



TODAY

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Vermont-NEA welcomes new partners

Vermont-NEA Photo/Art Huse

MONTPELIER – Vermont-NEA, through our Partnership/Sponsorship program, provides on-going financial and/or promotional backing for a number of worthy projects and organizations whose work supports students, educators, and public education. This year, two new partners already have been approved: Cyberchase on Vermont Public Television and The Handshake Project, created by Community Celebration Artist Maggie Sherman.

The Handshake Project

Vermont-NEA supports and recommends The Handshake Project as a unique activity that encourages students to experience being connected with other people and creates a work of art to honor the moment.

Community Artist Maggie Sherman already is known and appreciated by schools in Vermont where she has presented her Handshake Project. The Project's purpose is to help students express their understanding of responsibility, respect, tolerance and cooperation using the handshake gesture. The Handshake Project Kit includes all the materials an educator needs to lead a class in creating and capturing their handshakes in casts as symbols of their co-



Community Artist Maggie Sherman showed casts from the Handshake Project to Vermont-NEA Partnership/Sponsorship Committee members Tom Button and Carol Willey.

operation and commitment to one another. A standards-based guide called The Toolbox accompanies the Project. Call Maggie toll-free at 1-877-244-

2321 for information about bringing the Project to your classroom.

Cyberchase

Vermont-NEA now is an on-air sponsor of the Emmy Award-winning series Cyberchase. These words will be heard over the Vermont-NEA logo each weekday afternoon on Vermont Public Television as Cyberchase airs: "Local broadcast of CYBERCHASE on Vermont Public Television is supported in part by the Vermont-National Education Association... 10,000 Vermont educators working for Great Public Schools for Every Child."

The Vermont-NEA Partnership/Sponsorship Committee selected Cyberchase as the program to support because it reaches children. Cyberchase teaches kids aged 8-12 math concepts in a fun way they can understand. Packed with mystery, humor, and action, the TV show features a team of curious kids who outwit, outsmart, and outlast the bad guys in their adventurous quest to save Cyberspace.

In the world of Cyberchase, a classic good-versus-evil battle rages. The dastardly villain Hacker is on a mad mission to take over Cyberspace. The heroes are three curious kids determined to stop him. Their weapon: brain power.

Each episode takes the heroes on a thrilling adventure driven by a different concept – from tackling time in ancient Egyptian tombs to cracking codes in creepy caves. Kids readily learn that math is everywhere and fun to use! And even more exciting for teachers, each episode is tied to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) Standards – so it can be used to supplement a core curriculum.

Partnerships are recommended by the Vermont-NEA Partnership/Sponsorship Committee and approved by the Vermont-NEA Board of Directors. P/S Committee members are: Tom Button of Lamoille UHS (chair); Carol Willey of Essex Junction UHS; Wayne Whitehill of Essex-Caledonia; and Bill Haines of Montpelier. -LBH



Local broadcast of CYBERCHASE on Vermont Public Television is supported in part by the Vermont-National Education Association... 10,000 Vermont educators working for Great Public Schools for Every Child

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Leaving a Legacy

By Angelo J. Dorta, President

From time to time, teachers and school support staff are bound to wonder whether their demanding daily work in Vermont classrooms has any lasting impact. After our careers in public education end, will we leave an admirable legacy in the wake of our common commitment and service to Vermont's children and public schools?

Understandably, those thoughts most often focus on our students. We want assurance that — in Christa McAuliffe's bold words — we indeed "touch the future" through our students past and present. We yearn to confirm our positive contributions to their earnest and productive lives as students, adults, and citizens.

But what about our school colleagues? Are they usually part of our legacy musings?

If not, they should be. Day-to-day interactions with our workplace peers over months and years have lasting and profound influence in our profes-

sional and personal lives. experiences, idiosyncrasies, mannerisms, and disposition. An arousing mixture of hilarity, camaraderie, and true celebration suffused the entire occasion.

This event was not unique for my former co-workers, however. I had attended another, similarly joyous retirement affair last May for a female colleague who coincidentally happened to be a former teaching partner of the recent male retiree. An excellent and inspiring teacher, too, her party also was similarly crowded, included a different popular song with lyrics customized and spoofy just for her, and yielded a dazzling memory book gift assembled by her counterparts.

In each instance, I couldn't help but think afterwards about the lessons I too had learned from these teachers. And my admiration was apart from their more notable distinctions, such as the Friday guitar-playing and singing with students and co-authorship with another teacher of several com-



Angelo J. Dorta

Every day, we're preparing to leave a legacy with our colleagues, as well as with our students.

quences, active hands-on learning whenever possible, and preparation for the challenges ahead in middle school. Similarly, their working relationships had been solidly built on mutual esteem, apportioned professional duties and joint responsibilities, and the welfare of students as their first priority.

Upon such reflection, I was surprised retrospectively by how daily exposure to their accomplished teaching and to their personalities for many years had influenced my own instructional practices and viewpoints on effective teaching. They even had touched my future as an advocate for Vermont public education, teachers, and school support staff in my role as Vermont-NEA President.

Also, I realized that they had both broadened and deepened my circle of friendships. They had helped to create lasting, common bonds that would endure despite retirements, job changes, and the vagaries of life's personal passages.

Furthermore, I understood that the same truthful reality applied to so many of the other celebrants at those retirement parties. Their lives, too, had benefited from the work and the character of the honorees. And now, underneath the trappings, those multiple dynamic relationships with each other still remain.

Too often, it's only when our co-workers are snatched away from us by sudden tragic accidents or by withering disease that we see their imprint on the fabric of our lives. The losses of Nancy Zickler (Waterford), Steve Sheldon (Middlebury), Anne Brock (Champlain Valley UHS), Sue Pasco (Essex Junction High School), Jim Chapedelaine (Lake Region UHS), Karen Weiss (U-32 HS), Judy Chiott (Winooski), Chuck Duzinski (Brattleboro), and several others in the past eight years also remind us of the same important fact: Every day, we're preparing to leave a legacy with our colleagues, as well as with our students. ■

sional and personal lives.

A recent retirement party for a long-time friend and fellow teacher in Essex Town provided an unequivocal reminder. We had served together in the same school for nearly 20 years and played basketball together on weekends. Our beards and similar physical stature occasionally had caused elementary students to reflexively blurt out his name for mine, or mine for his. Whenever it happened, a spontaneous, shared momentary laugh over the understandable mistake always capped the interchange.

But there was no way to mistake the outpouring of professional respect and personal affection for the man at his retirement party. The house was packed by well-wishing teachers and support staff from the district's three schools. A humorous sing-along using a popular '60s Simon and Garfunkle song was specially created for the gathering, but with lyrics customized to capture aspects of his personality, skills, and teaching interests.

The gifts were thoughtfully selected by his closest teacher teammates over the years to enhance the retiree's talents and leisure activities. Moreover, their presentation to him was punctuated by many insider jokes aimed at his well-known past school

mercial language arts activities books for students.

Their grade-level "team" truly had been a successful and rewarding professional collaboration. It had been characterized by high standards for themselves, appropriately high expectations for student learning and behavior, and student academic achievement. Many parents each year had made direct requests for their children to be placed in their classrooms.

These teachers truly had cared about and had taken time to know their students as individual youngsters. They had always tried to work as closely as possible with students' parents. They had engendered that same sense of partnership with education specialists in the school who also taught their students.

They had sought to balance individual student assignments with shared tasks. They had emphasized respect and cooperation among student groups and between their classes. Their student plays and musical performances, their simulations, and their end-of-unit culminating activities always had been thematically integrated, collaborative, and celebratory.

These teachers largely had shared the same instructional values and methods. They had focused on clear, positive student expectations and conse-

Cavendish teachers present “resume” that makes the community proud

CAVENDISH – Teachers in Cavendish who felt they needed some positive public relations this year came up with a very creative solution: a school resume describing their outstanding qualifications, extensive experience, and many honors on one side, and “references” on the other side, including newspaper headlines such as “Cavendish students take on civic responsibility project” and personal messages from teachers answering the question “Why do you teach?”

Robin Long says the teachers did something similar a few years ago when they wrote “the ubiquitous essay ‘What I did over my summer vacation’ to put in the school newsletter.”

This year, Robin gathered the information and created the resume. I was prompted by our senior teacher when we were working on our wish list for negotiations,” explained Robin. “She commented on the quality of our staff, and the results of our testing. She said that our board should be proud of us. I wondered if the community was even aware of our accomplishments and made the resume.”

Robin says her favorite part is the “Why do you teach” section on the back that includes these quotes, among others:

“I am thrilled when I hear students say ‘I Love Math.’”

“The kids keep me young!”

“Because I can’t think of a better investment in the future.”

Cavendish Town Elementary School's Highly Qualified Educators

OBJECTIVE:
To provide a high quality academic education for the children of Cavendish and Proctorsville. Help all children recognize their true talents and potential, while providing standards based instruction that uses superior modeling, investigation, humor and compassion. Looking out for the emotional and physical health of children. Give students the opportunity to be enthusiastic about working for their community, whether they're reading all night to raise library money or stacking wood for an elderly person.

QUALIFICATIONS:
We have state level trainers in reading, mathematics, writing, technology and professional licensure. These trainers have also helped to create the forth coming *Grade Level Expectations* for the state. We had educators on the panel to create standards for the Praxis Educators License Test given to new teachers. Our teachers have over 200 years of experience in the elementary classroom. Our educators are members of several professional organizations, including the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, National Science Teachers Association, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Asia Studies Project and the Vermont Geography Alliance. Local memberships include Arts in Education, and the WWSU Literacy and Math Task Forces.

EDUCATION:

Seven Masters Degrees	Education and Mathematics
Bachelors Degrees	Education, Environmental Studies, Science, Special Education, Business Management, Music, and Nursing Certificate

EMPLOYMENT:

Cavendish Town Elementary School	Over 180 years combined.
Work in Other Schools	Over 35 years combined

HONORS:
Two Gold Medallions awarded for recognition from The Vermont Business Roundtable
Presidential Award of Excellence in Science and Mathematics Teaching
Who's Who in Education
Vermont School Nurse of the Year
UVM Rural School Model Literacy Award
Two University of Vermont Outstanding Teacher of the Year
 Vermont “**Model Kindergarten**” Winner
 Finalists for Vermont Teacher of the Year

REFERENCES
Included on the other side

After distributing the resume, Robin reports that there were positive comments from parents. And her prin-

cipal really liked the resume -- he said he wants it blown up and put in the foyer. -LBH

Calling all Odyssey of the Mind judges and officials

It's that time of year again...and this season is EXTRA special, because it is the 25th Anniversary of Odyssey of the Mind, and the 25th Annual Vermont Odyssey of the Mind Tournament.

Training will be held on Saturday, February 14th, 2004 at Camels Hump Middle School in Richmond, VT, from 9:00 am - 12:30 pm (refreshments provided). The tournament is on March 20th, 2004, at the University of Vermont.

We need your help to make this a special event for the approximately 75 teams from around the state. Bring your co-workers, your relatives, your friends, and your significant other. As usual, t-shirts, lunch, refreshments, and entertainment will be provided on tournament day.

More information, synopses to this year's Long Term Problems (which are terrific!), a link to descriptions of judging positions, and directions to the training and tournament site can be found at <http://vt.odysseyofthemind.org/judges.html>

The Odyssey of the Mind World Finals will be held from May 29-June 2, 2004, at the University of Maryland. If you are interested in being nominated for a World Finals judge or official position, please let us know immediately. Room and board are provided, and we expect to have a couple of vehicles going down for carpooling. It is really a lot of fun, and you get to see some of the most creative kids from around the world showing their problem solutions. Judging at a sanctioned Odyssey of the Mind tournament (such as the Vermont state tournament) is a requirement for judging at World Finals. In addition, if you're thinking of offering Odyssey of the Mind in your school, this is a great opportunity to learn a lot about the program quickly.

Please contact Anita Perkins by at sillymom413@hotmail.com or by calling 1-800-805-5422 to let us know whether to expect you at training and whether you're interested in volunteering at World Finals.

Thanks in advance for helping the kids. ■

Colchester Support Staff schedule informational picketing, strike vote

COLCHESTER – The Support Staff unit of the Colchester Education Association, representing more than 100 employees, set up informational picket lines in mid-January to alert their community to a building contract crisis.

The Association issued a news release announcing the informational picket and warning that Support Staff had set January 21 as the date for a strike vote, should their attempts to break the negotiations deadlock fail.

Negotiations between the Colchester School Board and the Support Staff began over a year ago. Despite a projected drop in the school tax rate for the coming year, the School Board's last offer would leave Colchester Support Staff employees with a contract significantly inferior to those of other districts in Chittenden County. The Board's proposal per-

petuates low staff morale, an excessively high turnover rate, and financial inequity between town and school district employees.

Lack of health benefits for school year employees and very high turnover of personnel are the issues behind the contract crisis.

Colchester is the only district in Chittenden County which does not provide health benefits to school year employees. The school board's last proposal makes employees wait four years before getting access to health insurance... and then they only pay 50%. Most school year employees couldn't afford to pay their part of the premium. Town of Colchester employees who work 22.5 to 30 hours per week get 75% health benefits. School district employees who work 32.5 hours during the school year get *no health benefits*.

Turnover is at a crisis level in Colchester. Thirty-seven Support Staff were hired between July 7 and November 11, 2003. Between January and June 2001, 35 Support Staff employees resigned; 69% of those who resigned from January through June 2001 worked directly with students.

The high turnover rate is costly to the district in the area of retraining. And worse, high turnover rate results in an interruption in the services provided to needy students. It is disruptive to parents, teachers, administrators, and other support staff.

Colchester ESP have good reasons to fight for a better contract. We wish them well in their crisis activity.

Brenda Hunt and Peggy Rogers are CEA Co-Presidents. Valerie Visconti is Chief Negotiator. CEA is a merged teacher-support staff Association. ■

Read Across America Plans for Vermont posted at www.nea.org

Essex Jct.

**Date submitted: 12/16/03
9:15:13 AM**

I'm the art teacher for grades K-4 and this year the students will be drawing a page from one of the many great and wonderful Dr. Seuss books. Students are learning basic elements of art, and will use their knowledge and understanding to draw their page. With great hopes the pages will be put together to make a book showing the readings of Dr. Seuss. I hope the book will find its way to our Children's Hospital in Burlington.

Leslie Ann Cobler

Milton Elem. Town School

Jericho

**Date submitted: 12/20/03
7:17:09 PM**

At Jericho Elementary School, we are planning to participate in the NEA's Read Across America campaign. Although we will not be in school on March 2, 2004, we plan to invite high school students to read from their choice of Dr. Seuss's books to our k-4 students on March 3, 2004. This has become an annual event eagerly anticipated by both the high school students and our own elementary students.

Betty Rendino, Librarian

Jericho Elementary School

South Hero

**Date submitted: 1/5/04
7:46:16 AM**

I plan on reading two stories to two different 1st/2nd grade classes and have them make posters of their favorite book/character. They will be working in groups to brainstorm ideas and co-ordinate the themes. There will be "tea" and "green eggs and ham" for snack (hot chocolate and green egg shaped cookies).

Kathi Craig

Folsom Educational Center

FREE Cat Hats!

It's easy for Vermont-NEA members to get a FREE red-striped Cat Hat. Just post your plan to celebrate Read Across America and Dr. Seuss's birthday on the NEA website, and we'll send you a hat.

Here's the address for the Pledge Page:

www.nea.org/readacross/pledge.html



These Vermont-NEA Board Directors are urging all Vermont-NEA members to celebrate Read Across America on March 2, Dr. Seuss's birthday. L-R: Joyce Sullivan of Brattleboro, Bonnie Tuscany of Morrisville, Jay Burnell of Bennington, Pat Vana of Newport (seated), Jeff Isham of Moretown, and Ann Lavery of Richford

Hats Off for Dr. Seuss! NEA's Read Across America urges YOU to wear the Hat of the Cat on March 2

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Whatever hat you usually wear – or even if you've never worn one – the National Education Association's Read Across America has plans for you on March 2, 2004. The day will mark what would have been the 100th birthday of Theodor Geisel, better known to millions as Dr. Seuss, and the plan is to bring the entire nation under one hat – the familiar red and white stovepipe chapeau made famous by the good doctor himself.

Park rangers at Mt. Rushmore, coal miners in West Virginia, showgirls in Las Vegas, and sailors in Virginia – all will be swapping their usual headgear for The Hat that shows their love of reading. On March 2, they will be joining teachers, librarians, education support professionals, kids, and parents and wearing The Hat that illustrates the importance of reading – and honoring the author whose books have taught millions just how much fun it is to read.

NEA President Reg Weaver says: "For the seventh year, NEA is the proud sponsor of the nation's biggest reading party. And it's a party with a purpose – to show young and old alike not only the importance of the written word, but the joy of reading as well. No one better illustrates the pleasure and the power of learning to read than Dr. Seuss."

Among events planned for NEA's Read Across America '04: a reading rodeo in Kansas; a park rangers' read-in at Mt. Rushmore; and a salute to the Cat (and his Hat) by West Virginia coal miners. For a sampling of other happenings, keep an eye on www.nea.org/readacross/.

Since the first celebration of Read Across America in 1998, the event has become a national tradition that annually attracts young and old alike in communities across the nation. Last year more than 45 million adults and children participated in reading events that ranged from green eggs 'n ham break-

fasts and pajama parties to reading extravaganzas featuring politicians, pundits, sports celebrities, and stars of television and movies.

Vermont-NEA members can get a FREE red-striped Cat Hat by posting their Read Across America celebration plans on the NEA website. And members who have a good use for some extra hats can email a request to vtnea@together.net. Here are some of Vermont's great celebration plans from the past:

- ✓ Reading Seuss stories on with firefighters on the local fire truck.
- ✓ Coming back to school in pajamas for birthday cake and a bedtime story.
- ✓ A parade from one school to another with kids waving books and wearing Cat Hats.
- ✓ Unlikely guest readers of Seuss stories, from the Governor to the school custodian.
- ✓ And of course, plenty of servings of Green Eggs and Ham. ■

Linda Berger of Montpelier shares her experience.

National Board Certification: “A right and important pursuit for all teachers”

By Linda Berger, NBCT

When I first heard about National Board Certification, I was wary because I did not believe distant experts could assess and certify local school content and teachers. At worst I believed national certification had the potential to minimize the complexity of our work, and reinforced merit pay's simplistic concept of good and bad teachers. I resisted gathering further information.

Throughout 15 years of teaching I was self-directed, open to change, and confident in my teaching skills. About five years ago, for the first time, I found myself questioning my career. Constant public criticism and questioning of teacher quality made me begin to question whether we, as teachers, were effectively doing our jobs. Although teaching sustained me during treatment for cancer, I found myself questioning my devotion to my work, and wondering if my work added value to the community. All that changed when a coworker anonymously criticized my work. Stung by the criticism, I decided I needed to renew my belief that teaching was a multifac-



Linda Berger has achieved Nation Board Certification for Early Childhood through Young Adulthood/Exceptional Needs Specialist

which could take up to three years to accomplish, was achieved by producing work that demonstrated the standards. State stipends and district funds paid for the entire cost of the process. Instinctively I knew that this was a way to work through my mid-career crisis. This was hands-on, individual, research-based professional development that promoted good teaching practices, solid content, and a com-

pleted.

In November, I learned that I had achieved certification. I had expected certification to be a good professional activity. I had expected to be glad when it was over. As it turns out, this has been the best professional development activity that I continue to work on.

I have discovered internal benefits of having achieved National Board Certification. Now I constantly ask myself: "Does this piece of work meet the standards?" As Maggie Eaton explained it: "You can never go back to the old way of teaching." I have a clear, articulated, understanding of good teaching that supports me. I know that an expanding community of teachers shares the teaching practices that are important to me. I am kind to myself when I fall short of my ideal, because I am confident that my next piece of work will be better. I hold my head higher, and my self-doubts are gone because I have demonstrated to myself that I am an accomplished teacher. Not elite. Not finished. Not perfect. Accomplished.

Our profession has the knowledge to improve instruction. We have the obligation to continuously improve public school education. If the National Board standards were implemented across all grade levels, we would improve learning by all students.

Gaining National Board Certification is an individual endeavor, yet the power of the National Board Standards will come from their collective application. I believe that working toward National Board standards through certification is a right and important pursuit for all teachers.

Linda Berger teaches at Montpelier High School.

“...an expanding community of teachers shares the teaching practices that are important to me”

eted and worthwhile profession, and prove to myself that I was an accomplished teacher.

I attended an informational session about the National Board Certification Process presented by Laurie Lawrence of Vermont Worldclass Teaching Project. I learned that National Board Certification standards of teaching are based on five Core Principles:

- Teachers are committed to students and their learning;
- Teachers are members of a learning community;
- Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from their experience;
- Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning;
- Teachers know their subjects and know how to teach them to students.

National Board Certification,

mon core of standards across all fields of teaching.

I worked on Nation Board Certification July of 2002 through May 2003. The National Board requires four, prompted, portfolio pieces (two of which included videotapes of my instruction) and six assessments. Like most of the most important experiences in my life, this one was all consuming, risky, and exhilarating. I was never neutral about the experience -- I loved and I hated the process.

From January to mid-May I spent nearly every non-working hour on certification. I did not work alone -- I had the support of an ILN course for candidates taught by Laurie. My cohort group, including Vermont-NEA members Eli Rosenberg and Paulette Gagne, and Maggie Eaton, a NBCT mentor, helped me face self-doubt and the mass of work that had to be ac-

Twelve more Vermont-NEA members achieve National Board Certification

MONTPELIER – The total number of nationally certified teachers in Vermont now has reached 65, including 12 Vermont-NEA members who learned in November that they achieved certification. Congratulations to:

Linda Berger of Montpelier, Early Childhood through Young Adulthood/Exceptional Needs Specialist

Allyson Coburn of Blue Mountain, Early Childhood/Generalist

Ronda Curry of Underhill, Early Childhood/Generalist

Diane Davis Villedaire of Harwood, Adolescence and Young Adulthood/Science

Tamie-Jo Dickinson of Champlain Valley Union, Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood/Career and Technical Education

Tricia Griswold of Blue Mountain, Early Adolescence/English Language Arts

Susan Gustafson-Byrne of North Country Union, Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood/World Languages Other than English

Michael Janiszyn of Springfield, Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts

Renee Lamore of North Country Union, Adolescence and Young Adulthood/English Language Arts

Ann Marie Mahar of Rutland, Adolescence and Young Adulthood/Science

Kathleen Nolan of North Country Union, Early Adolescence/Mathematics

Eli Rosenberg of Montpelier, Early Adolescence/Science

To learn more about National Board Certification, go to

www.nbpts.org

Congratulations!

Carol Bick of Williston Central School and **Barbara Barrett Bloom** of Albert D. Lawton School in Essex Junction both received the Vermont School Counselor of the Year award at the Vermont School Counselor Association annual conference.

“Teaching Diversity Without Getting Into Trouble”

MONTPELIER – On May 6, the Vermont Bar Association’s Center for Public Education will host its annual teachers workshop, bringing together lawyers, judges, and educators. Morning sessions will examine the importance of diversity. Speakers will address why teachers should teach diversity, and attention will be paid to racial, gender, sexual preference, socioeconomic, and religious diversity. Panelists will explore ways in which these topics can be broached in the classroom without raising objections from the community.

Afternoon breakout sessions will examine various ways in which law-related education can be implemented. These include mock trials, the Dialogue on Freedom, the Dialogue on *Brown v. Board of Education* and mediation. Demonstrations will be offered of each of these approaches.

For more information log onto www.vtbar.org and click on Center for Public Education. ■

Your Union — Your Voice

Let’s get rolling!

By Tom Walters, Organizer

Welcome to the first installment of *Your Union — Your Voice!* My name is Tom Walters and I am the newly hired Organizer at Vermont-NEA. Until December, I was a music teacher at Mount Mansfield Union High School in Jericho, Vermont. The position of Organizer presents many challenges and though I am excited about my new job, I’m definitely feeling “out of the pot and into the fire”.

My job entails organizing new Associations and merging existing ones. In addition, I will be assisting UniServ Directors and Vermont-NEA staff with issues such as recruitment, bargaining, training and, of course, political advocacy; hence, this column. It is my goal to use this space to inform members of political trends of interest to the education community. Also, perhaps more importantly, I will also use this space to *motivate members to action*.

For instance, one of my first major tasks will be organizing a process where we, as a State-wide Associa-

tion, screen and endorse candidates for State office. That sounds like a big job, but when you break it down into small parts, it’s not bad at all; it might even be fun! I am hoping this is not too much different than organizing a marching band. I figure that if I can get one hundred teenagers to all walk in the same direction and on the same foot, perhaps I can get a few Political Action Committees off on the right foot!

Needless to say, this important task relies upon input from many Association members at the local level. In the coming weeks I will be recruiting several PAC (Political Action Committee) chairs. The PAC chair will organize activity for their area and will be recruiting members for the actual committee. When your PAC chair calls you, please say “YES!” Having just been a teacher, I am acutely aware of the time constraints placed upon teachers and ESP. However, it is vitally important during this election year that we speak with a clear, unified voice to our elected officials. Also, you might be surprised at how stream-



Tom Walters

lined the process is; in most cases it will require only two meetings.

As 2004 is an election year both nationally and in Vermont, the process takes on great importance and urgency. If you are interested in serving in any capacity, please contact me at twalters@vtnea.org immediately. Let’s get rolling!

I look forward to meeting you and working on improving education in Vermont. ■

1/4 page
Castleton ad

ESEA: National Round-Up

Pennsylvania school district sues over “No Child Left Behind”

Proponents of George Bush’s “No Child Left Behind Act” speak glowingly of the law’s intent to help poor and minority students. The Reading School District in Pennsylvania begs to differ. In December, the district became the first in the country to sue its state education department for what it believes are unfair sanctions under the new federal law.

Thirteen of Reading’s 19 elementary, middle and high schools were cited for not meeting Pennsylvania’s state standards set in conformance with NCLB requirements. Seven of the schools were placed on a “warning” list and six were placed on a “school improvement” list, which requires the district to offer students transfer options to other schools.

Reading’s lawsuit argues three main points:

1) The state didn’t offer the required English and math tests in Spanish to students who are not proficient in English. The tests are not expected to be available in Spanish until 2005. (11% of Reading’s students are designated as having limited English pro-

ficiency, and 64% of the district’s student body is Hispanic.)

2) The district is questioning how the state determined that there must be at least 40 students per student “subgroup”—such as low-income and limited English proficiency students—for test scores to be valid. It claims the state has not justified that number.

3) Reading officials also argue that adequate technical and financial assistance has not been forthcoming from the state, as required under the law. Funding for tutoring, for example, has been held up by a state budget impasse.

Reading’s solicitor, Rick Guida, told the Post-Gazette in Pittsburgh that “It’s [NCLB] already starting to cost us money,” as the district has been forced to pay to bus students to other school districts.

Reading Superintendent Melissa Jamula, who strongly supports school accountability measures and high qualifications for teachers, said: ***“There are things contained in the law that just aren’t right and are clearly unfair and clearly inconsistent. We felt an obligation to our students and our schools to file the petition on their behalf.”*** ■

Welcome Sherry Gile to the Vermont-NEA Staff

MONTPELIER – Sherry Gile of Green Mountain-NEA begins a new career this month with Vermont-NEA as the Association's Director of Professional Programs. In her new position, Sherry will:

- ✓ Serve as the chief Vermont-NEA resource on matters of professional development.

- ✓ Oversee the creation and implementation of professional development programs.

- ✓ Advocate for State and local school district fulfillment of their obligations to provide and pay for high quality professional development.

- ✓ Monitor Association advocacy regarding State and federal regulations and other activities addressing teacher and paraprofessional qualifications and professional development.

- ✓ Assist and advise other Vermont-NEA staff in advocating, through collective bargaining and otherwise, on behalf of members regarding educator qualifications and professional development.

- ✓ Coordinate Vermont-NEA activities with those of other organizations engaged in educator professional development.

- ✓ Work with the Vermont-NEA Teaching and Learning Committee.

- ✓ Act as Vermont-NEA liaison to NEA offices and programs related to educator qualifications and professional development.

Clearly, Sherry's new job requires a tremendous amount of work and expertise, and she is champing at the bit: "I have always enjoyed being involved in new educational initiatives that I believe will enhance my professional growth, improve my practice, ultimately supporting student learning," she says, adding: "I viewed this newly created position at Vermont-NEA as an opportunity to support my unionized professional colleagues around the state in our pursuit to meet the challenge of teaching all students. In order for us to be successful in this endeavor we need to attract and then retain teachers to the profession as well as support teachers who are presently teaching, teachers with incredible commitment and expertise, who know what they need for professional development to 'get-the-job-done.'"

Sherry has been a Vermont-NEA member since 1973. As a new teacher, she organized the Richmond-Jericho Teachers' Association, and was a leader in the merger of her elementary Association with the district high school to form Green Mountain-NEA. Sherry served her local as president, grievance rep, and negotiator. Over 30 years, she has become well known and respected in Chittenden County for her Association work.



Sherry Gile, Vermont-NEA Director of Professional Programs

Sherry is also an accomplished educator. A Trinity College graduate, she taught elementary school in Jericho from 1973 until 1999, when she became a collaborating teacher for Chittenden East and then, a teacher of professional development. She was honored as an Outstanding Elementary Teacher in Chittenden East, and was a finalist for Vermont Teacher of the Year in 1995.

Asked if, after 30 successful years as a teacher, she is suffering separation anxiety, Sherry says, "Anxiety? Is that what's causing some of those sleepless nights recently? I will be ending a highly rewarding 30-year career as a classroom teacher. I have 'reported' to the same destination to begin and end each of my days for all 30 years. My car almost drives its self on those dark, moonless mornings. The word comfort comes to mind. I have felt a sense of fulfillment knowing I have positively impacted the lives of many, many children. Separation anxiety? Very Much So! But I know first-hand the Vermont-NEA staff to be a group of caring, collaborative, energetic, 'highly-qualified'

individuals."

Sherry already is setting goals for herself at Vermont-NEA. "One major goal will be to actively listen to our present 10,000 plus Vermont-NEA members to focus on finding creative strategies to serve the leaning needs of all students," she says. "Another goal I have is to increase new teacher retention and satisfaction in the profession of education." Sherry says "maintaining optimism about the future of public education at a time when the demands are so great" is the major challenge for educators.

Sherry is a native Vermonter, born and raised in Stowe. Her husband Dennis retired from IBM having fulfilled a 30-year career. He now works full time for the Town of Richmond. Sherry loves and appreciates her family: "We have two cherished daughters, Veronica and Melinda, who are both Physical Therapists, and we have two wonderful sons-in-law and five adorable grandchildren. (I tell my grandmother stories 'free-of-charge' and on a regular basis.) I feel blessed to have such a supportive family as I embark in this new career." -LBH

Upcoming Association events...

February 1

Deadline for Vermont-NEA/Maida F. Townsend Scholarship Applications

February 2

Vermont-NEA Committee reports due

February 6-7

Vermont-NEA ESEA/NCLB Conference to Defend Public Schools at the Sheraton in South Burlington

February 7

Vermont-NEA Board meets at 3:30 p.m. at the Sheraton

February 9

Deadline for March issue of *Vermont-NEA Today*

March 1

Deadline for nominations for Vermont-NEA Award for Teaching Excellence

Deadline for nominations for Vermont-NEA Human and Civil Rights Award

March 2

Dr. Seuss's birthday

Vermont History Day T-Shirt Design Contest

Each of some 200 Vermont History Day participants will receive a free T-shirt on May 1 at the Vermont History Day competition at Spaulding High School in Barre.

This year, History Day organizers are adding a little more fun by inviting participants to create the T-shirt design. The Vermont History Day staff will pick the winning design from the ideas that participants submit.

The contest entry deadline is Monday, February 16. The winner will have the honor of his or her name printed on the T-shirt at the bottom of the design. Plus, the winner will receive free registration for Vermont History Day and three additional T-shirts to give to family and friends.

Here are some contest rules:

- The design must be in one color
- Designs on paper must be on an 8 1/2" x 11" piece
- A fine-point magic marker makes the thinnest acceptable line
- Designs on computer need to be the same size as the final design
- Computer designs need to be at a resolution of at least 200 DPI

For more rules and information, contact Amy Cunningham at 802-479-8518 ■

Richard F. W. Whittemore History Prize for excellence in teaching

BURLINGTON – Ethan Allen Homestead Museum is looking for an inspired teacher with a love of history. The Whittemore Prize honors the memory of a former Homestead trustee and history teacher who understood the importance of enriching the present through exploration of the past. Recognizing educators who follow in that tradition, the Whittemore Prize carries with it the prestige of an outstanding teacher as well as a \$500 cash award. Those nominated must meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Inspire Vermont students with a passion for exploring the past
- ✓ Be a practicing K-12 teacher (individuals only, no teams)
- ✓ Teach history in any form
- ✓ Teach in a public, private or home school in Vermont

Those submitting nominations should provide a written description of how the candidate excels in leading Vermont students to a discovery of their unique heritage. Emphasize teaching skills, rather than community service. Include at least four letters of recommendation from any of the following: principals, professional colleagues, former students and parents. Do not send any news clippings, photographs, or craft items.

Nominations will be accepted from now until May 15. Information about qualified candidates may be sent to: Ethan Allen Homestead Museum, 1 Ethan Allen Homestead, Suite 2, Burlington, VT 05401, or fax at (802) 865-0661, or e-mail to joyce@ethanallenhomestead.org ■

“Sharing the Best” middle school reading conference

MONTPELIER – Teachers and librarians who work with children in the middle grades are invited to the second annual conference -- “Sharing the Best: Successful Middle School Reading Programs.” This conference, inspired by the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Book Award Program, will be held at the Lake Morey Inn in Fairlee, VT on Friday, May 7, 2004.

The purpose of the conference is: 1) to show the interrelationship between using great books in the classroom and high student achievement, and 2) to show how great books make great readers.

Virginia Euwer Wolff author of such award winning books as *Probably Still Nick Swansen*, *Make Lemonade* and *True Believer*, will deliver the morning keynote.

Michael Sullivan, the author of *Connecting Boys With Books*, will deliver an endnote lecture on techniques to get boys reading. In addition, there will be a wide range of workshops with topics such as using nonfiction trade books in the classroom, reading strategies in the middle school, literature circles and ways to discuss DCF books online.

Co-sponsors for the conference include the Dorothy Canfield Fisher Award Committee, the Friends of the DCF Award, the VT Department of Libraries, the VT Department of Education, the VT Council on Reading, the VT Educational Media Association, the VT PTA and Vermont-NEA.

Registration forms will be available in February. For a registration form, or further information, contact: Grace W. Greene at 802-828-6954; email: grace.greene@dol.state.vt.us ■

Recognize the excellence of a biology teacher in your local

BURLINGTON – Every year, the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT) selects an outstanding biology or life science educator in each of the 50 states, Washington, DC, Puerto Rico, Canada and the overseas territories to receive the **Outstanding Biology Teacher Award (OBTA)**.

Recipients are recognized for outstanding performance in the classroom as well as involvement with their profession, their school and the community. Each recipient receives a pair of precision binoculars from the program sponsor, Prentice Hall, and a microscope from Leica Microsystems, a video flex camera system from Ken-a-Vision, as well as certificates for the OBTA recipient and the recipient’s school. All recipients are recognized during NABT’s National Convention which will be held next fall in Chicago.

All biology/life science educators (grades 7-12) with at least three years public, private or parochial school teaching experience are eligible. NABT membership is not a requirement for consideration, but the major portion of the nominee’s career must have been devoted to the teaching of biology/life science.

To find out more about the program or to nominate an outstanding teacher, contact the Vermont OBTA Director: Judith L. Allard, Burlington High School, 52 Institute Road, Burlington, VT 05401 or email: jallard@bsdvt.org

The deadline for nominations is March 1, 2003. Completed application materials are due to the OBTA Director by May 1, 2003. ■

1/2 page AIG ad