

# The Agenda



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Over Seventy Years of Excellence in Education

MOUNT VERNON FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

December 2023

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



County Legislator Tyrae Woodson-Samuel, Keith McCall, NYSUT Retiree Coordinator for Florida, Florence McCue, UFT Representative

### Hello MVFT Family:

It is my hope that all is well with you and your respective families as we near the end of 2023.

The MVFT negotiations team has been actively involved with the School District regarding contract negotiations. We are in the midst of attempting to come to an agreement regarding the percentage increases across the salary schedules for all (3) three

bargaining units, as well as a significant increase of the hourly rate. We are also seeking retroactive payments for last year in the agreement. The MVFT and the School District will meet at least two more times prior to the holiday break.

Legislatively, the MVFT is monitoring the events regarding the State Education Department up in Albany. There have been discussions regarding the reduction of Title I Funding as well as New Teacher Certification requirements for staff. These changes have the potential to make a big impact on our profession. There is also a push to educate our members about the Tier 6 Pension System. The Tier 6 Pension System needs to be enhanced for the benefit of all teachers in the state.

Every member has a benefit of up to 6 hours of financial advice each year free of charge through our MVFT Welfare Fund. Please read the article in this newsletter from Mr. David Bonnington, one of our financial consultants at the Stacey Braun Advisors Company. Scheduling a consultation is simple. It is my hope that our members will take advantage of this free service.

In closing, I hope everyone enjoys this issue of the Agenda. Have a great Holiday Season.

Yours In Solidarity,

*Keith*

# COACH BOB CIMMINO

## Elected to the Westchester County

# HALL OF FAME

*By Richard Suozzo*

MVHS Boys Varsity Basketball Coach Bob Cimmino was recently inducted into the Westchester County Hall of Fame joining other prominent sports figures from Westchester. Coach Cimmino has won almost 600 games and 19 Section Championships along with 8 State Championships and 4 Federation Championships. However, his most successful achievement has been the number of former players who have gone on to college and graduated. Many of them sent well wishes and several attended the event. Coach has assembled a staff of loyal former players, trainers who work with the players, a great team doctor, Dr. K, and Destination College, which is a group of adult tutors who work with the young men to improve study skills. This support staff is instrumental in the success of the program.

In November, the MVHS Varsity Boys held their 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Tip Off Breakfast which was hosted by MVHS Alum Russ Baldassarre at his North End Tavern in New Rochelle. About 100 team members, friends and family attended the event where players make speeches about their goals and hopes for the season and beyond. It was a great event, and we would like to thank all who attended. The boys' varsity kicked off its season this Friday December 8 at MVHS. We look forward to seeing you this season.



Bob Cimmino  
Accepting Membership  
into the Westchester  
Sports Hall of Fame



Bob Cimmino and the Mt. Vernon Knights Standing Proud at the 29th Annual Tip Off Breakfast

# MAKE A 2024 FINANCIAL RESOLUTION TODAY!

By David Bonington, CFP®

Stacey Braun Associates, Inc.

Provider of the MVFT Financial Counseling Benefit

Hello! I am delighted to have received an invitation to submit this article to the newsletter. If you are not aware, Stacey Braun Associates offers a financial counseling benefit which is covered by the welfare fund. The program offers MVFT members and eligible employees up to six (6) hours of free, confidential, annual consultation time. I will finish describing the program below, but first, let me wish everyone a safe, healthy, and happy Holiday Season! My hope is that the balance of December will be a time for joy, celebration, relaxation, and peace for each of you.

As you know, January is often the month for resolutions – and it will be here soon. Many of the 2024 resolutions I've heard so far relate to personal health and well-being: I will lose weight. I will get more sleep. I will get more fresh air and exercise. I will eat more heart-healthy food.

One financially healthy resolution would be to make 2024 a year in which you take full advantage of the benefit offered by welfare fund. As mentioned, it includes up to six hours of consultation time with a Certified Financial Planner™ on topics of your choice. All meetings are strictly confidential, and because no financial products are sold there is never any sales pressure. Sessions are devoted to topics of greatest importance to you and the information and suggestions you will receive will be objective, constructive, and actionable.

There are sometimes general answers to financial planning questions, but the very best and sharpest advice is always developed in the context of a client's own personal and unique circumstances. A meeting can bring important facts and details into focus and can help a planner help you make progress toward – what else? – *resolution* of any stressful financial matters.

However, my immediate advice is not financial at all: Embrace the spirit of the season. Relax. Enjoy. Celebrate. Recharge. But don't forget to resolve to meet with a Stacey Braun planner in 2024, or (better yet) get a head start on the new year by scheduling a meeting today. My colleagues and I hope to see many of you in the year ahead!

**Free, confidential telephone or Zoom sessions with a Stacey Braun planner can be arranged by calling 1-888-949-1925. No financial products are sold and there is no sales pressure.**



# SICK INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

*By Ian Smith*

Currently there are two incentive programs offered through our contract & MOA. The goal of this article is to provide our members with a comprehensive guide to both incentive programs.

## **Incentive Program 1: Sick Leave Incentive Program**

The Sick Leave Incentive Program is intended to promote responsible sick leave practices among staff over the course of their careers in Mount Vernon CSD.

To be eligible, teachers must accumulate a minimum of 150 sick days. For those teachers using eight or fewer sick days in a school year, there is an option to sell back the remaining days to the District at \$75 per day. Teaching assistants and security must accumulate a minimum of 100 sick days to be eligible. For those teaching assistants and security using eight or fewer sick days in a school year, there's an option to sell back the remaining days to the District at \$50 per day. At retirement, such money will be used by the member to pay for the unit member's share of health insurance and/or welfare fund contributions.

The District should provide an annual statement of days stored in the incentive program account. However, members should know that they are responsible for keeping track of their own attendance. Please note that sick days cannot be returned once they are transferred to the sick incentive bank.

For teachers considering retirement, the program offers an avenue to sell back up to 18 unused sick days from the member's final year. Timing plays a crucial role in determining the credit received: those submitting retirement letters by January 15 can receive up to \$200 per day, by February 15 up to \$150 per day, and by March 15 up to \$100 per day. Remember, teachers must submit an irrevocable letter of resignation for retirement purposes by the dates listed above.

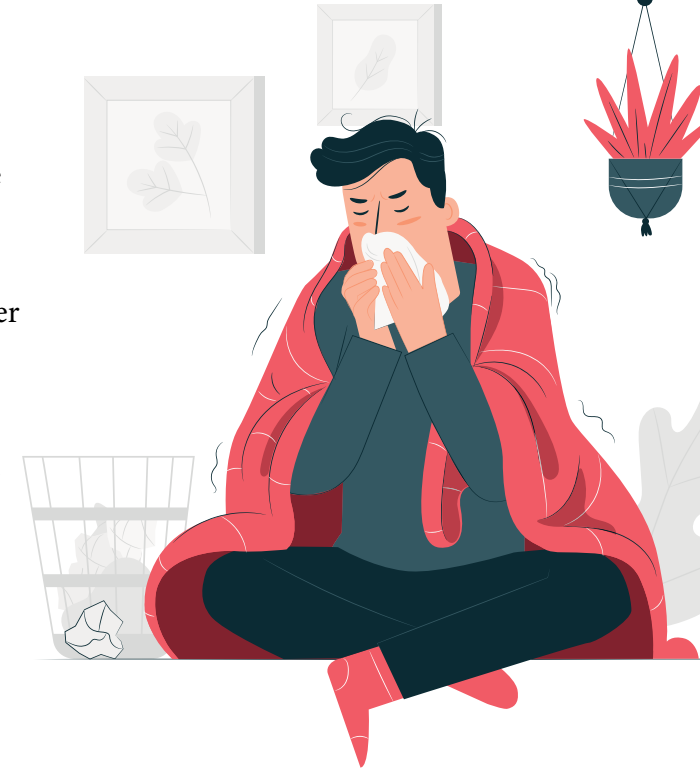
## **Incentive Program 2: Sick/Personal Leave Incentive Program**

The second incentive program can be found in the 2019-2022 MOA. The language for this incentive program is the same for all three MVFT units.

For the school year starting in 2021 and continuing, if a staff member uses five or fewer personal and/or sick days from September 1st to June 30th, they may qualify for a payment. The funds for these payments will be distributed evenly among all eligible staff members.

To be eligible for this payment, staff members need to work the entire school year. If a staff member is on an unpaid leave of absence or any other extended leave at any time from September 1st to June 30th, they won't be eligible for this payment. The District has set aside a total of \$275,000 to be distributed among all eligible staff members in the Teacher, Teaching Assistant, and Security bargaining units.

Refer to your contract for full details on both incentive programs.



# THE CREDIT APPROVAL PROCESS

Learning

The following is a quick rundown of the steps in the credit approval process. The full contract language on reclassification and lane changes can be located on **pages 2 & 3 of the contract**.

*Note: TAs do not need to submit credit approvals.*

## How to submit a credit approval form

1. Identify an accredited course.
2. Prior to paying for the course print out a copy of the course syllabus. Highlight the following items on the syllabus so the credit approval committee can easily identify the information they need.
  - a. Name of the college/university issuing credit.
  - b. Location of where the course is being held.
  - c. Dates of the course.
  - d. The part that specifies that the course is a 3 credit graduate level course.
  - e. How many hours you will spend in the course.
3. Complete a credit approval form (usually located in the school's main office).
  - a. Make a photocopy of the credit approval form.
4. Attach the syllabus to the credit approval form.
5. Submit credit approval form and supporting documents to Human Resources before the start of the course.
  - a. Be sure to get your credit approval form AND your personal copy of the credit approval form time-stamped. This will prove that you completed and submitted your documents prior to the start of the course.

## Rules regarding credits

1. You may take up to 6 online credits per **calendar year**.
2. You may take up to 6 total credits in both the fall and spring semesters.
3. You may take unlimited credits in the summer.
4. In-service credit information
  - a. For every 15 credits you must have 6 graduate credits.  
*Example: 9 in-service credits and 6 graduate credits.*

## Credit approval form denied or placed on hold

1. If your credit approval form is denied:
  - a. The most common reason for denial is that the credit approval form was not submitted prior to the start of the course. Therefore, getting a time-stamped personal copy is important.
  - b. You will need to appeal the decision through Human Resources.
2. If your credit approval form is placed on hold:
  - a. You most likely did not provide complete information such as a syllabus with dates of the course or the number of credits, etc.
  - b. Submit supplemental documentation to Human Resources to continue credit approval process.

## Rules regarding lane changes

1. You may apply for a lane change once per two years.
2. Reclassification documents are due by October 1<sup>st</sup> or February 1<sup>st</sup> of each school year. Lane changes will be reflected by October 15<sup>th</sup> or February 15<sup>th</sup> respectively.



Security Guard Kendalyn Meyers-Carter (L) with Lincoln School Principal, Rebecca Jones is honored at Lincoln's SRP Breakfast



Jeanneen Strand during SRP Day at Lincoln



SRP Day was a success at Cecil H. Parker school. We had a blast with our TAs and Security Officers by providing them with some DELICIOUS hot breakfast!!!

## SRP Day at Mt.Vernon City Schools

November 21, we celebrated School-Related Professionals Day. The theme was "SRPs Rise to the Challenge." This day of recognition is celebrated annually on the third Tuesday in November. Teaching Assistants, Teacher Aides, Security Members are honored through out the District with special breakfasts, gifts and honors. Our SRPs work tirelessly day after day to make sure the students are supported to become successful learners. We thank them for their dedication to the children of Mt. Vernon public schools.



Brittanya Barghen and Kendalyn Meyers-Carter, Security Guards at Lincoln celebrate SRP Day

Cliff Abney celebrates SRP Day with his colleagues at Parker





Union Strong Hamilton Members During the Day of Solidarity



Karl Nifontoff, Ian Smith, Mike Maclosay and Nadine Shields-Alcalde at NYSUT Leadership Conference



MVFT Delegates at NYSUT Leadership Weekend in Saratoga



Nikysha Copeland-Bey and Angela Cortijo-Brewer at NYSUT Leadership Week

# SPOTLIGHT

## LINCOLN STUDENT GOVERNMENT

*By John Reynolds, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies Teacher*

Lincoln student government has grown and evolved over the past few years. Since we came back to school after COVID, we have been active in the school and the community. We sponsor food cart Fridays. We sell snacks and treats to raise money that is donated to charity and used for class trips. We also sell mustaches during the month of November as part of our No Shave November initiative. We

have events such as Spirit Week and International Day. Over the last three years we have donated between \$1,500 and \$2,000 a year to different local charities such as Feeding Westchester and Lifting Up Westchester. We have also paid for class trips for students who otherwise couldn't afford it and donated money to families in need in our community as well as supporting local food drives.

The student government is very active in the Lincoln community. Many of our students are peer tutors, peer mentors and/or peer translators. They also offer teachers and staff classroom help. Our student government also serves as student ambassadors at such events as Back to School Night, Math Night, the Book Fair, and Parent Involvement Day. Many of our students also volunteer outside of Lincoln to help their community. The Lincoln Student Government is also going on a field trip to Mount Vernon City Hall in December to see firsthand how local government works. The students want to help and make a difference in their community, their enthusiasm and dedication make it an honor for me to be Facilitator of Student Government at Lincoln.



Lincoln Member John Reynolds with the Executive Members of the Student Government



# SPOTLIGHT



No Shave November at Lincoln

Making Strides for Fighting Breast Cancer at Lincoln

## SEPTEMBER RETIREE LUNCHEON 2023



*Joanne Cathcart and Gayle Wyckoff,  
Social Committee Co-chairs*

In-service members go to school while the retirees go to lunch! The MVFT Retiree Chapter General Membership Meeting and Luncheon, September 12, 2023, held in Patsy's Pizzeria, New Rochelle, was attended by 36 of our members. It was a most enjoyable afternoon! Minutes of the meeting were emailed to the retirees.

L-R: MVFTRC President Rick Castellitto with MVFT Vice President Karl Nifontoff and Anita Ameiero enjoying the food and fun at Patsy's Pizzeria. Click here to see more pictures from the event: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/NRAngdyubnbxGo17>

## MAKING STRIDES WALK 2023

*Pat Duggan, Chairperson*

The "MVFTRC Striders" collected \$1678.00 for the fight! Thanks to all who donated.



Pat Duggan and Anne Marie Kiernan

## HOLIDAY SCARF INITIATIVE

*Maz Hogan, Chairperson*

This year the MVFT Retirees donated almost 400 scarves to our students in need in grades K-6. On December 4, retirees gathered at the MVFT office to sort and pack up the scarves. The building reps will pick up the scarves and take them to their schools.

Thank you to those who gave a monetary donation, purchased scarves or made beautiful handmade scarves: Anne Myers, Phyllis Feingold, Maz Hogan, Margaret Mahoney, Marilyn Felder, Vera Glazewski, Elyse Hintzen, Cynthia Teiko, Karen Molinaro, Joyce Pines, Karen Wallace, Denise Crawford-Lighty, a knitting group from Hastings on Hudson and friends of Maz Hogan and her sister in Georgia.

L-R: Isabell Ellis, Karen Wallace, Roberta Greco, Veronica Washington, Vicki Scaglione, Diana O'Sullivan, Cythina Teiko, Maz Hogan, Margaret Mahoney



To see more pictures of the retirees in action click here: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/oqRyjHpMmNBQQ5t86>

## RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE MEAL PROGRAM MONETARY DONATIONS NEEDED TO CONTINUE OUR WORK

*Karen Wallace, Chairperson*

For the year 2023, MVFT Retirees prepared meals twice a month from April to December. Members cooked and packed over 630 meals for the families residing in Ronald McDonald House as well as families visiting their children in Maria Ferrari hospital. Funding for the program has come from donations from our members – retired and in-service. It is a most rewarding experience knowing that we are helping to care for the caretakers.

**Please help us continue this project with a monetary donation for purchasing the food.** Make a check payable to MVFT with a note for Ronald McDonald House. Send to:

MVFT, ATTN: Retiree Chapter,  
22 W. First St. #303  
Mount Vernon, NY 10550



*Thank You!*



A few of our delicious meals!

To see more pictures of our cooks in action click here:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/EpiYD3eeUpKQwjTw9>

## Letter From the Editors

Knowledge is Power. We have heard this aphorism over and over in our educational careers. So much so that we may have forgotten its truth. This first issue of **The Agenda** for school year, 2023-24, we are republishing some of the past articles Ian has written, plus a new one regarding sick incentive days. These articles provide members with the power to advance ourselves through proper credit approval process and keeping track of our hard-earned sick incentive days. Knowledge eliminates confusion and gives us the tools we need to advocate for ourselves and each other.

In addition, Rich Suozzo highlights the one and only Coach Bob Cimmino, who has been inducted into the Westchester Sports Hall of Fame. Coach's dedication and love of our Knights Boys' Basketball team is legendary, far beyond Westchester.

The editors' wish for the New Year is that more schools submit photos and articles of all the fantastic things happening at your schools. We also wish you a peaceful, healthy, and restful Winter Recess and prosperous 2024.

*Laura Marino and Ian Smith*  
Editors of *The Agenda*



### Membership Report

652	Retired
8	On Leave
1093	Active Members
1753	TOTAL

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

Keith McCall <i>President</i>	Janice Pollard <i>Pre-K-8 VP</i>
Jeanne Casino <i>Vice President</i>	Karl Nifontoff <i>High School VP</i>
David Israel <i>Treasurer</i>	Richard Suozzo <i>High School VP</i>
Frank Claro <i>Secretary</i>	Sabrina Velez-Payne <i>Pupil Personnel VP</i>
Andrea Gelling <i>Pre-K-8 VP</i>	Shondu Young <i>Security Chapter Leader</i>
Denisha Hawkins <i>Pre-K-8 VP</i>	Monique Bell <i>TA Chapter Leader</i>
Thalia Langley <i>Pre-K-8 VP</i>	

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## BUILDING REPS

Karen Wheeler #1  
Elizabeth Guidy #1  
Laura Marino #2  
Modesta Curzio-Spies #2  
Michele Battista #3  
Shawn Harper Tarrant #4  
Andrea Hyatt-Copeland #4  
Charlene Clarke #5  
Yesenia Avenant-DeFreitas #5  
Rebecca Challop #6  
Ellen Hanney-Saligumba #6  
Tashi Campbell-Tulloch #7  
Monica DeOliveira#7  
Janeen Clayton #8  
Nikysha Copeland-Bey #8  
Caiifa Clark #9

Rita Colucci #9  
Ellen Benowitz #10  
Lenora Harris-Shoulders #10  
Ian Smith #12  
Mary Dempsey #12  
Shawnette Odindo #13  
Nicole White-Lee #14  
Charissa Manigault #14  
Laurie Kellogg #14  
Francina Jubilee #16  
Greg McDonnell #16  
Isabel Garcia #17  
Nadine Shields-Alcalde #17  
Sam Stern #18  
Jaqueline Simone #18  
Tyler White #18  
Mike Malosky #18

## The Agenda

### NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

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*Editor:* Laura Marino  
*Editor:* Ian Smith

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