



# THE EDUCATOR

Newsletter of the Arlington Teachers' Association

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## Let's March Into Spring Together

It's March, and we're in the midst of that seemingly infinite stretch of days between Presidents Day and spring break. There are no three-day weekends to look forward to in the near future, or even a half day to get some grading done.

In contrast to a typical 9-to-5 job, we're lucky to have days like those off at all, but we don't have a typical 9-to-5 job.

Teaching can be all-encompassing if you let it. There's no tired like Friday-teacher-tired after going all-in all week.

So, what keeps us going? Of course we

have to love the job, but when we're in the doldrums of late winter, it helps to have more than that. It might be the little things outside the classroom that colleagues do for each

*In the following pages you will read about a pumpkin that raises school spirit at TRP, a UVMS teacher who is launching a second career doing voiceover work, and much more.*

other, or it might be the endeavors that we take on after work that enhance our teaching.

The focus of this issue of *The Educator* is on those things. In the following pages you will

read about a pumpkin that raises school spirit at TRP, a UVMS teacher who is launching a second career doing voiceover work, and much more.

By sharing these stories I hope to bring us, with a large membership in widespread buildings, a little closer together. We're all educators, but we have different experiences each day. Maybe you will be inspired by

a colleague that you have yet to meet, but are united in that common educator experience of making it through March.

-Sam Falk,  
ATA Communications



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## Trivia Challenge

Answer the question below correctly and you could be the proud winner of ATA gear!

**What year did we become the Arlington Central School District?**

Last month's winner, who submitted the only correct response, was **Nicole Sheehan** from NOX. She knew that there are **13** school districts in Dutchess County. She will be the proud owner of ATA gear. Answer this month's question and you could win ATA gear too!

Submit your answer to the above trivia question to [sfalk@acsdny.org](mailto:sfalk@acsdny.org) by **March 28**. The winner will be randomly selected from the correct submissions.

# Small Acts Can Raise School Spirit

For the past four years, I've hosted an annual pumpkin decorating contest for staff at Traver each October. Students participate by voting for their favorite staff-created pumpkin, with the winner receiving a fancy trophy and runners-up earning medals. The results are announced over the loud-speaker and the kids eagerly anticipate finding out who won.

This past year's contest was particularly special due to a last-minute entry on the morning of the event. A small pumpkin, simply decorated with a Sharpie-drawn face, was entered under the name "Spooky" by first grade teacher Kim VanVoorhis. She apologized for the last-minute submission but wanted to take part in some way. While Spooky didn't receive any votes that day, he has since become a daily source of inspiration.

Spooky now sits outside Mrs. VanVoorhis's door, where she attaches a new motivational quote to his "face" each day. He's

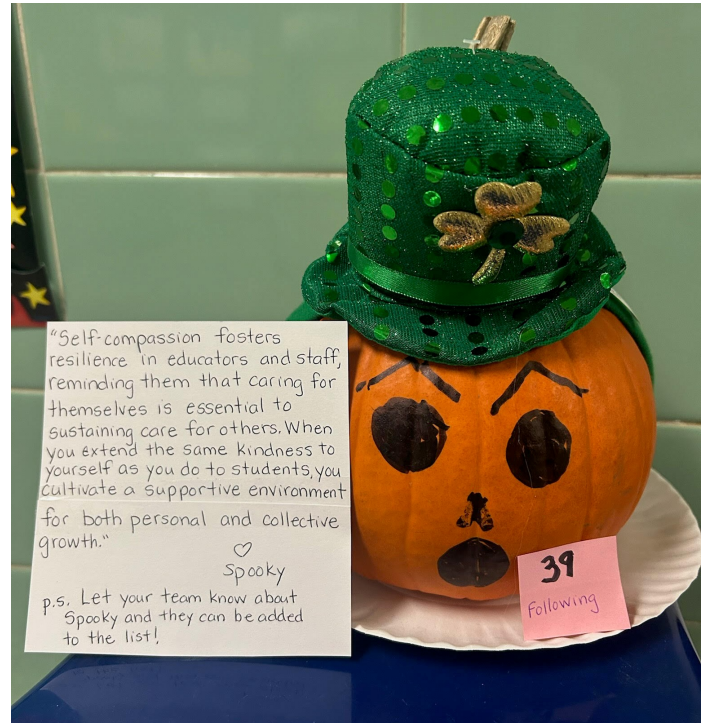


Photo courtesy of Leah Chasse

"Spooky" the pumpkin has been sharing inspirational quotes with the Titusville faculty since October. His number of followers continues to grow.

also been dressed up for every holiday, bringing joy to staff and students. Our school social worker Courtney Pek and I are lucky enough to receive a daily picture of Spooky's quote in case we don't get the chance to see it in person.

I wanted to share this

story because it's a celebration of school spirit and Mrs. VanVoorhis's creativity. I hope this story can inspire others to create small but meaningful traditions within their buildings.

-Leah Chasse,  
TRP School Psychologist

## School Board Candidates Sought

This year the terms of current Arlington school board members Marion Quinn, Jennifer Boye, and Mark Tornatore are up. Please contact the ATA Office at 845-454-7002 or [ataupdate@gmail.com](mailto:ataupdate@gmail.com) if you know of anyone who would be interested in running for a position. It is a great opportunity for people who care about their children's future and their community as a whole to make a difference.

To be eligible, candidates must live in the district and not be currently employed by Arlington. In order to be on the ballot in May a petition must be obtained from Central Office and returned there by April 21. ATA members are available to help with that task.



# CAC Update: Committee Of 100

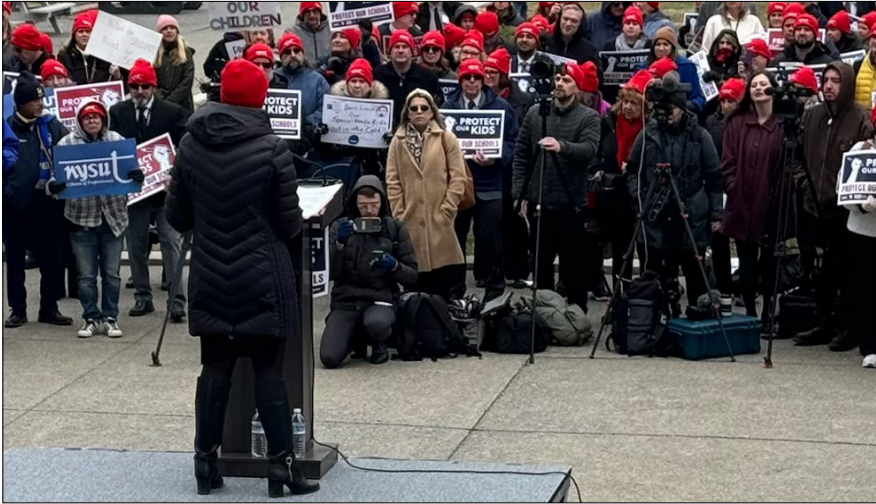


Photo by Bill Mueller

NYSUT president Melinda Person spoke against shutting down the federal department of education at a rally in Albany on March 4.



Photo by Brendan Lawler

Regional PAC Coordinator Brigid Kelly (right) lead a meeting with State Senator Michelle Hinchey on March 4.



Photo by Bill Mueller

ATA CAC-Co Chair Brendan Lawler (second from right) was among local union members who met with State Senator Rob Rolison in Albany on March 4.



Photo by Bill Mueller

AFT President Randi Weingarten fired up the crowd at a rally in Albany on March 4.

Every year NYSUT organizes a day in March for locals to send members to Albany to talk with their elected officials. It was our great pleasure to advocate for public education with fellow NYSUT members as a part of this year's Committee of 100 on March 4. We met with Senator Michelle Hinchey, Assemblymember Didi Barrett, Senator Rob Rolison, and Assemblyman Anil Beephan. During our meetings, we discussed Tier 6 equity, cell phone restrictions, and student and family fears of ICE raids. Each legislator was receptive to our discussions and engaged in good discussions around these issues, especially regarding cell phones distracting children during the school day and concerns regarding mass deportation. We also thanked legislators for supporting free meals for our students so they are fed and can focus on school.

After meeting with legislators there was a rally at West Capitol Park next to the capitol building. Red knit hats were given out to support public school funding and show solidarity. Speakers included Melinda Person, NYSUT president, and a fiery Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, AFT. The main topics of the speakers were the potential dismantling of Washington's Department of Education and the importance of federal funding for all public schools, regardless of whether it's a blue or red state.

-Brendan Lawler and Bill Mueller, ATA CAC CO-Chairs

# ATA Members Keep Busy

*The following stories highlight just two of the ATA members who do notable things outside of school. The experiences that educators have beyond the classroom can serve to enhance their teaching, but also to benefit their communities and beyond.*



## Jason Dempsey—UVMS

Seventh grade English teacher Jason Dempsey began his career at UVMS 21 years and has been in the same room and on the same team ever since.

About 10 years ago Dempsey started making audio recording of books and posting them on YouTube. He says, "At first it was *Winnie the Pooh* and some other stories, partially as a birthday gift for a friend. It became more and more apparent that a lot of our children are rather print-challenged; simply not great readers, and some who indeed could barely read at all. The audiobooks became a way of teaching reading and providing the extra support many of them really needed. It turns out

that a lot of other students really needed that support as well: one of my *Outsiders* chapters has over 18K views, and I get a lot of little messages from kids thanking me for helping them with their homework. Most of them I have never met."

In fact, not only are his recordings of *The Outsiders* popular, but his recordings of *Sophia's War* and *Frankenstein* have al-



## Jason Dempsey

@jasondempsey50 · 965 subscribers · 71 videos

Thanks to Damon Wolf for graphic design and technical consultation. ...more

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so received tens of thousands of views on YouTube. Viewers not only express their appreciation of Dempsey's providing an online source to access the books, but they also acknowledge the effort that he puts into the quality of narration.

Recently Dempsey has added recordings of selected short stories such as

*Thank You Ma'am* by Langston Hughes and *Song Of The Trees* by Mildred D. Taylor, and even poetry. A comment left by former Arlington curriculum director Dana Brown expresses her appreciation: "This is magical. It is so wonderful the way you hold our hands and walk us through interpreting this beautiful poem. Thank you for the excitement and energy you bring to your students."

Spurred by a successful narration of a novel for a friend last year, Dempsey is in the midst of launching a second career in voiceover work. He has a new website at [jasondempseyvo.com](http://jasondempseyvo.com) that offers demos of his work,

testimonials from fans, and information about his home studio.

Dempsey is happy to share his experiences with others who are interested in recording audiobooks themselves. On the March 7 conference day he led two successful PD sessions teaching others the mechanics of voiceover and recording.

UVMS teacher Jason Dempsey has launched a website at [jasondempseyvo.com](http://jasondempseyvo.com) for his voiceover work, and also has a successful YouTube channel.



**Chris Shave—TIS**

Third grade teacher Chris Shave first joined Arlington as a student teacher in 1996 and began teaching at Arlington Elementary in 1997. He transferred to Titusville in 1998 and has been there ever since.

Outside of school Shave is very active in the local agricultural community. Recently, he was elected president of the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Dutchess County's (CCEDC) Board of Directors. CCEDC facilitates various community programs from 4-H and Green Teens to Master Gardeners to Relatives As Parents Program and the Taste of NY Store at Todd Hill on the Taconic.

Shave discovered 4-H when his daughters got two sheep and began participating in many aspects of the program including sewing, cooking and public speaking. The girls' animal projects culminated with showing sheep at the county fair each August, which led to Shave showing in the Open Class.

While his daughters were young, he helped his wife Meegan as an assistant leader of their 4-H club and supported the girls with their various chores. Over the years, Shave became an "accidental sheep farmer" with many generations of Corriedale sheep being born in the barn on their farm Patchwork Pastures in Hyde Park. After years as a 4-H parent, Shave began to volunteer as a judge of public presentations and as well

as serving as a photographing and writing judge for projects presented at the fair.

After the girls aged out, Shave joined the 4-H Youth Leadership and Workforce Development Program Advisory Committee at CCEDC and was elected as one of two representatives on the CCEDC board of directors. Shave has served on many committees while on the board. He served as the vice president for six months to fill a vacancy before his fellow board members elected him at their January reorganization meeting as president. Shave also serves as a board member of the Dutchess County Sheep and Wool Association and is the chairman of the photography competition at the Dutchess County Fair.

As it is lambing season, Shave finds himself in the barn at all hours when not teaching his third grade Super Sidekicks. His daughter Cosette helps out as both a substitute teacher at TIS and a fellow farmer. They're pleased to report lambing has begun with an ewe lamb and more to come before spring.

If anyone is interested in volunteering with CCEDC, Shave would be happy to

discuss the various ways one could volunteer. Also he is always excited when



Photo courtesy of Chris Shave

TIS teacher Chris Shave is shown here with one of his sheep at the NYS Sheep and Wool Festival.



Photo courtesy of Chris Shave

Shave uses his showing of sheep at the Dutchess County Fair in August as an opportunity to meet some of his incoming third graders.

Arlington staff and students stop by the sheep barn to visit with the sheep of Patchwork Pastures Farm.

## 2024 — 2025 ATA Officers

<b>President</b>	Bob Maier
<b>Elementary Vice President</b>	Nicolle McMorris
<b>Secondary Vice President</b>	Greg Nieman
<b>Vice President For Membership</b>	Steve Hertzog
<b>Treasurer</b>	Dave Cordella
<b>Chief Negotiator</b>	Robert McHugh
<b>PR Committee Chair</b>	Kristine Jackson
<b>Community Action Chairs</b>	Brendan Lawlor Bill Mueller
<b>Communications Chair</b>	Sam Falk
<hr/>	
<b>Senior Building Representatives</b>	
ASM — A'Rehema Leach	
BES — Christie Boydston	
Noxon— Lynette Battle	
VFES— Alison Durkin	
OPS — Christene Way	
Traver — Diana Judge	
JDWR—Barbara Mackey	
TIS — Heather Blatz	
LMS — Bill Mueller	
UVMS — Jim DeBonis	
AHS — John Filor	
AHS — Theresa Daleo-Stock	

# What's Going On?

"What's Going on" is a monthly feature of 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.

### Arlington High

Art teacher Amanda Buhler will be volunteering to teach a course at Vassar's Lifelong Learning Institute for adults over 55. The Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI) at Vassar College is a volunteer-run organization designed for adults who love to learn and who wish to contribute to the larger community in their pursuit of knowledge. Buhler's course, starting on March 14 is "Felting Fun for Beginners and Intermediates" and designed to encourage imagination and exploration with this creative medium.

### LaGrange Middle

In February science teacher Jovonna Fallon hosted the school's 13th blood drive. According to English teacher Felecia White, "As usual it was an overwhelming success. Collecting 20 pints and having a remarkable



### Union Vale Middle

Band teacher William Stevens was chosen as one of eight international conductors to participate in RISING STARS New York at Westchester Conservatory of Music on March 7 and 8. The conducting masterclass is an intensive course, offering immersive and practical training on aspects of working in music education. Special guest Marin Alsop, the first woman to serve as the head of a major orchestra in the United States, offered feedback and her insights to the field of music.

turnout, volunteers and donors came together, showing incredible generosity and commitment to helping those in need. This event was well-organized, with Jovonna efficiently guiding donors through the process, ensuring a smooth and positive experience for everyone involved. In addition to collecting a significant amount of blood, the drive also raised awareness about the ongoing need for donations, encouraging more people to get involved in future events. The atmosphere was filled with gratitude and a sense of community,

proving that when people come together for a common cause, incredible things can be achieved. The staff at LMS was a big supporter of this event with 10 faculty members making donations for this wonderful cause."

### Overlook Primary

School social worker Laura Bagnarol is offering a self defense class for women through her Be Big Be Brave organization. It will take place at 1:30pm on April 6 at the Fishkill Recreation Center. For more information, or to register, visit [bebigbebrave.com](http://bebigbebrave.com).



# Grainger Travels To Tanzania

ATA retiree Lynn Grainger travelled to Tanzania in January. She reports on her time there:

More than six months ago I said yes to a colleague from the Hudson Valley Writing Project I first met at Beekman on an inservice day in 2013. I agreed to travel to Tanzania, go on safari, and use my skills to enhance the education program at The Small Things in Arusha, a children's home focusing on reunification of orphaned children with extended family. The children learn the skills to care for themselves and to assist with farm and household chores in addition to attending English speaking schools. 80% of the children are reunited with extended family by the time they begin secondary school. Most spend the school holidays with extended family beginning at a young age.

Friends of Bonnie Kaplan, seven retired women, traveled to Ngorogoro Crater and the Serengeti with a guide for four nights and five days. We bonded over our curiosity about the land, animals, birds, plants and the Maasai people who live in the crater area. We saw the "Big 5" - elephant, giraffe, cheetah, lion, and leopard, and more! We counted 50 species of birds, including many I had read about in children's bird reports over the years.

Overnight we stayed in migration camps, temporary tent structures with all amenities, and dined from buffets filled with Tanzanian dishes. After dinner there was traditional dancing and time to sit by the fire under a huge expanse of sky before being zipped into the cabin tent for the night. As I stood on the seat of the safari van staring at the multitude of zebras and wildebeests, I felt insignificant as the Serengeti stretched for miles dotted with animals as far as I could see, and the savannah still continued beyond the horizon.

For the eight days following safari I worked with teachers and students



Photo courtesy of Lynn Grainger

ATA retiree Lynn Grainger (back right) travelled to Tanzania with a group of women in January.

in the preschool and after-school programs. From the first smiles, fist bumps, and hugs I realized how important this work is. During the morning the preschool classrooms were my assignment, and I helped with homework and read to children after school hours.

In the preschool the instructional approach for math, science, and sounds is recitation, drill, and rote. I modeled simple math activities using bottle caps that developed number sense in the pre-primary class based on the Tanzanian national curriculum. The teacher was receptive to the ideas, and I hope to collaborate with her more around math sense and providing children voice by implementing a circle time. I trained a young Australian volunteer who will support the work for the next month. This first week after the December holiday break was a hard time to integrate volunteers in a preschool program.

I am still marveling at all I saw and did as I recover from jet lag and 30 hours of traveling. I am grateful to the friends and members of my church supported the project by providing 70 fitted sheets for the children's home.

Just like our careers in Arlington, I will never truly know the impact of my time with the children and teachers at The Small Things in Tanzania. Little gestures and small lessons can be the cornerstones of significant positive change.

As Rotary Club of Millbrook's president I look forward to potentially collaborating with a new foundation in Nkoaranga outside of Arusha that focuses on recycling plastics in Tanzania and providing environmental education to children. The plastic pollution issue is not as apparent as it was in Haiti, Guatemala, and Panama; however, the commercial areas closest to the National Parks were littered with plastics. A group of five Tanzanians have formed their own NGO to address the issue by planting fruit-bearing trees at schools following workshops on recycling. They recognize the issue and have begun to change the situation, benefitting all of us on the planet.

If you have any questions about my experiences, please reach out to [Lynnng125@optonline.net](mailto:Lynnng125@optonline.net). I'm happy to share my experiences with classes or clubs.

# Dates to Remember

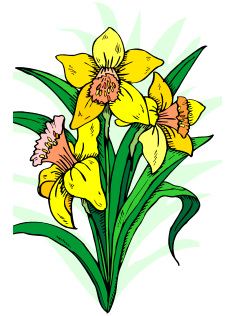


## MARCH

- 18th—ATA Executive Council Meeting: 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432
- 25th—Board of Education Meeting: 7 p.m., CAO

## APRIL

- 5th—District Art Fair, 11 a.m.—4 p.m., LMS
- 8th—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432  
Board of Education Meeting & Budget Adoption, 7 p.m., OPS
- 14th-21st—Spring Break
- 22nd—Board of Education Meeting: 7 p.m., UVMS



## MAY

- 13th—ATA Executive Council Meeting, 4 p.m., AHS Room 1432  
Board of Education Meeting: 7 p.m., ASM
- 16th—PD Half Day



# Announcements

## WHAT'S GOING ON?

Do you know something great that an ATA member has done recently? Perhaps they have done charity work, received an award, attended a conference, or even published a book. Let us know by scanning the QR code or going to this link:

<https://forms.gle/aGLYf3LWHqkP5gaS7>



## Save the Date!

NYSUT is planning a *Fix Tier Six* rally for June 6 at 5pm in the Hudson Valley. Location TBA.

Looking for info about last year's union dues for your taxes? Find them on page 7 of the February 2025 newsletter that is archived on the ATA website.

**Stay informed! Follow us on Facebook and Twitter or check out [www.arlingtonteachers.com](http://www.arlingtonteachers.com) for forms, photos, calendars, and more.**