

## I'm Sticking With Our UNION

By Carene Domato, MVFT VP

The MVFT is the third largest teachers' union in Westchester and has always put their members first. We negotiate for higher pay and better benefits, and make sure our contract is honored on a daily basis. Alongside NYSUT, we fought to protect our pensions by overwhelmingly defeating last year's constitutional convention. We are unstoppable when we "stick together"!

However, as we speak, wealthy special interests are fighting to destroy our unions and the things we value. They've funded Janus vs. AFSCME, a case before the Supreme Court that poses a direct threat to our voice, our values and our union.

Should the billionaires succeed in their latest assault on the nation's workers, here is what we stand to lose:

- H The right to bargain collectively for a living wage
- H Health coverage for you and your loved ones
- H Your right to a secure and dignified retirement
- H A voice on the job to ensure safe conditions, and prevent the abuse and exploitation of workers
- H A respectable standard of living for all working families

When we all commit to our union by signing the re-enrollment card we can protect what's ours and defend what we have earned. It is the best way to defend our voices, our values and our union.

## PARTING THOUGHTS FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Jeff Yonkers, MVFT President

Since this is my final newsletter article as President of the MVFT, please indulge me in a personal, union minute.

I started my career teaching part time at Horace Mann/Barnard, a lot of work, little pay. After that year, I began subbing in the Yonkers Schools, eventually at my alma mater, Gorton High School. I was surprised to see so many staff members still there from when I was a student, and they were even more surprised to see me! As a student, I had not shown much interest in school work, it was mostly sports and social life.

As luck would have it, soon after I arrived, Yonkers Teachers voted to strike. At the time, I was not a union member. I had no benefits and was being

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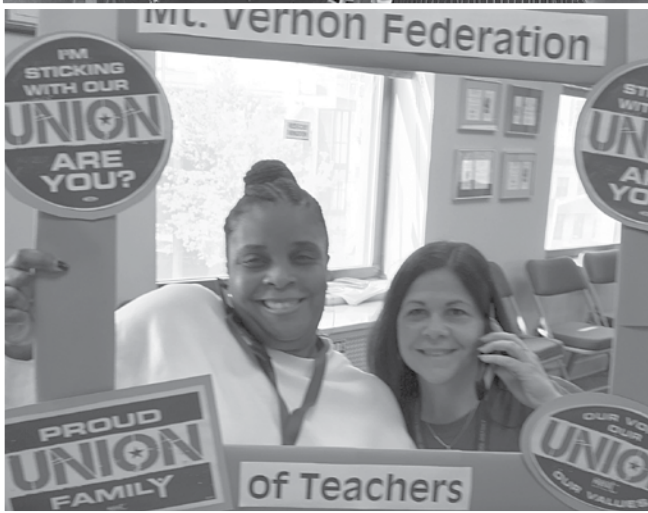
## MVFT CELEBRATES ANOTHER VICTORY ON MAY 16 SCHOOL BUDGET VOTE PASSES AND MVFT ENDORSED SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEES WIN!

By Carene Domato, MVFT VP

You might think that getting a .89% property tax increase with this year's proposed Mt. Vernon City School budget should take little effort, especially after four years of no increase. But in Mount Vernon, one of the highest taxed districts in Westchester, it was not an easy feat! Thanks to the commitment of our MVFT volunteers who made close to 1200 phone calls to NYSUT members who vote in Mount Vernon to get out the vote and support the proposed budget, the budget overwhelmingly passed! A big shout out to: Michelle Atterbury, Lisa Cavallero, Christine Ceglie, Patricia DeCarlo, Janees Gonzalez, Tonja Hills, Francina Jubilee, Thalia Langley, Diane Torstrup, Andre' Upson, Nicole White, and Marcia Wint who all joined us at our Virtual Phone Bank Party.

This year was also the first year the MVFT stood strongly behind a slate of Mount Vernon BOE Trustees and fully endorsed: Trustees Micah McOwen and Wanda White, as well as former trustee Darcy Miller. Their victory was a victory for all of us! The MVFT sent out 1200 postcards and followed up with a personalized automated phone call to the NYSUT voters in Mt. Vernon in support of the school budget and our endorsed candidates. The MVFT has proven again and again that when we stand together, we can accomplish anything!

# I'm Sticking With Our UNION





## **PARTING THOUGHTS FROM THE PRESIDENT**

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paid as a per diem. The Principal, Sam Manello, needing bodies, offered higher pay and a position of teaching and coaching when I returned if I would come in during the strike. Never belonging to a union, and having bills to pay, that night I called my father who was a manager for the post office. I believe that short discussion with my father changed the direction of my career.

My Dad put it this way, "You have been on athletic teams all your life, is it not your intention to be part of a new team, a team of educators? If you were to go in, it would undermine their efforts for your own personal gain." My dad told me that it was up to me, but he knew what he would do. I understood; I didn't have to ask!

I later called the principal and thanked him for the opportunity, but said I would not cross the line.

When the strike ended, I began to sub again, and after a few weeks of traveling between the four other high schools, I was assigned to Gorton once again. When I entered the teachers' room, I was greeted by several teachers who thanked me for not crossing their line. I was unaware that the Assistant Principal, Roger Abate, had told them that I had turned down the principal's offer.

Later that same day, the principal called me in to his office. I had been there way too many times as a student; it felt much the same way. To my surprise, he asked if I would consider working as a leave replacement teaching science and math until the end of the year. He shook my hand and said that I was the type of person he wanted working for him. I learned many lessons that year!

I taught and coached in Yonkers for almost three years without a tenure slot because the city was under a hiring freeze. Seeing no change in sight, when offered a tenure track position in Mount Vernon, off I went. I've worked in Mount Vernon now for 38 years. I have been involved in the union for almost 37 years, holding the office of President for 22 years.

I am very thankful for that first lesson, and the many lessons learned along the way. I have had a chance to meet, work with and for so many interesting, exceptional people. I have had the opportunity all these years to be a member of a very special team. My time in education, Mount Vernon and the Mount Vernon Federation of Teachers has been time well spent.

## **STATE OF THE UNION AND NEW LEADERSHIP**

As I write this article, as always, the ground beneath us keeps shifting. Having said that, the MVFT is solid, as are NYSUT and AFT as well. We are making headway on the APPR debacle and state aid has been increasing each year. Mount Vernon's school leadership has begun to shift in a direction that I believe will benefit us all when completed. There will be rough patches but we are accustomed to that and will find our way through.

Any day now, the Supreme Court will rule on the Janus case. How we respond to that ruling is up to us. This case, the next one, or the one after that, will challenge us, but if we stick together, we will remain strong.

Here in Mount Vernon, we will have a newly elected leadership team. All the

officers, many executive board members and building reps have experience in their roles. I believe Carene Domato, Jeanne Casino, Angelique Perez, and Anita Amieiro will serve you well. Our office team, Karen Molinaro and Claire DePaul will be able to help with a seamless transition of leadership.

The MVFT is financially sound and the Welfare Fund is as well. I am proud that we have run the MVFT without a dues increase for my 22 years. I would however, warn that it has become increasingly more difficult and that a small dues increase may be in order sooner rather than later.

## **THANK YOU**

I could use the rest of the space in this newsletter to thank all those who have served this union and helped me along the way. Of course, I won't do that, but even at the chance of leaving out some, I have to mention a few.

I have to thank Dominick Ciccone for the huge role he played; Dom, Frank Pandolfo and Mike Mariani for getting it started...Rick Castelletto, Ken DeStefano and Marc Laffer for their amazing NYSUT guidance; Joe McLaughlin, Barry Friedman and Jeff Zuckerman for their friendship and leadership lessons; Carl Caprio, Cesar Matanzo, and Karen Wallace for their never ending support of me and the MVFT even into retirement; Karen Molinaro, the glue that has kept the office and union together for all these years; and certainly my wife, Maryellen, and my daughters, Beth and Katie, for putting up with the shortened vacations, phone interruptions and the many weekends and evenings forsaken for union work.

Last, but not least, I have to thank the Union leaders, the membership, and those who work at the board who have helped serve our members. For me, this was never a job, it was truly my pleasure.

# SPOTLIGHT

PENNINGTON



## PENNINGTON CELEBRATES WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Mount Vernon City School District School Board Vice President, Wanda White, visited Michelle Atterberry's fourth grade class for Women's History Month. She came with treats in hand along with a host of stories about her childhood, career as an educator and current position as Trustee. They had a question and answer session and everyone learned a lot about Ms. White. It was a great way to end the month!

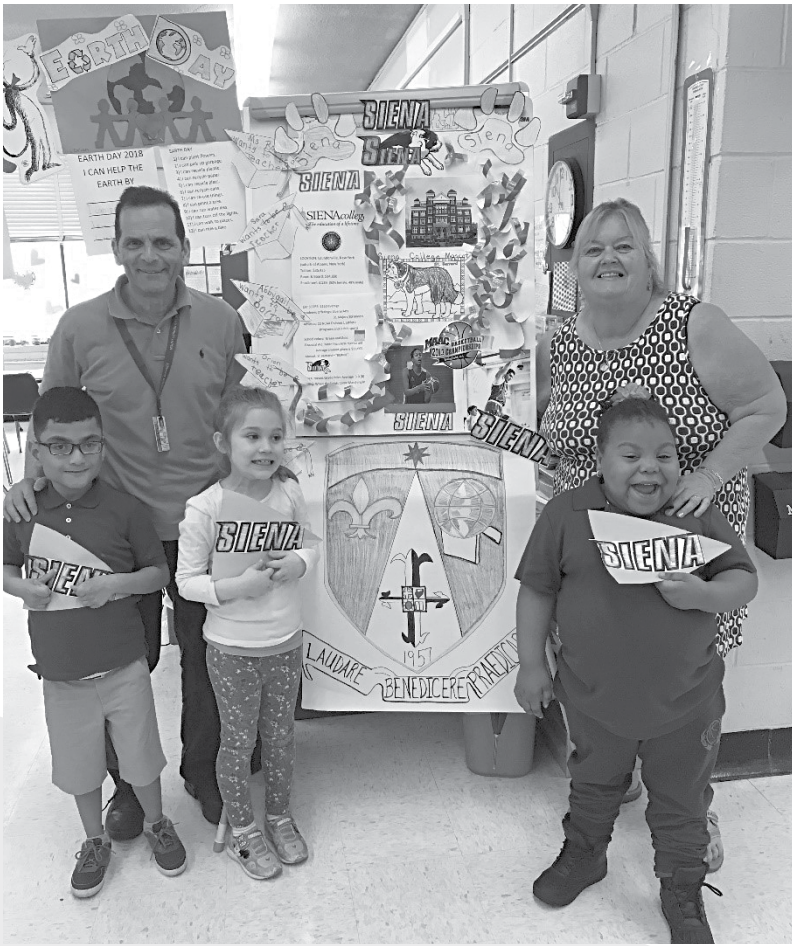
## GRIMES GOING AN EXTRA MILE

By Sophia Williamson, MVFT VP K-8

Grimes Elementary School second grade teacher, Stephanie Harris, has been inspired to start a book club with her second grade students. Ms. Harris states, "The idea of starting a children's book club for young readers came about after experiencing the enthusiasm, excitement and desire for literacy that my second grade class had while reading their first chapter book *"The Boxcar Children"* by Gertrude Chandler Warner. It was that experience that inspired me to go beyond the traditional walls of basal readers to introduce my class to the world of trade books."

Since there is not enough time in the school day to meet the demands of the district and give students the exposure to literature through trade books, *Ms. Harris' Book Club* was birthed!

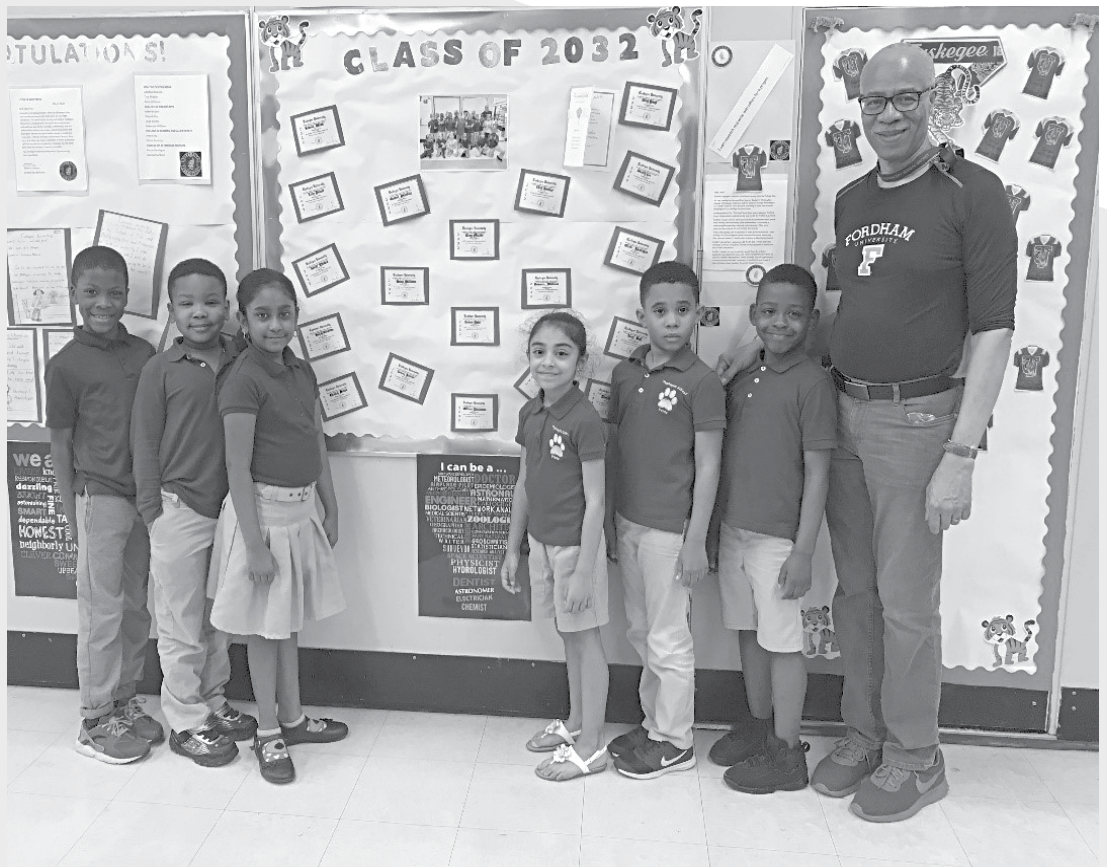
Ms. Harris hopes to engage, motivate, and cultivate her students' love for reading, as well as provide an avenue for social interaction and positive growth. Ms. Harris is thinking about expanding the book club to students outside of her class next year, should there be an interest. Stephanie Harris exemplifies the selfless dedication of teachers in the Mount Vernon City School District!



## COLLEGE DAY

*By Ann Marie Gilligan*

On May 4th, the staff and students at Traphagen enjoyed College Day where the students learned about the colleges their teachers had attended. The students heard from their teachers about the hard work they did in college to get where they are today. The teachers and students took the time to research different colleges and learn about the variety of degrees you can get from going to college. Students also learned about being college and career ready.





## A TRIBUTE TO OUR DISTINGUISHED MVFT PRESIDENT JEFF YONKERS

*By Carene Domato, Vice President*

Many of us who know Jeff Yonkers well have been avoiding the inevitable. How do you say goodbye to a friend, a mentor, and many times over - your hero? How do you put into words how much one person has impacted your life and the lives of so many others?

I have had the pleasure of working with Jeff Yonkers for over twenty-five years, even before he was MVFT President, but make no mistake, a title does not make a leader a leader. I can remember my first MVFT meeting as building rep of Pennington, feeling totally lost and unsure if I was even in the right place, but Jeff stopped me from running out the door and never coming back. He told me that I don't have to understand everything, I just have to be willing to listen. He spoke with a humility that I still hear in his voice today; you don't always have to know all the answers, just be willing to ask the right questions.

The year he ran for MVFT President, was a time for change, a time to move forward after surviving a one-day strike. That strike of 1994, could have lasted much longer than one day, but our members stayed strong and united. The efforts of our MVFT leaders behind the scenes were relentless. Jeff felt responsible for every single member that walked that picket line, and vowed to do whatever it took to get us back in the schools where we belonged.

We all learned a lot that year. It brought our membership closer together and proved to everyone else that we were not to be taken for granted. The newly elected MVFT officers that followed, led by Jeff Yonkers, offered a new strength and hope to our members. Jeff surrounded himself with strong leaders and it was not by chance. He knew that if we were to get the respect we deserved in this profession, it was going to take a team committed to the cause.

Numerous contracts have been settled since then: gains and losses, deals and broken promises. For two decades, Jeff and his Vice President, Dominick Ciccone, spent every single minute of every day protecting the rights of our members. They were fearless and selfless in their efforts, and together we all knew we were in the presence of greatness. I was there, witness to the admiration they deservedly received from teachers, teaching assistants, security guards and administration. You couldn't help but to want to be a part of it all!

Leaders know they are effective and successful when they have the ability to bring out the best in others. Leadership is not about power, it is about empowering others. Great leaders, like Jeff Yonkers, don't set out to lead, they set out to make a difference.

So, although it is difficult to say goodbye to MVFT President Jeff Yonkers, we thank you for making us stronger, giving us a united voice, and helping us to recapture the deserved pride we once again have in our profession. We thank you for making a difference.

## RETIREE BULLETIN BOARD MVFT RETIREE CHAPTER

The MVFT Retiree Chapter prepared dinner on April 25<sup>th</sup> and May 22<sup>nd</sup> for the families staying at Ronald McDonald House in Valhalla, NY. The meals have been greatly appreciated. Special thanks to all who donated the funds for the food, the cooks and the team leaders for planning and shopping. The funds donated will enable the retirees to cook dinner once a month through October.



*Pictured L-R: Karen Wallace, Team Leader; Roberta Greco, Cynthia Teiko*



*Pictured L-R: Roberta Greco, Elyse Hintzon, Team Leader; Vera Glazewski, Karen Wallace, Anne Hanney*



**Teaching Assistant Chapter Committee**, co-chaired by TA Chapter Leader Melvin Campbell, and AB Davis building rep, Monique Bell meets monthly, tackling issues that our teaching assistants face daily. If you are interested in joining forces with this committee, contact Melvin Campbell, [mcampbell@mtvernoncsd.org](mailto:mcampbell@mtvernoncsd.org), or Monique Bell [mbell@mtvernoncsd.org](mailto:mbell@mtvernoncsd.org)



L-R: Melvin Campbell, Monique Bell, Charissa Ayala, Terrence Gallimore, Caiifa Clark, Andre' Upson

**MVFT Promotion, Retention, and Grading Policy Team**, co-chaired by High School VP Karl Nifontoff Jr. and Parker School building rep, Christine Ceglio, has just begun reviewing the district's existing promotion, retention and grading policies. This team was appointed by the MVFT and will continue meeting with administrators under the direction of Dr. Claytisha Walden. They have taken on the task to update and recommend revisions to the present district policies.



Front L-R: Kisa Baginski, Patricia Duggan, Lisa Pizzolla, Christine Ceglio  
 Back L-R: Thalia Langley, Alfred Ritacco, Karl Nifontoff Jr., Anita Amieiro  
 Team Members Not Shown: David Israel, Andrea Militano, Latanya Beavers, Denisha Hawkins

## CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

*By Anita Amieiro, Secretary*

### GET WELL WISHES

Peter Squitieri (*Grimes*)

### WELCOME BACK

Patricia Caruso (*Williams*)

Francesca Apostolou (*Holmes*)

### BIRTHS

Kelly Murphy (*BTMS*) birth of daughter

### CONGRATULATIONS

Kayla Robstad (*Lincoln*) VFT Teacher Award

Jennifer Acciaviatti (*BTMS*) engagement

Shondu Young (*Davis*) engagement

Annette Coppola (*Thornton*) daughter's engagement

Nicholas Pickel (*Columbus*) engagement

### CONDOLENCES

Katherine Ramos (*Graham*) loss of father

Tamisha Hall (*Williams*) loss of aunt

Mary Oates (*Williams*) loss of son

Adam Slansky (*Williams*) loss of grandfather

Monique DaCosta (*Hamilton*) loss of grandfather

Patricia Thompson (*retiree*) loss of sister

Jean Hurst (*retiree*) loss of sister

Gloria McQuaid (*retiree*) loss of mother

Lenox Brown (*Holmes*) loss of brother

Jo-Ann Anderson (*Holmes*) loss of husband

Jeannie Rinaldi (*Holmes*) loss of father

To the family of Georgina Ennis (*MVHS Retiree*)



# Congratulations

## TO THE MVFT RETIREES

Ann Marie Autieri  
 Rosemarie Begley-Mastropolo  
 James Campbell, Jr.  
 Ohan Clarke  
 Cassandra Corbett-Jones  
 Jeff Corsello  
 Carol DelGuidace  
 Yvonne Forbes  
 Janine Garvin-Murphy  
 Patricia Griffin  
 Maxine Harris  
 John Hebert  
 Clarice Imbriano  
 Loretta Johnson  
 Carrie Jones  
 Joyce Lee  
 Michelle Lish  
 Thomas Lyons  
 Janet McKenna  
 Ronnie Meyer  
 Demetrios Mihailidis  
 Ferdinand Motley  
 Dawn Mullins  
 Henry Nardoizzi  
 James Newson  
 Maeve Nolan  
 Elizabeth O'Loughlin-Petrasovits  
 Katherine O'Toole  
 Norma Pelatti  
 Mary Ricciardi  
 Domenica Rinaldi  
 Diane Wong Shing  
 Georgia Slayton  
 Harriet Smith  
 Madeleine Stern  
 Gloria Willette  
 Sophia Williamson  
 Jeffrey Yonkers

YOUR Retirement dreams AWAIT

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

Jeff Yonkers  
*President*

Carene Domato  
*Vice President*

Angelique Perez  
*Treasurer*

Anita Amieiro  
*Secretary*

Karl Nifontoff  
*High School VP*

Richard Suozzo  
*High School VP*

Jeanne Casino  
*PreK-8 VP, Grievance Chair*

Patricia Duggan  
*PreK-8 VP*

Andrea Gelling  
*PreK-8 VP*

Sophia Williamson  
*PreK-8 VP*

Patricia Griffin  
*Pupil Personnel VP*

Rochelle Brown  
*Security Chapter Leader*

Melvin Campbell  
*Teaching Assistant Chapter Leader*

## BUILDING REPS

Annette Coppola #1  
 Scott Pollard #1  
 Toba Duggan #2  
 Karen Wheeler #2  
 Luis Angiolillo #3  
 Diana O'Sullivan #4  
 Shawn Harper-Tarrant #4  
 Charlene Clarke #5  
 Thalia Langley #5  
 Rebecca Challop #6  
 Kathryn Santoro #6  
 Tashi Campbell-Tulloch #7  
 Keith McCall #7  
 Lisa Cavallero #8  
 Nikysha Copeland-Bey #8  
 Christine Ceglio #9  
 Francia Mendoza #9  
 Marcus Green #10  
 Deborah Thompson #10  
 Monique Bell #12  
 Michael Jernegons #12  
 Donald Emerson #13  
 Greg Vandecarr #13  
 Nicole White Lee #14  
 Charissa Ayala #14  
 Tonja Hills #16  
 Francina Jubilee #16  
 Nadine Shields Alcalde #17  
 Isabel Garcia #17  
 Andre Upson #18  
 David Israel #18  
 Eddie Sauls #18  
 Michael Malocsay #18

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

### 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