

The Newspaper of Local 1776
The Association of Catholic Teachers

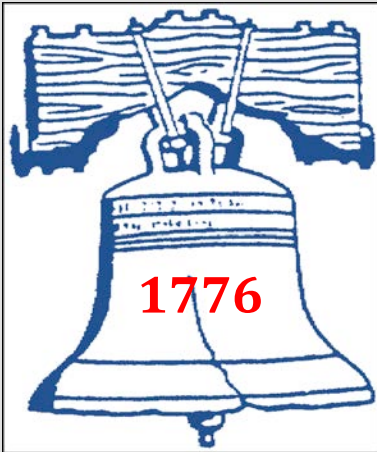
THE

SPIRIT

OF

'76

50+ Years Strong
1966-2016



3070 BRISTOL PIKE, BLDG. 2, SUITE 101, BENSALEM, PA 19020- 215-568-4175 – VOLUME XXXXIII-NO.7
Fax 215-568-8270 – email (act@act1776.com) - website (www.act1776.com) MARCH 2023



From the President's Desk

A Negotiations Update

Under the provisions of the Negotiations Memorandum of Understanding, the Association and System Teams have been meeting throughout the months of February and March. The hope is that a new Labor-Management Agreement will be negotiated and a tentative agreement reached by March 31st. If the Teams are unable to come to agreement by that date, negotiations will continue throughout the months of April and May. Both Teams are working very hard to complete contract talks so that a new Labor-Management Agreement can be ratified before the end of the school year.

As with every negotiations, the vote to accept or reject the Contract that the Association and the School System negotiate will be entirely up to you. You will decide

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FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

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whether or not the terms of the new Agreement make both your work and home lives better. Please remember, YOU are the Union. Therefore, whenever a General Membership Meeting is scheduled to vote on the provisions of the new contract, it is crucial that you attend. By Constitution, you must be present in order to vote on your future salary, benefits and working conditions.

Please keep both Negotiating Teams in your prayers as we work to bring you a contract that you will be able to ratify.

Irene

SENIORITY LISTS POSTED

(for school only)

Article V, Section 1b states “On or before April 1 of each school year, the Secondary School System shall supply to the Association and shall post in each school a complete listing of all full-time teachers in that school including those on approved leaves of absence arranged according to school seniority.” “Teachers shall have until **May 1** to call attention in writing to errors or file grievances with the local school administration concerning their positions on the seniority list.

VOLUNTARY TRANSFER, TEACHER SWAP, TEMPORARY TRANSFER APPLICATIONS

Teachers interested in applying for a voluntary transfer, teacher swap, or temporary transfer should file their application **no later than April 3, 2023**.

Applications were posted in the schools on March 1, 2023.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The following Legislative Report was submitted by ACT Legislative Representative, John Corrigan, at the ACT December Executive Board Meeting held via zoom on February 16, 2023.

1. PA General Assembly Update

PA Senate: The Republican candidate, Lynda Schlegel Culver, won the special election for the 27th PA Senate district on January 31, 2023. The party composition for the 2023-2025 term is 28 R seats to 22 D seats.

PA House: Democratic candidates won the three special elections for House seats in Allegheny County around Pittsburgh (House Districts 32, 34, 35) on February 7, 2023. The resulting party composition after the special election is 102 D seats to 101 R seats.

Constitutional Amendment: It has been reported that House Speaker, Mark Rozzi, plans to schedule a vote on the proposed constitutional amendment for victims of abuse when the House reconvenes on Tuesday, February 21, 2023. This is at odds with the earlier reported deadline for action in January. The Senate passed the amendment in January.

School Funding System Found Unconstitutional: On February 7, 2023, Commonwealth Court President Judge, Renee Cohn Jubilier, ruled the State's current school funding model to be unconstitutional. Six school districts first filed the lawsuit in 2014. The deadline to appeal to the PA Supreme Court is March 9th. The implications for the decision upon Catholic schools is currently unclear.

2. Iowa School Choice Legislation:

Iowa Catholic school students will soon get nearly \$7600 per year after Iowa Governor, Kim Reynolds, signed into law The Students First Act "school choice" legislation on January 24th. This Act allows parents to receive state funds to help pay for private schools. The law creates an Education Savings Account program with eligibility standards tied to the federal poverty levels.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

In conjunction with **National Women In Leadership Month**, which honors women who have successfully challenged the role of women in both business and the paid labor force, the **Association of Catholic Teachers**, along with the **Secondary School System of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia**, and **Holy Family University** sponsored a **Women in Leadership Conference** for female students attending Catholic high schools in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.



The **Women in Leadership Conference** is a program focused on inspiring young women to follow their dreams and aspirations. This year the Conference was held on **March 10, 2023**. The Keynote Speaker was **Kathryn Ott Lovell**, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, City of Philadelphia. Students attending the Conference got to hear stories of real life challenges and successes in the workforce experienced by former Catholic school graduates, **Lynn Tarini**, Communications Director, Bristol Myers Squibb, **Elizabeth A. Ward**, Associate Professor, Drexel University, College of Nursing and Health Professions, **Jacqueline Giuffrida**, Manager, Hospital Services, Gift of Life Donor Program, **Jayda Pugliese**, Principal, Philadelphia, PA, Global STEM and Leadership Trainer, and **Representative Martina White**, Pennsylvania State Representative, 170th District.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE



Pictured above: Archdiocese of Philadelphia Superintendent of Schools, Brooke Cortese Tesche (L), Association of Catholic Teachers President, Irene Tori (C), and Kathryn Ott Lovell, (R), Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, City of Philadelphia.



NOTICE OF ELECTION

By ACT Constitution, the 4 Area Vice Presidents are to be elected in May of odd numbered years by the active membership of their area.

ELIGIBLE MEMBERS WHO WISH TO RUN FOR OFFICE SHALL FILE A PETITION WITH THE NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE BY April 10th AND IT SHALL BEAR THE SIGNATURES OF **TWENTY-FIVE (25) REGULAR MEMBERS AND THEIR SCHOOL DESIGNATIONS.**

THESE PETITIONS SHALL STATE:

“I (NAME OF CANDIDATE) WISH TO RUN FOR THE OFFICE OF (NAME OF AREA) AREA VICE PRESIDENT, AND WILL SERVE IN THAT OFFICE IF ELECTED.”

The areas and schools each represents are as follows:

NORTHEAST: Conwell-Egan, Father Judge, Saint Hubert and Archbishop Ryan

NORTHWEST: Lansdale Catholic, Archbishop Wood, and Pope John Paul II

CENTRAL: Little Flower, Saints John Neumann and Maria Goretti, Roman Catholic and West Catholic

SOUTHWEST: Monsignor Bonner-Archbishop Prendergast, Archbishop Carroll, Cardinal O’Hara and Bishop Shanahan

IN THE EVENT THAT NO PETITIONS ARE RECEIVED FOR NOMINATIONS TO A PARTICULAR OFFICE BY APRIL 10, ONLY IN THIS EVENT SHALL THE NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE MAKE ANY NOMINATIONS. IN THIS EVENT THEY SHALL NOMINATE AT LEAST TWO (2) ELIGIBLE MEMBERS FOR THE SPECIFIC OFFICE(S) BY APRIL 16.

BALLOTS MUST BE SENT OUT NO LATER THAN MAY 1 AND MUST BE RETURNED NO LATER THAN MAY 15, 2023.

ANY MEMBER WHO WISHES TO HAVE HIS OR HER NAME PLACED IN NOMINATION MUST USE THE ABOVE PETITION AND MUST **RETURN THE PETITION WITH THE SIGNATURES OF 25 REGULAR MEMBERS BY April 10, 2023.**

ADDRESS ALL PETITIONS TO:

**NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
C/O ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC TEACHERS
3070 BRISTOL PIKE, BUILDING 2, SUITE 101
BENSALEM, PA 19020**

ACT WEBSITE

All teachers are asked to logon to the ACT Website (www.act1776.com) and verify your personal information. It is critical that we have your current information and that it is accurate. It is important that we have a **PERSONAL** email address for you, since Executive Board Minutes, Newsletters, and other pertinent information will be sent via email. We cannot and will not send email to a school email address.

Every teacher was provided with a username and password for the ACT Website. (New teachers will receive their logon information in an email.) If you do not have this information, please contact Ginny at the ACT Office at 215-568-4175 or email her at ginny@act1776.com and she can provide this information to you. To update your personal information, logon to the ACT Website and, in the upper right-hand corner of the homepage, click on member login. Type in your username and password and then verify the information on file. Any changes made will be sent to the ACT Office automatically.

2022 TAX INFORMATION

Union Dues for 2022

January 2022 – June 2022 = \$384.54
(For those who resigned or retired as of June 2022)

January 2022 – December 2022 = \$621.18

September 2022 – December 2022 = \$236.64
(For new teachers who started in September 2022)

FSA REMINDER

If you were a participant in the 2022 FSA Program, please remember that all monies in your account should have been exhausted by December 31, 2022. You have 90 days after the close of the calendar year in which to submit eligible expenses for 2022. All eligible expenses for 2022 must be submitted by March 30, 2023.

United Concordia Dental Plan

Please be aware that if you are making changes to your dental coverage such as adding or deleting dependents, you must complete a [United Concordia Enrollment/Change Form](#) and return it to the ACT Office. The form can be found on the ACT Website at www.act1776.com. The form can be returned via email to ginny@act1776.com or faxed to Ginny's attention at 215-568-8270. Forms must be completed and returned within 30 days of the event. (marriage, birth, etc.)

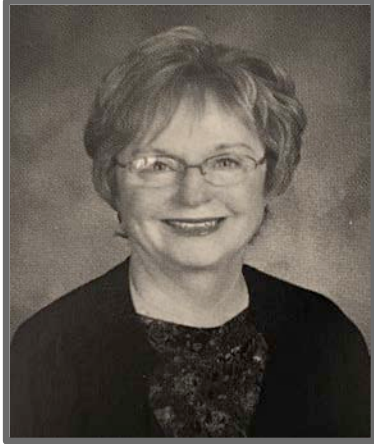
Happy Retirement!

The Association of Catholic Teachers congratulates [Carl Tori](#) on his retirement from the Secondary School System. Carl taught for [forty-six](#) years at Archbishop Ryan High School. Best wishes for a happy and healthy retirement, Carl!

ACT CONTACT INFORMATION

ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC TEACHERS
3070 BRISTOL PIKE
BUILDING 2, SUITE 101
BENSALEM, PA 19020
215-568-4175
Website: www.act1776.com
Email: act@act1776.com

IN MEMORIAM



PATRICIA BENNER

October 11, 1946 – February 21, 2023

A faith-filled Catholic; devoted teacher; esteemed colleague; caring friend; lover of theater, literature and all things pertaining to the English Language, Pat Benner spent 42 years influencing thousands of Philadelphia high school students at Cardinal Dougherty and Archbishop Ryan. Pat is survived by her husband of 40 years, Bill, and her Archbishop Ryan High School graduate son, Bud, his wife Lauren, and her two precious grandsons, Wesley and Owen.

Here are some remembrances from people who worked with Pat during her career.

When my oldest daughter was in kindergarten, I used to walk her over in the morning to St. Martha from Ryan. One morning, Pat shared with me that, from her car, she watched us walk to St. Martha. Pat then gave me advice that has always remained with me. She said to walk slowly because these precious moments pass too quickly. Pat was so right. Now my daughter is 24, an English teacher, and I always share Pat's poignant, spot-on advice with others. Thank you, Pat, for a life well lived and may you rest eternally in the arms of our Lord.

*Jim Meredith
Former Archbishop Ryan Principal*

I met Pat when I was hired as a first-year teacher at Archbishop Ryan. I was only 21 at the time and quite green. My roster included track three juniors and one class in particular, my eighth period, was giving me some early gray hairs. Pat knew I was getting frustrated and she offered to come in to see how I could improve. It was not evaluative but, as one always ahead of her time, she was "coaching!" She noted where I could get better and offered me some advice that I have been using in my class and with our teachers ever since: "take care of the little things and they will often take care of the bigger things." She saw kids coming in with jackets, a school bag, perhaps after the bell, and correctly told me that when those items were not addressed, the kids quickly learned what was and what was not important.

She helped me grow as a teacher in many ways and I was thankful that in time we would work together again. After she retired, she came to work in the Academic Affairs Office when I was Assistant Principal. As a final note, Pat was incredibly honest. After retirement, Pat still received our faculty newsletter and would read it each Sunday. Occasionally, on Sunday nights, she would call me to say she saw a few pictures of me in the newsletter and "I needed to be careful not to put any more weight back on and to be sure to take care of myself." Honest but caring. I will miss those calls and miss talking to Pat.

*Joe McFadden, Principal
Archbishop Ryan High School*

IN MEMORIAM . . .

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As English Department Head, Pat appreciated the differences in each of us and encouraged our unique approaches in the classroom. As a friend, she showed compassion, honesty, and when needed, a little bit of humor for good measure.

*Rosemary Leone, Retired
Archbishop Ryan English Teacher*

Pat was the quintessential English teacher—polished, poised, passionate. She was forward thinking in curriculum and always considered the needs of the students above all. One way she achieved that was by carefully encouraging and nurturing the teachers in the department—both the new and the established. Pat cared about each teacher and was aware of any issues or problems they faced—personally or professionally. She was a staunch supporter of the union, fiercely protecting the parameters of the contract. She had a great laugh. She loved to put on an alien mask and hands at Halloween and distribute candy to her students. She wrote poetry. She was many things to many people, and she will be missed. Until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand.” (An Irish Blessing)

*Kathi Szymborski, Retired
Archbishop Ryan English Department Chair*

Pat was genuine—she believed in what she shared with you, and most importantly, you knew she meant it and believed in it. One of the best pieces of advice Pat ever shared was “sometimes you get only one shot at something, and guess what, you do everything you can to make it right.”

*Mike Cianfrani
Former Archbishop Ryan Teacher*

It was February 21, 2014, sixth period. My husband and I were anxiously awaiting the birth of our first grandchild. My daughter and her husband were living in Clifton, NJ, minutes away from New York, so we would have a bit of a hike from Ryan. Suddenly over the PA, I was told to call home. Excited by the news that my daughter was in labor, I ran back to my classroom to magically find Pat Benner, who worked in the school library, taking over my class. She handed me my school bag and handbag, and as I was gushingly thanking her, she ushered me out the door with the wave of her hand and told me to “go, go, go.”

That was a random act of kindness that I will never forget but then again that was Pat’s way, taking matters into her own hands without fuss or bother.

*Arlene Brickman, Retired
Archbishop Ryan English Teacher*

IN MEMORIAM . . .

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Pat Benner and I go back almost a lifetime ago when we met at Cardinal Dougherty High School in the mid-60s as teachers in the English Department. That friendship continued until her passing in February 2023.

At the time the school building held 6,000 students with 200 in each class! But we were young and full of ideas and energy and all that youth offered. We felt so lucky to have a job we loved!

I will always remember Pat as a gifted, talented teacher. She enriched her students with her creativity and sense of humor but also instilled in them hard work and appreciation for literature and the written word. Her work directing plays at CD and writing poetry in her spare time only added to the many talents she possessed.

She continued this for the 40 some years she spent in the classroom and as Chairperson of the English Department at Archbishop Ryan HS.

Pat was a good, loyal friend, decent, caring human being and a generous colleague whose memory and friendship I cherish.

May she rest peacefully in God's arms!

*Helen Chaykowsky, Retired
Former Archbishop Ryan Principal*

Welcome Spring!



A time of rebirth and renewal

IN MEMORIAM



Mary Lou Graham

February 19, 1955 – February 28, 2023

Mary Lou Graham (nee Fagan) was the oldest child with three sisters and one brother.

She attended St. Helena Catholic grade school in Olney and graduated from Cardinal Dougherty High School and LaSalle University.

She was married to Tom Graham for 27 years.

But Mary Lou did not become universally loved and admired for her biographical achievements but rather because she brought all of her singular attributes to all that she did.

To her sisters and brother, she was the finest oldest sister imaginable as she watched over them not just from the days of their births but through their entire lives.

To all of her classmates from grade school through college, she was beloved for her energetic humor and kindness and for introducing them to the myriad rewards of helping others.

As a teacher of English, she worked successfully in class to enable her students to achieve their individual potentials, but perhaps it was in Guidance that Mary Lou positively affected the greatest number of people. Working with students and families who were experiencing difficult times as well as the hundreds of students whose needs ranged from roster changes to help with college plans, her seemingly unending supply of expertise, humor and energy helped all of these people to experience success. Never “tough” but always strong where strength was needed, everything she did was for the benefit of others and a number of people went into guidance as a career because of her example.

And when she met and married her soul mate, Tom, the two of them were a team, working to aid Tom with his diabetes and taking care of Mary Lou when she became ill later in life. Theirs was a marriage of mutual love, affection, courtesy and devotion for their entire marriage with Tom’s passing on January 28 followed by Mary Lou exactly one month later, on February 28.

IN MEMORIAM

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At the end of the movie "It's a Wonderful Life," Jimmy Stewart's brother calls Stewart the richest man in town because of the way people who had known him throughout his life felt about him.

For her entire life, Mary Lou employed her powers of humor, fortitude and generosity for the betterment of family, friends, co-workers and students, and anyone else with whom she came in contact. What we all hope is that she knew how much her kindness, courage and care meant and still means to all of us.

Quite a legacy. Quite a wonderful life.

*Steve Probert
Retired English Teacher
LC Greeter
Lansdale Catholic High School*

Mary Lou Fagan was a first-year teacher when I had her for Junior year English at Cardinal Dougherty High School in the Fall, 1977 as Anne Galasso. Although English was not a favorite subject of mine, she ignited a spark in me that is with me to this day. She had two poems hanging in her classroom: "Desiderata" by Max Ehrmann and "Dreams" by Langston Hughes. Those two poems touched me to the core so much so that, when I started teaching at Bishop Conwell in 1984, I hung both of those poems in my classroom, and I was a Mathematics teacher. I looked at them often and thought of Mary Lou.

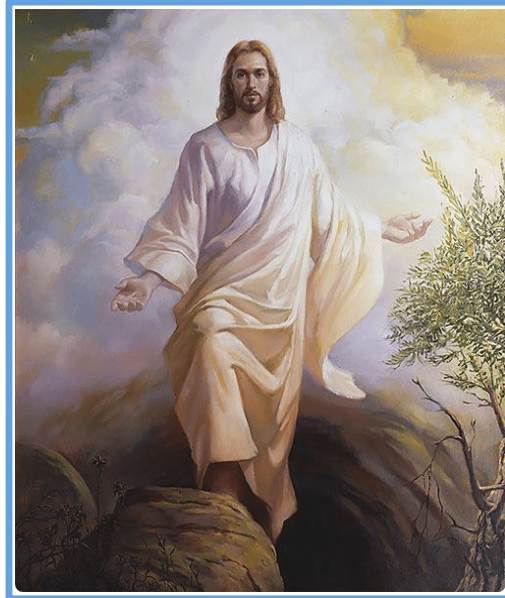
Fast-forward twenty-two years as I walked into Lansdale Catholic High School in 2006 as a heart-broken constricted teacher, and I was greeted by a bubbly Mary Lou Graham, welcoming me to my new school. Both of our last names had now changed, but I knew at once that everything was going to be okay and that I was "home." I brought the "Desiderata" and "Dreams" poems with me and hung them in my new classroom. As the years passed by, Mary Lou would be sure to include me in the many service projects she spearheaded as the Community Service Corps (CSC) moderator. She always served with pure joy, with a smile and warm heart for whomever she encountered.

It has been 17 years since I first hung those poems in my LC classroom, but they still bring me joy in seeing them on the walls of my classroom because it is Mary Lou I see shining through.

Yes, it is true, my dear Mary Lou, "To teach is to touch a life forever."

*Anne Templeton
Mathematics Teacher
Lansdale Catholic High School*

Easter is the Promise of Eternal Life



“And, I will raise you up on the last day!”

**THIS EASTER, MAY WE REMEMBER THE
FOLLOWING ACT MEMBERS**

+ Patricia Benner, retired, Archbishop Ryan High School +
+ Mary Lou Graham, retired, Lansdale Catholic High School +
+ Francis McMenemy, retired, Roman Catholic High School +
+ Michael Scavo, retired, SS John Neumann-Maria Goretti High School +

“May they rest in peace, and may perpetual light shine upon them.”

He has Risen
ALLELUIA



The ACT Executive Board and Office Staff
wish you and your family a
Happy and Blessed Easter.