



# THE EDUCATOR

Newsletter of the Arlington Teachers' Association

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## 'Tis the Season of Giving

The life of a teacher is a very busy one. We wake up before dawn, and in the winter, don't get home from school until after dark. The hours between are a non-stop stream of teaching, helping, planning, evaluating, and mentoring, with barely time for a bathroom break.

Somehow, in the middle of our demanding jobs and caring for our own families, Arlington teachers find an amazing amount of time to devote to charity. Some of these efforts are led by the ATA (see articles on pages 1, 2, and 4), some are building wide, and some are done by individuals.

Charitable donations can take the form of time, money, supplies, or even just raising awareness for a cause. Many Arlington schools adopt a local family for the holidays and donate gifts and food. At AMS this is called the "Helping Hands" program. Social worker Cindy Vandermark heads up

the effort to collect money to help AMS families during the holiday season. At AHS the "Spirit of Giving" campaign led by teachers Katie Nixon and Jenn Nilsen is being supplemented by a dress-down day where teachers who donate \$5 can wear jeans and a holiday sweater to school. Dress-down

personally deliver donated gifts and food and to sing Christmas carols at a holiday lunch.

Many charitable campaigns happen during the winter holiday season, but the giving spirit lasts all year. Veterans' Day is also a popular time for Arlington teachers to incorporate lessons about helping others into their curricu-

lums. At Beekman Elementary, teacher Adrienne Pisciotta led a group of fifth grade teachers who did a series of classroom activities culminating in a visit to

the Castle Point Veterans' Hospital. They began by collecting small monetary donations from their students in exchange for handcrafted camouflage duct tape bracelets and having two veterans come to the school to talk to the students. After an essay contest about why they would be good ambassadors to go to Castle Point to deliver the donations, the 21 student winners travelled to the

*See Charity on Page 3*

*Somehow, in the middle of our demanding jobs and caring for our own families, Arlington teachers find an amazing amount of time to devote to charity.*

days like this one are a popular way to raise money for a cause, or even to benefit a student organization.

At Overlook Elementary, teachers Anne Beesmer and Shar Estey have gone beyond just collecting donations for the less fortunate and have involved their first and second grade classes with activities like making gift tags. The students then travelled to the Lunch Box in Poughkeepsie to

## ATA Volunteers Serve Dinner at the Lunch Box

On Friday, November 4, I had the opportunity to join several other ATA members who volunteered to help out at the Lunch Box, a soup kitchen operating in the Family Partnership building on N. Hamilton St. in Poughkeepsie. I'd always thought it would be a good idea to try this type of volunteer experience, but somehow it was too intimidating to look into it on my own. When Colleen Napora (AHS) sent out the email asking



*Photo by Sam Falk*  
ATA members Teri Acosta (left) and Dallyse Gironda (right) show off their hair nets while volunteering at the Lunch Box along with Gironda's daughter, an Arlington student.

for ATA volunteers, I responded right away, and I'm so glad I

did.

The Lunch Box is a well-run operation and when I arrived several other teachers were already tricked out with hair nets and sanitary gloves. The jobs were straight-forward. Diners were served on a cafeteria line, and we occupied stations along the line to serve the food. At the first stop, the diner got a tray with the entrée – a stew over rice. Each stop along the line provided another item for

*See Volunteers on page 3*



# Retirement Resources are Available Online

## Trivia Challenge

Answer the question below correctly and you could win an ATA Polo shirt!

*Whose picture is on the opening section of the ATA's webpage?*

Last month's winners, selected at random from among the correct responses received, were **Anthony Stewart** from TIS and **Christie Sablinski** from LMS.

They correctly identified **Tom Hobart** as the first president of NYSUT. They are now the proud owners of ATA shirts.

Answer this month's question and you could win a polo shirt too!

Submit your answer to the above trivia question to [rmchugh@acsny.org](mailto:rmchugh@acsny.org) by Dec. 30th. Winners will be randomly selected from the correct submissions.

I recently attended the New York State Teachers' Retirement System (NYSTRS) delegates meeting in Saratoga Springs. Information was presented on a variety of topics that directly affect every single teacher in New York State.

Please be sure to look at your 2011 Benefit Profile and make sure that the information in it is accurate. That is the information that your pension is based on. Even if you are just starting your career as a teacher, it is not too early to look at the information carefully and see what the future may bring.

All of the presentations that were made at the delegates meeting in November are available on line. Simply click on the "Delegates" tab, and then the "Annual Dele-

gates Meeting" link to be directed to the page that links to all of the presentations.

Of particular interest was the presentation titled "Status

save money for the entire community.

There is an incredible amount of information available on the site that will help you start planning for the future. You can also play around with the pension calculator to get a handle on what your pension will be when you retire. You can set up an appointment to speak with a consultant who will review the information with you and help you make the best decision about when to retire. Don't wait until the year you think you will retire: plan 7-10 years in advance, meet

with a consultant, and make a plan. You can always meet with a consultant again as the time gets closer to make sure you are on the right path. We have wonderful resources at our fingertips! Let's use them!

--Siouxzanne Harris (Traver)

### WHAT CAN YOU DO AT NYSTRS.ORG?

If you create an account you can:

- See your personal NYSTRS information.
- Obtain a pension estimate.
- Track your retirement progressing.
- Change your address.
- Apply for a loan.
- Access your 1099R.
- See your most recent Benefit Profiles.
- Sign up for benefits consultations and PREP seminars.

Update on Public Pensions".

This workshop compared defined contribution plans (401k, 403b, etc.) to defined benefit plans (our pension plan) and really demonstrated how sound and stable our retirement dollars are. It also points out how defined benefit plans

## PR Committee Update: A Busy Start to the Year

The ATA's public relations team has been hard at work this year already.

From our great showing at the Arlington Street Fair, to cleaning up the highway, to our work on behalf of the March of Dimes, there has been a lot keeping us busy promoting ourselves positively in the community.

Once again this year we showed our commitment to supporting important causes and organizations by raising over \$4,600 for the March of Dimes. Across the district, union members and non-members, alike, showed their support by wearing blue jeans and sporting pins and t-shirts for the cause.

In addition to our work for the March of Dimes, the ATA will

outside of our classrooms.

The PR committee realizes and appreciates all that our membership is doing inside the walls of your classrooms, and we understand that committing even an extra hour is difficult. However, at this time, more than ever, it is important that we work together to promote ourselves within the community. Please join us in our commitment to not only provide exemplary education to the students in Arlington, but also to participate in local events, raise funds and awareness for important causes, and remind our community that the ATA has a membership of amazing individuals doing amazing things.

Photo by Bonnie Glick



Vail Farm enthusiastically participated in the dress-down day benefitting the March of Dimes.

soon kick-off our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Jackie Higgins Memorial SPCA Drive. We are honored to do work in the community in memory of Jackie, who was a treasured friend to the ATA for many years. Our work on behalf of this important organization is just another example of the great things we are doing

--Kristi Bogaczyk, PR Chair

# Volunteers Aid Local Soup Kitchen

*Continued from Front*

the meal – bread, a drink, a cup of coffee, and a dessert – and my job was to give out the desserts. The portion size was variable and the diner could choose one regular-sized cupcake, or two mini cupcakes. As we ran out of cupcakes, other items were substituted. My co-dessert-handler-outer was Eva Soderman (UVMS), and it was a nice chance to get to know her. We work in the same building, but I hadn't even met her until that day!

Here's the coolest part of the evening: the Lunch Box had received a lot of Halloween candy as donations, and they told us that the diners could select a couple pieces of candy, in addition to their dessert, to "get rid of it." This was a transformative element in the otherwise scripted process of getting food. The diners lingered a moment over choosing the candy, most making comments or having a short conversation about their favorites or which ones they liked as children. They were allowed to select the candy themselves, while all other food was handled by the volunteers. People smiled, laughed, and thanked Eva and me repeatedly as they engaged in the

process of choosing specific candies for themselves. Each person seemed to have in mind a pre-selected number of appropriate pieces of candy to take. For most, this was between two and three pieces, but for some, one piece did the trick. For a couple, that number was fairly elastic, as they came back a few times to add additional selections to their pockets.

About 70 people came to dinner that night over the course of an hour, either alone or in small groups, but nearly no one ate alone. A community formed; groups of adults,

some couples, lots of people who seemed to have come from work – indicated by their coveralls smelling of gas and oil, or by jeans with work gloves stuffed in their back pockets. There were a couple of families with children. There were two women who appeared to be in their thirties, dressed like any of us on a Saturday. There were many older men. They all seemed to be chatting with neighbors in a pleasant, low-key way. It felt a bit like Thanksgiving, in that it was good to see people eat well, and it was gratifying to be a small part of that process.

--Teri Acosta (UVMS)

**Volunteers are needed to serve dinner at Dutchess Outreach's soup kitchen on January 9, 13, and 20, plus the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday and Friday of February, March, April, May & June. 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. Please email Colleen Napora at [cnapora@acsdny.org](mailto:cnapora@acsdny.org) to sign up.**

# Charity Abounds

*Continued from Front*

hospital along with two small musical ensembles led by teachers Heather Sullivan and Leanne Sowul. According to Pisciotta, "The students got an opportunity to bring good cheer to many veterans, mostly from WWII. The experience was a fantastic opportunity for all involved."

Another Veterans' Day related charitable activity did not involve the donation of food or money, but rather the giving of support. West Road teachers Theresa Renzo and Chris Greco had their students write letters to local members of the military shortly before the young men were deployed to Afghanistan in November. Several of the men had attended West Road in the recent past.

Perhaps the most creative charitable effort at Arlington is that of UVMS teacher Matt Reilly who is growing a mustache and collecting donations to raise awareness for prostate cancer. Reilly says that this seemingly unique method is actually part of a world-wide "Movember" charity and that next year he plans to try to involve more men in the district. He has raised over \$300 on his own in the past month.

These are just a few examples of the acts of charity that ATA members participate in all year. There are many others that get little publicity that are undoubtedly appreciated just as much by those on the receiving end.

--Sam Falk, Newsletter Editor

## Negotiations Update:

*The current state of our contract negotiations is that we are still having on-going conversations with the district. Bob, the team, and I are optimistic that through meaningful collaboration we can come to an agreement. We are asking for a fair and equitable contract that meets the needs of both parties involved. We, the leadership of the ATA, appreciate the support of our membership and thank those of you have sent kind words of encouragement. I personally wish each of you a safe, healthy and happy holiday season and new year.*

--Donna Doerrier, Chief Negotiator

# Spotlight on the Contract: Textbooks

*Each issue of The Educator will spotlight a particular part of our contract in an effort to make our members more familiar with their rights and the terms and conditions of their employment. If you have a section you would like to see featured, email [rmchugh@acsdny.org](mailto:rmchugh@acsdny.org).*

"The purchase of additional textbooks and other instructional materials, changes in such materials, or selection of new materials shall continue to be determined according to the procedure presently in effect, to the end that teachers involved shall participate in the selection of all textbooks."

**Explanation:** According to this provision of the ATA contract (Article XIII, page 18), no teacher should be required to use a new textbook or "other instructional materials" that have been purchased without the input of teachers. Although this clearly says that administration may not select such materials themselves, it does not specify the amount of involvement the teacher must have in the purchasing process.



## 2011—2012 ATA Officers

**President**

Bob Maier

**First Vice-President**

Greg Nieman

**Second Vice-President**

Edward Hotaling

**Treasurer**

Kathleen Blank Cicala

**Chief Negotiator**

Donna Doerrier

**PR Committee Chair**

Kristi Bogaczyk

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Steve Hertzog

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BES — Anne Schillinger

NES — Elise Pattison

VFES — Pam Goetz

OPS — Anne Marie Beesmer

Traver — Siouxzanne Harris

JDWR — Betsy Marshall

TIS — Sue Ramsden

AMS — Greg Fredricks

LMS — Jill Freeswick

UVMS — Donna Curran

AHS — Steve Hertzog

AHS — Noreen Mills Martin

# What's Going On?

"What's Going on" is a monthly feature in The Educator. It highlights noteworthy accomplishments by ATA members. Do you know of a colleague who deserves recognition? Let The Educator know by emailing [sfalk@acsdny.org](mailto:sfalk@acsdny.org). We can't know what's going on at all of your schools without your help!

Congratulations to the following ATA members for their contributions to the Arlington community and beyond.

**National Board Certification**

This year 10 ATA members achieved National Board certification. They are:  
Sheri Altieri -- UVMS

Amanda Buhler -- TIS  
Michelle Burk -- Traver  
Mia Chong -- LMS  
Dave Gatta -- AHS  
Bonnie Leitheuser -- LMS  
Chris Lucia -- AHS  
Melissa Pastor -- BES

Linda Shekita -- Traver  
Ryan Sonne -- UVMS  
In addition, Gatta, Lucia, and Sonne were the first secondary level physical education teachers on the East coast to earn the certification.

Please join the ATA in welcoming one more new teacher !



Gina Ward

UVMS—Reading

Favorite Book: *The Giver*, by Lois Lowry

Favorite Food: Eggplant parmesan

## LAP Committee Continues to Act Locally

The ATA's Local Action Project (LAP) committee has a mission of coalition building with the community and district while promoting unity among the membership. We want the community to recognize that the ATA is not just about forwarding its own agenda, but rather, the organization's number one priority is its students and the communities they come from. Here is an update of recent LAP committee activities.

**School Related Professionals (SRP) Day**

On November 15, SRP Day, the LAP group distributed over 500 chocolate bars that had been customized with the ATA logo and a note of thanks to all secretaries, bus drivers, mechanics, and custodial staff in the district. The ATA wanted to acknowledge and thank them for all the hard work they perform for the district and for us. Thank you calls and notes began to arrive to committee chair Donna Doerrier on the day of delivery. The most touching came from those working in the bus garage. They expressed that it was the first time they had ever been acknowledged by anyone in the district.

**Dutchess Outreach**

Dutchess Outreach runs a food pantry in the former home of Lourdes High School in the Poughkeepsie at 29 North Hamilton Street. The

LAP committee has been working with Dutchess Outreach to determine what the ATA can do to aid their organization. ATA Members from Traver, Beekman, Noxon, UVMS, and AHS have volunteered at the food pantry to serve dinner to the homeless and struggling in our community. Dutchess Outreach continues to need help. Upcoming volunteer dates are January 9, 13, and 20. Contact Colleen Napora at [cnapora@acsdny.org](mailto:cnapora@acsdny.org) for more information.

**Dyson Center at Vassar Brothers Hospital**

With the holidays approaching, some of you may be replacing your electronics for more updated versions. If you have old CDs, CD players, DVDs, individual DVD players, or MP3 players, please think about donating

them to the Dyson Cancer Center for their patients who are undergoing chemotherapy to use. Contact Colleen Napora at [cnapora@acsdny.org](mailto:cnapora@acsdny.org) for details.

**Union Pride**

The LAP committee recently donated copies of "Teachers United: The Rise of New York State United Teachers", a book about the history of NYSUT, to each school's professional library.

**Unity Pub**

Look for another Unity Pub in March to help break up those dreary, end of winter days!

--Erin Dyke, LAP Committee Member



Photo by Donna Doerrier  
Chocolate bars bearing thank you notes were given out on School Related Professionals Day.

# Give the Gift of ATA Pride

Is there a better gift than a high-quality, made-in-the-U.S.A., ATA logo shirt or hat? To place your order, fill out the form below and send it, along with payment, through inter-office mail to the ATA Office. Checks can be made out to "Arlington Teachers' Association". Orders will be shipped to the school requested.

**Available ATA Logo Items:**



*Fleece Vest (front)*



*Long-Sleeved Fleece Jacket (front)*



*Baseball Hat*



*Short-Sleeved Polo (front)*



*Short-Sleeved T-shirt (front)*



*Short-Sleeved T-shirt (back)*

Item	Price	Sizes Available	Sizes Ordered	Total Price
Fleece Vest*	\$30	S, M, L, XL, XXL		
Long-Sleeved Fleece*	\$35	S, M, L, XL, XXL		
Baseball Hat	\$5	Adjustable		
Short-Sleeved Polo	\$10	S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL		
Short-Sleeved T-Shirt	\$5	S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL		

*\*Sizes on fleeces run extremely large*

**Total Payment Enclosed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School:** \_\_\_\_\_



# ATA Holiday Party 2011







These photos and many more  
can be found on the ATA's  
website at  
[www.arlingonteachers.com](http://www.arlingonteachers.com).



# Dates to Remember



## DECEMBER

23-31st—Winter Recess - No School

## JANUARY

1-2nd—Winter Recess - No School

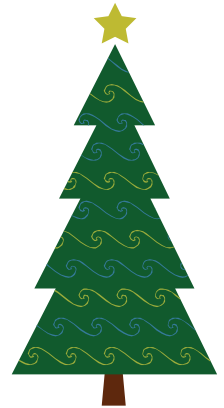
10th—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., CAO

16th—Martin Luther King Day - No School

17th—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432

24th—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., CAO

24-27th—Regents Week



## FEBRUARY

1st—Deadline for June 2012 Retirement Decisions

1-22nd—2nd Annual Jackie Higgins Memorial SPCA Drive

14th—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432

Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., CAO

28th—Board of Education Meeting, 7:30 p.m., CAO



# Announcements

The ATA would like to assure members who have been notified that their salaries are being paid from a federal grant that it is okay to sign the necessary paperwork each month.

Have you seen the ATA's Facebook page? Go to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), search for "Arlington Teachers' Association" and "Like" the page in order to receive updates about important issues and ATA events.

The staff of  
*The Educator* would  
like to wish all ATA  
members a happy and  
healthy  
holiday season.

**Do you need help preparing a grant? Call the ATA Office for help from one of our volunteers.**

*National Board certified teachers who are currently going through the recertification process and would like some support should contact Colleen Napora at [cnapora@acsdny.org](mailto:cnapora@acsdny.org)*

**Visit [www.arlingtonteachers.com](http://www.arlingtonteachers.com) for benefits information, forms, and ATA photos!**