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Mount Vernon Federation of Teachers

June 2024

Letter From the Editors

Thank you to everyone for submitting articles and photos throughout the school year. It is the commitment and love of the MVFT Members that bring the heart to Mt. Vernon City School District. As we look at past Newsletters, we see over and over the dedication, joyful spirit and community that makes our schools so special.

We wish all the best to the MVFT Retirees, who were honored at the Annual Luncheon. As President McCall pointed out, they represent hundreds of years of dedicated service. While they look back at their careers with pride, we hope that they know the positive impact they made to the children and fellow staff members.

Whether you are moving on to other endeavors, retiring or returning for the next school year, please remember that Unity and Endurance are the key to anything worth fighting for.

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Yours in Unity,

Laura and Ian

Message from the President

Happy Summer MVFT

As you read this edition of the Agenda, I know you are anxiously awaiting the final days of the school year. As you look forward to your anticipated summer vacations and the possibility of waking up late, I would like for you to think back on this school year and reflect on the positive influence that you have had on the students that you interact with daily.



The MVFT and the school district have met several times over the past month. We are no closer to a new collective bargaining agreement with the district. As mentioned in the last newsletter and at the general meeting at MVHS, the major point of contention is the percentage increases for the salary schedules. Our position is that the proposed increases for all units by the district is too low. As a result, the MVFT and the school district will seek to resolve the contract dispute through the mediation process. Hopefully the use of a mediator will result in coming to a contract agreement.

Despite not having a new collective bargaining agreement, MVFT members continue to go above and beyond for our students. One example of this is the Autism Awareness event, which took place at the end of April. Our union sponsored this event through a grant from the American Federation of Teachers. I am also honored to write that the MVFT awarded twenty-six scholarships to students in the three high schools. Each award is in the amount of \$250. We also awarded twenty-four scholarships to students whose parents are members of our Union. Those scholarships are in the amount of \$1000 each.

I am also proud to report that our union has received a grant from the National Education Association (NEA) to develop and implement a Teaching Assistant Mentoring Program next year. We will pilot this program in three schools next year. The hope is to expand the program to other schools in subsequent years.

In this edition of the Agenda, we have another article written by Dave Bonington from the financial advisor group Stacey Braun Associates. Each of our members is entitled to a free one-on-one financial consultation with one of the Advisors. I encourage you to make an appointment during the summer.

I wish each and everyone of you a great summer.

Weith McCall. MVFT President

Mentoring Program Wrap-Up

By Katie Santoro

The school year is coming to an end and there have been so many new teachers who joined our Mount Vernon staff and are about to complete the Mentor Program. We are so proud of them for their hard work and dedication to giving our Mount Vernon scholars the positive environment they deserve, allowing them to be able to learn to their best ability. Their patience and how they have shown care for our scholars is deeply appreciated!

Thank you to all the mentors who have assisted our new Mount Vernon teachers in the development and implementation practices to help students be college and career ready, as well as providing a practical



MVFT Mentor Teachers share best practices at their monthly meetings



MVFT Mentoring Program provides support and friendship at meetings

resource for the establishment and implementation of teacher practices. It has been great observing the partnerships in the PLCs that has blossomed where beginning teachers have learned to acclimate themselves to a new environment and mentors have helped the new teachers raise student outcomes by expanding pedagogical and interactive social skills.

A special thank you to my mentor program committee: Lucille Martir, Samantha Vieni, and Jennifer Cavallaro! I want to express my sincere appreciation for the dedication, motivation, and guidance with our mentor program community. You continue to be inspiring and bring a positive growth mindset to every meeting we have.

Wishing everyone a relaxing and restful summer to rejuvenate!



MVFT Members mentoring new educators.



Mentoring Program Committee Smantha Vieni, Kathryn Santoro, Jennifer Cavallaro and Lucille Martir

The Fight For A Fair Contract



Lincoln stand together to walk-in





MVHS Thursday walk-in



MVFT members locked out of Board Mtg



MVHS members rally together for a fair contract during walk-in



OCHHILLIAN WE GE ARTHUR WE DESERVE

FAIR CONTRACT

AND A CONTRACT

OCHHILLIAN WE DESERVE

FAIR CONTRACT

Blue wave of strength at May 23 board meeting



We Cannot be Silenced

Understanding the New York State Taylor Law: A Teacher's Guide

By Ian Smith

As educators, we are not only dedicated to teaching our students but also ensuring that our rights and working conditions are protected. One crucial piece of legislation that affects us is the New York State Taylor Law. This law has a significant impact on public employees, including teachers, and it's essential to understand its provisions and implications.

What is the Taylor Law?

The Taylor Law, officially known as the Public Employees' Fair Employment Act, was enacted in 1967. It governs labor relations between public employers (like school districts) and public employees (like teachers). The law aims to promote harmonious and cooperative relationships between the two parties, ensuring that public services are delivered without disruption.

Key Provisions of the Taylor Law

1. Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The Taylor Law grants public employees the right to form, join, and participate in unions. For us, this means we can organize as a teachers' union to negotiate with our school district.

2. Prohibition of Strikes

One of the most significant aspects of the Taylor Law is the prohibition of strikes by public employees. Strikes are deemed illegal and participating in a strike can lead to severe penalties, including fines and loss of two days' pay for every day on strike.

3. Creation of the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB)

The Taylor Law established the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB), an independent agency responsible for resolving labor disputes. PERB helps mediate and arbitrate disputes between unions and public employers.

4. Mandatory Arbitration for Certain Disputes

In cases where negotiations reach an impasse, the Taylor Law provides for mandatory arbitration. This means that if the union and the school district cannot reach an agreement, an impartial arbitrator will step in to resolve the dispute.

What Are Work Actions?

Work actions are activities undertaken by employees, individually or collectively, to express dissatisfaction or exert pressure on their employers. These actions can range from strikes and slow-downs to boycotts and picketing. While these can be effective means of advocating for better conditions, under the Taylor Law, certain work actions are deemed illegal for public employees, including teachers. The Taylor Law considers specific work actions illegal primarily to ensure that public services, such as education, continue without interruption.

Examples of Illegal Work Actions

Strikes: Any organized refusal by teachers to perform their work duties. Strikes can halt the educational process, leaving students without instruction and disrupting the school schedule.

Sick-Outs: Coordinated absences where a large number of teachers call in sick on the same day to disrupt school operations. This coordinated effort is seen as an attempt to strike without declaring it as such.

Slow-Downs: Deliberately reducing the pace of work or productivity. This can include intentionally taking longer to complete tasks or slowing down the teaching pace, affecting the quality of education and daily school operations.

Refusal to Perform Certain Duties: Teachers refusing to carry out specific job functions, such as supervising extracurricular activities, attending meetings, or performing administrative tasks, as a form of protest can be disruptive to school operations.

Work-to-Rule: Strictly adhering to all job descriptions and contractual obligations without any flexibility or additional effort. While this might appear as following the rules, when done collectively to disrupt school functions, it can be considered illegal.

Boycotts of Meetings or Committees: Refusing to attend important school meetings or participate in committees as a way to exert pressure on the school administration can hinder decision-making processes and school governance.

Why is the Taylor Law Important for Teachers?

Understanding the Taylor Law is crucial for several reasons:

Protecting Our Rights: By granting us the right to organize and bargain collectively, the Taylor Law ensures that we have a voice in negotiating our salaries, benefits, and working conditions.

Ensuring Fair Treatment: The establishment of PERB and the provision for arbitration mean that we have mechanisms in place to resolve disputes fairly and impartially.

Maintaining Public Services: The prohibition of strikes, while restrictive, aims to ensure that public services, including education, continue without interruption. This stability is vital for our students and communities.

How Can Teachers Navigate the Taylor Law?

Stay Informed: Knowledge is power. Make sure you understand the key provisions of the Taylor Law and how they impact your rights and responsibilities.

Engage with the MVFT: Actively participate in union activities and discussions. The MVFT is your advocate and can provide guidance and support in navigating labor relations with your school district.

The Taylor Law plays a pivotal role in shaping the labor relations landscape for teachers in New York State. By understanding its key provisions and implications, we can better advocate for our rights and work collaboratively with our school districts to create positive and productive working environments. Stay informed, engage with the MVFT, and communicate effectively to navigate the complexities of the Taylor Law successfully. Let's continue to stay united to ensure that our voices are heard, our rights are protected, and our schools remain places of excellence for both educators and students.

MVFT Retirees Go Out in Style



MVFT RETIREES 2024

John Abate Susan Andrasko William Brickle John Brogan Renee Buggie-Brown Laura Colletti-Rodriguez Aida Colon Mary Davis Angella Davis-Bidonne Denise DiGiorgi Susan Glasser-Ianuzzi Lenora Harris-Shoulders Clive Jarrett Glennis Ann Joseph Tamara King Dawn King-Espada Lisa Lewis Kevin McCall Brian McGrath Kevin Moore Christine Nowakowski Scott Perlman Andrew Pucci Lydia Rose Premenauth Singh Donna Smith Normearleasa Thomas Bernita Washington David K. Woolley Dawn Warnock

On Monday, June 17, MVFT celebrated retirees at the Davenport Mansion. The retirement committee, Modesta Curzio-Spies, Michelle Battista, Andrea Gelling, Caiifa Clarke, Stacia Fogg, and Tashi Tulloch-Campbell pulled out all the stops as the honorees were feted with a delicious lunch, gifts and fond memories. Congratulations to the 2024 MVFT members for their years of service.



MVFT retirees and president Keith McCall are all smiles as they look to the future



Parker family past and present celebrate with retiree Lisa Lewis on her next chapter



MVFT retirees Laura Colletti-Rodriguez and Scott Perlman celebrate at the Davenport Mansion







FRANCK PANDOLFO MEMORIAL MEMBER SCHOLARSHIP

STUDENTS	PARENTS (MVFT MEMBERS)	SCHOOL
MAKELA SIMPSON	MAKEBA LUCIO	MVLA
CAMILA JORGE	JOSEFINA MENDOZA	MVLA
ISABELLA AUSANIO	LUISA D'AVERSA	GRAHAM
SAALIHAH MUHAMMAD	MELISSA HELM MUHAMMAD	LINCOLN
NAILIA DEFREITAS	YESENIA AVENANT-DEFREITAS	HAMILTON
KAYLA ARTIS	LISA ARTIS	LINCOLN
LUCA SCIARRETTA	CHRISTINE SCIARRETTA	DWSA
NICHOLAS TUCCI	LAURIE TUCCI	NMHZ
TAMIAH WILLIAMS	EBONY COOPER	PARKER
LEO ROXAS	JENNIFER ROXAS	MVHS
ARMANI DESOUZA	ANNA LYNN TAYLOR	HAMILTON
DEAN SEWALL	ANDREA SEWALL	MVHS
KADIN SALES	TAKISHA SALES	MVHS
MICHAEL DACUNHA	SOLIVETTE DACUNHA	HAMILTON
BRANDON BYRNE	MICHELA BYRNE	GRAHAM
JULIANNA LENTINI	ALISA LENTINI	GRAHAM
BRIA SMITH	SHAWTA SMITH	PARKER
SKYLAR MCCALL	KEITH MCCALL	WILLIAMS
DAVID YANG	JAE YANG	MVHS
MATTHEW PORCELLO	LISA DESALVO PORCELLO	TRAPHAGEN
NIGEL DIGGS	VICTOR DIGGS	PARKER
MOLLY HAZEN	ANDREA HAZEN	PENNINGTON
MAX HARARI	BAHIA HARARI	GRIMES
KEIRA MERRIMAN	LISA COOPER-MERRIMAN	DWSA

FRANCK PANDOLFO MEMORIAL TEACHING SCHOLARSHIP

STUDENTS EMILY QUIZHPILEMA PROPOSED MAJOR

ART (GRADES K-12 CERTIFICATION)

SCHOOL MVHS

SPONS



Williams School at Autism Awareness Day

Our Annual Mount Vernon City School Districtwide Autism Acceptance Community Event took place on Monday, April 29th from 3:30-6 pm at Traphagen School. The event was a huge success where families in the community came to

Traphagen and enjoyed a free fun-filled day together which could not have been possible without the amazing volunteers and supportive teachers, teacher assistants, and security guards throughout the district.

We must give a big thanks to Mr. Derrick Thompson who got the City Council of Mount Vernon to supply the buses to make this event accessible to all of Mount Vernon's families. The SEPTA members, Parent Liaisons, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, School Secretaries, Dr. White, and Lotoya from the PTA council who we appreciate, gave their unconditional support in making this event possible. Also, a big thank you to Teresa Scott, a retired Special Education Supervisor of Mount Vernon, who donated water bottles for all the students who attended the event.

A special thank you goes out to Nadine Alcalde who wrote the grant and to MVFT, our union who contributed, which paid for the ENTIRE Autism Acceptance Community Event.

Finally, to our colleagues throughout the district who bought t-shirts, donated their time and money to make this day happen. Thank you to all the amazing MVFT Members! We could not have made this event happen without such supportive staff members. When we reached out for this cause the question was never "Why" or "We don't have the money," but "What can we do to help?" or "How can We Help?"

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work! From the bottom of our hearts... THANK YOU all! Sincerely,

Donald Emerson & Kathryn Santoro

AUTISM

AWARENESS DAY



Zeta Phi Beta Sorority proudly supporting Austism Awareness



Meredith Jaffess, Kathy Marmolejos, Zuri Fairman and Deneda Golemi at Autism Awareness Day

SPOILE



Aaron Seiden and Kristen Saffo prepare their students for the strings concert at Lincoln

Strings Program Comes to Lincoln

By Maryann Walsh

This year, the Fourth-Grade students at Lincoln School took part in a special String Program funded by a Concordia Conservatory grant. Each student received their own instrument (violin/cello) and were given weekly lessons from experienced instructors from the conservatory. Students not only practiced under the guidance of these accomplished instructors, but also had the unique opportunity to bring the instruments home for further practice. Instructors, Hubert Chen (violin), Emanouil Manalov (violin), and Jon Kim (cello) supported and gave lessons to over 60 students weekly in violin and cello.

Rebecca Jones, principal of Lincoln, is on the Board of the Conservatory, and has long advocated for the program to be brought to Lincoln. Administration and teachers both agree that underserved students in Mt. Vernon City Schools would thrive in a program that develops skills across the learning spectrum. Working together, this program was a resounding success

On June 6th, the entire Fourth Grade along with these dedicated instructors, performed in the Lincoln Elementary Performing Arts Concert. The faculty, staff, students, and families of the performers were overjoyed to see how far these young musicians had come. This wonderful program is funded to continue through their career here at Lincoln school, through 8th grade graduation. The teachers and students would like to thank all the instructors and supporters at Concordia Conservatory for this special opportunity. We look forward to continuing with this string program in early fall.





Mrs. Walsh and her 4th grade string students







Summer is approaching! Time to relax, kick back, and not worry about anything! Unless—you worry about your financial future. Let us help you alleviate any financial concerns so you can enjoy the Summer in peace and take a financial vacation!

Your ticket to this vacation arrives when you take advantage of Mount Vernon Federation of Teachers Welfare Fund's free Financial Counseling Program provided by Stacey Braun Associates, Inc. A Stacey Braun Certified Financial PlannerTM can help—whether you are looking for suggestions, recommendations, and ideas, or simply need information or a second opinion. Consultations can cover items like budgeting, debt management, saving for a home or college, insurance, investing, taxation, planning for retirement, and estate planning—and are always devoted to topics of greatest importance to you.

Consultations bring important facts and details into focus and allow planners to help you make progress toward the financial goals you are working to attain.

We hope to see many of you during the Summer!

A free and confidential meeting with a Stacey Braun Associates planner can be arranged by calling 1-888-949-1925 or email Jenni Landicho at Jlandicho@staceybraun.com

Stacey Braun Associates, Inc. offers objective and customized advice only and does not sell any investment or insurance products. Stacey Braun Associates, Inc. is not affiliated with any 403(b) providers.

It's A (Re)Balancing Act – Part II

By David Bonington, CFP* Financial Planner, Stacey Braun Associates, Inc.

Stacey Braun ASSOCIATES, INC.

I COULD EASILY HAVE TITLED THIS ARTICLE "AN RX FOR EMPLOYEE X."

If you missed the last issue, we left Employee X in a predicament. "Employee X" is a hypothetical 55-year-old who for 25 years contributed funds into a workplace retirement plan while specifying a 75% Stock/25% Bond allocation. (Employee X also has a 401(k) account from a prior employer, which was funded using a 90% Stock/10% Bond split between the ages of 22-30.) The total value of these accounts has grown nicely over time, but Employee X was recently startled to see that the Stock portion of these accounts was a sky-high 95%.

How did this happen? As they are likely to do over time, the Stocks grew at faster rates than the Bonds. The account "pie charts" are both bigger - but the percentage of each that Bonds represent are now mere 5% slivers. Meanwhile, at 55, Employee X's risk tolerance is not what it was at 22, 30, or 40-something: the safety of Bonds is gaining appeal. What should Employee X do? Re-Balance!

Precise re-balancing strategy depends on (1) the percentage of assets that Employee X wants to hold in Bonds and (2) the speed with which this result is desired.

Strategy #1 (Slow but Steady): If Employee X plans to work another 10 years and would be satisfied gradually restoring an approximate 75%/25% split at retirement, future payroll contributions could be shifted 100% to Bonds. This strategy might restore the Bond portion of the accounts to a percentage somewhere between 20%-30% at the time of retirement.

Strategy #2 (Immediate Action): If Employee X decides that any Stock percentage above 75% is simply too high, there is no choice: Stocks will have to be sold, with proceeds applied to buy Bonds. (For extreme shifts, however, depending on market conditions this strategy might be better carried out over a few weeks or months rather than on a single day.)

Strategy #3 (Hybrid Approach): This strategy would combine features of the first two, with a near-term reduction in Stocks to maybe 80% (using Strategy #2) and Strategy #1 setting in motion a further but more gradual increase in Bonds. This approach could reduce the Stock percentage to less than 60% at retirement - which might also be a desirable goal.

There is no one-size-fits-all strategy – each one must be customized to account for the portfolio at hand and the investor's

goals and risk tolerance. The main point of this article is that a careful study of portfolio composition is worthwhile. Over time, need for near-term (or eventual) re-balancing becomes visible in most portfolios.

If a Stacey Braun planner can assist you by shining - what else? - an "X-Ray" through your portfolio pie chart to help assess re-balancing need, why not make an appointment this Summer?

A free and confidential meeting with a Stacey Braun Associates planner can be arranged by calling 1-888-949-1925.





PEOPLE WHO MOVE CHANGE THE WORLD.®

What a great day it was! On a sunny Saturday in May, over 225 participants walked the streets of Westchester Community College in the Parkinson's Foundation Moving Day Fundraiser.

Rick Castellitto, and *Team Shake Rattle* and *Rollers*, placed second among the 27 registered teams by raising \$8,788.

Almost \$1,000 was donated to *Team Shake* by the MVFT Retiree Chapter, both as an organization and as individual members.

The annual event brought over \$54,000 to the Parkinson's Foundation in their efforts to continue research, provide education and help support those with the disease, and their caregivers.

"Thank you for your generosity and kind words of encouragement."





MVFT Retiree Luncheon 2024

The annual MVFT Retiree Luncheon was held at the Davenport in New Rochelle and was a chance for the newest members of the "leisure-class" to be recognized by their administrators and colleagues for their years of service and commitment to the students of Mount Vernon.

Retiree Chapter President Rick Castellitto and New Member Chair Lynne Petrone attended the annual event to help welcome over 30 new retirees into the Chapter ranks.

Lynne Petrone made beautiful arrangements of succulent plants which were given to the retirees as part of the MVFT gift package.





Rick Castellitto and Keith McCall

Retiree Carl Caprio, Gardener Extraordinaire

By Karen Wallace

Carl Caprio retired in 2016 after 34 years of teaching science at MVHS. During his tenure, Carl was instrumental in the development of the MVHS greenhouse. Twenty years ago, Carl, Baldwin Hurns, Peter Wynn and Frank Pandolfo, wrote and implemented a gardening curriculum for the high school that included growing seedlings in the greenhouse, and building four raised beds outside. In the early days, Paul Frisik and Henry Nardozzi offered their assistance as well. Flowers, vegetables and herbs grew in abundance.

After Carl's retirement, the program was dismantled and the greenhouse was used primarily for storage. Weeds took over the raised beds... until this school year.

Dr. K. Veronica Smith, Dr. Jamal Doggett, Mary Beth Rhodes and Sabina King collaborated on developing a new garden curriculum that would include

programs with the high school and elementary school students. The team consulted with Carl Caprio about developing this curriculum. At their request, he agreed to lead the project with the help of MVHS Science teacher, Robin Carpus.

For this pilot program, Carl planted seedlings in the greenhouse for "grow bags" and planted the raised beds with vegetables and herbs. Robin assisted with the planting and collaborated with the elementary schools for visits to the greenhouse and the distribution of the grow bags.

As you can see in the photos, it continues to be a banner growing season. After many hours of hard work, the greenhouse and beds are thriving once again! Kudos to Carl Caprio for his many hours of volunteering to get this worthwhile project up and running.





MVFTRC General Membership Meeting June 2024

On June 4, over 30 members attended the annual MVFT Retiree Chapter General Membership meeting and Luncheon. The meeting was held at the NYSUT Regional Office Conference Room in Tarrytown. Retiree Chapter President Rick Castellitto gave a quick overview of the history of the Retiree Chapter and the current State of the "Union". He also announced that Chapter officer elections would be upcoming this year as well as a joint effort by the MVFT and retirees to plan an 80th MVFT union anniversary celebration.

Secretary Karen Wallace gave an update on the Retiree Chapter volunteer committees and introduced the chairs of those organizations:

Making Strides for Breast Cancer: Anne Marie Kiernan, Pat Duggan

Holiday Scarf Initiative: Maz Hogan New Member Committee: Lynne Petrone

Ronald McDonald House Meal Prep: Karen Wallace Pull Tabs for Ronald McDonald House: Margaret Mahoney

Parkinson's Disease Movin' Day: Rick Castellitto MVFT Food Drive: Jeff Yonkers, Carl Caprio

Treasurer Pat Duggan reviewed the Chapter's budget for this year; the organization is on secure fiscal grounds and is following correct financial guidelines.

In the spirit of helping others, Andrew Sindell from the American Red Cross, also did a presentation on the role of volunteers in the Red Cross and offered the Chapter some possible ways it could be of service to his organization. More information will be coming out shortly.

Following the informal meeting, each member was presented with a Sunflower in the spirit of volunteer appreciation.

A catered lunch gave the members a chance to socialize and catch up on the latest news.

Thank you to the luncheon committee: Anne Marie Kiernan, Joanne Cathcart, Karen Wallace, Rick Castellitto, Lynne Petrone, and Denise Medoff.



MVFT Election Results

PPS Vice President: .TBD - Tied:25/25

A 'run-off' will take place.

MVFTRC Executive Board

Rick Castellitto, *President*Jeff Yonkers, *Vice President*Karen Wallace, *Secretary*Pat Duggan, *Treasurer*Anne Marie Kiernan, *Delegate-at-Large*

Meals That Heal Program at Ronald McDonald House

By Karen Wallace

Kincade, Michele Lish

Teams of 4-6 people continue to cook twice a month preparing 35 meals for the residents of the Ronald McDonald House in Valhalla. The families sincerely appreciate the delicious meals.

Special thanks to all of our volunteers: Elyse
Hintzen, Vera Glazewski, Roberta Greco, Joanne
Cathcart, Bob Fetonti, Carl Caprio, Karen
Molinaro, Shari DiPaola, Barbara Foley, Jeff
Yonkers, Barbara DeAngelo, Frank DeAngelo,
Jerry Wallace, Pat Stath, Maeve Nolan, Pat
Caruso, Carole Sindell, Diana O'Sullivan,
Christine Iaffoldano, Marilyn Pirozzi,
Debbie Cohen, Gayle Wyckoff, Michele Stone, Sara























Membership Report

8 On Leave 1093 Active Members 1753 TOTAL



Melissa Kelley, Stephanie Pedro, Kristen Saffo and Aaron Seiden Dress as Your Favorite Celebrity During Lincoln Spirit Week

MVFT Summer Office Hours

Monday-Thursday 10am-3pm Closed on Fridays

Mount Vernon Federation of Teachers

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The Agenda

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