



### **THE DOBBS FERRY PTSA TOASTS OUR 2019-20 RETIREES**

***Congratulations to our 2019-20 Dobbs Ferry district retirees! We are grateful for their many years of dedicated service to our school community and we wish them all the very best!***

#### **George Swietlicki: Springhurst Music Teacher**

**After 43 joyful and melodic years, George Swietlicki is stepping down as Springhurst's music and chorus teacher extraordinaire.** Educated at the Vienna Academy of Music, he is also an award-winning choral director/composer/arranger, having worked with Aaron Copland, Marvin Hamlisch and Alan Menken. Swietlicki has also scored three original school musicals that celebrate the environment, diversity and anti-bullying: "The Hudson River," "We All Are America," and "All The Same." His arrangement of "The Star Spangled Banner" was featured in the opening credits of the Showtime series, "Homeland." Founded in 1981 by Swietlicki, the Harmonaires have been the musical pride and joy of the Springhurst community. They have received numerous accolades over the years, performing everywhere from network TV appearances to the White House, Lincoln Center and Citi Field. Swietlicki says he will miss the Springhurst community dearly with his most treasured memory being the Grandparents' Day celebration. He loved the collaboration of students, staff and families with a full day of classes, a catered lunch and a culminating school-wide concert. "We Are One" is one of his all-time favorite songs. Originally he penned it as a Springhurst Earth Day anthem but it has been a part of Stepping Up ceremonies as well. Its lyrics inspire harmony, unity, family and community. Another beloved composition of his is "I'll Remember Springhurst" and it's no doubt generations of students will fondly remember the one and only Mr. Swietlicki. Not surprisingly, expect to hear more from him. His post-retirement plans include both practicing (all the Chopin Etudes) and composing musicals (he already has an offer!).

#### **Pat Coyne: Springhurst Teacher Aide**

**A kind and familiar face to all, Pat Coyne is retiring after 26 years of wearing many hats throughout the district.** She began her career at the MS/HS where she worked for 15 years before coming to Springhurst, where she was seen helping out everywhere: in the nurse's office, with attendance, as a kindergarten aide and in the main office. Her work scheduling building use with all the many outside organizations is legendary. One of her favorite Springhurst memories is the first time she saw the staff singing to the children at the Holiday Sing-a-long, fondly remembering that it was "quite a show!" She will miss the true camaraderie at Springhurst which she calls "pretty special." Coyne plans to fill her free time with various volunteer work and traveling with her husband.

**Joan Burmester: Springhurst Classroom Teacher**

**For more than 24 years, Joan Burmester has proven her commitment and dedication as a skilled and seasoned educator.** As both a 1<sup>st</sup> Grade and Kindergarten teacher at Springhurst she worked well with the younger students by sharing her wealth of knowledge with patience and kindness. She put that expertise to the test as the point person for the PTSA Publishing Room organizing the volunteers for many years. She will fondly remember all the wonderful and unique students she has been blessed to teach over the years as well as their supportive families. She will also miss seeing her colleagues on a daily basis and said it was an honor and privilege to work with all of them. Burmester loves to travel with her husband and is looking forward to making more memories soon. She also plans to spend time with her grandchildren, especially her Seattle family.

**Annette Gonzalez: MS/HS Librarian & Media Specialist**

**Annette Gonzalez says it was an honor to be the MS/HS Librarian for 22 years.** While there, she proudly served on the Executive Board, as a Building Representative, and as the co-chair of the National Junior Honor Society. She was also actively involved in the Senior Internship Program. She worked closely with students and teachers in both the library and classroom and will be remembered for her helpful, kind manner and bubbly personality. Over the years, she most enjoyed seeing “the 6th grade ducklings transform into 12th grade swans.” They, in turn, inspired her to be better, to grow and to challenge herself. Gonzalez will miss everyone very much and thanks all at Dobbs Ferry for giving her a wonderful adventure. She has not planned the next great adventure as she plans to live life one day at a time with just a little less stress.

**Kim Thornton: MS/HS Physical Education Teacher**

**This past January, Kim Thornton stepped down after 20 years of service as a loyal and dedicated MS/HS Physical Education teacher.** Without a doubt, whether teaching, coaching or field trip chaperoning, she loved her job and being around her students. Educating them about their general health and well-being were of the utmost importance to Thornton; so much so she shared her personal passion for yoga by introducing it to the PE curriculum. Thornton was also the longtime coach of the Dobbs Ferry Modified Girls’ volleyball, softball and basketball teams. She will be truly missed by her many students and colleagues. These days, you might find her on the Jersey shore or spending time with her grandchildren and family.

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