

VC ECHOES

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

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Welcome Back, Valley Central!

Wow, it's the beginning of a new school year already – my 28th – hard to believe! As one of the “old guard” I always look forward, with no small excitement, to the first day of school: new students, new challenges, old friends and colleagues, new friends and colleagues to get acquainted with and the ever present new state regulations and mandates to interpret and try to accomplish without losing one's mind! To those of you who are joining our staff for the first time, I congratulate you and extend out best wishes for an exciting and productive year of learning for both your students and you. I'm sure that you will find your colleagues more happy and willing to assist you in any way possible, and

certainly don't be afraid to ask them about anything. Also, make sure to locate your building rep(s) and speak to them to tap their wealth of knowledge and experience on just about anything you might want to know or have a question about. To those of you who are beginning another year back at Valley Central, no matter how many years that may be, it's good to see you back. We hope you had a relaxing and fulfilling summer, and are ready to begin a new year full of energy and ideas! We are here to help, listen and facilitate. Be sure to keep abreast of VCTA announcements and activities – remember, **YOU ARE THE UNION!**

~ Jay Sussdorff



Thirty two Members Begin this School Year as Tenured Professionals

High School

Alba Borchert, James Briggs, Linda Gizzarelli, Jane Hillis, Scott Kramer, Peter Meisel, Evan Panagiotopoulos and Frank Jordan

Middle School

Kimberly Brosius, William Burretto, Sally Coates, Paul Dederick, Terrence Devine, Nancy Fabrizio, Donna Marie Grinder, Grace Sciacca, and Kathy Sullivan.

Berea

Carla Ibrahim, Joseph Amuso, Jr., Katharine Baloga, Craig Jettleson, Nicole Shapely, Debra Zupko, and Lisa DeBeauvernet.

East Coldenham

Ginger Ethier and Ronald Intronini

Maybrook

Linda Siegal and DaraJane Sachs

Montgomery

Catheine Sowa

Walden

Victoria Gorton and Stacy McCusker

District

Timothy Lee

Congratulations on your achievement!

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *New Members: Check out page 2 devoted to you!*
- *Plan to attend the New Member Welcome Party on September 17th-more info on page 3.*
- *Did you know that 1/3 of current teachers will be eligible to retire by 2000? Page 4.*
- *Scholarship Recipients thank the VCTA, page 5.*
- *June VCTA Meeting Highlights, page 6.*
- *A student's tribute to John DeFrancesco, page 7.*

Especially for our New Members

Welcome! The Valley Central Teachers Association (VCTA), your local union, welcomes you to our school community. We want to work with you to ensure that you have a successful year. Your fellow members are always available to answer questions about your job performance and to support your continued professional career with the district. The VCTA is affiliated with New York State United Teachers (NYSUT). NYSUT is a federation of more than 900 local unions (like us), representing more than 400,000 people statewide. NYSUT members serve in a variety of capacities in the education community, from classroom educators, service and support personnel to health care workers.

NYSUT is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT)

and all NYSUT members are also members of the AFT. NYSUT and AFT are associated with the American Federation of Labor-Congress of International Organizations (AFL-CIO). We are Local 3076 of the AFL-CIO.



Did You Know?

Albert Einstein joined the AFT in 1938 while at Princeton University. He said at the time, "I consider it important, indeed urgently necessary, for intellectual workers to get together both to protect their own economic status, and also generally speaking to secure their influence in the political field."

NYSUT Services for New Members

NYSUT's Effective Teaching Program offers workshops designed for beginning teachers (1-3 years). These are offered at no charge in both our school district and at the NYSUT Regional Office in Kingston. Course topics include: Parent Teacher Confer-

ences, Discipline with Dignity, Study Skills, Classroom Management, and Creating a Positive Classroom Environment. Contact your building representative or local president to sign up for these classes.

All new members of NYSUT are

eligible for a free, one year \$25,000 Term Life Insurance policy, and a free one year Disability Insurance policy and a free one year enrollment in the NYSUT Legal Service Plan. These benefits are offered to you at NO CHARGE as soon as you have completed the NYSUT enrollment form.

If you have not signed the forms to activate these free benefits, please contact your local union president.

*Save the dates **September 21st** and **October 5th** for NYSUT's New Member Information Program for members.*

Tell me more about Tenure

Teachers receive tenure after successfully completing a probationary employment period. Once tenure is achieved, school boards and their administrators must follow a formal, legal process to discipline or dismiss a teacher. The probationary period for new teachers is three years. However, previously tenured teachers hired in other New York State districts – or transferring their tenure areas in the same district – must complete only two years of probation. The procedure, detailed in Section 3020-a of State Education Law, pro-

vides tenured teachers with a system of due process, assuring them the right to answer charges that have brought against them. Conduct or conditions that may constitute just cause for discipline or discharge of a tenured teacher include misconduct, incompetence, insubordination, physical or mental disability, neglect of duty or lack of a teaching certificate. A tenured teacher can be dismissed if found guilty of any of these charges. NYSUT provides representation from its staff of attorneys to any member facing Section 3020-a charges.



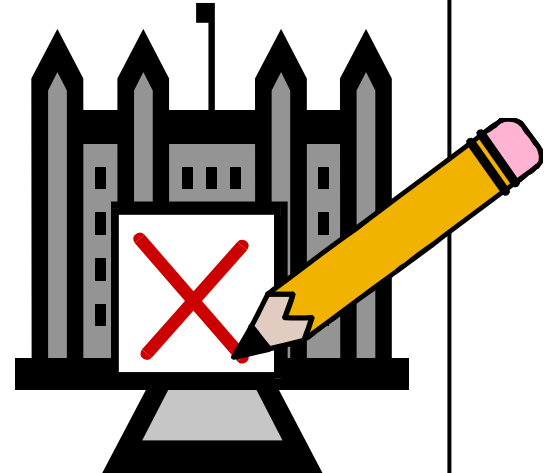
How about Certification?

There are many sources of information to learn about the new requirements for certification. On line visit NYSUT at www.nysut.org or the NYS Education


Results of the District Health and Safety Survey

The compiled results of the survey that many of you completed were forwarded to Central Office personnel, building principals and your building reps on the final day of school, June 23, 1999. As of this time, there has been no response to our invitation to sit and discuss the concerns you voiced, although I'm confident that a response will be forthcoming in the near future. Rather than list the results of the survey in their entirety please contact your building rep(s) for a copy of the letter that was sent. Suffice it to say that each building had its

unique set of problem areas, and as a district many of the same concerns were evident in all buildings. Aging of the plants obviously has its negative effects, as does the size of the custodial staff and financial concerns, but that does not mean that these concerns should be ignored or brushed off; we will keep up our attempts to make sure that we all are working and learning in a healthy and safe environment.



~ Jay Sussdorff



The VCTA New Member Welcome Party will be held

on

Friday, September 17th

3:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Stony Ford Country Club

Hors d'oeuvres • Cash Bar

Directions to Stony Ford: Stony Ford Country Club is located in Orange County Park. Take 17K through Montgomery to the intersection of 17K and 211. Turn left on to 211, follow through village to Rte 416 (Left at Airport). Take 416 and watch for signs for Country Club. The Country Club is located at the top of the hill.

East Coldenham pushing the 100% barrier for VOTE/COPE

Vote/Cope is NYSUT's non-partisan political action arm that coordinates voluntary contributions from members. Vote/Cope helps make NYSUT one of the most influential and successful advocates for children and school professionals.

The total contributions for all buildings exceed \$2300 with East Coldenham's teaching staff leading the pack with 89% participation rate.

You can now elect to have your VOTE/COPE contribution deducted from your paycheck!

in payroll deduction for your Vote Cope contribution. The VCTA would like to thank the District for working with the Union for making Vote/Cope available for our members through payroll deduction. Now instead of having to remember to give a donation to a building rep you can simply have it deducted from your paycheck. For example, since NYSUT suggests donating \$20, you can have a \$1 taken from each

paycheck. That same dollar that you may have spent on a cup of coffee on your way to work buys you quite a bit of political clout when you consider that former Senator Al D'Amato lost the last election by 400,000 votes. NYSUT has 400,000 members...an interesting coincidence to say the least.

To sign up for VOTE/COPE payroll deduction, fill out the form that was available at the VCTA table during convocation and send it to Tim Brown at the HS. If you didn't pick up a form, contact the Union Office at 457-5899.

A Word of Thanks and A Call to Action

On May 25th, I represented the VCTA at the New Member Program Development Workshop. This was an excellent, but terrifying workshop. The goal of this workshop was to develop a new member program that would encourage new members to become active in their union so that they will assume leadership roles in their local and with NYSUT in the next decade and beyond.

The staggering statistics that I obtained at the workshop were taken from NYSUT's membership records, New York State Education Department Data, and the Peter Hart Survey. Here are a few thought provoking statements:

- By the year 2000, nearly half of all NYSUT members would have entered the union since the year 1990.

- 25% have entered in the last 5 years.
- 1/3 of New York's public school teachers will reach retirement age by the year 2000.
- 45% of new members are 24-26 years old.

We can see that the future brings both youth and a large number of members without the historic background and experience with the union. The union (THAT'S YOU!) has struggled and negotiated for decades to obtain the benefits we now have and may take for granted.

These benefits were not given to us. The union has worked diligently to maintain and improve the quality of life for its members and the education

that they provide our children. These active and dedicated members who have worked very hard are nearing retirement age. To these members, I would like to say Thank You!

The survival and improvement of these benefits are at the mercy of our newer members. Don't wait – get involved today! I'm asking the veteran members to encourage the newer members to bring their skills and dedication to the union and become active.

Our Union Will Die. Without the Active Participation of Its Membership!



Kathy Sahl is Recognized for her Excellence



Kathy Sahl thought that she was going to a June Board of Education meeting to discuss the fifth grade trip to Greenkill. Instead she was recognized as the 1999 Orange County Soil and Water Conservation Teacher of the Year presented by Kris Naldony of the Or-

Kathy Sahl is being considered for New York State Conservation Teacher of the Year.

ange County Soil and Water Department. Kathy was awarded the honor for the work she has done in integrating environmental studies into her classroom. She has been also busy creating an Environmental Education Center in the 40 acres behind East Coldenham for the use of teachers throughout

of the district. She has involved Key Bank personnel who helped to clean up the overgrown nature trail as well as bringing in the NYS DEC and the OC SWCD who toured the site and offered recommendations and technical assistance. Kathy is also known in East Coldenham for her Painted Lady butterflies.

Ro Millham leaves for NASA

It all started at a Science teacher convention Ro Millham was attending last year. She kept noticing the same group of teachers attending the workshops she was attending. Eventually, one of those teachers approached her and she found out that the group were from NASA and they were scouting for future NASA educators. It obviously didn't take them long to recognize what anyone who has ever known Ro recognized, she is an exceptional educator in the fine tradition of VC educators. She was actually offered positions with two different NASA education centers.

She will be working for NASA outside of Washington, DC in conjunction with the Maryland Department of Education.

So should we be searching the skies for Ro? Ro has said that she will only be working on "terra firma" and has no intention of commanding a space shuttle. Ro taught science at both the MS and the HS and served as a HS Bldg rep and NYSTRS rep. Her loss will be greatly felt here at VC, but the state of the country's space education has just improved with the addition of Ro Millham to the NASA program. What is one small step for Ro Millham is cer-

tainly one great leap for education program of NASA.



Scholarship Recipients express their Gratitude



I wish to express my thanks for being chosen to receive one of the Valley Central Teachers' Association Scholarships last week, at my graduation ceremony. It is a great honor, and one which I hope I can live up to.

I have attended Valley Central Schools since kindergarten and I am eagerly looking forward to my future at Colgate University, I will never forget my years spent here. The educational experiences that I have received have proved invaluable and have exerted a positive influence on my life. Everyone I have met here has touched my life in some way. I will never forget the encouraging teachers and coaches that I've had, and the close friends I've made. I am very grateful to Valley Central for providing so many wonderful opportunities which I have been able to take advantage of, including sports, clubs and honor societies. Valley Central has thoroughly prepared me for the future and for that I am also thankful.

The money which I've received will be used to help pay for the many expenses of college. Once again, thank you for awarding me this honor.

~ Erin Skahen

Thank you so much for the scholarship! College certainly is expensive, and I am grateful for your assistance.

Marywood University, where I am going in the Fall, applies additional scholarship money to room and board, which will be my biggest expense next year. You are so generous and caring to make these scholarships available.

I have enjoyed my years in Valley Central. The education I received and the caring support of many teachers has made it possible for me to face my college years feeling confident and prepared.

~Aubrey Daily

Just a short note to thank the Valley Central Teachers' Association for awarding me a scholarship. The money will help defray the cost of my tuition at Manhattanville college.

Not only do I appreciate my scholarship, but everything that your organization has done that made my four years at VCHS enjoyable. Thank you for your generosity.

~Erin Clair

Thank you very much for choosing me as a recipient of one of the VCTA's scholarships. I am honored to win this award, which will be a great help to my family. I appreciate your hard work in presenting this award to graduating seniors every year.

~Sandra Lemmon

As I am writing this letter nearly one month since Graduation, I reflect on the busy pace my life takes. I wish to thank you the Valley Central Teachers' Association for their generous scholarship and briefly explain my future plans.

The morning following graduation I boarded a plane for California. I is here in California, that for the last month, I have worked as a counselor at the Salvation Army's Camp Redwood Glen. I have enjoyed the experience greatly and the opportunity that my job gives me to touch the lives of the children in my cabin. I feel that my ministry here as a counselor helps to prepare me for the ministry of teaching. After camp College where I will be majoring in secondary education and physics. Following my graduation I would like to become a high school physics teacher.

I believe that God has a plan for everyone's life and believe that this is His plan for me. Already I have felt His blessing as I have stepped out of the familiar and into the unknown of the rest of my life. May He be glorified through the journey and the goal.

~Christopher Love

Many Recognized at the June VCTA Executive Council Meeting

The June VCTA Executive Meeting was held on June 15, 1998 at the Spruce Lodge. Traditionally, the last meeting of the year is a dinner meeting to thank the Building Representatives for giving their service and time to the organization.

The District's eight retirees, **Rich Angameyer, Fil Bernatowicz, George Coates, Pat Hurst, Nancy La Goy, Fred Radl Anne Stone, and Catherine Unverzagt** were invited to attend the dinner. Tim Brown presented them with framed certificates recognizing their dedication and service to Valley Central.

Kathy Sahl and Joseph Fracalossi were also invited to attend the dinner. Joe was recognized for being named one of the five finalists for NYS Teacher of the Year. Kathy was recognized for being named Orange County Conservation teacher of the year.

Tim Brown also thanked his fellow officers, **Jay Sussdorff, Rich Steger, Patti Lunden and John Bonagura** for their work on behalf of the Union and presented

each with a gift.

Jim Lignori was recognized for his many years of service to the VCTA as Newsletter Editor. He was presented a certificate of appreciation and recognition. Jim offered observations full of insight and wisdom, as he so often has, on the Union's role in education at Valley Central. **Bob Bauer** was also recognized and thanked for stepping in this past year to assist Jim.

After the presentations, the meeting moved to its regular business. Some highlights from the meeting follow:

- Former HS Biology Chairperson, Patsy Iorlano was elected to the BOE. He received the most votes of all candidates.
- 33 people attended the Defensive Driving Course sponsored by the VCTA. It will be offered again in 1999-2000 for both active and retired members..
- The paydate grievance was settled.
- The District has agreed that we will always be paid within a 14 day cycle.
- The Chaperone grievance time table has been frozen.
- Two out of six people whose health insurance comparability were in consideration have opted for the buyout. One person's insurance situation changed and the District is now providing insurance. Three people will be proceeding to arbitration.
- Tim Brown asked for a survey of any teachers who have received compensation for Bachelor's credits beyond their Bachelor's degree.
- Appointments were made to the Benefit Trust.
- MS Principal, John Hunter, has been appointed Supt. For Curr. And Instr.
- The OUSDHP "Health Beat" newsletter will be available in faculty rooms.
- Paraprofessional Negotiations are not

For more detailed information, the VCTA Executive Council Meeting Minutes are posted monthly in faculty rooms. The Meetings are open to the General Membership, contact your Building Rep for more information.

Health and TSA Fair Held Today



Physical and financial well being are very important factors in life. The VCTA Health and TSA Fair provide a means for members to consider the fact that they have a choice. This year's Fair was moved to the first day of school to make it more convenient for members to consider some of those choices.

While the District provides the Orange Ulster School District Health Plan to those employees eligible as defined by of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, employees have a federal right to select an alternate HMO provider. An employee could seek out any HMO company to do this, the VCTA has brought in GHI, (formerly WellCare), MVP and Empire. However we do not endorse any one plan but rather encourage employees to consider their options.

*MS Building Rep.
Mike Steele was named
to the
Honor Roll of Attendance
for the Mid-Hudson La-
bor Council.*

*Mike attends the
Mid-Hudson Labor Coun-
cil meetings representing
the VCTA.*

*Thanks, Mike
and congratulations!*

Likewise, your money is your money and the TSA part of the Fair is provided to encourage you to consider your investment options. You certainly can make your own decision as to where you what to deposit your savings, but the VCTA Executive Council feels it would remiss to not let you know that there are options that are available to you. The companies invited to the TSA fair are reviewed annually and are invited to primarily speak to you about TSA's. Although they may display information about other services they offer they are instructed to allow you to initiate any conversation about such services.

It is important for you to realize that again, these are not the only companies that you can choose from. These are companies who have approached the VCTA and who, for your convenience, we have invited. You should research your options before making any decisions.

If you did not get an opportunity to review the Health and TSA companies at the Fair, contact coordinator, Patti Lunden at 457-5899. She can send you any of the materials for whichever companies you are interested in.

If you do decide to make a change in your Health Coverage, send the enrollment form to Mrs. Polly Conigilio at CO between Oct. 1st and 31st. Enrollment in a TSA or a change in your current investment amount in a TSA can be done through December 31st through Mrs. Conigilio as well.



What do UNIONS do?

- Unions are working people **working together** to solve problems.
- Unions give workers a **voice** on the job about safety, security, pay, benefits – and the best way to get the work done.
- Unions stand for **fair treatment** of all working people – on the job, in our communities and in the economy.

**Who is the UNION?
YOU ARE THE UNION!**
You have a voice. Make it heard.

Terms You Should Know

Building Representative: A local union official who represents members at the worksite level. Responsibilities include keeping members informed of union activities and assisting members with professional issues. Many worksite reps also assist members with grievances and situations related to the negotiated contract.

LRS: A labor relations specialist employed by NYSUT is responsible for conducting a broad range of activities including collective bargaining and contract administration. The LRS provides services and training to local unions and their members. There are seven LRS's employed by NYSUT's Mid-Hudson Regional Office in Kingston. The

LRS for the VCTA is Steve Berman.

Grievance: In labor law, a grievance is a claim that a policy or practice of the employer or a specific provision of the collective bargaining agreement has been violated. The resolution of the grievance is accomplished through a procedural mechanism provided in the union contract.

BOCES: A board of cooperative educational services is a voluntary cooperative association of school districts in a geographic area. The association shares planning, service and programs to provide edu-



cational and support activities to the affiliated districts more economically, efficiently and equitably than could be provided locally.

Teacher Centers: A network of over 100 Teacher Resource and Computer Training Centers across the state, teacher centers are operated by policy boards comprised of a majority of classroom teachers. They provide programs, services and materials for teachers to improve their pedagogical skills. The Mid-Hudson Teacher Center is located on the SUNY New Paltz Campus.

Remembering is a Dream that Comes in Waves

Whenever I hear the Irish folk song, "Londonberry Air", I think of my elementary school band teacher,

Mr. DeFrancesco. That was his favorite song. He told our band at my fifth grade concert. We played it at that concert, and I remember how swept up we were in the notes of that old Irish song.

Also, whenever I play my clarinet, I think of him. Mr. "D", which is what he asked all of his students to call him, taught me how to play it, and without him, I wouldn't be the musician I am today. He told me to stick with it when I said it was too hard, and I did. There was something about his words that made me keep playing.

Sadly, Mr. D passed away on

January 9, 1999, just over a week into the new year. He left behind a legacy of wonderful music in our district. We'll never find such an incredible teacher to replace him.

Just two weeks ago, I went to see my brother, Shaun, perform in his All District concert. It was strange, because I'm not used to watching concerts, (I'm usually in them!) I looked through the program and found, under the band selections, "Londonberry Air". I smiled and then read underneath the title, "In memory of Mr. John DeFrancesco."

Tears filled my eyes as I read that. Of course, they would dedicate Mr. D's favorite song to him. So when it came time for the newest generation of fifth graders to play the song, memo-

ries filled my head. I'll never forget the teacher who instilled in me a talent and a love for music. The day I become a famous musician, I'll surely remember the January day over three years ago when I first picked up my clarinet and blew that very first note, just for Mr. D.



~Aileen Mahoney

Aileen wrote this essay on 6/15/99 as a seventh grader in Eileen Wojhowski's class and gave permission for its publication in the VC ECHOES

Anne Stone puts down her Chalk

Listening and watching Anne Stone was like observing a Master in any profession. She is the Master Teacher. Like the sign over her door said, "Failure is not an option". Anne expected the best and her students always rose to the occasion. She was strict, consistent, compassionate and made students accountable for their learning. Mrs. Stone's students appreciated her guidance and admired her frankness and fairness with them.

Anne Stone's students appreciated her guidance and admired her frankness and fairness with them.

Many years ago, Anne and I started "VC SPIRIT" out of concern regarding statistics on drug addiction. Anne motivated many of us to organ-

ize an anti-drug rally with all sorts of community support. She was always willing to go the extra mile at whatever function we were planning. Her organizational skills helped keep us on track and made any event a success.

Since the advent of teaming I have had the pleasure to work on the same team with Anne for the past six years. She was the vital force on the World Team. She always challenged us to reach beyond our goals. She gave tirelessly of herself and motivated the rest of us to follow suit. Whether it is a reward trip to New

York City on a Saturday or a Mets' game on a Friday night before Memorial Day, Anne always put the students first.

In disbelief we watched Michael Jordan put down his basketball, Wayne Gretzky his hockey stick, and now Anne Stone has put down her chalk for the last time. As devastating as it seems, we were blessed to work and learn in her presence and we all wish her the best in her future endeavors.

~Christine O'Shea

Education would be much more effective if its purpose was to ensure that by the time they leave school every boy and girl should know how much they do not know, and be imbued with a lifelong desire to know it.

~ Sir William Haley

“Miss Berea” Retired June 25, 1999

Phone calls from Coldenham, letters from South Carolina, E-mail from Georgia, people stopping by Berea, so many people asking if she is really doing it? At the end of June the question was, “Is Catherine really retiring?” Yes, Catherine Unverzagt has done it!

Catherine loves teaching. She has not really left her vocation. She has been teaching summer school. She’s planning to work this fall with Maureen Radl with a Parent Workshop idea that was highlighted at a BOE meeting in June, and she has plans to try substitute teaching. She’s always ready for a challenge.

Miss Berea, as she is still known, has held to her high standards throughout her teaching career. Cath-

erine started teaching with the Lakeland School District in 1963, and then came to VC in 1966 to teach at EC. When Berea opened, she was one of the original staff. Her sense of sharing, her honesty, her tried and true methods and hard work have earned the respect and the friendship of all those who know her. The children and community of VC have benefited from her endeavors.

The list of Catherine’s contributions to VC is impressive. She brought Math Their Way, she often personally purchased the latest reading and phonics programs for her class and then shared with her colleagues. She has represented us at state portfolio workshops, brought bluebirds to Berea, organized cookbooks and penny social fundraisers for our parent groups, and

inspired PARP reading programs for so many years.

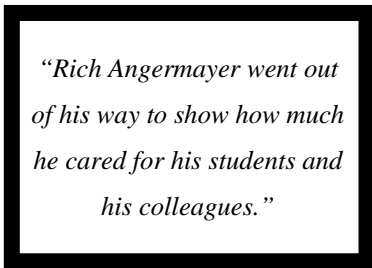


Those of us who have seen many people come and go, and have seen programs tried and then discarded, know and value Catherine’s expertise. We learned early that when Catherine talks, we should listen. She knows of what she speaks. We are happy with her in her retirement, especially when we know she plans to stay connected with us at Valley Central.

~ Gail Roberto

Richard Angermayer retires after 30 years of Dedication

Rich Angermayer had been teaching at Valley Central since 1969, and decided to retire after 30 years. Rich Angermayer was honored in 1998 on the Montgomery PTA’s Founders Day for his dedication to



his students. He was known to return to school for any program or sports event. He never missed an event. He went out of his way to show his students and his colleagues how much he cared for them. “Rich has a heart of gold and was always

very generous with the kids,” said Kathy Takvam. During his time at Montgomery, Rich produced Holiday plays and ran a Train club.

Rich will be looking forward to relaxing in his retirement however he has said he is considering returning to VC as a substitute once in a while.

Patricia Hurst retired after 24 years at VC

Pat Hurst began teaching at Valley Central on November 5, 1975. Pat taught Reading in four of the District’s elementary schools throughout her 24 years with VC working in Berea, Walden, Maybrook and East Coldenham. Pat spent most of her time in Maybrook and East Coldenham working there the last 12 years. Pat coordinated the PARP (Parents as Reading Partners) program at East Coldenham and was the lead person interacting with parents and teachers on issues of reading.

East Coldenham’s principal

Harvey Gregory said that he could always count on Pat to go above and beyond whatever was required. She was a dedicated and talented teacher.

As well as establishing the PARP program, Pat also established the Push In-Pull Out program working with students in small group outside of class and using a team approach in Reading lesson with classroom teachers. Pat also assisted John Bonagura with the 5th grade play and served as EC’s Building Representative last year.

Pat will certainly be missed at East

Coldenham. Pat joins her husband, (former Director of Athletics and Physical Education) in retirement. We all wish her much happiness and thank her for a job well done.



Mac's Musings (from the Retiree side)

Someone forgot to fire me at the end of last year, so "Mac's Musings" (the column!!) is back. As an intro, to the active teachers who have read through to the last pages of this esteemed educational journal and as a jog to the memory of retired teachers, a short biography. I'm Kevin McFadden, retired as high school English Chairman in '93 after 35 years of HS teaching (29 at VC) and in '98 as supervisor of student teaching at Mt. St. Mary College in Newburgh. Since '93, I have represented the retired teachers on the Executive Council of the VCTA. Orin Segall (retired from HS Business Dept. in '96) also serves on the this committee. We attempt to bring the thoughts, needs and activities of retired teachers to those still active in teaching and vice versa. Copies of the *VC Echoes* will continue to be sent to our retirees each month.

The column will continue to comment on matters of interest and concern to retirees. Many of the opinions expressed will be shared by many retirees; some will reflect only the mercurial thoughts of the writer-especially in the segment titled, "Nobody asked me but...". The author welcomes questions, comments, concerns etc. from both retired and active teachers. My number is 778-7236, and my address is 6 Jessup St. Walden, NY 12586.

Deja Vu Dreams and other Weird Wonders

Although I retired from the high school six years ago, I still participate in those "mid-August beginning of school dreams" You know the ones I mean. The entire class is escaping out windows and doors, ceiling tiles, etc.

Nobody is listening to you. There is cussing and screaming... then you wake up and it's nearly September. The reality ends up being much more pleasant. Most kids are still good kids, and all VC teacher are special and dedicated teachers and mentors, as are all members of our schools' staff. To all of you—especially the rookies—have a wonderful and productive year.

Update!

I sent out 165 announcement of the September 2nd Retiree Luncheon (now in its seventeenth year). Some folks retired as far back as the mid-60's (I will reveal no names, Ladies) More on the luncheon in the October issue. Lena Lease, who retired twenty years ago, has been the force and energy behind these luncheons and we owe her (and Bill Moran, John Mirola and the late Vic Haggar) an enormous debt of gratitude. Lena will be visiting family in Italy this year on the luncheon date, I better not screw it up!

"Nobody asked me, but..."

- If state legislators (who were 3 1/2 months late with a state budget) and seldom-seen George Pataki (also guilty on that count) are worth raises, how about teachers and other struggling workers?
- The "gub" still hasn't signed that bill guaranteeing health benefits to NYSTRS and NYSERS members. It's still on a year-to-year basis (Okay through May 2000). He deserves a letter expressing your wrath about that situation.
- The four tier retirement system ~~must be changed. Fire off a fiery~~

note to your state legislators.

- Annual COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) for retirees is an idea whose time has come. Share this idea with your elected state representatives.
- If retirees who are eligible are not included in the Tier Reinstatement program, NYSUT should bring a class action suit for discrimination against the state legislators.
- Welcome to our new editor, former student, and old friend, Patti (Behr)Lunden.
- Am I getting even crabbier as I get ever older?

The End (Amen!)

It's great to be back chatting with all of you. If Orin and I can help any retirees with problems related to their retirements, etc. don't hesitate to call. If we can help any active teachers with retirement questions, don't hesitate to call. Also remember that Sally Grodin (MS) is your retirement representative and very, very knowledgeable.

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

PEACE.

~Kevin McFadden

When Should I Begin to Plan for My Retirement?

It is never too early to begin planning for your retirement. The first step for all members should be the consideration of investment in retirement accounts. Consult a financial planner (check out the VCTA TSA Fair or contact NYSUT for help) to help you make long range plans. Three to five years before you retire you should attend a NYSTRS or NYSERS seminar. There are schedules posted in the faculty rooms for you to consult or contact your building representative, the VCTA officers, or Sally Grodin, our NYSTRS representative.

If you are considering retiring this year, definitely contact NYSTRS representative on the TRS Board of Directors (Joseph McLaughlin at (914) 835-3830 and your building representative who will give you the VCTA form letter that we recommend you use to model your letter. The letter is written to make sure that you are requesting every thing that you are contractually due. To be eligible for the Early Retirement Incentive this year, you must notify the District of your decision by March 2000.



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**We'll soon be
on the Web!**

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 should be sent to Patti Lunden at the HS.

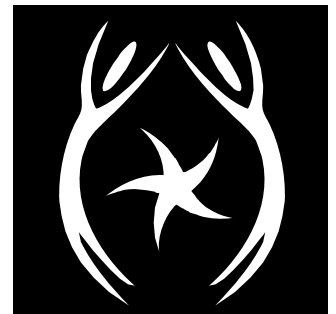
The VCTA was founded in the early 1960's as the bargaining unit representing teachers. The secretaries joined the VCTA in the early 80's and the paraprofessionals joined in the early 90's. Our membership consists of approximately 370 teachers, 21 secretaries and 125 paraprofessionals. The VCTA Executive Council is made up of building representatives from the District's seven buildings, a secretarial representative, two paraprofessional representatives, two non-voting retiree representatives, five elected officers, the newsletter editor, the NYSTRS representatives and representatives from the Dental/Optical Trust. Executive Council meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month of the school year at the HS Professional Library and are open to the general membership.

Centering Children

There is a banner in Central Office painted by a former student that shows children on a playground with the caption, "Putting Children First". It is a finely crafted banner depicting the caption which was embraced by our last Superintendent, however I must admit have never personally been totally comfortable with the word "first". Don't get me wrong, I also believe children are the most important aspect in education. After all, you don't go into the education field unless you love children and if you ask anyone who works in our school system I'm sure they would tell you that the children always come first. The problem I have with the word "First" is that it denotes a ranking. Of course the children should be first, it is where they belong. But it begs to question, who then is second? Or for that matter

third, fourth or fifth? I'm sure there are as many opinions on who would be second, third, fourth or fifth as there are employees.

One of the best parts of teaching is that every September we get the chance to do things over—to make things a little better. Each new school year holds the hope of doing things a little differently, improving things that have worked in the past and reworking things that haven't. In that spirit, I would suggest that a better caption to describe the heart of our District would be "Putting Children Center". Center denotes the idea of being surrounded by individuals who work together to create a circle of energy that lifts a child to their highest potential. Each member of the circle is as equally important as any other member whether they be the person who cleans the



school or hires the teachers, feeds the students, or nurses their wounds, teaches them, sets policy for them, or fundraises for their field trips.

Putting children in the center helps to align the focus of every member of our educational community so that not only are they seeing the child but they can also look across and see the others who also help to form the circle.

~Patti Lunden