



# THE UNION SOUND

THE VOICE OF A SOUND UNION



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

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## President's Message

by Robert McDonough

This remarkable 2019-2020 school year has finally come to an end. I never imagined in a million years when I ran for RVF President that my first year as president would see an impeachment trial of a US President, a pandemic and subsequent economic shutdown, and civil unrest in the US. The reason we have met these challenges is largely because of you all.

I want to thank you all for everything you have accomplished this school year. From revamping your classrooms and continuing to educate our students, to creating PPE for our local

health care workers, to feeding our community, you have all done an amazing job, and I am proud to represent you. These acts did not go unnoticed by our community. The school budget passed by a three-to-one margin, and I would like to believe it is, in small part, due to us all and the dedication we've shown. In these unsure times, it has been this small community of Rondout Valley that has given me hope. Yes, "The Audacity of Hope," as some have said.

As we head into this summer, much is still unknown for the future, but I have faith that no matter what is to come, we will all get through it together. I know that with such dedicated and creative staff, we will overcome any obstacle thrown in our way.

I want to personally thank all of our retirees for their lifetime of dedication to children and education. I know these were not the circumstances any of you planned on retiring under, but soon this pandemic will be over, and you will be enjoying your new lives and traveling to any place you desire. I wish you all health and happiness in your retirement and the best of luck in the future.

I wish everyone a safe and restful summer and hope you have time to recharge and relax. Enjoy the Retiree Issue of *The Union Sound*.



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### The Union Sound

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## Marbletown Retirees

**KATHY YEAGER, INA COLE,  
CAROL LAGOY, MARYANN BEARE,  
JOY MILLER, KYRA SAHASRABUDHE**

As this school year is rapidly coming to a close, I wanted to honor some important staff members at Marbletown Elementary who are retiring after years of dedication and service to our students, our staff, and our school community. These educators have been loyal employees to the Rondout Valley School District for years and deserve to be recognized.

Kathy Yeager has been providing AIS reading services to Marbletown students for the past 24 years. She has not only taught students to read during the school day, but she has taught many after-school programs, at no cost to our District or students. I can remember her showing students how to sew, by hand and on a sewing machine, and then boiling water to help them prepare a spaghetti and meatball feast. She is an excellent team partner as well. Kathy and I co-taught a very successful reading/writing pilot program for numerous years. Together we also took a plethora of in-service classes. I remember when we were colonial soldiers, foraging for our food at Fort Ticonderoga, riding on an open-air bus touring historical houses, and developing a career unit with the help of Port Ewen BOCES for our second-grade students at MES. Kathy is a wealth of information when it comes to reading, student development, and writing. She even headed one of our District's Strategic Planning Committees many years ago. Her years of experience, knowledge, and wisdom have made her a huge value to the students she served—as she taught them to read—and to our District. I'm happy to say that not only has she been a close colleague but a fabulous forever friend.

Down the hall to the right is Ina Cole's room. She is a speech pathologist who has been a faithful employee for the past 27 years. One of her gifts is she can walk into a room, listen to a student speak, and can tell whether or not that student requires her expertise. She can rectify a tongue thrust, get a student to know the difference between above and below, and will consult on a regular basis with a classroom teacher to make sure that her student gets exactly what he/she needs. I can remember Ina helping to prepare, cook, and serve at our after-school dinners that our staff used to host as a thank you to our PTA. I will miss seeing Ina every day at school but will still look forward to seeing her at our holiday and summer get-togethers.

Carol LaGoy, whom I met 34 years ago as her kindergarten classroom was across the hall from me, not only became a colleague but a roommate (in our younger days) and a friend. Carol has been a kindergarten teacher for many years but is ending her career as a first-grade inclusion teacher. Carol has a love of learning and teaching younger students. She greets them every morning with a smile on her face and instills her love of learning into her classroom lessons. I remember going to NYC with her and a few other professionals for a week to attend Columbia Teachers College to learn the Lucy Calkins reading and writing program. Upon returning, Carol eagerly embraced what she learned and brought it back into her classroom, and her students were the ones who truly benefitted. As she packs her classroom up and ventures out into her next phase, it won't be goodbye. I'll be visiting her on the beach in the Sunshine State on our yearly trip.

Down the hall in room 10 is Maryann Beare, a kindergarten inclusion classroom teacher. She has been part of the Rondout Valley School District for the past 33 years. Her students are referred to as the "Bear Cubs," a perfect name for her children as they become a close-knit class community. She gives her heart and soul to these students, brings her love of NASCAR into her classroom, and helps them learn in any way possible. During the holidays, not only does Mrs. Beare bring the season to her students but also brings the entire spirit to Marbletown Elementary School. The classrooms decorate their doors for a contest she organizes, and the teachers sport their ugliest holiday sweaters. Mrs. Beare, using her own monies, buys gifts for the participants and winners. Everyone in the building eagerly gathers into the gymnasium on the last day prior to our winter recess break to eagerly anticipate the results. It's an exciting event! As a fellow animal advocate, I will always continue staying in touch with Mrs. Beare to try to help all our local critters that are in need.

As you bring the students to lunch in our cafeteria, you hear children singing as you pass our music room. Inside that room is Mrs. Joy Miller. She has been teaching music for 40+ years! She is a staple here at Marbletown Elementary School and the only music teacher I have known at our school. Under her guidance and dedication, the students enjoy singing, dancing, and learning to play the recorder. She has organized so many concerts for the students here at our school. I vividly remember one concert in particular. In the "olden days," the concerts were for the entire school and were held on our school's side lawn. The students were on the bleachers singing and the families were sitting on blankets and lawn chairs.

Suddenly, someone noticed a big bear lumbering across the street towards the direction of our concert. Mrs. Miller maintained her composure and, in an orderly fashion, directed the students and their families back into the school. That concert and bear will be ingrained in my memory forever. I hope to still see Joy as maybe, just maybe, she still might come back to Marbletown Elementary School to teach piano lessons to students. In the meantime, she will be enjoying her brand new house and her grandchildren.

Our last retiree is Ms. Kyra Sahasrabudhe. Prior to meeting her, I would hear nice things about her as a teacher. She originally taught in Rosendale Elementary School, and when that building closed, she joined us here at Marbletown Elementary School. She has taught numerous grades but is ending her career as a second-grade teacher. Since I am a third-grade instructor, I tend to get some of her students the following year. In September, as I am reviewing curriculum from the year before, her students would always raise their hands and say, "I remember that we did that last year," or "Ms. S. taught us that, and we did this follow up activity." This was always

"music" to my ears as I knew they were coming into my classroom prepared. Kyra is also very generous. Not only does she offer our staff well-needed yoga lessons, but every year she also offers her beautiful house and property to host our end-of-the-year party. There we toast to another year completed and to a happy summer. Even after her departure, Kyra will continue to host our party. Therefore, there is no goodbye necessary.

As we are in unprecedented times and our school year is ending like no other year, it is important to honor these individuals. Together they have over 100+ years of service! Our students, staff, and school community will definitely feel the impact of losing these fabulous educators. There is definitely something to say about longevity and their base of educational knowledge that only years to a District and a profession can buy. Happy Retirement, Kathy, Ina, Carol, Maryann, Joy, and Kyra, and congratulations on extending your weekends with five days. All the best to each of you, as you journey into this new chapter in your life!

With love,

~ Laurie (Ajemian Knapp)

## JOY MILLER

Joy Miller has taught music to elementary school children for 38 years, working at different times in each of the District's four elementary schools: Accord, Kerhonkson, Marbletown, and Rosendale—as well as the Middle School. She will truly be missed by her students and the staff of the Rondout Valley Central School District.

Joy Young Miller was raised on Staten Island, NY. She studied music at Wagner College on Staten Island and graduated in 1976. She began her teaching career working in schools on Staten Island.

Joy and her husband Robert Miller moved to this area in the late 70s. She continued her education at SUNY New Paltz and received a Master's Degree in Early Education in 1980. Joy and Bob have three children—Brent, Marissa, and Luke—who all attended the Rondout Valley School District. Recently they have welcomed two grandchildren to their family, and a third grandchild will be born this year.

Joy joined the Rondout Valley staff in September of 1982, teaching music part-time in both Accord and Rosendale Elementary Schools. In 1984, she took a six-month maternity leave for her second child, Marissa. She returned to Rondout, where she became a full-time employee and

began teaching music at Marbletown Elementary School. In 1990, her service was interrupted once more when she took a one-year maternity leave for her third child, Luke. In September of 1991, Joy returned to Marbletown, where she taught music to students in kindergarten through fourth grade. Joy even taught at the Middle School when the fourth-grade students were transferred there. In 2013 after Debbie Smiseth retired, Joy became the only elementary music teacher in the District, teaching kindergarten through third grade at Kerhonkson and Marbletown Elementary Schools.

Joy's teaching career included many innovative music classroom techniques. One of her major accomplishments was applying for and receiving a grant for a Yamaha Piano Lab. Students at Marbletown were able to experience music through the classroom's keyboards. Joy spent many after-school and evening hours presenting concerts as well as special music and dance programs for students' families and the Rondout Valley community. Joy, an accomplished pianist, also taught piano to private students.

We hope Joy has a wonderful retirement enjoying her new house and spending time with her expanding family.

~ Joyce Hengstenberg, Barbara Jones, and Deborah Smiseth

## MARYANN BEARE

I am honored to write a few things about my colleague and dear friend Maryann Beare. Maryann has taught at Marbletown for over 33 years. She started her career as a first-grade teacher and then changed grades and joined our kindergarten team, where she has been for the past 24 years.

I have taught across the hallway from Maryann for the past 30 years. I have only heard her speak to a child with love, kindness, and compassion. Maryann comes from the theory that we, as educators, need to take care of the whole child. Maryann often spends her own money buying

clothes, food, toys, or anything that a child or a family may need.

Maryann is a loyal, reliable, dedicated, and compassionate teacher. She brings laughter, fun, and excitement to her classroom. As a dear friend, Maryann always listens, gives words of wisdom, and lifts spirits when they need lifting, and she always has chocolate to make you feel better!

I wish her a fun, happy, relaxing, and well-deserved retirement. Have fun watching NASCAR, scratching lottery tickets, and traveling with Bill! Much love,

~ Darlene O'Donnell

## Kerhonkson Retirees

### GAIL WIKANE

I have had the pleasure of co-teaching with Gail for the last eight years. She has brought so much knowledge, experience, and creativity to our classroom as well as her love of reading, her expertise in math and science, and—of course—her kindness, nurturing persona, and patience with children.

Gail always took the initiative to do whatever was necessary at any given time. She helped keep the daily structure and consistent pace of our classroom running, yet was flexible and quick to respond when needed. We could look at each other from across the room, give a signal, and know what the other was saying. Gail could finish my sentences! We were a great team! I may be losing Gail as a co-teacher, but I'm certainly not losing her friendship!

I will truly miss working with you, Gail, but I am so excited for you to start the next chapter of your life! Enjoy your family, old hobbies and new ones, and your travels.

~ Debbie Eck

When you think of the perfect teaching assistant, mother, and babysitter, one person comes to mind and that's Gail Wikane. Gail is soft spoken, patient, nurturing, and the kindest, most thoughtful person you'll ever meet. I know any child that was fortunate enough to be in Gail's company while growing up will certainly always remember her. Gail has a way with children that is nothing short of a blessing.

She was a pure blessing to many adults as well as the ideal babysitter for their children.

Gail's home, heart, and family quickly became a place of comfort with her homemade cookies, outside activities in the pool, or sleigh riding in her backyard. Whether it was social, emotional or educational, Gail was the perfect person to provide whatever children needed. She touched lives in the community, the school, her church and so many families.



Gail has been a part of the KES family for over 20 years, someone we trusted, and someone we all love and adore. As she moves on to start the next chapter of her life, we all wish her the very best. May she enjoy many happy healthy years with her husband Paul, her children, and granddaughter.

Gail, thank you for being a sincere, well-respected, loving, and dear friend. You will be deeply missed and are irreplaceable. With love,

~ Dorothy Mayone & your KES family

Happy Retirement!  
Wishing you lots of fun and happiness in your retirement.  
May you enjoy it to the fullest!  
Can you close them for me? Love,

~ Zulma  
AKA: KES PR



## LINDA YOUNG

Linda Young has chosen this year to retire from teaching. So, that means we lose a teacher who brought a unique perspective and experiences from a different time and generation. I know this because like Linda, I often reflect on the same time period, the 1960s and 70s, when life was tumultuous and fraught with struggles and passion, but there was just a little more simplicity, civility, and naivete. Like today, we had the big movements of women's rights, civil rights, and environmental justice. But there were quaint things like phone cords on a rotary phone, Mr. Rogers, *The Brady Bunch*, and running free in the neighborhood without parental supervision. We had time to enjoy the sweetness of that simplicity—if you sat under a tree in its shade, you couldn't be tempted to look at a device. Uninterrupted for long stretches, you might listen to the birds and, with your head tilted back, squint at the sky, scan the clouds, and feel the breeze. You might get a slushie with your friends and go on the swings or hang out in someone's garage. We got really bored. There was time to think. These "old days" formed us, allowing us to bring some of those stories and simple joys from the past to our students as we try to teach them about what matters: reading an actual book, spending time with friends or being alone, wondering about the stars, not just doing but being. Forgive me for sounding like an old nostalgic person because I do have to admit that iPhones are actually awesome.

After arriving at KES most days, I would stop by Linda's doorway—she would be there bright and early always beating me in! Usually she would jump out of her skin when I'd say, "Good morning," and then I'd have to say, "Sorry for scaring you!" But she didn't mind—we would look at each other with that knowing smile as if to say, "What's today's challenge, and how do we meet it?" Sometimes that question would be about the politics in the land or sometimes it would be about a personal dilemma, but most times it was about school and our students and how to make things work or make things better.

Linda came to our building in 2014, and she was new to first grade. She is a quiet, private person, so I feel lucky that little by little we got to know each other. It helped that we're both in the same grade level, in the same hallway,

love music, share the same politics, and love nature! On a personal level, I learned how much Linda loves her hometown, living in Accord throughout her life, in the same charming farmhouse where she resides to this day. She would sometimes share stories of her father and mother and what sounded like a very bucolic and wonderful childhood with them. She is devoted to her family and speaks with a twinkle in her eye and a broad smile on her face of her four children (and grandchildren) who bring her such joy! Linda is proud of having attended KES herself as a student and has fond memories, which were made in this old, beautiful brick building.

The pandemic shook the world for all of us. In our little corner in Kerhonkson, Debbie, Linda and I (and often Robin too!) huddled together virtually. We Zoomed, texted, and FaceTimed almost daily and really helped each other. That was certainly the best part of this unpredictable time in history. It made us realize we probably should've been collaborating more all along. . . I have been amazed at Linda's depth of knowledge in math and science! She created some engaging STEM experiments for the students to try at home. Even though retirement was on the horizon, Linda worked tirelessly throughout our distance-learning experience. My phone would "ding," and it would be Linda telling Debbie and me she made another tutorial. We were working on our fairytale unit, and for our Goldilocks story, Linda found a great STEM project to build and test the strength of the three bears' beds with pennies. Linda was always the biggest cheerleader for her students—continually encouraging them and coaxing their curiosity and celebrating their learning! She devoted herself to trying to help every child in every way she could.

One of the things I appreciate about Linda most is she makes time, even when I entered her room all fired up about some injustice in the world. I will miss stopping by that doorway on my way down the hall. Thank goodness for iPhones! Here is a quote for you, Linda:

What a wonderful thought it is  
that some of the best days of our lives  
haven't even happened yet.

I wish you all the best, my friend.

~ Cindy Carubia



# Congratulations!

## CINDY CARUBIA

Writing a tribute to Cindy is an honor! Cindy is firm in her beliefs and has strong values as a teacher, citizen, and a human being. She has an uncanny way of making even the mundane seem beautiful. I first discovered Cindy's love of nature when she invited me on a hike specifically to enjoy Mountain Laurel in bloom. Now, whenever I see Mountain Laurel, I think of Cindy.

In the classroom, her love of nature and concern for our fragile environment is undeniably inspirational! Through watching her teach about the creatures in our classroom ponds from Mohonk, or what was happening on the Bird Webcam that she shared with her first graders daily, you cannot help but feel excitement alongside her. That's what a great teacher does! Through leading by example, she inspires others to care about what they are learning. As more and more curriculum was demanded of first graders, Cindy always advocated for Writers Workshop. I learned so much from Cindy. As a colleague, she was always reaching out and checking to see if I needed anything. She made sure I knew I wasn't alone at Kerhonkson Elementary or alone in today's troubled world and shared how we need to stand up and push for what we know is right.

In 1971, I graduated from Rondout and "The Peace Train" by Cat Stevens was, and still is, one of my "go to" songs. Cindy, my colleague and friend, is this song. Being mindful of finding peace in everything—herself, family, school community, state, country, and the world. Rest assured, Cindy Carubia will always be on the "Peace Train" and that, my friends, is comforting.

~ Linda Young

I have had the incredible opportunity to work with Cindy Carubia over the past 23 years at KES. We have worked as fourth-grade teachers together, worked collaboratively as we team taught third grade, and in recent years we have worked side by side in Math Workshop in her first-grade classroom. All were incredible, positive, and successful experiences. Cindy was a colleague that always brought calm to my day, and if you know me at all, you know I am not always calm. She always made me look at the bigger picture and helped me see what mattered most, not only in the workplace but also in life. She was always there to listen and remind me to take care of myself when I was caring for so many others in my personal life. We have laughed together, cried together, been scared together, and partied together! We have a special bond and respect for each other. I respect the decision she has made for her future and I understand why. She is taking her own advice, which she has given to me numerous times. Take care of yourself, take care of your health. Practicing what you preach is admirable. It has made me think twice. It has made me reflect. Cindy, I will miss you more than you will ever know, more than words can ever say. You are a person that makes this world a better place. My life has been enriched by knowing you. I thank

you for that. Health and happiness is what I wish for you as you embark on this new journey known as retirement. I will not be far behind you. Enjoy every moment and be sure to experience everything you have not yet had the opportunity to. I will miss you dearly, my colleague, my friend.

~ Robin DePew

I was fortunate to have Cindy Carubia as a first-grade colleague at KES for many years. However, it was through distance learning that I really got to know Cindy and call her my friend. We worked collaboratively, sharing materials, lessons, stories, and creating memories. What I will remember most about Cindy is her love of nature and the environment. She inspired children to explore their local surroundings and to learn how to appreciate nature. Thanks to Cindy and her connections with Minnewaska State Park and the Mohonk Preserve, KES first graders had the opportunity to explore the environment, animals, and their habitats, literally in their own backyards, as well as in the classroom. Cindy will always be remembered by her students, friends, and colleagues for her love of reading and art. She had a talent for sharing her experiences with students through writing and inspiring them to do the same. Cindy, you will truly be missed by your KES family.

~ Debbie Eck

I've had the privilege and honor of working with Cindy for over 25 years. Her compassion for children, love of literacy, art, and nature made her the perfect fit for an elementary teacher. Several years ago Cindy, Robin DePew, and I had the opportunity to team teach. It was through that experience that our friendship strengthened. Working collaboratively day in and day out gives you insight to who someone really is. Cindy's calm demeanor and innate abilities to teach young children to read and love animals and nature were nothing less than amazing. The three of us would frequently reflect upon that experience as being rigorous yet rewarding. It was a learning experience we thoroughly enjoyed.

Not only did Cindy and I have KES in common, but we were friends, our children grew up together, and we've spent countless hours talking about challenges in teaching as well as in life. At least a couple of nights per week you would find Cindy and I working until 6 or 7pm, taking breaks, having a cup of coffee, and catching up on the day's events. Cindy, those are memories that I will cherish and carry with me as you begin your next exciting journey outside the walls of KES.

You've been a positive inspiration to so many children and adults. You've touched lives and certainly have left gigantic shoes to fill. As you begin your next journey of your bi-coastal life don't forget to turn around and remember your friends back home. I will miss you, dear friend, but I wish you many years of good health, happiness and excitement. I'll just be a text and cup of coffee away. Hugs to you.

~ Dorothy Mayone

## RITA MEKULIK

Dear Rita,

I really enjoyed having you as my teaching assistant, and I'm glad I got the chance to work with you. I wish it could have been for longer. Wishing you a wonderful retirement. Love,

~ Hailey Johnson

Rita was always very calm and professional in the Health Office. She understood that what happens in the Health Office stays in the Health Office. Her family is the most important thing in her life, but she loved working at KES, and we loved having her there! Wishing you health, peace, and the time to follow your dreams.

~ Rita Stoddard

*I'm just a text away* as Rita used to say! Rita and I worked together side by side for 15 years. She became my best friend,

confidant, and so much more than a co-worker. We both had each other's back through thick and thin and literally through life and death. Rita is an amazing human being, woman, wife, mother, grandma, daughter, sister, mother-in-law, and best friend. I have been beyond blessed and honored to have worked with Rita for the length I was able. I wish we could have continued our journey longer, but Rita finished this chapter and has moved on to a more important role.

Rita, no one in this world could have attempted to fill your shoes. We have been through so much together—even buying your house! You are one of the very few that truly knows the real me, the one anyone can confide in at anytime. This is certainly not a goodbye—just a see you later. Thank you for being an absolute amazing friend for all these years. I couldn't have gotten through all this without your love and support. I wish you complete happiness, love, and joy! Enjoy every moment of retirement and live life to the fullest! With tears in my eyes, I can say I love you, my friend! Love,

~ Maria Dunham

# Retirement

## Intermediate/Junior High Retirees

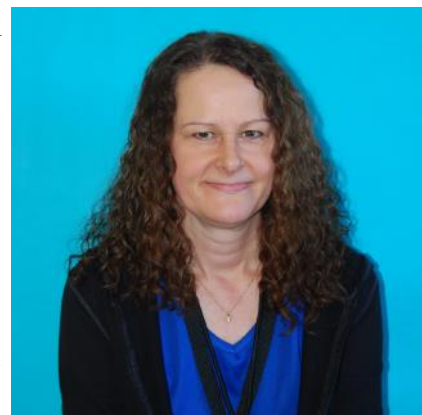
### JUDY TRAFICANTI

My first year at Rondout, I worked at Kerhonkson as a counselor two days a week. As a part-time person, it is not always easy to get to know people or for people to know what your role is. Judy was one of the kindest people that I met right from the start. I always had positive memories of her as she was incredibly helpful, inclusive, and welcoming whenever I was in a classroom that she was in or when I stopped by her room. I grew to really like Kerhonkson that year, in part because of Judy's kind heart.

When I heard she was coming to work with the 7th and 8th graders, I was so happy. Since then, she has been a great colleague to work with. She is so appreciative of the little things that I see as being part of my every day role, yet she extends her gratitude often. In addition, her interest

in the social emotional well-being of the students is evident in her daily approach. She truly cares about the kids.

I will miss seeing her every morning in the main hallway near her room where we would watch the kids come in off of the buses until first period started. She has been a great person to work with and will be missed!!



~ Nanette Simone

## JOE BROWN

Joe Brown has been a special education teacher in the Rondout Valley Central School District for 32 years. He worked at Marbletown Elementary, Rosendale Elementary, and the Intermediate School. Joe had self-contained classrooms, served as an inclusion teacher, and was a co-teacher in a 4<sup>th</sup>-grade classroom for the last eight years. He served as a RVF representative while at Rosendale Elementary and was a member of many contract negotiation teams.

Joe was a dedicated teacher. He did what he knew how to do best. He imparted crucial skills and knowledge to students that often were not necessarily thirsting for that knowledge. He accomplished this ultimate challenge with an innate understanding of his students' needs, endless patience, and a good sense of humor. He was able to reach the unique individual hiding behind feigned boredom or lack of interest. Joe supported all of the students and provided additional opportunities for those who needed to be challenged. Most recently, he would greet children daily outside the entrance

door as they packed into the school. He had the ability to draw a positive energy from all of the children.

Joe was a team player. He would do whatever was necessary to support his colleagues. He was willing to seek new strategies to solve problems and was flexible in team decision making. He was never self-serving but promoted what was best for all. He willingly organized the scheduling and set up of the NYS 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Science Test for many years.

We want to thank Joe on behalf of his students for making learning easier and enjoyable, for tolerating their occasional resistance to cooperate, and for always caring about their well-being.

We also want to thank Joe on behalf of the 4<sup>th</sup>-grade team for his constant support in the classroom, for tolerating our occasional bad days, and, most of all, for his unyielding friendship. You will be missed.

Joe, we hope your retirement years are filled with beautiful memories. You deserve the best! Happy Trails!

*~ Sue Gantz and Cheri Simmons*

## LORRAINE IOCOVELLO

Lorraine Iocovello has worked as a teaching assistant in the Rondout Valley CSD for many years and has worked in multiple buildings. Lorraine has worked in the High School, Intermediate School, and the Junior High School. She frequently worked one-on-one with students, making a huge impact in their lives.

For the last two years, we have been fortunate enough to have had Lorraine working with us in the Junior High TIP program. Lorraine consistently went above and beyond in the classroom. She arrived early every day and would help to get the classroom ready for the students, arrival. Lorraine was always willing to do anything that was asked of her, and she did it with a smile.

Lorraine could be counted on for everything and anything. She is also an incredibly generous person. When Lorraine grocery shopped, the children in our classroom were part of her shopping list. Lorraine was there for anything the students needed. Whether it meant making sure students had lunch money, were able to go on field trips, or needed clothing, Lorraine would make it happen, and no one ever knew where the money came from.

The students viewed Lorraine as a grandmother. She made the students feel very safe and comfortable when she was in the room. Lorraine was a great asset to the TIP program and our children's education. She will be greatly missed!

*~ Allison Beesmer and Robyn Lucaszewski*

## DONNA DEPOALA

Donna DePoala is a teaching assistant who spent many years at both the Middle School and the High School in Rondout, including as a 1:1 assistant in Life Skills classrooms. I met her when she came to the library a year ago, first to fill in for Shania Hitchcock, and then to work in the testing center. The two qualities I appreciated most about Donna were her resolve to get things right and her determination to push students to do their best. Shania had big shoes to fill, and every day I would remember something else she used to do. By the end of her time in the library, her desk and computer

were papered with Post-It notes to herself, so she didn't have to ask me more than once how to do something. When new aides came to work in the library, Donna took it upon herself to make sure these people got every detail right too. Later, in the testing center, I watched Donna encourage students to complete tests, to take the time they needed, and to try their best. She was always firm but warm with these students, pushing them to work through tiredness and frustration. I wish her all the best for a happy, healthy, and well-deserved retirement. Her grandchildren will be lucky to have her!

*~ Emma Tourtelot*



# High School Retirees

## FERN SARNOFF

Here's to Fern!

To those of you that don't know, Fern Sarnoff is and has always been a model educator. Her career as both artist and art educator is full of beautiful highlights and has been a fruitful labor of love. Unlike other educational fields, the greatest art educators maintain a studio practice that, for many, requires great skill and effort to balance. Many struggle to succeed. This is not the case for Fern—she has made her very successful balance seem effortless; her studio and educational practices have influenced one another seamlessly.

Most significant is her commitment to this community. She cares about all of us and our children and has made it the center of her life's work. This is made evident in her career of hard work and dedication in the classroom that has fostered a love for learning for some of our most challenging students, as well as the fact that she raised over

\$100,000 for local food pantries through her organization of Empty Bowls fundraisers.

Congratulations to you, Fern, and the rest of the retirees from Rondout Valley Central School District, for a long and fruitful career dedicated to our students and community. May your reward be as immeasurable as your impact. As we say in the Marine Corps, *fair winds and following seas!*

~ Stephen Protoss  
(The Son-in-law)



## KEVIN STORRS

Kevin Storrs and I began together in 1998-1999, so I am pleased to write this for him.

That first year Kevin had a lousy assignment, but he did a really good job squeezing "lemonade from the lemons." Then, with program changes, Kevin saw a way to move towards what he really wanted and expected: a position as a mainstream social studies classroom instructor.

Kevin was as steady and solid as they come, producing clear, concise materials and bringing his nimble mind to Rondout students as a Global Studies teacher. But this was not his natural "fit," and Kevin evolved again, this time becoming our respected department authority in the areas of US History and Law Studies.

Kevin carried his precision for legal language into many rounds of contract negotiations, a contribution highlighted by RVF President Robert McDonough: "Happy retirement to my old TNT buddy! I'm going to miss you and your 'Observations from the 300-wing'." And colleague (Kevin always liked "Comrade") Chris Frenza echoes this sentiment: "Kevin was always the voice of the 300-wing. His 'Observations' always said what everybody was thinking."

Deb Ricci: "You fought fiercely to maintain the social

studies position when it was in jeopardy of being cut, which was every year for my first six years."

Jenn Slauson: "You have always been a coach. You taught my kids to swim and helped me learn the strokes here at Rondout. Thanks, Kevin!"

John Soi: "Your humor, intellect, and mentorship has made me happy to be your classroom neighbor. I wish you relaxation, adventure, and family time in your retirement."

"The Best Department Ever!" saw you married, start a family, and embrace fatherhood. Despite profound challenges in education, you accomplished over a twenty-year period what we all strive for: to complete a fine and honorable career. Congratulations, Kevin!

~ David Cook



## RHONDA HIGBY

Despite her small stature, Rhonda Higby is leaving behind some big shoes to fill. A true lifelong learner, Rhonda has never stopped improving her work as an educator. When the Common Core curriculum was rolled out, she enrolled in college math classes, so she could be a better teacher. She has always been dedicated to her profession and her students; even now, knowing she is retiring at the end of this year, she continues to insist on learning new tricks, tools, and technologies to best serve her students in this time of need. Her dedication has always been evident as she could often be seen working late into the day in her room. As a colleague, she has offered support and advice whenever any of us needed it and has worked tirelessly as our liaison even in these most difficult of times. Rhonda is the “Hostess with the Mostess” and has held some pretty fun math “department meetings.” Our department has become a cohesive family thanks to Rhonda’s leadership. She recently said to one of us, “Thanks for teaching this

old dog some new tricks,” but really we should be thanking her for her years of service to the Rondout community and the education community as a whole.

We wish you all the best in your retirement, Rhonda! We’ll miss you!!

Love and Hugs!



~ The High School Math Department  
Elise, Lisa M, Lisa S, Lynne, Megan and Ron

## RON PERROTTA

Ron Perrotta! The Man, The Myth, The Legend! I have probably started this tribute to Ron 10-20 times in the last year—trying to accurately portray the many memorable moments of our 29-year friendship. Yes, 2020, the year of Coronavirus, quarantine, social distancing, murder hornets, and distance learning, Ron has decided to retire. I always knew it would take an act of a higher power but never expected this is what it would take. This is Ron’s 43<sup>rd</sup> year of teaching—36 of those at Rondout Valley High School. He has been a Union Building Rep for over 20 years. He didn’t run for the office initially—we secretly wrote his name on the ballot, and he won! Ron’s been a strong Building Rep advocate, working hard for the staff members.

Born and raised in Westchester County, Ron got his Associate’s Degree from the University of Miami and his Bachelor’s Degree from the University of Virginia. His first teaching job was at Martinsville High School in VA. He enjoyed teaching there but soon returned to New York. He began his career at Rondout in 1984 in the Science Department, teaching Living Environment. He began building his little menagerie of animals, which at one time consisted of alligators, piranhas, HUGE boa constrictors, parrots, turtles, fish—you name it. Any freshman who had any fear of animals soon overcame those fears to survive Bio class. There are so many stories of his animal adventures that I could fill an entire page. One that comes

to mind is when one of the alligators somehow got out of its enclosure and was loose in the classroom. The night custodian opened the door to come in and clean and boom—there was this gator hissing at him, mouth wide open. Out the door went the custodian, yelling, “Ron! Ron!” It was not uncommon for the occasional snake to get loose as well—sometimes taking months to be found—either by showing up in an office or falling out of the ceiling. That made for some exciting and, I admit, terrifying moments, but we all survived and had a good laugh afterward.

When I first started at Rondout in 1992, people kept saying, “Have you met Ron yet?” I was like, “Who is Ron?” Almost on cue, Ron showed up in the Health Office, saying, “I’ve come to meet the new nurse!” Well, that one visit led to another and another until it was daily—then many times a day to every spare moment! Twenty-nine years of friendship has resulted in laughter, serious moments (yes, a few scary ones like when he fell



off his roof), and a sharing of mutual respect. When someone can't find Ron, they call the Health Office first, looking for him.

Ron is now on his third generation of students. He has taught the parents of this year's classes, as well as some of their grandparents. Many parents have requested Ron to be their child's teacher because they enjoyed him as their teacher. Ron's unique style of teaching can shake even the hardcore person until it becomes apparent that his students love him; students work for him, and most of them succeed. Ron has spent countless hours on the phone calling parents, reaching out to discuss their children's progress or lack of progress, and always trying to push them to work up to their potential. He has been very active in home tutoring as well. We lost count long ago of how many WISE mentees he has worked with. In return, he has earned the trust of these students, who often seek him out when they have problems weighing on their minds. He is a teacher that they will never forget.

Ron has developed many "Ronisms" over the years (I'm sure you all have your own experiences with this), one being "I'm done with ya!" and another, "Give me a buyout." That became a running joke for the last few years.

You see, Ron has been here for 29 different principals and 6 superintendents during his career. As he got closer to retirement, he would approach each superintendent and say, "Hey, give me a buyout." Usually, he would just get a smile back or a chuckle. No one ever thought he really would retire, but this year it is happening—and, yes, he got his long-awaited buyout! The pandemic situation, which led to distance learning, accomplished one thing: Ron had to really learn how to navigate the internet, make videos, and use Google Classroom, something I never thought I'd see in my lifetime. You did it, Ron!

We are all sad to see you go, Ron. It's going to be too quiet around the school. I know I am going to struggle not seeing you pop into the office or yell down the hall long before you arrive, shouting "Oh, Nurse!" But at the same time, I am happy for you to finally have time to enjoy your passion for boating, hunting, fishing, flipping old houses and making them beautiful again, riding your motorcycle, and hiking with your dog, Shadow. God help his wife Sandy—you got him full time now! We all will miss you, Ron. We wish you nothing but the best and thank you so much for 36 years of memories and laughter!

~ Lucy Vansickle

## District Office Retiree

### DIANA WYNKOOP

What a tremendous help Diana has been over the years. Diana has always had that calming voice when you call her, knowing you might not have filled out something correctly or if you were late filling something out. I was always ready to be yelled at, but that was not Diana's demeanor. She always has such a pleasant way about her and the way she did her business. Diana was always willing to meet with you at the last moment even if it meant she had to put down what she was doing to be attentive to your needs.

Accommodating is what she has been over the years, and I personally will miss that contact and happy smile that she has always shown when in need. I now believe Diana was smiling because it was always around 3:55pm, and she knew she would jump into her van and be on her way home soon.

Diana, I want to wish you the best in the future. I know you will do a lot of traveling, so send those pictures and make us all jealous. Wishing you nothing but the best, and stay healthy and happy.

~ Jim Malak

**This year's 19 RVF Retirees have given a combined total of 439 years of service to the Rondout Valley CSD!**  
**How impressive is that?!**



During these unprecedented times and in the face of incredible adversity, each of you continue to sacrifice and dedicate yourselves to our children, our families and our communities.

We thank all of the educators, school-related professionals, nurses and other health care workers who continue to demonstrate their unwavering compassion, dedication and commitment to our communities on a daily basis.

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