

# The Agenda



www.mvft.org

Volume 23, Issue 1

Over Seventy Years of Excellence in Education

MOUNT VERNON FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

October 2021



**GEORGE LATIMER**, County Executive of Westchester County, New York, since 2018, took time out of his schedule to welcome us back at the Superintendent's Convocation on September 1st. As a former graduate of the Mount Vernon Public Schools, George Latimer knows better than most the challenges we have faced over the past couple of years. He thanked us for our dedication and commitment to the Mount Vernon Community and offered his continued support. He has been one of the most open and accessible representatives and has received the endorsement of the MVFT as former NYS Senator, Assemblyman and County Executive.



On behalf of the MVFT Leadership we would like to welcome the more than seventy newly hired teachers, teaching assistants and security monitors. We have had the opportunity to meet those of you who made an appointment to enroll in the MVFT Welfare Fund and sign up with the MVFT and NYSUT to become a member of one of the largest unions in New York State!

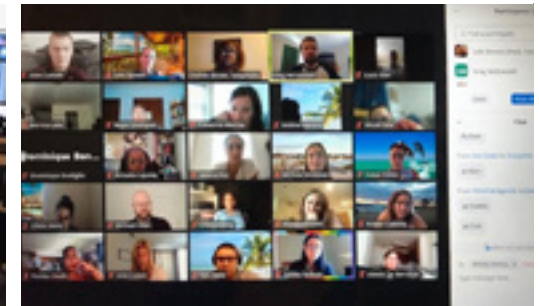
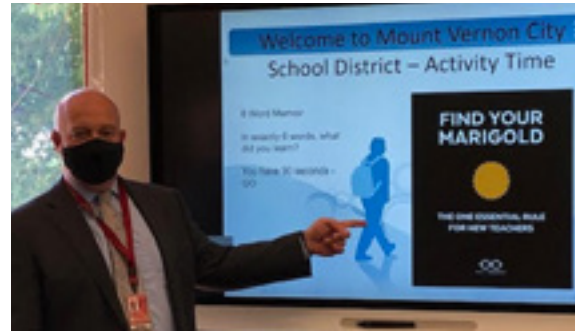
If you have not made an appointment to enroll, call or email MVFT Administrative Secretary, Alina Ramirez today!

**MVFT Office # 914-664-3189 Email: [aramirez1@mtvernoncsd.org](mailto:aramirez1@mtvernoncsd.org)**

by Carene Domato, MVFT President



Ebony Acheampong-Rogers	Trevor Latasa
Khalid Addou	Andrea Marano
Michael Allen	Hannah Marrero
Louis Aller, Jr.	Yojanny Marte
Yolanda Alston	Gregory McDonnell
Lexi Arborn	Dave McLaughlin
Sharyon Ashley-Nicholson	Sarah McNamee
Caren Barnaby	Olivia Meny
Dominique Bonfiglio	D'Wayne Miller
Falliemarie Caldwell	Catherine Murtha
Jack Candido	Samantha Naldini
Helen Caro	Annamaria Olivera
Victor Castillo	Virginia Oppedisano
Kristen Ciallella	Peter Poliey
Matthew Cipolla	Anthony Puleo
Brendan Connolly	Aneesa Raja
Veronica Cordero-Turner	Melody Ramnath
Rachel Crognale	Marilyn Reynoso
Alessia DeBernardo	Felton Robinson
Keisha Esson	Elizabeth Russell
Regina Ferraro	Teisa Salmon
Jessica Fico	Erica Schafer
Katherine Fischer	Claudette Senior
Bianca Gentile	Christina Shkreli
Tracey George	Nicole Shortman
Tiara Goodyear	Roger Silverblatt
Jose Hernandez-Garcia	Althea Simon
Tasia Hilton	Peridot Smith
Kerry Hope	Yvonne Smith
DoraMarie Iapozzuto	Jennifer Spencer
Ashley Jackson	Chantal Strudwich-King
Terissa Joseph	Kenneth Szeto
Panagiota Kostoglu	Nicole Tata
Jessica Kowgios	Jennifer Vano
Brenna Lade	Yvonne Williams
Richetta Laporte	



**New teacher  
orientation  
August 2021**



# APPR

*By Jeanne Casino, APPR Chairperson*

On June 7, our former Governor signed a bill and later added an amendment which eliminated the requirement for school districts and BOCES to complete an APPR for any classroom teacher or building principal for the 2020-2021 school year; the same happened for the 2019-2020 school year.

Although the requirement was waived, when you open Ed Vista, which is an internal tool used by the MVSCD to complete APPR requirements, you will still see a HEDI rating. This is only because the internal system is designed that way. The scores **do not count**. Many members have asked how this affects probationary teachers. Click on the link below to read the NYSUT Fact Sheet.

<https://www.nysut.org/resources/all-listing/research/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-appr>

For the 2021- 2022 school year, the observation process remains the same as last year. Unannounced formal observations will cover 3a, 3c and 3e. Administrators should begin to have meetings with staff soon. Decisions about testing or alternate means of assessing student performance still needs to be negotiated and will be discussed at our November/December meetings.

As you know, New York State regularly changes the regulations regarding APPR implementation. Each year, your APPR team meets with the district to discuss and incorporate any new changes. This includes all negotiated parts of the current plan as well as any new laws.

The MVFT representatives for the MVCSD District APPR committee are Keith McCall (Williams), Michael Jernengons (Parker), Karl Nifontoff (STEAM), myself (RTES) and our newest member David Israel (MVHS). I'd like to personally thank Anita Amieiro (MVHS) for all the years she served on this committee.

Please feel free to contact me or anyone on your district team about any issues or concerns.

## Annual Professional Performance Review

## Meet Alina Ramirez MVFT Administrative Secretary



After bidding a fond farewell to Karen Molinaro, MVFT Administrative Secretary for 19 years, we are very fortunate to have found a perfect fit for our MVFT office. Alina Ramirez is the kind, caring voice you hear when you call the MVFT office, and she is eager to assist you with your union concerns.

Alina has welcomed and enrolled many of our newly hired teachers, teaching assistants and security monitors. If you are new to the district and have not come to the MVFT office to enroll in the MVFT and apply for your Welfare Fund benefits (dental, optical, etc.), call Alina to make an appointment. Her patience and compassion will make you feel right at home. Simply call 914-664-3189.

Alina has also been extremely helpful with the transitioning of the Welfare Fund administrators. As you should already know, the MVFT office no longer manages the Welfare Fund benefits. If you have any questions or concerns about your benefits, retirees and active members should call 1-888-428-0148.

# ARE YOU READY TO ROCK?

## SRP Recognition Day is November 16, 2021

On November 16th, the MVFT will be celebrating our hardworking School-Related Professionals (SRP) in each of our buildings to show our Teaching Assistants and Security Monitors how grateful we all are for their dedication to the students and the community.

The MVFT was one of the first of NYSUT's locals to organize teaching assistants and security monitors. For over fifty years, school-related professionals have transformed our workplace and contributed mightily to the success of our schools.

They are our MVFT Super Heroes! TA Chapter Leader Monique Bell, and Security Chapter Leader Denise Coates, represent our SRPs on the MVFT Executive Board. They work tirelessly to improve working conditions and strengthen contract language for all teaching assistants and security monitors.

Thank you SRPs for providing a safe and nurturing environment for all of us.

*You Rock!*



## You asked, We answered!



### THE MVFT IS PROUD TO OFFER YOU AN EXCLUSIVE WEBINAR COVERING EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW: "FROM HIRED TO RETIRED!"

Need to know how to choose a 403(b)/457(b) Plan?

Want to better understand your NYSTRS Pension?

Curious about what types of insurance you need?

Want more info on how to save for your child's college?

Would you like basic budgeting and credit tips?

**Click Here to Register!!!**

[https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_jgjH9w9VTO2LNKJS27Nigg](https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_jgjH9w9VTO2LNKJS27Nigg)

### LOAN FORGIVENESS AND STUDENT DEBT

NYSUT: Public Service Loan Forgiveness gets major overhaul

<https://www.nysut.org/news/2021/october/loan-forgiveness#.YWRdhG7ybL8.gmail>

NYSUT: Student Debt Webinars - 2021 Schedule Now Posted

<https://www.nysut.org/news/2020/december/student-debt#.YWRReifDHGMs.gmail>

## CREDIT APPROVAL

### How can I improve my craft and earn a few more dollars?

*By Angelique Perez, MVFT Credit Approval Committee*

Professional development courses offer strategies and tools to improve our craft as well as increasing our salary if the course is pre-approved. In Mount Vernon, you must submit a pre-approval form for each new course you plan to take. These forms are available in the main office of every school.

Here are some guidelines for getting your courses approved:

- Make sure you submit the **pre-approval** form at least 2-4 weeks before the course begins.
- Forms must be submitted to the Human Resource Office at the Education Center and time stamped.
- Fill out the **pre-approval** form completely and remember to press hard as it is a triplicate form (if you have a copy of the form please submit 3 photocopies).
- Make a copy of the **official course description from the course catalog** for each course including the name of the institution granting the credit
- The **official course description** must also include the dates, times, and total hours or credits being issued. Handwritten dates and times are not accepted.
- If it is an on-line course, or a self-paced course, make sure to include start date and end date of the course, or the time frame in which the course must be completed.

Many teachers have taken courses from TEI-Teacher Education Institute, Central Westchester Teacher Institute, Creative Teacher Education Institute, as well as all accredited colleges and universities.



## NYSUT Certification Webinars

<https://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources-sites/certification/webinars>

We know that certification in New York State can be complicated and stressful. That's why NYSUT has an office that's entirely devoted to helping our members navigate the certification process. While the State Education Department manages all certifications, our certification experts are here to give you honest answers and help you through the process.

NYSUT is pleased to offer a new range of **free webinars to help our members with their certification questions**. These webinars are designed to help NYSUT members with specific challenges they encounter understanding and managing their certifications.

**Space in each webinar is limited. Please sign up only if you plan to attend.**

Webinars are free for NYSUT members.

### Upcoming Certification Webinars

**OCT 26** | 04:00 PM - 05:30 PM

**Initial to Professional Certification Guidance**

**OCT 28** | 04:00 PM - 05:30 PM

**Teaching Assistant Certification Guidance**

**NOV 10** | 04:00 PM - 05:30 PM

**Options Related to Expiring Certificates/Changing Assignments**

Get the Facts on Certification and visit :

<https://www.nysut.org/resources/all-listing/research/fact-sheets/fact-sheet-teacher-certification-in-new-york-state>



### COVID-19 Update: Emergency COVID-19 Certificate Requirement Deadlines Extended

Candidates who are seeking certain certificates and extensions may be eligible for the Emergency COVID-19 certificate, allowing them to work in New York State public schools or districts for two years while taking and passing the required exam(s) for the certificate or extension sought.

Effective September 15, 2021, the Emergency COVID-19 certificate requirement deadlines have been extended from September 1, 2021 to September 1, 2022. For example, the application deadline for this one-year emergency certificate is now September 1, 2022. The full list of requirements for the emergency certificate can be viewed on the **Emergency COVID-19 webpage** and **Search Certification Requirements webpage**.

Individuals who applied for the Emergency COVID-19 certificate prior to September 15, 2021 will automatically have their certificate requirement deadlines extended from September 1, 2021 to September 1, 2022.

# PROFESSIONAL CORNER



The NYSUT Tarrytown Regional Office is pleased to offer the schedule for the Fall, 2021 Seminars of the Tarrytown Learning Center (TLC). Link: **2021 Fall Seminars | (tarrytownlearningcenter.org)**

The TLC is set up to conveniently provide you with seminars that will enhance your work experience and give you the tools necessary to become the best that you can be within your profession. The seminars will be set up in conjunction with the NYSUT Education and Learning Trust (ELT). With more than 30 years' experience, the ELT is the go-to choice for high-quality professional learning with experienced, classroom-tested instructors. The ELT offers the latest and most relevant research-based strategies and resources, taught by your colleagues – fellow teachers and school-related professionals. In addition, the TLC is working closely with the Lower Hudson Valley Network of Teacher Centers.

Due to the current circumstances, we will be offering online seminars only. Seminars range from 1-4 hours. CTLE credits will be based on the number of hours of the seminar.

These seminars are open to NYSUT members only and there is no charge to participate. While class sizes will be limited, you are welcome to attend as many seminars as you can fit into your schedule.

Please use this link to register:

**2021 Fall Seminars | (tarrytownlearningcenter.org)**



## The Teacher Center of Central Westchester

20 Broadway Valhalla, NY

914-368-8771

Fall 2021 Newsletter

**[www.teachercentercw.org](http://www.teachercentercw.org)**



### Teachers Learning Together

The Teacher Center of Central Westchester (TCCW), a curriculum and professional development center for teachers, was founded in 1984. It provides professional development courses for instructional strategies and best practices, technology training courses, informational workshops, study groups, and action research groups. The Center provides a variety of grant-funded staff development programs and services at no cost designed to meet the needs of the educators in the Mount Vernon School District.

As co-directors, we have worked diligently to offer courses and workshops that met the needs of our members. TCCW appreciates your support and will continue offering valuable professional learning opportunities in 2021-2022. Please visit the TCCW website to learn more about our courses.

**<https://www.teachercentercw.org/>**

Thank you,

Toni Gamils & Julie Liebersohn

*Upcoming Free Learning Opportunities for In-service/CTLEHours*

*Please contact us if you register late for any PD offerings.*

*Some sessions may be repeated.*

# DO'S & DON'TS



## The Do's and Don'ts of Social Media for Our District

by Carene Domato, MVFT President

Social media is a great resource for educators to improve teaching, get inspired and connect with other educators. However, it can also make you the focus of a personnel investigation or unemployed! The MVFT encourages all our members to use social media wisely.

### Here are some Do's and Don'ts of social media:

**Do** follow district policy regarding social media. Read through the policies carefully and follow them to the letter. Remember you have signed off on these district policies which means you are obligated to adhere to them.

**Don't** connect with your students on any online platform, except for school-provided or required software. Do not "friend" or "follow" students or parents on your personal social media accounts.

**Do** keep your profile pictures clean. Your profile picture and personal pictures should never show alcohol, drugs, or anything that can be misconstrued. If any of your social media accounts are open to the public, you need to be aware that anyone can view them including parents and students. Tagging fellow teachers is also a bad idea as well.

**Don't** ever post pictures of your students or your classroom. You are violating their right to privacy and revealing their location when you post their pictures.

**Do** be careful when it comes to sharing strong or controversial opinions. Although social media is an excellent platform for sharing ideas, collaborating and organizing movements, try to keep your own posts neutral and respectful.

**Don't** ever post during school hours or speak negatively about your job online. This is good practice for all professionals, not just educators. We are all being paid to prepare lessons, teach, and provide a safe environment for our students. Socialize during social hours, work during work hours.

Overall, Facebook and other forms of social media have become the norm in terms of connecting with friends and family. However, it has also become common for public employers to use the information found on their employees' social media pages as basis for discipline. Although the law in this area is still evolving, MVFT members are cautioned that their use of social media may have a negative impact on their employment.



# SPOTLIGHT

## COLUMBUS

### SPOTLIGHT Columbus School Hispanic Heritage

This month we are honoring the music of Hispanic countries by completing a Hispanic Heritage Month Music Madness Bracket. We have 3 rounds where classes are listening to music from specific countries. They then decide which is their favorite and write down why. This has given the students the opportunity to listen to music from other countries and see how similar we all truly are through music. The students at Columbus have been having a lot of fun with this!

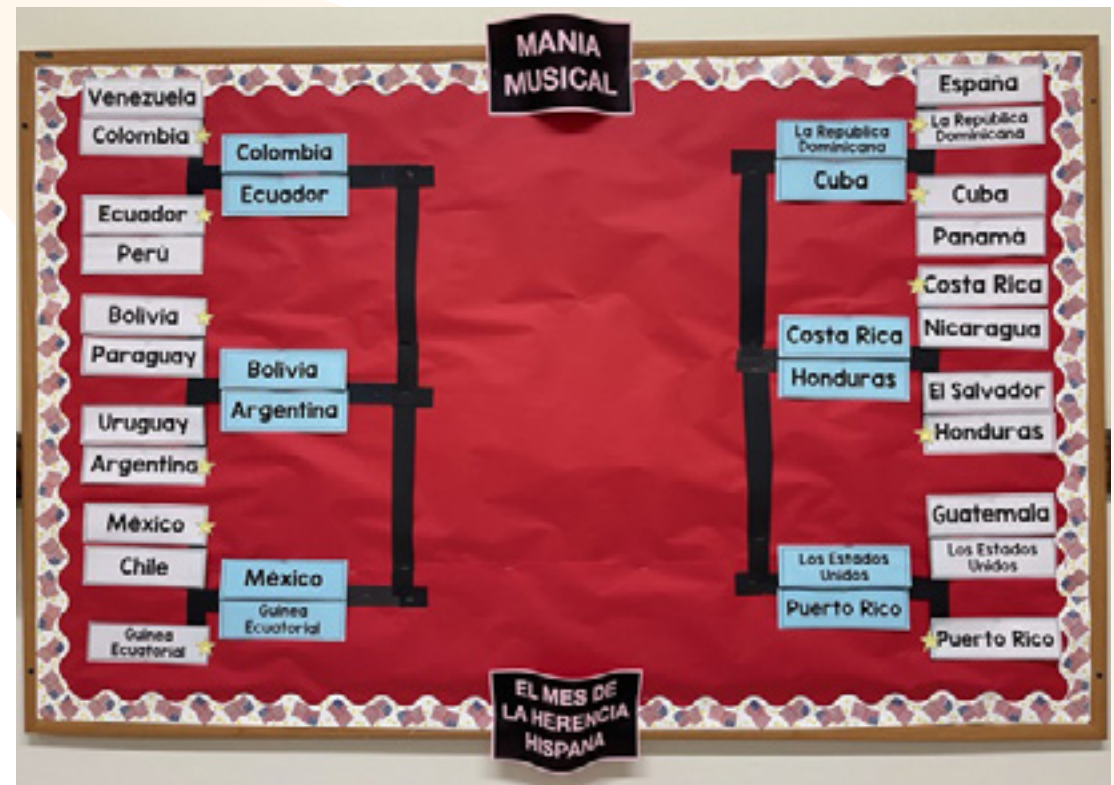
On September 16th Columbus School held its annual **Bring Your Dad to School Day**. Approximately 90 fathers and father figures participated in the event. Students and their fathers received a make and take spinning wheel titled **“Things I Can Do with \_\_\_\_\_ on the Weekend”**. The enjoyment and excitement on the students’ faces were priceless. As an appreciation for participating in that day, the fathers and father figures received a gift bag filled with goodies and some hints and suggestions to help with reading strategies at home.

*by Melissa Hogan, Columbus School*

## HOLIDAY INITIATIVE

### Scarves for Students in Need

The MVFT Retiree Chapter is ready to get back in action post pandemic. Maz Hogan, Chairperson, will be organizing the collection and distribution of hand made scarves, hats and gloves to our students in need for the 2021 holidays. Please send your creations to the MVFT Office, 22 W. First St., Mount Vernon, NY 10550 by December 10, 2021.



Curriculum Notes	Name:	Date:
Gr. 5 - Social Studies	Number:	Class:
Topic: Hispanic Heritage		
Learning Target: We are learning about Nicaragua and Costa Rica		
1- Country Name		
2- Location		
3- Facts about the country		

# SPOTLIGHT

## HAMILTON

Dress Down Wednesdays at Hamilton School had everyone showing off their Pink Pride in support of MVFT Making Strides Against Breast Cancer. Hamilton School is one of the top schools in MVFT fundraising initiatives.



**Front L-R:** Sara Kincade, Elizabeth Russell, Wendy Lang, Justine Jacobson, Solivette DaCunha, Kyrstyn Petrucelli, Jennifer Quiros. **Back L-R:** Sandra Dannenhoffer, Carene Domato, Charlene Clarke, Jennifer Vaccaro-Bisgrove, Nicole Chappas, Ebony Acheampong-Rogers, Sandra Sanchez, Annalynn Taylor, Lexi Arborn, Jessica Kowgios, Andrew Binder, Gordon Palmer

Hamilton Middle School Team celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month with their 7th and 8th grade students. Students presented their Hispanic Heritage projects and the dedicated Hamilton team prepared a feast of tacos and rice for the students.

Food is a great motivator and it gave our students a chance to get a “real taste” for Hispanic culture.

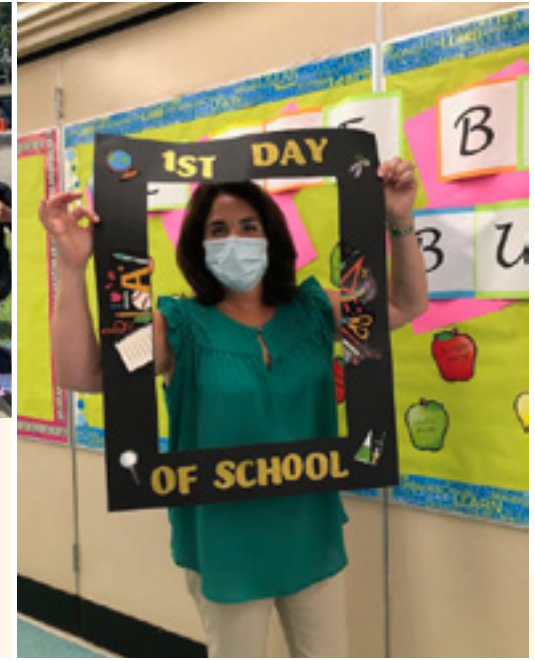


**L-R:** School Psychologist Andrew Binder, ELA Teacher Ishan Aret, Reading Specialist Carene Domato, and ENL Teacher Jennifer Quiros

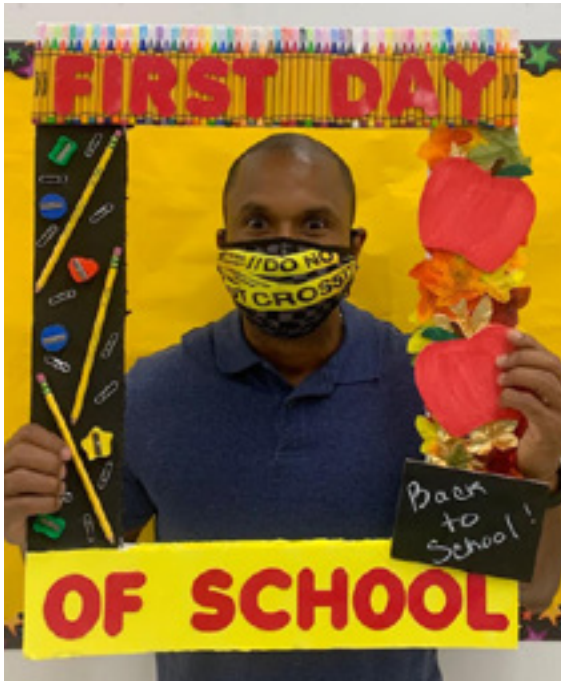


# SPOTLIGHT

## TRAPHAGEN



At Traphagen, we were excited to open the doors for the students to come back to school! Staff and students got to take their first day of school pictures! The students and staff cheered on the Olympic medalist Rai Benjamin during the motorcade. We had **Donuts with Dads** as a special thank you for all that they do. It has been a fun and eventful beginning of a school year where we are working on staying positive and here for the students!





# IN MEMORIAM

It is with a heavy heart that we announce the passing of Lyuba Halawin-Sesay, retired Mt Vernon Assistant Principal and former A.B. Davis English teacher. She was the beloved mother of Pasha and Kira Sesay and the wife of Lamin Sesay. It is believed that Lyuba passed away on approximately May 10, 2021. The cause of death is unknown.

Lyuba was born in December 1944 in Bergen-Beisen, a Nazi satellite concentration camp in northern Germany. She said her birthday was on April 13, 1945, the day her family was liberated by the British. Her family was originally from Russia. Lyuba was the youngest of 5 children, Lyuba being the only survivor.

Lyuba's parents settled in Brooklyn. She attended Brooklyn College. After college she worked at the United Nations, escorting students and instructing them. This is where she met Lamin, who represented Sierra Leone in the UN's justice department. They married and had three children. Their son died of SIDS in infancy.

The Sesay family settled in Mount Vernon where Lyuba became an English Humanities teacher at A.B. Davis Middle School in 1983. While teaching, she earned an administrative degree and was the Magnet Coordinator at A.B. Davis before becoming an assistant principal. She served as assistant principal at A.B. Davis, Lincoln Elementary, Franco Elementary (Longfellow), and later at Mount Vernon High School. Lyuba retired in 2013.

Lyuba was a very warm-hearted woman and a good friend to all who knew her. She was actively involved in meeting with the wives of United Nations diplomats each month, making them feel welcome and at home.

Lyuba was a true advocate of education and the arts. During her years of teaching she was very involved in many programs including the Brainerd Institute in South Carolina. Lyuba worked with Felicia Rashad, Debbie Allen, Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee to raise funds for the institute. Dr. Ayers, the director, was a close friend of hers.

Staff and students gravitated to her because of her nurturing, warm and selfless personality. She was genuine and trustworthy, sharing personal and educational experiences.

On September 26<sup>th</sup> an intimate memorial service was held in her honor at the Asbury Church in Tuckahoe. Joan Mallory, a former music teacher at A.B. Davis and close friend of Lyuba's, organized a beautiful ceremony including meaningful music pieces with Russian aspects as well as African ones. Former students eulogized her affectionately in prayer. It was a beautiful send-off by those who were close to her.



*by Marilyn Pirozzi*

# MVFT WELFARE FUND

## MVFT OFFICE ATTORNEY APPOINTMENTS

Attorneys are available at the MVFT office on a monthly basis for members who wish to avail themselves of the Welfare Fund's program of legal services benefits. The following dates are available for attorney appointments between the hours of 2:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m

**November 2, 2021**

**December 7, 2021**

**January 4, 2022**

**February 1, 2022**

**March 1, 2022**

**April 5, 2022**

**May 10, 2022**

**June 7, 2022**

**Please contact the panel law firm, Mirkin & Gordon, P.C. 914-997-1576. Identify yourself as a member of the Mount Vernon Federation of Teachers Welfare Fund to make a physical or virtual appointment.**

The Fund's program of comprehensive legal services benefit coverage includes representation in: purchasing and/or 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, etc.

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

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*President*

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*Vice President, Grievance Chair*

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*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

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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  
Karen Wallace  
Karen Molinaro  
Barbara Foley  
Barbara DeAngelo