

## A VISIT WITH JUDITH JOHNSON

THE TIME IS RIGHT TO CHANGE THE LEGISLATION.

By Jeff Yonkers, MVFT President

I recently had the opportunity, along with five other NYSUT leaders, to discuss some items that are most important to our members with Regent Judith Johnson. Ms. Johnson, appointed to the Board of Regents in April 2015, hit the ground running, opening up new important dialogues with educators and legislators in an attempt to move us forward. I saw firsthand her competence and strength as a leader during her tenure as acting superintendent here in Mount Vernon. Since her arrival, the Board of Regents has shifted to a much more progressive, educator based position on many, if not all, of those items within their purview.

The Regents are on the right track, but much of what we need to address can only be done through a change in "statute." For the Regents to enact a more common sense approach to student testing and teachers' evaluation (APPR), they will need additional flexibility added to the law. I bring this to your attention because the APPR laws begin to really count in 2019 and 2020. Between now and then, we will need to pressure the governor and the state legislature to make changes in the law to include added flexibility that will once again allow for greater local control.

Here, in this district, we can push our local legislators to support these changes, but each of us must do so in our home districts as well. We should consider supporting the opt-out movement in our local school districts. We must demand that our local representatives support "greater local control" and the removal of student scores from the teacher evaluation process. Together, we must show support for greater flexibility for the Board of Regents to move New York State from failed education policies to ones that are based more on student growth than state exams.

The time is right to change the legislation and to support quality education and those who believe in it.

## YOUR UNION, YOU'VE EARNED IT, SUPPORT IT!

By Jeff Yonkers, MVFT President



Earlier this year, the United States Supreme Court received briefs from the parties in the Janus v. AFSCME court case. This is one of several cases being used to try and weaken unions across this country. The court is expected to rule before the summer break. Although this is not a New York case, nor is it about a teachers' union, its finding will have a profound effect on all union membership.

Half the states in our country are presently "right to work states," which really means they have no rights at all. The other half, including ours, has collective-bargaining rights and "fair share fees." Not having these guaranteed rights and fees would likely tip the balance of power towards management, changing our lives and working conditions as we know them. When the ruling comes down, we will either continue to have these rights that we have earned, awaiting the next challenge; or, it will be time for all of us to redouble our efforts, keeping our union strong and viable as our united voice against power.

Typically, right to work states limit "fair share" or agency fees. This severely reduces funds available to the unions on which they rely to support the services they provide. This results in lower wages, weakened contracts, and in many cases the dissolution of pension rights and benefits that we have grown to expect. The attacks on our rights are funded by private corporations with deep pockets who have the most to gain. Public employees served by unions in states with collective bargaining rights are in their way. If these

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## DISTRICT WIDE LESSON PLAN COMMITTEE

*By Carene Domato, MVFT Vice President*

The MVFT has appointed a Lesson Plan Team to meet with district administrators as agreed upon in the June 2017, Teacher Memorandum of Agreement. The MVFT Lesson Plan Team, facilitated by MVFT VP Carene Domato, includes: Laura Mason, MVFT Chairperson; Francia Mendoza, Graham School; Thalia Langley, Hamilton Elementary; Donald Emerson, BTMS; Jason Stone, AB Davis MS; Anita Amieiro, MVHS, and Jessica Pizzuti, Thornton HS.

The MVCSD Lesson Plan Team facilitated by Dr. Claytisha Walden, Associate Supt. of C&I, includes: Charles Brown, AP of BTMS; Daniel Brady, AP of Thornton HS; Jacqueline Green, AP of Williams; Marc Molina, AP of Lincoln, and Colleen Crawford, Principal of Columbus.

The charge of the District Lesson Plan Committee is to make recommendations to the MVFT and the district pertaining to lesson plans. At this time, we have only been able to meet twice with the district. Thus far, we have brainstormed a list of lesson plan components, and perused a number of lesson plan templates.

Throughout our discussions with Dr. Walden, we have come to a consensus that lesson plans are at the discretion of the teacher as stated in the teacher contract. For this reason, the LP committee will be recommending a number of optional lesson plan formats. We have asked our building representatives to ask teachers to submit any lesson plan format that they have found to be effective. The MVFT LP Team wants to make sure that all our teachers have the opportunity to voice their opinions in regard to daily planning.

The MVFT LP Team created an anonymous survey that was emailed to all teachers on February 7th, by Dr. Walden, who also put together a survey with parallel questions for the administrators. We hope that all of our teachers will take the time to complete the survey and be honest with the responses. We will then have an opportunity to discuss and compare the results of both the teacher and administrator survey at our next District LP Committee meeting.

## 20/20 ACADEMIC VISION UPDATE

*By Jeanne M. Casino, MVFT Grievance Chairperson*

At the January 9, 2018, Board of Education meeting at Graham Elementary School, Superintendent Hamilton presented an update to the MVCSD 20/20 Academic Vision. The report moves up the Pre-K through 8 reconfiguration and the implementation of theme based high schools beginning in September 2018. There were also construction updates and improvements to our infrastructure. In September, Traphagen, Williams, Columbus, and Pennington will add 1 full day Pre-K class. In 2019, Columbus and Holmes will add another full day class while Lincoln adds 2 full day classes. In 2020, Hamilton and Grimes will have two full day Pre-K classes and the district will be providing Pre-K education to about 708 students.

Presently, Graham and Pennington are K-8 schools. Rebecca Turner (Pre-K-5) and Benjamin Turner (6-8) serve as a K-8 campus. Beginning in September 2018, Columbus, Grimes, Holmes, Lincoln and Parker will house 7th grade students. In fall 2019, Hamilton, Traphagen and Williams will begin the same transition. The transition to K-8 also signals the end of Davis middle school which will house only 8th graders in the fall.

Great things are happening at the high school level. We will now have three theme based high schools. Mount Vernon High School will become a comprehensive school with a focus on CTE (Career Technical Education), sports, an IB (International Baccalaureate) program and classes in the Humanities. The Performing and Visual Magnet School moves from Mount Vernon High School to the newly renovated Thornton High School building. The present Thornton High School will be phased out leaving only 11th and 12 graders in the fall and the last graduation happening in June 2020. Davis Middle School will become the new STEAM high school in September starting with grades 9 and 10. Current 8th and 9th graders filled out high school choice forms last month. The complete MVCSD 20/20 Vision update can be found on the district website.

This is certainly an exciting time to be a teacher, student, staff or community member in Mount Vernon.

**Please join us -  
Phone Banks - MVFT Office - March 27, 2018  
For NYSUT endorsed Shelley Mayer for State Senate  
(special election to replace George Latimer)**

# MVFT #FOODSTRONG - WHAT IS HUNGER EXACTLY?

By Karl Nifontoff, HS Vice President

The dictionary defines hunger as “a feeling of discomfort or weakness caused by lack of food, coupled with the desire to eat.”

Sadly, in our community, too many people suffer from the lack of the basic nutritional items necessary and feel “hunger” daily. We, at the Mount Vernon Federation of Teachers, hear this cry and once again have come out in full force to try to combat this issue.

I am proud to say that this year the MVFT, along with the Mount Vernon City School District, once again answered that call. Over the course of two weeks, teachers, students, and staff throughout our district have come together to donate thousands of pounds of food along with over \$3000 dollars for the Westchester Food Pantry.

In a tradition which goes back over 25 years, we have, once again, rallied to support and help those who may be faced daily with the unsettling feeling of where their next meal will come from! I would like to thank all of the people who have stepped up and joined us in supporting our efforts in this worthy cause. The students and their families who donated truly demonstrate the qualities that we in Mount Vernon try to exhibit by helping others. To all the faculty and staff, to the teachers and administrators who



donated, to the custodial staff who helped us collect and carry all the canned goods...a huge thank you! Lastly, many thanks to our Superintendent, Dr. Kenneth Hamilton, who graciously allowed us to hold “dress down days”, which enabled us to support our Food Drive with monetary donations.

Hunger never ends unfortunately, and we know that. Well guess what? The MVFT will never quit their efforts in supporting and helping this worthy cause. A most sincere thank you to all involved!!!

## YOUR UNION, YOU'VE EARNED IT, SUPPORT IT!

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challenges in the courts can damage us enough so that we no longer can bargain successfully for a living wage, benefits, protections like seniority and tenure or if they can undermine our pension rights, then corporate employees will be less likely to demand or win those types of compensation for themselves. Many of our members are too young to remember when all workers had pensions! Not so today! If this case goes the wrong way, we will not retreat, but we will need the support of all our members in order to continue to provide the benefits and support that we do today.

Writing this article made me think that perhaps a reminder of some of the things the union does for its members might be in order. You are all members of the MVFT, NYSUT, NEA, AFT and the AFLCIO; these organizations represent

you at the local, state and federal levels. Locally, we provide a full time office staff to address your needs in a timely fashion. We negotiate contracts, represent members in disputes or grievances, provide benefits and protections, and advocate and lobby to support your pensions and working conditions. Additionally, we serve you in the following ways:

Negotiate	Benefits	Advocacy
Benefits	Medical	Pensions
Salary	Dental	District Committees
Calendar	Optical	Newsletter
Work Conditions	Legal	Web Page
Work Day	Burial	Training
Child Care	Insurances	Grievances
Leave Time	Retiree Health	Notices
Paid FMLA	Benefit Incentives	Staff Development

Without your support and the funds necessary, who will provide these services for you? Management? Not likely!

# RETIREE BULLETIN BOARD

## MVFT RETIREE CHAPTER

### FINANCIAL REPORT

*by Cesar Matanzo*

Once again, our retirees gave generously to MVFT initiatives. In addition to the hundreds of scarves purchased or made for students, retirees donated \$580 in cash to the Holiday Initiative and \$125 to the MVFT Food Drive.

### RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE

*by Karen Wallace*

At present, we are scheduled to cook at Ronald McDonald House on the third Wednesday of every month through July 2018 thanks to the generous donations from retirees! On January 24, retirees prepared a delicious dinner for the families at Ronald McDonald House. Team Captain Gayle Wykoff was assisted by Denise Medoff, Dianne Santino, Joanne Cathcart, Barbara Foley and Anne Hanney. On February 24, Team Captain Elyse Hintzon was assisted by Anne Hanney, Vera Glazewski, Rita Abdo and Roberta Greco. If you would like to sign up to prepare a meal, email Karen Wallace [kkwallace312@gmail.com](mailto:kkwallace312@gmail.com).



### EMAIL COMM

Additional information for MVFT retirees is disseminated through email. If you have not been receiving MVFT Retiree emails and would like to receive info, call the MVFT office or email Karen Wallace at [kkwallace312@gmail.com](mailto:kkwallace312@gmail.com)



**EXECUTIVE BOARD**

- Jeff Yonkers  
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- Carene Domato  
*Vice President*
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*Treasurer*
- Anita Amieiro  
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- Annette Coppola #1  
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**Membership Report**

<b>Active</b>	<b>1115</b>
<b>Leave</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Retirees</b>	<b>538</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1669</b>



**The Agenda**

*Editors*

Melissa Hogan  
Laura Mason

*Staff*

Jeanne Casino  
Carene Domato  
Maz Hogan  
Karen Molinaro  
Karen Wallace  
Jeff Yonkers

NYSUT joins national affiliates for a National Day of Action Against Gun Violence in Schools on **April 20, 2018**



Source: NYSUT Communications

**"WE SHOULD BE UNITED IN OUR COMMITMENT TO ENSURING THAT EVERY SCHOOL IS A SANCTUARY FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING, AND A SAFE, NURTURING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL"**

*Andy Pallotta, NYSUT President*

Elections for all MVFT Executive Board Members will be held in April 2018

## KNOW YOUR CONTRACT ~ SICK DAYS

*By Carene Domato, MVFT Vice President*

We often get a lot of questions that can be answered quite easily by opening up the contract or recently agreed upon MOA. Both documents for teachers, teaching assistants and security can be easily found on the district website under Human Resources/Contracts and on the MVFT website [www.mvft.org](http://www.mvft.org).

Since the flu season has hit us so hard this year, I would like to remind all of our members to look more closely at the "Attendance Review Policy" agreed upon for both teachers and teaching assistants. For your health and for the record: go see a doctor if you are going to be out for more than a couple of days.

For those who have used very few sick days, this will be the first year that you may be eligible for a \$500 incentive at the end of the year!

According to the Teacher: MOA Article II: Leaves of Absence

Teaching Assistant MOA: Article III: Leaves of Absence,

Security MOA: Article IV

### THE SICK/PERSONAL LEAVE INCENTIVE PROGRAM:

"Effective July 1, 2017, in the event a unit member uses 7 or less personal and/or sick days in a year (9/1-6/30) said unit member shall be eligible for a payment in the amount of \$500 at the conclusion of each qualifying school year. Unit members must work a full school year in order to be eligible for said payment. Those on unpaid leave of absence for any period of time shall be ineligible for said payment."

Please be aware that the district will be relying on the daily attendance roll sent in by your building attendance secretary. The district management system, AESOP/Frontline, will not be used to determine who is eligible to receive the incentive. The MVFT has reminded its members how important it is to keep records of your absences, as we have witnessed many discrepancies between what has been recorded on AESOP, our end of the year APPR Form, and by the school's attendance secretary.

For the purposes of this incentive, it is in your best interest to request your recorded absences from your attendance secretary and to make this request via email and cc your building administration. If there is a discrepancy, be sure to request that it be changed via email and follow up with your secretary until the record of absences has been corrected.

Also, please note that bereavement days do not count against for this incentive. They are not considered personal or sick days, and should be recorded as bereavement.

# SPOTLIGHT

GRAHAM



Graham celebrated our 100 days of school. Mrs. Francis' kindergarten class dressed as 100 year old men and women as part of the celebration. They wore wigs, carried canes and had their house coats on.

HAMILTON



"MVFT Pens for Parent Involvement Day"  
L-R: Tina Harris, Lisa Morris, Christine Sciarretta, and Carene Domato

A.B. DAVIS

Seventh grade A.B. Davis Middle School students in Patricia Duggan's and Charles Tucker's Living Environment classes participated in an augmented reality and 3D printing pilot with 3D Bear AR application. Students were challenged to improve something in their school environment, like the classroom, the bathroom, the cafeteria, the library, or the play ground, using the 3D Bear AR application to create their design by using iPads. Students and staff enjoyed using the 3D Bear AR app on the iPads, as well as using 3D printer to print out best design in each class!

GRAHAM



Christine Ceglio and her class at Graham School celebrate Dr. Seuss

COLUMBUS



L-R: Jennifer Smith, Bianca Ruggiero, Lindsey Vetere, Victor Flack, Lissa Hogan, Stephanie Appollino, Maribel Marchena

## CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

By Anita Amieiro, Secretary

### WELCOME BACK

Sharell McKennie (RTES)  
Vanessa Williams (Parker)  
John Hopgood (Williams)  
Katie Galvin (RTES)  
Doreen Furlong (Hamilton)



### GET WELL WISHES

Agnes Taylor (BTMS)  
Denise Di Giorgi (Holmes)  
Anita Brown (Pennington)  
Sue Marie Stanton (Pennington)  
Pat Caruso (Williams)  
Claudine Nembhard (Davis)  
Marissa Albano (Williams)  
Francesca Apostolou (Holmes)  
Rebecca Challop (Traphagen)



### BIRTHS

Michael McGovern (BTMS) birth of son  
Michele Giglia (Graham/ Parker) birth of son  
Steven Salvatore (Holmes) birth of son  
Jackie Martinez (BTMS) birth of daughter  
Eric Chambers (Davis) birth of daughter  
Gina Conrad (Davis) birth of twin girls  
Tara Quinn (Graham) birth of daughter



### CONGRATULATIONS

Michele Lish (Graham) retirement  
Christine Ceglie (Graham) engagement  
Annette Coppola (Thornton) daughter's engagement  
Laura Grosso (Thornton) engagement  
Pat Battles (MVHS) birth of granddaughter  
Claudia Carmona (Pennington) grandchild  
Lauren Yancigay (Grimes) wedding  
Matthew Horn (Holmes) engagement  
Janet Marrone-Figueiredo (Retiree) daughter's marriage  
Karen Molinaro (MVFT) birth of grandson



### CONDOLENCES

Lauren Yancigay (Grimes) loss of grandfather  
Troy Peckler (Davis) loss of grandfather  
Viviam Russo (Davis) loss of father  
Toni Parson (Mandela) loss of mother  
Yolanda Thomas (Graham) loss of mother  
Danielle Grandazzo (RTES) loss of aunt and uncle  
Tamara Berthaud (Williams) loss of grandmother  
Pat Caruso (Williams) loss of sister  
Cassandra Corbett-Jones (Davis) loss of daughter  
Leida Plaza (RTES) loss of father  
Rosa Tirado (Pennington) loss of grandmother  
Christine Francis (Grimes) loss of husband  
Suzette Francis (Graham) loss of father  
Thrusha Henderson (Hamilton) loss of father  
Cesar Matanzo (Retiree) loss of mother  
Marisol Chinea-Matanzo (Retiree) loss of mother-in-law  
Karen Wallace (Retiree) loss of mother-in-law  
Caroline Facendo (Retiree) loss of mother  
To the Family of Naomi Ross  
To the Family of Naomi Brandler  
To the Family of Deborah Caraccio  
To the Family of Winifred Swirling  
To the Family of Joan Hagen  
To the Family of Marie Williams  
To the Family of Carol Laib

## MVFT WELFARE FUND WEBSITE - WWW.ASONET.COM

Administrative Services Only, Inc., (ASO) is the third party administrator that handles the processing of your dental, optical and co-pay reimbursement claims. By accessing their website: [www.asonet.com](http://www.asonet.com), and selecting Mount Vernon Federation of Teachers WF from the dropdown, you can obtain plan information, schedule of benefits, participating provider lists, and print out claim forms. If you would like to get information specific to yourself and your dependents, such as your claim histories and eligibility, you can create a login and password in order to access this information.

# MVFT ANNUAL HOLIDAY DRIVE 2018

By Carene Domato, MVFT Vice President

The MVFT Annual Holiday Drive 2018 raised \$8191 thanks to the generosity of all: including our members, retirees, building staff, administrators, and CSEA members!

This year the number of needy students in our district continued to rise from the previous year. Our fundraising efforts were used mainly to purchase Target gift cards for more than 300 secondary students. There was also an increase in the number of elementary students in need.

Melissa Hogan, MVFT Holiday Drive Coordinator, stepped up to organize and energize fundraising efforts for our younger students, including holding "Kindle Fire Raffles" that were very successful. Thanks to Melissa's CYBER MONDAY savvy, many schools purchased Kindles online for \$30 and then raffled them off to the students and staff, helping many of the schools purchase special gifts for our less fortunate students.

Lillian Reynolds, along with the social workers in the elementary schools, teamed up with the MVFT delegates to make sure that the more than 350 of our students went home with bundles of wrapped gifts. Sara Kincade, kindergarten teacher from Hamilton School, once again, matched every student on the needy list with a caring staff member. Many of our schools were so overwhelmed with an abundance of gifts we were able to donate extra gifts to elementary schools that needed it!

MVFT retirees Karen Wallace and Maz Hogan reached out to MVFT retiree volunteers who gave both their time and donations to make the holidays a little brighter for our students. We are also grateful for Dr. Kenneth Hamilton, who promoted the MVFT Annual Holiday Drive by announcing not one, but two, district wide dress down days for those willing to donate. And a special thanks to Donna Jackson and Sonia Gregory at the Ed Center for all of their help as well.

The MVFT and the students of Mt. Vernon had a lot to be grateful for this holiday season.