

**United
We
Stand!**



**Upcoming Board
of Education
Meetings:**

**March 10th– 7 PM
South Haven**

**March 24th– 7 PM
South Haven**

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**Proud to
be a
Teacher!**



The Beacon

MARCH, 2010

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BELLPORT
TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Why Are We Taking a Stand?

Stephanie Pirozzi

As members of the Bellport Teachers' Association, we are first and foremost teachers. We began this profession to pass on knowledge to our students and to hopefully create respectful, participating members of society.

As teachers, our main focus is education. For over two years, we have had to include in our focus contract negotiations. We entered negotiations optimistic, knowing that we work hard at our jobs and believing we are an integral part of student success. These beliefs led us to hope we would be

given the time and support to effectively negotiate a contract. We were dismayed when our BTA negotiating team set up numerous appointments with the Board of Education's team and they were not prepared to negotiate with us. Each time the BTA team was prepared and ready. Unfortunately, the B.O.E. members did not regard us as important, contributing employees since they were neither giving us the time or support. Our stand was - let's meet, let's discuss, and let's get back to our main focus, the children.

(continued on page 3)





President's Message

Colleagues:

It is with great appreciation that I thank all of you for your being on the picket lines and attending BOE meetings. Walking in the cold and filling up the BOE's meeting room has definitely presented our union as being involved and interested in our current contractual situation.

We have completed the mediation process (three meetings) and will be moving on to Fact Finding. This entire process is extremely slow but it is the one prescribed by NYS in the area of resolution of a negotiations stalemate. We also have at least a dozen arbitrations and PERB actions pending at this time. Janice Kryl has been working with NYSUT to present our cases to the arbitrators this spring.

Our spring plans will be focused on the BOE elections and the school district budget. We will also still need participation at the board meetings.

It is important for all of us to be involved in our future. Please put out your strongest effort. It is in your best interest.

Spencer

A Welcome to Interim Superintendent Cipp

Mr. Joseph L. Cipp was appointed Interim Superintendent for the South Country Schools on February 3, 2010.

I feel that Joe Cipp is the best person to be appointed Interim Superintendent of South Country Schools at this time of emergency. With the sudden resignation of Superintendent Walsh we need a strong and accomplished individual to manage the district. I am not concerned about the BOE's rationale or methodology for Mr. Cipp's appointment. I have known Mr. Cipp for 35 years. He is a long term district resident and a former BOE member. He was a Bellport High School teacher, coach and administrator since 1976. He has always been honest and direct with me in all of my capacities in the South Country Schools.

I welcome Mr. Joe Cipp in his new capacity and look forward to working with him to further educational improvement in the South Country Schools.

Spencer Stickley, President
Bellport Teachers Association

Why Are We Taking a Stand?

(Continued from cover story)

Recently we have heard comments such as, “the BTA doesn’t care about the children” or “the BTA picketing is an embarrassment.” These comments have disheartened teachers since we have continued educating our students to the very best of our ability. When students ask why we are wearing buttons or why we are wearing yellow, many of us reply -“Being respectful is an important thing, and we don’t want anyone to forget to treat each other with respect.”

The BTA believed picketing would help get this message across. This would be a time outside of school where community members could ask questions, receive important reading materials about what we are doing, and perhaps be driven to ask “why”. Since we do not lead the Board of Education meetings or have a sufficient voice in the proceedings, we did not feel that was a vehicle for getting information out to the community.

Other comments have been that the teachers are greedy. For the past two years, community members have been approving a budget that allowed for us to have a small cost of living increase. For the past two years, no teacher has received a cent of this increase since our salaries have stayed the same for two years and no new contract has been negotiated. We question how we could be greedy when the community has said we deserve this raise by approving the budget. We, in turn, are asking the Board of Education to allow the community’s wishes to mirror our own.

Our message to the community is clear; we are, first and foremost, educators of our district’s children, but we are also human beings. Each and every child in this district is treated with respect; we ask the same for ourselves



NEGOTIATIONS’ UPDATE



THE DISTRICT AND THE BTA

NEGOTIATION TEAMS MET WITH

THE MEDIATOR FROM PERB ON

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 9, 2010 AT 3:30 PM. THE TWO

TEAMS EXCHANGED PROPOSALS.

WE ARE WAITING FOR A RESPONSE FROM THE

DISTRICT TO OUR PROPOSALS.

Kevin M. Kirk *I'm Just Sayin'...*

As I drove into the parking lot of BMS (for one of my very last times), a brand new shiny, black SUV pulled in beside me and out popped a first year teacher. Kid-dingly, I said to this young man, "Beautiful car. Tell me it's your father's." Proudly he responded, "No, it's mine." Smart alecky I came back with: "On the backs of us old-timers you are driving this car." This teaching/union neophyte looked at me kind of puzzled as if to say, "What's this old fart talking about?"

So, this grizzled veteran of 34 years decided to give Mr. SUV a brief 34 year history of the BTA, a history that has encompassed decades of labor problems. I told him that I started teaching at Hampton Ave. School (now Frank P. Long School) in

1970 for \$8,000. It seems like a paltry amount- and it really was. I once remarked to my principal, Frank Long (he never used the "P"), that I actually had more spending money when I was a paper boy. (True.) The 1964 Mercury that I drove to school (with over 100,000 miles on the odometer) got 8 miles a gallon. But then again, gas was way less than a buck.

During my second year teaching (1971-72) we came off split sessions, and I was greeted with cafeteria duty (no pay for that), bus duty, and taught many days without a break, since subs were not provided for Music, P.E., Art, and Library classes.

We (the BTA) started 1971 without a contract and went on strike in October for 5 days. During those 5 days, we picketed in front of our schools in the mornings, we picketed Central Office in the after- noons, and we had union meetings in between. Some of us had part-time jobs at night. We learned a lot about the "suits- at- central," the board members, the community, and especially- each other. The BTA came together as one! I bet everyone who struck in '71 can still tell you the names of the scabs who crossed our picket lines. Scabs (many of whom were from out of state) would carpool, since they were too cowardly to drive alone. Some of us played a game called

***“Some of us
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Tailgate the Scabs to Sunrise Highway, a bit dangerous but great fun.

At the end of the strike each of us

got fined 10 days pay (2 for 1) which meant in effect, we didn't get a pay-check.

The BTA continued to have problems with each succeeding contract throughout the 70's and 80's when we were continuously among the lowest paid teachers in BOCES 2. But then in 1989, a palace revolt of sorts, led by chief negotiator Marv Loewen, rocked the district. The BTA picketed (God, I won't miss that); held candlelight protests; had union meetings where everyone attended; and blanketed BOE meetings with teacher and community speakers. (Marv always strode to the mic like a gunslinger.) We were one big, talented team. In the end, we settled an unprecedented 3 year contract of 12%, 12%, and 12%. That contract and the one that followed in '92 vaulted us into the top pay spot in BOCES 2.

Next came the TaxPac years 1994-1998 and 3 years and 30 days without a contract. TaxPac posted our salaries in local stores; demeaned us in public calling us names, ie. "part-time seasonal employees" and "overpaid babysitters;" and, even passed out copies of the *Beacon* in front of CVS in Bellport. Board meetings, needless to say, got downright personal and became very heated affairs. And in the succeeding "retro-contract" we (regretfully) settled a deal which called for 0%, 0%, and 1 % in the first three years. This started a downward spiral again for the BTA.

Health and What?

Chris Belford

I couldn't help but notice, after our most recent snowstorm, that the plowing in South Country has taken a serious nosedive since South Country Grounds crews were replaced with an outside contractor. Why is it that if I inadvertently leave a book on the windowsill in front of the rescue window I find a note taped on my door the next morning about the fire code violation I committed? (Yes, I said **taped on my door** which violates the fire code.) Yet, if I look out my rescue window, I see a ten foot high mountain of snow blocking the exit.

Imagine all of those cute little faces pressed to the glass in an emergency trying to figure out how to climb that mountain. I'm all for teaching our students that they must strive to overcome obstacles that they may encounter in their lives, but really, a mountain of snow! At least I can pick up the book I left behind in a pinch. I can probably make a frantic attempt at the snow too, but it better not be too much of an emergency, I have my limitations.....

The parking lots in South Country were done in such a shabby manner that the skeleton crew left in Grounds had to get them all sanded before school began. That couldn't happen. Especially since, by the time it was brought to the attention of administrators the High School was already in session, the Middle School parking lot was filling up, and

the staff and students there had to take their lives in their hands when crossing the icy tundra.

Something needs to be done to fix this situation, like maybe bring back the Grounds part of Buildings and Grounds. If they were here, they could concentrate only on the school district. I'm not too concerned about all of the outside accounts that the contractors have, I only want to be safe when I get out of my car and take the hike to the main entrance. Judging by the amount of complaints that came to me on the day we returned to work, I'm thinking many of you have the same idea. I don't think I'm asking too much, am I? If it was like that after two snow days, what is going to happen in the spring when all of the grass needs to be cut? It might be worth looking into an alternative. Hey, I have an idea, let's hire back the Grounds staff! Maybe that will work.....

It occurred to me the other day that are some irregularities when it comes to safety and health in our school district. I know that you are all just as surprised by that as I am, but sometimes it helps to state the obvious. Most of you know that the last two years have been pretty upsetting when it comes to the Health and Safety Committee. For those of you who didn't know, most of the meetings were cancelled and the few that took place were, for the most part, folly.

The good news is that things are looking up a bit when it comes to health and safety, the committee met for the first time this year after many cancellations and few good reasons. Some of you may be aware that there is some testing being performed in some of the buildings. Obviously, the results cannot be guaranteed, but maybe something positive will come out of the testing. The Committee will be meeting again in March to go over the test results. Hopefully, something good will come out of all of the testing. So many of us long for days when sinus infections and lung problems are a thing of the past. Wouldn't it be nice to come to work and not have fumes coming out of the univent? Maybe we will even be able to breathe without tasting the mold in a room! Wouldn't that be awesome?! We will keep you apprised of the results of the tests and any plans to remedy the problems that have plagued us for years.

In the meantime, if you have any safety or health concerns please speak to the committee member in your buildings, at Brookhaven, Stephanie Miller, at Critz, Cele Walsh, at Long, Gail Williams, at the MS, Loraine McCray, at the HS, Ellen Hoffman and at Kreamer, Chris Belford, or e-mail me directly at cbelford@optonline.net. At this time, I am cautiously optimistic about a positive outcome, hopefully, my caution will turn out to be unnecessary.

What is EAP and When is it Right for You?

Stephanie Pirozzi

EAP (Employee Assistance Program) is available to all employees, retired employees and their families. EAP provides intervention assistance through licensed mental health care professionals. It is also a referral service. Depending upon the problem, an individual may receive short-term counseling in the office or be referred to a service or practitioner. This service is free to all South Country employees and their families.

Some of the issues EAP can assist you or your family with are; addiction, bereavement, family conflict, learning disorders, marital conflict, parenting, pre-marital counseling, self-esteem, stress, trauma, and work related problems. These are only a few of the issues that EAP can assist you or your family with. Please contact them with any questions. The EAP is a completely confidential service so no information will be provided to your employer or anyone else.

Contact Information for EAP

Commack Office: 631-858-9177

Medford Office: 631-289-0480

Westhampton Beach Office:

631-288-8865

www.esboces.org/

EAP



BTA members looking for grant money act fast!

Rodney O'Neal
Grant Committee

Grants Available: I hope you will find these sites useful as you consider whether to apply for grant support.

The Beveridge Family Teaching Prize (K-12)

Established in 1995, this prize honors the Beveridge family's longstanding commitment to the AHA and K-12 teaching. Friends and family members endowed this award to recognize excellence and innovation in elementary, middle school, and secondary history teaching, including career contributions and specific initiatives. The prize will be awarded on a two-year cycle rotation: in even-numbered years, to an individual; in odd-numbered years, to a group.

The next prize will be awarded to a group. To be eligible, the group must be composed of a majority of K-12 teachers. The group can be recognized either for excellence in teaching or for an innovative initiative applicable to the entire field. The prize carries a cash award of \$1,500 for the group project (plus travel expenses for the group leader) and will be awarded at the annual meeting in January 2011. See past winners of this award.

<http://www.historians.org/teaching/Beveridge.htm>

The Captain Planet Foundation will fund as many projects as its annual resources allow. Please read the following guidelines thoroughly if you would like to seek funding from us. In order to maximize the impact of Foundation funds, the Board of Trustees limits their grant awards to those applications which comply. The Captain Planet Foundation reserves the right to earmark funding for specific budgetary items, and decline funding for budgetary items which are not consistent with Grant Guidelines. Generally, the range of grants awarded by the Foundation is \$250 - \$2,500*.

American History Challenge

Please see the attachment if you are interested in having your students participate in this annual African American History Challenge hosted by the 100 Black Men of Long Island. Last year State Farm Insurance awarded \$4,000.00 to help fund their educational and scholarship program designed to enhance the study of African-American History.

This year's challenge will be on April 10, 2010 at Newsday in Melville, NY. Please contact Phil Andrews at 100 Black Men of Long Island if you are interested 516-538-6318 or 347-737-2398. Email philandrews2001@yahoo.com

V i r t u a l E c o n o m i c s ® (V E)

State Farm funded the development of the Council for Economic Education's *VE 3.0*. *VE* is a set of comprehensive economic and financial education teaching materials. It enables the development of customized economics and personal finance curriculum by accessing 1,200 classroom tested lesson plans that are aligned with any state's economics standards. *VE* also contains interactive multimedia demonstrations of over 50 key economic concepts that help teachers convey these ideas to their students. To get free online training and a copy of *VE* for your partnering schools and teachers, go to <http://www.councilforeconed/training/statefarm/>

This offer is good through the end of March 2010.

Dear Loyal Readers,

This is our second issue as the new editors of *The Beacon*. Not much as changed with negotiations, grievances, etc. We do hope that your sense of pride in what you do and being a member of this union continues to grow as we go through this difficult time.

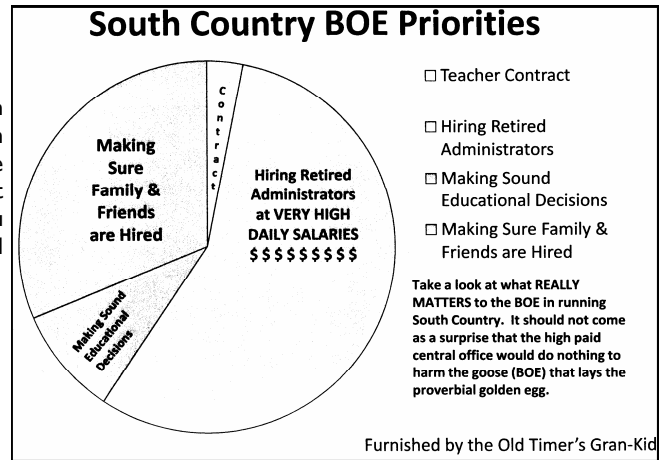
Please send us any contributions such as; letters to the editor, good news, concerns, advice to new teachers, cartoons, and quotes. Of course we will respect your anonymity if you wish. Contributions can be sent to Chris at

cbelford@optonline.net

or to Stephanie at stephpirozzi@gmail.com Please send information from your home email address. We can also be reached by pony at Kreamer Street. Thank you for all of you support and contributions.

Yours in Unity...

Chris Belford and Stephanie Pirozzi



A Chain is no Stronger than its Weakest Link

Howdy BTA Members,

I must say how happy I was to see my letter and one of my cartoons making it into the prestigious BEACON. My Gran-Pappy (the Old Timer) would be so proud of me for finally being published in the same newspaper he used to write to. So I see things are still going bad for the teacher's in South Country. I was mystified when I went to the monthly meeting down at VFW and heard what was happening in negotiations. I can't quite follow the whole percentage increase thing, but it seems to me, a cost of living raise is a reasonable thing. Then I hear the BOE wants to double the medical contribution, what's that all about. I just don't get it, no raise to meet the cost of living and then double the medical. I ain't the smartest guy around, but wouldn't it make sense if that is the best they can offer then HOLD OUT. My buddies and I were talking and we were thinking the teachers should sit tight and wait. In the meanwhile, I was told

that you teachers still have time to attend Laverne University. I never went there, but I want to know how far it is from Shirley University and is it located in Milwaukee? Schlemiel! Schlimazel! Hasenpfeffer Incorporated. Not sure what they have to do with getting a college education, but if you can go to that school, DO IT, I wish I had gotten all the school I could have. If I did I could join you fine teachers on the picket line. Hope you enjoy the articles I have been working on for all you teachers. Before I sign off I just want to wish you BTA Members a happy holiday and a healthy new year. Remember what my Gran-Pappy used to say "A chain is no stronger than its weakest link." I guess the UNION is the chain and all you fine teachers are the links. Keep being strong!

Thanks for all you do,

The Old Timer's Gran-Kid

BELLPORT TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Executive Committee:

President: Spencer Stickley

1st VP: Wayne White

2nd VP: Teri Palermo-Robinson

Treasurer: Don O'Hanlon

Recording Secretary: Sue Gerolami-Stelmok

Corresponding Secretary: Donna Synder

NYSUT Leg. Delegate: Debbie Becht

NYSUT Ed. Delegate: Trish Gallina

Committee Chairs:

Chief Negotiator: Janice Kryl

Grievance: Janice Kryl

SCOSH: Chris Belford

Elections: Mary Zaffarano

Community Relations: Teri Palermo-Robinson, Carol Conquest, Bill Freda

Grant Committee: Rodney O'Neal

Mentoring: Wayne White

Public Relations: Dan O'Connor

Beacon: Chris Belford and Stephanie Pirozzi

BTA Website: Dave Perkins

Community Newsletter: Ann Marie O'Sullivan, Lori Klamut

Building Representatives:

Bellport High School: Matt Feddern (Sr), Andrew Budris, Pat Brady, Dennis Pluth, Laurie O'Hara, Shannon Scott

Middle School: Christine Napolitano (Sr.), Rob Ancipink, Matt Bux, Bill Etzel, Matthew Kinigson

Frank P.Long: Jill Fioriello (Sr.), Bill Freda, Teri Turecamo, Erika Watson

Brookhaven Elementary: Jean Gray (Sr.), Tori Suarez, Michele Wein

Kreamer Street: Chris Belford (Sr.), Cathie Morgani, Stephanie Pirozzi

Vern W. Critz: Karen Hughes (Sr.), Lori Klamut, Judi Lindo

**United
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Bellport Teachers Association

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