WCT, WCRT march in St. Patrick’s parade

Wappingers Falls got its Irish up and paraded it down West Main Street through the village with all the bag-piping fanfare of a great Dutchess County St. Patrick’s parade on Saturday, March 2.

The Wappingers Congress of Teachers and Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers boasted 68 marchers, eight strollers, and a dog as they assembled on North St. as part the parade’s first division.

Members wore green necklaces and passed out erasers to kids as they marched.

“I’m here for the Union first because I’m only one-quarter Irish. We march a lot. I helped decorate the truck,” said Nicole Scalzo, a third grade teacher and building rep at Gayhead Elementary.

“We’re retired, but we’re still in the game, and still going strong,” quipped Jack Devine, a WCRT director for negotiations, partially quoting the WCRT banner he helped design and carry.

Jack Devine, WCRT director for negotiations, Ellen Korz, WCRT rep to WCT RA, and Sue Roger, WCRT President, hold banner to lead the teacher contingent in the parade.

Donna Kart, from Van Wyck Jr. High and WCT treasurer, passes out erasers to young parade watchers.

...And this is why we do this!

more PARADE PIX page 9

POLITICAL ACTION COLUMN page 3

Connolly writes, donates books to schools p. 5

WCRT increases scholarship money page 6
From The President

Dear WCRT Members,

Thanks for all the inquiries about my husband, John. He is walking with a cane, driving, and going to PT three times a week with our son John, the Physical Therapist, which is a good time for them to be together.

I am anxious for Spring to come so I can get out into our garden. This winter has seemed too long! Please keep in mind that May is school budget time and Board of Education elections. We may call on you to make out postcards or call other NYSUT members to remind them to vote.

Our Spring luncheon is always fun. It is a great time with friends and former colleagues. Sign up to attend; you might win the 50/50! Please don’t forget some food for the food pantry on this National Teacher’s Day.

March 2nd was a first for the WCRT as we marched in the Dutchess County St. Patrick’s Day Parade. Our banner was great thanks to Jack Devine. I hope you enjoy the pictures and consider marching next year.

Hudson Valley Home Matters, a non-profit organization, is looking for retired teacher volunteers because we are so responsible. Their website is www hvhome matters.org. The contact person is Barbara Dobals at 845.558.5245. Tell her you heard it from the WCRT.

Also be aware of our new trip to the motorcycle museum in Newburgh. I think it will be interesting, and we can have lunch on the waterfront.

See you at the luncheon! Susan Roger

PostScript

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The nightmares begin. May 21, 2013 is school budget vote day in New York State. Taxpayers will go to the polls in Wappingers and mark their ballots either for or against the proposed budget and propositions. Locked in by a 2% tax cap, the Board of Education and administration have the unenviable job of finding ways to fill a $2.8 million budget gap.

For a time the closing of an elementary school, most likely Evans, was on the table. Before it could be given serious consideration, there was a public outcry and the Board backed off. District Superintendent Marco Pochintesta, according to a March 29, 2013, Poughkeepsie Journal article, stated that cutting full-day kindergarten back to a half day and closing the Orchard View Alternative High School were “the two heavyweights” when looking to make cuts.

The article states that each would save more than $1 million. Personnel cuts of non-mandated positions could also produce savings of $1.4 million. Budget woes seem to be a recurring nightmare.

The zombies return. According to an item which appeared in the Wappingers Congress of Teachers newsletter, The Commentator, in March, zombie education ideas are those that are dead but that “keep coming back to life.” On the federal level we see No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top as government-mandated policies which include a teacher evaluation system based on student test scores. “They rank and rate children, teachers, and schools. They fire people and cause their schools to close. They do not improve education.”

The nightmare continues. The Poughkeepsie Journal in a March 8, 2013 piece stated that the cost of the evaluation plans to districts will not be covered by federal and state money. The government dangles money in front of the school systems as a “reward” for their “getting on the bandwagon.” New York’s Governor Cuomo also gets into the act by withholding cash for those who are not obedient. Timothy Kremer, State School Board’s Association executive director states, “Our analysis…shows that the cost of this state initiative falls heavily on school districts. This seriously jeopardizes school districts’ ability to meet other state and federal requirements and properly serve students.”

The bottom line is that school districts will have to put money in their budgets to cover this shortfall.

Those retirees who were in the educational trenches for many years have seen programs come and go. Thirty or forty years ago testing was “in.” We moved on to being concerned with the individual differences of students and trying to address those differences. Now as we entered the 21st century the testing has returned as the answer to making all students equal. And if the students do not perform, we will beat up the teachers. The Commentator article mentions another zombie adage, “the beatings will continue until morale improves.”

Wappingers and all of New York State will continue to be haunted if nothing changes. A Poughkeepsie Journal editorial on February 22, 2013, stated that the 2% cap “has holes. It doesn’t hold state spending to an equivalent standard that it places on localities and school districts.” Efforts are being made by the New York State United Teachers to make some changes that will protect quality education. Wappingers is faced with tough choices, which most likely will impact students and staff. It has been stated before that the nightmare of the new evaluation process will lead to low morale and eventually a teacher shortage. We, as WCRT members, can, through your support of VOTE/COPE, have a say in finding solutions to the current problems.

With more inspired leadership on the federal, state and local level, may we soon be able to enjoy a good night’s sleep.
Elfriede K. Ernst

WAPPINGERS FALLS - Elfriede Karoline Ernst, 72, a resident of Wappingers Falls for 51 years, died peacefully at home on Saturday, February 23, 2013 surrounded by her family.

She was born in Hipstedt, Germany May 18, 1940 and moved to Astoria, Queens, NY in 1952. She was the daughter of Martin and Barbara Cordes. Elfriede earned a B.A. Degree from Queens College, where she met her husband. On June 23, 1962, Elfriede married Eric Otto Ernst who survives at home. They celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary last summer in Maine with family.

Elfriede balanced raising her daughters with going back to school, teaching and volunteer activities. She earned Master’s Degrees in Education from SUNY New Paltz and in French from the Sorbonne in Paris while the family lived in France.

She taught French at Our Lady of Lourdes High School. She then taught French, English and German at junior and senior high levels in Wappingers Central School District. [She retired from Van Wyck Jr. High in 1996.]

Thirty four years ago, Eric and Elfriede embarked on a new adventure while抚养 their two daughters, Maddy and Amy. They moved to Maine, USA where they have lived in France.

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In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to Preston Robert Tisch Brain Tumor Center, Duke University Medical Center, DUMC Box 3624, Durham, NC 27710 or Charlotte Hobbs Memorial Library, PO Box 105, Lovell, ME 04051.

Patricia McCarthy

CHARLES TOWN, WV  Patricia Ann McCarthy, 70, of Charles Town, WV passed away on Saturday, March 23, 2013 at her home, following a courageous battle with melanoma, surrounded by her loving family.

She was born December 28, 1942 in Munhall, PA and was the daughter of the late Dr. Patrick Charles O’Hare and Anne Kistler O’Hare. She was a member of St. James the Greater Roman Catholic Church in Charles Town, WV.

Patty was a graduate of Slippery Rock University class of 1964 with a degree in Elementary Education. She was a retired kindergarten teacher, having taught school for 28 years in the Lakeland School District and Wappingers School District, both in New York. [She retired in 1998.]

She was a volunteer at Jefferson Memorial Hospital and St. James Catholic Church office. She loved to travel and visited many places abroad with her husband. Her greatest passion in life was her seven grandchildren.

She is survived by her loving husband of 48 years, James R. McCarthy, at home; two sons, Kevin Patrick McCarthy of Leonardtown, MD; and Ryan James McCarthy and wife, Nicole, of Fairfax, VA; one daughter, Kelly Loussedes and husband, Paul, of Waterford, VA; seven grandchildren, Maddy, Liam and Alyssa McCarthy, Hayden, Madelyn and Emerson Loussedes, and Avary McCarthy and one brother, Charles O’Hare and wife, Mary Kay and their son, Michael.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held at 9:00 AM Friday morning at St. Mary’s Magdalene Cemetery in Munhall, PA.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to St. James the Greater Roman Catholic Church, 49 Crosswinds Drive, Charles Town, WV with the Very Reverend Father John Ledford, assisted by Deacon David Galvin.

The family will receive friends on Tuesday 2-4 PM and 6-8 PM at the Eackles-Spencer & Norton Funeral Home, 256 Halltown Road, Harpers Ferry/Charles Town, WV. A prayer vigil was held at 7:00 PM.

The family received friends at George Irving Green Funeral Home, 3511 Main Street, Munhall, PA on Thursday from 2-4 PM and 6-8 PM. Graveside services and interment were at 9:00 AM Friday morning at St. Mary’s Magdalene Cemetery in Munhall, PA.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to St. James the Greater Roman Catholic Church, 49 Crosswinds Drive, Charles Town, WV 25414.

Condolences to the family may be expressed at her obituary at www.eackles-spencerfuneralhome.com and www.georgegreenfuneralhome.com.

Flat Stanley visits NYC with retirees

For the second time my grandchildren have sent Flat Stanley to vacation with me in NYC. If you don’t know Flat Stanley, he is a paper bag figure of a child sent to see the interesting sites in your city.

With the weather being an unusually beautiful day for February, Maryalice Goodall, my good friend Ann Druker, and I set out to take him around NYC on our way to the theater. Our first stop was Central Park at Columbus Circle. As I pulled into a spot and before I even left the car, one of New York’s finest was there. He agreed to take pictures with Flat Stanley to send back to Kingman, Arizona. We promised to leave the spot immediately because it belonged to his boss.

Then off to Radio City and Rockefeller Center. We pulled off to the side and put on the flashers so Maryalice could take a few shots of me and the skaters and the flags. Since my granddaughter loves the Rockettes, I know she’ll be so happy we got a good shot of Flat Stanley there.

Next stop was Becco, one of Lydia’s restaurants. Thanks to Ann’s securing a reservation, we had a wonderful lunch. Maryalice and I took our picture there with Flat Stanley.

In Times Square, we captured all the lit-up billboards and hustle and bustle.

Finally we arrived at our final destination, The Other Place with Laurie Metcalf. It’s a very moving play about a sad topic that has touched so many of us.

Thanks, Maryalice, Ellen, and Ann, for joining Flat Stanley and me for such a crazy, fun day.

Ellen Korz
Hi Everyone, February 25, 2013

Some of you may have received an email from Heather announcing the publication of Alphie, a Yellowstone wolf pup. What she didn’t say was that she and Kathy Reynolds of Oberlin, OH worked tirelessly to proofread the manuscript. What a daughter! Others helped as well, especially student readers from Centennial Elementary School in Bismarck, ND.

The story contains four parts which trace the first year of a wolf pup’s life in Lamar Valley. A few of you may not know that the 30+ wildlife sketches that appear throughout the book were created by George Bumann. It was great to work with George. I had asked for 20 drawings; he sent 200 for me to choose from! Also included on the back cover of the book is a fine Dan and Cindy Hartman photo of the black Hayden wolf pup, #386M, who was the model for Alphie.

Yesterday I got my hardcover copy of Alphie. I have to say it is a beautiful book, and the stories and sketches create a fine wilderness harmony. Arlie got his copy earlier in the week! He said if I was good, I could see his copy when I stopped by for dinner. Nate i-phoned (first time used as a verb) this photo to me:

While my writing has always promoted wolves, recently I have been trying to find ways to give back even more. I began by donating the essay Arlie and Papa in Yellowstone to the Yellowstone Park Foundation. (It is posted on my website www.bconnollybooks.com) Now, with the publication of Alphie, part of the royalties received for each book will be donated to the Yellowstone Association. Books sold on my website pay a higher royalty than those sold on Amazon, etc, which means that YA makes more per book. Of course, George and I earn a little more, as well.

Like me, some of you are very concerned about the loss of so many wolves from Yellowstone and other wilderness areas in the west and in the northwest Great Lakes area. What a tragedy! Many of us donate to and take action under the guidance of wildlife organizations. And it is important that we continue to do so. Quite a few have found more ways to deal personally with this crisis. If you are still looking for some way to act, let me tell you what I have been doing and suggest a few ways that you can do something similar:

Personally, I’d like to march on state capitols carrying signs to educate those who are presently guilty of crimes against Nature. Unfortunately, due to a few health issues, I won’t be marching unless I use a walker! What I have started to do is donate copies of my YA novels Wolf Journal & Hawk to middle school libraries. While I am concentrating on western states, a few books will go to eastern and central US schools. Librarians are the beams of light for all communities, the enlightened ones. So far I have donated 36 books to school libraries in Oregon (where we have 53 wolves), Washington, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Colorado, Virginia, and California. The thank you letters I received have been moving. Here is a sample from Montana:

Brian, Thank you for the books you gave to the C R Anderson Middle School Library in Helena, Montana. I appreciate the books and will see that they are processed into our collection and made available to students and teachers.

I loved the poem, “Curriculum” and will share it with the staff. In the face of the Common Core Standards which have pretty much universally been adopted by the states, it is refreshing to know there is another face, vision, one that isn’t technologically nor digitally driven. (see poem below)

Sincerely, Margy Kernan, Librarian

A few wolf watchers, who liked this donation idea, have bought books for me to donate to specific schools of their choice. Most of the royalties I receive from Alphie will go to book donations.

One of the things you might consider is to buy an extra copy of Alphie and donate it to a local elementary school library.

Or you might donate a framed photo of a wolf from Dan & Cindy Hartman (www.wildlifealongthecreeks.homestead.com) or from Mark Miller (www.markmillerphotos.com), or from Mike O’Connell (Mike O’Connell Limited Edition Nature Prints), or from Brad Orsted (http://horsefeathersphotography.com), or from the many other good photographers who hang out with the wolves in Yellowstone.

Or you might donate a bronzec sculpture or a wolf sketch from George Bumann (www.GeorgeBumann.com).

Or you can donate to the new Yellowstone wolf citizen science website (http://yellowstone-wolf-project-citizen-science). Books, photography, and art can speak the truth about wolves and be the voice for these magnificent canids. Children love to listen and see. They also express their new feelings about wolves to mom and dad.

Another way to act is to send librarians and teachers in your area a link to my YouTube essay The Delisting of Wolf 253M. (YouTube - The Delisting of Wolf 253M) When Mike O’Connell and I and a few amazing photographers created this tribute to #253M back in the Bush era, we never imagined that it would still be relevant today. Some of the comments posted are very anti-wolf, usually written with poor grammar which may indicate that the writers have other problems. Most of the comments are positive, and usually well written.

You could also send them a link or buy them a subscription to Yellowstone Reports, a great education tool (https://www.yellowstonereports.com).

If you would like to forward this letter to librarians/teachers at your local schools, feel free to do so. Most schools have a website with a link to staff where email addresses may be listed.

If you would like to help us with Alphie, you could forward this note to friends and ask them to place a link to my website on their Facebook page. (www.bconnollybooks.com)

You could also write a review of the book (positive only, thank you) on Amazon or any other book sales website where Alphie is listed. The more we share our understanding of wolves, the safer they become.

I hope to watch some wolves with you in Yellowstone this summer. My schedule may be irregular, but I’ll do my best to be there as often as possible.

Take care, Brian

PS: I’ll copy Curriculum below just in case you’d like to share it with teachers and administrators in your area.

PSS: Alphie, Wolf Journal, Hawk, and Not Far From Town are all available as e-books. I have discovered that some teachers use this format to review books they may be considering for classroom use. The only problem I have with ebooks is that they are difficult to autograph.

Curriculum poem will appear in the June issue of the PostScript.
February 26 RA Meeting

Lots going on, but no major decisions on anything have been made.

First on the agenda was closing Evans Elementary. Although there has been much discussion, no decision was made about closing a school at all. Much must be looked about funding changes and staff changes to become an independent library. The proposed budget does not include any cuts. It is in the talking stages. To keep what already exists, it is impossible to stay within the 2% tax cap. It will need the support of the Board of Education. We’ve had problems parents in the past, but new issues sound more difficult than most of us ever experienced. Between new regulations and problems like this, we retirees are in a wonderful place.

Don’t forget the WCT Recognition Dinner, June 7, 6 p.m. at Arbor Ridge.

RA Meeting, April 2, 2013

The agenda was lengthy, mostly updates of old issues still not resolved. The WCT presented a contract to the BOE and Superintendent it believed only needed to be signed since it negotiated in good faith. BOE came to some decisions on some issues.

The Superintendent wanted to go above the budget’s 2% tax cap to keep the bare bones of the budget, which is $4.8M above the cap. To do that, included items like full-day kindergarten and Orchard View Alternative High School. The BOE could not agree to anything. Their mood was to stay within the tax cap, but did not consider any cuts.

Pasquale thought the WCT had three candidates to endorse for the BOE, but at the last minute one was unavailable. More interviews again this Thursday. Two we will endorse are Somaiah Soma and Tom Piliouras. Both are pro-education and educators.

Our Committee of 100 reps secured $2.2 million extra state aid.

VOTE COPE information was distributed.

Hopefully by the next meeting, the BOE come to some decisions on some issues.

Ray Koretsky’s report on grievances was interesting. Grievances against Human Resources are not solved yet. A new development is how to handle teacher harassment by parents. Generally the administration handles any cases, but when not done to the satisfaction of the teacher, it should be reported to the police, a report filed, and possibly a complaint filed with the Board of Education. We’ve had problems parents in the past, but new issues sound more difficult than most of us ever experienced. Between new regulations and problems like this, we retirees are in a wonderful place.

Don’t forget the WCT Recognition Dinner, June 7, 6 p.m. at Arbor Ridge.

WCRT increases scholarship money

Dear Pasquale, WCT Executive Board, and WCT Members,

At this time I would like to advise you that, with pleasure, the WCRT Executive Board has voted to increase our donations to the Capasso and Leventhal Scholarships. The donation to the Capasso Scholarship will increase from $600 to $900. The donation to the Leventhal Scholarship will increase from $200 to $600. Thus, all five recipients will receive $300 each from the WCRT.

We retirees have always been proud of our WCSD graduates. I know from my time on the selection committee that competition is stiff for these awards, and the recipients are always outstanding.

We want you to know how proud we are of you and the job you do to prepare our young people. Please feel free to ask for our assistance when needed.

Our best regards for a successful 2013.

In Solidarity,

Susan Roger, WCRT President
NYSUT Defensive Driving class offered

Unlike rising gas and food prices, the fee for the NYSUT Defensive Driving classes has remained at $30.00 per person. Recognized by the National Safety Council.

The following classes have been scheduled for WCT and WCRT members and immediate family only in the Large Group Instruction room at RCK High School from 6:00 - 9:00 p.m:

Thurs. May 30 and June 6, 2013
Participants MUST attend both sessions.
We will collect tuition for the Oct. class only. Make $30** checks payable to: WCT, and mail to WCT Defensive Driving, Heritage Square, 2537 Route 52, Suite 15, Hopewell Junction, NY 12533.

**If you subscribe to auto insurance through NYSUT Member Benefits (METPAY), there is a $25.00 refund.
Further announcements will come in the Commentator and PostScript and by email sometime early next year.

Wappingers Congress of Teachers Recognition Dinner
Honoring 2013 Retirees, Members with 25 Years of Service, Members Granted Tenure, & National Board Certified Teachers.

Friday, June 7th, 2013
6:00 - 11:00 P.M.
Cocktail Hour with Carving Station
Top Shelf Open Bar
Dinner Choice:
Chicken Marsala, Prime Rib, Salmon
Cake & Coffee

$40.00 per person-
Free for 2013 retirees
RSVP to WCT Office by Fri., May 17, 2013
Return lower part of this invitation & payment.
Checks are made out to “WCT”
Reservation accepted until Fri., May 17, 2013.

Name(s): _________________________________
Number attending: ________________
Building: _______________________________
Dinner Entrée Choice:
Chicken Marsala: ________
Prime Rib: ________
Salmon: ________
NYSUT members: Is danger lurking in your home?

We’ve just about made it through a particularly cold winter, and spring is finally upon us. With that means warmer weather and the opportunity to spend more time playing with our pets (both indoors and outdoors).

And while we always hear about the dangers of ticks and fleas that can come from the “Great Outdoors,” what about those potential hazards lurking inside of our homes as well?

Check out the following list from VPI Pet Insurance about the most common calls received by the Pet Poison Helpline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 5 Toxins &amp; Poisons – Dogs</th>
<th>Top 5 Toxins &amp; Poisons – Cats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Chocolate</td>
<td>1. Lilies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Insect bait stations</td>
<td>2. Topical flea &amp; tick medicine for dogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mouse &amp; rat poison</td>
<td>3. Household cleaners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Fertilizers</td>
<td>4. Mouse &amp; rat poison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sugar-free gums &amp; candies</td>
<td>5. Paints &amp; varnishes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So have fun with your four-legged friends this spring, but be mindful of where your pet is roaming both inside and outside of your home.

If you suspect that your pet has ingested anything harmful, seek immediate veterinary advice. The Pet Poison Helpline is also available for a fee 24/7 at 800-213-6680.

Remember NYSUT members receive a 5% discount on VPI’s base medical plan and up to a 15% discount if multiple pets are enrolled.

For more information, please visit memberbenefits.nysut.org and click on “Discounts & Travel – Members” and then “VPI Pet Insurance” or call toll-free 866-838-3461.

Insurance from A to Z...

While you’re considering whether pet insurance is right for your pet, don’t forget about the humans in your life as well. If you’re looking to protect yourself or your family, make sure to check out the variety of insurance programs endorsed by Member Benefits.

The following programs are currently available: Term Life & Level Term Life; WrapPlan® II Universal Life; Personal Property/Liability (auto, home, renters, boat, umbrella, etc.); Disability; Vision Plan; and Dental Plan. Many of these programs are also available to cover spouses/domestic partners of members, dependent children, dependent parents, and grandparents.

Learn more about our endorsed programs by contacting Member Benefits at 800-626-8101 or visiting memberbenefits.nysut.org.

For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.
Dear readers,

This bonus page is for e-mail subscribers because they can handle whatever I send them.

I’d like some feedback on your thoughts about this concept. Printed hardcopies limit me to eight black-and-white pages. I can be more flexible electronically. You get the benefit. Let me know what that benefit is for you.

Let other retirees know about the color(s) and the convenience. Drop me an email note also. Tell me what you told them.

Enjoy the leftovers.

Bill Dourdis, PostScript editor
wdourdis@verizon.net

Jack Devine, Ellen Korz, and Sue Roger in action during the parade on West Main Street through the village.

Donna Kart, from Van Wyck Jr. High and WCT treasurer, gives instructions and passes out erasers to fellow teachers.

WCRT leaders in staging area prior to stepping off at the Dutchess County St. Patrick’s parade on Saturday, March 2.

FRONT: Jill Flanagan, Fishkill Elementary music teacher, drives her truck/float full of young students.

BACK: Jill’s truck/float had same banner on both sides.

<<<Fishkill Elementary School teachers with their families prepare to march in the parade.
Tuesday, May 7, 2013     12:00 noon

Christos Restaurant,
155 Wilbur Blvd.  Poughkeepsie, NY

Huge Hot and Cold Buffet Lunch served at 12:30 p.m.
Cost per person is $22.00.
Soft drinks included.  Cash Bar.
Free parking on the premises.
All facilities ground floor accessible.  No steps or stairs.

A short business meeting and a 50-50 raffle will be held.
Bring non-perishable food items (cans, boxes, bags) and/or shampoo, soap,
and other personal care items to be donated to local food pantries.

Please send check payable to WCRT to
attn: Leslie Leventhal,  WCRT,  Heritage Square,
2537 Route 52,  Suite 15  Hopewell Jct, NY 12533
(and must be received no later than May 1, 2013.
Spouses and significant others welcome.

WCRT SPRING LUNCHEON
$22.00 Per Person

Name(s):________________________________________________    Phone Number:_________________
Address:_________________________________________________________________________________
Number of Reservations: _______                     Amount Enclosed: $ _______________

(return this bottom part with your check)