

Honoring the VCTA Retiree Class of 2025-2026



Valley Central Teachers' Association

Congratulations on Your
RETIREMENT!

*Thank you for so many years of
“Putting Children Center.”*



putting children center
vcta

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

Julie Ardito



Ms. Julie Ardito, originally from Kiamesha, NY, is retiring after dedicating 30 years to educating students. Julie went to SUNY Sullivan and SUNY Oneonta where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education. She began her career at Tri Valley Central School District in Grahamsville, NY where she taught kindergarten, 1st grade, and 4th grade over 10 years.

Julie is a Nationally Board Certified teacher who has taught kindergarten and 1st grade at East Coldenham Elementary and Montgomery Elementary Schools over her 20 years at Valley Central School District. Outside of the classroom she is co-advisor for the Nature Club with Lisa Goland. Her favorite memory from her time at Valley Central came while teaching virtually during COVID because she loved doing it with her dearest friend, Rachel DeBenedictus.

Julie has expressed that retirement is so bittersweet. She has loved being a teacher and inspiring young minds. She said that it has been an absolute joy to watch children learn and grow, and she will miss that a lot. However, she is excited to be able to wake up whenever she wants to, go hiking, learn how to embroider, travel more, and be able to spend quality time with family and friends.

Happy Retirement, Julie!

May your days be filled with the things you love most!

Christopher Arndt



Mr. Christopher Arndt is retiring after 32 years in education, 30 of which include teaching 7th grade Social Studies at Valley Central Middle School. Chris grew up in Pine Bush before attending the University at Albany where he earned his Bachelor of Arts in Rhetoric and Communication. He would go on to attend New York Institute of Technology where he earned his Master of Science in Instructional Technology. Before coming to Valley Central Middle School, he worked at The Storm King School in Cornwall-on-Hudson.

Over the years Chris was involved in various activities outside of his classroom walls. In 1996 he became the district's first webmaster which helped to bring the district online at a time when publishing board minutes and budget information on the internet was still a very new idea. He also taught several professional development workshops on using the internet for teaching, even before Google existed. He is also currently helping his colleagues use AI tools for lesson planning, classroom materials, student review, and instructional support. Over his 30 years in the district he also had the opportunity to mentor several student teachers. In addition to spending time working with technology, Chris was also involved in the early beginnings of girls lacrosse in which he helped start the program when it began as a club before becoming a full team. He was also honored to receive a Teacher of the Year award from the VCMS PTA.

One of Chris's favorite VC memories is rollerblading through the Middle School hallways after the students had left the building with some of the other teachers. He said it was one of those fun, unexpected moments that reminded him of how special the people at the Middle School are.

In retirement Chris is looking forward to spending more time with family, including traveling internationally with his wife. He is also looking forward to having more time to build his business. He is excited for this next chapter and the chance to keep learning, creating, and working on new things.

Congratulations on your retirement, Chris!
May this next chapter be filled with new adventures as you create new memories!

Susan Baldwin-Page

Ms. Susan Baldwin-Page is retiring after 35 years in education. Susan grew up in Gallatin, NY. She attended Iona College where she earned her bachelor's degree and then went to Fordham University where she earned her Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction. Before coming to Valley Central School District, she taught at Xavier Elementary School in Manhattan, as well as in the Archdiocese of New York Catholic Schools.

Susan is an elementary school teacher who has been a part of our district for 32 years. She has taught at Montgomery Elementary and Berea Elementary Schools. Over her career she has taught kindergarten for one year, 2nd grade for one year, 3rd grade for six years, 4th grade for 23 years, and 5th grade for four years. While at Valley Central she has been on various committees, coached Odyssey of the Mind, and taught in the Spectrum program; she has also been involved in mentoring as well.

During retirement Susan is looking forward to relaxing, spending plenty of time at the beach, and traveling.



Susan, we hope that you enjoy every minute this new chapter of your life will bring you! Happy retirement!

Paul Berkowitz

Mr. Paul Berkowitz, originally from Long Island and Hyde Park, is retiring after 31 in education. He taught for 29 years at Valley Central High School. Before beginning his career at The Turning Point and West Park Union Free High School, Paul attended Dutchess County Community College, SUNY Fredonia, and SUNY Cortland. Paul was a physical education teacher for all of his career. Besides his time spent in the gymnasium, he was also very active in coaching. Paul was a Weight Room coach and also coached the Varsity Boys Soccer Team for 29 years. During his eight years as the Boys Junior Varsity Tennis coach he led the team to the New York State Championship twice. During his years as a coach, he also was the recipient of the OCIAA Sportsmanship Award. Outside of coaching he was the founder and advisor of the Badminton Club and also took part in the Gradus Honoris selection committee.

Paul has enjoyed working with his colleagues over the span of his career, especially every minute spent working with his department. During retirement Paul is looking forward to spending time golfing, cycling, boating, and playing hockey as well as pursuing other hobbies which include anything with a motor.



Congratulations on your retirement, Paul! Thank you for your many years of service to the Athletic Department!

Kathy Bordone



Ms. Kathy Bordone is retiring after 35 years in education, including 30 years at Valley Central School District. She grew up on Westbury, Long Island before attending SUNY Cortland where she earned her Bachelor of Science degree and Long Island University where she earned her Master of Science degree. Kathy began her career at United Cerebral Palsy in Queens and also spent time in private schools, working at Rehabilitation Programs, Inc. in Poughkeepsie, and she was a substitute teacher for Wallkill schools.

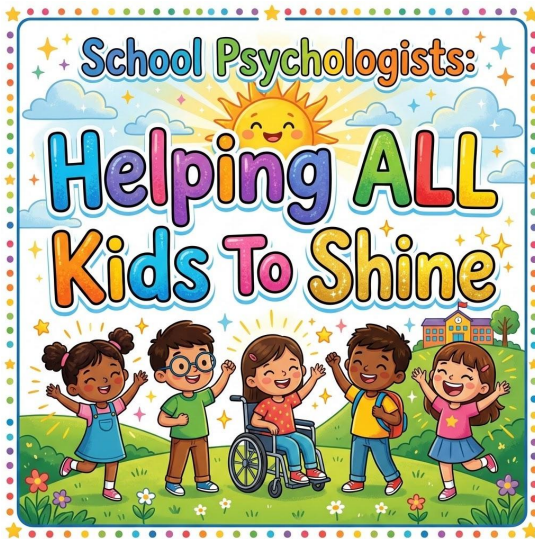
Kathy is a Nationally Board Certified teacher and has taught at Walden Elementary and Berea Elementary Schools. Through her afterschool S.T.E.A.M. Club for 4th and 5th graders, she has worked in all four elementary schools. During her career Kathy has been a self-contained 2nd through 5th grade special education teacher for four years, 1st grade teacher for four years, 3rd grade teacher for two years, AIS Math Teacher for 10 years and Math Consultant Teacher for 11 years. Kathy was also the recipient of the Mid-Hudson School Study Council Award for Excellence in Teaching. Looking back, she said that her favorite memory was taking all of the WES AIS math students to a Mets game for "Cyberchase Day at Shea"!

Outside of the classroom Kathy has served on a number of committees, including leading the Elementary Math Committee in a new curriculum adoption. She also has advised the afterschool S.T.E.A.M. Club, Math Club, Foreign Language Club, Student Council, Crazy 8s Club, and History Club. She was a VCTA Building Representative for many years and served as Vice President of the VCTA for three years as well.

During retirement Kathy looks forward to being on her own schedule, relaxing, traveling, playing pickleball, and learning how to cook. Most of all though, she is looking forward to enjoying this new stage of life and spending time with her family.

***Enjoy creating new memories in this next chapter
of your life, Kathy!***

Delaine Charette



Ms. Delaine Charette is retiring after 35 years at Valley Central School District. Delaine attended St .Bonaventure University where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Psychology. She earned her Master of Art in School Psychology from Alfred University. Delaine also has her Board Certification in School Neuropsychology.

When Delaine was hired in 1990, her first assignment was at Berea and Montgomery Elementary Schools. Over her 35 years at the district, she has worked at Berea, East Coldenham, and Montgomery Elementary Schools. She also worked in the Middle School and has performed assessments in all buildings, as well as for out of district placements. Delanie has been a coach for the district's Special Olympics team where she taught basketball and soccer skills. She was honored with the Mid-Hudson School Study Council's Excellence In Support Staff award and was also the recipient of the Berea PTA Founder's Award.

While reflecting on her long career, Delaine expressed that will fondly remember the everyday interactions with students and staff which have brought her so much joy. Every day was different and every day was rewarding through her everyday engagements trying to figure out a learning difference, helping a child problem solve, and supporting a teacher with a student's behavioral challenges in their classroom. During retirement, she is looking forward to having no more paperwork to complete!

Congratulations on your retirement, Delaine! Thank you for dedicating your career to helping students throughout the district!

Joseph Collins



Mr. Joseph Collins is retiring after 35 years in education, including 33 years at Valley Central Middle School. He grew up in the Beaver Dam Lake area where he attended Washingtonville Central School District. Joe went to SUNY Oneonta where he earned his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and another in Secondary Education in Social Studies. He also attended SUNY New Paltz where he earned his Master of Science in Secondary Education Social Studies.

Joe spent his tenure at Valley Central Middle School in the social studies classroom. Over his career, he taught 6th grade Civics for one year, 7th grade Social Studies for four years and 8th grade Social Studies for 33 years. Besides spending time in the classroom, Joe was an advisor for the Student Government Association, an A.V. coordinator, a Team Leader, and served on many school committees. During his time at VCMS, he fondly remembers starting his teaching career alongside a great group of fun teachers and understanding administrators. While Joe will miss his colleagues at VCMS, he is very much looking forward to having time to do whatever he wants, when he wants, in his much-deserved retirement.

***Congratulations on your retirement, Joe!
Thank you for your many years of service to
Valley Central Middle School!***

Stacey DeSantis

Mrs. Stacey DeSantis, a life long Valley Central Viking, is retiring after teaching at Walden Elementary School for 33 years. After graduating from Valley Central High School in 1989 Stacey attended Mount Saint Mary College where she earned her Bachelor of Arts in 1993 and then attended SUNY New Paltz where she earned her Master of Science in 1996. She was fortunate to student teach at Berea with her favorite teacher, Mrs. Bernatowicz, who was a huge inspiration for her. Fresh out of college she was hired to teach 3rd grade. During her time at Walden Elementary School Stacey taught 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades, with the majority of her time teaching 1st graders. She has truly loved teaching this age and is glad to have had the opportunity to work with so many talented and kind teachers as she began her career, while learning so much from them along the way. In 2019 she was honored to receive the Mid-Hudson School Study Council's Teaching Excellence award.

During her career Stacey has been on numerous Reading and Math committees, was a member of the MTSS Committee, Safety Team, and Principal's Council. She also coached the Odyssey of the Mind team.

Stacey has many fun memories from her time at Walden but one of the sweetest is when her 1st grade students came to the church on her wedding day to watch her get married to her husband, Dan, and take some pictures with them. She will also remember the time the building had to be evacuated because the fire alarm went off when she was making popcorn in the microwave with Lenette Walsh.

During retirement Stacey and Dan plan on traveling and going on as many adventures as they can! She is looking forward to having the time for more family get togethers, celebrations, and fun getaways with Dan, their sons, Nicholas and Marc, and her parents and sister as well. She also can't wait to clean, organize and redecorate because she always has plenty of ideas...she jokes that she hopes her husband understands that retirement is going to cost a fortune!



***May your retirement be as rewarding and fulfilling as
your career, Stacey!***

Lorraine Estevez

Mrs. Lorraine Estevez, originally from Queens, is retiring after working for 14 years at Valley Central School District. Before entering the education field, Lorraine earned her associate's degree from LaGuardia Community College. She originally worked for ABC and NBC as an executive secretary.

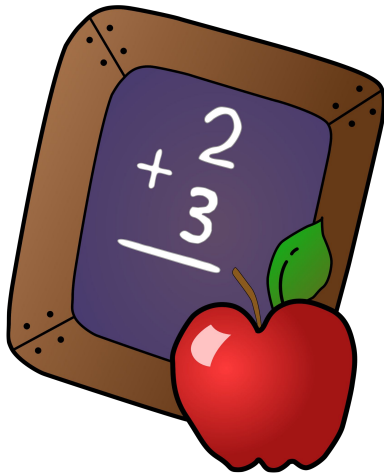
Since 2007, Lorraine has worked at Valley Central High School and Valley Central Middle School as a substitute teacher, 1:1 paraprofessional, and classroom paraprofessional. In her roles as a 1:1 paraprofessional and classroom paraprofessional she had the opportunity to work with students in the High School Skills program.

Lorraine has been married for 42 years and lives in Walden with her husband and two sons. During retirement, Lorraine is looking forward to traveling. She is also looking forward to having more time to pursue her hobbies, which include reading, cooking, yoga, and Pilates. She is also excited about not having to set her alarm clock anymore and having leisurely mornings.



Congratulations on your retirement, Lorraine!
We hope that it is everything you hoped for and more!

Janet Ganzer



Ms. Janet Ganzer, originally from Beacon, is retiring after 25 years educating students, including 12 years at Valley Central School District. Janet earned her bachelor's degree from SUNY Cortland and her master's degree from Western Connecticut University.

Janet began her career in the Beacon City School District and worked in Middletown City School District as well. During her 12 years at Valley Central, she has worked at Maybrook Elementary, Berea Elementary, and Walden Elementary Schools. Over her career she has taught 5th grade for 11 years, 2nd grade for one year, and AIS Math for 13 years. Outside of the classroom she has been on the MTSS Committee, advised the Crazy 8's Math Club, and was a part of the MV Connections after school program.

Reflecting on her time at Valley Central, Janet said she has so many great memories, but the best was landing in a safe, supportive, and fun classroom with the best teaching partner, Kerry! She is grateful to have been a part of the VC family, especially at Walden Elementary School where she has taught for the last 11 years. She will miss the staff and students but will always keep the great memories she made with her.

During retirement, Janet wants to spend more time with her two children and extended family and friends. She is looking forward to a more relaxed pace to enjoy every moment and experience. She is also looking forward to traveling and not having to set an alarm clock each morning.

Janet, we hope retirement is everything you dreamed of and more!

Betty Gaudette



Mrs. Betty Gaudette is retiring after 20 years in secondary education. Before starting at Valley Central, Betty was a substitute teacher for New Paltz Central School District and taught summer school at Ulster BOCES. Betty began her career at Valley Central High School as an Evening High School teacher. During her time at Valley Central, she taught 9th and 10th grade Algebra at the High School as well as 8th grade Algebra in the Middle School. She also taught S.T.E.A.M. to 6th, 7th, and 8th graders during summer school.

Betty grew up in Clintondale where she was a graduate of Highland High School. She attended Harriman College before attending Mount Saint Mary College. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics and Communication Arts as well as a Master of Science in Secondary Education.

Betty's favorite memories from her time at Valley Central are the summer Math Department gatherings where lots of food and laughs were shared amongst her colleagues, as well as having the opportunity to catch up with retired math teachers.

In retirement, Betty is looking forward to spending time with her husband, Bill, as well as their two German Shorthaired pointers. She hopes to be able to visit her daughter, Kate, during her United States Air Force deployment in Turkey. She also hopes to help her son, Will, who is a Navy veteran, move into his new home. She is looking forward to having an empty nest with her husband and two dogs and being able to enjoy time around her fire pit. She also hopes to learn how to quilt and relearn how to stain glass. She enjoys reading, knitting, cross stitching, stain glass, and many other crafts. She is also looking forward to the freedom retirement brings.

***We wish you a wonderful retirement filled with
new memories, Betty!***

Christine Giudice

Ms. Christine Giudice is retiring after 33 years as an elementary physical education teacher. Christine grew up in Monroe before attending SUNY Brockport where she earned her Bachelor of Science. She earned her Master of Science in Special Education (Kindergarten through 12th grade) from Mount Saint Mary College.

During her career at Valley Central, Christine taught physical education to kindergarteners through 5th graders at Montgomery Elementary, Berea Elementary, and East Coldenham Elementary Schools. She also has been the physical education teacher for Night School at the high school. Outside of the gymnasium, Christine has coached the Girls Junior Varsity and Varsity soccer teams, oversaw different clubs, and served on multiple building, safety, and budget committees.

There are two memories in particular which Christine has expressed are her favorites. The first is when she was honored as a MES PTA Founder's Night recipient in 2023. The other was when Montgomery Elementary School won the "Project Fit America" grant in 2018.

In retirement, Christine is looking forward to spending time with her family, traveling, and relaxing. She also is looking forward to having more time to pursue her hobbies, including various sports.

***Congratulations on your retirement,
Christine!***

***Thank you for always encouraging our
students inside and outside of the
gymnasium!***



Karen Gonyo

Mrs. Karen Gonyo is retiring from Valley Central Middle School after 30 years. During her tenure at the Middle School, she spent 13 years teaching in a 6th grade Integrated Co-Teaching classroom and 17 years teaching in a 12:1:2 Basic Skills classroom serving students in grades 6 through 8. Additionally, she was an advisor for the VCMS Spirit Club.

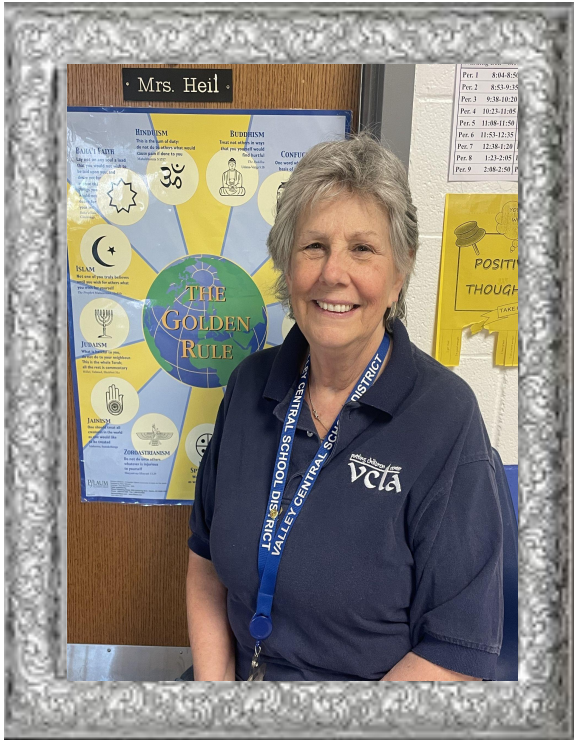
When reflecting on her time at Valley Central, she expressed that her favorite school memory isn't tied to a single day or event, but to the sense of family that was built together amongst colleagues. Through busy days, shared challenges, and plenty of laughter along the way, the friendships formed here have made VCMS truly special.

During retirement, Karen is looking forward to the freedom to travel wherever and whenever she'd like. Most of all, she's excited to celebrate life's special milestones with her husband, Jim, and their children, Brendan, Meghan, and Hunter. She is also looking forward to having more time to pursue her hobbies, which include reading, gardening, and taking early morning hikes with her dog, Winnie.



Happy Retirement, Karen!
May your days be filled with the things you love most!

Catherine Heil



Mrs. Catherine Heil is retiring after 24 years working at various buildings at Valley Central School District. Before joining Valley Central School District as a school social worker for kindergarten through 8th grade, she worked at various private sector rehabilitation centers as a substance abuse counselor. In total she has spent 40 years working with students. While at Valley Central she advised various clubs including the Chess club, Students Against Destructive Decisions Club (SADD), and Unity Club. She was also honored with the Founder's Day award at East Coldenham Elementary School.

Cathie grew up in Chester. She attended Marist College in Poughkeepsie where she earned her Bachelor of Social Work. She then went on to Adelphi University in Garden City where she earned her Master of Social Work.

During retirement, Cathie is looking forward to spending time with her husband of 49 years, four children, eight grandchildren, and one great grandchild. She is also looking forward to having time to pursue her hobbies which include cooking and baking, traveling, camping, and hiking.

***Cathie, thank you for your dedication to our students!
You will be greatly missed!***

Nancy House



Mrs. Nancy House grew up in New City, New York and graduated from Clarkstown North High School and Rockland Community College before beginning her 28 year career at Valley Central Middle School.

Nancy first began working at the Middle School as a lunchroom paraprofessional. Over the years she worked as a greeter, office paraprofessional, office secretary, and now she is the principal's secretary. In 2018 Nancy was honored with the VCMS's Founder's Night award.

Nancy has been married to her husband, Mike, for 40 years this coming October and they have two children, Kathleen and Michael. In retirement, she is looking forward to spending more time with family, traveling the world and being able to visit her kids whenever she wants to. She also looks forward to pursuing her hobbies which include gardening, going to the beach and traveling, and going to Yankee games.

Happy retirement, Nancy!
The Middle School Main Office won't be the same without you!

Katie Hoyt

Mrs. Katie Hoyt is retiring after a long career as an elementary school teacher at Valley Central School District. Katie is a Valley Central graduate who attended the University of Buffalo where she earned her bachelor's degree in Communications. She earned her master's degree in Education (Newborn through Grade 6) from SUNY New Paltz.

Katie spent her entire 38 year career in education teaching at Valley Central School District. She first worked at Maybrook Elementary School before moving to Berea Elementary School where she spent the rest of her career. Over her career she has taught 1st grade for seven years, 2nd grade for four years, 3rd grade for 16 years, and AIS Math for 11 years. Her favorite memories from Valley Central are all of the years she spent being with the students around the Christmas holiday.

Katie loves spending time with her husband on the farm and being with their lab, Elle. She loves visiting their daughter, Olivia, in Sonoma, California. She also enjoys singing, creative writing, being in nature and spending time with family and friends. During retirement, Katie is looking forward to being with her family and friends. She also will be continuing her work in ministry and composing music.

Happy retirement, Katie!

***Here's to your next great
adventure!***



Astrid Larson



Mrs. Astrid Larson grew up in Graz, Austria. She attended PADAK Graz Austria. She also earned her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees from SUNY New Paltz. Astrid began her 34 year teaching career teaching in Graz City and then in Leutschach County, Austria before moving to the United States. While in Austria, she taught English as a New Language for one year. She taught in the Pine Bush School District before teaching in various Valley Central Schools for the last 28 years.

Astrid has taught music and chorus for most of her years as a teacher. She has taught students in Berea Elementary, East Coldenham Elementary, Montgomery Elementary, and Walden Elementary Schools. She also taught at Valley Central Middle School as well. Astrid led the Select Chorus for four years. During her many years at Valley Central she was on a number of committees including those for ELA, Math, Character Education, and Safety.

Astrid is very grateful for the opportunity to have been a music teacher at Valley Central. She has so many wonderful memories from her time here. It is very special for her when she sees former students, and they tell her that she inspired them to pursue a career in music.

During retirement, Astrid is looking forward to spending time with family and friends. She is also looking forward to resting, relaxing, and traveling with her husband while they explore and learn new things. She cannot wait to have more time to dedicate to her hobbies which include Reiki, working with tuning forks as a healing modality, reading, and cooking.

We wish you a crescendo of joy, peace, and relaxation in your well-deserved retirement, Astrid!

Linda Lettieri



Ms. Linda Lettieri, originally from the Bronx, is retiring after 25 years of teaching. She attended SUNY Binghamton where she received her Bachelor of Art in Math and Music. She attended the College Of New Rochelle where she earned her Master of Science in Education. Linda began her career at The Astor Home for Children where she taught 9 through 12 year old residents for two years.

During her 23 years at Valley Central, Linda taught kindergarten through 5th grade AIS Math for 12 years at Berea Elementary School. She was a Math Consultant Teacher at East Coldenham for one year and a Math Consultant Teacher at Montgomery Elementary School for 10 years. Outside of the classroom Linda served on many committees including: Kindergarten through 5th grade Curriculum and Kindergarten through 5th grade Math Curriculum. She played an important role in Professional Learning and also participated in many Family Math Nights. She was honored with the Certified Happiness award. Looking back, Linda expressed that her favorite memories from her time at Valley Central were all of the Moving Up ceremonies she has witnessed. Teaching has been a second career for Linda and a great gift.

Linda expressed that she hopes that teachers will continue to honor the gift that is a strong union! The VCTA has been blessed with people who found the time to lead and represent us throughout her career, and she hopes that will continue far into the future.

In retirement Linda hopes to visit Antarctica with her husband in February of 2027. She is also looking forward to having more time to read, work on puzzles, and relaxing.

Congratulations on your retirement, Linda!
We hope that retirement is everything you have envisioned!

Christopher Malley



Mr. Christopher Malley grew up in Montgomery and attended SUNY New Paltz where he earned his bachelor's degree. He attended Mount Saint Mary College where he earned his master's degree and also has an Associate of Applied Science from SUNY Delhi.

Chris has spent his entire 20 year career teaching at Valley Central School District. He has taught S.T.E.A.M. as well as 3rd and 4th grade across Montgomery Elementary, East Coldenham Elementary, and Berea Elementary Schools. Besides being in the classroom, he has taken part in the Crazy 8s Math Club, was a member of the Technology Planning Committee, and also was a VCTA Building Representative. From his time at Valley Central he will fondly remember working everyday with all of the students where he watched them grow, learn, and have fun. He will miss seeing their smiles and hearing their laughter.

Chris is married to Jane, and they have two children, CJ and Elizabeth, and a Bernedoodle named Teddy Bear. Chris's hobbies include scuba diving, playing guitar, singing, repairing tools and renovating houses, fiddling with technology, and gardening and landscaping. During retirement, Chris is looking forward to traveling the country and parts of the world with Jane that they have always wanted to see. He will be spending real quality time with family, friends, and Teddy Bear. He is planning on staying busy with projects around the house, running his real estate business, and helping his daughter with her patent. He will also have more time to devote to playing music, scuba diving, golfing, exercising, relaxing, and having the freedom to do whatever he wants.

Congratulations on your retirement, Chris! You've earned it!

Donna-Marie McCarthy



Ms. Donna-Marie McCarthy is retiring after a long and fulfilling career in education. Donna-Marie grew up in Walden and attended Mount Saint Mary College where she earned her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, as well as her Master of Arts in Special Education. She also earned her SDA from Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MOCA). During her 32 years in education, she worked in a leave replacement setting at Newburgh/New Windsor Elementary School. Besides Newburgh, she also taught in Port Jervis and Fairfax, Virginia.

During her time at Valley Central Donna-Marie was the special education teacher for kindergarten through 12th grade at the district's private schools. For 28 years, she taught at the Middle School across all grade levels, providing special education instruction in both self-contained and collaborative settings. She was honored with the VCMS Founder's Award and the PTA's Volunteerism Award. She has also been the advisor to the Beautification and Development Team and a coach for Special Olympics for many years.

While reflecting on her favorite memory from Valley Central, she said that she has been fortunate to create countless, meaningful memories working with her students while watching them grow, both academically and personally, as they developed into responsible, hardworking, and productive young adults. One memory that stands out vividly is the year she received a grant to beautify the school courtyard, which not only transformed the space but also brought students and teachers together as they took pride in creating something meaningful for the entire school to enjoy. This remains one of her proudest and most cherished memories.

While Donna-Marie is retiring from teaching, she doesn't see this as the end of her work with students. She plans to continue subbing because she cannot imagine a life without teenagers and the energy, humor, and connection they bring. At the same time she's excited to devote more time to passions that have been waiting in the wings. She is looking forward to traveling and is eager to resurrect her "Kotton Kake" business, dedicating time and creativity to producing unique, handcrafted gifts. For Donna-Marie, retirement is not about stopping, but it's about finally having the time to say "yes" to the things she loves.

Happy retirement, Donna-Marie! Enjoy this new chapter in your life!

Deborah McKenney



Ms. Deborah McKenney is retiring after dedicating 25 years to educating students. Deb earned her Bachelor of Science in Secondary English (Grades 7-12) from SUNY New Paltz. She earned her Master of Science in School Library Media from LIU Post.

Before coming to Valley Central, Deb began her career at Newburgh Free Academy where she taught 10th and 12th grade English between 2001 and 2007. While there she was also the Co-Chair of the Health and Human Services House. While at Valley Central she was the High School Library Media Specialist from 2007 until 2010. Between 2010 and 2021 she taught 10th and 12th grade English along with AP English Literature and Composition. During her time at the High School she also ran the Writing Center, which was an invaluable resource to the High School and Middle School students. She was the librarian for Evening Night School and coordinated the very popular Poetry Slam. She has finished out her career as the Library Media Specialist at Walden Elementary School where she has worked from 2021 until 2026.

Deb, thank you for fostering a lifelong love of reading in so many students! We hope that this next chapter of your life is everything you hoped for and more!



Dawn Moore



Mrs. Dawn Moore, school psychologist at Valley Central Middle School, is retiring after 32 years working with students. For 30 of those years she has worked at the district. Dawn grew up in Montgomery and was a Valley Central graduate. She attended Mount Saint Mary College where she earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology. She also attended Long Island University where she earned her Master of Science in Education (School Psychology).

Before coming to Valley Central, Dawn worked for two years in Middletown School District. During her time at Valley Central she has worked at Central Office (2 years), the Middle School (21 years), and ALC/CPSE (7 years). Dawn was the cofounder of the ALC program and was on the planning committee for Learning Together (special education preschool). She was also involved with the Celebration of Capabilities, coached Special Olympics, and led Parent Circle which is a special education parent group. She also was part of the Orange County CPSE Chairperson Committee. Dawn was also honored with the PTA District Founder's Award.

Among many special memories, the one that stands out the most to Dawn is the first year our Special Olympics Team competed at West Point where she saw the smiles, laughter, and pride in the students along with their families, friends, and teachers. Reflecting on her time in district, Dawn expressed that VC has been her home throughout her life from a quality education, lifelong friendships, and a deeply fulfilling career. She has been honored to work with VC families and students with special needs over the last 30 years. Her colleagues and administrators have been there as a second family and she will miss them all dearly!

In retirement, Dawn is looking forward to spending quality time with family and friends, catching up on reading, and embarking on a second career as a travel advisor as she travels the world.

Dawn, thank you for your dedication to our students!

You will be greatly missed!

Rhonda Paul



Ms. Rhonda Paul is retiring after a 20 year career teaching secondary math, 17 of which were spent at Valley Central High School. Rhonda grew up in Highland Falls and New Windsor before attending SUNY New Paltz where she earned her bachelor's degree in Secondary Education Mathematics; she earned her master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Phoenix. While at the High School she taught Algebra I for nine years and Geometry for 11 years; in fact, she completed her student teaching under Linda Doty in the very same classroom where she has taught for all of these years!

Rhonda has a few favorite VC memories which stick out to her including the fall building picnics held at the park in Montgomery, and she always looked forward to "Anything But A Backpack Day" during Senior Week. She also fondly remembers the monthly breakfasts, especially Glenn Taylor flipping pancakes!

Rhonda would also like to acknowledge a few very special people without whom she wouldn't be here today. She is very grateful to both Elaine Keefer and Debbie Calvino for thinking of her as a teacher candidate when they had a Math Department vacancy back in the Summer of 2006; she is blessed beyond measure that they both trusted in her enough to recommend that she apply for the position. She would also like to acknowledge her cooperating teacher, Linda Doty, who made teaching look so easy. She learned so much from her, not only during her student teaching experience, but during all of their years working together.

In retirement, Rhonda is looking forward to traveling, either driving to see her kids and grandkids or cruising. She also is looking forward to working outside in her yard and relaxing on the front porch every night. She's excited to bake and cook more, along with visiting flea markets and antique shops on leisurely weekends. Most of all though, she is definitely looking forward to not setting an alarm clock or planning lunch every night!

Rhonda, may the years ahead be filled with many new memories!

Henry Pizzonia

Mr. Henry Pizzonia is retiring after teaching science for 25 years at Valley Central High School. Before beginning his career at Valley Central, he completed a leave replacement in Monroe-Woodbury Central School District. Throughout his time at the High School, he taught Regents and Advanced Earth Science, Honors Earth and Space Science, Basic and Regents Physics, as well as Science Research for four years. Besides his time spent in the classroom, he was the Science Honor Society advisor from 2003 until 2005, Senior Class Advisor from 2007 until 2015 and then again from 2019 until 2021, and Science Department Chair from 2014 until 2026. During his time at Valley Central, Henry was awarded the Orange County TA Senior Class Advisor of the Year Award. He also received the VCHS PTSA Distinguished Service Award at the 2026 Founder's Night.

Henry grew up in Highland Mills. He attended SUNY New Paltz where he earned his bachelor's degree in Geology and Secondary Education. He earned his master's degree in Geosciences from Mississippi State University.

Henry has many fond memories from his time at Valley Central but most special to him was working with his daughter as Senior Class Advisor when she was Senior Class President. Many of his colleagues have become like family to him, and he will miss working with them and seeing them every day.

During retirement, Henry is looking forward to being free of time restraints. He is looking forward to having time to play pickleball, go hiking, and spending more time traveling.

***Henry, your passion and dedication have made a lasting impact!
Happy retirement!***

Eileen Purcell



Ms. Eileen Purcell is saying, “goodbye” to Valley Central School District after spending 33 years between the Middle School and High School. Before starting her career in education, Eileen earned her bachelor’s degree from Siena College in International Studies and Foreign Language. She was also a part of the Business Program (English) and American University Journalism Program. She obtained her master’s degree in Teaching from SUNY New Paltz. She also holds a master’s degree in Counseling from LIU at West Point.

Eileen taught 9th through 12th grade English from 1993 until 2008. Her favorite memory from Valley Central was the first day of her mid-year leave replacement for Mr. Kevin McFadden, and the students were very upset to see him leave. Although it was a difficult day for her, the experience reminded her of the importance of being a teacher students could enjoy and trust while modeling the value of loving what you do. From 2009 until 2026 Eileen has been a guidance counselor. During her time at the High School she also was Senior Class Advisor, *Revelation* Magazine Advisor, and coached the Cross Country Track team.

While Eileen will miss so many people and things at VC, she’s thankful and excited to be anticipating July and beyond. At the top of her list are having time to be more available to enjoy her home and family, leisurely mornings, more time devoted to reading, and starting a great movie or series and actually taking the time to finish viewing the whole performance. She is looking forward to taking more trips to public libraries and bookstores and spending more time exploring New York City, including enjoying literature classes and other events at the 92nd Street Y in person. She feels so blessed to have enjoyed her entire career and will look for ways to continue to share skills and experiences that she has learned along the way

Happy retirement, Eileen!

Enjoy creating new memories in this next chapter of your life!

Jacqueline Scarano



Ms. Jacqueline Scarano is retiring after teaching elementary students for 34 years. Jackie grew up in Highland Mills and graduated from Monroe-Woodbury. She attended Springfield College and holds a master's degree in Education.

Jackie has worked at Maybrook Elementary and Montgomery Elementary Schools. She was hired as a kindergarten leave replacement in December of 1992 at Maybrook Elementary School and then looped to 1st grade with that class the following September. She taught 1st grade for five years and then moved to 3rd grade where she has stayed ever since. At the very beginning of her career Jackie coached Girls Spring Track for one year. Jackie has too many fond memories from her time at Valley Central over the years to mention.

Jackie's hobbies including refinishing furniture, gardening, working out, and shopping. During retirement she is looking forward to spending more time doing things with, and for, her family. She has plans to take her first cruise overseas. Mostly, though, she is looking forward to doing what she wants, when she wants!

Congratulations on your retirement, Jackie!

Thank you for touching the lives of so many students over your career!

William Sherry

Mr. William “Buddy” Sherry, originally from the Bronx, has been a familiar face in the hallways of Valley Central High School for the last 25 years. Buddy attended DeWitt Clinton HS, Bronx Community College, and Orange County Community College.

Besides being a hall monitor, Buddy has been a chaperone on the Spring Break Europe trips. During his time at Valley Central High School he was honored with the yearbook dedication in 2023.

Buddy’s favorite memory of his time at Valley Central High School was spending time with the great people he worked with every day and seeing his friends in the hallway. In retirement, Buddy is looking forward to taking each day one day at a time and having more time to go fly-fishing.



Happy Retirement, Buddy!
You will be greatly missed in the hallways of the High School!

Patricia Smith



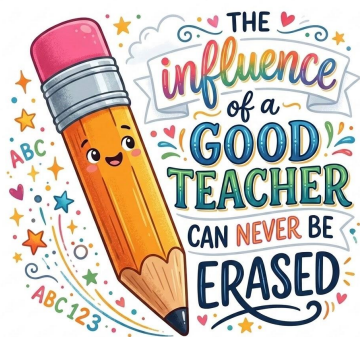
Ms. Patricia Smith, originally from Peekskill, has been an integral part of the Main Office staff at Valley Central High School for the last five years. Before working as a school secretary, Patty began her career at IBM.

Reflecting back on her time at Valley Central High School Patty said that she is glad that she has had the opportunity to work at the High School, and she learned a lot over the past five years. She said it was nice working with, and getting to know, so many great people in the Valley Central Family. Some of her favorite memories, and one of the things that she will most of all in retirement, is chaperoning the concerts and plays and seeing our very talented students take the stage. During retirement, she is looking forward to traveling more.

Happy Retirement, Patty!

Thank you for helping the High School always run smoothly!

Aileen Swift



Mrs. Aileen Swift is retiring after 36 years at the elementary and secondary levels. For almost 31 years of her teaching career, Aileen taught at Valley Central School District. Before beginning her teaching career at St. Finbar School in Brooklyn, she attended Franciscan University where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Education and Fordham University where she earned her Master of Science in Education.

After finishing a leave replacement at St. Finbar School, Aileen taught at Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Sunset Park, Brooklyn before moving to Orange County. Before starting her career at Valley Central, she was a substitute teacher at Warwick and Monroe-Woodbury before coming to the Middle School which changed the trajectory of her career as a teacher. She has taught 4th grade Science, Math, and Reading for two years, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade Science, Math, and Social Studies for four years, and has spent 30.8 years as a 6th grade Reading and Writing Specialist in which she also taught Math, Science, and ELA. Outside of her classroom, she has also been a part of VCMS Spirit Club and Backpack Snack Attack. During her time at the Middle School she was awarded many teacher superlatives from her students including: “Most likely to come to a past student’s sports game”, “Best pep talks”, “Funniest ELA teacher”, and “Most likely to have a lifetime supply of sticky notes”. During COVID a colleague awarded her “Most improved in a short few months to learn programs for teaching virtually”.

The Middle School is a very special place for Aileen. When she left Brooklyn she was hoping to find a position that would “feel like home”. She found that at VCMS between her friends, colleagues, and administrators. She expressed that her VCMS family has made her a better person and teacher because of their support, “hellos”, and laughs.

During retirement, Aileen is looking forward to having a second cup of coffee at 7 a.m. with husband, John, going bike riding, gardening, and spending more time with her family. She is also looking forward to volunteering in her community. Since downsizing, she is looking forward to their new adventures and travels.

Happy retirement, Aileen! Here’s to your next great adventure!

Jessica Tsantes

Ms. Jessica Tsantes is retiring after 34 years in education, 26 of which she worked at Valley Central School District. Jessica grew up in Brooklyn. She went to SUNY New Paltz where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Education. She then went to Lehman College where where she earned her master's degree in Reading. Jessica began her teaching career in New York City Schools and has worked in District 10 in the Bronx as well as Nyack.

Over her career, Jessica taught at Head Start for four years, 2nd grade for one year, kindergarten for four years, and she has been a reading teacher for 26 years. During her 26 years at Valley Central, she worked at Maybrook Elementary School and spent 25 years at Walden Elementary School. She has been a member of the Writing Committee, ELA Committee, and Social Equity Committee. Her favorite memories from her time at Walden Elementary School has been connecting and involving parents in workshops and other literacy events.

Jessica has lived in the Hudson Valley for 25 years and loves the outdoors, nature, hiking, and gardening. She loves animals and enjoys traveling and shopping. In retirement, Jessica is looking forward to traveling, gardening, reading, and exploring new hobbies. She is also excited about the opportunity to volunteer. Jessica loves the beach and plans on retiring to a beach community eventually.



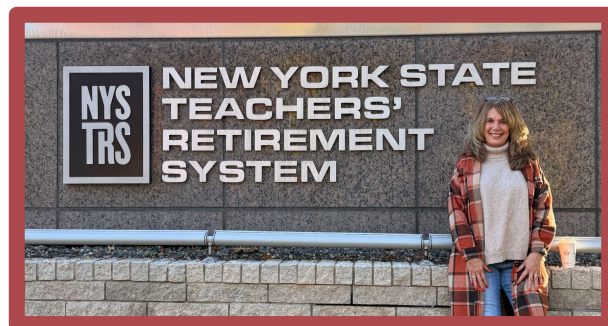
Happy retirement, Jessica! Here's to the next chapter in your life!

Merry Zapka

Mrs. Merry Zapka, originally from Newburgh, is retiring after 33 years dedicated to educating students. While subbing in Newburgh schools, Merry attended Mount Saint Mary College where she earned her bachelor's degree in psychology and her master's degree in General Education (Kindergarten through 5th grade) and Special Education (Kindergarten through 12th grade). During her 32 years at Valley Central, she has worked at Valley Central Middle School as a special education teacher for six years and a 6th grade general education teacher for 24 years; she also worked at Walden Elementary School for two years.

Looking back on her career Merry expressed that there are too many memories to list, but what she will always hold near and dear are the countless laughs, spirit days with her 6th grade family and many, many field trips. The Middle School has been a special place to work and the people present and past have all left a mark on her life. While teaching wasn't her first career choice, she is so grateful that someone got her into subbing which made her fall in love with teaching. She is especially excited to be retiring this year with her best friend, Karen Gonyo, and they already have many plans for next year and many more after!

Merry's best part of her life is her two sons, Devin and Mitchell, and husband, Lenny. During retirement she is looking forward to traveling, relaxing, doing what she wants when she wants to, and most of all not grading papers. She hopes to move down South to enjoy the sunny weather year round with her husband and spend more time with her two dogs, Gunnar and Hope.



Merry, may the years ahead be filled with cherished memories and endless joy!

Additional Retirees

Patricia Buchalski

Trisha LaFronz

Additional Retirees

Helen Micinowski

Mary Pettine

John Vanfradenburgh

Happy Retirement

May you be proud
of the work you have done,
the person you are,

AND

The difference
you have made