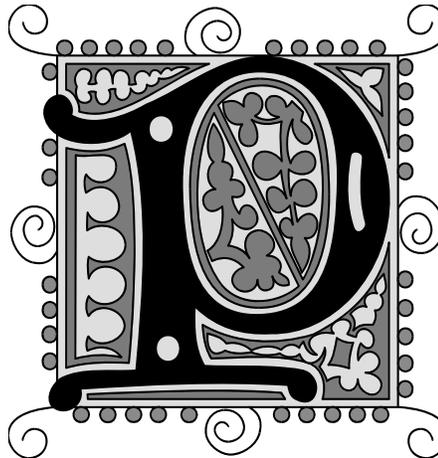


**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

## Words That Begin with the Letter "p"...

**H**earing all the educational jargon being bandied about recently is akin to having a swarm of angry bees buzzing around and inside one's head. I've noticed lately that, oddly enough, many of those words begin with the letter "p". For instance, how often do we hear the word **professional** (as in *professionalism, professional development, professional courtesy*)? How about **personal** (as in *days or challenge*)? Let us not forget **public** (as in *relations and reactions*). My personal (no pun intended) favorite is **politically** (as in *motivated or correct*). Finally, what list of "p" words would be complete without **power** (as in *hungry, plays, perceived,*

*usurped*)! I sometimes observe that as teachers (*myself included*) we are our own worst enemies. We are defensive; resistant to change; we exhibit qualities in group situations that we would not tolerate from students in our own classes. Do we need to be aware of our faults and shortcomings—of course! Should we attempt to work on and correct these things—certainly! Are we different from people in other fields of endeavor—I doubt it. Are these less than stellar traits the result of influences other than our own; do the educational



stresses, paradoxes and hypocrisies that swirl around us have more than a passing effect?

Are you tired of hearing the word professional tossed about as a catchword? Show professionalism, extend professional courtesy, bask in (continued on page two) the inspiration of professional development on our much anticipated

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### From the President

## Serfs, Lords, and the Feudal Mentality

**T**he Lords of the Viking Manor consistently refer to "us" as the Valley Central family when they want or need our cooperation in ventures that reach beyond

the confines of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. If serf leaders or individual serfs express resistance or ask for a shilling or grain to bake bread (*compensation*) or some other form of quid

pro quo for work that goes above and beyond, an immediate appeal is usually made to our professionalism. This is often accompanied by an underlying threat about (continued on page 3)

*Teachers believe they have a gift for giving; it drives them with the same irrepressible drive that drives others to create a work of art or a market or a building.*

~ A. Bartlett Giamatti

## Words that Begin With the Letter “p”... (continued from page 1)

conference days? Be professionals and hold the line against arbitrary and capricious administrations, unruly and indifferent students, parents who hold everyone accountable except themselves, and the State Education Department and Commissioner of Education, (*I could use those titles as fine examples of oxymorons for my English students.*), who sit in the Pantheon passing edicts down without considering either the immediate or long-term consequences of their self-serving standards.

Why is it that we are hailed as the finest, most dedicated staff in the area every September, and disregarded, mistrusted and treated like children on many occasions during the year; is there a palpable sense of hypocrisy here? Why am I given a collective reprimand in a faculty meeting for the mistakes committed by one or a few others? Is this leadership or an attempt to avoid the unpleasant but necessary one to one confrontation?

Personal days are what the word suggests and what the contract defines. Does it make sense for administration to encourage honest people to take sick days instead, because being honest and giving a reason may well end up in a denial? If someone is abusing his/her days, then deal with that person on an individual basis; don't punish others in some sweeping indictment. What would someone observing a class have to say about a teacher who punished an entire class for one student's transgression? I know that answer from my methods class way back in 1971!!

How many times have I been asked to accept something as a personal challenge? Just what does that mean and entail, or is it simply passing the buck or finding a patsy?

Are we overly concerned (*obsessed*) with public relations and

public reactions? Parents and communities should certainly have their children as top priorities. However, let us not forget who has been trained, has the experience and spends hours every day working with those children! In most professions aren't the practitioners respected and al-

lowed to do their jobs without undue interference and distraction from both outside and institutional influences? Should a district-its board of education and central administration-stand by and allow the pundits, naysayers and doomsayers to dictate how we do our jobs, or are they more interested in keeping their own? What happened to the ability, no, the necessity, of responding to certain agendas and crusades with a simple and straightforward **NO**? Are we that afraid of one or two voices of dissent?! Does the public smell fear and move in for the kill as a result? **YES**, we have to be aware of and sensitive to our students, parents, colleagues and administrators, but we are still the most well prepared people to handle the job of formal education. We should be trusted not attacked and undermined, especially by our own people.

Are politically correct and politically motivated synonymous terms? Do they both have something to do with control, manipulation and power? Who really has the students' best interests at heart? We hear, "We're here for the kids," all the time. Is it sincere or just another

platitude? How many teachers jump from position to position, district to district, for political gain or to feather their resumes or for something else on a personal agenda? In my time at Valley Central, I can name or recall very few. Can the same be said for administrators in many districts around the state and across the country? I know I'm here for my students, setting my own high standards and trying to work with all the parties involved to attain those goals.

Forget all the educational lexicon, politics and power plays. How about simple respect and honesty amongst the groups involved to do what is best for our children without feeding them pabulum and making excuses for their lack of motivation and responsibility? Let's not be myopic, petty and take things on a personal level.

How about reasonable and complementary as catchwords? The important things in life, including career, are really quite simple. Why do we insist on making them or allowing them to become complex and adversarial?

~ Jay Sussdorff  
Vice – President

*“ How about simple respect  
and honesty amongst the groups  
involved to do what is  
best for our children....*

## From the President Serfs, Lords, and the Feudal Mentality

community perception and its ensuing consequences for our having the audacity to not sacrifice our spouses, children, and sanity for the good of the fiefdom (*school community*). To add insult to injury, I often wonder whether the school community or Lordly convenience is the true motivation. Whenever new mandates from the Kings and Queens (*state or federal governments*) reach the local Manor, whenever new Lords are hired with new visions for the future, it is these Lords that crack the whip while the serfs do the bulk of the work, accept most of the responsibility, and suffer most of the consequences for unsatisfactory results even though they have little or no input into policy.

In light of this, one might expect the Lords to respect and honor their promises 1) to honor the hard work of dedicated serfs; 2) because it's the right thing to do; 3) because it builds trust and morale; 4) because the CBA is binding. This being stated, there are legitimate times when lords and serfs disagree on the intent of previously negotiated promises. This is acceptable and sometimes necessary, but ultimately destructive when either the Lords or the serfs attempt to be petty by watering down provisions through a back door approach, which at times can be successful. Once this pattern of behavior begins, there is no telling when or how it will end.

Many of you have asked me about the grievances filed on behalf of serfs who have been denied personal days and what the Lord's intentions are. First, let me state that our Lords have the utmost

respect for our professionalism. As stated on every opening day that I can remember, Valley Central serfs are "the best of the best." Often, however, this is taken for granted or even exploited by the Lords of the Manor. The CBA has very lenient language concerning the use of personal days to attend to personal matters of importance to the serf. At no time did the serfs negotiate language that made it necessary for these days to be of importance to the Lords. Unfortunately, this seems to be the Lords' new litmus test for determining this particular provision. This new attitude seems to lend itself to the "I am the Lord and you are the Serfs" mentality.

Am I contradicting my previous statement concerning the Lords' perceptions of our professionalism? Not at all! In fact, it confirms this view. Intelligent Lords could certainly see that serfs "acting unprofessionally" could simply utilize sick days rather than risk a Lord's denial of a legitimate personal day. This, however, is something that we do not do. Sick days are for sick serfs. Teachers are a clan of serfs that take ethics and promises very seriously. It is this very sense of ethics and fairness that makes the serfs so susceptible to manipulation and exploitation!

The serf leadership will continue to fight for fairness as the serfs continue to do the bulk of the work. Serfs will continue to work hard despite not having the proper tools and support to accomplish



their assigned tasks efficiently. Serfs have always understood that Lords and their parental subjects will at times feel compelled to sacrifice serfs like goats on a beautiful landscape on the altar of Feudal self-interest and political correctness. But mostly, serfs will continue to demand that promises be kept while retaining their dignity and professionalism.

It has been my hope that this feudal mentality would disappear with the changing of the guard. Feudalism denies serfs any real ownership with anything associated with the Manor, promotes snobbery, elitism, bullying, lack of respect for those you consider to be your "lessers," stifles creativity, and effectively creates a dysfunctional work environment, all of which impacts the teaching-learning environment.

Empowering serfs, respecting serf talents-abilities-insights, and accepting serf contributions to the Manor will help to bring about prosperity and growth, while also protecting the Manor against both internal and external attacks. Exploiting serfs and ignoring their talents to insure the survival of the Feudal mentality will weaken the Manor, leaving it ill equipped to confront the encroaching enemy (*ignorance*).

~ Tim Brown

*"It has been my hope that this feudal mentality would disappear..."*

## Professional Development Team

New York State now requires that teachers hold a majority of the seats on the Professional Development Team. This was done to ensure that teachers receive appropriate professional development in relation to their needs and consisting of quality content that will directly impact the success of their students. In this case the Commissioner has recognized that teachers are in fact the individuals who know first hand what is needed to improve student success.

The Valley Central Professional Development Team will have a significant influence on the content and structure of all future conference days. The Professional Development Team had absolutely no input for the November 7th conference day. We will be looking for your input and suggestions for our future conference days, workshops, etc.

The most frequently asked questions surround the state requirement for new teachers to complete 175 hours of professional development every 5 years to maintain a professional certificate in good standing.



must provide the 175 hours of professional development within the school day and year.

*What constitutes a professional development hour?*

The professional development team can determine

what will constitute a professional development hour by stating it in the professional development plan. Some examples could be conference days, faculty meetings, department meetings, team/grade level meetings and planning/curriculum development periods.

Any questions or suggestions on professional development issues should be directed to myself at Walden Elementary School.

*~ Rich Steger  
Vice President*

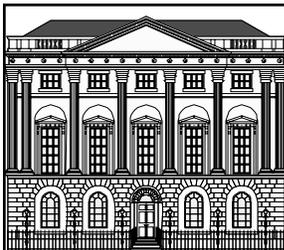
### Question & Answer

*Who does this requirement pertain to?*

Those teachers obtaining a professional certificate in the 2007-2008 school year will be required to complete 175 hours of professional development every 5 years to maintain their professional certificate in good standing.

*When are these teachers going to complete these 175 hours?*

It is the position of NY-SUT and the Valley Central Teachers' Association that the district



A teacher died and went to Heaven. St. Peter welcomed her in and said he would show her to her mansion. The first neighborhood was lovely. People were out on park lawns, socializing, grilling, and playing golf on a beautiful course. Everyone was having a great time. The teacher asked if this was her neighborhood, but St. Peter said it was just for doctors. They walked on and the teacher saw another neighborhood that was just as beautiful...huge mansions, beautiful grounds, swimming pool, and a golf course. People were having a great time. Again she inquired if this was her neighborhood, but St. Peter said it was for dentists.

On through the clouds they walked-approaching another neighborhood. It too was beautiful with new mansions, parks, pools, etc. St. Peter told the teacher this was her new home in Heaven. The teacher was thrilled except she noticed that no one was around and the mansions seemed to be empty. She asked St. Peter where everyone was. Didn't many teachers make it to Heaven?

St. Peter announced that yes, there were lots of teachers in Heaven and they would all return tomorrow. They were in Hell attending a staff development day. *~ from the Internet*

## On Good Health and a Safe Environment

# Reye's Syndrome

**W**ith the cold and flu season upon us, it is important to be aware of a very serious disease, Reye's Syndrome.

### *What is Reye's Syndrome?*

It is a disease sometimes developed when a person is getting over a viral illness like the flu or chicken pox. It can develop 3-5 days after the onset of chicken pox, upper respiratory infection or other fever-causing illnesses. Typically it occurs when someone is recovering and begins to feel better.

### *Who is susceptible?*

It usually affects people from infancy to young adult hood.

### *What does it affect?*

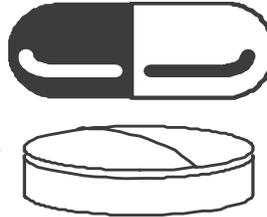
It affects the liver and brain. It is often misdiagnosed as encephalitis, meningitis, diabetes, poisoning, drug-overdose or sudden infant death.

### *What are its symptoms?*

The symptoms, which occur in this order, are:

- Relentless/continuous vomiting

- Listlessness
- Drowsiness
- Irritability, slurred speech, sensitivity to touch
- Disorientation
- Combativeness
- Delirium, convulsions, loss of consciousness



(acetylsalicylate, acetylsalicylic acid, or salicylate) used to treat the symptoms of viral illnesses can increase the chance of developing Reye's Syndrome.

**The National Reye's Syndrome Foundation, the US Surgeon General, the FDA, and the CDC recommend that aspirin and combination products containing aspirin NOT be taken by anyone under 19 years old during fever-causing illnesses.**

*~ Information submitted by  
Nancy Brother, RN*

*High School*

*If you have a concern or question you would like addressed in this column, please submit it to Patti Lunden, Editor.*

**Until next time may you enjoy good health and a safe environment!**

### *Can you recover?*

A person's life can depend on early diagnosis. There is a 90% chance of recovery when the syndrome is treated in its earliest stages by physicians and nurses experienced in the treatment of Reye's syndrome. **Anyone who vomits repeatedly should be suspected to have Reye's syndrome.**

### *How is it detected?*

Two liver function tests (SGOT, SGPT) can be done to determine the possibility of Reye's syndrome.

### *How can it be avoided?*

Studies show that aspirin or aspirin-containing medications



The VC Scholarship Council's **GOODS AND SERVICES AUCTION** was a great success thanks to **Teachers Supporting the Community!**  
*Thank you to the Valley Central teachers, staff and clubs for the support provided in goods*



- + Donna Barletta, Co-Chair
- + The East Coldenham Staff
- + Athletic Department
- George St. Lawrence and staff
- + Music Dept., Kim Carver
- + NART, Peggy Kennedy
- + Dance Team, MJ Hebbard
- + Yearbook, Antoinette Oakes
- + Ski Club, Doug Straebler

- + VC Swimming, Scott Warner
- + JR. Class, Jennifer Lynn
- + SR. Class, Pam Dixon
- + Math Tutoring, Maria Imperati
- + Bob Ciganek
- + Auctioneers Marge Elkin-Condon, and Keith Lipsey

***Special Thanks to  
VCHS Principal,  
Mr. Bob Klein  
and VCHS Asst. Principal,  
Mr. Darryl Imperati  
for all of their help and  
guidance for this program  
and throughout the year.***



*As of June 2000, the VC Scholarship Council has given away \$502,000 in scholarships!*



## What Every New Member Should Know About...

*excerpts from NYSUT new member bulletin.*

### Union Representation

**A**s a union member, you may have a right to the presence and counsel of a union representative at a meeting where your conduct is being questioned and you believe disciplinary action may result. If you are in doubt about whether you are entitled to union representation, ask for it anyway. If a meeting starts and you feel you should have union representation simply ask that the meeting terminate until adequate representation be provided.

If you don't feel comfortable answering certain questions – **DON'T!** Never write or sign any statements concerning your conduct without consultation with a union representative.

### Tips for

### Successful Management of Student Behavior

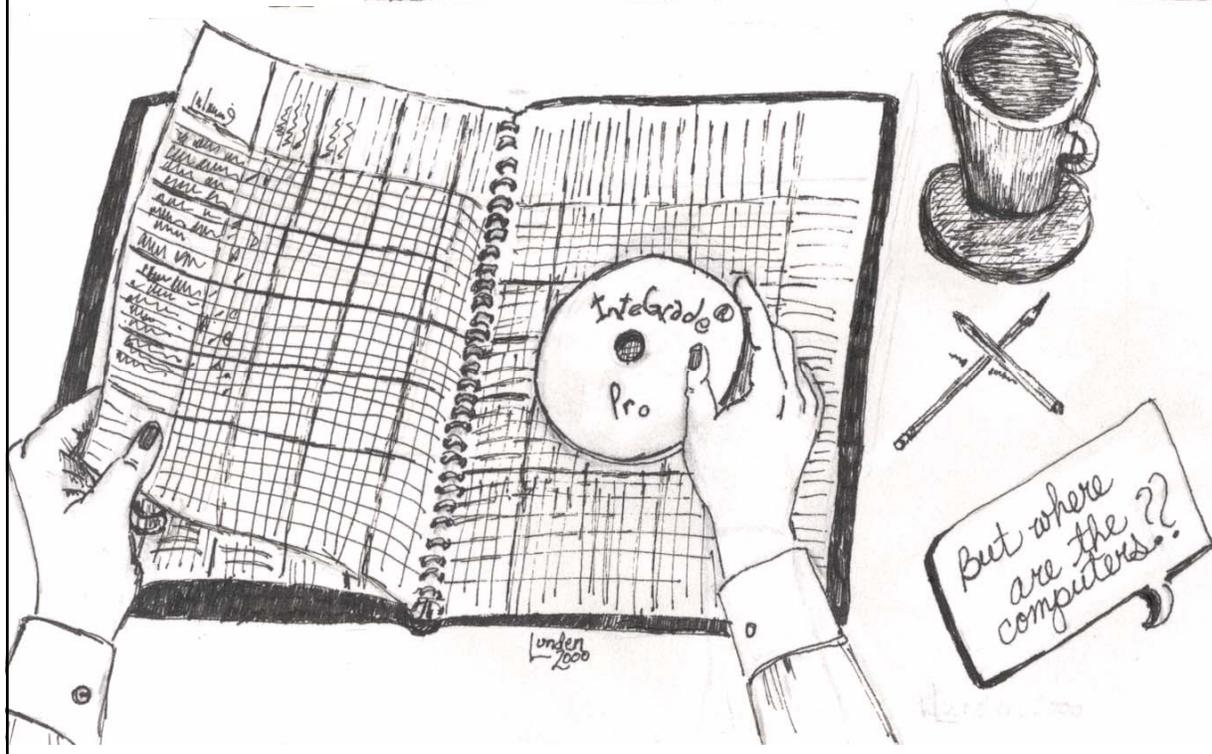
#### Do:

- Discuss and reinforce the rules to students.
- Be consistent.
- Make the students feel safe.
- Be a good role model.
- Review the rules when necessary.
- Praise students for abiding by the rules.
- Be compassionate and understanding but remain firm.
- Provide corrective feedback to students who do not follow rules.

#### Don't:

- Assume that the rules are automatically understood.
- Ridicule or make fun of a student.
- Compare a student with their sibling.
- Make unrealistic threats.

In an effort to stay on the cutting edge of today's technology, the District provides secondary teachers with a computer gradebook program...



## Highlights of the November VCTA Meeting

Mike Steele reported that through the AFL-CIO, 5 state labor councils were given money to assist locals within each labor council to be used for training and education of their members. Suggestions for possible uses and/or programs were discussed. Reps were asked to submit proposals based on suggestions from each building.

Chris Brand is a new VCTA building rep from Montgomery, replacing Kathy Takvam.

Grievances- Laurie Hey Personal Day Grievance has been delayed. Jane Dionne Personal Day Grievance arbitrated October 5, 2000 (decision pending). Katie Baloga Personal Day Grievance arbitrated November 9, 2000 (decision pending). Our contract has no restrictive language regarding personal day requests. The existing language is meant to prevent the extension of holidays/vacations. Reps were asked to find out if any VCTA members have requested personal days on the book end of a holiday and whether or not they were approved.

A grievance regarding Elementary AIS is being filed on November 15, 2000 at Stage 2 to protect our rights pursuant to the collective bargaining agreement. However, we will agree to hold this at Step 2 for the next few weeks as we discuss what compensation will be available to elementary teachers for having this extra assignment.

A Grievance is pending concerning elementary schedules. Elementary reps were asked to find what teachers schedules are not simply when their students are at a special area class.

Some staff members have not been included on master schedules. One teacher was assigned to teach 7-8 periods per day. This has resulted in the district being out of compliance with the current terms and conditions of employment. Reps from each building were asked to review teachers' schedules.

Please let Tim Brown know if any member has retired prior to June 30 and if they received the district incentive. Toni Sperry requested a retirement check for Brenda Oretsky, who retired in July.

Meetings after school: Tim Brown stated that you do not have to attend a meeting (other than a faculty meeting) after school, nor are you required to phone someone if you are unable to attend. It was reported that there

have been meetings for paraprofessionals after school. Paras being told that they must attend meetings after their hours should contact para rep, Kathi Russo, Mont. Paras should be paid for their time.

Special Area teachers should let CTM teachers and paraprofessionals know if paras will be needed for their class.

The Financial Building Blocks Seminar scheduled for October 23 was cancelled due to a lack of registration.

Rich Steger has completed a tutor list. It does not include home phone numbers, only the building in which a member teaches. If any retiree wishes to be added to the list, please contact Rich at Walden.

Currently, teacher coaches have preference over non-teacher coaches. Next month, the Regents will look at changes in Commissioners Regs that would allow non-teacher coaches to receive 3-year renewable certifications in a sport. This would put teachers at a distinct disadvantage and would allow these non-teacher coaches to be given equal status to teacher coaches when filling coaching positions.

Tim Brown stated that VCTA opposes Central Office giving employee addresses to 3<sup>rd</sup> party vendors.

Teachers are asked to record the number of times they are being asked to cover other classes. Include the date, duty you were pulled from and what you were asked to cover.

Kathy Manning expressed concerns from nurses about APPR. This form is for teachers, not nurses.

The PDP team did not have any input on the Nov. 7th conference day.

Faye Goldstein Retirement Reception will be held December 14 at Spruce Lodge. RSVP by December 1 if you would like to attend.

John Bonagura reported that Greg DeNunzio reported on the technol-

### Meet the Executive Council



**Sara Ackerson**  
**Berea Building Representative**

Sara has been a building representative for the last three years. She has taught third grade at Berea for thirty years.

ogy plan and the new high school computer lab. There is a question as to what will be done with old equipment. The Board questioned qualifications of teachers to teach computers. Discussion followed.

Orin Segall recommends being careful about using an outside provider and paying out of pocket. IN-DECS may deny the claim, yet may send the provider a check six months later, although you have already paid. If this occurs, call the provider and instruct them to send the check to you.

Dissatisfaction with the voting for Teacher of the Year nominees at the last VCTA meeting was expressed and discussed. A committee in the spring to handle future nominations.

Berea's principal would like to change the day of the faculty meeting. The staff is in agreement.

Concerns were expressed about Parent Visitation Day.

A Motion to purchase a new computer was made and carried. The new computer will be given to the Editor; the Editor's current computer will be given to the Secretary.

*The next Executive Council meeting will be held December 12, 2000 at 3:45 PM at the VCHS Professional Library, Montgomery.*

## News From Your NYS Teachers Retirement System

**O**n Sunday and Monday, November 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, Diana Shiner and I represented the Valley Central School District as your NYSTRS Delegate System's Annual Meeting. The primary purpose of this meeting is to elect a new board member who represents the teachers. Michael Corn, the incumbent who has held this position for the past 6 years, was re-elected. Mr. Corn has a record of being very knowledgeable and very influential. There was no opposition to his candidacy.

The second purpose of the Annual Meeting is to inform the delegates of new and impending legislation that impacts the System's membership. This has been a very productive year for teachers in the system thanks largely to the representation of Mr. Corn and the support and activism of NYSUT. The following is a brief synopsis of the Laws passed this year (*some as recently as October 31, 2000*) which will have major effects on the retirement benefits for many of our NYSTRS members. If you have any further questions, contact Diana (*Walden*) or me (*HS*) and we will do our best to answer them.

### Tier Equity:

Provides that the Tier 4 age reduction formula for those retiring before age 62 with less than 30 years of service will be the same as the Tier 2 formula.

**\*Note:** If you are Tier 3 or 4 (*remember that Tier 3 members always have the option of retiring under the much more lenient Tier 4 plan*), and you plan to retire when you are 55 with less than 30 years, your pension rate will now be 73% of the Tier 1 pension factor as opposed to the 61.7% prior to passage of this law!

### Military Service Credit:

Active members or those who retired from STRS on or after December 21, 1998 may be eligible. This allows qualified members to purchase a maximum of 3 years of service credit. Must have served during WWII, conflicts in Korea, Vietnam, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, or the Persian Gulf. For those members who already have military credit, the combined total cannot exceed 3 years. Cost is 3% of current salary for each year purchased.

**\*Note:** Prior to changing this legislation, the cost of purchasing credits for military service was prohibitive. It is now possible to make up the amount you spend on purchasing this credit in the first two years of retirement!

### Earnings in Retirement:

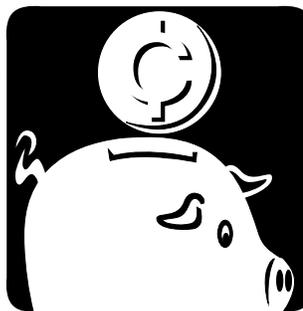
Increases the earnings limit for NYS public employment under Section 212 of the Retirement & Social Security Law to \$18,500 a year for the calendar year 2001.

**\*Note:** Last year, retired teachers were only allowed to earn \$17,000 without having their benefits penalized. The figure used by the NYSTRS is based upon increases granted by Social Security. There is also talk of extending more waivers to teachers in the future so that they can earn more than this amount and NOT be penalized. The employer must show, however, that there is a need to employ YOU and no one else will do. (*That should apply to most of us!*)

### Prior Service in New York State:

#### **This could be a big plus!!!**

Allows members of a New York State public retirement system to receive credit for prior **New York State public service**, which predated membership and would have been creditable at the time service was rendered. Enables all tiers to have prior service credited, with appropriate payment if applicable, after 2 years of membership service. You need to write NYSTRS, call (800-782-0289) or download from the Web site, form PRS-2.



### Cost of Living Adjustment:

To be eligible, a retiree must be age 62 and be retired for at least five years. All disability retirees, regardless of age, are eligible when they have been retired for 5 years. Phase One (*"catch-up"*) applies to those who retired prior to January 1, 1997 who meet eligibility requirements. They will receive the *"catch-up"* adjustment September 30, 2000, or when first eligible. Phase Two begins with the September 30, 2001 payroll and will include all dates of retirement for those who meet the above eligibility requirements. Unlike previous legislation, this COLA is permanent and automatic, based on 50% of the CPI each year. The percentage can never be less than 1% nor greater than 3%, and is (*continued on page nine*)

applied to the first \$18,000 of a retiree's maximum retirement benefit.

**\*Note:** While it isn't much, it's all we've got. People who retired some time ago (1970's e.g.) are



**The VCTA  
was a Tee Sponsor of the  
Victor W. Hagggar  
Memorial Scholarship  
Golf Tournament**

The tournament was held  
on August 29th.

A substantial amount of  
money was raised to pro-  
vide college scholarships  
to VCHS Seniors in mem-  
ory of Mr. Hagggar, who  
served as principal of the  
HS for most of his educa-  
tional career.



**Sweatfree Schools Poster  
Contest**

*NYSUT is a partner in the New York  
State Labor-Religion Coalition's 2001 Poster Contest.*

Open to students at public and non-public schools  
Promotes the cause of schools refusing to buy goods  
made in sweatshops using child labor

**Categories: K-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12**

**There are first and second prizes in each category.**

*The posters receive wide exposure, including an ex-  
hibit on Capital Hill in Washington, DC*

**The deadline is February 1st.**

**Get information by calling**

**(800) 342-9819**

**www.nyslarel@earthlink.net**



**Math B Teleconference to be held December 13th**

The State Education Department is sponsoring a teleconference on the new Math B exam.  
The broadcast will detail the course and show examples of good instructional practices.

**Check your local listings for specifics on the program airing  
Wednesday, December 13th from 3pm –4pm on most PBS stations.**

**News From Your NYS Teachers Retirement** *(continued from page 8)*

seeing a nice increase in the form of the “catch-up” and eventually we may see some more positive changes. At least our “foot is in the door”. Without this, other benefit enhancements would not have passed.

**Retirement Benefit Enhancement:**

Provides up to two years of additional service for qualified Tier 1 and Tier 2 members. This will allow pension factors to exceed the 75% maximum and can be combined with a state retirement incentive. Effective October 1, 2000 ends mandatory 3% contribution to retirement system for Tier 3 and Tier 4 members after 10 years of membership. Provisions are permanent and mandatory; districts do not need to adopt it. Members must have been in “active service” from April 1, 1999 through

the end of the 1999-2000 school year.

**\*Note:** This is a real “perk”. We just had 4% added to our retirement benefit package and/or what amounts to a 3% raise, and these can never be taken from us. Once these bills were signed into law, they can never be taken away from those of us who were members of the Retirement System at the time they were enacted. Of course, the legislature can change the playing field for newer teachers, but if you have certain benefits now, they only get better, never worse.

I hope this article helps people understand recent changes than have taken place in the Retirement System, and I hope you realize how much NYSUT has invested in the entire process of working to

make the system even better. The NYSTRS is not involved in changing legislative laws. NYSUT realizes that it still has an unfinished agenda

- 20/55 Retirement for all Tiers
- Complete elimination of the 3% mandatory contribution
- 5 year FAS for all members
- Guaranteed health insurance for retirees, current and future
- One system of retirement benefits for ALL.

*~ John Solan  
VCTA TRS Rep.*

## Mac's Musings...(from the Retiree side)



### Belated Welcome...

To Derek Taylor (*HS Science*) and Brenda Oretsky (*Elementary*) who retired during the summer. We all wish you a very happy and rewarding time of retirement.

### Season's Greetings...

Another year has flown by, and, as I pen the year's last column on the 20th of November, it occurs to me that we are again approaching Dylan Thomas's time of "close and holy darkness" - the winter solstice, Hanukkah, Kwanza, Christmas, nearing Ramadan, the ancient festival of lights, etc. Whether you celebrate one (*or more*) of these or none of these, may this time be happy for you and may 2001 be a time of joy for you and yours.

Nobody asked me, but...

Patti Lunden's editorial (*Echoes, November 3, 2000*) re: student responsibility is one of the best and most concise and incisive pieces I've ever seen on the subject. Bravo!

The Grand Island School District (*Buffalo area*) is truly committed and forward looking. They are paying two senior teachers (*at the top of the pay scale!*) to mentor full-time!-new teachers in the district. This is a truly enlightened administration.

The Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers has a very interesting development program for new teachers, "Starting Out on the Right Track" which begins two days in the summer prior to first year of teaching. The program focuses on classroom management and maintaining discipline. Worth a "look-see" by the VCTA and VC School District.

Also worth a look is the new

booklet in the AFT's What Works series, entitled "Five Promising Discipline and Violence Prevention Programs." Single copies are free. Write AFT Order Dept., 555 New Jersey Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20001. Certainly worth the price of a stamp.

The two page spread of pictures in November Echoes, taken at the VCTA Fall Fest was terrific. I'm just sorry I missed the festivities. It was great to see that retired folks attended; by the way attendee Joe Bayno was hired prior to attendee and computer maven Tom Kneiser. (*It does me good to let you know that Joe is old! At a recent meeting, he told me that he could still run like a deer. I responded that I heard he could run like Dear Abby!*) Before Joe calls me on this, I must admit that I am one year older than he is!

A big crowd of retirees was in attendance at the centennial celebration of the Josephine-Louise Public Library in Walden. Seen chatting, mingling and enjoying the singing of Metropolitan Opera Soloist and VC Alumnus ('92) Pat Carfizzi were: Leo and Trudy Flax, Jan Gridley, Ginny McFadden, Vivian Nathan, Alice Gutter, Ruth McMahan, Mary Ellen Whitmore, Bill Moran, and active teachers Marc and Brenda Newman. (I hope I didn't miss anyone.) The Library has a very pleasant relationship with the schools, especially through its children's services at the elementary level. This past year, there were also exhibits of art work of elementary and high school students at the library.

### Update...

All the hard work and dedication of our elementary students, especially those at Berea Elementary- has paid off in the just announced completion of the Literacy Project - South Africa. Peace Corps Volunteer Chris McFadden (*former teacher at Berea, Montgomery, and East Coldenham*) reports that English language libraries have been set up in the three elementary school in which he works in South Africa. The elementary schools are in Kaletsi, Reitfontein and Klepspoort in Northern Province, Republic of South Africa. Chris speaks of the enthusiasm

of the students as they utilize the books in their pursuit of learning English. He mentioned a young lady named Khumanego, who is really into Dr. Seuss! Twenty eight boxes of books were collected, packed and shipped. Students contributed mightily to shipping charges, as did the elementary teachers and administrators. Chris send his thanks to all his former students who did so much to help his present students. He send special thanks to Mrs. Maureen Radl who did such great work coordinating and initiating this Herculean task. VC once again shows its concern and care for others.

### Endnote to end 2000...

I'd love to hear from more of you retirees. I'd really like to publish and publicize some of the volunteer work that so many of you do. Your energy and dedication to others is incredible. Let me know what you are doing. 6 Jessup St. ;Walden, NY 12586; (845) 778-7236

Thanks for turning to the back of the newsletter and for putting up with this month's occasional outburst of bombast.

**And until next time (*in 2001*), keep pushing back the barriers of ignorance in whatever venue life finds you.**

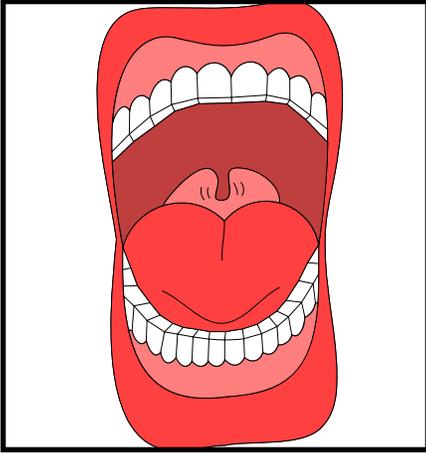
**Peace.**

~ Kevin Mc Fadden

### Addendum

George St. Lawrence, VC Athletic Director is in need of professional personnel for evening and/or afternoon athletic contests (*chaperones, etc.*) at the high school. Remuneration runs about \$40-45. Retirees who are interested can call George at 457-5293.

## Know The Rules—Benefit Trust Coordination-of-Benefits



**T**he Valley Central Benefit Trust includes two major service categories: dental and optical insurance coverage. The coordination of benefits provision for dental coverage works in the same manner as most major medical insurances. That is, there is a maximum dollar amount that can be utilized within a twelve month period regardless of whether you are submitting primary or secondary bills. For example, the VC Benefit Trust will reimburse members for up to a maximum of \$1,000 per year (July 1 through June 30) for covered dental expenses. In other words, an employee can continue to submit bills for reimbursement for covered expenses until the \$1,000 maximum is reached. After this maximum is reached the employee is responsible for all expenses incurred until July 1st, when the next twelve month cycle begins. An employee's spouse and dependents are entitled to the same benefit along with the same restrictions.

If the spouse also has dental insurance coverage, s/he must submit these expenses to his/her insurance company first. The portion of the bill that is not covered by the spouse's insurance company can then be submitted to the VC Benefit Trust for coordination-of-benefits.

This coordination of benefits for a spouse is subject to the same \$1,000 maximum. The advantage, of course, is that dual coverage effectively doubles the amount of reimbursable expenses a member, spouse, or dependent is entitled to (this statement is based on the assumption that both providers have a \$1,000 yearly maximum). Please keep in mind that the VC Benefit Trust, like other insurance organizations, has a *reasonable and customary* reimbursement rate. For example, a \$700 dental charge may be reimbursable for only \$400. You are responsible for the difference (\$300). You now have \$600 remaining on your VC Benefit Trust yearly maximum; however, if you have dual coverage through your spouse, you may submit the remaining uncovered \$300 out-of-pocket expense to her Benefit Trust/Insurance Company.

Optical coverage is subject to a different set of rules. For example, members and dependents are entitled to a new pair of glasses or contact lenses every two years. Although you may still utilize the coordinate-of-benefits provision for optical coverage, this may not be advantageous. Furthermore, coordination-of-benefits for optical coverage may effectively reduce your benefits. For example, if your spouse has alternate coverage, s/he is required to submit her claim/expenses to his/her provider first. If you then submit the remaining uncovered expenses) to the VC Benefit Trust for coordination-of-benefits, you will no longer be eligible to utilize the provision for glasses/contact lenses for the remainder of the current coverage year (July 1 through June 30), as well as the following coverage year since this provision extends reimbursable expenses only once every

two years.

If your spouse's uncovered or out-of-pocket expenses after reimbursement from his/her primary insurance provider is \$100, coordination of benefits might be financially beneficial. This may not be true, however, if your spouse's provider has the same two year restriction and the uncovered or out-of-pocket expenses) after reimbursement from his/her primary insurance provider is \$10. Instead, you might wish to utilize each insurance carrier on alternate years: year one for a new pair of glasses and year two for a new pair of contact lenses (submitting to a different provider each year without utilizing coordination-of-benefits). This could be an important strategy for someone whose prescription is constantly changing or if you are simply "rough" on glasses.

To insure optimum utilization and reimbursement for covered expenses, members must know their own needs and patterns of use for dental and optical services, as well as the limitations of the provisions and benefits provided by their Benefit Trust/Insurance Provider.

~ Tim Brown



## Survey Professional Development

By state mandate, the VC Professional Development team must consist of teacher members and those teacher members must make up half of the team. The VCTA selects the teacher members. The VC Professional Development team members are:

Dr. Art Nugent, Arlene Feldman, John Hunter – Central Office  
Darryl Imperati – Administration  
Jane Hillis (HS), Mary Bleau (MS), Ruthann Giattino (EC),  
Laurie Hey (MS), John Bonagura (EC) Eileen Panagiatoupolous  
(Walden), Rich Steger (Walden), Kay Fallon (Mt. St. Mary), and  
Sharon Behrens (Parent member)

**In an effort to best represent the VCTA membership, please fill out the survey below and return it to the VCTA Office, c/o Tim Brown, HS.**

Although the Professional Development Team did not plan the November 7th Conference Day they are interested in your opinion of it. Please answer the following questions.

What part of the Conference day did you find useful to your professional development?  
How was it helpful?

If you could have chose to do anything that day in terms of professional development, what would you have done?

What topics would you like to see covered on future staff development days?

**Advertising Section**

These ads will be seen by over 750 members of the VC Educational Community and their households. If you would like to advertise in the next issue of the VC ECHOES, contact Patti Lunden, 457-5899 for rates.

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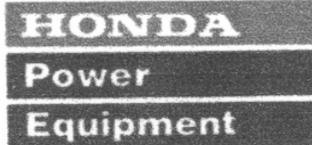


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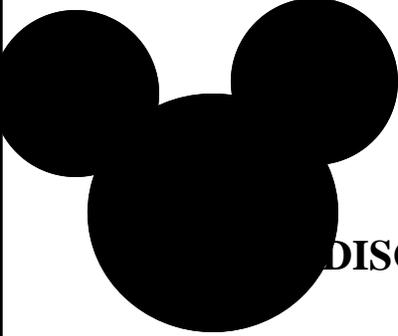
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for children and education  
than teachers and teacher unions.

**Valley Central Teachers' Association**  
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Montgomery, NY 12549  
Tel./Fax: (845) 457-5899

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Vice President, Jay Sussdorff (HS)  
Vice President, Richard Steger (Walden)  
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Glenn Eckert, Joe Fracalossi,

**VC ECHOES Editor**

Patricia Lunden, (HS)

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~vcta

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 Patricia Lunden  
at the HS by December 19, 2000 .  
Any articles submitted to the VC  
Echoes will also be posted on the  
VCTA Web page.

**How many snow days do we have?**

The Valley Central School District has the longest school calendar year in the County (187 days). This means, according to contract language, that the school year may not have more than 187 assigned days without compensating unit members at a per diem rate of pay for each additional day assigned. State law, however, requires school districts to have a minimum of 180 days within the school calendar. Therefore, the Valley Central School District calendar will likely be between 180 – 187 days in length. These assigned school days include scheduled conference days (e.g. opening day, parent conference day and Superintendent's Conference Day).

Because this school year (2000-01) had 187 assigned days, there are 7 snow days (187-7=180) available for inclement weather. The need for an 8th snow day could result in the assignment of an extra work day, necessitating contractual salary adjustments.

**My Favorite Things...**

Chalk dust on chalkboards and  
freshly waxed floors;  
Young shiny faces who  
can't wait to learn more;  
Brown covered books tied up with strings;  
These are a few of my favorite things.

When Dick sends test  
There's so much stress  
Then I'm feeling sad,  
I simply remember my favorite things  
And then I don't feel so bad!

Bright-colored artwork that  
fills hallway walls;  
School doors and class bells  
and recess basketball;  
Young people with dreams  
to take flight on wings;  
These are a few of my favorite things.

When Dick sends test  
There's so much stress  
Then I'm feeling sad,  
I simply remember my favorite things  
And then I don't feel so bad!

Children's laughter floating  
September to June;  
Days into months, years that end all too soon;  
Silver-white snow days that melt into Spring;  
These are a few of my favorite things.

When Dick sends test  
There's so much stress  
Then I'm feeling sad,  
I simply remember my favorite things  
And then I don't feel so bad!

~ Patti Lunden

(With apologies to Rodgers and Hammerstein)



THE VCTA WISHES YOU AND YOURS  
A SPECTACULAR HOLIDAY SEASON  
AND WONDERFUL NEW YEAR!