

WGTA History

By Lynn Davis

History from The Early 1950's

The West Genesee School District consolidated in 1952 and formed Central School District #1, which included the towns of Camillus, Onondaga, Van Buren, Geddes and Elbridge. At a special meeting of the Board of Education on March 25, 1952, a teachers' salary schedule was adopted effective July 1, 1952. It had 16 rows going down the schedule, but only 2 columns going across. A teacher was paid either as a "regular" or if they had 30 hours BEYOND their Master's degree. Step 1 paid \$2,700 and step 1MA+30 paid \$2,900. A teacher received an additional \$200 for a Master's plus 30 hours! Step 16 paid \$4,600 or \$4,800 with a MA+30.

Consolidation proved to be no problem for the Board when they determined where a teacher was to be placed on the salary schedule. A teacher, for example from Geddes, would get a one year placement on the salary schedule for every two years of service. If a teacher had 10 years of teaching before consolidation, they would be placed on Step 5 of the salary schedule!

Coaches made out about as well. Varsity and JV basketball coaches received \$250, football coaches received \$175 and baseball coaches earned \$150. Elementary sports coaches were paid between \$75 and \$125. The Board went on to state that "no teacher shall be eligible to be assigned to more than three extra duty assignments" per year, and could not be paid more than \$225 extra in any one year. They did go on to state, however, that any money a teacher made beyond the \$225 limitation would "be forthcoming as the years pass."



Royce Newell
WGTA President 1956 - 1957

One of the earlier Presidents of the WGTA was Royce Newell (President from 1956-57). Royce remembers the WGTA to be more of a social organization in the 1950's than a labor organization. Royce also remembers that when he started teaching (in 1949) teachers took the salary that was offered to them. If the teacher was lucky, that was the minimum amount required by the state. Royce tells us that some teachers were hired at the state minimum (\$2,000), but in order to keep their job had to "donate" \$200 back to the district.

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History from The Early 1960's

In the early 1960's the WGTA published a booklet called "TEACHER TALKS." We still have a couple of these publications, and would like to share with you some excerpts taken from them. They give a good indication of the times.

In the May 1962 issue we find that the Editorial Board consisted of Annette Artini, Isabel Backman, Jean Emerson, Marjorie Forth, Madeline Gilbo, Elizabeth O'Keefe and Janice Rockwell. The lead story was by Donald Snyder, Principal of Camillus Elementary and was titled "To Promote or Not Promote." The summary to Mr. Snyder's article states, "When classes are reduced to a point where the program of individual instruction can be fully achieved, the failure problem is likely to disappear automatically."

Most of the publication dealt with hints suggested by teachers to help others in the classroom. Some of the topics included bulletin boards, a Surprise Box, Hatching Eggs, Paper Plant Projects, Password for Children, and where to send for free information and materials. There were also reports on conferences, book reviews, and Educational Television

We find that "among the Florida-bound at Easter Vacation time from the Onondaga Road Faculty were: Dot Mussey, Ginny Sullivan, Shirley Newstead, Nancy Connolly, 'Jerry' Finnerty and Betty O'Keefe." In addition, we found that Elizabeth Palma wrote on how to make Easter Eggs from balloons, George Marlatt wrote on a demonstration for the Madison Project, and John Bochino wrote of Jeff Michels, who won first prize for 5th graders at the Oswego State Science Fair (his entry was a photoelectric cell).

Ruth Birmingham wrote on how students and faculty at Onondaga Road observed Arbor Day "by planting between 600 - 700 evergreen trees at the extremities of three sides of the school grounds. Sixth grade pupils were under the supervision of Mrs. Redman, Mr. Vaccaro, and Mr. Bush had charge of the project and dug all the holes."

In 1963 we find Royce Newell in charge of the WGTA Scholarship Fund, raising money with a Carnival Night. Other people working on the committee were Barbara

Stanislay, Betty Smith, Grances Geary, Dorris Morris, Pauline Williams, John Campagna, James Eagan, Richard Capella and George Kaye. Esther Gleason took the 5th grade class at Fairmount Elementary to the Erie Canal Museum and the first place team in the woman's bowling league was the "Hits and Misses." Team members were Madge Parrish, Madge Gilbo, Dot Mussey and Fran Zeno.



Richard Capella

It is obvious that the WGTA in the early 1960's was more of a social organization than a labor union. We must remember, however, that at this time teachers did not have the right by law to bargain collectively.

In 1964 we see the first signs of labor unrest as the short-lived "West Genesee Men Teachers' Association" was formed to take a stand against the district offering the teachers a zero dollar raise. Paul Bozych tells us that most of the men refused to sign their contracts until the district granted them a salary increase. They got their raises.

Research shows that many were the times when a contractual raise was "capped", or reduced to what the district said was the only amount they would pay, regardless of what the raise was. The district would state that the difference between the actual raise and the "capped" raise would be made up in the years when actual raises were low. Veterans such as Dick Capella (ret.) and Jim Ridgeway (ret.) remember that for some teachers, the money was never received, despite the existence of a "contract."

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History of Early WGTA Collective Bargaining (Mid-1960's - 1969)

Our next bits of information come from the January 1966, "Newsletter of the WGTA." Clyde Ohl is the President and writes that his platform includes "an end to interruptions which cut down on teaching time, an effective teacher voice in policy making, and an adequate and equitable salary schedule."

He went on to announce the adoption of a comprehensive medical insurance program. He writes, "The idea was first introduced (to the Board) by the Teachers' Association four years ago (1962) and was reintroduced each subsequent year." The District paid 100 percent of individual coverage and 0 percent of dependent coverage. The premium for dependent coverage was \$18 per month (\$216 per year).

In an editorial, President Ohl said "teachers are one of the best educated groups in the nation today. To expect this well-informed group to sit on the side lines when the politicians are making educational and political decisions is both impractical and ridiculous." Mr. Ohl later became principal of the high school.

The last step in the grievance procedure in 1966 was as follows: "If the aggrieved teacher is still not satisfied, he may have a final hearing and determination by the Board of Education." There was no binding arbitration before the American Arbitration Association in those days. In 1966 there were 360 teachers in West Genesee, 12 of whom were not members of the WGTA. Dues were \$4.00 per year.

We have a number of publications put out by the WGTA in 1967 when Bill Clark was President (Bill was later to become Vice Principal at WGMS). It was in that year that the Taylor Law was passed, giving teachers the right to unionize and bargain collectively with school districts. This is also when some of the "ugly" parts of the Taylor Law came into being, such as the 2 for 1-strike penalties (2 days loss of pay for every 1 day out on strike). Bill Clark summarized the situation when he wrote "this will be the most important year in the young life of the WGTA for many years to come. Now that the Taylor Bill is a law, it is up to you and your fellow colleagues to help augment the Professional Negotiations Committee."

WGTA Presidents 1965 - 1969



Clyde Ohl



Bill Clark



Ken Sherman



Rachel Donham

To give you a feeling for the political sentiments of the day, the following is part of an article written by P. Woodring (from the "Saturday Review") and reprinted in the May, 1967, "Newsletter of the WGTA."

"...In a great many of the larger school systems, communications between teachers and administrators have either broken down or were never established. There are many teachers from New York to California who even in 1967 fear their Principals, who look upon them as petty tyrants or at best bureaucrats who reject their (the teachers) professional leadership, and who would never dream of turning to them for advice and assistance. They fear the day when the Principal will come tiptoeing into the room during a class period to take critical notes that will become part of the teacher's permanent file.

"The younger and less experienced teachers do, of course, need supervision and assistance, but "snooper vision" -- the occasional stealthy visit of a Supervisor or Principal who drops in unannounced -- is not supervision.

"...So long as administrators continue to look upon teachers as subordinates and employees rather than as professional colleagues, the teachers will continue to look upon administrators as employers and as their natural opponents. When frustrated, they will organize against their employers, making use of all the techniques available to employee groups, including strikes."

In the same publication we see the 1967 Monday Night Men's Bowling Roster. Players such as Alletzhauser, Stebbins, Isbell, Brooks, Malinowski, Rapple, Bogert, Skelton, Connelly, Ridgeway, Ohl, Spagnola, Venner, Fox, Field, Upcraft, Collucci, Beebe, Whitmore and Bozych bowled for such teams as the Dagwoods, Tigers, Giants, Palookas, Finns, Popeyes, Abners and Alley Cats.

In these old publications we still see a lot of the social functions that the WGTA enjoyed, but we also begin to see the changes. We begin to see the WGTA go from an organization that submitted requests to the Board -- to a union that now has the right to bargain for teachers.

The movement towards unionism was written in an article called "The Wind Is Rising." The WGTA member that wrote the article in 1967 did not attach his/her name to it, but it shows the frustrations that teachers faced. The author wrote:

"Many administrators and board members are reluctant to relinquish any of their authority, thereby fanning the flames of dissatisfaction on their faculties. Administrators especially are prone to control every facet of administration and overlook the fact that every member of the school faculty has at least a bachelor's degree and just might have some ability if given a chance to demonstrate that ability.

"...Ask yourself this question: When was the last time my professional opinion was asked by my administrator? ... Teachers are in a good position to know what is best for a school district -- not part time board members or administrators who have not been in the classroom for years."

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History from The 1970's

The early 1970's saw the onset of what would be many political attacks on teachers and public education. In 1971 Charles Jerabek, a state law-maker from Long Island, sponsored bills that increased the probationary period for teachers from 3 to 5 years and repealed guaranteed minimum teaching salaries. Correspondingly, teachers determined that indeed "strength lies in numbers" and so, in 1972, the N.E.A.'s New York State Teachers Association (NYSTA) and the AFT's United Teachers of New York (UTNY) merged to form the New York Congress of Teachers. The group would soon change its name to the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT).

WGTA Presidents - 1970's



Dick Dominy



Phil Natoli



Jim Ridgeway



Chuck Mitchell

Initially NYSUT was affiliated with both the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association. This affiliation was not to last. In 1976 a bitter dispute developed between the AFT and NEA over both constitutional items and philosophical beliefs. This rift forced NYSUT to break its ties with the NEA. The WGTA voted to remain with NYSUT, as did most of the locals in Onondaga County (the exceptions were LaFayette, Baldwinsville and Fabius-Pompey). The early NYSUT Field Representatives assigned to the WGTA were Doug Matousek, Steve Malcheski and Jim Mathews, who worked with us until 1979. His replacement was Tom Clerkin who worked with us until his retirement in 2002.

In 1971 the West Genesee Central School System had 9,999 students. That was as large the district would ever get. The starting salary for a teacher with a bachelor's degree was \$7,000. The requirement for permanent certification was a bachelor's degree plus 30 graduate hours.

In 1973-74, in New York State, the average teacher was 34 years old, had taught for 8 years, and earned an average salary of \$13,371.

The New York State Teachers Retirement System created Tier 2 in 1973.



Contract Negotiations - 1974
Teachers marching at West Genesee Junior High School

The first issue of the WGTA newsletter was published in June 1976. One year later Dave Smithson won a "Name The Newsletter" contest, and "The Member Ship" has been published monthly (except summers) ever since. The first editor of "The Member Ship" was June Schneiweiss.

In 1977 NYSUT announced that it employed 30 full time attorneys. Also in 1976 the New York State Teachers Retirement System created Tier 3.

The issue of "tuition tax credits" reared its ugly head in the 1970's. Tom Hobart (NYSUT President) and Al Shanker wrote that, "the continued existence of public education in the U.S. is facing a major threat. The idea of tuition tax credits to reimburse parents for up to one-half of their children's private school tuition is gaining acceptance in Congress." That bill was ultimately defeated in the Senate. The battle, to this day, is still being fought.

In October 1978 the WGTA had 374 members. In that year "The Member Ship" reported that " the Syracuse Area Teaching Center, comprised of West Genesee, Jamesville-Dewitt, Syracuse City Schools, Syracuse University and LeMoyne College, was awarded federal funds totaling approximately \$168,000. New York City and East Ramspo were the only other Centers in NYS to be funded." The Teaching Center in West Genesee has been in operation since 1972.

In October, 1978, West Genesee and other school districts donated \$500 each to the Liverpool Central School District to help defray the cost of a court case in which the Liverpool Board called unconstitutional the state tenure law amendment that placed the final decision on dismissal and discipline matters in the hands of an arbitration panel (and taking it away from the school board). The New York Supreme Court ultimately rejected the Liverpool petition.

In November 1978, in a major victory for teachers and other public employees, the Legislature and the Governor repealed the section of the Taylor Law that put strikers on one year's probation after they came back to work.

In February 1979, the cost of living was 7.9% and the WGTA dues were \$155 per year. During the 1978-79 school year the average Teacher's Retirement System member was 60 years, 4 months of age, had 25 years, 4 months of service, had a final average salary of \$21,322.63, and a retirement allowance of \$11,315.29. In the 1970's there were 65 teacher strikes in New York State. One of those strikes was in North Syracuse. During that strike a teacher was hit by an automobile driven by a "scab" (a substitute teacher hired by the district to take the place of a striking teacher) and was killed. Striking teachers in North Syracuse were fined 2 days pay for each day out on strike; the union leaders spent 7 days in jail.

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History from The 1980's

In January 1980 WGTA President Patricia Ryan wrote, "Many times when a problem arises, Dr. Moores (WG Superintendent) agrees with or can at least sympathize with the position taken by the WGTA. However, he will not interfere in the running of a building if he sees the problem as one, which should be worked out within the building and not through the Superintendent's Office. Principals desire and should have a certain degree of autonomy within their building just as teachers desire and need autonomy within their classroom."



Pat Ryan
WGTA President
Late 1970's to Early 1980's

Also in 1980 a NYSUT teacher survey found that the "highest stress-producing factors were: managing disruptive children, followed by incompetent administrators - lack of administrative support, maintaining self-control when angry, overcrowded classrooms and the first week of school. The least stressful - students dropping a course."

In February 1980 the average New York teacher was 38 years old, had a Master's degree, had taught for 12 years, and averaged \$18,500 per year. Also in February NYSUT held it's first Committee of 100 meeting in Albany. 280 teachers from across the state converged to lobby legislators for an increase in state aid. The Committee of 100 now numbers around 700 participants and lobbies in Albany once or twice a year.

In March 1980 the NYS Board of Regents mounted an attack on teachers and public school systems when they attempted to institute a teacher disciplinary system which could destroy tenure, mandate in-service education as a requirement for holding a teaching license, test all current teachers for 'competency,' and exempt private schools from these licensing requirements." Fortunately, none of the proposals were enacted.

The cost of living in March 1980 was 12.3%. Thirty-seven percent of the West Genesee teaching staff (137.7 teachers) were beyond the last step of the salary schedule.



Jack Isbell
WGTA President - Early 1980's

In 1981, in an effort to raise the educational standards in New York, the Regents Competency tests were started.

In June 1980 the WGTA held a golf outing at Westhill. According to "The Member Ship," "The highlight of the competition was a booming shot by Jack "Golden Bear" Isbell on the 168 yard par 3, 7th hole. The crowd was brought to its feet by Jack's pulled 6 iron shot -- that landed in the parking lot. We won't say he hit anything, but was that red paint on his golf ball? (Note: By next year Jack promised to straighten out his 6 iron or increase his homeowners insurance -- whichever is easier.)"

Ironically, 6 years later, on the exact same hole, Jack hit another 6 iron into the same parking lot, and hit another red car. Apparently it was easier for Jack to increase his homeowners insurance than straighten out his 6 iron.

In 1982 individual health insurance cost \$366.96 per year, dependent coverage was \$802.56. Also in 1982 the cost of living was 3.4%, the West Genesee raise was 9.5%, and it was our first ever raise that was greater than the cost of living.

In 1982, after extensive lobbying by NYSUT, the Tribourgh Bill was passed by the state. This bill forced school districts to continue all the terms of an "expired" agreement until a new contract was negotiated.

In January 1983 Mel Taber was appointed WGTA Vice President for Grievances, a position he held until his retirement in June 2002.

In October 1983 the National Committee on Excellence in Education was quoted as "hailing merit pay as a means to provide increased compensation for 'superior

teachers,' a solution to the problem of future teacher shortages, and possibly a means of saving money." After years of experimentation in many districts around the country, merit pay was found to have fatal flaws and was widely abandoned.

In 1983 the New York State Teachers Retirement System created Tier 4.

In 1985 the West Genesee teachers rejected a tentative contract agreement that was reached between the WGTA and the district. Super conciliation was declared (the last stage in a crisis situation where a strike is imminent) -- but last minute negotiations provided an agreement. The contract was passed on the second ratification vote.



1985 Contract Negotiations
Camillus Middle teachers demonstrating their support

In 1986, then Governor Cuomo initiated the Excellence-in-Teaching program in which teachers were given an additional state stipend to help raise lagging teacher salaries. In West Genesee tenured teachers received \$600 and non-tenured teachers received \$200.

An advertisement in The Member Ship offered 7 nights / 8 days in Hawaii for \$849 and the credit union interest rate on a regular savings account was 7%.

At the December 2, 1986 West Genesee Board of Education Meeting, board member Mary Clark stated, "I am against (teacher) tenure. I feel that any teacher who does their job shouldn't feel they need protection. I guess I am just against the concept of tenure." A number of ardent supporters of the teachers in the West Genesee District wrote letters to the editor (of the "Camillus Advocate") complaining of this apparent malfeasance of duty since as a Board member, Mrs. Clark was sworn to uphold the

tenure laws. Perhaps not coincidentally, Mrs. Clark subsequently lost her reelection bid.

In 1986 the School Board eliminated the Middle School Department Chairpersons. The "official" reason was cost cutting; the unofficial reason was that union officers held too many positions.

On July 1, 1987, Dr. Rubeis becomes the West Genesee Superintendent -- and the job of WGTA Vice President for Grievances took on a new meaning.

In June 1987, WGTA President Cynthia Lush wrote, "Looking back I can say that my first year in office has been an eye opening experience for me.... On the minus side I must point to the frustration and indifference encountered with our Board of Education and our Administrators. I found especially grating the fact that many decisions were made without our input, and when we did come forward with our opinions we were ignored."

In 1987 the WGTA dues were \$285 per year.

By the beginning of 1988 the WGTA had filed 10 grievances. In a February 1988 editorial the WGTA stated, "In any district when the communication channels break down one of the first things that happens is an increase in the number of grievances. We have had more formal grievances in the last two years (1986-88) than we have had in the sixteen years between 1970 and 1986. It is the sign of a troubled district when the only means of communication with the administration is through the grievance procedure. ... As for teacher empowerment, the district doesn't even know what the words mean. The district has, in the past, bypassed the EDC, ignored suggestions from the chairpeople, and now wants to disable the Superintendent's Liaison Committee. It appears that the district is trying to do everything possible to remove teachers from any decision making roles."

In September 1988, fourteen months without a contract ended when a tentative agreement was finally signed. The starting salary for a West Genesee teacher with a BA was \$22,282.

By September 1989 the WGTA had filed 44 grievances -- and won most all of them. Also in 1989 the Carnegie Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents recommended that districts, "create small communities for learning, teach a core academic program, ensure success for all students by eliminating tracking, institute flexible instructional time and adequate resources for teachers, and empower teachers and administrators to make decisions about the experiences of middle grade students."

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History from The 1990's

In 1990 the Carnegie Foundation published a report titled, "The Condition of Teaching: 1990." One major idea promoted was that successful schools involve teachers in educational decision-making.

1990 ushered in strategic planning in West Genesee.

In 1990 the Excellence in Teaching payment in West Genesee was \$909 for tenured teachers and \$303 for non-tenured teachers.

Also in 1990 President Bush and some state governors formulated the National Educational Goals America 2000. NYSUT Vice President Toni Cortese reported that, "there is no national will to improve the schools ... there is not only a lack of sufficient money from the federal government but also a lack of clear direction."



Cynthia Lush - WGTA President
Mid 1980's - mid 1990's

In 1990-91 the West Genesee starting salary was \$26,675, the median salary was \$37,875, and the New York State median salary was \$42,080. The Syracuse Herald Journal reported that "only 40% of households surveyed bought a book" in the last year.

In February 1991 AFT's "Action" newsletter reported "three Florida state legislators have introduced a bill that would permit teachers to carry electronic stun guns in the classroom to subdue potentially violent students." The Florida Education Association said the "union would actively oppose the bill." It later died in committee.

On March 4, 1991, the West Genesee District, responding to a state budget crisis, formally asked the teachers to give back one day's pay. After the WGTA Cabinet voted "no" the district used some of its contingency funds to pay bills.

Also in March 1991 the Board of Regents approved "A New Compact For Learning." The Compact called for educational decision making to take place at the building level.

In a 1992 editorial the WGTA stated, "The WGTA feels the following problems (with Strategic Planning) need to be addressed:

- * Too many committees developing separate demands on teachers.
- * Decision making still remaining centralized.
- * Not enough school time provided for working on the goals and resulting projects.
- * Not knowing the resources which the District is willing to commit up front."

In 1992 the Regents ordered all school boards to submit a shared decision making plan to the state by 1994. The West Genesee District attempted to circumvent the union when the district submitted a plan that was not approved by the WGTA. The state ultimately denied the plan and ordered the district to develop a new one according to Regents regulations. The district finally complied, but the plan was submitted approximately one year late.

The battle over private versus public schooling continued to rage, the issue was now called "school choice" instead of "tuition tax credits."

In 1993 there were a record 411 locals in New York State without a contract.

In 1994 the WGTA surveyed teachers regarding shared decision making in West Genesee. Only 15% of the teaching staff felt that shared decision-making had a positive impact on the educational climate in West Genesee. When surveyed again in 1996, only 5% of the teaching staff felt that there was more trust between teachers, community and the administration than before shared decision making was started, while 41% of the staff felt that there was less trust.

In September 1994 NYSUT helped negotiate 3020a reform. In October 1994 Money Magazine called "public schools a better buy" than private schools.

"The Member Ship" reported that the median teacher salary in New York went up 242% between 1973-74 and 1993-95, while inflation went up 214%.



Jim Ridgeway - WGTA President
Early 1970's and Mid-1990's to June, 2002

In 1996 the West Genesee School Board unilaterally shortened the February break under the guise that children lose educational focus over extended vacations. After it was determined that the next West Genesee Christmas Vacation was two weeks in length (longer than most other districts) the board claimed that it was a "leader" in the educational community and that other districts were "poised to follow" their lead and shorten their February vacations. No other district in the area has followed the West Genesee "model" -- with many districts negotiating the February Break INTO their calendars to avoid the WG "model." The full February break was finally reinstated in 2002 after the WGTA exerted considerable and sustained political pressure.

In April 1996 NYSUT reported that it represented 190,000 public and private elementary and secondary teachers, and a total of 360,000 people.

In September 1996 the WGTA was presented with the 1996 Good Neighbor Award from the Robert Memorial Free Methodist Church.

In 1996 the WGTA dues were \$445.03 per year.

In May 1997 the WGTA doubled the scholarship given yearly to 4 West Genesee seniors who are pursuing a teaching degree. Each student receives \$500 per year for 4 years.

In November 1997 Al D'Amato, the junior Senator from NY, launched his reelection campaign with a vicious attack on New York public school teachers in general and tenure in particular, immediately alienating many teachers in New York. Interestingly, Mr. D'Amato is running for a United States Senate office, and theoretically should have nothing to say about New York State's educational policies.

Between 1986 and 1997 the WGTA has filed a total of 87 grievances against the West Genesee School District. We have won most of them.

In June 1998, the WGTA membership ratified a three-year tentative agreement with the district. The total vote was 278 YES, 16 NO, and 5 voided envelopes. The new contract went into effect on July 1, 1998.

The official results of the June 11, 1998, WGTA executive officer election were as follows:

President and NYSUT Delegate (term expires June 30, 2000): Jim Ridgeway - 158 votes

Vice-President and NYSUT Delegate (term expires June 30, 2000): Raymond Fuller - 159 votes

Secretary (term expires June 30, 1999): Lynn Davis - 154 votes

Treasurer (term expires June 30, 1999): Marcia Schwartz - 154 votes

NYSUT Delegate (term expires June 30, 2001): Michael Cost - 154 votes

The WGTA held the first of many informal social gatherings on Thursday, October 22, 1998. The location was the Camillus Elks Club on Newport Road. Beer, wine, soft drinks, munchies were offered compliments of the WGTA.

Political action played a major role in many of the key contests on Nov. 3, 1998, ballot, including in New York State where Democratic Rep. Charles Schumer defeated three-term incumbent Republican Sen. Alfonse D'Amato. NYSUT/AFT members made almost 300,000 phone calls to probable voters in the state highlighting Schumer's pro-education record--a stark contrast to D'Amato's dismal voting record on education and his campaign-inspired media attacks on teachers this year.

As of October 28, 1998, the WGTA had 351 members, 120 retirees and 31 agency fee members. The dues for the 1998-1999 school year were \$437.28 and will be deducted out of 18 paychecks at a rate of \$24.29 per pay period.

Through NYSUT's strong lobbying efforts, and because of heavy teacher support, the tier reinstatement bill was passed on December 17, 1998.

The WGTA Cabinet donated \$250 to the 15th annual West Genesee "All Night / After the Ball Party." The event was sponsored by the parents of WG Seniors and the West Genesee High School chapter of SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving), along with the help and financial support of the community.

The WGTA Cabinet designated May 19, 1999, as WGTA Dress-Up Day. Union members were asked to dress up in a show of support for the West Genesee budget vote. Union members were also asked to wear their WGTA Pin.



1999 WGTA Cabinet

The 1999-2000 dues for full-time WGTA members will be \$479.55 and will be deducted from the 3rd paycheck through the 20th paycheck. The payroll department will deduct \$26.64 per paycheck.

The WGTA web site won the First Place Award for "Best Web Site - Class IV" from the American Federation of Teachers Communications Association, AFL-CIO. The award was presented on July 7, 1999. The WGTA web site competed in Class IV, locals with less than 500 members. This was a national competition of web sites maintained by locals of the American Federation of Teachers. The WGTA Web master was Lynn Davis.

WGTA Millennium Officers -- The following list of teachers were elected or appointed WGTA executive officers for the 1999 - 2000 year.

Jim Ridgeway -- President
Ray Fuller Vice -- President
Mike Cost VP -- Negotiations
Mel Taber VP -- Grievances
Marcia Schwartz -- Treasurer
Lynn Davis -- Secretary

The WGTA, in conjunction with the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation and the Lee Company, announced that the union raised \$1,185 during the 1999 Lee National Denim Day. Teachers and support staff from across the district participated in the fund raising effort by wearing denim and donating \$5.00 to the fundraiser.

With over 70 teachers attending the event at the Elk's Club in Warner, the October 22, the last WGTA Social of 1999 was a huge success.

John Lazarski (WGTA Political Action Committee, High School) reported that over 40 teachers volunteered to participate in the Adopt A Highway Program. At the November 1999, WGTA meeting the Cabinet approved Association participation, which will begin in the Spring of 2000.

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History from 2000 - 2005

Nearly 50 West Genesee Teachers volunteered to participate in the Adopt-a-Highway program. The WGTA will have the responsibility to clean a 1.1-mile stretch of Route 690 near the Camillus Exit. John Lazarski, a high school social studies teacher, is the organizer.



Adopt A Highway cleanup volunteers.

In response to an increase number of bomb threats, the Onondaga County Teachers' Association offered a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any person or persons responsible for making a bomb threat against any school district in Onondaga County.

The total 1999 union dues for the WGTA, NYSUT, AFT and AFL-CIO were \$503.04.

Mike Cost, the WGTA Vice President for Negotiations, presented an academic calendar proposal to the West Genesee Board of Education at their March 1, 2000, meeting. Speaking before a standing room only crowd Mike discussed the strengths of the WGTA proposal. The suggested calendar would help student instruction by:

- * Providing teachers with more 5-day weeks
- * Reducing the number of long weekends
- * Scheduling more days to prepare for state tests
- * Giving Special Area and BOCES students the maximum amount of instruction
- * Providing breaks to maintain positive student attitudes
- * Allowing for personal growth in areas outside of school
- * Making decisions based on data not opinions

At the Board of Education Meeting held on Wednesday, March 15, 2000, the Board rejected the WGTA proposal and voted 6-3 to accept the Districts proposed calendar (Board members Crumb, Brogan, and Lum voted against the Superintendent's calendar). In response to this vote the WGTA released a statement which read, in part: "We agree with Board of Education member Dr. Crumb's assessment that there was no apparent criteria upon which the Superintendent's calendar was based other than possibly not to have a February break. On the other hand, the WGTA proposed calendar was based on five educationally based criteria and we supplied the school board with data to support those criteria. "

The WGTA Cabinet donated \$250 to the 16th annual West Genesee "All Night / After the Ball Party." The parents of WG Seniors and the local chapter of SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving) sponsored the event along with the help and financial support of the community.

A WGTA Spring Fling Social was held on Friday, May 19, 2000, at the Camillus Elks Club.

Jennifer Dee, a reading teacher at West Genesee Middle School, was one of three Central New York Teacher recipients of the 2000 Golden Apple Award. The award recognizes educators for creative and effective use of the newspaper as a learning resource.

Lorraine Bedy and Michael Cost, teachers at West Genesee High School, completed work on their doctoral degrees, both at Syracuse University.

During the March 24, 2000, Jean Day in Support of the American Heart Association, WGTA teachers and staff members donated a total of \$1,060.00.

Joyce Backus, an art teacher at the High School, was recently notified that she won the third place award in the 45th Annual Poetry / Art Contest. Joyce's winning entry, titled "Clown Fish," won the award in the adult art division of the competition.

The 2000 WGTA Executive Officer election results were:

Jim Ridgeway, WGTA President, 2 year term
Ray Fuller, WGTA Vice President, 2 year term
Marcia Schwartz, WGTA Treasurer, 1 year term
Lynn Davis, WGTA Secretary, 1 year term
Mel Taber, NYSUT Delegate, 3 year term
Dominic Fruscello, NYSUT Alternate, a 3 year term.

Mark Sunheimer was the 2000 winner of the WGTA Scholarship. The scholarship amount was for \$2000 divided over 4 years. Mark was planning to be an education major at SUNY Geneseo.

On July 1, 2000, the WGTA was informed that their web site won the 2000 American Federation of Teachers' Communication Association First Place Award for Best Web Site in Class IV (locals with less than 500 members). This is the second year in a row that the web site has won this award.

New York Gov. George Pataki on July 11 signed a bill providing a long-awaited, permanent, pension cost-of-living adjustment for New York public employees.

Both the AFT and NYSUT endorse Al Gore for U.S. President and Hilary Clinton for U.S. Senator from New York. Hilary Clinton wins -- Al Gore carries NYS but loses in "Flori-dah."

In December, 2000, the WGTA web site was informed that it had won a Second Place Award for best use of a union web site for promoting Union Plus Programs in the Union Privilege Annual Promotion Contest. The contest prize for second place was a cash award of \$500 and a certificate.

2001 - 2002

Starting January 19, 2001, the WGTA web site will changed its domain name and web address. The "old address" was: <http://www.dreamscape.com/wgtaweb>. The new web address and domain name will be: <http://www.wgta.net>. The new name more clearly identifies the WGTA as the sponsor and will be easier for users to remember.

The company that hosts the web site will continue to be Dreamscape. This company, a division of Northland Communications, has hosted the WGTA site since 1998. Prior to that the web site was hosted on America On-Line, starting over the summer of 1997.

The 2001 - 2004 Tentative Agreement between the WGTA and the District was ratified in March 2001, by the membership. The official vote was:

YES - 311

NO - 14

VOID - 1

Tom Hobart, Chairman of VOTE/COPE and President of the New York State United Teachers, sent a thank you note to the WGTA in appreciation for money donated to the 2000 VOTE/COPE campaign. The WGTA membership had a 97% participation rate in VOTE/COPE fund-raising, donating over \$3,500 from individuals in the local.

A letter was received from Tom Hobart, NYSUT President, informing President Ridgeway that the WGTA and its membership is a recipient of NYSUT's 2001 Local Community Service Award. This award recognizes a local's collective and sustained contribution to community service during the last calendar year.

To receive this award the WGTA and it's members sponsored educational newspaper ads, participated in the Adopt-A-Highway Program, provided scholarships to students majoring in education, invited BOCES employees that work in the West Genesee District to WGTA sponsored social events, cosponsored the Retirement Reception, participated in the new teacher orientation, donated sick days to fellow teachers, raised money for the United Way, sponsored Denim Days for the American Heart Association and the American Cancer Association, donated funds to the WG After-The-Ball Party, and made donations in memory of staff and families. In his letter Mr. Hobart stated, "Please extend congratulations to the members of your local for their dedicated effort. Their work in enriching the lives of community members is laudatory and worthy of this award." President Hobart will present an award to the WGTA at the upcoming Representative Assembly on May 5, 2001. In addition, NYSUT will highlight the WGTA's involvement in a New York Teacher issue following the convention.

The WGTA raised \$1,243.00 in a Denim Day event with the money earmarked for the American Cancer Society's "Making Strides Against Breast Cancer" event. The WGTA also raised \$3,500 for Vote/Cope.

In recognition of the time and effort teachers have made meeting the educational goals of the district, the West Genesee School Board voted to give checks for \$250 to teachers with the last paycheck in June 2001. Checks will be prorated based on the employment status of the individual teacher.

In response to the terrorist attack in NYC the WGTA Cabinet, at their September 18, 2001, meeting voted unanimously to donate \$2,500 to the NYC Firemen's Benevolent Association and another \$2,500 to the NYC Police Benevolent Association.

The WGTA dues for the 2001 - 2002 school year are \$496.95. The increase is due to an increase for NYSUT and AFT dues.

The web site of the West Genesee Teachers' Association won the American Federation of Teachers Communication Association (AFTCA) "2001 Journalism Award for Best Web Site" for locals with less than 500 members. AFTCA is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers and sponsors a yearly national journalism competition for AFT locals across the country. This is the third year in a row that the West Genesee Web Site has won this award.

2002 - 2003

Throughout the 2002 year the WGTA raised \$1,235 for Dollars for Denim fight against breast cancer, \$1,430 for the American Heart Association, and \$1,885 in the WG Scholarship Drive. The WGTA membership also donated thousands of dollars to such causes as the West Genesee Senior After the Ball Party Fund, the WGTA / District Retirement Party, memorials, and Vote/Cope. The Adopt-A Highway committee cleaned a one mile stretch of the Route 5 By-pass three times during the year, and WGTA representatives attended hundreds of meetings including the Committee of 100, Building Shared Decision Making, the Teaching Center, the Educational Development Committee, Superintendent's Liaison, the WGTA Cabinet, grievance hearings and arbitrations -- to name a few.

On April 7, 2002, the Onondaga County Teacher's Association honored staff from around the county with a dinner and a plaque given to teacher union members "who have given so unselfishly of their time and energy to further the causes of our profession." The following WGTA members were honored: Bill Baldwin (High School), Michael Cost (High School), Lynn Davis (CMS), Ray Fuller (Onondaga Road), John Lazarski (High School), Marcia Schwartz (Stonehedge), Kathryn Smith-Lance (WGMS) and Mel Taber (Stonehedge).

The full February break was finally reinstated in 2002 after the WGTA exerted considerable and sustained political pressure. In 1996 the West Genesee School Board unilaterally shortened the February break under the guise that children lose educational focus over extended vacations.

The end of the 2002 school year saw Jim Ridgeway, current President of the WGTA, and Vice President for Grievances Mel Taber, both retire -- taking with them a combined 70 years of experience working for the West Genesee Teachers' Association. Also retiring was Tom Clerkin who had been the WGTA's NYSUT Field Representative for the past 26 years. Tom's replacement is Sue DeCarlo.

Effective on July 1, 2002, the newly elected 2002-2003 WGTA Officers were:
Mike Cost (High School) - WGTA President
Dave Smithson (Stonehedge) - Vice President
Lynn Davis (CMS) - WGTA Secretary
Marcia Schwartz (Stonehedge) - WGTA Treasurer.

In addition, Ray Fuller (Onondaga Road) was appointed to the position of Vice President for Grievances

The WGTA won the 2002 Partnership in American Education Award from the American Federation of Teachers for increased participation in Vote/Cope and the 2002 Pride of the Union Award from the American Federation of Teachers for it's consistent "hard work and success."

The WGTA web site won the 2002 American Federation of Teachers Communication Association Award for best union internet site in its class. This is the FOURTH year in a row the web site has taken the top honors. The award was presented to Lynn Davis, web master, at the July 13, 2002, AFTCA Convention in Las Vegas. The web site also won 3rd place, and a check for \$250, in an AFT Union Plus competition.

The WGTA / NYSUT / AFT dues for the 2002- 2003 school year were \$522.95/year.

The WGTA Cabinet voted to endorse Clyde Ohl in the 124th Assembly race for New York State Assemblyman. Clyde has served 31 years as a principal and teacher at the West Genesee High School, and at one time served as president of the WGTA. In addition he has served two terms as Camillus Supervisor and four terms in the Onondaga County Legislature from Camillus. Clyde lost in this race for an Assembly seat.

The WGTA continued to argue multiple contract violations brought against the district. At the end of 2002 the status of active grievances included:

1. Termination Grievance - 2 more days of hearings are scheduled.
2. Early Literacy I - still in court.
3. Board Attachment Grievance - awaiting decision.
4. Sick Bank Grievance - an arbitrator ruled there was no contract violation.
5. Early Literacy II - in court.
6. Early Literacy III - Board Hearing is scheduled for January 2, 2003.
7. Part-time Stipend - settled.
8. Early Literacy IV - the district failed to abide by binding arbitration decision. The WGTA withdrew the grievance pending a court hearing.

2003 - 2004

The WGTA chartered a bus so that members could attend the May 3, 2003, "March for Public Education" in Albany, NY.

Grievance Report as of April 2003:

1. Unfair Dismissal - the arbitrator has rescheduled the next day of the hearing for May 13, 2003.
2. Early Literacy I - the appeal will be heard May 27, 2003, in Rochester.

3. Early Literacy II - the judge's order was confirmed; appeal continues.

4. Early Literacy III - the District still wants to talk; meeting set for April 8, 2003. In spite of the two arbitration rulings and two court rulings, the district still feels that it has the right to schedule training for any teacher at any time.

5. Board Attachments - we requested the District to follow the award of the arbitrator; Sally Romany said she had turned it all over to Rudy. Requested that Rudy follow the award of the arbitrator. We received a letter from the District's lawyer telling us that he is evaluating "the District's options regarding this most recent decision. Thus, any assumption that the District is ignoring the decision is erroneous." It has been two months since the award required the District to turn over Rudy's contract "forthwith." This could possibly be the third "binding" arbitration in a row that the District has decided not to be bound by. Obviously, the contract, and agreement as to how we will work together, continues to have little meaning to the District and its lawyers.

The following people were elected / appointed to WGTA Executive Officer positions for the 2003 school year:

Mike Cost
WGTA President

Dave Smithson
Vice President

Ray Fuller
VP - Grievances

Marcia Schwartz
Treasurer

Lynn Davis
Secretary

The WGTA membership ratified a new agreement on October 5, 2003, by a vote of 321 to 5 (with 1 void vote and 4 unverified votes). The three-year contract was the result of informal negotiations. Involved in the negotiations were Mike Cost (WGTA President), Dave Smithson (WGTA Vice President) and Ray Fuller (Vice President for Grievances).

The new agreement calls for a 4% increase on all money amounts described within the agreement, including salaries, over each of the three years. The retirement award as specified in Article V, Section S3 will be offered in 2005 and 2007 as per the existing language with the award being placed into a member's 403b account. In

addition, an award of \$2,000 will be granted for teachers achieving the National Board Certification and / or a doctorate degree.

The recipient of the 2003 WGTA Scholarship is Korrie Marie Murphy. She is attending St. John Fisher College and is pursuing a Secondary Education Mathematics Degree. Korrie was the WG president of SADD, member of National Honor Society and on the High Honor Roll. Korrie enjoys arts & crafts, sports and travel.

A WGTA Fall Fling was held Friday, October 17th, 2003, at the Elks Club.

The WGTA institutes the "YPO! Your Professional Opinion" surveys in which the union attempts to determine what our members think about the issues facing them in their jobs.

The October workshop WGTA sponsored Denim Day raised \$1,170 for the Susan G. Komen Foundation.

Lisa Tamiso, a foreign language teacher at Camillus Middle School, is one of New York's 107 new nationally certified teachers.

Receiving the 2003 Joseph A. Witowski Teacher of the Year Awards were Onodaga Road fifth grade teacher Kristin Lockwood, West Genesee Middle School mathematics teacher Kathy Smith- Lance, and High School English teacher Geoffrey Bender.

Bob Deegan, science teacher at the West Genesee High School, participated with an international team of scientists this summer in Ireland. The scientists are analyzing sediment, tree and water samples attempting to put together a climatic record of the last 10,000 years.

2004 - 2005

WGTA Executive Officers for 2004 were Mike Cost (President), Dave Smithson (Vice President), Lynn Davis (Secretary) and Andrea Moore (Treasurer). Ray Fuller was appointed as Vice President for Grievances and John Christian was appointed as Vice President for Negotiations.

Stephanie Sauda was awarded the WGTA Scholarship for 2004 - 2008. She will be attending Le Moyne College.

The WGTA newsletter, The MemberShip, won the NYSUT journalism "First Award" for the 3-part article titled "Elder Care" written by Lynn Davis (CMS). According to the NYSUT notification letter, "All the judges remarked on the unusually high quality of this years entries, making your achievement even more noteworthy." The award

was presented to the WGTA on March 27th at the NYSUT Representative Assembly at the New York Hilton.



WGTA President Mike Cost (center) accepting the NYSUT First Award presented to The MemberShip for winning the "Best Article on Health Issues," written by Lynn Davis (CMS). On Mike's left is NYSUT Vice President Antonia Cortese and on his right is NYSUT President Tom Hobart.

The WGTA Web Site also won an "Award of Merit" in the NYSUT Journalism Competition. The web master is Lynn Davis, CMS

The WGTA web site also won first place in the American Federation of Teachers Communication Association Journalism Competition. This is the fifth win out in the last 6 years for the web site.

The WGTA Office has moved to the Village of Camillus, at the corner of Main and South Street, on the second floor of the GB Lax Building.



President Cost in the new WGTA Office

The West Genesee staff raised \$947 in the October 2004, Susan B. Komen Breast Cancer Denim Day.

Thomas Y. Hobart Jr., president of the AFT's largest state affiliate, the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), announced Nov. 1 that he would not seek re-election as the union's president. The newly elected NYSUT President was Dick Iannuzzi.

Stonehedge kindergarten teacher Ann Barlow, WGMS mathematics teacher Sue Nicholson Bingham, and High School French teacher Melissa Brown received the 2004 Joseph A. Witowski Teacher of the Year Awards.

The results of the West Genesee United Way Drive are in and 157 staff members pledged a total of \$7,451.

Negotiations Update -- The WGTA was able to get the new mentoring program up and running. Mentors made \$500 this year, \$750 next year, and will make \$1,000 in 2006 - 2007. Second, the first snow day give back day was moved from the Thursday before Easter to the Monday after Easter. Third, the 2005 - 2006 school year will begin the Thursday before Labor day allowing us to have off Friday, December 23rd.

Negotiations Update part II. In June it was announced that the WGTA negotiated the new summer school hours and a Memorandum of Agreement to enter those new hours into the contract.

There was a successful Adopt A Highway clean up in May 2005.

Kristin Brown was the winner of the \$2,000 WGTA Scholarship for 2005.

Newsweek magazine ranked the West Genesee High School as the 828th best in the nation, putting them in the top 3% of schools across the country

The WGTA web site won a First Place Award for its class in a national competition sponsored by the AFT Communications Association. This is the 6th win in 7 years for the web site.

The August WGTA Cabinet meeting was held at the West Hill Golf Course. Some of the cabinet members played 9 holes of golf prior to participating in the dinner meeting. Sue DeCarlo, our NYSUT Field Representative, played golf and also participated in the dinner meeting.

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History from 2005 - 2010

2005 - 2006

2005 -2006 Executive Officers

Mike Cost - WGTA President - Senior High
Dave Smithson - Vice President - Stonehedge - B
John Christian - VP - Negotiations - Senior High
Ray Fuller - VP - Grievances - Onondaga Road
Andrea Moore - Treasurer - Senior High
Lynn Davis - Secretary - Camillus Middle

High School art teacher Jennifer Schrader and her students were featured in a Post Standard article (October 13, 2005). According to the article, "they are creating a stained-glass window depicting symbols of the freedom that veterans fight for and the honor and respect they believe veterans should receive." The window they are constructing is 15 feet long by 7 feet high, and will be placed in the main lobby of the VA hospital. Dedication is set for November 9th. Pictures of the project are located in the High School Library and another story about the project will run in an upcoming issue of the New York Teacher magazine.

A total of 173 teachers are contributing a total of \$177.50 per pay period to VOTE / COPE via payroll deduction. Deductions will be taken over 20 pay periods.

Onondaga road first grade teacher, Jennifer Scicchitano, was named educator of the Week by WSTM-TV Channel 3 on October 24.

Split Rock Elementary School kindergarten teacher Elva Stebbins, CMS librarian Carolyn Trombly, and High School science teachers Sam Gervaise received the 2005 Joseph A. Witowski Teacher of the Year Awards.

Kathy Annan received national certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching standards. Kathy is a chemistry teacher at the High School. According to the Post-Standard, "she is one of only 107 teachers in New York State to receive the honor this year." Kathy joins two other West Genesee teachers, both at CMS, who have attained national certification.

A retirement award tentative agreement was ratified by a vote of 260 to 11 during the January 5, 2006 balloting. The new agreement changes the January 2007 retirement incentive window to June 2006. The new agreement also changes the notification dates that teachers must give the district in order to be eligible for the award. To be eligible for the award, the new agreement also changes the notification date to February 1 in 2006 and March 1 in 2007. The District has agreed to allow June 2006 retirees to make health insurance adjustments during the annual enrollment period in September 2006.

The WGTA dues from January 2005 to December 2005 were \$529.52.

A thank you note was received from Kate Flannery, the Executive Director of the Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, for the WGTA donation of \$897 raised during a recent Denim Day for Breast Cancer.

The WGTA web site won the 2006 NYSUT - New York Teacher Journalism Competition. This is the third year in a row that the web site has won the award. According to Deb Ward, NYSUT Director of Publications, Web and Video, and Lance Howland, Editor of the New York Teacher, the judge's panel noted a trend toward more entries, including an upsurge in retiree entries this year. This makes your award even more meritorious." Lynn Davis, CMS, is the Webmaster. See our web site awards - [click here](#).

Tom Clerkin, our retired NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist died unexpectedly in February. His impact on our association is immeasurable. For over twenty-five years he advised and represented the WGTA in its labor/management issues.

On May 18, 2006, three WGTA members received an Onondaga County Teachers' Association / WGTA Service Award. These awards were presented for unselfish and dedicated service to the teachers of central New York. The 2006 WGTA recipients were:

* Marsha Tunison - for many years of service as the Building Leader at Camillus Middle School.

* Janice Pellegrino - for many years of service as a WGTA Building Preventative at Camillus Middle School and a member of the Superintendent's Liaison Committee.

* Chris Edinger - for 15 years of service as the Chairperson of the WGTA Scholarship Committee.

The WGTA awarded a \$2,000 scholarship to Miss Kim Petrick. Kim will be attending Houghton College and plans to major in History.

On June 13, 2006 the WGTA was notified that our web site won the 1st Place Award in the American Federation of Teachers Communication Network (AFTCN) annual journalism competition. This is the 7th year that the web site has won the national title in the last 8 years of competition. Lynn Davis, CMS, is the webmaster.

2006 - 2007

2006 -2007 Executive Officers

Mike Cost - WGTA President - Senior High
Dave Smithson - Vice President - Stonehedge - B
John Christian - VP - Negotiations - Senior High
Ray Fuller - VP - Grievances - Onondaga Road
Andrea Moore - Treasurer - Senior High
Lynn Davis - Secretary - Camillus Middle

Lisa Tamiso (CMS), Tammy Annicharico (CMS) and Sue Potrikus (CMS) were nominated to the "Who's Who Among America's Teachers."

Lynn Davis (CMS) was featured in the September 25th issue of the Advocate as the "Community Member of the Week."

Jim Vermeulen (CMS resource teacher, Coach and Post-Standard Contributing Writer) had his article, "In Pursuit of Average - Don't Underestimate the Value of Finishing 'In The Pack,'" published in the October 29, 2006 issue of The Post Standard.

Matt Bohla (WGMS Social Studies Teacher) was named the "Educator of the Week" by WSTM-TV Channel 3 for the week of September 25th.

Marsha Tunison (CMS - retired) was nominated to Who's Who In American Education.

WGTA members doubled their Vote/Cope contributions from last year.

Nancy Menges (East Hill), Sue Pray (WGMS) and Peggy Timmons (High School) were elected as the 2006 Joseph A Witowski Teacher of Year honorees by the Camillus Optimists.

The 2006 yearly WGTA dues were \$584.83.

Donna Mahar (WGMS) achieved National Board Certification.

The WGTA web site won a NYSUT First Award for Best Web site in Class III. This is the fourth year in a row that the web site has won a NYSUT First Award. Lynn Davis (CMS) is the webmaster.

The WGTA donated \$250 to the West Genesee Senior All Night After The Ball Party.

The WGTA donated \$250 to the St. Baldrick's Foundation in support of President Cost's "give five to help kids survive cancer" challenge. President Cost and Vice President Fuller together raised about \$4,800 for the St. Baldrick's Foundation. The mission of the Foundation is to raise awareness and funds to cure kid's cancer by supporting cancer research and fellowships.

25-Year Club Inductees

30 Years

Rose Ann LeBlanc - SR

James Vermeulen - CMS

35 Years

Lynn Davis - CMS

Frederick Guerreschi - CMS

Danielle Hamberger - WGMS

Christine Rust - ST-B

Thomas Sakowski - WGMS

David Smithson - ST-B

40 Years

JoAnn Macaluso - WGMS

The WGTA Spring Fling was held on Friday, June 1, 2007 at Gilfillian's.

The WGTA Cabinet voted to donate \$50.00 to the Camillus Memorial Day Boosters to help support the Camillus Memorial Day festivities.

The WGTA Denim Day for the American Heart Association raised \$881.75.

The WGTA Cabinet voted to increase the individual WGTA scholarships from \$500 per year to \$750 per year.

Ellen Miller (Stonehedge) was appointed as the Assistant Newsletter Editor.

Anne Sierotnik (High School) is one of five finalists for the NYS 2008 Teacher of the Year award. Anne is an English teacher and taught in the district for 16 years.

The WGTA sponsored the Fall and the Spring Flings, paid for half of the district retirement party, and purchased umbrellas for all its members. The Sick Bank was activated on four separate occasions with teachers volunteering hundreds of days for their colleagues. The WGTA sponsored and organized a retirement informational meeting, a Denim Day for the Susan B. Komen Foundation (raising approximately \$1,000), a Denim Day for the American Heart Association (raising approximately \$900), and President Cost and Vice President Fuller shaved their heads for St. Baldrick's and raised approximately \$5,000. WGTA members contributed more than \$15,000 for Vote/Cope, the WGTA Scholarship Fund and the United Way.

The WGTA web site won a First Place Award for its class in a national competition sponsored by the American Federation of Teachers Communications Network. This is the 8th win in 9 years for the web site!

Melissa Lynn DiBattista was selected as the 2007 WGTA Scholarship winner. Melissa will be attending St. Bonaventure University majoring in Early and Elementary Education. The WGTA scholarship is now \$750 per year for four years.

The new WGTA Teacher's Contract was ratified by a vote of 327 to 6.

2007 - 2008

2007 -2008 Executive Officers

John Christian - WGTA President - Senior High
Susan Gianniini - Vice President - Split Rock
Andrea Moore- VP - Negotiations - Senior High
Ray Fuller - VP - Grievances - Onondaga Road
Thersa Mosey - Treasurer - Senior High
Michelle Lepak - Secretary - Camillus Middle



WGTA Cabinet 2008

Anne Sierotnik, a high school English teacher in West Genesee, was one of 5 finalists named by the New York State Education Department for NYS Teacher of the Year.

Jim Hunter was recently named the Channel 3 Teacher of the Week. Jim is a technology teacher at Camillus Middle School.

The WGTA held a Fall Fling at McNamara's.

Tammy Annicharico (CMS) achieved her National Board Certification.

Jim Vermeulen (CMS) had an article in The Post-Standard published titled, "A Closer Look at a Week on the Run."

Bob Deegan (High School) who will be participating with a team of scientists this coming summer collecting water samples for meteorology and climate change research.

The WGTA sponsored a Christmas Holiday Happy Hour at McNamara's.

East Hill Elementary School first grade teacher Susan Deegan, CMS guidance counselor Melissa Ahern, and High School foreign language teacher Jennifer Roethel received the 2007 Joseph A. Witowski Optimist Teacher of the Year Award.

Mary Humphrey (librarian at Split Rock) just had her second book published. It's called: Kids Yoga Book of Feelings.

Jan Chemotti, librarian, and Susan Gibbons, 7W English teacher at WGMS, recently presented a workshop at the New York Middle School Conference in Saratoga Springs. The Conference theme was "Powerful Partnerships for Success."

The total amount of teacher union dues paid for the 2007 calendar year for a full time teacher was \$618.58.

The WGTA held a Spring Fling on May 8th at McNamara's that combined a toy drive with the festivities.

The 2007 Vote Cope drive raised an average of \$11.33 per member.

Marcia Ranieri (high school) raised more than \$3,300 dollars through the St. Baldrick's event. Marcia also received the YWCA's Academy of Diversity Achievers Award.

The WGTA website placed 2nd in the national AFT Journalism Contest.

School science teacher Richard Chapman will receive an Outstanding Teacher Award from the Technology Alliance of Central New York.

WGTA members donated \$100 to the Camillus PBA; \$100 to the West Genesee Sports Boosters in memory of high school teacher Kevin Kerswell; approximately \$5,000 to VOTE/COPE, \$3,000 to the WGTA scholarship fund, \$900 for the Susan G. Komen Foundation and \$805 for the American Heart Association

Wendy Cross, West Genesee High School art teacher, won the inaugural JGB Jazz Fest Poster Contest.

The following teachers were honored for their many years of service to the district at a dinner at Gilfillan's West Hill Catering Club:

25 years

Susan Blumer, OR
Diane Grygiel, WGMS
Elva Stebbins, SR

30 years

Janet Campbell, SR
Karol Gibson, OR
Nancy Miller, SR

35 years

Samuel Dance, WGHS
Richard Duggan, WGMS
Raymond Fuller, OR
Carl Weed, CMS

40 years

Virginia Lynch, EH

Congratulations to the Retirees!

Susan Blumer, OR
Lynn Davis, CMS
Jeannie Gmyr, ST B
Danielle Hamberger, WGMS
Mary Ellen Hoag, SR
Nancy Menges, EH
Leo Potrikus, CMS
Valerie Socha, OR/EH/ST
Elva Stebbins, SR
Carl Weed, CMS

THERE IS A YOU IN WGTA
By Ellen Miller (Editor)

We all know that without "U," there is no union, but did you know there is also a "U" in WGTA? The U, of course, is YOU – the approximately 400 full- and part-time teachers. YOU are represented in the WGTA by a cabinet of 34 members – six executive officers, eight building leaders, 14 building representatives, five alternates and the immediate WGTA past president. In addition to the cabinet, people like YOU are serving on such committees as the EDC, Superintendent's Liaison, Shared Decision Making, the Teaching Center, and Strategic Planning.

The 2007-08 academic year began under new leadership with John Christian as our WGTA president and Susan Giannini as our VP. With our new leadership came a fresh new start, some innovative ideas, and some new twists to our old (but still good!) routines. Let's take a look back at our union and how it represented YOU through 2007-08.

- YOU started out "The New Era" in grand style, with a t-shirt toss and iPod giveaway at the general membership meeting in September.
- YOU gave \$100 to the Camillus PBA; \$100 to the West Genesee Sports Boosters in memory of high school teacher Kevin Kerswell; approximately \$5,000 to VOTE/COPE and \$3,000 to the WGTA scholarship fund.
- YOU asked for and secured numerous pet projects, technology pet projects, collegial circles and action research projects from the S.U. Teaching Center.
- YOU attended not two but three "flings" this year, including the first-ever holiday fling as well as a spring fling that combined a toy drive with the festivities.
- YOU raised \$900 for the Susan G. Komen Foundation, as well as \$805 for the American Heart Association.

• YOU are among many distinguished colleagues receiving accolades in 2007-08, including:

- One Outstanding Teacher Award from Technology Alliance of Central New York
- One Academy of Diversity Achievers Award by the YWCA
- Three Optimist Teachers of the Year awards
- One of five finalists in NYSED's Teacher of the Year contest
- One Channel 3 Teacher of the Week
- One second place website award by the American Federation of Teachers Communications Network

• Some of our colleagues showed talent and persistence through their accomplishments:

- One teacher earned National Board Certification
- One had a (second!) book published
- Some presented workshops at state conferences
- One featured art at a solo art exhibit

• Many of our colleagues gave their time and energy to worthy causes with amazing results, including:

- Running a marathon for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
- Riding in the Tour de Cure for Juvenile Diabetes research
- Shaving a head for the St. Baldrick's Foundation's fight against childhood cancer
- And while you may not have been one of these individuals, many, many of you donated money, time and talent to help them achieve success in their endeavors.

••YOU donated hundreds of hours of your own time, above and beyond your school day each week on such committees as Curriculum Council, Respect and Responsibility, Character Education, Special Education Team, and Principal's Liaison, to name a few.

- YOU will continue to work into the summer, planning a record number of independent workshops through the S.U. Teaching Center, as well as technology training, AIM training, Rigby reading series training, curriculum mapping, and diversity training.
- YOU read eight newsletters published by the WGTA this school year.
- YOU were represented at nine cabinet meetings this school year.
- YOU as part of the WGTA, co-sponsored the District Retirement Reception at the Camillus Elks Club.
- YOU took courses, taught courses, and mentored student teachers and new teachers.
- YOU manned the NYSUT booth at the State Fair and walked or ran in the 100-degree heat at the Corporate Challenge.
- YOU volunteered many sick days for your colleagues in need.
- YOU dug money out of your own pockets to pay for extra school supplies, popsicles, birthday cupcakes, and whatever else is necessary to help a student have a better day or a more successful school year.

For all these and many other things that you do as a teacher for West Genesee, your union – the WGTA – is here for you. So yes, there IS a U in Union, and there is a YOU in WGTA. Without YOU, they're just four letters; it's the YOU in WGTA that makes us who we are – an Association of quality, dedicated professionals committed to creating lifelong learners who are well prepared for the challenges ahead.

Thank YOU for all that you do.

2008 - 2009

Academic Year 2008-09: Where did it go?

By Ellen Miller

WGTA Members: the June crunch will soon be over and our entire 2008-09 year will become a blur. Let me refresh your collective memory and remind you of a few of our accomplishments earned throughout 2008-09.

- * We donated toys to local families in need and filled the food pantry of Holy Family church in Fairmount and the Westminster food pantry in Syracuse.
- * We raised \$1350 for breast cancer research during the fall Lee National Denim Day.
- * We won a Pride of the Union Award for our NYSUT members.
- * We ran or walked in our 10th annual Race for Respect.
- * We won a Top Team Award for the American Heart Association's Heart Walk/Run.
- * We won the Abel-Blatman award for our outstanding VOTE-COPE donations.

* Our website won a NYSUT First Award for Best Website in Class III.

Lauded members of the WGTA:

* Were inducted into the Upstate New York chapter of the US Lacrosse Hall of Fame.

* Will attend Honeywell's Space Academy and Advanced Space Academy Program for educators.

* Will spend one week aboard a research vessel on Lake Huron.

Many of us attended conferences, presented at conferences, read research articles, earned degrees, helped clean up highways, donated to families in need, conducted concerts and attended countless meetings, open houses, CODE graduations, and other myriad nightly meetings on our own time.

But the real rewards earned by us all are the intangibles. You all know what I'm talking about: the child who learned to read against the odds; the one who is now comfortable with his or her peers; the unwilling learner who now has the spark of motivation; those children you helped to become friends, to become a team, to be successful. Those children are better off because of your efforts. Their success is our big payoff. That's why we do what we do. And that's why we are privileged to be a part of this quality organization, the West Genesee Teachers' Association.

2009 - 2010

Another Banner Year for the WGTA

West Genesee teachers won the Scholastic Challenge Award for the Large School Division in this year's Corporate Challenge Run/Walk. In addition to a plaque, this also means a \$1000 scholarship for one of our students!

WGTA members attending the Fall Fling donated over 1,000 food items to the Holy Family Food Pantry.

On December 10th active and retired West Genesee Teachers celebrated a Christmas Fling at McNamara's. Staff members donated money and over 1,000 canned goods for the food pantry at St. Cecillia's.

Enhancements to the dental and health care plans were negotiated.

The first-ever 25-year club silver clocks were handed out!!!

WGTA-sponsored events filled several food pantries!!!

No grievances were filed!!!

The WGTA won the Abel Blattmen Award for Vote Cope contributions.

The WGTA adopted "The Gold Standard" as our official slogan.

West Genesee won the Corporate Challenge Scholarship for Participation.

Vote/Cope contributions rank us 17th out of 84 contributing units in the Syracuse area.

A new WGTA contract was ratified with a 98.1% approval rating.

On September 1st WGTA volunteers staffed the NYSUT booth at the New York State Fair. The WGTA volunteers were Thersa Mosey, Kristen Czaplicki, Bonnie Young, Marcia and Pat Ranieri, Pat Andino, Margie Thiele, Lisa Tamiso and Julie Lodge.

The West Genesee "Language Other Than English (L.O.T.E.) Department" for receiving the James E. Allen Statewide Award from the New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers on Nov. 14 at the LECNY-NYSAFLT Regional Conference.

West Genesee High School science teacher Craig Dowler and West Genesee Middle School science teacher Rick Chapman for earning the Greater CNY Education Consortium's Philip Martin Award as an Educator of Excellence at the 17th Annual Professional Partnerships Conference at the OnCenter in Syracuse.

Kudos to West Genesee Middle School Physical Education Teacher Janine Corning for garnering the 2009 NYS Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (NYSAPERD) Central North Zone Middle School Physical Education Teacher of the Year Award.

Andy Perry, band director at WGHS and instrumental music teacher at CMS and WGHS, has been co-conducting The Central Winds, a Music Educators' Wind Ensemble for the last nine years. The band, made up of music educators from Central New York, prepares three to four concerts a year. The band was chosen to perform at this year's Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic held in Chicago.

Choral music teachers Don Schuessler and Christy Niedermaier Knowlton serve as music directors in the community as well. Schuessler, CMS music teacher and chorus director, is the associate conductor of the Syracuse University Oratorio Society and a member of the Syracuse Pops Chorus. In addition, he performs as a church musician at Immanuel United Methodist Church in Camillus. Knowlton, WGMS music teacher and chorus director, serves as the music director at St. Luke's Episcopal Church. She also has a private lesson studio of about 20 students, teaching piano and voice.

Kudos to Sue Bingham, 6th grade math teacher at WGMS, who was just accepted to the basic Honeywell educators at space program.

Congratulations to Andrew Perry, instrumental music teacher at CMS and WGHS and director of the high school Wind Ensemble since 1987, for being selected winner of the Syracuse Symphony Orchestra Outstanding Music Educator of the Year in Instrumental Music- Band.

Kudos to WGTA webmaster and retired teacher Lynn Davis for garnering a First Place Award in a national competition sponsored by the American Federation of Teachers Communications Network. This is the 11th national win in 12 years for the website! And another well-deserved KUDOS to Davis for winning an Award of Merit in the NYSUT Journalism Competition sponsored by the New York State United Teachers. This is the sixth such award in seven years for the website!

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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
- C* arol 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.



The WGTA Cabinet, 2015