

# The Agenda



[www.mvft.org](http://www.mvft.org)

Volume 23, Issue 2

Over Seventy Years of Excellence in Education

MOUNT VERNON FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

June 2022



## President's Final Message

*By Carene Domato, MVFT President*

It's been a hell of a ride! I'm not sure any of us could have possibly known how challenging the past couple of years would be and we surprised ourselves when we were able to rise above it! If anyone is more suited and able to survive all that we have been through together, it is the teachers, teaching assistants, and security monitors that proudly call themselves members of the Mount Vernon Federation of Teachers.

Unprecedented, it has been said, unfathomable with no comparison, but we did rise because we are the keepers of this profession, the protectors of our students and the core of our community. And sometimes we fall, but we lift each other up and surely rise stronger together. Thank you for allowing me to be part of your struggles and your triumphs. Thank you for giving me your confidence to fight the daily battles and make sure your voices were heard.

Mount Vernon has been my home for the past forty years and each of you are my family; brothers and sisters that became a force when needed and a comfort when we were at our lowest. I've had the privilege to work with some of the most dedicated professionals and learn from some of the most fearless leaders over the years. We have tackled numerous contract negotiations, layoffs, and even a strike that could have crippled us, but instead brought us closer together.

Countless students have passed through my classroom door and each one of them carries a promise of a brighter future. I am blessed and grateful to have played a role in that. I have had the pleasure of mentoring many new teachers over the years that continue to make me proud.

I have no doubt that MVFT will continue to live up to its reputation as one of the mightiest teacher unions in New York. I have complete faith that our newly elected Executive Board will continue to represent each of you with the respect and commitment you deserve. Our hardworking building reps will continue to be the dedicated frontline advocates you have come to rely on. Each one of you also has an obligation to keep our union strong as well. Stand up for each other, stand together, and together you will be stronger.

I am excited to start this new chapter in my life and spend more time with my family. I will continue to advocate for public education and work as a political action coordinator for NYSUT and surely get involved with NYSUT retirees as well as our own retiree chapter. I leave behind only the fondest of memories and the greatest of victories. Thank you for all of your support through the years.

## MVFT Delegates Attend 2022 Representative Assembly



*From L to R: Stacia Fogg, Carene Domato, Tashi Campbell-Tulloch, Keith McCall, Angelique Perez, Michele Battista*

The delegates convened in Albany, NY, on April 1-2, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the formation of NYSUT.

The statewide union was formed March 30, 1972 with the merger of the New York State Teachers Association and United Teachers of New York. Initially named the New York Congress of Teachers, delegates at the union’s first RA, held in Montreal in 1973, adopted New York State United Teachers as the union’s official name.

“Over the years, NYSUT members have advocated tirelessly to make sure that the work we do is properly valued, appreciated and protected,” President Andy Pallotta added. That important work continues. The annual convention, NYSUT’s highest policymaking body, took place at the Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza and the Albany Capital Center. Delegates heard from President Pallotta, Executive Vice President Jolene DiBrango, Second Vice President Ron Gross and Secretary- Treasurer J. Philippe Abraham as well as a host of union and legislative dignitaries.

## ELECTION RESULTS FOR MVFT EXECUTIVE BOARD 2022

President: ..... Keith McCall  
 Vice President: ..... Jeanne Casino  
 Secretary: ..... Frank Claro  
 Treasurer: ..... David Israel

### Uncontested Positions:

Pre-K – 8 VP: ..... Andrea Gelling  
 Denisha Hawkins  
 Michael Jernegons  
 Thalia Langley

High School VP: ..... Karl Nifontoff  
 Richard Suozzo

Pupil Personnel VP: ..... Sabrina Velez-Payne  
 Security Chapter Leader: Shondu Young  
 TA Chapter Leader: Monique Bell

## Many Thanks to the Outgoing Board



**L-R Standing:** Angelique Perez, Charissa Manigault, Jeanne Casino, Monique Bell, Carene Domato, Andrea Gelling, Kathryn Santoro, Alina Ramirez, Richard Suozzo,  
**Sitting:** Keith McCall, Karl Nifontoff, Charlene Clarke



## MVFT RETIREES 2022

Anita Amieiro  
Lisa Autieri  
Crystal Brown  
Margaret Brown  
William Bullock  
Tonia Carlo  
Debby Cohen  
Linda Coschigano  
Carene Domato  
Esther Ehrman  
Isabel Ellis  
Wendy Ennis  
Maureen Flynn  
Taryn Hill  
Sherie Hollis  
Idaann Hubbard  
Tinaca Johnson  
Leon Joseph  
Charles King  
Donna Longo  
Barbara Ressegue  
Phyllis Rivenson-Schulman  
Jonathan Rosenthal  
Linda Servino  
Brenda Sutton  
Vanessa Williams

## A Note of Thanks

*By Carene Domato, MVFT President*

The MVFT would like to thank MVFT Treasurer Angelique Perez, Secretary Charissa Ayala-Manigault, PreK-8 Vice Presidents Katie Santoro and Charlene Clarke. Each of them has dedicated countless hours representing our MVFT members and helping the organization to grow stronger. The MVFT is indebted to each of you.

Treasurer Angie tirelessly went above and beyond, not just keeping the federation's finances balanced, but she also organized and supported the majority of our MVFT Committees. Angie was also a part of our office dream team and her presence will be greatly missed.

Secretary Charissa Ayala Manigault was appointed to the MVFT Executive Board when we needed her the most. It is going to be very difficult to replace her. She worked hard to make sure our members were kept well informed and she also organized many of our fund raising drives. We are hopeful she will continue to be a part of these endeavors.

PreK-8 VP Katie Santoro was also appointed last year to the Executive Board. As Mentor Program Coordinator, she offered us insights on the needs of our newest members. Her enthusiasm will be greatly missed, but are sure Katie will continue to be an asset to the MVFT and our members.

PreK-8 VP Charlene Clarke was born to lead and she certainly will be missed at our Executive Board meetings. We hope she will continue to be a voice for our members and continue to be an integral part of the many committees and fund raisers that were made successful because of her participation.

We sadly must also say goodbye to our Administrative Secretary Alina Ramirez. She is the kind and compassionate voice of the MVFT and has taken command of our office with fervor. She has brought the MVFT into the 21<sup>st</sup> century creating and maintaining our newly launched web page. Her creativity can be witnessed with every flyer and promotion that comes out of our MVFT office.

Alina was determined to make the change in the administration of Welfare Fund a smooth transition and because of her commitment and perseverance, it was successful. Alina has been an integral part of our office dream team and has made all of us better for having known her. Alina will be a shining star wherever she goes. Thank you, Alina.





# CONGRATULATIONS

TO THE PROUD RECIPIENTS OF THE FOLLOWING SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS:

## 2022 MVFT Frank Pandolfo Memorial Member Scholarship Award

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <i>Allison K. Longo</i><br>Daughter of Donna Longo<br>Pennington School                  | <i>Beon L. Wilson</i><br>Daughter of Tara Lattimer-Wilson<br>Holmes School             | <i>Gabriella Jackson</i><br>Daughter of Brigitte Marks-Jackson<br>STEAM Academy                         |
| <i>Janeil A. Powell</i><br>Daughter of Janelle Waithe-Powell<br>Mount Vernon High School | <i>Jason Campbell</i><br>Son of Melvin Campbell<br>Rebecca Turner Elementary School    | <i>Kenneth J. Prince</i><br>Son of Pamela Prince<br>STEAM Academy                                       |
| <i>Sereena A. Zito</i><br>Daughter of Stephanie Zito<br>Holmes School                    | <i>Thomas M. Gleason</i><br>Son of Melissa Gleason<br>Rebecca Turner Elementary School | <i>Krista V. Longo</i><br>Daughter of Donna Longo<br>Pennington School                                  |
| <i>Julia Yang</i><br>Daughter of Jae Yang<br>Mount Vernon High School                    | <i>Alyssa M. Artis</i><br>Daughter of Lisa Greene-Artis<br>Lincoln School              | <i>Jessica L. Rodriguez</i><br>Daughter of Laura Colletti-Rodriguez<br>Rebecca Turner Elementary School |
| <i>Maci B. Langley-Furs</i><br>Daughter of Thalia Langley<br>Hamilton School             |  |   |

## 2022 MVFT Frank Pandolfo Memorial Teaching Scholarship Award

*Jasmari Guyman*  
Mount Vernon High School

## 2022 P.A.S.S. Scholarship Award of Denzel Washington School of the Arts

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <i>Olivia Anderson</i><br>Science            | <i>Kendall McDowell</i><br>Social Studies | <i>Jeremy Aponte</i><br>Physical Education |
| <i>Fatima Davila Pen</i><br>Foreign Language | <i>Shakira Bottoms</i><br>Health          | <i>Sidnie Paisley-Thomas</i><br>English    |
| <i>Haylia Harry</i><br>Art                   | <i>Joel Barclay</i><br>Art                | <i>Malachi Walton</i><br>Music             |

## 2022 P.A.S.S. Scholarship Award of Mount Vernon High School

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <i>Nyla Goodyear</i><br>English         | <i>Noaha Nimi</i><br>Mathematics         | <i>Nicolette Lofutto</i><br>Science                 |
| <i>Tonian Rattray</i><br>Social Studies | <i>Rebeck Valerio</i><br>World Languages | <i>Jabari Barriffe</i><br>Physical Education/Health |
| <i>Ovar Johnson</i><br>Art/Music        |  |   |



## Credit Approval

By Angelique Perez, MVFT Treasurer

As many of you may already know from attending your monthly union meetings, in the Mount Vernon City School District you must fill out a pre-approval credit application before you take any courses beyond your first master's degree. A committee reviews the information you submitted along with your form and either approves, holds for more information, or disapproves it if it was submitted too late. The committee usually meets twice a month and returns the member's copy via the pony. That being said, if you notice how long it takes for you to get your copy back, that should give you some clue as to how slow the pony moves sometimes. Therefore, you should be sure to hand deliver everything to HR and give yourself at least a week or two grace period before the course begins to make sure it is not disapproved for tardiness. Finally, be aware that the committee does **NOT** meet over the summer, so make sure you get your forms in before our last meeting on June 16, 2022. Have a great summer!

## Membership Report

652	Retired
8	On Leave
1093	Active Members
1753	TOTAL



# MT. VERNON FEDERATION OF TEACHERS WELFARE FUND FINANCIAL COUNSELING PROGRAM

Administered by Stacey Braun Associates, Inc.

## FINANCIAL COUNSELING PROGRAM

As a member of the Mt. Vernon Federation of Teachers Welfare Fund, you are entitled to fully paid, confidential financial reviews with a Certified Financial Planner® from Stacey Braun Associates, Inc. In these troubled times Stacey Braun Associates is committed to discuss your financial concerns. We are offering consultations by virtual web video using the Zoom platform, via phone or in-person.

Mt. Vernon Federation of Teachers Welfare Fund members receive six hours of planning over the course of the year and unlimited access to a financial help desk by email or website. The advice you will receive is free and Stacey Braun Planners are prohibited from selling insurance products or earning commissions from investment products.

Your one-on-one session with a Financial Planner can cover a variety of topics that are relevant to your financial present and future. Topics covered in your confidential review can include:

- Retirement Planning
- Debt Management
- Budgeting
- Investments (403b, etc.)
- Estate Planning
- Refinancing
- College Planning
- Financial “second opinion”
- Life, Disability, Long Term Care Insurance
- Any other financial topic

### GETTING STARTED

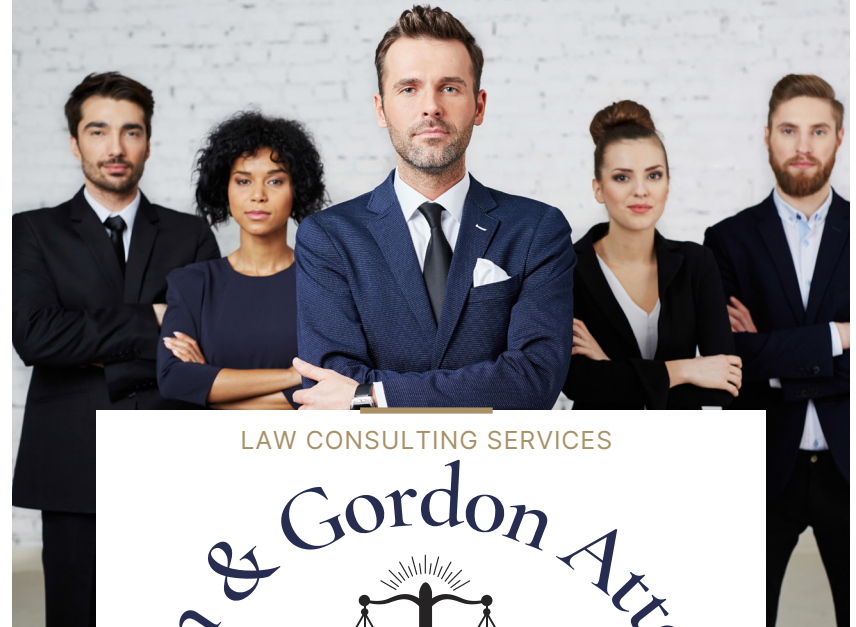
Contact Stacey Braun Associates to schedule your free, confidential consultation: Call (888) 949-1925 or visit [www.staceybraun.com](http://www.staceybraun.com)

Login: mtvernon • Password: money

**Stacey Braun**  
ASSOCIATES, INC.



The Mt. Vernon Federation of Teachers Welfare Fund has hired Stacey Braun Associates, Inc., to give you free financial advice on any topic under the financial sun. The firm does not earn commissions from investments or insurance products and is not affiliated with any 403(b) or 457(b) providers.



LAW CONSULTING SERVICES



**Representation in:**

- Purchasing/Selling a Primary Residence
- Legal Defense
- Uncontested Matrimonial Proceedings
- General Legal Consultations
- Document Review
- Preparation of Last Will and Testament
- Durable Power of Attorney
- Health Care Proxy
- Living Wills, and MORE!

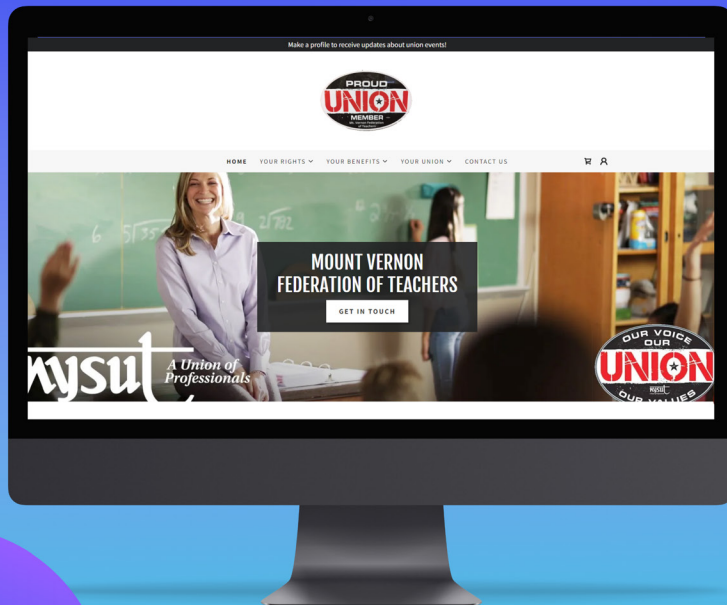
CONTACT US

 914-997-1576

# MVFT.ORG

Looking for Contracts?  
Welfare Fund Forms?  
Upcoming Events?

MAYBE ITS TIME TO  
VISIT OUR WEBSITE



[www.MVFT.org](http://www.MVFT.org)

**01** Contracts can be found under the **"YOUR RIGHTS"** tab on our website.

**02** For Welfare Fund Forms click the **"YOUR BENEFITS"** tab, then select **"WELFARE FUND"** on our website. Scroll all the way to the bottom to find downloadable versions of the form you need.

**03** Find upcoming events by going to the **"YOUR UNION"** tab and selecting **"CALENDAR"**



# SPOTLIGHT

## HAMILTON



MVFT Leaders: Hamilton School Strong: Jennier Quiros, President Carene Domato,  
Building Rep Thalia Langley, Vice President Pre-K-8 Charlene Clarke

**SPOTLIGHT**

# PENNINGTON

**PENNINGTON  
IS  
UNITED**



L-R: Denisha Hawkins & Janice Pollard



L-R: Stephanie Cooper, Sahar Miandaobi, Janice Pollard, Christina Shkreli



L-R: Seth Leibowitz, Joe Constantinides, Erica Fuggetta, Janice Pollard, Sahar Miandaobi, Karin Battersby, Jaleesa Swain

*Pennington wears BLUE in April for Autism*



# SPOTLIGHT

## TRAPHAGEN



Rebecca Challop, Erin Langton, Lauren Petrillo, and Ms. Jean showing their support for the college they went to during college and career ready week!

Ann Marie Gilligan and Coach Lade Rocking out the school spirit at Traphagen School!



# SPOTLIGHT

## TRAPHAGEN



*Claudine enjoying a sweet treat given by PTA.*



*Ms. Martino is presented with a M & M which stands for marvelous and magnificent teacher!*



*Ms. Gandarias enjoying a nice luncheon given by the PTA.*



*Ms. Challop is enjoying some goodies shared by the PTA.*



*Mrs. Armstrong and Ms. Jones get a delicious treat for all their hard work!*



*Mrs. Murray George and Ms. Fairman enjoy a treat from the PTA!*



*Ms. Moore is a fabulous music teacher enjoying teacher appreciation week!*



*Mrs. Shield is enjoying a yummy lunch presented by the PTA.*

# SPOTLIGHT

## LINCOLN

### Lincoln Teacher Appreciation Day at Maggie's



L-R: Modesta Spies, Nia Dlugon, Christina De Lucia, Susan Lombardi, Mary Anne Walsh and Kristen Cipriano



### MVFT Summer Office Hours

Monday–Thursday 10am–3pm, Closed on Fridays

Mount Vernon Federation of Teachers

22 W. 1<sup>st</sup> St. #303

Mount Vernon, NY 10550

MVFT Office 914-664-3189

Fax 914- 664-0860

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

Carene Domato  
*President*

Jeanne Casino  
*Vice President, Grievance Chair*

Angelique Perez  
*Treasurer*

Charissa Manigault  
*Secretary*

Karl Nifontoff  
*High School VP*

Richard Suozzo  
*High School VP*

Charlene Clarke  
*PreK-8 VP*

Andrea Gelling  
*PreK-8 VP*

Keith McCall  
*PreK-8 VP*

Kathryn Santoro  
*PreK-8 VP*

TBD  
*Pupil Personnel VP*

Denise Coates  
*Security Chapter Leader*

Monique Bell  
*Teaching Assistant Chapter Leader*

### UNION OFFICE

MVFT Rm. 303  
22 West First St.  
Mount Vernon, NY 10550

Phone: (914) 664-3189

Fax: (914) 664-0860

Online at: [www.mvft.org](http://www.mvft.org)

### BUILDING REPS

TBD #1  
Laura Marino #2  
Modesta Curzio-Spies #2  
Michelle Battista #3  
Andrea Hyatt-Copeland #4  
Shawn Harper-Tarrant #4  
Thalia Langley #5  
Rebecca Challop #6  
TBD #6  
Tashi Campbell-Tulloch #7  
Stacia Fogg #7  
Janeen Clayton #8  
Nikysha Copeland Bey #8  
Caiifa Clark #9  
Tina Ciccone #9

Ellen Benowitz #10  
Lenora Harris-Shoulders #10  
Frank Claro #12  
Mary Dempsey #12  
Lydia Rose #13  
Nicole White Lee #14  
Ainy Betancourt #14  
Janice Pollard #16  
TBD #16  
Nadine Shields Alcalde #17  
Isabel Garcia #17  
Sam Stern #18  
David Israel #18  
Eddie Sauls #18  
Jacqueline Simone #18

### The Agenda

*Staff*  
Carene Domato  
Alina Ramirez  
Karen Wallace  
Barbara DeAngelo



## ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF MVFTRC

The newly elected officers of the MVFTRC met on May 12, 2022, 10:00-12:00 at the MVFT Office with Committee Chairs for planning the continued development of the MVFTRC.

**Present:** Rick Castellitto, Jeff Yonkers, Karen Wallace, Cesar Matanzo, Pat Duggan, Margaret Mahoney, Lynne Petrone, Marilyn Pirozzi, AnneMarie Kiernan, Bob Fetanti, Vera Glazewski, Maureen Palumbo.

**Topics included:** membership, budget (expenses and dues), current committee reports, survey members for ideas and interests, communication methods, documenting MVFT history.

### CALENDAR:

New Member Committee meeting on June 2 to prepare gift and information to present to the 2022 retirees.

Executive board meeting on June 13 to prepare budget for 2022-2023 and set membership dues, discuss possible new committees.

President Rick Castellitto and Secretary Karen Wallace will attend MVFT Retiree luncheon on June 14 to present gifts and info about MVFTRC.

Summer dates for cooking at Ronald McDonald House TBA

The Seminar/Events/Social Committee will plan for September luncheon and general membership meeting 2022.

Email the next edition of AFTERSCHOOL in late August or early September



MVFT  
RC

# Introducing

## THE NEWLY ELECTED MVFT RETIREE CHAPTER OFFICERS

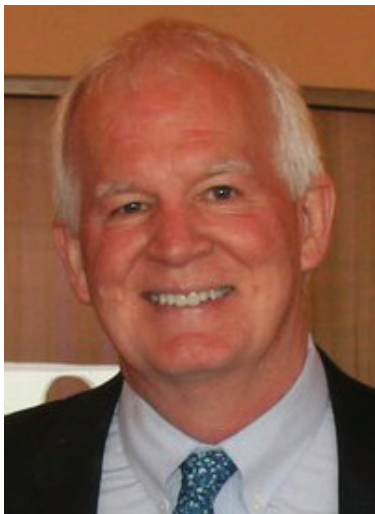


### **RICK CASTELLITTO, PRESIDENT**

Rick started teaching in Mount Vernon in 1972, straight out of college. He taught 6th grade, Remedial Math and Computer Ed at Graham, Washington and Hale/Parker schools. From the late 70s to 1990, Rick served on the MVFT Negotiating Team and was eventually elected to positions as Elementary School VP and Executive VP for over 8 years. He was also appointed as Grievance Chair under three MVFT Presidents.

Rick received a Certificate in Labor Studies from Cornell School ILR and left Mount Vernon in 1990. Rick then started work at NYSUT in Elmsford as a Field Rep/Labor Relations Specialist and also served as a Teaching Fellow at the NYSUT Leadership Institute. He retired from NYSUT in 2013. In his “free time”, Rick is a Certified Mediator for the NYS Unified Court System.

Rick and his wife, Barb, live in Mt. Kisco, NY. When he’s not being MVFTRC President, he enjoys babysitting for his three young grandchildren, baking bread and remodeling houses.



### **JEFF YONKERS, VICE PRESIDENT**

Jeff retired in 2018 after 38 years of teaching in Mount Vernon. Born and raised in Yonkers, NY, Jeff has resided in Mount Vernon since 1992 with his wife, Maryellen. They have two daughters: Beth, a teacher in Edgemont, and Kate, a doctor, married to James with whom she has two boys, Owen and Jameson. Jeff happily spends as much time as possible with his grandsons!

For over 40 years, Jeff has been involved with NYSUT and the MVFT. He began as an alternate rep at Pennington as an untenured teacher in 1980. Jeff served as President of the MVFT from 1996–2018. He continues to serve as an elected member of the NYSUT Board of Directors.

*“I look forward to this new venture, supporting Rick and our great team of MVFT retirees in all of our group’s future endeavors.” - Jeff Yonkers*

# THE NEWLY ELECTED MVFT RETIREE CHAPTER OFFICERS



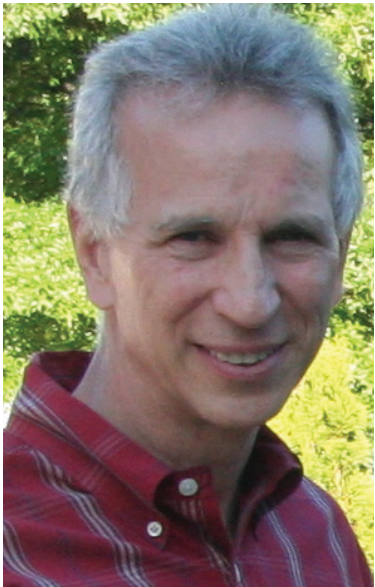
## **KAREN WALLACE, SECRETARY**

Karen retired in 2013 after teaching music in Mount Vernon for 30 years. In the early years, Karen taught at A.B. Davis, Parker, Lincoln and Holmes School. The last 20 years of her tenure were spent at Columbus School. She was a building rep for Columbus and the editor of THE AGENDA for 18 years.

Since retiring, Karen has continued to assist in the publication of THE AGENDA and is the editor of the newsletter for the MVFT Retiree Chapter, AFTERSCHOOL. Since 2017, Karen has been working with fellow retirees to develop the MVFT Retiree Chapter and helping to organize volunteers for charity projects endorsed by the chapter.

Karen lives in White Plains, NY, with her husband, Jerry. They enjoy travel adventures, family gatherings, gardening and cooking.

*"Retirees are a great resource for our community. I am excited about the future of the MVFTRC and appreciate being a part of this organization!" - Karen Wallace*



## **CESAR MATANZO, TREASURER**

Cesar retired in 2016 having taught for 36 years with 33 of those years in the Mount Vernon CSD. He served as the Hamilton School Building Representative from 1993-2000 and as MVFT Treasurer from 2000-2016. Cesar's wife, Marisol, also retired from Hamilton School in 2016. They enjoy being with their grandchildren.

Throughout Cesar's tenure as the MVFT Treasurer, the fiduciary responsibilities increased as the union expanded its outreach in various areas. Cesar attended many NYSUT workshops to guide union treasurers. As a full time sixth grade teacher at Hamilton School, the after school hours dedicated to the MVFT extended into nights and weekends.

*"As Treasurer of the MVFT for sixteen years, I appreciated the trust of the MVFT leadership and the MVFT membership to watch over our union dues. I do not anticipate the office of the Treasurer of the MVFTRC to be as encompassing as the MVFT Treasurer office, nonetheless, I will bring the same attitude to my work as Treasurer with the understanding that the Retiree Chapter has put their trust in me to maintain our financial health." - Cesar Matanzo*



# THE NEWLY ELECTED MVFT RETIREE CHAPTER OFFICERS



## PATRICIA DUGGAN, DELEGATE-AT-LARGE

Patricia is a lifelong Yonkers resident and mother of two adult daughters, Kelly and Caitlin. Patricia taught Science at A.B. Davie Middle School for 30 years. For 15 years of her tenure, she served in several positions in the union: a MVFT Building Alternate, Building Rep and Middle School Vice President.

Patricia is a Yonkers Public Library Board Trustee, Corresponding Secretary for the County Waterford Association, a GED Coach for Westchester Libraries through RSVP of Westchester and is an Ambassador for Gilda's Club of Westchester.

*"Since retiring in 2019, I spend my time tutoring and volunteering. Most days you can find me walking my dog in the park! I am honored to serve as the newly elected Delegate-at-Large for the MVFTRC and I am looking forward to working with my former MVFT colleagues on the MVFTRC."* - Pat Duggan

# VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Untermeyer Gardens in Yonkers, NY, is looking for interested volunteers in various areas: Garden Greeters, Garden Docents, Family Adventure Tour Guides and other interesting volunteer positions.

Volunteers can contact: [gardens@untermeyergardens.org](mailto:gardens@untermeyergardens.org)

- Pat Caruso, Untermeyer Gardens Chairperson