In the May/June Issue:

- Congratulations Retirees
- Service Awards
- NYSUT Award
- Retirement Column
- NYSUT
- President's Message

Thank you to the ETA for donating the beautiful flowers for the high school graduation ceremony, and to all who helped make the end of the year so special for our students and their families!
Congratulations Retirees!

Judy Marie Maynard

Awesome, awesome! This is Judy Marie Maynard's favorite saying, as Judy has a way of seeing the positive side of everyone she meets and every situation she encounters. Judy brought her positive viewpoint to her classroom, enthusiastically welcoming every student and eagerly embracing every challenge.

Judy has been involved in many school activities. She was a PTA rep, appeared in every Parents as Reading Partners (PARP) skit, and helped direct every Elementary 5th-6th grade musical. She was co-editor and advisor of the Eden Elementary News, which was written entirely by 5th and 6th grade students.

Judy volunteered to serve on Science and Math curriculum committees, always wanting to improve the quality of education for her students. Judy regularly held study sessions before school for any of her students that needed extra help. She was usually one of the last to leave school each evening, toiling over lessons for the next day, correcting papers, and contacting parents of her students.

She was an active member of the ETA, serving as a building rep for many years. Here again, Judy took on many tasks, such as helping to organize ETA fundraisers, picking up garbage for Adopt-a-highway day, attending NYSUT conferences, and working NYSUT phone banks to help get out the votes for school budgets.

If there was a Purple Heart awarded for injury in the line of duty in a classroom, Judy would get it. She is the only teacher I know who managed to injure her shoulder while demonstrating a principal of science. The best way to sum up Judy Marie Maynard's career at Eden is "Awesome, awesome."

Kim Castiglia

After a career as a graphic artist, Kim Castiglia was hired at Eden as a third-grade teacher. She then taught in numerous multi-age classrooms, eventually landing at the Kindergarten level. Throughout the years, Mrs. Castiglia has become a well-loved teacher! The students in her classes, even years later, still talk about Kim's annual Polar Express Day! She is a beloved teacher to so many of her students. Throughout the years, Kim has shared her computer skills, artistic talents, and creativity with the GLP students and staff. In retirement, Kim plans to spend more time with her wonderful grandchildren: Nicholas, Aleah, and Tino. She will also continue to make more creative, artistic treasures. Mrs. Kim Castiglia will be greatly missed by all!
Sandi Ploetz

The 500 hats of Sandi Ploetz; not really 500 of course, but she is the woman of many hats. She has a collection of hats, and if you follow her Face Book page you may have noticed that she has been counting down the days until retirement by posting a picture with a different hat each day. She spearheaded the “wear a hat and donate a dollar to a cause” at GLP to support many worthwhile programs. It was always fun to see the hats the kids wore, but Sandi took it to the next level by switching hats every 20 minutes, and adding a dollar each time. While she was librarian at GLP, her hats and costumes were a big part of our PARP plays, Character Education Celebrations, and Family Reading Nights.

Sandi is a woman of many figurative hats also. She started out teaching high school French, earned a Masters in Reading, and after raising 3 daughters, leading Camp Fire and doing some subbing, she became GLP Librarian and earned her Master’s in Library Science. Sandi is always supportive of other faculty, lending a sympathetic ear, pushing us to try new things, and providing library resources for many student and teacher projects. She embraces technology, creating library web pages and interactive lessons, teaching research and helping kids create video projects. She showed her creativity and innovation with Invention Convention and the Elementary Maker Space. In these last few months with home learning, Sandi created a blog with fun learning activities that families can do at home.

In 2019 Sandi was recipient of the Eden Teacher of Excellence Award. This is a difficult year for the retiring teachers. How do you say goodbye when you haven’t seen your students in three months? Well, Sandi made a video, reminding the students to be kind to the new library teacher, and giving them one last review of the Dewey Decimal chant.

Now it is time for a new adventure in retirement (with a puppy!) Best Wishes to you, Sandi!

Carol Stumpf

Carol Stumpf grew up in a household of teachers. Her father taught Business in Eden, while her mother taught Kindergarten in Hamburg. All her life, Carol knew she wanted to follow in her parents’ footsteps and become a teacher. After graduating from Edinboro in 1985, Carol began her teaching career as lead teacher at the Head Start Program in Gowanda, NY. Her dream came true when she was hired by Eden Central School District in 1990. Carol began her career in Kindergarten and hasn’t left that assignment. She taught for 30 years, molding, teaching, and loving each class of 4 and 5-year olds. She has always said “There is nothing like starting your day with smiles, hugs, and ‘Good morning Mrs. Stumpf.’”

While Carol may be small in stature, she has made a huge impact in the Eden community. Her ability to touch the lives of both students and their parents has been very evident. She would always go above and beyond when it came to her students and their needs. Her love of teaching and insight into her students’ needs, coupled with her care and compassion, led her to teach in an inclusive classroom. She welcomed all her students with open arms and an open heart.

In 1990, not only did Carol start her career in Eden, but she also married her college sweetheart Rick. They went on to raise two beautiful children, Kendra and Zack. As a family, they have spent many hours enjoying the outdoors through their love of traveling, hiking, biking, and camping. This is something Rick and Carol look forward to continuing to do in retirement. Carol also loves to spend time out in her garden. She could spend an entire day tending to her gardens. To say she has a “green thumb” doesn’t do it justice! She has one of the most beautiful backyards in Hamburg! She has taken her talent and knowledge of plants and is working part-time at Lockwood’s Greenhouse. Eden is losing one of the best! She will be greatly missed.
Ray Neil "Don Ramon" is a teacher because superhero isn’t an official job title. We all know Ray’s real identity: Spiderman. Ray is dedicated. Ray began his career in Eden in 1969. He once commented to Chuck Yale that he planned to teach about ten years and then move on to something else. This amazing man has so many talents, it could easily have been that way. We are blessed that Ray stayed with us in Eden. We have benefitted from his presence, his energy and his enthusiasm. It is clear that Ray cares deeply for his students, and for all of us. His myriad of interests and super powers make it easy for anyone to connect with him. He has also garnered attention with his ability to hurdle desks and hoods of cars!

Ray is loyal. Ray has taught Spanish (and some French!) with the World Languages department for all thirty years of his career. Ray can converse in five languages. Many times, he would vent between classes and startled us by conversing in Spanish, until he realized that we were not comprehending him! He would always smile, apologize and explain his reason for agitation again, in English. If a Spanish student ever thought of leaving his room early to head to the hallway, you would hear his reminder: “No cruces la linea”!

Ray’s love of languages and cultures included him leading student groups to Spain and Europe, chaperoning many French and German trips, as well as bond trips and eighth grade trips to Darien Lake. When he wasn’t “resting his eyes” on the bus, he could be found sampling the food, posing for photos, and explaining culture to all.

Ray is versatile. He has become an honorary member of the music department. As a pianist, he accompanies student solos, assists at concerts, and senior nights at Shea’s. Ray has also become the pit orchestra director for the musical. His enthusiasm resonates in the music and students. His effort was rewarded with Kenny Award nominations. He can also be heard practicing the music in his classroom on his keyboard after school, tirelessly for hours.

Recently Ray has joined the technology department as a tech integrator. Unsurprisingly, he is a guru in this field also. If he doesn’t understand a program, he will research it until he has an answer. Ray is practical and wanted to prepare students for life after high school. He has shared his knowledge with his coworkers and made step-by-step directions and tips for us all.

Ray has coached track. He would come out to the track in his shoes, shirt and tie from teaching. He would race the kids and still beat them! Being the good sport that he is, he also volunteered to play in the annual senior vs. staff softball game. Many remember a particularly warm year, with Ray wearing Apollo Creed style shorts. He accidentally tore those shorts, but remained gracious and funny about it. Nothing phases him.

We have truly been fortunate to have Ray in our lives and in Eden. As he embarks on this new chapter, we thank him for all that he has given to our students and to us. It’s time now to say “take your hat off your head” and give a nod to this legend. We will all miss him tremendously. Ray is real and true in all aspects of education, and friendship. His generosity, kindness and warmth have touched us all. He cares about everyone; he is a presence that will be missed. “Everybody loves Raymond”. We love you Ray! Best wishes to you! And thank you!
Joe Weis

Eden's retiring School Psychologist Joe Weis was born in Pittsburgh, a fact he shared with everyone he ever came in contact with. Even if he didn't tell you this fact you would know it by the funny way he drops his "L's."

In the beginning of his career, Joe worked at Elmira City School District for 2 years and then the Herkimer County BOCES for 6 years before spending the next 24 years with us in Eden.

Joe completed his doctorate degree in school psychology in 2008 after procrastinating on his dissertation for many years. (Joe is an expert in procrastination.) Joe’s doctoral dissertation addressed the degree to which psychologist’s assessments of reading disabilities were informed by the latest empirical understanding of the cognitive underpinnings of reading disabilities themselves. Joe lent his reading expertise to untold students, teachers and parents over the years.

Joe enjoyed many facets of his job, but his favorite professional activity was doing brief solution-based family counseling with the late Amy Banks. Joe and Amy provided evening counseling services to countless Eden families through Eden’s Family Support Center.

Joe always enjoyed the staff development days when the entire counseling staff could talk shop. Joe frequently said how lucky he has been to work in a district with such great students, families, colleagues, and the larger school community. Joe is deeply grateful for his past 24 years in Eden, especially for the friendships that have been forged and the lasting memories he has made (both joyous and heartbreaking). Joe can’t imagine spending 24 years anywhere else but in Eden. In retirement, he will be spending more time with his wife Jennifer and his sons Jared and Jason. Joe plans on joining fellow Eden retirees on the golf course and looks forward to Kevin Witman joining him in the near future.

Joe will also continue practicing yoga, tending to his garden, and especially looks forward to traveling with his wife. He promises he will continue to predict snow days for the rest of us who are still working (his accuracy rate has never been beaten). For anyone like me who sought out Joe for an idea to help a struggling student, a resource for a parent or simply a receptive ear to listen to a personal quandary I am sure you will agree: there is no replacement for a person like Joe Weis. He will be greatly missed.

Joan Brechtel

A big heart, that is what comes to mind when I think of Joan Brechtel. Joan has the biggest heart of anyone I know! She would do anything for her students, families, colleagues and friends. The GLP has been so fortunate to have her as a Kindergarten teacher for the past 22 years. I remember being on the interview team when Joan was hired. She walked in the room with her big smile, her honest sincerity and her unselfish way, I knew she was perfect for the job! Those that were blessed to be in her class will always remember her generosity, laughter and loving ways. As well as: Family Reading Night, her end of the year picnic and the Kindergarten Celebration with her class singing What a Wonderful World. This brought everyone to tears. You have made it a "Wonderful World" for all of the lives you have touched throughout your teaching career. Now it is time to explore a new world, the world of retirement! She plans on spending a lot of time with her first grandchild, Josiah, traveling the United States with her husband Rick and going anywhere else life may lead her. Thank you for all the laughter, smiles and hugs. Joan Brechtel you will be missed at GLP! Happy Retirement!
Service Awards

ETA Years of Service Recognition

Congratulations to the following who have reached years of service milestones! You will receive your awards when we return to school in the fall.

Twenty Years:
Jill Rapp
Jennifer Tylock
Kathy DeGroat
Olivia Doctor
Paula Farrell
Terri Lester
Bandie Woodard
Joanne Meredith
Jason Kuczkowski

Twenty-Five Years:
Ann Engle
Stephen Pierce
Robert Pierce
Lynn Morgan

Thirty Years:
Carol Stumpf

ETA Members Receiving Tenure

Brad Agen
Lindsey Kuhrt
Madison Weber

Sarah Fiorella
Heather Radder

Shannon Fitzgerald
Gabrielle Rodriguez
NYSUT Leadership Award

The ETA has unanimously nominated Linda Schwanz as the recipient of this year’s award. Without a doubt, Linda is the epitome of a leader. She has accomplished quite a bit since taking on the role of President; from a new contract, to a new healthcare provider, to Covid-19 and the building shutdowns. In these difficult, unprecedented times, she has worked tirelessly with administration to protect the rights of the teachers, preserve our CBA, all while ensuring the district, students’ and families’ needs are met. She has remained calm and collected and has delivered information to our membership with complete transparency. Lin has been resolute in her role and her service to our union. Thank you for your devotion, strength and effort.

ETA Leadership

The ETA has a membership that is engaged and united. This is the reason our Association is respected. This is the reason we are taken seriously by our administration and our BOE. This is why we are one of the strongest Associations in Western NY.

Our meetings are open to every member each month, and attending our meetings is a great way to learn what holding a leadership position entails. Our Building Reps, Committee Chairs and Officers receive support and training when assuming their roles.

If you’re considering becoming more involved, please reach out to a current Rep or Officer if you have questions. Nominations for positions and our election will be held in the fall.
While daily life may be anything but routine during this coronavirus crisis, your plans for retirement can still proceed smoothly and NYSTRS is here to help.

Even though in-person benefits consultations have been suspended, you can get all the important information you need in a phone consultation with one of our Retirement System representatives. You can book an appointment through your MyNYSTRS account or by calling us at (800) 348-7298. And, while PREP seminars have also been placed on hold, you can now watch video versions of all our PREP seminar modules online on our website. Find the videos on the Pension & Retirement Education Program page.

One key fact to note: Your retirement date is tied to your collective bargaining agreement, NOT the last day you work. That means, even if your last day of teaching is moved up, you cannot move up the effective date of your retirement.

Your effective date of retirement must be at least one day beyond the last date you earn salary under contract. For example, if you last earn salary under contract on June 30 (even if the last day you actually work is earlier), the earliest effective date of retirement you could elect is July 1.

When you are ready to file your retirement application, we encourage you to file online through your MyNYSTRS account. It’s fast, easy and secure. Filing online streamlines the process, helps you avoid mistakes that might delay the processing of your form, and eliminates the need to fill out and mail an eight-page paper application. Also, the online application does not need to be notarized, while a paper application requires notarization.

If you do choose to file a paper application, please note that the state has approved the use of e-notarization through June 6 due to the pandemic. See How to E-Notarize in Six Easy Steps for details. You may also contact us for assistance with e-notarization by calling (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6250. We suggest that you use registered or certified mail for timely delivery of any paper applications.

For more details on filing for retirement, we encourage you to check out the NYSTRS Retirement Checklist, our Ready to Retire page and the Retirement Planning FAQs on our website. You may also call us at (800) 348-7298, Ext. 6250, or send us a secure message through MyNYSTRS.
During these unprecedented times and in the face of incredible adversity, each of you continue to sacrifice and dedicate yourselves to our children, our families and our communities.

We thank all of the educators, school-related professionals, nurses and other health care workers who continue to demonstrate their unwavering compassion, dedication and commitment to our communities on a daily basis.

memberbenefits.nysut.org | 800-626-8101

For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits.
President’s Message

Congratulations and best wishes to our retirees this year!! We are looking forward to celebrating you at our future event. We will miss you!!: Sandi Laedke, Kathy Klopp, Judy Maynard, Carol Stumpf, Joan Brechtel, Kim Castiglia, Ray Neil, Joe Weis, and Sandi Ploetz.

Special thanks:
VP - Larry Millson
Treas - Laura Feasley
Sec - Terri Lester
Head Reps - Jason Bernardone, Kevin Witman, Susan Gianoidis, Paul O'Connor
Building Reps - Kristi Heidt, Erin Radke, Annette Bahun, Johanna Funke, Judy Maynard, Amy Porter, Randy Perison, Chris Dobeck, Monica Donovan, Carrie Hamlett,
Vote Cope/Political Action - Larry Millson
Teacher Center - Kathy DeGroat
Healthy Schools - Christine McTigue
Public Relations - Christine McTigue
Social - Tiffany Popp
Grievance - Eric Cooper
Health Insurance - Ed Myers, Paul O'Connor
Winter Fest: Amy Porter, Randy Perison, Keith Kwas, Katherine LaVerdi, Kristi Heidt, Christine McTigue, Terri Lester, Larry Millson, Laura Feasley, Lisa Nicastro, Kathy DeGroat, Kelly Grimaldi
NYSUT Winter Leadership Conference: Monica Donovan, Susan Gianoidis, Larry Millson, Paul O'Connor, Judy Maynard, Kevin Witman
Teacher Stakeholders Super Search - Stephen Pierce, Linda Pace, Annette Bahun, Jason Bernardone, Larry Millson, Laura Feasley, Christine McTigue, Kristi Heidt
Retiree Contact - Denise Uhlman
APPR - Andrea DeMont, Larry Millson, Laura Feasley, Joanne Meredith
Newsletter - Andrea DeMont
Webmaster - Lorry Malkowski
Sick Bank - Beth Levakoff
ETA Elections - Johanna Funke

Our commitment to our profession, our students and to one another was never more evident than this year. Thank you to every ETA member for demonstrating what our Association stands for, especially in challenging times. Please check your home emails throughout the summer for updates. Enjoy the much needed break and stay well!

In Solidarity,
Lin