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President's Corner

The Bedford Teachers' Association works for the welfare of school children, the advancement of education, and the improvement of instructional opportunities for all. We believe that an educator's success is measured by the progress of each student toward realization of his or her potential as a worthy and effective citizen. Therefore, as teachers we work to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals. We believe that the quality of the services of the education profession directly influence the nation and its citizens. We, therefore, exert every effort to raise professional standards, to improve our service, to promote a climate in which the exercise of professional judgment is encouraged, and to achieve conditions which attract persons worthy of the trust to careers in education. Aware of the value of united effort, we contribute actively to the support, planning and programs for our students.

~Adam Yuro,

President, Bedford Teachers' Association

Community Service with... BTA Member Juliane Harris

Denise

Since I became the coordinator of the BTA food drive three years ago, I felt it was time for me to pay a visit to the Mount Kisco Interfaith Food Pantry and see it for myself. On December 14, I was given a tour by Beverly Card.

Housed at the Mount Kisco Boys and Girls Club, it was impressive to see volunteers busily packaging food, toys and clothing, in time for the holidays. Standing there watching, I wished that every one of our participants could see this scene: Four tall gray metal cabinets stocked with a variety of food items arranged by category -- canned fruits and vegetables, cereal, coffee and tea, pancake and muffin mixes, condiments, juices, and more. Volunteers were buzzing around like bees, packing a mixture of food items into bags to distribute to the families who would be coming later that evening.

As I looked around at the "givers", I couldn't help but think

Samantha Bell assisting Juliane Harris



about those people who would be on the receiving end. I remembered my own days as a single mother, so many years ago. It renewed my desire to help in whatever way I could. Once the holidays are over, contributions to the Food Pantry decline drastically. That is the reason that we hold our food drive in January and February each year. That is when we have the opportunity to give something back to the community. Last year we collected in excess of **4,000 pounds of food and over \$400**. That fed 200 families for a month! I hope we can equal or even exceed that amount this year!

BTA SPONSORS MT. KISCO FOOD PANTRY

DRIVE

Each year the Bedford Teachers Association sponsors the Mount Kisco Food Drive that runs (this year) from January 15th through February 1st. Money and non-perishable food items are collected for the Mount Kisco Food Pantry. Juliane Harris, the organizer for this effort, has much support from staff members and support staff from all elementary schools, the middle school and the high school. These are only the early stages of drive this year. In the first few days we are close to surpassing our total collection from last year. All schools are making a great effort to help our fellow citizens.

L to R: Juliane Harris, BTA Food Pantry organizer,



Kristin Cacciapaglia, Nicole Viscomi, Jill Shapiro, Maura Ferrara, Amy Cunningham, John DeFavero

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR FREE TIME?

Teachers in Bedford spend their "free time" outside the classroom in many interesting ways!

Denise Connolly, Grade 4 teacher at West Patent Elementary, spent a good part of her summer and fall training for the Philadelphia Marathon. Denise completed the run on November 19, 2006, finishing in 4 hours, 30 minutes. Congratulations, Denise! Denise is not our only marathoner. For many years, **Dan Caffrey**, 4th grade teacher at Mount Kisco Elementary has run the New York Marathon. This year was no different. Dan finished his 5th marathon on November 5th, 2006, in 3 hours and 33 minutes!

Joining the running ranks is **Mary Downes**, Learning Specialist at Fox Lane Middle School, who has become a member of "Team in Training." She is training to run in a marathon in June on behalf of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. She is trying to raise money for a cure.

Jason Wein, Grade 1 teacher at Mount Kisco Elementary, and **Liz Callender**, ESL teacher at WPES, spend one night a week at his school with students who are a little bigger than six year olds. For five years, the team has been teaching Adult Literacy classes to parents for whom English is their second language. Parents have read [Charlotte's Web](#), presented information about

their childhoods in their native countries and learned many songs and chants to help improve their English. According to Jason, "It's evolved into a small but close-knit class of friends. We laugh at each other's mistakes but everybody helps and supports each other. We've worked with parents on communicating with teachers, becoming more involved in the classroom and helping their children with homework. We both feel that it's a rewarding, worthwhile and important program and we are always looking for more participants!"



Connolly, at mile 26 of the Philadelphia Marathon on November 19, 2006.

BTA SUPPORTS CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUES..... An Interview With Ken Kurzweil

Ken Kurzweil has been an employee with the Bedford Central School district since 1983. He has been employed at the Fox Lane Middle School for all of his 23 years. In addition, he has been involved in the BTA since his second year in the district, most recently as the President for the past 14 years. Recently, he spoke with Amy Galloway, a BTA newsletter reporter, about his work with the NYSUT Civil and Human Rights committee, of which he speaks passionately.

AG: Ken, tell me about the Civil and Human Rights Committee.

KK: The Civil and Human Rights Committee is just one of many committees that advise NYSUT on a variety of issues.

AG: Who makes up the committee?

KK: There are 15 representatives from all over the state. They represent a cross-section of geographical, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. We meet about 4 times a year in Albany. During the rest of the year we convene via conference calls. The committee represents not only public school employees, but retirees, private school and university professors as well.

AG: What is your role?

KK: Currently, I am serving my fourth consecutive year as the chair and this is the second time I have chaired this committee. I believe in the work we do, so I love it!

AG: What are some of the projects the committee is working on?

KK: I am glad you asked! We are involved with many social issues. I'll highlight a few:

* We have been encouraging the NYSUT retirement system to become more responsible about the investments they make for us, the teachers. We are asking

them not to invest in companies that, for example, do not have fair labor practices, like Wal-Mart, or that have relations with oppressive countries like Sudan.

* We have lobbied, with success, for domestic partner benefits in a number of school districts around the state.

* Our current project is a full-size, 18-month calendar which focuses on important dates in world history affecting civil & human rights. We hope to have it ready for September.

AG: I've been hearing about issues concerning free-trade products. Can you describe the work the committee is doing in this area?

KK: Our committee is taking a stand to persuade companies like Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts to increase their share of free-trade coffee to 8% of their total sales. Products like coffee and chocolate that are not free-trade are often from companies that employ children and adults that are grossly underpaid, with little or no benefits. We want to promote companies that offer a fair wage for a fair day's work. So, you will begin to notice ads in NY Teacher asking our members to patronize only fair trade coffee and chocolate.

AG: Does Starbucks offer fair trade coffee?

KK: They do, but you have to ask for it. It is not prominently displayed, so most people don't know they even have it. But they do, so ask!

AG: Well, your committee certainly sounds busy and effective. Is there anything else our membership should know about?

KK: BTA members will be hearing more about two resolutions that our committee is proposing: First is a marriage equity resolution that will grant same sex couples the same legal rights as other couples. And,

second, we are proposing a resolution that would mandate any new teacher seeking K-12 certification to take a five-hour course on diversity. We think it is important for all teachers to be aware of the rich diversity in all our schools throughout the state.

AG: Ken, thank you for sharing so much information about the Civil and Human Rights committee. And, thank you for your long-standing service on this committee! If anyone wants to become active in this work, what should they do?

KK: Give me a call!



Ken

Kurzweil explains NYSUT's role in promoting free trade products to Amy Galloway.

Then and Now

By Anne Crescitelli

For the second year in a row, first graders at West Patent Elementary School spent a delightful morning with senior citizens from My Second Home in Mount Kisco. The seniors eagerly answered the students' many questions about what it was like to be a child long ago. The visit was part of the social studies curriculum designed to let students discover what life was like "before computers, video games, DVD's or even TV." The visit concluded with lunch and many new friendships.

HIDDEN TALENTS

What Our Members ALSO Do!

Nicole Metzner - I took a class in Qigong and Tai Chi, because I thought it would be good for my back. Qigong, an ancient Chinese discipline, is exercise that aims to promote health through a series of movements, postures, and breathing. Tai Chi has physical, mental and intellectual benefits. It is a healing art which can alleviate many ailments. Doing Qigong and Tai Chi regularly has improved the health of my back. No more pain!

Carol Bisbano - I have been volunteering to usher at off-Broadway plays. I call a theater's volunteer usher "hotline" to sign up for a date and time of the show. My responsibilities vary depending on the theater. So far, I have collected tickets at the door, showed the audience to their seats, stood in front of the stage to keep the flow of traffic off of the stage and sold snacks at intermission. In return, I get to watch the show for free! My time is well-spent and so worth the experience!

New Member Committee Events

By Liz Smith

The New Member committee is planning several events over the rest of the school year. Keep an eye out for more information about the following events:

♦ **A Mid-Winter Social Hour** to gather and greet friends and colleagues on **Friday, March 2** at the Mango Café in Mt. Kisco.

♦ **Know Your Contract seminar** for new staff scheduled for the week of **March 5**

BEDFORD VILLAGE CELEBRATES FAMILY FITNESS



Students enjoying Family Fitness

On Thursday evening, November 30, a special inter-active community event -- "A Family Fitness Night" -- was held at the Bedford Village Elementary School. All the children and their families were invited to this special program to have fun and learn about the basic functions of the human heart and circulatory system, the available health/wellness/athletic resources we have in the Bedford community, as well as participate in a variety of fitness and coordination stations.

The event was coordinated by the school's physical education teachers **John DelFavero** and **Joe DiMauro**, along with BVES school nurse **Leslie Hunt** and BVES principal Karen Eldon. There were also many children, staff members, and parents that assisted with the family fitness night to help make it a huge success.

The children and their families learned about the functions of the human heart and circulatory system by walking through a larger-than-life human heart course which was set-up in the family room and hallways. The children and their families were guided through the four chambers of the heart, the lungs, and blood vessels by PE staff members. Each part of the circulatory system was explained as the families pretended to be blood cells traveling through the heart and lungs. There were diagrams, heart sounds, and videos illustrating every facet of the circulatory system. This was a terrific "hands on" learning experience for everyone in the BVES community and a wonderful opportunity for all the families to meet and see all the available resources we have in the Bedford community!