



Dear Harford County Public School Friends:

Each year, when the winter holiday time comes around, my mind wanders to the pleasant memories that I have of past holiday seasons. Of course included in those memories are many thoughts about my family when I was young, my family as a married couple when the children were young, and now my family in its new era with young adult children.

Part of those wandering thoughts that come each year are memories of my time with Harford County Public Schools – in different jobs, in different schools, and in differing times. Working in a school system and in one of its schools or offices is much like having an extended family who becomes an integrated part of your life. Your school, office, or school system friends share in your history of getting married, having babies, or any of the many ups and downs of life that come your way each and every day. These relationships become so strong that we hear from our retired friends that they miss us so much they think of coming back to just volunteer and be with their friends.

This year has been a challenging one for so many folks around the country and state who have had financial challenges due to lost jobs or troubled times with housing. Some of you have grown children that you are watching go through tough times and we cannot always make things better for them or our other relatives. I have thought about all of you and worried that each of you and your immediate families are surviving in this tough economic environment.

In my family we celebrate Christmas. I know that many of you celebrate that holiday and others have other forms of winter holidays. Whatever the event you celebrate at this time of year, I want each of you to enjoy this special time of peace and family. While there are many things that will not happen in some families due to the fiscal constraints we are facing, we are all fortunate to have jobs, be alive, and have loved ones we can see and enjoy during this holiday season. I count our collective blessings.

Enjoy the traditions you have built over the years since you were children yourself. Share those traditions with your children or youngsters in your extended family. I have been known to conjure up a good memory about one of my two sisters or my brother when we are together over the holidays. We used to pass this ugly scarf around from person to person each holiday, never remembering who got it wrapped up as their gift the year before, and wondering if you were going to be the victim this year and get the ugly thing in one of your gifts this year. Even though it rarely snows on Christmas Eve here in Maryland, I still go out on the front porch with one of my sons after Christmas Eve church service and look to the skies praying that we will see a few flakes of white snow so we can claim a white Christmas.

Life is good! It is good because what really matters to me at this age is that I will be with people that I love and care about. I wish the same for each of you. This year we have the unusual opportunity for a two week break for this holiday. Please take every moment of that time that you can to enjoy those that you love. When you share your gifts, I hope that the main gift will be your time, attention, and love. Even more, I hope that you will experience the love and caring of those in your family who have depended on you as their strength or as their partner in life.

Best wishes to all of you for a happy holiday season. I will see you in January 2009 well rested and well loved.

With much respect for your wonderful work,