

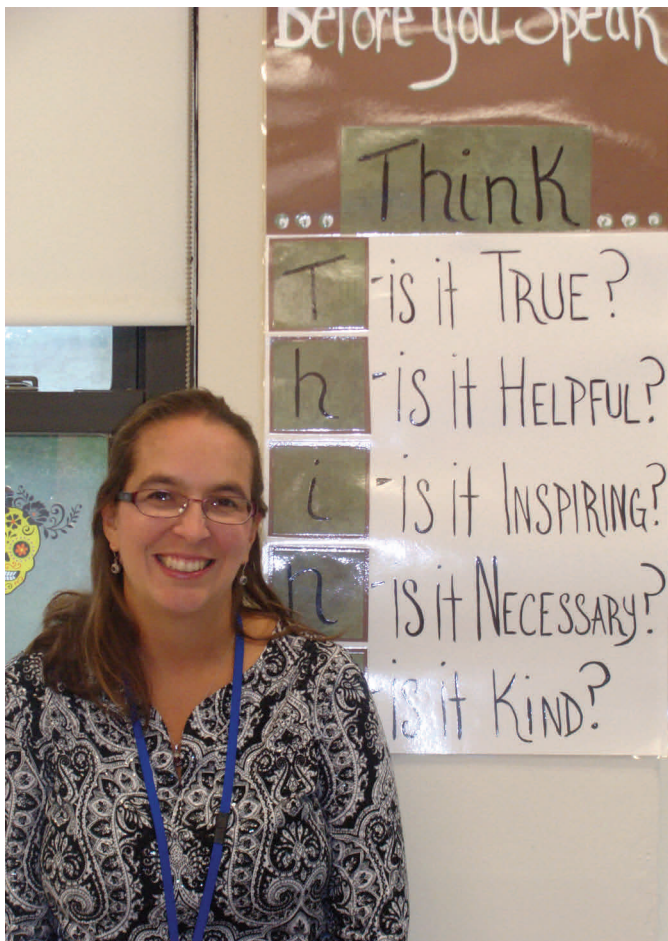
## VC ECHOES

Volume 18, Issue 1

Valley Central Teachers' Association

October 2015

### CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR TENURE RECIPIENTS!



ERIN GEPHARD  
SPEECH PATHOLOGIST  
MAYBROOK ALC

JILL TOTTON  
SPECIAL EDUCATION  
MIDDLE SCHOOL

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



Volume 18, Issue 1  
October 2015

## Valley Central Teachers' Association

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### In this issue:

|                           |    |
|---------------------------|----|
| What I have Learned       | 3  |
| Play Through              | 4  |
| What up, APPR?            | 5  |
| Sixteen Tests             | 6  |
| You Can't Be Serious      | 7  |
| HV Honor Flight           | 8  |
| Remember the Bad Old Days | 10 |
| Bullying Awareness        | 11 |
| Honor Flight Pics         | 12 |

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Vice Pres., Patti Behr (MS)  
Secretary, Christine Mello(HS)  
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**Contribute to the next issue!**  
**Articles or**  
**Contributions**  
**should be sent to**  
**Meghan Rilley, HS, by**  
**20 October 2015**

### Executive Council Building Representatives

•Berea: Amy Doce, Dawn Rubino, Robin Scott, Pasquale Leo (ALT)  
•E. Coldenham: Tiffani Garrison, Denise Bromm  
•Montgomery: Gail Nozell, Randy Sutter, Andrea Turso, Christopher McFadden  
•Walden: John Fisher, Erin Uszenski, Kathy Bordone  
•Middle School: Sonya Berger, Joe Collins, Paul Dederick, Cathie Heil, Frank DiPasqua  
•Retirees: Kevin McFadden, Arline Friedman  
•ALC: Holly Bacon

•High School: Nancy Brother, Deborah McKenney, Antoinette Oakes, Henry Pizzonia, John (Mike) Score, Melissa Verlin, Darci Fletcher, Meghan Rilley  
•Secretarial Representative: JoAnn Cassisi (HS)  
•Paraprofessional Representative: Kathy Lennon (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.*

## NYSUT Statement on John King's Appointment as Acting U.S. Secretary of Education

Source: NYSUT Media Relations

"New York State United Teachers is disappointed in John King's appointment as acting U.S. Secretary of Education. NYSUT has always considered John King an ideologue with whom we disagreed sharply on many issues during his tenure as the state's Education Department commissioner. Just last year, our members delivered a vote of no confidence against him and called for his resignation. NYSUT urges its members to call the White House switchboard at 202-456-1414 — as well as a special White House telephone line dedicated to public comments at 202-456-1111 — to express their displeasure in John King's appointment."

## **What I Have Learned by Watching the 2015 Primaries**

1. **Public Schools are responsible for teen pregnancy, drug abuse, sexting, bullying and bigotry.** Therefore, I promise to stop kids from having sex and injecting heroin during my class. I honestly didn't realize this was bothering people! I will also lobby my Board of Education to eliminate the following high school classes that may be contributing to this problem:

- Effective Freshman Sexting 101
- Beginner Bullying 102
- Freebasing and Meth Lab Safety for the Novice 201
- College Level Bigotry for Snobs and Wannabes 401

SERIOUS NOTE: Public schools are held responsible for these negative health behaviors and demeaning attitudes while being granted no real authority to address these cultural/societal problems with any impactful corrective or punitive action. These negative and/or demeaning activities are generally learned outside of school. However, the truth that critics of public education do not want to hear is that public schools are one of the only institutions that attempt to address these concerns and, unlike private and/or charter schools, public schools do not have the right to reject these students. Yes, public schools educate all children regardless of any biases, complications, problems, hurts or pains they may carry with them each and every day as they enter our legally mandated open doors!

2. **If you want to be successful create a Charter Business.** For example, due to the poor performance of firefighters in California this year, 2016 will see the creation of new Charter Fire Houses. This change will be necessary due to the number of

homes and acreage of forest lost by these underperforming public servants. These new Charter Fire Houses will be able choose which fires they respond to, improving the odds of success and, hopefully, eliminating criticism. After all, smaller fires are easier and less expensive to extinguish. Focusing on smaller fires will save money and improve statistical success results. This same Charter model will be utilized to create Charter Police Departments throughout the country. In light of the recent increase in tension between civilians and police, these new Charter Police Departments will have greater authority with regard to what complaints will be responded to. Domestic violence calls will, of course, be ignored as these situations are often the most challenging and violent. After all...it's all about perception and statistics. Who cares about reality? Reality sucks anyway!

3. **Bigotry under the guise of religion is protected by the Constitution.** This makes me especially happy as my religion, *The Church of the Holy Brown Cow*, has many concerns and subsequent prohibitions specific to our sinful and disobedient society. The following is an accommodation that must be provided to followers of the *Church of the Holy Brown Cow* if they live and/or work in Kentucky:

According to the *Holy Brown Cow's Book of Stupidity*, Chapter 3, Verse 12: "Couples wishing to form a legal union for the sake of marriage and children may not have a height differential of more than three inches when standing upright and bare-feet. Under no circumstances can the woman be taller than the man as this would be displeasing to the Holy Brown Cow." Members of my faith who work in

(continued on page 3)



## What I Have Learned...(from page 3)

Kentucky will not be required to grant marriage certificates to any petitioning couples who do not meet the Cow's criteria for holy union.

SERIOUS NOTE: Imagine a world in which schools adopted legally enforceable height requirements for class enrollment or inclusion in extra-curricular activities. If people are permitted to discriminate based on sexual orientation due to religious beliefs, why not permit discrimination based on height, weight, hair color, skin color, or facial features? Keep in mind, it wasn't too long ago that interracial marriage was not permitted due to religious objections.

*"In a most ironically named case "Loving v. Virginia," Richard and Mildred Loving—interracial married newlyweds—were arrested in the early morning of [July 11, 1959]. They had been married just five weeks previously in the adjacent District of Columbia where interracial marriages were legal. Various sources say that the county sheriff and two deputies broke into the bedroom of their home in Virginia, or that they simply entered the home through an unlocked front door. The couple were charged with a felony under Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924. The charge read that they had... unlawfully and feloniously go[ne] out of the State of Virginia, for the purpose of being married, and with the intention of returning to the State of Virginia...and for... cohabiting as man and wife against the peace and dignity of the Commonwealth... The ACLU first asked Judge Bazile to vacate the appealed convictions and sentences. He refused, saying—on behalf of*

*God—that: 'Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay and red, and he placed them on separate continents. And but for the interference with his arrangement there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that he separated the races show that he did not intend for the races to mix.'"*

I find it sad that bigoted attitudes such as this still exist in many forms to this day and that the name of God is often used as a justification. To read more about "Loving vs. Virginia" visit: [http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom\\_mar14.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom_mar14.htm).

4. **Being a pot-head is now okay.** If only I had been smart enough as a kid to smoke pot so I could improve my grades, athletics and work performance. I only have one request for Governor Cuomo: When it finally becomes legal to buy pre-rolled cannabis by the carton (20 joints x 10 packs = 200 joints), could we please have mandatory drug testing to ensure that these newly defined and legally responsible students do not negatively impact my APPR? Oh crap...I forgot...please reread number #1 above: *"Public schools are responsible for drug abuse."* Okay...I get it...it's my fault!

—Tim Brown, HS Health, VCTA President

Final author's note to those for whom humor is an elusive concept: The Cambridge Online Dictionary defines "sarcasm" as "remarks that mean the opposite of what they say, made to criticize someone or something in a way that is amusing to others but annoying to the person [or thing/topic being] criticized."

"I'm allergic to stupidity. I break out in sarcasm." (Author Unknown)

"Sarcasm is the body's natural defense against stupidity." (Author Unknown)

Diapers and politicians should be changed often. Both for the same reasons. (Author Unknown)

## Play Through

***"The terms "play through" and "playing through" refer to the act of a faster group of golfers on a [golf course](#) being invited to or allowed to pass a slower group - for the faster group to get ahead of the slower group. "(golf.about.com)***

**A**lbany and Washington, DC need to let educators play through. For too long they have meddled in education with no intention for students, only intending to please wealthy backers (Cuomo) or because they are too easily swayed by mass media (which is also controlled by wealthy backers).

Of late they have made being an educator a tough gig. Did you catch Ohio Gov. and GOP Candidate, John Kasich's quip at the New Hampshire Education Summit (huffpost.com): "If I were not president, but if I were king in America, I would abolish all teachers' lounges, where they sit together and worry about, oh woe is us." Really? So now we can't go to the bathroom, grab a soda or make copies? These people have no business discussing education as if they know something. Comparing them to a slow group on the golf course is insulting to the slow group--after all, even a slow group on the golf course understands the game--these morons haven't got a clue.

Yet if anyone is going to get America's children educated it will be America's teachers. We must play through and not only teach the children--we must teach the politicians and the media what it is to be a teacher. It is a monumental task, but not impossible if we lift our voices as one and yell, "Play Through!"

~ Patti Behr, VCTA VP



## What up, APPR?

- Deadline for new APPR plan extended to November 17, 2015
- Districts must be negotiating new APPR Plan (we have been)
- Not all the pertinent information and guidance needed to negotiate intelligently has been released
- Many pieces have been "tweaked or changed" since it was signed into law in April
- It still relies very heavily on student performance
- We must follow the "old APPR" plan (which was revised with the new contract) until the new APPR has been agreed to.
- If we are unable to settle by November but have been trying to in good faith we may be granted a hardship waiver. This has to be applied for.
- Expect to be trained in the new APPR even if it has yet to be settled (this is evidence of us trying in good faith to settle).
- MORE TO COME....

## **“Sixteen Tests”**

My history people will know the tune that this emulates and is set to: “Sixteen Tons” by Tennessee Ernie Ford.

Some people say a school is made outta testing  
A poor kid's made outta mom and dad  
mom and dad and life, no resting  
A mind that's a-weak and education that's bad

You take sixteen tests, what do you get  
Another year older and education in debt  
Hey College don't you call me 'cause I can't go  
Cuomo sold my soul to the common core

I woke up one mornin' when the test was at nine  
I picked up my pens and I walked to the school  
I put in sixteen hours of studying fine  
And the test grader said "Well, you're a fool"

You take sixteen tests, what do you get  
Another year older and education in debt  
Hey College don't you call me 'cause I can't go  
Cuomo sold my soul to the common core

Next year same mornin', it was test time again  
grabbed my pens and off to the test I went  
my teachers they taught me and I knew it plain  
But when the results came in, I saw what it meant

You take sixteen tests, what do you get  
Another year older and education in debt  
Hey College don't you call me 'cause I can't go  
Cuomo sold my soul to the common core

Next year you won't see me I'll step aside  
A lotta kids like me failed them too  
year after year those tests swallowed our pride  
I am prepping myself, "do you want fries, too?"

You take sixteen tests, what do you get  
Another year older and education in debt  
Hey College don't you call me 'cause I can't go  
Cuomo my soul to the common core

—Meghan Riley, HS Soc St., Bldg Rep.

## “Here’s Johnny!”



Have you heard yet? Just when you thought it was safe to teach again..... The Commish is (for now at least) headed straight to the top. He will serve as Acting Secretary of Education. This is the best example of incompetence being rewarded that has been seen in many years.



## Hudson Valley Honor Flight

**W**hat do Valley Central alumni/staff members, Donna Barletta, Donna Boyce and Denise Bromm have in common? No, not the initials "D.B.!" They all had the honor and privilege to be the "Guardians" of their Dads on a Hudson Valley Honor Flight. This past spring, Montgomery Elementary's Randy Sutter accompanied his father-in-law. Valley Central's middle school paraprofessional, Michelle Donovan, also was a guardian on an Honor Flight with her Grandfather.

Donna Boyce went with her father, Nicholas A. Martellotto, on the inaugural flight on June 9, 2012. He was a Sergeant in the Army Air Force. Donna said, "I was blessed that we made it on that flight as the next one (April 2013) was a couple months after he passed away".

Donna Barletta went on the inaugural flight with her father, Jacob (Jack) Barletta. He was a WWII Army Staff Sergeant who was awarded two Purple Hearts and the Bronze Star. Donna stated that she was grateful to have this experience with her Dad who passed away last year.

Fourth grade M.E.S. teacher, Randy Sutter accompanied his father-in-law, Dr. George Tracy on the May 30th, 2015 Leatherstocking Honor Flight out of Albany. He was a WWII Sgt. in the Army Signal Corp. Randy expressed the same sentiments about the honor flight being one of the most memorable days of his life. He also gets choked up when talking about the events of the day, saying that the people who ran it did an impeccable job and didn't leave out a single detail.

Michelle (Hembury) Donovan went on

the September 2013, flight, out of Stewart, with her grandfather, Edwin Hembury (known as Duke to his family), who was 88 at the time. Her grandfather was a sailor, whose served as a gunner protecting the Merchant Marine Ships in World War II. He was on 7 different ships, 3 of which were attacked and sunk while he was aboard, leaving him floating in the ocean. Michelle said, "My grandfather never talked much about World War II, until I took him to Washington DC with the Honor Flight. He told me so many stories and enjoyed every minute of the trip. My grandfather was also interviewed and

***"Hudson Valley Honor Flight (HVHF) is a nonprofit organization which "Honors American Veterans" for all their sacrifices. They transport these heroes to Washington, D.C. to visit their memorials at no cost to them."***

appeared in the movie premier, Hudson Valley Honor Flight: The Generation Bridge, in March, at the Middletown Theater (I highly recommend you seeing the movie, it was wonderful!). My grandfather is getting older, so his memory is starting to go but sometimes he still talks about going on the Honor Flight, and as much as it was memorable for him and he might not remember it, I will remember it forever and

I am so glad I put his application in to go".

Denise Bromm considers herself blessed and honored to have joined her father, retired teacher, Harold James (Jim) Bromm on the April 11, 2015 flight. He was a Lieutenant, Marine Corps Reserve during the Korean War. His best man, John McIntyre who was in the Army during the Korean War, was also on this flight. This was the first flight that included Korean War Veterans and one (terminally ill) Vietnam Veteran. Along with a great flight, beautiful weather and a police escorted tour of the memorials (no sitting in traffic for these 3 busloads of veterans!), we got to enjoy the beauty of the cherry blossoms on this glorious day.

*(continued on page 11)*



## Hudson Valley Honor Flight (continued)

Hudson Valley Honor Flight (HVHF) is a non-profit organization which "Honors American Veterans" for all their sacrifices. They transport these heroes to Washington, D.C. to visit their memorials at no cost to them. The Hudson Valley Honor Flight takes World War II, Korean War veterans to Washington D.C. for a day to visit the WWII Memorial, Korean War Memorial, United States Marine Corps War Memorial (Iwo Jima Memorial) and Arlington Cemetery.

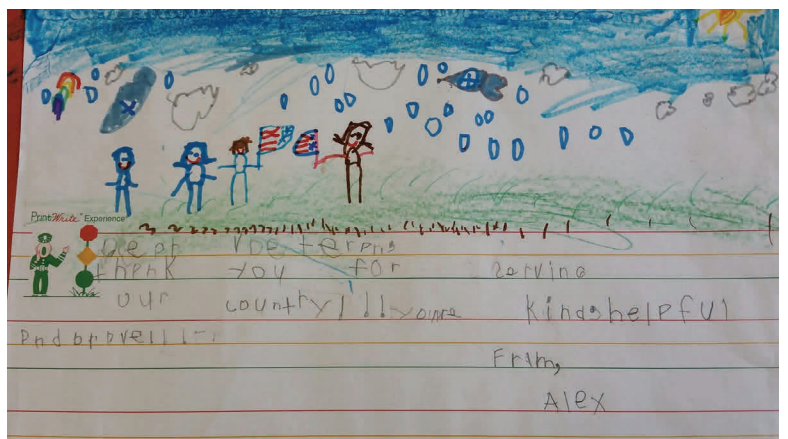
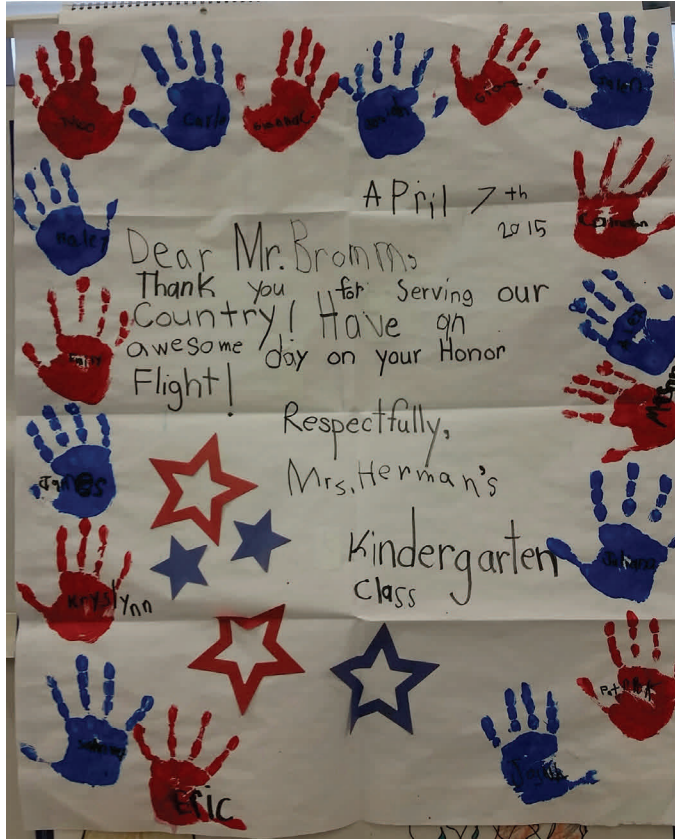
The most exciting part of the trip was the crowd of citizens that cheer the veterans on at Stewart Airport when they depart and arrive. The airport was full of cheering supporters including many Valley Central School District employees and families, along with their children, Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops and the R.O.T.C. It was amazing to see the hundreds of supporters who came out early on a Saturday morning and/or late Saturday evening to honor the vets. These veterans got the applause and cheers that they never received before for their service.

Another special part of the day is when they do a "mail call" like they did on the bases. Mail is collected ahead of time and handed out to the veterans as their names are called on the flight home. Valley

Central teachers at Berea and East Coldenham were very supportive in getting their students to write awesome letters and cards thanking these vets for their service. Except for the sniffing, you could hear a pin drop as these veterans tearfully read through the many beautiful letters they received.

The reason I wrote this article is to encourage others to sign up for an Honor Flight. If you are related to or know any WWII, Korean or Vietnam War veterans, go to <http://hvhonorflight.com/> to sign up. They need volunteers, people to drive the vets to and from the airport and monetary donations to keep this program going. Lt. H. J. Bromm, retired U.S. Marine Corps Reserve said "I feel that I can speak for all the participating veterans and for the veterans whose lives have been cut short and were not alive to make an Honor Flight, many who are more deserving than I. For the many wonderful events of the day, I thank you all". All of us agree that it was an AMAZING, once in a lifetime experience, which we will always treasure.

—Denise Bromm, East Coldenham, Bldg. Rep.



## Remember the Bad Old Days (from NYSUT.org)

Imagine being forced to resign from your teaching position — with no guarantee of being rehired — just because you got pregnant. Or not having a designated lunch break during your workday; forced instead to either eat with your students or to cover lunchroom duty. Or imagine this: After earning your academic degrees and participating in months of teacher training, finding out that your take-home pay is less than the workers at the neighborhood car wash.

Stories like these sound crazy today. But before widespread teacher unionization, these scenarios were real. In fact, they were just a handful of the many injustices educators faced. Prior to the 1960s, teachers' professional lives were governed by administrators who held absolute power over what was taught, who was hired, who was fired and class sizes.

In his book, *Teachers United: The Rise of New York State United Teachers*, author Dennis Gaffney details the antics of administrators like Abe Greenberg, an assistant principal at Astoria Junior High in Queens, who spied on teachers with binoculars throughout the day. Among other questionable opinions Greenberg held, he believed that educators should only lecture while standing. Teachers were chastised for sitting during class; Greenberg called it unprofessional.

In a 1996 New York Teacher story detailing the early days of the union, United Federation of Teachers retiree Lou Carrubba, said teachers had to "eat a lot of crow" back then.

***"When you hear the value of collective bargaining questioned in the faculty room, at the water cooler or after the morning meeting, remember the struggle of those who came before you—the battles teachers waged in the early days to earn the benefits you enjoy***

"Today's teachers have no idea. I'm telling you, hardly a day went by when we weren't humiliated in one form or another," he said. "There was no real grievance machinery, no protections, no due-process procedures. Besides, if you complained, they'd make your life even more miserable."

Sick days required a doctor's note or

teachers weren't paid. Until 1957, pensions didn't exist and to get one educators had to be 65 or have 35 years of service. And lunch and other breaks were unheard of. "You lined up with your kids in the schoolyard and stayed with them the whole day, even eating with them — not even a bathroom break," remembered Janet Miller, UFT retiree.

Said UFT retiree Alice Marsh of one first-grade class of 48 students she taught, "I had to leave 12 children back because I couldn't get to them when

they were slipping. This was par for the course." A 1952 New York Post article, "The Scandal of Our Schools," reported that one Queens elementary school built for 1,140 students had an enrollment of just under 3,000. And teachers really did earn less than car washers. A January 1955 New York Times editorial, titled "Teach or Wash Cars," asked why anyone would take a teaching position at \$66 a week when washing cars paid \$72.35.

Longtime NYSUT retiree activist Sylvia Matousek, remembers earning \$4,400 as a new teacher in North Syracuse in 1964 — a sum that forced many educators to apply for food stamps. Teachers were also required to inform the district superintendent immediately if they became

*(continued on page 11)*

## **Remember the Bad Old Days (continued from )**

pregnant. "The big joke was that you'd call the superintendent at two o'clock in the morning, and say, 'Oh, well, I think I just got pregnant,'" said Matousek.

Many current NYSUT members are too young to remember the early union struggles, but those struggles paved the way for what educators now consider the status quo. But with the stroke of a lawmaker's pen, or a single U.S. Supreme Court decision, today's "status quo" could become tomorrow's "good old days." Your hard-won rights, your voice at the table, could be lost — unless you remain vigilant.

When you hear the value of collective

bargaining questioned in the faculty room, at the water cooler or after the morning meeting, remember the struggles of those who came before you — the battles teachers waged in the early days to earn the benefits you enjoy today. If today's political climate teaches us anything, it's that nothing is guaranteed. You must be vigilant to ensure your rights are not stripped away.

Don't let complacency return us to the bad old days.

Remember the value of your union.

—Kara Smith, NYSUT Communications

## **Remember: October is National Bullying Awareness Month!**



**NEA's**

**BULLY FREE**

**IT STARTS WITH**



**ME**



**Denise and Jim Bromm**



**Donna Boyce and Nicholas A. Martellotto**

