



# THE UNION SOUND

THE VOICE OF A SOUND UNION



December 2019

*Rondout Valley Federation of Teachers and School-Related Professionals*

Volume 44, Issue 4

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

### January

- 01: School closed
- 06: Budget Committee meeting @ 6:30pm at the DO
- 08: RVF Executive Committee meeting @ 4:15pm at the RVF Office
- 14: BOE meeting @ 7:00pm at the DO
- 18: Deadline for submissions to *The Union Sound*
- 20: School closed
- 28: BOE meeting @ 7:00pm at the DO



### IN THIS ISSUE:

Monthly Calendar by Robyn McDonough	<b>1</b>
President's Message by Robert McDonough	<b>1</b>
History Corner by Jennifer Slauson	<b>2</b>
Guest Column by Kevin Storrs	<b>2</b>

## President's Message

by Robert McDonough

Well, I can't believe it, but another year has come to an end. As we take our time off from work for the holidays, let us remember the things for which we should be thankful: family, friends, our colleagues, and our profession. No matter which holiday we celebrate, our time off is a time to rest and reflect on the year that passed and the things that really matter to us.

We all have such busy days in our profession that often times we don't get a chance to breathe and take it all in and enjoy the day. Our jobs are so hectic, challenging, and mentally exhausting that when we hear from that angry parent

at the end of the day, it is easy to trick ourselves into thinking that they must all feel that way. We often forget that we tend to always hear from those who are unhappy, while the large majority stay silently content. When you put it all in perspective, we really do have great colleagues and students. We really do work in a good profession.

So, as we head together on this journey into the third decade of the millennium and the sixth decade of our Federation, I am very proud to report that the state of our union is stronger than ever. I wish you all a restful vacation and a very happy and healthy new year.

### *The Union Sound*

**Editor-in-Chief:**  
Robyn McDonough

**Assistant Editors:**  
Jennifer Slauson,  
Tara Thibault-Edmonds,  
Colleen Vitti

**President:**  
Robert McDonough

**Contributors:**  
Robert McDonough,  
Robyn McDonough,  
Jennifer Slauson,  
Kevin Storrs

## History Corner

by Jennifer Slauson

### DID YOU KNOW?

It's one of the hardest jobs out there. There's the long hours, the physical endurance, the need to always be professional and in character, the ability to tolerate high-stress situations every day, a willingness to travel from building to building, and the seemingly endless flow of children. And don't forget the requirements to even enter the profession: background checks, rigorous method classes, and training designed to cover almost every situation you might ever encounter.

Thankfully, these dedicated professionals have several unions representing their interests. One of the largest is The Amalgamated Order of Real-Bearded Santas (AORBS), and,

yes, they insist that fake-bearded imposters are not admitted. According to a 2008 Santa Survey conducted by the Kringle Group, the average Santa is 59 years old and 5' 8" tall with an appropriately jelly-filled body of 253 pounds, and 96.5% have a real beard. However, besides the obvious real- vs. fake-beard issue, the AORBS has had other internal conflicts that have led to rival Santa factions. Since 2007, the AORBS has splintered. Formerly expelled and banned members who allegedly "engaged in un-Santa-like dialogue" and "maligned fellow Santas on Elf Net" (the AORBS internet chat group) created their own new groups, such as The Red Suit Society and The Fraternal Order of Real Bearded Santas (FORBS). The *Wall Street Journal* described this rivalry as a raging "civil war" and to date, their disputes are still unresolved. And even though the quarrel continues, these Santas maintain their merry personas. In a *Time* interview, Bob Callahan, president of FORBS, said "We're Santa 24 hours a day. If I go to the grocery store, I can't be offstage. Kids look at me, and they know. Sometimes a wink goes a long way."

## Guest Column

by Kevin Storrs

### OBSERVATIONS FROM THE 300 WING

Greetings from room 307 in the High School—the proverbial cave where I reside most days, plying our trade to the best of my ability and where I occasionally think deep thoughts with caffeinated assistance. Years back, I used this forum to rail against the administrative machine so to speak: bullying, questionable district actions, and anything that struck my fancy. The high school now, leastwise from my cave view, appears calm, with most seeming to be playing and working well together. Our leader, Jessica Torok, is applying endless energy to our building and has succeeded in creating and sustaining a collegial environment that Bob Cook would have appreciated.

Approaching the twilight of my career (retirement is knocking), I find myself reflecting more and more on the things I have learned over the years. Things like don't take personally student resistance to doing work. Development of self-discipline is a very personal journey, and in today's society, it appears that the immediacy of electronic devices and examples (or not) provided by their parents make it increasingly difficult to break through this barrier. I write this and immediately cringe, for I'm beginning to sound like any other veteran teacher from years past who comments, "Things are so different now than when I started." Anyone here remember vowing to never be "that" teacher? One thing that has not changed is that while our use of technology is all-pervasive, our students still need us to model alternative, healthy behaviors.

Many years ago when I first started to consider entering the classroom, I went to observe a friend teach at Spackenkil High

School. Fran and I were teammates on the Y.M.C.A. Masters swimming team and had just competed together. Fran had been encouraging me to consider teaching as an avenue of endeavor since I was already passionate about coaching. I took him up on his offer to observe him for a day. I sat in on a U.S. History class and a senior P.I.G. class and was struck with how many students were disengaged, quietly chatting, or otherwise not invested in the topic or their education. Upon further reflection many years later with the hindsight of my own experience and training, it is possible that Fran may have needed a T.I.P. However, what he said to me in response to my question, "How do you do this when so many don't seem to care?" has never left me. Fran's response was, "I long ago gave up the notion that I'm here to save the world. That is overreach even for the best of teachers. I survive and thrive based on the true connections I make with a handful of students every year. Some years it may only be five or so students. Other years, perhaps closer to twenty. As long as I can help some who are willing and receptive, I feel that I'm doing the job."

Sure, I'd love to save the world, eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and more; however, if I can touch the lives of those open and ready for it and open a few eyes and gently encourage those who may still be resistant to an alternative path, then I'm doing okay. Strangely enough, despite almost thirty years in the classroom, Fran's advice still rings true for me today.

Happy Holidays to all my fellow comrades in arms. Administrators, teachers, paras and support staff, please remember that your positive actions pay forward the gifts of acceptance and encouragement others once provided to you. Every positive relationship with a student has the potential to exponentially impact others. No, we are not here to save the world, but we can do our best to help one student at a time.