

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Mary Goldberg...A VCTA Living Legacy



Mary Goldberg has been selected to receive the Silver Recognition Award for 30 years or more of service at the local, state and national union level.

The leadership of the VCTA is proud to announce that our own Mary Goldberg has been selected to receive the AFT "Living the Legacy" Silver Recognition Award for thirty years of service and involvement

to our local, our state federation (NYSUT) and the national AFT. We all know the many ways in which Mary has been a visible, vital and valuable member of our organization, school district and community over those many years. As part of the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Women's Rights in the United States, the AFT Women's Rights Committee instituted this award to recognize women who have provided leadership and demonstrated interest in the issue of women's rights; maintained multiple decades of involvement in local, state and national AFT affiliates; worked in the trade union movement; acted as mentors, coaches and role models for others and been recognized as lead-

ers in their community. It would appear that the above criteria were written with Mary in mind.

It would take several pages to list the activities, roles and influences Mary has performed, and is performing, in service to all of us in the Valley Central family. Suffice it to say that we would all be poorer if not for the presence of Mary in our lives.

Congratulations, Mary, on a well deserved award. You will, no doubt, leave an even larger legacy that will continue to make us proud to be your friends and colleagues!

*~ Jay Sussdorff,
Vice President*

Tenure achieved by 32 members...

Tenure is an important achievement in the career of any educator. Tenure is received after a teacher successfully completes a probationary employment period. It guarantees the educator that school

boards and administrators must follow a formal, legal process to discipline or dismiss a teacher. The usual period of tenure is three years unless a teacher has previously earned tenure in another NYS school district or if they are transferring to a

new tenure area in the same district, in which case they need only complete two probationary years. On the practical side, tenure provides

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teachers with a system of due process according to

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Welcome, Valley Central...

News flash: As we enter the 2000-01 school year, teachers on a statewide basis are jumping at the opportunity to take the state retirement incentive. How will this affect the ability of districts to hire qualified replacements now and in the next several years? I'm sure some of us are thinking about these repercussions and about retirement in our own cases.

I have to admit that the idea of retirement, not too far in the future in my own case, passes through my mind quickly on occasion. However, the thoughts and feelings that pervade my mind at this time of year, for the twenty-

ninth time, are those of the excitement and challenge of a new year: new students, new colleagues, and old friends, and the ability to share with all of those people the thrill of teaching, learning, and the interactions of all those parties. I may not get the butterflies I used to, but I still get up long before the alarm goes off and look forward with anticipation to getting back "into the groove." We welcome back those of you we worked with in the past and hope that you had a relaxing and rewarding summer. To those of you who are joining us for the first time, we offer our congratulations and our assistance. To all of you we wish an exciting and fruitful



year of instruction. In addition, remember to get acquainted with your association building representatives and officers. We are here to serve you in any way we can. Remember, the association is not its officers and reps, but all of you who are members. **YOU ARE THE UNION!** Have a great year.

~ Jay Sussdorff, Vice President

Welcome to the Ranks...

As September begins, many of us are beginning our fifth, tenth, twentieth, or even twenty-fifth year of teaching. We all feel the excitement of getting a chance to meet the young minds we will shape over the next year. There are also new teachers who are beginning their first year of teaching. I ask that you take a moment to remember the excitement, confusion, and yes even fear, that you felt that very first time you walked into your classroom. We have over 40 new members feeling the above emotions. I ask that as we encounter a new member we ask them if they need a hand or some direction. Welcome your new brothers and sisters to the Valley Central family and to the VCTA.

Our new members are:

Berea

Lisa Daily Fogarty, Amy Sucato, Bridge Roche, Kiera Quigley, Toni Orlando-Holbrook, Paul Cummings, William Carter, Denise

Scott, Ann Fantom, Christina Storaska, Stacey Grammas

East Coldenham

Denise Burretto

Maybrook

Christine Hollway, Linda Weiner, Elizabeth Haggerty

Montgomery

Robin Simmons-McMillan, Cathleen Nestor, Jennifer Rainey, Mary Devitt

Walden

Lori Velez, Allison Arcangel, Joan Zellmer

Middle School

Kate Shadrin, Jayme Sadowski, Robert Shust, Leigh Flood, Lawrence DeMarco, Susan DeMeo, Kathleen Clair, Laura McDonald, David Velsor, Hayden Hartmann, Jay Mentz, William Bacon, Gabrielle Wienckowski, Rebecca Brown

High School

Mia Barnes, Kristie Redner, Catherine Benson, Lucy Galanin, Stephanie Marshall, Kelly Pimm, Beverly Risco, Lori Nahow, Martha Santos

District

Christine Gustafson, Robert Shust

Secretarial

Joan Grippo, Montgomery, Arline Clark, Walden

Paraprofessionals

Patricia Kennedy, CO; Sherri Baum, HS; Patricia Abatangelo, Berea; Janice Pagan, Berea; Lisa Spears, Berea; Michelle Schubert, EC; Rosemary Pressler, Montgomery; Janet Hodge, Montgomery

~ Rich Steger, Vice President

**I touch
The future.**

I teach.

~ Christa McAuliffe

The 4th Annual VCTA Health/TSA Fair Held Today...

The VCTA presents its fourth annual Health and TSA Fair. The Fair is being held from 7:00 AM to 8:30 AM in the lobby of the High School before Convocation thanks to the graciousness of Central Office who have allowed us to do so.

The Fair addresses two issues close to many hearts, health and money and reminds members that they have a choice in these matters.

While the District offers the Orange Ulster School District Health Plan (OUSDHP) to those employees eligible as defined by of the Collective Bargaining Agreement, employees have a federal right to select an alternate HMO provider. Any HMO company can be used. The VCTA has brought in three area companies; GHI, MVP and Empire Blue Cross/Blue Sheild.

However the VCTA does not endorse any one plan but rather encourages employees to consider their options.

Be sure to visit each representative and take a packet of information. You have the entire month of September and October to make a decision. If you do decide to change health plans, you must send your enrollment form to Mrs. Polly Coniglio at Central Office by October 31st.

The TSA part of the Fair is provided to encourage you to consider the investment opportunities that are available to you. You certainly can make you own decision as what to do with your money, however we want you to be aware of your options.

If you didn't get a chance

to pick up the information at the fair, contact the VCTA office, 457-5899 and it can be sent to you.



The VCTA also has a table set up at the Fair to welcome you back where you can get your new NYSUT calendar, your VCTA lanyard, your September edition of the VC ECHOES, and information on VCTA meetings, BOE, and VOTE-COPE.

Saving for Retirement...the TSA option

A Tax Sheltered Annuity is an opportunity for public employees, like those of us in education, to save money for retirement purposes on a pre-tax basis. Tax Sheltered Annuities are called TSA's for short and are referred to as 403(b) accounts by the IRS.

The TSA is considered the

number one investment opportunity available to educators according to Fortune magazine. The advantage of these accounts is that you save the money before taxes, so if you put away \$100 a check, assuming a 30% tax, you see only a \$70 difference in your net pay. When you file your tax return for the year the amount that you sheltered in the annuity is not counted as part of your gross which

is another savings. And finally, when you do withdraw the money in your retirement years, it will be taxed in a lower bracket.

The contributions in a TSA are invested in the stock market, so you should carefully consider the agent that you choose to handle your
(continued on page fourteen)

NYSUT's Financial Workshop
Financial Building Blocks
is scheduled for October 23rd.
More information to come...



On Good Health and a Safe Environment

With the Health/TSA Fair comes time to revisit the issues of comparability and choice of health insurance.

Who is entitled to insurance benefits?

As a salaried or full-time employee you are entitled by contract to insurance benefits (*health, dental and optical*). If you are married (*or marry in the future*) your spouse and dependents are also entitled to benefits.

If I am married, am I still entitled to health benefits?

It depends because there is a contractual comparability clause (Article XXV, D.2, pg. 16) regarding health benefits. (*Dental and optical benefits are not affected by this clause*). The Comparability Clause applies under the given conditions: **You are married and your spouse PROVIDES health coverage for you & that coverage is COMPARABLE.**

What if my spouse does not have health insurance benefits?

If your spouse does not provide insurance for you, you are entitled to family coverage.

What if my spouse's health insurance is inferior in comparison to the insurance I could get through the District?

If your spouse's insurance is not comparable you are entitled to insurance through the District.

How is comparability determined?

Comparability is determined by the District through a holistic comparison of both plans. Since plans vary from providing company to providing company, you must provide your insurance summary and booklets to allow for a comprehensive comparison. You should give a copy of the information to the Association, so that the Association can also review the plan as well in case you disagree with the District's findings.

What if the District determines my spouse's health insurance to be comparable, but I disagree?

The contractual agreement allows for arbitration in such instances.

If I am not entitled to District health benefits, what do I get instead?

If your spouse's coverage is determined to be comparable, and you agree with the finding; you are entitled to the Dis-

trict's buyout (\$1800).

What if there is a change in my spouse's insurance and it is no longer comparable or if I get divorced or lose my spouse?

If your marital status or insurance changes at any time, you can regain the District's coverage immediately. If you have a previously unforeseen health situation, you may be able to regain coverage.

What if my spouse's insurance is NOT comparable, but I would like to take the buy-out anyway?

You can voluntarily elect to take the District's buyout if you would like to, as long as you are provided health insurance through another source.

What if I am single, never use my health insurance and would rather have the buy-out. Can I also elect to take it?

Not unless you have an alternate health coverage (i.e. from another job). You must show alternate coverage to elect to take the buyout.

What health insurance choices do I have?

You have a federal right to choose an HMO rather than the indemnity plan offered by the District.

What is an indemnity plan?

The indemnity plan offered by the District is the *Orange-Ulster School District Health Plan*. This plan allows you to stay in the Beech Street/ Medichoice network or go outside the network with deductibles and 20/80 coverage.

What HMO's can I choose from?

You can choose any HMO you'd like, however the VCTA has helped to make three HMO's easily accessible. They are: **Empire-BlueCross/Blue Shield, MVP, & GHI.**

Will I have to pay anything to choose an HMO?

If you choose to use an HMO, the District will pay the dollar amount that they would have paid to indemnity plan to the HMO. You are responsible to pay the difference if the HMO is more.

If I didn't get a chance to pick up information on the health plans during

the Health/TSA Fair, who should I contact?

If you would like information on the OUSDHP, contact Central Office. If you want information on Empire, MVP or GHI contact Rich Steger at the VCTA office, 457-5899.

What does the VCTA recommend concerning the health plan choices?

The decision is yours to make. *The VCTA wants you to know you have*

a right to choose, but does not endorse any one plan over another. Consult your physicians, family, friends, colleagues, or the Internet to help you make your decision. Also ask yourself "What if..." questions, to be certain that doctors and hospitals would be available to you if you needed them in the future.

What if I choose a health plan and then don't like it? Am I stuck with it until I stop working here?

No. You may change your health insurance coverage every year, deciding in October (the open enrollment period) to change for the following year. The VCTA hosts an annual Health/TSA fair to let you continually compare coverage options. However, you must stay with the plan through December 31st of the year, once selected you will not be able to change again until the next October.

If I decide to switch insurance plans, when does the new coverage begin?

If you select a different option this October, it will take effect as of January 1, 2001 will not change unless you select another option next October.

Who can I contact with questions?

Vice President Rich Steger, Walden Elementary School, 457-5899.

If you have any topics you would like to see covered or questions you would like answered on health or the working environment, please submit them to Patti Lunden, Editor at the HS and the answers will be sought.

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



What's Black and gray and read all over?

The best part of the VC ECHOES is the stories about members and the issues that concern them. It is our goal to have coverage of events or members from each building in each issue. In order to reach this goal, we need your help. VCTA Executive Council members have been given the committee duty of reporting to the VC ECHOES for your building. The correspondents for the newsletter are:

Berea: Carol DeMicco

East Coldenham: Beth Como

Maybrook: Donna Lloyd

Montgomery: Kathleen Takvam

Walden: Brenda Newman

Middle School: Paul Dederick

HS: Glenn Eckert

Secretaries: Lucy Fox

Paraprofessionals:

Kathi Russo

You can contact them with any questions you would like to have answered, topics or issues you would like covered or to report any event, activity or member that merits special recognition. Don't assume that we already know about an issue, event or member. Even if we do, we can always use another angle.



If you have a reaction or opinion about something, would like to cover something yourself, or have it covered please feel free to send it to VC ECHOES editor, Patti Lunden at the HS or call the office at 457-5899.

Make a difference in politics...give to VOTE/COPE

The COPE of VOTE/COPE stands for the Committee on Political Education, and hopefully the VOTE is self-explanatory. VOTE/COPE is the non-partisan political arm of the New York State United Teachers. It coordinates the voluntary contributions to NYSUT-endorsed candidates and NYSUT supported general campaign committees. These contributions do make a difference; NYSUT is one of the most influential and successful advocates for children and schools.

Just in the last few months, legislation was passed that greatly affects all members of the NYSTRS in a positive way. VOTE/COPE was pivotal in the fight to get this legislation passed and signed. VOTE/COPE has led the fight that

has resulted in record amounts of state aid for school districts.

VOTE/COPE will help to support the candidates who have demonstrated that they support the best interests of education....

One of the main topics of both the Republican and Democratic conventions has been education. VOTE/COPE will help to support the candidates who have demonstrated that they support the best interests of education. In a few weeks, we will elect a new President, Vice-President, Congress and State Legislators. These elected officials pass laws and set policy that affect our classrooms, our wallets, our benefits, and our pensions. Like it or not education is more and more becoming a political arena and VOTE/COPE works to be sure that we educators have a voice.

Our VOTE/COPE drive last year raised nearly \$2,700 thanks to the efforts of dedicated building representatives and our

VOTE/COPE coordinator, Toni Sperry. Several members also used payroll deduction which made contributing to VOTE/COPE easy. Instead of writing a check, they simply had \$1 deducted from their paychecks to reach the recommended contribution of \$25. If you would like to sign up for payroll deduction, you can do so through the month of September. Simply fill out the payroll deduction form available from the VCTA and send it to the VCTA office. Payroll deduction is convenient and makes



investing in you future easy.

Where will the next President stand?



*Democratic
Presidential Candidate,
Al Gore*

In less than eight weeks, this country will be about the business of choosing a new president.

It is important to know where they stand on key issues. The source of the following information was the AFL-CIO web site.

On Education:

Al Gore opposes school vouchers that would take away funds from public schools. He supports investing \$115 billion to decrease class size, hire 2 million teachers in the next 10 years, invest in new school construction and make preschool available to all children.

George W. Bush supports using public funds to provide vouchers for private education. He has stated that he would support another pilot (school voucher) program, despite privately funded voucher program disaster in San Antonio's Edge-

wood School District. In 1995, Bush cut the state's contribution to the teacher retirement fund by \$400 million – breaking a 1994 campaign promise.

On Social Security:

George W. Bush supports privatization of individual Social Security accounts. He would consider raising the retirement age for younger Americans.

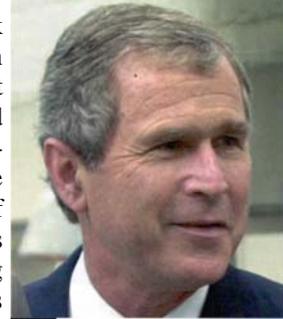
Al Gore supports setting aside more than two-thirds of the budget surplus to ensure Social Security and Medicare are strong years into the future.

On Unions:

Al Gore has stated "I'm going to keep standing up and speaking out about the importance of unions and the right to organize. A strong labor movement helps all working Americans, whether they are organized or not." He has opposed Proposition 226 which was California's initiative version of the Pay-



check Protection Act that would have silenced the voice of the state's working families in politics.



*Republican
Presidential Candidate,
George W. Bush*

George

W. Bush, as governor of Texas, attempted to privatize state-level public jobs, a move that would have put people out of work and damaged public employees unions. He supports so-called "Paycheck Protection" to limit unions' use of dues for educational activities related to politics.

On Family and Medical Leave:

George W. Bush offers no position.

Al Gore has championed the FMLA as Senator and VP. He has pushed a proposal to expand the act and allow parents paid time off to take care of a loved one or go to a parent-teacher conference.

Want them to hear more than just your vote? Use your voice.

When you flick that red lever on election day you send a message to the politicians, but maybe you have more to say ...

Contact your local, state and federal officials

by using the NYSUT or AFT web site.

www.nysut.org

www.aft.org



Tenure achieved by 32 members.... (continued from page one)

Section 3020-a of State Education Law, assuring them the right to answer charges that have been brought against them. Often tenure is mistaken, especially by the public, as protection against dismissal, no matter what the situation. This perception is wrong. Conducts or conditions that may constitute just cause for discipline or discharge of a tenured teacher include misconduct, incompetence, insubordination, physical or mental disability, neglect of duty or lack of a teaching certificate. A tenured teacher can be dismissed if found guilty of any of these charges. Tenure does not protect a teacher from excess either. However practical, it is not usually this protection that comes to mind when a teacher is granted tenure. Instead it is the confidence that the district and its administrators are placing in the teacher. Tenure makes the statement that the district made a good decision when they hired the teacher; the teacher is a valuable addition to the staff. It is a moment of great pride which is why

Tenure makes the statement that the district made a good decision when they hired the teacher...

the VCTA commemorates this achievement by presenting the newly tenured with pins at Convocation. Those who have received tenure between September 1, 1999 and September 5, 2000 are as follows:

High School

Paul Berkowitz, Helene Ierlardi, Linda Doty, Adrian Jacques, Frank Jordan, Jean McMahon, Michele Sinn, Ryan Phelps, and Carolyn Zayas.

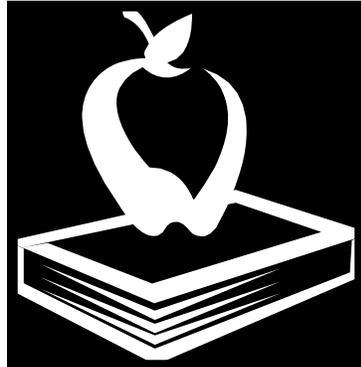
Middle School

Christopher Arndt, Aileen Behringer, Maria Circosta, Lisa DeBeauvernet, Dana Marie DeMasi, Mary Folchetti, Sharyn Buchman, Angela Longway, Paula Perillo, Aileen Swift, and Valerie Grippo.

Berea

Donna Clark, Jean Cook, Maura Kemmer, Jennifer Kra-

jeski, Robin Matthews, and Jessica Borner.



East Coldenham

Ruth Ann Giattino

Montgomery

Christopher Brand and Tracey Trischitta

Walden

Jeanne Marie Flanagan, Michelle Mylie, Susan Mylie, and Karen Harrington

The VCTA takes great pride in congratulating these members on this milestone accomplishment in their careers!

Who's your buddy, who's your pal...

The VCTA has a new member committee that will be working on setting each new member up with a BUDDY. Barbara Winchell is a 5th grade teacher at Walden Elementary School. She is the BUDDY coordinator for the elementary level. Mary Goldberg is a Physical Education teacher at the Middle School. She is the BUDDY coordinator for the Middle School.



Joe Fracalossi is a Science teacher at the High School and the Department Supervisor for Science. He is the BUDDY coordinator at the High School.

The BUDDY helps the new member through their first year by explaining building customs, procedures, and expectations but also helps them with practical advice like where to find supplies, etc.

If one of the coordinators asks you to be a BUDDY, please accept this opportunity to impart some of your hard-earned wisdom

to a new teacher. We can all remember a teacher that helped make our first year easier and more enjoyable. Most likely we are the teachers we are today because of these same colleagues. If you are a new teacher and have not been assigned a BUDDY by the third week of school, please contact the appropriate coordinator.

Have a wonderful experience and remember – **This is supposed to be fun!**

~ Rich Steger,

What is the VCTA?

The Valley Central Teachers' Association (VCTA) is your local union and we welcome all our veteran members back to another school year and our new members to our community. The VCTA was founded in the early 1960's as the bargaining unit representing teachers. The secretaries joined in the '80's and the paraprofessionals joined in the early '90's. Today, we consist of about 380 teachers, 21 secretaries and 140 paraprofessionals, as well as about 150 retirees. The Executive Council is the governing body of the Association and is made up of building representatives from each of the seven build-

ings, a secretarial representative, a paraprofessional representative, two non-voting retiree representatives, five elected officers, the appointed newsletter editor, NYSTRS representatives and Dental/Optical Trust representative. Executive Council meetings are held each month of the school year and are open to the general membership. The first meeting this year will be held September 19, 2000 at the HS Professional Library.

The VCTA is affiliated with the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT). NYSUT is a federation of more than 900 local unions representing 440,000 members. NYSUT is affiliated with the

American Federation of Teachers (AFT). NYSUT and the AFT are both associated with the American Federation of Labor-Congress of International Organizations (AFL-CIO). All VCTA members are also members of NYSUT the AFT and we are Local 3076 AFL-CIO. As members of these associations we encourage our members to purchase union made products and services and ask for all to support our brothers and sisters in the union movement.



Who's who in the VCTA...

The VCTA has five elected officers. Each officer oversees a specific area of concern. President Tim Brown, a high school Health teacher, is entering his third year as president, having held the offices of vice-president, chief negotiator and building representative before being elected president. Tim oversees all aspects of the Association and is our

official spokesperson to Central Office and the media. Vice-President Jay Sussdorff, who teaches high school English, is responsible for Secondary Issues/ Concerns, Political Action, Health and Safety, Negotiations/Action Committee and represents the VCTA at the OCTA. Vice-President Rich Steger, a Walden physical education teacher, is responsible for Elementary Issues/

Concerns, Health Issues, Health/TSA Fair, New Member, Public Relations, and also represents the VCTA at the OCTA. Secretary Laurie Hey, a music teacher at the Middle school is responsible for record keeping, maternity issues and continues to chair the Grievance committee with Mary Bleau (MS Rep.). Treasurer John Bonagura, who is a fifth grade *(continued on page 17)*

Union business is everyone's work...

As a long time member of the VCTA, and an officer, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the active building representatives who worked so hard last year to represent each building's needs, and the needs of teachers and staff in each building. From listening to the numerous conversations, and discussions of matters at the monthly meetings last year, it is evident that all of our members are

being well represented. The success of the union is only as good as the commitment of its members. I would like to also take this opportunity to welcome the new building representatives who join the VCTA Executive Council this year.

I think that a big **THANK YOU** is also in order for all the outstanding work our past leaders have done for us. Without their efforts, we would not have the things we have now.

Please get involved in your union. You may have lots of great ideas just waiting to be heard. You may be able to help your colleagues in significant ways. Union does not always mean fighting your bosses for things. We are all UNION, not just the elected leaders. We can, and should, help and support each other. Valley Central has **GREAT TEACHERS and STAFF**. May we all have a wonderful year.

~ John Bonagura, Treasurer

The ABC's of Education...New York State Education Style (NYSES)

During the past few years there have been a lot of abbreviations coming out of the State Education Department – AIS (*Academic Intervention Services*), PDP (*Professional Development Plan*), APPR (*Annual Professional Performance Review*) – and now, in his infinite wisdom, Commissioner Richard Mills has come up with another – **SASS** which stands for System of Accountability for Student Success. It was approved at the Board of Regents May 2000 meeting and is effective as of July 1, 2000. Specifically the amendments to Sections 100.2 and 100.7 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education enable him to establish school accountability performance

criteria for elementary, middle and high schools. He can also determine whether each elementary, middle and high school is farthest from meeting criterion, below school criterion, or meeting all criterion as well as establish adequate yearly progress targets for schools not meeting performance criteria and review improvement plans for schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress. He can also use a cohort to measure high school accountability and will be holding high school equivalent

programs accountable for student success as well.

Elementary and middle school accountability will be based on the English language arts and math assessments. Beginning September 1, 2000 each elementary and middle school must demonstrate that

sufficient progress is being made towards ensuring that all students achieve the state learning standards This will be determined by the following criteria:

⇒ 90% of students enrolled in the school building must score at Level 2
(continued on page 14)





**NYSUT's Mid- Hudson Regional Office is sponsoring
a New Member Workshop to introduce new members
to the Union and cover different topics of importance to them**

Choose either one to attend

**Monday, September 18th at Ramada Inn, Rte 17K, Newburgh
or Wednesday, October 11th at Holiday Inn,
Washington Ave., Kingston**

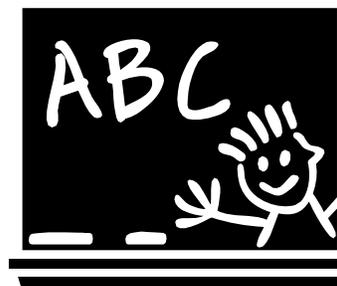
For more information, contact the VCTA Office, 457-5899

T is for teacher...

If it takes an entire village to raise a child, then it certainly takes an entire school community to educate one. Our local parent-teacher groups sponsor programs and trips for students, provide guest speakers and leadership training, and formally recognize the efforts of the staff in a variety of ways.

The Parent Teacher Associations or Organizations that are active in all of Valley Central's

school buildings need our support. Many members already support their building PTA, PTO, or PTSA by attending meetings, fundraisers, and/or contributing the modest dues necessary for membership in one of these organizations. Please consider joining the organization or association in your building by responding to membership drives. Many of these groups utilize these drives as a fund-raiser. And the state awards local PTA's with 100% partici-



tion. As a member you are welcome to take as active or inactive a role as your schedule permits.

Understanding your paycheck

VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO 1 - PAYROLL ACCOUNT 112919

Name		Emp#	Soc Sec No.	Fed	State	M/S	Prd. Ending	Check Date	Check#	
STUBB, IMA		19421	12345678	0	0	M	07/02/99	07/16/99	112919	
Gross		Fica	Medicare	Federal	State	Local	SDI	NET		
CPP	1052.11	65.23	15.26	132.25	38.40			666.41		
YTD	16595.72	1028.92	240.65	1953.33	554.68					
RETIREMENT		Normal	Loans	Arrears	Total	KEY BANK, NEWBURGH NY				
ERS NO	CPP	31.56			31.56	C 666.41				
TRS NO	YTD	276.83			276.83					
DEDUCT		UNTWAY	CR UN	VCTA	TSA	FLEX				
CPP	3.00	100.00								
YTD	36.00	1400.00								
Budget Code	Hours/Days	Actual Sal	CPP Amount	Fisc Gross	Budget Code	Hours/Days	Actual Sal	CPP Amount	Fisc Gross	
A230168		28407.00	1052.11	2104.22						
A2110463										
A285015										
A90608										
A285515										

usually finished in the first check of February. This year's dues are 43.80 for each of those 10 checks.

TSA = pre-tax deduction to your TSA

Flex = pre-tax deduction to cafeteria 125 plan

The Bank name is present if you elect to utilize Direct Deposit of your check. *Always check to make sure that the*

money went to the right bank, you may only send your check to one place. If you would like to have your check Direct Deposited, contact Polly Coniglio, 457-3171 before October 1st.

Budget Codes:

A21101214 = Salary

Dept. Chair/Super. pay is added in to regular salary

A2110461,462,463 = Chaperone pay

A285015 = Extracurricular Salary

September 15th is a pretty important day for most employees in the district. It is the first pay date of the new school year. All of us understand the part of the check that we cash, it is the stub that is often a mystery. Here is a listing of what all those abbreviations and number codes mean.

CPP = Current Pay Period

YTD = (Calendar) Year to Date

FICA + Medicare = Social Security

Federal = Federal tax

State = State tax

Retirement = either NYSTRS, if you're a teacher or NYSERS, if you're a SRP. The amount of your contribution is listed under **Normal**.

UNTWAY = United Way donation

CRUN = deductions that you elect to put in the Valley Central Federal Credit Union.

VCTA = your union dues deducted in 10 consecutive pays beginning the second paycheck in September and

Adding up your days...

You will receive your "Absence Verification Summary" in your first paycheck. This summary reflects the days that you were actually absent, and the reason for the absence. There are basically five categories of absence; sick days, illness in family days, bereavement, field trip, and association days.

Each year you are allotted 15 sick days and 3 personal days; whatever you don't use are accumulated. In this example, 52.75 days were accumulated as of June 30, 1999 and 15 more sick days and 3 personal days were credited for the 1999-2000 school year on July 1, 1999 for a total of 70.75 days. 7 sick days and 0 personal days were used during last year, so 63.75 are accumulated as of June 30, 2000. Add 15 more sick days and 3 more personal days as of July 1, 2000 and this person now has a total of

10/01/99 Sick Leave	1.000				
12/15/99 Sick Leave	1.000				
01/07/00 Sick Leave	1.000				
02/08/00 Sick Leave	1.000				
02/28/00 Sick Leave	1.000				
03/22/00 Field Trip	1.000				
04/06/00 Association Day	1.000				
04/07/00 Association Day	1.000				
05/01/00 Sick Leave	1.000				
05/17/00 Sick Leave	1.000				

REAS REASON	DAYS	ACCUMULATED	CREDITED	DAYS	CARRY
CODE DESCRIPTION	TAKEN	AS OF 06/30/99	ON 07/01/99	AVAIL	FORWARD
1 Sick Leave	7.000	52.750	15	60.750	60.750
2 Sick Leave-Buy Back	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
4 Illness in family	0.000	0.000	3	3.000	0.000
5 Bereavement	0.000	0.000	3	3.000	0.000
6 Personal business	0.000	0.000	3	3.000	3.000
9 Field Trip	1.000	0.000		0.000	0.000
13 Association Day	2.000	0.000		0.000	0.000

	10.000				

81.75 going into the 2000-01 school year.

The reason those 18 days for the 2000-01 year aren't reflected on the summary is because they are earned as you work. The only people who wouldn't have the total 18 days for 2000-01 are those who are out on unpaid leave, such as child care leave, or those who have accumulated more than 185 sick days since the contract caps the sick day accumulation at 200 days. That is why that many choose to, you take advantage of the sick leave buy-back so that you don't accumulate

more than 182 days at the end of any year (182+18=200).

Field trip, illness in family and bereavement days are granted when needed and do not accumulate if unused. Association days are utilized by the VCTA Executive Council to attend conferences and the like.

The teacher shortage

The teacher shortage is coming, the teacher shortage is coming.... is a cry that has been heard in recent years around the country. Has it arrived?

In 1998, the US Education Department estimated that America would need 220,000 new teachers a year by 2008; there had only been 150,000 new teachers a year from 1988-1998. That was about 70,000 teachers a year less than would be needed. Why? The problem is two-fold; a large number of teachers are facing retirement and there is a growing population of school-age

children.

The problem is compounded by the fact that teacher pay does not keep up with the private sector, and according to C. Emily Feistritzer, an independent researcher who studies the teaching profession, the shortage is not so much that college students are not studying teaching as much as the fact that over 30,000 newly credentialed teachers a year are choosing not to teach. Instead they are going into other fields. To



this end, some states and cities are giving signing bonuses to new teachers or enticing them with other incentives, such as cash towards the closing costs of homes as in Baltimore.

The move towards tighter standards for teachers also is part of the problem. Some education majors can not pass the
(continued on page twelve)

state exams for certification or are discouraged by the

Are you a veteran teacher?

Not sure whether you're a veteran teacher yet? See how many of these statements apply to you....

1. When out in public you feel the urge to snap your fingers at children you do not know to correct their behavior.
2. You have no life from August to June.
3. When you mention "vegetables", you're not talking about a food group.

4. You encourage an obnoxious parent to check into charter schools or home schooling.

5. You can tell if it's a full moon without ever looking outside.

6. You can't have children because there's no name you could give a child that wouldn't bring on high blood pressure the moment you heard it.

7. You think caffeine should be available in intravenous form.

8. Marking all A's on report cards would make your life SO much easier.

9. Your personal life comes to a screeching halt at report card time.

10. Meeting a child's parent instantly answers the question, "Why is this kid like this?"

~ from the Internet

National Board Certification

National Board certification provides a way to improve student learning by establishing high standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. National Board certification was developed for teachers by teachers. There are 62 teachers in NYS with National Board Certification. There are 100 applicants for this year.

To receive National Board Certification a teacher must complete a multi-component assessment which

examines talent, skill and knowledge. There are sixteen areas of certification titles. The application fee is \$2300 and the Al Shanker National Board Certification program provides \$2500 per teacher in grants to help defray costs associated with the application fee for those who qualify.

Some districts throughout the state are recognizing the value of having nationally board certified teachers on their staff by providing them with additional stipends above their normal salary. Locally, the

New Paltz School District is awarding \$5000 to teachers who achieve this certification. At this time Valley Central is not offering any additional stipend to teachers who achieve national certification. On the state level, a teacher in NYS who achieves National Certification will be exempt from the requirement of 175 professional development hours.

For more information, contact the National Board at 1-800-22-TEACH.

VC ECHOES wins four national journalism awards

When Patti Lunden took on the job of editor of the VC ECHOES along with her position of Association Secretary last year, I must admit I was nervous. It was a lot of work for one person to do, let alone do well. My fears were allayed after the publication of last year's first edition which was well received by the membership. The subsequent issues were even better and throughout the year many members would tell me how pleased they were with the newsletter. We even received accolades from the head of our Mid-Hudson Regional office, Ann Weiss.

This past April we decided to enter the newsletter in the AFTCA journalism competition hoping for some good constructive criticism. The AFTCA is the Communications Association of the AFT. They provide help to the editors of AFT organizations. We were pleasantly surprised in June

when we were informed that the VC ECHOES had won an award; after the AFTCA conference in Philadelphia this past July we found out that we had not won just one award, but four.

The VC ECHOES competed in Class III for locals with memberships of 501-2000. We won an Award of Merit in the Best News Story category, for the article, "Laurie Micco wins HCLC Community Service Award" written by Joan Grippo and Kathi Russo and published Nov. 1999. We won another Award of Merit in the Best Feature Story category for the article, "What's in a name..." by Patti Lunden published in Nov. 1999. We tied for an Award of Merit in the Best Photo or Art for "got union" published January 2000. We received an Honorable Mention in the category of Best Layout for the front page of



the March 2000 issue.

I would like to congratulate Patti on the success of the VC ECHOES. These awards are evidence of the dedication she has consistently shown in her involvement in the VCTA. And I would also like to thank our members who contributed articles last year. Each issue last year consistently had nine to ten contributors. This was

even noted by one of the competition judges. I look forward to another year of outstanding ECHOES, especially since Patti will now be focusing all of her attention on the newsletter.

*~ Tim Brown
President*

The teacher shortage...(continued from page eleven)

requirements for certification. And the number of new teachers with less than five years experience who leave the profession adds to the problem as well.

According to an AFT study of the teacher shortage, the teacher shortage definitely exists for big cities and in certain fields, especially math, science, bilingual, special education, foreign language, computer teachers, and school psychologists. The study found a small surplus of elementary and social studies teachers while all other fields seemed to balance out.

Has the teacher shortage been felt here at Valley Central? Many of us are aware in recent years that the District has faced the

frustrating problem of hiring teachers only to have them resign the job before the school year even began to take a position in a neighboring district. So, was the shortage felt here this year? Assistant Superintendent for Personnel, Mary Ann Wilson has said, "There is a shortage in specific areas of the curriculum." Wilson cited those areas for Valley Central were secondary math, foreign language and reading. Wilson stated that while the number of applicants for those fields were sparse, there were more than enough applicants to choose from in the fields of elementary and special education. Overall, Wilson noted that according to Superintendent Dr. Arthur Nugent in comparison to other area districts we've done fine

this year filling positions, having almost every position filled by mid-August.

As we enter the 2000-01 school year, we are still seven years away from the end of this projected shortage. Certainly its implications will continue to be felt on a national, state and local level, especially as we enter into the next round of contract negotiations in 2002.

*~ Patti Lunden
Editor*

Schools and Politics: Shaping the 2000 Agenda

The American Labor Movement has long been a champion of free, universal public education. Since the Workingman's Party in New York City in the 1820's, organized workers have seen a quality public education for all as the fundamental key to economic well-being and the basis for our nation's democracy.

Throughout the years, the AFL-CIO and its predecessor organizations, have fought hard to insure that every child has access to the best public education possible and vigorously opposed attempts to undermine our public schools or use vouchers and similar schemes to drain needed fund to support public education.

According to numerous public opinion polls, education is the single most important concern of voters in the 2000 election for president and in the US Senate race in New York State. Vice President Gore has a strong position in support of improving our public schools while George W. Bush has taken a position supporting vouchers and attacking the teachers' union. Bush argues that public schools are failing and only "competition" will get them to improve.

There is no question that our public schools must become better. But it is important to realize that *there have been major improvements in public education since the early 1980's.*

The Center on Education Policy and the American Youth Policy Forum have recently published a report entitled "The Good News About American Education" that highlights important improve-

ments in public education over the past 15-20 years.

The report notes that two-thirds of US citizens surveyed mistakenly believe that the high school dropout rates are going up and are higher than they were 25 years ago. In fact, dropout rates are lower today with an especially noteworthy decline in the dropout rate of black youth.

Students today are also taking tougher courses than their predecessors did in the early 1980's. In fact, the percentage of students completing a core academic curriculum that includes four year of English and three years each of social studies, science and mathematics more than tripled between 1982 and 1994 with large increases in all racial groups. The percentage of student taking higher-level courses such as trigonometry, chemistry and physics has also gone up significantly.

Student achievement is also improving, according to the study. As measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), mathematics scores rose for all three age groups tested, with 9-year-olds making the most progress since 1982. Black and Hispanic have made significant gains. Science scores have gone up similarly.

Many people believe that SAT scores have been falling, but those scores have gone up in the 1990's and the ACT program has concluded that the students taking the exam today are as prepared as those in the past.

Despite the recent event in Littleton, Colorado and elsewhere, the overall crime rate is down. Children are safer in school than in

the community or at home.

Many more students are going to college and completing four year degrees and the number of women earning professional and graduate degrees have gone up significantly.

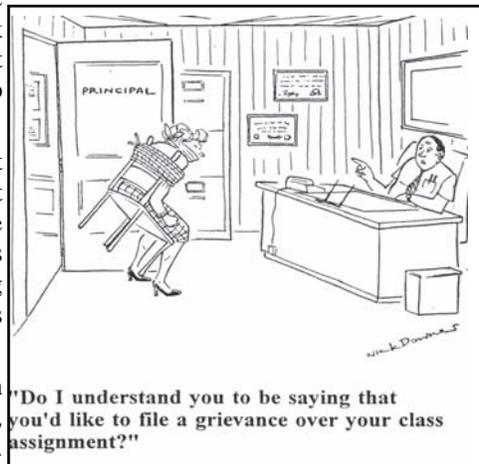
Americans – and political candidates– should give credit to public education for the progress. At the same time, the debate should be about how we continue to improve our public schools and insure that students reach the higher academic standards being demanded of them, not attack our schools or the dedicated teachers who are performing our nation's most important job.

This study is available at www.ctredpol.org or www.aypf.org.

~ Denis M. Hughes, President, New York State AFL-CIO

This column represents the views of the state's labor movement on topics of current interest.

Education is the single most important concern of voters in the 2000 election....



The ABC's of Education...(continued from page nine)

- ⇒ A percent established by the Commissioner must score at Level 3 and above
- ⇒ Each year the Commissioner will establish the percent of students at or above Level 3

High School accountability is based on the performance of students in the annual cohort on the graduation assessments in English Language arts and mathematics and the annual drop out rate. The criteria for a high school accountability performance are as follows:

- ⇒ 90% of students in the annual high school cohort must meet the graduation assessment in English language arts and mathematics
- ⇒ The drop out rate must be 5% or less

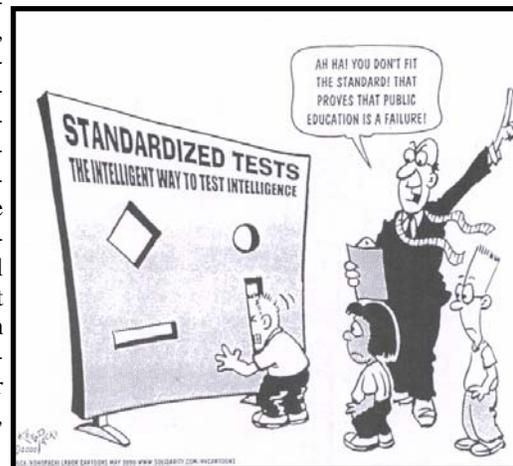
The annual high school cohort for 1999-2000 includes those students first enrolled in ninth grade in 1996 and who were also enrolled on June 18, 1999. The cohort excludes students with disabilities who are exempt from state assessments, Limited English Proficiency students who enter after their 17th birthday and are assigned 9th or 10th grade, students transferred to HS equivalency programs and deceased students. For 2000-01 the cohort will include students first enrolled in 9th grade in 1997, and enrolled in school on the

BEDS day in 1999.

What happens if a school fails to meet the accountability criteria? The superintendent must then develop a LAP (Local Assistance Plan) describing what will be done to raise student performance. The Commissioner must also set adequate yearly target goals to close the gap between school accountability criteria and the school's performance when it was initially below criteria. If the school doesn't meet the yearly target goal it will be identified as a school in need of improvement. The school must then develop a SIP (School Improvement Plan) which must be reviewed and updated annually each year if the school does not reach its progress targets.

Any school that does not meet or exceed the school accountability criteria and has conditions that threaten the health, safety and/or welfare of students or has been a combination of factors affecting student learning will be classified as school under registration review (SURR). These factors include student absenteeism, high levels of school violence, excessive student suspensions, building health and safety standards violations, high rates of teacher and administrator turnover,

excessive rates of referrals to special education, excessive rates of participation of students with disabilities in alternative assessments, excessive transfers of students to alternative high school and high school equivalency programs, excessive use of uncertified teachers or teachers out of tenure area, districts that fail to provide data required by the Commissioner and districts where excessive percentages of students fail to fully participate in the state assessment program. Such schools will be classified as school under registration review (SURR) and the school must develop a corrective action plan involving school staff, parents and members of the community to address the finding of the Commissioner's team.



Saving for Retirement...(continued from page three)

annuity. There are five TSA companies, (*Richard Gridley Tax Relief Investments, Joy Insurance and Investments, American Express Financial Advisors, Advest, and Aetna*) which the VCTA has allowed access to its membership during the Health/TSA Fair. Two other companies, Faculty Services Corporation and Myles Financial Advisors, are invited as a courtesy to Central Office

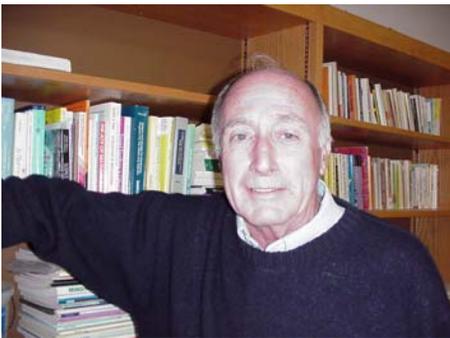
since they do business with the District. The VCTA expects all the companies at the Health/TSA Fair to provide our members with the best advice and investment options and if this is not the case, they will not be invited back. You can choose any financial advisor or company, (*according to Polly Coniglio in Payroll, over 55 companies are utilized*), to make an investment with, or you

can bury your money in the backyard and hope for the best, the VCTA just wants to be sure you're aware of the option of TSA investing. If you do want to set up a TSA or make a change in the amount you are currently investing, you must do so by December 31st. If you would like information on the VCTA approved TSA providers, contact the Union office at 457-5899.

The VCTA is hosting a
Fall Fest for all members,
 on October 20th at Stony
 Ford Country Club from
3:00 – 6:00 PM.
Hors d'oeuvres /Cash bar /
Prizes

This event is free for all active and re-
tired members
and their spouses or significant others.
 Come spend time with your old

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



Act I, Scene I –

The strains of the familiar refrain of

“Danny Boy” (familiar, at least, to all Irishmen) are heard in the distance, “But summer’s gone and autumn’s in the meadow;” back-to-school dreams haunt the sultry August nights – it must be that time again. School bells chime “September Song.” Welcome back! The retirees wish all the active teachers and school related personnel a very happy and productive year, proving once again that the VC staff is top notch. A

special welcome from us old geezers to VC’s rookies. May you have a pleasant, satisfying experience as you join the Valley Central family.

I’m writing this on August 13th for an August 25th deadline from our beloved editor. The reason for the early writing is that the McFadden clan is heading for son Matt’s wedding in Seattle on August 19th and will not return

(continued on page 16)
 until August 25th. I hope the other

Mac's musings (from the Retiree side) (continued from page 15)

coast is ready!

What is "Mac's Musings" and why are we subjected to it each month? (*a valid question! - you may, however, skip this explanation if you recall it from previous Septembers or even if you don't*) The column attempts to bring the thoughts, needs and activities of retired teachers to those still active in teaching and *vice versa*. Copies of the VC ECHOES will continue to be sent to all retirees covered by the VCTA and NYSUT.

Editor's Note: "Mac" is Kevin McFadden, a much beloved and respected retired member who was the English chairperson at the High School. He was long known as the spirit of the Vikings for his calling of the VC Varsity football games where he could often be heard proclaiming "joy in the land of the Vikings" with every touchdown. Kevin served on the VCTA Executive Council for many years as the NYSTRS representative and as a building rep. Upon retirement in 1993, Kevin became a retiree representative and has served as a historian and mentor to many a representative and officer.

Here's Help

If you are an active and are contemplating retirement in the not-so-distant future, the VC delegates to the annual NYSTRS meeting are John Solan (HS) and Kathleen Takvam (Montgomery). The alternate is Diana Shiner (Walden). All will be responsive to your concerns and questions. For retirees who have some questions on their benefits, Orin Segall (retired HS Business) and I are your representatives to the VCTA Executive Council, and we will be happy to help. I can be reached at (845) 778-7236.

An update

This year I sent out 184

announcements regarding the annual Retiree Luncheon on Wednesday, September 6th. The luncheon is in its eighteenth year and is open to all VC retirees. I'm hoping to have 100 retirees present this year. Last year we had 81. At this writing, there have been 60 responses, of whom 50 which attend. A special thanks to Polly Coniglio at Central Office for updating our total retiree list and for providing labels and to Patty Depew (HS Secretary) for typing and copying our printed material.

Condolences to the children of Wayne Gillispie and the family of Janet Frisbie; Wayne and Janet passed away this summer. Both worked in the middle school. Wayne retired eight years ago; Janet retired this past year. May they rest in peace.

Nobody asked me, but...

The COLA has been signed. Many retirees will note a pleasant adjustment in their retirement checks in September, and all retirees will receive a cost-of-living adjustment in ensuing years. This is a great victory for NYSUT and for all active and retired teachers. Even the state government deserves a hand for finally waking up to rectify some long-standing inequities, especially for those teachers and school related personnel who retired many years ago.

The bill to enhance pensions of veterans has passed and awaits the governor's signature. Do it, George!

Pension Enhancement for active teachers has passed! (one month of additional service credit for each year of service up to a maximum of 24 months at no cost! (Tier I & II) Tiers 3 & 4 will no longer have to contribute 3% of their salary after 10 years in the System!) What a great and well

deserved boon to our active teachers. Here you see your VOTE-COPE donations at work in lobbying the legislature (*who, as I have noted, usually need a spur to the flank*).

Continued BOO! And on-going Bronx cheers to the aforementioned legislators for neglecting to dismantle the four tier retirement system. Nudge them by mail, e-mail, phone calls. Ditto for their refusal to allow tier reinstatement for retirees who are eligible. Do away with "different strokes".

Every school district needs a mentoring program for rookie teachers. Districts should subsidize one-on-one mentoring by remunerating mentors and by allowing common planning time. Expensive? Yes. Worth it? Yes. If a district wants to nurture and retain young teachers, the reward will be one hundred fold.

And you thought I'd never stop...

I'll include news from retirees about their lives after VC in the next issue. Thanks for turning to the back pages and for reading this far. It's great to be back chatting with you.

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

Peace.

~ Kevin McFadden

Safe Schools Legislation

During the last week of June, the Senate and the Assembly passed legislation that will improve school safety. The bill was a result of a three way agreement between Gov. Pataki, Senator Bruno and Speaker Silver.

The highlights of the Safe Schools Bill follows:

- ⇒ Teachers will have the authority to remove disruptive students pursuant to provisions of a locally adopted code of conduct.
- ⇒ An assault on a teacher or school employee is raised to a Class D felony.
- ⇒ Boards of education are required to adopt a detailed code of con-

duct to provide the maintenance of order on school grounds.

- ⇒ Boards of education are required to develop school safety plans which provide for district wide and building level plans for crisis response and management.
- ⇒ A uniform violent incident reporting system is to be established requiring schools to furnish information to State Ed. on violent and disruptive incidents.
- ⇒ The State Ed. Dept. is to develop interpersonal violence prevention education and training packages



for K-12.

- ⇒ The Commissioner is required to ensure that school conference days include school violence prevention and training.
- ⇒ The Board of Regents is directed to include a civility, citizenship and character education component in the course of instruction in K-12.
- ⇒ Employees of school districts are given whistleblower protection if they make a report about a suspected act of violence.

Who's who in the VCTA...*(continued from page eight)*

teacher at East Coldenham, is responsible for financial accountability, dues, membership reporting, professional issues and reporting on the Board of Education.

Each building also has representatives according to the number of members in the building. Building representatives bring questions, issues and concerns of members to Executive Council meetings each month. They also report back to the members from these meetings. The building representatives also serve on at least one committee. The subcommittees of the VCTA Executive Council are as follows: Grievance, Mid-Hudson Labor Council, VCTA History, Membership Reporting, New Member, Public Relations, Political Action, Professional Issues, Social Activities and correspondents for the Newsletter. A list of the building representatives can be found on the back page of every issue of the VC ECHOES. While building representatives are not paid positions on the Executive Council, their local dues are refunded at the end of the

year if they have been active on their committees and attended 8 of 10 meetings.

The rest of the Executive Council consists of the Secretarial representative who represents the concerns and the issues of the 21 building secretaries in the district. The paras have their own building representatives and hold their own monthly meetings. The paraprofessional representative present the issues and concerns of the paraprofessionals to the Executive Council. The non-voting members of the Executive Council are the retiree representatives, the newsletter editor, and the NYSTRS and Benefit Trust representatives.

The Executive Council meets generally on the third Tuesday of each month at the High School Professional Library. The meetings are open to the general membership and there is a time period of public participation set aside during the new business portion of the meeting. The minutes of those meetings are posted



Building Representatives enjoy the Executive Council Dinner last June.

in the faculty rooms of each building and highlights are printed in each issue of the VC ECHOES.

The Executive Council relies on you, the general membership to report your concerns, issues and questions. Often what you think may be an isolated incident, may not be and your information can, and often does, make a difference.

2020: The Last Teacher

It's the year 2020, the target year of the online education initiative launched by governor Locke in the 1990's. The Last Teacher has just glumly closed the door on the last actual old-fashioned community college class taught in Seattle, the kind of class where students and teacher actually meet together in a room.

But there is hardly a nostalgic mood. Technology has run circles around a faculty that was slow to react and an administration that did not consider consequences.

Full-timers were initially mostly employed designing online courses and working with software designers. After these systems were perfected, the "part-time problem" was simply solved by laying off all the part-timers. The full-time tenured teachers were allowed to disappear mostly by attrition, gradually becoming dinosaurs roaming vacant and dilapidated college buildings.

Some of the former classroom space is now being used for unemployment support groups,

No one ... is interested in supporting institutions of which they have no fond memories of actual teachers and actual classmates.

and the state is trying to interest software companies in buying up the old buildings, but the companies consider them too quaint.

At first, the administrators were clapping their hands with glee at the cost savings of software replacing teachers, until they realized they were next. The state legislature saw no need for most administrators once most teachers had been fired, so management got the pink slip too as all the state's community college districts were combined into one single standardized online entity in the year 2015.

And although this automatic diploma mill saved a lot of money in some ways, it lost money and spirit in many other ways.

First of all, the alumni fund raisers at colleges has dwindled. No one in the community is interested in supporting institutions of which they have no fond memories of actual teachers and actual classmates.



There is little social aspect to higher education anymore. Students, and the few remaining online instructional assistants, simply log on from their homes, leading their small private lives.

The online newspapers have been reporting lately that the youth of 2020 are lacking social skills and are experiencing more loneliness and depression.

"It's not a big wonder," thinks the Last Teacher as he hands his keys over to the security guard.

~ A Science Fiction opinion by Doug Collins, of The Faculty Voice, Seattle Community College Federation of Teachers

Editor's Note: A 36-year-old billionaire philanthropist, Michael Saylor, has announced a \$100 million commitment to create a "Cyber University". One columnist has said "Such e-education poses a serious threat to the high-cost monopoly of higher education— and, by inevitable extension, is a threat to monopolies in secondary and elementary education, as well".

Pension Package Signed

Governor Pataki signed the COLA bill and the Tier I and II enhancement bill as well as the Tier III and IV reduction bill on Tuesday, July 11, 2000.

These retirement improvements affect both active and retired members. The COLA or permanent cost-of-living adjustment benefits current and future retirees securing their future income. **Tier I and Tier II** members of the NYSTRS and NYSERS will be afforded one additional month of service credit for each year up to 24 months which translates up to a 4% increase in their pensions.

Tiers III and IV members will no longer be required to contribute 3% of their salary after they have 10 years of membership.

There are other bills that have passed both houses but await the governor's signature as of late August. There is a bill which would **equalize the benefit reductions** currently imposed on Tier IV members who retire prior to age 62 with less than 30 years of service (current max.=38.3%) to those imposed on Tier II (current max. 27%). Another proposes that the **death benefit option** be improved to give members

who selected death benefit #1 the best benefit available and to automatically provide death benefit #2 to new entrants. There is also legislation which would afford veterans a real opportunity to **purchase credit for military service** and other active members to **purchase credit for previously uncredited service**. The traditional early retirement incentive also passed. **Contact Gov. Pataki through the NYSUT web site and encourage him to sign these bills!**

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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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, Richard Steger (Walden)
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*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 September 19, 2000 .
Any articles submitted to the VC
Echoes will also be posted on the
VCTA Web page.*

Yes, membership has its benefits!

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Keeping Children Center

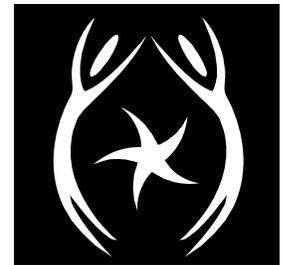
Last year, the VCTA adopted the motto, "Putting Children Center"; today you received a lanyard imprinted with that motto and our logo. As I read about and subsequently wrote about Commissioner Mills' SASS plan (pg. 9), it occurred to me that our position and commitment to putting, and keeping children center in education is needed now more than ever.

The higher standards movement, which is fundamentally a good thing, coupled with the insistence that education can be run like a business has consequently put a lot of focus on tests in the recent past. Although it is often denied that the test is the "thing", it seems more than ever before, it is. As this pressure intensifies it is up to those of us on the front lines of the education of our children to speak

out and be their advocates insisting that it is not test scores as much as the educational experience – it is not the product, but the process that matters.

W. B. Yeats said, "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." A filled pail is easily measured and categorized, a fire is not.

Education in this state and this country is directed and legislated by folks who haven't been in a classroom on a daily basis for a long time. Yet, they decide how today's classrooms should run and what is important in today's education. It is up to those of us who are in those classrooms every day to speak up and speak out on the issues of education. To insist that they listen to us. To tell them that an English or Math score is not the only measure of educational success. To tell them that physical education, music, business,



home careers, technology, art, social studies and science matter just as much. To make them understand that education is not a business, it is a public service. To tell them that sometimes the fruits of a lesson taught today are not realized for a long time. It is up to us to make them put children in the center of education. How do we do this? By doing what we do best; we teach them. We teach them that the successful education of a child is so much more than just a test score.

~ Patti Lunden,
Editor