



Every Child, Every Chance, Every Day



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.

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Between Assignments

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From the President:

By Kim Atwell, BTA President, BHS

Hopefully, this summer you will find plenty of time to rest and relax while you reflect upon your last year and plan for the next. Take time to sit and reflect about what the world may be for the children who are given to your charge. Our union is at a fork in the road; we can travel the road we have always gone down and say that "we just cannot do that because...." or we can take the road less traveled, and change our thinking as we forge paths in new directions. Each one of us has a responsibility to choose a road, to look at the path we are being

asked to travel and ask if it leads to a place where we put the children of the district first, so they can in turn lead us into the future. We must choose carefully, as we know that it does make all the difference.

I encourage you all to choose the road less traveled, to look ahead at our future, not only from your own eyes but through the eyes of your colleagues, your administrators and most importantly through the eyes of the children. Choose the path that will enable all of us to grow, unite and strengthen both personally and professionally. I encourage you to embrace change, to ask the questions,

to be a part of the solutions, to support and help one another in our quest for solidarity..... Be the change!!

I thank all of our members who embraced change and demonstrated support for our union throughout the year. I look forward to a summer of continued union development while taking some time to rest as well. I wish all of you a healthy, productive and happy summer break. Enjoy your time with friends and family and I look forward to seeing you next fall.

Thank You Executive Committee 2008-2009

By Kim Atwell, BTA President, BHS

Our Executive Committee is made up of Association officers, building reps, committee chairpersons, and delegates. They attend three hour meetings each month (sometimes longer) on your behalf to set direction, discuss issues and make decisions which directly affect our membership. They also serve on committees and subcommittees for the Association, run building meetings, attend workshops and conferences and host building visits from the officers.

They make themselves available to the members in each of our buildings to answer questions and listen to concerns. They have knocked on doors to help elect politicians, have collected many donation dollars from members for political action. They have made phone calls and stuffed envelopes to pass school budgets and elect BOE members. They have organized general membership meetings, worked on website development, implemented additional scholarship money and planned social events for our membership.

They are the eyes and ears of our union. As the President, all I had to do was ask and our committee was willing and committed in helping to achieve many of our goals this year. I am proud and honored to serve with the membership of this Executive Committee. They have dedicated their time and energy in putting the children first and have helped our union take giant leaps in helping Beacon become an excellent place to work, live and learn.

It has been an honor to work with these individuals and I humbly offer my gratitude for a job well done this year.

Know Your TRS! It's never too late (or Early)

Retiring Soon? Start planning now! This summer visit the NYSTRS website (www.nystrs.org)

- If you are retiring in less than 3 years- make a consultation appointment with the retirement system!
- If you are 10 years from retirement- attend a pre- retirement seminar this summer.
- If you are planning to retire next year- be sure to watch the video countdown to retirement on the NYSRS website.

The BTA will be offering another retirement seminar next year. Look for information early in the fall to sign up. Your NYSTR delegates are Gina Fontenot (BHS) and Kim Atwell (BHS)

BTA Scholarships

This year the Beacon Teachers Association made some changes as to how the BTA scholarships would be awarded. First, instead of giving two one thousand dollar scholarships funded solely through union dues; the BTA awarded three nine hundred dollar scholarships subsidized by fundraising. Second, a Scholarship committee chaired by Dave Ryley (BHS) determined who the recipients would be based on student essays about their most influential teacher in the Beacon City School District.


This year's recipients are as follows:

- ◆ Nicole DeRoma who wrote about Jen Fisher her fifth grade teacher at JVF
- ◆ Amy Niebuhr who wrote about Anita Shrederis, retired third grade teacher at Glenham
- ◆ Samantha Wilson who wrote about Bill Castaldi, social studies teacher at BHS

The awards were presented by Kim Atwell at the Senior Awards presentation on June 11, 2009.

On the following two pages are the essays that the winning students submitted. All essays are printed with the permission of the students.

BTA Scholarship: Nicole DeRoma



A teacher can be as influential to a child as a parent is because they provide different fundamentals of life to be taught that a parent cannot teach. The teacher that was most influential to me during my education was my fifth grade teacher from J.V. Forrestal, Ms. Fisher. She continuously emphasized the importance of hard work and staying focused which has carried over to my high school career.

Being only ten years old at the time, Ms. Fisher understood she had to captivate her kids' attention in a different manner. She created techniques which would make learning fun and easy. For example, Ms. Fisher taught myself and the other kids songs and games which were set as mnemonic devices to remember important subjects such as historical events or math problems. Learning this way kept me focused on schoolwork and understand its value. These techniques set a precedent which

would help me throughout the rest of my education and the years to come.

Ms. Fisher also stressed the importance of hard work and discipline. She taught her students to never settle for anything average; excel in everything you do. This lesson especially helped me during high school when there were temptations to put work aside and "fool" around. I always heard Ms. Fisher's voice in the back of my head saying "work first, play later." As childish as that may sound, her guidance helped me to do exceptionally well throughout the rest of my education. Even at such a young age, that fundamental aspect was imbedded into my memory.

Ms. Fisher was always the outgoing socialite. Her expressive personality was very optimistic and influenced me to never be afraid to be who I am. In a way, she broke me out of my shell because I was

extremely shy during this point in my life. She also encouraged me to never give up; set your goals high and aim for them. Her optimism taught me that if or when you do fail, do not get discouraged and just get up and try again. At times when this has happened, I have remembered her pushing me to strive up to my potential. This greatly influenced me to stay true to myself when I have doubts.

Without having Ms. Fisher as my teacher, I can honestly say I do not know what type of student I may be now. Her compassion and high spirits were so uplifting that she has changed my outlook on life. Ms. Fisher's inspirational support has taught me a better way of life which I will always carry with me.

Class of 2009

Valedictorian--Aileen Coughlin- She will be attending Fordham University

Salutatorian--Evie Bucket- She will be attending Dutchess County Community College

BTA Scholarship: Amy Niebuhr

There are only a few people in life that touch your heart, stimulate your mind, and who stays with you forever. I have been lucky enough to have met a person like this in third grade. Ms. Sherderis was the kooky teacher wearing mismatched earrings, but I grew to love her

Ms. Shrederis gave my class hands on lessons that were unique in giving us experiences to remember forever. We hatched chicks, had a worm farm, planted gardens, danced, adopted penguins, and made a recycling program. One of her most important lessons to us was that this world is a big, beautiful place we need to explore and cherish. She taught us the different cultures of the world by bringing in guest speakers, ethnic foods, or celebrating cultural holidays. She would read us books from different languages and often during lessons broke into different languages: Portuguese, Italian, and French. It was exciting; she had visited so many places and knew so much. As her students, we came to respect all the different cultures of the world and learn that we were not all that different.

Ms. Sherderis taught us our actions have consequences that do not just affect us. Everyone and everything was connected, so when I threw my gum in the grass outside, she explained that a series of things could happen now. It could sit there for years not decomposing or a bird could eat it, get sick, not be able to feed its babies, causing harm to their ecosystem, and killing them. While this might have seemed like a harsh lesson to give a third grader I was amazed that the things I did affected other people, animals, and things in the universe, we are all connected.

Every day she would sit in the cafeteria with her class. She joined us on the cramped benches and told us that she didn't need to eat with the teachers we were all equals. She made sure we had respect for everyone and this would help all of us as we left elementary school and entered the big world.

We did do academic work too in Ms. Shrederis's class. She set high standards that were always achievable with hard work. Nothing was out of reach if we tried hard

enough. Ms. Shrederis always kept the balance between fun and school work. One of her main concerns for us was to become good citizens. She instilled the value of literacy and mathematics in us, for surviving adult life. She knew that we all could do great things and therefore she pushed us to our limits in everything we did, reading the hardest books and solving the toughest math problems. In the end we were rewarded in our future grades.

I have been fortunate enough to stay in touch with her during my middle school and high school career. I still enjoy getting post cards from the places she visits, Antarctica to China. She still gives me advice about school and life. I know that she will forever be in my heart for the support and lessons she gave me.

BTA Scholarship: Samantha Wilson

For the past thirteen years many teachers have impacted my life in more ways than one. In tenth grade I had the pleasure of having a teacher who went out of his way to not only teach me and my peers but to form a student teacher bond which still exists between us today. He helped me through many situations and also influenced me into perusing psychology. I am going to school to study Psychology in the fall at Mont Saint Mary College thanks to Mr. William Castaldi.

Mr. Castaldi has had a major impact on my life for the past three years. I have always known that working with children is what I wanted to do when I got out of college no matter what field it would be in. When I first started Mr. C's psychology class I was just trying something new. After the first few weeks I realized that this is what I want to do with my life and Mr. C helped me discover that. Throughout the course I excelled, worked very hard and discovered all the little bits and pieces of psychology. Learning

about how the brain works, the different types of psychology and the theories that they developed from changed the way I look at the world. This psychology class helped me realize that children out there will always need help with situations and I wanted to be that person.

In August when I received my schedule for junior year I was ecstatic when I learned that Mr. Castaldi would be my US History teacher, and that I would have him for longer than a semester. Mr. C. again impressed me as a teacher. He did not just write notes on the board and make us copy them down without explanation; he got up in front of the class and was able to relate the notes to our age group. Every lesson was interesting; we had hands on activities, projects, and competitions. He made learning fun. Mr. Castaldi has always believed in me, supported me, and helped me make decisions which were in my interest. When something was wrong he was the first person to pull me aside and make sure I was okay. By

doing this I knew that he cared about his students and wanted them to have the best opportunities possible.

Mr. Castaldi has been a positive influence in my life since I first stepped into his class. He has taught me how to understand psychology and gave me the basis of what I needed to become successful in DCC Psychology, which I took junior year. I got to his class every day to catch up and tell him what my plans are for next year. He helped me choose the schools I applied to, and supported the decision I made. I know that we will keep in contact even after I graduate and this is why he is the most influential teacher I have ever had.

BTA Barbeque

By Charlotte Sypher, BHS

Saturday June 20th was our first (hopefully annual) family Barbeque. It was held at the East Hook Sportsmen Association Club in Fishkill. In spite of the rain, we had an excellent turnout. The barbeque was a great success, thanks to all who organized the event, attended, and brought loads of snacks and desserts to go along with the burgers, hotdogs, etc.

The kids, big and small, played in the rain – horseshoes, ball, and swimming. Others enjoyed the

excellent music provided by Al Allen (RMS) and good food provided by Eddie's Deli under the pavilion.

Thanks to Bridget Giavatto and her husband for arranging the use of the club – what a great place to party! Karen DeCandia made the arrangements for our life guards: Hannah Wood and Nicole Butler (who were such hearty souls watching over our swimmers in the rain). Alison Laspada provided extra cover (tent) and ran the grill with her team of cooks, Diane D'Uva, Linda Vacirca, Rich Caragine, and Lauri

Malin. As usual, Linda, with her artistic abilities, made the job extra special by making outfits for our cooks complete with Elvis aprons and sunglasses.

Suggestions that people have made for the next BBQ include: raffles and prizes, board games and contests. I hope the next BBQ is bigger and better – come out and get involved; bring your ideas!



A Retiree at the BBQ

By Edith Warg, BTA Retiree

On a rainy Saturday (one of sixteen consecutive days of rain) in June I had a date to meet up with some of my former teaching buddies at the first annual BTA Picnic. What a great time to sit back and relax amongst friends. The rain did not dampen the spirits of those who ventured out. Children were swimming in the rain (after they were already wet), families played catch between the raindrops, and friends talked under the pavilion. We had an abundance of food that was artfully prepared by our own BTA cooking volunteers who donned chef aprons crafted by Linda Vicerca.

Young and old alike had a great afternoon. If you could not make it this year, make sure you clear your calendar for next year. A heartfelt thank you goes out to all who helped bring the picnic to fruition.

Warm wishes for a relaxing summer!

Art Teachers Selected for Pilot Program

Stacy Ward-Kelly and Jennie Duke were one of 12 teams selected nationally for a pilot program entitled Art:21 Educators. This program is a year-long professional development initiative designed to cultivate and support K-12 art educators interested in bringing contemporary art, artists, and themes into their classrooms. Join a national group of educators to explore, discuss, design, and document curriculum around the art of our times.

Art:21 Educators begins with an opportunity to work with Art:21 staff, visiting artists, and guest presenters to develop a familiarity with contemporary art and artists as well as learn strategies for integrating related themes and working processes into the classroom. Using Art:21 films and educational materials along with museum and studio visits, participants will return to their schools with units of study designed for implementation during the subsequent academic year.

Jennie Duke stated that she and Stacy Ward-Kelly "are really excited to participate and to bring this new curriculum to the Beacon art department". *(source for much of the information for this article was from the Art:21 blog)*

Mock DWI at BHS

By Rachel Faiella, BHS

On May 29th Beacon High School SADD chapter (Students Against Destructive Decisions) along with Beacon Police, fire, volunteer ambulance and Mobil Life Support performed a mock accident. We simulated a horrific accident that resulted in fatalities. The Beacon High School SADD chapter played the victims. The purpose of this simulation was to remind students about the consequences of drinking and driving especially around prom season. The simulation was presented to the Beacon High School Senior class and was meant to inform teenagers about the reality to drinking and driving with the hope of saving lives.



Save the Date: Come Join the Team!

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer

Sunday, October 18, 2009

Woodbury Commons Outlet Center

The BTA will be sponsoring a team and we would like to have you join us. The walk is an easy path around Woodbury Commons. After the walk you can shop if you want as there are special discounts for participants.

More info will be sent out during the summer and early September. T shirt orders will be taken during that time.

Hope to see you there!

Donna Snowden and Arleen Phipers

Well Wishes to Our Union Members

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

Glenham

- ◆ Donna Snowden is celebrating the graduations of her children. Mark Snowden graduated from the University at Albany in May, Samantha Snowden will graduate from BHS 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 (BTA Vice President, JFV) or Dawn Clemens (Newsletter Editor, BHS).

BTA Committees

Recently, Kim Atwell sent out a listing of the committees that are included in the BTA Constitution. As a result of the ratification of the new constitution, there are several new committees that will be forming in the fall. Please consider getting involved in one of the committees. Your involvement helps the union to be successful and strong. If you would like to join a committee, please inform Kim Atwell.

Committee	Chairperson	Purpose
Election	Vice President	-Responsible for all elections of officers, special elections, voting on the contract, constitutional amendments, referenda and recalls.
Membership	Secretary	-Plan and execute a dynamic program to insure the continued growth and vitality of the BTA -Shall keep accurate and up to date membership enrollment.
Budget	Treasurer	-Prepare the proposed annual budget of the Association for presentation to the Executive Board, Representative Assembly, and the membership.
Constitution	Secretary	-Shall review the BTA Constitution on a yearly basis
Grievance	Vice President	-Shall insure all provisions of the current contractual agreement between the BTA and the Board of Education are upheld and shall report all grievances to the Representative Assembly.
Scholarship		-Responsible for acquiring funds for scholarships and determining the criteria for eligibility for the BTA scholarships.
Public Relations		-Prepare and disseminate information from the Association to the public using the following media: newspapers, radio, television, newsletters, and the website, etc. -Seek to develop understanding of the Association's philosophy and its programs and also the programs of the Beacon city School District. -Develop procedures by which the Association can work cooperatively with parents and the public with civic, fraternal, and social organizations -Chairperson of this committee will appoint the editors of the newsletter.
Political Action		-Be responsible for soliciting contributions from the membership for VOTE/COPE. -Consider recommendations of NYSUT and AFL/CIO and this Association pertaining to all levels of government. -Study proposed legislation and the records of government officials that may affect this Association and our schools. -Initiate recommendations on the basis of its study to the Representative Assembly and the membership.
Social		-Shall make arrangements for any social affairs of the BTA and should prepare a budget of all costs to be incurred and submit them to the Treasurer for approval by the Executive Board.
Technology	Bill Castaldi, BHS Tom Burns, BHS	-Shall be responsible for the development and upkeep of the BTA website and developing a budget for the cost of its upkeep for approval to the Treasurer.
Retirement	Gina Fontenot, BHS Kim Atwell, BHS	-Shall be responsible for informing the membership of any changes within the New York State Retirement System and report them to the Representative Assembly.