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

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 Weingarten is not a “Team in Training” member. However, he has volunteered to participate in the March of Dimes walk for the first time.

Lynne Graduateis is training to run in the New York Marathon. In addition, she is completing the 5K run for the March of Dimes.

Mary Connolly, Grade 4 teacher at Mount Kisco Elementary, has run the New York Marathon every year since she was in middle school. She recently completed her 14th marathon.

This year’s Bedford Teachers’ Association sponsored Mt. Kisco Food Drive that runs (this year) from January 15th through February 1st. Money and non-perishable food items are collected for the Mt. 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 the 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, Maura Ferrara, Amy Cunningham, John DellFavero

Lynne Graduatei is participating in the March of Dimes to raise money for a cure.

Denise 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.

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. I believe in the work we do, so I love it! We have been encouraging the NYSUT retirement resolutions that our committee is proposing: First is a marriage equity resolution that will grant same sex couples the legal rights as other couples.

AG: And the second resolution?

KK: The 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!

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BEDFORD VILLAGE CELEBRATES 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 DeiFavoro 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.

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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

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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, exercises 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!

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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 life was like “before computers, video games, DVDs or even TV.” The visit concluded with lunch and many new friendships.