

VC ECHOES

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Paraprofessionals Have a Contract

On Monday, November 1, 1999 the Paraprofessional Unit of the VCTA ratified a four-year agreement with the District. The last Paraprofessional contract expired June 20, 1999. We now await the District's formal ratification. We feel that we have made strides towards becoming equal to contiguous districts in the area. We felt there was progress made in respect to economics and several other non-economic issues.

The Paraprofessional staff wishes to thank the VCTA for their continuous support during this process. To be part of the family known as The Valley Central Teachers' Association made all the difference. Thank you!

~Joan Grippio
and Kathi Russo



Message from the President

I would like to thank Patti Lunden for all of her hard work in preparing the first three newsletters of the 1999-2000 school year. Although many of you have voiced your appreciation for Patti's efforts, we must, nevertheless, recognize our bias. We really like the lady, so just how objective could we possibly be in evaluating her job performance? Luckily, there are people *out there* who are capable of reading the Echoes from a more objective and, therefore, rational perspective.

After reading the October edition of the VC Echoes, Ann Weiss, Regional Staff Director of NYSUT's Mid-Hudson Office, provided the following feedback. "I am writing to offer my congratulations on the latest issue of the 'VC Echoes.' I thought the publication was an 'A+' - interesting, thought provoking, informative and even touching . . . Your publisher also did an excellent job with informing (versus advertising!) members of their options with regard to health insurance and TSA investments. Please

pass along my compliments to your colleagues." Director Weiss also complimented John Bonagura for his article entitled, *What is the Truth*.

Peter Boespflug, NYSUT's Communications Director and editor of the AFTCA Catalyst and Bottom Line, contacted Patti via email. In his letter he states: "Your Oct 12, 1999 edition of VC Echoes is a treasure (continued on page 5)

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- VC Teacher published in "Chicken Soup" book, page 3
- A new column, "On Good Health and a Safe Environment...", page 5
- 20/20 show testing teachers, page 6
- Custodians also settle, page 7
- Small school vs. Big School, page 8
- "Coming Home," page 10
- Executive Council Highlights, page 13
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- Web Sites to help with new regs, page 17

Remembering Nellie Brower ...



*May rest eternal be yours,
May light perpetual shine upon you.
Nellie Brower
1942-1999*

Nellie Brower served as the Valley Central High School librarian for almost thirty years, before she became ill with ALS, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. Nellie lost her battle with the disease on October 19, 1999; she was 57 years old.

During her tenure as librarian, she struggled quietly with meager library funds to maintain and to diversify the library's holdings. At the time of the first VC

bond issue, her greatest hope was that her library would be expanded. Eventually, she was pleased that the high school at least gained a professional library and began to become computerized.

Known for the organized and orderly "library atmosphere" she maintained, Nellie once said that her greatest challenge as a librarian was "to get kids to choose books by content rather than by thickness".

While she labored to build the high school library's book collection, she also amassed a fabulous collection of frog figurines in her home in Pine Bush. In her private life, Nellie was known to be well-read and well-traveled. Some of her destinations included England, Scotland, Wales, France, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Rockport, Gloucester and Williamstown.

She loved to dine in good restaurants, and was known to be a great cook in her own kitchen.

In addition, Nellie will be remembered by the Valley Central community for her contributions as Gradus Honoris advisor and VCTA Building Rep. Her longtime friend Arline Friedman recalls fondly that Nellie was, "... a librarian, scholar, lady, keeper of confidences, and feminist. With her colleagues and friends, Nellie was a great listener. With students, she was tough, but fair. And she never met a frog she didn't love."

~ Jim Lignori

The Welcome Party gives a chance to unwind

The VCTA Welcome Party traditionally has been a time for the Union to welcome its new members to our fold and catch up with old friends as we begin the new school year. This year's party was originally scheduled for September 17th but had to be rescheduled because of the major power outages caused by Hurricane Floyd. A good number of members turned out to spend some time with their co-workers sharing some good fun and some great laughs on a crisp Autumn Day. Stony Ford Clubhouse did an outstanding job with the food and the views from

their panoramic windows were just spectacular.

If you didn't get a chance to attend the Welcome Party, don't despair. In September the Executive Council passed a motion for the VCTA to host a Springtime Retiree Party to give us an opportunity to come together as one group and honor our members who are retiring. Look for more information in upcoming issues of Echoes.

~Patti Lunden



Barbara Palmer (HS), Antoinette Oakes (HS), and Jennifer Lynn (HS) enjoy the afternoon together.

Laurie Miccio wins HCLC Community Service Award

The Paraprofessional staff is proud of one of our own: Laurie Miccio has been awarded the Hudson/Catskill Central Labor Council of NY Community Service Award. Laurie, who works in the Computer Lab in Montgomery Elementary School is not only a very important part of Valley Central but also in her community – East Coldenham.

Mrs. Miccio spearheaded a grassroots campaign to put a traffic light at a very dangerous entrance to East Coldenham Elementary School. This is something that had been tried many times by others and she was able to accomplish this monumental task.

In September 1996, Laurie initiated the project as the East Coldenham PTA Legislative chair. She began with a petition campaign meeting with the BOE and enlist-

ing the aid of Assemblyman Tom Kirwin, Senator Bill Larkin, Assemblyman John Bonacic and Assemblywoman Nancy Calhoun.

By September 1997, Mrs. Miccio had received approval from the DOT for the light. She spent the next 27 months seeking funding for the light. Finally in March of 1999, Senator Larkin told her the funds had been approved and she would get her light. On the day before school this year, the light was dedicated. The local struggle was over.

The light would have never become a reality if it weren't for Mrs. Miccio's hard work and dedication. For years, there have been close calls and reported accidents at this intersection. The safety of the children that attend East Coldenham Elementary Schools as well as their parents, grandparents, neighbors,



friends and staff will be affected for years. This community is lucky to have such a giving person.

Laurie will be honored at a dinner on December 14, 1999 at Diana's Restaurant in Newburgh.

~ Joan Grippo and Kathi Russo

High School Teacher serves up some “Chicken Soup”

Would you believe that a Valley Central teacher is published in a book which includes works by Sarah, Duchess of York, Hillary Rodham Clinton and James Herriot? It's true. Lisa Korpics, HS Social Studies teacher has a story published in Chicken Soup for the Cat and Dog Lover's Soul, by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hanson, Marty Becker and Carol Kline. And just in case that wasn't impressive enough, you should know that her story is the first story in the book, always a coveted spot amongst works that contain collections of authors.

Lisa was hired in February 1999 as a mid-year replacement. She teaches Global I AD, as well as Global I and II Regents level. She has a Bachelor of Science in History and is half way done with her masters in Social Studies Education at SUNY New Paltz. She has subbed at a number of schools,

taught in the Peekskill City School District and was at Archbishop Stepinac in White Plains before coming to Valley Central. Lisa is married and has a five year old son and three year old daughter.

Lisa has also been published in regional magazines and newspapers and sometimes writes articles on assignment for Hudson Valley Parent, Capital District Parent and Family.com.

Lisa has always been interested in writing and after the birth of her daughter had some time to pursue it further. While reading Writer's Digest she saw an ad for “Pet Lover's Soul” and since she had worked as an Animal Control Officer (dog catcher) when in college, she decided to enter since she had plenty of stories. She sent one in and was pleasantly surprised that

hers was chosen to be included in the book. The editors seemed to really like it and were able to edit it down from 4000 words to 1200.

Lisa was a bit overwhelmed by her sudden fame as an author and said, “I was excited and a bit overwhelmed when I attended the book-signing. I was hit with an attack of shyness. I spend all day teaching during the week, but you would have never known that.”

Lisa plans to continue writing when she finds the time – most likely during the summers. Judging from the quality of her writing, we're likely to find more of her work on the shelves of bookstores.

~ Patti Lunden

Lisa Korpics has given her permission for the Echoes to reprint her story. Find it on page 12.

Health and Safety Issues Discussed with District Administration

On Friday, October 1st, Tim Brown and I sat down with Steve Puntar, Art Nugent, Peter Roden, Ron Revelle and John Hunter to discuss the results of the district-wide health and safety survey/responses. The tone of the meeting was one of understanding and cooperation as we shared concerns and learned more about the operation of the maintenance/repair aspects of the district. Listed (in no particular order) below are several pieces of information that may help you to understand and deal with at least some of the concerns which were voiced in your responses to the survey:

- Testing-all done through BOCES/ Art Lang-district meets state and federal requirements-this includes asbestos, radon, water (lead and e-coli bacteria)-results are available from S. Puntar
- Chemicals/cleaners-types and brands may vary from building to building but none are toxic-MSDS should be available in each building-if not, send Steve a note
- Pesticides/pest control-not integrated pest control but looking into the possibility of adopting it-Erlich Pest Control is our service provider and does inspections (some areas monthly) and attends to specific problems-drop note or send work order, if a chronic problem arises or is not taken care of, to Steve through bldg. principal
- HVAC systems-in buildings where staff can't turn off fans, heat regulation is far less a problem-if your room is overheating, the unit has a problem-if it is too cool it is just a matter of calibration-place a work order specifying the problem, and it will be dealt with on the building maintenance level or from outside, if the need arises-filter changes are scheduled for every 6 months but some

could be missed-**don't** try to adjust or tinker with the units or the thermostats yourselves!!!

- All electrical switchgear has been upgraded and is a ground fault system
- Boilers are either new or updated and in excellent running order
- Fire windows are not intended to be a means of escape but rather a means of **rescue**
- NYS Police are conducting a security audit for the district to determine vulnerability in each building
- Evacuation procedures are being examined and alternatives to evacuation are also being considered at this time-will keep you up-to-date on any developments
- There are now hall monitors in every building, along with entrance security measures being installed in some buildings

Although we have all run into difficulties when dealing with these types of

It has been my experience, over the last year and a half, that by being reasonable and following procedure, things will get done.

problems, if we work together with our custodial and maintenance staffs within reasonable expectations, I am sure a spirit of cooperation can help

to remedy them. We have to do our part, as they should be expected to do theirs. It has been my experience, over the last year and a half, that by being reasonable and following procedure, things will get done.

Something as simple as installing a pencil sharpener or a projection screen can be taken care of with a note to your head custodian, realizing it may not be done in the next twelve hours, nor should it take weeks, if the materials are available. However, something more significant, like repairing flooring or remodeling, would likely require that you fill out a work order. A work order must be signed by your

building principal before it goes to Steve Puntar. A priority list is then developed, so your problem will be taken care of as soon as more critical projects are completed. Knowing this, it would be wise not to wait until the last minute, if you feel you have an important project to be addressed.

We feel that the proper tone and spirit of cooperation was established at this meeting. The district is empathetic to our health and safety concerns and recognizes them as well. If we work together through the procedures and with a sense of respect and mutual cooperation, things should operate in a very successful manner. If you follow these "guidelines" and things are not being attended to, drop Steve a note explaining the situation. If that produces no results, see your building rep. and he or she will start the chain from our end.

Please feel free to drop me a line or leave me a message in response to this article or any other health and safety issues you may have arise.

~Jay Sussdorff

If you would like to purchase a tenure pin like those given to the newly tenured teachers, please contact the VCTA office at 457-5899. The cost is \$5.00

On Good Health and a Safe Environment. . .

Q.: What kind of testing is done in the buildings?

A.: Testing is done for asbestos, lead, e-coli bacteria and radon.

Q.: Who does the testing and does it meet regulations/standards?

A.: The testing is done under the auspices of BOCES, at the direction of Art Lang. It meets all legal requirements.

Q.: How often is the testing done?

A.: The water is tested every two weeks at different locations within each building for lead levels, bacterial levels and to pick up on anything else that might appear. Other testing is done on a regular basis as

required by law.

Q.: Is there anything I should fear in regard to my health or safety in my building?

A.: Nothing that is tested on a regular basis. However, if you think there is a problem in your building that has been missed or ignored, go through the procedure described in the companion article in this issue of **Echoes**, so it can be addressed in a timely manner.

Q.: How will construction and renovation affect the "health" of the buildings?

A.: There are very specific regulations that govern such work. Obvi-

ously, all such work cannot be done outside of school hours, so there will be inconvenience and the possibility that concerns could arise dealing with the work going on during school hours. If a problem arises, speak to a building administrator, who is as concerned as you, about an effective and safe teaching/learning environment. Be aware of and alert to your environment at all times!!
*A column dealing with health care and safety issues will be a regular part of **Echoes** future editions. Feel free to submit questions you may have regarding these issues to Jay Sussdorff or Patti Lunden at the high school. We wish you good health and a safe environment!!*

Message from the President (continued from page 1)

trove of information. Ann Weiss sent me a copy. I hope you can put me on your mailing list also at NYSUT headquarters in Albany."

Patti has been an invaluable source of energy, efficiency, and stability for the VCTA.

This year she is serving as both secretary and editor. Patti was excited over the prospect of working on the newsletter this year, but her fellow

A special thanks to everyone who has contributed to the VC Echoes. The October issue included nine writers and an interview. Remember, this is YOUR newsletter.

officers made it clear we would terminate her good health if she vacated her position as secretary. So she smiled and took

fort and embarrassment that Patti will experience at having to insert this article into the very newsletter for which she is responsible.

~ Tim Brown

both positions.

Despite my praise for Patti's efforts, the little boy in me can't help but be a little gleeful at the discom-

US Supreme Court rules on student to student harassment

If one student is harassing another, it not only should but has to be reported. According to a recent US Supreme Court 5-4 ruling, schools can be held accountable.

The standard for accountability was set high so that a school can only be held accountable when they know about, and are deliberately indifferent to, harassment "so severe, per-

vasive and objectively offensive that it can be said to deprive the victims of access to the educational opportunities or benefits provided by the school."

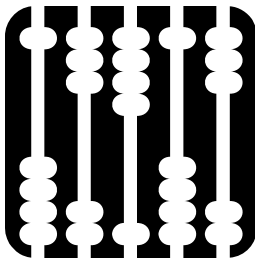
The case originated in Georgia, where a fifth grade endured five months of groping and badgering in her class by a boy in her class. Her



mother sued the county board of education for ignoring her complaint.

~from the Mid Hudson School Bell

Fourth Grade Test Scores Received. . . What do they prove?



We recently received our test scores from the May Math Exam given in fourth

grade. Only five months to receive the scores! Great timing! Dr. Nugent told us that the newspapers already had the information and would be publishing it on Friday, November 5, 1999. Why would the newspapers have this information before the staff members who gave the test, and before the staff members who are now teaching these children?

Another disturbing occurrence is that all children who took the test are included in the test results, including those who were given "special" help by their teachers. Furthermore, those students who are not even working on the fourth grade math level were also tested. Of what benefit could there be to include the scores of children who did the test with their teacher's help? Of what benefit could there be to even test a child on a fourth grade test when they are not even working on that level? Shouldn't these children have been tested on the grade level they are working on? It seems that this would be a more accurate score of their ability. Most of these children just filled in the

circles to make neat designs, or became so frustrated that they just did not try to complete the test. So much for "Putting Children First". Perhaps we could request an explanation from our esteemed Commissioner Mills to help us understand this. What are we, as a school district, doing to remedy this situation?

~ John Bonagura

20/20 "Test" for Teacher Quality

The American Federation of Teachers would like to inform locals that 20/20 has developed a test, which supposedly evaluates teacher quality. The results from this "test" will be used in a segment on teacher quality. 20/20 is encouraging teachers to take the so-called "test". The AFT urged 20/20 producer, Jeremy Goldstein, to abandon the "test" idea and approach the story from a more realistic angle. 20/20 has decided to go ahead with the "test" idea.

Due to 20/20's history with other education stories, the AFT is concerned with the manner in which

the results may be used. The AFT would like members to know that they may be misrepresented or even embarrassed, if they take part in this project.

"Excellent teachers possess many qualities."

I find it amazing that 20/20 could actually create such a groundbreaking test; one test that could measure one's knowledge

in a subject area, ability as a social worker, mediator skills, ability to entertain while passing on knowledge, and the moral background that would be fitting of a role model for the chil-

dren in our society. I find this hard to believe. Excellent teachers possess many qualities. I can think of many excellent teachers, who have touched my life as a student and as a colleague. The quality that set each of them apart was that they were all truly compassionate and possessed a genuine love for children.

I challenge 20/20 to develop a test that can measure one's love and compassion. Teacher quality needs to be experienced, not tested.

~ Rich Steger



The essence of intelligence is still in extracting meaning from everyday experience.

~ Unknown

Joe Fracolossi honored by the Mid-Hudson School Study Council



Joe Fracolossi working on the new Science Course, Authentic Science.

On October 14, 1999, Joe Fracolossi was honored for his excellence in teaching at a dinner sponsored by the Mid-Hudson School

Study Council. Joe was named one of the five finalists for New York State Teacher of the Year last Spring.

The National Education Association of New York (NEA) provided the VCHS Library with a \$250 grant to honor Joe's achievement while applauding the ongoing work of the Valley Central High School Library.

The VCTA is also proud of Joe Fracolossi for being a 2000 New York State Teacher of the Year finalist and looks forward to sponsoring the next candidate for 2001.



Attending the Dinner, Jean McMahon, Peter Meisel, Jane Hillis and retired Science Department Chair, Patsy Iorlano

Doing the Math . . . Adding up your sick time

In the beginning of each school year, returning teachers are given a toll of their accumulated sick days and personal days. According to Article XXII, A of the CBA, teachers are given 15 sick days a year and are allowed to accumulate unused sick time up to a maximum of 200 days. When you

Two hundred days seems like it would take forever to accumulate, but actually they add up fast.

receive the statement, you should realize that it accounts for the days accumulated at the end of the previous school year. When you total the days (according to Article XXII, F unused personal days also accumulate provided you haven't participated in the attendance incentive), you should

add 15 more sick days and 3 personal for the new school year to that total. Two hundred days seems like it would take forever to accumulate, but actually they add up fast. What most people don't realize is that *(continued on page 16)*

The Custodians Also Settle their Contract

The Custodial Unit, who are part of the Civil Service Employees of America Union, have reached a contract settlement with the District. Their Memorandum of Agreement was signed November 1, 1999 and ratified by their membership on November 8, 1999. The previous contract expired on June 30, 1999.

Like our own Collective Bargaining Agreement, the Custodians' new contract condenses the sched-

ule which means members will reach better pay and earn it longer rather than making top step salary only during the last few years of employment.

While this is an excellent gain, Chief Negotiator, Tinker Bunting was also able to get a voluntary sick bank for the life of the contract. According to the language of the contract, any custodial employee who has 60 sick days may donate up to 5 days (although the

Superintendent can allow unit members to donate more) to another employee who is suffering from a catastrophic illness requiring hospitalization or home care and also began the year with 60 sick days.

The inclusion of this language in the Custodians' contract is an important step in demonstrating the District's concern for the health and welfare of all employees.

A Small Town' Boys Look at Goliath (or) The Ramblings of an Ochlophobic

School buildings have undergone radical changes that have included one room schoolhouses, as well as buildings that attempt to accommodate thousands of students. As education has become more specialized, requiring more materials, expensive technology, and more intensive content expertise, one room schoolhouses have become obsolete concepts. The movement to form larger centralized school districts was, therefore, a natural and necessary transition. These small centralized school districts were initially cost effective and afforded children more academic, social, and extracurricular opportunities.

Unfortunately, most of the academic, social and extracurricular benefits of the centralization movement have been neutralized by increases in student enrollment that are out of control throughout many urban and suburban areas. Commissioner Mills and other education gurus have asked for higher standards while doing virtually nothing of substance to halt the devastating increases in school and class sizes.

One of the most noteworthy benefits of the centralization process was to be its ability to more effectively and efficiently provide necessary and proper instructional support services to students in need of intervention or remediation. The reality of budget constraints, overpopulated schools, increased social and family problems, and impersonal school environments have greatly sabotaged these potential advantages. The reality is that many schools' services are nothing more than a paper trail to justify educational funding.

Another important advantage inherent in small schools is their tendency to group students hetero-

geneously. Although this is often done because of small student numbers rather than to prevent tracking or for any particular dogmatic reasons, the benefits of perceived equality and high expectations for all are apparent. Heterogeneous grouping in larger more impersonal schools can promote mediocrity and behavior problems that lead to declining expectations for academic achievement, while smaller, more personal environments are better equipped to handle heterogeneous group dynamics.

Many claim that large centralized school districts can realize bigger and better athletic programs. Without a doubt, this is true. Bigger schools have larger numbers of students from which to create bigger and more talented teams, but



what happens to the students who do not make the team? Are they afforded other opportunities in other sports and activities? Or does their opportunity to participate in these other activities often meet the same fate at the hands of the same students?

I firmly believe student activities that occur outside the normal classroom setting can be just as valuable as those that occur within the classroom. School plays, sports, clubs, etc., play an integral part in the overall growth and education of students. The overarching purpose of American education has evolved to include the physical, mental, social, spiritual and intellectual well-being of students. Large schools, however, are a contradic-

tion of this type of growth. The larger the school, the more elitist the system becomes. For example, large and small high schools are

both limited to five starting players on the basketball team, eleven starting players on the soccer and football teams, and equally limited numbers of roles for which students can audition for the school play. Large schools have more observers and fewer participants in activities that are crucial to the growth of the whole student.

Small high schools, for instance, afford more opportunities for all students to be active and contributing members of a school community. The students who are less skilled are still needed for the activity to be successful and, in many cases, for the activity to even take place. In many ways, small schools continue to model neighborhoods of the past in which children knew that everyone on the block was needed to play stick ball on Saturday. They did not need the latest and most advanced equipment. They intuitively divided teams evenly to prevent arguments, and the children who were not as skilled were given four or five strikes before they were called out. This was ordinarily accomplished without adult supervision because children knew intuitively that their community could not function properly if someone's feelings were hurt and they chose to not participate. Everyone was needed.

Likewise, when students become more than a face, name, or
(continued on page 9)

"Commissioner Mills and other education gurus have asked for higher standards while doing virtually nothing of substance to halt the devastating increases in school and class sizes."

Valley Central Middle School Welcomes Harold Steele



The Valley Central Middle School welcomes Mr. Harold Steele to their fold.

Mr. Steele was born and raised in Texas. He grew up in a small town in western Texas and attended high school and college in El Paso. Sports played an important part in his life. In high school football he played both linebacker and guard. He was also a sprinter for the track team and played short stop and third base for the baseball team. He attended the University of Texas at El Paso on a football scholarship and dreamed of being a coach. To fulfill his dream, Mr. Steele had to obtain certification (by Texas law), so he majored in political science, health, economics and social studies.

Mr. Steele's first teaching position was as a junior high history teacher in Alice, Texas. He didn't like the

humidity there so he moved to Semonale, Texas. Mr. Steele explains, "I like dust better." He taught history and government at Semonale for two years while coaching high school sports. He then moved again to Marfa, Texas where he spent twelve years there as head football coach and athletic director. He also taught economics and spent five years as the High School Principal. After this, he spent nine years (1990-99) in a small Texas town where he served as an elementary principal for four years, a Middle School Principal for two years and then taught economics and government for the last three. I was touched as he explained to me those last three years were most special to him as he was able to coach his own son on the football field.

Harold has been married for thirty years to his wife Charlotte. They have three children, two sons and one daughter. All three are attending college in Texas. Charlotte kept busy raising their children and running her own catering business. She is presently attending the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park as a full time student and hopes to be a pastry chef.

Harold Steele loves Italian food

and misses, not only his three children, but good Mexican food. He loves to work out in the gym and bike ride.

His favorite books are biographies and historical novels. He enjoyed reading James Michner's The Source. He and his wife love fixing up old houses (otherwise I would have sold him a new one).

Stop by and introduce yourself to Mr. Steele when you can. If anyone knows the name of a good Mexican restaurant, be sure to let him know!

~ Kathy Manning, RN

~ Kathy Manning, RN

~ Kathy Manning, RN

**“Nothing
you do for
children
is ever
wasted.”**

Garrison Keillor

A Small Town Boy's Look at Goliath *(continued from page 8)*

number on a class list, school employees are more likely to become personally vested and, therefore, care more about the children under their care. If students know one another they are more likely to participate. Everyone is needed and has a place in class, activities and sports because of the school's size. There are also more leadership roles available.

According to Thomas Sergiovanni, a well respected educational

“guru,” new evidence indicates smaller schools are cheaper to operate, easier to administrate, and obtain more favorable student outcomes. They are more effectual in creating safe, secure and comfortable environments in which children and staff know one another on a personal level. The power in knowing another human being's name or having a personal relationship with that human being cannot be over stressed. Knowing students'

names makes them feel important. Actually knowing the students makes them important.

~ Tim Brown

This article is an editorial and should not be viewed as an official union position. To delineate, future editorials will be denoted as such with the simple closing: “Editorial, Tim Brown.” Please feel free to respond or submit your own editorials.

What's in a name...

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other word would smell as sweet..."

*William Shakespeare,
Romeo and Juliet, Act II*

Many VCTA members were considering *what is in a name* at the end of October as the District phased in the wearing of name tags by employees. As with any unilateral decision affecting so many people, there were many questions. The VCTA had checked into the issue when we were first informed in August and then again two more times with NYSUT, only to find that according to a PERB decision, the District could implement the tags whether the employees liked it or

not.

Knowing that we are now stuck with the badges, there has been much banter as how to make the best use of them. The District has implemented them for safety reasons, but there are many more creative uses for them. We could have multiple badges with many expressions; happy, sad, frustrated, ecstatic...choose the badge that fits the mood and cut out any small talk; "How are you today?", becomes a moot question.

The badges spark daily fashion decisions: to clip or to hang, that is the question; of course where to clip or hang is entirely a different matter.

In the end, how much the badges

will affect school safety has yet to be determined, however, one thing is for sure; I'll always know who I am and where I belong, and should I ever forget, the information will be no further away than my ID tag.

~ Patti Lunden



National Teacher Standards Certification Grants Available

Getting nationally certified has gotten a little easier; at least on the pocketbook. The recently passed state budget includes about one million dollars for the Albert Shanker National Board for Professional Teaching Stan-

Grants in the amount of \$2500 are available to eligible teachers to defray the expenses of national certification.

dards Certification grant program. Grants in the amount of \$2500 are available to eligible teachers to defray the expenses of national certification. The sum may include reimbursing the sponsoring school district to cover the cost of hiring a substitute

teacher for up to three days or the duration of an approved leave, whichever is less.

~ Mid Hudson School Bell

The regulations governing the grants are available on NYSUT's website (www.nysut.org). There is a December 1st deadline for application. If you would like an application contact the VCTA office and we will get one for you.

Inequities in the New York State Teachers' Retirement System

Attention Tier 3 and 4 Members:

Do you know how your retirement benefits actually stack up in dollars and *sense* against Tier I benefits?

What if you retire at age 55 with 20 years of service at a final average salary of \$60,000?

Tier I: Retirement is \$24,000.

Tier 3&4: Retirement is \$15,380.

Whose sense is this?

What if you retire at 55 with 25

years of service with a final average salary of \$70,000?

Tier I: Retirement is \$35,000.

Tier 3&4: Retirement is \$22,480.

Add to these inequities another: neither Tier I nor 2 pay into their retirement. Tiers 3 and 4 pay 3%. How did the union let this happen? What are we going to do about it?

When are those of us who began teaching after 1973 (more than two-thirds of our union) going to come

together and strongly lobby our union and legislators to address these inequities? Folks, we have been sold out; if we don't start writing letters, sending e-mail, and making phone calls, we can blame no one but ourselves. Join me in starting a grass roots push. Get those in your schools involved. There is power in unions – let's finally use it to our advantage.

~ Gayle Gridley, VCHS

If you want to calculate your own pension, go to www.nystrs.org, and use the pension calculator

Coming Home

Whenever a child goes into the family business, the parent usually beams with pride; as if the child's decision has affirmed the worthiness of the parent's vocation. This being so, the Valley Central "family" has much to boast about in the number of its children who have decided to go into the "business."

Certainly many school districts hire back their own students, but here the graduates returning as employees are so numerous that it cannot go unnoticed. There are VC graduates in every building and in many units, including central administration, building administration, teachers, paraprofessionals and custodial staff. The range of age is also great with graduates from the early 1960's to the mid-1990's.

In recalling their inspiration for becoming teachers, many stalwarts from the past and present : Miss Maureen Shirdren, Mrs. Freer, Mrs. Janet Gridley, Miss Lena Lease, Mr. McFadden, Mr. Robert Schoonmaker, Mr. Sperry, Mrs. Whitmore, Mr. Donald Brooks, Mrs. Joyce Zawistowski, Mr. Ernie Pettine, Mr. Ciganek, Mrs. Patricia Ficholtz, Mr. Donald Romme, Mr. Larry Sutter, the Digilio's, Mrs. Peggy Kennedy, Mr. Bruce Chapin, Mrs. Janet DiBello,

Mrs. Jane DePew, Mr. Bob Mooney, Mr. Jim Lignori, Mr. Bill Tucci, Mr. Howard Feldsher, Mr. John Nash, Mrs. Marilyn McKay, Mr. Joe DiBello, the Rev. Frank Wallner, Mr. Ken Maasen, Mr. John Solan, Mr. Eldred Ross, Mr. Derek Taylor, Mrs. Rosa Boyd, Mrs. Debra Calvino, Mr. Jay Sussdorff, Mrs. Gayle Gridley, Mr. Rob Sassi, Mr. Marc Newman, and Mr. Darryl Imperati, are mentioned specifically, while many graduates spoke comprehensively about the many teachers who took the time and interest to care about them.

There were also many fond memories among the graduates: being in the first class to graduate from the "new" HS (1962), Senior class trips, being active in sports and clubs, Kevin McFadden and the clock tap, friends, proms, cheerleading, a streaker at graduation (1974), graduation itself, being the recipient of a VCTA scholarship (Barb Palmer 1978), champion soccer and softball teams, drawing live rabbits in art class, being gathered around a piano to sing, the dances, being in a school musical, and the overall spirit of the school.

One of the firmest foundations



beneath the entire VC District has always been its sense of tradition and community. Amy Bull Crist once said, "You care about most what you know best." The investment Valley Central has made in the teachers it has produced and hired ensures that the collective memory and sense of tradition will continue to be carried on in generations to come. As Carolyn Schmolli Baker (1981) stated, "Valley Central is my home, my family. I wouldn't think of working anywhere else. Coming back to Valley Central was like coming home for the holidays."

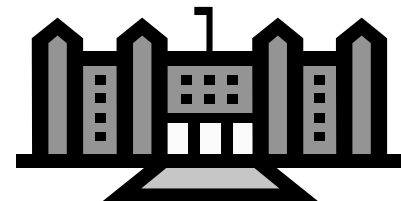
~ Patti Behr Lunden
(1981)

Wanted: Valley Central stories from each Building

Is your building being covered in the VC Echoes? It is our goal to have coverage of events or members from each building in each issue of the Echoes. VCTA Executive Council members have been assigned in each building to submit stories. Typical subjects for stories are (but not limited to); awards won by members, building events, building issues of concern, unique or

interesting pedagogical techniques being employed, highlights on staff and their achievements in school or out of school. If you have something that you would like covered, please contact the following people:

Berea: Carol DeMicco
East Coldenham: Sandy Carroll
Maybrook: Donna Lloyd
Montgomery: Kathy Takvam



Walden: Brenda Newman
MS: Kathy Manning
HS: Glenn Eckert
Secretaries: Lucy Fox
Paraprofessionals: Joan Grippo

Rescued by Love from Chicken Soup for the Cat & Dog Lover's Soul

By Lisa Duffy-Korpics,

Reprinted with permission from the author

On most days you could find him sitting out the wall in front of Saint Mary's Church next to the sign that read "Saint Mary's – A Church for Everyone." No doubt the pastor had meant to attract a larger membership with this billboard invitation, but I'm not sure he was prepared for Bobby. A towering six-footer, weighing in at over two hundred pound, Bobby was, at twenty-something, a very large child. He spent most of his time waving and smiling at the people driving by, and shouting, "Hey, pal!" to those he recognized.

Bobby called me Goldilocks. He knew me because, as the police department's Animal Control Officer, I was as visible around town as he was. My regular duties were to uphold the leash law, patrol for loose dogs and issue tickets. Bobby had appointed himself my unpaid assistant, and he took his job seriously. Once he waved me down in traffic, and ran over to the patrol car and banged on the hood.

"Goldilocks, there's a big dog up the street gonna get hit by a car! You gotta go get 'im now!"

Another time he found a litter of newborn kittens in a garbage can and made it his job to find a home for all of them – including the last one which, at his insistence, I ended up taking home myself!

At first I had loved being the "dog catcher", but as time went by, the job began to get me down. It wasn't the animals – it was the people. I dreaded having to deal with negligent owners. Especially those who no longer wanted their dogs.

In our town, the city provided a dog-surrender service with the local SPCA. For a ten-dollar fee, I'd pick up a dog whose owner could no longer keep him, and more importantly, I'd collect information about him (good with children, medical history, favorite toys, etc.) that would make it easier for him to be adopted.

Unbelievably, sometimes the people most capable of paying this fee chose not to, and abandoned the dog to be picked up as a stray instead. They gave up their best opportunity to increase the dog's chances of finding another home – just to save a measly ten-dollars. At first I felt crushed by this kind of behavior, but as time passed I toughened up. Lately, I felt so cynical I was afraid of what was happening to me.

One October when the nights were already dropping below freezing, it occurred to me that I hadn't seen Bobby for a while. He usually spent his nights at the Salvation Army in the winter, so I stopped by and asked about him. No one had seen him. I looked at the phone call log at headquarters to see if he had been making his usual calls to report animals – or just talk. No calls were recorded.

A week later I got a call at headquarters. "Goldilocks," he rasped, "I need you to come." He had a bad cold.

"Bobby! Where are you? Everyone's been looking for you!"

"I'm okay. I'm out in back of the chair factory."

Within a few minutes, I was turning the car off the main street onto a gravel road behind the old chair factory. All at once the road stopped and I was in a large field strewn with debris. In the middle of the field, a rusting factory wagon sat on cement blocks.

I approached the car, bent over and knocked lightly on the passenger window. Bobby was curled up tightly in the front seat with his wind-breaker thrown over him. Lying next to him was a chocolate Labrador puppy with long gangly legs and ears that he had yet to grow into.

The dog looked up at my knock with bright eyes and thumping tail. I peered in to get a closer look. The front of the car was filled with empty Styrofoam cups and potato-chip bags. The back of the wagon was covered in soft blankets. Neatly stacked boxes of dog biscuits and a bag of dog food were lined up next to two jugs of bottled water and two chewed rubber balls.

"Bobby, are you okay?" His eyes fluttered open.

"Goldilocks," he croaked. He struggled to sit up and get his bearings. He looked at me and I could see his nose was red and his eyes were bleary. He untangled himself and climbed from the car, wincing as he stood.

"Come on with me, Bobby. Get in the patrol car and I'll bring you to the Salvation Army, or the medical center. Okay? It's warm there." I urged.

"No, I'm okay. Social Service says I'm gonna lose my check if I don't go into housing. You gotta take Brownie."

It was true. I couldn't think of a single facility that would allow him to keep his dog. He was only out here in the cold because the Salvation Army didn't allow pets. He started unloading the puppy's supplies and carrying them over to the patrol car. Brownie watched every move he made with adoring eyes. I grabbed a jug of water out of the car and started to help, feeling helpless all the same.

Everything was packed up, except for Brownie. Bobby knelt down and put his hands on each side of the puppy's head. They looked at each other for a long moment and then Brownie started to lick Bobby's face. In one quick movement, he picked him up and put him gently in the front seat of the patrol car. He turned to me, his eyes redder than before.

"Here," he said, handing me a ten-dollar bill. "For the dog pound." I stared open-mouthed at the money. I couldn't believe it. Bobby was paying the surrender fee, though it was probably all the money he had in the world.

I put out my hand and grabbed his arm, "Bobby, don't worry about the fee. They'll understand."

He looked at me. "No, Goldilocks. You told me ten dollars to get a good home, 'member? A home with a kid to play with would be good for Brownie.

He turned from me suddenly and started to walk back toward the rusty station wagon. I knew better than to try to convince him to come with me. He had a mind of his own and treasured his independence, often at the expense of his health and safety.

"Bobby! I'll find him a great home," I called after him, my voice catching in my throat.

He made a noise, but didn't turn around.

As I drove away, Brownie put his muzzle in my lap and fell asleep. There were times I couldn't see the road through my tears.

Brownie was taken home that evening by a police officer who fell in love with him the moment he saw me carry him into the precinct. A year later his Christmas photos showed his little boy and Brownie sitting together in front of a fireplace.

I tried to return Bobby's money, but the station wagon was always empty. Later, I heard that he had gone to a group home in another city and was doing fine. I dropped the ten-dollar bill into the Salvation Army donation box.

I missed my assistant and wished I could have told Bobby what a wonderful job he'd done. He rescued cats and dogs – and my faith in people, too.

Are you receiving your copy of New York Teacher?

If you are not, send your name and address to John Bonagura, EC.

If this is your first year teaching in this District, you should begin receiving your New York Teacher after January 2000.

On September 16, 1999 Hurricane Floyd hit our area causing major power outages inconveniencing many people. But eventually the power came back on, and most people's lives returned to normal by the following week.

North Carolina was not so lucky.

North Carolina is still trying to recover from Hurricane Floyd. Retired HS Teacher, Bill Tucci works for the State Ed. Dept. in North Carolina and is asking that if any VCTA member, active or retired, would like to help out they contact him at 919-715-1853 or www.dpi.state.nc.us.

Highlights from the VCTA Executive Council Meeting

The VCTA Executive Council met on October 19, 1999 at the HS Professional Library at 3:45 PM.

- ⇒ NYS TRS Personal and Video Consultations will be posted in buildings.
- ⇒ Tim Brown reported that a side agreement had been reached on the Chaperone issue.
- ⇒ Tim Brown handed out the application for the Richard Aderson "Make a Difference" Award from O-U BOCES.
- ⇒ Tim Brown called attention to a hand-out received from Mr. Roden, calling for prospects for School Business Administration Certification. Anyone interested should contact Mr. Roden.
- ⇒ The NEA provided a \$250 Library Grant to honor the achievement of member Joseph Fracalossi in the NYS Teacher of the Year competition.
- ⇒ Tim Brown called attention to Health memo's members received from Mr. Roden's office. Any questions should be directed to Patti Lunden.
- ⇒ Tim Brown shared information on the "Village at Goodwill", a proposed community for residents 55 or older.
- ⇒ The VCTA Web Page is up!
- ⇒ Tim Brown called for nominations for the Hudson/Catskill Central Labor Council of NY Community Service Award.
- ⇒ Tim Brown reported that charter stipends are being finalized with CO.
- ⇒ Tim Brown asked that any concerns about Copeland Travelers be forwarded to him.
- ⇒ John Bonagura will be seeking 6 other VCTA members to serve with him on the Professional Development Committee.
- ⇒ Rich Steger will be heading a committee to develop performance review and evaluation language as provided on pg. 17 of the CBA.
- ⇒ Tim Brown reported that the Association and CO are working on a side agreement for a MS Technology position. Linda Cavanaugh has requested that veteran teachers be able to purchase the tenure pin at cost. They can.
- ⇒ EC Classified students are being switched from a 12-1-1 setting to a 17-1-2 setting. Larry Waite, NY-SUT special ed. Expert, was consulted and said that the IEP dictates for each child.
- ⇒ Tim Brown reported that 26 people are making use of payroll deduction for VOTE – COPE. Toni Sperry, Vote-Cope chair, pointed out that a percentage of money given is returned to the local each year for political action needs on the local level.
- ⇒ Briefs have been submitted in the Health Arbitration.
- ⇒ The name tag issue was discussed. Tim Brown reiterated that according to NYSUT, it is not a mandatory subject of bargaining.
- ⇒ The copy machine seems to be unable to handle the volume of copying and may need to be upgraded.
- ⇒ The paraprofessionals have a memorandum of agreement.
- ⇒ Paras have not been receiving job postings in a timely fashion.
- ⇒ The BOE would like to have training for bus drivers.
- ⇒ Building reps were asked to submit reports on their buildings monthly for the ECHOES.
- ⇒ Kevin McFadden sent greetings from Africa.
- ⇒ Orin Segall suggested that CO be made aware that retirees who live out of state are discriminated against since they can't use the network.
- ⇒ Anyone who taught summer school should check to be sure their TSA deductions have been restarted. Also check your pay stub if you changed the # of checks you are receiving.
- ⇒ Teacher Performance Videos will continue to be required through 2004 for certification. Check the NYSSED web for info.

VCTA Chain of Command...

When you, as an individual, have a question or concern involved with health and safety, contractual issues, health insurance, building issues, etc., there is a progression you should try to follow in order to get the quickest and most accurate answer. Listed below are some things you should consider and some steps to take when a question or situation arises:

- ask yourself if this is an Association issue or does it fall under building/administrative parameters-can you speak to a custodian or principal directly to address it?
- write down (document) any information that you feel is pertinent to your question or situation
- bring this (question/situation with your "notes") to one of your building reps-if you don't know who that person/those persons are, you should make it a point to find out-you were given that info. on opening day-**do not go directly to an officer of the VCTA just because that person is in your building**
- if the rep cannot answer or solve your situation, he/she will speak to one of the officers

directly or can bring it up at an Executive Council meeting as new business

- if an officer cannot answer the question or needs further clarification, he/she will confer with other officers or someone from NYSUT at our Mid-Hudson office or even someone in Albany at main headquarters, to find the most accurate and appropriate info. to deal with the problem or question
- the results of the "investigation" will be brought back to you through the same chain, hopefully to your satisfaction and edification

Chain of command allows for logical and effective problem solving, if it is followed and respected by the members of the organization. We are all displeased when our part in this chain is ignored or circumvented and, conversely, feel like we are part of a working unit when we respect each other's roles and use the system to the best advantage. Please make every effort to follow the above steps and get the most from the system!!

Examples of the kinds of things we have dealt with this year so far:

- several health insurance questions-plans, coverages, etc.

- correct logging of sick/ personal days
- special ed. situations- paras, collaborative classrooms, responsibilities, IEP's
- meetings scheduled outside normal school hours
- the chaperone issue
- grievances
- health and safety-water, testing, code violations, renovations, evacuations, etc.
- building "loyalties" for those who teach in two buildings-meetings specifically

These are just some of the issues we have tried to respond to, reps and officers alike.

We want to help you with items that concern you, whether they are association issues or not. In order to do so, you can help by following these guidelines and making our efforts more organized and effective. The union is you, but it is you working with each other and us which achieves the most fruitful results. Have a wonderful, safe holiday and let us know what you're thinking.

~ Jay Sussdorff

Mac's Musings (from the Retiree side)

Greetings from South Africa....

One never knows where VC teachers might find themselves teaching. As I mentioned in October 12th's column, Chris McFadden, a former teacher at Berea, Coldenham and Montgomery and a VC '89 graduate finds himself in Seleka, Northern Province, South Africa. Here he is known as Thabo, which is Setswana for Pleasure or Joy. He works at three primary schools surrounding his home

village of Seleka. The schools are in Reitfortein, Kaulstsi, and Klipspoor. He is also about to embark on some possible administrative duties at the office of the regional school manager. Thabo is well and happy and sends his best to his friends and colleagues at VC.

Nobody asked me, but....

Good people are good people wherever you find them. We spent the last two days (10/13 and 10/14) traversing this very rural and very

diverse Northern province and were welcomed warmly by all – especially teachers and school related personnel. Chris's African family is headed by a retired nurse whom he calls Coco (Gramma). She and her family have made him their own. Coco corrects Chris's Setswana, which her grandchildren find hilarious. Coco, although a
(continued on next page)

Mac's Musings (continued from page 12)

single parent in a very rural section of the country, sent two daughters through university. One is a teacher, one is a nurse.

A visit to the school at Kauletsi found a main building whose roof had blown off in a windstorm on September 25th. The principal, A.J. Seleka (same as the village) hopes for a new roof soon, but it may not happen for months – at a time when provincial exams are about to begin and the heat is high. The faculty is pulling together and instruction goes on. The teachers are a happy and generous group. Chris is writing a grant proposal (called a “business plan” here) in hopes of generating private funds to speed repairs along.

The small school at Reitfontein (grades 1-5) consists of two cinder-block buildings with dimensions of 20' x 30'. Classes were being held outdoors in the shade of several trees. It is the hope of the staff that a larger building with some facilities will soon be built. A gift of a soccer ball to the kids brought on a total school game. And what wonderful skills these youngsters have. Chris says that all he needs is a rolled up bunch of rags, and a game

will begin immediately.

The school in Klepspoort is in the care of a principal named Jeremiah – I missed his last name. His heart seemed as big as his body. His school is large and overcrowded. His need is for more teachers; this need may not be filled.

The regional manager of schools, Mr. T. L. Manong, is a man of enormous charm and energy. Although he was traversing the region picking up 12th grade matriculation exams (if you don't pass, you don't graduate), he found time to “talk schools” with Ginny and myself. His staff is supposed to be around 50 people. He has four. He told Ginny and myself that we could each have two offices if we volunteered to work with him! When he arrived in region, the passing rate on province exams was 22% (1996). In 1998, the passing rate was 50%. He says that he will remain until it's better than 95%. A very dynamic leader.

The owner of the lodge that we are staying in invited us to visit the farm/game preserve which we did on October 13th. The preserve is

hundreds of acres. The bush is beautiful ~mysterious ~ foreboding.

One of the things that I wanted to do on this trip to see our son was to meet and talk to teachers. I did, and I am happy to report that the South African teachers that I met are hard-working, caring, giving people like their counterparts at VC.

I hope I haven't bored you with my African musings. We return on November 1st, probably before you read this.

Until next time, push back the barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you. PEACE.

~ Kevin McFadden



We've Got Mail!

Please feel free to contact us by mail or email. Both addresses are listed on the back page.

Greetings to all at Valley Central! Hope all is well– Would like to make you aware of our new mailing address...It's changed from 500 Route 299 Highland to: 806 Edisto Court, Surfside Beach, South Carolina 29575. Telephone: 843-650-1442. Email: cjn@scscoast.net. Look forward to receiving the VC Echoes newsletters! Thank you.
John Napolitano

Enjoy the VC Echoes. We moved here (PO Box 223, Adirondack, NY 12808) in July. We are on Schroon Lake – and loving it! This Fall was beautiful – color great. Waiting for snow – skies are ready to go only 20 minutes from Gore Mt. Really enjoy keeping in touch with VC. Many happy days there.
Marilyn Kelso
Berea P.E.

Hello VCTA. I just browsed your web site and I am impressed. This has been needed for a long time and it looks like lots of work went into it. It's in my book marks and it is a good way to keep in contact with all of you.
Tom Kneiser (the wired retired)
PS: Didn't think I would see McFadden's name in cyberspace.

NYSUT Sponsors Sweatfree Schools Poster Contest

“Children belong in school, not in the factory or job site. And their parents should not have to work in dangerous, unhealthy places for less than a living wage. Yet, today these situations exist and indeed, expand. In NY State and throughout the world school-age children are exploited by multinational corporations and their owners.”

~ Thomas Y. Hobart, Jr.

NYSUT is underwriting the Sweat-free Schools Poster Contest to raise public understanding of this issue. The contest was launched by the NYS Labor-Religion Coalition as a



sweatshop labor in NY and discourage schools from purchasing apparel from companies that use sweatshop or child labor.

The theme of the contest is “How do sweatshops and child labor affect me and my school? Do you know who makes your clothes?” The contest is open to students, K-12. Students compete in four categories

part of a state-wide campaign to halt child and

according to age. Contest entries should be submitted to the each school’s art teacher who will select two entries per grade level to compete. Each entry must be accompanied by an entry form and post-marked by February 25, 2000. Entries will be judged by a panel of art teachers. First Prize (\$1000 Savings Bond) and second prize (\$500 Savings Bond) for each category will be selected and announced at NYSUT’s RA in April. If you would like more information, contact your building representative.

Doing the Math. . . Adding up your sick time (continued from page 7)

it can add up pretty fast and before you know it you’re up there in days. The other thing most people don’t realize is that because the language says “up to 200 days”, you never get more than that. For example, if you end a school year with a total of 195 days, you will not get 210 days in the beginning of the new school year, you will only get 200 days, or 5 new sick days. If in that same year, you become very ill and used 20 days at the end of the year you will have 180 days. You’ve used the 5 new days and 15 of your accu-

mulated days. What surprises most people is that they assume in that scenario they would have 190 days at the end of the year; that the 10 days they weren’t granted at the beginning of the year would be given once they fell under 200 days. But it doesn’t work that way, you never accumulate more than 200 days, no matter how few you got and how many you used in any given year. It’s the nature of the contract language.

So how do you make the most of your days? Article XXII, B.2 pro-

vides the answer. If in a given year, you have at least 90 days accumulated and have used less than 4 days (sick, personal or critical illness) you are entitled to buy back days. The less days you’ve used the more you’re paid for each day you buy back. So, doing the math, to be sure that you are granted 15 days each year you should plan on never ending a school year with more than 185 days or 182 days since personal days also accumulate.

~ Patti Lunden

NYSUT Members Working to Serve the Community

New York State United Teachers 2000

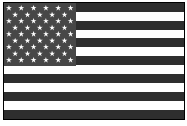
Community Service Award

Is there a member of our local who you think should be recognized for their outstanding community service?

Contact your building/ unit representative for application and guidelines.

Deadline: January 7, 2000

AFL-CIO endorse Al Gore



Less than two weeks after gaining the endorsement of the American Federation of Teachers in his bid to be the Democratic candidate for President in next year's election, Vice President Al Gore has picked up the coveted support of the AFL-CIO.

Gore's rival in next spring's primaries, Bill Bradley, also had sought the AFL-CIO nod. The resolution endorsing Gore acknowledged that Bradley "has the respect of many and a good record" but added: "There is no question that Al Gore is the Presidential candidate most favored."

Two unions, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and the United Automobile Workers, voted against the resolution, not because they oppose Gore, but because they felt it was too soon to vote on an endorsement.

The resolution noted that during Gore's seven years in the U.S. Senate he voted the pro-union position 88% of the time, the second best record to Edward Kennedy.

As vice-president Gore has aggressively opposed vouchers and supported the Patient's Bill of Rights. He also fought to save the federal deduction for state and local taxes, which helped millions of working families and saved local

agencies. At the AFL-CIO national convention delegates noted that Gore "has helped us protect workplace health and safety, community wage standards, Medicare and Social Security." The vice-president has called for the investment in public schools and treating teachers as professionals. He has vowed to stand with labor in opposition to the gutting of OSHA, privatizing of Social Security and the passing of anti-union legislation.

~ *The Bottom Line*
and *AFT Action*

Check out web sites for help with new regs

The following four web sites may help determine the impact and possible local action regarding new regulations issued recently by the State Education Department for the Annual Professional Performance Review and Professional Development Plans.

www.nywired.org – The New York Wired for Learning site contains lesson plans aligned with the state's learning standards.

www.nbpts.org – National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

www.nyspeerreview.org – The New York State Academy for Teaching and Learning site contains peer review lesson plans

learnonline.edutech.org – A data base of lesson plans aligned to the standards, as well as professional development

~ *The Bottom Line*

Part 200 proposals on NYSUT web site

NYSUT has made a number of recommendations for consideration by the State Education Department and Board of Regents in finalizing changes to the regulations governing special education (Part 200). The entire document is available on the NYSUT website at www.nysut.org. Click on "Part 200 Regulations" ~*The Bottom Line*

**This is the last edition of the VC Echoes
of the Millennium!**

*May your holiday season be
filled with peace and joy.*

See you next century...



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

Valley Central Teachers' Association
1175 Rte 17K
Montgomery, NY 12549
Tel./Fax. (914) 457-5899

President, Timothy Brown (HS)
Vice President, Jay Sussdorff (HS)
Vice President, Richard Steger (Walden)
Secretary, Patricia Lunden (HS)
Treasurer, John Bonagura (EC)

Building Representatives:

Berea: Carol DeMicco, Sara Ackerson Bryan
Guidice

Maybrook: Donna Lloyd, Sandy Tarallo

East Coldenham: Donna Barletta, Sandy Carroll

Walden: Barbara Winchell, Randy Sutter,
Brenda Newman,

Montgomery: Kathy Takvam, Toni Sperry

MS: Laurie Hey, Mary Bleau, Mary Goldberg,
Joe DeVenuto, Marc Sperry, Mike Steele,
Kathy Manning

HS: Arline Friedman, Jane Hillis, Peter Meisel,
Glenn Eckert, Dennis Delfino, Bob Jurgens

Newsletter Editor
Patricia Lunden, (HS)
Email: vcta@frontiernet.net
NYSUT
www.nysut.org
Mid-Hudson Teacher Center
(914) 255-2885
http://www.mhtc.dcboces.org
Employee Assistance Program
1-800-962-7487

Visit us on the Web!
www.frontiernet.net/
~vcta

Our website is up! Please visit us and let us know of any suggestions you might have, especially for links you'd like to see!

The VC Echoes is the official publication of the Valley Central Teacher's Association - Local 3076 and is published regularly throughout the school year.

Article Contributions or Letters to the Editor for the next issue should be sent to Patti Lunden at the HS by December 21st.

Any articles submitted to the VC Echoes will also be posted on the VCTA Web page.

What is a Grievance?

A grievance is a dispute or controversy that arises from the interpretation or application of a specific provision of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. An employee, group of similarly aggrieved employees, or the Association can initiate a grievance should they feel that they have an issue for grievance. Typically the aggrieved contacts their building representative who would instruct them to set down the occurrence in writing, specifying the name or names of the aggrieved employees, the article and subdivision of issue and the events that gave rise to the grievance and the relief sought. The building representative contacts one of the chairs of the Grievance Committee (Laurie Hey and Mary Bleau) and the grievance is immediately presented to the immediate supervisor or building principal. (The Association President is also contacted as is the Labor Relations Specialist (LRS) from NYSUT.) This must be done within thirty days of the occurrence. The supervisor must render a written decision with seven school days of that presentation. This is known as Step 1. If not settled, Step 2 provides for a meeting between the aggrieved with a representative of the Association and a representative of the Superintendent; a decision is rendered in writing within seven school days of that meeting. If the matter is still unresolved, it is submitted to the Board within five days of the Step 2 decision. This is known as Step 3. The aggrieved shall have an opportunity to meet with the Board at their next regularly scheduled meeting. The Board renders a written decision within ten school days of that meeting. If still not settled, the District or the Association submits the grievance to the American Arbitration Association within ten school days of the Step 3 Decision. The grievance is processed in accordance to the Voluntary Labor Arbitration Rules. A date for arbitration is given, and the aggrieved, the President, the LRS and any other needed parties meet with the arbitrator the District representatives and District lawyer. The case is presented with testimony and evidence to the arbitrator. The LRS and the District lawyer then submit briefs to the arbitrator. The decision of the arbitrator is final and binding if rendered in accordance with the CBA. The cost of the arbitrator is shared between the District and the Association.

The Business of School

Each day the bell rings eleven times at the HS. The bell systems in schools were modeled after the bell systems in factories where workers put together products. Today the phrases we have been using in education are borrowed from the business world as we become more accountable for student performance. It seems in the age old debate as to whether teaching is an art or a science, neither is winning - school is a business, where we produce a specific product. To be sure we're reaching our goal, we test our product over and over and study the tests to improve our product through technique. Our success as teachers is measured by our student's performance on tests. And if something is not on the test, it seems it's just not that important. Or is it? In the end, when all is said and done and our students have

gone on into the next phase of their lives, what will they remember of their K-12 educational experience? Will it be that we taught them to diagram a sentence, color in the lines, plot sine and cosine, or explain a moment in history so that they could pass a test? Or will it be the way that we taught them, the connection we made with them, the lessons that won't be on the test but are just as important?

We can model our schools on factories, speak in terms of business-ease, but our success will not be ultimately measured on a test but in the way we are remembered by those who matter most, our students.



~ Patti Lunden