

Thank you Dr. Bierwirth, and members of the Board of Education. We begin the 2014-2015 school year on a high note. After many months of tough but productive negotiations the board and our HTA teachers signed a new contract.

Believe me, many people said it couldn't be done. The naysayers and pundits said that our union and this district were too polarized, too far apart. I was hearing daily predictions that this school year I would be standing here without a signed contract. Well, through our perseverance, we proved the naysayers and pundits wrong. I'd like to take a moment now to express my personal thanks to the Board of Education and my PNC for making this remarkable achievement possible. I am proud to say that we have a 4 year contract that protects our union members, addresses the districts' concerns and most importantly results in the labor peace and harmony that will guarantee that our Herricks remains one of the coveted districts in NY State.

Allow me a moment to recognize our valuable PNC members who were at my side throughout the contract negotiations: Amy Bikoff, Rhonda Burrow, Lisa Parisi, Krista Weis, Susan Wicker, Heather Evers, Dan Lorge and our Executive V.P. Rich Peck.

However, our work is not done as the Teaching Assistants' PNC continues to meet with the District to try to find a compromise. Based on our successful recent experience negotiating the teachers' contract, I am confident that through continued perseverance and compromise we will reach a successor final agreement. Although hopefully not at 2:30 in the morning!!! We will continue our work as we aspire to also settle the three contracts that will expire in June 2015.

Summer is a time for rest and relaxation with family and friends. But for Herricks professionals, I know it is also a time to become engaged in activities that enhance our teaching. Whether it is through courses taken, independent study, workshops or travel, Herricks professionals persevere and are always exploring ways to strengthen skills, grow and improve so as to bring back new, interesting and innovative ideas to enhance our students' educational experiences. We begin refreshed, reenergized and excited this year, but a change is also present at Herricks – a positive change. We are finally welcoming many new members to our Herricks family.

Jack and Deirdre ~ allow me to express my personal appreciation, and the appreciation of the entire HTA, for your many years of devoted service to Herricks. I can think of no better way for you to retire than knowing that our district is restoring some of the positions that were previously lost and that your legacy of excellence in education will continue far into the future. But remember to come back and visit. Your spouses married you for better or worse, not for lunch, so come back and see us.

Colleagues, as your president, I was very busy this summer. At the AFT Convention, in July in L.A., the opportunity to hear various speakers, become engaged in conversations on how we can work together and affect change was inspiring. It is empowering to know that we are part of the AFT's 1.6 million member organization. In August, attending the NYSUT Endorsement Conference, in Albany, and the AFL-CIO Convention in NYC were enlightening. Being part of the unprecedented 400+ "Sea of Blue" NYSUT members who attended the AFL-CIO Convention at the Hilton confirmed that we CAN affect change through our perseverance and participation.

Although many outside forces, like the Tax Cap, APPR and mandated State Testing remain in place, I feel fortunate to be part of Herricks where we continue to value our

students rather than what the state prescribes as being important. Our stellar reputation is attributed in large part to OUR members, and of course our students, administration, Board of Education, parents and community. No matter what obstacles we face, our professionals continue to persevere to provide high caliber educational experiences that make us among the best schools in our nation. Our mutual goals with the district provide our students an outstanding well-rounded education and enables Herricks to be a premiere district. I look forward to working collaboratively with the BOE toward achieving common goals that strengthen and accomplish greatness for Herricks.

Remember, empowerment at all levels begins with involvement. I invite you to become engaged, active members so as to enhance our schools and profession. The power to strengthen and change our profession is in your hands. So be sure to become engaged, actively involved and make your voice heard especially during the upcoming elections.

I wish you all a successful year and remember we CAN and DO make a difference!