

the Lamplighter

Tribute to Superintendent Bill Ryan

On July 31st, Superintendent Bill Ryan is retiring after 34 years of dedicated service to the Acton and Acton-Boxborough schools. Bill grew up in Kansas and attended the University of Notre Dame on a four-year academic scholarship. An avid football fan to this day, Bill often goes out to Notre Dame for the big rivalry game with Boston College (often the only Notre Dame fan on the airplane)! Bill majored in history, and he was actively involved in history and politics. Upon graduating from Notre Dame, Bill and three friends came to Massachusetts in hopes of finding teaching jobs in the big city. They interviewed at Cathedral High School in Boston, and all four were hired. Bill taught history and theology at Cathedral High School for four years, and became the department chairperson.

Always interested in community service, Bill was then appointed Director of Community Education in Medford. Meanwhile, here at Acton-Boxborough, Superintendent Raymond Grey had a vision of the schools creating a program that would provide educational opportunities for all members of the community. In 1975, he hired the young Bill Ryan to start Acton-Boxborough's Community Ed. program. Bill talks fondly of his early years in Community Ed., where he could work creatively and collaboratively to build this new program.

In his days at Community Ed, Bill was already showing the qualities we see in him today. Superintendent Ray Grey described Bill: *"His greatest asset is his ability to promote constructive relationships, he works well with all types of people...he is very cost conscious, maintains strict budget controls, is creative and ingenious, and can make decisions... he shows genuine concern, respect and warmth for others."*

Capitalizing on these strengths, in 1981, Superintendent Bob Kessler expanded Bill's responsibilities to include the schools' finance department, promoting him to the position of Director of Business and Community Education for the next 11 years. Bill made significant contributions to the district's financial operations and budget preparation process. Bob Kessler described Bill in 1987 in the following way: *"Bill is among the best individuals with whom I have been associated. His contribution to this system is significant."*

In 1992-1993 Bill served as interim Superintendent, and in 1993 he became the Assistant Superintendent, working with Dr. Isa Zimmerman. He continued to maintain responsibility for all of the schools' financial systems. Isa also valued Bill's leadership in space planning amid enrollment increases and



his ability to develop relationships with town officials in Acton and Boxborough. She said, *"I have total faith in Bill's integrity. He not only knows his business, but he is honest, fair and thoughtful about his work."*

In 2000, the School Committees appointed Bill to the position of Superintendent of Schools. During his tenure, he has led the districts through three building projects, two overrides and several difficult budget years. Bill has hired all of the schools' current principals and administrators. Bill is a values-driven leader, and this is reflected in all that he does. Especially important to Bill is building positive working relationships. He listens and responds to citizens, and understands the needs of Acton and Boxborough.

We wish Bill the best in his retirement. He will enjoy more time with his wife, Christine, their four children and their families, including three grandchildren. And we're sure to see Bill on the golf course between travels, near and far! Thank you, Bill, for all you have done for a generation of Acton and Boxborough students and for our communities.



Acton/A-B Superintendents
(l. to. r.) Gary Baker, 1980; Bob Kessler, 1980-1992; Isa Zimmerman, 1993-2000; Bill Ryan, 2000-2009

Continuous Curriculum Improvement

In our efforts to ensure that the students in Acton and Acton-Boxborough are receiving a strong, challenging, and stimulating curriculum, the districts have instituted a repeating seven-year curriculum review cycle. Curriculum review is a process that provides for the continuous study and evaluation of each content area.

Continuous improvement is one of the core values of the Acton and Acton-Boxborough Schools. In order to ensure that our curriculum meets the highest of standards and to maintain Acton and Acton-Boxborough's expectations for an excellent school system, we established a formal curriculum review process in the fall of 2008. The process began with a focus on the visual arts curriculum, grades K-12. This year the review team members included teachers and administrators. Next year we will continue this process with year 2 of the visual arts review, as well as beginning the first year of the review of the K-12 English/Language Arts curriculum.

Curriculum reviews and the work of our curriculum departments ensure that the essential knowledge and standards at each grade level are identified and articulated, K-12. These standards at each grade level are aligned with national and state standards. At the state level, the standards are called the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Teachers are trained in the content and pedagogy necessary for successful implementation of the aligned curricula, based on current educational research around "best practices" in education. If necessary, core and ancillary resources will be purchased to implement the revised curriculum.

In order to be successful, we must dedicate time and resources to bring professionals from all levels together to pursue best practices and current trends in teaching and learning. A critical element of any curriculum review is the support necessary to prepare our teachers to present new content to students. This professional development provides staff with support and training to facilitate the best instruction, with all appropriate media.

The goal is to ensure that our teachers use current effective strategies to provide our students with the highest quality education. During the review process, the following questions are asked and investigated: Is the curriculum effective? If not, how does the curriculum need to be changed to meet desired results? What are its strengths and weaknesses? Does the curriculum meet its intended expectations for each constituency? Does the curriculum reflect current student needs and best practices?

In conclusion, we hope that you will find this helpful in understanding the status of the work accomplished by the committee in its first year.

For more information on the curriculum cycle and our efforts this year, please visit www.ab.mec.edu

Susan Horn
Assistant Superintendent

Global Awareness in the Acton and Acton-Boxborough Schools

How does the adaptive leader forge a district vision for a Global future? This was the question posed at the M.A.S.S Leadership Academy conference in the fall of 2007. This was also the beginning of the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District's quest for Global Awareness in its own schools. This Global Education conference was attended by teacher leaders of all disciplines. Speakers discussed the importance of incorporating appropriate experiences in the curriculum to prepare our students to be globally aware citizens. Panels, including students, talked about how their high school experiences with travel exchanges and working towards a global competency in high school prepared them for an increasingly flat world. At these conferences the seeds were planted for Acton's own Global Education initiative, which continued with another conference this past fall.

Many educators argue that schools and their curricula mirror society in the sense that the sources or engines of change within schools are based on forces or movements outside the educational system and that social change within the society provides the initiative for educational change. In recent years, this change has taken the form of rapid globalization of the American society. Therefore, the raising of global awareness in our schools has become the necessary next step in preparing our students for the world in which they must function. In schools, global awareness can begin with the cultivation of cross-cultural understanding, including the skill of perspective-taking. In addition, it will be necessary to study those problems and issues that cut across national boundaries as they impact the interconnectedness of various systems that comprise different cultures. In speaking of 21st century skills, the conversation is not complete without the inclusion of global awareness education.

Susan Horn, the district's Assistant Superintendent, has led the charge for Global Awareness in the district. Susan had the opportunity to travel to China last spring. During her trip she traveled the country and shared experiences in education with Chinese teachers and administrators. After returning from her trip, Susan enlisted another group of teachers to attend a second M.A.S.S leadership academy on Global Education. Those who attended listened intently to the keynote speaker, Dr. CanErbil, Assistant Professor of Economics at Brandeis University. He discussed the day's theme: Global is the New Local: Living and Learning in an Interconnected World.

From this fall's conference, the district's Global Awareness Steering Committee was formed, headed by the committee chair, Sinikka Gary. This new committee has met several times throughout the school

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year. Its members include Susan Horn, Sinikka Gary, Priscilla Kotyk, Allison Warren, Christopher Clinton, Deborah Bookis, Eileen Sullivan, Karen Sonner, Audra Kaplan, Wioletta Pawlowska and Claire Dix. This year, the Global Awareness Committee's charge was to discuss how the district personally defines Global Awareness, explore what currently goes on regarding global themes throughout the district and focus the district's direction for future growth. The committee found that many exciting opportunities already exist within the district to prepare our students with a global understanding. There are cultural festivals throughout the district celebrating the Chinese New Year and Divali. Global themes are embedded throughout the district's curriculum and travel exchanges and tours are exciting students to travel abroad and experience new cultures. The high school language department also recently included classes in Mandarin, and the junior high school is expected to include Mandarin classes this upcoming fall.

The committee has continued its work throughout the spring on developing a mission and action plan to help focus work in the coming years. It has defined Global Awareness as a process that leads to understanding of a rapidly transforming world. We want our students to become compassionate, effective, and knowledgeable citizens who will fully participate in a global society. In order to do this, our students must develop cross cultural understandings, realize the impact of global and regional resources, and recognize the interconnections of local and global decisions.

Another group of teachers and administrators is scheduled to attend a leadership conference on May 1st, entitled '21st Century Administrators Leading Globally Minded Districts.' We are excited about what new ideas this Global Awareness initiative will bring to the district. In the future we intend to educate our staff and students to be more globally aware citizens and look forward to expanding curriculum and opportunities for students, and professional development for staff.

In our schools we recognize the need to respond to the changing society in which we live as well as prepare our students for a society which is still evolving. Moreover, we must acknowledge that role as the very essence of curriculum development, leading the evolution of schooling in line with the changing society, and emphasizing the key role that curriculum development plays in education.

Susan Horn - Assistant Superintendent
Sinikka Gary - Global Awareness Chairperson

Acton-Boxborough Summer School

Elementary Level (entering grades 1 - 6)

Session I: 7/6-7/17; Session II: 7/20-7/31

Secondary Level (entering grades 7-12)

June 29 - August 7

To register or for more information:
<http://ab.mec.edu/summerschool>

This portion of the Lamplighter is offered in recognition of 17 Acton and Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools' staff members who are retiring this school year. The tributes were written by staff members with whom they have worked. Together these retirees have given 388 years of service and contributions far beyond measure. We salute them!

FRANCES BITTEKER – Gates, Grade 1

The Gates staff has been happily blessed to work along side Fran Bitterer for the past 24 years. Fran began her career at St. Joseph's in Leicester, MA, teaching 43 fourth graders. She then moved to Laurel, Maryland where she taught third grade for four years. After taking some time off to start her family, Fran moved to Acton with her husband, Ray, and two daughters, Jan and Sandy. While her daughters attended Gates, Fran began volunteering and, later on, substituting in the classrooms. She became a permanent member of the faculty in 1985 when she took over the AM and PM sessions in kindergarten. Throughout her career at Gates School, Fran has worn many teaching hats. From seven years in kindergarten, Fran moved on to first grade, third grade, 1-2 split and finally settled back in first. She has enjoyed working over the past 30 years with many wonderful children, with their supportive families and with great co-workers. Upon retiring, Fran looks forward to spending more time with family and friends (especially her adorable grandson, Tyler), traveling, hobbies, reading and continuing to enjoy life. We here at Gates will miss her cheerful, sunny disposition, her positive outlook on even the most difficult of situations, her calm, cool demeanor and, most of all, seeing her every day. We hope she'll come to visit often (and maybe even sub once in a while!) Your iced coffee will be ready and waiting, Fran!

MARY ANN BRANDT – Merriam, Grade 6

Mary Ann Brandt began teaching at Merriam School in 1993, when there were 200+ students attending. And though the school has changed in a variety of ways - it has more than doubled in size, we moved to a new building, and there are many new staff and new families attending Merriam – Mary Ann has remained a constant. What are the things we have come to count on from Mary Ann over these past 16 years? Drama, for one. Mary Ann somehow could take a group of sixth graders and transform them into the cast of Hamlet or Julius Caesar – and then direct them to perform in ways they never thought imaginable. Most of those 16 years the staff would also put on a play for the children, a play that was adapted and directed by Mary Ann. We'd look out and see all of the smiling faces in the audience as we all made fools of ourselves, knowing that it was for a great cause, made possible by

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Tributes to Our Retiring Staff..

Mary Ann. She embraced the project-based philosophy at Merriam from the outset, and has passed it along to all of her colleagues over the years. She is an organizer, and loves to integrate curriculum and help students find what they are passionate about in their learning. When you watch her teach, you realize how much she knows about so many topics, and how she embodies the philosophy that “enthusiasm for learning is contagious.” Mary Ann has lived by the Merriam core values – respect, persistence, and risk-taking – and has taught those values to her students. In particular, Mary Ann is a risk-taker. She has shown all of her colleagues and students how to “push the envelope.” If you didn’t know Mary Ann and saw her in action, you might think that when she’s teaching, she says and does whatever enters her mind at any given moment – because she is so entertaining. Though she is indeed spontaneous at times, she also cares very deeply and thinks very carefully about her craft. And she enjoys helping all of us learn not to take ourselves quite so seriously. The most reserved children blossom in Mary Ann’s class, because they see that it’s OK to be yourself. And the staff who have worked with Mary Ann have received a similar message: dare to have fun and learn and create in all of the ways you can imagine. Life is short; have a blast while you can. Those of us who have been blessed to work with Mary Ann always smile when we see her. A gem of some sort awaits us when she opens her mouth, and it will often make us laugh. But what we will miss most are her sensitivity and compassion; she is someone who has aimed to “make a difference” in the lives of everyone she comes into contact with, and she has truly succeeded. Thank you, Mary Ann, for making a difference in all of our lives for these past 16 years.

MAUREEN BRUSIE – Conant, Grade 2

If there ever was a teacher with a Red Sox attitude, a “get right in there, step up to the plate, and play ball” attitude, it would be Maureen Brusie! During her career in education, she has been a dedicated, enthusiastic, fun-loving teacher. When children enter her classroom, they sense that they will be in the hands of a kind and caring person. Maureen’s teaching career has included elementary schools in Hawaii, Belmont, and Acton where she taught Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and second grade. Her classrooms have always had a sense of order with inviting, interesting materials relevant to the latest lesson, on bulletin boards and table displays. She manages to create a warm, welcoming environment where kids can feel comfortable, and are motivated to learn. Setting high academic standards for her class has always been an important goal for Maureen. She uses enthusiasm and a gentle sense of humor to motivate and inspire her “clients” as she sometimes fondly calls her students. She is a person who expects the best from all of the members of her class and celebrates their different talents. Being a teacher who likes to enhance learning by making connections to

what is familiar, Mrs. Brusie’s students watch birds come to the feeders she hangs outside her windows, make hot fudge, (special recipe), and cook cranberry sauce. They also enjoy, “Mystery Readers” and cheering for the Red Sox! Children with older siblings, who were in Maureen’s class, know to expect these special traditions! Maureen also helps make Conant staff events special with her homey touches. Flowers in the teacher’s room, homemade blueberry muffins, and her gracious presentations make everyone feel welcome. She is the kind of person who “writes the notes and brings the baskets” to those in need. Maureen has been a teacher liaison at Conant PTO meetings, a member of Conant School Council, and served on Acton Education Association committees. After retirement, with more free time, Maureen will surely continue to teach, support, and nurture someone. It’s just the way she is. We wish her the best for a full, happy, and satisfying new chapter in her life.

JUDY CLARK – R.J. Grey Junior High, Social Studies

For the past 20 years, Judy has been a conscientious and dedicated member of our Social Studies Department at R.J. Grey. Judy came to R.J. Grey in 1989 with an unusually wide range of experience. In the 70’s, she taught eighth grade social studies, seventh grade English grammar and eleventh grade American literature in Northfield, MA. Following that, Judy taught U.S. and World History, and Urban Studies for four years at Marshfield High School in Marshfield, MA. Judy’s most extraordinary experience was from 1975 to 1977, when she taught U.S. History, Middle East History, Historical Research and English grammar at the Brunswick High School in Australia. In addition, she worked for the State Dept. of Education for one year prior to her teaching. This experience has given Judy the unique perspective she has maintained throughout her years at R.J. Grey. Judy is one of the few teachers who has taught both seventh and eighth grade social studies. Her understanding of seventh and eighth graders, as well as the seventh and eighth grade curriculum, has helped make her a distinctive voice during the many curriculum R&D’s in which she participated. Judy is well known and appreciated for her ability to cut through the discussion over curriculum objective revisions so as to reach a conclusion more quickly and effectively. Always a professional, she manages to do this in a consistently strong, fair and respectful manner. Through the countless workshops she participated in over the years and the many activities and projects she has created and recreated, Judy has worked hard to foster a safe and respectful community for her students and help them become more aware of issues of justice. With an open mind and keen awareness of diverse learning styles, Judy never stopped looking to improve her lessons. Over the years, Judy was a yearbook advisor, NELMS Committee member, Advisor and Advisee Committee member, and a supportive and patient mentor to both Marc Lewis and

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Kellie Carter. An avid traveler of the world and life-long learner, Judy has been to India, Thailand and recently to Ireland. She is looking forward to touring the South this coming fall to attend a workshop run by Jimmy Carter. We will all miss Judy and wish her many happy years of retirement.

SHERRIE FEINBERG – Gates, Grade 4

In 1975, after graduating from Boston University with a Master's in Education, Sherrie began her teaching career. She served as the Reading Coordinator for the Groton-Dunstable schools from 1975-1978. In 1978, she moved on to the Gates School in Acton, where she has been ever since. Sherrie has spent her years at Gates mainly teaching 4th grade. In the 1990's, she piloted a combination class for grades 3 and 4 and taught this combination for several years. Her strength in reading instruction served her well and she continued to attend the Massachusetts Reading Association conferences for many years. Sherrie has a special talent that enables her to get to the heart of each student. She differentiated instruction before "differentiation" was a buzzword. She has always been innovative and interested in best teaching practices. Her goal is to help each student rise to his/her highest potential. Sherrie has always been willing to go the extra yard. Her teaching style has drawn accolades from the staff, the parents, and the administration. She has always been committed to integrating the latest technology into her daily teaching. Sherrie has developed a strong reputation as a tutor and has worked with dozens of children both during the school year and throughout each summer. She is generous with her students and colleagues alike. Sherrie has served on many committees and worked on many special projects during her career. With several of her colleagues, she started the Gates School Talent Show in the 1980's. For many years, Sherrie was the guiding force behind this popular event. She spent countless hours on special auditions and rehearsals, and the end result was a great show and many happy children and proud parents. Always a giving person, Sherrie plans to continue working with children in the future. But first, she hopes to sit on the beach and finish reading at least one book from cover to cover! She also looks forward to spending time with her family, supporting their dreams.

JUDY HAUSE – Conant, Literacy Specialist

Judy Hause is retiring from her position as the Literacy Specialist at the Luther Conant Elementary School, but Judy is much more than that. She is the 'heart and soul' of Conant School. If you want to know information about any reading or writing program, MCAS test, Conant School policy, professional development opportunity, or if you have a question about any of the over 500 students, attending the school, Judy will be able to inform you quickly and accurately. Judy is not only the consummate professional educator; she is a person who has been an

inspirational mentor to so many staff members of the Conant School. Judy began her career as a reading teacher and saw her position grow and develop into much more. Just like a chameleon, Judy has changed with the times and she has always done so with a cheerful outlook. Never one to complain about having to help any of her colleagues, Judy is available at a moment's notice to cover a classroom when necessary, or share her expertise. Throughout her years at Conant, Judy has overseen most of the curriculum innovation, and has provided input about progress report changes. Judy provides the staff with the extra resources they need for their programs. She writes grants, supervises MCAS testing, plans professional development, and also teaches children. How does she do it all so well? Judy is a veritable bundle of energy. Judy has also played an active role in the AEA and, as treasurer, she is involved with Executive Board meetings, as well as her true love, planning parties. In her next life, Judy may want to consider a new career as an Event Planner. When her colleagues are in need of nourishment, Judy supplies a chocolate or snack fix with goodies from an incredibly organized closet. Judy has enjoyed helping to orchestrate all of the bridal and baby showers, and the retirement parties that occur with regularity at Conant School. Also, along with her dear friend, Maureen Brusie, Judy contributes to the planning of the all-staff 20-Year Chair Ceremony and annual retirement celebrations for the system. Her warmth and generosity mean that you will never be hungry or lacking support, as Judy has been the "sunshine lady" of the Conant School. We bid our cherished friend a fond farewell, and wish her much happiness as she embarks on the next phase of her life.

BUNNY LAWTON – Assistant to the Superintendent/ School Committee Secretary

Chocolate . . . Peppermint ice cream . . . bell ringing . . . bird watching . . . stacks of colored paper. For anyone who knows Bunny Lawton, mentioning these words will automatically bring her to mind, and the list could be much longer. Bunny, who grew up, went to school [with a diversion to Wells College in New York], and worked in Pennsylvania, moved here with her family in 1973. She began her association with the local schools in the time-honored way – volunteering in an elementary school library. In 1981, she was hired as a media assistant, working with Jill Colpak in the high school library. When an opening developed in the central office in 1987, she became the Assistant to Mac Reid, Director of Personnel at the time. Just over ten years were spent in the old central office. The room where Bunny worked was shared with two others – a very tight fit, but everyone worked well together and became friends. Over those years, Bunny worked as Assistant to Mac Reid, to Isa Zimmerman (former Superintendent), and to Bill Ryan. All of them benefited from her help, as have the rest of us who have

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worked with her. Retirement is enticing. Bunny's children (and new grandson), her mother, her sister's family, and many friends all live outside the area, so travel is sure to figure prominently in the future. In addition, there is her enjoyment of many other activities, particularly gathering with friends, taking walks, kayaking, watching sports at school, involvement in her church. For so many reasons, our office community will be affected not only by a change in personnel, but also by the absence of Bunny and her many wonderful attributes.

JOE MARASHIO – ABRHS, Physical Education

Joe Marashio, a native of Woburn, Massachusetts, graduated from the University of Connecticut where he majored in Physical Education and played varsity ice hockey. Continuing his education, he received a Masters of Education from Salem State and a Certificate in Advanced Graduate Studies from Boston State College. Joe has spent the past 35 years as an educator, beginning his teaching at Acton-Boxborough Regional High School in 1983. As a high school physical education and health teacher, he is known to be a dedicated, fair and compassionate teacher. With high expectations for his students, his focus has always been on the development of lifelong skills in both health and physical fitness. With a deep commitment to the value of CPR and First Aid, he has certified thousands of students, faculty and community members. In addition to his significant teaching accomplishments over the years, Joe also started the peer leadership program, was an advisor for Students against Drunk Driving, a class advisor and a very successful coach. Joe coached the boys varsity hockey team from 1983 to 1999. During that time his teams had 227 wins and 93 losses and 25 ties, including a 50 game unbeaten streak in the Dual County league from 1985 to 1991. If you walk into the high school gym, you will witness the Marashio legacy on banners hung high. His teams have won eight DCL Titles, two MVC/DCL Titles and appeared in two Super 8 tournaments. Joe has been recognized by many state organizations as an outstanding hockey coach, having received numerous Coach of the Year Awards and Distinguished Service Awards. To top it all off, Joe was recently inducted into the Acton-Boxborough Athletic Hall of Fame on May 2nd, 2009. His fondest memories at AB were coaching his sons, Joe and Mark, and watching his daughter, Julie, compete in three varsity sports. Joe resides in Wayland with his wife Ellen. However, during his retirement they will most likely be found strolling on the sands of Hampton Beach, New Hampshire.

PATRICIA METCALF – McCarthy-Towne, Grade 1

When Pat came to McCarthy-Towne in 1974, she brought an innovative, exciting approach to teaching Physical Education (PE). In her gym, students played cooperative games, learning to work together for the success of the group. She developed the first Project

Adventure course and was instrumental in bringing this resource to the district. She also developed gymnastics as an integral part of the PE program. Students loved Pat and PE. Her superb planning and organizational skills and her positive, can-do attitude inspired a generation of gymnasts and made Physical Education a front and center program at McCarthy-Towne. After 19 years and about 6,500 PE students, Pat brought her exceptional group management skills to the classroom: first in kindergarten, then second, and finally, for the last nine years, in first grade. Pat's classroom is a beehive of activity. She masterfully creates small group activities that integrate language arts, math, science and social studies into an in-depth area of study. Pat is passionate about her units and as a result students are totally engaged and excited. Pat is totally devoted to art integration. She has committed endless hours to the understanding of how students learn and deepen their understanding of curriculum through art. Her display of student work is museum quality.

Pat is committed to education. She ensures that each child is successful and competent and she builds a community where each child belongs. For years as a PE teacher she partnered with the 6th grades and attended their outdoor education camping program at Camp Sargent. Her gymnastic shows were a highlight of the school year. Pat has mentored new teachers and for decades has graciously shared her materials, insights and knowledge about her work.

For Pat, education is a family affair. Her children grew up at McCarthy-Towne and graduated from AB. Her husband will undoubtedly win "most supportive spouse" for all his help in the classroom and all the projects he's undertaken over the years.

Pat's presence will be greatly missed but, for the thousands of students she's inspired, her presence will always be felt.

LYNN MULROONEY – APS Pupil Serv. Coordinator

Supportive, organized, high-energy, articulate....these are just a few of the positive attributes that administrators, staff, and parents use to describe Lynn Mulrooney, Pupil Services Coordinator for the Acton Public Schools.

While Lynn has had an extraordinary professional journey, she chose Acton to finish her career. The District has been lucky to have had Lynn for the past three years - as an advocate for students, as a colleague of high repute, as an icon of academic excellence.

To her colleagues, Lynn is a creative, insightful, and supportive colleague who created an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect from teachers to parents. While Lynn's days are never-ending, she exudes grace under pressure. Imagine that she studied for her master's degree while pregnant with her second child, and delivered her thesis one week before delivery (now that is cutting it close!) -- all while working tirelessly on behalf of students, teachers and parents.

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Tributes to Our Retiring Staff...

As Coordinator, Lynn guided her department through a period of great changes encompassing new teachers, new programs, new standards for assessment, while always advocating for children by closely working with her department and the building principals. She is known for her willingness to try new things - strategies, programs - always with a smile.

Lynn will always be remembered for her first and final concern - what is best for her students. Her goal is always to provide every student with an environment where he/she can be successful and encouraged to make progress. She is a trainer of trainers; she is a people person.

The Acton and Acton-Boxborough school communities wish Lynn all the best as she starts a new stage in her life. Her retirement is just a beginning. She has yet to write that chapter with the same vigor she has today! We will miss her energy, her intellect, her love of life with all its joys and challenges. We will miss her leadership, her sense of fun, her commitment to teaching, and yes, even her jokes! The best to you, today and every day.

DIANE NEFF – ABRHS, Cafeteria Staff

Diane, a former elementary school teacher, started her second career at the AB High School on September 6, 1978. During this time, she cashiered and cooked lunches for many students and staff. Diane is extremely reliable. She will be missed by all of her co-workers. Corinne Merkh, former High School cafeteria manager, said how much fun they had working together and that Corinne became the sister that Diane never had. Now that she will have more free time, she will be able to enjoy her passion of knitting. Diane, thank you for all of your hard work and dedication during these 31 years. You have fed many children, which is an important link to learning at school.

JANET RAY – AB Community Education Teacher

Janet began her career in Acton as a second grade teacher at McCarthy-Towne School from 1966-1970. She then raised her two daughters, and began teaching in the A-B Community Education Preschool in 1980. She joined the Extended Day program in 1986, and has been teaching at both programs since then. Janet is a talented artist and gardener and has brought her love of art and the natural world to our programs -- many children have been introduced to the marvels of nature through Janet's teaching! Janet will remain busy spending time with her four grandchildren, as well as remaining active in our Preschool program. Her travel plans, which are intertwined with her love of nature, include Australia and Alaska. She'll continue her beautiful gardening, spend more time at her cottage in Maine, and she has said she might even find time to read and relax! Her dedication and professionalism have enriched the lives of those she has taught, and the teachers she has worked with. We will miss Janet and all that she has brought to our school system over the many years that she has been here, and wish her the

very best as she turns the page to the next chapter.

BILL RYAN – Superintendent of Schools (see page 1)

STEVE SOKOLOWSKI - Custodian

Steve Sokolowski started working as a part-time custodian in September of 1991 and then went into a full-time position shortly thereafter. His custodial duties took him through the R.J. Grey Junior High School, the Acton-Boxborough Regional High School, later becoming the Lead Custodian at the Merriam Elementary School. Many years later, the McCarthy-Towne and Merriam Schools each moved under one roof, presently named the Parker Damon Building. After relocating, the old Merriam School was renamed the Merriam Administration Building where Steve remained until his recent retirement. Steve will always be remembered for his quick wit and sense of humor. He continues to live in Maynard with his extended family and enjoys many activities, one of which is playing horseshoes on a regular basis. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Steve on a well-deserved retirement and thank him for the many years of service he gave to both the Acton Public and Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools. From all of us, we wish him much happiness in all his future endeavors.

ROBERT SPECIAN – R.J. Grey Music Teacher

After 17 years teaching music and serving as high school and junior high school choral director in the Acton-Boxborough Schools, Robert Specian is retiring. Bob, as he is known to all, has been a dedicated and caring music educator since 1970, after earning his degree in Music Education from Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. Prior to his hiring in the Acton-Boxborough Schools, Bob held a variety of positions as music teacher. His early teaching career included time with the Ayer Jr./Sr. High School, Tahanto Regional High School, The Nock Middle school in Newburyport, Westboro Junior High School and Algonquin Regional High School. In 1986, Bob decided to bring his teaching skills to another shore...he signed on to teach for two years at the American Community School in Athens, Greece. Upon his return, Bob taught in the North Andover Public School for three years until he was sadly RIF-ed due to budget cuts. He pressed on and was able to continue working two part-time positions with the Hopkinton Jr./Sr. High School and the Immaculate Conception School in Marlboro. In 1992, Bob was hired by the Acton-Boxborough Schools. Since then he has served our district faithfully. His choruses have consistently grown in numbers and their performance level has been outstanding. In 2007, Bob's grade 8 chorus earned a Platinum Medal for their superior performance at the Great East Music Festival. In a recent teacher evaluation Bob's supervisor wrote, "Mr. Specian is a master teacher with the ability to make connections to

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Tributes to Our Retiring Staff...

kids and share his love of music with them. He is always fair, thoughtful, and professional in dealing with students, parents and staff. "Acton-Boxborough is a better place with Mr. Specian teaching in it." This is Bob Specian in a nutshell. We will miss his unique outlook on life, his insight into how to best deal with any situation and even his trademark beret. We wish Bob all the best as he and his wonderful wife, Donna, and their two children, Vasha and Natasha, move into what will surely be an exciting next phase of his life.

RENEE VOORHEES – ABRHS Librarian

Renee Voorhees has a talent for interacting with students, teachers and administrators to guarantee that the ABRHS library is a safe space where anyone can feel comfortable researching, studying and learning. Renee's first task when she was hired in 2004 was to open a brand new library after the high school building project. She and her staff did such an incredible job that hundreds and hundreds of students flock to the library every day! The sheer number of users does not seem to bother Renee, as she knows just about every student by name, and she treats each of them with the utmost respect. Renee will most certainly be missed by our teachers who visit the library often with their classes. They come for help with a class project, they come to find the latest research on an area of interest, or they come to check out an 'easy read' before a school vacation. Renee Voorhees always has a kind word and a smile for anyone who enters her library. As the faculty advisor to the student group known as VOICE (Valuing Others in an Inclusive Caring Environment), Renee has been instrumental in supporting our students celebrate identity, diversity and acceptance. As a member of the Academic Integrity Committee, Renee proves that she has never strayed far from her role as a teacher, as she constantly teaches students about the importance of submitting their own high-quality work. Always a true professional and friend to many, Renee will be sorely missed by every member of the ABRHS community. Her positive attitude, her witty sense of humor, her ability to think creatively and her hard work will be difficult to replace. As Renee moves on from AB into retirement, we wish her the very best. She will surely be missed by all of us.

SUSAN ZUBATKIN – Gates Special Ed. Assistant

Susan Zubatkin began her career as a Special Education assistant at the Gates School in 1990. She took a leave of absence from teaching in 1999, only to return in 2007 to continue working as a Special Education inclusion assistant. For the past two years, she has

worked in second and third grade classrooms, and the teachers in those classrooms have come to rely heavily on Susan's insight, patience, and wonderful sense of humor. That, as well as her quiet and gentle manner has allowed her students to achieve great success in the classroom. In addition to teaching, Susan is a devoted wife to Alan, and mother to Jessie and Andrew. She has many interests, such as traveling with her family and painting. She even recently debuted on a web site demonstrating her talents in the kitchen, and achieved great critical acclaim! Susan will be greatly missed at the Gates School. We will look for her works of art to be displayed in museums or perhaps she will be the next Rachel Ray. With Susan, anything is possible!



Welcome to Dr. Stephen E. Mills

The School Committees have appointed Dr. Stephen Mills as the new Superintendent of the Acton and Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools, effective August 3, 2009.

Dr. Mills has been the Deputy Superintendent of the Worcester Public Schools for the past six years. Prior to that, he served as Principal of the Junior/Senior High School in Millbury, MA, and worked from 1978-1993 in the Shrewsbury Public Schools in several capacities - as Director of Alternative Programs, Director of Special Education/Pupil Personnel Services, and a High School Adjustment Counselor.

Dr. Mills received his B.A. from UMass-Amherst, his M.S.W. from Boston University, and his Ed.D. from UMass-Amherst.

We enthusiastically welcome Dr. Mills to the Acton and Acton-Boxborough communities!



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