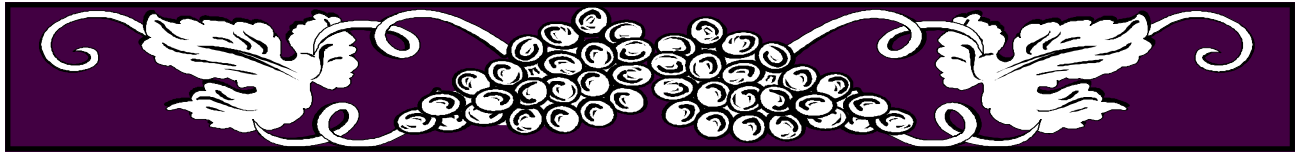


the grapevine

NTA TEACHING ASSISTANT CHAPTER NEWSLETTER



Valuable Professionals



BOE President Runston Lewis, NTA President Phillip Cordella, Interim Deputy Supt. Ralph Pizzo

At the NTA Board Forum, Executive Committee member Joni Mongelli addressed the school board on the professionalism of teaching assistants in our district. She spoke clarifying concerns of the teaching assistants. For those absent at the forum, I have edited her speech to let the membership hear her address.

"For many years all support staff were teacher aides who were considered "an extra pair of hands" in the classroom, useful for making copies, tying shoes and aiding the teacher. Women and men are now making a conscious decision to become certified teaching assistants. The road to certification includes college classes to take, as well as other standards to meet, attending workshops, a proficiency exam and ongoing professional development. The description of the job title of teaching assistant is just that: to assist with teaching.



Teaching assistants provide an important service which is providing instruction to students. We are certified to implement a teacher's lesson plan. This is important to the learning environment since it can generate small learning groups in the classroom. According to an agreement between the NTA and Central Administration, teaching assistants can spend up to one hour or one period per day alone providing instruction to students (in some instances this has been abused by TA's being utilized as substitutes for two hours up to a whole day).

We acknowledge that we are not certified teachers, but we are an integral part of the teaching "team". Most teachers who work with a teaching assistant would agree that we are a valuable asset, especially in a "District in Need of Improvement" (and strained by the rigorous demands of NCLB). We take our jobs just as seriously as teachers. We, too, are taking in-service courses for professional development, to give our best to the students. This can also be discouraging when we take the same classes with teachers yet are shown a different level of professionalism by not being compensated in the same way. We understand the district's budget constraints but we feel that there is a solution to this problem that would be beneficial to everyone and keep the motivation for professional development high and ongoing for TA's.

We realize that perceptions take time to change. As it stands, teaching assistants are no longer new to the Newburgh Enlarged City School District. More than 80% of NECS D TA's have been state and federally certified and working for 5 years. We strive to continue to assist student and teachers as proof of what we are qualified to do. Teaching assistants are an important part of the children's education in our district. We are hoping that the district values teaching assistants as important educators."

For more on this topic, see page 2 for comments from the Newburgh School district board members on the importance of teaching assistants.

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Board Appreciation



"With such an emphasis on testing, students need all the instructional assistance available. Teaching assistants can provide that extra help and show a commitment to early intervention in pre-kindergarten, kindergarten and first grade classrooms." -Edward Poppiti



"Expectations are greater than ever for teaching assistants. I feel there is a gap that needs to be met between the current contractual compensation for in-service classes attended by TA's that needs to be addressed." -Dawn Fuchek

*In accordance with NCLB,
how do you feel the
roles/responsibilities of
teaching assistants of the
NECSD has changed?*



"I believe responsibilities for teaching assistants have increased. There is important interaction between students and TA's. The TA's have taken on new roles, assisting as they never have before. If teaching assistants were removed from the classrooms, students would suffer." -Grace Bowles



"The district is working to utilize teaching assistants better." -Thomas Woodhull



The NTA TAC Chapter hosted it's annual Board Appreciation Dinner at the NTA Offices recently. Administrators, Board members, teaching assistant building representatives and committee members, Interim Deputy Supt. Ralph Pizzo, NTA president Phillip Cordella, VP Vicki Pittman and NTA delegates gathered for the dinner. Sheila Manning spoke briefly about how teaching assistants value the support we receive from our board members, our union and the school district. Thanks go to Lisa Maier and Maria Lattimore for arranging the enjoyable event for the second year in a row. The beautiful cake with the floral design pictured on the right was donated for the dinner by Pat Favata, NTA TAC Executive Member at Large.

"LET THEM EAT CAKE." —Marie Antoinette (1755-93), the Queen Consort of Louis XVI. She is supposed to have said this when she was told that the French populace had no bread to eat.



In Memory Of ...

Teaching Assistant - Mrs. Jean M. Harrison

**Jean Marie Gensheimer Harrison - b. July 30, 1957
d. April 23, 2008**

I am sure that many of you are now aware of the sudden passing of Jean Harrison. Jean has worked for the District since 1995 and has worked with many of us throughout the District, including Temple Hill School, Heritage Junior High School, and NFA as a Teaching Assistant. Jean also worked during summer school which is now known as the "Extended Year Program."

Quoted from the NTA—Teaching Assistants' Chapter "Wherever she worked, Jean was INVOLVED." Jean always attended and helped run the THA barbecue and has also been involved in the Empty Bowl fundraiser at NFA. Empty Bowls is an annual fund-raising dinner held at NFA to benefit the Hudson Valley Food Bank. This was her second year on the committee and she went above and beyond in her contributions again; going out into the business community getting many donations to be raffled off, bringing in a large beautifully decorated sheet cake from a friend, also setting up, selling raffle tickets and cleaning up. Jean was also one of the first to pitch in to help form the Teaching Assistants' Chapter of the NTA as a building representative and she was co-chair of the Nominations/Elections Committee.

Jean died suddenly in her New Windsor home on April 23, 2008. She was born in Franklin, NJ on July 30, 1957 to Dorothy and Joseph Gensheimer and was graduated from Pope John XXIII High School in Sparta, NJ and Rutgers University. In addition to working for the Newburgh School District, Jean worked for the Army Athletic Association at West Point. An extraordinarily generous woman, Jean loved helping people and always offered kind words and warm smiles to those in need of comfort. Jean had an amazing facility for languages and spoke Spanish and Portuguese, having lived in Mexico and Brazil. She loved the outdoors, traveling and spending time with her family. Jean's biggest source of pride was her four children, Erin, Bridget, Peter and Anna. Her children were the light of her life! Jean was predeceased by her husband, Peter Harrison. After his passing, Jean was determined and worked hard to keep her children's dreams alive!

In keeping with Jean's spirit and her determination to keep her children's dreams alive, the Teaching Assistants' Chapter of the NTA is starting the **Harrison Family Fund**. Please be generous and help fulfill Jean's wishes for her family. This is the least we can do for someone who gave so much to so many! You may forward any donations to your Teaching Assistant Building Representative(s). In addition to the Teaching Assistants' Chapter of the NTAs' **Harrison Family Fund**, donations may also be made to Education Fund, c/o Erin Harrison, 60 Forrest Hill Rd., New Windsor, NY 12553.



Note from the Assistant Editor: I know that this page is typically dedicated to "getting to know" one of our Teaching Assistants in the District that are working hard everyday to assist in the education of the students in our District but with the recent and sudden death of Mrs. Harrison, it was decided that it would be nice to dedicate a page in her memory! Mrs. Harrison has touched the lives of not only the students in our district, but those that she has worked with on a daily basis over the years. I know that Mrs. Harrison will be sorely missed by all that knew her, but will be remembered with the legacy she has left behind. Thank you Mrs. Harrison for all that you have done in assisting with the education of the children in our District and the love and dedication that you have given to all those in our community!

Scrappin For Safe Homes



Teaching assistants gathered at the NTA and Gardnertown School numerous times to scrap for our chosen charity, Safe Homes. The Chapter made scrapbook albums for Safe Homes for Mother's day. Everyone had a relaxing blast creating pages that were works of art (see top page right). The albums were made for the Safe Homes mothers there in the hopes that they can make happy new memories and place their photos in the pre-made albums. Chairing the project were Lori Rizzo, Theresa Brady-Lyden, and Maria Perez. Thanks to all who helped create wonderful memory pages. A special scrapbook was created in memory of Jean Harrison for her family also. To view the NY Teacher article "SRPS help create new family memories", logon to www.nysut.org, click on NY Teacher, click on archives and scroll down to the May 22 issue.

IN SCHOOL NEWS ... Gardnertown's Big Give

In April 2008, Gardnertown School joined forces with Mr. Stephen Paletta from "Oprah's Big Give" contributing to the "School to School Partnership Program". Mr. Paletta was contacted by parent Mrs. Sue Barr who presented the idea of "giving back to others" to Principal Ms. Gail Wilson and Assistant Principal Mrs. Lillian Torres. Mrs. Barr was encouraged by Gardnertown Administration to "go" with her idea and was able to get Mr. Paletta to come to Gardnertown School and encourage the staff to model the idea of giving and sharing with others in other nations to their students.



Mr. Paletta came back to Gardnertown School in May and held an assembly for all 3rd through 6th grade students. Mr. Paletta presented a slide show that shared pictures of children from Rwinkwavu School in Rwanda, Africa. Mr. Paletta spoke to the children about how these children in Africa are so much like the children in the U.S. They love to play soccer, they love to learn, they love to draw, and they love to read. With the help of Mr. Paletta, Mrs. Barr, GAPS (Gardnertown Association of Parents and Students), and Gardnertown Administration and staff, the children of Gardnertown School were encouraged to write letters to students attending Rwinkwavu and will be receiving letters back from their "pen-pals" in June. Gardnertown students also collected pencils, books, crayons, and erasers to send to the children of Rinkwavu along with their letters.



Picture from left are: Ms. Gail Wilson, Mrs. Sue Barr, Gunnar Barr, Brandon Coombs, Joey SanSevero, Mr. Stephen Paletta, Hannah Gross, and Nancy Gross

Gardnertown School plans on keeping in touch with the students in Rwinkwavu in Rwanda, Africa and would like to be the "role-models" and pave the way for all the schools within the District! Eventually, we would love to see all schools in the district from elementary up through high school sharing materials such as letters and artwork with students of other Nations. This is a wonderful learning experience for ALL of us in the District!



"Gardnertown Elementary School Partnership is About Reaching Out Across the World to Touch Other Peoples Lives ... and Have Them Touch Ours"

—Mr. Stephen Paletta

Article & photo credits : Patricia SanSevero

Teaching Assistants
Where will they go next??
Sky's the limit!

Teaching Assistants' Chapter Year End Statement

2007-2008

The NTA TAC adds another new member to its retirement chapter. There are now two retirees, Sally Clinton and Joyce McArdle.

The TA's are still working hard for our members at the Building Rep./Alt. meetings. Attendance is very high every month. Thank you all for the wonderful job you do every day.

Denice Knox did an outstanding job as our VOTE/COPE Chairperson once again.

Our Executive Committee/Officers now include Sheila Manning, Joni Mongelli, Berenda Jonson and Patricia Favata.

The LAP (Local Action Project) Grant was awarded to the TAC of the NTA. This project involves a 3 year commitment. The LAP Committee is comprised of Sheila Manning, Joni Mongelli, Berenda Johnson, Patricia Favata, Denice Knox and Lisa Maier. For more info on what the goals of the LAP are go to: <http://www.newburghta.org> and click on teaching assistant chapter, scroll down under news and upcoming events.

Our chapter will suffer greatly with the loss of Jean Harrison. Her spirit of living gives on. The TA chapter has raised money to start the Harrison family fund and a new resolution was added to our by-laws in the event of future (God forbid) loss'.

Thanks to our Special Events committee, Lisa Maier and Maria Lattimore. They have proven to be terrific coordinators for the BOE and Recognition events. We're sure the End-of-the-Year party will be a smash. Also thanks to our Scholarship committee co-chairs, Gail Nichols and Eileen Stein. The TA chapter awarded scholarships to two deserving students, Gina Santiago (Mom-Isabel) and Nicole Rose Verdier. Two awards also went to TA's furthering their education.

The Grapevine TAC newsletter won the honorable mention in the general excellence category of the NYSUT Journalism Awards.

If something or someone was not mentioned on this list, it does not mean your efforts went unnoticed. We thank everyone for all their help and hope to see you at the party.

Submitted respectfully by Joni Mongelli, TAC Secretary



R-L: NYSUT VP Kathleen Donahue, TA Patricia Sansevero, TA Maureen Pavlik, Exec. Member Sheila Manning and NYSUT President Richard Ianuzzi at the RA Journalism Reception. The NTA TAC **Grapevine** newsletter won Honorable Mention in the competition. The NTA also brought home another award for the best website.



TA's Jean Stumpf, Margaret DePuy, Denice Knox, Senator William Larkin, Theresa Brady Lyden and Maureen Pavlik at Senator Larkin's Dinner at Anthony's Pier 9. Senator Larkin is a great supporter of education and the NECSD.

Member News

- TA Elizabeth Kooperman (TH) and her husband welcomed their daughter, Sophia on February 27, 2008. (7lbs.11oz.).
- Gardnertown TA Joyce McArdle will be retiring this July. She joins the rank of TA Retirees with Retiree Sally Clinton, Sentinel reporter.
- Joni Waite (TA Gardnertown) and husband, Charlie, are pleased to announce the graduation of their son Cody. Cody graduates, with honors, from SUNY Delhi on May 17th 2008. Cody studied electrical construction and has several offers of employment to consider (much to the delight of his proud parents.)

- Congratulations to Sean Lyden and Sam Favata on their graduation from the University of Hartford on May 18, 2008. Pictured left, Sean is graduating with a degree in Audio Engineering and Electronic Technology, while Sam is graduating with a degree in Communications. They have been best friends since junior high and it is a pleasure to have them graduating together from the same university. Their parents, John & Theresa Lyden and Sam & Pat Favata are very, very proud of them! (Update: Sean Lyden is employed in his major in Middletown and Sam is employed as a broadcaster in Manchester, Ct.)



Dates To Remember...

June

- 3—Building Rep. Meeting
- 10—Teaching Assistant End of Year Bash
- 20—Friends of Education
- 27—Last day of school

July

- 10-14—AFT Convention
- 20-25—LAP Conference, Lake George

September

- 2 & 3—Superintendent days
- 4—School Reopens
- 26-28 SRP Leadership Conference, Albany

October (TBA)

- Breast Cancer Walk TBA
- Safe Homes Baskets Fundraiser

You have to be in it
to win it!

Okay, okay, here's the scoop.....

Are you smarter than your students?

E-mail the Grapevine within a week of publication with the correct answer to the question below. A winner will be chosen from the correct entries. The winner will receive a nice velcro shoulder bag with the NYSUT logo on the front as pictured below. Good luck!!!!



Question: What is the only EVEN Prime Number?

E-mail the answer to:

Grapevinetanews@aol.com

This contest is open to all NECSD teaching assistants with the exclusion of the Executive Committee and all Grapevine Committee members. The winner will be listed in the next edition of the Grapevine.

Congratulations to the Winner of the teaching assistant logo bag: TA **Veronica Ferguson** from New Windsor School. The question was:

Which gland in the human body is called the master gland?

Answer: Pituitary gland



Maureen Pavlik
Editor



Patricia SanSevero
Assistant Editor

Summer Message from the Editors

As the year winds down and the days grow warmer, we prepare for vacation time with our families. May September find you refreshed, healthy and raring to begin the process again of making quality commitments to the education of all students, involvement within our union and schools, and the belief that no matter what we position we hold, we are all **valuable professionals!** Enjoy your summer. See you in September.

Patty & Maureen



Articles/ideas listed in the Grapevine are not necessarily those of the Newburgh Teachers' Association, NECSD, NYSUT or AFT.