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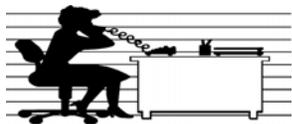
SPIRIT

OF '76

55+ Years Strong
1966-2024

The Newspaper of Local 1776
The Association of Catholic Teachers

3070 BRISTOL PIKE, BLDG. 2, SUITE 101, BENSALEM, PA 19020- 215-568-4175 - VOLUME XXXIV-NO.6
Fax 215-568-8270 - email (act@act1776.com) - website (www.act1776.com) FEB. - MARCH 2024



From the President's Desk

SPRING UPDATE

Happy Spring! It is hard to believe that it is almost Easter, and then, the 4th Quarter.

This school year has come with its successes as well as challenges. The negotiated three-year contract that is providing stability in your work life and, hopefully, in your home life is probably the greatest success for this school year. During my school visits, everyone has told me how grateful they are to the Association and its Negotiating Team for all their hard work last summer that resulted in the three-year Agreement. The Association and the System are still doing the final tweaks to the language of the new contract. Once the 2023-2026 Labor-Management Agreement is signed by both parties, a copy of the contract will be sent to you electronically.

[\(continued on page 2\)](#)

The System-wide student field trip to see Cabrini seemed to be a success, thanks in no small way to your willingness to work together as a faculty and in conjunction with your local administration to make the day the safest and most enjoyable one for all.

There has been no word from the System on any possible Constriction. The Association has been told that enrollment is growing. Let's hope that is a good sign.

With the fourth quarter comes a great deal of activity in the schools—AP exams, academic honors, spring sports, proms, final exams, and, for the senior students, graduation. For teachers, the start of the fourth quarter brings with it the knowledge that the end of the school year is getting ever nearer.

I wish you smooth sailing for the remainder of this school year. However, if you encounter any blips between now and June 14th, please reach out to Ginny or me in the ACT Office. We will always be here to help you.

In the meantime, enjoy the spring weather and your Easter Break.

Have a very Happy and Blessed Easter!

Irene



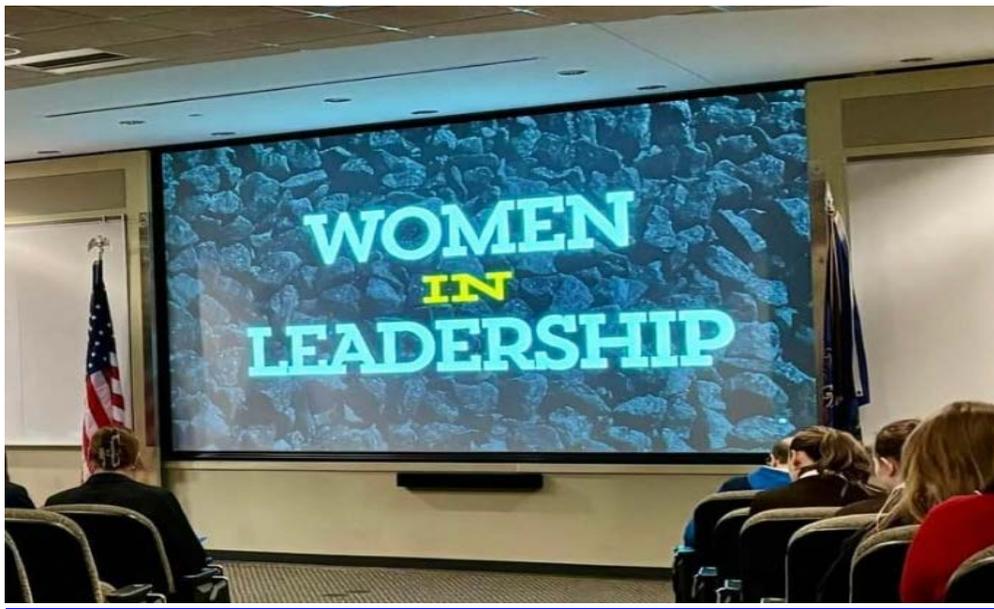
Congratulations to Sharon Blastic, Archbishop Wood High School, on the occasion of her retirement from the Secondary School System after 24 years of dedicated service to the students in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. The Association of Catholic Teachers along with your colleagues wish you a well-deserved retirement.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP SEMINAR

On March 8, 2024, *International Women's Day*, 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 Seminar** for female students attending Catholic high schools in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

The **Women in Leadership Seminar** is a program focused on inspiring young women to follow their dreams and aspirations.

Once again, this year's keynote speaker was **Kathryn Ott Lovell**, *President and CEO of the Philadelphia Visitor Center Corporation*. Sharing real life stories of the challenges facing women in the workforce with the girls in attendance, including their own challenges and successes, were **Frances Burns**, *Executive Vice President of the Connelly Foundation*, **Jeanine Heck**, *Senior Vice President of Comcast's Entertainment Product and founding Product Manager for X1 voice remote*, **Elizabeth A. Ward**, *RN, MSN, APRN-BC, CORIN, who is currently an Associate Professor at Drexel University's College of Nursing and Health Professions, a Family Nurse Practitioner/Medical Researcher at CHOP, and Adjunct staff at the University of Pennsylvania*, and **Representative Martina White**, *Pennsylvania State Representative 170th District*.



*"There is no limit to what we, as women, can accomplish."
-Michelle Obama*

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP SEMINAR



Pictured above left, Jeanine Heck, addressing the girls on AI technology.
Pictured above right, Joanne Walls, Principal, St. George Independent Catholic School, Keynote Speaker, Kathryn Ott Lovell, and Moderator, Maureen Gillespie, Little Flower Catholic High School for Girls.
Pictured bottom center, Pennsylvania State Representative, Martina White.

SCHOOL SENIORITY LISTS POSTED

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 2, 2024**.

Applications were posted in the schools and on the Educator Portal on March 1, 2024. A copy of the application can be found on the ACT Website at www.act1776.com.

2023 TAX INFORMATION

Union Dues for 2023

January 2023 – December 2023 = \$621.18

January 2023 – June 2023 = \$384.54
(For those who resigned or retired as of June 2023)

FSA REMINDER

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

TEACHER IN THE NEWS

Congratulations to ACT Senior Delegate and Bishop Shanahan Theology Teacher and Department Head, **Joseph Aquilante**, for being one of five recipients of the 2024 **Fideli Corde Award**.



The **Fidele Corde Award** recognizes “extraordinary individuals who live out the IHM charism of love, creative hope, and fidelity in their everyday lives.” “These individuals embody the spirit of the Fidele Corde (Faithful Heart) Award through their tireless service to others.”¹

Joe has spent his entire teaching career (26 years) teaching Theology at Bishop Shanahan High School, where he also serves as the Department Head.

During his 26 years at Bishop Shanahan, Joe has served 22 years as Moderator of the Student Council as well as Moderator of the Respect Life Club, and he has led Charity Day for 23 years.

Along with being an active Union Member and Senior Delegate who fights for social justice, Joe is active in his home parish as a youth minister.

We recognize why Joe was chosen to receive this Award, and we send out our congratulations to him.

¹ IHM Sisters *On Mission*
Winter 2024, Volume 23, No. 1

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

ACT 1776 Legislative Report – February 2024
Mr. John Corrigan, ACT Legislative Representative

PA Budget 2024-2025. Gov. Josh Shapiro Calls for \$1.1 Billion of Additional Dollars for K-12 School Districts in Budget Address— During his second budget address, Governor Shapiro called for \$1.1 billion of additional dollars for the state’s K-12 schools, a request that comes nearly a year after Pennsylvania’s education funding system was deemed unconstitutional. Mr. Shapiro’s proposed increase in basic education funding by \$1.1 billion is a 14% bump from the current year, that would bring the budget line to a total of \$9 billion. He also called for an additional \$50 million in special education funding. The massive \$3.2 billion increase in state spending in Gov. Josh Shapiro’s proposed 2024-25 state budget raises concerns for Senate Republicans, including the spending budget surplus funds and potential tax increases.

PA House of Representatives

A special election in Lower Bucks County on February 13 determined the balance in the State House. Jim Prokopiak (D) defeated Republican Candace Cabanas (R) to replace longtime Rep. John Galloway (D), who resigned to become a magisterial district judge. The outcome of returned control of the House to the Democrats 102-101. Prokopiak will serve the final year of Galloway’s term. Both candidates are trying to get on the ballot for the primary election on April 23, as a two-year term representing the district will be up for grabs again in November.

Rep. Joe Adams resigns from PA House of Representatives: Republican State Rep. Joe Adams resigned from representing the 139th Legislative District which serves parts of Pike and Wayne Counties on Friday. A special election will be held to fill the vacancy. Adams’s resignation along with Prokopiak’s election creates a 102-100 majority in the House for Democrats.

Education Developments

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association Released its 2024 State of Education report. The 48-page report highlights many challenges school districts are facing.

The U.S. Department of Education sent Title IX proposed rule to the White House bringing the department one step closer to finalizing the controversial regulation. The department has yet to send the second Title IX rule — on transgender students’ athletics participation — to the Office of Management and Budget, which oversees federal regulations. The department already missed two deadlines it set for the release of both rules, attributing the delays to overwhelming feedback on the proposals.

[\(Continued on page 8\)](#)

Legislation Update:

Senate Bill (SB) 801: Reported as amended in the Senate Education Committee (2-7-24): This bill is designed to improve literacy capacity through a three-stage approach: First, with evidence-based reading curricula, the bill would bolster literacy instruction, ensuring literacy achievement for children across the Commonwealth. Second, through a universal screening, beginning in the first 30 days of school, the bill will outline a process to identify struggling readers. Finally, by looking at the screening data, intervention plans can be designed and implemented to prevent children from falling behind. Amended: The approved amendment by Aument would create the Reading Leadership Council and require schools to adopt evidence-based structured literacy curriculum program and allows schools to choose a structured literacy curriculum not highlighted by the Council.

House Bill (HB) HB 1519: First consideration in House Education Committee (2-6-24): This legislation would allow students to take three excused absences for mental health reasons without requiring a doctor's note.

House Bill (HB) HB 1553: First consideration in House Education Committee (2-6-24): This bill would require the suicide prevention hotline telephone number to be included on student identification card; and, in school safety and security, further providing for a school safety and security coordinator.

House Bill (HB) 1665: First consideration in House Education Committee (2-6-24): This legislation would create the School Counseling Services Act, which would require that schools develop a robust and comprehensive school counseling plan. The plan would ensure that academic, career planning, and social and emotional learning concerns are addressed, would include a multilevel school data review to determine student needs, and would align with guidance from the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The bill would require counselors to spend at least 80% of their working time engaged in direct and indirect services to students on days that students were in school. These services could involve academic advising, career planning, social and emotional skill building, intervening with students at risk of dropping out, orienting new and transferring students, and contributing to decision-making teams and programs that directly impact students and families. Administrative responsibilities could take up no more than 20% of their time.

ATTENTION RETIREES

After taking a *COVID hiatus*, the Association is bringing back our Annual Retirement Luncheon. The date will be **Wednesday, May 15, 2024**. We look forward to sharing this day with you! Please see details below.

Retired ACT Members are invited to attend a

Retirees' Luncheon

May 15, 2024

12: 00 – 4:00 PM to be held at

THE WATERFALL ROOM

2791 Southampton Road

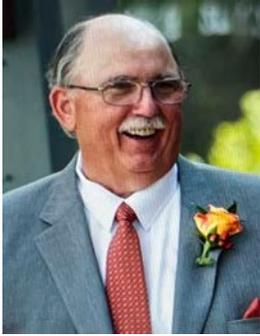
Philadelphia, PA 19154

Ticket price is \$40 per person. **You may bring a guest.**

An order form is posted on the ACT Webpage at www.act1776.com.

Your order form along with payment is due by April 19, 2024.

IN MEMORIAM



Michael F. Galante

March 4, 1952 – February 1, 2024

Good morning. I am writing to you today to announce that a very strong, liberal thinking, fact-based man will be sorely missed. You would know him when he walked into a room. Like him or not, he was a strong fighter in many regards. He loved what he did for many years as a teacher, a union rep, and a tough contract negotiator. That man was Michael Galante. He died suddenly on February 1st in the arms of his lovely wife MaryLou.

Mike loved teaching Social Studies, especially, senior Social Studies and the Constitution. He was a very strong advocate of right and wrong and the examples he would give were outstanding. He loved to debate issues with his students, his administration, and the Office of Catholic Education, especially, on the contract.

Mike started his career teaching at Bishop McDevitt in the fall of 1974. He was instrumental in creating a Junior Varsity baseball team of which he became the coach. Mike enjoyed the camaraderie that the faculty had and the parties and get togethers that took place there. It is also the place that Mike got his interest in our union and its activity.

Mike was constricted and came to Lansdale Catholic as a result. It didn't take long before Mike and I became friends. Mike became our Union Rep and handled with strength and tenacity the challenges taking place at our school. However, this also took a toll on Mike's health. The years he gave to Lansdale Catholic, and its faculty were great, but it also led to Mike retiring because of his medical conditions. He was missed immediately.

Mike enjoyed a good debate, but he loved his wife and family more. He made sure that his four children got the best education that they could. They all turned out very well. He stayed in close contact with his friends and, especially, his extended family. Mike enjoyed golfing, fishing, reading, traveling, especially, to Italy, and cars.

He visited many doctors after his retirement from teaching. My personal time with Mike was a phone call on Monday morning at 9:30 am. That would set up the topic for the week with many follow up calls during the week, when he was coming home from having breakfast with other friends. I miss that already, but I know that Mike is now having a debate with the Lord.

I hope to see him again. You are missed by all. Rest in Peace.

Sincerely,
Mr. Douglas Grunklee
Lansdale Catholic High School, retired.

IN MEMORIAM

Michael F. Galante

On February 1, 2024, Mike Galante, who worked in various capacities in the archdiocese for more than three decades, suddenly passed away. Mike began working as a history teacher at Bishop McDevitt in 1974 and then as a teacher and union representative at Lansdale Catholic from 1988 until his retirement in 2008.

In any class or activity in which he participated, Mike was always easily identified. He was notably exuberant and gregarious in class and was enthusiastic with providing his students in his history and government classes with the tools necessary to become good citizens. And no one ever slept in one of Mike's classes.

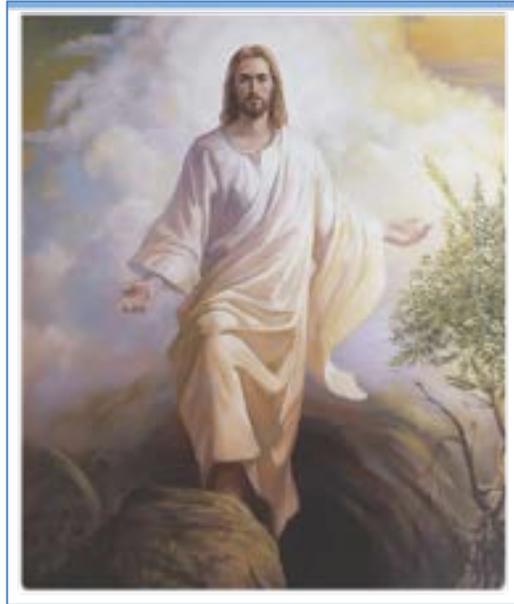
When Mike felt responsible for something, he would learn every detail on the subject. This quality was one of those that enabled Mike to also become a superb union representative at Lansdale Catholic. Any teacher with a problem with the Archdiocese, knew that not only would Mike always have your back, but he would be able to defend you completely because of his encyclopedia-like knowledge of the contract. In all of his years at Lansdale Catholic, Mike was a force of nature who never let anyone down.

At his funeral service, Mike's children gave many examples of Mike's love of family and friends and how he would take care of everyone during parties at his home. I personally know how Mike kept in touch and a watchful eye on his fellow teachers long after his retirement, and there was always a place for a friend at the Galante home. I knew that he had done so for me, but I learned at his service how he and his wife Mary Lou had done the same for everyone he had ever known.

At the service there was a wonderful picture of Mike wearing a big smile, driving a white convertible on a beautiful day with the top down and two of his Bernese Mountain Dogs happily in the back seat. Mike loved his family, his friends, his work, his home, his vehicles, and was loved by them all in return. Mark Twain once said that he prized a good heart in a person more than any quality. Mike Galante was a very good person with a great heart who shared it with everyone he knew. He will be greatly missed.

-Steve Probert
Lansdale Catholic High School, retired.

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

- + Roger Cameroni – Archbishop Ryan High School+*
- +Michael F. Galante, retired – Lansdale Catholic High School+*
- +James Donald Heron, retired – Archbishop Wood High School+*

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May their souls
and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen*

Alleluia, Alleluia



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