

Honoring the VCTA Retiree Class of 2019 - 2021



Valley Central Teachers' Association

Congratulations on Your **RETIREMENT!**

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



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

Karen Andersen



Mrs. Karen Andersen retired after 15 years as a paraprofessional at Berea Elementary.

Karen, a native of Walden, has been married to her husband, John, for 34 years. They have four children: Keith, Kassandra, Robert and Peter who all graduated from Valley Central. Karen is also the proud grandmother of two granddaughters as well as a grandson on the way!

While at Berea, Karen participated in Principal's Council for two years.

She has many fond memories of her time in the classroom, particularly being with the kids. There was one student she worked with who just stole her heart. They would have these great conversations, and he would confide in her and tell her these amazing made up stories because he had such a fantastic imagination.

Karen enjoys gardening with a focus on vegetables and flowers. She also volunteers at Reenie's Rabbit Rescue. She takes care of about 40 bunnies until they find their forever homes.

In her retirement, Karen is looking forward to having time to travel with her husband whenever they want and spending a lot of time with her grandkids. Mostly though, she will be volunteering her time at the rabbit rescue.

Best of luck on the next chapter of your life, Karen!



Rita Estrada-Flood

Ms. Rita Estrada-Flood said farewell to Valley Central after 21 years of teaching. She was born in the Bronx and is a Valley Central graduate. She lived in the Montgomery/ Walden area throughout her teaching years. Rita began her career at East Coldenham Elementary before moving to Valley Central Middle School and then to Berea Elementary.

Rita has two children: Joseph and Nicole as well as two grandchildren: Stella, 18 years old, who will be heading to college soon, and Anthony, 17. She also has a loyal pooch named Stella and a painted turtle named Franklin.

During her career, Rita was honored by Big Brothers Big Sisters and advised the Homework Club and the Debate Team.

What Rita will remember the most is getting to know her students and their families. She also fondly recalls the car wash fundraisers that she started at Berea, the 5th grade Moving Up song (BRAVE) when the district lost music in schools, building longhouses in 4th grade and making sure all students had the same access to supplies and assistance, the 7th grade Debate Club she started at the enthusiastic request of her 6th graders, and singing and dancing with her students to make them feel confident to be themselves and to have fun while learning! Good luck in your retirement, Rita!



Ron Hebbard



Mr. Ron Hebbard said goodbye to Valley Central after 27 years as a science teacher.

Ron started his career at Warwick High School as a teacher and a coach before moving to Valley Central High School. While at the high school, Ron coached cross country, indoor track, and outdoor track. He was also honored with the yearbook dedication in 2018.

Ron is married to MJ who is retiring from the high school this school year. They have two

daughters, Veronica and Mya.

Many of Ron's cherished memories from his time at the high school revolve around coaching. He loved experiencing a different side of his students outside of the classroom and making a lasting difference in their lives. He also fondly remembers his daily walk during 4th period to say hello to the staff in the main office, various classrooms, and the custodians.

In his spare time, Ron enjoys riding motorcycles, snowmobiling, cycling, hunting, fishing, hiking, wine making and drinking. In his retirement, Ron wants to travel and do those things he was not able to do during the year because of teaching and coaching.

Ron is not envious of the situation his colleagues experienced this school year and noted that it would have been devastating not to be able to have the personal interactions with his students and athletes since that is what teaching and coaching are all about. Best wishes in your retirement, Ron!



James Hession

Mr. James (Jim) Hession said his goodbyes after 31 years of being a Student Assistance Counselor. Jim began his career at Valley Central Middle School before moving to the high school.

Jim was born in Greenwood Lake, New York but currently resides in the state of Florida. He is the proud father to Stephanie, who is married to Paul. In his spare time, Jim rides motorcycles, plays the guitar, and goes climbing.

During his over three decades at Valley Central, Jim was an active member of many clubs and activities which included VASA, Ski Club, Ultimate Frisbee, and Peer Leaders. In 2003, he was awarded with Outstanding School Based Professional, and in 2004, he was recognized as Student Assistance Counselor of the Year.

Jim's most memorable times at Valley Central included VASA Coffee Houses and ski trips to Vermont. He is thankful for the great colleagues and students he worked with through the years.

Since his retirement, Jim is traveling and playing music. Wishing you a happy retirement filled with motorcycle rides, climbs, and tunes, Jim!



Robin McMillan



Mrs. Robin McMillan bid Valley Central goodbye after 20 years teaching.

Robin was born in the Bronx and has been married to her husband, Calvin, for 30 years. They have four beautiful children: Kavon, Amber, Victoria, and Jade and are the proud grandparents of Siri, Sora and Kalliope.

Robin began her career in the Bronx and after ten years, she relocated to Montgomery, NY where she taught at Montgomery Elementary. During her two decades at Valley Central, she worked in Montgomery, East Coldenham, Berea, and Walden.

Robin's achievements included receiving her Educational Administration Certification as well as her PreK-2 Literacy Collaborative Certification and 3-5 Literacy Collaborative Certification. In 2021, she was honored with the Mid-Hudson School Study Council Teaching Excellence Award.

Robin was an active member throughout her Valley Central career. She was a VC Mentor and the UPK Liaison. In addition, she was on the Literacy Team, the ELA Committee, the Handwriting Committee, and participated in curriculum writing.

One of Robin's favorite memories was when she instructed all of the second grade girls in etiquette classes that focused on self-esteem. The four weeks of instruction culminated in a Tea Party Extravaganza with hats, fancy dresses, table settings, finger foods, and tea. It was a very rewarding experience.

Robin enjoys reading and researching. Since her retirement, she has been enjoying her family, traveling, and pursuing her personal endeavors. She feels blessed to have had the opportunity to serve her community as a teacher/Literacy Consultant for the Valley Central School District. She will always miss the children and her devoted co-workers. Best of luck, Robin!



Maureen Morrissey-Wiseman

Mrs. Maureen Morrissey-Wiseman bid Montgomery Elementary farewell after 20 years as their greeter. She began working in district in 2001 and spent the entirety of her career at Montgomery.

Maureen is a Montgomery native and will be married to her wonderful partner and love, Wayne, for 40 years this August. They have one son together.

During her time in district, Maureen was honored as a Founder's Night award recipient.

She has many cherished memories of her time at Montgomery, but the thing she misses the most is the hugs she received and gave every morning to hundreds of children over the years.

Maureen enjoys listening to music, reading, having good conversation, and traveling. Having retired during the pandemic, Maureen is looking forward to FINALLY getting to go ANYWHERE!

Wishing you the very best in the next chapter of your life, Maureen!



Mary Ann Norman



Mrs. Mary Ann Norman said her goodbyes to Valley Central after 20 years of teaching.

Mary Ann began her career at East Coldenham Elementary as a special education teacher. She also taught at ALC and Harmony Christian.

Mary Ann was born on Long Island and currently lives in Wallkill. She has been married to her husband, John, for 44 years. They raised three sons and have four grandchildren.

During her time in district, Mary Ann was an active participant on committees and school activities. She was a member of the following

committees: SAT Committee, ATF Committee, and Technology Committee. She also participated in the Parents Club as well as Parent/Teacher Reading Nights and Math Nights.

Her favorite memory is going to Greenkill and watching the 5th graders become more self-confident.

In her spare time, Mary Ann enjoys doing crafts and traveling. In her retirement, she is looking forward to spending more time with her children and grandchildren and traveling more.

Mary Ann is glad to have worked with so many wonderful people at Valley Central. Wishing you the very best with all of the freedom that retirement brings, Mary Ann!



Gloria Oehme

Mrs. Gloria Oehme bid Valley Central farewell after 29 years as a paraprofessional at Montgomery Elementary.

Gloria was born in Cincinnati, Ohio and moved to New York in 1970. She has two children: Heather who is a kindergarten teacher in Connecticut, and Neal who is a landscaper. She is also the proud grandmother of Mason, 8 years old, and Olivia who is soon to be 2 years old.

She has many cherished memories of her time at Montgomery, but she particularly loves the memories made on the overnight trips to Greenkill with the 5th grade students.

Gloria enjoys bowling and playing with her grandchildren. In her retirement, she is looking forward to having more down time to spend with her family and friends. Best wishes on your retirement, Gloria!



Leeanne Walsh

Mrs. Leeanne Walsh retired after 20 years of teaching at Valley Central High School.

Leeanne is a Montgomery native. She taught special education social studies for her entire teaching career. During her time at the high school, Leeanne was the co-advisor of the Teen Club with fellow teacher, Gina Strolla.

Leeanne's favorite memory of her time in district focuses around seeing the advancement in her students from September to June.

Leeanne's hobby is to create beautiful cards with her vast array of Stampin' Up! supplies. During her retirement, Leeanne is catching up on her reading and walking on the beach.

Wishing you the very best in your retirement,
Leeanne!



Carolyn Zayas



Mrs. Carolyn Zayas said adiós to Valley Central after 22 years of teaching (two thirds of her career).

Carolyn began her career at her alma mater, Monticello Central School District. She taught Spanish at Monticello Middle School for eight years. She then moved to Kenneth L. Rutherford Elementary School where she taught 3rd grade for three years before moving to Montgomery.

Carolyn was born on Long Island. Her family moved to Monticello when she was in 2nd grade. She graduated from Monticello High School in 1983.

Carolyn is married to her high school sweetheart, Carlos Zayas. They met on the Cross Country team in high school. They have two lovely children, Chris and Emily. They love

spending time with them hiking, sharing meals, and exploring new places.

During her time at the high school, Carolyn enjoyed serving as a VCTA building representative for several years. She became the World Language Department Chair in 2014 and gladly served until her retirement in 2020. The most important award she ever received as an educator was the trust of her students and their families.

Carolyn doesn't have a specific favorite memory. Instead she has a specific favorite feeling: the unparalleled joy and sense of purpose when interacting with students and seeing them smile.

Carolyn enjoys being outdoors. She loves to hike locally at Sam's Point, Lake Minnewaska, and the many parks that are nearby. She also enjoys spending time with her family and researching her family's ancestry. In her retirement, she is looking forward to experiencing life with limited time constraints, but she bets there still won't be enough time to do all that her mind desires. She is excited to be spending more time with her family and friends, preparing for holidays in advance, researching her ancestry, spending a lot of time outside and traveling off-peak.

Being a teacher has truly been one of the greatest joys of Carolyn's life. She is having a difficult time reconciling that she will not experience the feeling of jubilation brought by watching and sharing in her students discovering, striving for, and reaching their dreams. She wishes all VCTA members have a career that brings fulfillment beyond measure.

¡Buena suerte en su jubilación, Carolyn!



Patricia Zillig

Mrs. Patricia “Pat” Zillig bid her beloved Valley Central High School goodbye after almost 35 years.

During her time in district, Pat was a paraprofessional and a secretary. She began her career at Berea Elementary before moving to the high school.

Pat was born in the Bronx, New York and is the doting mother of two daughters, Melissa and Tracy, who are both Valley Central graduates and Valley Central employees. She is also a grandmother to four beautiful grandchildren whom she absolutely loves and adores.

During her time in Valley Central, Pat was honored with the Founders Award and was the first secretary to receive the distinction of having the high school yearbook dedicated to her. Her fondest memories of her career focus around the love and support shown to her.

In her spare time, Pat loves reading and finding things to do in her house. She is most looking forward to the world opening up again so she can finally enjoy retirement and possibly take a much-deserved vacation!

Wishing you the best retirement, Pat!



Alva Antonelli

Mrs. Alva Antonelli is bidding Valley Central a fond farewell after 22 years of service. Alva began her career as a paraprofessional at Valley Central Middle School before moving to the high school as a secretary.

Alva grew up in Newburgh, New York and is married to Michael who retired in 2018 after teaching band in Valley Central for 20 years. They have two children, BJ and Allison, who both graduated from VC.

During her time in district, Alva coached cheerleading for over four years. Her fondest memories include watching her children play sports and seeing them graduate from the high school.

Alva's hobbies include cooking, helping her husband on the Hop Farm, and spending time with her kids and her family.

Even though Alva enjoyed her time at Valley Central, it is time for her to move on to other things. After retirement, she is looking forward to taking it easy and doing some traveling.

Best of luck in the next chapter of your life, Alva! You will be missed!



Diane Cassell-Smith



Mrs. Diane Cassell-Smith is saying her goodbyes to Walden Elementary School after 20 years as the school's Social Worker. Born in Yonkers, New York, Diane began her career working with children and families after graduating from college with her bachelor's degree. She worked at a residential facility in Westchester County and knew she wanted to further her education. She received her Master's Degree in Social Work in 1985.

During her two decades at Walden, Diane was an active staff member. She served as the co-advisor for the Walden Elementary School Student Government for 9 years, she was a member of the RTI team, the PBIS committee, the RULER committee, and the building level Safety Team.

Diane is joined in retirement this year by her husband, James, who is also a Social Worker for Peekskill City School District. Their children have followed in their footsteps of helping others. Their daughter, a second grade teacher currently living in California will be getting married this summer. Their son is a behavior specialist for ARC of Rockland.

It is difficult for Diane to single out one memory from Valley Central; however, she will remember the many children and families she helped overcome the challenges that they faced in their lives.

Diane is looking forward to retirement and plans to spend time with her daughter and future son-in-law in California. She isn't leaving her field completely. Diane plans to work part time for the Adelphi School of Social Work as a faculty field liaison. Best of luck in your retirement, Diane!



Virginia Clair

Mrs. Virginia Clair will be retiring after 20 years as a paraprofessional. Virginia lived in Walden for 33 years before moving to Dutchess County. She began her career as the front desk greeter at Walden Elementary and also worked at Central Office as a clerical paraprofessional and tutor coordinator, at the high school as a clerical paraprofessional in the main office, and at the middle school as the library paraprofessional. During her time in Valley Central, Virginia chaperoned many sporting events.



Virginia has been married to her husband, Pat, for 42 years and raised eight children who all attended Walden Elementary and graduated from Valley Central High School. Her favorite memory from her time in Valley Central was a proud mom moment. At her youngest child's Moving Up ceremony, the principal surprised her at the end by asking her to stand up and be recognized for having all eight of her children graduate from Walden with honors.

Upon retirement, Virginia is hoping to visit all of her children and grandchildren and to spend time being "Grammy". In her spare time, she enjoys decorating her new home and having playtime with her 18 (soon to be 19) grandchildren. Virginia wants to express her heartfelt gratitude to the wonderful friends and coworkers who stood by her side throughout her years working at Valley Central! Best of luck, Virginia!



Nancy Donaldson



Mrs. Nancy Donaldson is saying farewell to Valley Central after 16 years of educating. Fourteen of those years were spent as a Library Media Specialist for Walden Elementary and Montgomery Elementary. Nancy began her career in Peekskill before coming to Valley Central.

Nancy was born in Astoria-Queens and was raised in Bayside Queens. After getting married, she lived in Rockland for 9 years before moving to Washingtonville where she has lived for 35 years.

Nancy and her husband of 44 years, John, have three children. Their son, Thomas, was a Marine. Their son, Matthew, followed in education and became a physical education teacher. Their daughter, Christina, is a life coach.

Nancy's path to become a Library Media Specialist was quite interesting. After

graduating college with an undergraduate and Masters Degree in Education, she worked as a preschool teacher in private nursery schools, Head Start, and a daycare center. She was also the educational coordinator at the daycare center and briefly ran her own daycare center in her home. At a public special education preschool, she was a substitute teacher, a 1:1 aide, a para, and held a clerical position. She also worked in a clerical position at a public school library. In her 40's, after realizing how much she loved children's books, she completed an additional Masters Degree in Library Science.

During her time at Valley Central, Nancy participated in many committees: Author Committee, Safety Committee, Literacy Committee, and Principal's Council. She was also a grant recipient in both Valley Central and Peekskill.

Nancy's favorite Valley Central memory is watching parents read math-themed books with their children at Math Night in Montgomery.

Nancy's hobbies include reading, gardening, biking, fostering dogs, traveling, and doing jigsaw puzzles. After retirement, Nancy is looking forward to traveling, both abroad and in the United States, visiting friends and family, fostering dogs, taking time to relax and smell the flowers, reading, getting an e-bike, and volunteering locally. Wishing you the very best in your retirement, Nancy!



Paul Fritz



Dr. Paul Fritz will say goodbye to Valley Central after 11 years of teaching. Paul began his career at the high school in 2010 after spending 20 years as a scientist and manager at Texaco/Chevron.

Paul was born in Delaware and grew up in New Jersey. He currently lives in Newburgh with his wife, Debbie.

During his time at Valley Central, Paul taught Regents Physics, Basic Physics and Science Research. He

was the Grad Advisor for six years, Science Olympiad coach/volunteer for eight years, and headed up Science Research for six years. In March 2019, Paul was honored with the PTSA Founder's Award.

Paul's most cherished memories from his time at Valley Central High School revolve around the students he has taught, the letters he receives from former students, and the help and support provided by his colleagues along the way.

In his spare time, Paul enjoys swimming, biking, traveling, and playing golf. Post-retirement, Paul plans to relax, do some traveling, and spend time volunteering. Best wishes, Paul!



MaryJane Hebbard



Mrs. MaryJane “MJ” Hebbard will be saying farewell to Valley Central High School after 26 years of teaching. MJ spent the entirety of her career as a special education math teacher. Through the years, she has taught every math class offered at the high school and even taught Elements of Science for a year!

MJ was born in Brooklyn, New York but has been a resident of the district for 34 years. Her husband, Ron, retired from Valley Central High School last year. They have two daughters,

Veronica and Mya, who both graduated from VC.

During her time at the high school, MJ taught GradPoint, summer school, and night school. She also advised the Math Club for two years. She wrote the remedial math curriculum and co-wrote four other math curriculums.

MJ was the creator and coach of the high school’s Dance Team for 16 years. Her award-winning team performed aboard Carnival Cruise ships three times and at Disney World five times. Throughout the years, she led her team to 47 trophies which are proudly displayed in the main lobby at the high school. She personally wrote, produced, choreographed and directed 11 major school productions involving over 100 student dancers each year throughout the district from grades K-12.

Her favorite memories are the smiles on her students’ faces when they accomplished something they did not think they were capable of doing both academically and through the dance team performances.

MJ’s hobbies include creating new crafts, making baskets, drawing, and planning trips. She loves going on cruises and visiting Disney with her friends and family. After she retires, MJ plans to travel with her husband and spend time with her family. Best wishes for a relaxing and happy retirement, MJ!



Marnie Henrie

Ms. Marnie Henrie is retiring after 33 years of teaching. She was born in Brooklyn and lived in Long Island and Rockland County before moving to Montgomery. Marnie began her career as a teaching assistant at Felix Fiesta Middle School in Clarkstown Central School District. During her time at Valley Central High School, Marnie was a special education teacher who taught 9th grade English in both the 15:1 and collaborative settings.

Lasting memories of her time at the high school include her wonderful partnership with her friend and collaborator (and fellow retiree), Jacqueline York, and the countless rewarding connections she made with her students throughout the years. Marnie will miss her colleagues and how they inspired her with their friendship, support, and professionalism. Outside of giving 110% to her students every day, she enjoys photography, gardening, collecting movie memorabilia, working on home improvements, reading, and beginning new endeavors.

After retirement, Marnie most looks forward to the opportunity of starting many new chapters in her life and having more time for her family. Good luck, Marnie! You will be missed.



Elizabeth Henriquez



Mrs. Elizabeth “Liz” Henriquez is retiring after 20 years of teaching. Liz began her career in New York City before coming to Valley Central School District. During her time in district, Liz was an ENL teacher at the middle school and high school.

Liz is originally from New York City and has been married to her wonderful husband for 40 years. They have two amazing sons and five awesome grandkids.

Liz’s favorite memory is the ENL

Family Nights she participated in.

In her spare time, Liz enjoys doing yoga, dancing, gardening, and collecting international dolls. Upon her retirement, Liz looks forward to traveling and enjoying her younger grandkids.

Wishing you the best that retirement has to offer, Liz!



Christine Hollway



Mrs. Christine "Chris" Hollway is saying her farewells after 25 1/2 years of teaching. Chris began her career as a special education teacher at St. Katherine Day School in Philadelphia, PA. She spent a half year subbing in Highland School District before coming to Valley Central. Chris taught reading for 21 years at Maybrook Elementary and Walden Elementary.

Born in Ambler, Pennsylvania, Chris has been married for 31 years to her husband, Andy. They have 3 grown sons, one daughter-in-law, and one daughter-in-law "to be" in August 2022. Her oldest son, Joe, is a Captain in the U.S. Air Force. He is currently stationed at Misawa Air Base in Northern Japan and

flies F-16 Viper jets. Her middle son, Brian, recently graduated from Pace University from their PA program and passed his Boards. Her youngest son, Tom, has just entered his fourth year at the University of Pennsylvania, School of Veterinary Medicine, located in Philadelphia. Chris and her husband are extremely proud of all of their accomplishments.

Chris's favorite teaching memory is from when she taught Reading Recovery at Maybrook. She will remember fondly the times when a student successfully discontinued the one-on-one instruction with her and was able to carry over that learning into the classroom and become an independent reader and writer.

In her free time, Chris likes reading, spending time with her family and friends, taking long walks and sitting on a beach while soaking up the sun. After her much deserved retirement, Chris is looking forward to not setting an alarm every night, being able to make spur of the moment decisions to do what she wants, and to travel any time of the year, not just in the summer! She'd also like to visit with family who live in various states. Best of luck, Chris!



Pamela Horner

Mrs. Pamela (Pam) Horner is retiring from Valley Central after more than two decades of service. Pam began her career in the main office of Montgomery Elementary before moving to Valley Central High School in 2011 as an administrative secretary.

Pam is originally from Corry, Pennsylvania. She and her husband, John, have two children: Jack and Anne, a daughter-in-law, Erin, and a granddaughter, Penelope.

Pam's favorite memory of her time in Valley Central was watching her children graduate from the high school.

Pam enjoys drawing, painting, gardening, and playing golf. In her retirement, Pam plans to travel and spend more time with her granddaughter in Boulder, Colorado.

Pam will miss the many wonderful people she has worked with over the past 20 years. You will be missed too, Pam! Wishing you the best retirement!



Doreen Klett



Mrs. Doreen Klett will be retiring after 16 years as a paraprofessional in Valley Central School District. During her years at VC, Doreen worked as both a 1:1 paraprofessional as well as a classroom paraprofessional at Walden Elementary. Additionally, she worked as a classroom paraprofessional at Montgomery Elementary.

Originally from Connecticut, Doreen has been a Montgomery resident for many years. She has two sons who both graduated from Valley Central High School. Her hobbies include cooking, reading, and scrapbooking.

Doreen plans to enjoy her retirement by living at the beach. Best wishes to you on your retirement, Doreen!



Timothy Lee

Mr. Timothy “Tim” Lee will be saying goodbye to Valley Central after 31 years of teaching.

Tim, a native of Newburgh, worked in Maybrook Elementary, East Coldenham Elementary, and Montgomery Elementary as a computer teacher.

During his time in the district, Tim was a member of the member of S.T.E.A.M. and Technology Committees.

His fondest memories include meeting many wonderful coworkers and students over the years.

Tim enjoys bartending and horse racing and upon retirement, hopes to take up golf. During his much deserved next chapter, Tim plans to stay locally and looks forward to spending more time in his garden and doing some traveling. Good luck in your retirement, Tim!



Jean McMahon

Mrs. Jean McMahon is retiring after 23 years of teaching.

Jean was born in Mahopac, New York and has four children, six grandchildren, and eight siblings.

She began her career in Sullivan County at Roscoe Central School District.

During her time in the district, Jean advised the Environmental Club and Astronomy Club. She participated in a number of science teacher summer workshops and institutes for astronomy and earth science education.



Jean's most memorable moment from her time at Valley Central was a heartbreakening one. She recalls being in school when the attacks on the World Trade Center occurred. She remembers walking into the upstairs faculty room at the beginning of third period and watching the coverage with colleagues.

Jean's hobbies include walking, hiking, reading, and going to beach. She loves spiritual, Catholic retreats and is active with the Friars of the Renewal in Newburgh.

In her retirement, Jean wants to spend time with family, going camping and taking it easy. She also is considering getting back

into horseback riding, being more involved in the Friars of the Renewal, and being able to travel in September.

Good luck in your retirement, Jean!



Elizabeth Michella



Mrs. Elizabeth (Liz) Michella said her goodbyes after 20 years of teaching. She began her career as a preschool teacher at Busy Bees Nursery School in Otisville, New York before coming to Valley Central. During her time in district, Liz taught in three elementary schools: Walden, Berea, and Montgomery.

Liz was born in Brooklyn, New York and grew up in Bergen County, New Jersey. She and her husband spend their days taking care of their five grandsons who are all two years old or younger.

During her time at Valley Central,

Liz was an active member of several teams and committees both at school and in the community. She was a member of the district's Writing Committee, her building's Literacy Team, SAT team, and Snack Bag team. Locally, she is a board member at the Josephine Louise Public Library in Walden.

Liz has so many wonderful memories from her teaching career, but one of her favorites is the annual First Grade Academy Award ceremony where the students dress up in "black tie", walk the red carpet, and celebrate their uniqueness.

Liz enjoys spending time in her wine cellar making her own wine. In her retirement, she looks forward to doing some traveling but mostly to spending quiet days with her grandsons. Have a wonderful next chapter of your life, Liz!



Ruth Purcell

Mrs. Ruth Purcell is bidding Valley Central High School goodbye after 26 years of dedicated service.

Ruth was born in Walden, New York and is the mother of three wonderful children: Kelly, Trevor, and Brady as well as four terrific grandchildren: Parker, Peyton, Micaela, and Emily.

Ruth's favorite memories are attending high school graduation each year.

In her spare time, Ruth loves spending time with her family and her loyal canine sidekick, Benson the beagle. She also helps out at her son's new business, *Brady's Bistro*.

Upon retirement, Ruth looks forward to spending more time with her children, grandchildren, and Benson.

Best wishes for a wonderful retirement, Ruth! Your smiling face in the copy room will be missed!



Melinda Sulzbach



Mrs. Melinda Sulzbach is retiring after 33 dedicated years as a social worker.

Melinda was raised in New Jersey and currently lives in Monroe, New York. She has been married for 34 years and has one son who is a Program Manager for TIAA in Massachusetts.

Melinda began her career as a Psychiatric Social Worker in Rockland County in 1983. She then came to Valley Central and has the distinction of being the first social worker hired in the district.

Melinda worked in all five elementary schools for quite some time. Over the years, the number of buildings she was assigned to narrowed down to just Montgomery

Elementary where she devoted the rest of her career.

During her time in district, Melinda was honored as Student Assistance Counselor of the Year in April 2002 and was a PTA Founder's Night Recipient in 2018. She was also a former VCTA building representative.

Melinda has so many favorite memories of working with both the students and staff; however, one of her favorite memories was when she received the honor of the Founder's Night award. She was thoroughly surprised and shocked but enjoyed every single moment of the Montgomery Elementary students' performances.

In her free time, Melinda enjoys reading, doing crossword and jigsaw puzzles, and card making. Upon retirement, she is looking forward to sleeping late, relaxing, taking walks, and catching up on the many books she has on her reading list. But most of all, she's looking forward to helping plan her son's upcoming wedding!

Melinda thoroughly enjoyed her years at Valley Central. She met so many wonderful people along her journey and made life-long friends along the way. She feels fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with and counsel numerous students. Her students taught her many lessons and she hopes that she made a small difference in their lives. Her Montgomery colleagues have been her second family and she appreciates each and every one of them!

Best wishes, Melinda, in your retirement!



Susan Ward



Mrs. Susan Ward is retiring after 12 years as a secretary at Valley Central. During her time in district, Susan worked in many areas: the Data, Testing, & Technology Department, at Berea Elementary, and in the Special Education Department.

Susan was born in the Bronx (within walking distance of Yankee Stadium) and moved to Rockland County at age 11 where she graduated from Pearl River High School. She then moved to Bergen County, New Jersey and Stamford, Connecticut before marrying her husband, John, and moving to Orange County.

She and John graduated together at Pearl River and have two amazing sons, Anthony and Sean, both of whom they are immensely proud of because of their kind and thoughtful natures.

Susan spent 18 years working in Manhattan followed by 12 years as a stay-at-home mom. In July 2009 she returned to the workforce as a secretary in Data, Testing and Technology which was located in the middle school. This worked out perfectly for Susan as her youngest son was beginning his first year of middle school too!

Susan has many great memories of her time in Valley Central, but one specific memory that always makes her smile is one of a little boy at Berea who came to her desk after lunch one day, saying "Mrs. Ward, I saved something for you!" He pulled a wadded up napkin containing a chocolate cookie from his pants pocket. It was mostly crumbs at that point, but it didn't matter. The sweet smile on that child's face as he gave her his gift is something she'll never forget.

Susan's main passion is wildlife photography, especially capturing the beauty of birds in flight. Most days after work she visits the Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge. She also enjoys gardening, walking her dog, bicycling in Stewart State Forest, reading all sorts of books and periodicals on her Kindle, and floating around in her swimming pool. Most of all, she loves spending time with her family and friends.

After retirement, Susan is looking forward to having more time to spend on the activities she already enjoys, especially visiting different wildlife refuges and photographing the animals. She and her husband, John, have been looking at motorhomes and she's excited to hit the road with her camera in hand!

Susan views working at Valley Central as a gift and holds her friends and colleagues very dear to her heart. She sends best wishes to everyone in the district for good health and much joy in the days and years to come.

Best of luck on your retirement, Susan!



Other Retirees

Eric Bartle

Penny Bellarosa

Nancy Brother

Paul Cummings

Heather Martin

Vicki Vermilyea

Other Retirees

Diana Friscia

Nancy Green

Ronald Herman

Carmen Maher

Mary Prior

Deborah Vela

Patricia Weigel

Jacqueline York