The WCT will soon be on the move – literally. After a significant amount of discussion, and following a year or more of “looking,” the WCT has decided to purchase our own building. The new building will house the WCT offices, and will also be home to the Welfare Trust Fund. The days of paying rent to someone else are over, and the union will soon be owners of local real estate.

The decision to become owners instead of renters comes at a great time, with interest rates at historic lows. In addition, the WCT isn’t going anywhere – we’re here for the long haul, and it just makes sense to own rather than rent.

Our new office will be housed in a building that was formerly occupied by Richard Barger Engineering and Surveying. The building was built for Barger in 2006 by Strand Construction (Joe Strand recently renovated and opened Mary Kelly’s Restaurant and Irish Pub in Beacon) and sits directly across from the Dutchess County Airport at 280 New Hackensack Road in the Town of Wappingers. The building sits on .87 acres, and is approximately 2,400 square feet. It also has an additional 1,200 dry square feet of storage in the basement. It’s a great building with exceptional detail, hardwood and tile floors, lots of space, and plenty of off-street parking. The new offices will serve the WCT for years to come, and will prove to be a sound and smart investment.

Pasquale and the WCT Executive Board are completing the arrangements for financing, and expect to close on the purchase later this winter. We look forward to an “Open House” in the Spring.
From The President

SUSAN ROGER
WCRT President

Dear WCRT Members,

Those of us who are still in the Northeast survived the blizzard that wasn’t. However, it’s always better to be safe than sorry. I found this winter a good month to complete in-house projects and cook great comfort food. One of our new favorites is an easy corn and clam chowder. I hope you enjoy it.

Corn and Clam Chowder serves 4 from “Women’s Day Magazine”
2 tbsp olive oil
1 8-oz bottle clam juice
2 slices bacon
3 cups whole milk
1 large onion, chopped
about 3 med potatoes cut in 1/4” pieces
salt and pepper
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
4 tbsp flour
2 6.5-oz cans chopped clams in juice
1 15 oz can corn nibletts

1. Place oil and bacon in skillet on med heat. Cook till crisp and remove.
2. Add onion, salt and pepper, and cook till tender. Stir in garlic and cook 1 min.
3. Sprinkle the flour over the onions and cook for 1 min. Add the clam juice and juice from the 2 cans. Stir.
4. Add the milk, then the potatoes. Bring to a boil and stir. Reduce heat and simmer for about 12 min.
5. Add the corn and clams and cook until the potatoes are tender. About three more min.
6. Serve the chowder with crumbled bacon.

The years seem to fly by me now. Why are our grandchildren growing up so fast? For everything there is a season so I’m determined to enjoy every one! Happy winter.
Susan Roger

NEW newsletter distribution process, renewals, dues info

The new procedure for receiving the PostScript or Commentator by email is you MUST register your email address with the website www.wcteachers.org. If your email address is not registered there, you will not receive any publications or notices.

Retirees give their WCRT email address. The WCT website maintains the email list for publication. Prohibitive U.S. Mail costs may soon force us to cancel postal mailings, so please consider going green to save money.

The Commentator and PostScript may be viewed at www.wcteachers.org once a member registers.

WCT & WCRT publication dates for academic year 2014-2015:

Commentator and PostScript mailing dates:

Oct. 15* Mar. 16
Nov. 14 Apr. 15*
Dec. 15* May 15
Jan. 16 June 15*
Feb. 13*
and one sometime in August*.

Several retirees have almost had their NYSUT benefits cancelled because they neglected to pay their WCT dues. Calls to the office and checks sent in a panic have mitigated the problem. Make checks payable to WCT and mail to WCRT.

Renewal notices have been sent out. Dues for 2014-2015 are:

$ 20.00 Yearly;
$200.00 Individual Lifetime;
$325.00 Couples Lifetime.
Pay Lifetime and alleviate the yearly task of renewing.

send your comments to johnrogerjr@yahoo.com or call (845) 227-5065

SAVE THESE DATES
(future details coming soon)

Feb. 10 Executive Board mtg. 10:00a.m.-12:00p.m.
Printing date for February, 2015 PostScript
May 5 Executive Board mtg. 10:00a.m.-12:00p.m.
May 14 Spring Luncheon, Christos, 11:30a.m., $23,
May 19 School Budget and Board of Education Vote
“We’re at War”

in New York

Due process for educators is also a target of Cuomo. Tying it to student test scores would gut the protection of tenure. In his speech he states, “We propose allowing a district to remove a teacher after two ineffective ratings unless the teacher can show that their scoring was fraudulent.” This pretty much bypasses tenure and puts the onus on the teacher to prove that he was unfairly treated.

The Governor goes on to brag about how he implemented new evaluations across the state. “Last year we said if a school didn’t complete a teacher evaluation system, they wouldn’t get state funding – the excess funding. Low and behold, 100% of the teachers now have a teacher evaluation system. 100% of the schools adopted a teacher evaluation system. That’s the good news – we have teacher evaluation systems for every school in the system. The bad news is they are baloney.” Could it be they are baloney because they are basically nothing more than a debacle known as Common Core and its poor implementation?

In the conclusion of the teacher attack section of the speech, Cuomo says, “But if we really want to invest in the system, then make it the right system and don’t ask the taxpayers of New York to throw good money at the bad. We’ve done that for decades.” That makes you, as a retiree and every student, parent and educator is threatened by his attacks.”

You may remember that Cuomo called public education the “last public monopoly” in New York. His State of the State speech in January spent a great deal of time telling teachers, and us former teachers, what a poor job schools are doing and have done in the past. He states that he will, “Professionalize teaching and increase standards, strengthen teacher evaluations, reward excellent teachers, transform the state’s failing schools, expeditiously but effectively removing failing teachers, expand charter schools.”

So what this really means according to NYSUT’s Magee is that he wants to “gut collective bargaining and due process, hold school funds hostage to his threats,” and “more than double the weight of high-stakes standardized tests.”

Yes, the Governor is holding school funds hostage. The Poughkeepsie Journal on January 28, 2015, carried a front-page article which reported that Cuomo has refused to release state aid estimates to municipalities. He states that he will, “Professionalize teaching and increase standards, strengthen teacher evaluations, reward excellent teachers, transform the state’s failing schools, expeditiously but effectively removing failing teachers, expand charter schools.”

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In the conclusion of the teacher attack section of the speech, Cuomo says, “But if we really want to invest in the system, then make it the right system and don’t ask the taxpayers of New York to throw good money at the bad. We’ve done that for decades.” That makes you, as a retiree; really feel appreciated after all of your years of service to the students. Apparently you were a result of the bad money.

NYSUT’s Magee concludes, “This is the most punishing education plan ever put forward by any New York governor. And it’s a plan that must be stopped.”

In a month or so this year’s WCRT VOTE-COPE drive will begin. When that happens remember the plans Cuomo has proposed and consider an increased donation to NYSUT’s political action fund.
WCRT Constitution, By-Laws reviewed

JANE STOCKSLAGER

NOTICE OF ELECTIONS:

The WCRT biennial elections of the Executive Board of Directors will take place at our Spring Luncheon at Christos Restaurant on May 14, 2015.

The proposed slate of officers will be listed in the April Postscript for viewing. If anyone would like to be nominated to serve on the WCRT executive board, please contact me with your information to sundancewf@aol.com by April 1, 2015.

The following policies that have been written and accepted by the board of directors over the past 10 years are also being voted on to be included in the new WCRT Constitution.

1. On January 18, 2007: Non-Release of Personal Information of our Members: The WCRT will not release the names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and other information of our members for confidential reasons. Personal information is to be used only for confidential reasons.

2. On June 13, 2008: In the year a member of the WCRT becomes 80 years old before September 1st, the WCRT will not charge for membership in that year and thereafter.

Thank you,
Jane Stockslager

Enjoy some of what NYC has to offer.
Sign up to receive the monthly Plum Benefits Guide.
Send an e-mail to jtkorz@optonline.net to be added to our list.
Ellen Korz

Just a thought

by Bill Dourdis
PostScript Editor

As I look around the conference table during a WCRT executive board meeting, I see people who have retired and “refired.”

During my paper perusal on Sunday morning before church on February 8, the Poughkeepsie Journal’s USA TODAY section had a retirement section on page 7B.

Details later, but examples now.

Thinking back on past PostScript articles, I remember our retirees who wrote books, traveled extensively, became directors, chairpersons, commissioners, sponsors, and advocates, while others volunteered and supported organizations and corporations and were role models.

Pick up a copy of Refire! Don’t Retire: Make the Rest of Your Life the Best of Your Life by Ken Blanchard, 75, and Morton Shaevitz, 79.

I used to say I was “re-tired” because I was tired all over again. I might start using “refired” instead. For those still in a rut, it’s not what the WCSD wanted to do with us back in the day…

Hi, folks:

TOM DERITO
WCRT Treasurer

Financial Report available

As a service to any interested WCRT member, our union’s financial report is always available upon request.

Address your questions or concerns to tderito@optonline.net and we’ll make arrangements to satisfy your numerical curiosity.
Roy C. Ketcham High School’s “Masque and Mime’s 50th Anniversary Celebration”

Saturday, July 18, 2015
at Ramada Inn, Fishkill, NY

Roy C. Ketcham’s esteemed drama club, Masque & Mime, will celebrate its 50th Anniversary. Current and former members, as well the “drama mamas and papas,” are invited to attend.

$50.00 if pre-registered before July 3, 2015. $60.00 at the door after 7/3/15.
Price includes buffet, soft drinks, dessert and coffee, as well as memory lane performances.

Checks or money orders should be payable to Masque & Mime’s Advisor: Rosemary Evaul and sent to her attention c/o: Roy C. Ketcham High School 99 Myers Corners/Wappingers Falls, NY/12590

Those wishing to pay cash, should pay Rosemary directly. Please include name(s) of attendees with payment. For payment questions, call Rosemary at 845-505-5390.

For more information about the event or if you are interested in performing from a list of pre-selected musicals, please contact Michelle, mmartinetti23@gmail.com OR 914-489-6069.

Dec. 16, 2014 meeting

The last meeting of the year is generally a celebration at Last Chance in Wappingers. This time we met first at Van Wyck Junior High for some important business. Although most of the business doesn’t affect the retirees, I was curious and went there first.

After some discussion and presentation of the facts, we voted to have the WCT buy a new office at 280 New Hackensack Road in Wappingers. Donna Kart, WCT Treasurer, presented the numbers and it certainly looks like a good investment. In the long run it will save about $75,000 as opposed to renting for the next eight years.

More information will follow as we get closer to taking over the property.

The only other topic of discussion took quite long and was not resolved. Apparently the Elementary Grade Level meetings, which are not mandatory, are not being attended, and the WCT was supposed to encourage the teachers to find a way to attend even if it was on a rotating basis. This issue needs more discussion and will probably be an item for negotiations in the next contract.

Board of Education meeting minutes for the last two meetings were attached and briefly discussed. The WCSD is looking to purchase a building for $2 million rather than retrofit one of our structures for their offices. As for Orchard View, no decisions have been made regarding the new location nor continuance of the program.

As always, it was fun to catch up with the people I don’t see regularly. That’s where you really hear about what’s going on and how they handle all the issues of Common Core, Administration, and the changing population. Most are still loving the day-to-day work with the students, but it’s a different job from what we remember. Be happy we are retired.
As you know, the WCT Welfare Trust Fund ("Fund") is providing a pilot co-insurance/co-payment reimbursement program to all active and retired members and their families, who participate in the Empire Health Advantage PPO and EPO Select 20 Plans, provided by the Dutchess Educational Health Insurance Consortium ("DEHIC"). Retirees must be enrolled in one of the WTF Plans.

This program provides an opportunity for you to offset the co-pay/co-insurance costs that you incurred from July 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014. Starting January 1, 2015, you may submit a claim form with a copy of your Explanation of Benefits to the Fund and receive reimbursement of up to $150 per covered family for any in-network co-insurance and/or co-payment costs incurred under the DEHIC Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield Healthy Advantage PPO and EPO 20 plan. Once the $150 is reached, the Fund will reimburse 1% of all additional in-network co-insurance and/or co-payment costs incurred during the same period.

Claims must be submitted to the Fund no later than March 31st of the calendar year following the calendar year during which your co-insurance and/or co-payment expenses were incurred (Example: Co-insurance and/or co-payment expenses incurred between July 1, 2014 and December 31, 2014 must be submitted between January 1, 2015 and March 31, 2015).

In order to take advantage of this benefit, you must follow the following easy steps. Please wait until after January 1, 2015 to request your "CLAIMS SUMMARY" as co-payments and co-insurance will apply through December 31, 2014.

1. Print the Co-pay/Co-insurance form under the FORMS TO DOWNLOAD tab on the WCT website, www.wcteachers.org.

2. Complete the top portion of the form, sign, date, and enter total amount submitted.

3. Call Empire at 1-800-342-9816 (this number is on the back of your insurance card). Ask to speak with a customer representative.

4. Request a "CLAIMS SUMMARY" for the time period of July 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014.

5. You will only be able to request a "CLAIMS SUMMARY" for you and any dependents under the age of eighteen. Other family members that are covered under your insurance will need to request their own "CLAIMS SUMMARY." This is necessary due to HIPAA privacy regulations. This request can take place during the same phone call.

6. They will send your "CLAIMS SUMMARY" via standard mail. They will NOT email it to you.

7. Send your "CLAIMS SUMMARY" along with your completed Co-Pay/Co-Insurance form to the address below:
Wappingers Congress of Teachers Welfare Trust Fund
C/o Daniel H. Cook Associates
253 West 35th – 12th Floor
New York, NY 10001

Hello to all my WCRT colleagues:
For your info...
If you want an Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield "manual," you have to request it from Ellen Hogan, Insurance Dept. 298-5000, ext 40113.
I have asked about this since July...and only found out about it because one of my friends received one. I, of course, did not and called for one this morning. I was told that I wasn't on the list. I didn't know there was a list, but she's sending it now.

Saranne Ratner

Close To Home by John McPherson

“I don’t know what the big issue is about the common core. It seems fine to me.”

To receive any WCT/WCRT publications by email, you must now register your email address at www.wcteachers.org even if we already have your email address.
You will not receive anything electronically if you are not registered on the website.
A Not-So-Gentle Reminder...or The Top Ten Reasons to Register On The WCT Website

ROGER HIGGINS
WCRT 1st Vice President

A couple of issues ago, I wrote an article in Postscript describing the WCT’s brand new webpage, and the need to register for access to the site. Since then, many of you have in fact registered, but many of you have not.

The new website offers members the most direct avenue to get questions answered, access forms, and it is the “go to” place for answers to your questions about the WCT/WCRT. It is, in fact, your first point of reference.

So, in hopes of enticing more WCRT members to register on the new website, with apologies to Late Night with David Letterman, here are the TOP TEN REASONS TO REGISTER ON THE WCT WEBSITE . . .

10 – A random drawing of all newly registered WCRT members will be held, and the winner will receive a private tour (hosted by Pasquale) of the new WCT office.

9 - Access to the Welfare Trust is done through the website.
8 - Registered WCRT members will receive the POSTSCRIPT via e-mail, and in FULL COLOR.
7 - The WCRT will save money because e-mail delivery of the POSTSCRIPT saves your organization money.
6 - Confidential information is only available to registered members.
5 - Registered members enrolled in one of the WTF plans can file for reimbursement of up to $150 per covered family member for medical co-pays.
4 - Only registered members can get the forms to file for above.
3 - Contract information, constitution information, an event calendar, blogs, election & political information, insurance, even “on-line” shopping information is available.
2 - Registered members will be better informed, better able to communicate with friends, former colleagues, WCRT members, the WTF and with WCRT Officers and staff.
1 - ONLY REGISTERED MEMBERS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO THE WCT WEBSITE.

www.WCTeachers.org or rogerhiggins@verizon.net

Here’s how to register your email with the website:

1. Go to www.wcteachers.org
2. On the right-hand side, go to the “Member Login” module
3. Click on the “Click Here to sign-up” link (It is yellow)
4. Enter all of your information on the form. This is the information that we will use to maintain our records and to send email and/or text notifications. Make sure that you choose a username and password that you will remember.
5. Click submit
6. Review all of your information
7. Click Submit again
8. Wait 24-48 hours for us to verify your membership. You will receive an email advising you that you are good to go. At this point, you can come back to the website and login.

Hope this helps.
Thanks, Nancy

New website forces new email policy

Mandatory registration on website now required

Dear WCRT retirees,

Ya gotta be in it to win it.
Get your butts in gear.
Get with the program.
No more procrastinating.

These are the new Wappingers Website Warnings.

This entire issue focuses on new ways to conduct our union business. Our new WCT/WCRT website at www.wcteachers.org was designed to unify its groups, both active and retired teachers. It offers far more inclusive benefits and capabilities than the previously limited a la carte website.

With this new website comes a new policy: Even if we already have email addresses in our WCRT database, retirees MUST register their email address through the www.wcteachers.org website NOW or they will not receive email publications and notices. Members must initiate their email registration as part of the website’s security features. (Follow the steps at the top of this page.)

POSTScript newsletters in October and December of 2014 featured, highlighted, emphasized the benefits and advantages of this new communications tool and cajoled readers to register and “get on board” with the newer, better technology. Helping the WCRT lower postal costs is no longer what members are asked to do. Members are now put on notice that they follow the eight steps outlined by the webmaster or their communication with the WCT/WCRT will stop.

Liken it to, “Don’t expect an IRS refund if you don’t file a Form 1040.” However, you can guarantee a return of ongoing communication with the WCRT and NYSUT, get copies of insurance claim forms, view videos, and much, much more.

Other noteworthy changes in this issue include a new WCT office, how to battle New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo’s hostility toward active and retired teachers, and constitution and by-laws updates.

On a personal note, I want retirees to have access to news about their colleagues and friends through the PostScript. Too many of us contribute to our local communities by sitting on executive boards of nonprofit organizations, raise and give money to worthy causes, work in food pantries, shelters, and outreach programs. They offer their time and talent and we want to recognize them. Register your email address on the website so we can keep in touch.

Bill Doardis, PostScript editor
News since last issue
October 1, 2014

Ms. Mary Coiteux
WCRT Gifts & Contributions
Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers
2537 Route 52, Suite 15
Hopewell Junction, NY 12533

Dear Ms. Coiteux:

Once again, we are the grateful recipients of a generous donation from the Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers.

As a human service organization that depends on funders, we face many challenges. But we remain steadfast in our commitment, and we are encouraged by the progress of our students, the dedication of our volunteer tutors, and the support of so many in the community.

This year more people can read in our community than last year. An next year, we will say the same. Because of people like you, more people reached their personal literacy goals.

When adults learn to read, the entire family benefits. The parents become independent, contributing members of the community. They gain self-esteem and confidence. Their children do better in school, and become more successful adults. Instead of fear, failure, and frustration, the family reaches their potential. We see this first-hand, over and over again.

On behalf of all of our students, we thank you for your kindness, for your generosity, and for choosing to be a part of Literacy Connections. Most especially, for your continued support. I cannot thank you enough.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Marisol Rodriguez
Executive Director

"Helping people to read, write, and reach their potential"
Dear Family & Friends,

We hope everyone is staying warm this winter and we wish you a healthy and hopeful 2015. We are rallying again for the amazing Heart Walk and its annual campaign for Dutchess and Ulster Counties.

Last year, or a previous year, you may have supported my sister and me with your generous gift in raising money for the American Heart Association. We gratefully thank you.

Heart Disease is the greatest cause of death in the United States and yet, many lives have been saved with today’s advances in cardiac research, surgery and treatment.

This year’s Heart Walk will take place Saturday, March 14\textsuperscript{th} and Saturday, March 21\textsuperscript{st}. We truly hope you will support us again and we welcome new supporters to this worthy cause.

Please help us reach our goal and make a contribution. Raising as much money this year as we did last year would be wonderful; even higher would be awesome!

Checks may be made payable to the American Heart Association and returned to either one of us by February 25\textsuperscript{th}, 2015. Your donation is tax deductible.

Thank you so much for rallying us on and supporting the 2015 American Heart Walk.

Sincerely,
Marie and Joyce

Marie Dow
23 Horizon Hill Drive
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603
845-462-5526

Joyce Betros
11 Earlwood Drive
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603
845-471-3193
Michael Pombrio

HOPEWELL JUNCTION - Michael W. Pombrio, 72, an area resident for 50 years, passed away on Sunday, January 11, 2015 after a long illness.

Born on March 29, 1942 in Plattsburg, he was the son of the late Wilmer and Ruth (Monette) Pombrio. Michael had been employed by Wappingers Central School District for 33 years until he retired as District Administrator in 1997.

On March 22, 1990 in Verbank, Michael married Francine (Shron) Pombrio who survives at home. He is also survived by his sons, Anthony Pombrio of Easton, PA and Joseph Bartolotti and his wife Kerissa of Hyde Park; and his grandchildren, Hollie Pombrio and Christopher Bartolotti.

A graveside service will be held on Thursday at 10 am at St. Denis Cemetery, 604 Beekman Road, Hopewell Junction.

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to the charity of your choice in Michael's name.

Arrangements are under the direction of the McHoul Funeral Home, Inc. For driving directions, online condolences, or memorial donations, please visit Michael’s Book of Memories at www.mchoulfuneralhome.com.

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In Memoriam

Sandra Carolyn Giammette

FISHKILL Sandra Carolyn Giammette, a resident of Fishkill, entered into rest Wednesday, January 21, 2015 at Kaplan Family Hospice Residence in Newburgh. She was 59. Daughter of the late Alexander and Vera Perepechko Zukowski, she was born February 1, 1955 in Brooklyn.

Sandy worked in education and then worked as a Chiropractor together with her husband, Leon Giammette at their practice in Yonkers and Wappingers Falls. After the death of her husband in 2007, she went back to working in education. She retired as a Spanish Teacher at Wappingers Junior High School in June of 2014.

She enjoyed kayaking and sailing with her husband and had recently taken an interest in art; enjoying expressing herself by painting.

She is survived by her son, Matthew Trainor and his wife, Catherine of Valhalla; her grandchildren, Jack and Isabella; Leon’s children, Leonora (Richard) DiLullo and their children, Dana, Craig, and Jenna; Brenda and Dean; her sister, Claudia Gorman and her husband, Robert; her nephews and niece, Kevin, Michael and Alena; as well as the father of her son, Richard Trainor.

Family will receive friends on Saturday, January 31, 2015 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Straub, Catalano & Halvey Funeral Home, 55 East Main Street in Wappingers Falls.

A memorial service and opportunity to share memories will be held at 12 noon. Her ashes will be interred at Kensico Cemetery in Valhalla at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, February 1, 2015.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in Sandy’s name may be made to the Kaplan Family Hospice Residence – a special place with special meaning in our family’s hearts, 1 Sunrise Lane, Newburgh, NY 12550.

For directions or to send the family a personal condolence, please visit our website at www.StraubCatalano-Halvey.com.

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Sarah C. Frasca

Sarah C. Frasca, daughter of Rose and Michael Caruso, passed away December 23, 2014. Born February 18, 1929 in Beacon, N.Y., Sarah earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1950 from New York State College for Teachers, where she met her husband, Robert, in 1946. They were married July 6, 1952. She later earned her Masters degree and inspired many of her students to pursue a teaching career.

Sarah is survived by three daughters, Mary Ellen Frasca, Kathy Frasca Barnes and son-in-law Russell Barnes, and Susan Marie Frasca and partner Lisa Miller. She has one granddaughter, Hannah Miller, as well as many nieces and nephews. She is predeceased by her parents, her sisters Jeanette and Marie, brother Carl and niece Sarah Jean.

After her children reached school age, she taught 4th grade at Myers Corners Elementary in Wappingers Falls, N.Y., and later taught 5th grade at Webb Elementary in Austin, Texas. Upon her retirement, Sarah and Bob traveled extensively.

In her later years, she was a resident of the Summit at Westlake where she received excellent care and compassion from the dedicated staff. The family would like to thank everyone in the Skilled Nursing unit for their love and attention to Sarah during her residency.

Although it is always hard to say goodbye, we are comforted knowing Sarah lived a happy and fulfilled life.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Alzheimer’s Association at ALZ.org.

Published in Austin American-Statesman from Dec. 30 to Dec. 31, 2014.
Poor Elijah’s almanac: Why can’t Johnny tweet?

Source: This article appeared in the Eagle Times on Dec 09, 2014. The Eagle Times is a daily newspaper based in Claremont, NH, serving the twin states of New Hampshire and Vermont. Bob Ruopp, WCRT Class of 1998 who lives in Sunapee, NH submitted this article from their Education columnist.

While most Americans associate Twitter with urgent messages about what your favorite reality TV star had for breakfast or things you ordinarily wouldn’t bother to tell casual acquaintances if you accidentally wound up sitting next to them, tweeting has grown in scope and gravity since its earlier days. Now the President has a Twitter account on which he offers the United States government’s 140-character positions on world affairs. It reminds me of Orwell’s Animal Farm, where the revolution’s great truths were reduced to “Four legs good, two legs bad.”

Alongside Twitter is Facebook, where our self-absorption gets to consume as much space as it wants, meaning all the space in the world. In addition to enabling us to bask narcissistically in full view of strangers we designate our “friends,” Facebook serves the criminal underclass by alerting them to what our children look like and when we’ll be away from home.

Now according to NEA Today, schools are “embracing social media as a teaching tool.” While Twitter and Facebook were once regarded as a classroom “distraction,” and students’ postings as a threat to their “privacy and security,” a “growing cadre” of teachers is now “shrugging off” those concerns since they rested only on social media’s documented role as a distraction and threat to students’ privacy and security.

Supporters concede that teaching via social media is still “controversial.” A 2013 survey reported that while “41 percent of educators” use it in their classes, “56 percent” describe classroom use as “more distracting than helpful.” Promoters claim that “education dominates the Twittersphere” because “out of the half billion” daily tweets, “4.2 million are related to education,” a less than staggering eight-tenths of a percent, assuming everything categorized as “education” actually is educational.

One eager superintendent defends social media classroom use because there’s suddenly “so much information out there.” This popular fiction ignores the fact that thanks to Aristotle, the New York Times, Walter Cronkite, and the Encyclopedia Britannica, there’s always been so much information out there. The reason many American students are uninformed isn’t that they lack electronic access to what other uninformed American students think. Books, newspapers, and the nightly news have editors who, while fallible, filter out most of the nonsense and libel. Who filters Facebook?

Advocates argue that social media “apps” allow students to “share and regularly provide feedback on each other’s work.” This same theory prompted classroom “writing conferences,” where students comment on and correct each other’s essays. Unfortunately, few students know enough to make many useful comments.

Boosters also contend that students can use social media to “follow their learning passions” after school, something books apparently never permitted. I’m also willing to bet those particular passions aren’t why most students fire up their Facebook accounts when they get home.

The superintendent alleges that teachers can’t “just teach from a textbook anymore.” Except good teachers, depending on their subjects, have always drawn from magazines, newspapers, reliable websites, and their own minds. What he really means is schools can’t get some students to pick up a book anymore. Allowing social media in classrooms means at least they’ll be reading something, or more likely looking at it, since much of the material is pictures and videos.

Read? Who needs to read?

One tech disciple recommends Twitter for deciding whether students “want cookies or cupcakes at the next class party.” Whatever you do, don’t ask them to raise their hands in person.

Another devotee has long encouraged her students to email each other during class. She concedes she exercises “little control over the content” of their messages, but she’s “happy” they’re “so comfortable communicating electronically,” as if adolescents who can text in their pockets need help getting comfortable. She seems unaware she’s traded some portion of her curriculum, and her purpose, for what we used to call passing notes in class. Social media applications expand that idle conversation exponentially.

Primary level enthusiasts recommend Twitter for students who “are just beginning to read.” Kindergarteners can “connect” with other five-year-olds “around the country.” How do they do this since they can’t read and write? What aren’t children learning while they’re tweeting? Do we really want fingers that don’t know how to hold a pencil tapping out letters that many pre-readers don’t recognize to form combinations that often aren’t words?

Welcome to yet another reason 21st century Johnny won’t be able to read.

Welcome to another generation of Twitter customers.

Welcome to wisdom in 140 characters or less.

Repeated studies trace children’s escalating problems with socialization, attention, and sleep to excessive exposure to video images. Meanwhile, American schools devote more and more time to “learning” in front of a video screen.

The self-esteem movement corrupted children’s self-image so each thought he was the most important person in the room. Now we’re inflating children’s self-importance further by perverting their school days into reality television. Yes, you’re a star on your class Facebook page.

We’re so proud of our cutting-edge efforts to get our students electronically “connecting” and “learning side-by-side” with children they’ll never see. Meanwhile, we lament that bullying is on the rise because they can’t get along with the children they actually deal with every day.

Speaking of making connections, maybe we should make that connection ourselves.

Peter Berger teaches English at Weathersfield School. Poor Elijah would be pleased to answer letters addressed to him in care of the editor.