

The Agenda



Niagara Wheatfield Teachers
Association

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ETMS book project impacts children around the world

Darla Bubar, Editor

Many amazing things go on in the classrooms around Niagara Wheatfield and recently, I had the opportunity to talk with three Edward Town Middle School teachers who introduced a project called, "Books of Hope."

Jill Hessinger, Karen Culligan, and Gloria Manzella collaborated over about a two-month period with their

seventh grade students through Art and Technology classes at Edward Town to develop children's books designed to connect people across continents.

Jill Hessinger said she first learned of the idea from an article about a Lewiston-Porter teacher who does something called "Portraits of Hope" with her high school students. After researching this, Jill found information for "Books of Hope" and knew it was the perfect project for middle school kids.

Karen Culligan provided this valuable background



information... If you've never heard of "Books of Hope" - it is about books—about reading books, writing books, learning from books and about making connections. "Books of Hope" fa-

cilitates and exchange between American students and students in Uganda, whose lives have been disrupted by war, abandonment, disease, or slavery. The children who receive these books have a powerful thirst for knowledge. They know that education is their best hope for a better future.

In Uganda, the books will go to children who have been victims of the civil war that has waged for years in the north. The Lord's Resistance Army is a rebel group, that until 2006, had been kidnapping children



The books represent a potent symbol of the hope we'd like to share with as many children as possible.

and forcing them to murder their families and others. The books will go to children who have escaped from the LRA and are living at reintegration centers, orphanages, or attending schools and are in the midst of healing after their traumatic experiences.

Gloria Manzella commented, "I created the Books of Hope with Team 7-2. The information came from Mr. Evarts science class. Most

of the books were about the body systems. The students generated extremely creative projects. One student, Kayla used poems that she had from first grade, another girl, Terra used the word digestive to tell about the digestive system. Still others used spokespeople, like Mr. Peanut. They were all excellent and looked professional. The books were created in Microsoft Publisher. Most of the books had a cute note to the children of Idure. Some of the children created two books, one in art and one in tech. It was a great experience."

The completed books will be shipped out to the "Books of Hope" coordinator in Wisconsin and from there sent to Africa.

Channel 4 News visited Edward Town Middle School as well. The "Books of Hope" broadcast will air **Tuesday, March 18th @ 6:15 or 6:45 am on Channel 4.**

IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION ON THIS ENDEAVOR, OR WOULD LIKE TO READ SOME OF OUR STUDENTS BOOKS, CHECK OUT www.booksofhope.org. You can also view pictures from the Channel 4 interview on our NWCS website.

A special thanks to Jill, Karen, and Gloria for sharing this awesome experience with me.



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It's a new month...

- Have you scheduled your yearly mammogram?



- The next awareness

BOD is March 27, 2008

- Negotiations continue

Doing anything newsworthy in your classroom this month? I'd love to hear from you... please contact me at dbubar@nwcsd.org!

Breast cancer awareness workshop offered



Tuesday, March 25, 2008

Presenter: Elizabeth Vignaux

NYSUT Western New York Regional Office Conference Center

4:30 PM

Free of charge

Dinner included

Highlights of program:

- Breast cancer risk factors: the basics
- Why study occupational cancer risk?
- Mammary carcinogens: a growing understanding
- Teachers and breast cancer risk: the epidemiology
- Example of a cancer cluster investigation: Trumansburg Central School District
- Teachers and breast cancer: knowledge and perceptions (Cornell risk perception study)
- Mammary carcinogens: scenarios for exposure
- Mammary carcinogens found in the school setting
- Where do we go from here?

Survey of participants' preferences for educational programming

Any NYSUT member may attend. Reservations will be accepted as long as there is space.

Contact the WNY Regional Office at 716-634-7132 to reserve a spot.

Questions and reservations may also be directed to Elizabeth Vignaux at evignaux@nysutmail.org

A comprehensive presentation examining the relationship between breast cancer and educational careers.

Highly paid teachers

Contributed by retiree, Lucille Gervase

**This one's been run before, but it never loses its charm!*

I, for one, am sick and tired of those highly paid teachers. Their hefty salaries are driving up taxes and they only work nine months a year. It's time we put things in perspective and pay them for what



they do—baby-sit! We can get that for less than minimum wage.

That's right, I would give them \$3 an hour and only the hours they worked, not any of that ridiculous "planning time." That would be \$21 a day (* a.m. to 3:30 p.m. with 30 minutes off for lunch.)

Each parent should pay \$21 a day for these teachers to baby-sit their children.

Now, how many do they teach in a day... maybe 30? So that's $21 \times 30 = \$630$ a day.

But remember, they only work 180 days a year. I'm not going to pay them for any vacations. Let's see, that's $630 \times 180 = \$113,400$.

HOLD ON! My calculator must need batteries. Wait a minute, there is something wrong here!

From where I stand... *I love this job!*

Darla Bubar, Editor

Whenever people ask me what I do for a living, and then I tell them with a huge grin on my face that I'm a teacher, I'm often met with a series of "ughs" or "God bless yous." Apparently, teaching 7th grade is a bad thing in the public's view—raging hormones, and "tween" years seem to frighten the average Joe.

Teaching, minus all the bullsh*t, is the best job in the world. (You know—the time we actually get to REALLY work with students.) The idea of being in the classroom day in and day out shaping the minds of our future—what powerful stuff! I absolutely love coming to work everyday. Heck, where else can one be a perpetual "kid" - allowed to stay abreast of all the current trends in fashion, music, movies, and popular culture? Where else can one be admired even though he or she tells bad jokes, weird stories, and has bad hair days? Where else can one make a difference with just a hello or a smile? Where else can one screw up a "sales pitch" on the first try, re-work it, and give it another go a period later while still "selling" what one has to give? No where that I've found. Children make our jobs incredibly rewarding, incredibly challenging, and even—at



times—incredibly frustrating.. But, in the end, every moment with them helps us become better at what we do, and likewise, helps our students become productive members of society.

So—what makes our classroom time so wonderful? Of course, quality teachers sit at the top of the list. Because of our contract—we are able to attract the best of the best. When I run into teachers from other school districts who find out where I work, they always tell me how lucky I am—we have one of the best contracts out there. I have to agree. Our contract has certainly been beneficial to me over the years. It has also helps me to feel comfortable and confident. I teach knowing I have one of the strongest unions backing me up.

I don't have to worry about the "bull" consuming my work, because the contract protects me from that. I am so thankful each and everyday that I teach at N-W and that I am a member of the NWTA. Our strength and solidarity makes this job one that I look forward to doing for many years to come. Thanks NWTA.

Happy SPRING!

"Where else can one make a difference with just a "hello" or a smile?"

The lighter side



Beau

by Jimmy Stewart (contributed by R. Tilyou, SHS)

He never came to me when I would call
Unless I had a tennis ball,
Or he felt like it,
But mostly he didn't come at all.
When he was young
He never learned to heel
Or sit or stay,
He did things his way.
Discipline was not his bag
But when you were with him things sure didn't drag.
He'd dig up a rosebush just to spite me,
And when I'd grab him, he'd turn and bite me.
He bit lots of folks from day to day,
The delivery boy was his favorite prey.
The gas man wouldn't read our meter,
He said we owned a real man-eater.
He set the house on fire
But the story's long to tell.
Suffice it to say that he survived
And the house survived as well.
On the evening walks, and Gloria took him,
He was always first out the door.
The Old One and I brought up the rear
Because our bones were sore.
He would charge up the street with Mom hanging on,
What a beautiful pair they were!
And if it was still light and the tourists were out,
They created a bit of a stir.
But every once in a while, he would stop in his tracks
And with a frown on his face look around.
It was just to make sure that the Old One was there
And would follow him where he was bound.
We are early-to-bedders at our house--
I guess I'm the first to retire.
And as I'd leave the room he'd look at me
And get up from his place by the fire.
He knew where the tennis balls were upstairs,
And I'd give him one for a while.
He would push it under the bed with his nose
And I'd fish it out with a smile.
And before very long
He'd tire of the ball
And be asleep in his corner
In no time at all.
And there were nights when I'd feel him
Climb upon our bed
And lie between us,
And I'd pat his head.
And there were nights when I'd feel this stare
And I'd wake up and he'd be sitting there
And I reach out my hand and stroke his hair.
And sometimes I'd feel him sigh
and I think I know the reason why.
He would wake up at night
And he would have this fear
Of the dark, of life, of lots of things,
And he'd be glad to have me near.
And now he's dead.
And there are nights when I think I feel him
Climb upon our bed and lie between us,
And I pat his head.
And there are nights when I think
I feel that stare
And I reach out my hand to stroke his hair,
But he's not there.
Oh, how I wish that wasn't so,
I'll always love a dog named Beau.

Wit and wisdom from our president

Kevin Rustowicz, President

The basis of all effective groups is usually found within the trenches. The building reps of the NWTa are our union's foundation. The building reps are directly involved in a school's daily goings-on.

The union's job is to train our reps to understand the legal obligation of the duty of fair representation. These important people need to plan rather than react to help to build a school's

identity. By having a rapport with the building administrator, they can protect our members' rights and improve our members' terms and conditions of employment. These are the first in a line of defense against political, arbitrary, or negligent actions toward our members. It is vital that the members of the NWTa recognize the importance of a building reps role.

Because of the serious nature of the job, burnout isn't uncommon. Reps

often take on too much. We must involve newer members so that lack of training and experience in the lower ranks is diminished.

Please consider involving yourself in your building as a rep or in some other capacity that helps support the union. VOTE/COPE, union socials, non-tenured teacher mentors, and union workshops are just a few of the ways you can get involved in solidarity.

~ Rusto

News from the AFT ~ EPI Report: Teachers Face Growing Pay Gap

The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) today (March 7) released "The Teaching Penalty: Teacher Pay Losing Ground," which highlights the growing gap in salary growth between teachers and other professions. Here are a few of the major findings of the report:

- An analysis of trends in weekly earnings shows that public school teachers earned 15 percent lower weekly earnings than comparable workers.
- Teachers' weekly wages were nearly on par with those paid in comparable occupations in 1996 but are now 14.3 percent, or \$154 below that of comparable occupations.
- Policies that solely focus on changing the composition of the current compensation levels, such as merit or pay-for-performance schemes, are unlikely to be effective unless they also correct the teacher compensation disadvantage in the labor market.
- States vary widely in the extent to which public school teachers are paid less than other college graduates...but there is no state where teacher pay is equal or better than that of other college graduates.

The AFT released the following statement in response to the EPI's report http://leadernet.aft.org/documents_supporting/EPI_Cortese_statement.doc

A fuller Leadernet story concerning the EPI report is at: http://leadernet.aft.org/news/article_detail.cfm?ArticleID=2093

The full report can be found at:

http://www.epi.org/content.cfm/book_teaching_penalty

Participating TSA vendors

For those inquiring about Tax Shelter Annuities, the following list of participating vendors has been provided. There is also a payroll binder in each front office that contains this information and the forms need to sign up or change your current TSA. If you have any questions, please call Carol Guariglia at the payroll office (ext. 3025).

ING

Nationwide Life Insurance

Metropolitan Life

Oppenheimer Funds

Mass Mutual—Artistry NY

Employee Benefit Account (Legend)

Employee Deposit Account (PMG)

L&M ACCT/DBA N&L

Capital Guardian Trust Co.

Putnam Resources

T. Rowe Price Retirement Operations

**This information was provided by Carol Guariglia*





**We stand for education...
we stand united!**

Niagara Wheatfield Teachers
Association

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We're on the web
www.nwta-union.org

Heads up: A national campaign against teachers unions will kick off next week.

Next Tuesday (March 11), the Center for Union Facts (CUF) will launch what the organization describes as "an unprecedented, \$1 million advertising assault on teachers unions."

CUF is airing commercials on CNN and Fox News, and buying full-page ads in the *New York Times* and *USA Today*. The attack ads will promote its campaign Web site, www.TeachersUnionExposed.com. We suspect these ads, which focus on union actions in 20 school districts across the country, also will include distortions about tenure, claims that unions oppose worthwhile school reforms, and outright lies about what we do. The charges will be vicious and outrageous, and the ads may result in news coverage, particularly from anti-union media outlets.

We are currently developing our own attack plan and will have additional information to you shortly. However, each of you is capable of answering these charges by asserting the *real* facts and talking about your union's successes. In doing so, it may help to know a little about CUF, which has been monitored by Sourcewatch (www.sourcewatch.org): "The Center for Union Facts is a secretive front group for individuals and industries opposed to union activities. It is part of lobbyist Rick Berman's family of front groups including the Employment Policies Institute."

Berman has lobbied on behalf of pesticide, alcohol and tobacco companies, and against the Americans with Disabilities Act, checkpoints to catch drunk drivers, minimum wage increases, and card-check. A 2006 *USA Today* article reported that his lobbying firm brings in \$10 million per year for his work on ultra-conservative, anti-union clients. Berman has even waged a campaign against Mothers Against Drunk Driving. American Rights at Work (www.americanrightsatwork.org/the-anti-union-network/center-for-union-facts) has additional information about Berman and CUF. We hope this helps you respond. If you need further assistance, please contact John See in the AFT's public affairs department, 202/434-4694, jsee@aft.org.

We are pleased that our history dates back to 1971 when The New York State Teachers Association certified our union. Today we are proudly affiliated with The New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and The American Federation of Teachers (AFT). We are also honored to be a part of The American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).

What's good on the bookshelves

The Darkest Evening of the Year
by Dean Koontz

~Charlie Donner
Social Studies
Edward Town Middle School

Good development of some interesting and some spooky characters.

Lets you down a bit because it is not as intense as his earlier writing.

Does however still have a nice creepy edge.

The Machiavelli Covenant by Allan Fulsom

A highly improbable scenario but a whole lot of fun to read. Quite imaginative.

Global conspiracy fans will love it.



The Watchman by Robert Crais

A fast-paced thriller surrounding a real-estate deal gone bad that puts a spoiled rich girl,

Larkin, under the protection of former mercenary, Joe Pike. An interesting twist at the end ties this book into modern day terrorism.

~Darla Bubar, Editor

**Happy St. Patrick's Day...
Happy Easter!**

