

## BTA OFFICERS:

- President: Kim Atwell
- Vice President: Elizabeth Hanrahan
- Treasurer: Jeff Matus
- Secretary: Paul Tetrault

This newsletter was edited by Dawn Clemens. All articles were written by her unless otherwise specified.

If you would like to submit an article to the newsletter please email Dawn at [clemens.d@beaconk12.org](mailto:clemens.d@beaconk12.org).

Submissions must be in by November 14th to be in the next newsletter.

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## From the President

By Kim Atwell, BTA President

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome back! As always, summer has flown by, September has passed, and October is upon us. Hopefully, you had a restful and enjoyable vacation with family and friends and are looking forward to beginning a new, exciting, and productive year.

I am honored to begin my first year as President of the BTA. Having the opportunity to work and speak on your behalf is a tremendous privilege and I thank you for entrusting me with the responsibility. I welcome our new BTA members and remind them that there are many people and organizations to help them as they settle into the new year. I look forward to working with our dedicated Executive Board members and committees and value the insight and commitment they offer to our leadership.

Over the past three months, I have had an opportunity to meet and converse with many of our teachers, administrators, and NYSUT officials. I have also attended numerous union meetings, both locally and regionally and will continue to do so throughout the year. It is my goal to help strengthen the infrastructure of our Association through effective communication, knowledge, collaboration, and strong political action. This year, we will be faced with many challenges and opportunities at the local, state, and national levels. It is imperative that we play a vital and active role in the process which will directly affect our livelihood. Times are rapidly changing; the economy is poor and inflation is on the rise. We must be active in our goals to preserve, protect, and improve the education of our children as well as the rights of our teachers during this tense economic time.

As unionists, I challenge us to take initiatives against some detrimental recommendations made by the New York State Tax Commission on property tax relief to Governor David A. Paterson. Such proposals include:

- The amendment of the Triborough provision of the Taylor Law to exclude teacher step from continuation until new contracts are negotiated.
  - The requirement of districts to report collective bargaining outcomes between unions and school districts.
  - Mandatory employee contributions for health insurance premiums, 10% for individuals, 25% for dependents (we now pay 8% and 10%).
  - A mandate to study the creation of a Tier 5 in the public employee pension systems to include the reinstatement of employee contributions throughout their career and implementation of a defined contribution plan.
- A multi-million dollar decrease in aid for the Beacon City School district.

I urge you to participate in your union, attend meetings, join a committee, submit an article for the union newsletter, contribute to Vote-Cope, volunteer some of your time and attend social functions. It is the goal of the BTA to make a difference in the lives of our members, our students, and their families. The Beacon Teachers Association needs you to make a difference.

I wish you all a very productive and successful school year.

## Important Information

- ⇒ The 2008 District mileage reimbursement is .585 per mile. Please note that this is an increase from 2007.
- ⇒ Will you be retiring this year? Check out the new video on the NYSTRS website. It is called "Countdown to Retirement" and gives suggestions to follow each month of this last school year.
- ⇒ Cancer Screening Law 159b allows teachers to have one half day off per school year for breast and prostate screening. To receive this time, you must bring confirmation from your physician.

# New Teachers



The beginning of each school year brings with it new experiences, new students, and always new teachers who become part of our Beacon faculty. This year, we would like to introduce you to some of the teachers who are new to our schools and hopefully make them feel a little less unknown. This article will be the first in a two part series where teachers will be introduced in no particular order.

Inna Finateri teaches ESL at Rombout Middle School. Prior to teaching in Rombout taught in Glenham from January to June 2008. Inna received her bachelors in Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Russia and her master's at SUNY New Paltz. ESL takes on a special meaning for Inna since she is from Russia and was once an English Language Learner herself. She believes that her personal English language learning experience, combined with her professional knowledge and skills will help her be an effective and sensitive teacher for her ESL students. Inna states that last year she was "fortunate to work with many experienced and pleasant teachers" and that this year she is "looking forward to getting to know more of the district's teachers".

Cassandra O'Dell is also a teacher at Rombout Middle School. She is a science teacher who has previously taught at Arlington High

School for several leave replacement positions. Cassandra attended Marist College for both her bachelor's and master's programs. She received a Bachelor's in Biology and a Master's in Education. Cassandra is currently engaged and is looking forward to her wedding which will be taking place at the end of June.

Carlin Kosowski is a music teacher at Sargent Elementary School. She is a graduate Beacon City School District and is very happy to be "home teaching music in such a supportive environment". As a Beacon student, Carlin was an active member of the chorus and drama programs. After graduation she attended SUNY Fredonia to obtain her Bachelor of Music Education and Florida State University for her Masters in Music Education.

Dr. Steven Birnbaum teaches science at Beacon High School. Steven is also a Chiropractor who sees patients on a part time basis. He and his wife live in Newburgh and have been actively serving the community for twenty years through his practice and multiple Curves for Women fitness centers. Steven states that he loves teaching and that he feels "very fortunate to be part of the Beacon City School District" and that he "already feels at home in the science department".

Some people may already know Jennifer Bernstein as Glen-

ham's permanent substitute since January of 2007. Currently she teaches first grade at Glenham Elementary. Her career at Glenham actually began when she completed her student teaching there in a second grade classroom. Jennifer completed her both undergraduate and graduate degrees at SUNY New Paltz in Childhood Education and Special Education respectively. She is a Fishkill resident and graduated from John Jay High School in 2002 where she was captain of the Varsity gymnastics team. She has been teaching gymnastics to elementary school age children since. Jennifer is looking forward to a successful career in the Beacon City School District.

Rombout also gained another new teacher in the Special Education department. Karen Fava teaches self contained Special Education in seventh and eighth grade science and math. She recently moved to Orange County and is the mother on a "beautiful little girl" and is getting married this spring. Karen is involved in dance and theater and performs with a modern dance company and in musicals.

Look for more new teachers in our second newsletter. In the mean time the Beacon Teachers Association wishes all of our district's teachers the best of luck and hopes that you have a great school

## Well Wishes to Our Union Members

The Beacon Teachers Association would like to congratulate the following members' and extend well wishes for their future:

- ◇ Jeff and Jen Matus had a baby girl, Ava, born on August 30, 2008
- ◇ Anna Orlando just lost her pet Oscar to cancer, and she adopted a new one, Baby Oscar
- ◇ Liz Roche's daughter, Jessica, is getting married in October
- ◇ Michele Polhamus is getting married in November 2008
- ◇ Karen Hallock's daughter, Sara, is getting married on November 29, 2008
- ◇ Laura and Craig Seaman are expecting a baby in December
- ◇ Nicole Penzetta is due in December
- ◇ Trish Silverman is due in December
- ◇ Tom Burns and his wife are expecting their first child in June
- ◇ Roseann Goebel and Bruce Lock will be retiring in June

\*If you or someone you know has an event you would like recognized in future editions of the newsletter, please email either Elizabeth Hanrahan or Dawn Clemens.



# JV Forrestal Welcomes Kids BBQ Style

JV Forrestal Kindergarten teachers hosted their annual "Welcome to Kindergarten Barbeque" on August 28, 2008. Over 100 children and their families were in attendance. This event gave the children and their families an opportunity to meet their teachers, see their classroom, take a bus tour, and share a BBQ meal. This is a special yearly event that the teachers do before school begins to help the children feel more comfortable and excited about starting school in September. It was a great event that was made possible in large part due to Terri Losito and Marsha Hayes. Both of them do the shopping, prep, and cooking for the event. Nice work, ladies!



## Maryanne Ceriello: Teacher of the Year

Maryanne Ceriello is being awarded the honor of Elementary Physical Education Teacher of the Year. This award is being given to her this November by the New York State Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (NYSAPERD). Maryanne has been a member of the organization for thirteen years. She is currently serving as the Southeastern Zone President which includes Westchester, Dutchess, Rockland, and Putnam counties. Previously Maryanne has served in the organization as President of the Elementary/Middle School section.

When asked what she is most proud of as a teacher, Maryanne stated that her work over the past fourteen years at Sargent Elementary School. Maryanne has been quite a busy teacher at Sargent and had a huge impact on the physical fitness of the students there. She has implemented monthly "Walk to School Days" which have been in existence since 2003. She has organized annual fac-

ulty/student basketball and volleyball games, directed and choreographed the Jump Rope Team, and directed the annual field days. She has even helped the faculty to stay in shape by leading after school exercise programs! Her work in Sargent is not limited to physical education. She has worked on the Spring Talent Show and the Calico Ball and is a member of Sargent's Reading Committee. She has coordinated units of instruction with the Library, Art, and Music departments within the building as well.

Maryanne does all of these things while serving as a coach in Volleyball and Track and writing curriculum and participating in the BIC committee. She has shown herself to be a shining star, not only in Sargent, but in the district as well. We are very lucky to have Maryanne as a member of our faculty and on behalf of the BTA offer her a huge thank you for all that she does. Congratulations, Maryanne!

**Maryanne says**  
**that what she**  
**is most proud**  
**of is her work**  
**over the past**  
**fourteen years**  
**at Sargent**  
**Elementary.**

## Important Union Conference Dates

- ◆ Annual Retirement Delegate Workshop: November 9-10, Saratoga
- ◆ ED 13 Meetings: November 13, 2008, January 31, 2009, March 26, 2009, May 7, 2009
- ◆ DCUTC (Dutchess County United Teachers' Council): 10/16, 11/20, 1/15, 2/19, 3/19, 4/16, 5/21
- ◆ Representative Assembly: April 1-4, 2009, Buffalo
- ◆ Committee of 100: March 23-24, 2009 and May 11-12, 2009
- ◆ AFT (American Federation of Teachers): March 19-22, 2009
- ◆ NYSUT Summer Leadership Conference: August 31-September 2, 2009



# BHS Gets Spirit

Every year Beacon High School celebrates the new school year and its fall sports, especially football, during their Spirit Week festivities which culminate with our annual Homecoming Game. This year the members of Student Council took the festivities up a notch by adding new competitions and events which showed just how much school spirit Beacon High School really has.

To make the week more exciting, Student Council worked closely with the class advisors and class officers of each of the four grades in the high school. Their new ideas were aided by the support of new BHS principal Tony DiMarco who was constantly available to lend a helping hand. The end result was a week where each of the classes competed for points to win \$500 for their class and the "Spirit Stick" which will make its debut at the June 2009 graduation ceremony.

Each day classes received points based on the percentage of students participating in dress up days such as color wars, twin day, crazy dress day and blue and gold day. Classes also received points during the Pep Rally for winning highly creative and messy games like "Condiment Twister", "Cracker Relay", and the "Pie in Your Face Basketball Shootout".

Of course the biggest event, as always, was the Hallway Decorating Contest where each of the classes must completely transform half of a hallway to best fit the year's hallway theme. This year's theme was board games and the Seniors were up to the challenge and won with their Monopoly and Candyland themed hallway. This competition takes weeks of preparation but can only be assembled in one night after school. This year several of the classes were still in the building until just before midnight!

The week's events would not have been possible without the understanding and support of the BHS faculty and staff. Many people commented that the hallway decorations and Pep Rally were the best they had seen in a while which illustrates what we already knew; Beacon has the best teachers and students anywhere!

**BHS teachers show their spirit: top right- Fran Vakirtzis and students, bottom left- Bill Castaldi and Varsity Football Team, bottom right- Matt Steltz gets pied**



# Vote-Cope Opens Doors: What is it and Why is it Important

**By Kim Atwell, BTA President**

As your President, I want to share with you some information on Vote-Cope which will help us take the appropriate steps in becoming a solidified and powerful union; a union that supports local, state and national interests.

Vote-Cope is an acronym representing the Voice Of Teachers in Education, the Committee on Political Education. Vote-Cope, also referred to as a PAC (Political Action Committee), is the non-partisan political action arm of New York State United Teachers. Funded entirely by voluntary contributions from members, Vote-Cope is used to help union-backed candidates and campaign committees that support education and labor. Vote-Cope helps strengthen political action programs on all levels: national, state, and local. To help on the local level, Vote-Cope provides rebates (up to 40%) to participating unions for local political action. Vote-Cope funds by law are kept separate from these of NYSUT. Voluntary Vote-Cope deductions can be made through payroll deductions for our teachers and contributions to Vote-Cope are not tax deductible.

Donations to Vote-Cope help to ensure that school districts and colleges receive that state aid necessary to provide quality educational services for our students. Vote-Cope gives our profession the political power we need to protect education, health care, and workers' rights. The primary goal of Vote-Cope is to support the goals of the public education and protect all of NYSUT's constituents; from our newest members to our retirees. Vote Cope lobbies for:

- State aid for education and health care
- A secure retirement
- Affordable health coverage

Vote Cope also:

- Takes on those whose agenda is decidedly anti-union
- Encourages smaller class sizes through legislation
- Supports competitive salaries to recruit qualified teachers
- Advocates for affordable tuition at public colleges to keep graduate program costs down

- Lobbies for mentor program legislation to provide critical support to new teachers.

For good or for bad, the future of quality public education, as well as the future of your profession, your retirement, and your health care is bound to decisions coming out of Albany and Washington.

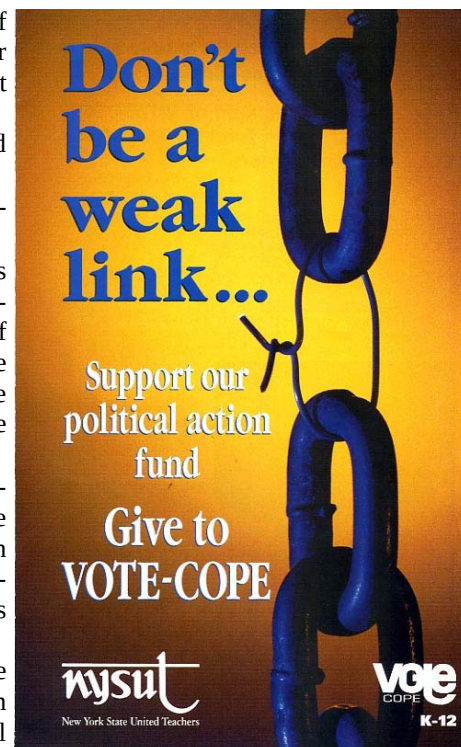
In recent years Vote-Cope has helped secure:

- A permanent cost of living adjustment (COLA) for retiree pensions
- The elimination of tier inequalities such as the mandatory 3% contribution for Tier 3 and 4 members of the NYS Retirement system (these members now only pay into the system for 10 years instead of the entire career)
- The continued enforcement of tenure laws and legislation like the Tri-Borough Amendment (which continues the terms of expired contracts until successor agreements are negotiated)

The single greatest form of Vote-Cope expenditures, however, comes in the form of Rebates to locals. The rebates we will receive will help supply the resources necessary to run campaigns for school budget initiatives and elections of pro-public education candidates for school board races. When we speak with one voice, we make a difference. Our political voice will give us the clout we need to strengthen our teaching profession and our union.

Please consider being a part of Vote-Cope. Donations are voluntary and can be as little or as much as you can offer. We would like to see every teacher contribute a minimum of \$1 per paycheck to get us started in our campaign. Along with our Vote-Cope Coordinator, John Burns, the BTA officers will be starting our Vote-Cope campaign in October. More information will follow. Please, please, please, consider signing up for payroll deductions for Vote-Cope!

\*Information for this article was provided by New York State United Teachers



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# Emails and the Internet: Something to Think About

By Kim Atwell, BTA President



Each year every BCSD employees sign a Technology User Agreement Form. When you signed the document you basically agreed to only use the internet available through school for school related business. Some of us use email more than others, but as we all know emailing has become an electronic necessity in our society and we should use caution when using the Internet at school. Some key points you should be aware of are as follows:

- Your e-mail account at school is meant for school business and not personal use. Be aware of who has your email address and what they might be sending you through your school email.
- Our work email is owned by the taxpayers of the district and the state and is totally transparent. Your email can be "foiled" by any taxpayer. When using your email, always remember that what you are saying in print could be published publically.
- You should exercise caution when communicating with parents through email.
- Any taxpayer can view your email account under the Freedom of Information Law.
- Deleting emails can be recreated.

Be sure to remain professional in using your account. Your school email account would be the wrong place for internet jokes that get forwarded from friends or attempting an eBay account. The district has access to anyone who even attempts to get on a site that is not for professional use. When we speak to someone on the phone or in person we can immediately interpret meaning from tone and inflection of the voice. That is all lost in an email. Email and the internet is a great thing. We just need to be cognizant of the implications and repercussions it could create.

## Tighter Tenure Laws Greet NY's Newest Teachers

*NYSUT plans training on student data use and implications for peer review*

Reprinted from New York Teacher - September 5, 2008

It's a whole new tenure review process for teachers whose probationary period began on or after July 1.

Under a new statewide law that sets minimum requirements, the tenure determination process for teachers providing instructional services in school districts and BOCES must now include:

- an evaluation of the extent to which the teacher successfully uses analysis of available student performance data and other relevant information when providing instruction;
  - peer review by other teachers, "as far as practicable"; and
- an assessment of the teacher's performance by the building administrator.

NYSUT successfully pushed for amendments to the new law to prohibit school districts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services from using student test scores to grant or deny tenure.

The union also successfully fought to change the effective date, which would have created widespread confusion if applied to teachers already in the tenure process.

Now, the new standards apply only to teachers whose probationary period began on or after July 1 of this year.

NYSUT Vice President Maria Neira noted the process for evaluating teachers remains a mandatory subject of collective bargaining.

Both NYSUT and the State Education Department agree that "as far as practicable" means that peer review by other teachers can occur only when collectively bargained.

NYSUT's Educational Services department is planning a one-day seminar in December to provide research-based information on peer review and implications for collective bargaining to teams from interested locals.

The union will share examples where some locals have negotiated peer review programs that contribute to a two-way, more supportive induction and mentoring process.

Neira said professional development will be needed so teachers can learn the best ways to analyze and use student test data to improve instruction.

Over the summer NYSUT's Education & Learning Trust and the American Federation of Teachers offered data training. More will be scheduled.

NYSUT has posted an [information bulletin on tenure](http://www.nysut.org) at [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org), under the Resources section. The law sunsets in two years, meaning the Legislature may revisit it in 2010.



# BTA Sponsors Air Force Academy Band



On Saturday October 11<sup>th</sup> the Beacon Teachers Association played host to the Air Force Academy Band. The band performed in the Beacon High School Theater to a full house of just under one thousand people. This highly successful event was sponsored by several groups including: the Beacon Educational Administration Association, Poughkeepsie Journal, Piano Clearing House of Westchester, Kreuter International, and Beacon City School District. As a result of our large role in organizing, running, and financing the event the Beacon Teachers Association took top billing as a sponsor.

The Air Force Academy Band has been in existence for over 50 years. The Concert Band (which is the

one which performed in Beacon) is the largest of the eleven performing units from the band and is made up of forty-five active duty Air Force music professionals from around the nation. In fact, one of the featured soloists has a PHD in musical performance with a specialization in the clarinet! The band wowed the audience by playing a variety of music from patriotic, classic marches, military hymns, and some contemporary band music. One of the highlights of the evening was the "Dames of Broadway" montage which included singing and dancing in addition to the band. The audience was encouraged to sing along to songs from musicals such as *West Side Story*, *The Sound of Music*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, *South Pacific*, *A Little Night Music*, and *My Fair Lady*. The concert ended with a rousing rendition of "Stars and Stripes Forever" which brought everyone to their feet.

This event was not only enjoyable for the audience but a very successful public relations event for our organization. The BTA received recognition online, on various radio stations, in local newspapers, and is also featured in the New York Teacher. The BTA would like to thank all who helped to make this event a success by providing and serving dinner to the band, selling refreshments, and serving as ushers during the event. We would also like to acknowledge that this event would not have occurred without the hard work and dedication of Pat DeLeo. Thank you to all who made this such a positive and wonderful event.



## Teacher Survey Questions

The BTA would like to know your opinion on several issues. You can let your opinion be heard in three different ways: 1) Tell your building reps your opinion, 2) Send Dawn Clemens (newsletter editor) your opinion via interoffice mail, or 3) Send Dawn Clemens your opinion via email at [clemens.d@beaconk12.org](mailto:clemens.d@beaconk12.org). Whichever way you decide---please let us know what you think!

- A. Adopt-A-Highway- The BTA is considering participating in the Adopt-A-Highway program in Beacon. There is no cost to the membership and we will be provided all of the materials necessary to accomplish our task. We will also have a highway sign which will serve as a great way to promote our organization. We will, however, be required to pick up the two mile stretch of highway at minimum four times per year during the two years of our contract. Our question is: will enough members come out and help so that we can do more than our minimum pick-ups and thus be seen as a positive contributor to the Adopt-A-Highway program? Would you volunteer? Let us know.
- B. SRP Recognition Day- The third Tuesday of November is designated as SRP (School-Related Professionals) Recognition Day. These professionals include: teacher aids/assistants/monitors, clerical staff, custodians, bus drivers, food service, and security workers. We would like to do something to recognize all that these groups of people do which allow us to effectively do our jobs. Please submit any suggestions that you may have.
- C. Holiday Party- Every year the BTA throws a holiday party usually in December for members from throughout the district to get together and socialize. As a result of declining attendance at these events, members of the Public Relations Committee suggested that possibly if an event was scheduled which was family friendly that there would be a higher teacher turn out. What do you think? What would encourage you to attend a BTA event? Please be descriptive in your answer (ex. music, venue, price, food, activities, ect.).