

## VC ECHOES

Volume 17, Issue 6

*Valley Central Teachers' Association*

*Retiree Special Edition*

### VC RETIREE CLASS OF 2015



CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF THIS YEAR'S  
VALLEY CENTRAL RETIREES!!

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

## Valley Central Teachers' Association

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**Articles or**  
**Contributions**  
**should be sent to**  
**Meghan Rilley, HS, by**  
**20 August 2015**

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•High School: Nancy Brother, Deborah McKenney, Antoinette Oakes, Henry Pizzonia, Mike Score, Melissa Verlin, Darci Fletcher, Meghan Rilley  
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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.*

## Debbie Moore Retires from East Coldenham



It's a beautiful thing when a career and a passion come together. This year we say farewell to one of East Coldenham's most dedicated paraprofessionals. Mrs. Moore has been a part of the E.C. family for over 20 years.

She began her career as a 1:1 paraprofessional in one of our Kindergarten Special Education classrooms. After several years of working with individual students, Mrs. Moore became a classroom para. In 1998, Mrs. Moore switched classrooms and worked with Mrs. Bacon for 17 years. This is where she found her passion. Her students will always remember her kind and caring

personality and her commitment to working with students with special needs. She kept everyone in the classroom organized and on track. Even after Mrs. Bacon changed schools, Mrs. Moore continued working in the same classroom with Ms. Verini.

Mrs. Moore plans on spending her retirement taking care of her beautiful grandchildren, Billy and Olivia, traveling with her husband, and decorating her house of course! She will be greatly missed by the students and staff at East Coldenham.

—Holly Bacon, ALC

## Lisa, Your Island Awaits You

### *Teachers*

*Paint their minds  
And guide their thoughts  
Share their achievements  
And advise their faults*

*Inspire a Love  
Of knowledge and truth  
As you light the path  
Which leads our youth*

*For our future brightens  
Which each lesson you teach  
Each smile you lengthen  
Each goal you help reach*

*For the dawn of each poet  
Each philosopher and king  
Begins with a Teacher  
And the wisdom they bring  
—Kevin William Huff*

**T**hese words only begin to express the passion and love Lisa Coney dedicated to her students throughout her teaching career at Valley Central Middle School. Lisa will continue to educate even after she departs our hallowed halls in June. She is currently a consultant nationwide through a program at New England College promoting and teaching Financial Literacy to middle school, high school and college students and she will also be associated with a college in the Sarasota, FL area in an administrative capacity during her relocation and retirement.

Lisa Coney grew up in Palisades Park, NJ where she graduated from Palisades Park Junior/Senior High School in 1971. From there she continued her education at Newark State College and soon after Mount Saint Mary College in Newburgh receiving her baccalaureate degree in business with concentrations in accounting and finance. Lisa had several jobs following her graduation from the Mount and was very successful in all of the paths she chose, but something was missing. She had the desire and need to teach.

Lisa began her teaching career as a leave replacement in Monticello for a fifth grade special education class and then moved on to Port Jervis at Hamilton Bicentennial in Cuddebackville in a special education fourth grade inclusion class be-

ing the special education teacher.

Lisa holds certifications in Elementary Education PreK-6, Special Education K-12, Business and Distributive Education for High School, Family and Consumer Science and English 7-12. Lisa after her first two teaching experiences decided that this is what she was meant to do. She was meant to teach young people. Taking all of her education into consideration the area that she felt young people really needed to know about and that she would be able to strongly teach them was financial literacy. She had the opportunity to work at several schools that were looking for Home and Career teachers and she chose Valley Central Middle School. When I asked her if she felt that she made the right choice, she said "Absolutely, I love my job at VC."

Lisa was part of many exceptional experiences at VC. Not only did she teach Home and Careers in the Middle School for ten years, she was a Spectrum Teacher at East Coldenham for grades 3-5 for 3 years, Middle School Yearbook Advisor for 3 years, Chairperson for Dental-Vision Benefits Manager of VCTA and Dental/Vision Trust for District for 5 years.

Lisa Coney is a wonderful teacher and a great friend. We were not only colleagues but quilting buddies. As our friendship grew we realized we had a lot of similar interests. Lisa has been there through the good and the bad. My most memorable times with Lisa include summer days having mini-quilt retreats on her back deck where we sewed, ate, had good conversation, and either finished a sewing project or created another for that pile of unfinished ones that I swear I will get to do when I retire.

So to you Lisa, finally having the time to finish all of those unfinished quilts, enjoy your retirement and your new home on Anna Maria Island in Florida.

—Carolyn Concolino, MS

## After 33 Years, Erin Davis to Retire

Since 1982, Valley Central's student athletes have been privileged to call Erin Davis their teacher and coach! Erin has touched the lives of thousands of students as her career has allowed her to teach every grade level from elementary to high school. Likewise, she has passionately offered her expertise coaching several sports. Whether it was soccer, basketball, or other sports, she has always instilled the value of hard work and dedication as she always led by example.

In addition to photography and helping to raise her dogs, she also has a very special love for sewing. This sewing hobby has provided opportunities for her to use her creative side on projects allowing her to do what she has always done, which is to help others.

Erin's love for sewing has helped her hone her creative skills. Her sewing skills are ready for her full attention now, as the demand for quilts, shirts, and various projects continue to pour in from family, friends, and colleagues (#Erin's Stitches for life!). I can vividly remember and still have the crochet blankets that she made me when I had my children. Not only were they beautiful, but the love and care that went into each and every stitch was special. Each and every item she makes has this thoughtfulness and she has brought smiles to so many of her friends.

With regard to the students she has taught and coached at every level, she has always approached her job with enthusiasm, focus, and most of all, Viking Pride! Every class and coaching assignment has been accepted with integrity, dedication and love for the teaching and learning. She

truly lived and believed the instructional day did not end after the last period of the day. The instruction that took place on the courts and on the athletic fields were equally as important as those lessons taught during the school day.

Each and every staff member that she has mentored or influenced with her matter of fact and no nonsense approach has been positively impacted, all for the better. Erin has coached, officiated, refereed and kept score for every sport that one could think of, all for the student athletes of Valley Central. Once again, Erin put her special mark in places or with people that needed help—whether creating a special item for a wedding shower or helping an athlete understand taking the proper angle to gain an advantage during an athletic competition.

Overall, it is safe to say that the Valley Central School District has been a special place for Erin and in many ways provided her with thousands of opportunities to help others, one project or season at time.

In closing, now it is time for her to work on herself with retirement goals to spend time in Maine and Florida. Erin will be utilizing her new photography equipment to take more amazing pictures. She plans on spending time with her family, her 2 dogs and friends during the next chapter of her life. She will be gleaming next September as she enjoys her first opening day as a retired teacher. It is with a heavy heart I bid my friend a happy, enjoyable and healthy retirement! Erin will always continue to be there for others as that is her nature, that is just the way she has always lived, and now she has more time to continue her journey. Congratulations and best wishes on your retirement.

—Christine Giudice, Mont Elem



**Congratulations and Best Wishes to all  
of Valley Central's 2015 Retirees!!!**

## **MaryEllen Raskopf-Kawauchi Retired from Walden**

**M**aryEllen Raskopf Kawachi (or as many of us remember her – “Mangiamele”), it’s quite an incredible name for just that, an incredible teacher and an amazing person! MaryEllen has been teaching for 30 years, 20 of those years in our district. She began her career as a Special Ed. Teacher and taught for several years in that area, but when our schools had computer labs, we needed new computer teachers. MaryEllen was working at Maybrook at the time and Anne Sussdorf recognized her as the perfect candidate for this new position. MaryEllen has a natural (and amazing) ability with computers, can fix many problems and can design fabulous computer projects. She filled a new and demanding position and has excelled through the years as a remarkable computer teacher. I call her the “Queen of Technology.”

MaryEllen lives on my road, and I can say without exaggeration, that she has put in an unbelievable amount of extra hours, working on special projects and PowerPoints for meetings and graduations. She worked tirelessly on Walden’s 5<sup>th</sup> grade yearbooks for many years. She did so much for every 5<sup>th</sup> grade class and all of her classes that there is not enough space to list all the special

tech projects she has done.

MaryEllen has always been my mentor for school and family devotion. She is devoutly dedicated to her children, grandchildren, and family members. She gives up countless weekends attending to her family’s needs and babysitting for grandkids. (If you don’t believe me, just check her phone. She’s filled up 3 gigs with pics and videos!)

MaryEllen has given this district her love, sweat and devotion. She is a shining example to educators, a devoted wife, mother, grandmother and friend. I feel privileged to have worked with her, and to call her my dear friend.

**M.E.**

**You will always be –**

**The Goddess of Technology, to me!**



## **Barbara Coates Retiring**

**A**lthough Barbara has only been with us in the high school math department for a few years, we will miss her next year! Barbara spent most of her career at Valley Central Middle School working with students to strengthen their math skills in the AIS classroom. When she moved to the high school in the 2012-2013 school year she really worked hard to adapt. In the high school we work closely together to make Smartboard lessons and notes to share with each other and our students. Barbara was ready and willing to learn the new technology and help out with lessons for the courses she taught. Barbara has shown what a hard worker she is; she can usually be found working in her classroom early in the morning and after school until nearly 5:00 each day. I’ve even heard her mention coming in over the weekend and on school vacations to catch up on lesson planning and grading!

Barbara has had many freshmen and sophomores travel through her classroom in the past few years and always exhibits patience and kindness. I often hear her speaking with her students before first period begins and giving them support and advice. Although younger students can sometimes be trying, Barbara has always done her best to prepare them well for future math classes.

Barbara is currently working hard at home to prepare her house to be sold so that she and her husband Colby can relocate after she retires. The first stop will be Ohio, where she has family, and then Barb and Colby plan to find a warmer climate in which to reside during the cold winters. The high school math department has really enjoyed working with and getting to know Barbara over the last few years and we wish her a peaceful and happy retirement!

—Casey Doty, HS

## **Love You, Mean It: Happy Retirement, Jo-Ann Capozella!**

**J**o-Ann Capozella is going to be sorely missed from the Guidance Office at VCMS come September! She is always there to greet you with a smile, a compliment and quick wit. Jo-Ann's ability to comfort, console and counsel the students at VCMS is unmatched. She has been a mentor and a role model for her colleagues.

Back in 1800 BC (or 1986), Jo-Ann began working as a Guidance Counselor at VCMS. Prior to coming to VC, Jo-Ann worked as a Special Education teacher at Washingtonville and Middletown. During her tenure at VC, Jo-Ann was a part of many clubs, programs and groups. She is a member of the Orange County Counselors Association. Jo-Ann gave time to Operation Heartstrings, Homework club and countless counseling groups. Jo-Ann has also been a union representative. Founder's Award 2015 and Mid-Hudson Study Council Excellence in Education Awards are just a couple of the honors Jo-Ann has received while working at VC.

When you ask Jo-Ann what she will miss most about working at Valley Central Middle School she always answers, "The kids!" Of course, she will miss her colleagues and friends but she plans to come back for lunch and "cake" regularly.

Jo-Ann's plan for retirement is to have NO PLANS! She intends to travel and spend time with family and friends. Jo-Ann is looking forward to leisurely enjoying her coffee and newspaper in the morning. Not having to pack a lunch or choose an outfit for the day are things Jo-Ann is thrilled about!

The connections she has made with the faculty and staff at VC as well as the successes, both large and small, she has made with her students are just a few of the things she will take with her.

As a faculty, we would like to wish Jo-Ann the happiest of retirements. Your presence will surely be missed on a daily basis. We aren't quite sure who we will turn to for advice, a warm smile, infectious laugh or a good old "birthday dance!" You have been a fixture at VCMS for as long as most of us can remember and your spirit (as well as your files dating back to 1986) will remain. Congratulations, Jo-Ann!!! Love you, Mean it!

—Erin Scherf and Jennifer Pacione, MS



## **Goodbye, Donna Magliato!**

**V**CMS will be saying goodbye to Donna Magliato this year. Well known for her stylish outfits, dedication to working out and for being a grammatically correct texter, Donna has been an integral part of the middle school for over 30 years. She began her tenure here as Gene Mueller's student teacher and was then hired as an ELA teacher. When teaming began Donna was the 7 Gold team leader and has stayed on that team ever since.

Besides her role as an ELA teacher Donna has also been a big help to the music department. As an accomplished pianist, Donna has accompanied the VCMS chorus many times for their concerts and shows. Donna also attained her counseling degree while teaching at the middle

school but chose to remain in the classroom throughout her career.

Donna is looking forward to a trip to the beach this September as she eases into retirement. She plans to continue working out and enjoying her other hobbies such as biking, reading (if you have any recommendations pass them along), spa trips and shopping. She is looking forward to having more time to spend with her friends and family as she moves into this next chapter of her life.

—Nancy Rypkema and the 7 Gold Team

## Retirement is Bittersweet: Adieu, Laurie DiLorenzo!

**S**ome say that retirement is bittersweet. Bitter: because someone is saying goodbye. Sweet: because they are moving on to new and exciting times, and we are glad to have worked with them. So it is without a doubt that the retirement of Laurie DiLorenzo is bittersweet.

It wasn't until our recent e-mail change that many people even knew that Laurie's real name was Margaret. In fact she is the fourth generation to have the name Margaret. It is her middle name, Lauren, where we get "Laurie" from. Laurie began her life in New Jersey, but moved to New York at a young age. As a VC Grad, Laurie attended East Coldenham Elementary, the middle school and the high school. Upon graduating, Laurie attended Oneonta and then moved on to New Paltz for her Master's. Teaching for Laurie began in Newburgh at Bishop Dunn followed by ten years of working in a day care. Her second teaching position was in Valley Central teaching.....Kindergarten! That's right, kindergarten. It was with some hesitation that she moved to the middle school to teach 6<sup>th</sup> grade. For many years Laurie taught 6<sup>th</sup> grade English and then reading was added. In recent years she switched to social studies and returned again this year to include ELA. In her career, Laurie has mentored many new teachers as well as has numerous student teachers. Those who have had the privilege to work with her know what a brilliant and tal-

ented teacher she is.

As her teaching career comes to an end, her new role as Grandma is kicking into full gear. During her retirement Laurie will be found visiting her oldest son, Daniel, his wife, Emily, and their daughter, Lillian in Portland, Maine. When not in Maine, Laurie and her husband, Joe, will be visiting their middle son Scott, the veterinarian, in San Diego, California; and their youngest son, Brian, in New York City. When not with her sons, she will be found traveling the world with friends or resting in her condo in Myrtle Beach. It would seem that she has plenty of places to go for vacationing, and her door is always open for friends to drop by.

On the odd chance that you do catch her at home in New York, it might be chatting with friends at CAVU in Walkkill with her martinis or enjoying dinners out. On Sunday afternoons, Laurie will be found floating in her pool catching up on some reading. On the rainy days she will be watching *Days of Our Lives* which she has been watching since she was in high school.

The middle school and especially the 6<sup>th</sup> grade will truly be **bitter** and sad that she will not be with us next fall, but we are happy that she has a **sweet** retirement ahead of her. Laurie, we wish you all the best in your retirement, and want you to know there will always be a seat for you at lunch at Carmela's. We will miss you!

## Pamela Dixon Retires from the High School

**T**here's a trusty red sweater hanging in Pamela Dixon's office that has hung there all alone on its hook since as long as any of us can remember. It's a baggy ole button up a couple sizes larger than the woman who wears it, but it's always been just one grab away for her during her years at VCHS. Whether she is rushing off to a meeting in another office or chasing down a student she needs to check in on or heading out for her midday lunch or reluctantly sauntering out, late, to meet her pm bus duty obligation, the red sweater gets lifted off its hook and shrugged on to the shoulders of this woman who will be so greatly missed when she retires this June.

When our friend and colleague Pamela Dixon

shoulders her red sweater and departs her counseling office at the end of this school year she leaves some shiny shoes to fill. Even as she acknowledges with sadness how very much she will miss her students and her very strong connections to both they and their families, she shares her humble humor in trying to make light of her bittersweet jaunt into retirement. - In reference to the district's hiring of not only one counselor to fill her office but also to the additional hire of a restored counseling position, Pamela Dixon chuckles, "You see, they need TWO counselors to replace me!"

Known for her laid back, but steadfast style of counseling heavily rooted in realistic, but high aiming goals for her students, (*continued on page 8* )

## **Pamela Dixon Retires from the High School**

Pamela approached leaving VCHS with the same sensitive and sensible approach- she says she knows it is time for her to go even while she knows she will continue to live only a short distance away "missing the VC family of faculty and staff" and "definitely missing all of the interactions with her students." Reminiscing some of the moments she has always enjoyed navigating with her students, tops among them was the absolute joy of "seeing the young ninth graders mature and graduate." She says she will dearly miss counseling her students through transitions and challenges towards rewarding college, career and life paths.

Pamela has always been a sympathetic ear for students, many of whom sought her out even though she was not their designated counselor. Her office has been a refuge and a social meeting place for so many students - a place where they could always feel welcome. She has always enjoyed the small groups of teenagers that would ultimately find their ways regularly into her office- a bright, very bright apple-red space painted enthusiastically by a former student who was careful to imprint the qualities of guidance counselors on the wall of the guidance counselor she loved and appreciated so greatly. Truly, there have been so many students who have grown through VCHS supported by Pamela's strength and wisdom and caring.

When I asked Pam to speak to me about how she ended up as a guidance counselor at VCHS, I was treated to the story of a life path that has come full circle from its start with her goals as a very young woman through to her own achievements and those of her two children, Corey and Courtney. Pam smiles as she tells me that she really wanted to be an English teacher, but her father encouraged her to reach beyond letters to the letter of the law to attend law school. Although Pam herself did not follow letter to the law, she fully supported her daughter Courtney on that path to fruition years later.

In deference to the parents she respected, Pam kept in consideration her parent's goals for her and graduated from City College of New York (1974) with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology. From 1974 through 1994 she utilized her degree in Sociology in working with healthcare patients. She served as the Admitting Supervisor at Mount Sinai

Hospital (1974-1994) in addition to working for the Visiting Nurses Service of New York (1992-1994). She enjoyed her job working in positions helping others, but in 1992 she decided she wanted a career. Pam went back and earned her Provisional, then her Master's Degree in Guidance and Counseling (1994). During this time she had worked towards her degree while living in Maybrook and raising her children.

New to Orange County, she earned a position as a counselor at Orange-Ulster BOCES (1992-1995). She so enjoyed her BOCES C-TECH counseling start, but she decided she wanted to be totally involved with students in all aspects and apply to traditional high schools.

Wanting a traditional school setting, Pam began to look towards moving from BOCES C-TECH counseling to a counseling position in an Orange County high school. All of us here at VCSD will readily understand that of all of the Orange county schools with which she interacted on behalf of her C-TECH students, Pam says it was Valley Central High School that appealed to her most. "VC always stood out to me. All of my interactions with VC and VC staff and students were always so friendly," she explained, "that I thought VC felt like home." When Pam interviewed for the first time at VCHS, she did not get the position, but when she interviewed for the second time very soon after, she was chosen. "My interview was so informal and laid back that I was immediately comfortable with the VC style."

When Pam was hired under Principal Joseph DiBello in 1995, she started on a twenty-year stint that allowed her to counsel in a community of which she has been so proud. She has lived here among us and our students and their families, fostering caring, supportive relationships among students and their families. She has been a community liaison who lives here, works here, worships here, votes here, shops here and plans to continue living here in her retirement. Pam is VC through and through, and she will be so missed.

We can't help thinking of how we will feel when Pamela Dixon's baggy ole button up red sweater is no longer hanging in its place by her office door next year- other than to know with certainty that in the absence of seeing it we will be realizing how much we, together with Pam's students, will certainly be missing our dear friend and colleague Pamela Dixon next year.  
—Eileen Purcell, MS and HS

## **Carole Fitts Retiring after 32 years!**

**T**hirty three years ago, Carole Bevan was on a Long Island beach, relaxing and thinking of the day she would fulfill her dream of teaching special needs kids to be productive, responsible citizens. This dream was realized when she began working at VCHS. Early in her career, Carole and Valley Central's future had become intertwined in the form of a young Social Studies teacher, Michael Fitts. The two were married in 1985 and have been happily married ever since, with two beautiful children, Melissa and Ryan. Carole entered Valley Central High School with a special education job and is leaving with a family.

As a special educator, her early years had her teaching with some of VC's finest, including: Debbie Santoro (Calvino) and Rosa Boyd under the leadership of Mr. Haggar. Some of her assignments have included teaching in a collaborative setting with numerous Social Studies teachers including Michael Fitts, Keith Sexton, Kevin Wentworth, Michelle Sinn, Lisa Korpics, Alicia Gannello, and Jay Tackabury. She moved on to teach special class Social Studies to her little "angels" for nearly two decades before switching to life skills where she spent the last twelve years of her career.

Throughout her 32 years at VC, which began in September 1982, she has seen 7 superintendents, 11 principals, 20 assistant principals, 5 athletic directors, and 8 paraprofessionals come and go while she has maintained residence in the same room, 113. She is the epitome of Valley Central family, as this is her one and only profession. She was hired immediately after graduation from Mount Saint Mary College in Newburgh by Superintendent Rooney. In Carole, he knew that he found someone special, someone who had the heart to become like a mother to the over 414 students that she taught during her career. Each of these students has remained in her thoughts and has a permanent piece of her heart. A testament to this is a journal she keeps near her desk of each and every student's life after high school.

Carole's drive to make a difference at Valley Central High School has been clearly apparent. She dedicated a great deal of herself to a plethora of functions and activities. She participated in several faculty plays, which were initiated to raise

money for school musicals. She often dressed up for Halloween and Homecoming Spirit Week to show students that even adults can be silly and have fun. She was the facilitator of the high school holiday party for 24 years. This party was created to elevate morale and the cohesiveness of the faculty and staff. Carole cultivated school spirit by overseeing the annual end of the year breakfast for staff and family for 6 years. Carole spent over twenty years assisting in the graduation commencement ceremony. She was a cheerleading coach for nine years and senior class advisor for the past ten years. In 2014, she and Henry Pizonia were nominated for and won the prestigious "Senior Class Advisor of the Year" award.

As a coach and a supervisor, she introduced many a mainstream student to the world of special education. She promoted the beliefs and ideas of acceptance, compassion and understanding. The lives of both those regular and special students will be forever changed. Carole leaves the halls of Valley Central High School to return to the place where she was first inspired to become a fixture in the lives of hundreds of students and educators alike, the beach. Carol will retire to Hilton Head, S.C. where she will once again relax, thinking of the tremendous impact she has made on so many...

—*Lisa Aguilera-Ingleson, Mary Jane Hebbard, Barbra Palmer, and Peter Meisel, HS*

## **Farewell, Etta Maxwell**

I remember meeting Mrs. Maxwell for the very first time at Maybrook Elementary. It was December 2005 and I had just finished interviewing there. Mrs. Maxwell was running back in the building in a state of panic because she had seen a dog in the parking lot. If you know Mrs. Maxwell you would know that she doesn't like animals at all. From that day on we became the best of friends well I should say we became family.

Etta is the most giving person I've ever known, she'll give you her last without a second thought. If I can't count on anyone I know that I can count on her. She's a person that stands by her word, means what she says and is not afraid to voice her opinion. She lives by the statement "Right is right and wrong is wrong."

Over the last ten years I've learned so much from her. I learned how to be a better mother,

daughter, wife, sister and most of all a true friend. Even though it will be hard not seeing her in the hallways of Valley Central daily I know that our friendship will only get stronger. Thanks Etta for being there for me whenever I needed you, day, night and even when I'm thousands of miles away. You are the first one to ask me if I need something when I'm sick, first one to ask me how my babies are doing, first one to ask me with a pout who's bothering me and who you need to beat up. We've laughed until our stomachs hurt, cried during the bad times and most of all prayed together for brighter days. I'm so excited for you... Enjoy the next chapter of your life...

Love Always.

—Aisha Estwick, HS

## **Wenda Heaney to Retire**

Wenda Heaney and her family moved to Walden about 35 years ago. As her four children grew up she was both a Boy Scout and a Girl Scout leader for many years. Wenda began working for Valley Central in November of 1996.

She worked in various buildings throughout Valley Central, including as the computer para at Walden Elementary, until April of 1999 when Barbara Galvin hired her to run the Copy machine at Walden. At one point she worked in the library at Walden, spending the next 5 years there working with Jill Parks, Nancy Donaldson and Nancy Joanides. She then returned to her original position as our copy para, where she still works now.

Over the past 16 years Wenda has worked in many places throughout Walden Elementary. She has supervised the school store with Linda Kirkpatrick and Jessica Tsantes and now runs the school store with the help of some of our 5th graders. Wenda always enjoyed working Camp Read-a-lot with Linda Kirkpatrick. Her various duties have included breakfast and hall monitor of the cafeteria hallway. She has fond memories of recess duties with John Robinson and Randy Sutter as well as many other

teachers from Walden. Wenda had served as Vice President for the Para unit of the VCTA as well as building rep for several years. She is an active PTO member and has devoted countless hours making sure the Holiday Craft Fair is a huge success for the children of Walden Elementary. She will be greatly missed and we all wish her the best of everything as she moves into the new life in retirement.

—Kathy Lennon, Walden



## **Danielle Amen Retires from Walden Elementary**

I have had the privilege of working with Danielle Amen for the last 11 years. She has been my “right hand woman” in our Special Education class and she will be dearly missed, not only by myself, but by the entire Walden Elementary family. She has touched many lives here, as well as in the community. Danielle has worn so many different “hats”, it’s hard to keep track of them all!

Danielle moved to Walden from Queens with her husband Steve and three children, Samantha, Steven, and Sydney in 1996. From 1996-1998 she worked at Valley Nursery School as a substitute preschool teacher. She then became a substitute paraprofessional at Walden Elementary School in 1998. She remained on as a sub until 2001, when she started as a full time Special Ed Para in a 5<sup>th</sup> grade Collaborative Classroom at East Coldenham. In 2002, Danielle moved to Walden Elementary and worked in a K/1 Special Education classroom. I moved into that class in September 2004 and was grateful for her experience and wisdom. I could tell immediately that Danielle was dedicated to the children she worked with and that they loved and respected her in return. Danielle has a special way with kids, and they respond to her positive approach.

Danielle is known as the “Queen of the Laminator” here at Walden – don’t mess with the laminator without checking with her first! Danielle also runs the Snack and Soda fund, providing us all with the necessary sustenance that is often needed in order to keep us going. Every year in June, she plans a luncheon for all faculty and staff using the proceeds from this fund. It is an event each of us looks forward to every year, and she

always adds her special touches to it. Danielle is also the Building Rep for the Paraprofessional Union and is a member of Principal’s Council.

Outside of work, Danielle has been one busy lady! She has been actively involved with the Hudson Valley Conservatory as Stage Manager. She has also performed in some of the productions there, including Cocktails with Mimi, The Grapes of Wrath, All I Want for Christmas, and the female version of The Odd Couple. She has served as treasurer of HVPOPS (Hudson Valley Parents of Performing Students) and has ran several fundraisers for the Conservatory. How she managed to squeeze in serving as Cub Scout pack leader for two years and coaching Valley Central Pop Warner Cheerleading for five years is beyond me! But she did it all, and she did it well. Danielle has had recent personal challenges, but she faced them like she does everything in life – with persistence and determination. She hasn’t let these challenges slow her down, and she is still the positive, energetic lady I consider my friend.

Soon, Danielle and her husband Steve will be moving to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. She plans on – finally! – relaxing for a change, and spending some time in another of her favorite arenas – retail (She LOVES to shop).

I wish you all the best my friend, you deserve it!—Nancy Kuriplach, Walden



## **Michelle DiPierro retiring from Walden Elementary**

Michelle DiPierro was first hired by Valley Central in 2003. After 12 years, Walden Elementary’s bulldog is leaving her post. While Michelle’s official title is “greeter,” everyone knows she is much more than that. Michelle is famous for asking for identification from even the most familiar faces in Valley Central School District, including the Superintendent.

Her cheery smile, infectious laugh, savvy organizational skills, and enthusiastic school spirit will be greatly missed at Walden Elementary. We wish her happiness, relaxation, and sunshine as she begins this new chapter in South Carolina.

—Patti Buchalski, Walden



## Carol Jacob

**I**t is with mixed emotions that we say good-bye to our Cook Manager, Mrs. Jacob. Mrs. Jacob has been a part of the East Coldenham family for 30 years.

Although we will miss Mrs. Jacob, we are excited for her as she enters the wonderful world of retirement.

Soon after retiring, Mrs. Jacob will move to Florida and enjoy spending some time with her two sons, Richie and Donald. With this new-found freedom she will also enjoy some of her favorite hobbies such as: bike riding, hiking, gardening, traveling, and of course spending time with her friends.

We wish Mrs. Jacob a fun-filled and relaxing retirement.

Congratulations!



## Jane Leenstra

**M**rs. Leenstra came to East Coldenham 31 years ago this past May. She was hired by Art Nugent. He told her that he needed a mom that could give a hug and a Band-Aid. She has done that and so much more. Mrs. Leenstra is an asset to E. C. working as both the health and attendance paraprofessional. With a smile on her face, she is always willing to help students and staff. She will be greatly missed by all.

In retirement, Mrs. Leenstra is looking forward to enjoying more time with her grandchildren and traveling with her husband.

Congratulations, Mrs. Leenstra... We wish you the very best on your new adventure!



## Gladys Rohatsch Retiring from VCMS

**G**ladys Rohatsch has worn many hats during her tenure in the Valley Central School District.

Gladys started out as a clerk in the middle school library under the directorship of Carol Hochreiter. When Carol retired, Gladys continued in that position for another 7 years under the new librarian, Barbara Introcaso. Gladys was known as the person who could find any obscure fact you could think of, or could direct you in the direction you needed to go to find it. Gladys worked well with children and staff. She was always willing to lend a helping hand to whom ever needed it. Gladys helped to make the middle school library a place that students and staff loved to come to. The library staff shared many laughs and good times during her time as a para.

Sadly, due to budget reductions, Gladys found

herself excessed and without a job. She became a substitute para for special education and found herself a new niche. Gladys became a one on one aide and then transitioned into a classroom paraprofessional with Anne McKallen. Gladys' love and devotion to the students was clearly evident in the way the students responded to her with obvious affection. Gladys' patient and kind demeanor made her sought out by special education students who knew she would always help them with any problems they might have. Students looked upon her for support and encouragement on a daily basis which she freely gave. We wish Gladys every continued success and happiness, as she will now have more time to enjoy her quilting, gardening, and beautiful grandchildren.