



# TODAY

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## NEA Honors Beth Dutton of Windsor with Human and Civil Rights Award

ORLANDO – Vermont-NEA’s own Beth Dutton, a Government/History and Civics teacher at Windsor High School and former Vermont-NEA Board member, was among 14 individuals from various walks of life honored on July 1 at the National Education Association’s Annual Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner.

The awards honor the achievements of NEA constituents and celebrate the multicultural roots of its members. The awards also serve as reminders of the many challenges the leaders of the human rights struggle faced and the need to continue to push the standard of equal rights for all.

The awards, presented by NEA President Reg Weaver and NEA Executive Director John Wilson, were given to individuals and groups who have expanded educational opportunities for minority students and educators and improved intergroup relations in the public schools.

Dutton received the National Education Association’s prestigious Author – Illustrator Human and Civil Rights Award. This award was established in 1994 to recognize the contributions of those whose graphic and literary creations help students understand the significance of human and civil rights in our daily lives.

Dutton won the award for her widely acknowledged and respected work educating students about one of the most horrific events in world history – the Holocaust.

She created a curriculum known as “Holocaust and Resistance Studies,” based on her 30+ years of Holocaust research, and turned it into a printed and Internet program that has received rave reviews. She made the curriculum available to all in 1997 on the Vermont-NEA website.

Over the years, Dutton’s program has received awards from the Anti-Defamation League, U.S. Holocaust

Memorial Museum, the American Gathering of Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust, and the Jewish Labor Committee.

In 1999, Vermont-NEA recognized Dutton with its Human and Civil Rights Award for her work as an advisor and trainer with the Windsor County Youth Court. She was also the recipient of the HCR award in 1996.

“Throughout the years, Beth has done much to eradicate discrimination,” said Barbara Barbour of the NEA HCR Committee. “As a teacher, she is passing on her passion for justice to her students, like ripples on the water.”

The NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards are presented each year in conjunction with the NEA Representative Assembly, the largest democratic decision-making body in the world. ■

*Beth Dutton (center) posed in May for a group photo with colleagues.*

Photo by Barbara Barbour

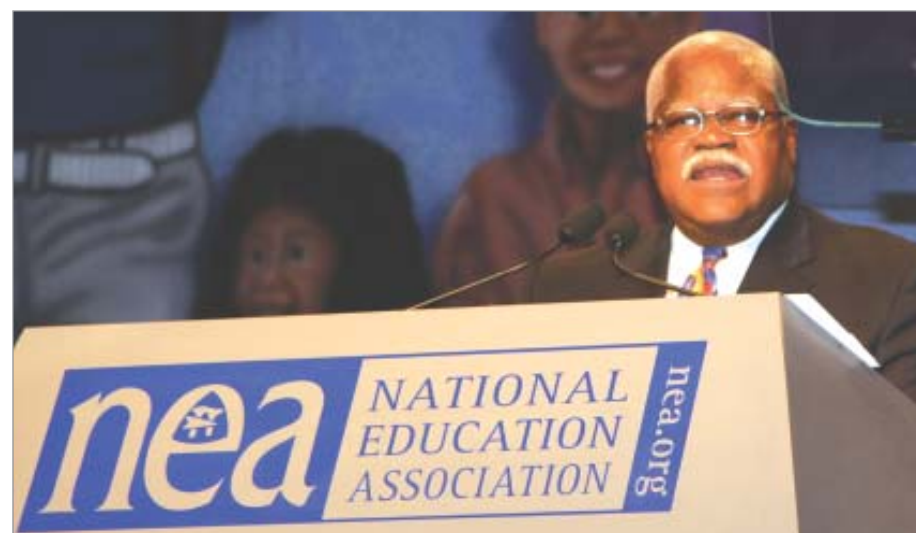


## NEA President: Every Child Has the Basic Right to a Great Public School

ORLANDO – Everyone has a responsibility to protect the basic right of all children to a quality public education, our NEA President Reg Weaver told 9,000 delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly in July. Vermont-NEA’s 18-member delegation was in the crowd.

“There are no more excuses,” said Weaver. “There are no more excuses for schools where the textbooks and technology are as old as the parents of some of the children. There are no more excuses for parents being absent when it comes to not only educating their children, but rearing their children. There are no more excuses for children and students who are not learning. Every American has a shared responsibility to create quality public schools, and no American should tolerate any excuses for why educators aren’t given the tools and resources they need to get the job done.”

Weaver urged educators to remember why they entered the profes-



*NEA President Reg Weaver will address the Vermont-NEA Educators’ Convention on Thursday, October 19.*

sion. “Public education only has room for those who have a passion for teaching and learning. Public education only has room for those who are truly committed. Public education only has room for those who believe that every child can learn and that great public schools are the basic

right of every child.”

Weaver said access to fully-funded pre-kindergarten programs would help at-risk children level the academic playing field and realize the joy of learning at an early age. Such programs, he insisted, would be the foundation on which to move many

children from poverty, ignorance, drugs and fear to a life of achievement and success.

Weaver told delegates that there is no doubt that public education faces challenges. He pointed to cuts pending in Congress that would reduce spending on the already-underfunded No Child Left Behind Act by almost \$500 million, on top of last year’s cut of over \$1 billion. He also cited the one-size-fits-all approach to education promoted in the No Child Left Behind that forces educators to teach to the test, and hinders their ability to cater to student needs.

“NEA members have a responsibility to educate the community about education,” Weaver said. “We have a responsibility to inform them of the role of school boards, state legislators, mayors, the U.S. Congress and why it is important that they make it their personal responsibility to hold each of these individuals as accountable as they do us.” ■

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10 Wheelock Street  
Montpelier, VT 05602-3737  
Telephone: (802) 223-6375  
FAX: (802) 223-1253  
Email: vtnea@together.net  
Website: www.vtnea.org

President  
**Angelo J. Dorta**  
Executive Director  
**Joel D. Cook**  
Communications Director  
**Laurie B. Huse**

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## Legendary Educators, Community Gratitude

It always should be like this:  
A dedicated educator gives years of competent and creative service to students and regularly incorporates local residents, issues, and resources into classroom lessons. A small spark of recognition and appreciation for the educator's accomplished teaching eventually ignites among a few individual colleagues and citizens. The spark steadily grows over the course of a lifetime career and inflames the deepest mutual respect and trust between the educator, co-workers, and the entire town.

I witnessed the culminating event to mark such ideal, decades-long relationships last June. Fittingly, it was a Sunday afternoon *community* reception at Oxbow Union High School and River Bend Career and Technical Center in Bradford. As termed by the Superintendent and a later local newspaper headline, the celebration intended to honor the impending retirements of "three legends," social studies teacher Larry Coffin, building trades instructor Harry McLam, and high school principal Robert Jones. Together, their legendary careers spanned 101 years at Oxbow and River Bend.

Even upon first entering the expansive high school foyer, the gratitude of the school and community for these men was both visible and audible. Three separate tables festooned with personal school photos and memorabilia of each educator were displayed beside congratulatory signs in registers. Coffin's table even included a stack of about a dozen or so older, well-worn lesson plan books loosely bound together with white string, a modest symbol of his 42 years worth of daily decisions about how best to teach his students. Small groups of three, four or five townspeople were scattered among the tables, chatting amiably and offering thanks and good wishes to the men.

Attendees soon gravitated to the very spic-and-span cafeteria, which was hung with colorful ribbons, streamers, and other party decorations. Six large and creamy sheet cakes, bowls of sliced fruit and punch, and various hors d'oeuvres prepared by school staff helped keep conversations lively amidst the crowd of approximately 200 people. Meanwhile, an entertaining video of additional photos of Coffin, McLam, and Jones continuously cycled on a large screen. The viewers were delighted by mid-sixties to early 21<sup>st</sup> century images of milestone school activities and by striking changes to the men's clothing fashions and hair styles wrought by passing time.

The centerpiece of the school and community celebration was an hour-long special program held in the auditorium. The honorees and their

families were accompanied by many friends and well-wishers. Adult and student speakers were carefully selected beforehand to offer their personal accolades, insights, fond remembrances, and good-humored jabs from the podium on behalf of the entire assembly. There's only one word that seemed most apt for the feeling in the room: love.

Two of the offerings were most memorable for me. Students presented Coffin, McLam, and Jones with gifts of specially manufactured bobble-head dolls in the nearly exact like-

*...broad community support for schools and educators is necessary for our students and public schools to thrive. Such synergy depends on our constant efforts to teach students caringly, to strengthen our professional expertise, and to foster strong school-community ties.*

nesses of the three men. A burst of spontaneous hilarity at the uniqueness of the gifts and their facial resemblances engulfed the entire audience! Such a wonderfully unexpected surprise!

Similarly, three musically talented faculty members and a senior student dedicated their moving rendition of a song entitled "Legacies" to the soon-to-be-retirees. The quartet's lead and bass guitars, keyboard, and drum set propelled a soft-rock melody and original lyrics. The same opening and ending lines set the emotional tone:

*"Every kid's a teacher, and every teacher's a kid,*

*And everyone at Oxbow has been touched by what you did.*

*You leave legacies behind you,  
And have given in your own way.  
So we gather here to thank you  
On this beautiful Sunday."*

Each retiring teacher also had their own distinct verse in the song. The words spoke of individual achievements and personalities. But the bridging refrain between each of the customized verses was poignantly identical:

*"You can see their lives through the kids who walk down our hallways.*

*They carry his lessons in the world outside of them always.*

*Some that still live here, some that have moved away.*

*All bring with them things they've heard you say."*

**Larry Coffin**, the 42-year faculty "dean" (and former Vermont-NEA President!) was praised for his tremendous commitment, energy, organizational skills, innovation, and infectious enthusiasm. Social Studies Department Chair Bruce MacLean described him as "the original Energizer Bunny" who "only got better with age." MacLean also held a plaque aloft and announced that it would be

affixed to Coffin's virtually lifelong classroom at Oxbow, henceforth to be formally designated as the Larry Coffin Room.

Coffin's penchant for creating community-based, active student learning experiences was lauded, too. Recent printed retrospectives on his lengthy and distinguished career included mention of his waterproof time capsule vault buried in 2000 near the Oxbow flagpole and to be opened in 2050, his first-in-the-state Voter Preparation course, his use of 60 Bradford area speakers in 1995 to help students better understand the World War II era and the "living history" behind the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the War's end, and his student-led mock trials with adult citizens serving as jury. Several decades of myriad professional distinctions and civic leadership posts round out Larry's impressive biography.

**Harry MacLam** taught and worked successfully with students in his home building construction program to erect 29 Bradford houses during 28 years at River Bend Career and Technical Center. He was acclaimed for his patience, his ability to forge personal connections with his students, and his woodworking courses for adult learners in the community.

**Robert Jones** began his education career as a forestry teacher and guidance counselor at River Bend for 19 years. After a difficult 1993 strike, he literally was coaxed and persuaded into accepting the Oxbow principalship for 12 more years because his colleagues, district officials, and community members knew that students were his first priority and correctly believed that his collaborative spirit, openness to the public, and the respect of peers and residents could re-unify the school. "Where can you find one man who humbly lives his faith each day, gives the credit and praise to others, and will move heaven and earth if it helps the kids?" remarked MacLean.

Like a warm embrace, these ideal relationships epitomize the school-community synergy for which we should continue to strive as the new school year begins. After all, public schools are the heart and soul of our Vermont communities and of our democratic decision-making traditions. Similarly, broad community support for schools and educators is necessary for our students and public schools to thrive. Such synergy depends on our constant efforts to teach students caringly, to strengthen our professional expertise, and to foster strong school-community ties.

Best wishes for a legacy-filled school year inspired by your own work with students, colleagues, and communities around the state...

-- **Angelo J. Dorta, President**

# NEGOTIATIONS

*For decades, Vermont-NEA local Associations have bargained hard -- and successfully -- to increase salaries and improve benefits for educators. Here's how local Associations can stay on course...*

## **Vermont-NEA Bargaining Summit** Training and deliberation for local Association negotiators and other local leaders

**Saturday, September 30, 2006\***  
**8:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., lunch included**  
**DoubleTree Hotel, South Burlington**  
*To register: [www.vtnea.org](http://www.vtnea.org) or 1-800-649-6375 x 111*

Over the past 16 months, Vermont educators have experienced unprecedented events and serious challenges...

- Four teacher strikes with health insurance coverage at the core.
- Sharp opposition to teachers' actions by some community members.



*The picket line in Colchester, October 2005*

Increased pressure to pay a greater share of health insurance premiums.

Looming property tax, education funding and school budget issues. We encourage local Association negotiators (teams preferred) and other local leaders to attend Vermont-NEA's first annual Bargaining Summit. It will be an important opportunity to share information and experiences with fellow Association leaders from throughout the state.

The morning will begin with a panel of teachers from local Associations that recently went on strike: Orleans Central EA in May 2005, Colchester in October 2005, Barre EA in December 2005, and Green Mountain NEA (Chittenden East) in May 2006.

Each participant also may attend two of four sessions being offered to address the issues local Associations must be prepared to deal with as they negotiate. Locals sending at least two participants will be able to get all the training being offered.

Make plans now to send a team from your local to the Summit! No fee. Space is limited. The sessions:

### **Building a Strong Association for Bargaining** **Maintaining Affordable Health Insurance** **Improving Salaries** **Organizing for a Crisis**

\* *The Vermont-NEA Bargaining Summit, an annual meeting, will be held further south next year, in Rutland at the Holiday Inn. The date: Saturday, September 22, 2007.*

## **Good MONDAY Morning!**

On Monday mornings, well-informed Vermont-NEA members receive Vermont-NEA's members-only electronic newsletter, **MONDAY**. They get...

- The latest on local contract negotiations and settlements, crisis buildups, strike votes and success stories.
- Cool information, from new websites and great editorials, to news about colleagues' work lives.
- News briefs about political action, election efforts, and proposed legislation affecting education.
- Professional opportunities, free stuff available for classrooms, and more...

**To subscribe, go to: [www.vtnea.org/e-newsletters.htm](http://www.vtnea.org/e-newsletters.htm)**



## **Wolcott Teachers Settle 3 Years**

The Wolcott Teachers Association, representing 15 Teachers settled: a three-year contract in May 2006, without mediation or fact finding.

The 2006 - 2009 deal calls for new money increases of 6.25% this year, 5.80% in 2007-08, and 5.36% in 2008-09.

The base salaries for the three years of the contract are \$27,518, \$28,683, and \$29,779.

The maximum salary moves to \$50,633, then to \$52,777, to \$54,793 in 2008-09.

In addition to these impressive improvements, teachers will get five paid professional leave days per year. Plus, teachers off scale (last 2 columns) will receive 3.25% in addition to the yearly percent new money increases for teachers on schedule. This means that their total new money increases over the three years of the contract are 9.5%, 9.05% and 8.61%.

Congratulations to Cathy Smythe and Sandy Fiess, Chief Spokeswomen, Trista Hutchins, Christine Edwards, Leslie Stancliff, and Mosie Hill for their work achieving this settlement. Vermont-NEA UniServ Director Jerry Carruba advises the local.

## **Montpelier EA Settles 3 Years**

The Montpelier Education Association, representing 120 teachers, also is advised by UniServ Director Jerry Carruba. MEA reached a three-year contract agreement in June 2006, without mediation or fact finding.

New money increases under the new deal are 4.3%, 4.1%, and 4.2% over three years.

The base salary moves to \$31,911 in 2006-07, \$33,837 in 2007-08, and \$34,445 in 2008-09.

The maximum salary will be \$59,080 this year, \$61,006 in 200-08, and \$62,099 in 2008-09.

In addition, there will be prepayment on coursework. Also:

▪ There will be no change in health insurance; teachers will continue to pay 15% of the premium.

▪ Teachers gain Long Term Disability in years 2 and 3 of the contract.

▪ MEA obtained a 20% increase in professional development money, and an increase in sick day benefits.

The Montpelier School Board and the MEA bargained in good faith and with respect, according to Stuart Russo-Savage, President and Chief Negotiator. These members of the MEA negotiating team deserve recognition, along with Russo-Savage, for achieving an excellent settlement: Don Taylor (Vice President), Kristie Bush (Treasurer), Dave McGraw, Susan Beem, Eli Rosenberg, Barbara Colf, and Bill Burrell.

# Welcome to the 155th Annual Vermont-NEA Educators' Convention

*Where Vermont's Education Community Meets!*

Champlain Valley Exposition Centre  
October 18-19, 2006

*Featuring...*



## A keynote Address by NEA President Reg Weaver

Expo Centre, October 19, 10:30 a.m.  
No registration required, but seats may be reserved by sending an email request to vtnea@together.net

The Woodstock Speakchorus, directed by Harriet Worrell, will open the General Assembly program.



## An Afternoon Session with Youth Violence Expert Dr. James Garbarino, author of *Lost Boys* and *See Jane Hit*

Expo Centre, October 19, 12:00 noon  
Fee: \$50 Vermont-NEA member: \$40  
Register at [www.vtnea.org/garbarino-register\\_online.htm](http://www.vtnea.org/garbarino-register_online.htm)



## A Communications Workshop with National PTA Trainer Deb Walsh

Expo Centre, October 19  
Registration available soon...

## Programs by Subject Area Affiliates...

### Vermont Association of Family and Consumer Sciences

Rubrics and Resources:

Exploring Authentic Assessment, Tools and Curriculum  
Champlain Valley Exposition: Thursday, October 19

Discover what recent Vermont FCS Teachers of the Year prepare for their lessons/students and share strategies with other FCS teachers in your grade level. A session is scheduled for each level (middle school and high school).

The afternoon session focus is on authentic assessment in all subject areas of Family and Consumer Sciences. All sessions continue the work started last year at the Focus Forums and Spring Conference.

### Vermont Art Teachers' Association

The Vermont Art Teacher's Association (VATA) will be meeting on Thursday, October 19th at 10am in downtown Barre at the Studio Place Arts Gallery for a conference that celebrates the art of STONE.

We'll view the show "Rock Solid" at the Gallery, lunch at Sean & Nora's restaurant, a guided tour of the stone masterpieces in Hope Cemetery, and an optional tour of the Rock of Ages quarry.

### Vermont Business Teachers' Association

The Vermont Business Teachers' Association will meet on Friday, November 3, 2006 -- 8:30 a.m./3:00 p.m. -- at the Steak House Restaurant on the Barre-Montpelier Road (RT 302) in Barre.

Presenters will be Kay Charron, assistant director of the division of lifelong learning of the Vermont DOE, John Mayfield, owner of Julio's and Sean & Nora's restaurants, Mike Cinquanti, president of Genium Group, Inc., and Lenae Quillen-Blume, state director Vermont Small Business Development Center.

Representatives from South-Western/Thomson Publishing, Glencoe/McGraw-Hill, and Members Advantage Community Credit Union will have displays at the conference.

A registration form will be included in the fall VBTA newsletter. The cost of the conference is \$35 per person. Dues are \$10. Contact: Nancy Gilbert: gilbertnvt@hotmail.com or gilbertn@wssu.org

### Vermont Council of Teachers of Mathematics

Vermont Council of Teachers of Mathematics will be hosting the ATMNE Fall Conference: "Magic in the Mountains" at the Killington Grand Hotel on Thursday, October 19 and Friday, October 20. Visit the ATMNE website at [www.atmne06.org](http://www.atmne06.org) for program information and online registration.

## Vermont Foreign Language Association

The Vermont Foreign Language Association will be holding its annual convention on Friday, October 20, 2006 at the New England Culinary Institute/Inn at Essex. The theme is "Food for Thought."

Participants will spend the morning in a cooking class - French or Spanish. In the afternoon we will have breakout sessions on teaching the culture of food in the foreign language classroom.

Space is limited. Registration information will go out with the fall VFLA newsletter to all foreign language teachers in Vermont.

Contact: Ruth Ann Dunn, VFLA President, [dunnru@msu.edu](mailto:dunnru@msu.edu)

## Vermont Council for Gifted Education

Scholarships Available for the 2006 New England Conference on Gifted and Talented Education in Rhode Island

The Vermont Council for Gifted Education proudly co-sponsors the 12th Annual New England Conference on Gifted and Talented on October 20 and 21 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Warwick, Rhode Island. The conference is in a different New England state each autumn and was at Killington last year.

The Vermont Council offers two scholarships each year for an educator and a parent to attend. Contact VCGE President Alice Maurer at [amaurer@anwsu.org](mailto:amaurer@anwsu.org) to apply. Members of the Vermont Council receive a discount and the membership fee is \$20. Go to [www.vcge.org](http://www.vcge.org) to join.

Dr. Nicholas Colangelo, the Director of the Belin-Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development and Co-Author of "A Nation Deceived" is the Friday keynote speaker.

Dr. Linda Silverman, Director of the Gifted Development Center and author of "Upside-Down Brilliance: The Visual-Spatial Learner" is the keynote on Saturday.

The annual conference provides an opportunity for parents and educators to hear nationally recognized experts and researchers in the field of gifted education. Over 40 workshops for parents, educators, and students are scheduled including topics such as educational options, social and emotional needs, twice exceptional, home schooling, differentiated instruction, educational testing and more. The conference fees, including meals, are as follows

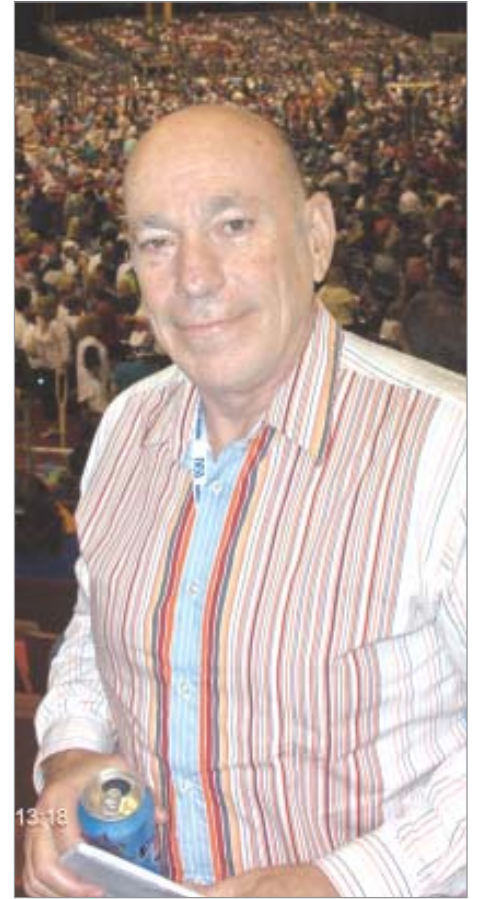
Days	Non Members	Members	Students	Groups of 5+
Friday Only	\$150	\$140	\$90	\$135
Saturday Only	\$120	\$100	\$72	\$108
Friday & Saturday	\$240	\$220	\$144	\$216
Saturday Children's Program	\$50 (for ages 6+ - includes lunch & T-shirt)			

Additional Saturday Robotics Workshops available, including Robotics for Beginners, Gears, Advanced Lego Mindstorms at \$15 per workshop ( must be enrolled in Children's Program).

For more information and to register go to [www.necgt.org](http://www.necgt.org).

# NATIONAL MEETING

Photos by Alison Sylvester



*Bottom left: Vermont delegate Bonnie Tuscany takes in the debate. Top left: Vermont's NEA Board member Joyce Sullivan (in red) on stage before 9,000 RA delegates. Top right: Vermont Retired Delegate Jay Kaplan working on the RA floor. Bottom right: The floor of the NEA RA can't be fit in a single picture.*

## Educators Leave Representative Assembly Fired Up for Major No Child Left Behind Reauthorization Campaign

ORLANDO – Vermont sends one of the smallest delegations to the National Education Association's Representative Assembly – we are 18 in an Assembly of 9,000. Brian Walsh of Essex High School attended this year for the first time. When he walked onto the RA floor, he says he “realized the tremendous power we (the NEA) have to make positive change in society.”

Positive change is exactly what the RA set its sights on accomplishing, change in the so-called No Child Left Behind Act

“Seeing 9,000 educators fired up and fed up with excuses, that's quite

a sight,” said Reg Weaver, NEA president. “They're tired of excuses for lawmakers not backing up the so-called No Child Left Behind Act with adequate resources to get the job done. And they know that children and students are the ones hurting from those excuses. Now they'll head home and help turn their first-hand expertise with these problems into sound education policy.”

The Representative Assembly is the highest decision-making body of the 2.8 million member Association. NEA members elect their peers to represent the best interests of children and students, and shape NEA's policies.

These members represented Vermont: Marie Benway of Windham NE, Jay Burnell of SWVEA, Lisa Champagne of Windsor Southeast, Natasha Eckart of Washington South, Thomas Gallagher of Lamoille UHS, Linda Howard of Twinfield Staff Association, Cynthia Howarth of Windham NE, Jeff Isham of Washington West, Kim Kimler of Addison Central, Alison Sylvester of Green Mountain NEA, Bonnie Tuscany of Morristown, Terri Vest of Twinfield, Brian Walsh of Essex Junction Westford, Eric Weiss of Lamoille Union, Rose Wenzel of Vergennes ESP, and Local Association delegate:

Phil Bailey of Windham SE. Angelo Dorta led the delegation, and NEA Director Joyce Sullivan is a member.

Among the many actions taken at the Representative Assembly, delegates overwhelmingly approved a nationwide grassroots campaign to fundamentally reform the so-called No Child Left Behind Act. The law created a fierce backlash from educators who say its one-size-fits-all standards, obsessive focus on testing and punitive policies hurt students and schools. The law is up for reauthorization by Congress in 2007, and NEA has built a coalition of 86 organizations to push for reform. ■

## Fair Haven Teachers Affirm Affiliation with Vermont-NEA

A resounding 70% of teachers at Fair Haven Union High School voted in May to maintain their affiliation with Vermont-NEA. The election, which was overseen by the American Arbitration Association, was agreed to by the Fair Haven UHS unit of the Addison-Rutland Supervisory Union Education Association when a former Association member circulated a petition calling for disaffiliation. He wrote letters to local newspapers and made media appearances to criticize the Association's positions on public issues and service to members – and to promote his self-published book on education reform.

The vote against disaffiliation was 35-15. Local president Hurley Cavacas deserves much credit and congratulations for organizing a campaign to bring accurate information about the Association to his FHUHS colleagues. Special thanks also must go to members of the Association family in neighboring locals who supported ARSUEA.

President Cavacas was pleased with the response of his local Association members. "I feel that when the faculty looked at all options, they realized what was the most beneficial to the group as a whole," said Cavacas.

Now, he said, "It is business as usual. We are gearing up for a negotiating year... Vermont-NEA truly helped us deal with a difficult situation."

## Letter

### Five Long-Time Barre Town Teachers Retire

I want to let you know that five long-time Association members from Barre Town Middle and Elementary School retired in June after many years of dedicated service to the children and families in Barre Town. They are:

Phil Acebo, 32 years  
Mary Janus, 28 years  
Jim Juknis, 30 years  
Suzy Klinefelter, 29 years  
Anne O'Donnell, 20 years

These years of service do not include additional years taught in other school districts.

We put our hearts and souls into our teaching, and now it's time for new adventures in the next phase of our lives.

Thank you for the support you gave us over the years.

Sincerely,  
**Suzy Klinefelter**  
Barre Town EA

## Viewpoint

### Health Care Reform: This is no time to relax our effort for a comprehensive, publicly financed plan

By Brian Walsh

As teachers, educational support staff, and members of a strong union, we have better health insurance than most Americans. Our Vermont-NEA locals have made health care a priority in contract negotiations. You and I have sacrificed higher pay in order to maintain our health insurance. As you are aware, the struggle to keep health care affordable has led to four Vermont teacher strikes in the last 12 months.

Health care needs to be considered a right for all Americans. Health care is as indispensable as public education, your police and fire departments, our system of roads and highways. These services are all provided by government at public expense.

It is astonishing that the United States, the wealthiest country in the world, is the only western developed nation without national health insurance. It is a crime that the United States government, ruling the wealthiest country in the world, has been able to spend over 400 billion dollars on

the invasion and occupation of Iraq, and yet refuses to provide affordable health care for every American.

It is ridiculous that Americans pay more for their health care than people of any other country, yet the quality of that health care ranks lower than thirtieth in the world. Most Vermonters, and most Vermont legislators, therefore, believe that health care reform is vital.

Vermont House Bill 861- the Catamount Plan - is a step in the right direction. I want to thank Rep. Tracy, Senator Welch, Senator Leddy, Speaker Symington, and everyone else who had a hand in crafting that bill into law. The longest, most difficult journey begins with the first step.

That being said, bill H.861 falls far short of what most Vermonters are calling for. As more and more Americans are unable to afford health insurance, those Vermonters are saying that they want comprehensive health care coverage, and want state government – not private companies – to make that coverage available and affordable.

It is tempting, after all our hard work, to sit back and see what happens. But this is no time to relax and wait for the health care crisis to get worse. This is the time to continue our work and demand the health care that we need and deserve. History shows that government reacts to people's wishes only when people are willing to go out and demand that government do so. Therefore, it is time to support our lawmakers who fought to make health care reform a priority on this year's legislative agenda. It is time to demonstrate to Jim Douglas, or whoever will be governor next year, that we do not want any watered-down, cost-shifting bills signed into law. It is time for Vermonters to demand the health care we need and deserve – a comprehensive, publicly financed plan – and not quit until we get it.

*Brian Walsh teaches social studies at Essex High School. He is president of the Essex Junction Westford Education Association and a member of the Vermont-NEA Board of Directors.*

## South Burlington Teachers Attend National Future Educators Association Conference

By Thomas Stowell

This past February, South Burlington High School teachers and Vermont-NEA members Miki Grady and Tom Stowell attended the seventh annual Future Educators Association Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. The Future Educators Association (formally Future Educators of America) is sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa International and endeavors to provide young people with an opportunity to learn about available careers in the field of education.

This year's conference theme was "Fulfill the Dream...Teach!" The theme, which paid tribute to "Atlanta's rich history and to the ideals of Dr. Martin Luther King," encouraged participants to acknowledge the important role that teachers play in the success of students and the prosperity of our society.

The conference was an opportunity for FEA advisors and club members to come together to "energize and become excited about education." During the conference, participants had an opportunity to attend workshops, speak with invited dignitaries, and network with clubs from around the United States.

"The conference provided us with a wonderful opportunity to network with several clubs in the Northeast. We quickly befriended a club in Reading, Pennsylvania and hope to organize a joint event in the future," said Miki Grady.



*Miki Grady and Tom Stowell attended the seventh annual Future Educators Association Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.*

Miki also commented on how few chapters of FEA there are in the Northeast. With only four chapters of FEA in Vermont and fewer than ten in each of the New England States, high schools are missing out on an opportunity to inspire future educators by not having a club like FEA in their schools. The resources and development opportunities that exist through FEA and PDK are outstand-

ing. I encourage you to contact me should you be interested in chartering a chapter in your school or to learn more about next year's FEA National Conference that will be held in sunny San Diego!

We would like to extend a big thank you to the UVM/SBHS Professional Development Partnership and the Vermont-NEA for their generous sponsorship of conference attendance.

# Something Special for New Teachers...

MONTPELIER -- Vermont-NEA has published something special for local Associations to give to new teachers this year: An attractive desk calendar filled with important information and good advice.

The calendar is intended for teachers entering their first, second, or third years of teaching. The information it contains includes phone numbers and an explanation of the services and protections the Association provides.

The good advice is in checklist form, with a section for each month under headings that cover the gamut, from "Build Professional Relationships" to "Protect Yourself and Your Students." The advice is based on the wisdom of veteran teachers and the experience of Vermont-NEA staff (the majority of whom were teachers themselves). Special thanks to Kathy Buley of South Burlington for her insights in the section on communicating with parents.

In fact, we think the advice is so good that each issue of *Vermont-NEA Today* through the end of the school year will feature one of the sections. Please use it, share it and, by all means send in comments and tips of your own (to LHuse@vtnea.org) for publication in next year's *Desk Calendar for New Teachers*. This is the advice for August:

## Get Ready for the New School Year

Here's good advice about what you should do, even before your students burst (or meander) through your classroom door.

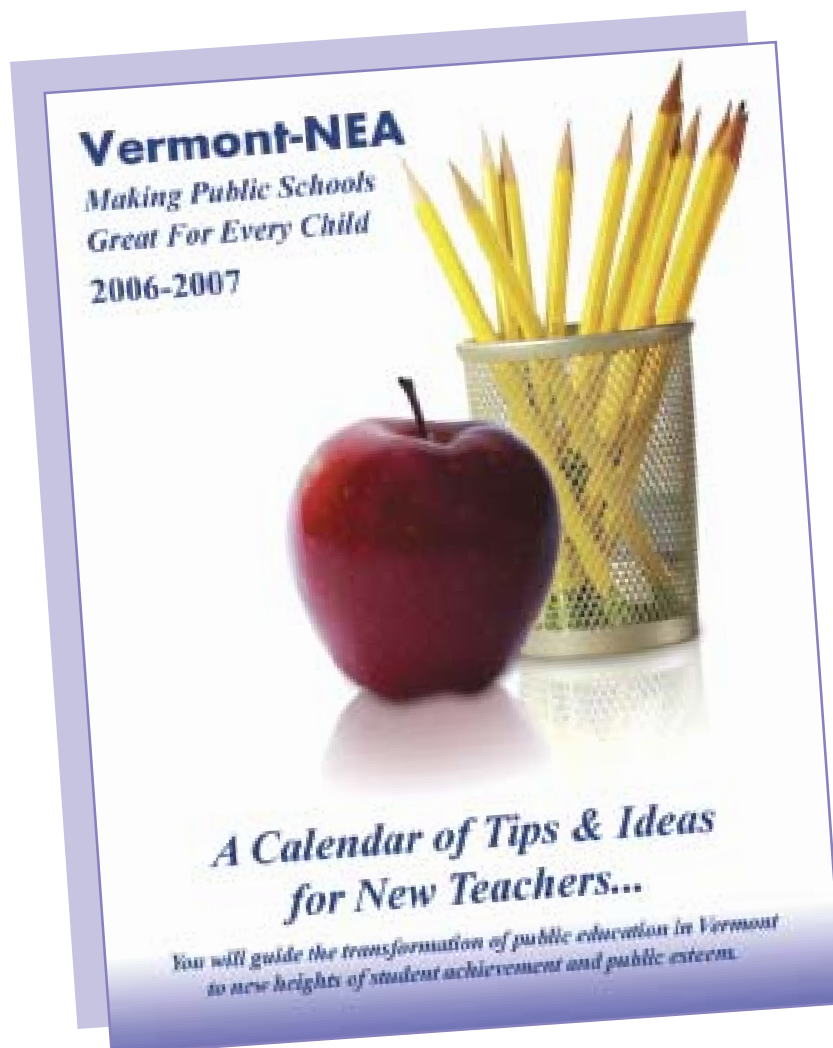
- ✓ **If you were not given a copy of your Master Agreement when you were hired, ask for one and READ IT.** It spells out your salary, benefits, working conditions, and your rights. Remember: It is a document fought for and won by your Local Association colleagues.
- ✓ **Spend time in your classroom or work space before the start of school and make it your own** -- ar-

range the furniture, position your supplies, hang your diploma, and decorate. It is easier to maintain discipline in a classroom that very clearly "belongs" to the teacher.

- ✓ **Stroll around the school to get your bearings** -- find the bathrooms (yours and the students'), faculty room, nurse's office, supply room. Check out the cafeteria, gym, auditorium, library, locker rooms, reception area, administrative offices, boiler room, janitors' closet, all the entrances and exits, and the sports and play areas.
- ✓ **Introduce yourself to everyone you see.** There's a lot to be learned in the relaxed conversations that are possible only when school is not in session. Plus, you may find new friends!
- ✓ **If your school district provides a mentor for new teachers, you are in luck!** Take full advantage of her wisdom. No mentor? Find one! Ask your local Association president, department head, or the principal to suggest

someone. **You need an experienced colleague who will show you the ropes, offer advice, and help out if you meet an obstacle.**

- ✓ **Listen carefully** at your school's opening day in-service program. Find out whether there's a dress code or homework and grading guidelines. **Learn the rules** and emergency procedures. Read the teachers' handbook / school district policy manual, closely.
- ✓ **Get a list of your students.** You are one up if you are familiar with their names and can pronounce them correctly. Knowing a difficult pronunciation is respectful and shows the entire class that you are interested in students. Find out about the special needs of any of your students, and be prepared.
- ✓ **Seek out the leaders of your local Association and JOIN.** As a member of your Local Association family, you will receive professional support and legal protection, plus the camaraderie of fellow educators.



## Seeking 1st - 5th year teachers to write for Vermont-NEA Today

MONTPELIER -- Vermont-NEA Today is looking for two or three new teachers to write columns about their experiences in Vermont public schools.

We would like to run a regular monthly column with alternating authors, providing insight into what it's like to be a new teacher. The columns also will be posted at [www.vtnea.org](http://www.vtnea.org)

in a special area for new teachers.

The column will be by and for new teachers. It will focus on successes and challenges with students, joys and frustrations of the teaching profession, classroom discoveries and surprises, rewards and disappointments, survival tips, union involvement, and any other insights the authors can provide about working in

today's classrooms.

We're looking for teachers in their first five years of teaching or other education professions who have writing experience.

Interested? Please e-mail your resume, with writing samples, by October 1 to: Laurie Huse, Vermont-NEA Communications Director, at [LHuse@vtnea.org](mailto:LHuse@vtnea.org).

## Upcoming Association events...

- August 7**  
Vermont-NEA Membership Seminar - Lyndon State
- August 8**  
Vermont-NEA Membership Seminar - New Haven - Roland's Place
- August 9**  
Vermont-NEA Membership Seminar - Rutland Holiday Inn
- August 10**  
Vermont-NEA Membership Seminar - Montpelier - Vermont-NEA Office
- August 16**  
Bennington Battle Day
- August 21**  
Deadline for Vermont-NEA Convention Booklet
- August 28**  
Deadline for September issue of *Vermont-NEA Today*
- September 18**  
Vermont-NEA Board meets in Montpelier
- September 26**  
Deadline for October issue of *Vermont-NEA Today*



## Members may subscribe online to Vermont-NEA V.O.T.E. Insider

Vermont-NEA members with a particular interest in politics -- and a willingness to get involved -- receive a special e-newsletter: Vermont-NEA V.O.T.E. Insider.

This e-newsletter has great commentaries and the inside track on:

- Public issues and policy.
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- Elections, political action, and more...

To subscribe, go to: [www.vtnea.org/e-newsletters.htm](http://www.vtnea.org/e-newsletters.htm)

## OPPORTUNITIES

# Retiring with Security in an Insecure World 2006

## Vermont-NEA Sponsors Eight Seminars on Retirement Security & Financial Planning

(Open to members only. Recommended for ALL ages.)

Retiring with security is something all of us deserve. We know from experience that planning earlier than later for retirement helps pave the way for a future that is more economically secure. Vermont-NEA wants to help you.

Your Association is sponsoring eight retirement seminars between September 14 and December 7 for members (and their spouses/partners) only.

Each seminar will provide a comprehensive overview of the major components of a smart retirement "roadmap." Here, in brief, are the topics the seminars will cover:

- **Understanding the Teacher Retirement System: Pensions and Health Insurance Benefits**

- **Making the decision on when to take Social Security**

- **Personal Investments and Financial Planning As Your Near Retirement**

- **Long-Term Care Insurance and Protection**

- **NEA-Member Benefits for Retirees**

Each seminar will run from **4:00 until 6:00 p.m.**, with light refreshments provided. Here is the list of seminars:

- **September 14, 2006**  
Holiday Inn, Burlington

- **September 28, 2006**  
Black Bear Tavern, St. Johnsbury

- **October 5, 2006**  
Vermont-NEA, Montpelier

- **October 26, 2006**  
Holiday Inn, Rutland

- **November 9, 2006**  
Hotel Coolidge, White River Junction

- **November 16, 2006**  
Old Foundry, St. Albans

- **November 30, 2006**  
Putney Inn, Putney

- **December 7, 2006**  
West Mountain Inn, Arlington

*These seminars are free but limited to 30 members each, so please don't delay in registering. You can register on-line by going to:*

[www.vtneaprofessionalprograms.org](http://www.vtneaprofessionalprograms.org)

Or contact Ellie McAndrew at Vermont-NEA: 1-800-649-6375 or [emcandrew@vtnea.org](mailto:emcandrew@vtnea.org). When you register, please share with us:

- Your full name
- The school where you work
- Your school and home telephone numbers.
- Your e-mail address would be helpful, too, in case we have to cancel a seminar for any reason.



### Vermont-NEA Website for Professional Development Now Available

MONTPELIER -- Vermont-National Education Association provide opportunities for effective, ongoing professional development and leadership training to fulfill the professional needs of its members to advance the quality of public school teaching.

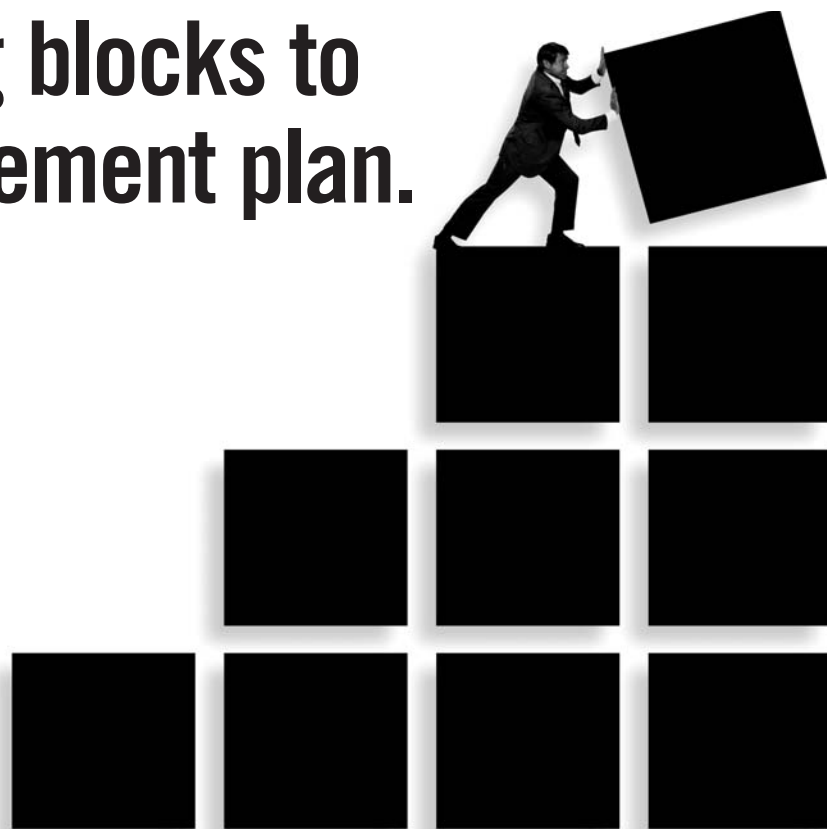
Vermont-NEA actively seeks the guidance and assessment of its members to ensure that its professional development programs are meaningful, are based on their needs, and employ strategies that attract and retain new members.

Vermont-NEA members now may go to a new website -- [www.vtneaprofessionalprograms.org](http://www.vtneaprofessionalprograms.org) -- for professional development needs. You will find:

- A calendar of events and workshops.
- Educator license information.
- School Quality Standards.
- Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators
- Teachers' Tool Kit
- Education Support Professionals
- NEA Student Programs
- Read Across America
- I Can Do It
- Professional Growth
- Mentoring

Questions? Contact Sherry Gile, Vermont-NEA Director of Professional Programs: [sgile@vtnea.org](mailto:sgile@vtnea.org)

## The building blocks to a solid retirement plan.



Building a solid retirement plan takes knowledge and expertise. The NEA Valuebuilder® Program has a long history of helping educational professionals achieve their retirement goals. Call your NEA Valuebuilder representative today.

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*You should carefully consider the investment objectives, risks, and charges and expenses of the mutual funds and variable annuities available under the NEA Valuebuilder Program before investing. You may obtain a prospectus that contains this and other information about the mutual funds and variable annuities by calling our National Service Center at 1-800-888-2461. You should read the prospectus carefully before investing. Investing in variable annuities and mutual funds involves risk and there is no guarantee of investment results.*

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