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April is National Poetry Month: Poetry Inspires NYSUT RA Delegates

Keep A-Pluggin' Away by Paul Laurence Dunbar - referenced by NEA's Secretary-Treasurer Becky Pringle

I've a humble little motto
That is homely, though it's true,—
Keep a-pluggin' away.
It's a thing when I've an object
That I always try to do,—
Keep a-pluggin' away.
When you've rising storms to quell,
When opposing waters swell,
It will never fail to tell,—
Keep a-pluggin' away.

If the hills are high before
And the paths are hard to climb,
Keep a-pluggin' away.
And remember that successes
Come to him who bides his time,—
Keep a-pluggin' away.
From the greatest to the least,
None are from the rule released.
Be thou toiler, poet, priest,
Keep a-pluggin' away.

Delve away beneath the surface,
There is treasure farther down,—
Keep a-pluggin' away.
Let the rain come down in torrents,
Let the threat'ning heavens frown,
Keep a-pluggin' away.
When the clouds have rolled away,
There will come a brighter day
All your labor to repay,—
Keep a-pluggin' away.

There'll be lots of sneers to swallow,
There'll be lots of pain to bear,—
Keep a-pluggin' away.
If you've got your eye on heaven,
Some bright day you'll wake up there,—
Keep a-pluggin' away.
Perseverance still is king;
Time its sure reward will bring;
Work and wait unwearying,—
Keep a-pluggin' away.

From The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar | Dodd, Mead And Company, 1922



(Becky Pringle speaking to NYSUT delegates in Buffalo)

Outwitted by Edwin Markham - referenced by NYSUT Executive Vice President Alan Lubin

He drew a circle that shut me out—
Heretic, a rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in!

Shuffle Off to Buffalo: *A Delegate's Report*

By Ellen Korz

On Wednesday, April 1, eight WCT members shuffled off to Buffalo to be with about 2,000 other delegates at the Annual NYSUT Representative Assembly Convention. Sounds like a bad April Fool's joke, but it turned out to be another wonderful experience. This event renews your energy to continue to focus on why you are in this profession in the first place - for the children.

Before we even began our duties at the Convention, we had some time to experience the area and its people. Alexey Golyadkin and his wife picked some of us up for a tour of Niagara Falls and the surrounding area. What was so interesting was that this couple had only been in the US for a year and they knew more about Buffalo and its history than we did. They had both been teachers in Moscow and were here for their son who was in a Masters program. Although they were an interesting couple they didn't steal the show at the Falls. The views were spectacular and the Three Sisters Island they took us to was worth the side trip. Good thing Diane DiChiara had two quarters to lend me, or I wouldn't have been able to re-enter the US. Apparently that's a new Canadian tax upon re-entry to the United States.

The Convention itself was invigorating as it always is. All the school musical groups were wonderful and really showcased the talent so many students possess. The Mayor of Buffalo, Byron Brown, welcomed us and thanked us for coming to Buffalo, the second poorest city in the US, as we were told by the Russian couple. It made me feel better about being there, knowing I was stimulating the economy of this city. So many speakers were on the agenda. All reminded us of the poor economy and the tough times ahead, but urged us to Speak Up, Speak Out - the theme of the Convention. As a product of the turbulent 60s, I welcomed this message. Truly we cannot allow the times to shortchange our students, give back all we have worked for as a union, or allow social injustices.

There were a few highlights for me. Becky Pringle, the NEA Secretary-Treasurer, used the power of poetry to relay the message, "keep plugging away." She spoke of how our commitment and passion that helped in the battle against Patterson's budget must continue. More money must be brought to education for pre-k to higher education. She

asked for our support of President Obama whose vision is to ensure great public schools. Her passion and commitment were so strongly felt through her presentation, she certainly inspired us all.

All the NYSUT executives spoke as well as some politicians. All warned of hard times and urged us not to cave in, especially since it was not our students or our members who created this financial crisis. What better way to inject some more inspiration than to have in attendance three women who took a risk to better their lives and the lives of the children of Southwest Georgia. Three women representing the Southern Alternatives Agricultural Cooperative were presented with \$5,000 to build a playground for the children in their afterschool center. Not only do they run a fair trade pecan facility, helping women stay off Welfare, but they have an afterschool center on the grounds to help with homework, provide snacks, love and play. Their goal is to have their facility running all year and not just five months of the year. What awesome ladies.

That very same day the shooting crisis in Binghamton occurred; a bucket was passed around the assembly and gave the representatives a chance to again demonstrate their generosity and compassion. \$5,000 was collected for assistance to the families of the victims. What would the public say about us doing our part in a time of crisis?

So much went on that was memorable, but mostly I'll recall the fun, the laughs, the great food and camaraderie we enjoyed with each other and our friends from Arlington and even our good friend Lee Cutler, the Secretary-Treasurer of NYSUT. Thanks for electing me to go and to learn.



(WCT Delegates, left to right: Christine Romano, Ellen Korz, Martha Bilsback, Meredith Inkeles, and Diane DiChiara)

Social Workers: NYSUT Speaks Up and Speaks Out While WCSD Board Votes No

By: Meredith Inkeles

BUFFALO: Part of the duties of a NYSUT delegate attending the RA Convention is to participate in the deliberation and passing of proposed resolutions. If resolutions are adopted, NYSUT works towards having them passed as legislation. I had the privilege of attending the Educational Issues Committee where the first resolution brought to the delegates was “Mandatory School Social Workers in Every School.”

When I signed up to attend this committee, the WCSD Social Workers were not on the Board’s chopping block but with 13 locals sponsoring this resolution I knew this issue was on many people’s minds and it is never safe. Social Workers are not mandated and districts typically turn to cut these positions in hard economic times even though schools are responsible for students’ social, emotional, and behavioral welfare on top of their educational needs. So, I was not surprised to receive a call from a fellow WCT member after the Thursday, April 2nd Board meeting alerting me to the WCSD Board’s decision to cut 1.5 Social Workers in an effort to save money.

As my committee meeting began at 9 AM Friday, April 3rd, the Social Worker resolution was first on our agenda. The resolution states, “RESOLVED, that NYSUT include in its legislative program a bill that mandates all public school districts in New York State to employ at least one (1) full-time school social worker in every school building, K-12, when school is in session. It is recommended that this bill should include a provision that New York State provide funding for these positions to offset the costs that school districts have endured as a result of unfunded mandates.” The floor was open to discussion. Some delegates attending were against the resolution but most spoke in favor of it. Finally, a man from Schenectady approached the microphone to speak. He was sent by his local to support the resolution because the Schenectady School District was in the middle of a suicide epidemic. There have been three failed student suicide attempts and four successful student suicides. This delegate had just gotten a call at 7 AM this morning informing him of the fourth suicide. In a large city school district like

Schenectady, aside from Guidance Counselors and Psychologists, there are only 1.5 Social Workers to assist the entire student population. The district has had to reach out to community and religious organizations to deal with this crisis. After this moving speech in favor of the resolution, the question was called and the committee adopted the resolution. I left the committee meeting with a sense of hope that NYSUT will fight for this resolution to become legislation so many of our students will have access to mental health services they desperately need.

WAPPINGERS FALLS: My sense of hope quickly faded as I attended the Monday, April 6th Board of Education meeting. Social Worker positions were once again on the Board’s chopping block. Currently, the District has 8.5 Social Workers servicing 15 schools. Superintendent Powell commented on a webcast with Albany where he asked if the \$1.85 million stimulus money could be used to keep the Social Worker positions. The answer was **YES**; positions could be funded through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) money, but the funds would only be good for 2 years. At hearing this news, Trustee LoCicero proposed to rescind the April 2nd motion to cut the 1.5 Social Worker positions. Trustee Dr. Chandani seconded the motion. Controversial discussion followed. Trustee Lumia commented on how the classroom teachers should do more to help the students with mental health/emotional issues. Board President Bitteker criticized parents saying that we are in the business of education and that the parents should be doing more. Finally, Bitteker would not let Trustee Porpora continue to comment in favor of Social Workers and abruptly ended the discussion. The motion was called to a vote and it failed 5 to 4. Even though the positions would be paid for through stimulus package money, Board President Bitteker, Trustee Incoronato, Trustee Lumia, Trustee McGeary, and Board Vice President Shultz voted no. In favor of rescinding the motion by voting yes were Trustee Dr. Chandani, Trustee LoCicero, Trustee McMahon, and Trustee Porpora.

Motion to rescind failed 5 to 4

Sports Hall of Fame to Induct Twenty-One

By Kathryn Polumbo

The Thomas D. Macrini Sports Hall of Fame will add twenty-one new members to its roster at their Eighteenth Annual Induction Ceremony to be held on **Friday, May 1**. The Hall of Fame currently consists of 326 former athletes and coaches, whose performances in Wappingers' schools from 1927 to 1997 have been recognized by the committee as outstanding. The induction ceremony and dinner will be held at the Best Western, Poughkeepsie.



In addition to the 21 new inductees, the Hall of Fame will honor two Special Service Award recipients. A Special Service recipient is an individual whose service to the athletic program of the WCSD, in capacities other than as a player or coach, has been judged outstanding by the committee. Thirty-eight have previously been bestowed with this honor.

Inducted this year will be: from RCK - **Jeanne (Hadden) Paino, Matthew Williams, Ryan Bergmann, Andrew May, Meghan McNeil and Sara Pomerantz**; from JJ - **Marc Mostransky, Darryl Sullivan, Joe Montalbano, Emily Brownell, Scott Capraro, Matt Doran, Beth (LeBarron) Dowd, Jeffrey Matteo, Brooke (Davey) Milos, Chris Moran, Scott Sniffen, Sarah (Speicher) Tubbs, Jason Van Buren and Mary Sclafani (Coach)**. **Paula Johnson and Sherrill Lazarus** will be receiving Special Service Awards.

If you are interested in attending this year's ceremony, please contact Kathryn Polumbo at 298-5062 for reservation information.

Teacher Resources for Earth Day from PBS

Earth Day is April 22nd. Looking for something to do with your students? Go to <http://www.pbs.org/teachers/activitypacks/science/earthday.html> for resources and activities. A link has also been added to the WCT web page for easy access.

Board of Education Meetings Schedule

- **April 21, 2009 (TUESDAY)** - Board to vote on budget - 8:15 PM at WJH - Fishkill Plains, Myers, Van Wyck
- **May 5, 2009** - Brinckerhoff, John Jay, Vassar - at RCK
- **May 18, 2009** - Gayhead, Orchard View, Sheafe - at WJH
- **June 8, 2009** - Ketcham, Wappingers - at WJH
- **June 22, 2009** - at WJH
- **July 1, 2009**



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Letter to Members

Dear Wappingers Family,

Some of you may know my mom, Eileen Rubin (retired Brinkerhoff teacher). When I was a young child, she was diagnosed with MS. Since that time, I have come to know many others who suffer from the devastating effects of this disease. That's why I registered for the MS Walk and that's why I'm asking you to support my fund raising efforts with a tax-deductible donation.

The National Multiple Sclerosis Society is dedicated to ending the devastating effects of MS but they can't do it without our help. It's faster and easier than ever to support this cause that's so important to me. Simply go to the link at the bottom of this message. If you prefer, you can send your contribution to me at Van Wyck JHS, c/o Allyson Rubin, 6 Hillside Lake Rd., Wappingers Falls, NY 12590. Please make all checks payable to the National MS Society.

Any amount, great or small, helps to make a difference in the lives of people with MS. I appreciate your support and look forward to letting you know how I do.

P.S. If you would like more information about the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, how proceeds from the MS Walk are used, or the other ways you can get involved in the fight against MS, please visit nationalmssociety.org.

You can click on the following link to go directly to my homepage: http://main.nationalmssociety.org/site/TR/Walk/NYRWalkEvents?px=1904243&pg=personal&fr_id=10635&s_tafId=104250.

Thank you,
Allyson Rubin



PR NEWS

By: Emily Guthoff and Ellen Korz

The PR Committee is proud to announce that the recipient of this year's Dutchess County United Teachers Council Public Relations grant of one

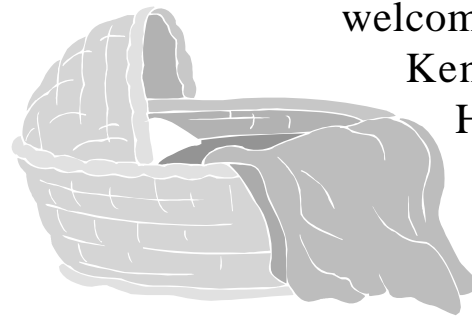
thousand dollars was awarded to the Coordinated Children's Services Initiative (CCSI) of the Astor Home Services.

CCSI coordinates services for the students who are at risk in Dutchess County. The one thousand dollars grant will be used to help fund activities that provide support to our Wappingers students. These students will have the opportunity to attend a summer camp, or explore an artistic endeavor they have a passion for, or obtain a much needed item that without it their risk of dropping out of school would increase.

In these tough economic times, students and their families who have been at risk are now at a crisis level. As teachers, any step that we can take to provide a chance to help a student succeed is a welcomed opportunity.

Good News!

- Congratulations to **Kelly Hanna**, Gayhead Elementary School First Grade teacher, her husband Matt, and their son Brady. They welcomed a baby girl, **Kenleigh Dorothy Hanna**, to their family.



R.A. Reminder

R.A meetings for the remainder of the school year will be held in the RCK Large Group Instruction Room, beginning at 4 PM.

- April 28, 2009
- May 26, 2009
- June 23, 2009

Retiree: Joan Kavanagh



I look forward to my years of retirement because I hope to have much more time for traveling, reading, cooking, classes at my health club and long walks with my wonderful husband who is always incredibly supportive of me in so many ways.

My work with my first and second grade students has been a labor of love. Some of the highlights of my career that made every year a wonderful and rewarding experience were teaching children to read and helping children design and complete projects for our yearly Open House Night. I have always loved Open House Night at Fishkill Plains because it is a very special treat to greet the many former parents and students who stop by to say hello. I feel particularly honored to have had the children of five of my former students in my first grade class.

At Fishkill Plains, I worked with very dedicated and professional faculty and staff members who cared deeply about helping the students and each other. My colleagues at Fishkill Plains have always been kind and eager to share ideas and supplies. The secretaries in the main office have worked very hard every day to make Fishkill Plains a special place for students and teachers.

Over the years, I was lucky to work with compassionate and wise administrators. I was very fortunate to have worked with Mrs. Epstein for the last seventeen years of my career. I learned many important life lessons from Mrs. Epstein.

I will miss teaching very much because of all of the special times and enriching experiences that I had because I was a teacher at Fishkill Plains for thirty six years.

Retiree: Debbie Dvorkin



Retirement is a bittersweet thought for me as I prepare to make this major life change. I have taught first grade for twenty-five years, mostly in Evans, and another nine years in private school. The first grade classroom has been a major part of my life and it's hard to imagine life without it. When I see a pinecone will I reach to grab it to save for when we make bird feeders? When I see a good book, will I think of how my first graders would enjoy it? I will miss the challenges and joys of teaching this most special grade.

It is hard to imagine not walking down the hall to my classroom and greeting all those wonderful friends and colleagues on the way. I work with the best, most supportive people and I will miss them all. However, I won't miss writing lesson plans and doing report cards, nor will I miss correcting papers in bed at night.

Bob and I are looking forward to being snowbirds and spending the winter in our condo in Delray Beach, Florida. I hope to spend a lot more time with my four grandchildren and I look forward to taking more time to smell the roses. It's been a great ride!

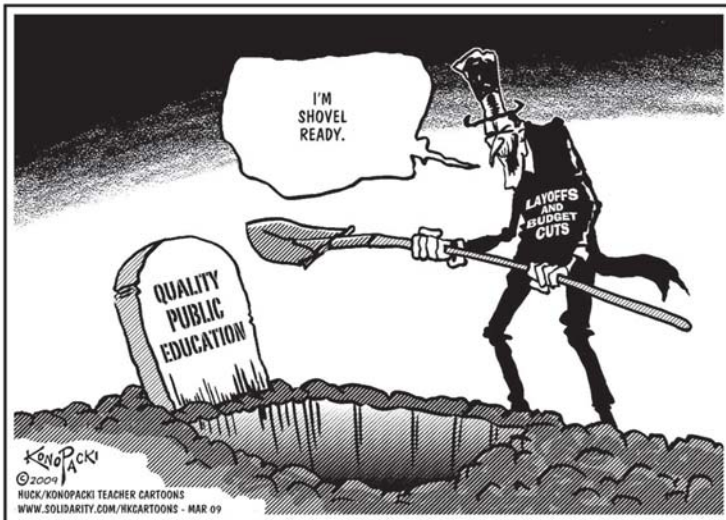
What You Missed at the April 6, 2009 BOE Meeting

√ Powell remarked that if the Board wants to have a 0% increase in the 2009-2010 budget, another \$3 million needs to be cut.

√ Trustee McMahon made a motion to rescind the motion on cutting 9th grade sports; Trustee Lumia seconded the motion. Before the vote proceeded, Trustee LoCicero made a clarifying statement about how the Board just voted against retaining 1.5 Social Workers and were now voting on whether or not 9th grade sports was more important. The vote resulted in Board President Bitteker and Trustee McMahon voting to rescind the motion and all other trustees voting against. With this voting result, there were some profanities uttered from the audience and a number of pro-sports families got up and left the meeting.

√ Board policies 1900, 5420, 5421, & 1600 are under consideration by the Board and are now on the WCSD web page for public viewing.

√ The Board voted to reinstate a policy that children can be bused to all licensed day care providers regardless of the facility being a large commercial center or a “mom & pop” daycare. A *Poughkeepsie Journal* article is available online at <http://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/article/20090411/NEWS02/904110324/1007>.



Trustees:

Christine Romano, Chairperson
Betty Seifert, Treasurer
Erin Mulligan, Secretary
Philip Gertler, Trustee
Pasquale Delli Carpini, Trustee
Linda Leito, Administrator

WCT telephone number: 845-227-5065

Daniel H. Cook telephone number: 1-800-342-6651

Important information for all members:

- √ You must let the WTF know of any change in your personal information as soon as possible
- √ Student verification forms must be sent to Daniel H. Cook every semester
- √ Dental and prescription reimbursement forms are on line at the WTF website
- √ Please direct all concerns or questions to Linda at the WCT office or directly to Daniel H. Cook

Last Day to RSVP

Friday, April 17 is the last day to RSVP for the April 24 WCT Recognition Dinner. Go to <http://wcteachers.org/forms/invite.doc> to download and print the invitation and RSVP form. Checks are to be made out to **WCT**.

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NYSUT 13-270
AFT 1989

phone:

(845) 227-5065

fax:

(845) 227-1977

email:

wct@WCTeachers.org

WCT President:

Pasquale Delli Carpini

Editor & V.P. of Internal

Communications:

Meredith Inkeles

Proofreader:

Diane Davis

Distribution:

Peg Nikola & Alice Heusinger,
WCRT



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FOR SALE: GE Washing Machine, 3-4 years old in excellent condition, \$175 or best offer, call 845-849-2357.

THINK SUMMER! FOR RENT: 4 bedroom beach house in Charlestown, RI, only 2 1/2 hrs from Dutchess Co. 1 1/2 baths, large screened-in porch, newly remodded fully equipped kitchen, large rec room in finished basement with pool table, and outdoor shower. Sleeps 8 comfortably. Just bring your bathing suit! It is less than 1 mile to lovely beach with private beachside parking. It also is within 1/2 mile of stores and casual restaurant. Newport, Mystic, Foxwoods, and Block Island ferry are a short drive away. If interested, call Roberta at 221-9872.

FOR RENT: LAKEFRONT, Lake Wallenpaupack, PA. 1.5 hrs from Fishkill. Swim, fish, motorboat. House on level lot sleeps 8. BBQ, bicycles, HDTV, A/C & new EZ dock \$1,200/wk. For email photos & details call Gary 845-462-4686.

FOR RENT: Beautiful, spacious, recently renovated 2 bdrm, 1.5 bath, bottom floor, end unit condo in POK. New floors throughout, updated kitchen and baths, brand new wall-to-wall carpet in bdrms. Community pool, close to IBM, Marist and Culinary. Excellent for young professionals or a young family. \$1,395/month incl. heat/hot water. For more info or for an appointment, call Brad 845-430-3811.

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