

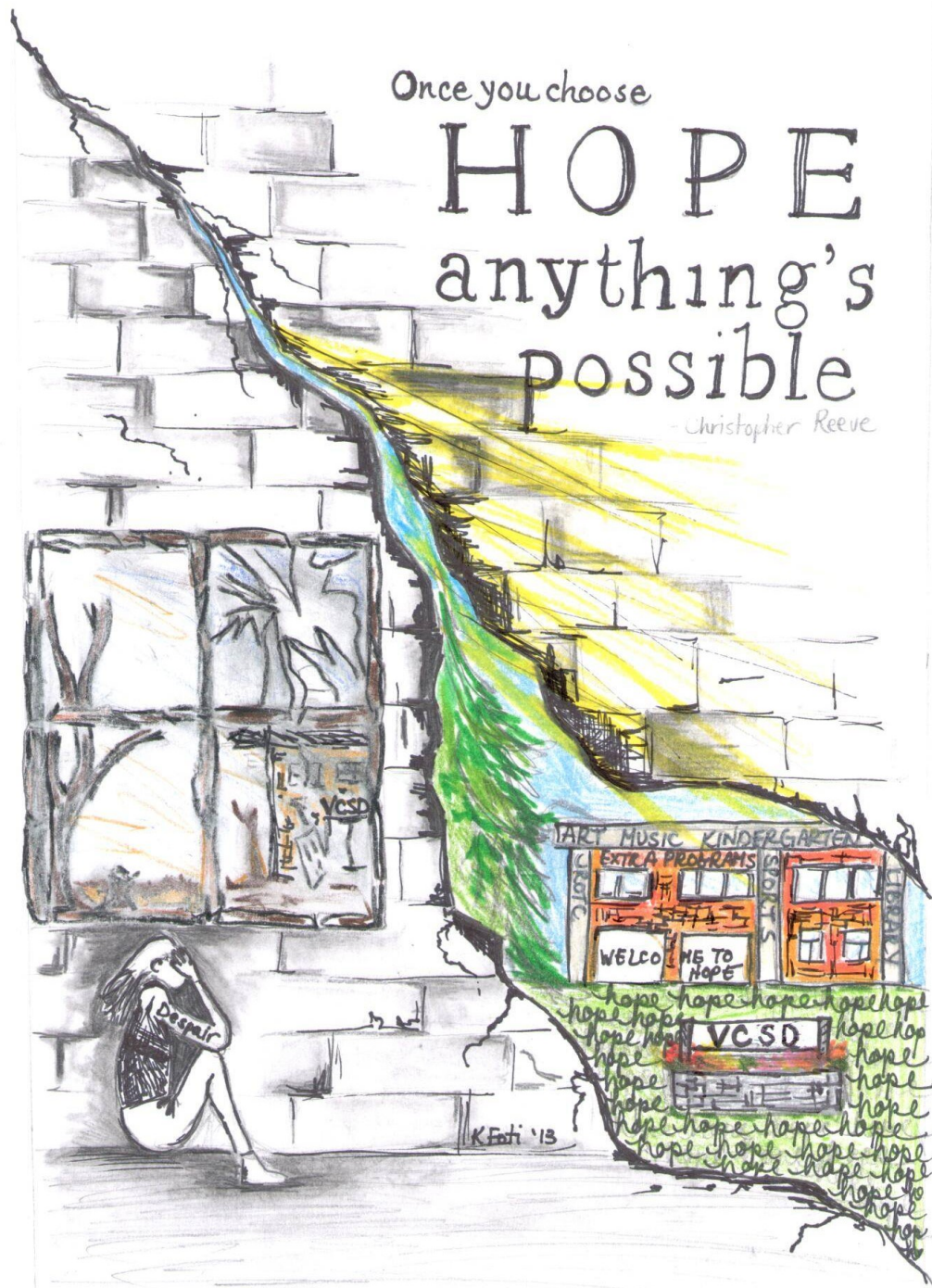
## VC ECHOES

Volume 15, Issue 5

Valley Central Teachers' Association

May 2013

### WILL VC CHOOSE HOPE?



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

## Valley Central Teachers' Association

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Montgomery, NY 12549  
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### VCTA Officers:

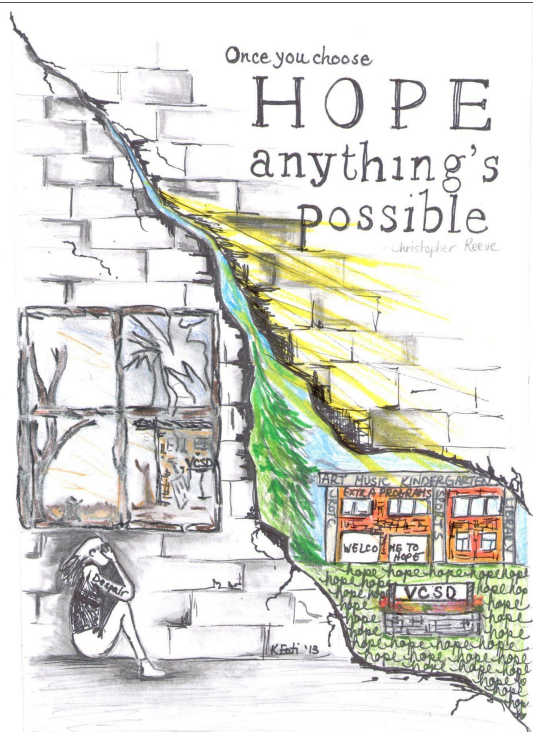
President, Tim Brown (HS)  
Vice Pres, Richard Steger (EC)  
Vice Pres., Patti Behr (HS/MS)  
Secretary, Christine Mello(HS)  
Treasurer, Jennie Sexton (HS)

**Contribute to the next issue!**  
**Articles or**  
**Contributions**  
**should be sent to**  
**Meghan Riley, HS, by**  
**3 June 2013**

### Executive Council Building Representatives

•Berea: Lisa Daily, Robin Scott  
•E. Coldenham: Cathi Heil, Laura Casey  
•Maybrook: Linda Draughn, Jeanne Cassel  
•Montgomery: Gail Nozell, Andrea Turso, Susan Page  
•Walden: Mary Ellen Raskopf, John Fisher, Lori Meyerson  
•Middle School: Chris Arndt, Sonya Berger, Joe Collins, Derek DeVoe, Paul Dederick, Anne McKallen, Pat Weigel, Frank DiPasqua (A)

•High School: Steve Altman, Nancy Brother, Jim Hession, Deborah McKenney, Antoinette Oakes, Henry Pizzonia, Mike Score, Melissa Verlin, Scott Warner, Keith Sexton (A)  
•Secretarial Representative: JoAnn Cassisi (HS)  
•Paraprofessional Representative: Kathy Lennon (W), Wenda Heaney (W)  
*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.*



## About the Cover:

The cover artwork was done by VC's own Kathy Foti (MS, Art) and depicts the crossroads at which our District finds itself. It accompanies the article by Patti Behr which begins on page 3. Thank you, Kathy for generously giving of your time and talent!

## **Abandon Hope? Losing Hope? Finding Hope...**

**“Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.”**  
~Dylan Thomas

I learned the work of Dylan Thomas in the classroom of VC English teacher extraordinaire, Kevin McFadden and those two lines have remained with me since. They have been inspiring in many battles we have faced in our profession since 2009. In the face of incredible odds, can there be a choice other than to go down fighting to the end? If all is to be lost, at least there is solace in knowing you have given all you can give.

The last four years in education have not just been disappointing, they have been horrific. Public education is in crisis when 75% of educators are unsatisfied with their jobs. The work environment is toxic...educators at all levels are feeling watched, judged and generally mistrusted.

By its nature education is full of hope. We touch futures. There is no greater joy in the life of an educator than to see what a student goes on to achieve once they have left you. But finding hope lately has been, at best, difficult and at worst, totally impossible.

There is no need to reiterate all the stressors that add to the lack of, actually, the loss of hope. After all, we are all living it daily as we walk into school or talk to anyone in the community. Try telling someone you are a teacher or that you work in education. You might as well as tell them you are diseased for the look that you get.

Every time I talk to someone in education the conversation turns into how much longer? How much longer till you can get out? How much longer do you have to go? How much longer can you take it? Since 2009 I have always held hope that the next year will be better, but instead they have gotten worse. Each year we have endured more cuts, more loss of program, opportunities for kids...more insanity, more loss of control over our profes-



sion and the loss of respect for our professional opinion. This year has been the worst by far. I am fearful of next year but still hope that it will change...it will turn.

After all in the face of the loss, the loss of hope is still in our control as hard as it is to hold on to. Yet, it may be the only thing that will save us, turn the tide so to speak. So where do we find hope?

First and foremost, we find hope in the faces of our kids—our own children and in the faces of the children that we have been entrusted to teach—for if we cannot see hope in the next generation, then we truly are lost. We must always be mindful to keep students in the center of our focus no matter what the stressors that affect us—I learned that from a colleague whose job is in grave danger of being (*cont'd on pg 4*)



## **Abandon Hope? Losing Hope? Finding Hope...**

cut dependent upon the result of the budget vote. When I asked her how she keeps going day after day in the face of all of it, she told me she does it for the kids, "because this budget mess is not their fault." It is what she holds on to each day that lets her walk into the classroom with the same smile she has worn from the first day she crossed its threshold. If someone facing being exscessed after 15 years with the district can have that much grace, strength and dignity, it should inspire the rest of us to find hope.

I'm hoping that June 8<sup>th</sup> is the day the tide turns. I hope that on that day the state legislators realize that holding the state education budget to the same level it has been held to since 2008 and then lowering that amount further with a GAP elimination is unjust to kids. It is simply wrong to allow this generation to have less education than so many generations before it. It is unjust to parents and community members to force us in 2013 to consider closing perfectly good schools, eliminating sports teams, getting rid of Kindergarten, living without art and chorus and band; not having musicals, getting rid of AP classes or college classes, dismantling programs that work, doing without secretaries, paraprofessionals and custodians in schools. I hope on that day that state legislators realize that the greed of testing companies is ruining education and not creating a generation of thinkers as much as it is developing a generation of bubble makers... I have to have faith that NYSUT has planned this moment carefully knowing that now is the time to help us find hope. "This is our moment, our chance to seize public education back from the bureaucrats and billionaires who think they know more about what's best for children than educators and parents," said NYSUT President Richard C. Iannuzzi. "Thousands will gather in Albany June 8 to speak in one voice and deliver a loud, clear message that 'enough is enough.' This rally will be another step in our

fight for the future of public education." <http://www.nysut.org/news/2013/may/thousands-of-educators-parents-students-community-members-to-rally-for-public-education>

We need to look to our kids to hold on to hope, we need to stand with our colleagues and fight together for our profession, for our life's work...as hard as it is we must stop asking how much more time there is till we can leave and ask how much longer can we let all this be done to us...the time is now to raise one voice together. We cannot wait for someone to save us. We must be willing to save our kids and take back our profession; it may be the only hope we have.

Hope to see you June 8<sup>th</sup>.

—Patti Behr, MS,/Art; VP/VCTA



See page 7 for more information on how you can BE THERE!

**6-8-13**

**Find Hope!**

## **Connie Griffin: NYS Nurse of the Year!**

**M**aybrook Elementary is so lucky to have the BEST OF THE BEST. Our very own Nurse, Constance Griffin, has been selected as the **New York State Nurse of the Year** by the New York State Association of School Nurses. She has also been nominated for the National Association of School Nurses Excellence in School Nursing Award for 2013.

Connie was chosen for the 2012 Award For Excellence as a School Nurse!! She is also a Director on the National Association of School Nurses. She was installed on January 31, 2009, in Washington, DC, as a National Association of School Nurses Board of Directors Member. In addition, that association recognized her with an Excellence in School Nursing Award in 2010. She was the winner of that award for Zone 5 of New York State. She has also won the Orange County Youth Bureau-Asset/Builder/Outstanding School Based Professional Award.

Connie gives unselfishly of herself. Besides being a member of the Board of Directors of NYSASN, she is currently the NYS Representative to NYSASN. Connie is a part of the Orange County Medical Corps, Critical Incident Stress Management Team, District



Emergency Management Institute, and National Incident Management System. She is a trainer for CPR and First Aid. She also became a National Board Certified Asthma Educator in March.

Connie will be honored at a reception in June at the National Association of School Nurses annual conference in Orlando, Florida.

So, once again, congratulations to my special friend and our school nurse, Connie Griffin!!

Fondly,

—Linda Draughn, Maybrook, building rep

***Congratulations!***

## **Method to the Madness?**

**D**isclaimer: This brief article will contain conspiracy theories. But like most conspiracy theories, there are bits of undeniable logic buried within. Bear with me.

I have not exactly been quiet about my disdain for our current governor, Andrew Cuomo, and our current Commissioner of Education, Dr. John B King, Jr. I believe both of these men are unfit for the positions that they hold and are driven only by self-interest. They have proven time and again that the best interests of New York State's children are not their primary concern.

But I must admit that they are both brilliant strategists. Devious and diabolical, but brilliant. They have managed to make teachers Public Enemy #1 (though this didn't prove too difficult), implement a new Teacher Evaluation System that would so bog down educational professionals across the board that none of us can even lift our heads from work, and poorly (by design) implement the new Common Core

State Standards. These things are no coincidence. The goals are to keep education professionals so busy that they will not be able to fight the inevitable influx of Charter schools that they have in store, the implementation of expensive and relatively useless tests created by companies which fund their campaigns, and the closing of schools around the state to provide ready-made homes for their charter school friends to build their nests. All while they sit back and laugh about how dumb we and the general public are.

They have also managed to convince the general public that NY State schools are failing and in need of drastic change. In fact, NY schools were ranked third in the nation in 2013 by Education Week. If that is the stench of failure, it is a sweet smell! The powers that be are determined to destroy public education as it exists today. We must stand strong and find the time to combat this before it is too late and the agenda is realized.

—Meghan Riley, HS,/Soc St.

## **Got a friend retiring?**

**T**he Retiree Class of 2013 is soon to graduate VC and head for the sunny shores of retired life. We must give them a proper send-off!

A special thank you to Maybrook, Montgomery, and Walden Elementary schools who have already submitted articles for retirees. If you have a friend retiring this year, please consider writing for him or her. Submissions should be sent via e-mail to:  
mriley@vcmail.ouboces.org.

Please include a picture of the retiree in jpeg format. Traditional film prints can be sent to Meghan Riley at the HS. I will scan them and send them back to you.

Some questions you may want to ask your friend and colleague are:

- How long have you been at VC?
- What will you miss the most about teaching?
- What are some of your favorite memories of your teaching career?
- What are your plans for retirement?

The best articles come from those who truly love and admire the retiree, so even if you don't love to write, please consider doing so for a special friend.

# ONE VOICE UNITED

## RALLY TOGETHER

Educators, parents, students, community

June 8<sup>th</sup> • noon • Empire State Plaza • Albany

### ***Stand!***

- Against corporate control of public education!
- Against the state's obsession with standardized tests!

### ***Demand!***

- A MORATORIUM on high stakes for standardized tests!
- The state fully invest in public higher education!
- The state save SUNY Downstate Teaching Hospital!

### ***Fight!***

- For the funding that public schools need!
- To restore local control — fix the tax cap!

### ***Support!***

- The DREAM Act!
- The School Violence Prevention Act!

***Fighting for the Future of Public Education***

[www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org)

[www.twitter.com/nysut](http://www.twitter.com/nysut)

[#rallyJune8](https://twitter.com/rallyJune8)



Be sure **you** can say  
this on Wednesday!

# Exercise your rights!

## NYS School Budget Vote

Date: Tuesday, May 21st, 2013

Time: 7:00 am to 9:00 pm

Where: Elementary School that  
serves your voting area.