

The Agenda

Volume 22, Issue 1

Over Seventy Years of Excellence in Education

MOUNT VERNON FEDERATION OF TEACHERS



www.mvft.org

November 2020

Message From The MVFT President

The MVFT celebrates the initiation of our first online newsletter. Quite fitting for the times and yes, long overdue! Throughout this pandemic this has sometimes been the only way we were able to communicate with our membership. Thanks to the efforts of our MVFT Executive Board and hardworking building reps, we too have continued to meet in zoom sessions to address our members concerns.

Our MVFT leaders have been vigilant in making sure that we reach out to our membership during these unprecedented times and check in as often as possible.

Our MVFT AGENDA online newsletter will be one more way to keep you all informed. We hope you will also use this platform to share your own stories of tribulation and triumph.

It is difficult to know where to begin and where we left off, which seems to describe our daily existence since we were forced to vacate our classrooms in mid-March 2020. Unless you do what we do everyday, I don't think anyone can possibly understand our journey. No one could possibly have predicted the types of challenges we would encounter as individuals and as a union of teachers, teaching assistants, and security monitors. But as a union of dedicated professionals, together we continue to prevail.

We work in a very unique district made up of students who rely on us for more than just their educational needs. We are their constant, even if it is from the other side of a camera. There just doesn't seem to be enough time in a 24 hour day to accomplish everything that needs to be done. We have to make a conscientious effort to find a balance and clock out so we can take care of our own personal needs and our family responsibilities as well.

We are zooming from morning to night. Preparing lessons has become even more time consuming and we do our best to keep up with the latest technologies and resources. When students need us more than ever, we do our best to be innovative and try something new.

We have welcomed our students into our homes, while trying to instruct them from their kitchens or living rooms where distractions are plentiful, sometimes comical, and parental support is understandably, not always on hand. We have done our best to overcome this disconnect as well as technological disconnects almost daily. These unprecedented and unpredictable circumstances require an exuberant amount of patience and determination from each of us.

The feeling of isolation can sometimes be unbearable for all of us. The hardest part is being removed and separated from our supportive

colleagues. even though they may be in the next room or on the screen right in front of us. It plays games with your mind trying to separate reality from virtual reality. It can sometimes test your sanity as well. We start questioning, and can't remember if we actually were in each other's presence or we were together in a zoom room? We are concerned about our student's social emotional wellbeing, and need a wellness check or two of our own!

I cannot emphasize enough that these are the times we need to lean on each other the most. We need to make an extra, conscientious effort to be there for each other, work together and do our best to support each other every day. The script gets flipped on a daily basis and we don't know most days if we are literally coming or going. But what we do know is that there is strength in unity.

The Mount Vernon Federation of Teachers will continue to fight for a safer workplace, a contract worth ratifying, and the respect each one of our members deserves!

We are stronger together, even when we are apart.



Carene Domato

CREDIT APPROVAL: What do I do?

By Angelique Perez, MVFT Treasurer

If you are interested in taking courses to improve your craft as a teacher and move across on the pay scale make sure you do the following:

- Obtain a triplicate **Mount Vernon Board of Education Pre-Approval Credit Application** from your building rep, the school secretary or Human Resources for each course you plan on taking and read it completely.
- Make sure you give yourself enough time to get it over to the *Office of Human Resources* and timestamped **BEFORE** the class begins.
- Use the form as your guide for making sure you submit everything that is required.

On the form it says that you are to submit an official course description, this must be printed from an online catalog or an actual catalog. You may not copy and paste onto a word document. In addition, it must include how many credits the course is worth. Finally, there must be proof of dates and times when the class will be meeting. If it is a “self-paced” course you must include the time frame you will be allotted to complete the course; again printed from the website or catalog. If the course is an “in-service” course remember that fifteen (15) hours is equivalent to one (1) credit.

Since COVID-19 there have been many questions with regard to online courses. Officially there has been no change; you may only take six (6) online credits per calendar year. However, if the course is via zoom it is considered “in person”. Lastly to quote the contract, “...the combination of in-service and college courses taken in one ten month school year should not exceed six (6) credits per semester.” Please be reminded, that just because you put in the forms you are not guaranteed approval or a salary reclassification.

MVFT Celebrates SRP Recognition Day 11/17/2020

By Carene Domato



L-R: Yvette Lee, Carene Domato, Jeffrey Morrison



L-R: Erica Dunkley, Diana O'Sullivan and Vanessa Williams

The MVFT is proud to honor our hardworking SRPs (School-Related Professionals). Our MVFT teaching assistants and security monitors are the backbone of our school community. They provide a safe and nurturing environment for our staff and students. They are our first responders.

This year the SRP Recognition Day theme is “SRPs Care for Their Communities.” While this is true every year, it has never been more evident than it is this year, dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The MVFT Event's Committee, chaired by PreK-8 Vice President Diana O'Sullivan, made sure each of our teaching assistants and security monitors received a travel mug and NYSUT car magnet. All of the MVFT building reps also made sure to show their appreciation and recognize our SRPs and let them know “we have your back, because you have always had our backs!”

Making Strides

This year the Making Strides Fundraiser was faced with some challenges due to the pandemic. The committee, which was comprised of Charissa Manigault, Monique Bell and Charlene Clarke, rolled up their sleeves and got to work within the guidelines set of having a caravan of cars in place of a walk.

Using a digital platform to collect donations presented itself as a possible speed bump in reaching our goal of \$2,000. The MVFT members proved, once again, that nothing can stop us when we work together. We raised a total of \$2,799!

Thank you everyone for your donations and making this another successful year.





MVFT Welfare Fund News

The MVFT Executive Board/Delegate Assembly voted to approve Jeanne Casino Welfare Fund Trustee for another term of four years. **Congratulations!**

Reminders...

Co-pay reimbursement benefit, (for SWSCHP members only), runs each year from July 1st–June 30th and **allows a full year beyond the June 30th deadline to submit a claim.**

The Co-pay reimbursement allows for up to \$200 of reimbursement for an individual or \$400 for a family. The components that are reimbursable are the following:

- \$10.00 of every doctor's visit copay
- \$25.00 of any outpatient hospital service copay
- \$50.00 of an ambulance copay
- \$100.00 for hospital admittance copay
- ANY prescription copay

To file for the benefit, you must submit a claim form to Administrative Services Only, Inc. Claim forms may be obtained through the insurance website: **www.asonet.com** or by requesting one from the MVFT office, along with the following information:

For the medical copays - send a COPY of your EOBs (explanation of benefits) which illustrate your copay.

For the prescription copays - you can call the phone number listed on your prescription card to request a statement of your copays **OR** go to the website listed on your prescription card and print a summary of your copays.

Optical Benefit runs from January–December.

Dental exams and cleanings are allowed two times within a twelve month period.

Financial Counseling Benefit: As an active member of the Mount Vernon Federation of Teachers Welfare Fund, or a retired member electing the *Plus Plan* benefits, you are entitled to a fully paid, confidential financial review with a Certified Financial Planner® from Stacey Braun Associates, Inc. through the Welfare Fund's Financial Counseling Program. Consultations are available via web video or telephone. Welfare Fund members can receive six hours of planning over the course of a year in person or by phone and unlimited access to a financial help desk by email or website. The advice you will receive is unbiased and not commission driven, as a result you will not be subjected to a sales pitch or sales pressure. Call **888-949-1925** to set up an appointment or to learn more.

If you have any questions or need any assistance regarding your MVFT Welfare Fund benefits, please call the Fund Administrator Karen Molinaro at (914) 664-3189.

Mount Vernon Virtual Thanksgiving 5K Run/Walk Turkey Trot

Submitted by Michael Jernegons

On November 21, 2020, Graham School's Nelda Bazil-LeBlanc, Founder & President of "WE RUN MOUNT VERNON" – a Run/Walk Group here in Mount Vernon, executed the city's first annual **VIRTUAL Thanksgiving 5K Run/Walk Turkey Trot**. Nelda, an avid runner and marathoner, has dreamed for some time to bring a 5K Turkey Trot Run/Walk to Mount Vernon.

Nelda directs a Run/Walk Group for adults. They recently walked from Mount Vernon to White Plains as they trained for the upcoming Virtual NYC Marathon. They also participate in group hikes and have climbed Bear Mountain, Ward-Pound Ridge Park, Roosevelt State Park and Shirley Chisolm Park, just to name a few.

Prior to COVID-19, Nelda had a Youth Fun-FITNESS Program at a local Mount Vernon church. She also coached a NYRR-Team-For-Kids Program at Graham School. Nelda has taken our students to participate in the annual Colgate Games, and two years in a row she has taken students to run the last 1.3 miles of the world-famous TCS NYC Marathon.

SPOTLIGHT

HAMILTON

What's The Buzz...

Hamilton School "Hornet" of the Month

PBIS Team invites students and their parents to pick up their well-deserved student of the month certificates.



L-R : Hamilton PBIS Team: Suleyma Salazar, Danielle Zeolla, Jennifer Quiros (Hamilton Shirt), Andrew Binder, Dawn King-Espada, Susan Fontecchio



Hamilton School Teaching Assistant Veronica Washington prepared bookbags to distribute on October 8th to her Kindergarten students filled with workbooks and donated school supplies.



Hamilton Teachers book distribution for students. Teachers set up appointments with parents to safely pickup student workbooks at Hamilton School on October 8th.

L-R: MVFT Building Rep & Grade 6 Teacher Thalia Langley, Band Teacher Evan DeSanto, MVFT VP Pre-K-8 Charlene Clarke, ENL Teacher Jennifer Quiros, Grade 6 Teacher Sanaa Basheer, Grade 5 Teacher Annalynn Taylor

SPOTLIGHT

TRAPHAGEN

Traphagen Staff working with their students on a lovely Friday. The staff are all staying positive and keeping the students engaged with Kahoot Educational games and interactive activities to review skills.



Tisha Murray George



Zuri Fairman



Jenny Jones



Shane Davanzo



Reno Benitez

Our Newest School!

By Michele Battista, Union Rep/6th Grade Teacher, NMHZ

On behalf of the Mount Vernon Federation of Teachers (MVFT) we are pleased to announce the newly recreated **Nelson Mandela/ Dr. Hosea Zollicoffer School**.

Principal, Mr. Michael Vicario, is a former Mount Vernon resident and his parents still reside in the area. This statement is a glimpse into his vision for the **NMHS** community.

The Nelson Mandela/Dr. Hosea Zollicoffer School is the newest addition to the Mount Vernon City School District serving approximately 315 students, (N – 8), with a talented staff of 35 teachers. At the core of our educational philosophy is cultural responsiveness in a vibrant and exceptional learning environment to promote the academic, social, and emotional success for all students. Our Vision for The Nelson Mandela/Dr. Hosea Zollicoffer School is to be committed to producing lifelong learners that are college bound, career ready, and can compete in a global society. Our Mission is to provide a stimulating environment which fosters a love of learning, promotes independent learners, produces responsible citizens, and interacts with the community to develop each child's potential and self-esteem. Our mission, in partnership with families and our community, is to provide each student a quality education in a safe and nurturing environment.

With an A+ staff, accept great things to follow!!!

A call for help from NYSUT Tarrytown Regional Office **Food Drive**

During this Covid-19 pandemic, we have seen countless pictures and videos from across the country and our own region, of people going to local foodbanks. Many of these people talked about being embarrassed at the need to go to a foodbank because in the past, they had donated to some of those same foodbanks, never thinking they would be there, picking up food for their families. With unemployment still at historic levels and going into the fall and winter seasons, our local foodbanks need your help.

While we recommend Feeding Westchester, any foodbank in your region is a worthy recipient. All we ask is that you notify us of any money donated by your local so we can track the generosity of the locals and the NYSUT members in the Tarrytown Region. To make a donation, you can do one of the following:

Individuals can make a contribution to Feeding Westchester using the following link
<https://p2p.onecause.com/nysut2021>.

Checks should be payable to Feeding Westchester and kindly send the check, *preferably by certified, return receipt mail (although not required)* to: Feeding Westchester, Attn: Development, 200 Clearbrook Road, Elmsford, NY 10523. **Please be sure to indicate NYSUT and the School District Name.**

As we approach the Thanksgiving season, we are thankful for all the good things we have in our lives. It is also the perfect time to think of those in need and how we can make a difference. Thank you; have a healthy holiday season.

BE the union! **www.nysut.org/unionvalue**

MVFT Donates \$1500 to NYSUT Food Drive

The MVFT Executive Board was encouraged to donate to the NYSUT FOOD DRIVE early this year and without donating cans! Karl Nifontoff, MVFT HS VP and Food Drive Chairperson, asked the MVFT to donate \$1500 to the NYSUT Tarrytown Regional Office Food Drive. The MVFT Executive Board voted unanimously to donate \$1500 to “Feeding Westchester”.



Retiree News

Since last March, all meetings, social gatherings, and charity work have been on hold. As covid cases continue to rise, we will maintain our distance and stay connected digitally. We have 564 retirees and email addresses for 491 members.

Communication

At present, the MVFT is not printing and mailing hard copies of *The Agenda* newsletter. All newsletters will be posted on the mvft.org website and emailed to all who have email addresses to both in-service and retiree members.

MVFT Retiree Chapter Constitution

The proposed MVFTRC constitution was ratified by electronic vote on November 13 with 33% of members voting: **164 Yes; 2 No**

Thanks to the committee members for their work in preparing this document: Rick Castellitto, Carl Caprio, Bob Fetonti, Vera Glazewski, Pat Griffin, Anne Marie Kiernan, Cesar Matanzo, Maureen Palumbo, Marilyn Pirozzi, Karen Wallace, Jeff Yonkers.

Rick Castellitto is chairing a committee to plan for the next steps: election of officers, newsletter, logo design, brainstorming ideas for the direction of the retiree chapter moving forward. If you are interested in participating on that committee, email Karen Wallace, kkwallace312@gmail.com by December 4, 2020. All meetings will be digital until it is safe to gather again....sigh.

Holiday Scarf Initiative:

Maz Hogan, Chairperson. Postponed until December 2021.

Cooking at Ronald McDonald House:

Karen Wallace, Chairperson. No meal preparation until further notice.

Untermeyer Garden "The Illumination" VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Untermeyer Park and Gardens at 945 N. Broadway in Yonkers, New York, is once again opening the garden up for a nighttime Illumination. Volunteers are being recruited for this event from December 12th–January 3rd, Monday through Sunday from 4:30–8PM. Volunteers are asked to sign up for 2 hour time shifts from 4:15–6:15 and/or 6:15–8:15.

The positions are the following:

Rover: to rove the garden to keep the visitors moving throughout the garden for adequate social distancing.

Clicker: to keep accurate account of the entrant and exit of the visitors.

This is an outdoor event. There will be 3 – 5 volunteers per shift. Volunteers may sign up for more than one shift per week.

If you are interested in representing MVFT retirees, please contact Pat Caruso at iluv2tch1@verizon.net

EXECUTIVE BOARD BUILDING REPS

Carene Domato
President

Jeanne Casino
Vice President, Grievance Chair

Angelique Perez
Treasurer

Anita Amieiro
Secretary

Karl Nifontoff
High School VP

Richard Suozzo
High School VP

Christine Ceglio
PreK-8 VP

Charlene Clarke
PreK-8 VP

Keith McCall
PreK-8 VP

Diana O'Sullivan
PreK-8 VP

Josephine Kirkland-Hudson
Pupil Personnel VP

Denise Coates
Security Chapter Leader

Monique Bell
Teaching Assistant Chapter Leader

UNION OFFICE

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Ryan Kirk #1
Toba Duggan #2
Modesta Curzio-Spies #2
Michelle Battista #3
Andrea Hyatt-Copeland #4
Shawn Harper-Tarrant #4
Thalia Langley #5
Rebecca Challop #6
Kathryn Santoro #6
Tashi Campbell-Tulloch #7
Stacia Fogg #7
Janeen Clayton #8
Nikysha Copeland Bey #8
Michael Jernegons #9
Alexis Paupaw-Myrie #9
Ellen Benowitz #10
Lenora Harris-Shoulders #10
Frank Claro #12
Jason Stone #12
Donald Emerson #13
Lydia Rose #13
Nicole White Lee #14
Charissa Manigault #14
Tonja Hills #16
Denisha Hawkins #16
Nadine Shields Alcalde #17
Isabel Garcia #17
Michael Malocsay #18
David Israel #18
Eddie Sauls #18
Jacqueline Simone #18

The Agenda

Staff
Carene Domato
Karen Molinaro
Karen Wallace
Barbara DeAngelo

Membership Report

Active	1142
Leave	29
<u>Retirees</u>	<u>592</u>
Total	1763

Correspondence Report

By Anita Ameiero

GET WELL

Dolores Paul (*Graham*)

Michelle Atterberry (*Pennington*)



BIRTHS

Amanda Candal (*Graham*) daughter

Gloria Montgomery (*Graham*) grandson

Narjis Raza (*Pennington*) granddaughter

Colleen Cioffi (*Parker*) son

Jenny Jones (*Traphagen*) grandson

Julianne DeLuca-Hallock (*Traphagen*) daughter

Nadine Alcalde (*Holmes*) grandson

Greer Valinotti (*Holmes*) son

Maureen Alleva (*Holmes*) grandson

Gayle Wyckoff (*retiree*) grandson



CONDOLENCES

Sheba Serna (*Capstone/Sundown*) loss of nephew

Jennifer Fuller (*Parker*) loss of mother

Ronnell Fuller (*Parker*) loss of mother

Melissa White Harris (*Holmes*) loss of grandmother

Monique Brown (*Holmes*) loss of brother

Denise Medoff (*retiree*) loss of mother, April 2020

Karen Molinaro (*MVFT*) loss of brother-in-law, April 2020

To the family of Leda Giatti, retired MVHS guidance counselor

To the family of Al Carapella, retired MVHS Administrator

To the family of Ralph Lauricella, retiree



In these uncertain times, NYSUT members are doing what they do best: taking care of their students and contributing to our communities.

No matter where in the state you are or what your district's reopening plan is, everyone deserves to feel safe at work.

That's why NYSUT is pleased to announce the release of the **NYSUT COVID Tracker website**.

We encourage NYSUT members to report any unsafe working conditions they encounter in schools.

NYSUT launched this online tool to collect health and safety reports from our rank and file members, students and members of the community regarding alleged health and safety violations within our schools and colleges. You can visit the site at: <https://www.nysutcovidtracker.org>.

Currently, any individual can submit a report to NYSUT, however, the only detail regarding the report that will appear on the website will be the general violation type (mask wearing, social distancing, ventilation, etc). The specific details about each report will be reviewed by NYSUT staff on a daily basis. Any reports made that impact your local that require follow up will be sent to Local Presidents through the Regional Office structure.

Delegate Assembly Zoom Meeting

