December 16, 2011

From the President’s Pad...

A SEASON OF THANKS AND HOPE

During the holiday season, I am reminded of how fortunate I am to have a supportive family, dedicated members, and an outstanding leadership team that make my job a rewarding experience.

Our Administrative Assistant, Ronnie Dwyer, plays an integral role in the success of the union. Her dedication, experience, and professionalism provide members with an invaluable service.

The commitment, diligence, and zeal of the executive board are vital parts of any successful organization such as ours. My sincerest gratitude goes to: Michael Lyons (VP Elementary), Raymond Koretsky (VP Secondary), Flip Gertler (VP Political Action), Mary Ann Moran (VP External Communications), Kim Mahusky (VP Internal Communications), Martha Bilsback (Secretary), Donna Basile (Treasurer), Theresa Stowell, Michelle Ross, Dawn Sala (Elementary at Large), Diane Di Chiara, Paul Nostrand, and Jane Stockslager (Secondary at Large).

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the members of the Welfare Trust Fund: Christine Romano (Chairperson), Kim Mahusky (Treasurer), Erin Mulligan (Secretary), Flip Gertler (Trustee), and Ronnie Dwyer (Administrator) for preserving, protecting, and improving member benefits.

I would also like to recognize Beth Rizzi (WCT Commentator Editor) and Ellen Mead (Webmaster), who keep members updated on important information, along with Tad Herman (Membership Chairperson). His hard work is valued and highly appreciated.

My heartfelt thanks go to the WCT Building Representatives who, on a daily basis, protect and safeguard the interests and the rights of our members.

We are indebted to the Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers for the many benefits we enjoy today. Along with the able leadership of their president, Susan Roger, they play an essential role in the organization.

It is with great honor and pride that I congratulate the newest W.C.T. members who have earned National Board Certification: Anne Bogen (Guidance), Michele Bresnahan (Generalist/Middle Childhood), Nicole Cauro (English), Karrie Davis Brenner (Guidance), Rena Finsmith (Extra Needs), Elisa Kondor (Foreign Language), Lisa Rutigliano (Mathematics), Patricia Seablom (Generalist/Middle Childhood), Anne Seymour (Physical Education), Jennifer Taylor (Literacy), and Christine Zandstra (English). We should all celebrate such a high level of professional excellence. Recognition for their success also goes to Diane Di Chiara, for her support, guidance, and training of the aspiring candidates.
STAY INFORMED... IT’S UP TO YOU !!!!

{A Monthly Feature in The Commentator}

Respectfully submitted by: Flip Gertler – VP Political Action
Below are some important articles to keep you up to date with current educational issues. These issues will directly affect your job on a daily basis.

NYSUT UNITED – November 2011

The Great Divide: (p.6)

Brief Summary: Educate yourself as to the reasons why “Occupy Wall Street” demonstrations continue to take place all across the country. This article gives examples of income inequities and how it affects public schools and educational funding.

NYSUT UNITED – November 2011

Unions fighting for jobs: (p.9)

Brief Summary: The beginning of this article should be an eye-opener to all. Sometimes we become complacent, thinking that the upcoming budget cuts won’t affect our jobs due to the courses we teach or the years we’ve been teaching. However, with unprecedented decisions that will have to be made this year, we may see situations that we never thought we’d see. At this time, President Obama has resubmitted portions of his jobs plan as separate legislation in an attempt to put teachers back in the classroom and create jobs.

Useful FACEBOOK links for teachers

NYSUT United (formerly known as NY Teacher) --- http://www.facebook.com/NYSUTUnited
AFT – (American Federation of Teachers) http://www.facebook.com/AFTunion
NEA – (National Education Association) http://www.facebook.com/NEA.ORG

Other useful links for teachers

AFT (American Federation of Teachers) - http://www.aft.org/
NYSUT United (New York State United Teachers) – http://www.nysut.org
Speak Up for Education and Kids (National Education Association) - http://www.educationvotes.nea.org/
We Are One (AFL-CIO) - http://www.aflcio.org/issues/states/
A SEASON OF THANKS AND HOPE (CONTINUED)

The negotiating team: Martha Bilsback, Raymond Koretsky, Michael Lyons, Michelle Ross, Jack Devine (retiree representative), Steve Berman (NYSUT's LRS) and I are working diligently with the District to attain a one year extension. It is our sincere hope to reach a fair and equitable agreement. As always, we will keep the membership informed of any developments.

As we enter 2012, some important battles still have to be fought. The relentless attack on our pension system damages both the present and future members and the economy of the state. The governor has proposed a new Tier VI pension plan for newly hired public workers, including teachers. The plan—which must be passed by the Legislature—is being vigorously opposed by NYSUT and other public unions. It would raise the retirement age, increase employee contributions from 3 percent to 6 percent, and lengthen the vesting period from 10 years under Tier V to 12 years in the new proposed Tier VI. It is imperative to remind our elected officials that the New York State Teachers Retirement System is fully funded, and has been recognized as one of the best-managed retirement systems in the nation, if not the world. The proposed Tier VI plan, meanwhile, would produce no short-term savings for school districts and taxpayers. The governor's proposal is a direct assault on middle class workers. It is also a diversion from the state's failure to support its public schools.

This proposal will negatively impact both the state and the local economies for many years, as less people enter public employment due to decreased retirement benefits. In 2009, NYSTRS paid out $5.3 billion in benefits. Of that total, 80%, $4.2 billion, was paid to retirees living in New York State. Those payments created a ripple effect throughout the state's economy. According to a study by the National Institute for Retirement Security, each dollar invested in public pensions by New York taxpayers supports over $11 in total economic activity. One person's pension spending becomes another's income. The study also concluded that retiree expenditures in New York State supported nearly 137,000 jobs, accounting for $10.5 billion in wages and salaries and $4.1 billion in tax revenue to the federal, state, and local governments.

Some ignorant elected officials are buying into the myth that switching from the current defined benefit pension plan 403(b) to a defined contribution plan 401(k) will save money while providing similar benefits to retirees. According to NIRS, statistics show the cost to manage a defined contribution plan is between $1.25 to $2.00 per $100 of assets. By comparison, the median cost to manage the same $100 in a defined benefit plan is 10 cents. NYSTRS does it even more cost effectively - about 7 cents per $100 of assets. Evidently, public pensions work! They are not only less expensive to operate, but have proven to be a great investment for taxpayers, governments, employees, and the economy. Most importantly, they provide middle-class New Yorkers with retirement security in their golden years.

As we can see, the challenges we face for the new year are formidable and the benefits being attacked are dear to us. Therefore, enjoy a well-deserved break and on behalf of myself and my family, I would like to wish you and your loved ones the very best holiday season and a prosperous New Year!

In solidarity,

Pasquale Delli Carpini
WCT President

[Information obtained from NYSTRS and November 2011 Delegates Meetings]
THE MORNING LINE … returns again!
by Bill Green (1966-1999)

It’s been 12 years since I last taught in Wappingers. In these past twelve years since I retired, numerous changes have taken place in education and especially in the classroom. I can only imagine how new technology has affected teaching. Years ago I wrote some “new” comments for Report Cards. Here’s my updated list!

2012 REPORT CARD COMMENT SHEET

1. Excessive “googling” and “tweeting” in class.

2. Continually fails to put Cell Phone on VIBRATE.

3. Inappropriate comments on Facebook.

4. THEIRS KNOW WEIGH EWE can depend on “spell-check” for grammatical assistance.

5. Appears on “You Tube” too often.

6. Saying your “typewriter” is broken does not justify failure to hand in homework.

7. Being late for class because your hallway GPS is broken won’t cut it!

8. “Mouse elbow” and “Text-ting tendonitis” are unacceptable excuses for missing assignments.

9. Too involved with i-Pads, i-Phones, and i-Tunes!

10. Finally received your Term Report …. LMFAO.
RCK CAREER DAY …
NOVEMBER 10, 2011
by Jeanne Paino

On Thursday, November 10th Cathy Kim, Barbara Rowan, Ginny Woych, and Jeanne Paino proudly represented the WCT at the Roy C. Ketcham Career Day. It was a fun way for us to share with young adults our feelings about our profession and teaching experiences. We were very impressed with the enthusiasm and thoughtful questions that the students at RCK presented to us. Hopefully our encouragement was helpful to them. We all agreed that teaching is not just a career, it is a way of life.
Devine and Powers Honored by the Exchange Club of Southern Dutchess

By: Pasquale Delli Carpini

On Tuesday, November 8th, The Exchange Club of Southern Dutchess honored two distinguished WCT retirees, Jack Devine and Charles Powers, with The Book of Golden Deeds Award. I had the distinct privilege of attending the event at the Ramada Inn in Fishkill. Both admirable men humbly serve this community through various charities. They both sit on the Board of Directors of the New Hamburg Yacht Club. Under Jack and Charlie's guidance, the NHYC Golf Committee raised $8,000 this year alone for Meals on Wheels. They also help with the Senior Christmas Dinner, the Christmas Bell Ringing and the Blue Ribbon Committee. These good friends are an unparalleled (comedy) team and have always been involved in humanitarian activities.

Powers taught fifth grade for 35 years at Fishkill Elementary. He and his wife Janet have donated their time, especially over the last six years, to many worthwhile endeavors, like Meals on Wheels. Charlie has also organized and co-chaired fundraisers for the Semper Fi Parents of Hudson Valley for the past three years. The funds raised were used to assemble 103 boxes full of necessities for our troops overseas. As an active member of the NHYC's Board of Directors, Charlie also headed a very successful t-shirt drive for the veterans at Castle Point Hospital. Over 300 t-shirts were collected for the patients at the hospital. He continues to partake in selfless, exemplary work in our community and his efforts are beyond worthy of acknowledgment.

Jack Devine served two years in the US Army, 101st Airborne Division and "kept us out of the war for the duration of [his] enlistment." More than a fighter, he's a great negotiator. Jack taught in the WCSD for 37 years and retired in 1998 "with most of [his] sanity intact." He faithfully serves on the board of the Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers. He is serving his second tour of duty as the retiree delegate on the negotiating team. His sound advice, great sense of duty, and unique humor make him an invaluable asset to me and the negotiating team. Jack's volunteer efforts have improved the quality of life for countless people in the Hudson Valley. For the past 12 years, he has been an integral force within the Zion Food Pantry, an organization that raises 2,000 pounds of food a week for families in need. Under Jack's guidance, the ZFP has grown from two volunteers serving six clients to twenty-five volunteers that provide food to 75-90 clients each week. They also graciously provide dinner for families at Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. Such selfless dedication and altruistic character make Jack one of nature's noblest men.

The Exchange Club of Southern Dutchess "is one of the most active service organizations in the area. [The] organization is comprised of leading business and professional men and women who take an active interest and work together on various projects to serve our community." Jack and Charlie embody this motto and are worthy to join the previous honorees. I especially enjoyed the acceptance speech (comedy routine) of both men. On behalf of the Wappingers Congress of Teachers, I would like to commend and congratulate you both for such a great recognition!
Teachers receive Gold Star Awards

About 200 local teachers, school administrators, children and staff gathered on Oct. 19 at the Children’s Home of Poughkeepsie to honor three local teachers with the Gold Star Award at the 74th annual Teacher’s Tea.

Children from the home wrote essays about their favorite teachers explaining why they thought they deserved to receive this award.

From the many entries, three were chosen, and those teachers were recognized. This year’s winners were, Elrene Thomas from Franklin D. Roosevelt High School, James Chappas from Van Wyck Middle School and Patti Mulcahy from Dutchess BOCES.

The students had the opportunity to read their winning essays before the crowd.

Submitted by Katie Irving; As seen in the Poughkeepsie Journal
Sad News….  
John R. Miller, 29-year-old son of Vee and Richard Miller passed away on September 15, 2011. John was the brother-in-law of Timmy Mohl, a current WCT member and the nephew of Andrea and Steve Miller who are retired employees of our district.

John was the Manager of Community Services at Yale University, School of Music. He lead a program that sends School of Music graduates to New Haven Public Schools to provide music lessons for the children.

Memorial donations in John’s name can be made to:
John Miller Instrument Fund for New Haven Public Schools, Office of the Dean, Yale School of Music, PO BOX 208246, NEW HAVEN, CT 06520-8246.

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Important Information about the WCT Welfare Trust Fund

Trustees:
Christine Romano, Chairperson
Kim Mahusky, Treasurer
Erin Mulligan, Secretary
Flip Gertler, Trustee
Pasquale Delli Carpini, Trustee
Ronnie Dwyer, Administrator

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

From the WCT Welfare Trust Fund

A financial consultant from Stacey Braun Associates, Inc. will be in the WCT office on the following dates:

January 18, 2012
February 15, 2012
April 18, 2012
March 14, 2012
May 16, 2012
June 13, 2012

Appointments are one-hour blocks available between 2:00-6:00 PM on a first-come first-served basis. When you call the office to schedule an appointment, we will forward a questionnaire to you. Please complete it and bring it with you to the meeting.

Since these slots fill up very quickly, call as soon as possible! If the above dates are not convenient for you, call Stacey Braun Associates, Inc. directly and other arrangements may be possible.

Stacey Braun has no affiliations with any 403(b) Providers.

Directions to the WCT Office

- The WCT Office is in the Heritage Square complex at 2537 Route 52 in Hopewell Junction.
- Heritage Square is a short distance east of the intersection of Routes 376 and 52 and west of the Taconic State Parkway.
- Enter the parking lot and make the second right turn into the parking area
  - Enter the main entrance of the building.
  - The sign over the main entrance reads “Prudential”
  - Take stairs or elevator to the 2nd floor
  - Go right, all the way to the end
- Look for the “Wappingers Congress of Teachers” sign posted on the Suite 15 door

Important Phone Numbers:

WCT Office.................................(845) 227-5065
Daniel H. Cook............................(1-800) 342-6651
Mirkin & Gordon (attorneys).............(914) 997-1576
Davis Vision .................................(1-800) 999-5431
Stacey Braun Associates (fin.consultant) ..(1-888) 949-1925
Health Advocate ..........................(1-866) 695-8622

WCT Office Address
2537 Route 52, Suite 15
Hopewell Junction, NY 12533
WCT COMMENTATOR Policy

The content of the WCT COMMENTATOR shall reflect the official positions and policies of the WCT, with the following three exceptions:

1. The President of the WCT should present his/her views in a message to the members from time to time, but not less than bimonthly.

2. Signed Letters to the Editor (of responsible length) containing personal views from members and subscribers shall be published subject to laws of libel.

3. Members of the WCT may place articles adhering to the Canons of Journalism concerned with WCT positions, policies, and issues of interest to teachers in the Commentary Section. (For both Letters to the Editor and the Commentary Section, the writer’s name and WCT affiliation shall be attached, and an editor’s note shall accompany these sections indicating that “The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the official views and policies of the WCT.”)

Reprints of articles from the WCT COMMENTATOR are allowable only with the permission of the WCT President.

WCT COMMENTATOR

Advertising Policy

The WCT COMMENTATOR advertising policy as adopted by the Executive Board is as follows:

Noncommercial (Personal) ads for WCT MEMBERS only will be run for two issues at no charge.

Commercial (Business) ads for WCT MEMBERS only: guaranteed placement for half of the school year, $35.00 per half year payable Sept. 15th and Feb. 1st or $5.00 per issue.

For prompt placement of advertisements and articles in upcoming issues of the WCT COMMENTATOR, e-mail the information to commentator@wcteachers.org. Information can also be sent to the editor at the WCT Office. Do not send articles or ads through the GroupWise e-mail system.