extra. One of the best examples is serving on Valley Central's Science Review Committee—a panel responsible for reviewing the original experiment and study proposals of students in the Science Research program. For 13 years, since the inception of Science Research at Valley Central, Dennis would stay well beyond the school day or return to school in the evening to participate in SRC meetings. His background in research proved invaluable to Research students as Dennis effectively critiqued projects with a sage wisdom and gentleness that improved research protocols without devastating students. As well, Dennis would frequently attend



*(cont'd on pg 5)*

## **Dennis Delfino Retires (from page 4)**

the annual Science Research Symposium to see student projects to fruition, and once even served as a scientist mentor to a budding young Research student, a three year commitment on his part.

Outside the classroom, Dennis' life experiences have made him a true Renaissance man. Over the years, I've yet to ask a question, and not just in science, but from plumbing to construction, that stumps Dennis...and I've certainly tried. Be it installing a dishwasher, building a bridge with a twenty foot span and determining what size joists were needed for proper support, or calculating tread width and riser height to build steps, Dennis is the answer man. And when I've needed an answer to a difficult professional challenge, I could always rely on Dennis for an honest (not necessarily easy)

answer. Dennis subscribes to a belief that true friends tell us what we need to hear, not what we want to hear. Thanks for your honesty.

Here's to you, Dennis, my friend! As you leave Valley Central, I wish you a wonderful retirement and many years of health and happiness. Know that we are better because of you—your presence at Valley Central has enriched us. Enjoy more time with Cheryl and your boys, and with your extended family. As a devoted family man, that will be retirement's greatest gift. Enjoy also more time for the outdoors, for tinkering around the house and in the garage, for helping Nicky in his landscaping business, and for experiencing life's adventures.

—Joe Fracalossi, HS, Science

## **Kathy Gorman to Begin Life After VC!**

**K**athy Gorman has been a School Psychologist with Valley Central for almost 23 years! Kathy began her career in the district when she completed her psychology internship in 1989, and then was able to begin in a permanent school psychology position in 1990. She has worked in most of the elementary buildings and currently has been in the 'district' position where she does the updated evaluations for Valley Central students who attend out-of-district placements and has the additional responsibility of overseeing the meetings for preschoolers with disabilities. Kathy has been able to provide a range of services across the district and is a face well known in most of our schools and many of the BOCES special education placements and private day programs.

Kathy is now ready to retire and begin a new chapter in her life. She has enjoyed her

many years of work with Valley Central and she is ready to move into this new phase of life called retirement. She is thankful to have her grown children and their families close by where she can enjoy her role as grandmother! While Kathy is ending one phase in her life she is also welcoming the beginning of a new phase as she and her fiancée Peter will be getting married at the beginning of 2013! We at Valley Central wish her well in her life after VC; it sounds like she has a lot to look forward to. All the best to you and your family Kathy!

—Chris Mello, HS, School Psychologist

## Ray Loeb Retires from the Middle School

**M**r. Ray Loeb is retiring this year after a teaching career that lasted over 25 years. He started in Goshen in the mid 1980's and in 1989 he was hired by Athletic Director Hugh Hurst to be a physical education teacher at Valley Central Middle School. During his time here, Ray helped shaped the minds and bodies of hundreds of middle school students with his love of sports and his strong belief in improving physical fitness. Ray also spent countless hours coaching

athletes in baseball, football, wrestling, and even girls basketball. Ray has two daughters, a son, and a new grandson. He plans to stay active, be a grandpa, and perhaps start a business after retirement. Ray has had a lasting impact on the physical education program at VCMS and has been a valued and influential colleague.

We wish him well in retirement.

—Shane Regan, MS, Phys Ed

### **Subject: Ray article for you**

Sent from a shiny tech toy that I don't need and use too much

On Jun 13, 2012, at 7:43 PM, "Gene Mueller" <Gmueller@vcmail.ouboces.org> wrote:

My Friend Ray Loeb

At school, Ray Loeb's path and mine don't cross much. Outside of school, however, Ray and I have a lot of history together. Back in 1995 Ray had the idea of starting a once-monthly open mike in a church basement in Pine Bush. He asked me to supply the sound system and help him run things. The Pine Bush coffee house evolved into a favorite hangout for local musicians and music lovers alike. For five years Ray manned the helm, and it was a great ride! The friendships that we forged back then have lasted and deepened, and for that I thank Ray. It was his idea, his initiative and his drive that made that whole, wonderful world of music happen in the first place.

Soon, we started hosting barbecues, jam sessions, and New Year's Eve parties at either Ray's home or mine. I got to know Ray's kids-Jennie (she's a mom now!) Stephanie, and Will. Each of them is a fine and likable person, and I've been lucky enough to see them several times a year. Ray's family and mine vacationed together at the Falcon Ridge folk festival and it was a blast.

When my wife, Jeannie, was very ill three years ago, Ray wrote the most beautiful and supportive note. Each time I met up with him over those years, Ray asked about Jeannie and conveyed the most heartfelt sentiments.

Lately, when I see Ray coming my way down the hall, he always seems to be grinning. What follows is usually an acknowledgement of how lucky we are to be escaping from the crazy house of public school education. I am happy for both of us that we got through it alive! In our retirement, I know I'll see Ray at some music venue or walking his dogs at Winding Hills Park. I certainly look forward to that!

Sent from a shiny tech toy that I don't need and use too much

—Gene Mueller, MS, English

## **“GENE“sis - The Creation of a Legend**

**W**hen asked to write “Gene’s retirement article” those of us sitting around the table looked at each other in silence, then smiled and said “Oh Boy.” It’s not that we would have nothing to say, quite the opposite. How could we say all the things that Gene has meant to so many of us professionally and personally within the confines of a simple article? After all how could one capture a “true Renaissance man”, as one colleague offered, on paper? Gene is the quintessential “Master Teacher.” Not only has he taught generations of students with his roots and raffles, but also countless numbers of his fellow teachers both young and old the way to survive the mine field that is public education.

Gene created an inviting learning environment that mixed humor with discipline. The students knew what was expected of them and he proudly displayed the results of their efforts. At the same time students were encouraged to keep a tally of all the times he blatantly lies to them. Gene is such a good storyteller that even hard boiled eighth graders sit in riveted attention as he reads them a story from the text or tells them an anecdote from his vast life experience. Only after students are stunned and in awe does he say “only kidding, that didn’t happen.” Kids love it and him. Mr. Collins likes to share the story about how numerous times after school former students would stop in from the high school to say “We just wanted to come back and see our favorite teacher.....is Mr. Mueller around?”

For colleagues, when passing by Gene in the hallway, he is always quick with a comment that puts a smile on your face. “How was your pedagogy today?” or “Have a nice weekend” as you walk out the door on a Wednesday afternoon are two of his regulars.

As fun and light-hearted as Gene may be, he is also very sensitive to personal troubles of both his students and colleagues. It is not unlike him to stop by your room as he leaves for the “weekend” to express his concern about a personal issue that you felt comfortable enough sharing with him. This genuine concern is what tips the scale from colleague to friend. Some quotes from those who know him:

- ⇒ “Gene is my colleague, my mentor and my friend”
- ⇒ “I don’t think I’ve ever in my 28 years in the education field met someone who had a more amazing combination of talent...wit, humor, wisdom and compassion for people”
- ⇒ “Gene is much more than a colleague who will be missed. He is a friend who has touched the hearts of many.”
- ⇒ “It was a privilege to work with the man and we will not see his like again”

But let us not despair, “Don’t cry because it’s over, smile because it happened.” Those words from Dr. Seuss sum up the sentiment regarding Gene’s Retirement but one can’t help but shed a few tears for those students who won’t get that “Mr. Mueller Experience”, the new teacher who will not be told “Happy Birthday” from the birthday savant, or the regulars that need that daily dose of Gene’s wit. But smile we will...because Gene is the teacher we all strive to become.

It’s fitting that Gene’s position will not be filled due to budgetary constraints and whatnot. That is how it should be because we all know he is irreplaceable. We should just leave room 105 vacant and retire the room...let people look in every now and again... and whisper in reverent voices “That’s where Mr. Mueller taught...”

—By all who have been touched by Gene Mueller (*The Pedagogue*)

## A FOND FAREWELL TO KATHRYN PHILLIPS

**W**hat comes to your mind when you think of Kathryn Phillips? Her petite frame and beautiful long hair, her savvy computer skills, her amazing and creative sewing abilities, her never ending “wit”, or her spectacular taste in gorgeous jewelry? Yes, all of these.

Kathryn refers to herself as a “military brat”, having been born in Germany and growing up around the world. Those early experiences have served her well at Valley Central. She has a great deal of knowledge on a wide variety of subjects, which she passes on to her students.

Kathryn started her teaching career in 1984 filling in for a teacher at the middle school. Then she went to the high school taking a maternity leave position and finally the following year, back to the middle school where she has taught ever since. At the time she had three young sons, who are now grown adults. Keith is employed at the Theodore Roosevelt National Historic Site in Buffalo, NY. Brian is a stock car racer at the Orange County Fairgrounds Speedway and Kevin is pursuing a teaching degree in physics, after having served in the U.S. Navy.

Kathryn is a dedicated professional who has served in the local chapter of the New York State Family and Consumer Sciences Educators Association in various capacities. She has also been an advisor for the Beautification and Development Team here at the middle school for many years. The objective of this group is to enhance the appearance of the middle school through various projects such as murals in the bathrooms and the planting of flowers in the courtyard. This group was responsible for the 9/11 banners that have been hanging in the cafeteria for 10 years. Through Kathryn’s hard work, they will be replaced this year with banners depicting the various subject areas, clubs and groups of people that make the middle school such a special place. She designed and has done much of the sewing on this herself so if you are in the middle school, stop by the cafeteria next year and admire her work!



Kathryn’s wisdom goes way beyond the classroom. She is a great problem solver and sounding board. As a former colleague stated, “She is motivated to make a situation better. She will do anything to help another person, student, or friend.” On many occasions, she has made dinner for ill coworkers, and even visited them at the hospital bearing gifts. Another coworker related the following story, “When I slipped in the parking lot one icy, wintry morning and my skirt ripped all the way up the back seam to the waistband, it was Ms. Phillips who immediately attended to my distress. Hiding me in her classroom closet, she graciously sewed up my skirt, dusted me off, and with an example of her great wisdom and resiliency in life, her calm, reassuring words encouraged me to dwell on the humor in the situation. With that outlook, I was able to recoil upward and went off to teach the students.”

What impresses people about Kathryn has been her incredible devotion to her parents. Every summer and on vacations throughout the school years, she would fly out to California to take care of her elderly parents, never taking time for herself. During this time she assisted her father in writing a book about military weaponry of WWII. (*cont’d on pg 9*)

## **A FOND FAREWELL TO KATHRYN PHILLIPS**

Her parents have since both passed away. She proudly buried her father at Arlington National Cemetery in December 2011.

Kathryn is civic minded and because of her upbringing in a career military family, she has learned the skills, commitment and discipline necessary to adapt to moving often, making friends quickly, and the importance of being organized and task oriented. Others easily recognize how focused she is and that she works far beyond basic expectations to meet her responsibilities whether at home or in school. She is often in the building until late in the afternoon or evening, working on grades or preparing materials for labs. Kathryn, you should be very proud of all your ac-

complishments, from raising three fine sons alone, to working full time and earning a Master's degree.

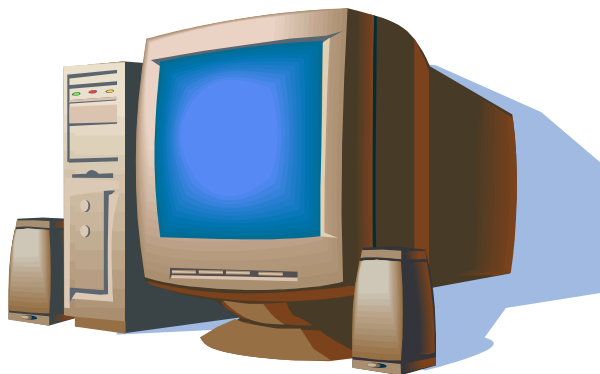
We wish both you and Frank many years of happiness and good health. Enjoy your hobbies of gardening, jewelry making, and traveling and take the time to relax and continue to create fun memories. We love you and will truly miss you!

With admiration,

—Robin Briand, Lisa Coney,  
Sue DeMeo, and Heather Martin

## **The World as it was Thirty Years Ago!!**

- The Epcot theme park at Walt Disney World opens to the public for the first time.
- Sony launches the first consumer compact disc player (model CDP-101).
- On Nov 13, The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is dedicated in Washington, D.C., after a march to its site by thousands of Vietnam War veterans.
- Thriller album by Michael Jackson is released, becoming the biggest selling album of all time in entertainment history.
- At the University of Utah, 61-year-old retired dentist Barney Clark becomes the first person to receive a permanent artificial heart (he will live for 112 days with the device).
- Time Magazine's Man of the Year is given for the first time to a non-human, the computer.
- Commodore 64 is released. The Commodore 64 goes on to sell over 20 million computers until 1994.
- Falklands War (Apr 2-June 14): Argentina invades the Falkland Islands.
- Prince William is born on June 21 at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington, West London.



## Fondest Regards to Linda Siegel

Linda Siegel grew up in Mineola, Long Island and graduated from SUNY College at Geneseo in 1973. She moved to Monticello and began teaching special education in 1973. Then in 1987, Linda, her husband Paul and her two sons, Seth and Jordan moved to Orange County so they could be closer to their family and to The Big Apple. In 1996, Linda secured a temporary position in East Coldenham for a maternity leave. Next, she began teaching at Maybrook Elementary. Linda told Arlene Feldman, Director of Special Education at the time, "I feel like I'm home." Linda stated, "I've taught Special Ed for over thirty years." Why? "It's because I love kids and I love working one on one and in small groups on a daily basis and getting to know my students and their families. I enjoy being a liaison between my students and their teachers."

Linda has been married for 31 years to her husband, Paul, who taught and coached soccer and basketball for thirty seven years at Port Jervis. The Siegel's have two sons, Seth and Jordan. Seth is a twenty nine year old guidance counselor and Jordan is a twenty eight year old dentist in Newburgh. Linda says she is, "the proudest Mom!" Linda and Paul enjoy numerous activities, such as bike riding, hiking, walking, going to concerts, dining out and being with family and friends.

In 2011, Linda moved to the Middle School. She taught Math, ELA, and Resource Room with seventh and eighth grade students. She said this was, "quite a stretch" for her but she "did it"! What a challenging, exciting way to spend the end of her teaching career. In talking to her, we learned some of her teaching philosophy. What stands out the most is that all the students really want to be successful. It is most important that positive relationships with the students, their families, and the school be established early every school year in order for the students to be successful. Among her fondest memories are all the wonderful, talented, and

dedicated teachers she has met at VCMS. Thanks to her Middle School colleagues' warm welcome, professional support, and friendship ("Roberta Betanzos, you're the best roommate in the world"), she loved being at the middle school.

When asked, "What are you going to do when you are retired?" Linda replied, "Whatever I want, when I want"! She is really looking forward to sleeping late. In September, Linda and Paul are planning to hike through the Grand Canyon and then drive to Las Vegas. She decided she'll be spending a lot more time at the gym to prepare for the trip. Linda Draughn reminds you to send her pictures of the hike! We've enjoyed working with you and getting to know you. Best of luck and fondest regards as you retire.

—*Your friends at Maybrook Elementary  
and Valley Central Middle School*

### Billboard's Top Ten-1982

10. Jack and Diane - John Cougar
9. Maneater - Daryl Hall & John Oates
8. I Love Rock n' Roll - Joan Jett & The Heartbreaker
7. Gloria - Laura Branigan
6. Ebony and Ivory - Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder
5. Don't You Want Me - Human League
4. Abracadabra - Steve Miller Band
3. Hurts So Good - John Cougar
2. Centerfold - J. Geils Band
1. Eye of the Tiger - Survivor



**A**s two new special education teachers, we were lucky enough to work closely with Linda. She always took the time when we had a question and offered resources to help accommodate all the learners of Maybrook Elementary School. We thought that by writing a poem, everyone would get a chance to become familiar with the Linda we know.

L atkas and love  
I nfluenced the lives of so many  
N urturing young minds  
D etermined to meet each child's needs  
A lways patient with students

We will miss you!!!

—Heather Jurgens & Jake Rau, Maybrook Elementary



## On Retirement: A Reflection

**W**aking up in the morning without the cursed alarm clock, no churning stomach on Sunday nights wondering where those tests from Friday had gone. No more endless meetings, no more trying to figure out this theory of education by abbreviation (APPR, NWEA, SLO, CO, BOE). No more being lulled into lala land by educational consultants who have all the answers but have never been in a classroom, no more edicts from Albany-on-high, no more politicians posing as educational experts. No more!

But for the new retirees there is only sunshine and many a yellow brick road. You have faced all the challenges of the teaching life, you have fought the good fight, you have changed lives. Countless young men and women have grown because of you.

Enjoy every moment of the years to come... and thanks.

—*Mac (AKA Kevin McFadden),  
Retiree Representative*

