



RVC Teachers Move Forward to Preserve Public Education

By Viri Pettersen

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As a whole, educators are skilled leaders, focusing on teamwork, community and undeniably, our future leaders, our children. Educators inspire a sense of self in our nation's students, work hard to build confidence, encourage creativity and communication, and always serve as role models in adaptability and flexibility. Rockville Centre's educators are dedicated individuals who maintain an unwavering commitment to the promise of public education.

October was a significant month in the Rockville Centre community, as our teachers finalized a new bargaining agreement with our district. This agreement again validated our educators' willingness to step up to the plate, physically and fiscally, in demonstrating community support when addressing the serious problem resulting from the imposition of a debilitating state-imposed tax cap. In 2012, when the tax cap was established, Rockville Centre's educators agreed to take drastic action in ensuring that our community remained whole, with no shifts in class size, offerings or employees. They did this through accepting salary cuts, resulting in substantial savings for our district. This unheralded show of support kept Rockville Centre's unique academic perspective intact, while also protecting our community from falling prey to the educational erosion faced by other Long Island dis-

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tricts. Four years passed, and, this year, our educators returned to the bargaining table knowing that a problem still exists and willing to help in controlling costs. Thankfully, they again acknowledged district budgeting problems and have accepted wage cuts at personal expense, thus retaining the integrity of our fine public school system.

Our community's parents, students and residents have valiantly worked with teachers in protecting and defending public education.

However, a greater investment by the state in Long Island's schools and Rockville Centre is still needed to make up for the loss of local aid due to the tax cap. State aid was a solution last year, but we have no idea about what our communities and students will face in the upcoming year.

What should we do? As taxpayers, we should send Albany a clear message, instructing our legislators to listen to resident voters who want to make the decision on their community's tax cap override, and allowing for a simple majority of 50% of voting population.

In conclusion, as president of the Rockville Centre Teachers Association, I thank our members, Dr. Johnson and our Board of Education for their hard work, dedication and enduring support of the children within our community. Together, we make a difference.