

## Congratulations to our Retirees

Traditionally we honor our retirees in the May edition of Chalkdust. Let's highlight the word "honor". These folks dedicated a huge portion of their lives to educate the children in Mt. Pleasant. Please heed their words of wisdom, as experience is the best teacher. We will miss them. All MPEA members wish for them the best in their retirement. The best is yet to come!

### Jan Alfano

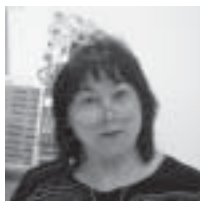


Mt. Pleasant, Mt. Pleasant, Mt. Pleasant is where Jan spent her teaching career. After graduating from CMU, she applied for the position Lise Dietz was leaving at West Intermediate. "I had apprenticed with her, we had gotten along well, so of course, I expected to get the only job I applied for (the arrogance of youth). After six years at West, I applied for the position of retiring teacher, Irving Kidd. Since then, I have been teaching mostly high school art, with a short stint in the late 80's, early 90's of both high school and elementary art. I also taught fashion illustration at CMU for ten years. This year makes number 35."

"When we went through construction, three moves in three years, over 200 boxes of mystery supplies, and a homemade sink (honest!), I found two mantras to help me; one was 'I can do this' and the other 'This too shall pass'. It depended upon the day which of these I used. I don't know if that counts as wisdom or survival techniques. I try to see the glass half full but to never give up on what I truly believe."

Jan plans to spend time with her husband, family, and friends, and to be the Grandma who has time to play. She hopes to take classes and do ART. "I have spent so many years being jealous of my students who 'have' to do art. I want to smell the spring flowers instead of grade projects."

### Mary Bentley



Mary currently teaches in a Special Education Resource Room at Fancher. But over the years she has been in every school in Mt. Pleasant, except Pullen, and before that in three different school districts. Mary started teaching in 1973 in North Branch, then in Ortonville, obtained her Master's at Oakland University, and taught in Breckenridge for 4 years. She came back to Mt. Pleasant (she's a Sacred Heart graduate) in 1986.

Mary's advice for us is: "Buy your years of retirement no matter how much it costs! You can buy years with pre-tax dollars, and you'll never regret that you did. Also, keep all of your paycheck stubs, because you'll never know when you may need to verify your pay."

Mary plans on spending some of the summer cleaning out her classroom and spending quality time up-north at her cabin. She is preparing for her second career as a medical transcriptionist, so she can work at home in her PJ's when she wants. She will also be deadheading her flowers, and anyone else's if you ask.



### Marsha Biggs

Marsha started her career as a teacher in an Emotionally Impaired classroom in St. Louis. She stayed in St. Louis for five years until the opportunity came to join the staff of the new Oasis Alternative High School. She is one of the three original teachers of Oasis, which began 20 years ago. Marsha values her years working with Carol Meixner, former Oasis administrator. "I worked with Carol for over 17 years. Her professionalism, compassion, superior intelligence, vision and friendship has had a profound influence on my personal and academic life. I believe we do not always have such a person in our lives, but Carol Meixner has been such a person in mine. If I'm told that I have any of her qualities, I feel complimented. As I've said repeatedly, 'were Carol to have gone into corporate business of some type, she'd surely be a wealthy CEO by now.' Her dedication, however, has been to students in need."

One of the lessons that Marsha practices in her daily life and teaching is modeling respect toward her students. If there is one thing that she can pass on from her years of experience, it is the fact that we are all role-models. "We expect students to respect us because of our position, but we need to model respect to our students first. Emulation is the greatest teacher. It is a mind-set and style of teaching." She is concerned about the future of education, and believes that it will get more difficult with financial problems and more state/federal mandates.

Marsha and her husband will be moving up to Frankfort to live in and fix up their "little old house". She will look into possibilities for a different job, perhaps working in the jail system. She will miss all that she has learned from her students.



### **Nancy Black**

Nancy has worked in MPPS for 17 years as a Speech & Language Pathologist. Before coming to Mt. Pleasant she worked in the private sector of Home-Health care. Nancy started her school career at Sunnyfield, MPHS, Fancher, and Sacred Heart. As caseloads

grew, she serviced Fancher and the high school, and after the elementary configuration, she taught at Vowles with a very full caseload of 60 plus students. Anyone who worked with Nancy knows that we are losing a teacher who exemplifies common sense, wisdom, and dedication to her students' needs. Nancy also served the MPEA as treasurer for quite a few years.

Nancy's advice to us is to be flexible. She also knows that it is critical in education to be a good listener and a team player. No one has all of the answers, so good collaboration skills are critical.

Nancy will take off on a cruise to Italy as soon as school is out. After that she plans to spend more time traveling, relaxing, and enjoying her family.



### **Kathy Ling**

Kathy began teaching in 1968 at Copernicus Junior High School in Hamtramck, MI; "after one year in jr. high, I wasn't sure I ever wanted to teach again!! My respect for jr. high teachers who come back year after year is enormous!!" After moving to Mt. Pleasant in 1970 and

adopting several children, she returned to the classroom in 1975 teaching government in the Adult Education program. She started at the high school in the social studies dept. part-time in the winter of 1977 and was laid off in June, 1978. During the time she was laid off, she served for six years on the Isabella County Board of Commissioners and also taught part time at Alma College (speech and debate) and in the Alma alternative education program. Kathy was called back to Mt. Pleasant in 1985 teaching for the first few years in both English and social studies. Since 1987, she has taught primarily in social studies and also worked with debate, Youth in Government, quiz bowl and mock trial.

"I will miss the many dedicated teachers I have had the opportunity to work with and get to know over the last 25 years. I have been inspired by your hard work, creativity, professionalism and commitment to students. I would encourage all of you to stay involved (or become involved!) in the MPEA. When I first started teaching in the mid 60's I was not really a very strong union supporter. It took several years before I began to realize that it was the unions that were really on the frontlines in the battle to assure that every student have the opportunity for a high quality education. Union opponents try to suggest that teacher unions look out for themselves at the expense of students. But anyone who has taught for a few years knows that it is impossible to separate

the interests of teachers from the interests of students. It is the teacher unions that fight for smaller class sizes, for competitive salaries to assure that the best college graduates will view teaching as a viable option, for safe, healthy classrooms, and for adequate opportunities for meaningful professional development. The one thing that George Bush, Bill Clinton and Jennifer Granholm agree on is that the key to a quality education is a quality teacher in every classroom! Your active involvement in the MPEA helps to assure that we can continue to play a role in making Mt. Pleasant Public Schools a great place for kids and a good place to teach."



### **Jen Linsday**

Jen has been teaching in Mt. Pleasant for 33 years; 9 years at Vowles, 19 at Pullen, and the past five at Fancher. She taught a variety grade levels including 1, 2, 3, 5, and some combos. Jen got to know many students and parents in our community

over the past 33 years. She sees many advantages to living and teaching in the same district. Jen is highly respected by all of her colleagues, and has team taught for quite a few years with her husband, Mike. Jen has a calm, quiet, and caring atmosphere in her classroom.

Jen still believes that we have a wonderful profession. She wants us to remember that a teacher can make each day exciting and interesting for students. "You can make each day the way you want to in your classroom." Teaching has allowed Jen to spend quality time with her family, and she has many wonderful memories to take with her.

Jen will not be bored, although she looks forward to relaxing and slowing down her pace of life. She has many hobbies to keep her busy including gardening, sewing, photography, cooking, reading, crafts, and playing the piano. She looks forward to having more time to visit family and friends.



### **Carlene Shortz**

Carlene is completing her 34<sup>th</sup> year in education. She taught in Gladwin for 14 years, and has been in Mt. Pleasant ever since. She has taught in every building in the district in a variety of roles, Gifted & Talented programs (remember when?), Title I, and in 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> grades. Carlene

is an amazingly creative teacher who blends technology and fun activities into her lessons. She keeps her students highly engaged, and is truly a "master teacher".

Carlene's advice for us is: "You will never know it all. You will make mistakes everyday. Remember to learn from your mistakes."

Carlene's plan for the future is to join husband, Ron (who has had a few years of practice at retirement), and they will travel, travel, and travel.

## Reorganization Committee

“You get what you pay for”, or “don’t criticize until you’ve walked in someone else’s shoes” are two quotes that have gone through my mind the last few weeks after being asked to chair a **committee to investigate our constitution and by-laws in light of the reduction of release time for our president.** It would have been very easy for me to decline this position. I feel very inadequate when it comes to our contract and the workings of our association. I will readily admit that I have never been as active as I should have been in our association, although very grateful for those that were. I have the most respect for our MPEA officers and negotiating teams who have put in countless hours on my behalf for the last 31 years, so when Rick asked me to chair this committee I decided it was about time for me to give back.

I am surrounded with a committee of experts. As we met last week to take on this task I realized more fully what our association, MPEA, does for us. I am convinced that we must make sure that our level of service remains the same even though the President’s position will only be half of the time that we are used to. We have become accustomed to seeing Rick in our buildings and having our needs and problems solved quickly. This has not always been the case, as we fought hard for release time for our president during the last 20 years.

As we looked at our Constitution and By-Laws this committee has already decided that we need to realign the duties of several MPEA officer positions. We believe that our needs for negotiations, communication, member representation and political action should continue to be given at the level we have become accustomed. BUT this can only be done well if the people doing the job can be adequately compensated. Would you be willing to do what must be done outside of your teaching day and for no compensation? I think not!

So, it will be the job of this committee to make some recommendations for the re-arrangement of jobs that must be done and how that will be compensated. Will we have more money than other years due to the presidential reduction? Do we need to use it for compensation and other obligations? These will be questions that this committee will research. We hope to have this done in a timely manner and will bring a recommendation to the Association at the Executive Board and General Membership meetings in the fall. If you have any questions or input that you would like to give please contact myself or one of the committee

members listed below. I am appreciative of the opportunity to serve.

Most sincerely,  
*Deb Fahr*

### Reorganization Committee Members

<u>Deb Fahr</u>	<u>Chairperson</u>
Diane Benford	MPATC
Al Bowerman	MPHS
Rosa Johnson	MPHS
Judy Mako	McGuire
Karen Turnbull	Ganiard
Jeff Natzel	Vowles
Todd Graham	Fancher
Kathy Ling	MPHS
Gail Mitchell	McGuire
Kathryn Hughes	Ganiard
Rick Trainor	Ex Officio

### From the desk of the President:

I want to wish everyone a restful and reenergizing summer. It’s been a while since we had one where we didn’t have to worry about bargaining, getting updates, and emergency Association meetings. For me, it’s the first summer as President where bargaining doesn’t take center stage. I am going to enjoy that.

To those who will be starting a new life outside of the classroom, I wish you all the best. We will miss you as colleagues, and will continue to remember that you are enjoying a better life - and we’ll be jealous!

In addition to the retirees, we have at least two colleagues who will not be returning in the fall:

**Julie Price** (Language Arts at West) has been granted an education leave and will be pursuing her Masters Degree at U of M.

**Shannon Rease** (Resource room at McGuire and Rosebush) is embarking on service in the Peace Corps.

We wish you both great experiences and look forward to your return at the end of your adventures.

*-Rick*

### MPHS Graduation Commencement

If you have never attended a commencement before, you have missed a real treat. High School teachers are encouraged to attend. However, elementary teachers who attend attest to the positive feeling of having also been a part of the education of these graduates. All teachers are welcome to attend this event. Traditionally flowers are given to every teacher in attendance. MPEA provides the flowers for elementary and West teachers.

Call Judy Mako at McGuire to RSVP by Friday, June 2, so that seating and flowers can be arranged.

## Upcoming Dates

<b>Sunday, June 4</b>	MPHS Commencement Ceremony 1:30 - Rose Arena All teachers are invited and encouraged to attend.
<b>Monday, June 12</b>	Committee of the Whole Meeting 6:30 - Kinney Conf. room
<b>Monday, June 26</b>	Board of Ed. Meeting 6:30 - City Hall
<b>Monday, July 10</b>	Committee of the Whole Meeting 6:30 - Kinney
<b>Aug. 1-3</b>	MEA Summer Leadership Conference Saginaw Valley State University
<b>Monday, August 14</b>	Committee of the Whole Meeting 6:30 - Kinney
<b>Monday, August 21</b>	Board of Ed. Meeting 6:30 - City Hall

### Correction:

In the April Chalkdust, **Rosa Johnson** and **Pam Pfau** should have been included in the list of nominees for the Saginaw Valley Teacher of the Year. **Robin Mower** should have been included in the list of teachers who organized the World Cultures Day.

## Contract Corner

In an effort to make it easier for members to search the Master Agreement, we have published the new version electronically in PDF format. This adds a powerful functionality using the search feature. So far, everyone who has seen the demonstration has been excited about how much easier it makes finding the right language in the agreement.

Try this short tutorial on the on-line version of our Master Agreement:

Go to: [www.mtpleasant.edzone.net/mpeacontract.pdf](http://www.mtpleasant.edzone.net/mpeacontract.pdf)

On the toolbar just above the page, you will see a button with a pair of binoculars and labeled "search".

Click on the binoculars.

This will open the search feature on the right side of the page.

Type the word "tenure" in the box at the top of the search window and click the Search button.

The search feature will highlight the first occurrence of tenure in the Master Agreement, and show a list on the right of every other occurrence with a bit of the context. Each time Tenure appears, it serves as a link.

Click on any "tenure" in the list and you will see that instance highlighted in the main window.

Try this tutorial with a colleague and see how powerful this tool can be. We think you will find it most useful.

## **Beware, the 65 Percent Solution! Funding scheme — more deception than solution**

*(Reprinted from the "Michigan Voice Today" E-Newsletter of 5/24/06)*

School funding is in the news daily in Michigan and elsewhere. One proposal that has surfaced in the funding debate is known as the "65 Percent Solution," promoted by a group called First Class Education. The proposal would require school districts to spend at least 65 percent of their operating budgets on "classroom instruction."

The problem is, their definition of "classroom" leads to absurd results. Spending on football programs, for example, would be allowed, but not on librarians, nurses, counselors, or the buses or bus drivers needed to get kids to school in the first place.

It's a gimmick that removes control of spending from local districts. MEA and NEA are among many state and national organizations opposing this growing threat to school funding.

Last June, state Rep. Jack Hoogendyk (R-Kalamazoo) introduced H.B. 4975, Michigan's version of the 65 percent scheme. The bill has been referred to the House Committee on Education and has seen no activity since last year. However, anything can happen in Lansing in an election year, so MEA members must be vigilant and know what the "65 Percent Solution" is — and how to stop it. To keep up to date on state issues affecting education check [www.mea.org](http://www.mea.org).