Last month, Fran Brock, a Burlington High School history teacher who serves as president of the Burlington Education Association, addressed all of her colleagues at the start of school. Please read accompanying article for an update on how BEA is faring in its contract talks.

Good morning! I am Fran Brock, president of the Burlington Education Association. Let me introduce your other officers; please stand: Andrew Styles, vice president; Marcel Girouard, treasurer; and Greg Gillard, secretary.

Also, here are the key committee chairs: Beth Fialko Casey, Crisis Committee, Tim Korman, Grievance and Bob Church, Chief Negotiator. These folks along with their committees and the building representatives are all working for you!

So welcome back!

Primary grade teachers and paraeducators, please stand and stay standing. You have a crucial purpose.

You are the group that introduces youngsters to the wonder and mystery of learning. You are the ones who ignite the candle in each child that will enable them to think.

Middle School teachers and

continued on p. 4

VEHI Board Flips, Changing Default Health Plan

On June 15, a divided VEHI Board of Directors – against Vermont-NEA’s strong advice – voted to replace the default plan it adopted in January.

This action was a serious breach of trust in the VEHI partnership between school districts and union representatives, and one that will very likely complicate bargaining unnecessarily for local school boards and unions over VEHI’s new health plans. It could also, as explained below, increase out-of-pocket costs for affected union teachers and ESP, as well as non-union staff.

Finally, it will have the effect of advancing the bargaining agenda of the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA).

Why a default plan is important

Since VEHI’s current plans close on December 31, 2017, it’s likely that many new collective bargaining agreements will not yet be resolved or in effect by that date.

School districts in that situation will need a way, then, to provide ongoing similar benefits to active employees and their families; hence, a default plan.

The original default system has been replaced by one default plan for all: the VEHI Gold CDHP

Initially, the VEHI Board decided the default plan would be whichever new VEHI plan most closely aligns with the VEHI plan teachers and ESP now have. For the great majority of our members, who are enrolled in the Vermont Health Partnership Plan (VHP), this meant their default plan would have been the VEHI Platinum plan. They would have moved to that plan if their schools did not submit enrollment information for the new plans to VEHI by November 15, 2017.

The new default plan will be the VEHI Gold CDHP, regardless of which current VEHI plan teachers and ESP are getting coverage from in 2017.

Contact your UniServ Director if you have questions about the potential costs of this change and its implications for negotiations and for you and your colleagues’ health benefits.

Districts without a new CBA must provide “similar” health benefits after current plans close

Even with a default plan, before a new bargaining agreement is settled, school boards will be legally obligated to make up the difference in value between their current, disappearing health plans and the default plan.

A collective bargaining agreement that “expires” continues in effect until a new one is settled. If that expired agreement provides health benefits, those benefits, too, must continue until the new CBA goes into effect. Further, if the health benefits in an expired CBA are no longer available, the employer remains obligated to provide benefits that are similar.

“Similar” in this context generally means benefits of approximately the same value to employees. None of the 2018 VEHI plans offers benefits that are sufficiently similar to what school districts generally provide now, and that could mean your school district may be obligated to supplement what the new VEHI plans do offer.

Cost-sharing implications of the change to the Gold CDHP

Health insurance plans have out-of-pocket costs (OOPs – co-payments, deductibles, and co-insurance).

Deductibles are amounts that must be paid for health care by you, the teacher or ESP subscriber, before VEHI helps you pay ongoing claims subject to OOP costs.

Co-insurance is that post-deductible “help” from VEHI. Essentially, it’s a sharing of post-deductible costs – you pay 20%, VEHI pays 80%, up to your out-of-pocket maximum. Having co-insurance support as soon as possible after satisfying a deductible obligation is important to teachers and ESP with high medical needs or who struggle to make ends meet. It’s a vital cost-relief mechanism.

Unfortunately, switching to the Gold CDHP as a default plan means teachers and ESP may bear heavier out-of-pocket charges before VEHI is obligated to pay co-insurance.

Here’s why. The Gold CDHP is an aggregate deductible plan, which means teachers and ESP who get medical care, especially those with two-person, family, or parent/child[ren] coverage, will have to pay a higher amount in deductibles before they receive co-insurance

continued on p. 5
I know, I know. The summer has gone by faster than ever! The “to do” list of projects may not have been completed and those trips to the beach and mountains, or to visit friends and relatives, were far too short. By now you are gearing up for a new and exciting school year.

There is something so special about the start of a school year. New students, new learning, new opportunities and, new colleagues add to the anticipation of a productive year. In spite of the increasing challenges you face with federal, state, and district mandates, your focus will be on your students. It is the students who make your job so rewarding. There is never a dull moment when kids are involved, that’s for sure! No matter their academic prowess, socioeconomic status, sexual identification, religion or race your students know that you care about each and every one of them as individuals with great promise. You may make the difference for a student and most likely for several students.

While you are doing your job in your school, Vermont-NEA is working hard in Montpelier to support you. There are many issues at the local, state, and national levels that need the attention of our staff. We know that during the school year your primary focus is on your students and their success. That is exactly where your energy should be spent. But, in order to approach your work as a professional, you know that you need to pay attention to what is going on around you. We will keep you informed when issues that demand your attention surface.

- This year, almost every collective bargaining agreement will be up for negotiations. This is unusual, but not surprising. Health insurance continues to be a major challenge for everyone. Changes in VEHI and continued problems with Vermont Health Connect are our real reality. Your Unions directors are working diligently to provide you with up-to-date, pertinent information.

- Now that ESEA (No Child Left Behind) has been reauthorized, Vermont is contending with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Our Agency of Education is working hard to minimize any adverse changes that may occur when Vermont complies with ESSA. If you are interested in learning about and/or participating in the ESSA process, you may find information on the NEA website, www.nea.org or the Vermont Agency of Education website, http://education.vermont.gov. There are many decision points in the law that require educator input as the Vermont plan is developed. The plan may be the law for the next couple of decades, so it is important that educators get their voices heard. Call me (800-649-6375) with any questions.

- Our Professional Programs Department has been busy all summer with many professional offerings from a class on student learning objectives to a conference on childhood trauma. This fall, mentoring programs, National Board Certification courses, and new teacher trainings are just some of what Vermont-NEA offers for both teachers and ESP alike. Check out the offerings for this school year on our website, www.vtnea.org.

- Staff and student safety continue to be on Vermont-NEA's front burner. We are helping local associations to take action and demand support from their school administrators. This issue is not going away and if we want our students and the adults around them to feel safe in school, something must be done, now.

- Institutional racism is a national problem and Vermont is no exception. Vermont-NEA is taking the lead to address institutional racism in our schools with an ambitious goal to eradicate it. Our task force (made up of educators, parents, and community groups) will develop a long range plan. If you would like to serve as a contact in your school, please let me know.

- It is an election year, and an exciting one at that! Bernie did us proud and I was thrilled to be in Philadelphia with him in July. He made it very clear that it is critical that we participate in the election this November and vote for candidates up and down the ballot. Our statewide elections will result in many changes in Montpelier. Contact Vermont-NEA if you are interested in helping with a campaign.

Thank you all for the important work you do for your students, public education, and your communities. Remember, you are why our local public schools are Vermont’s most important resource!
10 Must-Haves for New Teachers

By Stephanie Richardson; Reprinted from NEA Today

Disclaimer: I'm not being paid to say nice things about any of these products, although that would be pretty cool. I just love them.

1. Student Supplies Center

Don't fight your kiddos to get a hold of a stapler or a three-hole punch. Get two sets and create a student supplies center. Mine is right in the front of my classroom and includes scissors, a tape dispenser, glue sticks, a stapler, a three-hole punch, and drawers with loose-leaf paper, rulers, black permanent markers, and red ink pens. I try to get supplies that look different from my own. On Day One I make it clear that these supplies are theirs to use. The supplies on my desk are not. Helpful hint: Don't go cheap on your stapler or your three-hole punch.

2. Pencils and Pens

Before the year begins, decide what you will do when students don't bring their materials. Usually, I only have a problem with kids showing up without a pencil or pen. Many of them (especially the boys, it seems) keep pencils in their pockets and lose them throughout the day. You could keep your pens and pencils in your student supplies center for easy student access, but be prepared to spend a lot of money replacing those items. You could also tell a student without supplies "tough cookies."

But this creates two possible outcomes: Either they will hound the other students incessantly every single day to borrow a pencil, which is annoying, disruptive, and builds bad blood, or they might shrug their shoulders.

This creates a bigger problem: a student who has chosen to sit and do nothing. To avoid those two scenarios, I do a collateral system in my class. I'm happy to loan a kid a pencil or a pen, but I want their cell phone or something else that they hold dear (no stinky shoes, thank you!)

3. A Calendar for Student Reference

I like to keep a monthly calendar in my classroom with school events, classroom events, etc. I even include our units of study, due dates, test dates—those kinds of things.

It helps everyone. This is one of three classroom calendars. I also have one on my desk for personal information and a "sanity saver" calendar for class planning purposes.

4. Trashcans...Not One...Not Two...But Three

Prevent students from making a big trip across the classroom to throw away their chewing gum and stopping at three friends' desks along the way.

5. SORTKwik Fingertip Moistener

Teachers handle a lot of papers, usually papers that kids handled first. How often are your fingertips so dry that you can't get a grip on paper? for me, that used to be all of the time. Then I noticed just how often I was casually licking my fingertips before distributing or flipping through papers. YUCK! I picked up a SORTKwik last year, it's a must-have!

6. A Sanity Saver! Or Something Like It Anyway

Make sure you have a paper grade book and attendance record that fit your needs. Many times last year there was a dispute about student attendance and I was happy to have two records: the digital record sent to the office daily and my personal paper record.

7. A Homework Landing Point

Figure out your homework collection system and keep it. I'm a big fan of those little plastic trays, but everyone has their own style. You do not want that gut-wrenching "oh crap I just lost that student's homework assignment and of course it's that student" feeling.

Personally, I don't like to collect student work because it could get lost from Point A to Point B. Instead, just have the students turn in their homework at Point B. Then, the responsibility is all on them.

8. An Information Center

I have a bulletin board dedicated to classroom rules, procedures, consequences, fire drill maps, dress code rules, and everything in between. Posting these things is a school mandate, but I like having all of the information together in one spot. The students like it, too.

9. An Absent Work Something

I love my absent binder! It's the simplest, most effective absent work system that I have ever used. Whatever you decide to use, every student should know where to find his or her absent work, missed assignments, etc. I keep mine with my student supplies center. Its location should be a place your students see every day.

10. A Variety of Storage Solutions

The amount of stuff that accumulates in a classroom is amazing. Without storage, things can start looking really crazy, really fast. I use little plastic drawers for my copies and extra paper, baskets for scissors and glue, small buckets for pencils, pens, and highlighters, trays for homework, art boxes for colored pencils and markers, and coat hangers with clips on them for the poster board.

Stephanie Richardson is a fifth-year English teacher and theater director at North Harrison High School in Ramsey, Ind. She shares her classroom adventures and dishes out unsolicited teaching advice punctuated with funny gifs at eatwriteteach.com.

The one thing she wishes somebody had told her before she began her teaching career? That you do not have to give homework every single night to qualify as a great teacher.
Let’s Do This: Together We Educate Vermont’s Kids

from p. 1

paraeducators, please stand: You too have a crucial purpose. First of all, you are working with young people as they enter that dark and confused period of adolescence. You guide them through the frightening changes that confront each young person at this stage of human life. And while you offer guidance, you continue to nurture that flame in each student that excites the skills of questioning and thinking.

Okay, High School and Tech Center teachers and paraeducators. Please stand: Of course your purpose is crucial, too. You continue guiding students through the cataracts and rapid of adolescence. And you continue the work started in kindergarten, fanning those flames of wonder and query. But you also work with students as they prepare for the so-called “real world.” You are the final gate where young adults demonstrate that they have figured out how to learn what they don’t know; how to think through problems they will confront as they move out and into the community.

Everyone who works in the schools with the students should be standing, including guidance counselors, school nurses, and other school-based specialists.

Now is everyone standing? Good. Look round and realize that we are a team. We are in this together. We all are dedicated to teaching children to be independent, critical and creative thinkers. And know that we can depend on each other when we need help, when we have ideas and strategies worth sharing, and even when we might need to come undone. Okay. Give your neighbor a high five, and take your seat.

What is important for us all to remember is that we know what we are doing and we all share that common goal of teaching our young people to think. It is as the philosopher/mathematician Bertrand Russell once said:

“When you want to teach children to think, you begin by treating them seriously when they are little, giving them responsibilities, talking to them candidly, providing privacy and solitude for them, and making them readers and thinkers of significant thoughts from the beginning. That’s if you want to teach them to think.”

That’s what we do and we do it very well. Don’t let anyone tell you differently. As we open our classrooms this week, we will look out on young people all of whom can and will learn to think! And we will be ready to guide, nudge, prod and humor our students through the sometime arduous challenge of learning to read, write and problem solve.

I ask that you ignore those who claim that public education is dead. As public school educators, we are committed to providing all students the opportunity to get a challenging and rich education. The greatness of public schools is the ability to educate all students so all students are prepared to pursue their dreams and to participate fully in our community. Those who suggest that public schools are dead are wrong.

And those who suggest that they have quick fixes for our teaching that will educate students faster and more efficiently should be greeted with a healthy dose of doubt. Learning takes time and focus. Current research shows that learning takes perseverance and grit. Curiously, Horace Mann noted in the late 19th century: “Teachers teach because they care. Teaching young people is what they do best. It requires long hours, patience, and care.”

So as we start this new year, don’t let anyone rush you. Work with students at a pace that will insure that your teaching enables students to sincerely and deeply learn those skills of reading, writing and problem-solving.

Teachers -- you are well-trained, well-educated and well-equipped to play your role in the education of each student. As a faculty, we have and will continue to light and fan that flame that empowers each student to learn how to think. Consider the words of that courageous young Pakistani activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai (Mel aice yosafzai): “One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world.”

Stay focused on what you all do best: teach! Okay! Let’s do this!

BEA Frustrated at Board’s Path to Disruption

BURLINGTON -- The city’s teachers condemned the chair and vice-chair of the Burlington School Board for seeming to choose disruption instead of negotiation with their public threats of impositions and strikes.

“It is disheartening to see the board throw around terms like ‘imposition’ and ‘strike’ when the report of a neutral fact-finder gives both sides a very clear path to a contract agreement,” said Fran Brock, a Burlington High School history teacher who serves as the president of the Burlington Education Association. “At a time when our top priority as educators is giving the city’s students the best education we can, it’s distressing to see the board prefer discord to compromise.”

The report was given to the board and the association ten days ago. A mediation session last week saw the teachers’ make many compromises, while the board, unfortunately, preferred to walk away without reaching a settlement.

“With its divisive public rhetoric – coupled with budgeting decisions this year that hurt our city’s students – the board seems intent on disrupting over four decades of collective bargaining that has served the city’s students, parents and residents well,” Brock said. “We implore the board to work with us rather than try and gain points in the media. It’s time for them to get back to the table, and reach a settlement.”

On Sept. 1, the teachers began working without a contract -- and without any definite idea on whether the board would change course and concentrate on settling instead of grandstanding.

Brock pointed out that the teachers have compromised, saying the fact-finding report offers the best chance at a settlement. The two parties were expected to meet again after press time. For updates, please see vtnea.org.
Your Union

VSBA Helps Derail VEHI Default Plans

from p. 1

support from VEHI.
If you have single coverage on the Gold CDHP, you must first incur $1,800 in deductible costs before VEHI pays its share of co-insurance for ongoing care for which there is a charge. If you have two-person, family and parent/child(ren) coverage, that amount is $3,600.

Currently, most teachers and ESP are enrolled in VEHI’s Vermont Health Partnership (VHP) and are accustomed to paying for most medical services out of pocket with co-payments – modest, fixed-dollar amounts – rather than with deductibles and co-insurance.

Like the other new VEHI plans, Gold CDHP offers preventive services at no out-of-pocket cost, and, unlike the VEHI Platinum and Gold (non-CDHP) plans, it offers access to wellness drugs at no charge to employees. What it doesn’t do, because of its aggregate deductible structure, is provide co-insurance support from VEHI at lower deductible amounts, like the Platinum or Gold Plans, which have stacked deductibles.

The Gold CDHP’s monthly premiums are lower than the VEHI Platinum and Gold Plans, but there are no medical or Rx services paid for with co-payments, as there are in the VEHI Platinum or Gold Plans. Every medical service and prescription in the Gold CDHP for which there is a charge is tied to the plan’s deductibles, which raises the risk of teachers and ESP incurring higher out-of-pocket costs during a default period.

We know this is complicated, particularly the differences between stacked and aggregate deductibles, so if you have questions or concerns about how the Gold CDHP or the three other new VEHI plans are structured in respect to premiums and OOP costs, contact Mark Hage, Vermont-NEA’s Director of Benefit Programs, or your UniServ Director.

Who voted for this change – and who voted against it

The three school board representatives -- Tracy Wend, Elizabeth Fitzgerald, and Martha Gagner -- wanted the new default plan and voted for it.

We, the two Vermont-NEA representatives on the VEHI Board, voted against it. We did so because it will:

- make reaching timely settlements in 2017 even harder for both local Associations and their school boards;
- expose many teachers and ESP (plus non-union staff), depending on their medical situations, to financial hardship; and
- subject some school boards to otherwise unnecessary unfair labor practice charges before the Labor Relations Board, with related costs and delays.

We also cast our votes in opposition not only because we believe the VEHI Gold CDHP is potentially harmful to school employees and local school boards, but because it is a key element in the bargaining playbook of the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA).

The Gold CDHP & VSBA’s Bargaining Agenda

For more than 20 years, the exclusive focus of VEHI was the quality of insurance products and wellness programs it would make available to school districts and their employees. It never engaged in discussions about collective bargaining. That, sadly, has changed.

To make matters worse, the VEHI Gold CDHP is the same plan to which the Vermont School Boards Association is urging school boards to “peg” their premium contributions during bargaining. This past spring, in workshops for school board members, VSBA identified the following bargaining objectives during the VEHI transition as “essential” (this is not the full list):

- Do take advantage of this opportunity to make meaningful changes in how your district and its employees pay for health insurance. Insist the employees have greater “skin in the game” when it comes to utilization and spending; at a minimum, contributing no less than 20% of premium costs.
- Do peg the employer dollar contribution to the Gold CDHP (emphasis added) plan price… never to the VEHI Platinum Price, and never greater than 80% of the premium cost.
- Do consider having different premium contribution sharing levels for the employee, a two-person plan and a family plan. For example: The employer will contribute dollars equal to 80% of the premium cost for the employee only, 75% for a two-person plan and 70% toward a family plan.

As you can see, the Gold CDHP is part of VSBA’s aggressive, cost-shifting strategy, which will not only hurt teachers, ESP, and their families, but create unnecessary obstacles for local school boards and unions trying to reach settlements consistent with VEHI’s transition deadlines.

What is the effect?

To sum up:

- If local negotiations are not resolved in time for schools to submit plan enrollment information to VEHI by November 15, 2017, affected employees will see their health coverage move from their current, disappearing plan to the Gold CDHP default plan, and they will remain in it as a group until their district’s next open enrollment period (July 1, 2018, or January 1, 2019, in most cases).
- The differences in costs between the VEHI plans that are closing and the new plans, which school boards are obligated to make up, could be substantially greater as a result of the Gold CDHP being selected as the default plan.

- We anticipate multiple school boards will not be sufficiently aware of their legal obligation to provide health benefits at similar value during the default period, and that will result in Vermont NEA having to pursue multiple charges of unfair labor practices before the Labor Relations Board.

What comes next?

Vermont-NEA will be by your side every step of the way in this difficult transition:

1. UniServ Directors will explain all of this to local leaders and members.
2. UniServ Directors will work with local Associations to prepare for the start of negotiations this fall, and assist all local unions for the duration until the transition to VEHI new health plans is completed.
3. We will continue to advocate consistently for your interests on the VEHI Board, despite being in the minority, and will make recommendations to the Board in the near future on how it can operate in a more balanced fashion to the benefit of all.
4. Mark Hage, your Director of Benefit Programs and a VEHI Trust Manager, will provide you with transition information and guidance on the new VEHI plans and health care spending accounts. You can contact Mark at mharga@vtnea.org.

Our union has faced tough times and opposition before, and, for this upcoming cycle of negotiations, we will respond to all bargaining challenges with preparation, solidarity and resolve.

— This article was written by Joel Cook and Martha Allen

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Board Backs Minter, Zuckerman for Top 2 Spots

The Vermont-NEA Board of Directors last month made recommendations in the governor’s and lieutenant governor’s races after the primary narrowed the field in both contests. The board did not weigh in those primaries.

After his win over Rep. Keshia Ram, Sen. David Zuckerman sat down with the board for an interview (his Republican opponent, former State Senator and Auditor Randy Brock, also talked to the board). The board chose to recommend Zuckerman.

In the governor’s race, Democrat Sue Minter also met with the board, in addition to participating in the first general election debate sponsored by Vermont-NEA. Her Republican opponent, Lt. Gov. Phil Scott, was at the debate, but declined an interview with the board because of a scheduling conflict. The board chose to back Minter.

Below are the releases sent to the press announcing the recommendations.

**MONTPELIER (Aug. 31) – Sue Minter will be a governor who will deliver a better future for Vermont’s students, schools, and communities, according to the board of the state’s largest union.**

“Whether it’s her steadfast support of our local public schools, her commitment to enact more family-friendly programs, or her pledge to build a vibrant economy for all Vermonters, Sue Minter will be a governor to move our state forward,” said Martha Allen, a K-12 librarian from Canaan who serves as Vermont-NEA president. “We are proud to stand with Sue as she embarks on making this great state even better.”

Vermont-NEA’s board made its decision to back Minter after Minter completed a several-step recommendation process and delivered a strong debate performance. Both major party candidates for governor were asked to complete a questionnaire; both were invited to an interview with the board; and both participated in a live, professionally moderated debate on Aug. 22.

While both candidates appeared in the debate and completed questionnaires, only Minter participated in the interview with the board.

“I am honored to have the support of the state’s largest union,” said Minter. “A core mission of my administration will be to support Vermont’s best-in-the-nation education system to ensure that the next generation of Vermonters has the best possible chance to succeed. That is why I will work to expand early childhood education and keep my Vermont Promise to provide two years of tuition-free education at Community College of Vermont and Vermont Technical College. As governor, I look forward to working with our teachers and education support professionals to ensure that every Vermont student has a bright future.”

According to Allen, Minter’s advocacy on behalf of children, schools, and working families stands out. She also said Minter’s support of paid family leave, a higher minimum wage, making sure Vermonters have access to affordable health care, teachers’ right to strike, and of unions is crucial to the state’s economic future.

“We are certain that Sue’s vision for Vermont is one that brings great promise,” Allen said. “We look forward to many years of working together on behalf of the state we all love. Sue’s leadership will prompt all of us to do the work we need to do in ensuring that Vermont remains the best place to live, work, and raise a family.”

**MONTPELIER (Aug. 18) – The board of directors of the state’s largest union today announced its recommendation of Sen. David Zuckerman for lieutenant governor, saying he will advocate for the state’s students, schools and working families.**

“Throughout his long career in public service, Sen. Zuckerman has kept the needs of working Vermonters first,” said Martha Allen, a K-12 librarian from Canaan who serves as Vermont-NEA’s president. “We have always admired his principled approach. Whether it’s ensuring that all children get an outstanding public education or insisting that working men and women are treated fairly, David is consistent in his approach while never giving up the fight.”

Zuckerman, a Hinesburg organic farmer, was pleased to earn the board’s recommendation. “I have long respected and admired the work Vermont-NEA’s educators do every single day in our local classrooms,” Zuckerman said. “I am honored to have their backing, and will continue to fight for working people, for students, and for unions as lieutenant governor.”

The board of directors invited the two major party candidates to an interview, and also asked each candidate to fill out a questionnaire on issues important to Vermont’s students and educators.

Both Zuckerman and his Republican counterpart, Randy Brock, participated in the recommendation process. Both were interviewed by the board last week.

“We appreciated Randy’s participation in our process, and thank him for taking the time to meet with us,” Allen said.

“He, like David, has strong and consistent views on issues confronting students, schools and working people, and he was gracious enough to share those with us. In the end, David’s views are more in line with our own.”

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**Get Ready for Fall District Meetings**

If it’s fall, then it’s time for Vermont-NEA’s Fall District Meetings. These two-hour evenings – all the meetings run from 5 to 7 pm and include dinner – are a great way to get the low-down on what your union will prioritize in the coming year. It’s also a great chance for you to let us know what’s on your mind. To register, please visit vtnea.org/fallmeetings2016 or contact Executive Assistant Kristie Ferguson (kferguson@vtnea.org) at HQ.

- **Central Vermont** – October 6, Capitol Plaza, Montpelier
- **Upper Valley** – October 19, Hotel Coolidge, White River Jct.
- **Chittenden and Northwestern Vermont (combined)** – October 26, Hampton Inn, Colchester
- **Northeast Kingdom** – November 2, Lyndon State College, Lyndon
- **Addison-Rutland** – November 17, Brandon Inn, Brandon
- **Southern Vermont TBD**
400 Turn Out for Vermont-NEA’s Governor Debate

RANDOLPH – Major party gubernatorial candidates Sue Minter and Phil Scott sparred before 400 people at the Chandler Music Hall Aug. 22 in the first post-primary debate in a match televised live on Vermont-PBS.

“My fellow members and I are very proud to have sponsored the debate because it gave all Vermonters a chance to hear directly from the candidates on a range of issues we face as a state,” said Martha Allen, a K-12 librarian from Canaan who serves as the union’s president. “It was especially gratifying to see so many people turn out in person on a beautiful late summer evening.”

While underwritten by the state’s largest union, the debate was independently moderated by two journalists: Peter Hirschfeld of Vermont Public Radio and Lola Duffort of the Rutland Herald. They were given complete editorial control, and their questions were not shared with Vermont-NEA or the campaigns in advance. Audience members were able to submit questions as well, and the candidates had a chance to query each other.

“What is striking to me is the difference in tone here in Vermont relative to the political discourse around the country,” Allen said. “While each candidate offered different approaches to many issues, the conversation on stage was civil, dignified and polite.”

Also striking, according to observers, was the general support for collective bargaining and an unwillingness to wade into the culture wars.

Both candidates clearly support the rights of teachers and other working people to form unions and collectively bargain. Both candidates, when asked whether they would ever ask the VSEA to open contracts to renegotiation prior to expiration, both said no. Scott was clear: he said a contract is a promise that cannot be broken.

Both candidates were also adamant that they would not sign a bill that would outlaw teachers’ strikes.

On the culture war front, both candidates said they support allowing transgendered people to use the bathroom of the gender they identify with; Scott surprised many with his one word answer that sets him apart from almost all other GOP gubernatorial candidates across America: “Yes.”

The crowd – comprised of members of Vermont-NEA and other unions, supporters of both candidates and the general public – was enthusiastic and attentive. Moderators at times had to remind them they were on live television to curtail the applause and cheers.

The debate was the second gubernatorial contest sponsored by the union at the Chandler Music Hall in the last 10 years; the last debate featured Gov. James Douglas, then-Speaker of the House Gaye Symington and now state Sen. Anthony Pollina.
4 Members Snag $10K Math, Science Awards

Four members were honored by President Obama for excellence in science and math recently. The Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science were given to more than 200 teachers around the country. While honoring excellent teaching and understanding of their subjects, the awards also carry a $10,000 prize for recipients to use at their discretion.

Katherine McCann, a U32 High School Association member who teaches math; Mary Louise McLaughlin, a member of the Barre Area Education Association who teaches science; Lisa Marks, a member of the Ludlow EA and science teacher at Ludlow Elementary School; and Laura Botte-Fretz, a Burlington EA member and math teacher at Edmunds Middle School were saluted by President Obama at a White House Ceremony Sept. 8.

“The recipients of this award are integral to ensuring our students are equipped with critical thinking and problem-solving skills that are vital to our Nation’s success,” President Obama said. “As the United States continues to lead the way in the innovation that is shaping our future, these excellent teachers are preparing students from all corners of the country with the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics skills that help keep us on the cutting-edge.”

Vermont-NEA President Martha Allen praised the winners. “I hope all of my fellow members join me in congratulating Katherine, Mary Louise, Lisa and Laura for their hard work on behalf of Vermont’s students,” she said. “It is gratifying to see national recognition for their hard work.”

President Obama and his Administration have taken significant steps to strengthen education in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields in order to fully harness the promise our Nation’s Students. The President’s Educate to Innovate campaign, launched in November 2009, has resulted in more than $1 billion in private investment for improving K-12 STEM education. Additionally, in 2011, the President set an ambitious goal to put 100,000 additional excellent STEM teachers in America’s classrooms by 2021. Thanks to the work of more than 280 organizations, 30,000 new STEM teachers have already been trained, and resources are in place to train an additional 70,000 STEM teachers by 2021.

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Burlington EA's Beth Fialko Casey is honored at Vermont-NEA's Leadership Conference.