

# TAAAC ACTION REPORT

Your Professional Organization

Volume 38, Number 9



## Where are the heroes of today?

### *A Tribute to Teachers*

As we celebrate National Teacher Appreciation Day, we realize too many people are looking for heroes in all the wrong places. Movie stars and rock musicians, athletes, and models aren't heroes; they're celebrities. Heroes abound in public schools, a fact that doesn't make the news. There is no precedent on the level of violence, drugs, broken homes, child abuse, and crime in today's America. Education didn't create these problems but deals with them every day.

#### ***You want heroes?***

Consider Dave Sanders, the school teacher shot to death while trying to shield his students from two youths on a shooting rampage at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado. Sanders gave his life, along with 12 students, and other less heralded heroes survived the Colorado blood bath.

#### ***You want heroes?***

Jane Smith, a Fayetteville, NC teacher, was moved by the plight of one of her students, a boy dying for want of a kidney transplant. So this woman told the family of a 14 year old boy that she would give him one of her kidneys. And she did. When they subsequently appeared together hugging on the Today Show, even Katie Couric was near tears.

#### ***You want heroes?***

Doris Dillon dreamed all her life of being a teacher. She not only made it, she was one of those wondrous teachers who could bring the best out of every single child. One of her fellow teachers in San Jose, Calif said, "She could teach a rock to read." Suddenly she was stricken with Lou Gehrig's Disease which is always fatal, usually within five years. She asked to stay on job ... and did. When her voice was affected she communicated by computer. Did she go home? Absolutely not! She is running two elementary school libraries! When the disease was diagnosed, she wrote the staff and all the families that she had one last lesson to teach ... that dying is part of living. Her colleagues named her Teacher of the Year.

#### ***You want heroes?***

Bob House, a teacher in Gay, Georgia, tried out for Who Wants to be a Millionaire. After he won the million dollars, a network film crew wanted to follow up to see how it had impacted his life. New cars? Big new house? Instead, they found both Bob House and his wife still teaching. They explained that it was what they had always wanted to do with their lives and that would not change. The community was both stunned and gratified.

#### ***You want heroes?***

Last year the average school teacher spent \$468 of their own money for student necessities ... workbooks, pencils ... supplies kids had to have but could not afford. That's a lot of money from the pockets of the most poorly paid teachers in the industrial world.

Schools don't teach values? The critics are dead wrong. The public school system provides more Sunday School teachers than any other profession. The average teacher works more hours in nine months than the average 40-hour employee does in a year.

*Continued on page 5*

# COMMENTARY



**Sheila M. Finlayson**

While our year began in turmoil, the arrival of Mrs. Mann and her team of educators began to calm the waters and instill confidence in the leadership. Educators county-wide felt a sense of relief to know that those at the helm genuinely understood and cared about our issues and morale has improved.

Just as the waters began to calm, I called on you to voice your concerns about our pension. You met at MSTA every single Monday night for twelve weeks. You listened to the briefings and armed yourselves with the necessary information to lobby. You met every delegate and senator and shared your personal stories and delivered the message that pension legislation was a must. You sent thousands of emails and filled hundreds of green bags with thousands of letters and postcards.

You were a large part of one of the best grassroots efforts ever seen in Annapolis.

And, your efforts paid off. We didn't get it all but we were able to get decent enhancements to improve our pension. We'll no longer have

the worst pension in the country!

While a litany of other activities were going on, a small group of your representatives were meeting regularly to negotiate a contract that would chip away at the salary disparities, increase your lifelong earnings, give you paid time to do the work you now do for free, and eliminate some of the workload that has dragged you down, amongst other things. The give and take required in negotiations was not easy but your team remained determined and committed. The end product is a three year agreement that will be deemed the best contract in the state of Maryland.

***“You were a large part of one of the best grassroots efforts ever seen in Annapolis.”***

We have met with much success and have much to be proud of!

With only a few weeks left in the school year, we still have two very important tasks. First of all we must do all we can to make sure the negotiated agreement is funded. In our regular meetings with the County Executive, we have shared the urgency in fully funding the

Board's budget. When the Executive's budget goes to the County Council, we must then join together to attend the budget hearings, to make sure our interests and our needs are met and that the Executive's budget is fully funded.

While we are working to make sure adequate funding comes into the school system, we must begin to make decisions about education candidates for whom we want to endorse. Screening committees are being formed and questionnaires are being mailed to potential candidates for state and county offices. During the month of May, we will be interviewing candidates so that recommendations can be made to the ARC at the June meeting. Then our responsibility will be to support those candidates over the summer months and into the fall to make sure they are elected.

I think it is pretty clear that it's all connected. Our elected officials, state and local, greatly impact what we do and how we live in Anne Arundel County. Some may say we should not be political but if we were not, where would we be?

We are on a roll! I trust the last few weeks will be as fruitful for us as the last few months have been. With your continued support and dedication, I am sure they will be.

**Thank you in advance!**

## TAAAC Action Report

Teachers Association of Anne Arundel County	Officers	Board of Directors	Editors
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## From Contentia this month . . . *Our self-inflicted wounding...*

We here in Contentia have spent the past few years making some light of follies committed by some elected and appointed officials, some recalcitrant administrators and others not among our own bargaining unit. This month, it's time to look within our own unit at the harm some of us are inflicting, some by innocent neglect and some by deliberate intention. I'm speaking of our non-members, those who are content to ride the coat-tails of their colleagues, content to accept the work done for them [albeit some reluctantly], and equally content to let the member next door pay for it.

TAAAC's tentative budget for FY07 will cross the six-figure threshold. Representing a group of nearly 5700 professionally certificated educators in a collective bargaining agreement is a service that comes at a significant cost. Even though TAAAC strictly limits its services for non-members only to that which is explicitly required by law, they still sap a sizable portion of the TAAAC budget – a budget which is exclusively funded by members' dues. For every non-member, there are three members paying his /her share, as well as their own. In virtual terms, non-members have their hands in our pockets.

Unfortunately, the harm non-members cause does not stop at their withholding of dues revenue. Both bargaining power and lobbying influence are directly related to membership size and strength. Our local politicians and our employer are well aware of the number of employees for whom TAAAC speaks, and the number of people who will do what TAAAC asks when collective action becomes necessary. At the bargaining table, in the County Council chambers, and in the Statehouse, membership means much more than most realize. In turn, non-membership hurts more than most want to believe. Even the question of whether our new tentative agreement is funded by the county executive and county council in each of the next three years may ultimately depend upon "join/don't join" decisions made by our own colleagues who will – like us – have to live with the result.

TAAAC has done well for local educators this year. It negotiated a new multi-year agreement that makes nearly a half-million dollar improvement in 30-year career earnings for its Unit 1 employees and raising many of our salaries to a level nearly a third higher as 7/1/08, and providing an average bi-weekly increase of \$232 (\$30 of which would cover membership dues). With MSTa, TAAAC successfully lobbied for higher pension benefits and raised the maximum 30-year benefit by 29% over the current pension system (42% to 54% of average final salary). Further TAAAC negotiated an exclusive auto insurance benefit for members containing 10% to 60% in discounts, with premiums to be payable by direct payroll reductions. TAAAC partnered with the Maryland Real Estate Team to provide deep discounts on any housing-related service or product, whether rental, sale, purchase, or refinancing of homes, and free expert advice and counseling. Participating members' savings have reached into five figures.

TAAAC has earned the support of every Unit 1 employee, and has made its membership dues very affordable. We are strong, but we will be much stronger when we all pay our share.

## Hundreds Contribute to PAC

Since no dues dollars can be used to support our Fund for Children and Public Education, each year MSTa hires a firm to make phone calls to TAAAC members to solicit contributions. This year, an election year, over 300 members have committed over \$18,000 to get "friends" of education and educators elected. ***A special thank must go to all members who have made the commitment.*** And, we welcome all others to contribute to the Fund. Getting educator friendly candidates elected is crucial in meeting the needs of our members and the students you teach.

# The Pension Enhancement V.S. the Retirement System

There seems to be much confusion and concern about the newly approved pension enhancement and how it compares to the Retirement System. The pension changes passed by the 2006 General Assembly will bring Pension System benefits closer to Retirement System benefits.

With the new 5 percent member contribution and 1.8 percent multiplier, participants in the Pension System will eventually (in the year 2028) earn a 54 percent benefit after 30 years of service. They will also receive a cost of living adjustment, with a cap of 3 percent.

Retirement System participants also contribute 5 percent. They earn “1/55” for each year of service, resulting in a benefit after 30 years (30/55) of slightly over 54.5 percent. Their cost of living cap is better; it is 5 percent.

There is a class of members who chose to purchase unlimited protection from inflation for an additional two percent of pay. These members of the Retirement System contribute 7 percent, earn the same 54.5 percent of final average salary at retirement, and have an unlimited cost of living.

The wisdom of the decision to invest an additional 2 percent of pay for all the years to buy the increased inflation protection will probably only be apparent in the next 10, 15, or 20 years and beyond. Things can change quite rapidly over that time span.

The move in the Pension System to 54 percent is a gradual one. In 2006, someone who has 30 years of service in the Retirement System can retire at the 54.5 percent level with a 5% or unlimited cost of living cap. Someone in the Pension System with the same amount of service can retire at 40.8 percent with a 3 percent cost of living cap. The 40.8 percent is the result of 22 years at 1.2 percent plus 8 years at 1.8 percent.

In other words, after 30 years, those in the Pension System will get almost 75 cents for each dollar those in the Retirement System will receive (40.8/54.5). If inflation exceeds 3 percent in any retirement year, those in the Pension System will lose pace.

The Retirement System benefit is fully protected and it is richer than any benefit being earned by Pension System participants.

## A Pension Poem

Hip Hip Hurray!  
Teachers saved the day!

We made the politicians  
Vote our way!

We didn't give up,  
We didn't sit back.

We stayed active,  
MSTA and TAAAC!

*Quarterfield Elementary*

**NATIONAL  
TEACHER  
APPRECIATION  
DAY  
MAY 9, 2006**

# NEA is leading the fight to “fix” the flaws in NCLB and win the funds that help you do your job.

NEA, guided by your ideas on “fixing” the flaws in the law, released the “Great Public Schools for Every Child Act” calling for significant changes to NCLB. Based on our proposals, thirty NEA-supported bills have been introduced in Congress.

NEA won nine changes in the national rules governing the law. Based on NEA proposals the U.S. Department of Education issued national rules changes to help correct some of the most unfair and impractical aspects of the law that:

NEA stopped the Department of Education from weakening the NCLB provision protecting employee rights under federal, state, or local law or collective bargaining agreements when school districts or

schools implement sanctions for failing to make AYP.

NEA organized an alliance of 70 national organizations proposing changes to NCLB — the Forum on Educational Accountability. The Forum’s organizations represent education, civil rights, special education, various religions, and children.

NEA initiated, with several affiliates and nine school districts, the first national lawsuit challenging the unfunded mandates imposed on states and school districts by NCLB. Although a U.S. District Court judge granted the federal government’s motion to dismiss our complaint, our appeal is being supported by seven states (Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Wisconsin) and

the District of Columbia, the Governor of Pennsylvania, as well as the American Association of School Administrators and a collection of state and local elected officials from California.

NEA successfully encouraged state and local officials to speak out about the flaws in NCLB and its lack of funding. This bipartisan state “rebellion” against NCLB now encompasses all 50 states.

NEA highlighted the problems with NCLB with NEA-developed effective messages.

NEA empowered state and local affiliates to influence implementation of the law in their states and school districts by providing a continuing flow of information and resources.

## *A Tribute to teachers continued from page 1*

### *You want heroes?*

For millions of kids, the hug they get from a teacher is the only hug they will get that day because the nation is living through the worst parenting in history. An Argyle, Texas kindergarten teacher hugs her little 5 and 6 year-olds so much that both the boys and the girls run up and hug her when they see her in the hall, at the football games, or in the mall years later.

A Michigan principal moved me to tears with the story of her attempt to rescue a badly abused little boy who doted on a stuffed animal on her desk, one that said “I love you!” He said he’d never been told that at home. This is a constant in today’s society. There are two million unwanted, unloved, abused children in the public schools, the only institution that takes them all in.

### *You want heroes?*

Visit any special education class and watch the miracle of personal interaction, a job so difficult that fellow teachers are awed by the dedication they witness. There is a sentence from an unnamed source which says: “We have been so eager to give our children what we didn’t have that we have neglected to give them what we did.”

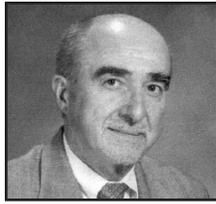
What is it that our kids really need? What do they really want?

Math, science, history and social studies are important, but children need love, confidence, encouragement, someone to talk to, someone to listen, standards to live by. Teachers provide upright examples, the faith and assurance of responsible people.

### *You want heroes?*

**Just look in the mirror. You change lives for the better each and every day! Thank you!**

# Meet Your New Officers



TAAAC President  
Tim Mennuti



TAAAC Vice President  
Richard Benfer



TAAAC Secretary-Treasurer  
Ron Russell



Ken  
Baughman



Enid  
Collison-Lee



Susie  
Jablinske



Shirley  
Little



Yolie  
Marshall



Grace  
Matthews



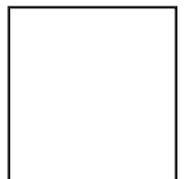
Kathy  
Naeseth



Carol  
Petrosky



Sarah Weller-  
Bentivenga



Vacancy

## TAAAC/Board Negotiations Team



Seated: TAAAC Middle School Representative, Allison Crews; TAAAC President, Sheila M. Finlayson; HR Specialist, Vanessa Bass; and Area Director, Catherine Herbert

Standing: TAAAC Secretary-Treasurer and Elementary Representative, Ron Russell; TAAAC Pupil Services Representative, James Burns; TAAAC Special Education Representative, Sarah Weller-Bentivenga; TAAAC High School Representative, Anthony Pinder; TAAAC Executive Director, Bill Jones; Board Chief Negotiator, Oscar Davis; Middle School Director, Christopher Truffer; Board Attorney, P. Tyson Bennett; and High School Principal, Harry Calendar

# *Does a new federal law jeopardize your assets?*

*TAAAC* members should be aware that a new law recently passed by the Federal Government will dramatically change how a person must pay for long term care. The ability to shelter accumulated assets will be severely restricted, particularly if there has been no advance planning.

Planning for your personal future involves setting aside a nest egg for retirement, reconsidering the size of your living space, and now, more than ever, considering the implications of current and future long term care. Have regular physical check-ups; review your financial situation, but also consider the impact an extended illness may have on your future financial well being.

As outlined recently in *The Baltimore Sun*, while you are thinking about your personal retirement, you also need to think about another big expense—long term care. Even as little as a month of long term care stay can

exceed \$6,000 in un-reimbursed medical expenses, and with 40% of those individuals currently receiving long term care services being between the ages of 18 and 65, the possibility of needing long term care services is real and not just for you as you get older.

Within the next month, as reported in *The Sun*, letters will be mailed to Marylanders over age 50 to raise their awareness of the need to consider their long term care options. *TAAAC* currently provides members with the option to access an outstanding program through **NEA Member Benefits**. The recent signing of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 severely restricts an individual's ability to transfer assets in order to access Medicaid benefits thus placing more *financial responsibility* on the individual and his or her family to provide those funds to pay for needed care.

Many *TAAAC* members have

already addressed this potential financial problem with the benefits provided by the NEA MemberCare® Long Term and Home Health Care Program. If you are concerned about your financial future and health care choices, take time now to find out about the many unique benefits available to you as an Association member through the **NEA MemberCare® Long Term Care Insurance Program**.

Spending time now to learn how to protect your assets and health care choices may provide you with the opportunity to intelligently plan for the future. If you wish to receive information about this program, schedule an individual or school meeting, contact NEA MemberCare® at 410-455-0680 or 1-800-884-2675. Your *TAAAC* membership provides this opportunity to you, your spouse, parents, parents-in-law, and adult children and their spouses for group coverage under this plan

## **TAAAC Begins Endorsement Process**

On the heels of the end of the legislative session, TAAAC begins the process to endorse education friendly candidates for state and local offices. While the filing deadline is not until early July, the TAAAC/MSTA/NEA processes must be completed to allow our membership to vote to support the recommended candidates before the summer break.

Questionnaires are being sent to any and all candidates who have expressed an interest. The deadline for all questionnaires is Monday, May 8 at 4 p.m.

Screening committees are being formed for each Legislative District, each District of the County Council and for the County Executive. A meeting of all committee members will be held on Monday, May 8<sup>th</sup> with interviews lasting through May 19<sup>th</sup>.

Decisions on the state delegates and senators must be completed in time to be forwarded to the TAAAC Board and then to the MSTA Fund for Children and Public Education by June 1, 2006. Decisions on county candidates will be taken to the June ARC for approval.

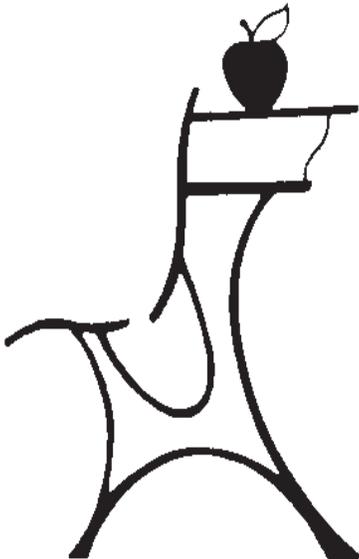
Please contact the TAAAC Office if you are interested in serving on a screening committee.

# WELCOME NEW MEMBER

Katharine Seidenwand

*Have you spotted the  
last four digits of  
your phone number?*

*If so, please contact  
the TAAAC office for  
your prize!*



## NOMINATIONS OPEN

The Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for the **Board of Directors (one-year term)**. Nominations will be accepted until the June 7 Association Representative Council Meeting.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (S) \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to place my name in nomination for the following position:

**Board of Director**

## NOMINATIONS OPEN

The Nominating Committee is accepting nominations for **MSTA Delegates**. Nominations will be accepted until the June 7 Association Representative Council Meeting.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (S) \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to place my name in nomination for the following position:

**MSTA Delegate**

Visit us on the Web at [www.mstane.org/taaac](http://www.mstane.org/taaac)