

WGTA History from 2010 - 2015

By Lynn Davis

History from 2010 to 2015

On June 22, 2010, 62 West Genesee staff members gathered at Onondaga Lake Park to take part in the Corporate Challenge Run/Walk. This was almost double the amount we had in 2009! Participants included Teachers, Teacher Assistants, Teacher Aides, Administrators, Office Staff Members and our Superintendent, Dr. Brown. Each building was represented by at least one participant at the event. The night was full of fitness, fun, and plenty of food and drinks, thanks to the WGTA and participants!

Despite the rain and thunderstorms, the night was a success! West Genesee won the Scholastic Challenge Award for the Large School Division, for the second year in a row. This award is given out to the school district with the highest percentage of their employees involved in the Corporate Challenge. The West Genesee staff members were presented with a plaque that evening and even more significant, two of our students would be honored this year with \$500 scholarships! The women's team, made up of the top four females, finished in fourth place, walking away with gifts from Tiffany & Co.!



West Genesee Corporate Challenge Participants

Camillus Middle School music teacher Don Schuessler received the "Outstanding Young Choral Director" award for 2010 from the New York Chapter of the American Choral Director's Association (NY/ ACDA).

Steve Frank, Instrumental music teacher at Stonehedge and East Hill, for his imminent induction to the Syracuse Area Music Awards' (SAMMYs) Hall of Fame.

WGHS Social Studies teacher Dominic Fruscello attended the Advanced Placement U.S. History Exam Scoring Conference in Louisville, Kentucky in June. "It was the single greatest professional development experience in my 20 year career and a great honor to work with so many experienced AP teachers," said Fruscello, who is also in his 16th year of writing regents exam questions for the NY State Education Department.

Science teachers Sue Potrikus (CMS) and Judy Allen, (WGMS) attended the Honeywell Institute for Ecosystems Education August 9-13 at Onondaga Lake. Bob Marks, history teacher at WGHS, and Christine Rust, third grade teacher at Stonehedge Elementary, who will be taking part in the First Person America Teaching American History grant.

Several West Genesee strings teachers, who have been invited to conduct All County Festival Orchestras around

Central New York. Bill Mercer, orchestra director at WGHS, will be conducting the Oneida County Junior High All County Orchestra in February 2011. Kristen Panzetta, orchestra director at CMS, will be conducting the Monroe County Elementary All County Orchestra in March 2011. And Maggie Mercer, orchestra director at East Hill Elementary, will be conducting the Onondaga County Elementary Orchestra in March 2011.

Priscilla Palmieri was the winner of the 2010 WGTA Scholarship.

West Genesee teachers make national news when they agree to take a pay freeze. President Christian and Superintendent Brown appeared on CNN to answer questions regarding this groundbreaking contractual agreement. Governor Cuomo also commended the staff at West Genesee.



WGTA President Christian and Superintendent Dr. Brown explain to CNN and the world how they negotiated their teacher's contracts without protests. "It's all about trust."

Ellen Miller (CMS) won an NYSUT Award of Merit in the Best Feature Story category (Class III) for her MemberShip article entitled, "West Genesee music teachers: a class act," which was printed in the WGTA newsletter in March 2010.

West Genesee was chosen as one of the "Best Communities for Music Education" by The National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation.

Congratulations and best wishes to our retirees:

- * Donna Coloton-Forman - 31 years - grade 4 at EH, grade 3 and 5 at SR, and grade 1 through 5 AIS at ST

- * Ann Crane - 16 years - home and careers - recently at CMS

- * David Crawford - 36 years - grade 7 and 8 science at CMS

- S* teven Frank - 16 years - instrumental music at ST and EH; Jazz band director at WGHS

- * Susan Gillen - 14 years - grade 1 through 5 AIS at ST

- * Rose Ann LeBlanc - 34 years - grade 2, 4, and 5 at Warners and SR

- * William McGrade - 26 years - grade 1, 3 and 4 and pre-1 through 5 reading specialist at ST

- * Jane Rose - 21 years - library media specialist at ST

2011 - 2012

The winner of the WGTA Scholarship for 2011 is Shannon E. Howes. Shannon will attend SUNY Cortland in the fall and she'll major in Childhood Education.

The total annual dues for 2011 – 2012 were \$712. These included WGTA, NYSUT and AFT.

The NYSUT approved rubric for the new APPR has been given the tentative OK by the district administration.

There will be no money available for teaching centers from the state

The WGTA donated \$1,000 of VOTE/COPE money to promote NYS teachers through commercials.

2012 - 2013

The average starting salary in NYS in 2012 was \$43,839. The average salary for all teachers in the state was \$75,279.

WGTA members manned the NYS Fair NYSUT booth on Wednesday, August 29th, 2012.

Sarah Hart won the 2012 WGTA scholarship. Sarah will be attending Cazenovia College in the fall, and will major in Inclusive Elementary Education.

Despite the fact that WGTA members agreed to forego a raise in 2013 to help save jobs and programs for students, WGTA members dug deep into their pockets for many causes this year. Just looking at the district-wide "jeans days" we held, here are the numbers:

- * American Heart Association, initiated by Peg Bailey - \$940.00
- * Academic Decathlon Competition, initiated by District - \$1,325.00
- * Susan G. Komen, initiated by Theresa Mosey - \$1,600.00
- * Craig Reinhardt, initiated by Courtney Lyons - \$1,200.00
- Carol Baldwin Breast Cancer, initiated by Ginny Cummings - \$835.00

Total: \$5,900.00

This doesn't reflect the many other fundraisers we held locally at the various school buildings, the United Way, or the time spent volunteering for other diverse causes. It does reflect the spirit of generosity we have here. We at West Genesee have proven our mettle repeatedly through our unflagging donations of time, talent and money. Thank you.

The 2012 - 2016 WGTA Teacher Contract was successfully negotiated. WGTA Officers were: John Christian, President; Sue Giannini, Vice President; Danielle Tuttle, Vice President for Grievances; Andrea Moore, Vice President for Negotiations; Bonnie Young, Treasurer; Michelle Lepak, Secretary.

2013 - 2014

On July 1, 2013 the newly elected WGTA Executive Officers took office. The newly elected officials were:

John Mannion - President
Mary Weaver - Vice President
Susan Marshall - Treasurer
Katie Williams - Secretary



John Mannion
WGTA President
2013 - Present

“West Genesee teachers, administrators and some students will be wearing blue on Monday as part of a national day of action to show support for public education.”

“This is another event for people to say we believe these dramatic changes should be carefully looked at to make sure they are impacting the education of children positively,” said John Mannion, president of the West Genesee Teachers’ Association.

The WGTA started a Facebook page and a Twitter account. WGTA Officers attend the NYSUT Leadership Conferences in Albany and Cooperstown.

Grossman St. Amour, PLLC, conducted an audit in July. The report recommended more stringent internal controls and required a refilling of 990 Tax Forms, an annual reporting return that federally tax-exempt organizations must file with the IRS.

A Fall Fling was held at Bitterman’s on October 17th.

Congratulations go out to High School Science teachers, Kathy Annan & Sam Gervaise, who were designated as New York State Master Teachers by a governor's commission.

Kudos to West Genesee High School Health teacher, Sandy Brown, one of the Hope Honorees for being an amazing educator who promotes anti-bullying! Sandy was honored at the Hope Gala 2013.

This year's Camillus Optimist Joseph A. Witowski Teacher of the Year Award winners are: High School Chemistry Teacher Leandra Kovalchik, Kathy Byrne, West

Genesee Middle School Math Teacher, and Melanie Callahan, Split Rock 5th Grade Teacher.

WGTA members donated over \$1000 to the Carol M. Baldwin Breast Cancer Research Fund! WGTA members donated over \$800 to the Western & Central New York Chapter of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

On November 5th, the WGTA had an elementary forum at Stonehedge Elementary for all elementary teachers that wanted to share their concerns and have their voices heard. It was a wonderful conversation that allowed teachers from different buildings to hear each other's thoughts.

2014 - 2015

The starting salary in West Genesee for a person on Step 1 with a BA was \$47,019 and with an MA was \$51,387.

The WGTA annual Fall Fling was held on October 3rd at The Wildcat.

The WGTA Officers received training at the NYSUT Fall Leadership Conference in Cooperstown in October.

President Mannion explaining the "perfect storm:"

"It is not teacher evaluations that are the problem, nor new curriculum, decreased funding or more testing. The problem is not that students are coming to schools with greater emotional, social, behavioral, financial or academic needs. The problem is not that schools are dealing with these students with fewer staff and decreased funding. It is the perfect storm combining all of these issues that has teachers turning their heads wondering which new initiative they need to address. Teachers still teach, they overcome and keep their focus on the students in front of them. The greater crime in all of this is that it is done under the guise of saving children from the dreadful state that public schools will impose on them. The education reform movement is not saving our children, in fact it is stealing away the joy of education, a joy that we all encountered. This chaos is intentional. Many teachers, administrators and elected officials are afraid to call this what it is, the creation of a new industry. The changes are being driven by billionaires and hedge fund coordinators that are seeking a profit, a guaranteed profit mind you."

The WGTA collected \$1,180 for donation to CMB Breast Cancer Research. The Teaching Center Directing Council approved 10 collegial circles, and 4 action research proposals. The PDC project at the High School was approved.



WGTA Cabinet, February 2015