

## VC ECHOES

Volume 18, Issue 4

*Valley Central Teachers' Association*

Retiree Edition 2016

### VALLEY CENTRAL'S RETIREE CLASS OF 2016



CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF VALLEY CENTRAL'S RETIREES!

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

## Valley Central Teachers' Association

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### In this issue:

Blood Drive	2
John Fisher	3
Francine Adams	4
Terri Campbell	5
Diane Colangelo	6
Nancy Desole	7
Suzanne Eastwood	8
Marie Fasulo	9
Carolyn Lahue	9
Carolyn Lahue	10
Joann Lamond	10
Kathy Manning	11
Mariellen Murphy	11
Liz Papesca	12
Beverly Risco	13
Debra Sinclair	14
Gail Skahen	14
Carol Vogel	15
Denise James	16

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**Articles or**  
**Contributions**  
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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.*

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



## John Fisher sings his swan song to WES...

**M**r. John Fisher began teaching at Valley Central in 2001. Here at Walden Elementary School, he has taught second grade and kindergarten for a combined 15 years of dedicated service to our Walden children. For seven of those years, John also served our teachers as our Literacy Coordinator. His professionalism and supportive style assisted numerous teachers in implementing the Literacy Collaborative initiative with as little stress as possible. John is a devoted and caring person who brought kindness and respect to his colleagues and students.

John also served as Walden Elementary School's VCTA Building Rep for the past 4 years. His expertise in the political arena and his steadfast support for teachers and unionism made him the ideal person to be the voice for Walden's teachers. I feel privileged to call him a friend and hope to be able to continue representing the teachers at Walden, as well as he has.

John worked in the business world before realizing he had a much greater calling as a teacher. After spending time working in that field, John knew he wanted something more meaningful for his life's work. With the support of his family, John was finally able to follow his heart and go back to school. He knew he wanted to teach and was advised to aim for a secondary teaching certification. After a brief experience in an elementary setting during his own studies, John was hooked and knew becoming a teacher working with elementary children was the path for him.

When away from our school and his students, John enjoys writing music, playing guitar, and performing his original works. I have had the pleasure of attending one of his performances and witnessing firsthand the joy John takes in his craft. His music comes from the heart and speaks to people to help them feel less alone in this sometimes brutal world.



John is going to enjoy having more time to write and perform his music, to share the songs in his heart with the rest of us. In school, John has used his musical talents to enrich his students' educational experiences and we are excited he has promised to come back each year to provide the musical accompaniment for our annual 100th Day of School parade!

John Fisher is a man who chose to come into teaching as a second career to enrich his life's journey. He became a teacher who was loved and respected by his students and colleagues, and will be remembered as a dedicated teacher. John will be greatly missed by all of us here at Walden Elementary and Valley Central. I am happy to know I will still get to see John at our monthly VCTA meetings, when he continues to be active on behalf of teachers and unions, as a representative for the retirees!

Congratulations and best wishes to you, John! It's been wonderful! We will miss you when you're **Gone!**

—Kathy Bordone, Building Rep.  
Walden Elementary School

## **Life and Art in Retirement: Fran Adams**

**W**hen Fran Adams came to Valley Central in 1991, we had no idea how very much talent and fun had just arrived!

Fran's journey has led her from her native Brooklyn, to New Jersey, to Rockland County and finally, to us in Orange County.

Her credentials were and are exceedingly impressive! She possesses a Bachelor's in Art Education from Montclair University as well as a Masters in Art Education. In addition, she earned a second masters in Elementary Education at Indiana-Wesleyan University.

Her teaching experiences have been extensive; having taught in New Jersey for 2 years; then 3 years in Monroe. Next she taught 4 more years in New Jersey, 2 of which were at Vernon High School before coming on board at Valley Central, only to stay with us for 25 more years, completing a very successful career!

All this was accomplished with an interruption mid-stream when Fran took 6 years off to raise her wonderful children, Annette and Reed. Fran has always been a very hard worker. During this time she also provided child care, taught art lessons, and sold her outstandingly beautiful baskets.

Montgomery Elementary was the first VC school to benefit from Fran's expertise. Very few elementary schools could boast of an Art teacher so versatile in so many media forms, which included drawing, painting, calligraphy, print making, collage, pottery, weaving, stitchery and clay, to name a few.

During her time at Montgomery she led an Art Club, and wrote mini-grants which greatly enhanced the art program!

She was instrumental in the Y-scoop program for 9 years and Spectrum for 3 years.

And of course Fran was noted for her amazing Art Shows, which were often coordinated with the budget vote because of their popularity! This was an outstanding display of students' art work, contained mini art environments and offered several interactive tables; a true source of pride for Valley Central! Of course, gradually Fran came to share her expertise with our middle school and all of the elementary schools in the district.

Finally, no tribute to Fran would be complete without mentioning how she truly was a one-woman Social Committee! Fran was always the one to organize holiday parties, end-of-year get-togethers, happy hours and parties of all kinds. She simply brought the fun!!!

So although we wish her the best in her new South Carolina home, her departure for her cohorts will be bitter sweet. We will truly miss her amazing talent and irreplaceable friendship.

Happy Retirement, Fran ...And thanks for the memories!

—Mary Monahan, Retiree

## **Creative Chemist, Terri Campbell, Retires From**

**M**arie Curie once said, "One never notices what has been done; one can only see what remains to be done." Anyone who has ever had the privilege of working with Terri Campbell knows that our VC family is about to bid farewell to one of the busiest, most hard-working, and innovative teachers on our staff. Terri has spent her entire career always looking for more to do. Whether entering her students into crystal competitions, designing an entire unit around tie-dying, or encouraging student participation in "The Walk to End Alzheimer's," Terri's endless energy never seemed to run out.

Since she began her career in 1984, Terri's passion for her profession and for Chemistry has only grown stronger, her enthusiasm contagious to all those around her. Even during her final years of teaching, Terri could be found completely overhauling her lessons to make her class more interesting and engaging for students. While many teachers lose energy as they advance in their careers, Terri has only grown busier, taking on more challenges and always finding ways to reinvent her teaching.

Born in Elizabeth, New Jersey, Terri moved with her family to Colonie, NY when she was three years old. She graduated from Colonie Central High School, studying abroad in Grenoble France the following summer. She graduated from SUNY Cortland in 1983 with a BS in Physical Education and a minor in French language. After graduation, Terri began teaching Biology in Grover Cleveland High School in New York City. After two years, she moved to Japan where she taught Biology and French at the Yokota Air Force Base High School. Terri moved back to NYC in 1987 where she returned to Grover Cleveland High School to teach until 1995. She coached volleyball, gymnastics, and softball. In 1995, Terri began teaching Chemistry at the High School for Environmental Studies in Manhattan.

During that time, she moved to Wallkill, NY and welcomed two sons Eli (1997) and

Wyatt (1999). Soon after, in the fall of 1999, she became part of the Valley Central family where she has found her home teaching Chemistry ever since. During that time she met her future husband, Joe Fracalossi, whom she married in 2005. While at Valley Central, Terri has advised the Ski Club and Science Honor Society, and she also started a girl's golf team.

Anyone who has ever had the privilege of working with Terri would be amazed by her compassion. When a new teacher enters the science department or is newly assigned to teach chemistry, Terri is one of the first to step up as mentor, generously offering her time and any available resources in her possession. When looking for guidance, one can always count on Terri for level-headed, well thought out advice.

Our society has become so quick to define teachers based on passing percentages on state exams. While Terri's state exam scores are typically spectacular year after year, she has shown all of us that being a master teacher is so much more than an APPR score. A master teacher is someone who defines themselves by not just test scores, but also in the way they conduct themselves professionally both inside and outside their classrooms. Terri is an asset to our entire school, staff and students alike. We have been extremely fortunate to have had her as a mentor and colleague. Terri, you will be sorely missed, and know that we wish you nothing but the best in your retirement as you replace planning lessons with planning vacations and making wine. You still will use ethanol as a solvent, just in a different manner!

With Love and Best Wishes,

—Jennie Sexton and Jane Meisel  
HS Science Department

## Au Revoir, Arrivederci, Auf Wiedersehen, & Totsiens, Diane!

**E**ach of these phrases does not simply mean goodbye. They all translate as “until we meet again.” And though Diane Colangelo may be leaving the Middle School, we all know we will definitely be meeting again soon.

Diane Colangelo was born and raised in Binghamton. As a young girl, she knew she was destined to become a teacher. And so off she went to SUNY Oneonta to get that teaching degree she so coveted.

While at Oneonta, Diane met the love of her life, Joe. Whether she was drawn to his puka shell necklace or perhaps it was his clogs that first caught her attention, either way it was love at first sight. They were soon married and started their family with their first child, Joanie, followed by their son, Joey, four years later.

While her kids were young, Diane chose to be a stay-at-home mom working to complete her Master’s Degree in the evenings once her husband would get home from work. She began working as a substitute teacher in 1993 and through the next few years, she also worked as a teacher’s aide and teaching assistant in the Highland Falls and Monroe school districts. Her love for sixth grade began with a leave replacement in Monroe at Pine Tree Elementary.

It was in 1997 that Diane came to Valley Central, where she began as a part-time sixth grade teacher. This soon developed into a full-time position. In her years at the Middle School she has mainly taught science and it is in this subject that her teaching really shines. The countless activities and labs she uses to enhance her curriculum only begin to highlight just what a wonderful teacher she is. Her many stories and anecdotes make sixth grade science come alive. Pet Rock Adoptions will never be the same without the hours she would put into creating each unique and quite stylish rock. In addition to her stories and activities,

Diane has always found ways to add music to her lessons. She knows how to find the right song to fit what she is teaching (even if they may be a little dated.)

Diane has such a generous heart and is extremely devoted to the kids. From school supplies to clothing, Diane selflessly gives to those in need, not only during the holiday seasons, but all year round. Her generosity and caring nature will surely be missed.

One of the things most people know about Diane is her artistic talent. She has probably the most perfect penmanship seen anywhere. She is always called upon (or rather elected) to create posters and signs. It is this artistic nature that will find Diane taking art courses upon her retirement with the goal of refining her skills.

In the future, Diane will be found relaxing in Myrtle Beach in a vacation home and commuting back to NY to spend time with family and with friends. One of her most important family members is the light of her life, her grandson Jack, with whom she will spend countless enjoyable hours.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Grade will surely miss such a wonderful, energetic, and talented teacher, colleague and above all... friend. So whether for lunch or simply a drink we know that we will definitely be meeting Diane again. We wish her the best.

Au Revoir, Arrivederci, Auf Wiedersehen, & Totsiens

— Derek DeVoe, VCTA Treasurer, MS



## Nancy Desole Retiring from Walden Elementary

**N**ancy Desole knew she was always supposed to be a teacher. Nancy was born and raised in Marlboro, NY. She graduated high school in 1972 and moved to Poughkeepsie in 1980. Before becoming a teacher, Nancy was a hair stylist for about 16 years. In her thirties, Nancy decided to enroll at SUNY Empire State College for her undergraduate degree. She earned her master's degree in Special Education from SUNY New Paltz in 1998.

Nancy's first job in the world of education was as a teaching assistant in the computer lab in Poughkeepsie City Schools from 1989-1995. Once she earned her degree, she came to Valley Central in 1995 as a computer teacher. She started off teaching in all 5 elementary schools. Eventually she became full-time at Berea Elementary. In 2010, she moved to Walden Elementary, where she'd finish her career. Her first two years were spent teaching kindergarten. Nancy then spent two years teaching third grade before coming full circle during her final year of teaching as the computer teacher at Walden Elementary.

I had the pleasure of working with Nancy during her first year in third grade in 2012. She was the general education counterpart in our collaborative classroom. Right from the start, I was struck by Nancy's calm exterior. I kept waiting for her patience to wear thin or revealing some sort of crack in her armor. It didn't take long to realize that Nancy's character is a reflection of her faith and her belief in seeing the good in everything around her. Nancy taught me not to allow people to mistake my kindness for weakness (her words) and that it's totally fine to say no every once in a while. I taught Nancy the joy of color-coded filing and to only save one copy of a worksheet and recycle the rest. Looking back, I definitely walked away with the better life lesson.

Nancy is very active in her church and its youth ministry. She teaches children's church on Sundays and bible study for inner-city youth every Friday.

Nancy has been married to her husband, Joe, for twenty years. She has four sons:

Charlie, Joseph, Tommy, and Matthew; and three daughters-in-law: Jamie, Ebony, and Karen. Her six grandchildren- Joseph, Justin, Lucas, William, Logan, and Lindsey- are her pride and joy.

When I asked Nancy what she loved most about teaching, she said she loved seeing the looks on her students' faces when they learned something new. Nancy says she will miss the people she's worked with. She said she's met some wonderful people who truly love children and she says she will never forget what she has learned from them. In her retirement, she is most looking forward to the time she will have to enjoy her family and all of the "wonderful" she has in her life.

Nancy not only impacted my life, but the lives of others. Kathy Caltavuturo, who worked as Nancy's kindergarten paraprofessional, commented that Nancy's faith and spirituality helped Kathy through a very difficult time in Kathy's life. Julie Lennon, a third grade teacher at Walden, said that Nancy is warm, patient, and supportive and is always there to lend an ear or share ideas. Nancy Phelps, another Walden third grade teacher, referred to Nancy as a "computer fairy godmother" who would swoop in to help her finish a difficult project. Pam Nasser, Nancy's computer paraprofessional, commented on how Nancy's grandchildren mean the world to Nancy and that she will miss Nancy very much next year.

I think retired third grade teacher Nancy Drennan said it best. "There is such a big and loving heart in our tiny little friend and colleague! She never fails to make time to listen to, support and encourage those who surround her. It was such a joy to be on the third grade team with Nancy! I miss her, and I wish her much happiness, good health, and many blessings in retirement!!!"



—Holly Siegel, High School

## Suzanne Eastwood: A New Chapter

Ten years marks the number of years we have had the great fortune of having Suzanne Eastwood be an integral part of the Walden Elementary School family. Yet she has had a lifetime of career and family experiences prior to working in the Valley Central School District.

Suzanne was born and raised in Syracuse, NY (what she likes to refer to as the “real” upstate NY). In fact, she is still so rooted there that she’s been known to wear the official orange and blue colors (socks included!) of Syracuse University when she is devoutly following a basketball or football game. Suzanne attended SUNY Potsdam where she received a BA in psychology in 1976. It was there that she met her husband of 39 years, Ken Eastwood. Ken holds the prominent position of superintendent of Middletown Schools. They have two daughters, Jessica and Katie. Jessica and her husband Chris had their first child, Jack who is now 17 months old. Suzanne (aka “Mimi”) is overjoyed at being a first time grandmother. Her younger daughter, Katie, is engaged and the wedding is set for May of 2017.

Suzanne began her teaching career as a nursery school teacher prior to being a “stay at home mom” to raise her two daughters. In 1999 she attended Dominican College where she received an advanced certificate to become a Teacher of the Visually Impaired. When Suzanne was ready to return to work, she taught visually impaired students at Oswego City Schools BOCES. She even taught herself braille! In 2004 she earned her Master’s Degree in literacy at SUNY Oswego.

In 2006 Mrs. Eastwood began her distinguished career at Valley Central working as a reading specialist at Walden Elementary School. She has taught AIS Reading from kindergarten through fifth grade and has always enjoyed working with a wide range of ages, abilities and personalities. The one thing that comes to mind is Suzanne’s verve and enthusiasm! She is always eager to implement the most current reading practices and make her

lessons engaging and interesting. She genuinely adores all of her students and treats each one with kindness, acceptance and respect.

Suzanne’s enthusiasm and desire to be a lifelong learner is reflected in her accomplishments throughout the years. In 2008, she trained to be a Literacy Collaborative Leader. For three and a half years she worked closely with colleagues and provided staff development in the Literacy Collaborative program. She has served on various district committees including the Writing Committee and BLT. She even runs the school’s post office! Her expertise extends to the community as well, where she has taught many parent workshops in literacy.

Suzanne looks forward to pursuing her many interests and hobbies in her retirement. She loves being outdoors and calls herself a “nature girl.” Her love of nature is reflected in her beautiful photography. She also enjoys gardening, reading, playing piano, traveling, and going to the beach. As a child, Suzanne did a lot of camping with her mom, dad and three siblings. Her parents took them to almost EVERY state on the U.S. map! Some of her happiest memories were visiting the state parks.

So what else does retirement have in store for Suzanne? She plans on moving to Rochester to be closer to her daughters and her grandson. She eagerly looks forward to spending copious amounts of time with Jack while at the same time helping with child care. She’s interested in volunteering and can picture herself in the future teaching illiterate adults or rocking babies in the NIC unit of a hospital. Suzanne also looks forward to traveling more. Places like Alaska, Italy and Hawaii have been calling her name!

Whatever Suzanne does, she does it with great care, gusto and enthusiasm. I am confident that the same will hold true in her retirement! On behalf of our colleagues, I want to wish you the very best in your retirement. On a personal note, you have been a wonderful colleague and friend. I will miss our great conversations and collaborations. Best of luck, dear friend!

—Jessica Tsantes  
Walden Elementary School



## Marie Fasulo

**F**our score and seven principals ago, Marie began teaching at Valley Central High School. After graduating from Monticello High School in 1969, she attended Montclair State where she received her degree in what was then known as Home Economics, with a minor in Early Childhood Development.

Her first teaching experience was in Newark, New Jersey where she worked as a substitute. This led her to a job at a residential home for children in Rockland County where she ran a therapeutic horseback riding program and taught culinary. Referred to as the "Galloping Gourmet" she taught the alternative school within the alternative school, "Reading, Riding and Rithmatic" where she met her husband, Tom. They moved to Orange County and raised two children, Virginia, now an AP Bio teacher in Lodi, New Jersey and Thomas

who runs a physical therapy and fitness center in Honolulu, Hawaii.

When Marie was hired at Valley Central in 1993, there had not been a Family and Consumer Science program for several years. Shortly after she started, Donna Zajkowski joined her and for the next eighteen years, they worked together to expand the program in both culinary, fashion and child development.

Marie will look back at her years at Valley Central with the fondest of memories and will miss almost everything about teaching. She does look forward to spending time with her husband of thirty-seven years, visiting her children, traveling, reading, writing and hopefully riding horses in as many places as possible.

—Rebekah Stoll, HS, Fam and Con Sci.

## Carolyn Lahue

**M**rs. Lahue is truly a talented and gifted music teacher. She began her career 33 years ago and has been with our district for 30 of those years. Mrs. Lahue taught at East Coldenham, Maybrook, and Berea Elementary Schools, and also at the Middle School during her tenure here at Valley Central.

Mrs. Lahue has taught countless children in her career. She has taught general, instrumental and choral music. Her students have learned so much about music, especially how to enjoy and appreciate it. Through all of her choral music groups, many of her students had the opportunity to perform during concerts. If you have ever had the pleasure of listening to one of her choral groups perform, you have witnessed a very delightful and impressive event.

Mrs. Lahue has always been very proud of these performances and has worked very hard to make sure the music she has selected

is superb and that the children have practiced more than enough to make everyone proud. Through her gifted leadership all of these years, music has enhanced the life of the entire school community. Well done Mrs. Lahue!

Mrs. Lahue is looking forward to a well-deserved retirement. She is also looking forward to slowing down a little and having more time to enjoy life. She plans to spend more time with her family and friends and to pursue other interests. She will be greatly missed, and so will her special talents and dedication. We wish her all the good things that life has to offer.

—Nancy Joanides

## Carolyn Lahue

**M**rs. Lahue began her career as a music teacher 33 years ago, but it was 30 years ago when Dr. Art Nugent hired her to teach music at East Coldenham as well as other Valley Central schools.

She is a well-rounded music teacher having taught both vocal and instrumental. Mr. Harvey Gregory asked if she would create an EC Select Chorus. She did this with great excitement and pride. With hard work and dedication it continues to be a special part of the music program here at EC. It is something her students will never forget. Over the years, we have enjoyed her many wonderful concerts where she carefully picks each song. She and her students work so hard for each performance and it shows.

After retiring, she will be spending quality time with her family and friends. Retirement

will leave her plenty of time to plan trips to NYC to see all the Broadway Plays she's been wanting to see. Of course, this will all happen after she helps her daughter, Jessica, plan her upcoming wedding.

Mrs. Lahue will be greatly missed. We wish her all the best!

—Your Friends at EC

## A Fond Farewell to Joann Lamond

**I**t is with mixed emotions that I extend my retirement wishes to friend and colleague, Joann Lamond. After several years of employment at Berea Elementary and many relationships built with staff, students and their families, the time has come to close this chapter in her life. While I am happy for her to embark upon new beginnings, I am sad to see her go. She has been a solid and vital part of Berea's office staff for several years. I can confidently say that her years of commitment, honorable dedication and performance will long be remembered by many and will always be greatly appreciated, too.

May retirement be relaxing, enjoyable and bring new beginnings and only the best. May it be spent with those who mean the most and may it be full of welcomed experiences and memorable moments that we all strive to have down the road.

Thank you for everything you've done for your colleagues and the students, both past

and present, at Berea. Here's wishing that all of your time, dedication and hard work has successfully culminated into a beautiful, well-deserved feeling called retirement. I've always said to my children, "Do unto others as you'd have done to you." "Goodness flows in circles. What you give out, will come back to you." If my belief holds truth, in retirement, you my friend will shine indeed.

**Congratulations Joann!** Much love, health and happiness always! I will miss you with certainty.

—Lorraine Troy

## Kathleen Manning Retires from VCHS

I first met Kathy Manning when she began her 2<sup>nd</sup> career at Valley Central High School 13 years ago. Kathy previously managed a retail store for many years until they eventually closed up shop. This was Kathy's opportunity to turn to teaching to finish out her working years. Kathy was assigned to share a room with me and we have been the best of friends ever since. I remember how excited she was to begin her math career at Valley Central and how eager she was to learn anything and everything. Math is Kathy's passion. She classifies herself as a true "math nerd" and is quite proud of this title. She loves all the levels of math but has always had a real love for geometry. She even designed a t-shirt for the geometry team with the title "Geo Babes" on the sleeve. Teaching proofs was, by far, Kathy's favorite unit. Although this was NOT a favorite of the students, Kathy continually tried to convince them that this was very,

very useful information and will help them become better thinkers, strengthen their reasoning skills and just make them better students overall. As students would flood our room during post session in a desperate attempt to be able to get past the "given" statements of a Euclidean proof, Kathy would work tirelessly to explain the ins and outs of proof.

Kathy is looking forward to her retirement. She plans to spend a good amount of time in Florida and also travel within the country and abroad. One of her first adventures is to tour the wine country in California. As we all are wrapping up our summer and getting ready to start a new school year, Kathy will be boarding a plane and heading west!

Kathy will be missed here at Valley Central but we certainly wish her good health and happiness as she begins the wonderful adventures that retirement will bring her.

—Elaine Keefer, HS, Math Teacher

## Mariellen Murphy-O'Connor Retires

It is with very mixed emotions that we say good-bye to our very dedicated nurse, Mrs. Murphy-O'Connor. She began her career at Valley Central in 1986. She spent many years dividing her time between several elementary schools in the district including East Coldenham. Finally, in 1991 she became full time in East Coldenham where she has stayed ever since.

She has comforted many students and staff in her 30 years here (many of our present students are children of former students). Mrs. Murphy-O'Connor truly loves her job, just ask any student who has spent time in the Health Office.

Although, we will miss Mrs. Murphy-O'Connor, we know she will be doing what she truly loves – spending time with her family and friends. She will become a snowbird in the winter with her husband Tom. She will also enjoy spending quality time with all of her grandchild-

dren. Lastly, this will leave her lots of time to find new music venues and visit new restaurants with her friends.

We wish her well in her retirement!

—Your Friends at EC



## Ciao, Maestra. Bon Voyage to Liz Papesca

Elizabeth Brooks became a teacher in the early 80's. At that time foreign language positions were few and far between. Her first position was a leave replacement at her alma mater, Pine Bush High School, for her own French teacher, Trudi Graham. Liz is a dedicated citizen of the Pine Bush community. Her dear husband, Bob is also a graduate of Pine Bush High School. They raised their three boys, Danny, Tommy and Mikey in Pine Bush where they make their home. Liz ran the PB scholarship council basket BINGO fundraiser for several years. She also dedicated her time to their All Night Grad party. She is perpetually involved in her high school class reunion planning. She is a cheerleader for all things Pine Bush. She simply loves her community.

It is, therefore, a stroke of luck for us that Liz began her career at Valley Central as Miss Brooks in 1984. She was hired as a maternity leave replacement for Mrs. Cecilia Cornwell and found her professional home at VC. Within two years she was appointed to a tenure track position and has spent the last 34 years awakening the logophile within each student.

Liz brings to the classroom so much more than her degrees in French, Spanish, Elementary Education, Technology and Administration. Liz creates new lesson plans every year that reflect the specific needs of the students in her charge at the time. She has an uncanny way of inspiring students to do things that they believe they are unable to do. They internalize her "Of course you can" response when facing the challenges of learning a foreign language. Liz will always be known as the teacher who offered her students a Friday Special bonus. Her students liked the sound of this, until they had to write in a foreign language! Those kids who learned to love her Friday Specials gained Liz's love for the craft of writing in addition to the love of language.

For years, Liz combined her love of foreign languages with summer travel to Europe. She soaked up the languages, the culture, and

the history, while chaperoning high school students throughout a two week tour wearing flip flops! Her legacy will be the sense of adventure, open mindedness and love for communicating with people of other heritages that she gave to countless students through her many trips abroad and in the classroom.

Liz's dedication to the students and staff does not end at the door of her classroom. Liz was advisor for both the Spanish and French Honor Societies for many years. She collaborated in a day long language celebration called LIFE day: *Language is For Everyone*. Liz formed part of the original ad-hoc committee that hosted the scrumptious Holiday Celebration. She has been a member of the scholarship selection committee, helped organize the diplomas for graduation and participated in countless graduation rehearsals and ceremonies.

Liz has lead the Foreign Language department since 1998 as Supervisor. Liz shared with her colleagues a lifetime of teaching, caring, nurturing, guidance, and friendship. She exemplifies and promotes all that is foreign language learning.

Throughout her tenure at VC Liz has compiled many interesting statistics:

- In her 34 years at Valley Central, she has seen 7 superintendents, 11 principals, 20 assistant principals, 5 athletic directors.
- She has moved around the entire building, calling rooms 225, 132, 205 and 201 home.
- She has taught well over 3,000 students.
- She has made hundreds of delicious jars of jams and jellies.
- She has accumulated *kilo reams* of paper on her desk.
- She has solved infinite technology related problems.
- She has amassed 6,000,000 points on Words with Friends and counting.

There will be no replacing Liz. There will only be teachers trying to emulate her for years to come.

*(continued on page 13)*

## Ciao, Maestra. (from page 12)

Our dearest Liz,

As we spend the rest of our careers striving to be just like you, we wish you a retirement packed with fulfilling pursuits, the love of family and friends and, most especially, high scoring words on Words with Friends, so that we may steal them and use them in the future in our futile attempts to defeat you.

—Composed by Sandra Creter, Al Ortiz and Carolyn Zayas and felt by all.

We think of Liz when we read this quote:

“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.”

— **Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad/Roughing It***

## Beverly Risco Retiring from the High School

**B**everly Risco became a member of the Valley Central family when she joined the high school Math Department in the fall of 1999. Former principal, Bob Klein, heard through a colleague that the Washingtonville school district had a great math teacher that might be willing to move to a district closer to her home. Washingtonville's loss was Valley Central's gain!

Bev's first career was working in the retail world using her business degree but she recalls always wanting to be a teacher. After her children were born, her husband Jerry encouraged her to go back to school and get her teaching degree. She went to school at night for several years until she completed her degree and received her teaching certification.

Throughout her 16 years at VC Bev has taught everything from Algebra to Trigonometry. Not only has she taught almost every math course but thanks to NYSED has taught three different iterations of the curriculum. She has worked tirelessly to ensure that every one of her students reach their full potential.

Beverly's husband Jerry retired in 2014 and has been waiting patiently for her to join him in their new home in North Carolina. This

move will take them closer to their children. Her son, Michael, and his wife, Daphne, live with their two children, Adeline and Luca, in South Carolina. Bev and Jerry's daughter, Ashley, and her husband, Pat, reside in Virginia. A fourth grandchild is due in December and Bev can't wait to have the freedom to be there for all the excitement.

In her retirement, Bev is looking forward to doing what she wants, when she wants and not having to get up at 5:15 in the morning. She plans on enjoying the southern weather by walking, biking, and learning to play golf. Bev also plans on spending as much time as possible with her grandchildren. They are going to enjoy her retirement as much as she will.

The entire math department at the high school wishes Beverly a long, happy and healthy retirement. It has been our privilege to work with such a caring and giving colleague. We will miss you.

—Math Department, HS

## Farewell, Debra Sinclair!

**H**ow do you replace a person like Mrs. Sinclair who has done so much for East Coldenham? She works tirelessly inside the classroom, the cafeteria, recess, organizes breakfasts for special occasions, collects for the Sunshine and Water and Coffee Clubs, to name just some of what she does. You can always count on Mrs. Sinclair to help or lend a listening ear whether it is a student or staff member. Students in her class will miss her encouraging words and her playful admonishments like "Leave some water for the fish!" when the child has been at the water fountain too long.

Debbie will spend her new free time spoiling her new grandson, getting to all the things she hasn't had time to do, and having lunch with her sisters and friends. Of course she will

still meet her friends at the diner on Fridays for breakfast.

How do you replace Debbie? You can't replace her. Another person will take her job, but there is only one Debbie and she will be missed by both students and staff. Enjoy your retirement, Debbie!

—Your Friends at EC

## Goodbye, Mrs. Skahen!

**M**rs. Skahen began her career on October 4, 1993 as a Teacher Aide in a Special Education classroom at Berea Elementary School. She resigned from this position on June 30, 1994 in order to be appointed as an elementary teacher in Berea beginning in September of 1994. She received her tenure three years later, a truly wise decision on the part of administration.

For these last 22 years, Gail has served the students in her first grade classroom with countless opportunities to grow and flourish as learners and readers. Her welcoming, caring demeanor invites students to explore, take risks, and become more confident as learners enabling them to develop the skills needed in first grade. She uses thematic units like "Holidays around the World" or "Bears" to teach her students vocabulary and new information as well as engage them in interesting subjects that address all goals/standards.

Her author studies of Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss) or Norman Bridwell allow students

to discover different styles, learn the use of rhyme, and improve their own writing skills as they have written to some authors in the past. The students are genuinely excited to hear back from them, which reinforces the importance of written communication. Over the years, Gail has honed her teaching skills to become an experienced teacher who is sought after by her peers for guidance or suggestions to employ within their own classrooms.

She has been involved with discussing and intervening for students at risk with her participation in committees such as Child Study Team or Instructional Support Team to improve student performance/learning. Her knowledge and expertise has made her an important member of these committees.

Personally, I have not only had the privilege of working with Gail as a colleague; but have also been thrilled to have her as both my son and youngest daughter's teacher. Her maternal character set me at ease, but was crucial when my daughter was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes early on during her (*cont'd on pg 15*)



## Goodbye, Mrs. Skahen!

first grade year. Not only did Gail send her surprises while in the hospital, but allowed me the reassurance to comfortably entrust Aubrey to her care upon returning to school. I will never forget the support she gave me throughout that wild first year! We continue to share updates on our children and what they are currently involved with. Now we are both grandmothers who often talk about our precious grandchildren and how they make us smile! Although I, along with many others at Berea, will miss her greatly, I wish her a blessed re-

tirement full of health, happy moments with family and many long relaxing days!! Mrs. Skahen, you've given Berea your best and we thank you for a job well done!

—Dolores O'Brien

## Congratulations, Carol!

Carol Vogel's dry sense of humor, ready smile and laughter will be greatly missed when VCMS opens its doors in September! For the past 17 years, Carol has taught AIS reading at the middle school to students who benefited from her nurturing, loving manner. She was truly passionate about her students and believed all her students were inherently capable of great things with the right amount of encouragement, love and support.

Since 1971, Carol's heart and soul have been in education. As a young nun, Carol taught kindergarten, 1st, 3rd and 5th grade then worked for her administration certificate and became vice-principal and later principal in Saratoga Springs. Carol is fond of saying "there are no coincidences in life" and in each part of her life this rang true. Upon leaving the convent many years later, she ran into a priest friend who knew a nun who knew Carol. Due to this nun's recommendation this priest offered her a job at a juvenile detention center for young girls teaching a GED course. Later, when she was applying for a job at NYS Department of Corrections a monarch butterfly flew in front of her windshield, in March, and she knew then that she would get the job

teaching male felons in maximum security.

Needing a well deserved vacation, Carol took time off to visit friends in Colorado where she met the love of her life, Bill, a musician from Texas. They married and stayed in Colorado for many years before moving back to the Hudson Valley to be closer to family. Carol began working at the Dutchess County jail teaching GED classes to inmates under 21, when she saw an ad for children's services in need of a teacher. When speaking with the supervisor they came to realize they were acquainted with some of the same people which resulted in an offer of a job teaching GED classes to High School residents at Highland Residential Center. Finally, in August of 1999, Carol was offered a job at VCMS teaching AIS reading, where she spent the next 17 years sharing her love of reading and inspiring even the most reluctant reader.

Carol and Bill look forward to much relaxation and travel. There will be more time pursuing what they enjoy the most: spending time with family and their grand-nephew. According to Carol, the best part will be sleeping in and not waking up to the alarm-clock!

—Kathy Clair, AIS Reading, VCMS

## Enjoy Retirement, Denise James!

**D**enise James started working at Walden Elementary several decades ago. She has worked for almost a quarter of a century at WES. Heck, she started working last century! In 1992 Denise started working in the WES kitchen. She served the food, she worked the cash register and she was here when they baked the desserts and made pudding and jello. Her favorite dessert was the apple crisp cake! (She didn't say if it was her favorite to make or her favorite to eat.)

Denise enjoyed working in the kitchen, and as her kids got older and busier, she started working summers as a custodian. When a year round custodian position opened in 2003 she decided to try it out. When she started, Eddie DeGroodt was the head custodian and she worked with Rob, John and Charlie. During that time, she was known as "Charlie's Angel" for keeping everyone safe and in line. She was also known as "Eddie's Little Tea-cup", which doesn't make much sense because she usually has a big cup of coffee. Today, she is known by John as "Channel 7 News" for her weather forecasts and as "Wonder Woman" for helping everyone in need.

Denise has walked into our building

every day with a smile on her face, willing to greet any challenge. She works with a great team, led by Jim Hall. Together they make our building beautiful, clean and safe. When asked what her favorite part of the job is, there is no hesitation when she says; "**The kids!**" She likes seeing the kids everyday, watching them grow and move from grade to grade. She gets to know them from kindergarten and knows most of the kids by name by the time she prepares the gym for 5th grade graduation. Denise cares about the kids, and it's not uncommon for her to mention to a teacher that one of their students isn't eating lunch or maybe needs a better lunch. She has seen several generations pass through our school and often recalls having served lunch to the parents of our current students.

As a custodian Denise is required to mop up spills, paint rooms, move furniture and a sundry of other tasks. Ask her about her favorite duty as a custodian, and she'll tell you "I know what my most unfavorable thing is!" "**Shoveling and carrying the boxes of paper up the stairs.**"

Denise will be missed. Not only for her diligent work ethic, but also for her sunny disposition and her willingness to always help out. Fortunately, Denise plans to sub, so we can count on seeing her on sunny snowless days when the paper is well stocked.

—Nancy Phelps and Rob Casper

