

The Agenda



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Volume 26, Issue 1

Over Seventy Years of Excellence in Education

MOUNT VERNON FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

December 2024

MVFT SOCIAL EVENT

By Laura Marino

MVFT Members spent a fun filled afternoon on Monday, October 21, at the Radisson in New Rochelle, gathering for the annual Social Event. Committee Chairs, Stacia Fogg and Michele Battista, created a fun-filled event that was a great way to start the school year.



Caiifa Clark and Fellow MVFT Member at the MVFT Social Event

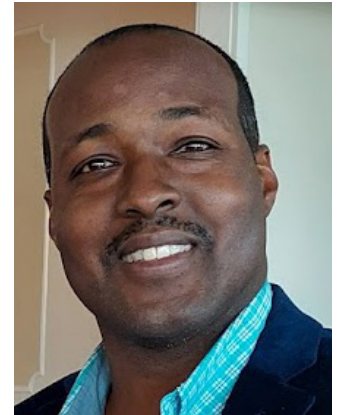


Michael Malocsay, Tyshawn Staggers and David Israel



Nicole White socializes in style at the MVFT Social Event

Message from the PRESIDENT



Greetings Union Siblings:

As we enter the Holiday Season, I must acknowledge that there is quite a lot going on in the Mount Vernon City School District. From discussions surrounding district reorganization (which may include the closing of school buildings) to the fact that we are in contract mediation and working under an expired contract, our members continue to provide the education and services that students need in a professional manner. For this I say thank you!

Despite the challenges we face, we continue to go above and beyond to ensure that our students get what they need to learn. We continue to meet the needs of the Mount Vernon community. In this issue of The Agenda, you will see some of the wonderful things that our colleagues are doing across the school district. We also have an article from our Stacey Braun Associates financial advisor.

Enjoy the well deserved two weeks off. Enjoy the Holiday Season!

Remember to always educate, inspire, and organize.

Keith McCall, President, Mount Vernon Federation of Teachers



GET READY FOR '25

But Enjoy Some Holiday Peace First!

By David Bonington, CFP®, Stacey Braun Associates, Inc.

To say that 2024 was tumultuous would of course be an understatement. In financial, social, political, technological, and you-name-it ways, changes and challenges seemed to be everywhere. I could try to list many of them here, but your memory will recall them far faster (and more completely) than a pen could ever set them forth. And simply from a financial planning standpoint alone, 2025 promises plenty of new changes in tax, estate, and retirement savings guidelines.

Fortunately, it is that time of year when the Holidays have arrived! Starting with the Thanksgiving we recently enjoyed, the last five weeks of every year offer a welcome time to get together with family and friends, and to remind ourselves about those things that are right and most enduring.

But before I get to my suggestions for December, a brief reminder about a benefit which could reduce financial anxiety. If some loose financial ends are out there, remember that it is not too late to make a free, confidential 2024 appointment with a Stacey Braun counselor. I mentioned taxes above, so let's imagine that some nagging tax questions are on your mind: a planner can help review a checklist of tasks that need - or don't need - doing before December 31. For example, if you are saving in a 529 Plan for college, yes, you need to make a contribution this month for a 2024 New York tax deduction. However, on another matter there is no need to rush - you have until April 15, 2025 to make 2024 contributions to a personal IRA. As you can tell, tax (and many other) checklists feel like they could be long - but if getting to the bottom of a list allows you to better enjoy your Holiday, why not arrange a meeting?

All right - enough of complicated financial things! 2025 will bring financial changes, but it is not here yet. Once any 2024 loose ends are tied up, the balance of this month can become a great time to relax, reflect, and recharge. My advice? Keep it simple and seek simple pleasures! Take in the sounds, songs, sights, and lights that come with these weeks. Enjoy what's new and different if you are traveling. Enjoy what remains constant if you are hosting. Enjoy time with members of an extended family, or even engage in a multi-generational, kitchen table game of Monopoly, Clue, or a game of your choice. You can also overeat - just a little - because there'll be plenty of time in January for an exercise and weight-loss resolution. Strive for happiness and peace of mind.

While my colleagues and I plan for 2025, we are also going to follow these suggestions. We hope to see many of you in the weeks and months ahead - and in the meantime, we wish everyone a safe, warm, peaceful, and wonderful Holiday Season!



Free, confidential telephone or Zoom sessions with a Stacey Braun planner can be arranged by calling 1-888-949-1925.

No financial products are sold and there is never any sales pressure.

SICK LEAVE INCENTIVE EXPLAINED

By Mary Dempsey

The cold weather has moved in, and Cold and Flu season is upon us. If you manage to avoid illness, lucky you, there are incentives for unused sick and personal days!

Tenured teachers, teaching assistants as well as security guards with 3 or more years working in the district are allotted 15 sick days per year and 3 personal days. Unused days at the end of the year accumulate and become part of your Sick Day balance going forward. These days can be used in future years should you need them for an extended illness or FMLA leave.

YEARLY INCENTIVE

All teachers, TAs and security that use 5 or fewer sick and personal days in a school year get a bonus at the end of the school year. The amount of the bonus varies as it is determined by the number of people eligible. The district allots \$275,000 to be divided among all members eligible that year.

Many members accumulate days over their career and ask: What happens to my unused sick days when I retire? The answer can be found in our respective contracts under “Sick Leave Incentive Program.”

CAREER INCENTIVE

1. Accruing sick days

To join the Incentive Program, teachers need to have at least 150 sick days in their bank at the beginning of the year. TAs and Security need to accumulate one hundred days to join. You should receive a letter when you meet this milestone asking you to agree to move the days into your “Incentive Bank.”

2. Selling Back Unused Sick Days

Once the days are set aside, you are part of the program. You will receive a notice each year of how many sick days you have eligible to “sell back.” If a teacher uses eight or fewer sick days during the school year, they can sell any unused days back at \$75 per day. TAs and Security members would earn \$50 per day.

3. During your retirement year

Teachers who are planning to retire receive an added benefit in their final year from selling back unused sick days. However, they need to submit an irrevocable resignation letter for retirement. To qualify, the teacher must meet the 150 sick day requirement and be part of the program.



The amount of money a teacher can get for selling back sick days depends on when they submit their retirement letter:

- If they submit by January 15, they can sell up to 18 days (15 sick days and 3 personal days) for \$200 per day.
- If they submit by February 15, the amount drops to \$150 per day for the same 18 days.
- If they submit by March 15, they can sell the 18 days for \$100 per day.

4. When you retire:

The money earned from sold sick days is used to pay for Insurance or Welfare Fund Benefits once you retire. Currently, a retiree is responsible for 40% of an individual premium at retirement and 50% of a family premium. Current Retiree Welfare rates can be found on MVFT.org.

MENTORING PROGRAM

By Katie Santoro

There have been so many new teachers who have joined our Mount Vernon City School District staff. We are so proud of you for your hard work and dedication to give our Mount Vernon scholars the positive environment to be able to learn to their best ability. Your patience and how you have shown how you care for our scholars is deeply appreciated!

Thank you to all the mentors who are assisting our new teachers in the development and implementation practices to help students be college and career ready, as well as providing a practical resource for the establishment and implementation of teacher practices. It has been great observing the partnerships in the PLCs that are blossoming. Beginning teachers are learning to acclimate themselves to a new environment, and mentors are helping the new teachers raise student outcomes by expanding pedagogical and interactive social skills.

Wishing everyone a relaxing and restful holiday break to rejuvenate for the new year of 2025!



Melissa Helms-Muhammed, second from right, Shows Off Swag at Mentoring Meeting



Nadine Shields-Alcalde Leads an Exciting Discussion at the Mentoring Meeting

CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

By Andrea Gelling, MVFT Secretary

Wedding Bells

Brenna Lade Luchsinger, Traphagen School

Elizabeth Burgos Batson, Edward Williams School

Jessica DeCecco Comerford, MVHA

Births

Christopher Walker, Williams/Parker,
Birth of Son, *Jack Reid Walker*

Condolences

Adrienne Stanley, Edward Williams,
Loss of Grandmother

James Blount, Traphagen, *Loss of Mother*

Enid Ingram, Traphagen, *Loss of Sister*

Isabel Garcia, MVHA, *Loss of Brother*

Stephanie Turner, MVHA, *Loss of Mother*

Janet Figueireto-Marrone, Retiree, *Loss of Brother*



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Andrea Gelling
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Stacia Fogg
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BUILDING REPS

Karen Wheeler #1
Michelle Atterberry #1
Laura Marino #2
Modesta Curzio-Spies #2
Michele Battista #3
William DeMorris #3
Andrea Hyatt-Copeland #4
Darrell Lowe #4
Yessenia Avenant-DeFreitas #5
Rebecca Challop #6
Ellen Hanney-Saligumba #6
Tashi Campbell-Tulloch #7
Monica DeOliveira #7
Janeen Clayton #8
Nikysha Copeland-Bey #8

Caiifa Clark #9
Rita Colucci #9
Ellen Benowitz #10
Mary Dempsey #12
Corinn Gorman-Bahr #12
Shawnette Odindo #13
Nicole White-Lee #13
Laurie Kellogg #14
Francina Jubilee #16
Greg McDonnell #16
Isabel Garcia #17
Nadine Shields-Alcalde #17
Sam Stern #18
Tyler White #18
Mike Malosky #18

The Agenda

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE
President: Keith McCall
Editor: Laura Marino

Contributors:
Rick Castellitto
Mary Dempsey
Andrea Gelling
Keith McCall
Laura Marino
Maureen Palumbo
Katie Santoro
Karen Wallace

SPOTLIGHT

HAMILTON



Members of Hamilton staff make Thanksgiving a special event for students



Hamilton Thanksgiving feast with Eric Neuman and colleagues helping make it special for students



Everything looks delicious at Hamilton Thanksgiving event



SPOTLIGHT

MANDELA



SRP
Day



Good Night for a Good Day

By Laura Marino

Lincoln families and staff, under the direction of Member Modesta Curzio-Spies, participated in the Good Night for a Good Day Program pajama/book drive this fall that resulted in 90 children receiving a pair of new pajamas and a book.

The program believes that every child has the right to a sense of stability and security which can begin with a healthy sleep that will help them thrive in school. Since 2001, the pajama program has delivered over 8 million Good Nights for Good Days. Scholastic teams up with the program to match each pair of pajamas with a book.

Mrs. Spies delivered the pajamas and books to the Doles Center. From there, the Boys' and Girls' Club of Mt. Vernon will deliver them to children in our community.



Modesta Curzio-Spies representing Lincoln at the Fall Festival



Member Modesta Curzio-Spies and Kristen Cipriano share fun activities with Mt. Vernon students



Jean Marie Castracucco and Cristi Pizzuti from Lincoln collaborated with their 2nd graders on a landform project



Lincoln 2nd Grade Teacher, Jean Marie Castracucco engages students in a collaborative project



Modesta Curzio-Spies and students who donated to the Good Night for a Good Day Program

AFTERSCHOOL *Retiree* NEWS

WE ARE THE UNION, STILL

By Rick Castellitto

2024 is coming to a close and I still have so many things to finish. Is it just me or does time pass more quickly as you age? I look at what I do in a day now and think, how did I work a full-time job and still get all this stuff done?

And it looks like several of our MVFT Retiree Chapter members have also been “getting stuff done.” From the time that this Retiree Chapter was started back in 1997, there has always been an emphasis on getting involved in the expanded community in order to help others; that involvement continues to the present.

In this season of giving thanks, the Chapter should give special thanks for our most recent volunteers:

- Chair Karen Wallace and her sous chefs for their shopping and cooking duties at the **Ronald McDonald House** to help those families in need of support;
- Chair Margaret Mahoney for organizing a **Pull Tab Collection** with MVFT Delegates for Ronald McDonald House;
- Chair Maz Hogan and her nimble-fingered elves for the **Scarves for Holiday Initiative** which provides some warmth for students;
- Chair Pat Duggan and the **MVFTRC Striders Breast Cancer Team** for walking to raise thousands of dollars for cancer care and research.
- And the list of thanks for engaged volunteer members continues with Chairs:

Gayle Wyckoff and Joanne Cathcart of the **Social and Seminar Committee**; Ann Marie Kiernan of the **Political Action Committee**; Lynne Petrone of the **New Member Committee**; Jeff Yonkers for **VOTE-COPE**; Rick Castellitto for **Parkinson's Walk**; Maureen Palumbo, Karen Wallace and Marilyn Pirozzi for **The Afterschool Newsletter**; Maureen Palumbo, Bob Fetonti, Marilyn Pirozzi for **Member Correspondence**; the most recent **Executive Committee Election Committee** of Maureen Palumbo, Bob Fetonti, Marilyn Pirozzi; and your **MVFT Retiree Chapter Officers** Rick Castellitto, Jeff Yonkers, Karen Wallace, Pat Duggan and Anne Marie Kiernan.

We wish you and your family a joyful holiday season and a happy and healthy New Year. If you would like to join any of these current committees, have any ideas for a new committee or just have a question about our Retiree Chapter I can be reached at pres.mvftrc@gmail.com or on my cell at 914-715-9573.

Rick

Political Action Committee – Anne Marie Kiernan, Chairperson

Members Bob Fetonti and Joan Aracich represented MVFTRC at the NYSUT phone banks.



MVFTRC September General Membership Meeting and Social, September 5, 2024.

Great time at the Membership Meeting and Luncheon held at Patsy's Pizzeria in New Rochelle. The meeting lasted for 20 minutes and the eating, talking and catching-up went for over two hours. Next meeting scheduled for June.

*“Good time with
good food, good talk
and great people.”*

~ Vera Glazewski



RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE MEAL PREP 2024

By Karen Wallace



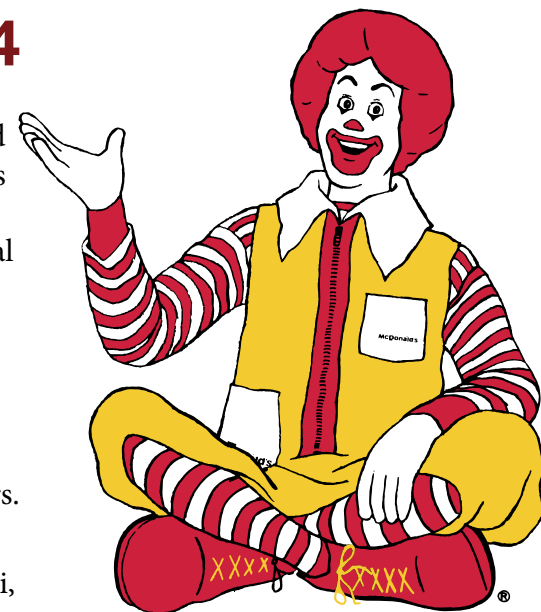
The cooking continues! The MVFT started this partnership with Ronald McDonald House in 2017. Teams of 4-6 retirees cook two or three times a month from April to December. Money to purchase the food is either donated by members or from the MVFT Retiree Chapter budget. A meal for 35 residents costs between \$75.00 and \$170.00, depending on the menu.

For the year 2024, retirees and friends have volunteered their time and expertise cooking over 630 delicious meals for the families staying in Ronald McDonald House in Valhalla while their children are in the hospital. It is our small contribution in helping to care for the caretakers.

Thank you to our 2024 volunteers: Elyse Hintzen, Vera Glazewski, Maeve Nolan, Pat Caruso, Roberta Greco, Sara Kincade, Marilyn Pirozzi, Christine Iaffaldano, Diana O'Sullivan, Joanne Cathcart, Debbie Cohen, Carl Caprio, Karen Molinaro, Jeff Yonkers, Shari DePaola, Barbara Foley, Carol Sindell, Marcia Morgan, Joan Aracich, Bob Fetonti, Margaret Mahoney, Karl Nifontoff, Mary Beth Rhodes, Barbara DeAngelo, Frank DeAngelo, Jerry Wallace.

For photos from our cooking adventures click this link:

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/u4bAXdp4EADtsDTt9>



PULL TAB COLLECTION FOR RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE

Margaret Mahoney, Chairperson

On May 21st, Joanne Cathcart and Margaret Mahoney attended the monthly meeting of the MVFT Delegate Assembly at MVHS. Materials were distributed to begin a month long collection of pull tabs from our district schools. We are very grateful to the building reps for their participation in this program to benefit Ronald McDonald House in Valhalla, NY. Thank you to Laura Marino (Lincoln) and retirees Jeanne Kennedy and Marielena Ciccimarra for collecting huge amounts of pull tabs. Our total collection was 26,000 tabs

Margaret Mahoney delivers a trunk load of pull tabs to Ronald McDonald House



AFTERSCHOOL *Retiree* NEWS

MVFT Retiree Chapter Correspondence Report

Our Sincere Condolences

SHARI DIPAOLO (*Retiree, MVHS*) passing of her father, Harvey Cohen in May 2024. Harvey was a member of the Mount Vernon Board of Education for 15 years; two of those years as president

MARIA LAURINO (*Retiree, ESL Hamilton School*) passing of her mother in January 2024.

LORNA YVON (*Retiree, Pennington, 2019*) passing of her father, Salvatore Pelliccio, on October 9, 2024

To the Family of JAY COLVILLE. Jay passed away in January 2024. Jay was a Principal at Nathan Hale (*Parker Elementary*)

To the Family of VIRGINIA CRAMER. Ginny passed away in July 2024. Ginny was a MVHS Home Economics teacher at MVHS.

To the Family of SANDY KILLEN. Sandy passed away in June 2024. Sandy taught at Nichols and retired from A.B. Davis.

To the Family of LORI MONASTRA. Lori passed away on November 13, 2024. Lori was an English teacher and Librarian at MVHS.

To the Family of DEBBIE SUTHERLAND. Debbie passed away in July 2024. Debbie was a Special Education teacher at MVHS.

Congratulations

ANITA AMIEIRO (*Retiree, MVHS*) marriage of son, Andrew Amieiro, to Rachel Palumbo on October 5, 2024.

Get Well

MARIA LAURINO (*Retiree ESL Hamilton School*)

Births

PAUL COURT, (*Retiree MVHS*) granddaughter, Capri (son, Michael), on June 5, 2024 and a grandson, Matteo (daughter Lianna), on October 4, 2024

GERRI DEANGELIS (*Retiree A.B. Davis*) great grandson, Jack (grandson Timothy) on September 20, 2024

MAUREEN PALUMBO (*Retiree A.B. Davis*) grandson, Nicholas (son Marc), August 14, 2024



MVFT Retirees sorted and packed scarves for the MVFT Holiday Initiative. The MVFT Delegates picked up the scarves and delivered them to their school's social worker who will distribute the scarves. Our Pre-K through 6th Grade students in need will receive a beautiful handmade scarf. Thanks to Chairperson Maz Hogan for organizing this wonderful project, and to all who contributed their talent and time.



Pictured L – R: Maz Hogan, Margaret Mahoney, Anne Myers, Roberta Greco, Karen Wallace, Isabel Ellis, Christine Iaffaldano, Marilyn Felder, Diana O'Sullivan. Not pictured: Elyse Hintzen, Vera Glazewski, and several friends of Maz Hogan.

The MVFTRC Striders team walked at Manhattanville College on Sunday October 20th with team walkers Maeve Nolan, Anne Marie Kiernan and Patricia Phelan.

It was a beautiful, warm day for the 31st Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk. Our team raised \$1056.00.

