**JAMES S. EVANS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL’S LITERACY NIGHT**

Submitted by Mike Clarke—Evans Elementary

Friday night… movie…popcorn…perfect. What? The Lorax? Oh, I get it. It’s a kid’s movie. We’ll just kick up our feet and relax and read a book or talk …

What? We have to go to school and learn? Yup!

Welcome to the James S. Evans Kid’s Night Out sponsored by the School Leadership Team (SLT). Our first annual Literacy Night was an overwhelming success. Over one hundred parents and children attended the enlightening event. The children enjoyed a movie, popcorn and each other’s company while parents attended workshops led by Evans teachers on a variety of topics.

Ms. Sheremeta taught a workshop on **Reading Levels: What Are They and How Can My Child Pick the Right Book**. Mr. Clarke taught a workshop on **Comprehension and Higher Level Thinking**. Ms. Langer and Ms. Tsontos taught a workshop on **Language Comprehension and Processing**. Ms. Giammichele taught a workshop on **Family Reading and Motivating Children to Read**. Lastly, Ms. Longenberger taught a workshop called **Fundations Overview**. All provided essential information to parents.

“I didn’t know learning could be so much fun. It wasn’t this way when I went to school,” observed one parent. “I have a totally new respect for how hard my child works every day,” uttered another parent leaving a workshop. “We feel we know more about how to help our child at home now,” commented several parents to teachers as they walked down the hall to meet up with their children.

In the end, a good time was had by all. As the last family was seen exiting the building, Evans principal Mrs. Warden could be heard saying, “We need to have another Back to School Night, maybe one all about Math.”
HEALTHY STEPS
Submitted by Brad Bengel—Fishkill Plains

This year’s Fishkill Plains’ Healthy Steps Program ran from October 1st, 2012 to October 12th, 2012. The program was tremendously successful. As a school, Fishkill Plains’ students, parents, faculty and staff walked over 25,000 miles for the two week health program.

The Healthy Steps program is designed as a health initiative to inspire students and their families to walk every day in school and out of school. It provides the opportunity to not only have a healthy lifestyle program, but also a good natured competition between the classes in each grade level. Every year the classes walking the most miles from each grade win a prize for their efforts. This year’s prize was a customized Healthy Steps wrist band.

What started as a simple healthy lifestyle program has now evolved into a family and community event. With the help of the Dutchess County Rail Trail, Fishkill Plains now holds an annual walking event for the entire Fishkill Plains community. This year hundreds showed up in support of both Healthy Steps and Fishkill Plains to walk two miles together in solidarity. We here at Fishkill Plains only hope to hold more events like this.

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!
Respectfully submitted by Flip Gertler—VP Political Action

In the past, I have called upon WCT members to go online and send prewritten faxes letting legislators know the position of NYSUT on various educational issues ranging from pre-K to college. These efforts have proven effective in getting lawmakers to realize the impact of their potential legislation and have helped in changing or stopping these bills from becoming laws. NYSUT has now made it easier for you to contact your local lawmakers. They have created an “app” for all smart phone users to download for free. Once setting up your basic information, it will automatically list the legislators in your area. From that point on, all you have to do is click on their names and click send fax. You can also set it up to be alerted when faxes on new issues become available. It is quicker to send faxes to your elected officials than it is to check your email.

Please take the time to download the free “app”. Search NYSUT MAC on your smart phone. These faxes do make a difference.

2012 PRESCRIPTION CO PAY REIMBURSEMENT

The claim for prescription co-pay reimbursement for the 2012 calendar year must be received by March 31, 2013. Forms are available on the WCT website: wcteachers.org or you can call the WCT office (845-227-5065). Receipts or a computer printout from your pharmacy are accepted. However, a printout is much easier to process and will compensate for any misplaced receipts.

If you need further information, please call the WCT office.
NEW CHARTER SCHOOL UNIONS SPRING UP COAST TO COAST

By Connie McKenna

Reprinted from AFT LeaderNet

Charter school educators across the country are staring down legal appeals, "boss" campaigns and winter weather to exercise their right to form a union. Despite challenges coming from employers in both the public and private sectors, three new charter school unions have formed in recent days.

On February 7, in the shadow of Michigan’s recent passage of so-called right-to-work legislation, teachers and counselors on the four campuses of Cesar Chavez Academy won an election conducted by the National Labor Relations Board after a dramatic five-month campaign. The employees filed a petition with the labor board in Detroit on a rainy day in December; they returned to their campus to join hundreds of rain-soaked parents and community members demonstrating in support of the union drive.

The rally and media coverage served notice to the charter holder, the Leona Group, that employees in Detroit's biggest charter district were determined to unionize. The Leona Group is one of the nation's largest for-profit educational management companies. Cesar Chavez Academy is the second-largest charter school district in Michigan. Throughout the drive, Detroit community members and parents had been visible, appearing at charter board meetings with a growing number of teachers who wore union buttons. State Rep. Rashida Tlaib was an articulate early supporter, along with the Rev. David Bullock, who is president of both the Highland Park NAACP and the Detroit chapter of Rainbow PUSH, and parents from Mujeres Mejorando Educación (Women Improving Education).

The ballot outcome of the February 7 election was 88 for the union, 39 opposed. Said Becky Wilinski, a middle school social studies teacher at Chavez Academy, "We are reminding Gov. Snyder that workers in Michigan still have the right to say union, yes!"

The Detroit victory was the first election conducted by the National Labor Relations Board since a December ruling that charter schools may be considered private sector employers. In the same week, teachers at two other charter schools successfully won access to the path toward certification under their states' public sector labor laws.

In the West Valley of Los Angeles, teachers at Ivy Academia received voluntary recognition of their union after 54 (out of 56) faculty signed a union petition. Ivy is one of a handful of high-performing charter high schools in the area; United Teachers Los Angeles now represents more than 1,600 educators at independent charter schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District. "This move is to ensure a stronger learning environment for students," says Tom Kuhny, a teacher on the De Soto campus, "and open communication between teachers, administration and parents."
JOIN our COMMUNITY TODAY

on the web:
mac.nysut.org

facebook.com/NYSUTActionCenter
Stressed about your observation or APPR? Worried about having students with IEPs in your regular ed classroom? Overwhelmed with the new common core standards or implementing Readers and Writers Workshop? Are you having a family issue and you don’t know what to do? Or do you just need someone to listen?

Call the Employee Assistance Program

The EAP provides free confidential assessments, information, and referral services to all WCSD employees and their immediate family members. EAP’s 24-hour a day crisis line is staffed by a trained counseling professional.

Contact the 24-hour EAP Crisis Line at 1-800-724-0917 or during regular business hours, you may reach the EAP at 483-5150.

TEACHER SHARE CORNER

PBS LearningMedia™ is the go-to destination for instant access to tens of thousands of classroom-ready, digital resources including videos, games, audio clips, photos, lesson plans and more! You can search, save and share with ease. Best of all, PBS LearningMedia is free for educators.

www.pbslearningmedia.org

COMMENTATOR PUBLICATION DATES:

- March 15, 2013
- April 15, 2013
- May 15, 2013
- June 14, 2013

Please email your articles, ads, good news, etc. for the Commentator by the 7th of the month to ensure it will appear in that issue. If late, it will be placed in the next month’s issue.

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETINGS

- February 25 - JJ, Vassar, Kinry
- March 11 - RCK, Orchard View, Van Wyck
- March 25 - Myers, Evans, Oak Grove
- April 8 - Brinckerhoff, Sheafe, Wappingers Jr
- April 23 (Tues) - Gayhead, Fishkill Plains, Fishkill
- May 7 (Tues) - JJ, Vassar, Kinry
- May 20 (District Offices) - RCK, Orchard View, Van Wyck
- June 3 (District Offices) – Myers, Evans, Oak Grove
- June 17 (RCK cafeteria) – All buildings for the Retiree Recognition

“Throw out the Lifeline,” is a NYSUT-sponsored statewide fundraising campaign to raise $250,000 in 25 days for the NY-SUT Disaster Relief Fund. The initiative kicked off February 4 and runs through February 28.

www.nysut.org/disasterrelief

Although several months have passed since Superstorm Sandy, many of our union brothers and sisters are still suffering. The scope of Sandy’s devastation was so widespread it will require a concerted, union-wide effort to help members recover from the storm.

Hundreds remain homeless in the New York metropolitan area. Countless others are living in severely damaged homes or with friends and family.

Local unions are encouraged to ramp up fundraising for NYSUT Disaster Relief throughout the month of February to raise $250,000 statewide in 25 days. If every local raises and contributes at least $1 per member, we meet out target.

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RALPH & JANET CAPASSO SCHOLARSHIP

The WCT, in conjunction with the Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers, is offering three (3) $1500 scholarships to seniors presently enrolled in any public or private high school planning to attend college in the fall of 2013. To be eligible candidates must have a parent or legal guardian who is a member in good standing of the WCT.

The selection process for these awards will require the following:

♦ an application
♦ an essay
♦ a high school transcript (including senior year classes & grades)
♦ one letter of recommendation
♦ a personal interview for the finalists

Applications will be available in the WCT office on February 20, 2013. Please call 845-227-5065 to request an application or pick it up directly. To be considered, applications must reach the WCT office no later than Friday, April 5, 2013.

Committee members are: Margaret Loh, Alison Schukal, and Carol Tarby

STAY INFORMED—IT’S UP TO YOU!

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 – February 2013
Right to work – The false slogan (p. 16)
Brief Summary: Do you really know what “right to work” means? Scarily, Michigan became the 24th right to work state. That is just about half of our country. Right to work states undermine the work of unions and in turn see benefits such as wages, health care, and safety laws continue to steadily decrease.

NYSUT UNITED – February 2013
Tax cap depletes options for students, burdens districts: (p. 8)
Brief Summary: Keep up to date on the realized results of an ill-proposed property tax cap. It continues to decimate school budgets which include school supplies, extra-curricular activities and professional development.

NEA TODAY – Winter 2013
Stop Blaming Teachers! (p. 54)
How the PR war against educators is hurting our students and schools.
Brief Summary: A quick read supporting the “myths” about the teaching profession. It offers some witty and true responses to statements that are commonly made about teachers ranging from tenure to summers off to being a glorified babysitter.
The Wappingers Congress of Teachers Presents NYSUT’s Defensive Driving Program
(Recognized by the National Safety Council)
*THIS COURSE IS OFFERED TO WCT MEMBERS AND IMMEDIATE FAMILY ONLY*

Monday, March 11, 2013
Monday, March 18, 2013
6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Sessions will be held at Roy C. Ketcham High School, Room Large Group Instruction.

Family members are welcome to participate. A fee of $30.00** per person is necessary to cover cost of materials. (Participants MUST attend both sessions).

**If you subscribe to auto insurance through NYSUT Member Benefits (METPAY), there is a $25.00 refund.

Benefit to Participants:
Upon completion of the course, members and their family members, who are principal operators of a vehicle, are entitled to a ten percent reduction in the base rate of their liability (bodily injury and property damage), no-fault (personal injury) and collision insurance premiums each year for three years.

WCT members and their family members who complete the course may receive a subtraction of up to four points on their driving records. This applies only to points for violations occurring within the 18 months immediately before course completion. It does not affect points for earlier violations and can never be used as a “credit” for future points. Points may be reduced only once in any 18-month period.

To register, send the clip-off below and your check to the WCT office ASAP. Reservations will be accepted on a “first come, first serve” basis.

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Defensive Driving – March 11 and March 18

Member’s Name ____________________________________________________ Are you attending? Yes______ No______

Family Members (Attending) 1) __________________________________________________

2) ______________________________________________________

3) ______________________________________________________

School (School Mail Location) _____________________________________________________________

Home Phone ____________________________________________________________________________

A check for $30.00 per person must accompany this form.
Please make check payable to “WCT.”
You must be a WCT member or WCT family member to enroll in this course.
MEMBERS’ CLASSIFIED ADS


FOR SALE: 2 cushion sage green couch, hardly ever used, in perfect condition. 90 inches X 37 inches. $400 OBO. Call 831-8199 or 845-235-2910.


LEARN MORE ABOUT TEACHER EVALUATIONS

http://learnmore.nysut.org/

BACKGROUND: In 2010, New York state adopted a new teacher evaluation law that said 20 percent of a teacher’s evaluation would be based on student growth on a state assessment or other comparable measure; 20 percent would be based on student achievement on other locally selected measures; and 60 percent would be based on locally negotiated evidence of teacher effectiveness. Subsequently, NYSUT went to court to challenge State Education Department regulations that were not consistent with the law. A state Supreme Court decision largely in the union’s favor was then challenged by SED.

The settlement between NYSUT and SED that was announced earlier this month may resolve the court case, prevents any adverse higher court actions and forestalls the governor’s imposition of his own evaluation law through budget bills. The settlement reinforces the 2010 law in all major aspects. Most importantly, it maintains the provision in the 2010 law that says the process for 80 percent of a teacher’s evaluation must be collectively bargained at the local district level.
FROM THE WCT WELFARE TRUST FUND

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

- February 27, 2013
- March 20, 2013

Appointments are one-hour blocks available between 2:00-6:00 pm on a first-come first-served basis. Appointments are available at no cost to you; this is a benefit through the Welfare Trust Fund.

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.

The planner can advise you on any financial topic in an objective fashion since sales are prohibited under this program.

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 lot and make the second right into the parking area.
⇒ Enter the main entrance of the building. The sign over the entrance reads “PRUDENTIAL.”
⇒ Take the stairs of 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 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 at WCTeachers.org
- Please direct all questions & concerns to the WCT office or directly to Daniel H. Cook.

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IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

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