



## State Begins Whacking Jobs With No Regard For Impact

The State released its 150 "position reduction" list on June 30, finally revealing to state employees, VSEA, legislators, the public and the press which 150 workers' jobs would be whacked in the first round. The State has already said that 250 more positions will be cut by January 2009, bringing the grand total to 400.



VSEA wasted no time denouncing the cuts and highlighting the adverse impact they will surely have on public services.

"VSEA has reviewed the list and it took very little time for us to find multiple positions that, left unfilled, will negatively impact many Vermonters," said VSEA Interim Director Michael Casey in a press release issued by the union on June 30. "The Douglas Administration promised Vermonters these cuts would not impact services, but just a cursory review of this list proves otherwise."

Casey added that of the 150 position reductions being claimed by the Douglas Administration, more than 50 were placed on the list because their duties were reassigned to other staff.

"There are only so many hours in the day, and VSEA is concerned that the

administration, in an effort to reach their magic 150 number, conveniently shuffled job duties to other staff. Since state employees assigned new duties have the right by contract to request a reclassification, VSEA will be advising affected employees to do so."

Here are just a few examples of some services that VSEA believes will suffer due to the Douglas Administration's failure to think through its ad hoc downsizing of State government or its failure to engage Vermonters early in the process to determine if there were services they thought they could live without:

**Health Outreach Specialist** – Working for the Ladies First Program, responsible for ensuring low income, under-insured Vermont women are receiving regular mammograms and providing them additional health care direction and resources.

**Human Service Case Aide** – Unique position who provides caseworker support in many forms, primarily transporting foster children to and from appointments or other meetings.

**Public Health Nurse** – Participates in the development, refinement and implementation of department programs and public health initiatives. Specifically targets at-risk populations.

**Corrections Youth Services Specialist** – Assessment, counseling, group facilitation and community development for the DOC, involving the provision of interventions for a small, specialized caseload of youthful offenders.

**Forester** – Responsible, in part, for harvesting timber that is provided to low-income Vermonters to assist with their winter heating needs.

"VSEA will be distributing copies of this list to our membership and asking state employees to closely review it and contact the union with any and all additional adverse impacts or job duty shifts resulting from these reductions," said Casey. "This first wave of cuts is bad enough, but the Douglas Administration isn't done yet. More cuts are coming."

In the press, several prominent Vermont legislators joined VSEA in blasting the State's job cuts.

Senate Appropriations Chair Susan Bartlett (D-Lamoille) told the *Times Argus*: "It's just not possible that these reductions won't have an effect on state services. I know what members of the administration are saying, but I'm very dubious of that. You can't downsize a state workforce

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## Dale Prison Employees Reluctantly Prepare For Closure

*In the final days of the 2008 legislative session, the legislature approved a plan to radically restructure Vermont's prison system. The plan, which the State also approved, will supposedly save millions of taxpayer dollars by closing the Dale facility in Waterbury, moving Dale and Windsor's female populations to the high-security St. Albans facility, relocating St. Albans inmates to other facilities, converting the Windsor facility to a work camp, and relying more on out-of-state, for-profit private prisons to house inmates. In theory, it all sounds good, but what do men and women employed by the DOC think about the plan and its coming impact on Vermont?*

*In this interview, Dale Prison employees Dawn Rearick, a Corrections Officer II with six years experience and Sally Carpenter, a Caseworker II with 17 years experience, talk about what happens after their facility closes in January 2009.*

**Q: What do you think the result will be of uprooting Dale's female population and relocating it to St. Albans, which, until now, has always been a male prison for Vermont's toughest and most violent offenders?**

SC – As a general rule, more than 50 percent of women don't like change. But we're taking 100 percent of our women and asking them all to change. Our women will lose the continuity they have enjoyed until now, meaning they always see the same caseworkers and other employees and they have come to know and respect those employees. But these employees won't be at St. Albans. Now the women will be subjected to an entirely different staff that knows nothing about them. For women to walk in and just trust who they are talking to or let them know everything about them and their case isn't going to happen easily. There is a trust factor.

As a caseworker, I know who is on my caseload and most everything about the person. A caseworker at St. Albans, who has never dealt with women, is now going to have a brand new, 25-30 inmate caseload of women they know nothing about. As a caseworker, I can tell you that having a new caseload dropped on you like this is a nightmare.

DR – The impact will be huge, and not in a good way. Right now, Dale is here in the center of Vermont. The inmate's family, especially their children, doesn't have to drive a long way to see them because Dale is centrally located. I know that some of the families won't be able to get all the way up to St. Albans to visit. It's going to be more difficult, and with these gas prices, it makes it even harder. It's going to have an emotional impact on many of

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Ed Note:** The following letters were culled from Vermont newspapers. All are from VSEA members, regarding state employee issues.

Appeared in the 5/27 *Rutland Herald*

### Vermont Gained From Her Work

The announcement of the leaving of Annie Noonan from her longtime position as executive director of the VSEA is a great loss for the state of Vermont.

As a state employee myself since 1968, I have had the opportunity to observe her very fine work over many years. When I first started with the state of Vermont, Garnet Harvey was the executive director of the union. At the time, employee pay raises depended entirely upon the rating of the immediate supervisor and could often be somewhat arbitrary based on a variety of factors such as did the supervisor "like" the employee, and the rating did not always correlate with an employee's actual work performance. There was little or no employee training and development. Disciplinary action could be arbitrary and sometimes capricious. That kind of work environment did not always produce the most effective workforce.

Under Annie Noonan's leadership over the past many years, there have been significant improvements in many of these areas. For example, there is now a progressive disciplinary process that is fair and equitable and has the result of forcing state managers and supervisors like myself to sharpen our supervisory skills and pay better attention to staff performance on a regular basis; there is a pay scale that is fair, reasonable and not arbitrary; there is an objective and independent system for determining an employee's correct pay grade based on their actual work duties; there is an improved retirement system with employee contributions; there are workplace protections for employees engaged in work that puts the employee at potential risk or injury of harm to themselves; there is an extensive workforce training and development system to keep employees current and up to speed in their job; there is a system for helping laid-off employees transfer to another state job that they are qualified to do; there is a good health insurance program; and many other examples of improvements that have contributed to a much better work environment. This has led to attracting highly qualified individuals to serve as state employees throughout the state government and has resulted in a better, more productive and professional workforce.

Unless you are connected to state government in some way like I am, it can be difficult

to fully appreciate what the Vermont state employees do for us on a daily basis, but I believe that there is a very close correlation between the level of public services and the quality of community life. Here in Vermont, we have a very high quality of life and a very high quality of public services from Vermont state employees. Annie Noonan has played a big part in the improvement of the quality of public services over the many years of her 24/7 dedicated leadership at VSEA. While the state employee workforce has benefited from her work, so have all Vermont citizens. We should all give her a big thank you. Thanks Annie.

Alan Willard  
Woodstock

Appeared in the 6/16 *Free Press*

### What's Real Impact Of State Job Cuts?

I agree with Sen. Bartlett ("Sen. Bartlett Questions State Job Cuts," May 22). Vermont citizens need to have a public conversation about the Douglas administration's mandate to cut 400 state jobs.

It is ludicrous to believe that reducing the state work force will not impact Vermont's citizens. Every person who lives in Vermont uses government services -- whether it's bringing your child to a WIC clinic, having your drinking water tested, getting an unemployment check, having your roads plowed or having someone inspect your favorite restaurant to ensure your food is safe. If these jobs were not necessary, they would not have been approved by the Legislature in the first place. To eliminate 400 positions that currently employ taxpaying Vermonters when the economy is already on the skids is outrageous.

Members of the Vermont State Employees Association gave the Douglas administration cost-cutting ideas that would save a substantial amount of money without cutting jobs. Gov. Douglas' response was the jobs would be cut anyway. His plan to cut jobs is no plan at all; it's slash-and-burn politics.

When Jim Douglas hits the campaign trail, he'll be bragging about how much money he saved by cutting state jobs. However, he won't have a clue what those job cuts mean to the average Vermonter. He and legislators need to listen to the front-line workers who do those jobs, and to the people who use the services.

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# DALE PRISON

## Dale Prison

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the women. There will be repercussions when an inmate is no longer having contact with her family. Depression, acting out, who knows?

### Q: Why is Dale important to Vermont?

DR – The work we do here isn't being done anywhere else. Dale has very specialized programs for its population—and they work. If you're worried about savings, think about the money being saved by a female inmate who is no longer committing crimes, abusing substances or coming back into the system. That's one less inmate Vermonters are paying to house.

SC – Everybody is on the same page at Dale. We all work well together and we're proud of what we do here. It's going to take some time for it to be this way at St. Albans.

### Q: What's the mood of the Dale employees?

DR – Anxious and angry. A lot of the Dale employees don't believe this restructuring is really going to save money. Like I said, we do a lot of good work here that isn't being done at other facilities—that can't be done at other facilities. I don't think the St. Albans employee will be able to work with the women the way we do here—and that's not a knock against them. We've been working exclusively with women since we opened. A lot of our inmates are "former" inmates and there's a good reason for that. I mean, some come back through, but a large majority do not. How much money is that saving Vermont in the long run? You might not see an immediate savings but I think in the long run, the savings would have been more than any savings this restructuring might claim.

SC – Many of us are really confused about this restructuring and angry that it wasn't thought through a little more. We do things differently here. I have former inmates who call on a regular basis just to tell me "I'm still out, and I'm still doing well." I wonder how long it will take for a lot of these women to build that kind of relationship all over again at St. Albans.

### Q: What's your mood like these days?

DR – I'm anxious. Wondering where I'm going to end up. Some employees are looking at Chittenden, some are looking to the State Hospital. Others, like me, are just trying to find another State job between Waterbury and Montpelier, regardless.

SC – If I don't think about it, I'm okay. When I start to think about it, I think about my only bumping option being to the Chittenden facility. So I go there for the same amount of money, but factor in the increased mileage and gas prices, and I'm not going to benefit at all. In fact, I won't break even.

### Q: What challenges does the St. Albans workforce face, changing from an all male to all female facility?

SC – A lot! I've been through the St. Albans facility and the employees have their house in order,

much like we do at Dale. Inmates were respectful and everybody knew where they were supposed to be. A lot of the St. Albans employees have worked at that prison a long time and they've been working with male inmates just as long. Now we're going to dump all of our women on them at once. The employees are going to think they woke up in a bad dream. We have women who are whiny, and who cry, yell, scream and call names—sometimes all at once. The first few days are going to be tough. Dale is what many of the women consider home. They know what's acceptable in here. Now the rug is being pulled out from underneath them.

DR – It's going to take a lot longer than a few days. Honestly, I feel bad for the St. Albans employees who have never worked with women before. They're going to have their hands full. And, leading up to this closure, there's been no job shadowing at all. Personally, I don't think it's right to be making this change without giving the St. Albans staff an opportunity to get their feet wet.

### Q: Some St. Albans employees have expressed concerns about women inmates leveling "false accusation" charges against them. Should they be concerned about that?

DR – Oh yeah. They should be.

SC – It's a very legitimate concern. In fact, it's a concern here, especially with the new officers. But we have enough seasoned staff here to be able to say to a new officer "You really have to be careful with this one because this is how they work. Have someone else in the room with you at all times." Trust me. If some of these women don't feel like they are getting their way, they'll try anything they can.

### Q: Why do you think the legislature voted to restructure Vermont's prison system?

SC – It's not about people's lives. It's not about state employees. It's not about keeping a system that works well. It's about money. Plain and simple.

DR – Dollars for sure, but it's a short-sighted decision. Not well thought through.

### Q: Do you believe the restructuring will save money?

SC – The only way I think this will save money is in food service because you might not require as many people. Medications are going to be way more than I think legislators anticipate for the women. I just met with a woman inmate who is on 16 different medications a day. Women have more medical issues than men.

DR – Mental health costs will rise, and this is a trickle-down result. The mental state of a lot of these women will go downhill after they are transferred so far north. Like I said, many won't have the same amount of contact with their family that they do now. These are the impacts I don't think the legislature thought about at all—and that's just one of them. The loss of certain programs, if they aren't continued at St. Albans, will hurt too.

SC – In two years, we'll be hearing "We need to rethink these women."



*VSEA members Dawn Rearick (left) and Sally Carpenter aren't happy with the State's decision to close Dale.*

### Q: Is the closure and your future job security worrying your family?

DR – Yes. My kids are a little resentful that they're closing Dale down and mom's not going to be able to continue doing the work she's been doing—and the work that makes her happy. I have three children and, at first, they were scared we were going to be picking up and moving to St. Albans, but I told them it was out of the question. I'll hit the unemployment line first. One of my daughters is worried that I won't be able to find a job locally and will end up in Burlington, which is the option for me if I can't find anything else. It will add another hour and a half to my commute, and my family already thinks the DOC gets too much time from me as it is.

SC – One thing I've heard from Dale employees is that they'll no longer be able to work a four and three (four, 12-hour days on and three off) if they bump into another facility. Anywhere else, you're required to work a six and two. This means less time with their families, and it's not making many people happy.

### Q: After the doors close, what will you miss most about Dale?

SC – Just knowing all the people you work with and being able to resolve problems quickly because you do know your co-workers so well. There are a lot of long-term employees here and we work really well together. I'll also miss watching some of the inmate's progress as we work with them. I really enjoy when they learn something new. You know... somebody who is proud that they finally passed a reading test from Grade 3 to Grade 4. It's a huge accomplishment. And I'll miss some of the inmates I've gotten to know over the years. Sometimes I know more about a certain inmate than even their own family does.

DR – We are like a family here. Very close knit. I'll miss working with each and every one. And I'll miss some of my relationships with the inmates too. I got a lot of happiness out of watching some of them grow as people. More often than not, the women exited Dale a lot better than they entered and that's good for Vermont. I'll miss seeing their families as well.

## Newspaper Editorials Address Job Cuts

Excerpt from July 6 *Times Argus* editorial:

"The Douglas Administration insists that a reduction of 150 already achieved in the state work force, and further cuts of 250, will not affect services adversely. That argument is simplistic, implying that until economic constraints forced cuts, the State had employed too many workers. That is not an argument that Gov. James Douglas probably wants to make."

"The Douglas Administration acknowledges that the responsibilities of some state workers will change as duties are shifted. It stands to reason that some workers will have to work harder. This is what happens when a work force is trimmed but the work load remains the same.

It also stands to reason that services will be affected. If not, why were the cutbacks not made earlier? Is it really true that the Douglas administration was carrying 400 workers it didn't need? Probably not. It is also more realistic to say that state government will do the best it can, that some services will be curbed or curtailed or cut or handled less expeditiously, but that the administration will do the best in hard times to make sure the damage is not too great."

"In fact, hard times are making it hard on everyone, and Vermonters are going to have to accept the fact that state services are bound to suffer when money is tight and the state work force is reduced. Douglas need not try to paper over that reality. Vermonters can understand it and accept it. Douglas' job is to minimize the hardship, ensuring that the most important services affecting the most vulnerable do not suffer and that the state work force is treated fairly."

Full text of July 8 *Brattleboro Reformer* editorial:

The new fiscal year for the state of Vermont began last week with the announcement that 150 jobs would be eliminated.

The list of eliminated jobs released by Gov. James Douglas' administration included a deputy commissioner in the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living, a prison superintendent and 35 positions that were authorized and funded but never filled. Most of those jobs were associated with Catamount Health, the new state's insurance program for uninsured Vermonters. The anticipated savings for the cuts is \$8.9 million.

Another 250 jobs are scheduled to be cut by the end of December. The 400 positions

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### Job Cuts

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without affecting services." And Senate Pro Tem Peter Shumlin (D-Windham) sharply criticized the State's approach to the cuts, saying: "I think the administration approached the job cuts with the same level of planning as Bush did invading Iraq. You don't know who is going to retire. Some of them are in critical positions."

VSEA is urging all members to contact the union with any and all stories relating to adverse impacts at your workplace (see boxed "URGENT" entry for contact details) that were created by this first round of State cuts. Your stories will be critical to VSEA's efforts to try and prevent further damage to Vermont's public services in the State's next round of 250 job cuts.

### RIFs Already Occuring Outside The 400 Cuts

#### ACCD RIFs 4

As VSEA feared, the State is now RIF'ing state employees and claiming that these employees do not count against either the 150 job cuts in June, or the 250 jobs to be cut by January 2009.

In mid-June, the *Times Argus* featured a story about the impending layoffs of four state employees working at the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD). In the piece, State officials defended the layoffs as being dictated by budget cuts imposed by the legislature in

its budget bill. The story explains that the legislature did indeed propose \$500,000 in ACCD budget cuts, but Senate Pro Tem Peter Shumlin (D-Windham) explained that the dollar amount decision was made *collaboratively* in discussions with the administration—with never a mention of layoffs.

Shumlin blasted the State's decision to layoff the employees. "It's nothing short of outrageous," he said. "We had extensive dialogues with the administration about how to achieve a reduction in the size of state government. They gave us every assurance the position cuts would be achieved through retirements and that no existing employees would be laid off. Senate Appropriations Chair Sen. Susan Bartlett (D-Lamoille) joined Shumlin in denouncing the State's finger pointing, saying, "It certainly was not the legislative intent to create a situation in which people were being RIF'd when we already don't understand how they are reducing by 400." Sen. Vince Illuzzi (R-Orleans) also weighed in, saying, "We made decisions based on certain assumptions and representations from the administration. The key one being that the reduction in force would take place through retirement." State officials said the four layoffs are unrelated to the impending 400 job cuts; the first 150 of which are due to be made by June 30.

VSEA was warned of the ACCD layoffs (three of which are classified positions), but the move is certainly not welcome.

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## URGENT!! VSEA Wants Your Job Cut Impact Stories

**As many state employees know, the State's job cuts are already adversely impacting the quality public services you provide. With the State's next round of 250 job cuts quickly approaching, VSEA needs to hear from as many members as possible with your impact stories.**

**If you've reviewed the initial 150 list (online at [www.vsea.org](http://www.vsea.org)) and already see problems on the horizon, or if you're currently experiencing the negative fallout of the 150 cuts, VSEA wants to hear your story!**

**Send your story by e-mail to:**

**VSEA Legislative Coordinator Conor Casey at [ccasey@vsea.org](mailto:ccasey@vsea.org), or  
VSEA Communications Coordinator Doug Gibson at [dgibson@vsea.org](mailto:dgibson@vsea.org)**

**You can also mail your story to:**

**Job Cuts Impact Story  
c/o VSEA  
155 State St., P.O. Box 518  
Montpelier, VT 05601**

## Job Cuts

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"VSEA fears these RIFs are the beginning trickle of what could become a flood by the end of this year," said VSEA Communications Coordinator Doug Gibson. "There's no doubt in VSEA's mind that, left unchecked, the State fully intends to lay off even more state employees—and that is to the detriment of all Vermonters who depend on the quality public services delivered by Vermont state employees. VSEA remains steadfastly opposed to any reduction in the state workforce because it will almost certainly have an adverse impact on some valuable public service that Vermonters depend on."

## DG RIFs 6

In mid-August, more RIFs were announced by the Defender General's office. In all, six DG employees were being RIF'd for budget reasons, further augmenting VSEA's ongoing contention that the State says 400 jobs will be cut, but there's going to be even more above and beyond that number.

VSEA Interim Director Michael Casey commented on the DG RIFs on August 11 to the *Bennington Banner*, saying, "We've already highlighted the negative impact on public services that has resulted from the administration's elimination of 150 jobs in July. We anticipate the impact of the Defender General cuts, in addition to another 250 scheduled to be announced in January 2009, will be much worse. At a time when the public is demanding more accountability through our criminal justice system, these [DG] cuts will unquestionably slow down the rate at which criminal cases are heard and disposed of."

Bennington District Court Manager Mary Frost is quoted, saying, "Having two public defenders instead of three will certainly have an impact just by sheer numbers. The overwhelming majority of our cases are public defender cases." And Bennington County State's Attorney Erica Marthage tells the paper: "It would be virtually impossible for us to cut positions. I don't know how, in this political climate in our state, we're expected to operate when you're repeatedly cutting funds from us."

State DG Matthew Valerio warned that cuts being proposed for the judiciary and its departments could have a backlash effect within Vermont's criminal justice system. "Fundamentally, what will end up happening is cases will not be handled as quickly."

VSEA has identified the DG VSEA members who were RIF'd and is working to educate them about RIF rights and help them better navigate the reality of this unfortunate situation.

"At some point, the State will have to begin looking elsewhere to find missing revenue; like the State's 'rainy day' funds," said Casey. "If we continue down this path of state employee RIFs and layoffs, Vermonters will continue to see a marked drop in the services they rely upon. Undoubtedly, the State's response will be to have employees take on extra tasks not being completed because of the vacancies. The truth is you can't ask much more from a workforce that's already stretched thin. As one employee told me recently, 'We've already cut down to the bone. We're now cutting into the marrow.'"

are being cut as workers retire or leave state government. No layoffs are expected as yet, but some may be necessary if attrition does not achieve the requested reductions.

There is an ongoing debate about whether cutting this many people from the state's payroll will affect the delivery of services. But the more interesting part of this story was provided by Progressive Party gubernatorial candidate Anthony Pollina.

Pollina said that the state government awarded about \$280,000 in bonuses to more than 100 state workers in the past year, including top executive officials such as George Crombie, the secretary of the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Secretary of Commerce Kevin Dorn and Douglas spokesman Jason Gibbs.

Pollina questioned why Douglas gave out merit bonuses while planning to eliminate state jobs and freezing the salaries of other workers. With the deteriorating economy and increased demands on state agencies, he said the state should be adding jobs, not cutting them.

While the merit bonuses were first awarded in June 2007, months before the full extent of the state's economic troubles were known, and there will be no pay increases or bonuses in fiscal 2009 for employees who earn more than \$60,000, Pollina's charge has some sting to it. It shows once again the Douglas administration's penchant for putting public relations ahead of policy.

And speaking of public relations, notice that none of the administration's "communicators" are slated to see their positions cut. It costs taxpayers close to \$800,000 a year for the 14 people charged with spreading the spin for Gov. Douglas. At a time when essential services are facing budget cuts, having 14 "communicators" seems rather indulgent to us.

That's why Pollina suggested that Gov. Douglas consider cuts in middle-management jobs or some of the administration's PR people instead of front-line workers.

"Like a hedge fund or Wall Street firm, the Douglas administration has given those at the top a bonus while those at the bottom lose their shirts," Pollina said at a news conference last week.

We agree. But in response, the Douglas administration did the same thing it always does when someone questions its policies -- it blamed the "out of the mainstream" and "out of touch" Democratic majority in the Legislature for the poor economy that caused the cuts, and brushed off criticism about the bonuses.

But the administration can't blame the Legislature for this one. It authorized the bonuses. It's keeping its high-salaried PR people on the public payroll. Distracting voters with the tired old "Democrats are out of touch" song and dance isn't going to work, especially when it looks like Gov. Douglas is the one who's out of touch when it comes to running Vermont.

## Legislature Appoints Committee To Monitor State's Cuts

Before adjourning, the legislature voted to create a new "Government Oversight Committee" to monitor the State's next round of job cuts and their impact on Vermonters. The committee is holding its first meeting on September 3.

Committee members are:

### Senate

Sen. Ann Cummings (D-Washington)  
Sen. Kevin Mullin (R-Rutland)  
Sen. Diane Snelling (R-Chittenden)  
Sen. Jeanette White (D-Windham)

### House

Rep. Janet Ancel (D-Washington)  
Rep. Mark Larson (D-Chittenden)  
Rep. Pat McDonald (R-Washington)  
Rep. Donna Sweaney (D-Windsor)

## GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE VSEA QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE

*In July, VSEA mailed a candidate questionnaire to the Republican, Democrat and Independent candidates for governor. Democrat Gaye Symington and Independent Anthony Pollina returned their questionnaires by the August 22 deadline, but Republican Jim Douglas did not. Here are the responses of the two candidates who did respond:*



**NAME:** Anthony Pollina (I)

**Vermont currently houses over 500 offenders in private, out-of-state for profit prisons where there is both a lack of quality programming and opportunities for rehabilitation. Furthermore, the costs for offenders sent to these for profit prisons benefit the economies of other states. Will you support legislation that limits the Department of Corrections' ability to contract with these private prisons?**

Explain: Yes. I oppose the development of a private prison industry that profits from incarceration. I also believe sending offenders out of state, away from family, friends and community is counterproduc-

tive and some offenders are exposed to situations in out of state private prisons that are counterproductive.

**The Bennington State Office Building was closed last year after there was discovered to be a cluster of sarcoidosis, a debilitating disease with a wide range of symptoms. The Vermont Department of Health believes the building can be rehabilitated and safely reoccupied, however the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health maintains that the cause of sarcoidosis is unknown. Do you support rehabilitating the old building or do you believe new off-site workplaces should be either leased or built? In general, what is your view on the role of government to protect the health of its employees?**

Explain: Protecting workers' health is a top priority. It is simply the right thing and sick building and indoor air quality related illness impacts workers' health and productivity. I worked on sick school building issues as advisor to Representative Bernie Sanders and policy director of Vermont Public Interest Research Group. I visited sick buildings, advocated for state workers and coordinated a group of physicians and scientists around the issue. I prefer a new site. In part, I think it is difficult, sometimes impossible, to rehabilitate a sick building. It would be nice if the state would take the lead in designing a model office building and work environment.

**400 state positions are being eliminated in FY08 and FY09 which will have an adverse impact on public services. As Governor, will you commit to not making any further position reductions in your FY10 budget?**

Explain: Essentially yes. I am committed to working with workers to determine if and how any future cuts are made. I have spoken out in opposition to the Adminis-

tration's elimination of the positions and the way in which the reductions are taking place. Especially when coupled with "merit" bonuses given to certain members of the Administration. I called for eliminating middle management before front line workers. I believe the position reductions will impact services for Vermonters and I believe that when the economy is weak we should focus on creating good jobs not eliminating jobs and services.

**Do you believe that the Vermont State Hospital should be replaced by a new state-run hospital in central Vermont? Or do you support the state financing a privately operated facility on the campus of a community hospital such as Fletcher Allen or Rutland Regional Medical Center?**

Explain: The State Hospital should be state run. And I do prefer the Central Vermont option. I do not support the state / taxpayers building a facility to be given to another entity to essentially own and operate. It is, of course, another effort to privatize public services, which should be operated in the "public" interest.

**Failure to fully fund the Pay Act requires that agencies and departments increase the number of positions left vacant, resulting in a deterioration of important public services. As Governor, will your budget include a fully funded Pay Act?**

Explain: Yes

**Will you commit to not reducing workers compensation benefits for Vermonters who are injured on the job?**

Explain: Yes. Also, in general I am committed to working towards a Vermont universal health care "system" that could remove or lessen the need for separate workers compensation.

## GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATE VSEA QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE

*In July, VSEA mailed a candidate questionnaire to the Republican, Democrat and Independent candidates for governor. Democrat Gaye Symington and Independent Anthony Pollina returned their questionnaires by the August 22 deadline, but Republican Jim Douglas did not. Here are the responses of the two candidates who did respond:*



NAME: Gaye Symington (D)

**Vermont currently houses over 500 offenders in private, out-of-state for profit prisons where there is both a lack of quality programming and opportunities for rehabilitation. Furthermore, the costs for offenders sent to these for profit prisons benefit the economies of other states. Will you support legislation that limits the Department of Corrections' ability to contract with these private prisons?**

Explain: I prefer keeping our offenders in Vermont where they can get the service and oversight needed. On a related note, I do not accept campaign contributions from Corrections Corporation of America.

**The Bennington State Office Building was closed last year after there was discovered to be a cluster of sarcoidosis, a debilitating disease with a wide range of symptoms. The Vermont Department of Health believes the building can be rehabilitated and safely reoccupied, however the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health maintains that the cause of sarcoidosis is unknown. Do you support rehabilitating the old building or do you believe new off-site workplaces should be either leased or built? In general, what is your view on the role of government to protect the health of its employees?**

Explain: Under my leadership we worked with Senator Vince Illuzi to force the Douglas administration to deal with the Bennington office building. I believe that the building should be tested by an organization approved by the legislature. If the test results show that the building is not safe, I will not make employees there and will consider leasing options. I believe that government should make the health of its employees a priority. That's why I went and visited the employees in Bennington last month.

**400 state positions are being eliminated in FY08 and FY09 which will have an adverse impact on public services. As Governor, will you commit to not making any further position reductions in your FY10 budget?**

Explain: As Governor, I will not make any pledges or promises to any organization. The promise that I will make is that I will be completely upfront and work with state employees on how to tackle the state's budget challenges. During the last session when we were gridlocked over the position cuts, I went over to VSEA and tracked down Annie Noonan to ask for her input and later to hear directly from state workers.

**Do you believe that the Vermont State Hospital should be replaced by a new state-run hospital in central Vermont? Or do you support the state financing a privately operated facility on the campus of a community hospital such as Fletcher Allen or Rutland Regional Medical Center?**

Explain: Under my leadership as Speaker the legislature has been working to make a plan to replace the VSH. This has been a long and difficult process with many potholes and road blocks put in place by the administration. In the Vermont tradition of focusing on community and recovery, the legislature is working towards a replacement that would provide care as close to home as possible. Connecting multiple community hospitals with community mental health and residential support services will not only respect that tradition but can be done at a far more reasonable cost than the original Futures Plan. As Governor, I would make sure this process continues.

**Failure to fully fund the Pay Act requires that agencies and departments increase the number of positions left vacant, resulting in a deterioration of important public services. As Governor, will your budget include a fully funded Pay Act?**

Explain: I recognize that under-funding the pay act can make it difficult to fill open positions and I will of course respect any negotiated contract. I cannot commit to fully funding the budget for the Pay Act without knowing the trade offs in any given budget year.

**Will you commit to not reducing workers compensation benefits for Vermonters who are injured on the job?**

Explain: As Governor, I won't reduce workers compensation benefits for Vermonters who are injured on the job. Under my leadership the legislature resisted calls from Jim Douglas to reduce workers compensation benefits. However, I am not convinced that worker benefits are the main driver behind workers compensation costs.

## VSEA And State Formalize Building Safety And Health Reporting Protocol

Recognizing that its handling of the sarcoidosis outbreak at the Bennington State Office Building was less than admirable, the State invited VSEA late last year to begin working with Buildings and General Services (BGS) and the Department of Health (VDOH) to develop a protocol to address all future State-owned and State-leased building safety and health issues. In early January 2008, the State and VSEA signed off on a formal protocol, named BGS Administrative Policy 0008. Thanks to that collaborative effort, state employees who work in State buildings with safety and health issues can now submit a form via BGS' or VSEA's website to start the ball rolling towards an improved workplace environment.

The protocol received its first test in May 2008, when BGS received "several" complaints from employees working in the Bennington Parole and Probation office, claiming they were made sick by files once housed in the now empty Bennington State Office Building (BSOB). Because the complaints included reports of employee illness, BGS, per the protocol, immediately delivered the complaints to the VDOH, so that agency could launch its own investigation, in addition to BGS'.

"VSEA was pleased to see that, in this initial instance, the protocol does seem to have worked the way it is supposed to have," said VSEA Senior Field Representative Gretchen Naylor, whose territory includes Bennington. "It's especially encouraging that it worked at the Bennington State Office Building, particularly after everything this particular workforce has been through in the past few years."

The first step of the protocol for any state employee experiencing a safety and health issue at their worksite is to log on to VSEA's or BGS' website, find the "Online State Office Building Health & Safety Issue(s) Form," fill out the form and submit it to BGS. Please also provide a copy to VSEA or your VSEA field representative.

Here are the web addresses, where state employees can find the form:

VSEA -- <http://www.vsea.org/> (box in right-hand column)

BGS -- <http://www.bgs.vermont.gov/safe-healthybldg.html>

### Policy 0008 -- Safe and Healthy Building Environments

#### Purpose:

It is the policy of the Department of Buildings and General Services (BGS) to define a procedure for the prompt, coordinated and

comprehensive response to building-related issues affecting the quality of the work environment for State employees in State-owned and State-leased space.

#### Policy:

BGS is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for the employees of all State agencies and departments.

#### Procedure:

The Department of Buildings and General Services, the Health Department and the Vermont State Employees Association have established the Building-Related Issues Resolution Process. Once the nature of an issue has been determined, three levels of investigation have been established to ensure a prompt and appropriate response to work environment concerns.

#### Starting the Process:

Any building-related issues or concerns can be reported by completing the on-line form.

This form should be filled out with the appropriate information and submitted as directed. The form will then be forwarded to the District Facility Manager (DFM) who, with assistance from the maintenance supervisor, will create a work order and determine whether it is a routine maintenance issue or a potential building environment issue.

Routine maintenance issues will be resolved in a timely manner. The complainant will be notified of the process resolution and the completion date when the work order is closed.

If the routine maintenance issue is determined to involve indoor air quality or any other building environment issue affecting employees in their work environment, then BGS will proceed with Level I of the "Resolution Process," as shown in Addendum A: Resolution Process Flowchart.

If prior to Level I in the process, the issue is found to be an outbreak of a serious illness or disease, then the Quality Assurance Team (QAT) and/or the BGS Commissioner will be notified and will immediately notify the Department of Health which will then take the lead in the investigation. BGS will provide assistance as required and as requested.

#### Resolution Process:

##### Level I:

When a potential building environment issue is determined, a Level I investigation is conducted by the DFM, maintenance supervisor, and members of the QAT (when

requested), upon proper notification of appropriate parties.

Resolution of Level I issues must be approved by the QAT and the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services prior to closure. If the issue is not resolved, or the resolution is considered to be unsatisfactory by the QAT and the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services, then the issue moves to Level II status and notification is made to the appropriate parties.

If an outbreak of serious illness or disease is identified at any time during the Level I resolution process, the QAT or the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services will immediately notify the Health Department and other appropriate parties. The Health Department will then assume control of the investigation with BGS providing assistance as required and as requested.

##### Level II:

Level II issues involve some or all members of the QAT, outside environmental consultants as needed and periodic consultation with the Health Department. If a building-related source is identified, then a remediation plan will be developed and implemented as soon as reasonably possible. The implementation of the remediation plan will hopefully resolve the issue. Closure must be approved by the QAT and the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services.

If the resolution is unsatisfactory, or no building-related source is identified, then the QAT and the BGS Commissioner will notify all appropriate parties and the issue will move to Level III.

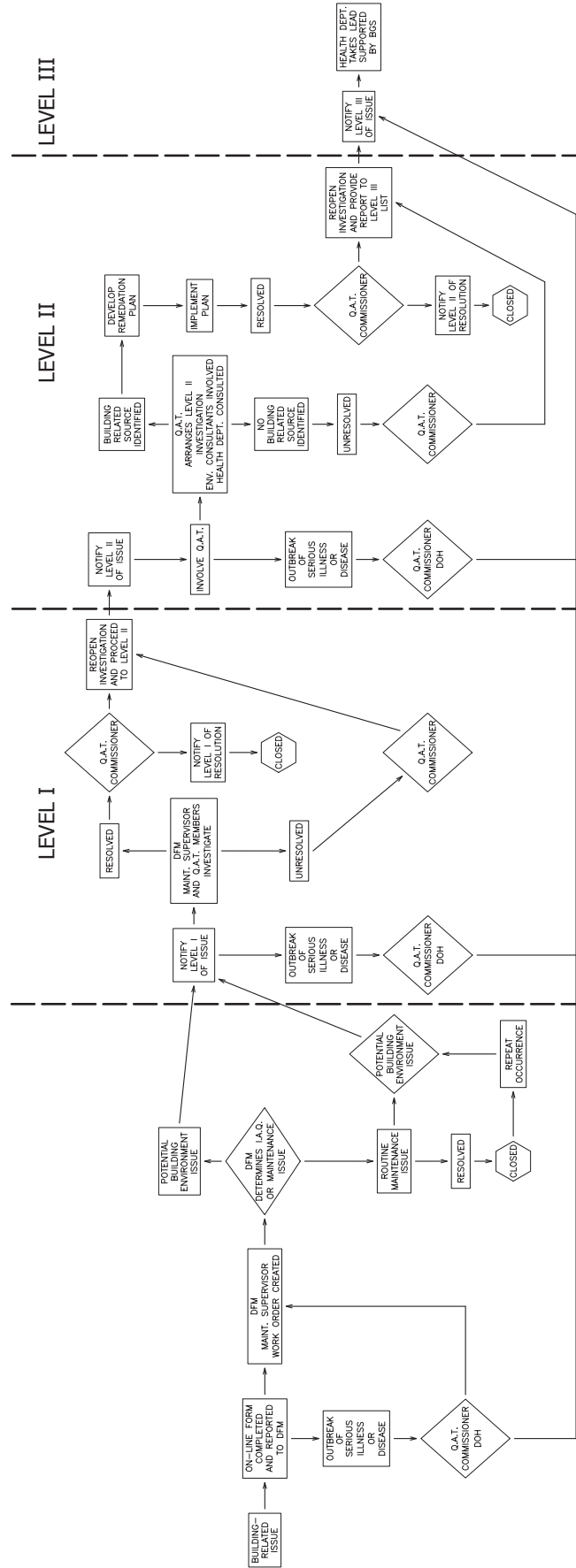
If an outbreak of serious illness or disease is identified at any time during the Level II resolution process, the QAT or the Commissioner of Buildings and General Services will immediately notify the Health Department and other appropriate parties. The Health Department will then assume control of the investigation with BGS providing assistance as required and as requested.

##### Level III:

The Health Department assumes responsibility for resolving issues at this level. BGS will be involved at this level if required or requested to do so by the Health Department.

# NEW INDOOR AIR QUALITY PROTOCOL

## BUILDING - RELATED ISSUES RESOLUTION PROCESS PILOT PROGRAM



- KEY**
- Q.A.T. = QUALITY ASSURANCE TEAM
  - DFM = DISTRICT FACILITIES MANAGER
  - DOH = DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
  - [Rectangle] = PROCESS
  - [Diamond] = DECISION POINT
  - [Hexagon] = PROCESS CLOSED
- LEVEL I NOTIFICATION LIST**
- BGS Q.A.T. LEADER
  - BGS COMMISSIONER
  - V.S.E.A.
  - HUMAN RESOURCES DEPT.
  - BGS DIRECTOR OF FACILITIES
  - BGS MAINT. SUPERVISOR
  - COMPLAINANT (SOURCE)
  - PRIMARY CONTACT FOR AGENCY/DEPT.
- LEVEL II NOTIFICATION LIST**
- LEVEL I LIST
  - ADD: VERMONT DEPT. OF HEALTH
  - HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE
  - COMPLAINANT'S COMMISSIONER
- LEVEL III NOTIFICATION LIST**
- LEVEL I AND LEVEL II LISTS
  - ADD: SECRETARY OF ADMINISTRATION
  - SECRETARY OF HUMAN SERVICES

Revised 11/14/07

## Advice For Stewards Facing “Mandated Reporter” Conflict?

If you are both a VSEA steward and a “mandated reporter” of abuse or neglect, you need to be aware of the potential conflict created between your role as steward to keep member information confidential and your role as mandated reporter that obligates you to be forthcoming about confidential information.

In your steward role, when conducting an initial intake, simply use language like: “Without getting into any specific details right now, what type of misconduct is management alleging you engaged in?” Phrasing the question this way provides the member an opportunity to give you enough general information—without concrete details—for you to decide whether you need to make a referral or provide a “disclaimer” before continuing.

If it’s immediately clear that the alleged bad behavior involves potential abuse or neglect, you need to refer the member in question to another steward who is not a mandated reporter. Tell the member in question that you have a conflict that will prohibit you from representing s/he, but advise them that another VSEA steward will instead be able to assist them. If the situation is serious enough,

contact your VSEA field representative.

If it’s unclear, but possible, that the allegations might involve abuse/neglect, you can provide a disclaimer such as: “Before we discuss this any further, I need to tell you that I am a mandated reporter. That means that if you are about to tell me about a situation that could be viewed as abuse or neglect on your part, I would have to report it to (the relevant State agency). So, if that’s the case, it might be better if (insert other steward’s name) represents you instead. S/he is not a mandated reporter.”

When dealing with this issue, you should always err on the side of caution. It is important for VSEA members to feel like they can tell their stewards everything, but it’s also important that they are forewarned about the steward’s potential conflict—if one exists.

If you have additional questions on this issue, please contact your VSEA field representative.



## Getting To Know Your Contract: A Primer For Stewards (& Members)

*In this and future editions of the VOICE, a contract question will be posed along with the correct answer.*

**Question:** I want to take my family on a vacation, and I put in a request two weeks ago. When I asked my supervisor about it, s/he said it was a busy time of the year so s/he would have to see how it goes. Don’t I have a right to take time off?

**Answer:** Management cannot unreasonably deny an employee request to use earned accumulated leave, and must respond promptly when employees are making travel arrangements or reservations. The Contract states: Article 30, Section 2 (n): Vacation scheduling is the exclusive prerogative of the appointing authority. Leave must be requested in advance by the employee and is subject to approval by the appointing authority or his delegated representative. Such approval shall not be unreasonably withheld. Employees who request a prompt response in order to make travel or lodging reservations shall have their leave request responded to no later than between three (3) days and the stated deadline for making such reservations.

## Did You Know?



*This regular column features interesting news that VSEA members can use.*

It’s come to the attention of VSEA that some employees are being asked by management to submit Parental Family Leave Act (PFLA) or Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) forms prior to taking contractually provided leave. State employees covered under a VSEA contract are not required to fill out and submit PFLA/FMLA forms, unless it is being done of the employee’s own volition.

If an employee wishes to avail themselves of PFLA or FMLA (e.g. because they have exhausted all their leave on the books), he or she should fill out a “Request for PFLA or FMLA” form and submit to the employer along with a PFLA/FMLA “Medical Certification” form. These forms let the employer know that the reason the employee will be out qualifies for PFLA/FMLA and also provides notice of the duration of the leave. These steps ensure an employee is protected under the PFLA and/or FMLA.

If an employee, however, has ample sick leave on the books—and wishes to take time off in accordance with their contract—s/he does not have to fill out the Request and Medical Certification forms, regardless of how long they are out. If an employee is told by management that s/he has to fill out these forms, they should advise the supervisor/manager that they are not requesting PFLA or FMLA and that they decline to complete the forms. If an employee is ordered by management to fill out the forms, s/he should comply (to avoid an insubordination charge) and contact VSEA immediately, as the union will likely file an unfair labor practice (ULP) charge.

Caution: If the employer already has enough information to know that the employee is taking sick leave for the birth/adoption of a child, or for a serious illness (as defined by Article 35 in most contracts), the employer can designate that time off as part of the employee’s FMLA allowance, but, again, the employee cannot be ordered to fill out the forms.

# DOC Unit Chair Pens Op-Ed Challenging Prison Restructuring Cost Savings

The following op-ed by VSEA DOC Unit Chair Dave Bellini appeared July 3 in the Bennington Banner and July 13 in the Times Argus:

### Is Corrections Restructuring A Money Saver?

The honors usually paid to corrections employees in the first week of May during “Corrections Employees Week” rang hollow this year to many Vermont corrections employees. Because while America dedicates this week to acknowledging corrections employees for protecting our safety daily in an often dangerous—and thankless—profession, the State and the Vermont legislature were disregarding a large number of them by deciding to radically restructure Vermont’s very successful prison system.

The decision by the State and the legislature to close the Dale facility in Waterbury, move Dale and Windsor’s female populations to the high-security St. Albans facility, relocate St. Albans inmates to other facilities, convert the Windsor facility to a work camp, and rely more on out-of-state, for-profit private prisons to house inmates is being viewed with great skepticism by a majority of the corrections employees who work at these facilities. It’s not that these employees don’t share the Department of Corrections (DOC) commissioner’s and legislators’ objectives of “corrections reinvestment.” They do. But they have very real concerns about the legislature’s plan, which strays from Vermont’s vision of smaller, specialized facilities which would encourage more programmatic approaches to offender rehabilitation. As one Vermont State Employees’ Association (VSEA) corrections member testified before several committees throughout the legislative debate, “It was the legislature that created Vermont’s current system, and it’s a system that works very well. Other states contact us to find out how they can do it better. What is the great rush to change everything?”

Many legislators and the DOC commissioner would respond that the great rush is to reduce “out-of-control” costs for Vermont taxpayers so the money can be applied elsewhere. It’s a noble gesture, but will the plan actually achieve its stated goals?

Probably not.

The many questions VSEA DOC members raised in committee after committee throughout the legislative debate were thoughtful and persuasive. So much so that the House Corrections and Institutions Com-

mittee voted 10-0 near the end of the session to recommend delaying the radical system change for at least a year so other alternatives could be explored.

DOC employees challenged lawmakers to consider the following:

- If the cost to incarcerate female inmates is so high at Dale, what assurance do Vermonters and the legislature have that the costs won’t escalate to those levels—or beyond—at the St. Albans facility?
- Why would the State and the legislature want to send Vermont tax dollars—and Vermont jobs—out of state to private, for-profit prison corporations, such as Corrections Corporation of America (CCA)? Tax dollars used to pay Vermont corrections employees stay in our state and fuel our economy and businesses. Those dollars are also subject to Vermont taxes.
- What assurance does the State or the legislature have that the large out-of-state prison corporations won’t drastically raise the price to house Vermont inmates, who already have to be transported hundreds of miles to the prison company’s facilities? While it’s true that companies like CCA currently charge less than what Vermont does to house an inmate, that’s due—at least in part—to the fact that it is permitted to cherry pick less problematic inmates to house in its facilities. If and when CCA facilities start to accept the worst of the worst, will that price structure change?
- What about the costs this restructuring will transfer to local communities across Vermont? These concerns were voiced repeatedly throughout the debate, not only by DOC members but also by local police forces and government officials. Increased transport and holding costs, increased overtime costs and reduced manpower, primarily due to longer transports, will all have a major impact on local economies. Local municipalities will also require additional monetary resources to provide services to the new wave of “nonviolent” inmates being released into communities under this plan. So while the State claims to be reducing its costs, local municipalities will almost certainly be forced to raise taxes.



- How much money will it cost to retrofit Vermont’s existing prisons to be able to house the more hardcore inmate possibly coming to it from St. Albans?
- How much money will it cost to train staff at these facilities to supervise their new inmate populations? and
- Couldn’t the DOC and the State find a huge immediate savings by finding housing for the 140-plus Vermont inmates currently being jailed—at the taxpayers’ expense—because of a lack of housing?

So after all the dust from the impending restructuring settles, will Vermont realize the savings the State and some legislative leaders repeatedly said it would? We’ll see. But be assured, VSEA and other interested groups will be watching the process closely and asking for periodic updates on what savings have actually been achieved as a result of the radical restructuring of our State’s corrections system.

As for the men and women serving as Vermont corrections employees, the VSEA applauded them during “Correctional Employees Week”—and the union applauds them every day. No one does a better job. Their level of exceptional supervision and treatment of Vermont’s inmates is second to none across the nation. If Vermont’s exceptional corrections system falters in the coming months and years, it won’t be hard to trace back where the blame must fall.

## VSEA Awards 2008 Scholarships

At the June 17 VSEA Council meeting, the winners of this year's VSEA \$500 scholarship prizes—as chosen by the VSEA Awards and Scholarship Committee—were announced. They are (in alphabetical order):

**Kara Bissonnette** (VSEA member) – Kara, a Regional Assistant with the Division of Fire Safety, attends Union Institute Champlain College and is pursuing a master's degree in Health.

**Nicolas Ledo** (son of VSEA member Cpt. Edward Ledo) – Nicolas attends Lyndon State College and is pursuing a degree in the Social Sciences (emphasis on historical studies) with a minor in English.



**Chantal Marcoux** (daughter of VSEA members Laurie and Cpl. Claude Marcoux) – Chantal attends Castleton State College and is pursuing a degree in Psychology.

**Christopher Robinson** (VSEA member) – Christopher, an investigator with the Defender General's Office, is pursuing a Master's of Science in Law at Woodbury College.

**Gregory Silvestri** (son of VSEA member Joe Silvestri) – Gregory is pursuing a degree in Biochemistry at the University of Vermont.

**Stephanie St. Onge** (daughter of VSEA member Peggy St. Onge) – Stephanie is pursuing a degree in Nursing and is hoping to attend Norwich University.

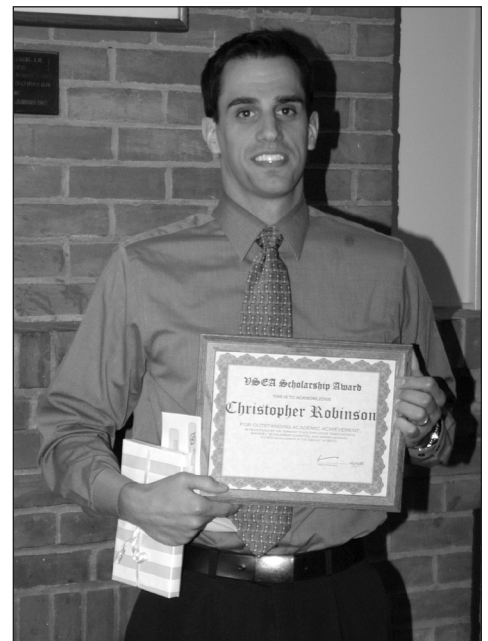


*Left: Nicolas Ledo proudly displays his award.*

*Below: Scholarship winner Kara Bissonnette couldn't attend the meeting so her co-workers, VSEA members Bob Stone and Monte Mason, were happy to accept for her.*



*Stephanie St. Onge is working towards a nursing degree.*



*VSEA member Christopher Robinson is using his award to pursue a master's degree.*

# State Tries To Charge VSEA \$1,700 To Review Public Records Union Won't Pay!

In early July, VSEA issued a public records request to 17 State agencies and departments, requesting copies of all written communications (letters, e-mail, faxes, documents, memoranda or other reports) between specified officials concerning:

- The Governor's initiative to eliminate 400 state positions;
- The impact of this initiative on the services provided by (Agency/Dept.);
- The impact of this initiative on the operations of (Agency/Dept.);
- The impact of this initiative on the (Agency's/Dept.'s) clients and employees; and
- The possible or actual use of temporary or contracted employees to provide functions of the positions eliminated as a result of this initiative.

A few weeks later, several agencies and departments had responded to VSEA's request and provided documents for review. Not one asked VSEA for any fees other than standard copy fees, which the union was prepared to pay. Then came the Department of Human Resources (DHR) response on July 24. It said the records would be provided but VSEA would have to pay \$1,700 (the fee DHR wanted to charge the union for someone's time to compile the records).

Upon learning that the DHR was charging VSEA a fee to review public records, the union issued the following press release on July 28:

The State's Department of Human Resources (DHR) has informed the Vermont State Employees' Association (VSEA) that it must agree to pay \$1,700.00 in fees before the union can review public documents it requested.

Under the Vermont Access to Public Records Act (1 VSA 315 et seq.), VSEA had asked to inspect internal correspondence from select state officials, concerning the impact of the Governor's 400 proposed job cuts on the services and operations of state government.

In a letter dated July 24, 2008, on behalf of Commissioner David Herlihy, the union was informed that the State anticipated costs of "approximately \$1,700" to compile VSEA's request and stated that VSEA must be prepared to "pay this cost in advance of being provided access to the records."

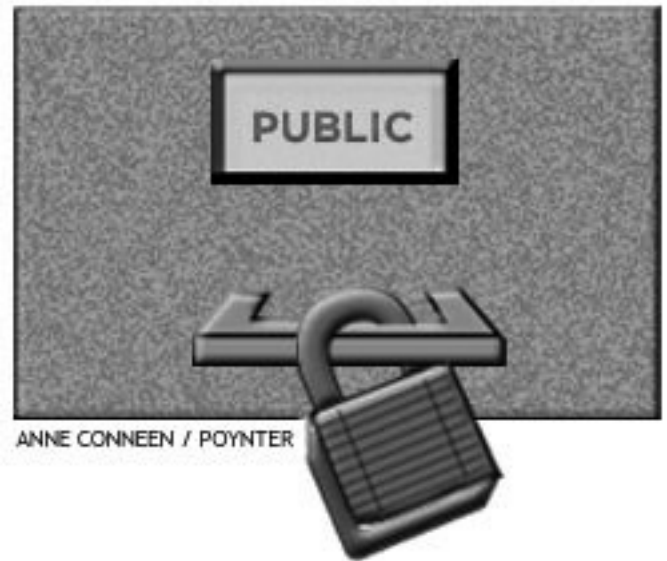
VSEA Interim Director Michael Casey strongly criticized the State's decision to charge such an exorbitant fee to review public documents.

"The fact is, the public has a vested interest in knowing what government services and operations are impacted by the Governor's 'position reduction' initiative—but the public should not be required to pay to examine internal correspondence about those effects."

Casey added that VSEA believes the DHR's attempt to charge is contrary to the spirit and intent of the Vermont law, which states: "Officers of the government are trustees and servants of the people and it is in the public interest to enable any person to review and criticize their decisions even though such examination may cause inconvenience or embarrassment."

One day after informing VSEA it would have to pay \$1,700 to the DHR for it to compile records sought by the union in a public records request, DHR Commissioner David Herlihy wrote a letter to VSEA asking the union to consider filing the same request under Article 6 of the collective bargaining agreement. Herlihy said Article 6 was a good option because VSEA's request for DHR correspondence related to the 400 job cuts would be very time consuming for the department to gather under the 10-day response timeline mandated by Vermont's Access to Public Records Act. Under Article 6, the State would have no defined time frame in which to respond to VSEA's request, which is the primary reason the union said "no" to the State's offer.

VSEA Interim Director Michael Casey issued a statement to the press about the offer, saying: "We would be happy to accommodate a request for an extension of time as permitted by the Public Records Act (an additional 10 days). But we choose not to request information under Article 6 of the collective bargaining agreement because that provision does not include any timeframes for a response, and we would



not have the enforcement mechanisms afforded us under the Public Records Act."

VSEA Staff Attorney Abigail Doolittle expounded on the union's position to the Associated Press, telling the news agency that VSEA wants to maintain the Public Records Act's timelines as a tool in the union's efforts to pry loose information. She added that the Act also affords the union legal recourse if the information is not produced. "Unlike Article 6, the Public Records Act contains strong enforcement mechanisms, including expedited docketing in Superior Court, the power to order production of documents, and an award of attorney fees and costs if the union prevails."

VSEA sent a letter to Herlihy on July 31, explaining the union's reasons for rejecting the Article 6 idea but offering the State the Act's additional 10 day extension to respond to the public records request.

"We are willing to offer you additional time to compile our records request," wrote Casey. "By doing so, we are not waiving our enforcement rights under the Access to Public Records Act, but are hoping to compromise with you to meet the needs of your office. We believe that a deadline of August 18, 2008, is fair, and we are glad to provide you this additional extension."

On August 18, DHR produced the public documents requested and VSEA staff reviewed them on August 20. There was no charge, other than a fee to copy the documents pulled by VSEA.

### VSEA Member Pens Tribute To Deceased Co-Worker

By Terry Lefebvre, VDOH, Burlington

Many state workers knew Bethany Fitzgerald, who worked for the State of Vermont for 22 years. Her last job was at Health Department at 108 Cherry Street in Burlington. Beth's primary duty was making sure everyone in the Health Department had a working telephone. No easy task. Her job duties required her to travel around the state, so she got to meet just about everyone in the Health Department.

There was no harder worker anywhere than Beth. There was always more work to be done than people to do it, and Beth often tried to carry far more than her share of the load. She recently told a co-worker that she didn't know how much longer she could keep up the pace. Because of understaffing, Beth was trying to do three jobs, and she was exhausted.

On Tuesday, June 10, Beth was not feeling well. As usual, she came in to



work anyway because there were things she just had to do. To our great shock and sorrow, Beth collapsed at work. Attempts to revive her were not successful. She was

42 years old. She leaves her husband, Joel, and four children, Daniel, Ashley, Jamie and Hannah.

Beth typified so many state workers. She put her job before herself. She was dedicated to the people who depended on her and would not rest until she was sure they had what they needed. She will be sorely missed.

At the June 17 VSEA Council meeting, members passed a hat at the June and donated the proceeds to Beth's family. Those of us who knew Beth are grateful for having had that privilege.

*Ed Note: Beth's family is asking that anyone wishing to honor her can do so by making a contribution in her memory to:*

Save the Manatee Club  
500 N. Maitland Ave.  
Maitland, FL 32751

### Four-Day Work Week Debate Begins In Vermont

Like many states across the country, Vermont is beginning to weigh the pros and cons of offering state and public school employees a compressed, four-day work week that supporters of the idea say will save the state energy and money.

In June, Sen. Vince Illuzzi (R-Orleans) publicly floated the four-day work week idea to the press and Vermonters. Explaining his reasoning to the *Times Argus* newspaper, Illuzzi said:

"If folks are commuting four days a week, instead of five, I think there's some significant cost savings that can be achieved given the current price of petroleum-based products. We're not giving them the day off. We're asking them to do the same amount of work in a four-day period, to enable them to save costs, and to enable the State to save money on heating buildings."

VSEA Legislative Coordinator Conor Casey responded to Illuzzi's idea for the union, telling the paper: "VSEA members are well aware that these are difficult economic times, and the union applauds Senator Illuzzi for exploring creative cost-saving ideas that don't negatively impact public services or result in layoffs. If the

Senator's proposal gains momentum, VSEA will certainly present the idea to our membership and then determine where in state government opportunities may exist to implement his ideas, particularly the four-day work week."

VSEA also reminded the media that the union has already negotiated a provision in many of its contracts that allows some employees to request a four-day work week or "flextime," pending management approval. And years ago, VSEA drafted a policy that would have allowed employees to "telecommute" where feasible, but the Agency of Administration chose to ignore the union's telecommuting policy.

The downside VSEA sees to the proposals are that many State operations are 24/7 and a four-day work week would not be possible and a 10-hour work day could present challenges to state employees with child or elder care demands.

In late July, VSEA formed a committee to discuss the pros and cons of the four-day work week proposal. The committee will present its conclusions to the VSEA Council when it meets in Montpelier on September 12.

### Have You Been Asked To Not Record Hours Worked?

As the State continues to eliminate positions, employees are being asked to take on more and more work without more pay. If your workload is such that you cannot complete it during your normal work schedule, you should record all hours you actually work on your time sheet. Managers should NOT be instructing employees to record fewer hours than they actually work on their time sheets. If you have a manager who is instructing you not to record all hours actually worked on your time sheet, VSEA wants to hear from you immediately! Such instruction may be a violation of law. You must still get pre-approval to work overtime, but that is different from being told to falsify timesheets by under-reporting hours actually worked. If you are being told to under-report hours on your timesheet, please contact VSEA immediately at 223-5247, or by e-mail at [vsea@vsea.org](mailto:vsea@vsea.org).

### VSEA Upset By BGS Suspension Of Quality Assurance Teams

VSEA representatives to the joint labor-management committee on Safety and Health were upset to learn on June 10 that BGS had decided, without warning, to change the duties of its recently created Quality Assurance Teams (QAT).

BGS Deputy Commissioner Tom Sandretto told the committee that the QATs would no longer be proactively investigating the “50 Worst State Office Buildings” (in terms of safety and health complaints) to determine the status of the buildings and what needed to be done to make them healthier and safer. To date, just

six of the 50 inspections had occurred. Instead, Sandretto said that, due to costs and manpower issues, the QATs would now only be “reacting” to site specific building related issues.

The news did not sit well with VSEA committee members because in several meetings in 2007, then newly appointed BGS Commissioner Gerry Myers sold the QAT program to the union as a proactive way to demonstrate BGS’ commitment to improving State worksites and ensuring employees’ concerns were being addressed. He said he wanted to avoid

future problems and issues like those experienced by employees working at the Bennington State Office Building.

“VSEA is disappointed that BGS has abandoned its proactive approach to these possibly serious safety and health issues in State office buildings across Vermont,” said VSEA Interim Director Michael Casey. “BGS can continue to ignore the many problems already identified in these buildings, but the problems are not going to go away by themselves; they are only going to get worse—and employees’ safety and health will suffer.”

### Peters Wins District 9 AOT Rodeo Loader Competition

Pictured here is District 9 AOT employee and VSEA member Bernie Peters, who works at the AOT garage in Albany, Vermont. Peters, a 37-year AOT employee, won first place in the loader competition at the District 9 rodeo on June 19 at the Derby garage. He’s proudly holding the certificate presented to him to commemorate his first-place finish.

Throughout the month of June, AOT district garages across the state hosted their annual “AOT Rodeos,” where AOT employees compete in a series of events to see who is the best in events like “the loader competition” and “snow plow maneuvering.” The final competition was held July 23 in Colchester.

One down side to this year’s competitions is the State, as it has in years past, will not be funding a trip to the national AOT rodeo, where Vermont AOT employees have historically competed against other AOT employees from across the country. The State told AOT employees the decision was due to a lack of funds.



### Noonan Honored At Annual “Murphy BBQ”

Outgoing VSEA Director Annie Noonan received a special honor in early July at this year’s “Murphy Barbeque,” an annual fundraising event hosted by retired Rep. John Murphy (pictured here with Noonan). She was honored with the “John Murphy Labor Award” for her longtime dedication to furthering the cause of working Vermonters statewide. VSEA members know Annie certainly earned the award!

### Longtime VSH Employee Calls It Quits

*After 36 dedicated years working at the Vermont State Hospital in Waterbury, Dr. Larry Thomson retired from State service on July 1, 2008. He began work at the VSH as a Staff Psychologist for five years and spent the next 31 years as Director of Psychology.*

*Throughout the long—and ongoing—debate about where to relocate the antiquated VSH and whether or not to keep it state-run and staffed by state employees, Larry was an outspoken advocate for keeping VSH state run, retaining the state workforce and keeping the facility in central Vermont, preferably in Waterbury. If there was a hearing or meeting on the VSH's future, VSEA could count on Larry to be there and to provide the valuable insight only a seasoned VSH employee could.*

*Just after leaving State service, the VOICE conducted an interview with Larry. Here's what he had to say:*

**Q: What prompted you to retire from State service now?**

A: The last few years have been very stressful, both in terms of the external pressure due to the VSH's decertification and the subsequent Department of Justice agreement. And after the style of management that was imposed (supposedly) to help us recover our great reputation, I decided I had had enough.

**Q: What will you miss most about your VSH job?**

A: I will miss the daily contact with my VSH colleagues and with the patients with whom I have worked. They are both very special groups of people, which was very clear to me all along, and especially as I approached my last few days at the hospital. It is really too bad that most people are unaware of the community that is VSH.

**Q: Describe how the VSH has changed during your tenure. For better or worse?**

A: VSH has gone from a well run, flexible treatment facility, to an externally driven, internally restrictive place where policies are imposed from the top without a sense of preserving the humanity that has been lost. Fortunately, the care of clients goes on in spite of these changes, although the staff has to maintain itself, its motivation and its energy in the face of negative commentary from the press, attacks from people who have no idea what truly ex-

cellent care requires, and the continuous threat that the staff will be abandoned by the State in favor of a privatized system which has never been effective in other states that have tried it.

**Q: What have you enjoyed most about your career at the VSH?**

A: I have enjoyed the ability to take on new projects over the years that were helpful to my patients. I have enjoyed the incredible support of my colleagues at VSH, and I have enjoyed seeing patients recover their lives and move back into the community.

**Q: What have you enjoyed the least?**

A: I have not enjoyed watching the State allow the hospital to wither on the vine for years (despite warnings from its own staff) and to see VSH be dragged through the mud of ignorant public commentary, or to see the hospital become victimized by internal and external policy imposition, which seemed only designed to please external legal entities but not to advance clinical care.

**Q: What's the biggest public misconception about the VSH?**

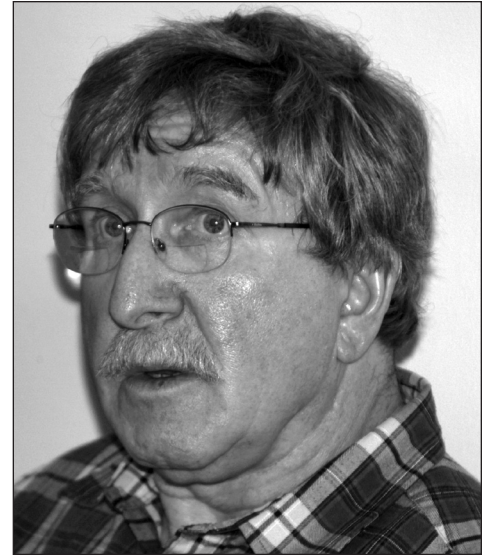
A: In the past few years, it is that the hospital was not providing good care. Before that, even though it was seen as a great treatment setting (if only by those who actually knew the hospital) it was shrouded in mystery, which added to the stigma issue for our patients and kept people from knowing—more accurately—what we offered and why it is such an important part of the public mental health system.

**Q: Is there anything unique or special about the VSH?**

A: Absolutely! It is the ONLY treatment site in Vermont that has the experience, skills, and therapeutic philosophy to effectively care for Vermonters who are in the throes of severe and complicated life crises. VSH only has patients because no other in-patient facility will take, or keep, or work with the kinds of challenging, complicated life issues that people who are admitted there are facing.

**Q: What lessons about state government have you learned in your tenure?**

A: I have learned that there are many people in the legislature who truly want



the people of Vermont to be well served by their government and its services. At the same time, political policies, meant to serve a very few, can derail the best efforts of all the others. This is frustrating!

**Q: In your opinion, should the VSH continue as a State-run entity?**

A: The overwhelming majority of individuals with severe and persistent mental illness also have to deal with issues like poverty, lack of health insurance, and many complex life problems (e.g. substance abuse, stigma and social isolation). Providing all the services these individuals need is not a "money-making proposition." Private hospitals must always keep an eye on their "bottom line," which is not what the primary goal should be. It's why the responsibility for the kind of care provided at VSH has historically been undertaken by states. It is important for people to realize that the "per diem" rates that private hospitals charge (compared to VSH's per diem) only cover bed and board. Anyone who has been in a hospital knows that every therapy group, doctor's visit or aspirin is charged to the patient, in addition to the "per diem." The VSH "per diem" covers everything. If the governor gets to privatize the care now provided by VSH, the actual costs of inferior care will actually rise to reflect these very real differences.

**Q: How do you view VSEA's efforts to keep the VSH a state entity?**

A: I feel that VSEA has done a very effective job of representing both the patients

### Thomson

*Continued from page 16*

and staff at VSH. In this case, VSEA is on the side of the angels because their position is that a new State Hospital, built in central Vermont, would:

- Serve the patients who need care there better than any other plan put forward by the governor's team;
- Serve the families and friends of these patients by providing a safe, beautiful facility in which to visit their loved ones, and located in an area that makes travel to it easier from anywhere in the state—and less expensive in this time of \$4.00 gas; and
- Provide a state-of-the-art hospital for a fraction of the cost (\$29 million as compared to \$100 million) that the governor's privatization and corporate welfare plan would provide.

**Q: Why did you choose to become actively involved in the VSEA effort to keep the VSH as a state entity and in central Vermont?**

A: As someone who knew the mental health system so intimately, I was horrified that a political decision was made to discard the State's responsibility to care for our most vulnerable people and hand it over to a sector of the health care system that had actually demonstrated its inability to do the work VSH does every day. It would be a catastrophe for our patients. The idea that this idea was made for economic and political reasons made this process all the more upsetting.

**Q: In your opinion, why is it important for VSEA members to get active in workplace campaigns?**

A: Only Vermonters who provide the services our citizens need—and who know how great that need is—can comment with knowledge and realistic details. The VSEA "Speak Out" at the State House cafeteria, in response to Governor Douglas' plan to cut 400 State positions and his foolish declaration that services for Vermonters would not be affected by this decimation, is a good example. When disconnected leaders make such plans, it takes a lot of real people voicing their concerns to counteract the power of publicity that a sitting governor has at his or her beck and call.

**Q: How would you categorize the state's efforts to relocate the VSH? What has it done right? Wrong?**

A: As I stated earlier, a new State Hospital, built in central Vermont, is the only way to serve the patients, their friends and families, and do it in a fiscally responsible way. Moving the VSH services to far flung, small and inflexible locations is the wrong way to do it.

**Q: Is there anything you fear could happen as a result of the relocation effort? Something that will do irreparable harm?**

A: As I have expressed before, if the privatization plan goes through, we will not be able to reverse course after all the money is spent and all the building and renovations have been completed and given away—at taxpayer expense!

**Q: What is employee morale like these days?**

A: Staff morale at VSH is very low these days, as one might expect. The only so-called planning for the future that is being publicly discussed is still the governor's corporate welfare plan, which is still presented with cost "estimates" rather than the actual capital expenditures that VSEA presented to the "Futures Committee" over a year ago. The public needs to know the facts.

**Q: What advice do you offer to younger VSH workers?**

A: Younger VSH staff should follow this discussion in the State House closely, and be active in this conversation. The hospital has always been able to attract staff members who are very dedicated to the patients. These staffers should continue to hone their skills and help explain their role to the public and the people's representatives in Montpelier. Vermonters need to know that VSH is a vibrant and effective hospital, which is the only place where our patients can be effectively treated.

**Q: If you were able to give one piece of advice about the VSH to the governor and key legislators, what would it be?**

A: Learn what VSH actually provides and do not allow it to be dismantled in the name of a political policy that has failed everywhere else.

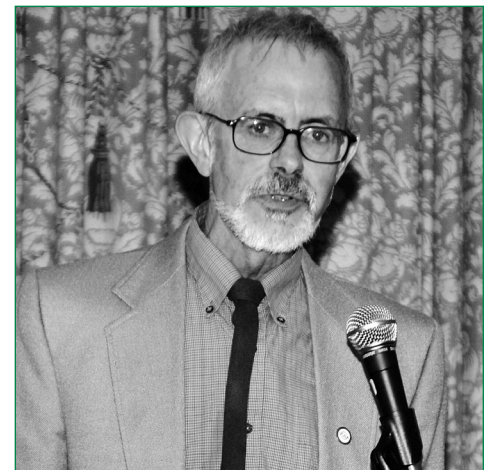
**Q: Finally, what will you do in retirement? Stay in Vermont?**

A: I will continue to live in Vermont, which is such a wonderful place to live. I plan to stay active with family activity, continuing to volunteer with a Cub Scouting program I am involved with, and look for other kinds of employment.

## Member Gives \$450 To VtPAC

Longtime VSEA member and activist Alton "Tony" Smith once again demonstrated his deep personal commitment to helping VSEA elect candidates who will fight for social and economic justice for all working Vermonters, especially state employees. In late June, Smith wrote a check for \$450 to VtPAC, VSEA's political action committee. This is the largest individual contribution VtPAC has received in 2008.

"Tony is a diehard political activist and a great union member," said VSEA Legislative Coordinator Conor Casey, who helps administer VtPAC for the union. "We really appreciate his very generous contribution, and we'll be putting it to good use by ensuring that candidates who support VSEA and our issues receive it."



## Packed House For Annie Noonan Goodbye

More than 100 VSEA members, staff, retirees, Vermont labor representatives, legislators and friends and family packed the Elks Club on May 30 to say goodbye to VSEA Director Annie Noonan.

Delivering tributes to Noonan's exemplary career at VSEA were VSEA Past Presidents Bob Hooper and Terry Macaig, House Speaker Gaye Symington, Washington County Senator Bill Doyle, House Government Operations Committee Chair Donna Sweaney and member Pat McDonald and VSP Unit Chair Mike O'Neil. Annie's daughter Colleen concluded the night's speeches with a moving tribute to her mom.

Annie will remain on a part-time basis with VSEA through Annual Meeting in September. On June 2, she began work at her new position with the University of Connecticut Professional Employees Association, where she will head up the unit's collective bargaining, grievance and arbitration work.

Godspeed Annie!



*Annie delivers her farewell speech to a packed house of well wishers, saying she's proud of all VSEA was able to accomplish in her many years serving as director. She thanked VSEA members for their solidarity through the good times and the tough times.*



*Annie's daughter Colleen delivers very moving remarks about how proud she is of her "mom."*



*VSEA members like these visited with Annie throughout the evening, many expressing their thanks for her service and their wishes for continued success.*



*Annie visits with some of the many VSEA retired members who attended the event.*

## Fire Safety Employee Receives Award For Outstanding Performance



In mid July, the Williston Office of the Division of Fire Safety presented a merit award to VSEA member Kara Bissonnette for outstanding service.

Bissonnette, a Fire Prevention Regional Assistant since 2006, was recognized for her outstanding performance, primarily because of her efforts to eliminate huge filing backlogs and organize and plan work procedures for greater efficiency.

"Kara has exceeded all expectations since assuming the position of Regional Assistant," said Williston Office Regional Manager Robert Patterson (pictured here presenting Bissonnette with her award). "What Kara has learned and accomplished since working with us is far more than I would have anticipated. I have never seen anyone more efficient and as organized as she is. Her competitive nature pushes her to complete a high number of computer entries—more than 8,600 in the past year, which is an amazing amount. She excels in every aspect of her job."

VSEA member and activist Monte Mason, who works with Bissonnette, echoed Patterson's praise, saying, "We are very proud of Kara and very fortunate to have her in our office."

## Judiciary Unit Ratifies New Two-Year Agreement

On June 16, VSEA members of the Judiciary Unit voted 36-4 to ratify a new two-year agreement that affords Unit members a 1.8 percent wage increase each year of the contract. Terms and conditions of the new agreement began on July 1, 2008.

"I was very impressed with the outcome of our negotiations, and I was pleased with the respect each side showed towards the other," says VSEA Judiciary Unit Chair Bill Capasso. "Given the current financial climate in Vermont—and hearing of incidents throughout the country where bargaining has led to "givebacks" by unions—I believe our team did a great job. Although the COLA is not as high as we would have liked, we were able to make financial gains in other areas and negotiate increased benefits. All in all, the bargaining team is pleased with the outcome, and, judging by the vote, the members were as well."

Here are some of the contract's other highlights:

- Compensation and Benefits: a) outlines alternate assignments out of the unit and procedure for returning without loss of benefits b) changes date of effective step movement for retroactive to beginning of the pay period if the actual step date falls within the first half of the pay period c) increases RFA stipend from \$ 25 to \$ 35 per pay period d) establishes a career development and personal wellness fund to provide an annual benefit for associated activities;
- Insurance Programs: an "opt-out" program was created that, beginning January 1, 2009, will provide participants a cash reimbursement per pay period with a proscribed quarterly savings period; and
- Other Leave: an increase in the personal leave accrual rate from 10 hours to 12 hours per quarter, as a sick leave incentive.



The Judiciary Unit Bargaining team was (left to right): Bill Capasso, Lucinda Kirk, Desiree Fucile, Shannon Bessery and Patricia McPhee.

## Upcoming Advantage Days Events

The VSEA Membership Recruitment Committee kicked off a new series of Advantage Discount Program Days in Morrisville on June 25. Years ago, "Advantage Days" were regular events in VSEA chapters across Vermont, but, in the past few years, they have not been held for various reasons.

VSEA's Advantage Discount Program is a collection of participating vendors statewide who, in exchange for free advertising and increased customer volume, offer discounts on goods and services to VSEA members. Advantage Days events allow participating vendors to bring their goods and services directly to VSEA members in the chapters where they work. Free food and beverages are also available to VSEA members who attend.

Here is the schedule of upcoming Advantage Days events:

- Sept. 3 – White River Junction Chapter
- Sept. 9 – Addison Chapter
- Sept. 10 – Chittenden Chapter
- Oct. 2 – Vermont State Hospital and Waterbury Chapters
- Oct. 7 – Barre Chapter
- Oct. 10 – Chittenden Chapter

For a complete listing of participating Advantage Discount Program vendors, go to [www.vsea.org](http://www.vsea.org) and click on the gold "Advantage Program" box on the homepage's left-hand side.

## Letters to the Editor

*Continued from page 2*

I urge you all to start asking questions. Find out what the real impact of these job cuts will be.

Theresa Lefebvre  
Burlington

Appeared in the 8/14 *Rutland Herald*

## Where's The State's Plan?

Just a note to thank the *Rutland Herald* for publishing the Aug. 11 editorial "Budget Needs Further Review."

As a recently retired state employee, I have been watching the news closely about the state's budget and employee cuts. I've also been hearing directly from many of my friends and co-workers about how reckless they think the Governor's "position reduction exercise" has been so far, and I agree. There doesn't seem to be any thought or strategy to the Governor's process. It's being done blindly. Many critical public services Vermonters depend are being chopped willy nilly with no regard for any bad consequences.

The *Herald* is absolutely right to begin asking the Governor why his handpicked public relations people are not being asked to share the sacrifice he is asking all other Vermonters to share. If the Governor is going to balance the budget on the backs of state employees, he should also require his bloated personal staff to carry some of the weight. It would be the right message to send to an already decimated state workforce.

Joan Eckley  
West Haven

## BUZZ FARMER REMEMBERED

VSEA is mourning the passing of Past President Roy "Buzz" Farmer, who died recently at his home in Arizona.

Buzz will be remembered as the first VSEA president to be elected to consecutive two-year terms. He was instrumental in the purchase of the current VSEA headquarters in Montpelier and mortgaging it through the Vermont State Retirement System.

Buzz was a long-term AOT employee and an ardent VSEA activist and supporter, even in retirement.

# ADVANTAGE PROGRAM

## New To The VSEA Advantage Discount Program

**Thanks to the hard work of the VSEA Membership Recruitment Committee and several individual VSEA members, many new businesses have joined the VSEA Advantage Discount Program in the past six months. Here are the businesses that have come on board:**

### Antiques

#### **Pedlar's Cove Antiques**

385 East Shore Rd.  
Isle La Motte, VT 0546  
Contact: Evanthia Hill  
Phone: 802-928-3001  
E-mail: evanthiahill@hotmail.com  
10 percent off store merchandise!



### Automotive Services

#### **City Tire Company**

Other locations: West Lebanon, NH; Keene, NH; Springfield, MA; Abraham, MA; Pittsfield, MA; Worcester, MA; Greenfield, MA; Waterford, CT; 740 Marshall Ave.  
Williston, VT 05495  
802-951-9999  
10 percent off tires, wheels and auto repairs!

#### **Gigi's Cleaning Company/Auto Detailing**

Gerette Buglion/Jane McKenzie  
93 S. Main St.  
Waterbury, VT 05655  
Phone: 802-244-6992  
E-mail: gigiscleaningcompany@verizon.net  
Website: www.gigiscleaningco.com  
\$25 off complete interior & exterior auto reconditioning! Free paint sealant for jobs done in Waterbury. Mobile Service. We come to you!

### Beauty and Spas

#### **Arbonne International (Skincare/Nutrition)**

159 Pearl St.  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Phone: 802-878-5596 or 802-878-8228  
E-mail: JMCelia@msn.com  
10 percent off retail product purchased from independent consultant Jennifer Celia! Potential for free product when hosting party!

#### **Essex Hair Designers & Body Essentials Day Spa**

1 Towne Market Place  
Susie Wilson Rd.  
Essex Junction, VT  
Phone: 802-879-0306  
Website: www.bodyessentialdayspa  
15 percent discount on all hair and spa services!  
Some examples of the services offered:  
facials • nail services • waxing services  
seas salt scrub • massage • full spa packages

#### **Master Cuts**

Diamond Run Mall  
Rutland, VT  
Contact: Krista Aratare 802-773-0123  
20 percent discount on all retail products and services!



#### **The Rusty Clipper**

159 Pearl St.  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Phone: 802-878-5596  
Contact: Kristianna Blackwell  
E-mail: myx731@hotmail.com  
10 percent discount on cuts, color, facial, wax and skincare and cosmetic services! 10 percent off all products!

### Cleaning

#### **Gigi's Cleaning Company/House Cleaning**

Gerette Buglion/Jane McKenzie  
93 S. Main St.  
Waterbury, VT 05655  
Phone: 802-244-6992  
E-mail: gigiscleaningcompany@verizon.net  
Website: www.gigiscleaningco.com  
25 percent off first-time cleaning (minimum of \$100).  
\$25 off Spring/Deep Cleaning (windows, carpets, special projects, etc). Service available in Washington, Lamoille and Chittenden Counties.

### Clothing

#### **Deerfield Designs**

Screenprint and Embroidery  
151 Mad River Canoe, #7  
Waitsfield, VT 05673  
Contact: Creighton Vogt  
Phone: 802-496-4224  
E-mail: info@deerfelddesigns.com  
Website: www.deerfelddandco.com  
15 percent discount on all services and products.  
Must mention "VSEA"

#### **Sox Market**

99 Church St.  
Burlington, VT 05819  
802-859-0832  
Martha Fortune, proprietor  
10 percent off purchase!

### Computer Services

#### **ACK Computing**

Computer Repairs and Training  
454 South Main  
Northfield, VT 05663  
802-485-4352  
Serving Barre, Berlin, Moretown, Montpelier, Northfield, Riverton, Roxbury and Williamstown  
\$50/hour charge plus \$25 travel charge for all house calls outside the downtown Northfield area

#### **www.BinaryBlacksmith.com**

Web Programming and Website Design  
Stonehedge  
South Burlington, VT 05403  
Phone: 802-598-3179  
Contact: Daniel J.J. Lefebvre  
E-mail: daniel@binaryblacksmith.com  
Website: www.binaryblacksmith.com  
25 percent discount on all web development work, including website design, programming and logo work! Special pricing on photo scanning and photo

slide show creation. 25 percent off computer tutoring services, private lessons and workshops!

### Crafts and Hobbies

#### **Ben Franklin**

63 Main St.  
Middlebury, VT 05753  
Phone: 802-388-2101  
10 percent off everything, except custom framing!

#### **Kaleidoscope Yarns**

15 Pearl St.  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Phone: 802-288-9200  
Contact: Jill Bujold  
Website: www.kyarns.com  
10 percent off any regularly priced purchases over \$50 (excludes sales items and classes). Void on store purchases only, not online purchases!

### Exercise and Fitness

#### **CURVES of Bennington**

901 E. Main St., Suite 2  
Bennington, VT 05201  
Contact: Judy Brownell  
Phone: 802-442-0600  
E-mail: curvesben@sover.net  
Website: www.curves.com  
50 percent savings on current promotion for VSEA members and a friend! New members only.

#### **CURVES of Randolph**

12 1/2 South Main St.  
Randolph, VT 05060  
Phone: 802-728-7088  
E-mail: curvesfw@verizon.net  
Website: http://www.curves.com/  
50 percent savings on current promotion for VSEA members and a friend!

#### **CURVES of Waterbury**

6 North Main St.  
Waterbury, VT 05676  
Phone: 802-244-7224, ask for Ruth Elzey or Erin Divelbiss  
E-mail: curvesow@verizon.net  
Website: http://www.curves.com/  
50 percent savings on current promotion for VSEA members and a friend!

#### **CURVES of Williston**

4735 Williston Rd., Ste. 20  
Williston, VT 05495  
Phone: 802-951-9866  
Contact: Sanda Mobbs  
E-mail: smobbs09220@verizon.net  
Website: http://www.curves.com/  
Additional 15 percent off joining fee at time of service!

# ADVANTAGE PROGRAM

## Hammer Fit Health and Fitness

Essex Shoppes Complex  
21 Essex Way, Ste. 215  
Essex Junction, VT  
Phone: 802-879-4659  
Contact: Nan Payson  
Website: www.hammerfit.com

No registration fee for VSEA members. 20% off all memberships, based on annual commitment. Free fitness consultation w/any membership!

## Sports and Fitness Edge

142 West Twin Oaks Terrace  
South Burlington, VT 05403  
Phone: 802-658-0001  
E-mail: RobB@sfedge.com  
Website: www.sfedge.com

Take 20 percent off yearly prepaid memberships. Take 15 percent off 12-month billing contracts. No registration fee! Also valid at Essex and Williston locations.

## Entertainment

### Pizza Putt

Family Entertainment Center  
1205 Airport Highway  
South Burlington, VT 05403  
Phone: 802-862-7888  
E-mail: info@pizzaputt.com  
Website: www.pizzaputt.com

20 percent off lunch bill (Mon.-Fri., 11 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., alcohol not included). Buy one game of golf and get one FREE (anytime)!



## Eye Care

### Vermont Laser Vision

55 Timber Lane  
South Burlington, VT 05403  
Contact: Samantha King  
Phone: 802-864-2010  
Website: www.vermontlaservision.com

E-mail: samantha@vermontlaservision.com  
30 percent discount on regularly priced vision correction treatment for both eyes! Offer good until March 1, 2009

## Fireplaces/Stoves

### Green Mountain Fireplaces

800 Marshall Ave.  
Williston, VT 05495  
Phone: 802-862-8311  
Website: www.greenmountainfireplaces.com

All your fireplace and stove needs. Gas, Wood and Pellet. Take 10 percent off any regularly priced item!

## Florists

### Chantilly Rose Florist

30 Susie Wilson Rd.  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Phone: 802-872-0003  
Website: www.chantillyrose.com  
E-mail: chantilly.rose@verizon.com  
10 percent discount!



## Food Services

### Busy Chef

26 Susie Wilson Rd.  
Essex Junction, VT 05465  
Phone: 802-878-0770

Website: www.vtbusychef.com

E-mail: cindy@vtbusychef.com

The Busy Chef offers complete meals that are ready to be cooked at home. We do all the menu planning and meal preparation that you don't have the time or desire to do! 15 percent off anything in our store!

### Eden Mini Market

Route 100  
Eden, VT 05652  
Phone: 802-635-2456  
Contact: Carol and Bruce Burnor  
10 percent discount on all deli items year-round!

## Furniture and Mattresses

### Goodnight Moon Mattresses and Furniture

3424 Roosevelt Highway  
Colchester, VT 05446  
Contact: Roland Charbonneau  
Phone: 802-872-0949  
e-mail: goodnightmoonvt@aol.com  
15 percent discount on regularly priced mattresses and furniture!

## Gifts

### Gift Wrecked

47 Landing St.  
Newport, VT 05855  
Phone: 802-334-2340  
Located at the EastSide Restaurant. 10 percent off all items!

### Pine and Feather

U.S. and VT Made Products  
3197 U.S. Route 5  
Derby, VT 05829  
Phone: 802-766-2205  
Contact: Tiffany Crowe  
E-mail: pinefeathervt@yahoo.com  
15 percent discount on all items, except consignment items!

## Health Care

### Yankee Medical

Durable Medical Equipment  
141 Fairfax Rd.  
St. Albans, VT  
Contact: David Fitzgerald  
Phone: 802-527-1343  
Website: www.yankeemedical.com  
10 percent off cash sales only!

## Lodging

### Highgate Manor Inn

464 Highgate Rd.  
Highgate, VT 05459  
Contact: Jillian Protzman  
Phone: 802-868-9007  
e-mail: info@highgatemanor.com  
10 percent off any food or B&B purchase! Excludes alcohol.

### Ladies Pearls Inn and Lodging

Inn/Cabin Rentals  
47 Landing St.  
Newport, VT 05855  
Phone: 802-334-2340  
\$50 per night for overnight stay!

## Massage

### Family Physical Therapy

137 South Main St.  
Waterbury, VT 05676  
Contact: Billy Collins  
Phone: 802-244-1140  
25 percent off a \$20 massage on the Aqua Massage Machine (that's \$15 for a 20-minute Aqua massage)!

## Pet Services

### Island Memorial LLC

Pet Cremation Service  
384 East Shore Rd.  
Isle La Motte, VT 05463  
Contact: Stacey Rousseau  
Phone: 802-316-2284  
E-mail: rhdb@fairpoint.net  
Website: www.islandmemorial.com  
10 percent discount to VSEA member! Must mention VSEA when setting up service.

## Photographic Services

### Finally Affordable Foto

Pat Ethier  
272 Chartier Hill Rd.  
East Calais, VT 05650  
Phone: 802-456-9822  
E-mail: finallyaffordablefoto@yahoo.com  
Website: Coming!  
10 percent off VSEA member bookings! Weddings, Reunions, Senior Portraits, Pets, Etc.

### Jon's Darkroom & Frameshop

159 Pearl St.  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Phone: 802-879-4485  
Contact: Jon Long  
Website: www.jonsdarkroom.com  
10 percent off passport photos and 10 percent off all in-store service!

## Restaurants

### Greek House of Pizza

95 Main Street  
Fair Haven, VT 05602  
Phone: 802-265-8111  
website: http://www.greekhouseofpizza.com/  
\$2 off any large gourmet pizza! One offer per visit.



### Wendy's

187 Waterfront Plaza  
Newport, VT 05855  
Phone: 802-334-5717  
Contact: Graham Bear  
10 percent off all menu items!

## Stationary

### Main Street Stationary

56 Main St.  
Middlebury, VT 05753  
Phone: 802-388-6787  
Contact: Gregory Tomb  
10 percent off all merchandise, except sales items, copies, copy paper and all other discounted items!

To view the entire listing of the VSEA Advantage Discount Program's participating businesses and services, please visit [www.vsea.org](http://www.vsea.org) and click on the "VSEA Advantage" listing in the left-hand column.

## VSEA Membership Recruitment Chair's Tips To Recruit New Businesses To The VSEA Advantage Discount Program

In addition to developing ways to convert more agency-fee payers to full-fledged VSEA members, another charge of the VSEA Membership Recruitment Committee is to recruit more businesses to participate in the VSEA Advantage Discount Program—but as Membership Recruitment Chair Shelley Martin explains, it's not just the committee's job, it's every VSEA member's job.

"There's only so many times a year our committee can meet, and not all of our time is devoted just to the Advantage Program," says Martin. "For that reason, we need all VSEA members to help us identify and recruit new businesses or services in their area that will benefit VSEA members."

You can send your ideas by e-mail to Martin at [bi-zzililbee@yahoo.com](mailto:bi-zzililbee@yahoo.com) or phone her at 802-241-3456. Please provide a vendor contact name if you can.

To help VSEA members feel more confident about approaching a business owner about participating in the VSEA Advantage Discount Program, Martin offers these tips:

### First – Be able to answer the question: "What is the Advantage Program?"

The Advantage Program is a discount program available to just VSEA members. It includes a wide range of businesses and services offering exclusive discounts to VSEA members and their families.

### Second – Be able to list the advantages of the program to the business owner:

- 1) Keeps business here in Vermont
- 2) VSEA promotes the business/service in its online directory, which is accessible to the union's approximately 6,000 members and all state employees
- 3) Free advertising for the business/service in several VSEA communication vehicles
- 4) Lifetime inclusion at no cost to the business
- 5) Business participation promotes more activity for the business and brings in new people
  - a) Because union members can view participating businesses before going to meetings or other functions in unfamiliar towns, they are able to learn about, then patronize, businesses in those towns
  - b) Members are more likely to patronize a participating business, which increases customer volume to that particular business
- 6) If business owners encourage other area proprietors to participate in the program, more customer traffic comes their way
  - a) The more participating businesses in a particular area, the better chance VSEA members will shop in these towns where multiple discounts are available

### Third – Remember these key steps

- 1) Always have a hard copy of the most current participating business directory with you and also plenty of business/service enrollment forms handy. Be prepared!
- 2) Keep a folder with this information in your car at all times because you may be out shopping and decide to try and recruit a new business to the program that day

- 3) Always promote the free advertising benefit to the business/service owner. Smart businesses will appreciate the benefit, knowing the high cost of advertising and the advantage of an increased customer base
- 4) Always reinforce to the business owner that the Advantage Program directory is online and is potentially viewed by thousands of VSEA members.
- 5) If nervous about approaching a business owner, remind yourself that most of them are just like you.
  - a) They have a vested interest in their business because its their livelihood, just like you have a vested interest in your job for your own livelihood
  - b) They want what's best for them just like you want what's best for you
- 6) Remember that you are NOT in their store or business to sell them anything!!!!!!
  - a) Businesses with storefronts are constantly bothered by door-to-door salesmen/people.
  - b) They DO NOT want to buy anything.
  - c) You need to make it clear that you are offering them something for free (e.g. advertising or increased customer volume)
- 7) Promote that this relationship is a win-win for both businesses and VSEA members
- 8) Don't forget that almost any business or service can participate (e.g. fast food restaurants)
- 9) Memorize [www.vsea.org](http://www.vsea.org) because the business owner may want to review the website

### Fourth – To ensure you're always prepared, keep this checklist handy:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Printed letters/application with your name written at the bottom
- \_\_\_\_\_ VSEA Decal (available at VSEA HQ)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your VSEA green card to use as an example of what one looks like
- \_\_\_\_\_ Copy of online business directory to provide example of other participants
- \_\_\_\_\_ Copy of VOICE to provide free advertising example

### Fifth – To recruit businesses, be prepared, review the advantages & points to remember and use the check list:

- 1) Compile a list of businesses you want to visit in a given town
  - a) Remember that the local managers of corporate-owned franchises, like McDonald's, do not need permission to offer discounts
  - b) Know that if a business offers senior discounts, discounts to VSEA members should not be an issue
  - c) If soliciting a business in Vermont that has other branches in different parts of the state with the same name, be sure to indicate the specific branch's locale on the letter/application
- 2) Have a copy of the printed letter/application for the business owner to complete with your signature already penned at the bottom.
  - a) Your signature is imperative for VSEA to know who recruited the business
  - b) If asked, explain to the business owner that your name is at the bottom so VSEA knows who solicited the business and who explained the program

- 3) Have a decal with you to show them what VSEA will send to them once they agree to participate
  - a) The decal allows participants to identify their business as a member of the Advantage Discount Program
  - b) The decal shows that the business supports state employees, which will bring more state employees in the door
- 4) Have your VSEA green membership card with you to show them what the card looks like that identifies a VSEA member

### Sixth – The actual business recruitment:

- 1) Before you go enter the store – take a deep breath and relax yourself! It's normal to be a little nervous
- 2) Ask for the manager on duty or business owner (you want the person with authority to make business decisions for the company or business)
- 3) Introduce yourself professionally, clearly, and politely – look the person in the eye and offer a handshake. For example: "My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I work for the state of Vermont. I'm also a member of the Vermont State Employees Association and would like to offer you free advertising and increased customer volume by enrolling your business in the VSEA Advantage Discount Program"
- 4) If there isn't anyone of authority
  - a) Ask for the name of the person you should talk to later
  - b) Leave a copy of the enrollment letter with the person you speak with and ask them to give it to the owner only. Ask them to stress the free advertising benefit and the program's ability to reach approximately 6,000 Vermonters
  - c) Ask when this person of authority will return
  - d) Let them know you will be returning and make a note to revisit the business
- 5) If the owner is on site but is busy, ask them when the best time to return would be and try to do so
- 6) If the person is available
  - a) Explain the program
  - b) Show the directory
  - c) Show similar businesses or a page from the directory that highlights discounts you particularly like
- 7) Have them fill out the letter while you wait and take it back with you to send to VSEA
- 8) Show them the decal and explain that VSEA will send them one.
- 9) Show the business owner the VOICE and explain that their business will be promoted in an upcoming edition, letting 6,000+ VSEA members know their business has joined the Advantage Discount Program.
- 10) Be sure to THANK THEM and wish them well with prospects of new and more business through this advertising method.

### If you were turned down, it is only for one of two reasons:

- 1) They didn't understand what you were offering
- 2) They don't really want more business (which does happen!)

## **Healthcare Is A Human Right**

### ***Vermont Workers' Center Launches New Statewide Campaign***

On April 28, 2008, the Vermont Workers' Center (VWC) kicked off its "Healthcare is a Human Right" campaign in Barre. This major statewide grassroots organizing campaign is aimed at changing what is "politically possible" for healthcare coverage in Vermont. The first phase of the campaign will include a "Healthcare is a Human Right" rally at the State House in Montpelier on Friday, May 1, 2009.

This summer, VWC members and supporters began surveying Vermonters to learn more about people's views and experiences with healthcare. Their answers are being used to develop a platform that the VWC will use to push for fundamental changes of Vermont healthcare.

"The healthcare system is in a crisis. Every day people are not getting the care that they need, when they need it, because they are afraid of the costs," explains VWC organizer Erika Simard, who lost her healthcare benefits in 2005 after Specialty Filaments—the factory where she worked at for 22 years—closed. "The physical and economic toll this reality is having on Vermont families is enormous. The VWC believes that a healthcare system must be established that truly represents the single most important basic value of Vermonters; that equal access to high quality medical care is a basic human right to all. This must be the foundation of the healthcare system we hope to create, and we are organizing a movement to make it a reality."

In addition to conducting the healthcare surveys, VWC members, supporters and other Vermont union members have also been holding small gatherings called "Healthcare House Parties," inviting their co-workers, friends and neighbors to learn about the campaign. At some of these

events, video clips from Michael Moore's healthcare industry expose SICKO are shown. VWC members are also using the events to film Vermonters firsthand, healthcare horror stories. This fall, VWC will sponsor public human rights hearings in communities across the state, where Simard explains, "Vermonters will put the healthcare system on trial and there will be open testimony on healthcare and human rights."

On December 13, the VWC will hold a "Human Rights Conference" at the University of Vermont. The event commemorates the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

All of these events are targeted at building a statewide action network of healthcare activists who will mobilize on May 1, 2009, at the "Healthcare Is A Human Right" rally in Montpelier.

"Many Vermont policy makers say they agree that healthcare should be a basic right to all Vermonters and many even say that, in theory, they support a single-payer system," says VWC Director James Haslam. "But they add that it's just not politically possible. So this campaign is to try and change that mindset. Our goal is to begin a strategic reframing of healthcare as a basic human right and to show that the healthcare crisis is truly a human rights emergency. Right now we have a segregated healthcare system. Some people have great care while many go without the care they need because of the costs. And, sadly, insurance companies seem solely focused on how to deny coverage. The VWC believes we need a system that is geared to keep people healthy. We are finding lots of people who agree and are ready to start organizing to make it happen."



Plans for the May 1 rally include organizing a caravan of Vermonters to come to Montpelier from across the state in buses, carpools, bicycles, etc.. The VWC is asking VSEA members to help us organize for this important rally. Educate and solicit people in your communities who, like you, are sick of the rising costs of healthcare and believe that healthcare should be a human right.

Businesses that agree healthcare should not be tied to employment, but rather available to everyone and financed publicly through fair taxes, are being asked to declare May 1 a "healthcare holiday" and join their employees for the rally in Montpelier.

If you are interested in learning more about the campaign and want to get involved in any of the activities listed in this article, please contact Erika Simard at [erika@workerscenter.org](mailto:erika@workerscenter.org) or 802-316-7827. The campaign's blog is [www.workerscenter.org/healthcare](http://www.workerscenter.org/healthcare).

# SUGARBUSH SKI PASSES AVAILABLE!

*The VSEA Advantage Discount Program is pleased to once again be offering deeply discounted "all-mountain access passes" to Sugarbush Ski Resort for the upcoming 2008-09 ski season.*

Last year, more than 55 VSEA members took advantage of this program, so the odds are very good that the number of members needed (15) to realize the **\$609** price will be achieved again this year. If we only sign up 10-14, the price jumps to \$649. If you purchased this pass without going through the Advantage Program, your price would be \$1,099!



**If you would like to receive the forms to sign up  
for a discount pass, please contact:**

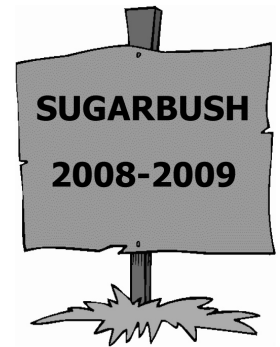
Doug Gibson

Advantage Program Administrator

Phone: 223-5247

E-mail: [dgibson@vsea.org](mailto:dgibson@vsea.org)

Deadline To Sign Up Is Sept. 17, 2008



Vermont State Employees' Association  
155 State Street  
P.O. Box 518  
Montpelier, VT 05601-0518

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
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