

May 1, 2009

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the WCT COMMENTATOR

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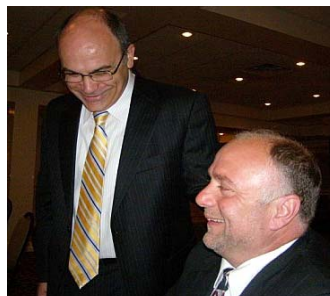
WCT Recognition Dinner Friday, April 24, 2009



(Retirees from left to right: Rob Pribeck, Linda Adams, Debbie Dvorkin, Roni Maschas, Bernadette Murphy, Susan Lewis)



(Rochelle Locetti - WJH, Jane Stockslager - VW, and Catherine Ricker - WJH)



(Pasquale Delli Carpini with WFW President Jeff Savino)



(Kim Mahusky and Flip Gertler - Fishkill)

Retiree: Susan Stillerman



I taught for one year in New York City, six years in Hyde Park, and for 20+ years at Oak Grove. I've taught first grade at Oak for all those years except for the last four years when I taught the Bridge Class.

I find it hard to believe that my turn has come. It has always seemed that retirement was something in the distant future. I cannot imagine not getting up in the morning before the sun rises and then driving off to work. How can it be September without picking apples, making applesauce, graphing apples, creating apple prints, and the list goes on and on . . .

Oak has really been like a second family. I will really miss all the wonderful people whom I have had the good fortune to work with. It will be hard to say goodbye to the children, my colleagues, our wonderful office staff and Mrs. Alvarez-Rooney.

I will take with me wonderful memories, but now it is time to make new memories.

Westport, CT Save the Children Knit One, Save One Campaign: THANK YOU FLO!

By Anne Marie Mahoney

In many poor countries newborn babies die within the first hours of life. WCT supports these children through the Knit One, Save One Campaign, sending kits to pregnant women around the world. Contents vary by country and may contain items such as soap for hand washing, a new blade for cutting the umbilical cord and clean string for tying the cord. In each kit is a hand-made cap to keep the baby warm during the first critical hours and days after birth.

Flo Loftus heard about our campaign and she is the kind of person who delights in helping others in spite of her many personal disabilities. Flo will celebrate her 88th birthday in August. She was the second of seven children born in Beacon and was an inspector for 39 years at Beacon Curtain Fabrics on Rte 52. She then worked on Rte 9G at Stamp Inc. until age 73. During these years Flo lost two husbands to cancer and raised her late son Charles and two nieces.

Flo has volunteered at the Good Shepherd Friendship Center in Rhinebeck for many years. Always dedicated to others, she immediately responded to our WCT

Knit One, Save One Campaign. Bedridden and on oxygen for heart failure and with vision problems, she still has managed to crochet over 200 beautiful little baby hats. She says, "most of my life I have helped other people and I'm glad I am still able help these newborns. I use mostly white or light yarn so I can see." Flo says this project has given her new purpose. She will be getting into a chair with a crochet hook as long as possible.



Letter of Thanks

Dear Pasquale,

I want to thank you for all of your help during my prescription crisis. I tried for weeks to solve my co-pay issue without success. NextRx insisted that I pay the full price for my name brand medication even though I had a note from my doctor indicating I needed to have the name brand. Previously, with Caremark I only paid the \$20 co-pay. NextRx insisted that I needed to pay the full price. However, after calling you with my problem, the price was adjusted and I was picking up my prescription two days later for just the co-pay. Thank you for all of your help and support with this very expensive problem.

Sincerely,
Linda Burnham
Myers Corners

Good News!

- Congratulations to **Colleen Wilber** (KR) who received tenure in the area of elementary, effective date 6/10/09.
- Congratulations to **Colleen Orth** (KR) and her husband Rob on the birth of their daughter Kerriann who was born March 10, 2009. Kerriann weighed 8 lbs., 4 oz.
- Congratulations to **Rob Milroy** (KR), his wife Chandra and sons Aidan and Ronan on the birth of their newest addition, Teagan Claire. Teagan was born April 22, 2009 and she weighed 6 lbs., 7 oz. Special congratulations also go to Teagan's grandmother, **Janet Burati** (KR) and Teagan's aunt, **Janine Sloth** (KR).
- Congratulations on the engagement of **Elizabeth Kulich** (1st Grade teacher at Sheafe) to **Paul Panesa** (1st Grade teacher at Fishkill Plains). This joyful event took place on Saturday, April 25, 2009 at Catlin Gardens in Middletown, New York.

News from the Music Department

The John Jay High School Music Department recently returned from the Dixie Classic Music Festival in Richmond, VA. The trip was a huge success and the following awards were earned by the department:

John Jay Chorus:

EXCELLENT Rating

Judges Award for Outstanding Vocal Performance (Alto Section)

John Jay Orchestra:

EXCELLENT Rating

Judges Award for Outstanding String Performance (Violin Section)

John Jay Combined Bands:

EXCELLENT Rating

Judges Award for Outstanding Instrumental Performance (Woodwind Section) Judges Award for Outstanding Soloist:

Richard Rose

Please congratulate the students when you see them. Thank you for supporting us in this endeavor!



Wappingers was selected as one of the 100 Best Communities for Music Education 2009. The the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation announced the results of its tenth annual "Best Communities for Music Education" survey on April 16, 2009. This nation-wide survey acknowledges schools and districts across the U.S. for their commitment and support of music education in schools. As the economy challenges state and local school budgets to adequately support education, the 124 school districts named by the NAMM Foundation demonstrate the unwavering commitment to provide music education for their students. The NAMM Foundation's mission is to ensure that all children have access to quality music education programs that encourage lifelong participation in music making.

WCT to Sponsor Community Food Drive

By Michelle Ross

In early winter I was making my daily commute to work when I heard on the radio that an elderly woman and her companion arrived at a local food bank to find a note on the door which read, "Sorry we have no food to give out today." The news story went on to say that this elderly woman had been using this food bank for some time and she did not know what she was going to do for groceries that week. This story made me sick to my stomach as I continued on my drive. Before I reached school that morning I was determined to do something to help those in need of food in this area.

The Wappingers Congress of Teachers is running a food drive in all Wappingers Central School District buildings from May 18th until May 27th. In these hard economic times I am grateful that I can put food on my family's table every day. Others in our WCSD community are not as lucky. Children and adults in our country, county, and neighborhoods go hungry everyday. A quick internet search revealed that 1 in 10 households, which include 12.4 million children, in the United States experience "food insecurity", or the inability to obtain sufficient food for their family on a daily basis. This is simply unacceptable!

The food that we collect from May 18th-27th will go to the Zion Food Pantry, which is located in a converted garage at the Zion Episcopal Church. They are 100% non-denominational in regard to the people that they serve. Jack

Devine, member of the Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers, is a very active volunteer at the Zion Food Pantry. He recently told me that the pantry serves 65-70 families on average per week and that they would be in serious trouble if they did not get help from the community and organizations such as the WCT. During the week of April 16th they were able to give each of the 70 clients;

- 1 box of cereal
- 2 cans of tuna fish
- 2 cans of fruit
- 2 cans of vegetables
- 2 cans of soup
- 2 boxes of macaroni and cheese
- 1 jar of peanut butter
- 1 jar of jelly
- 1 jar/can of spaghetti sauce
- 1 box of pasta
- 1 can of stew

We are a large teacher's union and can do great things when we are united in our efforts. The WCT is calling upon every member to bring in a non-perishable food item and place it in the box in your building during this important food drive. These are grim economic times for so many people, so please participate in the WCT Food Drive to help our neighbors who are hungry.

Board of Education Meetings Schedule

- **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**



Take Health Care Survey

Let your voice be heard by participating in the 2009 Health Care for America Survey sponsored by AFL-CIO and Working America, the 2 million member community affiliate of AFL-CIO.

Find the survey at www.aflcio.org/issues/healthcare/survey/index_survey.cfm?source=hc_survey_aflsite.

Shuffle Off to Buffalo: A Delegate's Report

By: Christine Romano

At first I was not very excited at the prospect of going to the NYSUT convention in Buffalo. I had visions of snow, cold weather, and a very long trip getting there. I was right on all counts, but despite all that I had a wonderful time.

It is always energizing being in meetings with hundreds of other educators. All the things we think are so unique to Wappingers are true in other districts. In addition, you get a perspective of the various challenges from all corners of New York. From the very depressed areas of the northern NY cities, to the very small upstate communities, to New York City with its unique problems, and the very wealthy Long Island and Westchester districts, we hear it all. The common threads in all the districts are far greater than our differences.

One meeting I attended was on peer review. Effective for teachers whose probationary period commenced on or after July 1, 2008, peer review will be included in the granting of their tenure. The law states that "peer review, as far as practicable" will be part of the new standards.

What is peer review? Peer review involves teachers assessing the performance of probationary teachers. The purpose of peer review is to focus on improving teacher quality and promoting instructional improvement based on a set of locally adopted standards of criteria that define teaching expectations.

What does "peer review by other teachers, as far as practicable" mean? The process for evaluating teachers is a **mandatory** subject of collective bargaining. Both NYSUT and the State Education Department agree that "as far as practicable" means that peer review by other teachers can only occur when collectively bargained. Local school districts cannot impose a process that involves peer review by other teachers, unless agreement to do so is reached through collective bargaining.

Peer review is not the only component of the granting of tenure. A teacher will still need to have an evaluation by a building administrator. This is in addition to and separate from peer review. To fully understand the entire law I suggest you go the NYSUT website: www.nysut.org

My first reaction to peer review was one of skepticism. It wasn't until I heard from several school districts that I changed my mind. Syracuse, Rochester, and

some smaller districts near those cities have had a very hard time keeping new teachers. They lost at least 50% of their new teachers within five years. Peer review helped change those statistics.

From what they described, peer review is a misnomer. What their programs developed was a very thorough peer mentoring program, with review as only one aspect of it. Experienced teachers were relieved of their teaching duties for a full school year. They mentored up to nine new teachers. They spent three hours a week, every week, in each of the teacher's classrooms. In addition to that, all the peer reviewers met once a week to discuss the progress of the program.

The teachers at this meeting were very proud of the success of their programs. The retention rate of new teachers had improved considerably. They also felt this was a sure way to retain the **best** teachers. Being a part of a new teacher's classroom three hours every week gives a much greater insight into their ability and methods as opposed to the twice yearly observation of an administrator.

We asked them how they went about dealing with a teacher who was not meant for the profession. They said that with this program, there were not too many instances of bad teachers. The support and guidance from experienced teachers helped the rookies have more confidence. In addition, part of the new law requires that a Teacher Improvement Plan be put in place for any teacher who is struggling. This gave these teachers a second chance for improvement.

I had a new respect for the idea of peer review. The evidence was overwhelming that it has been a success in these upstate schools. I don't think any of us would argue with the logic of having an experienced mentor to answer questions, make suggestions and criticize in a constructive way.

The NYSUT convention is always a wonderful experience. Political speakers, inspirational events, sharing ideas, and bonding with colleagues makes for a lasting memory. A short trip to Niagara Falls, dinner at the Anchor Bar, home of the **original** Buffalo wings, and the opportunity to spend time with friends outside of the classroom makes for a great time. In addition, seeing the passion of the political process, the strength of our union, and its dedication to the children of New York makes me proud to be a NYSUT member.

Walk for Diabetes at Kinry Road

By: Anne Seymour

On March 27, 2009 the students of Kinry Road sponsored a "Walk for Diabetes" and raised over \$4,757 for the American Diabetes Association. In a show of school unity, all students in grades four through six participated in the walk around the school grounds on what turned out to be a beautiful spring day. Some students volunteered to collect



pledges and helped raise the funds. Sixth grade teachers, Kelly Evert, Paula Boshart, and Michelle Murphy along with the school nurse, Teri Settle, organized the event and were instrumental in teaching students about this disease. Thanks to everyone involved, we have increased diabetes awareness at Kinry Road.



(Above: Sixth grade students walking to raise diabetes awareness)

(Left: Fourth and fifth grade students walk the school grounds)

AFT Teachers – Celebrate Teachers Week (May 3-9) with Drexel Online

<http://www.aft.org/tools4teachers/Drexel.htm>

Thank you. These are two simple words that you deserve to hear! At Drexel Online, we recognize your commitment to teaching, your passion for knowledge, and the hard work you put in every day. In honor of Teachers Week, Drexel Online offers you the following opportunities to celebrate with us:

■ Attend the AFT Teachers Week Webinar - TUESDAY, May 5, @ 4:00 p.m. As an AFT teacher, how can Drexel Online help you advance your career? Learn about the educational opportunities available to you, your partnership benefits, and how to get started! Register online today!

■ Win a Teacher Appreciation Gift! Enter to win at www.drexel.com/teachersweek anytime before May 10. As a token of our appreciation, Drexel Online is awarding Teacher Appreciation gifts to 200 teachers.

■ Receive a 30% Tuition Reduction. As a special AFT+ Member Benefit, you are entitled to receive a 30% tuition reduction on all graduate education programs and a 10 %-25% tuition reduction on all other programs at Drexel Online.

Deadlines for Drexel Online's education programs are rapidly approaching! Complete your application package by June 5 and start class this summer! Apply online FREE today at www.drexel.com/aft. Be sure to enter "AFT" as your affiliation code to receive your full tuition reduction.

- MS in Teaching, Learning and Curriculum
- MS in Special Education
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- Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) Certificate
- And more! Visit www.drexel.com/aft for a full program list.



Glitch Could Cause Retirees to Owe Taxes

NYSUT Leader - April 24, 2009

The National Education Association, one of NYSUT's national affiliates, is working to remedy an unintended consequence of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that could cause financial hardship for retirees.

New tax withholding tables were issued by the IRS to reflect the Making Work Pay credit on earned income that was contained in the ARRA. While pension benefits are not considered earned income and not subject to the Making Work Pay credit, the IRS nevertheless instructed the payers of retirement benefits to use the new federal withholding tables.

This likely will result in under-withholding on pension income, and retirees, most of whom are on a fixed income, may find themselves unexpectedly owing taxes at the end of the year.

Find more details on this at www.nysut.org and in the April 23 New York Teacher.

Get Your WCT Gear

Short sleeve tees, long sleeve tees, and lanyards are available for purchase at the WCT Office. Shirts range in size from small though 3X. Please stop by the office to make your purchases. Payment for these items must be a check made out to WCT - cash will not be accepted.

WCT Gear is available at the WCT Office:

- ✓ \$9 for short sleeve tee
- ✓ \$12 for long sleeve tee
- ✓ \$2 for lanyards



Trustees:

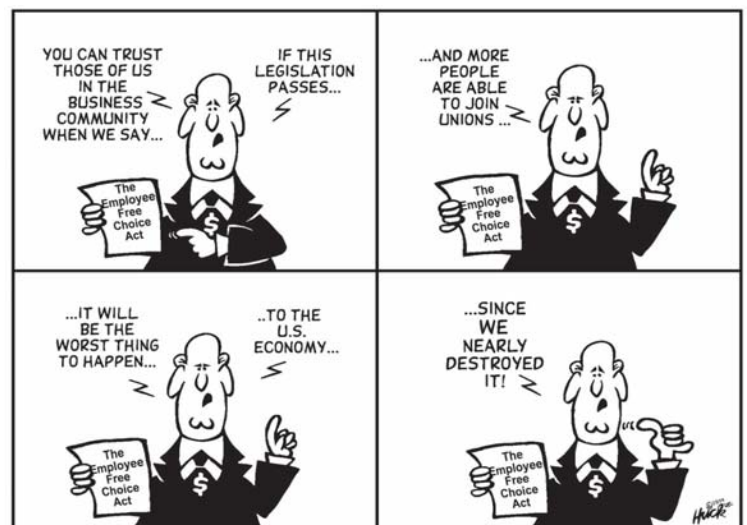
Christine Romano, Chairperson
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Linda Leito, Administrator

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



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Call the Employee Assistance Program

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Contact the 24-hour EAP Crisis Line at **1-800-724-0917** or during regular business hours, you may reach the EAP at **485-3710**.

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