Fortino featured at RC 13 Conference

KINGSTON, NY—NYSUT’s fifteenth Regional Conference for Retiree Council 13 at Wiltwyck Country Club on October 15 featured NYSUT Vice President Catalina Fortino.

“Commissioners and superintendents come and go, but members stick around. I taught Special Ed, early childhood, and bilingual. I draw my strength from the classroom. Here’s an update on educational issues.

“Honor the work we do. We engaged the governor and commissioner by a collective effort of members. A major step is I’m on the commission. I hope he’s seen the light. Look at the Constitutional Convention. Revise, add, and change it. We need New York Standards to make them our own. We always had standards. Learning is what guided our work.

“Bring teachers together with their expertise and working knowledge. First meeting is Friday. It’s an executive session only. We know the position we come from. Get on the MAC with specific recommendations as goals of our own. Two teachers are on task force. I will create a network of teachers. Our voices were silence with Commissioner King.

“Respect for professional voice. Fight goes on for teacher evaluations. Define regulations for APPR. Create a new low for APPR not just a single rating…most important….give me feedback.

“Delink standardized test from the teacher evaluation. It’s 90 minutes as the sole determinant. What is student assessment? We don’t shy away but embrace it. Portfolio assessments, project based, or other multiple paths to graduation. Decisions of APPR at the local level must be negotiated by Districts and locals.”

Questions from the floor pertained to hardship waivers and the inaccuracy of evaluations if kids opt out.

Catalina commented on other topics:

Gag order: Teachers can’t see questions on the test. They are not allowed to see them or they’re seen too late, and can’t talk to their colleagues about them. The major question on the test is to fix it.

Friedrichs vs California Teachers Association case may go to the Supreme Court. It’s about voice, the union voice. The major question on the test is to fix it.

Constitutional Convention facts

Small cities highlights the role of poverty in our schools not fully funded. Syracuse president Ahearn brought case before King to challenge the teacher evaluation that doesn’t take into account poverty level of kids we teach.

“I am proud to serve you.” There’s a contrast between King and the new commissioner. There is no way to shape his (King’s) thinking. Mary Ellen does it back and forth. She will take on these issues. It’s an opportunity to engage with her on issues. There’s hope with this new Teachers’ Advisory Commission. We’ll have a conversation three times a year so teachers can say “we were heard.”

A final question addressed full funding: 30% is federal, 30% is New York State, and 30% is the local District. Now with the tax cap, it changes the numbers. Massachusetts has a 2.5% tax cap. Exemptions weren’t in their best interest. It’s easy to go over the cap for an easier vote for more reasonable exemptions.

see COVER STORY on page 4
From The President

Dear WCRT Member,

It is time to update our volunteer emergency sub list. It has been a long-time service for WCSD retirees to go into the school and volunteer to substitute during a crisis or emergency. Some of you are out of the area, some have been out of the classroom long enough that we wouldn’t feel comfortable, but there are several years of new retirees who would like to help out in an emergency situation.

If you would like to do this, please fill out the sub form for us including which school or schools and grade levels with which you would feel comfortable. (See pages 9 and 10.)

Even though you have been a past WCSD employee, you will have to outline the calling process.

Calling will be done by the principal’s secretary or the teacher who needs coverage. I will warn the principals that the retirees are very busy people so the calls could come during the day or evening before the coverage is needed.

I thank you in advance for volunteering for this valuable community service.

Have a Happy Hanukkah and Merry Christmas, and most importantly good health in the new year.

Susan Roger

Protect your WCRT, NYSUT membership

Members with email addresses registered on the website wcteachers.org will receive publications and notices by email. Please keep email information up to date on that site.

Our files are not linked to that site, so please notify the WCT office of any changes in address, phone, or email, etc.

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.

SAVE THESE DATES
(future details coming soon)

Dec. 1 WCRT exec board mtg. 10:00-12:00
Deadline for mid-December PostScript
Jan. 12 WCRT exec board mtg. 10:00-12:00
Deadline for mid-February PostScript
May 3 Spring Luncheon, Christos, 12:00noon, $23
May 24 Deadline for mid-June PostScript

WCRT will keep a copy and copies will go to Human Resources and the school principals. Principals will also get a letter outlining the calling process.

You MUST belong to the WCT to be eligible for NYSUT benefits. Make checks payable to WCT and mail to WCRT.

Renewal notices have been sent out. Dues for 2015-2016 are:
$ 20.00 Yearly;
$200.00 Individual Lifetime;
$325.00 Couples Lifetime. Pay lifetime and alleviate the yearly task of renewing.

WCT Mission Statement:
To bring WCSD retirees together for mutual assistance and socialization, and to promote the best interests of retired educators.

Wappingers Congress of Retired Teachers Newsletter
280 New Hackensack Rd.
Wappingers Falls, NY 12590
(845) 227-5065

Editor: Bill Dourdis williamdourdis@gmail.com (845) 266-0430

The WCRT PostScript is a 2015 NYSUT United Communications Competition Winner with 7 awards: (*AD =Award of Distinction; & 1st=1st Place). AD, General Excellence, April 2014; AD, Social Justice Issue, 320 7th Graders “Thrown to the Wolves”; AD, Overall Graphic Design, Batter Up! We’re Panik-Stricken!; 1st, Best Photo, St. Patty’s Day Parade; 1st, Best Column/Blog, by Cliff Foley; AD, Creative Writing, by Saranne Ratner; AD, Local or Chapter Issues, WCT Prez.: I Have a Dream Too!

WCRT Officers and Board of Directors
July 1, 2013-June 30, 2015
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Retiree Council 13 Liaison....Cliff Foley

PostScript
SO YOU WANT TO BE PRESIDENT

Every four years the American public has an opportunity to elect the President of the United States. He is the leader of one of the greatest nations to exist on this planet and is the Commander-in-Chief of our military. As November 2016 approaches, we will face the choice of which person we want to fill that position. For some people the choice is easy. They zero in on one issue and base their decision on that. For the rest of us, we need to look at the candidates’ stands on multiple points.

We have a large number of potential Commander-in-Chiefs who are appearing in debates on television, who are spending millions of dollars in ads and who are even calling our home phones with robo-messages. As the array of candidates begins to dwindle and 2016 progresses, we can expect this assault to intensify. With the Supreme Court’s decision in the Citizens United case, the high court has opened the flood gates for spending by corporations and wealthy individuals. Super PACS (Political Action Committees), which have formed as a result of this court action, are allowing funding to come in the back door from billionaires who certainly have their own plans for how the United States should be run. We are seeing this result in more attacks on other opposing candidates and less focus on the issues that really matter.

Yes, issues are what most of us really want to know about. When you have candidates who believe we should privatize Social Security and phase out Medicare, people better pay attention. We hear scary predictions that Social Security will run out of money in less than twenty years. The solution proposed is to turn over their functions to Wall Street and private companies. The truth is Social Security can continue to provide benefits well beyond that time frame.

Another issue of concern to those of us retired from the education field involves what is called Right to Work. Its name sounds good but what it basically does is attack unions and the right of workers to organize. Twenty-five states already have Right to Work laws on their books. The Supreme Court is currently considering a case that would eliminate agency fee and expand Right to Work. It allows individuals to receive all of the benefits negotiated by the union without paying a cent in dues to support it. Organizations like the WCT and NYSUT would be weakened by this. The result would be losses in negotiations that would directly impact retiree benefits such as health insurance.

One more point that needs to be looked at is what role the federal government will play in public education. There is movement in Washington to replace No Child Left Behind with a new law titled the Every Student Succeeds Act. The goal of this appears to be allowing more educational decision making to be turned over to the states. We wonder if each of the Presidential candidates will study this 1,068 page bill so they can give the public their stand on this issue.

As informed voters we need to separate the real issues and the positions of the candidates from the rhetoric they are throwing around in the media. So you want to be President, then give me straight answers on where you stand and what you propose for America.
PANDORA’S BOX
Facts about a Constitutional Convention

Cover Story

continued from page 1

KINGSTON, NY--Every 20 years the people of the Empire State are asked a seemingly simple ballot question: “Shall there be a convention to revise the constitution and amend the same?”

This question will appear on the top of the ballot on November 7, 2017 and will have a huge impact on not only NYSUT members, but every citizen of New York State.

This warning was part of an early-warning-detection PowerPoint presentation by Legislative Representative Pete Savage, NYSUT Legislative and Political Department, about an upcoming vote on NYS Constitution Article 19 §2. He strongly stressed a “NO” vote with a focus on not having a convention.

This question goes before the voters every 20 years, and allows for much wider modifications of the constitution, including a full rewrite.

The state constitution can be amended in two ways: by passage of individual bills for specific purposes, by two separately elected state Legislatures (Art. 19 §1). The second process is §2.

Estimates say the 1967 convention cost $10M. Updated estimates are not yet available factoring in the current rate of inflation.

Savage offered a timeline if voters approved the multi-year process and noted that of the total 204 delegates, many are allowed to hold both their elected office and a position as a delegate; collecting both salaries. At the daily rate of an assembly member making $79,000.00 a year, he questioned if this was a “double dip” or a conflict of interest.

This is important to members because the constitution establishes the fundamental rights we enjoy as a citizen of NYS, as a public employee, and as a retired public employee, including:

- Rights to workers compensation (1, §18);
- Rights to be a member of a union and bargain collectively (1, §17); and
- Requiring that the state provide for social welfare needs (27, §1).

Voters rejecting the required call for a constitutional convention include:

- Public and private organized labor;
- Environmentalists and conservationists who did not want to see the repeal of the “forever wild” provision that protect environmentally sensitive areas;
- Advocates for public education at all levels;
- Casino and gaming interests who don’t want to see additional expansion;
- Some government watchdog groups who just didn’t want to “spend the millions of dollars to hold a party in Albany!”

NYSUT organizer informs

Mike Grubiak, NYSUT Statewide Political Organizer, said “I want to protect unions, build on it, and I want my children to have the same rights and benefits. Get out into the field with kids my age to go to rallies and meetings.” He gave dates, times, and locations of screenings for the Education Incorporated film.

MiSci program explained

Julie Muffler, a former teacher, represents the Museum of Innovation and Science (miSci) and shared programs provided by the Challenger Center in Schenectady, NY, close to Proctor’s Theater.

Since Challenger exploded on January 28, 1986, she has asked, “What were you doing when it blew up?” Houston Control decided to build this Learning Center in 1988 engaging participants in a two-and-a-half-hour hands-on simulated mission including science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Facilities are also located in Framingham, MA, England, Korea, and Canada.

Students take the lead during their experience, half in mission control and half in a space module before switching.

Summer camp programs are also available. Monthly exhibits and program calendars are online at www.miSci.org or contact Julie at 518-382-7890x236 or julie.muffler@miSci.org.

Julie works on staff development, helps schedule and coordinate tours, works with funders, and SWAT (Staff Working All the Time.)

Calhoun to retire

Laura Calhoun will retire at the end of the year after 29 years with NY-SUT. She has worked on the website, contributed to the Member Benefits quarterly e-newsletter. As a perennial promoter of Member Benefits programs, her latest offering is for an ID Watchdog against computer hacking scandals.
WCRT’s watchdog about “insider information” affecting WCSD retirees

RA Meeting
November 17, 2015

A formal request to start negotiations was sent to the District. It should be interesting since some issues still have not been resolved. Although the waiver for APPR was sent by the District, they believe they should still have the new APPR rules in place. The Administrators have begun observing teachers in other buildings. The Administrators are not happy with APPR and seem to be hoping the teachers take the lead in opposing the new regulations.

There is still a lack of communication with the Educational Development Committee and the District. It was brought up at Central EDC that proposals must get to the BOE. The proposal to have a sliding pay scale for subs never got to the BOE and getting subs is still a problem. The Secondary Vice President, Ray Koretsky, will make sure it gets to the BOE.

The meeting ended quickly and many of us stayed for the Educational Forum, Stronger Together Caucus. The Forum was chaired by two union presidents from other NY districts. After much questioning, a group of NYSUT members realized the union wasn’t fairly representing the urban, suburban, and rural factions equally. NYSUT is not addressing the needs of the rank and file on the Common Core Task Force. There was a lot of tension and injustice. NYSUT is not empowering its members.

The group ST Caucus is looking to work with local teachers unions and communities to stop Common Core, high stakes testing, and APPR and maybe even work on correcting Tier 6. Right now their message is to get parents to opt out of testing for their children. The bottom line is we need to fight for ourselves and our students.

ELLEN KORZ
WCRT Rep. to WCT RA

Check out this group on Facebook to learn more. Membership to this group is $10 and is open to any NYSUT member in good standing. The next Educational Forum will be January 26.

Look for an e-mail soon about signing the forms for our District children to receive free books.

Happy Holidays!
Ellen Korz

VAN WYCK JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL TURNS 50
Celebrate 50 Years of Academic Excellence in East Fishkill
Fri., Apr 15, 2016

All active teachers, teaching assistants, monitors, secretaries, custodians, and kitchen workers who currently teach, did teach, or work at Van Wyck, including retired teachers, teaching assistants, monitors, secretaries, custodians, and kitchen workers who taught at or retired from Van Wyck are invited.

4:30p.m. “Meet and Greet” in the cafeteria
6:15p.m. dedication ceremony in the auditorium. Ensemble music and a movie made from decades of pictures from past yearbooks. Refreshments will be served.

Spread the word to friends by word of mouth and social media. Send copies of pictures and artifacts of the time and written stories to share in perpetuity. Please send all inquiries to Steven Shuchat at Van Wyck Junior High School.

www.wcteachers.org
Bits ‘n’ pieces

By Nancy Beiner
WCT Webmaster
webmaster@wcteachers.org

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.

Hay this helps. Thanks, Nancy

JANE STOCKSLAGER
WCRT Constitution,
By-Laws

CONSTITUTION and BOARD of DIRECTORS Voted on!

At the Spring Luncheon on May 14, the WCRT voted on the WCRT Amended Constitution. All amendments from the past 10 years were added and the new Constitution was accepted.

www.WCTeachers.org or sundancewf@aol.com

WCRT by the numbers:

WCRT membership as of Nov. 23, 2015:

627 WCRT members
165 yearly members
374 Lifetime members
48 Complimentary Lifetime members
16 Complimentary members
72 retirees don’t belong to WCRT & not entitled to NYSUT benefits
370 members email subscribers
232 members postal subscribers

Saranne Rap
A transparent view of issues
by Saranne Ratner

Classroom vs Stateroom: HMMMM!

Fall has always been a time of anticipation. For my adult professional life, preparing for a new school year, getting to know the kids (and parents) and getting into the routine was a way of life. Since retirement, routines, if any, are different.

This fall, instead of bulletin boards, conferences, and report cards, I was deciding which gourmet dinner to have or which special martini was offered at the martini bar on a two-week cruise to Canada and Nova Scotia. We also had to choose which excursions we wanted to take and where to shop at each of the places we visited.

In talking to any friends who are still teaching, there is a thread of similarity…the challenges of Common Core, evaluations, TESTS, TESTS, TESTS, and redistricting. I am always so grateful not to have to deal with these.

As with the ELA, as I compare and contrast, though being a teacher for 34 years provided me with the best retirement--hands down, cruising wins!

October 22, 2015

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

Dear Ms. Colette,

Once again, we are the grateful recipients of your generous $100 donation.

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. 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 its potential. We see this firsthand, 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,

Marisol Rodriguez
Executive Director

Literacy Connections of the Hudson Valley
Serving Dutchess, Orange, Columbia & Greene Counties
www.LiteracyConnections.org

WCRT PostScript
NOV. - DEC., 2015

Page 6

“Helping people to read, write, and reach their potential.”

Jane Stockslager
WCRT Constitution, By-Laws

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You do you. Say what?

By Allan Stein
allans@eagletimes.com

There used to be a time when people spoke in plain English.

Proper English. Queen’s English. Precise, sensible, polite English. In terms you could understand. Not corrupted, vulgar, dumbed-down “it is what it is” social media English.

Which is to say it’s not English at all in a vague, roundabout way.

The late great American lexicographer Daniel Webster spent the better part of his career reforming the English language. The common dictionary his work inspired was a painstaking lesson in linguistic elegance and precision.

Therefore, the improper use of the contraction “ain’t” had no place in Webster’s New American Dictionary until nearly 200 years after his death. Then, suddenly, “ain’t” became an acceptable word in everyday gum-chewing interaction.

Thanks, declining standards. Yada-damean? (Translation: You know what I mean?)

One can only imagine the “shade” (nasty) look on Webster’s face given the present state of web-based “English.”

In fact, it’s gotten pretty "ratchet" (extremely annoying) listening to all the babble that passes for English on social media and the Internet.

When used often enough web babble quickly insinuates into the modern American dys-lexicon. There it stays until something even more ridiculous sounding and less comprehensible takes its place.

“That being said (having said that), it’s a “reket” (wretched) and “dead” (so funny it kills you) state of affairs in American culture, yet with a strangely Orwellian twist.

In Orwell’s 1984 the totalitarian goal was to remove words from the English language until there weren’t enough words left to conduct a meaningful conversation.

If you can’t express yourself in words, you can’t think for yourself or communicate. A nation of mindless ciphers is what you get.

In American social media and Internet “newspeak,” the same level of linguistic complexity is lost. If a person is being irrational or unreasonable, he’s “no chill.” If she gets drunk, she’s “turnt.” In web-land lingo gossip is no longer gossip. It’s “tea.”

So, drink up and enjoy the weak, flavorless lack of clear meaning with your morning tea.

Californians are notorious for turning the English language on its thick 21st century head in an annual flurry of popular new street terminology. “You do you” (take care of yourself first or do it your own way) is what they say in the Bay Area these days.

In a weird, immuno-filled kind of way it kind of makes sense to “do” yourself first and have a “giggin” (really good time) while you’re doing it. “Doe” (though) it’s not always “on fleek” (on point or very good) all of the time.

Are you “feeling it” (getting it) yet? “Yeah-no?”

The English language used to be a beautiful thing. Waves of new immigrants struggled to learn and master English as a badge of assimilation into the larger society.

It took American Internet culture about a generation to wreck it.

That being said, don’t worry about it. You do you, and do it without FOMO (fear of missing out).
News since last issue

Source: Poughkeepsie Journal
WCRT EMERGENCY SUBSTITUTING FORM

Dear WCRT members: please fill in the form with your name, address, telephone number, cell phone number (optional), and e-mail address (optional). Then, please check the box which answers the question “Will you be a substitute for the Wappingers Central School district during an emergency?”

NAME ________________________________

ADDRESS ________________________________

PHONE NUMBER ______________________ CELL # ______________________

E-MAIL ADDRESS ________________________________

Will you be a substitute for the Wappingers Central School District during an emergency?

_____ yes  _____ not at this time  _____ no

IF YOU ANSWERED ‘YES’, PLEASE CHECK THE SCHOOL (S) IN WHICH YOU WOULD BE WILLING TO WORK AS WELL AS THE GRADE LEVEL(S):

_____ Brinckerhoff  _____ Myers Corners  _____ Evans

_____ Fishkill  _____ Oak Grove  _____ Sheafe

_____ Fishkill Plains  _____ Vassar  _____ Gayhead

_____ Kinry  _____ Van Wyck  _____ WJH

_____ Orchard View  _____ R. C. Ketcham  _____ John Jay

Grade level:  _____ K-3  _____ 4-6  _____ 7,8  _____ 9-12

Fill out both sides and return this to the WCT office: WCRT
280 New Hackensack Road
Wappingers Falls, NY 12590
WAPPINGERS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

SCHOOL VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

The Wappingers Central School District deeply respects and encourages the many efforts of our exceptional volunteers who give so willingly of their time to the students and staff of our schools.

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Last Name, First Name, Middle Initial

Address: ___________________________

Street Address, City, State, Zip

Telephone Numbers: (____) ____________ (____) ____________ (____) ____________

Home Mobile Work

Emergency Contact Name & Telephone Number(s) ___________________________

I wish to volunteer at the ___________________________ School(s)

in the ___________________________ Activity/Program(s)

References:

1. ___________________________

Name, Address, Telephone Number(s)

2. ___________________________

Name, Address, Telephone Number(s)

Please answer the following questions. If you answer “yes” to either question, please provide an explanation on a separate page.

1. Have you ever been convicted of, admitted committing, pleaded no contest, or are you awaiting trial for any crime (excluding minor traffic violations not involving alcohol or drugs)? Yes _____ No _____

2. Are you now being investigated for any alleged misconduct or other alleged grounds for discipline by any authority regarding any claim of either substance abuse or physical/mental abuse of another person? Yes _____ No _____

I will inform the WCSD Office of Human Resources within three days if, during my tenure as a volunteer, question number 1 or 2 becomes applicable.

I have read the Wappingers Central School District Volunteer Policy #4532 and agree to comply with its requirements. I understand that the Board of Education can terminate my services as a volunteer at any time, with or without cause, including for any instance of elevating the interests of any particular student over the interests of other students.

Applicant’s Signature ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Please return this completed application to the Principal of the school or Coordinator of the program in which you wish to volunteer.

--------------------------------------------------------------- PLEASE DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE ---------------------------------------------------------------

Name / Signature of Employee-Supervisor ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Name / Signature of Supervising Administrator (Principal/Principal’s Designee or Coordinator) ___________________________ Date ___________________________
News since last issue

Source: Poughkeepsie Journal
The Value of NYSUT Membership

You may not be aware that your NYSUT membership allows you to enjoy the benefits of the more than 40 programs & services endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits, including a variety of quality, competitive insurance plans.

Member Benefits strives to provide the highest-quality programs for NYSUT members and closely scrutinizes all proposals from reputable vendors before any endorsements are given.

While we work continuously to maintain quality benefit programs at competitive prices, you are encouraged to shop and compare before making any purchasing decisions.

Are you ready to answer these questions?

What would happen if you suddenly died? Have you ever considered what would happen to your spouse and/or children? Take a few moments and answer these questions now:

1) Would your loved ones be able to afford their current home?
2) Could your loved ones continue to pay regular bills and maintain their medical coverage?
3) Would your loved ones be able to plan for your final funeral expenses?

If your answer to the above questions is “No” or “I don’t know,” consider enrolling in the NYSUT Member Benefits Trust-endorsed Term Life or Level Term Life Insurance Plans. Both of these plans allow you to select the plan and benefit amount that best meets your specific needs.

Visit the NYSUT Member Benefits website at memberbenefits.nysut.org or call 800-626-8101 for specific details about these plans.

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.