

Dear VATE Members:

In an effort to cut costs (especially important for professional organizations in these economic times), save trees (always a good idea), and bring you the latest information regarding the teaching of English in Virginia (timely communication essential), VATE has committed itself to publishing its newsletter electronically. So, should you change your email address, please notify us so that you will not miss out on any news or publications. To update your VATE contact information, send any changes to CMillerCrz@roadrunner.com.

Also, welcome aboard Sara Zeek of Lord Botetourt High School and the PATE affiliate, who is taking over the editorship of the *NE*. The spring issue was her inaugural issue, and we appreciate her taking on this significant role on our organization. As I noted above, timely communication is essential if VATE is to play a vital and meaningful role in your teaching, and Sara has committed herself to putting out a top quality publication. Please send any news that would like to share with other VATE members to Sara at szeek@bcps.k12.va.us. July 31 is the deadline for the summer issue.

I would be remiss if I did not take the time to thank Christina Frierman, who served as the editor for this past winter's *NE*, our first foray into the world of electronic publishing. Christina's "VATE plate" is still very full, as she is president of VBATE, our largest affiliate, in the Virginia Beach area. On March 21, VBATE held its spring symposium, and I had the privilege of joining over a hundred teachers from the Beach in a very meaningful and well-organized mini-conference. It was a rewarding inservice experience, as I brought back a number of ideas that I was able to use immediately in my classroom. Congratulations to Christina and to VBATE for putting on such a successful event.

As I write this article, I am thinking about PATE affiliate's mini-conference on April 21 at Hidden Valley Middle School in the Roanoke area. The theme was "Shakespeare in Blue Jeans," and it was a first-class event. Lynn Payne was busy organizing the PATE mini-conference, and I really appreciate her enthusiastic efforts in promoting membership in VATE and the PATE affiliate.

Sadly, VBATE and PATE are currently our only majorly active affiliates, though we do have active student affiliates at Radford, Christopher Newport, and JMU. Active affiliates can help breathe life into our statewide organization, and participating in local events can be a lot of fun as well. Local affiliates are also excellent training grounds for potential statewide leaders. I first came to service on the VATE executive board by being elected as president of the JATE affiliate in central Virginia. Over the years, we had a number of outstanding local events including presentations by Henry Taylor and George Garrett and a visit to the Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Special Collections Library at UVA, where we were able to see writings by Poe, Faulkner, and Thomas Jefferson in their own hand.

I strongly encourage anyone who wants to start a new local affiliate or to revitalize an existing one to do so. If you would like any advice or suggestions on how to get started, please feel free to contact me at the email address mentioned earlier in this article.

Last month, I sent out an email reminder about this year's annual conference, October 30-November 1 at the Woodlands Hotel, a Colonial Williamsburg property. Please mark your calendar now and plan to join us for what promises to be a very special conference.

Our president-elect, Adria Merritt has added a few wrinkles to our usual conference program. She has developed two very special activities for Friday, an excursion to Jamestown for a tour led by K.K. Bruno, one of last year's featured speakers, and in keeping with the Halloween spirit, an evening Ghost Walk through the streets of Williamsburg. Conference attendees are encouraged to bring along family members to participate in these events. Attendees and their family members will also be allowed to purchase special discount tickets for admission to Colonial Williamsburg for the duration of the conference.

Another new feature of this year's conference is a Student Book Trailer Competition. Winners will be showcased as part of the entertainment for the Saturday luncheon. For information about the contest as well as other aspects of the conference including program proposals and hotel information, check out our award-winning website, www.vate.org.

In closing on a somewhat sad note, Leila Christenbury, who has served on the executive board as our organization's treasurer for well over twenty

years, has decided to step down from that position at the close of this fiscal year, June 30. Leila was one of the folks who graciously welcomed me to my first executive board meeting in June of 1989. Except for a two-year stint when she served as the editor of NCTE's *English Journal*, Leila is the only VATE treasurer with whom I have worked. She has been a valued colleague, a strong mentor, and a trusted friend for me. It will seem strange not seeing Leila at the board meetings. VATE is fortunate that someone of Leila's nationwide prominence, as she has even served as president of NCTE, has taken the time to get so involved in a state affiliate in such a hands-on way.

Leila will remain an active member and supporter of VATE, and will, of course, be joining us for the conference in Williamsburg. I hope to see you there as well as we share "The Stories of our Lives" and "Weave a Multitmodal Tapestry."

Chuck Miller
Executive Secretary