From the President’s Pad

The WCT Needs You to Make a Difference!

Dear Colleagues,

I hope you have enjoyed a memorable and restful summer. I trust the vacation has provided you with much needed rest and relaxation and are now reenergized to begin a new academic year.

I am humbled and deeply honored to begin my fifth year as president of the WCT. Having the opportunity to work and speak on your behalf is a tremendous privilege and I thank you for entrusting me with this responsibility.

One of the most rewarding aspects of this position is being able to work with such esteemed and dedicated executive board members: Michael Lyons (VP Elementary), Raymond Koretsky (VP Secondary), Flip Gertler (VP Political Action), Mary Ann Moran (VP External Communications), Meredith Inkeles (VP Internal Communications), Christine Romano (Secretary), Donna Basile (Treasurer), Martha Bilsback, Michelle Ross, Dawn Sala (Elementary at Large), Diane DiChiara, Paul Nostrand, and Jane Stockslager (Secondary at Large).

The WCT also owes a great deal of its efficiency to our Administrative Assistant, Linda Leito. Her commitment has been valued and appreciated over the past twenty-four years.

At Rookie School, August 20th, I had the opportunity to welcome 56 new members to this Union. Judging from their enthusiasm and positive energy, I know they will become invaluable additions to this institution and I encourage them to participate in the WCT’s many worthwhile endeavors.

This year, we will be faced with many challenges and decision making opportunities at the local, state, and national levels. Therefore, it is imperative that the WCT and the WCRT play a vital and decisive role in these processes which will directly affect our livelihood.

In less than two months, we will be asked to elect a president who has a clear vision and lead this nation through tumultuous times. It is important to choose a president that is pro-education, in deeds, not only in promise and who

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From the President’s Pad (continued from the front page)

does not look at unions as liabilities, but as assets to this country.

At the state level, we need to remind legislators, on both sides of the aisle, to act diligently and responsibly when dealing with taxes and education. We also need to prompt our representatives, especially the Senate, that the New York State Property Tax Cap will have a devastating impact on the delivery of special education services for school districts across the state by inflating costs and reducing funding for students.

The AFT references numerous studies that focus on the impact ‘tax caps’ have had on education in other states. The findings include larger class sizes, lower test scores, and a decline in education quality. We should praise Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and other Assembly members who on Tuesday, August 19th voted for the ‘circuit breaker’ legislation that will reduce property taxes for senior citizens and families who need it the most, without compromising the resources available to our children. WCT members should strongly urge the Senate and the Governor to embrace the ‘circuit breaker’ tax relief as an equitable, responsible alternative to the ‘tax cap.’

I must commend the numerous WCT members who had the courage and integrity to challenge a poor decision made by the District. The NYSUT Legal Team, on behalf of these members, petitioned the Supreme Court, Dutchess County, for an order pursuant to CPLR Article 78, seeking an annulment of the district’s determination that the cancer screening leave was an unpaid one, asserting that the district’s determination was irrational, arbitrary and capricious, and in violation of Civil Service Law 159-b. In addition, restoration was sought of their sick leave accruals. This decision will have impact upon any outstanding timely claims for restoration of accruals which individuals may have been forced to use to cover the time spent at a breast cancer screening, as well as upon future claims in the absence of a legislative amendment to clarify that the leave is a paid one. In addition, the decision will facilitate the interpretation of Civil Service Law 159-c, which mirrors the provisions of the breast cancer screening leave statute, but which applies to a screening for prostate cancer. BRAVI!!!

As a Union, almost a thousand strong, plus the retirees, our great sage allies, we must always fight to preserve, protect, and improve benefits and not stand idle when elected officials do not have the same visceral fortitude to safeguard them. We are not only teachers, but community members, and taxpayers. We share the pain of these difficult economic times, but we should never compromise the quality of education of our children. Good schools with funded mandates are what make communities like Wappingers an attractive place for families to raise their children. Education should not be looked at as an expense, but an investment in our students that will always pay the greatest dividends. It is the goal of the WCT to make a difference in the lives of members, students, and their families.

I would like to wish us all a very productive and successful school year!

In solidarity,
Pasquale Delli Carpini

(*Information obtained from NYSUT’s Leader Access)
Editor’s Note

**Going Green. Saving Green.**

The WCT is trying to reduce the amount of paper it sends out, which usually ends up in the garbage. As a result, you may have noticed that you did not get a **COMMENTATOR** in your mailbox. Instead, you need to look for it in your “In Box.” An e-mail will be sent through the WCT news updates when the most recent issue is available on the WCT web site. The e-mail will contain a link to the issue. You can also go to wcteachers.org/1294/index.html to view archived issues going back to the 2005-2006 school year. A limited number of paper copies will still be delivered to each building so be sure to check with your building reps. If you have any questions or would like to contribute an article, please e-mail me at commentator@wcteachers.org.

In Solidarity,

Meredith Inkeles

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**My Learning Plan Reminder**

**Information from August 22, 2008 e-mail from Joanne Sereda**

Proper completion of in-service credit approval requests for workshops in MyLearningPlan.com other than workshops in the District catalog:

When completing the approval request “form” in MLP, if you are applying for in-service credit you must indicate “In-service” in the “Type of Activity” field. You must also check “In-service” in the “Purpose” section of the form (if you have an Initial Teaching Certificate, you should also check 175-Hour Requirement as a Purpose).

If you fail to check “In-service” as a Purpose, your request is not properly routed by the MLP system and never reaches Ms. Sereda for approval. *If you attend without properly submitting the request for approval in advance of the starting date of a workshop, you cannot receive in-service credit by requesting approval after-the-fact when your error comes to light.*

A few teachers have lost credit recently due to this error so please remember to properly complete the “form” in MLP. If you have questions, call or e-mail Barbara Greenberg.

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**Building Rep Elections**

Elections should be held before the first RA meeting (September 23, 2008) in accordance to Article X, Number 3 of the Wappingers Congress of Teachers Constitution and By-Laws:

**X.3.a.** Election of Representatives to the Representative Assembly shall be by secret ballot and shall take place according to election procedures established by the Election Committee during the month of September at least one week after nominating meetings are held in each building. Representatives-elect shall take their seats in the Assembly at the following R.A. meeting.

* Building Rep training will take place at the R.A. meeting on the 23rd.
The Cost of a Cup of Coffee
By Diane DiChiara
Secondary at Large & NYSUT Delegate

Whether we brew it at home or stop at our local specialty coffee shop, as teachers returning to the classroom, our morning cup of coffee is an essential start to the day. There is magic in the first cup, as energetic caffeine and wafting aroma mingle to kick-start both morning and memory. For me, images flash through my mind as I am transported back through time to holiday gatherings and weekly Sunday visits. The aroma of my morning coffee produces pictures of family and connects deeply to childhood. So much of what I have learned outside of the classroom has been learned over a table surrounded by family, friends and always a good cup of coffee.

Like those before me, my day begins with the long-established ritual and homage to the coffee bean. The brewing process has changed, the brand and flavor are different, and the Pyrex coffee pot has gone the way of the dinosaur, but the distinctive scent remains and hints at the past. And as that first cup rises to my lips, the long-ago times float dreamily in my morning mug of java.

Well, that is how it used to be until the NYSUT Summer Leadership Conference (August 25-27, 2008). My glorious celebrated morning coffee ceremony came haltingly to a shameful end, after I attended the first of two sessions on “Social Justice Issues in the Classroom and Beyond.” The once pleasant aroma was quickly altered and changed into a malicious odor reeking of the exploitation of the land and workers (including children).

Now, as I looked into my morning mocha there were producers, middlemen, exporters, importers, roasters, retailers, and children being tossed in a tempest, fed by the fiscal force of a fragrant white flower with a cluster of crimson red cherries. Within that cherry is the bean that has been an economic influence for centuries.

The story of the morning “picker-upper” begins on either a family farm or plantation. Many coffee-farming families are kept in a cycle of poverty and debt that is designed to exploit cheap labor and keep consumer prices low. These farmers must sell to a middleman exporter also known as a coyote and are generally paid below market price for their harvest. This can amount to less than four cents for each $3.35 latte sold in the U.S. (http://www.fair-trade@labor-religion.org). Moreover, many coffee-farmers cannot afford the fees to send their children to school. On a coffee plantation, workers must meet a quota in order to earn the minimum wage; furthermore, in order to meet the quota the workers may bring their children, as young as six or seven, to the fields to help. It takes 4,000 hand-picked beans to produce approximately one pound of coffee (http://www.fair-trade@labor-religion.org). There exists unpaid overtime and poor working conditions that may include exposure to pesticides (http://www.globalexchange.org).

As I listened to the information being presented, an obvious dilemma began to brew. Do I swear-off my venerated morning coffee and become a tea or hot chocolate drinker? (The issues that dominate the domain of coffee do not commonly exist in the tea industry; the issues in the chocolate industry are severe and include slave and child labor.) I am deep in thought, bereaving my soon to be loss, as literature passes through my colleague’s hands into mine. The phrase “Fair Trade” stares at me and I realize - all is not lost.

Fair Trade empowers farmers by investing in their farms and communities, protecting the environment, and developing the business skills necessary to compete in
The Cost of a Cup of Coffee (continued from page 4)

the global marketplace. It includes fair price, fair labor conditions, direct trade which eliminates the middlemen, community development, and environmentally sustainable farming methods (http://www.transfairusa.org). The fastest growing Fair Trade commodity is coffee and 85% of all Fair Trade farms are organic (Co-op America). In the U.S. all Fair Trade certified products are clearly labeled.

Co-Op America (http://www.coopamerica.org/) offers a “Guide to Fair Trade” that includes a Fair Trade directory.

That’s all well and good…but what about my morning cup of coffee?

Fair Trade Quest

Upon returning from the conference, I began a quest to purchase Fair Trade certified coffee in my community. Although not my favorite coffee shop, my first stop was Starbucks in Fishkill. Starbucks proudly boasts a corporate social responsibility policy. The company “works together on a daily basis with partners (employees), suppliers, farmers and others to help create a more sustainable approach to high-quality coffee production, to help build stronger local communities, to minimize our environmental footprint, to create a great workplace, to promote diversity and to be responsive to our customers’ health and wellness needs.” The store was vacant of customers as I walked to the counter and asked the barista for a Fair Trade tall coffee.

“Sorry, Fair Trade is not the ‘Coffee of the Day’.”

“I thought the Starbucks’ policy stated that if a customer requested Fair Trade coffee it would be brewed.”

Silence…a barista smile (of indignant irritation?)…“It will take four minutes to brew.”

“Thank you, I have the time.”

My beans were freshly ground and four minutes later I had a steaming, cup of guilt-free Fair Trade certified coffee. During the time a terse conversation ensued in which I was told that Fair Trade certified coffee is not customarily brewed as the ‘Coffee of the Day’ and that all Starbucks coffee is Fair Trade, but not labeled as such. (I could not find any information on the company website to support that statement.) When visiting your local Starbucks why not take the extra four minutes and order a Fair Trade (Café Estima) certified cup of coffee? Assist the various social justice organizations and start pressuring local Starbucks to offer Fair Trade certified coffee as the ‘Coffee of the Day’ one day per week.

Encouraged by my trip to Starbucks, I decided it was time to uncover the truth about my favorite coffee shop, Dunkin’ Donuts. An e-mail was sent, and within 48 hours a response from Customer Relations Associate, Margaret, revealed the following: “Dunkin’ Donuts’ entire line of espresso beverages—both regular and decaf-use 100% Fair Trade certified beans. As one of the country’s largest purchasers of 100% fair trade regular and decaf espresso, Dunkin’ Donuts is a great example of an industry leader that recognizes the critical role corporations play in helping to alleviate the problems affecting coffee farmers.” If you are an espresso drinker (including lattes and cappuccinos) then Dunkin’ Donuts is the place to buy it.

My community Fair Trade coffee bases appear to be covered – regular coffee at Starbucks, lattes at Dunkin’ Donuts, but what about for home? Would I be able to brew my own Fair Trade cup of morning coffee? A visit to Fishkill’s ShopRite revealed that if I am willing to have a limited number of choices and to pay a slightly higher price, it was possible. Careful scrutiny of the coffee aisle revealed two brands that can be purchased Fair Trade certified: Seattle’s Best (a Starbucks subsidiary) and Newman’s Own (Green Mountain Coffee). The savings I have been receiving from using my own canvas bags for grocery purchases can now go to the higher price of Fair Trade and guilt-free coffee.

Coffee drinkers are not limited to specialty coffee shops and supermarkets. Internet shopping offers Fair Trade certified sites. One of the sites, Dean’s Beans (http://www.deansbeans.com/) has a variety of coffees: Dark Roasts, Medium Roasts, Light/Dark Blends, and flavored coffees. Other Fair Trade products can be purchased (sugar and cocoa) as well.

My coffee-trek concluded, I can rest assured that a Fair Trade certified and guilt-free cup of coffee is readily available in my community.
Professional Development, Your Way: National Board Certification and the Take One! Program

Diane D. DiChiara
National Board Certification Recipient

Certification takes months, sometimes up to three years, and it involves hundreds of hours, so why would a teacher pursue National Board Certification? Many candidates have been in the classroom for a while and are looking for ways to revitalize and strengthen their teaching practice. Others are interested in improving student performance. Some want the portability of the license for relocation. While others want the salary increase that many school districts offer. Finally, a number of teachers want a new challenge. To pursue certification, candidates must have

• A baccalaureate degree
• Three years teaching experience, prior to submitting application
• A valid state teaching license for each of those three years

What certificates are available?
Currently, NBPTS offers 25 certificates, in the traditional content areas as well as Art, Career and Technical Education, Health Education, Library Media, Music, and School Counseling (http://www.nbpts.org/become_a_candidate/available_certificates1).

What is the cost?
The cost of certification turns many off from the process. However, for New York State candidates, the expense is negligible as applicants can apply for the Albert Shanker Grant and Candidate Fee Subsidy Program. Therefore, the assessment fee of $2,500.00 including a non-refundable fee of $500.00 is covered by the grant with the candidate responsible for the $65.00 processing charge due at the time of application.

What is the WCSD incentive?
WCSD offers one of the best incentives in New York State for those who successfully complete the certification process. Each year for the life of the certificate (ten years), a certified teacher receives an additional $5,000.00. Moreover, the NBCT teacher mentors a new teacher; thereby, increasing the incentive an additional $1,000.00 or 45 hours of in-service credit. Even if you are not interested in mentoring, as an NBCT you will still receive a stipend of $2,500.00.

How many NBCTs are there in the WCSD?
Currently, WCSD has seven NBCTs. The majority of these teachers participated in a NYSUT sponsored support group and NBPTS research suggests that there is a higher achievement rate when one is involved in a support group. Some of the seven teachers achieved certification in one year; others took two years, while another took the allowable three years. Even those who have not achieved certification feel that the experience allowed for professional growth and reflection.

Is the process difficult?
The certification process is not difficult, but it is time-consuming, involving three types of writing (descriptive, analytical, and reflective), and requiring strong organizational skills.

Are there any other options?
However, there is another option available for teachers who want to “sample” National Board Certification. There is a program called Take One! This program is available to all teachers as well as induction or pre-service
teachers, principals, administrators, professors in colleges of education and those who provide support for National Board Certification candidates (NBPTS). Therefore, a teacher does not need to be permanently certified or have three years of teaching experience. Furthermore, an elementary principal can be part of a group of teachers from the same school or a coordinator can group with the department teachers. The implications of these partnerships are remarkable and can be far-reaching. The cost is $395.00 and only one video/writing entry is submitted. The score can be banked for completion of the entire process at a later date.

What is the WCT doing to support candidates?

Why not create a professional development plan that has meaning for you through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards process? The WCT will be offering an informational session in the very near future about both routes to certification. In conjunction with the district, we would like to offer support groups for Take One! participants. The participants will receive 45 hours towards inservice credit. Also, there is an already established NYSUT support group for those interested in the complete process. In the meantime, more information is available at http://www.nbpts.org/.

2008-2009 Newsletter Schedule

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Appointments are one (1) hour in length from 2 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on a first come first served basis. Since these slots fill up very quickly, call as soon as possible. The WCT office number is 227-5065. If the above dates are not convenient for you, call Stacey Braun Associates, Inc. 1-888-949-1925 directly and other arrangements may be possible.
The following biography of Roger Higgins, former WCSD Guidance Counselor and WCT Executive Board member, is from the June 22, 2008 Annual Award Brunch presented by the Town of Poughkeepsie Democratic Committee.

Today we honor Roger Higgins, Democratic Chair of our party’s successfully won majority in the Dutchess County Legislature.

Roger’s path to his political achievements began when he was recommended to run for the Legislature against Joe Poillucci in 1984. He did; he lost. When Poillucci resigned to go to the Board of Elections and Gerry McCluskey filled the vacancy, a special election soon followed and Roger won the seat - by one vote! - to become the first Democrat elected to the Town of Poughkeepsie’s former District 7. The following year he defended his seat and won again. Although he then lost a couple elections, he won back his seat and has kept it, and the towns of Wappingers and Poughkeepsie have benefited form his commitment to the sound government on their behalf.

“IT’s a challenge to be elected as a Democrat,” Roger says, “a pleasure and an honor to serve the community. Meeting and working with so many talented, committed people, that’s what makes public service so rewarding - the people you get to work with and establish relationships with.”

Roger’s formative student years enhanced his innate ability to become a leader and community advocate: President of Masque & Mime theater group at Ketcham High; President of the Dutchess Community College union board and involvement with student programming activities. He credits a DDC mentor, Tony Adamo, for teaching him “the importance of accountability, integrity, honesty and fiscal responsibility.” Next, to SUNY Brockport, becoming president of its union board. On to obtaining his MA in Education from Springfield College; later to Highland Falls as a school counselor; and for 30 years at Ketcham High, Roger was a school counselor and head of the Guidance Department.

His deep sense of responsibility has been directed to his larger community: member of Grinnell Library Board of Directors; former Vice-Commodore and current Trustee of New Hamburg Yacht Club; member of the New Hamburg Neighborhood Assoc., Town of Poughkeepsie Democratic Committee, D.C. Democratic Committee and the D.C. Economic Development Corporation.

Now, as Legislative Chair of the country’s majority party, Roger has “had the privilege to work with Democrats who serve as chairs of committees. Collectively, we have ‘opened up’ the legislature to the public, making our meeting time more accessible, allowing the public to speak and crafting agendas to represent Democratic initiatives, with a strong focus on the environment. Our efforts to strengthen the legislature is in evidence. Strengthening our independence in the long term - looking down the road at the future legislatures - may be my biggest contribution.”

Educator, accomplished political leader, advocate, and activist only partially defines Roger. His family is prime: daughter Brette, a recent DCC graduate who will be attending Western Conn. State College for graphic arts; son Christopher, Council to the NYS Senate Minority Caucus who is currently serving his 1st term in the Albany County Legislature; and his lifelong partner Pat of thirty-six years who cheers him on and is his greenhouse companion with flowers where Roger tends his 40 tomato plants, garlic, assorted peppers, eggplant, lettuces and squash, enjoying that as much as quiet times for reading and traveling and skiing with family.

With respect for and in appreciation of Roger, today we particularly honor him for his leadership, perseverance and energies to “preserve the integrity of the DC Legislature.”
Members’ Classified Ads

KEEL SYSTEMS, LLC
Computer (PC/Mac) Setup / Repair / Improvements Software Setup and Instruction
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- Data Backup & Recovery
- Networks: Wired/Wireless
- Mobile Computing (Laptops/PDAs)
- Digital Photography/VHS to DVD
Ed McKenna - 845-471-7607
EdmundTMckennaJr@gmail.com

FOR RENT: Georgetown Square townhouse for rent. 3 bdrm, 1.5 bth, 3 levels, great southside POK location, off street parking. Great deal. Call Mike at 462-3106.

FOR SALE: Southside POK - an updated “Arts and Crafts” style home with original features: oak woodwork, stained glass, cobblestone porch, and fireplace. 3bdrm, eik, lr,dr, sunroom with radiant heat, 1bt, central air, finished storage areas. $275,000 below assessed value move in, mint condition, a must see! Call 845-473-2251 or Rita at 845-473-1650, 845-905-8762.

FOR SALE: Husqvarna Model 400 computerized sewing machine. It is in like new condition. I paid $850. It was the absolute top of the line. It is easy to use and comes with all of the booklets, etc. Asking $300 OBO; Two year old Total Gym ELITE for sale. It is like new (only used twice). Has all accessories included! Asking $100 OBO. Please call (845)661-2567 leave a message.

FOR RENT: one bedroom/one bath, EIK, LR, hot water included, no pets, in East Fishkill Historical Society Palen House on 3 acres; $400/mo; one month rent/one month security. Call 227-5374.

Are you thinking of buying or selling a home now or in the future?

For a market analysis of your home or a referral to buy a home, call me or e-mail me:

Chuck Deppe
845-227-3859
tdep1@optonline.net
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**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 Meredith Inkeles at the WCT Office. Do not send articles or ads through the GroupWise e-mail system.

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**Miles of Hope Breast Cancer Foundation:**

*The Community Walk for Breast Cancer*

Our Biggest Fundraiser of the Year – Get Involved

Community Walk for Breast Cancer on Sunday, September 28th at James Baird State Park in Pleasant Valley, NY.

Walk with us and raise money for Breast Cancer support in the Hudson Valley region! Registration forms may be downloaded from our website (online form or PDF) or pick up at any Hannaford’s, Price Chopper or Adams Fairacre Farms stores.

Registration is $25. Register and start getting pledges now. (Walkers should be pre-registered). The entry fee for walkers who register the day of the walk is $35.

* The 2008 Community Walk for Breast Cancer honors Alice Scheff. She is a retired teacher from the Wappingers School District, a survivor, a supporter and a volunteer for Miles of Hope Breast Cancer Foundation.

Many volunteers are needed to help run the even. Call Miles of Hope at 845-264-2005 if you can help out.