



12/27/2019

### **New Nanticoke mayor ready to help**

spanny@citizensvoice.com

After spending six years on the Nanticoke City Council, Kevin Coughlin is about to be sworn in as its mayor.

“I just feel that there are a few things that could be changed, and I felt that I could do the job,”

Coughlin said. “I want to move the progress forward of the revitalization of the downtown.”

Coughlin first began working in the city government as controller, overseeing the city’s financial health. He first began seriously thinking about running for mayor last year, when the former mayor — Richard Wiaterowski — passed away after battling leukemia.

Coughlin said Wiaterowski was a real “community man” who would drop everything to help someone, and Coughlin believed he could do the same.

Coughlin said serving on council and talking with residents gave him a better perspective on the issues plaguing the city. Some of the issues he plans to tackle during his tenure will include budgeting for development and looking for ways to do so without raising taxes.

One of the biggest issues Coughlin plans to address is the city’s drug problem. He said he plans to strengthen the fight by building ties between the community, including the schools, and the government, including the police.

Coughlin hopes to build committees that will work closely with each other on a variety of topics that will improve the community. He also plans to establish more community-oriented places like rec centers.

“Finding whatever ways there are to help each other,” Coughlin said, “I think is very important.”

Coughlin considers himself a good communicator and he believes this will be an asset to him during his tenure as mayor. He said he wants to bridge the gap between the public and the government and plans to do this by keeping an open-door policy, ensuring the public knows their officials really do want to hear what they have to say.

He also believes in complete transparency with the public and the members of his government and said he wants to make sure that council members, who sit in front of the public, know every decision that’s being made. He said he feels that some local governments do have problems with communication and transparency but hopes that by meeting daily with council members and making everyone involved with processes like hiring he can build open and transparent lines of communication.

On Jan. 6, Coughlin’s granddaughters will hold the Bible as he is inducted into the same position his father-in-law held back in the 1970s. This was Coughlin’s first time running for the office.

“I need to get more people involved and establish an environment where more people’s ideas will be heard,” Coughlin said. “I just feel it’s the community’s city. Everyone should have a say.”

12/16/2019

### **Parade spreads holiday cheer through Nanticoke**

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

They heard that Santa Claus was coming to Patriot Square — and they were right.

Mr. Claus, the guest of honor for the annual Nanticoke Christmas parade on Sunday, arrived at the square atop a city fire truck, waving to the many children who lined the parade route along East Green Street.

Firefighters “decided we like the jolly old elf,” and decided to give him a ride from the start of the parade at Greater Nanticoke Area High School, said city Fire Chief Kevin Hazleton.

The line was long to pose for photos with Santa after the parade ended at the square. Parents stomped their feet and blew on their hands to stay warm on a cold gray blustery day.

A horse-drawn carriage navigated around parked cars and fire trucks, awaiting riders.

Hot coffee and hot chocolate were in high demand.

The parade gets bigger and better each year, according to Lisa Rudawski, a band mom from Newport Twp.

“It’s awesome,” said Rudawski, whose son and daughter performed with the Greater Nanticoke Area High School band.

Erica Zegarski, of Nanticoke, said she and her 9-year-old daughter Amaya attend the parade every year, no matter the weather.

Amaya, a fourth-grader who sings in the school chorus, dressed for the occasion Sunday, wearing a string of colorful holiday lights around her neck.

She said she hopes to be part of the parade as a member of the high school band someday. Amaya and her mom said they enjoy coming to the parade “to spread holiday cheer.”

12/16/2019

### **Nanticoke rings in the season**

kcarroll@timesleader.com

Christmas came early to the city on Sunday afternoon, as Nanticoke hosted its annual Christmas parade and Santa meet-and-greet.

The parade started at the Greater Nanticoke Area High School and made its way down Green Street to Patriot Square. Along the way, a large crowd of townspeople were gathered to take in the scene and partake in the holiday tradition. Fire trucks, police cars and more processed down the street to thunderous cheers and applause from the citizens of Nanticoke, as the paraders tossed candy out of the windows of their vehicles for the young children to snatch up. The parade also featured appearances from 570 Jeeps, as a large contingent of the vehicles took part in the parade as well, with drivers donning Santa hats and featuring Christmas lights on their Jeeps.

Children and their parents watched in awe as Santa Claus made his way down the street in the last vehicle of the procession, waving and smiling.

But that wasn't all that Saint Nick had to do on Sunday, as he sat in his big red chair in the middle of the square and greeted all of the children, taking pictures and getting their Christmas wishes.

The parade featured a performance from the Greater Nanticoke Area marching band, who braved a light snowfall to provide a soundtrack to the parade.

Rylie Lewis is a member of the Marching Trojans.

“It’s a lot of fun, but it’s so cold,” Lewis said after the parade was completed.

The elements didn't stop Tom Wall from coming out to enjoy the festivities with his two rescue dogs, Bella and Sadie. “We’ve been waiting for today to come,” Wall said. “The dogs enjoyed it until the fire trucks came in and then they got a little scared.”

12/6/2019

### **Nanticoke Area board won't raise taxes past state index**

Michael P. Buffer - Citizens Voice

The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board will not approve a property tax increase in 2020 that exceeds the state index amount, according to a resolution approved at Thursday's board meeting.

The index amount for Greater Nanticoke in 2020 is 3.9%, according the state Department of Education. The state establishes an index amount each year for school districts based on various financial factors.

In June, the school board approved an annual budget with nearly \$31 million in expenditures and no increase in the property tax rate. The board voted to keep the tax rate at 11.9113 mills. A mill is \$1 on every \$1,000 in property assessment.

School districts can exceed index amounts with voter approval through a referendum or by getting exceptions for certain costs approved by the state.

Also Thursday, the board had a reorganization meeting and chose Tony Prushinski as board president for another year. Kenny James is vice president of the board.

Prushinski, James, Mark Cardone and Len Olzinski and Kenny James were sworn in for new terms. They won four-year terms in last month's election.

The board also appointed Vito DeLuca as district solicitor for another year at an annual salary of \$24,000.

11/14/2019

### **Local principal hired as Northwest Area super**

mbuffer@citizensvoice.com

Joe Long, an elementary school principal for the Wyoming Area School District, will start as Northwest Area School District superintendent in mid-January.

The Northwest Area School Board voted Tuesday to appoint Long as superintendent. Long said he has a three-year contract as superintendent and his annual salary will be \$110,000.

Long, 55, lives in Jenkins Twp. Before he began working for Wyoming Area in 2015, Long worked for the Greater Nanticoke Area School District as the middle school principal for six years and high school principal for two years. Prior to that, Long was an elementary school teacher for the Pittston Area School District for five years and at St. Mary's Assumption School in Pittston for five years.

In August, the Northwest Area School Board decided to go back to having a full-time superintendent and began a search for a new superintendent. Former Hanover Area Superintendent Andrew Kuhl has been the interim superintendent at Northwest Area.

The district had not had a full-time superintendent since Ronald Grevera resigned in 2014 to become Greater Nanticoke Area superintendent. Lake-Lehman Superintendent James McGovern had been working as Northwest Area's superintendent of record in a part-time capacity.

Long said taking over in the middle of the school year will be a bit of a challenge. He said he plans to "observe the programs" after becoming "part of the Northwest Area team."

11/13/2019

### **Six Luzerne County projects awarded state funding**

dallabaugh@citizensvoice.com

Sen. John Yudichak, D-14, Plymouth Twp. announced six projects in Luzerne County have received more than \$1.3 million in state funding from the Multimodal Transportation Fund, which is administered by the state's Commonwealth Financing Authority.

Among the projects, Valley Crest Real Estate LP will receive \$300,000 for the Kidder Street/PA 309/Mundy Street area improvement project.

Robert Tamburro of Valley Crest Real Estate LP said the funding will allow "safer and more efficient access through the corridor" as infrastructure upgrades are made to state Route 309 near Mundy and Kidder streets.

The project also will create better access to the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Plains Twp. and "unlock the economic development opportunities at the former Valley Crest nursing home," Tamburro said.

According to Tamburro, the proposed Valley Crest Commons at Route 309 is a 62-acre mixed use project that would feature retailers, restaurants, other commercial users and residential communities.

**Among the other grants, the City of Nanticoke will receive \$250,000 for the Kosciuszko and Main Street reconstruction and sidewalk project that will create improved access to the new Hanover 9 Industrial Park. Nanticoke city manager Donna Wall said the city is "experiencing unprecedented economic growth and job growth," including the Hanover 9 project which has brought Spreetail and True Value to the region.**

**"The funding received today will help us manage that growth and keep residents and visitors safe as they traverse through the city," Wall said.**

Other projects receiving funding:

- The Greater Wilkes-Barre Industrial Fund Inc.: \$500,000 for the multimodal transportation improvement project.
- Plymouth Borough: \$150,000 for the Plymouth Borough Main Street improvement project.
- Luzerne County, on behalf of NorthPoint Development, LLC: \$100,000 for the new Hanover Street and New Commerce Boulevard intersection improvement project.
- Hanover Twp.: \$50,000 for the Safe Route for School and Travel project.

State Reps. Gerald Mullery, D-119, Newport Twp.; Eddie Day Pashinski, D-121, Wilkes-Barre; and Mike Carroll, D-118, Avoca, assisted Yudichak with securing funding for the 14th Senatorial District projects.

**Mullery said the \$250,000 that Nanticoke will receive will replace severely deteriorated sidewalks and install curbing and ADA-compliant ramps on Main Street from Lawrence and Dewey to Kosciuszko Street.**

**The project also will include street reconstruction and widening, curbing and ADA-compliant ramps and striping on Kosciuszko Street near the Hanover 9 park. The total cost of this project is \$966,258, he said.**

The \$150,000 Plymouth Borough will receive will make pedestrian safety and streetscape improvements along Main Street, including crosswalks and a bus shelter, after the borough repairs and replaces manholes and storm drains along the street. The total cost for this project is \$537,147, Mullery said.

11/10/2019

### **Historic grandfather clock returns to Nanticoke**

dallabaugh@citizensvoice.com

A 98-year-old Herschede grandfather clock has returned to its original home in Nanticoke.

During an open house Saturday, members of the Nanticoke Historical Society displayed the grandfather clock that was originally in Nanticoke State Hospital.

The clock's most recent home was Misericordia University and Donna Ayers Snelson, director of the Center for Nursing History for Northeastern Pennsylvania, donated it to the Nanticoke Historical Society.

The Nanticoke State Hospital started out as a private institution in 1909, was taken over by the state in 1911 and became part of Mercy Health System in 1990.

Chester Zaremba, vice president of the Nanticoke Historical Society, said the clock later went to the nursing school at Misericordia University.

Research from the Center for Nursing History of Northeastern Pennsylvania revealed the clock is worth approximately \$3,000 to \$5,000. The clock doesn't work and needs repairs.

"Our intentions are to have it repaired," Zaremba said. "We are going to definitely get it fixed."

The clock is named in memory of Charles E. Jones, a businessman who formerly owned Jones Boston Store on East Main Street in Nanticoke, said Nanticoke Historical Archivist John Sherrick.

Jones' store closed in 1918. The businessman formerly lived where American Legion Post 350 is now located on West Broad Street in Nanticoke. His house was demolished to accommodate the American Legion, Sherrick said.

Sherrick said the clock is unique because of its age and the craftsmanship and artistry that went into making it.

"We've had a lot of people come and go and they look at that clock," he said. "It's just a beautiful clock. When you manage to have something like this that has lasted all this time, it's just amazing that we have it."

In addition to the grandfather clock, Sherrick showed a coal-burning kitchen stove that also drew interest at the open house Saturday.

A West Nanticoke man donated the stove called a "Nanticoke stove" that was manufactured for the former C.H. Lecher Hardware Store in Nanticoke.

"We cleaned it up the best we could. I think it's from 1913. They actually cooked on it. My grandmother had one of these," Sherrick said. "I've since heard other people in the area have them. They put the coal in the bottom and just heated it up."

Sherrick said when he was growing up in the 1950s, his mother also had a coal stove in the kitchen.

"She cooked all her food on the kitchen stove and it was a coal stove," he said. "Our new place had a gas stove so that was the end of that. You didn't have to bring all the buckets up to put the coal in the stove. We had a tall thin one which was for heating only. These were quite common up until the 1950s."

11/9/2019

### **Eyesore former bowling alley in Nanticoke sold in tax auction**

jandes@timesleader.com

The former L.S. Bowl-A-Rama in Nanticoke was purchased at Thursday's Luzerne County back-tax auction. Tamara Dunn|Times Leader The former L.S. Bowl-A-Rama in Nanticoke was purchased at Thursday's Luzerne County back-tax auction. - Tamara Dunn|Times Leader

A mammoth Nanticoke eyesore was snatched up by an arm of city government in Thursday's Luzerne County back-tax auction, with officials assuring residents the move will ensure the troubled property is finally addressed.

"We made a good first step in acquisition of this property," said Kenneth Malia, who made the lone auction bid on behalf of the Nanticoke Municipal Authority. "I think the residents will be ecstatic when they hear about this."

The former L.S. Bowl-A-Rama closed about 14 years ago and was found to be the site of a marijuana growing operation during a raid a decade ago this month, records show. A Hazleton-based company bought the property from a 2014 tax auction for \$70,000 but never carried out promises to remove the structure so the 1.6-acre parcel could be developed, officials said. The accrual of \$24,233 in unpaid real estate taxes dating back to 2015 brought the property to auction again.

City officials say the property has been plagued with code issues.

The decaying structure dominates a largely residential neighborhood because it is nearly 122,000 square feet and runs the entire length of East Washington Street between South Prospect and South Walnut streets.

The municipal authority, which was established to focus on city improvement initiatives, secured the property for the minimum bid of \$1,803 with no competition in the free-and-clear auction held at the King's College Scandlon Physical Education Center in Wilkes-Barre.

Malia, an authority board member, said a consultant will help the board come up with a feasibility plan and funding

options. He anticipates demolition will be necessary, saying the structure appears to be “too far gone.” The authority has no specific plans for reuse yet, he said.

“It will be something for the overall good of the community,” he said.

Authority Solicitor Christopher Slusser said Thursday he is “excited” to be involved in addressing the problem.

“What a source of consternation that building has been for the community over the last several years,” Slusser said.

City Manager Donna Wall said city officials have been trying to come up with a plan for years to address the property, which she described as a “threat to public safety.”

“It’s been a long ride with that building, and finally we’ll have an opportunity to work as a team to get rid of this eyesore.”

The municipal authority currently owns approximately 17 properties in the city, including several linked to a proposed housing and public transportation project on East Main Street called the “Nantego Development.” Praised by some, that project also received criticism from some property owners impacted by an eminent domain effort to make way for the development. Malia said Thursday those project plans are still ongoing.

11/8/2019

### **Officials set do-over for SCI-Retreat forum**

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

Let’s try this again.

A new public hearing about the fate of State Correctional Institution at Retreat in Newport Twp. has been scheduled for Nov. 21 at the Nanticoke City Municipal Building.

The forum is a do-over from a similar hearing held in October that was marred by controversy after insensitive open microphone comments from the Department of Corrections leader later surfaced online.

DOC Secretary John Wetzel was overheard whispering to a deputy that he was only pretending to pay attention to those urging him to keep SCI-Retreat open, which drew criticism from area elected officials, some who called for his firing.

They believe the comments showed Wetzel and the administration of Gov. Tom Wolf already made the decision to close the prison, which would be in violation of Act 133 of 2018, which requires a thorough review, including a public hearing, before a decision is made to close a state facility.

In response, Wolf removed Wetzel from the decision-making process about SCI-Retreat and promised a more thorough, transparent review prior to a final decision.

Wetzel previously said a decision would be made the first week of December. It’s not clear if that remains the deadline. The hearing will run from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Nov. 21.

Wolf has selected Tabb Bickell, DOC executive deputy secretary for institutional operations, to take over leadership of the effort to evaluate SCI-Retreat

11/5/2019

### **Eyesore former Nanticoke bowling alley in tax auction Thursday**

jandes@timesleader.com

The former L.S. Bowl-A-Rama in Nanticoke is one of several properties that will be part of the Luzerne County back-tax auction Thursday. The former L.S. Bowl-A-Rama in Nanticoke is one of several properties that will be part of the Luzerne County back-tax auction Thursday. -

The fate of a massive, decaying former bowling alley in Nanticoke may be decided in Thursday’s Luzerne County back-tax auction.

Once the L.S. Bowl-A-Rama, the nearly 122,000-square-foot structure runs the entire length of East Washington Street between South Prospect and South Walnut streets.

City Code Enforcement Officer Jack Minsavage said Monday he has received multiple complaints about the property over the years and processed various code violations at the site.

“It’s been an ongoing issue,” he said.

The property was in the limelight a decade ago this month when law enforcement raided the structure and discovered marijuana plants growing in the basement of the facility, which had closed down about four years before, according to past published reports. George Ellis, of Ellis Investment Inc., owned the building at that time and ended up pleading guilty to possessing more than 1,100 marijuana plants and money laundering, reports said.

After years of tax delinquency and continued deterioration, the property was listed in the county’s 2014 free-and-clear

auction at \$856 and ended up fetching the highest bid of the sale — \$70,000 — following heated competition between Hazleton area resident Pasquale Scalleat and businessmen affiliated with a nearby market and deli.

Scalleat prevailed and purchased the property through PS Capital Ventures Inc., saying the demolition and salvage company he operates would remove the eyesore structure so the 1.6-acre parcel could be developed. Scalleat could not be reached for comment Monday.

The promised demolition never happened, and the property is up for sale again because it now carries \$24,233 in unpaid real estate taxes dating back to 2015, according to officials and records.

With no takers at a prior first-stage auction, the property is now listed in Thursday's free-and-clear sale in which liens and back taxes are no longer attached.

Bidding starts at \$1,803. If the property does not sell, it will go into a repository pool and may be purchased at any time with approval from taxing bodies.

Nanticoke Councilman Kevin Coughlin said Monday he and his council colleagues have long been troubled by the property but could not secure funds to acquire and demolish it. He is hopeful a responsible buyer with financial resources will successfully bid on the structure so the site can be redeveloped.

"I feel sorry for the people who live around it," Coughlin said. "It's such a blighted building. It's terrible."

**Auction details**

Thursday's sale, which begins at 10 a.m., is the last of the year and designed to address properties previously removed from auctions due to court orders or notification issues, according to Sean Shamany, a representative of county tax-claim overseer Northeast Revenue Service LLC.

Both types of auctions — first-stage "upset" and free-and-clear "judicial" ones — will be held Thursday at the King's College Scandlon Physical Education Center, 150 N. Main St., in Wilkes-Barre.

A listing of the available properties and information on bidding is posted at [www.luzernecountytaxclaim.com](http://www.luzernecountytaxclaim.com).

11/1/2019

**Newest roundabout opens in Nanticoke**

dallabaugh@citizensvoice.com

After weeks of road closures and detours, a new roundabout opened Thursday at Prospect Street and Middle Road in Nanticoke.

It marks the sixth roundabout to open in the Nanticoke and Hanover Twp. areas since work on the \$90 million South Valley Parkway began in 2016.

State Rep. Gerald Mullery, D-119, Newport Twp., said Nanticoke and Newport Twp. residents and students at Luzerne County Community College who are happy that the new roundabout is open.

"It's probably one of the most asked questions I have been receiving lately about when will the roads be open and what are the timelines," Mullery said.

Construction continues on a seventh roundabout that will connect to an access road to huge warehouses at the Hanover 9 site near Luzerne County Community College. That roundabout is expected to open in mid-November, said PennDOT spokesman Mike Taluto.

Missouri-based NorthPoint Development received a permit to construct the access road that connects to the latest roundabout.

Hanover Twp. received a \$1 million gaming grant on behalf of the Lower South Valley Council of Governments that includes the township, Nanticoke, Ashley, Sugar Notch, Newport Township, Plymouth and the Earth Conservancy to construct the access road leading into new warehouses for Spreetail and True Value that are creating hundreds of jobs on reclaimed land.

Mike Dziak, president and CEO of the Earth Conservancy, said the Earth Conservancy and NorthPoint Development are paying part of the costs for the new roundabout.

The Earth Conservancy also received a \$2 million grant from the state's Multimodal Transportation Fund to assist with costs, according to State Sen. John Yudichak, D-14, Plymouth Twp.

Yudichak announced in 2017 that the grant would be used to fund the construction of access roads from the South Valley Parkway to key properties of reclaimed Earth Conservancy land.

Dziak said \$1.1 million of the grant is being used for the latest roundabout connected to an access road to the Hanover 9 project. Kriger Construction was the low bidder and was awarded the contract to construct the roundabout, he said.

The remaining funds will be used toward constructing an access road to a new state police headquarters planned in Hanover Twp. and another access road to the roundabout that opened Thursday on Prospect Street, he said.

As work continues on the seventh roundabout, Mullery said he has heard from residents who said they have been “very frustrated with the construction and perceived waste of taxpayer dollars but satisfied with the traffic flow provided by the new roundabouts.”

“The gripes I get on social media or when people see me in public are that this is a waste of money and then when I ask them if the commute is better, it’s almost universal that it is clearly safer,” Mullery said.

Mullery also hears different opinions about the roundabouts from different generations.

“For younger drivers, if that’s the road they’re going to travel, it doesn’t matter if it’s a roundabout,” he said. “Older drivers aren’t as welcoming to change but they get used to them.”

Dziak has been working on the South Valley Parkway project for 20 years and now that the project is finally coming to fruition, he said he thinks “it’s terrific” and it “increases safety.”

“People are going to have an easy way to traverse across the areas and connect to Route 29 and I-81,” he said. “It’s also going to help the people in the Askam area to get back to a residential area as opposed to having the traffic they have always had there.”

For years, long-time Lower Askam resident Don Casterline has complained about the heavy traffic speeding over the narrow Middle Road where he lives.

While the South Valley Parkway has taken traffic off Middle Road, he said road closures from the construction of the two roundabouts have led to it being busy again. He can’t wait until work on the seventh roundabout is completed and he and his neighbors are looking forward to it being quiet again, he said.

Yudichak, who also has been working on the South Valley Parkway for years, said he thinks it has been a “tremendous catalyst for job creation and public safety improvements along the South Valley corridor.”

“As work on this \$90 million infrastructure project nears completion, it is important to recognize how investments in improving our public infrastructure systems are changing the mine scarred landscape of Luzerne County into a prosperous regional economy that is attracting national companies and thousands of jobs to northeastern Pennsylvania,” Yudichak said.

10/31/2019

### **W-B hospital reaches \$16M settlement with Nanticoke man’s estate**

[jhalpin@citizensvoice.com](mailto:jhalpin@citizensvoice.com)

Wilkes-Barre General Hospital has reached a \$16 million settlement with the estate of a man who died after having his neck broken during an emergency intubation, according to documents filed in court Tuesday.

Luzerne County Judge Lesa S. Gelb signed an order approving the settlement between the hospital and the estate of Nanticoke resident Bernard Joseph Ford III, 62.

The judge directed the hospital to pay \$14 million of the settlement, while Dr. Noel Estioko and ApolloMD Business Services will each be responsible for \$1 million.

Plaintiffs attorneys with the Wilkes-Barre-based Anzalone Law Offices will receive 40% of the settlement, plus receive reimbursement of \$253,000 the firm spent litigating the case.

The lawsuit, filed by attorneys Patrick J. Doyle Jr. and Kelly M. Ciravolo alleged Estioko broke Ford’s neck, causing partial paralysis, during an unnecessary intubation.

According to the complaint, Ford arrived at the hospital in March 2016 to be treated for shortness of breath. Hospital records show Ford was confused and in moderate distress with shallow breathing.

The suit alleged that Estioko decided to perform an emergency intubation because of increased levels of carbon dioxide in Ford’s blood, despite having no evidence that Ford was destabilizing.

During the procedure, Estioko broke Ford’s spine, leaving him with the best-case scenario of being a paraplegic requiring total care, including a feeding tube, the complaint said.

Ford told doctors he wanted to be removed from life support the same day, and he died on April 6, 2016.

The complaint alleged Estioko was negligent in performing the intubation despite knowing about Ford’s medical history, causing the father of three to endure “severe pain and suffering prior to his death.”

The agreement calls for Ford’s wife Joan and his three children to each receive 25% of the settlement, after the attorneys’ cut.

10/31/2019

### **Advanced Placement places GNA students on the path to college**

Kayla Eckrote is a junior at Greater Nanticoke Area. Student columns are published Wednesdays during the school year.

According to YouthTruth, a nonprofit organization that partners with school districts to gather data, 87% of students in the United States want to attend college after high school; a majority of them, however, feel unprepared. CollegeAtlas.org, a digital news and information platform that empowers students and the academic community to make more informed decisions about higher education, has revealed that 30% of students drop out after their freshman year of college due to a variety of factors; the largest of these remains the fact that basic high school classes did not properly prepare these students, forcing them to face failure.

High schools are attempting to combat this issue by offering options such as dual enrollment, but universities can be very selective about accepting these credits; many students also lack the transportation necessary to participate in such programs. What many students seek is an advanced high school class that will adequately prepare them for college.

#### More AP classes on the way

The Greater Nanticoke Area School District is working to produce students who will be ready for the challenge of their first year of tertiary education by placing them in rigorous courses, thereby granting them an opportunity to gain credits that will transfer to the college of their choice. These classes are known as Advanced Placement (AP) subjects, and Greater Nanticoke Area is offering an increasing amount of them to benefit students.

These courses' focused and interactive nature has a profoundly positive impact on those who choose to take on the challenge that they present; as AP English teacher Rachel Jeffries stated, "AP English Literature and Composition students will most definitely be uber-prepared for a college classroom. Rigorous reading schedules, demanding writing assignments, and student-led discussions are the norm here."

#### An AP primer

AP classes, created by the College Board administration, are college-level classes taught at high schools. Similar to regular college courses, AP classes are worth three credits; they last, however, for two semesters instead of one. To gain these credits, students must earn an acceptable score on the AP examination that is administered at the end of the second semester on a five-point scale. Though different educational institutions have their own criteria for the lowest transferable scores, a three is canonically considered a passing grade, with the College Board deeming those who receive it to be "qualified" in the according subject(s).

Some colleges will accept this score, but students seeking to attend upper-level universities may need to attain a four, or a "very well qualified" grade — the equivalent of a B in a college course. A five is the highest score one can achieve on an AP exam; students who manage such a feat are considered to be "extremely well qualified," comparable to earning an A in a college course.

All students aspire to get a five on the exam, for they wish to be certain that their score will transfer to the college that they decide to attend (and it is, indeed, the only mark that some Ivy League schools accept for certain AP credits).

#### Requirements

There are certain requirements to get into such classes at GNA. Students must, for instance, maintain an A average in a preceding course (e.g. a 94+ yearly average in Pre-Calculus is necessary for admission into an AP Calculus group); they must also obtain the permission of the respective teacher in order to be able to join the class. Students are typically required to complete summer work and must be prepared for graded assignments and assessments in the first week of school — and, of course, far beyond.

As Nanticoke's AP Calculus instructor Barbara Warman stated, "A student needs to be self-motivated, hard-working, and have excellent time management skills. An interest in the subject matter is also important. Additionally, students are expected to complete both summer assignments and additional independent assignments throughout each course."

#### A brief history

The journey through the Advanced Placement program began in the early '90s for the Greater Nanticoke Area School District, when Principal John Gregorowicz implemented the first AP class at the high school. Under his administration, AP Calculus was taught to seniors by Bernie Zoranski.

Though the process took some time, GNA went on to offer a second AP course in the late 1990s when AP English, introduced by James Carey, was added to the roster. Since then, GNA has further expanded its program, having provided four AP courses in 2016: AP U.S. History (APUSH) for juniors and seniors, instructed by Candice Muench; AP Biology for seniors, taught by Dawn Marshall; AP Calculus AB for seniors, instructed by Barbara Warman; and AP English for seniors, taught by Tonya Cumberland.

As more and more students expressed interest in these classes, GNA decided to further extend its list of offered AP



classes—primarily under Principal Amy Scibek. For the 2019-2020 school year, GNA has seven presently active AP courses: APUSH for juniors and seniors with Candice Muench, AP U.S. Government and Politics for seniors (also with Muench), AP Computer Science Principles for juniors and seniors with Michele Wisniewski, AP Biology for seniors with David Prushinski, AP Calculus AB for seniors with Barbara Warman, AP Probability and Statistics for seniors with Nicolas Rauh, and AP English for seniors with Rachel Jeffries.

#### A special honor roll designation

During the 2018-19 school year, the Greater Nanticoke Area School District was recognized for this list of classes when it earned a spot on the National Advanced Placement District Honor Roll. The program works to honor schools that have made efforts to enlarge their AP programs and is highly selective: only 373 schools from the United States and Canada are named.

Greater Nanticoke Area was one of two districts from Luzerne County that were chosen to receive this bi-national distinction. The accomplishment has encouraged Nanticoke to cultivate and execute even greater intentions: in the future, GNA hopes to add AP Chemistry, AP Psychology, AP European History, AP Physics, and AP language courses to its subject list.

It is a goal of the faculty to put these courses into action, for they aspire to provide the students with a variety of challenging classes that spark interest and a desire to learn. As Barbara Warman commented, “I would add AP courses to our curriculum based on student need and interest.”

#### Exam performance improvements

In addition to making the National Advanced Placement District Honor Roll, students at GNA have performed exceptionally well on the examinations that mark the conclusion of their corresponding courses. This can be observed, for example, in the performance of the AP U.S. History students, whose mean scores have been on the rise over the past four years. The 2017-18 class received scores that exceeded the national average, and the 2018-19 cohort had a higher-than-average pass rate, with one individual obtaining a perfect score.

Even students who did not pass the examination acquired a set of valuable skills, presenting them with exposure to a subject matter which is bound to be covered and utilized at length in university.

For example, the APUSH students wrote (and continue to write) many papers throughout the year, thus fostering the writing skills that are notoriously essential in higher education. The course’s instructor, Candice Muench, noted, “AP students need to be willing to devote a substantial amount of time outside of the classroom to AP History courses. My AP students, especially in the AP U.S. History classes, have nightly assignments that require them to dissect and analyze every event in United States history. AP History students need to be established writers who are willing to polish their writing skills based on College Board writing rubrics, bringing not only their knowledge of history and politics to life, but exhibiting their ability to analyze and make connections across themes.”

With regard to AP Calculus AB, many students who did not pass the AP Exam later went on to take the course in university with noticeable success — a factor for which they give Barbara Warman great credit. The Greater Nanticoke Area staff has many goals; the intention to have students accumulate the knowledge required to pass the rigorous courses and accumulate college credits, along with teaching them vastly beneficial skills for college and beyond, are only some of these.

#### Two decades of success, and growing

By augmenting the AP course repertoire, Greater Nanticoke Area administrators and educators have dedicated themselves to creating a curriculum that continues to meet the needs of their students. The program has expanded rapidly in less than two decades, going from a sole class in the 1990s to seven in the present-day — much to the benefit of pupils, who have increasingly excelled over time and whose thirst for knowledge has only been amplified.

“The bond developed in AP classrooms is like none other. Students see (a teacher’s) dedication to the content and (his/her) devotion to pushing them toward success,” APUSH instructor Candice Muench states. “I am blessed to work for a district that has allowed me to successfully experiment with College Board courses.”

Though the addition of Advanced Placement courses requires an ever-growing abundance of mentors, GNA is determined to continue to find spaces in scheduling and work to shuffle schedules in order to maintain its position on the National Advanced Placement District Honor Roll, striving to earn untainted pride from both its alumni and the city of Nanticoke as a whole.

## **New Dollar General store in Nanticoke plans grand opening**

Denise Allabaugh - Citizens Voice

Discount retailer Dollar General's newest store at 443 W. Main Street in Nanticoke is now open and store officials will celebrate an official grand opening 8 a.m. Saturday with free prizes and special deals. The first 50 adult shoppers at the store will receive a \$10 Dollar General gift card and the first 200 shoppers will receive a Dollar General tote bag with complimentary product samples among other giveaways. Traditional Dollar General stores employ approximately six to 10 people, depending on the need, according to the discount retailer. Anyone interested in applying for available positions can go to [www.dollargeneral.com/careers](http://www.dollargeneral.com/careers).

10/20/2019

## **Suspected gas explosion rocks home in Nanticoke**

[bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com](mailto:bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com)

A possible natural gas explosion rocked a home on West Church Street on Sunday night, badly damaging the property and sparking a fire.

Emergency crews said a property manager was on scene at the time of the explosion, but only suffered minor injuries. The man was treated on scene and released.

Crews from UGI Utilities, the natural gas provider, are on scene.

Don Brominski, a UGI spokesman, said the company's investigators did not detect any gas leaks on the UGI distribution system.

The company received a call about an incident at 117 W. Church St., Rear, at 6:22 p.m. and a UGI crew was at the scene by 6:46 p.m., Brominski said.

The gas company will likely defer further investigation to police or other agencies, since it did not detect a leak, Brominski said.

10/18/2019

## **Yudichak: SCI-Retreat closing gives Luzerne County an economic 'death penalty'**

[bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com](mailto:bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com)

Using Department of Corrections terminology, state Sen. John Yudichak on Thursday at a public hearing accused Gov. Tom Wolf's administration of ordering the economic "death penalty" for Luzerne County with plans to close State Correctional Institution at Retreat in Newport Twp.

Yudichak, D-14, Plymouth Twp., said he's watched Luzerne County "rise from the ashes of anthracite" coal mining during his 20 years in the state legislature, but the area still struggles economically compared to other regions of the state.

Closing SCI-Retreat, in addition to the proposed closure of the White Haven Center for the intellectually disabled in White Haven, would amount to a "catastrophic" loss of over 850 family-sustaining jobs for Luzerne County, Yudichak warned during the hearing at Greater Nanticoke Area High School chaired by Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel.

"After decades of working to dig ourselves out of the mine hole, why would state government kick Luzerne County back down the mine shaft?" Yudichak asked. "This is more than cruel and unusual punishment. It is the potential death penalty."

Hundreds of people in attendance, mostly SCI-Retreat workers, loudly applauded following Yudichak's comments.

Citing budget constraints and a shrinking prison population, the Wolf administration has proposed closing SCI-Retreat and sending its 1,000 inmates to other prisons in the state. The administration has said 400-plus employees would be offered jobs at one of six other DOC facilities in Northeast Pennsylvania — SCIs Coal Twp., Dallas, Frackville, Mahanoy, Muncy and Waymart — all within 65 miles of SCI-Retreat.

The hearing began with DOC officials reading a statement from Wolf.

"I do not take the decision to close a prison lightly," Wolf said.

Wolf vowed to work with staff members, the union and legislators and review all the testimony presented before making a final decision. But he noted DOC needs can't be dictated only by the impacts on communities where prisons currently exist.

"No community should rely solely on a prison for economic viability," Wolf said in his statement.

SCI-Retreat, which sits between the Susquehanna River and a Newport Twp. mountainside, is by far the largest employer in the municipality.

Newport Twp. manager Peter Wanchisen told the DOC panel leading the hearing that the closing would devastate the township, which contains the downtrodden Glen Lyon, a section of the township has been classified as the most distressed place in Pennsylvania.

“We are not looking for a handout from Harrisburg. We are looking for a helping hand. Please do not close this facility,” Wanchisen pleaded.

Bernadette Mason, the superintendent of SCI-Retreat, asked DOC officials and the governor to reconsider the decision. “I am here to humbly ask that every effort be made to allow for the facility to stay open,” Mason said. “To the staff of SCI-Retreat, we are one family, brothers and sisters who stick together. I am with you every step of the way.” During his comments, Yudichak noted the closure would be felt far beyond Newport Twp. to the tunes of millions of dollars per year.

Since SCI-Retreat is only accessible by using a bridge from Route 11 in Hunlock Twp., businesses along Route 11 — like Stookey’s Bar-B-Que and Morris Family Restaurant in Plymouth Twp. — would see a big loss of business, Yudichak said.

Sen. Lisa Baker, R-20, Lehman Twp., asked Wetzel not to endorse a “foreclosure on our future.”

She noted the state, in recent years, spent \$1 million for a new natural gas hook up at SCI-Retreat and wondered what the state will still owe to the gas company.

Additionally, the prison is by far the largest customer of the Shickshinny Sanitary Sewer Authority, which also serves the residents of Shickshinny, Conyngham Twp. and Salem Twp.

Baker noted the authority has an outstanding loan through 2036 to pay for upgrades, which were designed assuming SCI-Retreat would continue to be a customer.

The senator warned that the average ratepayer in those three municipalities who now pays \$60 a quarter might see their bill skyrocket to \$500 every three months, or \$2,000 a year, if SCI-Retreat is eliminated.

Baker said the authority already has a 30 percent delinquency rate on bills.

“To pile on a big rate increase, the delinquencies will rise and soar,” Baker said.

Prior to Baker’s testimony, DOC officials said the department has agreed to continue paying its \$37,000 quarterly sewer bill for five years.

Don Williams, a prison safety advocate from Nanticoke, told Wetzel about how his son Eric, 34, was murdered by an inmate while working in federal prison after cost cutting measures reduced staff.

“To try and fix a budget problem by putting all these officers lives in danger is very ill advised,” Williams said. “I hope something doesn’t result like what happened to my son.”

The crowd, some with tears in their eyes, gave Williams a standing ovation.

Dave McElwee, a retired SCI-Retreat captain from Bloomsburg, said he wants an investigation launched to see if partisan political motivations were behind Wolf, a Democrat, trying to close two state facilities in Luzerne County.

“It’s a retaliation on Luzerne County for voting for Donald Trump,” McElwee said.

His comment drew the loudest applause of the night.

Trump, a Republican, routed former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in Luzerne County in the 2016 presidential election, despite a nearly two-to-one registration advantage for Democrats.

Several people who asked questions wondered why Wetzel in his budget request before the state legislature indicated a prison closure wasn’t likely but now seems to support one.

In 2017, Gov. Tom Wolf targeted five prisons for possible closure, including SCI-Retreat. Following meetings, protests and public outcry, the governor opted to just to close SCI-Pittsburgh.

After Wolf tried to close SCI-Retreat in 2017, the state legislature passed the Public Safety Facilities Act, which required a public hearing before state facilities could be closed and a 90-day notice.

Wolf first proposed closing SCI-Retreat on Aug. 29, so the earliest a decision could be made is Nov. 29, Wetzel said.

He said a decision will likely be announced the first week of December.

“This isn’t just an exercise,” Wetzel said. “This is a difficult decision. We are going to take all due caution.”

10/18/2019

**Support for SCI-Retreat overflows at hearing**

[pkernan@timesleader.com](mailto:pkernan@timesleader.com)

Gathering in the auditorium of the Greater Nanticoke Area High School, state officials, employees of the State

Correctional Institute — Retreat and others came out in an attempt to convince the state Department of Corrections to keep the state prison open.

But as corrections officials tried to assure the hundreds in attendance Thursday evening about the possible prison closure, one state senator likened it giving Luzerne County the “death penalty.”

Thursday’s hearing was necessitated by Act 133 of 2018 — passed in part due to a previous attempt to close the prison in 2017 — which requires closures of public institutions like correctional facilities to come after a period of public comment and investigation into the economic impact of the closure. Gov. Tom Wolf’s administration and the corrections department announced their plans to close the Newport Township-based prison in August.

Overseen by Corrections Secretary John Wetzel, the hearing began with assurances from the department that, despite the difficulty of the potential closure, the state would be taking all necessary precautions to ensure the local economy and prison employees would be impacted in the least negative way possible.

Paul Macnowsky, regional director of the Department of Community and Economic Development, said that the economic effects of a closure could be tough, but added that he believed the troubles could be surmounted with the right kind of help from the state.

Macnowsky specifically highlighted a potential loss of \$1,300 in taxes each year from any employees of the prison who move out of the county for work, should they be placed at a prison outside the county.

He also said it was estimated that slightly more than 50% of the employees would be relocated to correctional facilities that would, on average, decrease the length of their commute, as the state has guaranteed all employees would be placed at a prison within 65 miles of SCI-Retreat.

A hiring freeze has been placed at the six correctional institutions within that radius in order to make room for the 409 employees who would be affected by the closure, said another official.

It was repeatedly said throughout the night by state officials that the decision to close the prison does not come lightly, with a statement from Wolf being read saying the governor wants to provide a system that is more “fair,” but also fiscally responsible.

However, during the period of public comment, criticism of the plans was sharp, drawing the ire of prison employees and elected officials, including state Sens. Lisa Baker, R-Lehman Township, and John Yudichak, D-Plymouth Township. Yudichak’s comments were particularly impassioned, saying the closure of the prison, when coupled with the White Haven State Center, would be disastrous to the local community, saying the two closures would result in a loss of 800 total jobs locally.

In a fiery speech, Yudichak spoke about how proud he was of the Luzerne County community for rising “from the ashes of anthracite.”

“So after decades of digging out of that mine hole, why at this time, why at this time would the Wolf administration and the Department of Corrections kick Luzerne County back down the mine shaft?” Yudichak asked. “It’s more than cruel and unusual punishment; it is the possible death penalty of Luzerne County shaking its status of having the highest unemployment rate in the state.”

Before thunderous applause from the nearly 300 people gathered in support of the prison, Yudichak asked the department to actually take the public comments into consideration.

“Live up to the spirit of Act 133 and keep SCI-Retreat open,” he said.

Leo Kaskel, an employee at the prison, also spoke heatedly, saying that the prison is needed to not only keep the community safe, but to help rehabilitate prisoners.

“(Closing the prison) inherently increases the possibility that, when reentrants come home, they’ll remember that the Department of Corrections treated them as a number,” he said, saying shipping inmates to other prisons would only increase overcrowding. “These people will become our neighbors again.”

Kaskel said he’s not worried about the employees — he said they’re tough; he knows they’ll survive.

“I’m worried about what we are saying as a commonwealth when we are taking away another property, another asset from our citizens for budgetary reasons,” he said, with emotion in his voice. “We can do better than this. This is not an opportunity to reduce our footprint, but to improve our footing.”

A spokesperson from the Department of Corrections said the state’s decision about the prison could come in 60 to 90 days.

10/18/2019

**Earth Conservancy president will retire early next year**

dallabaugh@citizensvoice.com

After serving as president and CEO of the Earth Conservancy for 25 years, Mike Dziak said Thursday he is retiring early next year.

He will be replaced by Terence J. Ostrowski, a senior civil engineer employed by Borton-Lawson Engineering. Dziak, 78, a Harveys Lake resident, previously worked for IBM for 27 years and returned to the area in 1994 to lead the Earth Conservancy in acquiring 16,000 acres of former Blue Coal Land and putting the property back into productive use.

He said he has been trying to retire for more than a year but was seeking a good replacement to finish the Earth Conservancy's mission. About 6,000 acres still needs to be addressed, he said.

He and the board of directors, chaired by John McCarthy Jr., concluded that Ostrowski is the "guy for the job," Dziak said.

Ostrowski has worked at Borton-Lawson in Wilkes-Barre since 1998 and has provided engineering and planning expertise on several Earth Conservancy projects.

"Terry is a good replacement," Dziak said. "I've known him for 15-plus years and he's very capable. I think he will be an excellent leader for the organization going into the next decade."

Dziak said he will remain at the Earth Conservancy until the end of January next year and will be available after that to answer questions throughout 2020 to ensure a smooth transition.

Dziak said some of the Earth Conservancy's recent success stories include NorthPoint Development bringing Chewy.com, Adidas and Patagonia to Hanover Twp. on what was once mine-scarred land.

NorthPoint Development also is constructing a 2.4-million-square-foot business park that spreads through Hanover Twp. and **Nanticoke** with three large warehouses.

True Value Company is occupying about 1 million square feet of warehouse space and plans to create hundreds of jobs and e-commerce company Spreetail has opened in a 610,000-square-foot fulfillment center. NorthPoint Development also plans to construct a third warehouse on the site and in all, the project called Hanover 9 is expected to create more than 1,500 jobs.

The Earth Conservancy also is working with a New Jersey-based developer who wants to purchase a parcel of land in **Nanticoke** and Newport Twp.

Dziak said since the \$90 million South Valley Parkway project is finally getting done, it has sparked economic development on all this land.

"It took a long time to get there," he said. "It took many, many years. There were some projects that we worked on that took close to 10 years. When things come together like they have over the last year and a half, it is really neat for the region."

10/18/2019

**Mike Dziak retiring as Earth Conservancy head**

jandes@timesleader.com

Mike Dziak is retiring as president/CEO of Earth Conservancy after 25 years and will be replaced by Terence J. Ostrowski, the nonprofit announced Thursday.

The nonprofit was created in 1994 to acquire 16,000 acres of former Blue Coal Land, much of it mine-scarred, and put the property back into productive use.

"It's been a good run," said Dziak, 78, of Harveys Lake. "It's always hard to leave something that you've worked at for 25 years, but it's time to move on."

About 6,000 acres remains, and Dziak estimated it will take another 10 to 15 years to address the rest.

Of the 10,000 acres already processed, 8,000 acres will remain green space or undeveloped forever, Dziak said.

The remaining 2,000 acres now houses residences and businesses, including the Chewy.com, Adidas and Patagonia Inc. structures visible from Interstate 81 at a Hanover Township site once containing an unsightly giant pit and other black remains from past coal mining.

In a release, Earth Conservancy Board of Directors Chairman John McCarthy Jr. said Dziak has been a "tireless leader" and a "passionate advocate" for preserving open space, protecting critical water resources and reclaiming and repurposing mine-scarred land in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

"This dedication has made a profound impact on our region, and he's made an indelible mark on those he has worked with," McCarthy said.

Ostrowski, a professional engineer, will take over as head of the nonprofit when Dziak's retirement takes effect Jan. 31, the release said. Ostrowski has worked at Borton-Lawson in Wilkes-Barre since 1998 and has provided engineering and

planning expertise on several Earth Conservancy projects.

“His deep knowledge of the region and his engineering talents will prove invaluable as Earth Conservancy moves forward with its mission in the years to come,” the release said of Ostrowski.

Dziak said he will share his extensive institutional knowledge of coal land history during the transition and after retirement, if needed. He plans to pursue other interests and spend more time with family, including four grandchildren. Earth Conservancy has spent nearly \$50 million reclaiming more than 2,000 acres, largely aided by government grants and land sales, Dziak said last year.

Much of Earth Conservancy’s focus is now on a 2,200-acre swath known as the Bliss/Truesdale site located primarily in Hanover and Newport townships. This project will create a mix of residential, industrial and public open space after it is cleaned up, Dziak has said. Between 400 and 500 acres must be reclaimed, he said.

Dziak said Thursday a developer has expressed interest in 130 acres of the first 200-acre section that Earth Conservancy is working to reclaim.

10/13/2019

### **Hearing on SCI-Retreat closure expected to draw large crowd**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Union leaders representing the workers of the embattled State Correctional Institution at Retreat say they have yet to see an agenda for this week’s public hearing about the proposed closure of the prison.

One thing certainly on the agenda, they say, will be a huge crowd of the prison’s workers, their families and friends who are faced with an uncertain future.

The public hearing, which local lawmakers have said appears to be a mere formality since the decision has already been made, is slated for 7 p.m. Thursday at Greater Nanticoke Area High School.

“I would like to think it’s going to be packed,” said Larry Blackwell, president of the Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers Association. “We’re hoping to fill the place and let the decision makers know how it’s going to affect people.” SCI-Retreat employs about 400 people and local lawmakers say the loss of that many family-sustaining jobs will devastate the local economy.

The prison, on a hill along the Susquehanna River in Newport Twp. that is only accessible by crossing a bridge from Route 11 in Hunlock Creek, has survived closure talk before.

In 2017, the prison, the largest employer by far in Newport Twp., was one of five state prisons being considered for closure by Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf. In the end, the governor only shut down SCI-Pittsburgh.

Now, it’s the lone target.

While some lawmakers have signaled that the Wolf administration has already finalized its decision, the union plans to keep fighting.

“We are holding out hope,” Blackwell said.

State officials say the 400 workers will be offered jobs within the Department of Corrections and have often noted there are six other facilities located within 65 miles of SCI-Retreat — SCIs Coal Twp., Dallas, Frackville, Mahanoy, Muncy and Waymart.

Citing a shrinking prison population, the administration says the 1,000 inmates at SCI-Retreat will be absorbed in the state’s other facilities.

Blackwell said the shrinking population is the result of more lenient parole standards that are letting inmates out from their sentences sooner.

“People in this administration want more prisons closed and inmates out in the community, but in the last several months, we saw six murders by five parolees in Pennsylvania,” Blackwell said. “I don’t think its time to be closing prisons when the parole murder numbers are as high as they’ve been that I have ever known of. The budget cuts can’t put public safety in jeopardy.”

Hank McNair, the statewide union’s vice president, spent 12 years of his career working at SCI-Retreat and knows many of the workers who will be affected.

“This one I have a personal interest in. This is the jail I was associated with,” McNair said.

McNair, of Hanover Twp., said if Retreat closes “there will be a lot of people who have to make a lot of tough decisions here.”

“There’s people who just started. Some said they are probably going to leave and get a new job because they don’t want to commute. There’s a couple who are just going to retire and hang it up,” McNair said. “The sad thing is there is a lot of employees scared, not knowing what’s going on with their future.”

## ABOUT SCI-RETREAT

SCI-Retreat, which sits between the Susquehanna River and a mountainside, first opened as a county-owned home for the poor.

It later became a state-run mental health hospital until 1981, when it closed. The facility reopened as a state prison in January 1988.

The prison is in Newport Twp., but it is only accessible from U.S. Route 11 in Hunlock Creek.

A distinctive feature of the complex is a bridge that spans the river. Staff and visitors have to cross the bridge, from Hunlock Creek to Newport Twp., to get to the prison.

In 2017, the state Department of Corrections listed the “pros and cons” for each of the five prisons that were being considered for closure in an internal report of recommendations for possible prison closures.

The limited access to the prison was cited by the department as one reason the prison was a candidate for closure.

The lone access road is a problem because during bad floods, like in 2011, the prison is left in “complete isolation” because flooding shuts down Route 11 in both directions, according to a memo released by the department.

## IF YOU GO

A hearing about the proposed closure of State Correctional Institution at Retreat in Newport Twp. will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday at Greater Nanticoke Area High School, 425 Kosciuszko St., Nanticoke.

10/12/2019

### **Sale of former Nanticoke school in the works**

Michael P. Buffer - Citizens Voice

The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board voted Thursday to approve an agreement to sell the vacant K.M. Elementary Smith school building in Newport Twp. for \$400,000.

The buyer is Jay Naparlo. He plans to use the building and area for apartment buildings, Superintendent Ronald Grevera said.

The school at 25 Robert St. was closed after the 2017-18 school year. In August 2018, the school district opened the new Kennedy Early Childhood Center, and since then, all Greater Nanticoke Area schools have been located on one campus off Kosciuszko Street in Nanticoke.

The K.M. Smith building dates back to 1930. It was last used for pre-K, kindergarten and first graders.

The school board also approved a plan to refinance old debt from 2015, and it could save \$500,000 and \$800,000 in reduced debt payments, Grevera said. The board agreed to borrow \$9.3 million in 2015 to fund the project to build the Kennedy Early Childhood Center.

10/9/2019

### **Woman sues Boscov's over escalator mishap**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

A Nanticoke woman is suing Boscov's Department Store in Wilkes-Barre, claiming she was severely injured during a mishap on the store's escalator in November 2018.

In a lawsuit filed Tuesday, Viola Shemanski claims she was riding an escalator in the store when it “violently sped up and jerked her.”

Shemanski fell down, hitting her head and ribcage, causing “severe and serious” injuries, the lawsuit says.

During the incident, Shemanski's jacket became entangled and was ripped off, the lawsuit says.

According to the suit, filed by the Zola Law Offices in West Hazleton, Boscov's had crews doing maintenance on another escalator at the time of the incident.

The lawsuit accuses Boscov's of “failing to discover what a reasonable inspection of the escalator would have discovered, that the escalator was existing in a dangerous condition, which constituted a hazard to plaintiff.”

Efforts to reach officials with Boscov's were not immediately successful Tuesday.

10/4/2019

### **Greater Nanticoke Area looking to float bonds to refinance debt**

mguidish@timesleader.com

Greater Nanticoke Area School District has posted a legal notice of plans to float bonds in an amount “not to exceed” \$17.5 million, to be used for “advanced refunding of the school district’s outstanding general obligation bond.” The move is projected to save about \$600,000.

The refinancing plan was proposed at the Sept. 14 monthly school board meeting by financial consultant Mike Vind of FSL Financial Solutions. Vind said current interest rates were low enough to make the savings worth the effort. The bond being refinanced was issued in 2015 at 3.2%, and Vind said the new rate would be a bit above 3%, though the plan would be to make the transaction when rates were at their lowest over the next month or two.

Vind had talked about refinancing about \$9 million. The classified ad amount “Not to exceed \$17.5 million is considerably higher, but it is not uncommon for districts to seek more than they actually settle for when making such large financial moves.

It is also possible FSL determined more savings were possible by refinancing more of the district’s existing debt. According to state-mandated documents drawn up for this year’s budget, Greater Nanticoke Area has about \$25.5 million in bonds payable.

The ad notes the board will consider a resolution authorizing the move at a meeting ‘to be held not more than 30 days nor less than three days from the date of advertisement of this notice.’ The next School Board meeting is scheduled for Oct. 10.

10/2/2019

### **School bus, Jeep involved in Nanticoke crash**

Staff Report - Times Leader

City police are investigating a two-vehicle crash involving a school bus that occurred at 3:25 p.m. Tuesday on Garfield Street.

The school bus was carrying 19 children, all of whom came away from the crash uninjured and were released on scene to their parents. The drivers of both the school bus and the other vehicle, a Jeep Wrangler, were transported by ambulance to a local hospital for minor injuries.

**Anyone who witnessed the crash is asked to contact the Nanticoke Police Department at 570-735-2200.**

9/26/2019

### **Students voicing concerns of bullying, racism at Greater Nanticoke Area**

mguydish@timesleader.com

A number of students who contend school bullying and racism are being ignored have formed a group dubbed the “Stop the Hate Project,” sophomore Cydnee Dingman said.

“We feel the complaints are being neglected by the administration,” Dingman said. “We hear stories of being bullied and nothing is done about it.”

Dingman said a group of about eight students trade stories both via social media and in person during morning gatherings at the school. She posted screenshots of some of those comments on her Facebook page, with stories of hands being slammed in the door of a locker, a threat to kill a student, and suicidal thoughts.

“We are hoping to change the way people are seeing these things,” Dingman said. “We don’t like the hate going around in our school.”

Asked about the student concerns and postings, Superintendent Ron Grevera said in an email that all reports of bullying and harassment are investigated by the building principal, and that some of it starts outside the schools but is continued in them. He also noted “much of the bullying occurs on social media.”

If it does come into the school and reports of bullying are substantiated, Grevera said, “Students receive progressive discipline,” but that discipline is not made public, “and therefore I can see how sometimes students may perceive that nothing is being done.” Students who are bullied may be referred to the guidance department for counseling, he added. “Currently,” Grevera wrote, “the district is waiting for state approval of an ‘in-school’ based counseling service through Northeast Counseling whereby students can receive counseling during the school day rather than having to rely on parents or guardians to drive them to appointments.”

Dingman said students started noticing the problems about a month ago “but the group only started almost two weeks ago.”

“We want schools that feel safe,” she said, “Not to feel like we’re not worth anything



9/20/2019

### **Young entrepreneur debuts food truck**

[bwellock@citizensvoice.com](mailto:bwellock@citizensvoice.com)

The Greater Nanticoke Area homecoming pep rally was a showcase for a Trojan alumnus and entrepreneur. Brandon Murtha started a business selling cupcakes from a colorful camp trailer when he was in high school. He's 19 now, and his business is growing.

Thursday's pep rally was the grand opening for his new food truck, Murt's Mobile Diner.

The menu included diner staples like fries, hamburgers and cheeseburgers, hot dogs and grilled cheese. He also had a few Polish specialties, such as pierogi, potato pancake and haluski, as well as a chicken wing ravioli.

The Nanticoke native has been interested in business for several years.

"When I started this one," he said, pointing to the cupcake camper, "I didn't really know what I was in for. But as I started to do it more and go to different events, I saw how much people really enjoy food trucks and how big it's starting to get and starting to expand in the area. Building on that, I didn't just want to stay with that. I just wanted to move up." FASTSIGNS of Wilkes-Barre completed the brightly colored decals on his truck which advertise "Homemade classics served with a smile."

Creating and equipping a food truck is no small task. Murtha created the logos and menus, purchasing, learning the recipes and serving it at events.

Rosie Hish, a family friend, helped him develop the recipes, and was helping Thursday along with his parents and another friend, Sarah Bonk.

"It's a big accomplishment for a young man who's 19, to have two businesses on his own," said his mom, Debbie Murtha.

He served cupcakes from his other venture, Murt's Desserts, at last year's homecoming, and the large crowd cleaned out his stock. That's why he came back again this year with something more.

9/5/2019

### **NYC firefighters visit LCCC tribute to 9/11 victims**

[bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com](mailto:bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com)

A motorcycle group of New York City firefighters rumbled into Nanticoke on Wednesday to visit Luzerne County Community College's Walk of Honor, a memorial that has a tribute to the victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Robert Carlo, whose family is from Newport Twp., came to honor his brother, Michael, a fellow firefighter who was killed on Sept. 11 at the World Trade Center.

The memorial has a plaque dedicated to Michael Carlo. Robert Carlo laid flowers nearby during Wednesday's visit. The pilgrimage has become an annual tradition for the current and retired FDNY members who comprised the group known as the Fire Riders.

"There's a lot of sadness that's associated with the month of September. For years, I dreaded the month of September. It created a lot of anxiety and sadness," Michael Carlo, who retired from the FDNY in 2005, said during a speech at the memorial.

He challenged his brothers and sisters to turn that sadness into positivity rather than let the terrorists accomplish their goal.

"If you go around saying you hate the month of September, that's one-twelfth of the year. You're going to hate one-twelfth of you life because something they wanted? I'm not giving it to them. If you dread the month of September, they win," Michael Carlo said.

Michael Carlo, who still has family in Nanticoke and Newport Twp., told the crowd about visiting his Luzerne County relatives every holiday and summer when he was a kid. He recalled riding his bicycle all over.

He said he didn't get into riding motorcycles under after Sept. 11. After buying a motorcycle, he started riding with the Fire Riders.

"The rest is history — 450,000 miles later, here we are today," Michael Carlo said. "I never personally worked with any of these guys I rode up with today but our common bond is the love of riding motorcycles."

Michael Carlo thanked the Nanticoke Fire Department for the warm welcome, as fire trucks escorted the riders through town. The bikers then visited city fire headquarters.

"We really got to know the guys in Nanticoke," Michael Carlo said. "It's a great thing to continue the brotherhood across state lines."

9/5/2019

## **Giuseppe's brings Italian fine dining to Nanticoke**

Patrice Wilding - Citizens Voice

Joseph Ginthner Jr. worked in the food service industry for 30 years, watching trends come and go and observing what worked in the local foodscape.

In 2018, he teamed up with his brother, David, and business partner Steve Smith to initiate a plan for Giuseppe's, a pasta, seafood and steakhouse serving authentic, homemade Italian fine dining in Luzerne County.

When it opened on March 19, Giuseppe's found a welcoming home in Nanticoke, which Ginthner, a Wilkes-Barre native, described as a historic city on the brink of greatness.

"I saw that downtown Nanticoke needed a restaurant of this caliber to show off the foods we have," Ginthner said.

"We're here at the perfect time, and we're excited to see the city grow around us."

Situated on North Market Street, Giuseppe's has an unassuming exterior that belies the atmosphere found within, where the voices of classic Italian crooners such as Dean Martin, Tony Bennett and Frank Sinatra fill the air with love songs, and low, moody lighting creates a cozy ambience.

With seating for about 150, Giuseppe's offers a variety of table choices for guests, from high-tops to booths to the fine dining room and outdoor patio area. The bar can accommodate 32 and is the perfect spot for enjoying cocktails and appetizers while "watching the action" unfold in the rest of the restaurant, Ginthner said. The private Brody Room can seat between 14 and 20 people.

As executive chef, Ginthner said his menu reflects the merging of several influences over his years of experience.

"I was able to grow the recipes and adapted to the area," he explained. "Some are family recipes, some are from creativity, but they're all things I thought people wanted to see."

Top sellers include the Homemade Short Rib Ravioli, comprised of ribs that have been braised for up to 12 hours until they are fork-tender, then stuffed into raviolis with a blend of ricotta cheese and herbs and topped with a peppercorn cream sauce and additional pieces of short rib on the plate. The restaurant also is noted for its premium steaks, which are all hand-cut on the property and never pre-fabricated.

"Our white marble pork chop is a cut above what everyone else serves, and because of that, we offer quality that's unbeaten," Ginthner said.

Giuseppe's also carries a range of pasta and seafood staples, such as the Fra Diavolo and Homemade Lasagna, all "composed of the right product," he added.

Meals are complemented by a robust menu of wines available by the glass or bottle, all of which have been hand-selected to pair perfectly with the food, and a diverse collection of after-dinner drinks, such as the popular Root Beer Float, Caramel Truffle Latte and Salted Caramel Iced Coffee.

Catering is available on- or off-premises for everything from showers to corporate meetings to family functions, and the restaurant can be booked for private events on Sundays and Mondays when it is closed to the public.

Ginthner's devotion to quality of experience at every step of the meal or night out has been met with positive feedback, which he hopes will drive more customer traffic into Nanticoke for his brand of authentic fine dining.

"Word of mouth and the response on social media has been unbelievable," he said.

Giuseppe's Pasta

Seafood Steaks

Address: 14 N. Market St., Nanticoke

Phone: 570-735-2682

Established: March 19, 2019

Owners: Steve Smith and Joseph Jr. and David Ginthner

Hours: Tuesdays through Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Fridays and Saturdays, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Cuisine: Authentic, homemade Italian fine dining

Online: Visit the restaurant's Facebook page or [giuseppe-restaurant.com](http://giuseppe-restaurant.com).

8/28/2019

## **LCCC mold problem causes delay, additional expense**

mbuffer@citizensvoice.com

Repair work to fix mold and water damage to the Educational Conference Center on Luzerne County Community

College's main campus will continue through December and cost an additional \$834,631, officials said Tuesday at a board of trustees meeting.

The facility has been closed since Nov. 1 after air-quality testing was conducted in response to musty odors and the appearance of mold on pipe insulation in the mechanical room.

In June, the board of trustees approved contracts totaling \$784,730 to repair water infiltration damage, and officials then expected the building to reopen before the start of the fall semester Sept. 3.

But over the summer, workers discovered more damage to exterior sheathing. The board on Tuesday approved a change order with Champion Builders to replace most of the building's exterior.

The repair work will now cost more than \$1.6 million. At Tuesday's meeting, architect Brian Doran and college Vice President of Operation Don Nelson defended the step-by-step approach to try to repair the water infiltration damage.

"You don't take a sledgehammer to kill the fly," Doran said.

The cost to repair the building will still be much less the \$6 million estimate to replace the building with a new one, Nelson said. The building opened in 1982 on the Nanticoke campus and has two auditoriums, several multi-functional classrooms and a full-service dining room.

Doran is with the Scranton firm hemmler + camayd architects. The firm worked with Cocciardi and Associates Inc. to prepare bid documents for renovations from January through March. Cocciardi and Associates Inc. will prepare air-quality testing as the project moves forward.

8/22/2019

### **Solicitor: Nanticoke police chief's future in mayor's hands**

[jllynott@timesleader.com](mailto:jllynott@timesleader.com)

A decision on how to deal with a state Supreme Court ruling that said police Chief Thomas Wall was hired illegally rests with the mayor, the solicitor said Wednesday night.

Attorney William Finnegan met with city council behind closed doors in executive session before the start of its work session and meeting to discuss the case. There was no public discussion on the ruling that came down earlier this week and Mayor Nicole Colatosti-Mackiewicz did not attend the meeting.

"The only thing that I can say for the record is our labor counsel Jack Dean has briefed the mayor with regard to options and the mayor's gotta make a decision in the next couple days as to how she's gonna proceed," Finnegan said after the meeting. "There should be a decision one way or the other as to which way we're going with it in the next couple days." Finnegan did not go into detail about the options, but summed up the situation that the city must deal with. "This is an issue under the home rule charter where it's an interpretation of what the mayor's powers are with regard to the police chief," he said.

Colatosti-Mackiewicz's predecessor, the late Richard Wiaterowski named Wall, a retired state trooper, chief in 2016, prompting the Nanticoke Police Officers Association to legally challenge the appointment.

In its lawsuit, the police union claimed the hiring violated state law which said the chief must be chosen from within the ranks of the department, but if no suitable candidate could be found internally, then the city could look outside. The union maintained the internal search was skipped even though Lt. Michael Roke expressed an interest in the spot left vacant with the death of Chief William Shultz in August 2016.

The union also raised Wall's position on the city's Police Civil Service Commission as a possible conflict of interest. Wall's wife, Donna, was interim city manager at the time of her husband's appointment. She remains in that position and was excused from Wednesday night's council meeting.

In August 2018, Luzerne County Judge William Amesbury sided with the union in the suit and directed the city to name a new chief by Oct. 1, 2018. However, Wall remained on the job while the city appealed the judge's ruling. The state's highest court Tuesday affirmed Amesbury's order.

8/20/2019

### **High court finds Nanticoke police chief hired illegally**

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court on Tuesday upheld a Luzerne County judge's decision that the chief of the Nanticoke City Police Department was hired illegally.

In a one-page order, the state's high court allowed Judge William H. Amesbury's decision to stand, deeming Chief Thomas Wall was hired illegally under state law. The order does not provide an explanation.

Wall, a retired state trooper, was appointed in September 2016, with then-Mayor Richard Wiaterowski citing his 25 years of experience with the state police, his proven leadership ability and record of community service. The City of Nanticoke Police Officers Association responded with a lawsuit alleging an internal candidate was improperly passed over to fill a vacancy created by former Chief William Shultz's death. The suit also alleged Wall had conflicts of interest because he was a member of the city's police civil service commission and he is married to Nanticoke interim city Manager Donna Wall.

In a ruling filed last August, Amesbury found Wiaterowski and the city appointed Wall as police chief without seeking applications or interviewing anyone within the police department, despite the fact that Lt. Michael Roke had expressed interest in the job.

Although state law requires a police chief to be hired "from within the ranks," the city maintained expanded powers granted by its home-rule charter supported an outsider being appointed chief.

Amesbury, however, agreed with the union that state law prohibits the city from making such a change to regulations that affect employee rights.

The judge's order allowed Wall to remain in his post pending the outcome of the city's appeal. It was not immediately clear how long Wall would be permitted to remain in his post as a result of the Supreme Court decision.

Union President Brian Kivler declined to comment on the high court's ruling.

8/19/2019

### **Changes in store for schools in county**

M. Buffer \_ Citizens Voice

Greater Nanticoke Area

The Greater Nanticoke Area School District is trying something new this year to help kindergarten students and their parents adjust to being in school.

Each student and parents get to meet with their teacher for 30 minutes during kindergarten transition days on Aug. 28, 29 and 30. The first day of school for kindergarten students is Sept. 2, and the first day for all other grades is Aug. 28.

"Coming to kindergarten is a huge transition for kids. Sometimes it's a bigger transition for the parents," Superintendent Ronald Grevera said.

Greater Nanticoke Area students at the Educational Center in the sixth, seventh and eighth grades will be required to use clear backpacks this year. It's a safety measure, and it was required in the high school in 2018-19.

The district is also shifting a Title I reading teacher to math in grades 3-5 and is also expanding Title IV remediation from grades 1-5 to grades 1-8, Grevera said. Title I and Title IV are federal programs.

8/16/2019

### **Greater Nanticoke introducing kindergarten transition, math help in early grades**

mguydish@timesleader.com

Greater Nanticoke Area School Board approved a string of hires and contracts for the start of the school year, but some of the biggest news may have been changes Superintendent Ron Grevera announced, including a first-ever kindergarten transition Aug. 28-30 and more help in math for the Elementary Center students.

Grevera has been implementing transition programs for students shifting from one school to the next, particularly since completion of the new Kennedy Early Childhood Center last year and the realignment of grades K-8 in each school (K-2, 3-5, 6-8). This is the first year for kindergarten transition, letting each student and their parents meet with the teacher for 30 minutes.

The new transition program means the first day of kindergarten will be Sept. 2, but the first day for all other grades is still Aug. 28.

The district is also shifting a Title I reading teacher to math in the Elementary Center (Grades 3-5). Title I is a federal program providing money for education in schools with high poverty rates. Grevera said the district gets a bit more than \$1 million annually in Title I money and uses it to pay eight Title I teachers. There is no new money or new hires this year, he added, but student assessments suggest they will do better with more math help in the lower grades.

The district is also expanding remediation help paid for with Title IV grant money, from grades 1-5 to grades 1-8. Title IV is a much smaller federal program that nets Greater Nanticoke about \$80,000 a year, Grevera said.

And the district is expanding the requirement for clear backpacks from the high school into the Education Center

(grades 6-8).

The agenda included a vote to authorize Grevera to submit “intent to utilize flexible instructional days” to the state, but the motion was tabled. The option is new this year in Pennsylvania. Some have dubbed it “cyber snow days,” because it allows the district to fulfill up to five of the required 180 school days through alternative teaching methods including computer-based programs at home.

After the meeting, Grevera said he had decided against implementing the idea because there were still too many questions about how it would work and any potential downsides. He said he was particularly concerned about the impact on special education students who might need the in-person instruction and more help than regular students. The deadline for submitting paperwork to the state is Sept. 1, and Grevera said he does not intend to pursue the idea further this year, though he is open to reconsidering it next year.

8/16/2019

### **Greater Nanticoke Area won't use 'cyber snow days'**

mbuffer@citizensvoice.com

The Greater Nanticoke Area School District will not use flexible instruction days this school year when bad weather prevents students from coming to school.

The school board tabled a vote at Thursday's meeting on a motion submitting to the state the district's intent to use the new option. Superintendent Ronald Grevera said he had operational concerns about implementing flexible days, explaining the state wanted a response by Sept. 1.

In July, Gov. Tom Wolf signed legislation allowing “cyber snow days,” and it required the state Department of Education “to determine specific protocols.” The legislation allows flexible instruction days that will count toward the state requirement of having at least 180 instruction days during the school year.

That could help school districts avoid the task of adding school days to the school calendar when snow days pile up during the school year. The legislation also requires school districts who use technology for flexible instruction days to accommodate students who don't have internet access.

School districts in the area typically expect a few snow days a year and schedule additional instruction days. But when the number of snow days exceeds the number of extra days, districts will have to reschedule school on holidays or off days or they'll extend the school calendar.

Also at Thursday's meeting, board President Tony Prushinski commended E.J. Gill for criticizing some aspects of the high school yearbook. Gill, who graduated high school in June, said the yearbooks were issued last week.

The yearbook only used some submitted quotations from students and didn't include a photo of student council members, Gill said.

8/15/2019

### **Honey Pot Club ready to resume operations**

jhalpin@citizensvoice.com

Six months after discovering a former officer had been draining its coffers, the Honey Pot Club is preparing to resume operations.

“I'll do a happy dance,” said board member Julianna Kobylarz, 72, of the re-opening. “It was so stressful — not sleeping, my mind was spinning: ‘Oh my God, how could somebody do this?’”

The club closed down in February after members discovered the former treasurer had allegedly embezzled tens of thousands of dollars from club bank accounts.

In court documents, police said former board member and treasurer Daniel Wozniak admitted to stealing from the club for years to support a gambling habit. He admitting to taking money from nightly cash deposits until there wasn't enough money left to pay bills, court papers say.

No charges have been filed in the case.

But Kobylarz said the club is ready to reopen Friday, and will resume its monthly bingo game Aug. 24. The club plays 10 regular games, one special game and ends the night with coverall.

Cards are \$1 each and doors open at 6 p.m.

“We know we're not going to recoup all this money,” Kobylarz said of the embezzled funds. “We just want to start over.”

8/11/2019

## **John 'Stanky' Stankovic to be inducted into international polka hall of fame**

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

Back in his Polka band's heyday, John "Stanky" Stankovic once had a globe-crossing marathon weekend by playing in England on Friday, at the Bloomsburg Fair on Saturday and in Switzerland on Sunday.

"How we did that? I don't know. But we did it," Stankovic, 83, said.

From playing at church bazaars in Northeast Pennsylvania to performing in front of one million people at a festival in Tiananmen Square in China, his band "Stanky and the Coal Miners" has been a world traveler.

That's always been the plan.

When Stankovic was a boy, his coal miner father — who urged him to learn to play the accordion instead of focusing on baseball — told him if he learned 10 songs he could make a living for himself.

"I told him, 'I'll learn 11 and see the world.' And I did," Stankovic said.

Stankovic's legendary 74-year career will soon be feted when he is inducted into the International Polka Association's Hall of Fame. He'll be inducted Aug. 31 during the organization's 51st annual convention in Buffalo.

"I feel happy about that. It's a wonderful thing after all these years and it's a great honor," Stankovic said.

Stankovic, who grew up in the Hanover section of Nanticoke, where he still lives, started taking accordion lessons in 1942 and formed his first band in 1945 when he was 9. They started by playing at weddings.

"When you played weddings, you played at houses. You didn't go to ballrooms. Back in those days, weddings lasted for three days — Friday, Saturday and Sunday," Stankovic said. "How you made money was when people were walking in the door, you held a basket out. At that time, everybody would give you a quarter, half dollar or dollar. Sometimes that would add up to \$20 a guy. At that time, that was a hell of a lot of money."

Early in his career, Stankovic's band was a side gig, though they played as many as five nights a week.

His first job was as a "rag man," essentially a junk collector who drove the streets looking for unwanted items he could sell. Later, he worked as a garbage man for Nanticoke's Public Works Department. After that, he worked several other manual labor jobs until music became full time.

Stankovic's band name was originally the "Tip Toppers" until he changed it to "Stanky and the Coal Miners."

While the name paid tribute to the area's coal mining roots, for him it was literal.

Stankovic's early band mates were all coal miners and he picked them up directly from the mines to go on gigs.

"We used to pick them up and their faces were black, their clothes were black. We used to get to a job and they would wash their faces off in the restroom and then come out to play," Stankovic recalled.

Stankovic's biggest supporter for most of his career has been his wife of 57 years, Dottie, who is well known for being Luzerne County's long-time elected register of wills. She often took the stage with the band to sing, ring bells and play the violin.

For decades, the couple hosted the "Pennsylvania Polka" show on WVIA public television, a show which televised people dancing to Polka music.

Polka music allowed Stankovic and his wife to travel the world together. They've been to five continents where "Stanky and the Coal Miners" performed. Sometimes as many as 100 fans from Northeastern Pennsylvania would join them.

Stankovic said his band performed on nearly 60 cruises, including 25 to Alaska. One cruise liner, he said, offered his band the opportunity to be the performers for a 100-day cruise around the world, but he had to decline.

"If we did take that, we would have lost our day jobs," Stankovic said.

During the band's peak, they were booked two years in advance.

As the older generation has passed away, the demand for Polka music has diminished, Stankovic said.

But he still plays at festivals and nursing homes.

Stankovic continues to play annually at Knoebels Amusement Resort and this year will mark his 45th consecutive year playing at the Bloomsburg Fair. Most recently, "Stanky and the Coal Miners" performed Friday at the Plymouth Alive Kielbasa Festival.

At 83, Stankovic still plays the accordion flawlessly and his voice is still sharp. He just uses a lighter accordion than the one he used for most of his career. And instead of standing during performances, he sits on a stool.

But retirement from Polka isn't even an option, he said.

"If people keep calling, I'm going to keep playing," Stankovic said.

8/9/2019

## **Another commercial project could be coming to Nanticoke region**

emark@citizensvoice.com

The Luzerne County Planning Commission on Thursday approved the Earth Conservancy's request to subdivide a parcel in and near Nanticoke that the conservancy intends to sell to a private developer.

The nonprofit conservancy, dedicated to the reclamation of mine-scarred land, has sold several properties it owned in the county's South Valley region to commercial developers. It appears the subdivided parcel could become another commercial project, though few details have been released so far.

The conservancy is working with a New Jersey-based developer that wants to purchase the parcel but no deal has been finalized, according to Michael Dziak, the conservancy's president.

Dziak declined to name the developer or speculate on the developer's plans for the land, which he said is near the site of a planned NorthPoint Development commercial project, not far from Luzerne County Community College.

"I can't comment on that," he said. "It's still ongoing. I don't know what they are going to develop there so I don't want to speculate."

The northern boundary of the subdivided parcel will be a roundabout on Prospect Street, according to Heath Eddy, the county executive director of planning and zoning.

The conservancy's plans call for creating a two-lot subdivision on 130.1 acres and a road easement on 5.52 acres.

The larger lot of the subdivision includes 121.8 acres, mostly in Newport Twp. just outside of Nanticoke, Eddy said. Small portions of that lot are in Nanticoke and Hanover Twp. The smaller lot, of 8.3 acres, is entirely in Hanover Twp. and will be used as a stormwater basin, Eddy said.

The proposed road would lead from the Prospect Street roundabout into the site of the development, Eddy said. The road would "essentially be the southern leg of that roundabout," he said.

Most of the larger lot is in a zoning district classified as Mining, or M-1, according to Eddy. Permitted uses in M-1 zoning districts are limited, he said.

The county planning commission's approval was needed since the county handles zoning and planning for Newport Twp. Officials in Nanticoke and Hanover Twp. already approved the subdivision request, Eddy said.

8/6/2019

### **Officials say Nanticoke land can be transformed if bill passes**

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

A contaminated tract of land in the city could be transformed into a 10-acre recreation complex if a proposed severance tax on the natural gas is finally passed, state officials said Monday.

Officials gathered at the site of a former junkyard along Lower Broadway Street to tout the Restore Pennsylvania proposal, which they say would generate \$4.5 billion over four years that would be invested back in the state's communities.

"Restore Pennsylvania is a bold, bipartisan proposal that will help our cities and communities tackle significant projects that improve public safety and set the stage for greater economic growth," Sen. John Yudichak, D-14, of Plymouth Twp., said. "Projects like the Lower Broadway Recreation Complex cannot be completed with local resources alone." Yudichak said the tax on gas drillers should be a no brainer. About 83 percent of tax will be paid by out-of-state energy consumers, he said.

The proposed recreation complex in Nanticoke would include athletic fields, walking and bike trails, a skate park, a playground and nature areas.

While the tract of land near the Nanticoke-West Nanticoke Bridge used to be a junkyard and heavy equipment center years ago, it was most recently used as a youth soccer field.

Soil tests taken in the summer of 2018 determined the site is contaminated with various harmful chemicals, such as polychlorinated biphenyls, arsenic, cadmium, lead, mercury, pesticides and more, according to a press release by the state Department of Environmental Protection.

"This project is a unique example of how Restore Pennsylvania can eliminate the hazards associated with blighted properties while creating recreational opportunities in the community," DEP secretary Patrick McDonnell said.

8/6/2019

### **Yudichak, DEP secretary tout severance tax proposal to aid Nanticoke park plan**

mguydish@timesleader.com

Standing before a chain link fence barring entrance to an overgrown field and rundown shed, State Sen. John Yudichak and State Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Patrick McDonnell pushed the value of Gov. Tom Wolf's proposed Restore Pennsylvania plan and how it would help turn an old scrapyard into a recreation area.

"Local communities work hard but don't have the resources to tackle these sites," Yudichak, a Democrat from Nanticoke, said. The Restore Pennsylvania plan, embodied in a Senate Bill Yudichak co-sponsored along with Sen. Tom Killion (R-Delaware County), would levy a severance tax on natural gas production to generate about \$300 million annually.

That money would be used to support floating a bond for some \$4.5 billion, Yudichak said, which in turn would be spent on a wide range of infrastructure and land reclamation projects. In this case, Yudichak said, \$3 million to \$5 million would be used to reclaim 10 acres on the edge of Nanticoke near Lower Broadway Road, right before the bridge across the Susquehanna.

Yudichak said the site had been used for various industrial purposes, most recently a scrapyard, and has multiple contaminants including arsenic, lead, chromium and Selenium.

The city acquired the property following the Agnes Flood of 1972, and stored equipment on it, building a soccer field with plans to turn it into a municipal park. But the clean up has proven too costly. The Restore Pennsylvania plan could provide the money to move forward.

McDonnell said the land would likely be restored to a partly marshy area with recreation fields and a trail, though the final decisions would be made after the money was available.

Yudichak noted that the severance tax levied on the energy companies extracting natural gas in Pennsylvania would ultimately be passed on to mostly out-of-state residents because so much gas is sold across state lines. "About 80 percent would be paid from out of state energy users," he said.

Wolf, a Democrat, has been pushing the Restore Pennsylvania idea throughout the commonwealth either by traveling to areas it would target or by sending his cabinet and other officials to events like this.

8/4/2019

### **Cocomo the parrot**

Judy Endo writes about pets - Citizens Voice

As I had mentioned in a previous column, my childhood was spent in the woods near my house, enjoying hours of bird watching. My mother would buy me a bird book, and I would read it cover-to-cover, repeatedly, to learn about the various birds, their habitat, etc. It was my passion. What a wonderful way to spend your childhood years.

I love all creatures great and small, and I do continue to have a love of birds. My little lovebird, Kiwi, is a constant source of joy and entertainment for me. So when I had an invitation to meet the magnificent Macaw, Cocomo, who lives in nearby Nanticoke, I literally jumped at the chance.

Off I went on a very warm Sunday morning to meet Cocomo. As I entered his house I was greeted by Loretta Chmura, his loving owner. As we exchanged greetings, Cocomo was actively giving me the once over from his cage. Loretta and I went into her outside patio to chat before having Cocomo join us.

Like myself, Loretta is an active senior who continues to work full time. She is currently employed at Wesley Village as a service assistant. Loretta is also extremely active in many community groups, and was voted Woman Of The Year in 2016 by the Wyoming Valley Woman's Club. Quite an honor!

Loretta told me that she had always wanted a parrot. I asked her if she had done her homework about their care (high maintenance, very messy, need much attention). She was aware of some, but not all, of a parrot's requirements. These beautiful birds do not simply sit on a perch all day quietly. They need stimulation and social interaction to lead a healthy and happy life.

Loretta's neighbor, who owns several birds, mentioned that she had seen baby parrots for sale from a Florida parrot farm, priced affordably at \$500. Loretta immediately ordered a Blue and Gold Macaw, to be flown into Pennsylvania. When Loretta picked up her little parrot at the airport in Avoca, she was astonished to see this baby bird, approximately the size of an orange. At about two months old, he had no feathers, was wobbly, and had little head control, comparable to a human infant. Loretta was alarmed because she had no knowledge of how to care for a bird so young. However, her neighbor came to her aid and coached her on the feeding regime, keeping the wee one warm, etc. And soon, Loretta had the syringe feedings mastered, knowing how much and how quickly to administer the formula. Baby Cocomo began to grow stronger and sprout feathers.

I then asked Loretta when Cocomo became weaned off being bottle fed, and how she knew it was time to introduce solid foods. Loretta was guided by her veterinarian, Dr. Mark Stair, who told her that Cocomo would resist being bottle



fed, which he did at approximately nine months of age.

Cocomo is currently 27 years old and three and a half pounds, a beautiful adult who is living large in Nanticoke with Loretta and her husband Joe. Loretta takes Cocomo on many excursions where he has a multitude of fans. Cocomo is a very popular sight as the school bus passes near his residence and he is out for his daily walk with Loretta. Cocomo's wings have been clipped to prevent him from taking flight. Cocomo routinely visits Wesley Village, where Loretta works, and is also a customer at Tractor Supply Co. Cocomo's beauty and quiet demeanor are a people magnet. But parrots are not always quiet, as was demonstrated by Cocomo during my interview. We were sitting and, during the interview, Cocomo erupted into some panicked ear-shattering shrieks, obviously upset and distressed. Loretta told me that Cocomo has an intense fear of cats (for obvious reasons) and that she could guarantee that the parrot had caught the scent of a nearby feline.

Cocomo has a delightful trick of "waving" when Loretta asks him to say hello. He raises his foot and holds it in the air. Cocomo obviously enjoys this trick because during my interview he repeatedly said 'hi' by raising his little foot, and I in turn had to stop and say 'hi' back. Who could resist all of that cuteness?

Loretta said that Macaws do not have the vocabulary as that of African Gray Parrots, but Cocomo did have a few phrases such as "Loretta, Where You Going, What Are You Doing, and I Love You." When Loretta had some workmen at her house, they would be preparing to depart to pick up supplies and Cocomo would ask "Where Are You Going?" And they would explain! Another day, Loretta was in her backyard, and Cocomo began shouting from inside the house "Loretta! Loretta!" She rushed inside and saw a delivery man at the door. He asked if that was her husband who had been shouting for her, a bit astonished at the tone, and Loretta replied "You would not believe who it was." Ha ha! I was very relaxed while chatting with Loretta and admiring this beautiful parrot. As Loretta was answering my questions and providing information, Cocomo suddenly shouted "LORETTA!" I laughed out loud. It was so clear, and human-like. You could never recognize that this was a bird shouting her name. Then again, "LORETTA!" At this point, I knew that Cocomo was really putting it on for his interview. It reminded me of Marlon Brando's "STELLA!" Different name, same tone.

Parrots are very bonded to their owner, and Loretta is wisely aware of the damage that this bird's powerful beak can inflict. She is obviously an expert at handling Cocomo, but she recognizes and respects how he might react if he becomes stressed, frightened, or angry. As with any pet, it is the owner's job to ensure their safety and security, first and foremost.

Cocomo's favorite nut is pistachios, and he will reject other offerings. Loretta stated she spends about \$1,000 a year buying his food of choice. But Cocomo also loves mashed potatoes, potato salad and pizza (and I do not like pizza!). You can have my share, Cocomo.

Through her will, Loretta has made arrangements as to who the caregiver will be for Cocomo upon her passing. This is something that all parrot owners must consider since their bird will most likely outlive them. It was through a chance meeting on Halloween that Loretta met and chose the woman who would care for her beloved Cocomo when she was no longer able to. The woman also owns a Macaw and has a strong knowledge of their care and needs.

It was delightful to meet Loretta and Cocomo and to see the strong bond and love that they share. Loretta said that Cocomo had awakened her at 2 a.m., throwing empty pistachio shells on the floor, obviously wanting his supply replenished. And she was happy to oblige, being the dutiful parrot mama. Aren't we all too happy to oblige our fur and feather kids? But remember to do your homework before you make that very important decision to add a pet to your household. Rock on Cocomo. See you out and about!

Dog bless.

8/4/2019

### **Soulful Nanticoke singer-songwriter begins recording debut project**

By Patrick Kernan - pkernan@timesleader.com via The Weekender

Channeling the sultry sounds of soulful singers like Amy Winehouse, a Nanticoke resident's musical career is just beginning after being signed to a local record label.

Sara Belle, 26, was recently picked up by RWE Studios, a label also based in Nanticoke. Belle, along with RWE Studios' lead engineer and producer Reginald DeVaughn, spoke with a Weekender reporter recently, as the songstress recently completed her first EP, which will be entitled "Love Sick."

According to Belle, her songs come from a deeply personal place, saying that much of them are inspired by her own experience with depression.

"When I create music, I feel it," she said. "It comes bursting out of me."

Belle said that she's working to craft her own unique style, but she said she's inspired by soulful singers like Winehouse, to whom DeVaughn directly compared her.

"I want to stick out; I want to bring back that jazzy feel," she said. "I make music that I want people to feel."

According to DeVaughn, Belle is a signee who he really "believes in."

He said they met through mutual friends at a local bar.

"I knew she was a singer and she knew I worked in a recording studio," he said of that first meeting, but he said nothing much came of it.

But the next time they met, DeVaughn said he had Belle sing for him.

"I knew she had it," he said simply. After that, it was only a short amount of time until she ended up in the studio with DeVaughn.

Belle said that she'll be releasing her first single in August to promote the EP. Until then, those who are interested in the soulful singer's work can check out her Facebook page, located at [www.facebook.com/thegirlwithsunflowereyes](http://www.facebook.com/thegirlwithsunflowereyes). She said she's been performing in numerous bars around the area, and you can keep up with her schedule there.

While her dream is only just starting, Belle described just working in the studio as being a dream come true.

"I always sang in the shower, but I never really chased that," she said. "It's a really surreal process."

8/3/2019

### **Nanticoke cop again files suit against city**

[jhalpin@citizensvoice.com](mailto:jhalpin@citizensvoice.com)

Nanticoke Police Officer Kara Kroll now has two pending federal lawsuits against the City of Nanticoke. For the second time in as many years, a Nanticoke police officer has filed a federal lawsuit against the City of Nanticoke.

Kara Kroll alleges in a complaint filed Wednesday that she has faced gender discrimination and a hostile work environment since being hired in June 2015.

According to the lawsuit, male officers in the department have access to a private bathroom for changing, but Kroll, as the department's only female officer, must do so in a public restroom.

The complaint also alleges police Chief Thomas Wall investigated Kroll after she was injured while on duty on Oct. 7, 2016, but that other male officers were not similarly investigated after being injured.

That injury — a sprained neck caused when Kroll hit her head on a staircase platform — was also the basis of the previous federal lawsuit she filed against the city in May 2018.

That case, which is still pending, alleges a violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act by the city for failing to pay Kroll for 15 hours of overtime she said she is owed because officials would not let her go to physical therapy during work.

The new lawsuit goes on to allege that male police officers in the department are permitted to part-time second jobs, but when Kroll was hired to work for the Harveys Lake Police Department city officials rescinded approval for her to take the post.

"Kroll was discriminated against because of her gender since her male counterparts have received preferential treatment," Pittston attorney Cynthia L. Pollick wrote in the complaint.

The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages as well as permission for Kroll to work a second job.

Wall declined to comment on the lawsuit other than to say the matter has been referred to the city's attorneys.

8/2/019

### **Yendrzejewski Tabbed As New Women's Hoops Assistant**

via: Kings Monarchs website

As the 2019-20 season approaches for head coach Caitlin Hadzimichalis and the King's College women's basketball team, the coaching staff continued to round out on Thursday as Alan Yendrzejewski was named as assistant coach for the upcoming campaign.

"I have always had a huge amount of respect for Alan's coaching abilities since the day I met him," said Hadzimichalis.

"He has a genuine passion for the game, plus he knows what it takes to build and maintain success within a program. All of his knowledge and experiences will translate well into our league. I'm so eager to learn from him and to have our players learn from him."

"I am thrilled to join the King's College Women's Basketball program and the Monarch community as an assistant coach," said Yendrzejewski. "I have always been intrigued by the challenge of coaching at the collegiate level and I am

thankful for the opportunity to do so with the coaches and players here at King's."

No stranger to the Northeast Pennsylvania corridor, Yendrzejewski has 20 years of prep basketball coaching experience in the area as he comes to King's. Most recently, Yendrzejewski was the head girl's basketball coach at Greater Nanticoke Area High School in Nanticoke, PA from 2009-18, amassing a 179-57 (.758) record through his nine seasons. He was the Wyoming Valley Conference Coach of the Year four seasons, while leading the team to four WVC Championships and four state playoff appearances.

Before his tenure as the girl's coach, Yendrzejewski was the assistant varsity boy's coach from 2001-09 following a one-year stint as the 9th grade boys head coach at Delaware Valley High School in Milford, PA.

A graduate of GHHS in 1996, Yendrzejewski graduated from local Wilkes University in 2000 with a bachelors in mathematics and secondary education, while completing his Masters Degree in Classroom Technology from Wilkes in 2009. He has served as a math teacher at GNA for the last 18 years.

"Alan has a great basketball mind, especially on the defensive end," said Hadzimichalis. "We've always shared similar philosophies so it was a no brainer when it came to adding him to our staff. His ability to analyze and teach the game will make an instant impact within our program."

"I have a tremendous amount of respect for student-athletes and the high level they are challenged to perform both on the basketball court and in the classroom," said Yendrzejewski. "I hope to offer my 20 years experience as a coach and an educator to the program and I am looking forward to assisting Coach Hadzimichalis and her players in any way that I can."

Alan and his wife Candice reside in Nanticoke with their sons Lucas, Ethan, and Owen.

7/28/2019

### **Habitat building: Conservation club project draws PFBC boss to area**

Tom Venesky - Citizens Voice is a freelance outdoors writer. He can be reached at [www.veneskyoutdoors.com](http://www.veneskyoutdoors.com)

As members of the Nanticoke Conservation Club worked in unison assembling 2-inch strips of hemlock into fish habitat structures, they were being watched.

For the last 15 years, the club has been meeting each July at Frances Slocum State Park to build porcupine cribs — pyramid-shaped wooden structures — and deposit them at the bottom of the lake to provide habitat for aquatic life. It's become an annual tradition for the club, which partners with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission on the project, and on July 11 they built 20 porcupine cribs for the lake.

As club members popped nails into boards and methodically assembled several structures in unison, PFBC executive director Tim Schaeffer watched in amazement.

Schaeffer drove from Harrisburg earlier in the day to see the unique partnership between his agency and the Nanticoke club in action.

"Their dedication is impressive," he said. "We wouldn't be able to do a project like this without the club, and it's a partnership that's never been stronger."

After the structures were assembled on the boat launch, a loader provided by the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources lifted them onto a PFBC boat. Concrete blocks fastened inside each structure allowed them to sink to the bottom at various points throughout the lake.

And it doesn't take long for the benefits to surface.

"Panfish and smaller fish love the cover these structures provide, and when they congregate there it also attracts larger predatory fish, like bass and musky," said Ben Page, a biologist with the PFBC.

Small fish are attracted to the narrow openings in the cribs, Page said, and they are part of an entire food chain that quickly forms around each structure. That's why the cribs are intentionally placed in areas of the lake that are devoid of any cover.

"It's basically a mud flat on the bottom. After these wood structures go in, a layer of algae will soon grow over it. That brings macroinvertebrates, which attracts minnows and then young bass and panfish, followed by the larger predator fish," Page said. "It's similar to the food chain you see develop around a beaver hut in a pond."

In addition to the cribs, Page also cut several trees around the edge of the lake, allowing them to fall into the water and create additional habitat. The trees provide instant cover, he said, as fish seek refuge in the submerged leaves and branches. In several years, the branches decompose and a log remains, which is often used by turtles to bask in the sun. The cribs, however, have a long lifespan as long as they are submerged. Page said structures deposited in other lakes as far back as 1988 have yet to decompose.

As an added benefit, the location of each structure is marked on a map, which the PFBC makes available to anglers on

its website.

Schaeffer said the locations are hotspots for anglers, and making the locations available is part of the agency's mission. "We work on behalf of the anglers, and it's their license dollars that fund projects like this," he said. "It's important to make it accessible to them."

And for the members of the Nanticoke Conservation Club, it was important that the top PFBC official stopped by to see their dedication firsthand. To date, the club has built and deposited more than 100 fish habitat structures in the lake, and they plan on doing more next summer.

"It meant a lot to us that (Schaeffer) came here to witness what we do and see the benefits it provides to the lake," said club member Joe Rutchaskas. "The fishing has improved and anglers are coming out here specifically targeting the cribs. We're helping the fishery and fishing itself, and that's why we do this work."

7/27/2019

**Round and round they go**

dallabaugh@citizensvoice.com

Drivers in Hanover Twp. and Nanticoke should get ready to travel in more circles.

Five roundabouts have been constructed in the areas as part of the \$90 million South Valley Parkway project, a sixth one is expected to open in Nanticoke later this year and a seventh roundabout is coming.

Missouri-based NorthPoint Development received a permit to construct a new access road to the Hanover 9 site being developed near Luzerne County Community College and the new road will connect to another roundabout, said James May, spokesman for the state Department of Transportation.

Since the South Valley Parkway will include six roundabouts, May said the seventh roundabout will stick with similar traffic patterns.

Efforts to reach Brent Miles, vice president of economic development for NorthPoint Development, were unsuccessful Friday.

The company is constructing a 2.4-million-square-foot business park that spreads through Hanover Twp. and Nanticoke with three large warehouses.

True Value Company is occupying about 1 million square feet of warehouse space and plans to create hundreds of jobs. It is expected to open in the fall, a company spokesperson said.

E-commerce company Spreetail has opened in a 610,000-square-foot fulfillment center. Bret Naugle, regional fulfillment manager for Spreetail, said the company is doing receiving and shipping there now and will continue to ramp up their production into the fall.

NorthPoint Development also plans to construct a third warehouse on the site and in all, Hanover 9 is expected to create more than 1,500 jobs.

Hanover Twp. manager Sam Guesto said the township received a \$1 million gaming grant on behalf of the Lower South Valley Council of Governments that includes Hanover Twp., Nanticoke, Ashley, Sugar Notch, Newport Township, Plymouth and the Earth Conservancy. He expects the new road will be put out for bid by September.

With the hundreds of employees who will be entering the new warehouses, Guesto said the new road will take traffic off Kosciuszko Street in Nanticoke where Luzerne County Community College and Greater Nanticoke Area schools are located.

A sixth roundabout being constructed on Prospect Street in Nanticoke should be completed by the end of 2019 paving season on Oct. 31, said PennDOT spokesman Michael Taluto.

Construction of the new road and roundabouts has led to detours and road closures. Signs have been posted throughout Nanticoke and Hanover Twp. to navigate people.

Guesto said people keep knocking over the signs and they are often found laying on the sides of the roads.

Lindsey Temarantz, who co-owns R Bar and Grill on Middle Road in Nanticoke, said construction of the roundabouts, road closures and detours have negatively impacted her business.

Part of Middle Road that leads to her business was shut down three times for several weeks to construct roundabouts.

The road reopened July 3 but will shut down again in August to construct the roundabout on Prospect Street, said Cody Forgach, chief of staff for state Rep. Gerald Mullery, D-119, Newport Twp.

With the road closed, Temarantz said, "It's much harder to get to us."

"You have to go completely out of your way to get to us," she said. "A lot of people come from I-81 and they have detours. If you're not familiar with Nanticoke, the side streets get confusing."

R Bar and Grill formerly was located on Union Street in Nanticoke and opened in the bigger location on Middle Road in

2014.

Temarantz said the new warehouses likely will bring in more business. With road closures hurting business in the meantime, however, she wonders if it's worth the wait.

"A lot of our customers comment about how long it took them to get here," she said. "A lot of our customers come from outside of Nanticoke and they're not familiar with Nanticoke and it creates frustrations."

Mullery said he recently met with Rich Roman, acting PennDOT District 4 executive, in an effort to keep part of Middle Road open until mid to late August. He also vehemently objected to any possibility that the seventh roundabout would delay the roundabout on Prospect Street from opening.

"I totally understand the need for a seventh roundabout but to be bluntly honest, the small family-owned businesses in Nanticoke and Newport Twp. are being negatively impacted by all of this construction. They can't take another delay or another six months for a project to be completed when they're relying on every day and every week for their business to stay afloat," Mullery said. "I feel for all the small businesses who have been who have been affected by this. It has gone on too long and a lot of it was unnecessary."

7/26/2019

### **Piontkowski makes mark against global competition**

Aaron Miller - Citizens Voice

sports@citizensvoice.com

Holy Redeemer senior Jared Piontkowski competed in an international tournament earlier this week. After the tournament — and on his birthday — Piontkowski earned all-state honors to cap an exciting week for the Ohio State commit.

Piontkowski and the Keystone Region Volleyball Association team finished fourth in the gold bracket of the 2019 USA Volleyball High Performance Championship in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, which took place last week and earlier this week.

The Pennsylvania Volleyball Coaches Association named Piontkowski to the Class 2A All-State Team shortly after the tournament. Piontkowski and Holy Redeemer teammate George Beck were the only two athletes from the Wyoming Valley Conference named to the 11-player team.

The 2019 USA Volleyball Coaches Association included the top teams in each region of the U.S. and the best youth teams from countries around the world. Games began on Thursday, July 18 and the championship game concluded Monday.

Piontkowski said KRVA head coach Joshua Brenneman invited him to try out for the team in the winter.

A few days later, Brenneman asked Piontkowski to join the team as a middle-hitter on the 12-player roster.

"Coach Josh reached out to me and invited me to try out," Piontkowski said. "I was in basketball mode and after the first tryout practice, I didn't feel like I was going to make it. After that first practice, I was told by my parents that Coach Josh told them I made the team."

Piontkowski said Brenneman contacted the Ohio State head coach after tryouts and told him that he would be a great fit for the Division I team. The Ohio State coach took Brenneman's advice and Piontkowski committed to the program earlier this summer.

Before competing for KRVA, Piontkowski said he had never played volleyball for a team other than his high school team, but that did not stop him from showcasing his talents at the highest level.

"The practices (for KRVA) were totally different (than high school)," Piontkowski said. "When I got down there, those kids loved volleyball and everyone was really good."

Piontkowski said the team only practiced four times before the tournament began, while most other teams practiced for two weeks, but the team's bond made it successful.

KRVA opened the tournament with force last Friday, defeating Puerto Rico's youth team 3-0, Youth USA High Performance 3-1, and Northern California Volleyball Association 3-2.

The team's momentum on Friday carried over into Saturday's matches, with KRVA commanding 3-0 victories over both Northwest Region Youth team and USA Youth A1.

On Sunday, Piontkowski led KRVA to a 3-1 win over the No. 1 ranked team in the tournament— Canada's youth team. With that win, KRVA advanced directly to the semifinals of the gold bracket and knocked Canada's youth team down to the silver bracket.

"Before the game, we said to each other, 'Canada is nothing special and you should never look up to a team like that,'" Piontkowski said. "Good things happen when you work together."

However, the team's bond could not withstand the offensive power of USA Youth A1 Select's team in the semifinals of the gold bracket. KRVA lost to Youth A1 Select 3-0, which knocked the team down to the third place match. "I was focused during that game, but we didn't show up to play," Piontkowski said. "We shot ourselves in the foot." KRVA lost to Southern California Volleyball Association 3-0 and ended the tournament with a fourth place finish. "SCVA was a really great team, and we gave our best, but we fell short," Piontkowski said. Future Ohio State teammates Jacob Pasteur and Nathaniel Wilson competed alongside Piontkowski on the KRVA team. "The chemistry was great," Piontkowski said. "I got really close with (Nate Wilson) and (Jacob Pasteur). When high school is over, you have to make friends as quickly as possible and I already started."

7/24/2019

### **LCCC Gets Shout-out in 'Late Night' Movie**

Posted 5:19 pm, July 24, 2019, by Chelsea Strub = WNEPTV

NANTICOKE, Pa. -- You may remember actress Mindy Kaling from the show "The Office" set in Scranton. She's making an appearance on the big screen and it seems our area also has a connection to her latest character.

In Mindy Kaling's latest movie, "Late Night," she plays alongside Emma Thompson as a comedy writer who finds herself in the right place at the right time.

Audiences find out in the movie that her character Molly Patel is from Scranton and learned about chemistry at Luzerne County Community College.

"Shortly after the movie came out, we started getting phone calls and emails and Facebook posts. 'Hey, we heard your name Luzerne County Community College on a movie called 'Late Night.' And I said, 'Wow, this is amazing.' We've never seen that happen before," said Robert Bogdon, director of marketing at LCCC.

"You never really hear about community colleges. You hear about more along the lines of a four-year university as opposed to your local community college," said LCCC student Brian Guerrero.

Students and staff at LCCC say it's validating to see community colleges represented on the big screen.

"It's just fantastic in the movie and it was good to hear that we're getting national recognition for a community college," Bogdon said.

"They're seeing the value and the merit in a community college where it's more real," Guerrero added.

"It's the changing face of our population. People have to go where it's affordable," said Bonnie Lauer of LCCC alumni relations. "She came here, and then I understand she went through the technology programs and then got a job in a manufacturing plant."

If you'd like to see what Mindy Kaling's character does after her time in the manufacturing plant, check your local listings and see "Late Night" at a theater near you.

<https://wnep.com/2019/07/24/lccc-gets-shout-out-in-late-night-movie/>

7/21/2019

### **Keeping the faith at St. Ann's Novena**

jlockwood@timeshamrock.com

Pat Cannon has been faithfully attending the Solemn Novena to St. Ann in West Scranton every year since childhood, first coming with his parents and grandparents.

The 47-year-old Nanticoke man also has been volunteering for years during the annual novena at the grotto at St. Ann's Monastery and Basilica.

The annual novena is where Cannon has spent his summer vacation from his factory job at Offset Paperback Manufacturing in Dallas. He's worked at that factory for the past 20 years and wouldn't think of going anywhere else on vacation.

"This is my two-week vacation. I come here," Cannon said Saturday while helping staff a table at the candle grotto.

"I've been doing this all my life. I love it up here."

The 95th Solemn Novena to St. Ann began Wednesday and will conclude with the Feast of St. Ann on Friday.

The annual devotion began as a prayer session in the early 1900s to stop a rock slide that threatened to destroy the church at 1239 St. Ann's St. The next day, church officials discovered the slide had stopped and two boulders had locked, creating a stronger foundation, according to a history published by the basilica.

For many, attending the novena daily is not a burden, but rather a blessing, said Ken Quigley, 77, of Dunmore. He also has been attending the annual novena for many years and tries to get there daily.

“We come willingly because it’s important to us,” Quigley said. “Faith is very important to me.”

Crowds come out no matter the weather, in heat waves and during thunderstorms.

Wednesday’s opener was marked by a thunderstorm, Cannon said. A Mass of the Anointing of the Sick held Friday and a Children’s Mass on Saturday both drew large crowds, as usual, Cannon noted, despite temperatures in the 90s.

By the time the novena concludes, tens of thousands of Christians will have made the pilgrimage to the basilica grounds.

7/14/2019

### **Event breaks out the pucks to fight cancer**

Marcella Kester - Times Leader

Hundreds came out to Quality Hill Park Saturday to raise money and have some fun at the 7th annual Puck Cancer Festival.

Founded by Lauren and Shawn Myers, Puck Cancer NEPA is a local nonprofit whose mission is to raise money for the Prescription Fund at Medical Oncology Associates of Kingston.

Headed by Dr. David Greenwald and Dr. Bruce Saidman, the goal of the fund is to help ease some of the many financial burdens cancer patients face while receiving treatment, Lauren explained.

“It helps their patients with copays, medication, transportation, utilities, bills, groceries, things like that,” she said.

The husband-and-wife team created the nonprofit after Shawn’s mother passed from cancer in 2011. Puck Cancer NEPA has steadily grown, raising over \$45,000 to date.

“Last year we ended up donating \$20,000, so we are hoping and praying to of course go over that, and it’s very possible,” Lauren said. “We’re looking forward to a really, really big crowd.”

Attendees didn’t seem to mind the heat as they enjoyed food, watched live entertainment, played games and more.

Getting ready to take her chance at some of the raffles, Wyoming resident Lisa Yurek said she was excited to see what the event had to offer this year.

“My mother herself has cancer, so I think it’s a very good cause,” she said. “I brought her with me and we come every year. It’s a great event.”

On the other side of the park several teams were taking turns during a hockey tournament. From the cheeky, pun-filled name to a working relationship with the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins, the sport plays a major role in several of the nonprofit’s events while sharing Shawn’s love for hockey.

Hockey fans can expect to see some new events on the roster, too.

“Next year in 2020 we’re actually looking to do our next arena takeover,” Shawn said of the special games, limited-edition jerseys and more. “We’re also looking to do some ice tournaments and things of that sort to branch out more.”

A first-time attendee of the event, Scott Arellano talked about the importance of the treatment center and Puck Cancer. “I lost my wife to cancer back in 2014,” he said while praising both the treatment center and nonprofit. “They actually helped us out a lot.”

Enjoying his time in the sun, Jeff Thomas hopes more cancer patients and survivors will attend event such as the Puck Cancer Festival.

The Dallas resident has been battling the disease sine 2011, and is a patient at the Kingston treatment center. Looking around the crowd, he said it’s both gratifying and inspiring to see the support of the community.

“I encourage other survivors to go out and get involved in this kind of thing. It does make the journey less lonely,” he explained.

Visit Puck Cancer NEPA on Facebook to learn more about the organization and see upcoming events.

7/6/2019

### **Digital Exclusive: Our Town Nanticoke**

by: Revathi Janaswamy - [www.pahomepage.com](http://www.pahomepage.com)

NANTICOKE, LUZERNE COUNTY (WBRE/WYOU) —The Nanticoke Historical Society held an open house on Saturday to help it’s community reconnect with their history. Chester Zaremba, the Vice President and founding member of the Nanticoke Historical Society, says the group tries to hold the open house once a year to educate people on how to use the society as a resource.

“So we usually try to do this once a year. Let the people come in to see what we have. Try to let them be aware of the history of Nanticoke,” he said.

Zaremba says that coal mining originally put Nanticoke on the map. Most of the mining industry is gone now, and

people moved away. But Zaremba says people still return to learn about their history.

“Now they want to come back, they want to find out where their ancestors were from, their grandparents were from, what the town was like then, and we certainly provide that information,” he said.

The Nanticoke Historical Society does genealogy work as well. Zaremba says they’ve had requests from all over, including from Australia. The Historical Society has many resources to help track down people’s ancestry, including photo library with about eleven thousand photographs, twenty thousand obituaries, a photograph of every building in the area, archival video, and an almost complete set of Nanticoke year books. Zaremba says that the memories of how Nanticoke used to be are important as people return.

“Those days created memories for a lot of people, when those people were young and in school and small and all that. And now they’re looking to recreate those days. They want to go back,” he said.

“It’s all good memories. It’s all good memories. And that draws them in here a lot of times too. The good their they want to show their children or their grandchildren about,” he said.

Zaremba says the Nanticoke Historical Society is funded through various fundraisers and is run by volunteers.

“We’re glad to be a service to the community. We feel we’re an integral part of the community. And that’s what we’re here to do. You know, keep the memories alive.”

The Nanticoke Historical Society is open Monday through Friday, nine am to two pm.

7/4/2019

### **Nanticoke Area keeps same tax rate**

Michael P. Buffer - Citizens Voice

The [Greater Nanticoke Area District](#) is maintaining the same property tax rate for another year.

The school board voted to keep the tax rate at 11.9113 mills. A mill is \$1 on every \$1,000 in property assessment.

The board also approved an annual budget with nearly \$31 million in expenditures and \$31.1 million in revenue.

7/2/2019

### **New rules in Nanticoke, Forty Fort strive for fireworks safety**

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

Thursday will mark the second Fourth of July since changes to state law expanded the definition of consumer-grade fireworks.

In response, some local municipalities have amended fireworks regulations to include restrictions on when and where fireworks may be set off.

The changes will protect public safety, officials say.

“We really hope people have a safe happy Fourth of July, and they wake up with all the fingers and toes they had the night before,” said Forty Fort Mayor Andy Tuzinski.

Forty Fort adopted an amended fireworks ordinance earlier this year. It sets a 10 p.m. curfew for setting off fireworks throughout the borough. Violators will be fined \$100.

“If the police department receives any complaints, this curfew will be strictly enforced,” states a post at the Forty Fort police website.

The post reminds residents that state law prohibits setting off fireworks within 150 feet of an occupied structure. That regulation applies even when no one is at home at an occupied structure, Tuzinski said.

### **Nanticoke also adopted a new fireworks ordinance this year.**

**It prohibits setting off fireworks on public property anywhere in the city, including public parks, according to Nanticoke fire Chief Kevin Hazleton.**

**“Basically anything the city owns you can’t discharge (fireworks) there,” Hazleton said.**

**That change was driven by people who would ignite fireworks in parks or open areas that met the state-mandated minimum of 150 feet away from an occupied structure, but still close enough to pose a fire hazard if the ignited fireworks landed on a nearby home, he said.**

**City officials want residents to enjoy the holiday but to focus on safety first, according to Hazleton.**

**“It’s just trying to prevent a potential disaster,” he said.**

Tuzinski said Forty Fort officials also want residents to have a fun Fourth of July and hope they will comply with the 10 p.m. curfew voluntarily.

“The police do not want to be the fireworks Gestapo,” he said. “It comes down to quality of life and safety. Having a



good time means having a safe time.”

Wilkes-Barre city council last year adopted an ordinance that prohibits setting off fireworks on any city street, sidewalk, park or other city-owned property.

City residents had complained that noise and disturbance from fireworks reached a new level last year, following the changes to state law.

6/30/2019

### **Socioeconomic status plays role in test results**

mbuffer@citizensvoice.com

Hanover Area School Board President John Mahle is not happy with student scores on standardized tests.

“I am upset as a board member,” Mahle said. “Every year, I am told it’s improving. It doesn’t show.”

Mahle said he wants the next superintendent to focus on improving test scores. Applications for the job are due Wednesday.

The board appointed elementary school principal Terry Schnee as acting superintendent after the discovery of transportation overpayments and the suspension of Superintendent William Jones. Last month, the board approved a separation agreement with Jones.

Hanover Area, Wilkes-Barre Area and Greater Nanticoke Area failed to meet state averages on 17 standardized exams and the SAT in Times-Shamrock Newspapers’ annual report.

The Wilkes-Barre Area School District has made progress toward increasing standardized test scores, Superintendent Brian Costello said. The district also performs well above average when compared to similar school districts, Costello said, noting 77.5% of the Wilkes-Barre Area student population is considered economically disadvantaged.

“Research indicates that a key factor in academic success is socioeconomic status,” Costello said.

The economically disadvantaged population is 57.5% in Hanover Area and 66.7% in Greater Nanticoke Area. The lowest percentage in Luzerne County is 7.1% in the Crestwood School District.

Wilkes-Barre Area’s economically disadvantaged population, along with a transient population, “presents our district with one of its greatest challenges in bringing up the proficiency levels of all our students,” and those “challenges are compounded” by state underfunding, Costello said. The district’s annual budget is \$126 million, and Costello said the district is \$33 million dollars underfunded according to the state’s Basic Education Funding Formula.

The state’s academic-growth measurement shows Wilkes-Barre Area ranked first in Luzerne County and 24th in the state on the Keystone Literature Exam and fourth in the county and 66th in the state on the PSSA English Language Arts test for students in grades 3 to 8, Costello said.

Recent high school graduates in Wilkes-Barre Area accepted more than \$10 million in scholarship money, and 88% of the 510 graduates will attend post-secondary institutions, enter the military or join the workforce, Costello said.

Greater Nanticoke Area is also showing growth when student progress is examined, and the district has the highest percentage of special education students in Luzerne and Lackawanna Counties, Superintendent Ronald Grevera said.

“Our first goal with those students is to meet their needs evident in their individual IEP’s,” Grevera said.

An Individualized Education Program is a plan to help special-needs students with learning disabilities and other challenges.

“We expose those students to the standards as much as possible through ensuring they are being taught in their least restrictive environment, but the scores of these students is secondary as we are looking at individual progress rather than making the state benchmark,” Grevera said.

The population of special-education students is 22.7% at Greater Nanticoke Area. It’s 18.9% in Wilkes-Barre Area and 18.6% in Hanover Area. The lowest in the county is 10.7% in Crestwood.

Scores for sixth and seventh grade students at the Greater Nanticoke Area Educational Center improved dramatically, Grevera said. The score that measures academic growth at that school was significantly above the state averages on both the PSSA English Language Arts test and math test.

Greater Nanticoke Area has also increased opportunities for Advanced Placement courses in the high school and provides students opportunities to retake Keystone Exams, and next year, high school students will receive remedial help during the school day to better prepare for the Keystone exams, Grevera said.

6/28/2019

### **Nanticoke’s annual fireworks event moves to new spot this weekend**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

The city's annual fireworks display, the Big Bang, is slated to be held Saturday in memory of late Mayor Rich Wiaterowski, who first organized the event six years ago.

However, this year's event is moving to the main campus of Luzerne County Community College due to some surface problems near the Greater Nanticoke Area High School's football stadium that couldn't be repaired in time.

"We are doing it in memory of Richie. This was his favorite event he held in the city," said Nanticoke Mayor Nicole Mackiewicz, who was appointed to the position after Wiaterowski's death in December from leukemia. "For me, it's a different experience. I was always his second in command planning the event."

The event kicks off at 4 p.m., featuring food vendors, food trucks, games, raffles, activities and other events along the Prospect Street side of LCCC. A fireworks display, by Big Daddy's Fireworks, will be held at dusk.

Mackiewicz thanked Big Daddy's for putting on the show, which she promises to be bigger and better than ever in memory of Wiaterowski.

She also thanked LCCC for saving the event.

"I would like to extend a huge thank you to LCCC for holding the event there on such short notice. I can't be more appreciative."

In the event that bad weather cancels the celebration, the make up date is Sunday.

6/27/2019

### **Habitat for Humanity presents awards at home dedication**

Submitted - Citizens Voice

Wyoming Valley Habitat for Humanity recently presented awards at the dedication of a home in Nanticoke to honor those who have made significant contributions to the build over the past year.

Kathleen Nestorick received the Golden Hammer award. Wyoming Valley Habitat for Humanity gives this honor to a person who has shown exceptional commitment to help further the mission of Habitat. Nestorick donated the property on which Habitat built the house in Nanticoke.

Jim Zarra received the Herm Shiplett Award. Wyoming Valley Habitat for Humanity gives this honor to a volunteer who has demonstrated an outstanding level of commitment and support to Wyoming Valley Habitat for Humanity.

Attorney David Harris received the Gottfreid Csala Award. Harris received this award for providing professional expertise and knowledge to further the mission of Habitat.

6/26/2019

### **Nanticoke seniors graduate from nutrition program**

mbiebel@timesleader.com

Nutrition education advisor Karel Zubris brought only one graduation cap to the Rose Tucker Active Adult Center on Tuesday morning, but what a cap it was — one she'd decorated with a little toy pumpkin and cauliflower, an apple and the Penn State College of Agricultural Science's owl mascot.

"Everybody took turns wearing it and having their picture taken," Zubris said after she held a graduation ceremony for the 15 senior citizens who had attended a four-part, educational nutrition program she had taught at the center.

During the Penn State Nutrition Links lessons, sponsored by the Department of Agriculture and Penn State Extension, Zubris talked about reading labels while grocery shopping, eating fresh foods when they are in season and making smart beverage choices, such as opting for water instead of soda.

"Today we made fruit smoothies," she said. "Every time I have a food demonstration, I get lots of volunteers to help me in the kitchen and help me clean up."

Participants learned about the importance of keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold and learned that "It's OK to toss something out" rather than eat food past its expiration date.

Zubris is based in Luzerne County's Penn State Agricultural Extension Office in West Pittston and travels to Active Adult Centers and other settings to offer nutrition advice.

"It's like I operate a home-ec class out of my car," she said.

In the near future she expects to teach similar Penn State Nutrition Links classes at the senior centers in Edwardsville and Shickshinny, among other locations.

Nutrition Links is designed to help people of limited income make healthful food choices. It is supported by funds from the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed), known in PA as PA TRACKS.

Because Tuesday was the last class at the Rose Tucker Center, Zubris gave the program grads a cookbook as well as a certificate of professional development, and brought graduation gowns for them to wear — plus that one, fancy mortarboard — to make the day extra special.

"I'm always looking for caps and gowns," Zubris said, noting that many people have academic garb in the back of their closet. If you'd like to donate some that you're not using, she said you can email her at [kzz65@psu.edu](mailto:kzz65@psu.edu).

6/15/2019

### **Over six decades in the making, 83-year-old receives high school diploma from Nanticoke**

[mguydish@timesleader.com](mailto:mguydish@timesleader.com)

Ronald Grabowski got his high school diploma with a little more experience under his belt than any of his fellow grads. There's the 21 years in the Air Force, for example, and 10 years as a manager for a company that sells money counters and ATMs, and the 26 years driving a school bus. Oh, and a stint with an insurance company.

If you're grappling with the math here's the answer: Grabowski is 83. He dropped out of school in Nanticoke as a sophomore to help his financially strapped parents support the family, a move that allowed two siblings to finish high school. And while he got his GED high school equivalency by the time he was 20, he had to wait another six decades to actually hold a diploma in his hand.

"There were complications at home," Grabowski said as he recounted the decision to drop out. "My dad wasn't making the money and my mother had to work, and she was making minimum wage. I had to supplement the income for the family, so I went to work at a gas station with my uncle, then got a job with a Nanticoke chicken market."

From there it was into the Army National Guard for about 18 months before enlisting with the U.S. Air Force in 1955. Within a year after that, he notched two other experiences: Get that GED, and come home long enough to marry his sweetheart, now his wife for 63 years.

"They've been great years," he added.

An actual high school degree? Well, clearly that was on the back burner - the way, way, way back burner.

The military service took him to - among other places - Thailand, Alaska, Hawaii, Indiana, California and Africa. "My one son was born in Morocco," he noted.

Traveling "was good," he said, "Around every four years I was going someplace."

After the military, Grabowski did a pretty wide variety of work: 10 years as a manager with Cummins Allison, a corporation known for automated coin and bill counters and other related equipment. He did about a year and a half in the insurance industry. And he drove that school bus.

While one son died eight years ago following medical complications, his daughter is teaching in Berwick, where Grabowski now lives, while his other son "is in charge of security and safety at a college out in Missouri." Both came to town to attend his graduation, made possible, he said, by said son.

"He called the school and they said they had some kind of program that they were able to do this."

In a rare reversal of the usual order, it was the son, Mark, flying in to see his dad graduate from high school Friday - two days before Father's Day.

But Grabowski points out graduation isn't really the end of anything important, other than high school.

"I had more schooling after I left high school than before." Since dropping out, he learned numerous skills. "In the Air Force I had many different jobs, with electronics, computers, radio and radar. I went to many schools and got many certificates." Oh, and he took some of those quaint "correspondence courses" colleges offered before online learning was a thing.

"If anyone tells you when you leave school you're done, you're not."

6/15/2019

### **Veteran finally receives his Greater Nanticoke Area diploma**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

It was 65 years late, but Ronald Grabowski finally got his diploma from Greater Nanticoke Area High School on Friday night.

The 83-year-old ended up being the star of the school's graduation ceremony, receiving probably the loudest and longest ovation after his name was called as the school's final graduate of the Class of 2019.

"It's great. It's a dream I had for years," Grabowski said.

Grabowski was supposed to graduate from Nanticoke High School in 1954, but he had to drop out of school to support

his family.

"My dad wasn't working and my mom was hardly making ends meet. We had to supplement the income and I needed to go work," Grabowski said.

Grabowski later served in the Army Reserves for a 1 1/2 years before enlisting in the Air Force. He spent more than 20 years in the Air Force and served in the Vietnam War.

Grabowski's son, Mark Grabowski, 57, traveled from Missouri to see his dad graduate.

He said it was beautiful to see a Vietnam War veteran being saluted by so many since they were not saluted when they returned home from the war.

"To see a Vietnam War veteran get recognized, it's great. When they came back they didn't get any recognition," Mark Grabowski said.

Mark Grabowski said he heard about a Vietnam War veteran who graduated many years later at a Missouri high school and contacted Greater Nanticoke Area's superintendent to see if they could do the same for his father.

"He said 'Yeah, we do that here,'" Mark Grabowski said.

Ronald Grabowski said after entering the military without a high school diploma, he got his GED. He also attended several years of college.

"It's not like I stopped," he said.

After retiring from the military, Ronald Grabowski returned to the area and became a school bus driver for 26 years for the Millville Area School District in Columbia County. He and his wife, Carol, now live in Berwick.

Greater Nanticoke Area Superintendent Ronald Grevara said Ronald Grabowski was an example of "servant leadership," the theme of his speech to the 2019 graduates.

"Mr. Grabowski was unable to complete his education at Nanticoke High School. He was unable because of servant leadership. He had to put his family first. He had to quit school to work 40 hour weeks to take care of his family.

Additionally he practiced servant leadership by serving in the military," Grevara said. "It gives us great pleasure as school district for him to join us tonight and for us to give him his diploma. He's waited a long time for this."

6/6/2019

### **Warehouse project eyed for coal land near LCCC**

By Borys Krawczeniuk - Citizens Voice

A New Jersey developer has plans for up to 1.5 million square feet of new warehousing on reclaimed former coal mining land near Luzerne County Community College.

Earth Conservancy President and Chief Executive Officer Michael Dziak revealed the project after a news conference in downtown Scranton where a federal Environmental Protection Agency official announced another \$500,000 grant to help the conservancy clean up more abandoned mine land near the college.

The New Jersey developer's warehouse project would sit on about 130 acres in Nanticoke and Newport and Hanover townships. It is separate but not far from several warehouses built in the neighborhood by Missouri-based NorthPoint Development, Dziak said. Dziak declined to name the New Jersey developer because the deal remains incomplete.

The company would likely develop the 130 acres in 2021. Plans call for multiple buildings, but could change.

"We'll see how they configure it," Dziak said. "A lot depends on the market. Right now, big buildings are in vogue."

In the last few years, NorthPoint has developed warehouses in the same neighborhood for Spreetail, an online home and garden products retailer; Chewy.com, a pet products manufacturer; Adidas, the sneaker company; Patagonia, a clothing retailer; and True Value, the hardware retailer.

Reclaiming the 130 acres will cost about \$7 million by the time the land is ready for development, Dziak said. The project will include a roundabout at Middle Road and Prospect Street that feeds an access road to the land, he said.

He has no estimate of the number of jobs the project will create because its nature remains so uncertain, he said.

"We won't know that for a long time," Dziak said.

The \$500,000 grant will help pay for the design of a \$3 million project to clean up another 50 acres unrelated to the New Jersey developer's project, Dziak said.

EPA has awarded the conservancy about \$4 million over the years to clean up rocky and scarred abandoned mine land, a remnant of the region's long-gone coal mining era. In all, the conservancy has cleaned up more than half the more than 16,000 acres of former Blue Coal Co. land in Luzerne County that it acquired in August 1994 for about \$12.5 million. Former U.S. Rep. Paul Kanjorski helped obtain the land with a special \$20 million federal budget earmark.

6/1/2019

## **Nanticoke firefighter headed to Normandy**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Born 22 years after D-Day on June 6, 1966, Nanticoke firefighter Tom Sadowski always wanted to spend a birthday in Normandy, France, to pay respects to all of the men killed on the day he was born.

This year he will.

As part of a World War II airborne reenactment group, Sadowski will jump out of a C-47 plane over the sacred beachhead as part of the 75th anniversary ceremony of that fateful day that changed the course of the war.

“It’s going to be emotional for me. I was born 22 years after D-Day, but I was born on D-Day, so I always knew what D-Day was my whole life,” Sadowski said. “To picture in my mind what they went through and the sheer volume of people who didn’t make it through, I kind of look at it personally like they did that for me. I almost am dreading going to the cemetery because I know I am going to bawl my eyes out there.”

D-Day launched the battle of Normandy, the massive invasion by air, land and sea that helped lead to the liberation of Europe and the end of World War II.

Sadowski, 52, served two years in the U.S. Army with the 101st Airborne Division — the unit he’ll be representing in his reenactment next week in France. He continued his service to his community and country by becoming a Nanticoke firefighter 33 years ago.

After the Sept. 11 terror attacks, he enlisted in the Pennsylvania Army National Guard for four years and deployed as an infantry soldier in Iraq during the war.

A little over a year ago, Sadowski met a group of World War II re-enactors at an air show in Reading. But they didn’t just dress they part. He learned they jumped out of planes, too.

Sadowski soon signed up to be part of the World War II Airborne Demonstration Team, a group of 200 volunteers who train to keep the legacy of World War II airborne units alive.

From the mechanics to the pilots to the paratroopers, no one gets paid. The nonprofit organization relies entirely on donations. The volunteers pay their own way to events and for their own training.

Sadowski, who never jumped out of a plane before joining the group, trained for nine days in Frederick, Oklahoma before gaining his “wings.” He’s been a full-fledged member ever since.

He knows few experiences will be as memorable as the one he’s about to embark upon.

Sadowski leaves today for France, where he will join 70 other members of the World War II Airborne Demonstration Team. They’ll be meeting up with some Normandy survivors as well.

Not a bad way to spend his 53rd birthday.

“I always said I wanted to be in Normandy some year for my birthday,” Sadowski said. “Now I get to be in Normandy and jump out of an airplane.”

5/28/2019

## **Tax rate will remain unchanged at Greater Nanticoke Area**

Michael P. Buffer - Citizens Voice

The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board has proposed a \$30.9 million budget with no increase in the property tax rate. The property tax rate would remain 11.9113 mills under the budget proposal. A mill is \$1 on every \$1,000 in property assessment.

The board is required to adopt a final budget by June 30 for the 2018-19 fiscal year. The fiscal year starts July 1.

The school district projects \$31 million in revenue with \$19.3 from the state, nearly \$9.9 million from local sources and nearly \$1.9 from federal sources. Property taxes for the upcoming year are expected to generate \$6.6 million in local revenue.

The budget would allocate \$20 million for instruction, nearly \$1.7 million for debt payments, nearly \$2 million for transportation and nearly \$2.3 million for the operation and maintenance of plant services.

5/26/2019

## **Nanticoke market makes spot on nightly news**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens voice

A Nanticoke meat market was featured on “NBC Nightly News” on Saturday for a report about how swine flu in China is causing global pork prices to surge.

A crew from NBC spent hours at Jerry & Son Market a day after a Citizens' Voice report on the topic also featured the sixth-generation business.

While the dramatic rise in pork prices is hurting the business' bottom line, owners John and Joanne Gerrity said they are resisting raising prices for customers.

5/26/2019

## **Unions still play vital role in region**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Two nights a week, dozens of electricians-in-training meet in a former parochial school in **Nanticoke** to learn the trade inside classrooms.

During the week, they work in the field alongside veteran electricians.

The schooling is free. They get paid for their work. Immediately, they have health care benefits and union protection. After five years and 8,000 hours of on-the-job training, they become journeymen electricians without the thousands of dollars in loans most college students accumulate.

"School is free. It doesn't cost anything. Then you get paid to go to work," said John Nadolny, director of the training center for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 163.

"It's not a job. It's a career. You can earn a livable wage, buy a house, have a family and get an excellent retirement," Nadolny said.

While the union workforce isn't as prominent in Northeast Pennsylvania as it was during the heyday of coal mining and the garment industry, unions are still vital to the region's employment landscape.

Most building trade unions, from ironworkers to carpenters, offer similar apprenticeships that lead to full-time work and a chance at a good living.

There are about 300 union electricians working for IBEW 163.

Often there's not enough workers to keep up with the demand, Nadolny said.

"Last year, we were so busy, we had full employment and we could have used some more people. All across the country, that's the way it is," Nadolny said.

The union, which has a meeting hall on the Sans Souci Parkway in Hanover Twp., trains and organizes workers in Luzerne, Wyoming, Sullivan and Bradford counties.

Meanwhile, the next-door chapter, IBEW Local 81, the Scranton Electricians, has a similar training program that covers Lackawanna, Monroe, Wayne, Susquehanna and Bradford counties.

One of the biggest regional unions is the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. AFSCME Council 87, based in Dunmore, which represents more than 5,000 government employees in Northeast Pennsylvania.

The American Federation of Government Employees, Local 1647, represents more than 1,000 employees at the Tobyhanna Army Depot, the region's largest employer. Other AFGE unions represent hundreds of workers at the Social Security Administration facility and the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, both in Plains Twp.

Unions played major roles in two of the biggest construction projects in region's modern history: the Lackawanna Energy Center power plant in Jessup and the Moxie Cathiness Freedom power plant in Salem Twp.

Hundreds of union workers took part in the construction.

The Salem Twp. project primarily used union labor, while the Jessup project used nearly 100 percent union labor, according to Martin Williams, business manager for the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Local Union No. 13.

The union boilermakers built and maintained pressure vessels on both job sites during construction, he said.

At peak employment, about 120 boilermakers were working in Jessup and about 100 were on site in Salem Twp., he said.

"We're always thankful for the work. We know on those projects we have to perform at the highest level every time and consistently show our values," Williams said. "In addition to the work we performed, the other building trades greatly contributed. We are proud to have played a role."

A spokesman for the Moxie Cathiness Freedom plant said about 500 union workers were employed during the peak of the two-year construction.

"During major maintenance periods, work will be completed primarily by union labor as well," spokesman Steve Kratz said.

William E. Cockerill Jr. of the Scranton Central Labor Union said the building trades are doing well in recruiting new members, but the region is lacking new people to fill the ranks of industrial apprenticeships.

These workers fill jobs at places like General Dynamics in Scranton, Schott Glass in Duryea and Intermetro Industries in Wilkes-Barre, he said.

"We are trying to reestablish the industrial apprenticeships. There are so many jobs open because there are not enough people training," Cockerill said. "The workforce has aged and there is no backfill. The guys are aged and there is no one coming up to replace them."

A union member for more than 45 years, Cockerill is an official with the AFL-CIO, which has a partnership with the United Way of Lackawanna County.

Cockerill belongs to the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, often called the stagehands union. He works at the Scranton Cultural Center and the Pavilion at Montage Mountain.

The union movement, not as strong as it once was, is "holding our own" in the area, he said.

"Holding our own is a big thing right now," Cockerill said.

In 2018, 10.5 percent of workers in the United States belonged to a union, down from 10.7 percent in 2017, according to a report released by the U.S. Department of Labor in January.

That's down from a 20.1 percent union membership rate in 1983, the first year comparable data was available, the report said.

Pennsylvania was one of 24 states that saw an increase in union membership from 2017 to 2018. The percentage of union workers in Pennsylvania rose from 12 percent to 12.6 percent, for a total of 5,575,000 workers.

One regional union frequently in the news is the Pennsylvania Association of Staff Nurses and Allied Professionals, which represents 600 registered nurses at Geisinger Community Medical Center in Scranton and Wilkes-Barre General Hospital in Wilkes-Barre. The nursing union remains united and strong, said PASNAP Vice President Roben Schwartz, who works at Geisinger CMC.

"While more nurses and health care workers are in unions now than ever, the decline of manufacturing has meant that we have fewer and fewer union brothers and sisters in the private sector to build with," Schwartz said.

It's important for unions to support each other, he said.

"We wouldn't be able to have any power at all without our sisters and brothers in the labor movement," Schwartz said.

5/24/2019

### **Local businesses struggle as pork prices soar**

dallabaugh@citizensvoice.com

At small butcher shop Jerry & Son Market in Nanticoke, owners John Gerrity Jr. and his wife Joanne started to see the price of pork increase before Easter and it hasn't come back down.

"It should be down by now but it isn't. For how high it is right now, it's going to go up again because the Fourth of July is hot dog season," John Gerrity said, while cutting porterhouse steaks Thursday. "We're losing money."

Pork prices have increased up to 40 percent as China struggles with a deadly swine disease that has sent shockwaves through global meat markets.

China produces and consumes two-thirds of the world's pork, but output is plunging as Beijing destroys herds and blocks shipments to stop African swine fever. Importers are filling the gap by buying pork as far away as Europe, boosting prices and causing shortages in other markets.

For the most part, the Gerritys have not yet passed the price increase onto customers at the sixth-generation family meat market, except for the price of scrapple going up 30 cents a pound. They sell about 12 pounds of scrapple a week.

"Right now, we're trying to hold steady. We don't try to take anybody over. When suppliers gouge us right before the holidays, we just swallow it and then we pray it comes down," John Gerrity said. "We've been waiting for it to come down for a while. Usually, the week before Easter, people are done processing stuff for the holidays so pork starts coming down. It continued to rise."

If the price of pork continues to go up, he said they will have no choice but to raise prices for customers.

"We are held hostage," Joanne Gerrity said. "The good thing on our part is that swine flu isn't here."

The Gerritys get their processing pork from the Midwest and pork chops from Hatfield in Pennsylvania.

The U.S. supplies China with pork all the time. Now that China's suppliers can't sell pork because of the swine disease, the country is buying more pork from the U.S., they said.

"They are buying more now because where they were buying from has that swine flu," John Gerrity said. "They're not letting any pork products back in the country from China. If you have American-made pork and it goes to China and gets processed into something, they won't let that come back in. Normally they would have but they won't because of the disease. Our government is stopping everything from coming in so we don't get it."

African swine fever doesn't harm humans but is fatal and spreads quickly among pigs. It was first reported in August in China's northeast. Since then, 1 million pigs have died and the disease has spread to 31 of China's 34 provinces, according to the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization.

"The disadvantage is a higher price for us but not the disease for the U.S.," Joanne Gerrity said, emphasizing they will continue to sell quality meat. "Maybe we have to pay more but we're not going to be subjected to the disease." Rising pork prices also have impacted Stookey's Famous Bar-B-Que in West Nanticoke, a local staple that has been in business for 93 years.

Owner Ralph Frank said he has seen the price of pork increase by a dime a pound. Selling pork is the core of his business and he buys about 1,000 pounds of pork a week. Seventy-five percent of his business consists of selling the popular pork BBQ sandwiches.

Frank also has not yet increased prices for customers but he said he may be forced to if the cost of pork continues to go up.

"I've looked at some of the news stories about pork prices and it does not look good," he said.

5/21/2019

### **Local Veterans of Vietnam War post closes after national group shutters**

Paul Golias, Correspondent - Citizens Voice

A national Vietnam War veterans' organization has closed up shop and its former posts are doing the same, leading to a spate of donations to other nonprofit organizations.

Post 56 of the Veterans of the Vietnam War, Nanticoke, has donated a new American flag to the Hanover Green Cemetery, Hanover Twp. A ceremony will be held at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday to raise the flag.

Frank Park, of Hunlock Creek, the last commander of Post 56, said declining membership prompted the national organization to shut down a few weeks ago and Post 56 followed.

"We had 60 to 65 members at our peak," Park said, representing all branches of the U.S. military. Park was an Army ranger who, like his comrades in arms, saw action in Vietnam.

The organization used acronym the VVNW, Park said. The group was organized in Pittston, which hosted Post 1, and the national organization had several commanders over the years.

In shutdown mode, Post 56 has donated to the bingo project at the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Plains Twp.; to the Eagles Aerie in Nanticoke, where the Vietnam vets met for many years, and to other charities.

Even though defunct, Post 56 will have a presence at five cemeteries as they prepare for Memorial Day this year. The vets helped place flags on graves of veterans, Park said.

"We also take care of a small cemetery at Sweet Valley," Park said. The vets began cutting grass and resetting toppled tombstones several years ago, he said. The cemetery is unnamed, he said, but six to eight Vietnam War vets are dedicated to maintaining the 100 graves on the site.

Len Luba, president of the Hanover Green Cemetery Association, said AMVETS Post 59 of Hanover Twp. will assist in the flag ceremony. The old flag will be lowered and the new flag will be presented by Post 56 members and then hoisted. The AMVETS, formed in December 1944, accepts members from all wars.

Luba said the Hanover Twp. Community Ambulance Association will be on hand. Its new headquarters is on the site of the former Hanover Green fire station just north of the cemetery. The public is welcome to attend, he said.

Another Vietnam vets' organization, the National Vietnam Veterans of America, lists a membership of approximately 65,000, with 617 chapters throughout the United States and its possessions, according to its website. The closest chapter listed is in Thornhurst, Lackawanna County.

5/10/2019

### **No tax hike in Greater Nanticoke Area budget**

mguydish@timesleader.com

Greater Nanticoke Area became the second local school board in three days to pass a "proposed final budget" with no tax increase for the 2019-20 school year.

On Monday, the Dallas School Board pulled a similar feat. Both must pass the final budget by the end of June.

GNA Superintendent Ron Grevera cited two unexpected savings: Health insurance premiums had been expected to increase by 8.2 percent, but the district recently learned it would only increase 5 percent. And the district got a break on the monthly premium it pays for one month.



The district is a member of the Northeast Pennsylvania School District Health Trust, a consortium of area districts formed to save money by combining buying power. The Trust gave districts a one-half credit for for one month recently, something it has done in the past if the Trust surplus gets above a set point.

The Trust had issues more than a decade ago with surpluses so large districts complained, prompting several district to withdraw from the consortium in the belief they could save more money on their own.

The budget calls for total expenditures of \$30.9 million and revenue a bit more than \$31 million. Business Consultant Al Melone said the budget shows a surplus of about \$120,000, which - if it materializes - would increase the district fund balance at the end of the upcoming fiscal year to \$4.4 million.

The board voted on a list of athletic appointments, but ran into snag in hiring Ed Grant as girls basketball head coach.

With Board Member Matthew Landmesser absent, three members - Len Olzinski, Wendy Kotsko Wiaterowski and Mark Cardone voted against the appointment, while Erika Jacobs abstained from all the coach hirings.

Solicitor Vito Deluca noted the abstention was essentially a "no," splitting the board 4-4, which meant the motion to hire Grant failed. Board President Tony Prushinski said he felt any concerns about the appointment should have been brought up in executive session prior to the regular board meeting, but Deluca suggested there should be no discussion of hiring in privacy other than talk related to disciplining employees. Deluca then suggested "further conversation here is not advisable."

Appointments that were approved included boys basketball head coach John Beggs and assistants Ed Lukowski, Zach Pientka and Matt Meade. The board also accepted the resignation of Marnie Kusakavitch as field hockey head coach and voted to advertise the post.

The board accepted the resignation of Grevera's executive secretary Carol Kelly. Grevera praised her decades of service and extensive knowledge of the district thanks to serving in multiple departments. The boar appointed Sarah Engle as secretary to the superintendent at a salary of \$35,000.

And the board approved a string of bill payments, all below \$17,000 except for a new high school alarm system recently installed at a cost of \$178,542. Grevera said the new system id primarily hazard detection, with heat, smoke and carbon monoxide

5/7/2019

### **Bureau of Forestry probes wildfires around Nanticoke**

Staff Report - Citizens Voice

The Bureau of Forestry is investigating wildfires that were intentionally set around Nanticoke.

The bureau is offering a \$1,500 reward for information that leads to an arrest.

According to a news release:

Several wildfires were set the evening of April 3 in Newport Twp. and Hanover Twp. outside of Nanticoke.

At the time the fires were set, eastern Pennsylvania was under a "red flag warning," a warning issued by the National Weather Service to indicate increased wildfire danger.

The fires burned dozens of acres.

"Circumstances around all of these fires have led us to the conclusion that the fires have been intentionally set. Some of the fires have put public and firefighter lives and property at risk, which is of great concern," said Michael Kern, chief of the bureau's Division of Forest Fire Protection, in the press release. "Intentionally setting a wildfire is arson and we take that very seriously. We are asking for anyone who may have information to come forward."

Information can be forwarded to bureau Special Investigator Terry Smith at 717-362-1472 or at terrsmith@pa.gov.

Anonymous tips also will be accepted but do not qualify for the reward.

4/5/2019

### **Banko's restaurant heads to sheriff's sale**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

J.J. Banko's seafood restaurant, a popular venue that abruptly closed after the 2017 death of its owner, is slated to be sold in June at a Luzerne County sheriff's sale.

The mortgage lender for Banko's filed foreclosure proceedings against the estate of Jeff Bankovich following his death in October 2017.

A judgement for \$903,555 was recently awarded to the mortgage lender, which included \$384,671 in principal balance plus daily interest and other fees that accrued since his death.

"There's basically no assets in the estate. There's mortgages. There's liens against the property. It's unfortunate what happened," said Kingston attorney Thomas O'Connor, who was appointed by the county Register of Wills Office to administer Bankovich's estate.

In August 2017, two months before his death, Bankovich took out a two-year, \$402,000 mortgage on the restaurant along Route 11 that required daily payments of \$1,492.99 to New Jersey-based World Business Lenders, court records show.

Bankovich, 44, who had been recovering from several strokes, died Oct. 19, 2017.

It was not immediately clear what the starting bid for Banko's will be when the property is auctioned during the June 7 sheriff's sale, starting at 10:30 a.m. at the Luzerne County Courthouse. The property is assessed at \$328,700 for tax purposes, according to county records.

The Luzerne County Tax Claim Bureau has also sought to auction other properties Bankovich owned due his and his estate's failure to pay back taxes. They include lots and property adjoining the restaurant, 821 Beverly Drive in Plymouth Twp. and 68 Park Ridge Road in Hunlock Twp.

State and federal tax liens also remain against the business, totaling at least \$98,733.

Longtime friends say Bankovich was a visionary businessman who developed a cult following of customers who loyally flocked to J.J. Banko's on U.S. Route 11 near the intersection with state Route 29.

Bankovich bought the family business, then known as Banko's, from a realtor in 1999. He renamed it J.J. Banko's. Since that time, the restaurant was flooded four times. Each time, Bankovich bounced back quickly, with an army of friends volunteering to do the work. Because the business was located in the floodplain, near Harveys Creek and the Susquehanna River, he couldn't get flood insurance and funded renovations out of pocket.

Bankovich liked to have a little fun with his battles with flooding.

"Located along (and sometimes in) the water on Route 11 in West Nanticoke," read advertisements he placed in The Citizens' Voice.

4/4/2019

### **E-commerce company coming to Nanticoke**

dallabaugh@citizensvoice.com

National e-commerce company Spreetail will occupy the second warehouse in the Hanover 9 project near Luzerne County Community College and plans to hire dozens of workers at a starting wage of \$16.50 per hour.

Spreetail will move into a 610,000-square-foot fulfillment center in Missouri-based NorthPoint Development's 2.4 million-square-foot business park being built in Nanticoke and Hanover Twp.

State Sen. John Yudichak, D-14, Plymouth Twp., said Spreetail's investment in the \$40 million facility in Nanticoke is the largest economic development project that the city has seen in the last four decades.

Yudichak joined NorthPoint Development, state and local officials to announce the new tenant at a press conference late Wednesday afternoon at the site.

Spreetail, established in 2006 in Lincoln, Nebraska, sells home, garden and backyard products online. Over the last 13 years, the company has grown and expanded across the country with offices in eight cities and six states with more than 650 employees. The fulfillment center is tentatively expected to open on June 1.

This year, Spreetail will employ 50 people at the Hanover 9 site and company officials expect to employ 120 by 2021.

"We are very excited to open our new, state-of-the-art facility in Luzerne County," said Bret Naugle, regional fulfillment manager for Spreetail.

Naugle said the location in Nanticoke offers logistical advantages to satisfy customers who reside in the Northeast.

He encouraged interested job candidates to look at open positions and apply at the company's website at Spreetail.com.

He said applicants are already rolling in and the company has hired some community residents for full-time positions. The business focuses on delivering products in one to two days, he said.

In addition to paying \$16.50 an hour, Spreetail offers other perks such as paying employees on the job for two years \$5,000 toward a home purchase.

"If you're on the job three years, you get a beach vacation," Yudichak said.

Spreetail's decision to invest in Nanticoke "continues to build upon an unprecedented surge in economic growth" along the new South Valley Parkway, Yudichak said.

"Today, with our great partner, NorthPoint Development, we welcome Spreetail to a growing list of global companies that are investing hundreds of millions of dollars and creating thousands of jobs in the South Valley/I-81 corridor,"

Yudichak said. "If you are looking to do business as an e-commerce company, a manufacturing company or a logistics

company, the South Valley is the place to do business."

The announcement follows a previous announcement in February that True Value Company would occupy another distribution center under construction in the business park.

True Value Company, expected to open in the fall, plans to create hundreds of jobs at the site and is investing more than \$150 million in the project. It plans to occupy 1 million square feet of space in a more than 1.3 million square-foot distribution center being built next to the warehouse for Spreetail.

Nearly 400,000 square feet is left for another business in the warehouse True Value is occupying, said Brent Miles, vice president of economic development for NorthPoint

Development. A third warehouse measuring more than 300,000 square feet is coming soon to the Hanover 9 site and Miles said there may be a possibility for a fourth warehouse.

NorthPoint Development bought the mine-scarred Hanover 9 site from the Earth Conservancy for nearly \$10 million last year.

Elected officials approved a tax break on the construction site under the state's Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance program that calls for full real estate tax forgiveness for seven years, 90 percent exemption in the eighth year, 80 percent in the ninth and 70 percent in the 10th year.

NorthPoint Development also brought huge warehouses for Chewy, Adidas and Patagonia to a 172-acre parcel in another part of Hanover Twp. Chewy opened in 2017 and Adidas and Patagonia are hiring and close to opening, Miles said.

"We are pleased they (Spreetail) will join the names of Chewy.com, Adidas, Patagonia and True Value as great tenants NorthPoint has been able to secure for Northeast Pennsylvania," Miles said. "We are proud of the public-private partnership we have built with the city of Nanticoke, Luzerne County, the Earth Conservancy, the school districts and the community college as we continue to invest in the area and keep the momentum to an all time high with capital investment and jobs for the area."

Recently, NorthPoint recently purchased another 173 acres from Earth Conservancy and the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce for another development called the "Chamber Loomis" project along Dundee Road in Hanover Twp. which also received a LERTA tax break. Work also has begun at that site.

In all, NorthPoint Development has invested more than \$393 million in capital investment in the South Valley Corridor, creating more than 4,600 new jobs.

Spreetail received support from leaders of Luzerne County, Hanover Twp., Nanticoke, school districts, Luzerne County Community College and the Earth Conservancy.

Nanticoke Mayor Nicole Colatosti-Mackiewicz said Spreetail has a long history of community involvement and she is thrilled to welcome the company to Nanticoke. She said the announcement is special to Nanticoke because it's the largest jobs announcement for the city in decades.

"The jobs being created by Spreetail are good-paying, family-sustaining jobs that will benefit our residents," said Luzerne County Manager David Pedri. "We look forward to continuing a partnership that will pay dividends for the South Valley Corridor for years to come."

4/4/2019

**Officials hail announcement of e-commerce tenant for Nanticoke site**

jandes@timesleader.com

Lincoln, Nebraska-based e-commerce company Spreetail.com will occupy a new 610,000 square-foot building along Kosciuszko Street across from Luzerne County Community College, with plans to start fulfillment team members at \$16.50 per hour, officials announced Wednesday afternoon.

Established in 2006, the company will hire 50 employees this year and expects to employ 120 by 2021. Spreetail.com offers a "simple and enjoyable way" to shop online for home, garden and backyard products, a release said.

The new \$40 million fulfillment center is tentatively expected to open June 1.

It's the second tenant announced for Missouri-based NorthPoint Development's 322-acre Hanover 9 Industrial Park, which falls in both the city and Hanover Township. Chicago-based True Value Company said in February it will occupy most of a 1.4 million square-foot distribution center also under construction and set to open this fall. Two more buildings are planned at the site, which has become accessible due to the new South Valley Parkway, officials said.

NorthPoint also brought Chewy.com, Adidas and Patagonia Inc. to its first 172-acre project in Hanover Township known as the Hanover Ridge Trade Center, and it is working on a third development with three structures planned on 173 acres it purchased along Dundee Road in the township.

Spreetail.com has grown and expanded across the country over the past 13 years, with offices now located in six states employing more than 650, a release said.

The Nanticoke site offers "logistical advantages" to continue that growth and create new opportunities in this region, said Bret Naugle, Spreetail.com's regional fulfillment manager.

In an announcement event Wednesday attended by a contingent of area legislators and elected officials, Naugle said he can already tell the company selected the right location for its latest facility because local employees hired to date meet its search for "hardworking and humble team members."

In the announcement release, county Manager C. David Pedri described the company's new positions as "good-paying, family-sustaining jobs that will benefit our residents."

'Unprecedented development'

Standing in the cavernous structure during Wednesday's event, state Sen. John Yudichak, D-Nanticoke, said Spreetail.com's investment is the largest single economic development project in the city in four decades, noting the last was the community college construction.

"Welcome to the Hanover 9 business site, where an unprecedented economic development story is unfolding at a breathtaking pace right before our eyes," Yudichak said.

In addition to creating jobs, Spreetail.com will benefit the community because it donates 5 percent of every purchase to charity, which has added up to more than \$1 million to date helping other areas where it has facilities, Yudichak said. The company also provides attractive benefits, including vacations and money toward home purchases after employees have reached certain tenure milestones, he said.

Brent Miles, NorthPoint's economic development vice president, said his company is proud of its public-private partnership with taxing bodies, the community college and Earth Conservancy, which is the nonprofit that originally owned two of the sites and much of the third tract along Dundee Road.

More than \$400 million has been invested in NorthPoint projects to date, Miles said, promising to continue the momentum.

"Thank you for believing in us," Miles told the group, repeating his mantra that capital goes where it is welcomed.

The Hanover 9 park received a tax break on new development but not the land, which was exempt under Earth Conservancy. Spreetail.com and True Value will receive full real estate tax forgiveness on new buildings for seven years, 90 percent exemption in the eighth year, 80 percent in the ninth and 70 percent in the 10th and final year, officials have said.

Chicago-based Clayco constructed the first three NorthPoint buildings and also is handling the True Value and Spreetail.com structures.

Nanticoke Mayor Nicole Colatosti-Mackiewicz and county Council Chairman Tim McGinley also spoke during the announcement.

Colatosti-Mackiewicz praised her predecessor, the late Rich Wiaterowski, for putting in long hours to secure the project.

McGinley said many people worked together to make the Spreetail.com and other NorthPoint projects a reality.

"I think it's just terrific what's happened here," McGinley said.

4/2/2019

### **Pharmacy, therapy center set for closed personal care home in Nanticoke**

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com

A former personal care home in downtown Nanticoke will see new life as a pharmacy and physical therapy center. The city's General Municipal Authority has agreed to sell the former Villa Personal Care Home to FCLN Real Estate LLC for \$450,000, according to a real estate consulting firm handling public relations on the project.

Nockley Family Pharmacy, which has locations in Hanover Twp. and Scranton, plans to open its third location at the property.

Cawley Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation plans to use part of the building to relocate and grow its Nanticoke practice. The business has five locations including the Nanticoke facility. The move will allow Cawley to increase available services in Nanticoke by adding an aquatics therapy pool.

Additional retail space will be available.

"Good things are happening," City Manager Donna Wall said.

The Municipal Authority bought the property at East Main and Walnut streets for \$825,000 after the personal care home closed in 2014. The purchase was made through a \$1 million grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's Pennsylvania First.

The Municipal Authority voted to sell the property last Monday. The sale is still pending. Proceeds will be used to fund other projects in the downtown.

"We've been a quiet partner in Nanticoke's economic development for a long time and now our efforts are starting to show. We look forward to continuing to support the City of Nanticoke in its revitalization efforts so that the whole community can benefit," said John Nadolny, chairman of the municipal authority.

The development is the latest in downtown Nanticoke in recent years.

Luzerne County Community College opened its culinary arts center in a new building at Market and Main streets and moved its health and sciences center to the former Kanjorski Center at 38 E. Main St.

Geisinger Health System built a clinic at 128 E. Main St.

On the other side of East Main Street, a \$21 million project is planned after existing properties are claimed through the eminent domain process. The proposed five-story property will include dozens of affordable housing units, retail space and a transit hub.

4/2/2019

### **Nanticoke to sell former personal care home; new tenants already lined up**

pkernan@timesleader.com

The city of Nanticoke will be selling a former personal care home that's sat empty since 2014, and it will be revitalized to include a family pharmacy and rehabilitation center.

The announcement came Monday in a press release from the General Municipal Authority of the City of Nanticoke, which said the former Nanticoke Villa Personal Care Home would be sold to FCLN Real Estate LLC.

The property, located at the corner of East Main and Walnut streets, will be sold for \$450,000.

The Villa closed in October 2014, and has sat vacant since then. According to the release, the property has since become "dilapidated," leading to numerous calls for fire and police crews.

According to the release, the building will become a new home to the third location of Nockley Family Pharmacy. The company already has locations in Hanover Township and Scranton.

Cawley Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation will also relocate its Nanticoke practice into the building, pursuing a plan to add an aquatics therapy pool to its practice.

The release has said additional retail space is still available.

The chair of the municipal authority, John Nadolny, said in the release that improvements like these are showing off the authority's work in the city.

"We've been a quiet partner in Nanticoke's economic development for a long time and now our efforts are starting to show," he said. "We look forward to continuing to support the City of Nanticoke in its revitalization efforts so that the whole community can benefit."

4/1/2019

### **Pharmacy, physical therapy center to open in former Nanticoke personal care home**

|Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

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The Municipal Authority voted to see the property last Monday. The sale is still pending. Proceeds will be used to fund other projects in the downtown.

“We’ve been a quiet partner in Nanticoke’s economic development for a long time and now our efforts are starting to show. We look forward to continuing to support the City of Nanticoke in its revitalization efforts so that the whole community can benefit,” said John Nadolny, chairman of the municipal authority.

3/24/2019

### **Nanticoke Fire Department shows off new engine at open house**

Marcella Kester - Times Leader

Children happily ran around a shiny red fire truck inside the Nanticoke Fire Department on Saturday, occasionally stopping to examine all the buttons and levers on display.

Several apparatuses were available for public inspection as a big crowd came out to celebrate the addition of a new fire engine to the department’s fleet.

Donning a sleek red paint job and an image of the American flag emblazoned on its grille, Engine 3 made its official debut — something Nanticoke Fire Chief Kevin Hazleton said culminated a 10-year process.

“It’s been many, many years in the making. We’ve been trying to get the grant for over 10 years,” he said of efforts to acquire the new engine. “At the end of the day, this is \$438,000. So you can understand why you only get them every so often.”

The 2019 Pierce Saber can hold 500 gallons of water; uses a 1,500 gallon per-minute pump; and carries the Jaws of Life, a hydraulic rescue tool that can help free people from small places such as a crushed passenger compartment after a vehicle crash.

The engine will be replacing a 45-year-old truck.

It was financed through a collaborative effort that involved the city, a community development block grant and volunteer donations.

Saturday’s open house also showcased a new rescue engine that was obtained for the department in October through the Nanticoke Firemen’s Relief Association.

Before Engine 3 received an official blessing by Father James Nash, Chief Hazleton took a moment to point out a very important message that has been placed on both sides of the engine.

Growing emotional, Hazleton pointed to a memorial patch honoring late Nanticoke Mayor Richie Wiaterowski, who was instrumental in the effort to obtain the fire truck.

‘Deserves recognition’

Pausing mid-run to stop and stare into the glimmering metal bumper before running her hands across an array of attachments, 2-year-old Teagan Bruza was just one of many children fascinated by the apparatus.

Her mother, Nanticoke resident Amanda Bruza, said she wanted to come out and support the fire department for all it does for the community.

Not only does the department help keep residents safe, but it also assists with education in schools and elsewhere, said Bruza.

“Our fire department definitely deserves a lot of support and recognition,” she said. “Plus, my daughter loves fire trucks, so we thought it’d definitely be something she’d enjoy seeing.”

Another person who enjoyed the open house was new Mayor Nicole Colatosti-Mackiewicz, who also took a moment to congratulate firefighters on their much-needed addition.

“It’s about time we got a new engine. Engine 4 is older than me,” she said, drawing chuckles from the audience.

“It is imperative that we continue to support 24/7 fire department services that keep our community safe,” she added.

3/24/2019

### **Nanticoke café set to open second location**

Staff reports - Citizens Voice

A new specialty café is moving into downtown Hazleton where a former restaurant operated.

Grateful Roast Coffee, a café featuring specialty coffees made with an in-house coffee roaster, is set to open in April at 9 E. Broad St., previously occupied by Dragonfly Café.

Along with its signature coffee, Grateful Roast also will have a menu including pastries and breakfast and lunch items. It is the latest new business in the downtown, about a block away from the recently reopened Dragon Chinese restaurant.

The Hazleton café is Grateful Roast’s second location, following the opening of its first in Nanticoke three years ago.

Owners Brian Williams and Sarah Kratz expect the hours to be the same as the Nanticoke location: Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

As a native of Portland, Oregon, Williams grew up in the coffee culture of the Pacific Northwest area. When he and Kratz moved to Northeast Pennsylvania to be closer to her family, they quickly realized the region needed a quality coffee alternative to what was being served at chain coffee and donut shops.

Williams began studying coffee roasting, building a business idea and making plans to open a café.

“I knew pretty early on that if we really wanted a coffee culture, we needed to build it ourselves,” Williams said. “I took whatever start-up money we had saved and purchased a little 2-kilo (4-pound maximum batch size) coffee roaster. I put that on my sun porch, purchased a few delicious coffees and taught myself how to roast.”

When asked what makes Grateful Roast stand out from the competition, he said rather than its coffee and unique food items, is the local community.

“We stay mindful of our place in a community,” he said. “We feel that we have a responsibility to give back to the community we serve in and we can use our coffee as a vehicle for change, so we do. We often host events aimed at raising funds or awareness for various local causes.”

In Hazleton, Grateful Roast Coffee already is working with Brandon’s Forever Home by roasting Brandon’s Brew. When someone purchases a bag of Brandon’s Brew from the foundation, \$5 is donated to Brandon’s Forever Home. The coffee is roasted in-house, and that the menu items feature high-quality, locally sourced ingredients.

“We are the only place in Luzerne County that actually roasts our own coffee locally, in our own café,” Williams said. “You can come into the café and actually see the coffee roaster and smell the beans roasting.”

“We place an emphasis on high-quality and locally sourced whole foods. We use local artisans, bakers and farms to produce the foods that we offer. The more local foods we can offer, the better we feel about the business we’re doing. It’s very important to support local because we’re all in this together.”

Williams said the spirit of Grateful Roast Coffee seems to fit with the downtown revitalization Hazleton is experiencing, Williams said.

“I love what Hazleton and the Downtown Hazleton Alliance for Progress are doing,” he said. “The downtown looks great and is only getting better. One night after visiting the space, before we signed the lease, we were driving down Broad Street heading to Interstate 81 and I noticed how all the trees were lit up with lights; not even just downtown, but all down the street. It’s things like this that really show a city’s pride. I am very proud to be a new business in this revitalizing city.”

Turning the thought of a second Grateful Roast Coffee location in Hazleton from an idea to reality was a team effort involving the city of Hazleton, the downtown alliance, CAN DO and other organizations supporting downtown. Jocelyn Sterenchock, CAN DO’s coordinator of entrepreneurial services, assisted Williams in navigating the licensing and permitting process, leaning on the relationships developed with the city.

“Working to bring this business to downtown Hazleton took a lot of teamwork and it could not have been done without the support of those partnerships we rely so heavily upon,” she said. “I’m passionate about having new and young businesses in downtown Hazleton. I think Grateful Roast Coffee will be a complement to the many long-established restaurants that are already in our community.”

Williams said Sterenchock’s assistance throughout the entire process had an integral role launching the second location. “Jocelyn is amazing,” Williams said. “She kept us informed throughout the entire process and spearheaded everything from start to acceptance. I can’t say enough about how awesome she’s been. Running a cafe is crazy enough, and trying to open a second is insane, but she made it happen and, for that, we are truly grateful.”

3/22/2019

### **Nanticoke Fire Department set to unveil new fire truck**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

The Nanticoke City Fire Department is hosting an open house from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday to unveil its new fire truck to the public.

Engine 3, a 2019 custom-built Pierce Saber, will be blessed at the event by the Rev. James Nash of St. Faustina Parish in Nanticoke.

City officials will offer comments during the open house.

The City of Nanticoke purchased the new engine with funds from a DCED grant and state grant money allocated to the volunteer hose companies that support the city’s full-time department.

This new engine is equipped with a 500 gallon water tank and can deliver 1500 gallons per minute with its pump. It was

designed with a short wheel base and an overall length of 28 feet, four inches to navigate through tight streets and alleys in the city. The truck has a

3/19/2019

### **Nanticoke's oldest tree coming down**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

The oldest tree in the city is coming down.

Work began Monday to cut down a hulking maple tree that towered and leaned over East Main Street in Nanticoke, a landmark estimated by an arborist to be nearly 250 years old.

The last of the tree should be ground down to nothing by Wednesday, said Jeff Arnott, owner of Arnott Tree Service of Hanover Twp.

"It's all rotted, dead. It was falling on the road," Arnott said.

After a recent inspection, it was determined the tree was too much of a possible hazard to remain standing, Arnott said. Much of the tree was hollowed out, he said.

"It's full of cavities," he said.

Arnott and workers spent Monday sawing brush and branches off the tree, leaving being the bulkier trunk and some bigger branches.

Main Street was closed to traffic in both directions.

Nanticoke police Chief Tom Wall, who monitored the operation on Monday, said the city had little choice but to have the tree cut down when an arborist gave the opinion it was a safety hazard.

"Once it was determined it was an unsafe tree, if we didn't do anything, we obviously would have been liable if something happened," Wall said.

3/18/2019

### **Look Back: Nanticoke evacuated in 1987 due to poisonous fumes from blaze**

elewis@timesleader.com

Nearly 18,000 people in Nanticoke fled their homes under a mandatory evacuation ordered by then Mayor John Haydock early in the morning of March 24, 1987.

A poisonous acidic cloud settled over the city due to a blaze, which erupted at 12:30 a.m., inside the Spencer Metal Processing Plant on Alden Road. Six 55-gallon drums of sulfuric acid and nine other chemicals were inside the building, the Times Leader on March 25, 1987.

The combination of heat from the fire and water from fire hoses caused a poisonous cloud to "hover" over the city, Haydock told the Times Leader on March 24, 1987. Then Gov. Robert P. Casey signed a proclamation declaring a disaster emergency.

Luzerne County Emergency Management Director Jim Siracuse expanded the evacuation to include residents in the Sheatown section of Newport Township and parts of West Nanticoke in Plymouth Township. Approximately 127 patients from Nanticoke State Hospital were transported to other hospitals, and residents at Birchwood Nursing Center and St. Sanislaus Medical Center were sent to other nursing home facilities.

Ambulances poured into Nanticoke to transport patients as firefighters and police officers went door-to-door to rattle people awake instructing them to get out.

"Most residents said the first frightening sound they heard was the pounding of a stranger at the door – and their first thought was that something had happened at the Susquehanna Nuclear Power Plant, located less than 20 miles away near Berwick," the Times Leader reported March 25, 1987.

Evacuation shelters were set up at high schools at Hanover Area, Wyoming Valley West and Crestwood, Kistler Elementary School in Wilkes-Barre, the U.S. Army Reserve Center in Hanover Township and the Italian American Sports Club in Glen Lyon, Newport Township, the Times Leader reported March 25, 1987.

"Evacuees described a disoriented, nighttime flight from their homes into streets filled with bumper-to-bumper traffic and a sky suffused with the red glow of fire," the Times Leader reported.

The National Guard blocked roads leading into Nanticoke at 8 a.m., as traffic jammed on Sans Souci Parkway, Middle Road and state Route 29 leading out of the Trojan city.

"In the main corridor at Hanover Area before dawn, a crowd stood shoulder-to-shoulder. Some people cradled babies, dogs or cats in their arms," reported the Times Leader, noting the cafeteria and gymnasium were completely filled with



evacuees.

A decade before cellphones, a long line formed waiting to use the lone pay phone inside the corridor at the Hanover high school.

More than 100 firefighters battled the blaze that destroyed the building.

“A ring formed around the entire city. The smoke was very heavy and very irritant,” Nanticoke Fire Commissioner Mark Yeager told the Times Leader.

Hours after the blaze was extinguished and the state Department of Environmental Protection conducted air tests, residents were permitted to return home.

A state police deputy fire marshal determined the fire was caused by an electrical malfunction and ruled it an accident.

Cleanup at the Spencer site took several months.

[Nanticoke Webdesign Info: Read more about the fire here.](#)

3/15/2019

### **GNA ramps up security**

mbuffer@citizensvoice.com

The [Greater Nanticoke Area](#) School Board voted Thursday for a policy to enhance security and enact tougher disciplinary actions at the Educational Center.

The Educational Center this year became a middle school for sixth through eighth grades. The new policy is a reflection of that change, Superintendent Ronald Grevera said.

The school district is installing a metal detector at the facility, and next year, students will be required to use clear backpacks, Grevera said. The district also is imposing a “restricted movement plan” for students outside classrooms and is hiring two part-time hall monitors for the school, Grevera said.

“Students at the Educational Center must learn appropriate behavior and how to interact appropriately with peers,” Grevera said. “They also have to realize that when they do things, there are consequences for their actions.”

The school board also approved an agreement with Franklin and Marshall College to participate in the College Advising Corps. in 2019-20. The district will pay \$25,000 of the \$50,000 cost to participate in the program, which provides a full-time advisor at the high school to help students with the college-admission process, Grevera said.

Next year will be the fourth year the district has participated in the program, and Greater Nanticoke Area is the only district in Luzerne County that participates, Grevera said.

3/14/2019

### **Trevor Stanley Grohowski receives Eagle Scout Award**

Citizens Voice Submitted

Trevor Stanley Grohowski, a member of the Boy Scout Troop No. 418, sponsored by the American Legion Post 395, and a resident of Nanticoke City, has earned the honor of Eagle Scout, the highest rank that the Boy Scouts offers.

Grohowski, 18, a honor student at John S. Fine High School, part of the Greater Nanticoke Area School District, achieved the 21 merit badges required to receive the Eagle Scout award. For his service project, he designed and constructed a toddler area for the Hanover Recreation Association in the Hanover section of Nanticoke.

A ceremony honoring Grohowski took place on Oct. 28, 2018, at the Party Place, Nanticoke. At the ceremony, he was also honored with citations from former U.S. Rep. Lou Barletta, state Sen. John Yudichak, and state Rep. Jerry Mullery for his accomplishment.

He resides in the Hanover section of Nanticoke with his parents, Diane and Eric Grohowski and siblings, Dr. Deric Grohowski, and Amber Grohowski.

3/6/2019

### **Crowds rush to local favorites for Fat Tuesday desserts**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

As people rushed to his Nanticoke bakery for their Fat Tuesday fix, Joe Kowalski of [Sanitary Bakery](#) revealed the secrets behind a good paczki.

“A paczki to me is a high-performance doughnut,” Kowalski said. “It’s a doughnut with extra sugar, extra eggs and mashed potatoes, believe it or not. That’s what makes the doughnut so rich. The mashed potatoes on the inside give it a

good texture compared to a regular doughnut.”

Paczki, pronounced “poonch-keys” and sometimes spelled “ponczki,” are a traditional Polish treat that are a staple on Fat Tuesday, the day before Catholics begin fasting for Lent. Legend has it the extra-rich pastry got its start in Poland centuries ago when families were encouraged to use up all their eggs, butter, sugar and fruits before fasting for Lent.

Sanitary Bakery on Tuesday offered apple, blueberry, prune and black raspberry paczki.

Kowalski and his co-owner brother, Ed, worked 16-hour days getting ready for Fat Tuesday. They started at 1 a.m.

Tuesday, expecting to sell around 400 dozen paczki and fasnachts, the German cousin of the paczki.

Stanley and Marion Viercinski traveled from Old Forge, the self-proclaimed ‘pizza capital of the world,’ to Sanitary Bakery in Nanticoke on Tuesday to buy paczki for their neighborhood.

“This is the paczki capital of the world,” Stanley Viercinski said with a laugh.

Asked if they were giving up anything for Lent, Marion Viercinski was quick to answer:

“Not giving up paczki, she said.

Residents from throughout the area also descended on Bakery Delite in Plains Twp. for paczki, fasnachts and king cakes.

Staff started working around 10 p.m. Monday to prepare for the big day. The owners prepared to sell up to 10,000 paczki and fasnachts.

George Blom, a co-owner, defined a paczki as an “extra rich-doughnut.”

“It’s really a fried pastry,” Blom said.

Fat Tuesday is one of the busiest days of the year, ranking with Christmas Eve and the day before Thanksgiving, he said.

“It’s been busy since 4 or 5 o’clock in the morning,” Blom said Tuesday afternoon. “We were open all night, really.”

3/3/2019

### **Nanticoke man quits day job, starts urban farm**

dallabaugh@citizensvoice.com

After battling melanoma, Yale Wolfe wanted to adopt a healthier lifestyle and grow some of his own food.

Wolfe, 41, grows unconventional things like broccoli and green pea shoots, red amaranth, popcorn shoots and purple rambo radish sprouts in his Nanticoke home. He said these “microgreens” are packed with nutrients and have many nutritional benefits.

Microgreens are the seedlings of vegetables and herbs harvested after sprouting as shoots. They have more nutrients than full-grown vegetables and Wolfe said he could just harvest them and eat them.

Most take seven to eight days to grow. The best way to eat microgreens is raw like a salad, he said.

“It’s really considered a superfood,” he said. “Eating a small amount of this is like eating a big bushel of broccoli as far as the nutrients.”

Wolfe likes gardening and he said he started growing microgreens in his quest for better health after battling melanoma and undergoing three surgeries.

“I had to start living a more healthy lifestyle,” he said. “I really had to make some changes.”

Later, Wolfe grew his urban farm into a business. He transformed his former music studio into a business that he calls Wolfepack Urban Farm where he grows racks of microgreens.

He formerly worked as a sales manager in the wireless industry and decided to quit his day job to operate his urban farm.

He has a background in graphic arts and social media marketing and a computer in his growing room. He promotes his microgreens on a Facebook page and an Instagram account for Wolfepack Urban Farm.

“I took that scary plunge of quitting my day job to pursue this because it was something I was passionate about,” he said. “Some of my friends who are chefs were really encouraging me to do this.”

Wolfe sells his microgreens to customers, including chefs who like to use them to enhance dishes with their aroma, texture and visual appeal. Chefs like red amaranth because the vibrant color pops on their plate, Wolfe said. He also grows and sells cilantro and basil.

The Beer Deli in Forty Fort sells 2-ounce packages of Wolfe’s microgreens for \$5 each and chef William Kuchta said he adds them to food like soups and salads and as sandwich toppers.

Kuchta has seen a big demand for microgreens at the Beer Deli.

“Everything has gotten great reviews and it’s been a great success so far,” Kuchta said. “They’re a good thing because they don’t just add a wonderful color and aroma but they pack such a punch with flavor. Based on reports going back to

2012, their nutritional value is 40 times greater than their mature counterparts. If you eat a pea shoot, it has more nutrients than a pea.”

Wolfe’s customers also include chef Jeff Kochanski of Bettelli’s Villa in Wilkes-Barre, who is part of a group called NEPA Chefs For Sustainability.

Kochanski has used microgreens Wolfe grows like red amaranth to garnish dishes. He purchases microgreens from Wolfe for \$3 to \$5 for 2-ounce containers that he said last for two or three days.

“We like buying small and local,” Kochanski said. “It’s the small local guys helping the small local guys.”

Wolfe recently donated spicy mixed microgreens and green pea tendrils for an eight-course dinner chefs held at Bettelli’s Villa to benefit Four Seasons Farm in Meshoppen.

Kochanski said he has garnished pork with broccoli microgreens, which have more nutrients than full-grown broccoli. When people find their food aesthetically pleasing, he said they will reap benefits from eating more nutrients.

Wolfe spends extra money to buy high-quality organic seeds. He delivers the microgreens he grows. He has met chefs like Kochanski through photos he has posted on Instagram.

“All the business I have so far is people reaching out to me through my Instagram,” he said. “Instagram is huge because that’s where all the chefs are. Chefs are taking cool pictures of their food and posting that on Instagram.”

Wolfe has seen a demand for microgreens and in the future, he plans to expand by growing more in his garage and adding a greenhouse in his yard. His goal is for more people to order boxes of microgreens that could be delivered to their homes.

“I’m scaling up quickly,” he said.

2/26/2019

### **Heavy winds cause damage to building in Nanticoke**

Bill Wellock - Citizens Voice

High winds damaged a building that was once home to a beer distributor in downtown Nanticoke.

Winds pulled down part of the roof on the Nanticoke Beer Distributors building at 201 Arch St.

After winds pulled down the material under the building’s eaves — known as a “soffit” — bricks on the wall started falling where the soffit had blow off.

City employees put fencing around the building to keep passersby away from the hazard of falling debris.

At some point, the building will likely have to be demolished, said city manager Donna Wall.

Mark Construction Services of Moosic have said in the past that they could demolish the structure to make space for a parking lot that would complement a planned development project at the nearby site of the now-closed Nanticoke Villa, an assisted living facility that closed in October 2014.

2/25/2019

### **Honey Pot Club members trying to move past theft**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

The Honey Pot Club has been a part of Angela Sullivan’s life since she was a kid. Her grandfather would walk her down to the social hall to buy a candy bar and talk to the neighborhood elders.

As an adult, she’d visit to have some drinks with friends and share some laughs.

Sullivan, 42, has been saddened to drive by in recent weeks to see the building sit empty and idle, the result of the building’s utilities being shut off due to a large theft.

“It’s dark and cold when you drive by now,” Sullivan said. “It’s sad.”

Sullivan is among the club’s board members who are leading the effort to reopen the club under new leadership. First, they need to raise money to pay off nearly \$13,000 in bills and taxes that racked up while the club’s former treasurer allegedly embezzled tens of thousands of dollars.

The club is selling “Save the Honey Pot Club” T-shirts and is hosting a craft fair on March 10 at the 400 Club in Nanticoke.

“The goal remains to open the doors and become operational again,” Sullivan said.

The abrupt shuttering of the club also forced the Honey Pot Volunteer Fire Department out of service because it shared the building with the club. The department on Feb. 6 said it was operating under limited service. Three days later, the department announced it was completely out of service until further notice.

In court documents, police said former board member and treasurer Daniel Wozniak admitted to stealing from the club

for years to support a gambling habit. He admitting to taking money from nightly cash deposits until there wasn't enough money left to pay bills, court papers say.

Since the theft came to light, Wozniak and three of his family members left the club's board.

Four new members were appointed at an emergency meeting held Thursday, Sullivan said.

Sullivan, her husband and her mother are the other three board members.

Sullivan said "better systems" will be in place to track finances. She noted that financial reports presented at meetings "were not accurate."

Some former board members have stepped up in leadership roles to help, Sullivan said.

"They know the checks and balances that need to be in place," she said.

2/18/2019

### **Court fight continues over eminent domain issue in Nanticoke**

Bill Wellock - Citizens Voice

An eminent domain dispute in Nanticoke is still working through county court.

The General Municipal Authority of the City of Nanticoke filed a declaration of taking for properties along the 100 block of East Main Street on Aug. 28, 2018.

On Jan. 28, attorneys for the municipal authority filed the latest motion in the ongoing dispute.

The purpose of the project is to provide affordable senior housing and public transportation, as well as to improve the infrastructure, streetscape, pedestrian safety and economic development in the city, and those are valid purposes for using eminent domain, attorneys argued. The fact that private interests may also benefit is immaterial.

The taking should not be considered excessive, attorneys argue, because it fulfills a need in the city.

In its declaration of taking, the authority said it plans to build a five-story mixed-use building on the site that will include affordable housing for senior citizens, a Geisinger center for the elderly, a parking garage and a bus station.

But Nilved Apartments, LLC, owned by Debbie Massaker, and Clifford and Mary Lou Pomicter objected to the project.

Among the complaints raised by the Pomicters and Nilved Apartments are beliefs that the project will include additional commercial space and that some of the apartments will not be used for senior citizens. There is already enough affordable housing for senior citizens in the city, their motions contend.

The motions also say they believe an older adult center could be replaced by a YMCA and that plans for an intermodal center are not finalized, and that the possibility of those changes means the project does not have a definitive plan. The basis for that belief is a news article published in The Citizens' Voice in 2018 about the project, which quotes state and local officials.

The municipal authority denies those contentions, saying the project does not include additional retail or commercial space. The authority also denies that any housing won't be for senior citizens in Nanticoke and says there are not adequate vacancies at three other senior housing facilities in the city, Oplinger Towers, Nanticoke Towers and Park Towers.

2/16/2018

### **Leadership WB group aims to improve Nanticoke's Quality Hill Park**

boboyle@timesleader.com

A Leadership Wilkes-Barre project committee is looking to restore and beautify Quality Hill Park on Hill Street in Nanticoke.

The committee said the public park is a destination for many local families to host parties and gatherings. The project consists of various renovations and upgrades throughout the park, including:

- Replacing or repairing an existing fence that was damaged during a recent storm
- Painting of existing facilities throughout the park
- Upgrades and renovations to the community center and public restrooms
- Landscape upgrades such as shrubs, perennials, mulch and trees
- Pavement repairs for the existing basketball court

The committee will be holding a fundraiser Thursday, Feb. 21, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Sabatini's Pizza in Exeter. Cost is \$25 and includes all-you-can-eat pizza and up to three drinks. There will be raffle baskets and a 50/50 raffle with a \$100 minimum guaranteed.

Tickets can be purchased prior to the event by contacting Jeff Kiluk at [jkiluk@sordoni.com](mailto:jkiluk@sordoni.com), or at the door the day of the

event.

The committee's goal is to raise \$5,000. Every dollar that is raised will be invested in the park and will help pay for the materials needed to complete the renovations.

Donations to help support the project can be made by contacting Matt Daube at [mdaube@toyotasportsplex.com](mailto:mdaube@toyotasportsplex.com).

The park includes basketball courts, tennis courts, swing sets, a merry-go-round, slides, a community center with restroom facilities, picnic tables and benches.

Besides Kiluk and Daube, committee members include:

- Candice Dutko – [cgdutko@geisinger.edu](mailto:cgdutko@geisinger.edu)
- Dawn Gilliland – [gillilandd@service1.org](mailto:gillilandd@service1.org)
- Christine Mackin – [cmackin@wvcakids.org](mailto:cmackin@wvcakids.org)
- Tyler Salerno – [tyler.salerno@assuredpartners.com](mailto:tyler.salerno@assuredpartners.com)
- Deb Telesz – [deborah.telesz@prudential.com](mailto:deborah.telesz@prudential.com)
- Desiree Voitek – [desireevoitek@kings.edu](mailto:desireevoitek@kings.edu)

2/14/2019

### **Local school districts tightened security in Parkland massacre's wake**

Michael P. Buffer 0 Citizens Voice

Note: This excerpt was taken from full article

The [Greater Nanticoke Area School District](#) “has been very proactive in safety and security” since the Parkland shooting, Superintendent Ronald Grevera said. Greater Nanticoke hired a full-time school police officer this year, and the \$39,000 cost was covered by a Safe Schools Grant.

The district added two walk-through metal detectors and metal detector wands at the high school, and they have also been used for sporting events, Grevera said. Clear backpacks are required in the high school, and they will be used at the Educational Center beginning in the 2019-20 school year, Grevera said.

“All buildings in the district now have locking vestibules, which we did not have a year ago,” Grevera added.

Visitors must now present a valid ID for a check on whether they are on the list of registered sex offenders. The district also plans to use a \$7,000 grant to add communication systems to the district through “walkie-talkies” and a repeater for a district frequency through the FCC, Grevera said.

2/12/2019

### **Demolition begins at shuttered St. Joseph Church in Nanticoke**

Staff Report - Citizens Voice

Demolition began on the former St. Joseph Church in Nanticoke on Monday.

The church and an adjoining rectory at 107 E. Noble St., closed in May 2010 as part of the Catholic church consolidation.

Demolition is being done by Brdaric Excavating, Inc.

The Diocese of Scranton will try to find a buyer for the property once demolition is complete, according to diocese spokesman Eric Deabill.

1/26/2019

### **WVIA seeking volunteers for ‘Our Town Nanticoke’ segment**

Staff Report - Citizens Voice

Nanticoke will be featured in WVIA's “Our Town” series.

“Our Town Nanticoke” will be a “day-in-the-life” one-hour video scrapbook focusing on the people, places and happenings of Nanticoke, as seen through the eyes of its residents.

Nanticoke residents are invited to attend the first “Our Town Nanticoke” community/volunteer meeting at 6:30 p.m. Jan. 31 at the Nanticoke City Municipal Building.

Residents will discuss which landmarks, events and local stories the program should tell about their town.

A second community/volunteer meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 7 at the same location.

During this meeting volunteers will participate in a whiteboard session to determine the stories to be told in the program and which stories each volunteer will videotape to create the show.

WVIA hopes to recruit 20 to 25 area residents with personal camcorders.

Anyone interested in being a videographer and/or storyteller for the program should contact Lisa Mazzarella at 570-602-1164 or email [lisamazzarella@wvia.org](mailto:lisamazzarella@wvia.org).

“Our Town Nanticoke” will debut April 25.

1/23/2019

### **Five people displaced after fire in Nanticoke**

[elewis@timesleader.com](mailto:elewis@timesleader.com)

Five people have been displaced due to a fire at an apartment building on East Washington Avenue that could have been much worse early Wednesday morning.

Fire Chief Kevin Hazleton said a woman was awake in her second floor apartment at 5 E. Washington Ave. when she smelled smoke just before 5:30 a.m.

The woman grabbed her son and called 911 while escaping the building.

Hazleton said the woman did the right thing by closing doors, which prevented the fire from spreading.

“On her way out, she closed the bedroom door and closed the apartment door,” Hazleton said. “It starved the fire of oxygen and kept the fire to the bedroom. We ran a line and nailed this fire. She did the right thing by closing the doors.”

Hazleton said the fire was extinguished within 10 minutes. No injuries were reported.

Three people in a first floor apartment were displaced due to water damage.

Hazleton said the second floor apartment sustained fire damage to the bedroom and smoke damage.

Smoke alarms were activated alerting other tenants, Hazleton said.

Hazleton said there were no issues with the cold temperatures that was around 25 degrees at the time of the fire.

“We did have the street department come up and spread salt around,” Hazleton said.

Fire departments in Hanover Township and Kingston assisted at the scene.

1/15/2019

### **Father of slain correctional officer pens historical novel**

[bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com](mailto:bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com)

Don Williams of Nanticoke has written a historical novel dedicated to his son Eric, a correctional officer killed nearly six years ago in a federal prison.

While the novel is based on a real event at the end of the Revolutionary War in 1782, a common theme of the book deals with a topic he’s thought a lot about in recent years: revenge.

“It mostly surrounds revenge for the murder of family members,” Williams said.

Williams, who advocated for the death penalty for the inmate who killed his son, said the book is based on a little-known event at the end of the war, the Gnadenhutzen massacre, also known as the Moravian massacre.

“It’s an occurrence very few people know about,” Williams said. “It was an unbelievable tragedy.”

The massacre was the killing of 96 Christian Moravian Indians by a colonial white American militia from Washington County, Pennsylvania on March 8, 1782. Survivors of the dead vowed revenge.

The summary of Williams’ book, *Eighteen for Mercy*, says he knows the topic well, following the death of his son. His son’s killer was convicted of murder, but spared from getting the death penalty.

“He understands being compelled to seek revenge and didn’t just write about those things; he lived them,” the summary says. “As the characters in his book had to do, Donald also had to move forward and continue to live this life and hopefully experience some joy here and there among the struggles.”

Williams said he wrote the book previously, but it ended up like a history book. This time, he wrote it as a novel and he thinks it’s more compelling.

The fighting described in the book wasn’t just imagined, according to Williams’ website. He was able to describe some scenes from what he experienced during the Vietnam War.

“Breathing in the thick gunpowder and smelling feces and blood, which he described in a battle scene in his novel, *Eighteen For Mercy*, wasn’t something he read somewhere,” the book summary says. “The smells, the confusion, dryness in the mouth, and the inability to swallow experienced in battle, was something Donald had experience during his time in Vietnam.”

**BUY THE BOOK**

You can purchase *Eighteen for Mercy* at [donaldwilliamsjr.com](http://donaldwilliamsjr.com) or by going to [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

1/11/2019

## **Greater Nanticoke Area votes to limit taxes, narrow kindergarten registration window**

mguydish@timesleader.com

The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board voted Thursday on several major issues:

- To limit any potential tax increase in 2019-20 to a state maximum of 3.5 percent;
- To classify e-cigarettes and “vaping” equipment under the district’s tobacco policy (thus banning them on school grounds);
- And to limit kindergarten registration to no later than Sept. 30 unless a child is transferring from kindergarten in another district.

The tax-limit vote will be common among school boards this month. Under the state law known as Act 1, which legalized gambling, some money from that gambling is used to reduce school property taxes. But districts are restricted in how much they can raise taxes without a voter referendum or state approval under a limited number of exemptions. If districts vote to stay within the limit this month, they need not approve a preliminary budget until the end of May. If they don’t vote to stay in the limit, they must prepare a preliminary budget in February. The limit, known as the “Act 1 Index,” can vary year to year and district to district. This year, Greater Nanticoke Area’s index is the highest among Luzerne County’s 11 school districts.

Asked if the vote meant the board would raise taxes, President Tony Prushinski said it does not, and that under state law a final decision on any increase doesn’t have to be made until June 30.

### **K registration**

Superintendent Ronald Grevera said the change in kindergarten registration policy was aimed at those who register children later in the year for kindergarten when they were not attending school anywhere else. He said teachers can’t cover all the lessons a student missed if they don’t start school until, say, November. Those who are transferring from another district can still register mid-year because they were getting their lessons at the other district.

Grevera also praised high school administration and teachers for getting the district on the 9th annual “Advanced Placement Honor Roll.” The title is given by the College Board — which oversees the AP program — to districts in the United States and Canada that increase access to AP courses while maintaining or improving the rate of students scoring 3 or higher on AP exams, which are scored on a scale of 1 to 5. Some 373 districts made the honor roll this year.

### **Aide terminated**

The board also voted to terminate a paraprofessional, or teacher aide, identified only by employee number. The vote apparently prompted a person to leave the room, which in turn prompted Prushinski to make a criticism he said he has done in the past: Urging people to stay for the whole meeting.

Noting the board takes actions based on the advice of Grevera and Solicitor Vito Deluca, Prushinski said all were present “for the students” and “the taxpayers,” and that while he won’t attempt to stop people from leaving, he will continue to comment when it happens.

“Do they have a right to walk out? Absolutely,” he said. “But it is rude.”

Asked after the meeting about the person who walked out, Grevera said only that it “is a personnel matter.”

1/4/2019

## **Nanticoke swears in first female mayor**

Nicole Colatosti-Mackiewicz takes the place of Rich Wiaterowski

Kelly Choate - pahomepage.com

NANTICOKE, LUZERNE COUNTY (WBRE/WYOU)

The City of Nanticoke has a new mayor.

Councilwoman Nicole Colatosti-Mackiewicz was sworn in Thursday night as the city's first female mayor during a special ceremony at the Nanticoke Municipal Building.

She's taking the place of Rich Wiaterowski, who died last month after a battle with leukemia.

Wiaterowski dedicated his life to this community. He also served as a volunteer firefighter in the city for 25 years.

Colatosti-Mackiewicz said she was fortunate to call Wiaterowski her close friend.

"We did a lot of things together besides the political things in the town," said Colatosti-Mackiewicz. "We had a great time, and I love every memory of it."

Colatosti-Mackiewicz said she'll pick up where Wiaterowski left off, attracting more businesses to the city, paving

streets, and planning more events in Nanticoke.

Colatosti-Mackiewicz will serve as mayor until the end of the year, but she already plans to run for the position after that.



1/3/2019

### **Councilwoman selected to serve as Nanticoke's mayor**

[bwellock@citizensvoice.com](mailto:bwellock@citizensvoice.com)

#### **Nicole Colatosti-Mackiewicz**

A Nanticoke councilwoman will be the city's next mayor. Council chose to take the seat at a meeting Wednesday. She is the first woman to serve as mayor in Nanticoke, solicitor William Finnegan said. Colatosti-Mackiewicz fills a seat previously held by Rich Wiaterowski, who died Dec. 9 after a battle with acute myeloid leukemia. Along with his duties as mayor, Wiaterowski served as a volunteer firefighter in the city.

He worked for Laborers International Union of North America before his illness.

"They are big shoes to fill, for sure," Colatosti-Mackiewicz said.

The city's charter allows her to serve through 2019. Voters will choose a mayor in November to serve the remaining two years of Wiaterowski's term. Colatosti-Mackiewicz said she planned to run for the position.

In the meantime, she wants to continue work from Wiaterowski's time as mayor, such as paving projects and redevelopment in the city's downtown.

"I'd like to continue with his legacy and see everything that he wished and wanted to go through," she said.

Among those projects is the ongoing development of the "Hanover 9" industrial site in Nanticoke and Hanover Twp., the Nantego Development Project along East Main Street, and infrastructure improvements she hopes will attract more business to the city.

Colatosti-Mackiewicz was one of six people who submitted an application ahead of the deadline. Council received another application at the meeting. The council members reviewed each application and were able to have one-on-one conversations with each other about the applicants.

"It is great to see this many people have an interest in Nanticoke to make this city better than what it is right now," council President William Brown said.

The vote for her nomination passed with three yes votes and two abstentions. Colatosti-Mackiewicz and council vice president Kevin Coughlin abstained.

Colatosti-Mackiewicz is a human resources director at Guardian Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center in Newport Twp. She was the only council member to apply for the seat. Because she had to resign in order to become mayor, council will now have to fill her seat. They will advertise the position, collect applications then vote on someone to fill the seat, Finnegan said.

The business of choosing a mayor to fill a vacant seat is the kind of housekeeping municipalities everywhere must complete from time to time.

But this time, in Nanticoke, it meant much more.

Replacing a beloved mayor is not how council expected to start the new year, Finnegan said.

"(Wiaterowski) was my friend and he was a remarkable man," Colatosti-Mackiewicz said. "I sure am going to miss him and so is this city."