

12/29/2011

## **87-year-old veteran attends National Wheelchair Games**

Times Leader

Doris Merrill, 87, of Nanticoke was the oldest veteran to participate in the recent 31st National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Pittsburgh. In all, 625 veterans from all 50 states and England took part. Coached by Bethany Purdue, Emily Carver and her son Pepper Merrill of Kingston, Merrill won a gold medal for Powerball, a silver in the motorized rally and bronze in ramp bowling. Franco Harris of Pittsburgh Steelers fame presented Merrill with her gold medal. Merrill served as a World War II WAVE and worked as a yeoman for Central Naval Intelligence in Cape May, N.J., and Philadelphia. She has three grandchildren, Heather, Paul III and Toby, and three great-granddaughters, Olivia and Emma Merrill and Morgan Challenger.

12/26/2012

## **Nanticoke barber still clipping away at 97**

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Back when Zelino Vici opened his barber shop in Nanticoke, haircuts cost 25 cents.

As he tells it, there were 32 other barbers competing for business throughout the bustling coal town filled with mom and pop stores and dozens of "beer gardens."

At age 97, Vici is still going strong.

After 76 years in business, he's one of two barbers remaining in the city.

"He's been my barber since I was a kid and I'm 70 now. His customers won't let him retire," said Ken Turley, a Nanticoke native who now lives in Lake Silkworth. "I still come here. He knows how I like my hair cut, so why change? His hand is still steady and his eyes are still good."

Vici continues to work a regular schedule at his shop at the corner of Prospect and Church streets, open 6 a.m. to noon, Tuesday through Saturday. If you weren't told so, you might not even know it's an active business - there is no sign, barber shop pole or hours of operation posted on the storefront below his home.

"I never had a sign. I didn't need one," he said.

These days, Vici says he gives about six to eight haircuts a day. On a recent afternoon during a reporter's visit, however, three customers arrived within an hour. As Vici cut, Frank Sinatra songs loudly played throughout the shop - apparently very common background music here, along with Dean Martin.

While leaving, one customer forgot to pay. "Did you pay me?" Vici asked, just as the man was about to exit. These days, Vici charges a bit more than 25 cents: \$12 for a standard cut. The man gave Vici a \$20 and Vici gave him change. Vici then called the next customer to the barber chair and continued the interview.

The son of Italian immigrants, Vici explained how he grew up amid the Great Depression with few opportunities and bleak hopes of going to college. In the early 1930s, he got a job as a lather boy for a barber at Maple and Green streets, preparing customers faces for their shave.

At the time, Green Street was an unofficial border for barbers in Nanticoke. Most barbers south of Green Street charged a quarter, while barbers north of Green Street charged 50 cents because they were closer to the busy commercial district on Main Street.

"They used to take care of the business people. On a Saturday night, there wasn't room to walk down the street," Vici recalls.

Vici lived and worked on the side of town that charged a quarter. In 1935, he opened his own shop, next to the family homestead on Prospect Street. Vici bought a set of used 1927-made barber chairs - the ones he uses to this day. Vici moved his home and shop a few doors down in 1956 and has been operating out of 412 S. Prospect St. ever since. While chatting with one his customers, Vici recalled the days when he'd open before sunrise to cut hair for men before they went to work.

"All my life I got up at 4 a.m. I said, while I was here, I might as well open the doors," Vici said.

"Those days are long gone," Vici added. "Now I open at 6."

When asked how and why he has continued to work all these years, he explained, "I inherited the correct genes and had good doctors. I enjoy doing it and like to take care of my customers."

Vici also wanted to make one thing clear - retirement is not on the horizon.

"I don't intend to retire. As long as I can work, I'm going to work," he says.

12/15/2011

### **Community effort assists Nanticoke families, kids**

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It looks like a toy store.

Except in here, the toys are free - for the needy, for the holidays.

Students of [Greater Nanticoke Area](#) schools who expected few or no toys this Christmas will be getting at least two thanks to the district's annual toy drive.

The district partnered with the Nanticoke community recently to buy about 2,000 new toys for hundreds of less fortunate GNA students. On Wednesday, the months of planning and hard work were on display at Kennedy Elementary School - its lunch room tables filled with toys. Selected families arrived to pick two toys per child, plus a few extra items.

There were basketballs and Barbie dolls, stuffed animals and stocking stuffers, board games and books. Each family was given a gift card to Gerrity's Supermarket as well.

"I'm proud of the kids for what they did and thankful for the people who donated," said school board member Cindy Donlin.

Minutes earlier, Donlin greeted a flood victim who arrived to choose a few toys.

"She hugged me and said, 'Thank you so much,'" Donlin said.

In all, about \$13,000 was raised to buy the toys and supermarket gift cards to benefit 260 families and about 500 children.

Members of the school's administrative office - Leslie Caley Cimasky, Bonnie Dembowski, Carol Kelly, Reine Paveletz - organized the drive with the help of students and Superintendent Anthony Perrone, starting in October.

"There was a lot of work put into this - I'm talking every day," said Caley Cimasky.

Bronwyn Perrins, 17, a senior at the school who worked on the project, said "it feels good helping kids that might not get anything for Christmas."

"When you called the families, they appreciated it and it made you feel really good," said senior Cassie Yalch, 17.

In addition to students and staff, those who donated to the toy drive included: Dale Richards Garden Equipment, Malishchak Brothers, Broski Distributing, Barbara and Wayne Dombroski D.D.S., Attorney Vito DeLuca, Citizens Bank, Housing Authority of Nanticoke, Janisons, Attorney Joseph Iracki, Sen. John Yudichak, Joseph R. Aliciene and Co., Nanticoke Career Firefighters, Broadway Jewelers, Butchko's Garage, Sanitary Bakery, Felici Electric, 400 Club, J.P. Mascaro, Albert B. Melone Co., White Transit School Bus, Maps Restaurant, Stanley Schmidt Printing, and Gerrity's Supermarket.

12/13/2011

### **Proposed Nanticoke budget has tax hike**

### **Proposed \$4.3 million 2012 plan less than 2011's; audit shows grant money lost.**

Steven Fondo - Times Leader

City Council voted unanimously Monday at a specially scheduled makeup session to approve the first reading of a proposed 2012 budget that at \$4.3 million is \$29,000 less than 2011 but still includes a tax increase.

According to city officials, the new budget features a .35 mill increase for a total of 3.0575 mills.

A mill is a \$1 tax for every \$1,000 in assessed property value.

The tax increase represents about a \$17.50 per year hike on a home assessed at \$50,000.

Officials said an audit revealed the city was losing some grant money.

Copies of the proposed budget will be available at City Hall starting today.

A second and final vote on the budget will take place at the next council meeting, set for Dec. 31.

Also, the council passed an ordinance that will exonerate all active military personnel from the city's per capita tax.

In another matter, resident Theresa Sowa called for the immediate resignation of Councilwoman Margaret Haydock over Haydock's persistent absence from scheduled council meetings.

"She's a nice woman," said Sowa. "But she's a poor politician."

Mayor Joe Dougherty addressed the fact that several recent council meetings have actually been canceled due to the persistent absence of several members.

Dougherty, whose term is up on Dec. 31, was unable to offer an explanation for the absences of the council members.

**THE STORY ON THE NANTICOKE City Council meeting on Page 9A of Tuesday's edition of The Times**

**Leader contained two errors. The city has not lost grant money and Mayor Joseph Dougherty's term ends in two years.**

12/13/2011

**Bigger and merrier**

**GNA's holiday drive big success**

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This year's toy and food collection drive by the [Greater Nanticoke Area School District](#) easily exceeded the previous year, resulting in donations being stockpiled and sorted in a bigger room.

Students, families, school officials and business donated more than \$13,000 and nearly 2,000 toys that will be given to underprivileged families within the school district this holiday season.

The district sponsors the collection drive and leaves it up to the students to participate. Its success over the last 40 years has grown with donated items.

"All the support we received was amazing," said senior Alexa Gorski, 17, of Nanticoke, president of the school's National Honor Society. "There was such an outpouring from the community; it's really touching to see how much people care around the holidays."

Twelve tables and at least 10 washer-size boxes were filled with toys in the cafeteria of Kennedy Elementary. Toys were sorted by boys and girls and by age group from infant to 10 years old.

The cafeteria was used because of the large volume of donated toys. Last year, donations were stockpiled in the high school's main hallway.

Kelsey Rynkiewicz, 18, of Nanticoke, was coordinator of the collection drive this year. She said she would have been overwhelmed by the donations if it weren't for other students helping out.

"It was schoolwide drive from kindergarten through 12th grade," she said.

Rynkiewicz said money was raised through the school's dress down day, in addition to monetary donations from businesses and the Nanticoke Fire Department.

For \$1 every Friday, students were permitted to wear jeans and t-shirts outside the district's dress code.

"The money raised went to buy more toys," Rynkiewicz said.

Bonnie Dembowski, school district human resources officer, said 266 families will receive toys and/or gift cards for food at Gerrity's Market, surpassing 220 families that benefited last year.

Those families within the district affected by the September flood "will receive a little more extra," Dembowski said.

"This is truly amazing," said Superintendent Anthony Perrone. "The kids should be proud of what they've accomplished. Families are not going to go without a toy or go hungry this holiday season from their efforts."

12/11/2011

**A shadow on a family**

**Area child has rare affliction**

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Juliann Tompkins has been a mystery for much of her 2 plus years of life.

Her parents, Christina and Brent Tompkins of Pine Street, sensed from early on that something was wrong with their child. Juliann never moved inside her mother's womb. As an infant she rarely, if ever, cried.

The couple also was concerned that her head seemed disproportionately small, and that her eyes and nose appeared slanted. And they couldn't fathom why, at age 2, she developed sun poisoning after being outside on an overcast day for less than 30 minutes.

They were questions that remained unanswered until this summer, when a neurologist at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, acting on a hunch, tested the toddler and confirmed she suffers from Cockayne Syndrome, a genetic disorder so rare that there are only 300 known cases worldwide.

For the Tompkinses, the diagnosis was a relief as they finally had an explanation for their daughter's disabilities. But it came with a stark reality:

Juliann will likely live only to age 10, or, if she's fortunate, perhaps up to age 20. She will progress physically and mentally for several years, only to deteriorate as she ages.

"You're on a projectory scale. You go up and stay there a few years. Then she'll start to forget things. She'll forget how to walk. If she talks, she'll forget how to talk," said Christina Tompkins, 27.

## Genetic disorder

Cockayne Syndrome is a genetic disorder passed on to children through their parents, each of whom carries a mutation in one of two genes. There is no cure.

Both parents must carry the same mutated gene for the disorder to develop, said Dr. Edward Neilan, a genetics expert at Children's Hospital of Boston and a leading researcher on Cockayne Syndrome.

It is an insidious disorder that affects multiple organ systems and other body parts, including the nervous and digestive systems, the ears, eyes, teeth and liver.

The symptoms and degree of disability vary significantly. Some children have very severe symptoms that are apparent at birth. Others develop milder symptoms over a period of years.

Affected patients suffer from growth failure, abnormal sensitivity to the sun, progressive degeneration of the nervous system and developmental delays. Many are unable to speak or walk and suffer sight and hearing loss that worsens as they age.

They also have an appearance of premature aging.

The rarity of the disorder – it's estimated to afflict just one in 500,000 children in the United States and Europe – coupled with the similarity of its symptoms to other more common disorders, make it difficult to diagnose for children with mild to moderate symptoms, Neilan said.

In most cases the child looks healthy at birth. The most common symptoms, which include developmental and growth delays, may not appear until after the first year.

Both symptoms can be caused by a wide variety of factors, including poor nutrition, Neilan said.

"Those first problems are pretty non-specific. There are lots of reasons a child has developmental delays and is growing poorly. You tend to look at the common things first," Neilan said. "It takes time, even after the symptoms set in, to exclude common things and to think of the rare things."

## Juliann's affliction

Juliann suffers from a moderate form of the disorder. Her symptoms, which primarily consist of developmental delays, began to manifest at around age 1.

Doctors initially thought her problems were caused by the premature closure of the soft spot on her head, which caused her brain to push against the skull, Christina said.

Juliann underwent surgery at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville to correct that condition at eight months of age. She underwent a second surgery in May.

"The doctor at Geisinger said she'd be fine. Everyone thought it was because of her skull surgery, that there was nothing wrong with her and we should just go on and she would be fine," Christina said. "I knew there was something wrong, but I couldn't pinpoint it."

The couple sought out a second opinion with Dr. Eric Marsh, a pediatric neurologist at Children's Hospital in Philadelphia.

"He took one look at her and said 'Excuse me,' and walked out of the room," Christina said. "A half hour later he walked back in the room. He didn't know if he should tell us what he was testing her for."

Marsh has been practicing for 13 years and had only seen one other case of Cockayne Syndrome, but he immediately suspected it in Juliann.

"For whatever reason, I don't know why, I looked at her face and it made me think of Cockayne Syndrome," Marsh said.

Marsh gathered genetic material from Juliann and shipped it off to Children's Hospital in Boston. It was several months before the results came back.

"We got a call on a Thursday and my heart just sank," Christina said. "I was relieved when we got the diagnosis because I could stop my search. It's not what we wanted, but at least we know now how to treat it."

## Multitude of problems

Juliann suffers from a number of developmental issues. She attempts to speak but her words are incomprehensible. She has poor balance and is able to stand only if she's holding on to something. She's also legally blind.

How far Juliann will progress remains unknown, Marsh said.

"Some kids don't ever walk or communicate at all. Then there are kids who do walk and talk," he said. "At this point it's hard to know where Juliann is going to fit in."

Despite her disabilities, Juliann is an affectionate child who loves to give hugs and kisses, her mother said. She also loves to play with her toy kitchen set and any toy that's animated.

Sitting on her mom's lap in the family's living room, Juliann delights at the stuffed animal sitting on the floor that flaps its ears and tail while belting out the song, "Tutti Frutti."

With mom holding her up, she moves toward the toy, bouncing her legs up and down in an attempt to dance to the tune. It's a light-hearted moment during an interview in which Christina does her best to remain upbeat, even as she speaks of the struggles the family faces.

"We always say 'why us?' But I wouldn't want anyone else to have her but us. She has brought a lot to our lives," Christina said. "It has taken a toll on us. We go day by day because that's all we can do."

She and Brent, 31, work hard to make life as normal as possible for the family, which includes 6-year-old Dustin, Christina's son from a previous relationship.

Dustin, who has no disabilities, has had to grow up fast, Christina said. He gets jealous at times of all the attention that Juliann gets, but he has adjusted well, she said.

"He thinks the world of her. He helps take care of her and helps feed her. In the morning when she wakes up he goes into her crib and plays with her," she said.

As much as they try to live a normal life, there is no escaping the reality of Juliann's condition.

"We think of things that parents of children who are healthy don't think of," Christina said. "I think of funeral costs. I shouldn't, but we want to have a cushion there in case something does happen."

Christina, a licensed practical nurse, and Brent, an engineer, both work full-time jobs. It's difficult to juggle the demands placed on them as they work with Juliann and the speech, physical and occupational therapists she sees each week.

"We try to push her, even though she has a fatal syndrome. You never know what you are going to get out of her. I never thought she'd talk; then she started babbling a little bit," Christina said.

#### Couple's commitment

The couple also have committed themselves to spreading the word about Cockayne Syndrome and to raising money to help fund research of the disorder.

Because it's so rare the disorder does not attract much attention or research money, Neilan said.

Children's Hospital in Boston is one of only a handful of medical facilities that conducts research on Cockayne Syndrome. The clinic loses money each year, Neilan said, but the hospital remains committed to the research.

Neilan said he first got interested in researching Cockayne Syndrome after he met a 9-year-old girl with the disorder.

"The parents of several children affected by Cockayne Syndrome essentially said to us 'our children are dying and no one is doing anything,'" Neilan said. "As a major national hospital, we see the need to serve the rare as well as common things."

The Tompkinses have been working to raise awareness locally. In September they joined forces with Scott and Jean Decker of Pittston, who had two children who died from Cockayne Syndrome, to sponsor a fundraising event, "The Butterfly Walk."

Held in Community Park in Hazleton, the walk raised more than \$5,000 for the Share and Care Network, a nonprofit group that provides support for parents of children with Cockayne Syndrome.

Christina said the support group has been her lifeline in helping her and Brent deal with Juliann's condition.

The Share & Care Cockayne Syndrome Network provides information and support for parents of children afflicted with the disorder. For more information visit [www.cockaynesyndorme.net](http://www.cockaynesyndorme.net).

Donations to support research on Cockayne Syndrome should be made out to Children's Hospital Boston and mailed to Dr. Edward Neilan, c/o Children's Hospital Trust, 1 Autumn St., #731, Boston, MA, 02215-5310. The check must be accompanied by a cover letter designating the purpose of the gift.

12/11/2011

### **Big welcome from small town**

### **Nanticoke residents turn out to enjoy Christmas parade and greet Santa.**

Camille Fiotti - Times Leader

Disguised in a Santa suit, "The Grinch" scowled as he led the parade through town atop the Newport Township fire truck Saturday.

Sponsored by the South Valley Chamber of Commerce, the parade, which began at Greater Nanticoke Area High School, included floats, Boy and Girl Scout troops and the high school marching band.

Anxiously waiting to catch a glimpse of the "real" Santa, Kaitlyn Smith, 6, of Nanticoke, scooped up a small bag of "reindeer food" which was tossed to the curb. Joined by her mother Cindy, 43, her brother Tyler, 19 and his girlfriend, Nadine Fisher, also 19, Kaitlyn said this was the first time she attended the city's parade. "It's nice to see that small towns are still doing parades like this," said Cindy, who recalled taking Tyler to the parade each year while he was

growing up.

A few blocks away, the festivities continued in the parking lot of Luzerne County Community College's Joseph Paglianite Culinary Institute. A long line of children waited for a chance to sit on Santa's lap under a large tent. After spending the afternoon with her mom as a Salvation Army bell ringer at a grocery store in Kingston, Jordan Lamb, 6, of Nanticoke treated herself to hot cocoa and cookies. "I asked Santa for a Little Mommy Very Real Baby Doll," she said.

"I think this is great," said her mom Georgette, 49. "I love how they do this every year for the kids."

12/10/2011

### **Nanticoke fire chief saluted**

Citizens Voice

Nanticoke firefighters gave a final salute to the city's former fire chief on Friday. Following a Funeral Mass for Donald J. Casey, the procession took Casey past fire headquarters on Ridge Street one last time.

Firefighters saluted and a bagpiper played as the hearse carrying Casey traveled underneath a giant U.S. flag draped by the ladder trucks of the Nanticoke and Hanover fire departments. Casey, who died Monday at age 84, served as fire chief between 1977 and 1991.

"He's going to be remembered for being a great leader and a great guy," said Deputy Chief Kevin Hazleton. "We lost a good guy. It's a sad day, not only for the department, but for the community."

12/6/2011

### **Kozlofski heads reorganized board**

Susan Denney - Times Leader

The December reorganizational meeting of the Greater Nanticoke Area School Board on Monday began with the swearing in of board members Tony Prushinski, Ryan Verazin, Kenny James, Frank Shepanski Jr. and Chet Beggs, who is new to the board.

The board elected Jeff Kozlofski to serve as president for the coming year. The board chose James to serve as vice president.

The board voted to continue to retain Vito DeLuca as solicitor for the district.

In regular business, the board voted to adopt a resolution stating that the district will not raise property taxes by more than its state inflation index for 2012-2013 under the state's Act 1.

The inflation index is presently 2.5 percent.

The board accepted the resignation of Christina Grendzinski, a teacher who is presently furloughed.

It also appointed Andrea Cannavale as junior high soccer coach pending clearances.

12/4/2011

### **Book provides neat peek into Nanticoke's past Tom Mooney Out on a Limb**

Tom Mooney - Times Leader

Here's a local quiz question: What Wyoming Valley town has boasted a housing development made entirely of concrete, a one-armed man who played major league baseball and the very first variety store in what became a national chain?

If you answered "Nanticoke," you're right.

You'll find this kind of information, plus a ton of historic photos, in the new book "Nanticoke," by Chester Zaremba. It's 127 pages of neat pictures describing the city from an incredibly detailed 1890 bird's-eye view through 1920s saloons (Prohibition, what's that?) to the cleanup after the 1972 Agnes flood.

Zaremba, a retired state trooper and former Nanticoke police chief, scoured the community for photos. While you will notice some you might have seen before if you're into local history, most of them will be new.

"A lot of the pictures have not been seen since they were taken," he said. One, a picture of the town's old football field, languished in the form of a glass plate until Zaremba unearthed it, photographed it, made a positive and brought back to life a sight that had been unseen for many decades.

You can buy the book at Barnes & Noble and at the Nanticoke Historical Society, located in the Samantha Mill House, adjacent to the Nanticoke Library. Zaremba is a co-founder of the group.

If you're a genealogist with roots in that area, you probably won't uncover any ancestors you didn't know about in Zaremba's book, but you will get a strong, strong sense of how your Nanticoke ancestors lived, studied, shopped, worked, worshiped and played sports. You'll see what was important to them, what filled them with pride and what sights they walked past on their way to job or church.

The book offers a short general introduction, plus a brief separate introduction to each of the nine sections, with titles like "Churches" and "Trolleys."

Oh, and here are the details of our quiz question: the Concrete City housing project, Pete Grey and the S.H. Kress chain.

11/22/2011

Scoring National Success

**Kati Nearhouse named to the National Field Hockey Coaches Association Second Team**

Times Leader

Nearhouse (Greater Nanticoke) finished with eight goals and five assists for 21 with four game-winners for the 22-3 Monarchs. This was her first All-American selection.

11/19/2011

**Flood of determination saves store**

**Perseverance, hard work help Village Pet Supplies make it in Hanover Township.**

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After dealing with months of up and down sales, Brenda Bartlett can see some stability ahead in her business. Since getting flooded out in September, Bartlett and her employee, Jessica Callahan, have been raising and lowering the rear lift gate of the rental truck that's served as the temporary home for Village Pet Supplies & Gifts.

"It was just starting to wear on us," said Bartlett.

On Friday they started moving inventory back into their leased space in the Dundee Plaza.

"We backed the truck up to the front of the store," said a relieved Bartlett.

New walls, carpeting and ceiling tiles were put in after the Susquehanna River reached a record crest of 42.66 feet on Sept. 9 and spilled six feet of water in the store in a low-lying area unprotected by levees.

Bartlett, 45, of Nanticoke closed the store for six days, saying "it caused me pain" not being able to help people who depended upon her for specialty foods for their pets with chronic health problems.

An animal lover, she said started the business 8 ? years ago and has developed a niche selling foods not found at other locations.

"I love my store, my business, my customers," said Bartlett. "I don't even feel like I have a job."

She was up and running again with the help of one of her distributors, Natural Animal Nutrition Inc. of Edgewood, Md., who paid for the rental truck and has helped with the cost of shelving that was to arrive today.

Without electricity, Bartlett and Callahan used a pen and calculator to do business. At night Bartlett punched the numbers into the cash register she took home and placed on her kitchen counter. From there she entered the information into a computer.

"Business was good. We probably did 60 percent of our business," said Bartlett.

It would have been a higher percentage, she added, had she been able to sell more than food and treats from the truck.

But customers were wonderful, bringing hot chocolate and soup for Bartlett and Callahan working in the unheated cargo area of the truck.

The support reinforced Bartlett's decision to reopen. "I just see it as the show must go on," said Bartlett.

11/16/2011

**Honor for Myers**

Times Leader

Sophomore Jake Myers (Nanticoke) wrapped up his season with the Mansfield sprint football team by being named Collegiate Sprint Football Association Special Teams Player of the Week.

Myers, a standout linebacker, scooped up a blocked field goal and ran 72 yards for a touchdown in a 21-14 loss to Cornell. Myers finished second in the league with 68 tackles and had seven tackles, an interception and a sack against Cornell.

11/6/2011

### **Support workers merit recognition**

Times Leader

Each November we celebrate Educational Support Professionals Day.

This year it will be celebrated on Nov. 16. ESPs typically are the first to arrive at school and the last to leave, and schools couldn't operate without them – although their role in supporting students and teachers is often overlooked. The students realize it, and they know they can depend on all of the ESPs who care about them. ESPs are the backbone of our school system. They are your aides and paraprofessionals, cleaners, cafeteria workers, secretaries, crossing guards, hall monitors, transportation people, technology personnel, custodial and maintenance people.

Educational support professionals should not only be recognized this month, but every day of the year. They are role models and play a very big role in making public schools positive places for every child.

A big thank-you to all of these people in all of our school systems. Wishing each of you a happy Educational Support Professionals Day!

J.D. Verazin - President

Greater Nanticoke Area Educational Support Professionals Association

11/3/2011

### **Parking limited in Nanticoke**

Steven Fondo -Times Leader

Business parking will be easier in the city's downtown due to an ordinance passed on Wednesday which allows for 30-minute parking zones near retail establishments.

The city council also voted to award the city's cable renewal service to the Cohen Law Group at a fee of \$9,900. The group negotiates the fee the cable company pays to the city.

Nanticoke's Solicitor William Finnegan Jr. said the cost of the law group's services in providing ongoing renewal revenue from Comcast Cable would be recouped in one or two years.

In other business, council voted to renew the city's joint law enforcement agreement with Warrior Run borough for 2012. The renewal agreement states that any traffic fines levied by Nanticoke officers patrolling in Warrior Run will be kept by Nanticoke.

11/3/2011

### **Nanticoke's the place, according to this bear**

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Wildlife Conservation Officer Jerry Kapral is so familiar with the black bear that meandered through Edwardsville on Tuesday that he can tell you exactly where it was headed.

Beastly journey

So what happened to the bear that wandered into Edwardsville on Tuesday? Conservation Officer Jerry Kapral got a call at 3 p.m. that the bear was seen near Woodward Street. He arrived and said the bear wandered into a small patch of woods and there were a few more sightings reported in the area that night. By Wednesday afternoon, however, things were quiet and Kapral surmised that the bear crossed the river and headed back to the Nanticoke area.

Here's what to do

If you see a bear in your neighborhood, don't panic. Conservation Officer Jerry Kapral said it's best to leave the animal alone and head indoors. Black bears are not typically aggressive, he said, and they will likely leave the area if they aren't being fed. "Go back in the house and give it space," Kapral said. "Don't antagonize it and certainly don't try to throw food to it."

"It was trying to get back across the river to Nanticoke," Kapral said.

How does he know?

Kapral has trapped and relocated the bear, which is tagged, three times since 2004. Back then the male bruin weighed 300 pounds. When Kapral last trapped it in October by the K.M. Smith Elementary School in Sheatown, it weighed more than 600 pounds, he said.

In October Kapral relocated the bear to State Game Lands 57 along the border of Wyoming and Sullivan counties, and it wound up in Edwardsville as it was trying to get back to Nanticoke.



Turns out, having a bear wander through a residential area is a pretty common occurrence in the region. It keeps Pennsylvania Game Commission officers extremely busy and, in many instances, is avoidable.

“The populations of both people and bears are increasing and every day I get calls about a bear in a neighborhood,” said WCO Dave Allen, who covers Mountain Top and southern Luzerne County.

Allen said he has trapped and relocated more than 10 bruins this year, including five in five days in Fairview Township. Calls from citizens reporting bear complaints have increased by 40 percent, Allen said, and much of the reason behind the problem is habitat loss.

Wooded areas have been erased by housing developments and the bears that live there turn to the residential areas for an easy food source consisting of garbage and bird feeders. In some instances the bears are intentionally fed, which only exacerbates the problem.

“They become habituated to the area,” Allen said. “There is one bear I know of that is so fat it doesn’t even look like a bear. It’s continually being fed human food.”

Allen and Kapral both agreed that there will always be bears that wander into residential areas. It’s just a circumstance of living in Northeastern Pennsylvania, they said.

Kapral said most of his bear complaints originate from Hanover Township, Nanticoke, Kingston and Edwardsville. He’s trapped and relocated a dozen bears so far this year, including three from the area surrounding the K.M. Smith Elementary School.

Instances of bears in urban areas tend to increase during the fall, Kapral said, because the bruins are trying to put on fat for the winter and that’s easier to do by feasting on garbage than searching for mast, such as acorns, in the woods.

“They get more bang for the buck eating out of trash cans and bird feeders,” Kapral said. “We’re never not going to have bears show up in town, but we can minimize it.”

That can be done by keeping trash cans inside at night and putting them out the morning before pickup. Bird feeders can also be stored indoors once darkness falls to limit the temptation.

And, most importantly, resist the urge to feed bears. Not only does it usually lead to problems down the road, Kapral said, but it’s against the law.

“Dealing with bears and other wildlife in urban areas is part of the job,” he said. “But it can be frustrating when you’re dealing with people who either don’t care or don’t want to follow our recommendations to avoid these conflicts.”

11/1/2011

**EPA: Source of Nanticoke mercury spill is unknown**

**Teenage girl discovered the metal beneath a bridge and brought it into school.**

Times Leader

The federal Environmental Protection Agency issued a report Monday regarding a spill of the element mercury that was discovered last month beneath a bridge near Allen and Poplar streets in Nanticoke.

According to the report, a teenage girl discovered the mercury, a liquid metal known to be toxic, on Sept. 15. She placed some of the mercury in a salt shaker and took it to her science teacher in Greater Nanticoke Area School District, who notified environmental officials.

The report does not indicate how much mercury was present and the source of the spill remains unknown, the report said.

The EPA investigated the incident and conducted tests at the spill site, as well as the home and school locker of the girl who found the substance. Elevated levels of mercury vapor were detected in her locker and carpeting at her home. The locker was cleaned and carpet has been removed, negating any danger to the public.

The report recommends that further action be taken to decontaminate the site where the mercury was found. The estimated cost of the clean up is \$18,000, the report said.

10/23/2011

**Polish and proud of it**

**Nanticoke college student’s essay is honored at Pulaski Scholarship Ball.**

jkrispin@timesleader.com

Being Polish paid off for one local college sophomore this weekend.

William Borysewicz, of Nanticoke, is the recipient of this year’s Pulaski Scholarship Ball award of \$2,000 in celebration of National Polish-American Heritage Month. The King’s College student is in his second year in the

sociology and theology fields, attaining a 4.0 GPA. The winner read his essay on 'What My Polish Heritage Means to Me' at the event held at the Gus Genetti Hotel and Conference Center in Wilkes-Barre Saturday evening.

The Pulaski Scholarship Committee of Northeastern Pa. held its second annual Pulaski Scholarship Ball at the Gus Genetti Hotel and Conference Center Saturday evening and awarded a \$2,000 scholarship to William Borysewicz of Nanticoke, a second year sociology and theology student.

"His essay was really the best, and the judges all thought that, too," said Rose Marie Carlin, the committee's publicity director.

Borysewicz holds a 4.0 GPA at King's College.

The winner read his essay on "What My Polish Heritage Means to Me" and was awarded the scholarship, which increased in value from the inaugural year last year. The essay, which accounts for half of the basis for the scholarship (the other half being financial need, grade point average, and school community and church involvement), was unanimously voted on by judges.

"We have sponsors for our programs, and plus the people who come in and paid for their dinner, that goes toward the winning students," said Carlin. "Hopefully, maybe next year, it will be better because it's a great time. When people come to it, they tell their friends and they bring more people the following year."

After reading his essay, Borysewicz thanked members of the committee.

The Ray Suda Orchestra performed during the ceremony. The event was held in celebration of National Polish Heritage Month. A proclamation from Gov. Corbett's office was read to the audience at the event. Pulaski Day was Oct. 2. The scholarship and ceremony's name is derived from Casimir Pulaski, a Polish born soldier. He is known for his contributions to the U.S. military in the American Revolution by training its soldiers and cavalry.

10/22/2011

### **Nanticoke superintendent honored**

Fred Adams - Times Leader

A longtime educator, Superintendent Anthony Perrone was honored Friday for his service and commitment to the Greater Nanticoke Area School District. The complex on Kosciuszko Street containing the district's schools was renamed the Anthony P. Perrone Educational Campus. Perrone has been with the district for 49 years and started out as a Spanish teacher, said Cindy Donlin, a school board member. During the nine years that Perrone has served as superintendent without pay, the district has saved \$2 million, she said. 'We wanted to do this for him so often,' said Donlin.

10/21/2011

### **Flood victims in Nanticoke get gift cards**

Steven Fondo - Times Leader

City Council announced Wednesday that residents who sustained damage in the recent flooding are eligible for a \$100 gift card compliments of Raymour and Flanagan in Wilkes-Barre Township.

City officials said the gift cards are part of a \$10,000 donation from Raymour and Flanagan to help area flood victims with household needs.

Eligible residents need to contact the city in order to receive a gift card.

Also, an ordinance permitting two-hour parking along Broadway between Arch and Main streets received approval on a first reading as part of an effort to relieve parking problems at the new Luzerne County Community College Health Sciences facility. A second reading of the ordinance is set for November.

Another ordinance, which received unanimous approval in on first reading, would amend the city's per capita tax to exonerate active military members. The ordinance must still be approved by Greater Nanticoke Area and a second reading.

In other business, Pasonick Engineering was awarded the bid to pave Hanover Street as part of the city's 2010-2011 block grant renovation project.

10/17/2011

### **Pretty in Pink**

Citizens' Voice

Though they may have lost the game on the field Saturday night, the Nanticoke Area football team, particularly lineman Christian Stevenson, proved to be the big winners.

At halftime, as part of his senior project, Stevenson presented a check to the American Cancer Society for \$4,000. Stevenson sold more than 600 shirts for fans to wear to the game and the Trojans wore pink socks and the coaches wore pink hats to support Stevenson's event.

The project had a special meaning for the Nanticoke Area community as they mourned the loss of coach Hank Turoski, who passed away because of colon cancer on Oct. 7.

10/9/2011

### **Nanticoke history explored in book**

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Do you remember Nanticoke's main street in the days when the city was thriving?

Did you graduate from the old Nanticoke High School, meet friends at the Coal Mine bar, shop at the Leader Store, ride the trolley - or do you wonder what these long-gone landmarks looked like?

A new book, "Nanticoke," by Nanticoke Historical Society vice president Chester J. Zaremba, will prove a look at the city's glory days.

The book, which will be released by Arcadia Publishing on Oct. 17, has plenty of photographs, many of them previously unpublished. Nobody had seen them except for members of the historical society, Zaremba said.

"A picture's no good if it's sitting in a drawer or a file cabinet," he said. "The idea of having a picture is to get it exposed to the public so they can look at it, reminisce, evoke a memory."

Many of the photographs are from the historical society's collection. Others were contributed by private individuals.

There is a section of trolley photos shot by the late Ed Miller, a well-known local rail photographer.

Pawlowski Photo Studio, a multi-generational business, was responsible for a lot of photographs, some dating to the early 1900s, Zaremba said. He said the owner's grandson, Leonard Pawlowski, found a cache of them in a basement and let the historical society use them.

But "Nanticoke" is "not merely a picture book," Zaremba said. There is a lot of text in it, to put the pictures in context.

He should know: it took him almost a year and a half to compile the book. Members of the historical society, particularly archivist David Sherrick, whom Zaremba described as "just amazing," were instrumental in helping put the book together.

Zaremba said he wrote the book in a way so that "the people who are going to read it will recognize almost everything in it."

The photos run the gamut, from the turn of the century to the 1990s.

"It's pretty inclusive, I think, of what life was like," Zaremba said. "We tried to cover a little of everything in that book."

He tried to focus on scenes from Nanticoke's heyday, such as the saloons that were so much a part of the miners' lives, the memorable 1961 boys' basketball championship, the local stores, and Concrete City, not as the ruin it has been for decades but as it was when it was home to Truesdale Colliery employees and their families.

The historical society previously published a hardcover book on Nanticoke and Newport Township, authored by Charlie Ciesla, and it sold about 1,500 copies, Zaremba said. However, they weren't too happy with it because to keep it at a viable price - around \$30 - "we really had to compromise on the quality of the photographs and the paper," he said.

Historical society members considered Arcadia Publishing, which specializes in picture-rich local history books, Zaremba said. Coincidentally, the company ended up contacting the society.

"One day we got an email from one of the publishers saying there was no book on Nanticoke, would we like to do it?" he said.

Society members agreed it was time to do the kind of book they wanted - and which would give them more public exposure - so they said yes, according to Zaremba. He was delegated to write it and put aside another book he was working on to do it.

For Zaremba, who co-founded the Nanticoke Historical Society in 1995 with its president, Julianna Zarzycki, it was a no-brainer for the book proceeds to go to the society, and to stock up on copies to sell as a much-needed fundraiser.

"I just want to see my historical society continue," he said.

"Nanticoke" by Chester Zaremba will be released Monday, Oct. 17 by Arcadia Publishing. Copies are \$21.99 and can be ordered from Arcadia by calling 888-313-2665 or visiting [www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com).

The Nanticoke Historical Society will also have copies of the book for sale. To get one, or for information about the society, call 570-258-1367, visit [www.nanticokehistoryonline.org](http://www.nanticokehistoryonline.org), or write to the Nanticoke Historical Society,

Samantha Mill House, 495 E. Main St., Nanticoke, PA 18634.

10/7/2011

### **Nanticoke approves sale of properties**

Amanda Myrkalo - Times Leader

City Council on Wednesday night approved the sale of two city-owned properties and OK'd contracts with three snowplow operators, for which the city received bids.

One property, 421 E. Church St., was "no use to the city," according to Solicitor William T. Finnegan Jr.

Council agreed to sell the property at 256 W. Church St., which the city had bought for \$10,000, to the next door neighbor for \$7,500. The city must do some sewer work there, and the neighbor will allow the city access without having to pay for an easement, said City Clerk Mary Beth Cheshinski.

The city sold the empty lot at 421 E. Church St. for \$2,750.

Council did not name the buyers on Wednesday night and Cheshinski did not have the names available on Thursday. Council also awarded a snowplowing contract for \$60 an hour to Frank Capozzi, Wilkes-Barre, for \$65 an hour to Paul Zoltewicz, Nanticoke, and for \$80 an hour to Matthew Owazany, Nanticoke. The bids were based on the sizes of the trucks and they will be used as needed if the city crew needs help, Cheshinski said.

Director of Finance Pamela Heard said the city "budget is on track," and future revenue and expenses should be close to budget.

Council member Jon Metta reported the cleanup after last month's flooding was continuing.

During the open floor, resident Lauren Pote, whose family resided in a hotel for three weeks after September's flooding, thanked the mayor, police department and fire department. She also extended her gratitude to FEMA and state Sen. John T. Yudichak.

Council will next meet Oct. 19, at 7 p.m. at the municipal building.

9/28/2011

On Campus

### **MYERS TACKLES JOB – Sophomore Jake Myers (Nanticoke) has started the season in fine style for the Mansfield sprint football team.**

Times Leader

Myers, an outside linebacker, leads the 1-1 Mountaineers with 26 tackles. He had 17 in a 37-23 opening-season loss to Cornell and had nine in last weekend's 40-2 victory over Princeton.

"Jake has gotten bigger and stronger since last season and we expect him to be a leader for us on defense," coach Dan Davis said.

According to Davis, Myers was a key to holding Cornell to 21 yards rushing on 32 attempts. The Big Red had averaged more than 250 yards rushing in their four previous games against Mansfield.

"Jake is willing to play whatever position is needed and is providing a physical presence to our defense," the coach said.

9/18/2011

### **Saddest day recalled**

### **College President Leary praises those who devote their lives to being first responders.**

Camille Fioti - Times Leader

A gigantic American flag, suspended high in the air by two ladder trucks, flapped gently above the entrance of Luzerne County Community College's Regional Public Safety Training Center on Saturday.

Led by bagpipes and drums, a long procession of local first responders and members of the community made its way to the site of a new monument marking the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

At the front of the procession, a piece of steel from the World Trade Center was carried on a gurney to the monument -- a concrete replica of the twin towers. Bagpipe strains of "God Bless America" played as members of Boy Scout Troop #418 assisted in peeling back an American flag to unveil the artifact, which was then hoisted into its permanent home between the two "towers".

As time passes, we have learned to live again, laugh again, and love again," said college President Tom Leary.

He commended people who choose careers in the emergency services field. "They've dedicated their lives to each of

us," he said. "They know what it's like to risk it all for another. We've seen this happen over and over again on 9/11." The force of terrorism, as well as the force of nature, have only strengthened us, Leary said, as he thanked the first responders and volunteers who helped the victims of last week's flooding.

"The response from our service people was the same," he said. "They were stepping up to help each other." Susan Porter Allen, a student at LCCC, sang the national anthem, and "Hold My Hand," a song she wrote in honor of her nephew, who served in Afghanistan and became a triple amputee after being a victim of an IED.

Phyllis Carlo of Newport Township presented a wreath in honor of all first responders and her son, Michael Scott Carlo, a New York firefighter with Engine #230 in Brooklyn who was killed at the World Trade Center on 9/11. He was 34. "He lived life to the fullest," she said of her son.

Wearing a necklace with a photo of Michael in his uniform, Carlo said her son had always wanted to be a firefighter, and followed in his older brother Robert's footsteps. "They were both working that day," she said.

Robert, who was with a fire department in Harlem, was on his way to the World Trade Center that day, but was told to turn around and cover a station for firefighters who were dispatched to the scene.

County Commissioner Stephen Urban recalled the crystal blue sky on that tragic day 10 years ago. "Beauty was in the air as thousands awoke, but beauty would not remain."

Urban said the tragedy affected him personally as he spoke about his friend's wife, who was killed in the Pentagon that day.

"Remember the victims and remember their families," Urban told the crowd. "And as you leave here today, never forget them, and God Bless America."

9/13/2011

### **Waste company sustains \$1M in flood damage**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

A waste and recycling hauler based in Hanover Township sustained about \$1 million in damage due to the record flooding that hit the area.

Seven garbage haulers and the maintenance building at J.P. Mascaro and Sons on the Sans Souci Parkway were ruined, said Mike Mascaro, a company spokesman.

"There was not enough notice," Mascaro said. "The water never came this high in 1972."

Mascaro described the company's woes to the media while addressing a nearby resident's concerns about streams of recyclables that floated away from the facility and littered the residential neighborhood and wooded area nearby.

The area affected is near the Nanticoke and Hanover Township border, which saw unprecedented floodwaters.

John Bienick, 62, of Loomis Street, confronted Mascaro along the Sans Souci Parkway and said the company "should have had a contingency plan" to prevent the release of anything on its property.

"We were literally watching tons of garbage," Bienick, 62, of Loomis Street said. "It was a torrent - a raging creek."

Mascaro said the waters rose so fast that employees barely had enough time to retrieve their vehicles and flee. He said absolutely no garbage escaped because the Hanover Township site is not a waste drop-off center, and the waste packers undergoing maintenance were sealed. The center only houses the maintenance garage and the recycling center, he said.

In addition, the only recyclables to wash away were ones placed in the residential drop-off Dumpsters near the entrance, he said.

Mascaro sent crews to work along Loomis Street to clear the items.

Nearby on the Sans Souci Parkway, Jennie Kanjorski of A & J's Produce lost a significant amount of produce and one of her coolers flooded.

"People don't realize what is costs to put food on the table these days. Fertilizer goes up, and gas prices go up. And they take the farmer for a bad farmer," Kanjorski said.

9/12/2011

### **Walk of Honor salutes a hero**

Steven Fondo - Times Leader

Friends and family of New York firefighter Michael Scott Carlo gathered at Luzerne County Community College's Walk of Honor on Sunday to pay quiet tribute to the fallen hero who gave his life in the North Tower of the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

Carlo, a native of New York City, was member of FDNY's famed Engine 230, which lost six firefighters in the terrorist

attacks.

The 9/11 ceremony set Sunday for the Walk of Honor was not held. A spokesperson for the college said the event will be reset for a later time.

Carlo was 34 years old at the time of his death.

Michael's brother, Robert, also a FDNY firefighter, was on the scene in Lower Manhattan during the disaster but survived the attack. He is now retired and living on Long Island.

According to family members, Michael spent many summers in Northeastern Pennsylvania visiting family in Newport Township.

"Michael loved it here," said Marge Dudeck, Carlo's aunt, enthusiastically. "The boys made a lot of friends in the area when they were kids."

Michael's mother, Phyllis Carlo, of Wanamie, was at the 10th anniversary memorial service that was held in New York City on Sunday.

"Michael was always smiling," said Dudeck. "He was adventurous and loved sky-diving and scuba diving."

The Walk of Honor features a large, stone-work replica of the Twin Towers as well as a picture shrine and plaque memorializing Carlo.

College officials say the site will continue to grow as additional phases are completed.

"Michael was a true hero," said family member William Dudeck as he surveyed the memorial shrine. "He died much too young."

9/12/2011

### **Show of faith with good works**

### **Service remembers 9/11, flood victims**

Steven Fondo - Times Leader

The bells at St. John's Lutheran Church tolled at precisely 8:46 a.m. Sunday in commemoration of the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and to mark the exact moment the first plane struck the south tower of the World Trade Center in New York 10 years ago.

"Our worship committee thought that it only fitting to honor the victims and families of 9/11," said Dale Zmijewski, St. John's Church Council president. "We want them to know that they are always in our hearts and minds. They are not forgotten."

The worship service was led by the Rev. Robert M. Brueckner as part of a joint "Peace Sunday" observance of 10th anniversary of 9/11 attacks and also to raise money for the families affected by the recent flooding.

Bright orange buckets were placed throughout the sanctuary to collect household items and cleaning supplies for members who are cleaning out now that flood waters are receding.

Many of the church members are from low-lying areas of West Nanticoke and Shickshinny.

"It's important for us as a congregation to show our faith through good works," said one church member.

"It's why we're here today," Zmijewski said.

St. John's will be welcoming a new pastor in the coming weeks and it has invited other flood-ravaged churches to use its facility to worship.

Donations for flood victims can be made by calling St. John's at 570-735-8531 or online at [stjohnnanticoke@aol.com](mailto:stjohnnanticoke@aol.com).

9/10/2011

### **Creek, river leave Honey Pot flooded**

Jill Snowdon - Citizens Voice

The Honey Pot section of Nanticoke took on island status Thursday night into Friday as rising water from Forge Creek combined with the Susquehanna River to surround the elevated area.

The point where North Market Street and Access Road meet took on heavy water, as did the area where River Street meets Garfield Street.

As of Friday night, residents had access to the area via Garfield Street through Whitney Points property.

"We're certainly not used to this kind of flooding in this area," Nanticoke Mayor Joe Dougherty said. "Both the creek and river contributed to this and as soon as the water goes down, all the roads will open back up. That might be Sunday, but we just have to see how it goes."

According to Dougherty, between 700 and 800 people live in Honey Pot. Only one home at the bottom of River Street

was affected as it took on water in its basement.

A regulator station flooded Friday, affecting gas service to 100 customers, according to UGI spokesman Donald Brominski.

"We are in the process of shutting off gas to the station with valves," he said. "When the water recedes and allows access, we will fix the station and restore service."

9/9/2011

### **Flooding strikes Nanticoke as residents seek refuge**

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With most of the river flooding occurring on the west side of the Susquehanna River, people sought shelter in Nanticoke. The gymnasium at Luzerne County Community College was turned into a Red Cross shelter, and people from other communities sought refuge there.

But, in another part of the city, the Susquehanna River flooded lower roads and the city's Honey Pot section, with about 630 residents.

The unnamed creek that flooded the roadway and railroad tracks near the river, originates in Glen Lyon and runs through Honey Pot and into the Susquehanna River.

"This is worse than the Agnes flood," said one Garfield Street resident trying to make his way to work Friday morning. The flood waters affected River Street, Access Road, and parts of Market Street, including the parking lot and building that houses Weis Markets and a neighboring state liquor store.

At around 9:30 p.m. Thursday, Nanticoke Mayor Joe Dougherty declared a state of emergency in Honey Pot because of the flood waters that shut down access to and from the area, as well as a housing development in Newport Township and nearby industrial park.

The Honey Pot Active Volunteer Fire Department made its rounds Thursday night to let residents know of the flood waters.

City councilman James Litchkofski, a resident of the Honey Pot section, said he spoke with city and emergency officials, and that no problems were reported during the flooding period.

"It's certainly historic," Litchkofski said. "I've only ever seen anything like this twice in my life."

Firefighters said Friday they didn't know when to expect the flood waters to recede, but said it could be a day or so. The Stachowiak family, who owns the only home affected by the water, said they had a few inches of water in their basement due to the flood waters, and continued to pump it out Friday.

Residents made their way to the flood waters throughout the day to take photos, other reminisced about the Agnes Flood in 1972, remembering taking boats from the Honey Pot section to get into Nanticoke.

Flood waters closed Access Road early Thursday and by Friday morning flood waters nearly reached the tops of street signs, even covering a stranded car.

9/4/2011

### **LCCC to hold September 11 remembrance ceremony**

Times Leader

Luzerne County Community College will hold a 10-year remembrance ceremony on Sunday, September 11, at 1 p.m., at the College's Walk of Honor at the Regional Public Safety Training Center in Nanticoke. The LCCC PSTI has received a piece of steel from the World Trade Center. The artifact has been transported into the design of the Walk of Honor. Artifacts recovered from the World Trade Center after September 11, 2001 are courtesy of the Port Authority of NY and NJ and are displayed in memory of the 2,752 victims including 343 NYC Firefighters, 37 Port Authority Police Officers, and 23 New York City Police Officers.

The Walk of Honor is a joint project between the Public Safety Training Institute, the LCCC Alumni Association, and the LCCC Foundation. The site is a tribute to the dedication and service of first responders who selflessly risk their lives to save the lives of others. In addition, the site also honors alumni, friends, family, and the emergency responders who are now serving or have retired.

Senator John T. Yudichak will present remarks at the ceremony as well as Thomas P. Leary, LCCC president. An Honor Guard and bagpipers will lead the procession to the Walk of Honor site. The Greater Nanticoke Area Marching Band will perform and Susan Porter Allen will sing the Star Spangled Banner and Hold My Hand. Rev. J. Duane Gavitt, Chaplain, Wilkes-Barre City Police Department and Pastor, Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Freeland will

provide the Invocation. Benediction will be given by Rev. Adam Sexton, Chaplain, Nanticoke Fire Department and member, Engine 4, Nanticoke and Pastor, St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church, Hanover Section of Nanticoke. Phyllis Carlo, mother of Michael Scott Carlo, a firefighter with FDNY who lost his life during the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center, will participate in a wreath presentation. Phyllis Carlo collaborated with Senator Yudichak to establish the Michael Carlo Memorial Fund with monies received from the New York Stock Exchange Fallen Heroes Fund. Money from this fund helped construct the LCCC Walk of Honor project. An open house of the LCCC Regional Public Safety Training Center will be held following the ceremony. The event is free and open to the public.

9/4/2011

**National magazine on water industry recognizes Tom Walski of Nanticoke**  
Citizens' Voice

Water and Waste Digest Magazine recently issued its 50th anniversary special issue. As part of that issue, the magazine identified a list of 50 individuals who "made the most significant contributions" to the water industry over the past 50 years. The magazine named Tom Walski of Nanticoke as one of those individuals.

Walski was cited for advancing the state-of-the-art in hydraulic analysis of water distribution and wastewater collection systems. He is the author of several books and several hundred journal papers and conference presentations. He is a former editor of the Journal of Environmental Engineering and current associate editor of the Journal of Water Resources Planning and Management. He co-holds three patents for hydraulic analysis and is the three time winner of the award for the best Distribution and Plant Operation Paper for Journal, a publication of the American Water Works Association.

Originally from Plains, he is a 1968 graduate of Sacred Heart High School in Plains and 1972 graduate of King's College. He received a doctorate in environmental and water resources engineering from Vanderbilt University. He is the son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Walski of Plains and is married to Dee Walski.

During his career, he has served as a research civil engineer with the Army Corps of Engineers, manager of water distribution operations for the City of Austin, Texas, executive director of the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority, associate professor of environmental engineering at Wilkes University and engineering manager for Pennsylvania American Water. He is currently senior product manager for water and wastewater for Bentley Systems, Inc. He is a registered professional engineer in Pennsylvania and Mississippi, a licensed water and wastewater operator in Pennsylvania, a fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers, a life member of the American Water Works Association, and a diplomat of the American Academy of Water Resources Engineers.

8/20/2011

**Low-income can get online for less**  
**Comcast is offering new program for low-income households that would save \$31 off regular price.**

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Hundreds of low-income families throughout Luzerne County are eligible to sign up for a new program offered by Comcast that would mean monthly Internet bills of \$9.95, a \$31 savings off the regular service price.

Though Comcast serves a geographic majority of Luzerne County, it does not serve the greater Wilkes-Barre, Hazleton or Mountain Top areas. It does serve most of the West Side, the greater Pittston area, the greater Nanticoke area and much of the Back Mountain. To see if your home is in Comcast territory, call 1-855-846-8376. You can learn more about the program at [www.InternetEssentials.com](http://www.InternetEssentials.com).

Called Internet Essentials, the program offers low-cost access to the Internet and even fully-installed netbook computers for families in Comcast Internet territory who have children eligible to receive free lunches through the National School Lunch Program. The program launched earlier this summer and was a condition of the Federal Communication Commission for Comcast to secure federal approval to purchase NBC Universal. As part of the merger, Comcast agreed to "increase broadband deployment in low income households."

The Internet Essentials program meets that requirement.

Anthony Perrone, superintendent of the Greater Nanticoke Area School District, said the program comes at a good time, because of the difficult economy.

With many families dealing with unemployment and children affected by their parents' loss of income, the Internet can become an unaffordable luxury. But the lack of Internet service at home could negatively impact a student.

"I know how important they (computers) are," Perrone said. "There's a reason we have them in every classroom." He



said letters will be sent home to all families with students in the district, along with school bus schedules, detailing the program and information on eligibility and how to sign up.

Perrone said 43 percent of the 2,250 students in his district are eligible for the free lunch program, and all districts include families living in poverty and suffering from economic hardships.

Comcast spokesman Bob Grove said the company has known there is “a digital divide in this country and we see this as a way we can help to bridge that divide.” He added that research has shown that there are three barriers to people getting on the Internet: cost of the computer, cost of the service and a lack of understanding of how the Internet is relevant and useful. He said this program “addresses all three.”

In addition to the affordable internet, the program offers the opportunity to buy a netbook computer for \$149.99 plus tax and access to free digital literacy training in print, online or in person.

8/22/2011

**Little League reunion is a home run in Nanticoke**

**Hanover Yankees team from 1961 gathers to remember championship and friendship.**

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Russ Swantko stood in Ruby’s Inn holding a dirty and worn baseball in his hands, a feel that’s familiar to the former Hanover Yankee Little Leaguer. As he pointed to the signatures on the ball, he looked out across the room.

“This one here is Tony Kuprionas, who’s over there in the green shirt,” he said. “And there, that’s George Kachinski.”

He smiled as he scrutinized the faded ink on the championship keepsake.

“They’re here,” he said. “The people that signed this are right here.”

The people that wrote their names are also 50 years removed from when they put down said signatures.

The 1961 Hanover Yankees championship Little League team met up Sunday, some for the first time in more than 30 years, to celebrate the time they spent together on the field and the lasting friendships that came of it.

When Swantko and his wife, Arlene, moved back into the area about a year ago, after being away since the 1970s, they ran into former Hanover Yankees coach Stanley Glzenski and his wife Nellie.

“Of course the conversation turned to the good old days,” Swantko said. “I said, ‘Do you realize it’s 50 years already since we did all this? Why don’t we have a party?’”

Seeing that many of the former players still live in that part of town, it was easy to spread the word. Ruby’s was packed with former players from not only the 1961 team, but from years prior and after.

A group crowded around a laptop that showcased one of the team’s games, transferred to a DVD from old reel tape. It played out in grainy black and white, for not more than 5 minutes and lacking sound, but everyone watching could pick out who was who.

Another corner played host to several poster boards with newspaper clippings and pictures from banquets scattered about, a spot that Mark Manosky and Robert Wodarczyk gathered in front of to reminisce.

It seemed Swantko wasn’t the only one that held on to a ball from the days of playing on the Front Street field.

“It was a championship game and I was out in left field,” Manosky said, “and I caught a ball that no one thought could be caught. To this day, I have it in my possession.”

8/18/2011

**Nanticoke road upgrades to begin**

**The city is waiting on the state. Construction should begin in two to three weeks.**

Susan Denney - Times Leader

What’s Next

City council will next meet on Sept. 7 at 7 p.m.

City Administrator Holly Circo on Wednesday night reported progress in the K-Route road reconstruction project.

The K-route is a federally funded program because the roads, Alden, Union and Prospect streets, are federal emergency routes out of town.

Circo said the city has approved a contract with Pennsy Supply Inc. for the first phase on Alden Road. The city is now waiting on a response from the PennDOT legal department and construction should begin in two to three weeks.

The council passed a resolution to transfer three parcels of land on Main Street to the General Municipal Authority. City Solicitor William Finnigan said the resolution will allow him to prepare the deed and transfer the property to the GMA.

The lots are presently vacant.

Hank Marks, authority chairman, told the council Luzerne County Community College had asked that the parcels just deeded to the authority be cleaned up before the dedication of the school's Health Science Center in the former Kanjorski Building on Main Street. He said the lots had tall weeds and materials left by a contractor.

Councilman James Litchkofski said he would contact LCCC to find out the date of the dedication so the lots could be cleaned in time.

A resident complained about potholes on Alden Road. He said he had just paid \$400 for suspension damage his mechanic said was due to the condition of the road.

He got into a brief shouting match with Mayor Joseph Dougherty. The mayor said, "We're doing what we can with what we have."]

City Clerk Betsy Chesinski stated copies of the Home Rule Charter, which will be up for approval on the Nov. 8 ballot, were available in the municipal building.

Jerry Hudak, chairman of the Nanticoke Government Study Commission, said a series of informational meetings would be held to educate the public on the charter. The dates of the meeting are Sept. 13, Sept. 27 and a third date in October.

8/17/2011

### **3 charged in beating of mayor**

### **Trio also accused of going on a crime spree after taking Nanticoke official's car.**

elewis@timesleader.com

Mayor Joseph Dougherty has a simple message for the three men accused of beating him with brass knuckles and a wooden club before stealing his company-issued vehicle.

"Enjoy jail," Dougherty said.

Authorities allege Daniel Banks, 24, Steven Brannigan, 20, and Thomas Owens, 21, all from Wilkes-Barre, went on a two-day crime spree on June 25 and 26 in four municipalities, stealing vehicles, burglarizing businesses and intentionally setting a fire, in addition to the violently assaulting Dougherty.

The three men were arraigned by District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke on a host of felony and misdemeanor assault, theft and conspiracy charges that were filed after a joint investigation by state police at Wyoming and Shickshinny, and police in Hanover Township, Nanticoke and Newport Township.

They were jailed at the Luzerne County Correctional Facility -- Banks for lack of \$1.25 million bail and Brannigan and Owens, \$1 million bail each.

"They attempted to steal a vehicle on Prospect Street (Nanticoke) owned by Peter Kanjorski," said Nanticoke police Detective Capt. William Shultz. "When that failed, they went down two blocks and ran into the mayor. They beat him and stole his vehicle."

Dougherty said he was sitting in a 2011 Chevrolet Cruze owned by his employer, Colours Inc., in front of his residence on South Chestnut Street at about 11 p.m. June 25 waiting for a friend when he noticed three men walking in the street. Dougherty was pulled from his vehicle and assaulted.

Shultz said the three men used brass knuckles and a small baseball-style bat to assault Dougherty.

"They put a beating on me," he said after the three men were arraigned. "I'm very pleased they got arrested. I want to go to work. Life goes on."

After carjacking Dougherty, authorities allege, Banks, Brannigan and Owens drove the Chevrolet to Countryside Market on Main Road in Hunlock Township, where they smashed a glass door and stole cigarettes and a cash register at about 1:30 a.m. June 26.

The three men then traveled to Newport Township, where they smashed a glass door at the Variety Shop on East Main Street in an attempted burglary just after 3 a.m.

Less than an hour later, authorities allege in the criminal complaint, Banks, Brannigan and Owens drove to Hanover Township, where they smashed a glass door at the Sunoco service station on the Sans Souci Parkway and ransacked the business, damaging a lottery machine and a cash register, and stealing money and cigarettes.

The three men left Sunoco and traveled a short distance to Don's Deli on West End Road, where they forced open a door and stole a cash register and damaged a credit card machine at about 3:45 a.m., the criminal complaints say.

Video captured on surveillance cameras at several of the businesses helped investigators, Shultz said.

State police recovered the Chevrolet, which was torched in woods near Zachery Road and state Route 239 in Huntington Township on June 26.

Banks allegedly told investigators he used gasoline to set the vehicle on fire, according to the complaints.

Preliminary hearings for the three men are expected to combine before a single district judge. A date has not been scheduled.

8/17/2011

**Suspects charged in Nanticoke mayor's beating, carjacking**

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Three men were arrested Tuesday for beating Nanticoke Mayor Joe Dougherty and stealing his company car in June. Daniel Thomas Banks, 24, of Nanticoke; Steven Brannigan, 20, of Hanover Township, and Thomas Maxwell Owens, 21, of Wilkes-Barre, were arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Donald Whittaker. Police said the three men used Dougherty's car to commit a string of burglaries in other communities throughout Luzerne County.

They face a slew of charges in connection with the beating and carjacking of Dougherty including aggravated assault, simple assault and robbery of a motor vehicle as well as burglary and related charges in Hanover and Newport townships and Hunlock Creek.

Dougherty, who talked to the media outside the arraignment, recalled the night of June 25 when three men bludgeoned him outside his home on East Green Street and stole his vehicle. He said he was beaten like never before. He just came home, parked his vehicle outside his house and waited inside for his friend to pick him up.

While he waited, he saw three men walking in the middle of the road toward him. As they got closer, he said they opened his driver door, pulled him from his Chevrolet Cruz and hit him in the head, face and body. He was bleeding from his head, face, nose and right leg. Dougherty was assaulted with brass knuckles, a wooden bat and the three men's fists, police said.

Dougherty credited "wonderful cooperation from law enforcement" in arresting the three men. Nanticoke, Hanover Township and Newport Township police departments and state police at Wyoming and Shickshinny worked together to make the arrests.

According to the criminal complaint, police learned the three men were involved in other burglaries they committed with Dougherty's vehicle, including one that occurred June 26 at 1:30 a.m. at Countryside Market in Hunlock Creek. State police at Shickshinny investigated and observed the three on video committing the crime with Dougherty's car. Just after 3 a.m. on June 26, Newport Township police found a glass window in an exterior door was broken at the Variety Stop in Glen Lyon. A video showed the same vehicle was involved.

At 3:45 a.m. that day, Hanover Township police were dispatched to the Sans Souci Sunoco for a burglar alarm. When police arrived, they found the front window was smashed. According to police, the three men entered the business and destroyed the lottery machine, cash register and shelves. Money and cigarettes also were missing. Owner Simmy Singh reported \$218 was stolen from the cash register; \$607 worth of cigarettes were taken and \$3,300 in damage to the building and equipment.

At about 4:15 a.m. on June 26, Hanover Township police responded to Don's Deli on West End Road where a window was smashed. Owner Don Heness told police that the cash register and cord for the credit card machine was missing. He said the approximate value for the stolen cash register and cord for the credit card machine is \$121 and there was \$260 in damages to the building and equipment.

Investigators obtained video surveillance which shows Dougherty's vehicle at Don's Deli and Sans Souci Sunoco. The three men burned Dougherty's vehicle in the Hunlock Creek area, according to police.

The three men also are charged with breaking into and attempting to steal Peter Kanjorski Jr.'s vehicle in Nanticoke on June 25.

Between Aug. 1 and Aug. 4, members of Nanticoke, Hanover Township and Nanticoke police departments interviewed Banks, Brannigan and Owens, who admitted to their roles in committing the crimes, police said. The three men declined comment as police led them to their arraignment on Tuesday.

They were jailed at Luzerne County Correctional Facility in lieu of \$250,000 bail. Whittaker set preliminary hearings for Sept. 23 and 24 in his court and before magisterial district judges in the areas where the crimes occurred.

8/17/2011

**Nanticoke officials put home rule on ballot**

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The fate of the home rule charter is now in the hands of the voters.

In front of a dozen people, Nanticoke's Government Study Commission voted unanimously Tuesday evening to put the

home rule charter it has worked on for nearly 18 months on the Nov. 8 ballot.

The commission has met twice each month since May 2010 to hash out the details of the document that could define the city's future. The group met with officials from other home rule municipalities and worked closely with consulting firm Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance to put the charter together.

"We didn't always agree on everything," commission chairman Gerald Hudak said, "but we discussed it through."

The charter reorganizes the city's government to more reflect the federal system, Hudak said, and allows the city more freedom in levying taxes.

"The big thing of this is that we get rid of some of the yolk of the third class city rules," Hudak said.

Under state law, third classes cities cannot levy an earned income tax higher than 0.5 percent. When the state declared Nanticoke financially distressed in 2006, the city was allowed to increase the income tax to 1.5 percent.

When the city is no longer distressed, taxes would have to revert back, leaving the city with a shortfall in revenue that some residents feared would fall on the backs of property owners.

"I hope the charter is approved by the public," said resident Hank Marks, "because of the loss of income of \$1.2 million if they don't."

Al Wytoshek, the city's tax collector and treasurer, said he strongly supports the home rule charter but emphasized to the commission that the city will need a strong leader "with a backbone that knows how run this city."

What's next?

Now that the charter is officially on the ballot, members of the commission will turn into teachers.

"You've got to get the word out," said Alan Baranski, a consultant with Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance who has helped guide the home rule process.

The commission will hold two public information sessions in September and October to help educate voters on how the charter will change the city if approved. Jeffrey Malak, an attorney and legal advisor for the commission said the group had a duty to inform people of what they were voting on.

"People are voting for a change," Malak said, "What is that change?"

The commission has funds available for advertising and printing copies of the proposed charter. Commission members said they would like to make copies available at the municipal building and the public library.

Though they are not allowed to lobby for the charter, commissioners will also visit areas around town such as senior centers to help educate people.

"I talk to most people through my job," Wytoshek said, "and people are not up to school on this home rule government. "It's very important that we push this home rule charter."

8/16/2011

### **Three men arrested for assault on Nanticoke mayor**

elewis@timesleader.com

Three men are facing charges for the beating and carjacking of Nanticoke Mayor Joseph Dougherty in June.

[click image to enlarge](#)

Stephen Brannigan, 20, Daniel Thomas Banks, 24, and Thomas Maxwell Owens, 21, all from Wilkes-Barre, were arrested Tuesday morning after a joint investigation by state police at Wyoming, and police in Hanover Township, Nanticoke and Newport Township.

Authorities allege the three men assaulted Dougherty who was sitting inside an idling Chevrolet Cruze in the 300 block of East Green Street, Nanticoke, on June 26.

Dougherty was assaulted with brass knuckles, police allege.

After the three men stole the Chevrolet, state police said the vehicle was used in a burglary at the Country Side Quick Mart on Main Road in Hunlock Township on June 27.

The vehicle was found torched in a wooded area near Zachery Road and state Route 239 in Huntington Township on June 28.

Authorities also suspect the three men burglarized Don's Deli on West End Road in Hanover Township on June 26, and attempted to burglarize a building in Newport Township.

Brannigan, Banks and Owens are scheduled to be arraigned by District Judge Donald Whittaker in Nanticoke on a host of felony and misdemeanor assault and theft charges later today.

8/15/2011

### **GNA releases information for start of 2011-12 school year**

## Citizens Voice

Anthony Perrone, superintendent of the Greater Nanticoke Area public schools, announced classes will open for students Aug. 30 for the 2011-12 school year. Teachers will assemble Aug. 29 at the Greater Nanticoke Area High School cafeteria at 8 a.m. for a general meeting.

Parents are reminded to note the time changes for the new school year. Elementary doors will open at 8:35 a.m. Breakfast will be served 8:35 to 9 a.m. Dismissal for bus students will begin at 3 p.m. with walkers' dismissal at 3:10 p.m. Students in grades six to 12 will be dismissed at 2 p.m. Start time remains the same.

Starting and ending times for respective schools are as follows:

Greater Nanticoke Area Educational Center: 7:20 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Greater Nanticoke Area High School: 7:25 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Greater Nanticoke Area Elementary Center: 8:35 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Kennedy Elementary: 8:35 a.m. to 3 p.m.

K.M. Smith Elementary: 8:35 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The Greater Nanticoke Area School District reminds parents and guardians of the cafeteria procedures for the 2011-12 school year.

Cafeteria will begin serving lunch for all grades, kindergarten to 12, on the first day of school, Aug. 30. Milk will be available to all students beginning that day.

Breakfast will be served in the Educational Center for students in grades six to 12 beginning the first day of classes.

Breakfast service begins at 7:15 a.m.

Breakfast in the GNA Educational Center for students in grades two to five begins at 8:35 a.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 31.

K.M. Smith Elementary School breakfast program for kindergarten and first grades also will also begin Aug. 31 at 8:35 a.m.

All students who were eligible to receive a free/reduced lunch last year will remain eligible for free/ reduced lunch until Oct. 13. To become eligible to receive a free/reduced lunch for the 2011-12 school year, parents must complete one new application for all the students in their household and turn it into their teacher or use the Compass system before Sept. 28. Students who qualify to receive a free/reduced lunch also qualify to receive a free/reduced breakfast.

The cafeteria will take prepayments for the lunch and breakfast program. These payments can be made in the child's homeroom for students in kindergarten through seventh grades. The payments will be accepted in the high school office or the cafeteria for students in grades eight to 12.

The cafeteria will be offering breakfast and lunch in accordance with the National Lunch Program guidelines. Students will be offered a five component lunch consisting of meat or meat alternative, two fruit/vegetable selections, milk, plus additional dessert selections. Students are not required to take all five of the components for lunch, however, the school lunch system requires the student to choose three for their complete meal.

Lunch prices for the 2011-12 school year are:

Paid price breakfast: 75 cents

Reduced price breakfast: 30 cents

Adult breakfast: \$1.45

Kindergarten to fifth grade lunch: \$1.75

Sixth to 12th grade lunch: \$2

Reduced price lunch: 40 cents

Adult lunch: \$3

Milk: 35 cents.

8/14/2011

### **Nanticoke's home rule charter would give mayor more muscle**

By Elizabeth Skrapits - Citizens Voice

This fall, Nanticoke voters will get to make an important decision about the city's future.

When the seven-member government study commission meets at 6 p.m. Tuesday, the group will vote to put the home rule charter they drew up - which contains major changes to the way the city is run - on the Nov. 8 ballot.

The charter could make or break the city, resident Jim Samselski said.

"It's worth a try. If it doesn't work, we can get rid of it," said resident Theresa Sowa, who has been closely watching the study commission's progress.

Nanticoke voters opted in May 2010 to form a study commission to determine whether the city might do better under a home rule charter instead of third class city code. Seven members were elected to the commission.

The group met twice a month for about 18 months, interviewing officials from home rule municipalities like Carbondale, Kingston and Kingston Township, as well as Nanticoke's administration and department heads.

[Read Nanticoke's draft charter](#)

Commission Chairman Gerald Hudak said the group met with "just about everybody that's involved with municipal government."

When the commission decided a home rule charter might serve Nanticoke better, members drafted the charter with help from Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance consultants.

Sowa attended the commission's meetings fairly regularly.

"From the beginning, I was adamantly against home rule," she admitted.

But the more Sowa heard and saw at the meetings, she began to lean the opposite way. She's in favor of the charter, believing only a few things need to be changed.

"They worked hard on that. They really, really did. And they put an awful lot of time in," Sowa said.

In addition, commission members allowed residents to give input, and "they took everything into consideration," she said.

But resident Hank Marks said not many people attended the study commission meetings and a lot of city residents are confused with the Luzerne County home rule charter that will go into effect in January.

If adopted in the November election, Nanticoke's home rule charter would be enacted in January. A transition team consisting of the study commission members, one councilman and the mayor would be formed to help get the new city government operational.

### **Charter changes**

Nanticoke was declared Act 47, or financially distressed, by the state in May 2006. The designation allowed city officials to raise the earned income tax to 1.5 percent from the state limit of 0.5 percent.

When the city sheds its Act 47 status, it will lose the ability to keep the earned income tax above 0.5 percent. As a result, city officials would have to hike property taxes substantially to make up the difference.

That's one thing Marks doesn't want to see.

"If it (the charter) doesn't pass, they're going to have to put it on the backs of the property owners," he said. "Or else they're going to have to cut. I don't know where."

Although maintaining the higher earned income tax rate was one of the main reasons for exploring the home rule option, a charter allows for making changes to the city's government, ideally to make it more efficient, economical and accountable to residents.

The charter drawn up by Nanticoke's home rule study commission calls for a strong-mayor form of government, with a council of five instead of four members.

Staff at Pennsylvania Economy League, Nanticoke's financial recovery coordinator, submitted a review of the charter that calls into question a few points in the charter:

- n Selecting an engineer should be done by the request-for-proposal process instead of by the mayor, and should have approval by council.

- n Council should approve the mayor's hiring of a solicitor.

- n There is a lack of oversight in the tax collector and treasurer positions, and the city does not need either one, since the powers are already invested in the manager.

Marks is ambivalent about the charter: "There are some things I like and some things I dislike," he said.

Samselski, on the other hand, likes everything the commission has put together.

"I wish they would have put more into the mayor's position, and I wish they had described exactly what the outline of each position is," Samselski said.

Despite the potential for a strong mayor to make decisions that aren't in the city's best interests, Alan Baranski, vice president of community and government services at Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance, doesn't believe that will be a problem.

"I think the charter will make it more difficult for the political manipulation to occur unchecked," he said. "There are checks and balances in there."

The mayor would select the city manager, but the hiring needs to be approved by city council, Baranski said.

"We tightened up the qualifications to require a candidate with a four-year bachelor's degree in business administration or related discipline," he said.

If the mayor fires the city manager, it would have to be approved by a super-majority of council, he said.

Under the proposed charter, the city manager reports directly to the mayor. City council is primarily a legislative body for making policy, rather than having oversight over operations, Baranski said. The mayor oversees the manager, but since the office of the mayor is a part-time position, the functional administration of the city falls on the manager, he said.

The charter calls for the manager to live in Nanticoke or move there within one year. Marks doesn't know if the manager residency requirement is a good idea, but Sowa likes it.

"People who work here and don't live here don't care about the city, because they just do their job and walk away from it," Sowa said.

Marks and Sowa agree on allowing residents to propose agenda items after presenting a petition with 100 or more signatures. A petition to prevent or overturn an ordinance needs 250 or more signatures.

"If you really want something changed, it's not that hard to get 100 signatures," Sowa said.

Samselski said if a resident is intent on getting something done, he or she won't have to wait for a member of council to put it on the agenda.

The charter is in its final form and Baranski doesn't anticipate making amendments.

"This is pretty much it. They can make changes right up until next week, and some minor changes can be made - but minor," he said. "Right now, judging from working with this group, there's a pretty strong consensus that the charter in this form is pretty much final."

**Nanticoke Home Rule Study Commission will hold a public meeting to vote on the charter at 6 p.m. Tuesday at city hall, 15 E. Ridge St.**

**The home rule charter can be found at [citizensvoice.com](http://citizensvoice.com) or at city hall during normal business hours.**

**Study commission members are Chairman Gerald Hudak, Vice Chairman Leonard Omolecki, Secretary William Brown, Treasurer Yvonne Bozinski, and Robert Katra, Linda Prushinski and Gary Smith.**

8/14/2011

### **Luzerne County Sports Hall of Fame set to induct new members**

Citizens Voice

**Two members of the 1990 undefeated state championship Nanticoke Area girls teams are among 16 area sports standouts who will be inducted into the Luzerne County Sports Hall of Fame when the organization holds its 27th annual dinner Sunday, Aug. 21.**

**The affair will be held at the Ramada Hotel and will get underway at 4 with a social followed by dinner at 6.**

**Ellen Bartuska and Lori Scally, two vital cogs on that undefeated Trojanette squad, will join two other teammates already enshrined - Casey Comoroski and Holly Kozlowski.**

Also to be honored are Frank Galicki, George Aldrich, Pat "Tiger" Denoy, Dave Masgay, Joe Naperkowski, Ted Jackson, John Kashatus, Al Weston, Lou Ciampi Jr., Joe Pizano, John Monick Sr., and Joe Lukavitch. Jake Handzelek and Gay Meyers will be inducted posthumously.

Also, this year's Sam Falcone Award, given annually in recognition of dedication to sports and the community, will be presented to George Miller of West Pittston.

#### **Frank Galicki**

**One of the first stars to emerge from the Nanticoke Area merger in the mid-1960s as the school's first two-time All-Scholastic in football, he was named to the Big 33 team and also played in the 1968 UNICO game. Galicki was a named a WV all-star in baseball.**

**He took his talents to Wilkes where he co-captained the 1972 football team and was named All-East ECAC and Associated Press all-state at linebacker. In 1973, he was named Wilkes' Athlete of the Year.**

**Galicki also played baseball and, in 1973, duplicated his football honor by being named ECAC All-East.**

**Following graduation, he played minor league football for a few years before turning to education, starting as an assistant coach at Northwest Area and serving as the Rangers football coach from 1976-78, In 1979, he joined Berwick as its junior high football coach guiding the young Dawgs to a 10-0 record.**

**A long-time and well-respected PIAA football referee and baseball umpire, Galicki was selected for many state playoff games. He also served as a substitute umpire in the International League, doing many Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Red Barons games.**

**Currently, he is superintendent of the Dallas School District. He resides in Mocanaqua with his wife, Terry. The couple has three children, Dora Golanoski, Lena Russel and Tess Stavenski, and four grandchildren.**

Jake Handzelek

(deceased)

One of, if not the, greatest athlete to emerge from Shickshinny, Jake was one of the most prolific basketball scorers in Pennsylvania history. He finished his scholastic career with 2,232 points - 1,008 of those as a senior. He had single-game totals of 59, 58 and 53 points in leading Shickshinny to the 1952 Class B Eastern finals. Despite scholarship offers from schools such as St. Bonaventure, Notre Dame and Stanford, Handzelek matriculated to Juniata College, where he remains the school's all-time leading scorer with 1,950 points. He was inducted into the Juniata Hall of Fame in 1995, along with his roommate, former NFL coach Chuck Knox.

After returning to the area, he taught and coached for 35 years at Northwest, and was the right-hand man for Northwest's legendary basketball coach Eddie Gayeski for 29 years. He later succeeded Gayeski and coached the Rangers for six years.

He died in 2009 and is survived by his wife Gloria, children Michael and Renee and two grandchildren.

**Joseph Naperkowski**

From marbles to karate, Naperkowski has been a champion most of his life. In Little League, he was the home-run champion. In marbles, he was the Luzerne County champ. Later, he would win the U.S. Karate Championship, to go along with a national and world championship in the bench press. At Wilkes-Barre Township High School, he was a two-sport All-Scholastic in basketball and baseball, leading the Wyoming Valley League in scoring during his tenure at 33.5 ppg. He is the Braves' all-time leading scorer with 1,309 points and played on the 1971-72 championship team at Luzerne County Community College. In 1999, Naperkowski was named Best Black Belt Fighter at the U.S. Karate Championships.

A veteran of the K-75th Airborne Rangers in Vietnam, he and his wife Lydia reside in Wilkes-Barre and are the parents of six children, Gina, Dori, Dina Ashli, Joseph and Lydia.

**George Aldrich**

One of Pittston Area's greatest basketball players, Aldrich was a member of PA's 1978 District 2 championship squad and that year was named the Outstanding Player of the WVC. He went to King's where he was a four-year starter, earning All-MAC honors as a junior and league MVP as a senior. At his graduation, he was the second all-time scorer at King's.

Aldrich later toured for two years with the Washington Generals, playing in 40 countries as part of the Harlem Globetrotters troupe.

Currently he is the owner and operator of Aldrich Medical Supply in Pittston and Clarks Summit. He and his wife Jean Ann reside in Avoca and are the parents of three children, Julia, Lauren and William.

**Ellen Bartuska**

**A three-year letterwinner in basketball, softball and volleyball, Ellen was a member of what is arguably the finest girls basketball team ever in the Wyoming Valley - the 1990 PIAA Class AAA champion undefeated Trojanettes. She finished her career with 1,286 points and was named league MVP in Division I.**

**She was the first Trojanette to receive a Division I basketball scholarship, going to Richmond where she started as a freshman on a team that made the NCAA Tournament.**

**The daughter of Peter and Barbara Bartuska of Nanticoke, she resides in Delaware and is a zookeeper at the Philadelphia Zoo.**

**Patrick "Tiger" Denoy**

When sports people in the Wyoming Valley say the word "Tiger," is not Tiger Woods but Tiger Denoy they are referring to. Denoy staked his claim as one of the finest basketball officials to ever don a striped shirt. A long-time educator at Northumberland and Benton high schools and LIU 18, he served as a PIAA basketball referee for 32 years, working more than 120 district and state playoff games, including semifinals and finals. He also officiated on the collegiate level.

At age 24, he was chosen to officiate Eastern Basketball League games. He spent 24 years in the EBL, working five all-star games. Later he worked in the American Basketball Association for two years.

Denoy also was an accomplished baseball umpire who later worked in the Class D Western Carolina League.

He is a graduate of Shickshinny High School and Bloomsburg State Teachers College and currently resides in Mocanaqua.

**Ted Jackson**

The fiery Dallas High School coach is the owner of one of the finest football coaching records in the annals of Pennsylvania. Jackson's teams are 221-74-3 for an incredible .750 winning percentage. Among those wins are 15 WVC championships, three District 2 titles, four Eastern Conference titles and the 1993 PIAA Class AA championship.

Jackson is a graduate of GAR, where he played football and baseball and wrestled. Before taking over at Dallas,



Jackson was an assistant coach at Coughlin and an assistant wrestling coach at Meyers and Coughlin. He has been named coach of the year 14 times and was an assistant coach for the Big 33 team in 1995 and was head coach of the East team for the 2001 PFSACA East-West All-Star Game. In 2010, he was honored by The Citizens' Voice as its Coach of the Decade.

Jackson recently retired after 35 years of teaching in the Wilkes-Barre Area School District. He and his wife Sandy reside in Shavertown and are the parents of three children, Ted S., Matt and Jill, and two grandchildren.

Lou "Bikes" Ciampi Jr.

A three-year starter on the great Wyoming Area football teams of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Ciampi was selected first-team All-Conference as a junior and senior as the Warriors went 32-4 during his varsity career. In 1981, he was the recipient of UNICO's Brian Piccolo Award.

At Dickinson College, he was a three-year starter at center and captained the team as a senior and received the Coaches Award in 1984.

Ciampi founded the Luzerne County Jump-a-Thon which helped raise money for the Luzerne County Heart Associated. He also co-founded the Wyoming Area Football Alumni Association and the Bike Athletic Club which sponsors local flag football and softball teams and still coaches youth soccer.

He is president of Independent Graphics Inc. in Pittston. He and his wife Lisa reside in Wyoming and have three children, Louis, Nicholas and Mia.

Gay F. Meyers

(deceased)

A long-time educator at Wilkes, Meyers coached field hockey at Wilkes for 20 years and also coached basketball and was the guiding light in Wilkes establishing its softball program. A graduate of Forest City High School and Lock Haven University, Gay also refereed basketball for many years. Prior to her retirement from Wilkes, she was received the Athletics "Ancestral Colonel" award for the lifetime achievements at the college and was inducted into the Wilkes Sports Hall of Fame in 2004. Once an avid skier, she was the advisor to the Wilkes Ski Club for 20 years. Gay passed away last Monday.

David Masgay

Masgay, a graduate of Wyoming Valley West and Penn State, is one of the finest track athletes in WVC history. He made his mark as a sophomore in 1981 at WWV when he won the District 2 title in the javelin and added javelin and long jump titles in 1982 and javelin and triple jump as a senior. In 1983, he won the PIAA championship with a state record throw.

At Penn State, he took up the decathlon and was ICAA champion in 1986 and '87 and added the championship in the decathlon and javelin that year at the Penn Relays. He was a consistent qualifier for the U.S. national and Olympic teams and, in 1991, placed seventh in the decathlon at the Track and Field National Championships. He followed that with a sixth-place finish in 1999 and 10th-place finish in 2000 in the javelin at the Olympic Trials.

He resides in California and is a personal strength coach and volunteer track and field coach for Terra Linda High School.

**John Kashatus**

**One of the area's finest baseball coaches, Kashatus is the owner of a career record of 404-294-11 which includes high school, American Legion and Keystone Games. Along the way, he has received numerous awards, including being named American Legion Coach of the Year in 1981 and the Pennsylvania Amateur Volunteer Coach of the Year in 1987.**

**A graduate of Newport Township High School, he was a three-year starter on the baseball team and a member of the undefeated championship team in 1958. He was head baseball coach at Nanticoke Area from 1970-78, 1982 and 1984-94 while also managing the Nanticoke American Legion team from from 1980-91. His Nanticoke Area teams claimed league or division titles in 1970, '71, '76, '88 and '90 while his AL teams received regional berths in 1981, '82, '84 and '89. His 1988 GNA team qualified for the PIAA tournament after winning league and District 2 titles. He currently serves as a volunteer assistant at Dallas. John and his wife Sally reside in Nanticoke and are the parents of three children, Christopher (deceased), Kenneth and Karla Kashatus Plasco.**

Joe Pizano

A two-time first-team All-Conference selection in football at Wyoming Area, Pizano also was an outstanding track athlete, capturing a District 2 title in the long jump and a silver medal in the triple jump.

He went on to play football at Pitt under Paul Hackett and Johnny Majors and received a game ball for his play in a win over Louisville.

For the last 13 years he has been a member of the Wyoming Area football coaching staff and as coach of the freshman

team in 1999-00, guided the team to a 19-1 record and back-to-back league titles. Also for the last 10 years, he has been head coach of the WA track and field team and enjoys a 64-5-1 record with eight WVC titles and one District 2 crown. In 2008, he was inducted into the WA Ring of Pride.

Joe resides in Exeter with his wife Rhonda and they are the parents of three children, Rocco, Bianca and Talia. He also is a councilman for Exeter Borough.

**Al Weston**

A long-time coach at Hanover Area, Weston has enjoyed success no matter what sport he guides. His Hawkeye golf team in 1981 is considered the measuring stick by other scholastic golf teams.

That team was headlined by Ted Tryba, Art Brunn Jr., Pete Korba, Bill Sailus, Kevin Kaminski and Joe Gill. That year, District 2 sent seven golfers to the state meet - three were Hawkeyes and Tryba came home with the gold medal.

Weston also has made a name for himself in track and field. His 2001 boys 1600-meter relay team won the PIAA championship. He also coached one of the area's all-time greats in Julia Laiuvara, who was a four-time PIAA champion in the hurdles. Overall, his girls teams have won five District 2 championships.

Weston has enjoyed similar success in cross country where his girls teams have won four District 2 titles and his 1988 team won the PIAA championship with Theresa Dennis winning a gold medal.

A graduate of Plymouth High School, Weston was a three-year starter in football. He also participated in track, running the sprints and hurdles.

Weston and his wife, the former JoAnn Champi, reside in Plymouth and are the parents of two daughters, Lisa McGee and Diasha Medvetz and have four grandchildren.

**John (Jack) Monick Sr.**

A native of Wilkes-Barre Township, Monick transferred to GAR as a freshman and quickly made a name for himself in baseball. In 1941, he set a record by striking out 18 players in a game against Exeter High School and, three days later, helped deliver the league championship by pitching a win over defending champion Coughlin.

He served with the U.S. Navy during World War II and also played baseball with several service teams. Upon his discharge, he played briefly in the Pittsburgh Pirates organization before returning to the Wyoming Valley where he worked for the Lehigh Valley Railroad.

He was instrumental in the establishment of the Kingston swimming pool and was a coach and umpire in the Kingston Little League. He and his wife of 60 years, Dolores, reside in Mountain Top, and they are the parents of three children, Jack Jr., recently retired athletic director at Penn State Wilkes-Barre; Donna Albright and Michelle Grant, along with six grandchildren and eight great grandchildren.

**Lori Scally-Zaleski**

**A three-sport standout at Nanticoke Area, Lori was named All-Scholastic in field hockey and basketball. She was a member of the 1990 undefeated PIAA and Class AAA championship Trojanette squad and scored more than 1,000 points in her career. In 1990, she received her second PIAA gold medal when she finished first in the javelin after qualifying as the District 2 champion.**

**She also is active in the Mountain Top Youth Basketball League and has coached AAU girls basketball as well as youth basketball at the Wyoming Valley CYC. A graduate of Temple University's School of Pharmacy, she is senior director of Care Site Pharmacies for the Geisinger Health System.**

**Lori and her husband Matthew Zaleski reside in Mountain Top and are the parents of three children, Simone, Jacob and Michael.**

**Joseph Lukavitch**

A graduate of Plymouth High School, Lukavitch began a successful track and cross country coaching career at Wyoming Valley West in 1978 in the junior high ranks, including a District 2 title for the boys in 1982. He became varsity cross country coach in 1984 and track and field coach. His girls track team was conference champion in 1985, '86 and '87 and District 2 champ in '86 and '87. The boys won the WVC and District 2 titles in 1989 and '90.

During his tenure, his girls teams posted an 88-6 record while the boys teams went 80-12-1. He enjoyed similar success in cross country with his girls and boys teams going 74-15 and 80-12-1 respectively. Lukavitch also was instrumental in establishing indoor track at WVV.

Lukavitch is a nine-time recipient of the Who's Who Among American Teachers Award. Now retired from WVV, he continues as a track and field official. He and his wife, Ella, reside in Plymouth and are the parents of three children, Ella Karassick, Joseph III and Christopher.

**George Miller**

A PIAA official for the last 30 years, Miller also serves as tax collector for West Pittston Borough and Wyoming Area School District. He also sponsors annual scholarships to two Wyoming Area graduates. He and his wife Lois reside in

West Pittston are the parents of three children, Jacquelyn Koscelansky, Barbara Argenio and Edward Miller and have four grandchildren.

8/10/2011

### **Plymouth Twp. to put home rule on ballot; Nanticoke holds off**

Citizens Voice

Plymouth Township residents will get to vote on Nov. 8 on home rule, but Nanticoke residents might have to wait. The government study commissions in each municipality met Tuesday. Plymouth Township voted to move forward with putting the home rule-charter on the ballot. Nanticoke postponed their decision.

[Read Nanticoke's draft charter](#)

[Read Plymouth Township's draft charter](#)

Ed Nowak, chairman of Plymouth Township's study commission, said letters will be in the mail to the required parties, including the Luzerne County Bureau of Elections and the state.

Both municipalities are financially distressed and need to adopt home rule so they can keep an earned income tax rate of 1.5 percent, higher than the state's 1 percent limit.

Plymouth Township's charter keeps the three-member board of supervisors and only contains a few changes from second-class township code, such as replacing the three elected auditors with a professional accountant or firm to be hired each year to perform the audit.

**On the other hand, Nanticoke's charter is very different from third-class city code. It calls for a strong mayor form of government, a council of five members instead of four and an appointed manager. The mayor would be responsible for hiring and firing the manager - with council approval - and overseeing him or her, as well as supervising daily operations.**

**The mayor would also be responsible for making appointments to boards and authorities and hiring the engineer, all subject to council approval.**

**Council approval would not be needed for the mayor to hire and fire the city solicitor, clerk, tax collector and treasurer, or to hire, discipline and fire all employees.**

8/5/2011

### **Alden Road restoration announced**

Citizens' Voice

After years of delay, the restoration of Alden Road in Nanticoke is scheduled to start in mid-September.

Council has awarded the job to low bidder Pennsy Supply, also known as Slusser Brothers. The bid of \$1.9 million is slightly under budget, Nanticoke Mayor Joe Dougherty said.

Alden Road will be completely restructured up to about the Learning Station and Reilly Plating Co., he said. There is a federal K-route grant for the paving, administered through the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. The money was first earmarked in 2005, but delays in federal, then state approval held the project up while Alden Road disintegrated further.

"I refuse to call it a road," Dougherty said.

East and West Union streets and part of South Prospect Street, from Washington Street to Luzerne County Community College, are also part of the project, but Dougherty said there might not be time to start them this year. Work on those streets includes new concrete curbs, sidewalks and drainage control.

8/4/2011

### **Council to bid on properties at tax sale**

Steven Fondo - Times Leader

City council agreed on Wednesday to bid on several blighted city properties at the Luzerne County tax sale next week. City Solicitor Paul Pugliese said the city plans to purchase and raze the blighted houses in order to return the properties to the tax rolls.

Council said the tax sale bid proposal was discussed in an executive session prior to the council meeting. The state's Sunshine Law allows executive sessions to be held under five instances, including personnel, real estate and litigation issues.

Some residents at the meeting asked city officials what properties the city plans to try to buy at the auction, but Pugliese stated the state Sunshine Laws do not require the city to list the specific properties of interest prior to bid. The tax sale, on Wednesday beginning at 10 a.m. in the courthouse rotunda, is open to the public, so residents can hear who is bidding on what properties and for what amounts they are sold. The Times Leader also will cover the tax sale and report the results.

7/30/2011

### **Closed Nanticoke school eyed for medical offices**

Erin Moody - Citizens' Voice

The closed St. Francis School in Nanticoke is about to get a new life as medical and physician offices. A variance was granted Thursday to allow Joseph Usefara, of Swoyersville, to use the building at 131 E. Green St. for office space. It is in a residential zone, but as Nanticoke Zoning Hearing Board Chairman Michael Jezewski pointed out, it can be difficult to find buyers interested in using a former school as a home, or expensive if they want to knock it down and build a house on the lot.

Jzewski was the only board member present, but under rules the board agreed to previously, he had the option of making a decision on behalf of the entire board if it appeared the community approved and all issues were settled. Upon learning about rumors the school would be turned into a methadone clinic, Usefara promised that would not happen, and agreed to the board solicitor's suggestion that a clause be added to the variance banning such a clinic, as well as other alcohol and drug treatment programs.

Up to six offices could be included in the building, and the parking lot can accommodate about 50 cars. Usefara would like to fill the offices with doctors, dentists, physical therapists and similar medical practices. He hopes the offices will be up and running within a year.

7/14/2011

### **Nanticoke's home rule charter plan unveiled**

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Nanticoke's Government Study Commission unveiled the city's draft Home Rule Charter at a public hearing Tuesday. The seven-member commission was established and elected in the May 2010 primary election to study the city's current form of government, determine its strengths and weaknesses and consider alternative structures.

On Feb. 8, the commission decided the city would be better served by an alternate form of government and voted to draft the charter, which was completed June 30. It must now submit a final draft to Luzerne County by Aug. 23 to be put on the ballot for the November election.

Between now and November, the commission is charged with publicizing the home rule charter, something Chairman Gerald Hudak said the commission will need to work at, as many residents seem to have confused the charter with the Luzerne County Home Rule Charter approved by voters last November.

As members of the city's consultants Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance Jeffrey Box and Joe Chacke explained at the meeting, the charter would change the city's government from a commission government as regulated by the state's third-class city code to a strong mayor form of government.

Under the charter, the mayor would be charged with preparing an annual budget, have veto power and would have final say in all hiring decisions. A new, appointed city manager would handle day-to-day administrative duties, make personnel recommendations to the mayor and assist the mayor in preparing the budget. A five-member city council would hold all legislative power and would approve all borrowing for terms of longer than six months or for more than \$250,000.

Other provisions include:

- Tax revenue increases would also be capped at 8 percent from the preceding year.
- Citizens would gain rights to initiative, or compelling council to address an issue, with 100 resident signatures, and referendum, or placing an ordinance for consideration on the election ballot, with 250 signatures.
- All currently elected row officers would become appointed positions, and the offices of treasurer and controller would be eliminated.

About 30 residents and officials attended the meeting and offered their thoughts on the charter.

Joseph L. Boyle of the Pennsylvania Economy League recommended changes to the hiring process for an independent auditor the charter requires and the frequency of audits, and recommended eliminating the tax collector position as well as the city treasurer in favor of a unified financial office, but he said his criticism is “not with the intent, it’s the mechanism.”

Boyle explained that the charter will allow the city to continue to levy a 1.5 percent earned income tax, which nets the municipality \$1.2 million annually. The city has been allowed to collect that tax since 2006, when it was declared a financially distressed municipality under the state Financially Distressed Municipalities Act, also known as Act 47. Mayor Joe Dougherty also said he approves of the charter.

7/13/2011

## **HONORING A LOCAL BASEBALL GREAT**

Times Leader

The Baseball Reliquary, a Southern California-based nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering an appreciation of American art and culture through the context of baseball history, is displaying “Patriotic Pitch: The Empire of Baseball,” through July 30 in Pasadena.

Featured in the exhibit is NEPA native **Pete Gray**, who garnered national attention in 1944 when he batted .333 for the Memphis Chicks, hit five homeruns and stole 68 bases and was named the 1944 Southern League’s MVP. Gray, who lost his right arm in a childhood accident, made his Major League debut for the St. Louis Browns in 1945.

The Baseball Reliquary will induct Gray, who passed way at his home in Nanticoke in 2002, into its Shrine of Eternals on Sunday, July 17 in Pasadena.

For more info, visit [baseballreliquary.org](http://baseballreliquary.org).

7/12/2011

## **Watching the world from behind the plate**

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Bob Bertoni has seen a lot in his 31 years as a Little League umpire.

And he knows just about every rule for every situation.

But some things can leave even the veteran umpire scratching his head at times.

Like the time a baserunner lost a crucial piece of equipment between first and second base.

“He hit a double and was rounding first, and his belt broke,” said Bertoni, 47, of Nanticoke. “He was trying to hike up his pants and run at the same time. “He bumbled and stumbled into second base, but he lost his pants.

“His face was bright red from the embarrassment. I really felt sorry for him.”

The player who lost his pants was just one example of what Bertoni and other Little League umpires deal with on a daily basis.

Sometimes they have a chance to see a highlight worthy of making ESPN’s top plays. The play that sticks out the most in Bertoni’s mind is a spectacular catch of what appeared to be a certain home run.

“A kid hit a towering blast to deep center field,” Bertoni said. “The outfielder jumped up and caught the ball, but got stuck on the fence. It was a great play, because the held on to the ball.”

There is a lot more to umpiring behind home plate than calling balls and strikes.

“You run into delicate situations, especially dealing with girls,” Bertoni said. “They get hit in awkward places. You just have to walk away and get the trainer.”

It’s not unusual for umpires to require medical attention. Bertoni estimates that he’s been injured too many times to count. When working home plate, he said you can count on suffering significant bumps and bruises at least 10 times a season.

Bertoni said the worst injury he suffered occurred a few years ago when was struck by a foul ball that careened off the net.

“It struck the left side of my neck, between the neck and collarbone,” Bertoni said. “It hurt so bad that I thought I broke my Adam’s apple. It was the only time I couldn’t finish a game.”

Bertoni never loses sight of the danger involved in being an umpire. He talks with most of the players before the game, but makes a point to introduce himself to the catcher.

“I make sure the catcher knows it’s his job to protect me behind the plate and make sure that I don’t get hurt,” said Bertoni, who is the chief Little League umpire for District 16 and District 31.

Just like the players, umpires are human, too. Bertoni always strives for perfection, but knows it's impossible. His greatest fear is making a bad call that results in a team losing the game.

"I can deal with it if I miss a ball or a strike," he said, "but I don't want to miss a call at home plate when someone is trying to score."

When working behind the plate, Bertoni also tries to establish a rapport with the pitcher. Sometimes, when a kid is struggling with his control, he tries to cut him a break if he can do it without breaking the rules.

"You always try to bring common sense into play," Bertoni said. "If a pitcher is struggling and the game is out of hand, I'm going to help him by widening the strike zone."

Bertoni also tries to give a pitcher a pep talk whenever he or she is replaced or becomes a position player.

"When they're taken out of the game, nine times out of 10 that kid is down in the dumps when he gets a new position," Bertoni said. "I give them a pat on the back and tell them to keep their head up."

Bertoni knows a few things about pitchers. His daughter, Sarah, was a standout pitcher for Nanticoke High School the last three years and led the Trojanettes to the 2010 state championship.

He formerly coached the Nanticoke baseball team, and is currently the coach of the Crestwood softball team.

The highlight of Bertoni's umpiring career occurred in 1999 when he was chosen to work the girls Little League World Series in Seattle. This summer, he's going to be umpiring the Mid-Atlantic Regional playoffs in New Haven, Conn., on Aug. 5.

"Bob's done a great job," said Fred DeSanto, the district administrator for District 16 and 31. "It's quite an honor to have him. We're trying to get him to Williamsport."

Umpiring is a labor of love for Bertoni. It's a volunteer job.

"The diamond is in my blood. I love baseball and softball, but softball is my true passion," Bertoni said. "That's why I do it.

"I still get excited when I umpire a game. The day I don't will be the day I walk away."

7/6/2011

### **Fire damages two houses in Nanticoke**

elewis@timesleader.com

A family of five were forced out of their East Union Street house due to an early morning fire on Wednesday.

[click image to enlarge](#)

Two adults and three children were forced from their house due to a fire Wednesday morning.

Fire Chief Michael Bohan said firefighters from Nanticoke and Hanover Township responded to 127 E. Union St. at about 2:40 a.m.

Two adults, Sharon Brown and Angelo Slaughter, and three children, escaped their house before firefighters arrived at the scene.

Bohan said flames spread to 129 E. Union St., occupied by Dory and Kyle Andrews, damaging the exterior.

The Andrews' and occupants of a house at 123 E. Union St. escaped their houses unharmed. .

Bohan said firefighters quickly "knocked down" the flames.

There was heavy fire, smoke and water damage to 127 E. Union St., Bohan said.

No damage was reported to 123 E. Union St. No injuries were reported.

State police deputy fire marshal Trooper Ron Jarocha was at the house investigating the cause of the fire Wednesday morning.

7/4/2011

### **Nanticoke Class of 1961 remembers state championship game**

#### **Still a lot of hoopla**

Eileen Godin - Times Leader

Basketball games that practically shut down the town and a state championship win resulting in parades and banquets are among the memories the Nanticoke High School Class of 1961 will be reminiscing during its upcoming union.

After the Nanticoke High School boys basketball team returned as the state championship team in 1961, the community staged a victory parade in their honor that drew more than 20,000 people.

About 50 of the 142 class members from Nanticoke High School to toast that championship season will converge on the Ramada Inn in Wilkes-Barre on this coming weekend, July 8-10, said reunion chairwoman Regina Plodwick.

Plodwick said her class was always close.

Most classmates live locally, but a few ventured away and cultivated lives and raised families in surrounding states. She noted one is currently living in Alaska and one in Nevada.

Tracking down everyone was not too difficult. Plodwick said that since 1981 this will be the class's seventh reunion.

In 2006, its 45th reunion, she created a master list of email and street addresses.

"This will be our last formal reunion," she said.

She hopes to continue the tradition by having smaller get-togethers annually, "Dutch Treat."

Although the class's old high school building is long gone – CVS Pharmacy now sits in its place – the memories are still fresh.

State champion basketball team members Billy James and Rich Kiewlak remember how the community used to pack in, and sometimes travel, to see a game.

"I remember the priest used to say, 'I know when you are playing a game on Saturday because there is no one in church on Sunday,'" James said.

Plodwick, a former cheerleader, said she remembers following Kiewlak up the steps of Holy Trinity church before every game. Kiewlak said he always went to the church before a game to pray for a win.

And their prayers were answered with talented and determined players.

As a Division A team, Nanticoke's coach would file them as Division A, B, and C to be able to play against larger schools, James remembers. During the State Championships in 1961, Nanticoke played against Hickory High School and won with a final score of 56-46.

James remembered when the team returned to the area from the game and stopped in Berwick. Local businesses give them small treats like small cartons of milk and Tastykakes, James said.

Then, in West Nanticoke, they got off the buses and climbed into five or six convertibles for a ride into Nanticoke and to the park.

He estimated that around 20,000 people gathered there to celebrate the victory.

This milestone in their high school careers did not overshadow daily activities such as getting into trouble for chewing gum in Mr. Chickson's algebra class. Plodwick shared a memory of having to write 100 times "I will not chew gum."

"Every time I got caught, the number would go higher," she said. "I believe once I wrote it 500 times."

Gathered around a table at a Hanover Township restaurant, Plodwick, James and Kiewlak laughed about the innocent fun they used to have.

"I think we grew up at the best time in our high school years," Plodwick said.

7/3/2011

### **Changes afoot for Chargers**

Tom Robinson - Times Leader

The Electric City Chargers enter their fourth season as a team in transition.

A new coach, home field, league and, possibly, level of competition are all part of the equation.

"The Colonial Football Alliance shrunk. It was losing a lot of teams," owner/general manager Tom Conserette said.

"The Regional American Football League is growing and expanding.

"It's geared toward a higher level of play and trying to advance toward a national championship."

Rich Hall has taken over for Mike Arcure, who coached the team for its first three seasons but was unavailable to be head coach again this season. Arcure continues to assist in coaching the team while Hall, a long-time defensive assistant in semi-pro and arena football, takes his first head coaching assignment.

"The kind of talent we've recruited was much better than the league we were in," Hall said. "It's a powerhouse league and we can qualify for the national championship.

"There are no givens in the RAFL."

The Chargers will begin league play Saturday at home against the Philadelphia Braves.

Although the Electric City team continues to practice in Lackawanna County, using the Taylor Junior Vikings Field and, when necessary to move indoors, Riverfront Sports in Scranton, **it has moved home games to Nanticoke High School.**

The Chargers played their first game at Nanticoke June 25, winning their non-league opener with a 44-7 rout of the NEPA Miners, the region's other semi-pro team.

Hall and several of the team's defensive players were at one time part of the Miners.

The Chargers, coming off an 8-2 regular-season record in the CFA and a 1-1 mark in the playoffs, were too much for the Miners, who were 4-6 a year ago.

The Miners will play their home opener Saturday at Scranton Memorial Stadium against the Red City Outlaws from Shillington in the Reading area.

The Chargers showed their dominance in the non-league opener.

Electric City led just 21-7 at halftime before Tim McFarland hit Shamar Coates on a fly pattern on the first play of the second half for a 79-yard touchdown. A penalty had halted the first attempt at the play, but Hall decided to stick with the approach.

“I believe in an attacking offense as much as an attacking defense,” Hall said. “I wanted to go for the jugular.”

Running a spread offense patterned after the Oregon Ducks, McFarland finished 10-for-16 for 247 yards and four touchdowns. Earl Chapman caught four of the passes for 105 yards and two touchdowns.

Damon Saxon, a Division III national rushing leader while playing at King’s College in 2000, led the Chargers in rushing with 59 yards on eight carries.

The defense posted 10 sacks, using a “46” approach made famous when Buddy Ryan was the defensive coordinator of the Super Bowl champion Chicago Bears.

We show everybody at the line of scrimmage,” Hall said. “You never know who’s dropping and who’s coming.”

Malcolm Singleton had four of the sacks and four other tackles.

Andy Minnick, who forced a fumble, and Darian Twyman each had two sacks.

Roy Glenn Junior, a former Lackawanna College linebacker, led the team with 12 tackles, including two for losses, and a broken-up pass. Leon Black made 11 tackles.

#### MINERS

The Miners return their passing, rushing, tackles and interception leaders from last year.

Quarterback Justin Piontkowski threw for 924 yards and eight touchdowns while leading a limited ground game with 275 yards rushing.

Anthony Bodtman led the Miners last season with 34 tackles, seven interceptions and eight passes broken up.

7/2/2011

#### **Nanticoke wins District 16 title**

Citizens Voice

#### SOFTBALL

District 16 11-12

Nanticoke 8

Jenkins Township 5 (7 inn.)

Leandra Ramos earned the win in relief and also chipped in with a single, RBI and a run scored as Nanticoke edged Jenkins Township in the District 16 11-12 softball championship game on Friday night.

Hanna Voyton added a double and an RBI and Morgan Briggs added two singles and scored the tying run. Alyssia Stavetski contributed with a single and an RBI.

7/1/2011

#### **Water-soaked gym floor to be replaced**

**Work will begin Tuesday so that the facility will be ready for student use in September.**

Susan Denney - Times Leader

In a special session on Thursday night, the Greater Nanticoke Area School Board voted unanimously to replace the water-damaged high school gym floor with a completely new one.

Miller Flooring Co. Inc. will begin the work on Tuesday so the high school gym will be ready in time for the reopening of school in the fall.

Miller Flooring will install an AACER ScissorLoc LP floor, which is a ventilated maple floor system.

The \$184,860 floor replacement will cost the district nothing as it will be completely covered by the insurance payment.

Frank Grevera, director of buildings and grounds, said the district’s insurance company has paid out more than a quarter of a million dollars to rectify the damage caused by two pipe breaks in January.

Grevera said the district has been negotiating the gym floor repair since the two water main breaks in January. He said the floor could not be repaired and needed to be replaced.

“We had no other options,” he said. “The new floor will be a half inch higher than the existing floor and there will be air escapes in three areas,” he added.



The new floor can be dried out in the case of future water damage.

6/28/2011

### **Car stolen from Nanticoke mayor found torched in Sweet Valley**

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State police at Shickshinny recovered a burned out vehicle that may be linked to the car stolen from Nanticoke Mayor Joseph Dougherty Saturday night.

The vehicle was found torched near Zachary Road at about 8:30 p.m. Monday. It has since been seized by state police. Dougherty was assaulted by three males in their late teens or early 20s while he sat inside a Chevrolet Cruze, which is owned by his employer, Colors Inc.

State police suspect the vehicle was used in a burglary at Sorber's Stop and Go Quick Mart on Main Road in Hunlock Township at about 1:33 a.m. Sunday.

Two males smashed the glass front door at the quick mart while the third male waited outside, state police said.

Cigarettes, lottery tickets and an empty cash register was stolen from the store. The vehicle was last seen traveling south on Main Road after the burglary, state police said.

Authorities are also investigating whether the three men are responsible for burglaries at the Sunoco Service Station on the Sans Souci Parkway, Hanover Township, and Don's Deli on West End Road, also in Hanover Township, Saturday night.

6/27/2011

### **Nanticoke mayor is attacked**

#### **Joe Dougherty is beaten Saturday in a crime that might be linked to others.**

jllynott@timesleader.com

As the city's mayor, Joe Dougherty might have upset some people, but not to the point where they would beat him and steal his car.

The part-time mayor was the victim of a vicious attack Saturday night near his house on East Green Street that left him with a broken nose, staples in his head and bruises over his body.

"I don't think it was anybody from town, to be completely honest with you," he said Sunday.

Three white males in their late teens or early 20s assaulted him and drove off with a white, four-door 2011 Chevrolet Cruze that has the number 192 in black on the driver's side quarter panel. Police are investigating whether the carjacking and robbery is connected to the smash-and-dash burglaries of stores in Hanover, Newport and Union townships.

Dougherty, 44, a full-time, automotive paint salesman for Colours Inc., said he was sitting in the car provided by the company doing paperwork around 11:15 p.m. and waiting for a friend to come by so that they could go out. The headlights were on, the motor running and the interior dome light was on as well. He saw three males pass by and he didn't give them a second thought.

"Next thing you know I'm drug out of my car and I'm thumped," he said.

"It was so quick. They pulled me out of the car. My keys were still in the ignition. I was listening to the radio. I saw something. It looked like a club."

Dougherty said his attackers didn't say anything and they didn't take his wallet.

He remembered calling Luzerne County 911 and handing his phone to his friend who had arrived by then.

Nanticoke Police Detective Capt. William Shultz corrected Dougherty, saying the mayor did call 911, but "at one point lost consciousness." The friend picked up the phone, said Shultz.

Dougherty was taken to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center in Plains Township, where he was treated.

The mayor struggled to find an answer for the attack.

"I've lived in this neighborhood all my life," he said, adding he plans to stay put.

Shultz, however, offered an explanation, calling it a "crime of opportunity."

Dougherty did not know his attackers and they might not have known him, said Shultz.

The detective said a neighbor reported seeing Dougherty sitting inside the car with the headlights on.

"He didn't think anything of it," Shultz said of the neighbor. The neighbor also recalled hearing the car speed off.

The car was last seen traveling north on South Chestnut Street.

A car matching that description was involved in a burglary around 1:30 a.m. at Sorber's Stop & Go Country Side Quick

Mark gas station on Main Road in Union Township, according to state police at Shickshinny.

A glass door was smashed and two white males went inside, state police said. A third white male waited outside the store. Cigarettes, lottery tickets and an empty cash register were taken, state police state.

The three males drove away, heading south on Main Road toward Hunlock Township and U.S. Route 11, state police said.

Windows were smashed in burglaries at Don's Deli on West End Road and the Sunoco Service station on the Sans Souci Parkway, Hanover Township police said.

There were no descriptions of the suspects in either of those break-ins.

**Anyone with information about the carjacking and robbery is asked to contact Nanticoke police at 570-735-2200. State police at Shickshinny asked that anyone with information about the break-in at Sorber's Stop & Go contact them at 570 542-4117.**

6/27/2011

**Nanticoke mayor carjacked, beaten**

emoody@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2051

The mayor of Nanticoke was bludgeoned with a club late Saturday night when three men attacked him outside of his home and stole his car.

Recovering with family Sunday afternoon, Joe Dougherty said they "ripped me out of my car and hit me with a billy club, but I'm still walking around today."

Nanticoke police Capt. William Shultz declined to identify the victim, but confirmed police are looking for three men in their late teens or early 20s who are suspected of stealing a vehicle from the 300 block of East Green Street at about 11 p.m. Saturday. He is looking into a possible connection with several burglaries and attempted burglaries in the area that night.

He said it did not appear the victim was targeted, and this was a "crime of opportunity." The vehicle is a white four-door 2011 Chevrolet Cruze with "192" painted in black on the driver's side. It was last seen traveling north on South Chestnut Street.

Dougherty said he was sitting in the vehicle, doing paperwork, waiting for friends to pick him up, when the men attacked him. Despite heavy blood loss and some loss of consciousness, he called 911 for help. Dougherty was taken to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center and later released. He received staples in his head, stitches in his forehead, nose and leg and his nose was broken.

Councilman Brent Makarczyk rents to Dougherty and lives in the same building as the mayor. He heard a car speed away Saturday night and walked outside to find Dougherty and a friend, who was on the phone.

"Just about the time I got to the car, he collapsed," Makarczyk said. That's when he noticed the blood. "Joe, he's a fantastic human being, just a great guy. I don't know what motivated this kind of attack, but there must be something wrong with these guys," he said. "... When you have three guys drag a guy out of a car and beat him without saying a word to each other, they're either psychic or they planned this."

Their neighborhood is generally peaceful, Makarczyk said, and he and his wife will sit on the porch until late at night in the summer. They rarely see anyone besides neighbors or teenagers walking around. However, he sees the demographics of the area changing and an increase in drug activity and knows that is taking a toll.

"With the money issue, it seems like the police department is doing the best they can but they are spread thin," he said.

The 44-year-old mayor has been a resident of Nanticoke his entire life, and said nothing of this sort has happened to him before, but the region is changing and violent incidents are becoming more frequent. Dougherty cautioned people to be vigilant in their neighborhoods and keep an eye on their surroundings.

"People voted me into office because they wanted someone to stand tall and I do, even if I get knocked down. I get back up," he said.

Shultz said there could be a connection to an attempted burglary at the Variety Stop, 15 E. Main St., Glen Lyon. Plains Township police are also investigating several overnight burglaries, but officers were unable to provide additional details Sunday afternoon.

State police at Shickshinny are investigating a burglary at the Sorber's Stop and Go Country Side Quick Mart in Union Township, near Hunlock Creek, that involved a white four-door Chevrolet Cruze that was carjacked earlier from Nanticoke, according to state police.

Three men about 18 to 25 years old, smashed the glass front door and entered the store at about 1:33 a.m. Two of the men went inside, stole cigarettes, lottery tickets and an empty cash register, and then all three fled in the Chevrolet,

headed south.

Hanover Township police are also investigating several overnight burglaries, at 3:45 a.m. at the Sunoco Service Station on the Sans Souci Highway and at 4:15 a.m. at Don's Deli on West End Road. Both stores were entered after front windows were broken. Officers were unable to provide additional details Sunday afternoon.

**Anyone with information on the carjacking is asked to call Nanticoke City police at 570-735-2200. Anyone with information on the Union Township burglary is asked to call state police at Shickshinny at 570-542-4117.**

6/25/2011

### **Effort on to capture bear spotted in Nanticoke**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens' Voice

Authorities are trying to catch a black bear spotted multiple times this week in Nanticoke City.Z

The bear was again seen Friday morning in a residential yard on the 300 block of West Grand Street, Nanticoke police Capt. William Shultz said.

Each day this week, authorities received calls about the bear being spotted in residential areas, Shultz said. Residents of Nanticoke have generally spotted the bear in the west side of the city near Special Care Hospital, the former Penn Footware factory and West Side Park, Shultz said. The Pennsylvania Game Commission on Friday set up a bear trap in a wooded area in the neighborhood. Officials said the bear has rummaged through the garbage of multiple residents, looking for food. Police warned people to be cautious and not leave their children or pets unattended in their yards. Tim Conway, an information and educational supervisor for the game commission's northeast office, said it's unlikely the bear would attack if unprovoked.

"They aren't necessarily a threat, but they can be," he said. He advised residents to put their garbage out at the last minute.

"If they can't get to a food source, they are going to move on," Conway said.

6/24/2011

### **Nanticoke residents warned about bear in city**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens' Voice

The Pennsylvania Game Commission is trying to trap a bear that has been spotted in Nanticoke every day this week, authorities said Friday.

Residents of Nanticoke have generally spotted the bear in the west side of the city near Special Care Hospital and West Side Park, said Nanticoke police Capt. William Shultz.

This morning, the bear was spotted in a residential yard at 391 W. Grand St., he said.

The bear has rummaged through the garbage of multiple residents, authorities said.

The game commission set up a bear trap in a wooded area in the neighborhood.

Police warned people to be cautious and not leave their children or pets unattended in their yards.

Tim Conway, an information and educational supervisor for the game commission's northeast office, said it's very unlikely the bear would attack if unprovoked. He advised residents to put their garbage out at the last minute.

"If they can't get to a food source, they are going to move on," Conway said.

6/24/2011

### **Board OKs plan with \$1.6M in cuts**

**\$24.3M plan backed unanimously provides less funding for music, art and phys-ed elementary programs, and has 11 teacher furloughs.**

Susan Denney - Times Leader

The [Greater Nanticoke Area](#) School Board voted unanimously Thursday night to approve a final budget of \$24.3 million that includes cuts to music, art and physical education elementary programs.

In all, 11 teachers were furloughed and one was demoted to half time. In addition, 11 positions were terminated in the Family Center, the Parent Child Home Program and the Fatherhood programs. Those programs were eliminated because of the loss of federal grant money.

A large group turned out for the meeting.

Residents and teachers spoke against the proposed cuts, but board President Robert Raineri said, "We don't want to cut

anyone, but our hands are tied. Furloughs were decided by the whole administrative staff, the board and the union.” He said all furlough decisions were carefully considered and were based on seniority.

Addressing the large crowd, Superintendent Anthony Perrone said he knew that no one wanted cuts. “You’re asking us to do something we can’t do,” he said.

He said \$1.6 million in cuts were needed to cover losses in state education funding to the district.

“It’s either cut or next year or the next not have a school. Some of the districts are not going to survive,” Perrone said.

Tom Melone, of Albert B. Melone CPAs, speaking as business consultant to the district, made a lengthy presentation showing present and projected budget needs. He showed state funding represents 60 percent of the GNA budget. When the state is the leader in educational funding and when the funding gets cut, he said, the local districts face challenges. He said every line item was turned upside-down in an effort to make up for the cuts in state funding and that retirements and furloughs would make up \$881,000 of the projected shortfall.

Melone also said there was a possibility that there would be severe limitations on how much a school district could raise taxes beginning next year.

Raineri remarked, “We should have been raising taxes a little each year.”

Leigh Bonczewski, chief of staff for state Rep. Gerald Mullery, appeared before the board to report the state budget was still being negotiated. He said it was not too late to contact state senators to urge them to reconsider cuts to education. Facing the crowd, he said, “You are lucky in Nanticoke. You are in much better shape. It’s a testament to the school board and Mr. Perrone.”

Greater Nanticoke Area School District has a budget reserve fund of \$6.4 million. In last month’s meeting it was revealed the budget would have no tax increase.

Board Secretary Cindy Donlin urged the residents in attendance to contact state representatives and senators about the budget, remind them that it wasn’t too late because the budget was still being completed.

“Bug the hell out of them,” she said.

In an emotional moment, board member Tony Prushinski gave the personnel report, which included the list of furloughs and program cuts.

“Many years ago, I was laid off by the Nanticoke schools. It’s ironic that I have to do this tonight,” he said.

The board voted unanimously for the budget with many members voting yes with regrets.

6/17/2011

### **Nanticoke Music Festival opens to a traditional beat**

spokorny@timesleader.com

J.D. Verazin looks out on Patriot Park in Nanticoke at this time each year and loves what he sees.

“Everyone’s just hanging out, enjoying music, food and each other’s company,” he said. “It’s a great time to be a part of this community.”

Verazin is a committee member of the Nanticoke Music Festival, which will take place tonight and tomorrow. This year marks the 14th for the festival, a highly anticipated tradition.

From music of the ’70s to today’s hits, country beats and fresh talent, the music festival has it all.

Verazin is part of [Tyme Band](#), a classic-rock cover band that will play the festival on Saturday night. He is on vocals, Tom Cipriani is on bass guitar and backup vocals, Rick Wells plays lead guitar and backup vocals, and Steve Cipriani is the drummer.

The guys formed Tyme Band in the 1970s and have played consistently up until 1996 before taking a break. They’ve met up here and there during the past couple of years, then finally decided to come back in full swing in the fall of 2010. The band is looking at its latest batch of shows as the “It’s About Tyme World Tour.”

“We have T-shirts made up,” Verazin said. “It’s just like any T-shirt you’d find at a big concert, with all the venue names and dates on them. Instead of something like ‘Madison Square Garden,’ we have ‘Bentley’s in Ashley,’ which I think is much, much cooler.”

Entertainers for this year also will include [Farmer’s Daughter](#), a country band; [Johnny Unit](#) and [Pop Rox](#), two high-energy cover bands with set lists that consist of new music of nearly every genre; and the contestants of the Greater Nanticoke Area Educational Center Idol. For the past six years, the Ed Idol contest has been organized for sixth- and seventh-graders. This year 12 finalists were picked from 28 auditions. That number was then whittled to three.

For 2011, Bailey Cunningham took third place, Taylor Brown came in second, and Michaela Buckley was the winner. The final 12, as well as last year’s Ed Idol winner, sing at the festival.

Although the festival is focused mainly on music, Verazin said, there’s much more to it.

“It’s a way to get the community together and involved,” he said. “We want people to enjoy this beautiful park, check out some very talented locals and relax. We’ve got a lot to offer, and we look forward to keeping the tradition alive.”

6/17/2011

### **Nanticoke honors Relay for Life Days**

Joe Dolinsky Times Leader

City Council issued a proclamation Wednesday night recognizing June 18-19 as Relay for Life Days in Nanticoke. The American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life is the signature act of the ACS and council members encourage citizens to attend the event on June 18 at Luzerne County Community College.

In other new business, council members passed a motion to authorize the purchase of 256 W. Church St. Also, the council approved a motion authorizing the assignment of the 3/7/01 lease from St. Joseph’s Church to Sanitary Bakery. Finally, council members passed a motion approving submission of Streetscape Engineering invoices to Pennsylvania Department of Transportation.

6/13/2011

### **Nanticoke Area senior completes attendance streak**

bkalinowski@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2055

Jared Bartusek of Glen Lyon finished 12 consecutive years of school at Greater Nanticoke Area without missing a day. Jared Bartusek's parents scheduled an overnight trip to a Poconos water park for Jared's birthday five years ago, thinking there was no school the next day.

But there was.

Bartusek, then 13, awoke early and made his parents take him to school at Greater Nanticoke Area. He had an attendance streak he didn't want to break.

That streak is now complete.

Bartusek, of Glen Lyon, has finished 12 consecutive school years without being absent a day. A single missed day in kindergarten when he had to get a tooth pulled is all that kept him from perfect attendance for his entire school career.

"It was worth it. Colleges look at it, workplaces look at it," Bartusek said. "It's a reliability trait. You show you can show up and do your job."

The 18-year-old received an award at Greater Nanticoke Area's Class Day last week to recognize his accomplishment. He graduates tonight.

Bartusek said he started thinking about the streak after fifth grade. For several years in a row, teachers presented him with a perfect attendance award at the end of the year. At that point, he made it a goal to never miss a day.

"I said, 'let's see how long I can keep this up.' It's something I wanted to achieve. Not many people have done it and I set a goal," said Bartusek, son of Joseph and Melody Bartusek.

His mother said they are very proud. Some parents have to convince their children to go to school, but Jared begged to go on the days she didn't think he should, she said.

"It was all him. It wasn't something we were pushing him on. It was something in his heart he wanted to do," she said. Greater Nanticoke Area High School Principal Stu Tripler commended Bartusek's accomplishment.

"Jared is a pleasure to have in school and a positive influence on his peers. We are certainly glad to have him here everyday as these characteristics will help him be successful in his adult life," Tripler said.

Bartusek acknowledged it was a challenge. Some mornings he'd be tired. There were times he had been vomiting all night. Other times he just dreaded dealing with the "everyday schoolkid stress."

But waking up and heading to school every day just seemed like the natural thing to do, said Bartusek, who plans to attend King's College.

"It formed into a habit, an everyday thing - waking up, going to school and coming home," Bartusek said.

6/12/2011

### **2 Glen Lyon teens show they care about cancer**

### **Girls host benefit walk for breast cancer awareness.**

mhughes@timesleader.com

Two area teenagers showed maturity beyond their years Saturday, organizing a charity walk to raise money for the

American Cancer Society.

Sarina Kinlaw, 14, and Krystal Daniele, 13, both of Glen Lyon, hosted the first ever “We Do Care” Walk for Breast Cancer Saturday morning in the Wanamie section of Newport Township.

Kinlaw said she wanted to raise awareness of the disease after her grandmother was diagnosed with breast cancer two years ago.

“My grandma was always sick,” she said. “I knew how much pain she was in, and how much her treatments cost, and some people around here, they can’t pay for that.”

“We found out that there’s a lot more breast cancer around here than we ever thought there would have been,” said Daniele, adding that in preparing for the walk she learned many of her friends had family members who had breast cancer.

The girls, both students at [Greater Nanticoke Area Education Center](#) in Nanticoke, said organizing the walk provided a lesson in maturity.

“We had to go to board meetings. We had to get it all approved. We had to put fliers up everywhere. We had to get people to come,” Kinlaw said.

They also made dozens of pink ribbons and collected more than \$600 from local businesses prior to the event.

“I’m really proud of her,” said Krystal’s mother Jayme Daniele. “For two teens to come up with something this big; it’s pretty impressive.”

“It’s unheard of,” said Newport Township Commissioner Jack Vishnefski before the walk. “It’s kind of what we need more of in this world.”

A few dozen participants set off from the Newport Township Recreation Park around 10 a.m., and made two laps of a course around Wanamie, from Center Street to Vandermark Street to West Main Street, leading back to Center Street – four miles in all.

Volunteers also sold hotdogs and a DJ performed.

“I’m glad they grabbed the bull by the horns and started this down here. Communities don’t do enough things like this,” said Tom Kashatus, president of the Newport Township Community Organization.

6/12/2011

### **Cool Ride band to cruise Atlantic Ocean aboard ship**

shite@mydallaspost.com

Lloyd Smith, of Nanticoke, strikes the first few soulfully funky notes of The Commodores’ “Brick House” and throughout the rest of the beat-busting tune, it never dawns on the listener that Smith could ever be a 43-year-old truck driver by trade.

The Cool Ride Band member was born to sing and play the ax (and the sax) like local Olympian Jim Thorpe was, as Bruce Springsteen would say, “Born to Run.”

The local cover band frequents car shows and bike weeks throughout the Back Mountain and Wilkes-Barre areas, and now the rockin’ quartet will cruise the Atlantic Ocean.

Guitarist and saxophonist Smith, lead guitarist and vocalist Billy Fitt, drummer Darren Hall and his twin brother and bass player Doug Hall, will perform on a five-night Royal Caribbean cruise to Bermuda from June 18 through June 23. Darren Hall, of Orange, said the trip is a milestone for the band that recently celebrated its 5-year anniversary.

“It’s definitely an accomplishment,” he said. “It’s a feather in our cap.”

The band, which members call “NEPA’s Ultimate Party Band,” is comprised of musicians who have all played instruments for 30 years or longer.

It’s no surprise the band could perform for a 3,300-guest cruise ship and not be nervous. The Cool Ride Band takes listeners on a musical journey through several different genres when it performs – anything from classic disco chart-toppers like the 1975 K.C. & the Sunshine Band hit “Get Down Tonight ” to current tracks of today such as Finger Eleven’s “Paralyzer.”

And that’s just one beat of the almost symphonic performance the band provides for its fans. Visual ploys play a big part of the band’s ability to get the crowd roaring with enthusiasm, and band members take that job seriously.

But ZZ Top-style beards, afro wigs and flashy sunglasses are just the beginning – band members even hold up signs with phrases like “make some noise” during shows, which Darren says throws parties for a loop.

“You hold a sign behind someone who’s playing the tambourine and everyone’s cheering and (the person) onstage gets a kick out of it,” said Darren.

The interactive band even invites its fans on stage to help in performances, providing instruments like tambourines to

willing participants. Band members also use wireless technology so they can play with the crowd while playing their instruments.

"We like to get people involved," said Darren.

The band plays mostly private events and club gigs, and also hosts an annual event in the Back Mountain at Konefal's Grove in Jackson Township at the end of the summer. The Cool Ride Summer Party combines two aspects of what has made the band click for five years – classic cars and classic rock.

"The first time we did it, we set up a price, just to see if it would work," said Darren. "No (newspaper) articles announced it. We had more than 500 people show up."

And that loyal fanbase keeps coming back. For the cruise, Darren said band members had the option of staying on the ship for free in exchange for their performance or working out a discounted rate for a group of fans to come onboard. They chose the latter, opting to open the transatlantic trip to all Cool Ride lovers.

It will be a family affair, too, as Darren's recently-married son will celebrate his honeymoon on the five-day cruise.

6/2/2011

### **Nanticoke eyes accounts' interest rates**

**City has almost \$3 million in bank and has earned less than \$2,000, treasurer states.**

Geri Gibbons - Times Leader

What's Next

The next meeting will take place 7 p.m. July 6 at City Hall.

Fiscal responsibility and efficient use of tax dollars were discussed at Wednesday night's City Council meeting.

"We have nearly \$3 million in the bank," said Albert Wytoshek, city treasurer, "and I am unclear as to what type of accounts this money is in and why we don't get more interest." He noted the interest on these accounts was under \$2,000 a year.

Holly Cirko, city administrator, said many of the accounts were earmarked for a specific purpose and could not be invested in anything long-term, such as a certificate of deposit.

"Most of these accounts have money in and money out," said Mayor Joseph Dougherty. "Attempting to collect interest on these types of funds would be impossible."

Wytoshek said he believed that council should investigate this matter further and he planned to determine whether better interest rates could be made on the more than 30 accounts held by the city.

Resident Jim Samelski also brought up current real estate owned by the city that is not generating any taxes.

"Can we sell these properties," Samelski asked, "so that we can collect revenue from them?"

Dougherty said research was currently being done on the properties' market value and that it was the city's intent to sell them.

In another matter, Councilman Jim Litchkowski expressed interest in the progress of the city's Home Rule Charter Committee.

Linda Prushinski, a member of that committee, said the group was in the process of deciding whether an additional member would be added to City Council.

Prushinski said the committee would be meeting Tuesday at City Hall.

Mary Cheshinski, city clerk, invited the public to the Relay for Life event and bake sale to be held June 18-19 at City Hall.

5/30/2011

### **Soldier who replaced stolen grave markers to receive honor**

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As Staff Sgt. James Horning walks past the graves adorned with U.S. flags, he speaks of the military as being one big family.

"We have to look out for each other," Horning says. "Even in death."

Few have lived up to those words as this Pennsylvania Army National Guard recruiter from Shickshinny.

When he heard last month that thieves raided three adjoining Glen Lyon cemeteries of 125 brass grave markers, the 36-year-old vowed to right the wrong committed against so many U.S. military veterans at their final resting place. For more than a week, Horning tirelessly canvassed area veterans halls for replacement markers and found a new one for

each and every disturbed grave.

"I saw it in the paper. It was titled 'Heartless.' I was at a loss. I couldn't believe what I was reading. I believed I had a responsibility to have them replaced," Horning recalls. "With Memorial Day approaching, I wanted to make sure the job was done."

This Memorial Day, those who come to St. Adalbert's, St. Michael's and Italian Independent cemeteries on the outskirts of Glen Lyon to pay their respects will see the fruits of Horning's work - markers at each veteran's grave, each adorned with a new flag.

"It looks fantastic," Horning said while meeting a reporter and photographer at St. Adalbert's Cemetery last week.

"It would have been disgraceful if they weren't replaced. It would have hurt the families and it would have hurt the military," said **Horning, a recruiter based out of the Nanticoke branch of the 109th Field Artillery**. "We feel like this mission was accomplished. We turned a bad thing into a good thing."

All of the stolen markers were made of brass, which thieves often try to sell for scrap metal. Horning's collection of replacements included brass and the newer ones made of bronze and aluminum.

Newport Township police are still investigating the case.

Horning's work is going to get him some accolades today. State Rep. Gerald Mullery, D-Newport Township, plans to award Horning with a citation lauding his efforts at a ceremony at the Glen Lyon American Legion.

"I'm humbled by it. I wasn't expecting it, but I definitely appreciate it," Horning said.

Meanwhile, Mullery said he is co-sponsoring legislation to increase the fines and possible jail time for those to steal metal in attempt to sell it for scarp.

While thieves stole the markers, Horning believes that, in the end, they could never steal a veteran's honor, dignity and respect. That's a message Horning hopes continues to be championed by future generations of veterans.

"When I am laid to rest one day, I'd hope if something this disgraceful happened to my grave, someone would do this for me," Horning said.

Pennsylvania Army National Guard Staff Sgt. James Horning, 36, of Shickshinny, will be honored at 9 a.m. today at the American Legion in Glen Lyon by state Rep. Gerald Mullery, D-Newport Township, for his role in replacing 125 brass grave markers that were stolen from three cemeteries in Glen Lyon.

5/24/2011

### **Nanticoke Area school district must make serious cuts**

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Taxes will remain flat, but spending cuts - including personnel - are needed to bring Greater Nanticoke Area School District's spending in line with its revenue, according to a presentation about the proposed final 2011-12 budget approved Monday night.

"We've got to realign our expenses to the funding. There is no magic in that. This is like nothing we've ever seen,"

Business Manager Al Melone Jr. said, referring to the drop in not only state funding, but also local revenue due to the economy.

Full-day kindergarten and seventh and eighth grade sports are not among the cuts for next year, Superintendent Anthony Perrone said. Even though Gov. Tom Corbett's proposed budget does not include the \$468,000 the district has used in the past to pay for full-day kindergarten, other cuts were made so the program could remain in place.

The \$24,211,691 budget passed unanimously with all board members present, and the tax rate will remain at 9.9295 mills. A mill is \$1 for every \$1,000 in assessed property value. The budget must be approved a final time before the end of June.

Although the budget includes \$1.2 million in spending cuts, Greater Nanticoke Area officials will need to dip into their \$6.5 million fund balance, which is similar to a savings account, to make up an additional \$294,413.

The financial belt tightening comes as officials look at a possible funding cuts of \$1.4 million from the state, \$100,000 from the federal level and \$31,500 from local taxes and fees.

Much of the district's finances are fixed, such as contractual wage increases, utilities and special education costs, Melone said. Health care is expected to increase 18 percent.

The biggest savings built into the proposed budget are \$182,432 for salaries, \$225,601 for benefits and \$622,835 for supplies. Perrone said the district bought as many textbooks and as much supplies as possible this year with the one-time federal stimulus money.

The professional teaching staff will shrink, either by not replacing retirees or by implementing furloughs, Melone and Perrone said. They would not say how many positions need to be cut, or what those positions would be, because it



would be premature. Final decisions would be available in June. Administrators are looking at state requirements for classes and seniority, and if any program is cut it would be an elective, Perrone said.

"And teachers, you know, there aren't that many going but those that are left are going to be left with all the support staff. So you are going to have enough people in the classes to help you. And I want you to work as hard as you can," Perrone said.

5/24/2011

### **Nanticoke Area OKs \$400,000 in cuts**

#### **A reduction of \$1.57 million in state aid is giving the school district difficulty.**

Steven Fondo - Times Leader Correspondent

Budget at a glance

Size: \$24.2 million

Cuts: \$400,000

Fiscal belt-tightening was on the agenda at a special meeting of the Greater Nanticoke Area School Board on Monday, as the members voted unanimously on a 2011-2012 budget that includes more than \$400,000 in salary cuts and benefit adjustments.

Board members said the cuts are in response to the \$1.57 million shortfall in state funding as proposed by Gov. Tom Corbett.

"If I had a crystal ball and knew all this at the end of last year when 11 teachers retired, I wouldn't have filled all those positions," said Superintendent, Tony Perrone. "But unfortunately, that's what happened."

Greater Nanticoke Area School District is sitting on a budget reserve fund of \$6.4 million, but Perrone quickly pointed out the money cannot be used to hire new teachers and is in place to offset rising benefit costs.

Perrone said a number of cost-saving scenarios were discussed before the planning session. However the proposed \$24.2 million budget does not include a tax increase or cuts to existing sports or extracurricular programs.

A \$600,000 reduction in educational supplies was included in the total, but administrators stressed that this was a one-time item and others areas of savings would need to be explored in the future.

"Financially, we're better off than any other district in Luzerne County," added board member, Kenny James. "I want to thank Mr. Perrone and Mr. Melone for all their hard work."

Business consultant Al Melone, Sr. said the district's real estate tax base has no significant industry-driven revenue and is comprised mainly of an older housing base.

"There will obviously be furloughs and salary savings by attrition due to upcoming retirements," Melone continued.

"We'll have a definitive answer before June 30."

More than 70 percent of Nanticoke's budget consists of fixed salary and benefit costs as well as purchased services for transportation and contractual service agreements with the Luzerne Intermediate Unit and Wilkes-Barre Career Training Center. Current union contracts run through 2013.

"It's like nothing else I've seen in over 40 years working with school districts," said Melone, referring to the current state of the economy. "It's the perfect storm, and fortunately, Nanticoke is better prepared than most to weather the storm."

5/24/2011

### **Bieski Joins Cirque**

Times Leader

West Virginia's standout gymnast Amy Bieski (Nanticoke and Northeast Gymnastics) has joined the Cirque do Soleil system after a recent three-day nationwide audition in Orlando, FL. She didn't sign a contract but is now eligible for future productions.

"This is a great opportunity that not many receive and I'm honored to have been selected," Bieski said. "I am anxious and hopeful that I will be placed in a show. I'm thankful for the chance to continue to use my gymnastics and athletic skills."

Bieski capped off her four-year career at West Virginia by being named East Atlantic Gymnastics League (EAGL) Gymnast and Senior of the Year. She won the bars title at the conference championships and earned four all-league honors, which gave her a career total of 17. She totaled 1,940.6 career points which is second all-time at West Virginia. Bieski recently graduated with a degree in speech pathology and audiology.

“We are so proud of Amy,” coach Jason Butts said. “Her success at the tryouts is a testament to the amazing combination of athleticism and grace she possesses.”

5/22/2011

## **Nanticoke in limbo for sale revenue**

### **Greater Nanticoke Area School District still hasn't seen cash from Mercy sale.**

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The heads of the Greater Nanticoke Area School District and Luzerne County Assessment don't think the county and Nanticoke should have to wait indefinitely for a piece of the tax revenue windfall from the sale of Mercy Special Care Hospital.

The city of Scranton, Tunkhannock Township, and the Scranton and Tunkhannock Area school districts soon will receive a combined total of more than \$2.5 million in real estate transfer taxes from the sale of Mercy's properties in Scranton and Tunkhannock Township to subsidiaries of the for-profit Community Health Systems in April.

Mercy Special Care Hospital in Nanticoke was included in that sale. The sale of properties in all three municipalities was \$150 million.

Transfer taxes were based on the \$80.6 million portion of the Scranton properties sale price and the \$6 million Tunkhannock Township properties sale price recorded in the deeds in Lackawanna and Wyoming counties. The city of Scranton itself will see \$2 million in transfer taxes in June.

“If Scranton collects that much, Nanticoke should be entitled to its fair share,” Greater Nanticoke Area School District Superintendent Tony Perrone said.

But Regional Hospital of Scranton spokeswoman Gladys Bernet said in an email that no deed was filed for the sale of the Nanticoke hospital “because the real estate for Special Care Hospital in Nanticoke is leased.”

Owned by Pa.

Luzerne County property and tax records indicate that the hospital complex, which dropped the “Mercy” moniker and became Special Care Hospital, and the approximately three acres on which it lies is owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Troy Thompson, press secretary for the state Department of General Services, said Mercy had been leasing the hospital property in Nanticoke from the state for \$1 per month for the past 20 years.

When Mercy decided to sell the hospital, the department negotiated a new lease with Nanticoke Hospital Co., a subsidiary of Community Health Systems, for \$2,000 per month effective May 1, with a \$500,000 option to buy.

The option to buy is pending legislative approval, because all sales of state-owned property must be approved by the General Assembly. The lease is good for two years, Thompson said.

Thompson said the department prefers not to rent to for-profit corporations, and Nanticoke Hospital Co. wants to buy the property, but it takes time for legislative approval for the sale and nobody wanted to see hospital services disrupted in the meantime.

Until the sale does take place, the property, which has an assessed value of \$14,573,600, will not return to the tax rolls, Thompson said.

So, until the sale is approved, Nanticoke will lose out on about \$53,700 in property taxes, the county will lose about \$76,000 and the school district will be out about \$144,700 each year the property remains under state ownership.

Local officials upset

And that doesn't sit well with local officials.

“I don't know if I agree with him about not taxing that property while the state is renting it to a for-profit company,” said Tony Alu, Luzerne County chief assessor.

Alu said the county could use additional tax revenue as soon as possible, and he intends to ask his solicitor to look into case law regarding the taxation of state-owned property being leased to for-profit companies.

Perrone said he had been trying for a week to find out the sale price for Special Care Hospital and how much the school district stood to take in real estate transfer tax. But he was confounded because the county Recorder of Deeds Office had no record of a sale.

“If Scranton got that much money for Mercy, I'm sure \$30,000, \$40,000 or \$50,000 would be a reasonable amount for Nanticoke. I have a school district that doesn't have a very big tax base. ... Every penny counts,” Perrone said, noting that state budget cuts for education are also making it especially difficult for the school district.

“Three hospitals were apparently sold. Even if it's not taxable, there should be some way the city can get some money from it,” he said.

Holly Circo, city administrator for Nanticoke, which has been a financially distressed city since May 2006, said she would "refrain from commenting until the commonwealth determines which direction they're going to move in" on the sale.

Bernet did not respond to a message asking whether Nanticoke Hospital Co. intended to make any payments in lieu of taxes to the city, county or school district until the property is sold.

Calculating transfer tax

As for the real estate transfer tax to be realized through the sale, the city and school district should receive revenue based on the fair market value of the property rather than the \$500,000 sales price.

Joan Hoggarth, Luzerne County deputy recorder of deeds, said that if Nanticoke Hospital Co. doesn't pay the state the fair market value of the property, which is basically the assessed value, the company must submit a Real Transfer Tax Statement of Value and the state Department of Revenue will determine the amount of real estate transfer tax due.

So the city and school district can expect to receive somewhere in the neighborhood of \$73,000 in transfer tax if and when the property is sold.

The state receives 1 percent and the school district and city each get one-half percent of the fair market value.

Williams said the department's real estate division negotiated the \$500,000 sale price based on the fact that the building is more than 100 years old and that Mercy paid for any and all of the improvements to the buildings during the past 20 years.

The assessed value of the Tyler Memorial complex in Tunkhannock Township is \$2.5 million and the sale price recorded on the deed was more than \$5.9 million, according to Wyoming County Chief Assessor Eric Brown.

Tunkhannock Township and Tunkhannock Area each will receive nearly \$29,800 in real estate transfer tax based on the one-half percent tax rate on the recorded sale price.

Scranton School District will receive about \$400,000 based on the approximate \$81 million sale price recorded in the deed for Mercy's Scranton properties.

The city of Scranton will receive about \$2 million or 2.5 percent of the price recorded in the deed because Scranton the city has a Home Rule Charter and can set its own real estate transfer tax rate.

5/7/2011

### **Trojanettes reward Williams with 300th win**

By Jill Snowden - Citizens Voice

Gary Williams would like to forget some losing seasons he has experienced in 21 years as Nanticoke Area's softball coach. But one particularly losing season actually helped the veteran coach take a few steps closer to a milestone.

Williams recently miscounted his coaching victories as he inadvertently overlooked the 1995-1996 season. The Trojanettes finished an uncharacteristic 4-13 that year but, when added to his other wins, Williams closed in on 300 victories a little sooner than expected. On Friday, Williams was rewarded with his 300th win after the Trojanettes posted a convincing 10-2 victory over Coughlin at K.M. Smith Field.

"Before we started the season, I went back and rechecked everything, but somehow I totally forgot a year," Williams said. "I knew I was getting close because we've had a pretty good run the last few years."

That run continues as Nanticoke's win over Coughlin improves the defending Class AA state champions to 10-0 in the Wyoming Valley Conference.

Junior Katie Wolfe highlighted the victory as she drove in six runs on two home runs and a double. She also added a single, while Sammy Gow followed with a home run, double and three RBIs.

"We actually didn't know about it until (assistant coach) Mr. (Ryan) Stetz passed around a ball for us to sign," Wolfe said. "It's nice to be a part of something like this and be a part of a team that is capable of doing so many good things." Williams was doused with Gatorade from his players and enjoyed cake with his family, while his players went off to decorate his front lawn. It's become tradition for the Trojanettes to prank Williams after milestone victories.

"Now we get to go have fun with his yard," Wolfe said. "We'll get toilet paper and shaving creme and we stick clear plastic forks in the ground."

Williams was anticipating his team's good-fun antics. With such a prestigious coaching achievement added to his resume, Williams didn't mind the celebration. The win also gave him a chance to reflect on his 21 seasons, that include two Class AA state titles, five District 2 Class AA championships and five Wyoming Valley Conference crowns.

"I really appreciate the fact that I've always been around a really good group of girls, very nice kids to associate with," Williams said. "And I also appreciate the fact that from day one when my brother-in-law agreed to be my assistant, to my present assistant coaches, I've never had a bad assistant coach. Denise Beltrand and (the late) Charlie Brown were

with me for a long time and now Dave Warren and Bernie Dalmas have been with me at least a dozen years. And then the newer additions of Ryan Stetz and Diane James. I really couldn't have asked for a better coaching staff."

5/6/2011

### **Nanticoke OKs pact for work on firehouse**

### **The City Council modifies procedure for notifying violators of ordinances.**

William Bell - Times Leader

City Council approved two motions and the payment of monthly bills totaling \$303,971 by unanimous votes Wednesday night.

The first vote was the second reading of an ordinance to allow a procedural change. That change allows the use of first class mail as an adequate method to provide service to violators of an ordinance.

The second vote was a resolution to award the heating, ventilation and air conditioning renovation contract for the Nanticoke fire station to low bidder PLD Associates of Wilkes-Barre for a bid amount of \$147,777.

Holly Quinn, city administrator, told council the city was setting up procedures to switch earned income tax collector firms from Berkheimer to the Don Wilkinson Agency. She said this change was the result of the state mandate that one collector be used by all municipalities and school districts in each county.

She said the Luzerne County Tax Collection Committee, on which she is the city's representative, had selected the Don Wilkinson Agency.

She said the change would be implemented during the next few months.

City Clerk Mary Beth Cheshinski announced a free "City Wide Yard Sale" on June 4. She said more information can be obtained from fliers that are being posted around Nanticoke or by calling her office at City Hall.

Mayor Joseph Dougherty, and council members Margaret Haydock and Jon Metta were present. Councilmen Brent Makarczyk and James Litchkofski were unable to attend the meeting.

Council held a closed-door executive session at the end of the regular meeting.

What's next

Nanticoke City Council's next regular meeting is scheduled for May 18 at 7 p.m.

5/1/2011

### **A Capsule look at district finances**

Citizens' Voice

#### **GREATER NANTICOKE AREA**

Estimated operating budget: \$25M|

Potential deficit: \$1.5M

Students: 2,335

Teachers: 144

Greater Nanticoke Area School District officials are waiting until the state budget is finalized before announcing cuts.

"We have a couple of scenarios in mind, but in this day and age with politics, you can't be sure how it's going to go in Harrisburg. So we are not going to give people a lot of sleepless nights by doing anything prematurely," Superintendent Anthony P. Perrone said.

Although a balanced \$25 million preliminary budget was passed in February, revenue cuts in Gov. Tom Corbett's budget proposal could leave Nanticoke with a \$1.5 million deficit.

"We announced at the last board meeting that we may be calling on teachers, administrators and everyone else to take a pay freeze," school board President Robert Raineri said.

Teachers are already working with no wage increases this year, according to the terms of their three-year contract negotiated last year, Raineri said. Eliminating junior high sports would save \$25,000, "which isn't a lot when you look at the budget," Raineri said.

If the district decides to raise taxes, "it's going to be minor," he said. With two or three teacher retirements on the horizon, Raineri said the district may leave one of those vacancies unfilled.

The composure at Nanticoke is based, in part, on a healthy reserve fund and a three-year plan.

"We're in a little bit better shape than a lot of districts," Raineri said. "We have a few million fund balance. But we know we can't spend it all in one year."

## **On Sporting Cuts:**

Nanticoke Area school board member Ken James: "There has been some discussion about it but nothing has been decided one way or the other. Personally, I'm not for that. Our budget in athletics for the total department is 1 percent. You're not talking a lot of savings if we discontinue seventh and eighth grade sports. It's going to impact a large number of students. I understand education is the No. 1 priority but you also need extra curricular activities."

5/1/2011

## **Mission of honor accomplished**

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When Staff Sgt. James Horning of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard heard 150 veterans' grave markers were stolen from three cemeteries two weeks ago, it was a call to action.

"I felt like I had to do something about it," Horning, a recruiter with the 109th Field Artillery in Nanticoke, said. "This is my area; I'm in charge of the recruits in this area."

Saturday, Horning accomplished his mission, replacing each stolen brass marker with a new one culled from area American Legion and VFW posts.

"These markers represent much more than just a piece of brass," Horning said, addressing a crowd of relatives whose loved ones' markers were taken. "They represent an eternity of remembrance for these veterans who have served our great nation... Although these markers were stolen, no one can ever steal the honor, dignity and respect that our veterans have earned. It will stay with them forever."

Cemetery officials discovered last week that thieves had pilfered the markers from three adjoining cemeteries in Glen Lyon: St. Adalbert's, St. Michael's and Italian Independent. Brass markers are sometimes taken for their scrap metal value.

"It's a great thing that he's doing," cemetery caretaker Joe Hillan said. "There's no way we would have had these replaced by Memorial Day without his help."

Horning, 36, of Shickshinny, and a team of recruits from his post called area American Legions looking for replacement holders, which vary in design by war, and by the end of the week had collected all but a handful, which he tracked down at a VFW in Harrisburg. The Nanticoke American Legion also donated 150 American flags to replace those left lying in the mud after the theft of the markers.

The crowd that gathered Saturday was appreciative of Horning's work, even if the thefts still left a sour taste in their mouths.

"I'm so happy that they're replacing them," said Dorothy Tarnowski, of Glen Lyon, who first reported the thefts after she discovered her cousin's marker missing. "It's what I hoped would happen."

Janine Floryshak of Glen Lyon had tears in her eyes as she replaced the marker on her cousin, Brian Patton's grave. Patton was killed while on active duty in Kuwait two years ago.

"To get killed in the line of duty and then someone steals your marker," she said incredulously.

State Rep. Gerald Mullery, D-Newport Township, turned out to the event to pay his respects to the families gathered at the cemetery and to support Horning.

Mullery said constituents have contacted him about the theft and that his staff is now studying the state's power to increase penalties for theft of veteran's markers and to implement a monitoring system at scrap yards to prevent them from accepting the markers.

"If there is something that can be done on both issues I will introduce legislation on both of those issues," Mullery said, adding that he plans to introduce a resolution honoring Horning's efforts in the House soon.

4/27/2011

## **Nanticoke Area plans basketball benefit on Saturday**

Citizens Voice

Pro athletes, local celebrities and Nanticoke Area basketball alumni will come together at 6:30 p.m. Saturday at Nanticoke Area High School to benefit people with muscular dystrophy.

Cliff Lewis organized the event to raise money for his foundation, the Clifton R. Lewis Good Life Foundation.

Lewis, a 1999 Nanticoke Area graduate, lives with muscular dystrophy.

The celebrity game will feature former Bishop O'Reilly, North Carolina Tar Heels and Boston Celtics great Dave Popson, Pittsburgh Steelers guard Darnell Stapleton and Nanticoke Area's all-time boys points leader Paul Guffrovich.

The night will also feature a dunk showcase by Kenny Dobbs.

Dobbs, known as the "Dunk Inventor", has participated in the Sprite Slam Dunk Showdown and is a Nike Dunkfest winner.

Admission for the event is \$6 and all proceeds from the night will go toward the Clifton R. Lewis Good Life Foundation to assist people with muscular dystrophy.

Along with celebrity game and Dobbs' dunk showcase, the night will also feature Nanticoke Area boys intrasquad scrimmage, a 3-point shootout and a dunk contest.

4/26/2011

### **Army sergeant on mission to replace stolen grave markers**

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When he heard thieves raided three Glen Lyon cemeteries of veterans' grave markers, Staff Sgt. James Horning vowed to replace the cherished U.S. flag holders.

After a long weekend of canvassing veteran halls and social clubs, the mission is almost complete.

Horning, a Pennsylvania Army National Guard recruiter with the 109th Field Artillery in Nanticoke, has amassed replacements for all but 20 of the 125 grave markers stolen. He plans to have his project finished by Saturday when he will hold a ceremony at the cemeteries to return flag holders to each of the disturbed graves.

"The respect was stolen from these people and we'll be there to give it back," Horning said.

"Right now this is my mission."

Horning, 36, of Shickshinny, invited the families and friends of the affected veterans to attend and offered them the chance to personally stake the replacement grave marker at their loved one's gravesite.

The ceremony will begin at 1 p.m. at St. Adalbert's Cemetery, which adjoins the other two cemeteries on the outskirts of Glen Lyon.

A 1993 graduate of Greater Nanticoke Area High School, Horning said he was shocked and saddened to read about the thefts last week and felt compelled to help.

Over the weekend, Horning called and visited more than 20 America Legion and Veterans of Foreign War posts, seeking replacement markers. He was able to obtain replacements for all missing markers of veterans of World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. He even tracked down a marker for a Civil War veteran whose flag holder was swiped.

Finding replacements for World War I markers proved to be the most challenging. He found replacements for 35 of the 55 stolen and remains about 20 short. Those with World War I markers can contact him at 570-592-8652.

All of the stolen markers were made of brass, which thieves often try to sell for scrap metal. Horning's collection of replacements, which are stored at the 109th armory in Nanticoke, includes brass and the newer ones made of bronze and aluminum. He also obtained 150 new U.S. flags donated by the American Legion post in Nanticoke.

Horning thanked all the veterans groups who helped as well as his two new recruits, Greater Nanticoke Area seniors Angelique Lopez, 17, and Katelyn Harrison, 18, who worked with him on the project through the weekend.

It was a daunting task on short notice, but Horning said he felt a need to undo the harm and disrespect caused to those who served the country.

"Once I set my mind to it, I was going to make it happen," Horning said.

Newport Township police continue to investigate the thefts. Anyone with information should call Newport Township police at 570-735-2000.

**Family and friends of veterans whose grave markers were stolen from St. Adalbert's, St. Michael's and Italian Independent cemeteries in Glen Lyon are invited to attend a ceremony Saturday at 1 p.m. to celebrate the replacement of the missing flag holders.**

**Pennsylvania Army National Guard Staff Sgt. James Horning, who canvassed the area for replacement markers over the weekend, is still looking for about 20 World War I markers. Those with World War I markers can contact him at 570-592-8652.**

4/24/2011

### **For love of the game**

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Crestwood softball coach Bob Bertoni isn't one to razz the other team's pitcher during a game, or give them a hug and a

kiss on the cheek afterward.

The first-year high school coach, however, found himself in a unique circumstance earlier this season.

A long-time softball coach, from his duties at Luzerne County Community College from 1988 to 1996, to his days with the Wyoming Valley Flames travel softball team and as the leader of the Luzerne County Chaos, Bertoni's daughter, Sarah, has always been by his side.

But for the first time in their softball careers, the Bertonis are rivals.

While her dad is guiding Crestwood, Sarah is a standout senior pitcher for the defending PIAA Class AA champion Nanticoke Area.

"I never thought we would be in this situation," Bob said. "But here we are, and it's actually been going really well."

Bob didn't give it too much thought when one of his travel players contacted him last fall about the open coaching position at Crestwood. He started to entertain the idea after talking to a few more people associated with the program, but before he made a commitment, Sarah was certainly the one person who needed to be 100 percent behind him.

"It was a great opportunity for me, but what did it for me was that Sarah was all for it," said Bob, whose teams faces Nanticoke Area twice during conference play. "She said 'I think you should take the job. Because I will get to beat your butt twice.'"

So far, Sarah has one upped her dad. Nanticoke Area and Crestwood met April 11 the Trojanettes survived a 2-1 showdown. Sarah was the winning pitcher with a three-hitter and she also connected for two singles.

The days and moments leading up to the game were a little awkward, both admit, but once the game started the competitive personalities in each of them overshadowed everything else.

"I gave her the business a little," Bob said. "I thought she went a little high and inside on Alex Hoops and I let her know it. But I also realized that day how good Sarah really is."

That's not to say that Bob wasn't well aware of her talents. He just got a taste of what it's like trying to solve her pitching, rather than celebrate it.

It was under her dad's suggestion that Sarah try pitching when she was 7. After just a few throws in the backyard, Bob saw natural ability in his little girl. But he doesn't take credit for her evolving into the star pitcher she is today. He passed her off to Flossy Finn, a former softball coach who specializes in pitching.

"I learned pretty much everything from her," Sarah said of Finn. "My dad showed me the basics, but she made me as good as I am now."

And that's pretty darn good, considering she led Nanticoke Area to the state title last season and was offered a number of scholarships to pitch in college. She decided to attend Division II Millersville, because of its program as well as its proximity to home so Bob and her mom Eileen can see her play.

Watching Sarah play during the regular high school season is actually something Bob never had the pleasure to do. He coached baseball at Nanticoke Area for five years prior to taking the Crestwood job.

He relied on Eileen to videotape Sarah's games. When Nanticoke Area reached the post season last year, Bob took over the camera and was one of the Trojanettes' biggest supporters.

"It's a phenomenal feeling as a parent to see your kid go through something like winning a state championship," Bob said. "I wish every parent could experience that kind of pride."

Both Bertonis are experiencing early-season success. Nanticoke Area (5-0) has outscored its opponents, 33-4. Sarah is 3-0, allowing just one run and three walks while striking out 11.

Crestwood (4-2) is led by Hoops, who paces the conference with three home runs and three doubles. She will be a teammate of Sarah's next season at Millersville.

"I have a true passion to coach softball and the players on my team are great kids and great athletes," Bob said. "Sarah has come up to see us play and cheer for us and she's become friends with some of the girls."

Bob may need Eileen to keep the camera rolling for the rest of the season, but he will get one more chance to face Nanticoke Area and Sarah. The teams will meet May 16 at Nanticoke, the final home game for Sarah - the only senior on the Trojanettes' roster.

"It's definitely going to be interesting to play against him for my last game at Nanticoke, especially since he'll be escorting me onto the field wearing a Crestwood shirt," Sarah said with a laugh. "But I'm really happy that he decided to coach there. He's enjoying it and I really hope his team goes far. He's a great coach, really intense and not too laid back. You can definitely tell I'm his daughter."

4/21/2011

**Council OKs closing part of Nanticoke Avenue**

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Over the protests of a handful of residents, borough council approved Wednesday closing a portion of Nanticoke Avenue to vehicle traffic, behind Luzerne County Community College's culinary arts center, to make the area safer for students.

Council members and the mayor pushed for the school to be a good neighbor to residents, and Joseph Grilli, LCCC's vice president of training institutes, external affairs and planning, agreed to look into some of the residents' concerns. Those included making sure tractor-trailer trucks pulling up to the building's rear dock would not block traffic for residents of Coal Street, as Virginia Knorek said there are times the trucks are there for half an hour, blocking the flow of traffic.

The council also approved an ordinance to ban the sale and use of bath salts within city limits after several high-profile incidents have been connected to the designer drugs that mimic the effects of cocaine and methamphetamine. Violations of the Nanticoke ordinance would carry a \$500 fine and up to 30 days in jail.

Mayor Joseph Dougherty noted the ordinance had passed preliminarily before the county obtained an injunction on bath salts.

Resident John Newman's request for a letter he wrote to council and the solicitor's response to be formally read into the meeting minutes led to a heated discussion that resulted in Newman's request being granted. Newman had asked about conditional use zoning, and said he felt it was important to be read into the formal meetings because he is concerned about a proposed industrial development near Espy Street and wants to make sure proper procedure is followed.

4/21/2011

### **Mercy hospitals announce new names**

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By Josh Mrozinski (Staff Writer)

Officials with soon-to-be new owners Community Health Systems Inc. on Wednesday announced new names for the facilities in Nanticoke, Tunkhannock and Scranton after the group's purchase of Mercy Health Partners is finalized, possibly as early as May 1.

Mercy's Tunkhannock property will be renamed Tyler Memorial Hospital, the Nanticoke property will become Special Care Hospital, and the Scranton property will become Regional Hospital of Scranton, officials said.

"We offer reasons to smile about the future of health care in the region," said CHS acquisition project manager Aaron Hazzard on Wednesday, during the announcement of the new names.

Hazzard said the new names, developed after holding discussions with stakeholders, will be outward signs of the inner values cherished by Mercy, which was founded a century ago as a Catholic hospital.

As the new Scranton name was being unveiled, some observers suggested the real question is whether the city can continue to support three hospitals - the newly-christened CHS facility, Community Medical Center and Moses Taylor Hospital.

"There has been general discussion over the years about the subject," said Austin Burke, Greater Scranton Chamber of Commerce president. "The general consensus is that the area can support two hospitals, not three."

And the new name?

"You want it to be recognizable," Burke said. "It's a name that gets the job done."

But, he pointed out, such an institution's name is important and indicates an organization's purpose, location and service area.

Joshua Nemzoff, a New Hope consultant who has managed hundred of hospital mergers and acquisitions, said it would make "enormous sense" if Scranton's hospitals are discussing potential deals.

"You have three hospitals in a town that only needs two hospitals," Nemzoff said.

Reached after the announcement, Tomi Galin, CHS spokeswoman, said the word "regional" was included in the name for the Scranton hospital because the hospital offers a "wide breadth of services" beyond the city.

Other area officials, including from neighboring hospitals, offered neighborly words for Mercy's new operator.

"CMC welcomes CHS to the region," said Wendy Wilson, CMC spokeswoman. "Competition always benefits patients." CMC President and Chief Executive Officer Bob Steigmeyer said they are engaging in conversations "all the time" about opportunities to strengthen his hospitals' ability to provide quality health care.

Moses Taylor President and Chief Executive Officer Karen Murphy said they welcome CHS and "look forward to collaborating with the area hospitals and physicians in improving health care delivery in our community."

Bishop Joseph Bambera, who participated in choosing new names for Mercy, said that while the hospitals will no longer



be Catholic institutions, he said he believes the "facilities will maintain the same principles that are expressed in the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (ERDs), especially a deep and abiding respect for the sacredness of all human life from conception to natural death.

4/16/2011

### **GNA considers pay freezes for teachers, other cuts**

JIM MORRISSEY Times Leader Correspondent

Greater Nanticoke Area School Board is bracing for possible budget cuts in the district, school officials said at the board meeting Thursday night.

The board is waiting to see if Gov. Tom Corbett's proposed budget passes.

School Board President Robert Raineri said he may be asking the teachers and support personnel unions to take a pay freeze on their normal 2-percent-to-3-percent annual increase in salary.

Superintendent Anthony Perrone said the district will be just fine one way or the other. Perrone also maintains officials can make up the difference if the cuts are in the \$1 million to \$1.5 million range.

Assistant Principal John Gorham credited three students for bringing one of the best anti-bullying programs in the country to the school. Gorham said students Thomsina Watson, Brook Chapin and Hanna Rubaski "were instrumental in researching programs and ultimately finding the best program out there... and they did."

The students brought a program called Teen Truth Live, an award winning anti-bullying program that also deals with drug abuse and self-esteem.

The program is a California based program, featuring award winning producer and director Erahm Christopher of Canada. The program has already reached more than 3 million students. Parents are urged to attend the school assembly sessions of the program on April 21 at 8 a.m., 10 a.m. and noon. This program is showing firsthand how and what students can do to prevent and stop bullying.

4/7/2011

### **Road rage: Tiny Nanticoke roadway prompts heated discussion**

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A small stretch of road fueled a long debate Wednesday night as several residents grilled city council about Luzerne County Community College's plans to obtain a tiny portion of Nanticoke Street and close it to vehicle traffic.

The college wants council to vacate a 0.059-acre stretch of the road behind the school's culinary arts institute to ensure student safety, said Joseph Grilli, LCCC's vice president of training institutes, external affairs and planning. Foot traffic would still be allowed, and a manual gate on the road could be opened to allow for deliveries to the school, he said.

"If you see the way the building is configured, you take three steps outside of the back door and the student is in the roadway," Grilli said. "It's a very dangerous situation."

Though Grilli said the college always intended to obtain and close the street to traffic, many residents expressed surprise at the planned move. They questioned whether the road closure, which would run between Coal and West Main streets, could hinder emergency access and insisted it would inconvenience residents living in the area.

Rich Shibilski has been using the road for 50 years, he said, and ticked off four streets that he said would be adversely affected by a road closure. He accused council of putting LCCC's interests above those of city residents.

"You're just going to say, 'Hey, we don't worry about you, we don't represent you, you didn't vote for us,'" Shibilski said.

As the questions continued, Mayor Joseph Dougherty bristled and expressed a desire to move on with the meeting. He admitted it might take people "two more minutes to get around the corner" but said the college will help reinvigorate the city's downtown in return.

"Now do we stop progress? Do we stop the development of downtown? You can still get around that area," the mayor said. "Do we want Nanticoke to be empty storefronts? Do we want nothing there, nobody on the street? I don't. We've got to move forward."

City police and fire chiefs assured Dougherty they could still access the area in an emergency, the mayor said. City officials also pointed out the college recently paid \$15,000 in real estate taxes to the city and has spent more than \$100,000 in permitting fees. LCCC will also take over maintenance of the road, Grilli said.

The council eventually tabled the ordinance that would cede the road to the college because it lacked the necessary four voting members to move forward. Two council members were excused from the meeting.

In other business, the council gave preliminary approval to an ordinance that would ban the sale and use of bath salts within city limits after several high-profile incidents have been connected to the designer drugs that mimic the effects of cocaine and methamphetamine.

Violations of the ordinance would carry a \$500 fine and up to 30 days in jail.

4/2/2011

## **Legislation The synthetic drug substitutes, seeing upsurge in popularity, have effects similar to cocaine Towns target bath salts with laws**

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As problems with people high on synthetic drug substitutes disguised as bath salts continue to grow in the region, one city has passed a law banning them and at least a few others are taking steps to follow suit.

Hazleton has taken action to ban bath salts. Several other Luzerne County communities are planning action.

Hazleton City Council last week adopted an ordinance banning the sale and possession of synthetic drugs marketed as – but not limited to – incense, potpourri, plant fertilizers, insect repellents and bath salts.

Several stores in the region have been selling the substances, which have effects similar to cocaine.

Courtney Accurti, director of communications for the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs, said she hasn't heard of any boroughs banning bath salts, but the issue is starting to appear on the association's online member forum. The association does not have a sample ordinance to provide its membership, she said.

Representatives of the Pennsylvania League of Cities and Municipalities and the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors did not return messages for this story.

Area municipalities that have passed or are considering bath salts ordinances include:

### **Hazleton**

City Council adopted an ordinance on March 23 based on ordinances the city clerk found in other states. It lists 11 chemicals that, if contained in the substances, would make them illegal to sell, distribute or possess within city limits. Violating the ordinance could be punished with a fine up to \$500 and/or incarceration up to 30 days, with each day of violation constituting a separate offense.

### **Nanticoke**

City Council on Wednesday will consider a bath salts ordinance that city Solicitor Bill Finnegan said “substantially mirrors” Hazleton's ordinance. Finnegan said he asked the mayor if he wanted him to work on an ordinance after he read about the issue. “Rather than reinvent the wheel, I checked to see who had the best one and (Hazleton's) ... covered everything it looks like needed to be covered,” he said.

### **Wilkes-Barre**

Assistant city Solicitor Bill Vinsko is working on a bath salts ordinance. A draft will be available at council's work session on April 12 and will likely come up for a vote at the April 14 council meeting. Vinsko is also working with Luzerne County District Attorney Jacqueline Musto Carroll on a court injunction to ban sales in the city. Musto Carroll has been exploring a petition that would seek a court injunction to ban sales by retailers, similar to a court injunction imposed in Lackawanna County on Wednesday.

### **Scranton**

Lackawanna County District Attorney Andy Jarbola announced Wednesday that a preliminary injunction had been approved against the vendors of bath salts within Scranton's limits. Meanwhile, Scranton City Council is set to introduce legislation at a meeting on Tuesday to ban the sale and possession of so-called bath salts.

The issue soon could be moot locally, as laws also are in the works at state and federal levels.

### **State House**

The state House of Representatives on Monday is scheduled to vote on legislation that would ban certain chemicals used in the manufacture of bath salts. If it passes, the bill will be taken up in the state Senate.

H.R. 1254, or the Synthetic Drug Control Act, was introduced Wednesday in the U.S. House of Representatives. It would ban the compounds used in synthetic drugs that are sold as bath salts or plant food.

3/24/2011

## **Corbett picks Wilkes grad to direct conservation**

### **Richard J. Allan was general manager of Allan Industries in Wilkes-Barre from 1975 to 1991.**

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A native of Nanticoke and a graduate of Wilkes University will be nominated by Gov. Tom Corbett to serve as secretary of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Corbett said Wednesday that he intends to nominate Richard J. Allan, 57, now a resident of Camp Hill, to the post. "Richard Allan is a proven leader and commands a wealth of knowledge and experience in environmental and energy issues," Corbett said. "I am confident that his abilities and background will be a tremendous benefit to DCNR, especially during this critical time in the agency's history."

Allan graduated from Wilkes University with a bachelor of science degree in Environmental Sciences/Biology in 1976. He was vice president and general manager of Allan Industries in Wilkes-Barre from 1975 to 1991.

His brother, John Allan, now runs the business.

"I am very honored that Gov. Corbett would even consider me for this position," Allan said when contacted at home. He is the second Northeastern Pennsylvania native to be nominated to Corbett's cabinet. In January, Dan Meuser was named secretary of the Department of Revenue. Meuser, 46, is former president of Pride Mobility of West Pittston. Pat Solano, a friend of Allan's, has been a major force in GOP politics in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Solano said he was pleased to learn of Allan's nomination.

"He is certainly capable to do this job," Solano said. "I'm glad that he has made himself available to serve the governor and the state."

Allan is a member of the boards of directors of the F.M. Kirby Center for the Performing Arts and the Sordoni Foundation.

According to the state Department of State's campaign finance database, Allan contributed a total of \$2,150 to Corbett's campaigns in 2009 and 2010. He also was a member of Corbett's transition team for energy and environmental issues.

According to a release from the governor's office, Allan has long been involved in environmental interests.

He was a founding member of Back Mountain Recreation Inc., a recreation and environmental facility in Luzerne County. He was also a founding member of the North Branch Land Trust, which provides management to more than 10,000 acres of land in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

He has also worked with the LACAWAC Sanctuary Foundation.

Since 1991 Allan has served as executive director for the Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware members of the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, the national trade association that represents the recycling industry. Since 2005, he has also been a consultant to energy producers in the electric, wind, solar and coal sectors.

Allan has served on the boards of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and Pennsylvania Resources Council since 2000. He was also a member of the energy and environmental committees for Corbett's transition team.

Allan and his wife, Patricia, have two adult daughters.

The state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is charged with maintaining and preserving the 117 state parks; managing the 2.1 million acres of state forest land; providing information on the state's ecological and geologic resources; and establishing community conservation partnerships with grants and technical assistance to benefit rivers, trails, greenways, local parks and recreation, regional heritage parks, open space and natural areas.

3/23/2011

### **Honors for Bieski**

Times Leader

West Virginia senior Amy Bieski was recently named Gymnast of the Year and Outstanding Senior of the Year by the East Atlantic Gymnastics League.

Bieski, a graduate of Nanticoke Area, is only the sixth gymnast to win both awards in the same season.

"It's such an honor to win both awards," Bieski said. "I really didn't expect this at all. I've had an enjoyable four years at West Virginia."

Coach Linda Burdette-Good wasn't surprised that Bieski won the honors.

"Amy has had a wonderful season and I think the league coaches noticed that," the coach said. "Over the last four years Amy has had an incredible impact on our program."

After winning the award, Bieski competed in the league championships in Washington, D.C. She captured the bars (9.825) and finished fifth in the all-around (38.95). The all-around score moves her into second place all-time in career points with 1,940.6.

"Amy recovered well after a shaky beam routine and her bars routine was beautiful," Burdette-Good said. "I'm happy to see that she was able to win a league title in her senior season."

The Mountaineers now must wait to hear if they have qualified for the NCAA Championships. The regionals are April 2

in Athens, GA.

3/4/2011

### **Council OKs storm water ordinance**

### **Request for vacating a city street for the community college is also read.**

William Bell - Times Leader

What's next

City council's next regular meeting is March 16 at 7 p.m.

City Council on Wednesday night approved the second reading of the new storm water management ordinance as well as the first reading of an ordinance to vacate a portion of Nanticoke Avenue.

The thoroughfare will be partially vacated at the request of Luzerne County Community College. The college plans to use the property for additional parking and access to its buildings.

Council also voted to table, until its next meeting, a resolution to adopt the civil service rules for the city's Fire Department Civil Service Commission.

Mayor Joseph Dougherty began the council meeting by reading a proclamation to honor the local chapter of the DeMolay Organization.

The DeMolay Organization is a Masonic Youth Order that stresses social skills and leadership. The month of March was named "DeMolay Month" by the city.

The mayor also announced that the city's finance director would no longer offer free income tax assistance to low-income and senior residents after a woman at the meeting raised a question about it. The woman suggested the city should cut Pamela Heard's pay since she apparently had time during working hours to provide the volunteer service.

After the comments, Dougherty said the service was canceled. In other business, representatives of Pasonick and Associates, the city's engineer, made a brief presentation covering a number of pending projects. The firm requested that all bids for a ceiling project in the police department be rejected and the bids be reconsidered after the city completed part of the work itself to cut down on costs. It also requested that the heating ventilation and air-conditioning project for the firehouse be rebid.

The initial bidding was stopped when there was concern about possible asbestos in the building. Subsequent testing has revealed there was no asbestos problem.

3/4/2011

### **Public gets look at parkway plan**

### **Downsized \$34.6M South Valley Parkway has been a long time coming for many. It's still five years away.**

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Most roadways have mile markers. But the South Valley Parkway can be measured in years.

First initiated in 2001 by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the project to reduce traffic and improve safety on a two-mile section of Middle Road isn't expected to be ready until 2016.

The most recent design of state Route 3046, as it will be called, was presented for public view Thursday night at Luzerne County Community College.

The \$34.6 million project includes the construction of two new bridges over state Route 29, six new intersections and three traffic roundabouts along the parkway between Hanover Township and Nanticoke.

Getting to that point has taken five public meetings, numerous revisions and the persistent demands for something to be done from people who live along the road.

State Sen. John Yudichak, D-Plymouth Township, who has supported the parkway, liked what he saw, but noted it was different from what's been proposed over the years.

It doesn't run in to Newport Township. It's been cut down to two lanes from four and the cost has come down considerably from the \$102.5 million estimated in 2007. And it's still another five years away.

"I share the frustrations of residents particularly the residents who live along Middle Road," said Yudichak

But the funding is in place and it's moving closer to construction. The parkway is a priority for PennDOT, which eliminated 500 projects statewide because of budget constraints, he said, adding, "It's a big deal."

Most of the money being spent by PennDOT within District 4 that includes Luzerne County is on repair and maintenance of roadways. Only two new "capacity adding" roadway projects are scheduled for the district. "This is one

of them," he said.

The other is a new access road from the entrance of the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport over the Pennsylvania Turnpike and into the Grimes Industrial Park in Pittston Township.

Like Yudichak, Jerry Hudak, president of the South Valley Chamber of Commerce, has been pushing for the project that at one point, he said, was "literally dead."

Hudak said he brought to the attention of PennDOT that the parkway could serve as an exit out of Nanticoke if the heavily traveled Sans Souci Parkway was closed due to a disaster such as train derailment.

"We needed another egress route," said Hudak. After he made his appeal, he said, "It got reinstated."

Dorothy Kosloski of Hanover Township doubted the project would achieve its desired result. "It's still not going to cut the traffic down on Middle Road," she said.

People are creatures of habit and motorists, mainly those coming and going to the college, will still speed past her house, she said.

2/28/2011

### **School News**

Citizens Voice

### **Greater Nanticoke Area School District will conduct kindergarten registration for the 2011-12 school term March 14-15.**

Children will register according to last names at K.M. Smith Elementary School, 25 Robert St., Sheatown.

On March 14, children with last names beginning with the letters A to L will register from 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. and names with M to Z will register from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. On March 15, last names beginning with the letters M to Z will register from 8:30 to 11 a.m. and A to L will register from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m.

In order to be eligible for kindergarten next school year, a child must be 5 or older on or before Sept. 1, 2011.

Parents should accompany their child. Bring the child's birth certificate and provide all health and immunization records. Also two proofs of residency are required. If a child is a foster child or has a custody paper, bring the original so a copy can be made for the child's record.

According to the Department of Health, all children must be immunized with the following in order to attend school: DPT, four or more properly spaced doses with the fourth dose given on or after the fourth birthday; Polio, three or more properly spaced doses; MMR, two properly spaced doses with the first dose on or after the first birthday; Hepatitis B, three properly spaced doses of; chicken pox, two doses of varicella vaccine or a history of having had chicken pox. All children registering for kindergarten will receive audio, visual and speech examinations. A reading readiness screening also will be conducted.

Registration packets are available between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. in the principal's office at K.M. Smith School.

Parents/guardians may pick up a packet and should bring all necessary papers needed for registration. Copies will be made at this time. This is to help make registration move smoothly and quickly at registration in March.

2/28/2011

### **Switching Gears**

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The South Valley Parkway project has been moving ahead at the rate of a truck stuck in bottlenecked traffic during rush hour.

Now the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation is hoping to clear the jam and move forward with the road designed to link state Route 29 in Hanover Township with Luzerne County Community College in Nanticoke. The highway is intended to relieve traffic on Middle Road in the Askam section of Hanover Township, address safety issues and create a more direct route to the college.

PennDOT is holding a public meeting at LCCC on Thursday to show South Valley residents what's new.

"It will be the latest design that's been approved by Harrisburg," PennDOT spokeswoman Karen Dussinger said.

Originally the South Valley Parkway was supposed to have four lanes, but after a project review and "right-sizing effort," it was reduced to two narrower lanes. The latest plans also include two traffic roundabouts at the LCCC entrances at Prospect and Kosciuszko streets.

The South Valley Parkway was first conceived in 2000 and was expected to be a reality by 2004. Plans stalled repeatedly due to funding issues. Its highest estimated total project cost was \$102.5 million in 2007; it stands at \$34.6

million today, Dussinger said.

She said all four phases - preliminary engineering, final design, right-of-way acquisition and construction - are fully funded, with 80 percent of the money coming from the federal government and 20 percent from the state.

The project is on track to start in 2013 and wrap up in 2016, according to Dussinger.

"However, given today's economy and changing budgetary priorities, this schedule may change," she noted.

One of the purposes of the South Valley Parkway is to help relieve traffic through Askam. For years people who live on Middle Road have complained of traffic and speeding.

Increased enrollment at LCCC due to the economy has worsened the problem, said resident Don Casterline, who was on the design committee for the original parkway.

"There isn't one person who goes 25 miles per hour on this road. Average speed I'd say is at least 45, 50. Double," he said.

The parkway would take away some of the traffic coming from nearby Interstate 81, but the locals will still use Middle Road - it's a shortcut, he said.

Casterline said he and his neighbors plan to attend Thursday's meeting, but he isn't optimistic.

"I think they'll just go through the motions," he said. "I really don't see any promise in this."

He added, "PennDOT doesn't have \$50 million. Their bridges are falling apart. They're not going to build a secondary road that's only going to serve a select few."

2/23/2011

### **Nanticoke gov't study group quizzes officials to gather info**

William Bell - Times Leader

#### What's Next

The commission's next meeting is on March 8.

The Nanticoke City Government Study Commission started its fact-gathering process Tuesday night by conducting interviews with some local officials.

The seven-person commission, created last May by the voters to determine if a home rule charter would better serve city residents, interviewed state Rep. Gerald Mullery. The Newport Township Democrat was asked a number of questions concerning the Third Class City Code, which governs the city's actions.

While there was general concern that parts of the code were outdated and should be revised, Mullery said he had not seen any legislative efforts in that direction. He said he would check into any potential legislation.

Nanticoke Police Chief James Cheshinski and Fire Chief Michael Bohan described the general duties and responsibilities of their departments.

The commission requested the panel's solicitor research the basis for any mandatory retirement age for police officers.

The commission also asked Gerald Cross, executive director of the Pennsylvania Economy League's local office and Act 47 (Distressed Community Act) consultant to the city about if he was aware of any move to legislate changes that would modernize local government structure or change the way local governments obtain revenue.

Cross said that while plans have been suggested by many, only minor changes have occurred. He said there are a number of grassroots efforts under way, including one by a number of chambers of commerce, but change affecting local governments is very difficult to get through the Legislature.

2/21/2011

### **Youth will visit Spain**

### **St. Faustina's Parish will send 20 members to World Youth Day in Madrid this year.**

B. Garret Rogan - Times Leader

When World Youth Day, an international Catholic youth celebration, kicks off its 26th year of celebration this year in Madrid, Spain, 20 members of the St. Faustina's Parish of Nanticoke Youth Group intend to be there.

The celebration is held annually at local levels across the world, but every two to three years it is celebrated on a grand scale at one location with a week's worth of events highlighted by a visit from Pope Benedict XVI.

The last celebration was held in Sydney, Australia, in 2008.

The group of Nanticoke parishioners has been raising funds for the trip since November 2009. The cost is roughly \$4,000 per person, and the group has raised more than \$43,000 thus far.

"I'm just thrilled that this is all coming together. That's the only word for it," the Rev. John Nash, pastor, of St. Faustina Parish said. The Hanover native has been the St. Faustina pastor for more than six years.

He was quick to point out all of the fundraising has been done by the group members themselves. Although they have received a lot of support from the parish members, they have received no contributions from the parish itself.

Since November 2009, the group has held nearly every type of fundraiser that it could think of -- breakfasts, dinners, Chinese auctions, candy sales and bingo tournaments.

The group members plan to continue raising funds as often as they can, leading up to their August departure for the festivities. They're planning a breakfast Sunday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the St. Mary's Social Club on Hanover Street. A fish fry is planned for the same location on March 11 from 4 to 8 p.m.

Kevin Halchek, 29, of Nanticoke, has taken up a position of leadership within the group. He said that although it is a World Youth Day celebration, the St. Faustina parishioners are going as a community of the faithful. The members range in age from 15 through 61.

Before the World Youth Day celebrations in Madrid, the group will be sightseeing at vaunted Catholic heritage sights in Rome and Assisi, Italy.

In addition to the fundraising, group members have been tasked with researching the geography, culture and history of the places that they will be visiting. The group members will meet three times to present information that they've researched to one another.

"There is a lot of preparation required because this is a pilgrimage as opposed to a vacation," Halchek said of the work going into the trip.

The group will hold two spiritual retreats before departing in August.

Jeff Jaikes, 16, of Nanticoke, is one of the group's youngest members. He said he was drawn to the trip out of a desire to travel and learn more about the Catholic faith.

He had always had wanted to visit some of the revered locations in and around Rome, and when pressed, he guiltily admitted that he was more excited about the sightseeing than actually hearing an address from Pope Benedict.

2/18/2011

### **Man who saved fire victim in January is honored**

William Bell - Times Leader

Kenneth Diguilio of Nanticoke was honored at the City Council meeting Wednesday night for saving his neighbor from his burning home back on Jan. 19.

Diguilio was presented with a Citizen Life Saving Award. Additionally, state Rep. Gerald Mullery, D-Newport Township, presented him with a copy of a Pennsylvania State House of Representatives resolution honoring his actions, and state Sen. John Yudichak, D-Plymouth Township, presented Diguilio with a copy of a Pennsylvania State Senate resolution, also honoring his actions.

After the presentations, council appointed Steven Duda and Lee Ann Hamm to the city Recreation Board.

The council adjourned for a brief executive session to discuss personnel matters.

Upon returning, council approved resolutions raising the hourly wage for part-time firefighters from \$11 to \$14 an hour and setting the hourly wage for the part-time code enforcement officer at \$10 an hour.

During the public-comment portion of the meeting, the condition of the roads and the lack of proper sidewalk snow removal by residents were discussed.

Council said the roads would be addressed on a case-by-case basis, subject to the weather. The city will work on specific problem areas.

As to the snow removal, Mayor Joseph Dougherty said the new code enforcement officer has already started work on citations for those residences and businesses not in compliance.

It was also announced that the Home Rule Study Commission will meet on Feb. 22.

2/12/2011

### **No tax increase in preliminary budget**

Steven FondoTimes Leader Correspondent

The [Greater Nanticoke Area](#) School Board voted Thursday night to approve a preliminary 2011-12 budget of about \$25.8 million.

The new budget reflects a \$400,000 increase over fiscal year 2010-11 but does not include a tax hike for district

residents.

Superintendent Tony Perrone said the district will amend its academic calendar to address the snow days taken this winter. Student makeup days are: Feb. 21, April 21, May 13 and June 8-10. Graduation date has been moved to June 10. On a previous matter, Director of Buildings and Grounds Frank Grevera updated the board on the water leak that occurred at the high school on Jan. 26. Grevera estimated the damage to property and equipment was about \$40,000. He said he has consulted a flooring specialty firm to inspect the water-damaged gymnasium floor and provide an estimate for repairs.

Grevera stated the district's liability coverage will reimburse all costs associated with the water leak.

Perrone also reported the district will hold a kindergarten pre-registration on March 13 and 14. Medical and professional personnel will be on hand at the registration to provide screening for immunization, vision, hearing and speech. In other business, the board adopted a new kindergarten eligibility policy which states that a student must be 5 years old on or before Sept. 1 of the school year to be enrolled in the district.

2/9/2011

### **Nanticoke officials will continue on with home rule study**

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Nanticoke's government study commission will have a lot of work to do in the next few months.

"We passed the resolution unanimously to continue on with a home rule study," commission chairman Jerry Hudak said. Since last May, when city residents voted to form the commission, its members have been studying Nanticoke's current form of government - third-class city code - to determine whether a home rule charter would make local government more efficient, economic, effective and responsible to residents. Commission members plan to have more interviews with officials in home rule municipalities like Kingston, Wilkes-Barre, Easton and Carbondale, Hudak said. The study commission has nine months to draw up the charter, in order to get it on the ballot for residents to vote on in November.

Hudak said the commission's next meeting will be 7 p.m. on Feb. 22 at the municipal building. Meetings are held at 7 p.m. the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month and are public.

2/4/2011

### **GNA high school resumes classes**

Times Leader Staff

High school students at Greater Nanticoke Area will return to classes today after maintenance crews identified and repaired a water main leak that closed the school on Thursday.

Superintendent Anthony Perrone said students arrived at the school Thursday morning and were bused back home. The district's other schools were not impacted by the water leak.

This is the second time the high school has been disrupted by a water issue.

Last Tuesday, the main water line serving the building became disconnected, causing water to gush through the school. Workers used vacuums and dryers to clean up the wet mess.

1/28/2011

### **'Join the Jungle' and raise cash for good cause**

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A group of Greater Nanticoke Area seniors is asking fellow students and basketball fans to come "Join the Jungle" on Saturday night.

As part of their senior project, Joe Badowski, 18, Cody Bukowski, 17, and Megan Shock, 17, are trying to draw people to the boy's home basketball game to raise money for "Coaches vs. Cancer."

The night is being billed as a "Nanticoke Basketball Extravaganza," featuring games by the school's freshman at 4 p.m., junior varsity at 5:45 p.m. and varsity at 7:30 p.m. against GAR. Youths in the Bidy Basketball program will play an exhibition between games and members of the school's 2010 softball team will be presented their state championship rings at halftime of the varsity game.

"We're trying to get a lot of people to go to the game," Shock said.

The goal is to get at least 300 students to the game to form "the Jungle," the longtime nickname of GNA's student



section. For \$10, students will receive a game ticket, T-shirt, "Coaches vs. Cancer" wrist band and a wall stamp. Shirts will also be on sale at the game and donations will be accepted.

Bukowski plays on the basketball team and hopes a large crowd will show.

"It helps you play. You get a lot more pumped," Bukowski said.

Coaches vs. Cancer is a nationwide collaboration between the American Cancer Society and the National Association of Basketball Coaches that empowers basketball coaches, their teams, and local communities to make a difference in the fight against cancer. Money raised at the event will be donated to the American Cancer Society.

"A lot of students don't like to get involved with a lot of school activities, but this is getting everyone involved," said Badowski. "The game is a big benefit - supporting Coaches vs. Cancer is what it's all about."

The students hope to raise at least \$3,000. If they reach their goal, students at GNA will get dress-down days on Fridays in February and their project advisor, social studies teacher Ryan Stetz, agreed to wear a "goofy costume."

"This is bigger than one person. Nanticoke came forward and supported this wholeheartedly," Stetz said. "Everyone embraced this with open arms. It really took teamwork to pull it off."

1/28/2011

### **Opposition to solar firm heated Plans meet resistance in Nanticoke meeting**

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The solar panel company interested in building a distribution center on mine-scarred land was told to look elsewhere by residents who live next to the proposed site near Luzerne County Community College.

The company plans to build a 60,000-square-foot building with 85 parking spaces on 15 acres of the parcel. The building would house offices, a showroom and a warehouse to store some of the panels that would be trucked there and then shipped out to job sites.

Ted Warkowski, president of Mid-Atlantic Solar Supply LLC, said he has alternatives to the location, but wanted to bring up to 60 jobs and tax revenues to the city.

"We're going to pursue it and see what we can do," Warkowski said.

He discussed his plans for the site after withdrawing a request to have the land rezoned.

Warkowski and Mike Dziak, president and chief executive officer of the land owner, Earth Conservancy, were prepared to seek a zoning change to industrial from residential for a little more than 51 acres bordered by Middle Road and Espy Street.

But the city's Zoning Hearing Board did not have the authority to make the change, said its solicitor, Mark McNealis. He directed them to go before city council to begin the process.

"A project of this magnitude is going to take quite a few public meetings," said McNealis.

For nearly two hours, Warkowski and Dziak faced an angry crowd of approximately 30 people, answered their questions and dispelled rumors.

The people who install the solar panels will receive federal tax credits, not the company, added Warkowski.

The property is not in a Keystone Opportunity Zone that provides tax abatements, said Dziak. Earth Conservancy, a non-profit agency created in 1994 to reclaim the lands of the former Blue Coal Co., would like to complete the reclamation of the site and build a solar farm on it to either power the nearby college or feed the electricity back into the power grid, said Dziak.

The company plans to build a 60,000-square-foot building with 85 parking spaces on 15 acres of the parcel. The building would house offices, a showroom and a warehouse to store some of the panels that would be trucked there and then shipped out to job sites. There would be some truck traffic for deliveries, explained Warkowski who is a partner with Jerry Hudak in the company.

"Do I want something right behind my house to decrease the value of it after I spent 30 years improving it?" asked Meadowcrest Drive resident John Gregorowicz.

He said he opposed the proposed site and told Warkowski to locate across town in the Nanticoke Industrial Park.

"We approached them first," said Warkowski, adding he has not yet heard back.

Contrary the park's name, most of it is in Newport Township, said Thomas Wall, a member of the Zoning Hearing Board.

Wall acknowledged he understood why people had concerns and he tried to convince people who live near the land that the proposed building would not be close to anyone's house.

"For something good, you have to have something bad, too. It's a tradeoff," said Wall.

If the company did locate to the site, the city's tax base would increase and it would bring jobs to the city, he said. Still, the residents were not satisfied with the answers from Warkomski and Dziak and said that there are plenty of empty buildings elsewhere to move into. "Why, why, why ruin it?" said Dorothy Talacka of building on the site and disturbing the land and cutting down trees. "Go where it's paved or where it's ready for you."

1/28/2011

**Dad wants action after son forgotten for hours in school transport  
Driver left 4-year-old boy in SUV after vehicle dropped off for repairs, official confirms.**

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Michael Perrins of Nanticoke can't comprehend how someone could forget a small child in a vehicle, especially when a person gets paid to transport children to and from school.

Wilkes-Barre police are investigating the incident. It is not known if the driver will be charged with endangering the welfare of children or other violations.

Perrins' son, 4-year-old Michael, also known as Mikey, was forgotten in a Cragle Bus Service SUV for several hours Tuesday after the vehicle was dropped off for repairs in Wilkes-Barre.

Perrins wants immediate changes made and the driver to be held responsible for forgetting his child.

Wilkes-Barre police are investigating the incident. It is not known if the driver will be charged with endangering the welfare of children or other violations.

Perrins wants the driver to face some type of punishment. He points out that if a person were to leave a child in a vehicle at a store for a few minutes he or she would be in trouble with the law enforcement authorities.

"It may not be jail, but house arrest or something. I think that is my biggest fear that it is going to get lost in the system," Perrins said.

No one knew Mikey was missing until noon Tuesday. Perrins escorted his two children, Mikey and his 5-year-old sister, to the bus stop at 8 a.m. Tuesday and watched Mikey climb onto the third-row seat of an SUV, a different vehicle than his sister. Mikey should have started classes at the Luzerne-Wyoming Early Intervention Program at 9:15 a.m. Perrins called the school shortly before noon because Mikey was late arriving home and was informed that Mikey had not arrived for class.

Perrins' mind began racing, wondering what happened to his son.

He then called the owner of Cragle Bus Service to find out where his son was. He said the transportation owner soon called back informing him the vehicle transporting Mikey was taken in for repairs at Valley Chevrolet shortly before 9 a.m. and a dealership employee found Mikey in the vehicle that was parked outside.

Calls to the transportation service were not returned as of press time.

Mikey told his family he was screaming and crying while locked in the vehicle, but no one heard him calling for help.

The boy was evaluated at a local hospital and found to not suffer from frostbite or other injuries. Perrins said his son has had trouble sleeping since the incident.

Following this incident, Greater Nanticoke Area Superintendent Tony Perrone met with representatives from the transportation firm to inform them tougher policies would be enacted.

Now drivers of any vehicle, regardless of whether it is a school bus or vehicle transport, will be required to visibly check that no children are left on the vehicle and who may be hidden from view.

"I think if you drive a bus and have little kids on it that you should be aware and sure that every one of those children is accounted for," Perrone said.

He said he believes the matter was a bad mistake as he said the driver was extremely visibly upset during a meeting with district officials.

But news of the updated policies didn't ease Perrins' anger or frustration. He said he wants to see additional staff or aides ride on buses so another adult is present to account for students. He said doesn't want the driver transporting other children in any district throughout Luzerne County.

The driver of Mikey's transport will no longer be allowed to drive any Nanticoke Area students, Perrone said.

Mikey will return to school on Friday aboard another school transportation vehicle. His father promises to not be far behind as he plans to follow the vehicle to his son's school to ensure Mikey is not forgotten again.

1/26/2011

**Nanticoke study commission gets residents' input**

The city's home-rule study commission sought input from residents, who received a better idea of what home rule is and what it could mean for the city.

The commission, formed by voters in the May 18 primary, has been studying the current form of government to determine if it can be made more clearly responsible to residents, more economical and more efficient with a home-rule charter, commission vice chairman Leonard Omolecki said.

About 35 people attended Tuesday's public hearing, which started with a presentation on home rule and how it works, given by Jeffrey Box, president and CEO of the study commission's consultant Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance.

The home-rule study process, though similar to the one Luzerne County went through, is separate, he said.

It's up to Nanticoke's study commission members to decide whether to keep the current form of government, third class city code, or replace it with a home-rule charter approved by voters. They're going to make the decision at a public meeting at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 8, in city hall.

If they move forward, the goal is to have the charter drawn up in time for residents to vote on it in the Nov. 8 election, Box said. If they decide not to, the commission writes a final report and basically "goes out of business," he said.

Box said home rule allows a municipality to create its own "mini constitution" or governing document instead of using the state code. It transfers power from the state to local residents, who vote to adopt and amend the charter.

Nanticoke currently has a commission form of government, with a mayor and four-member council. With a home rule charter, the city could have a council with either a strong or weak mayor, or with a hired manager instead of a mayor.

Home-rule charters can include more checks and balances, improved fiscal procedures and controls, and more accountability.

A charter would also give the city more flexibility with taxation. Under its state-imposed designation of Act 47 - financial distress - Nanticoke officials could raise the earned income tax above the state maximum of 1 percent. But when the city gets out of Act 47 status, it loses its 2 percent earned income tax, and officials say real estate taxes would more than double to make up the difference.

Resident David Zurek said the city's current form of government is "archaic," but asked the commission to find other sources of revenue besides taxation.

"I can't keep getting taxed to death," he said.

Resident Rich Novak asked the commission to consider issues including if home rule could be used to generate revenue and how it might be used as a regulatory device to protect residents. He said home rule "could help this community immensely."

"I think we've got to be open-minded about this," Novak said.

1/26/2011

### **Leak closes GNA High**

### **Superintendent says problem fixed and classes are set to resume today.**

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[Greater Nanticoke Area High School](#) did not have classes Tuesday because of a water leak, which a custodian discovered at about 5:30 a.m.

But Superintendent Tony Perrone said the problem had been fixed by noon, and he expected classes to resume this morning, weather permitting.

Perrone said the district had discovered a leak last week but that it was difficult to track down the source because there wasn't much visible water.

He said repairs were done and administrators thought the problem had been resolved. But this morning there was water in the gym, wrestling room and hallways, prompting the cancellation of classes at the high school for the day. The other schools remained open as usual.

Perrone did not recall the name of the company doing the repairs but said it was quick to respond -- find a leaking water line coming into the front of the building from the street -- and repair it. The company, which also had worked on the initial leak last week, also brought in equipment to dry the gym floor, wrestling mats and other places and items dampened by the leak.

Perrone had no estimate of damage costs but said he believes the company's insurance will cover it.

He noted students have already missed four days of school due to weather and that this makes five for the high school. Students will have to make up those days, though Perrone said the state may grant an exception for the day lost by high

school students because Tuesday's closing was prompted by an emergency.

1/24/2011

### **Nanticoke home-rule commission wants public's help**

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Nanticoke residents voted last May to form a home-rule study commission tasked with examining city government. Immediately afterwards, apathy set in.

"I don't think there's a lot of interest," city Administrator Holly Quinn said. "The meetings I went to, there was really nobody from the general public there."

City officials and study commission members want that to change: they're urging residents to come to a public hearing at 7 p.m. Tuesday in city hall to sound off on Nanticoke's government - and about the prospect of a huge real estate tax hike.

The study commission has been meeting since June to gather information - conducting interviews with current council members, former mayors, the tax collector, union officials and the administration, commission chairman Jerry Hudak said.

But the meetings were poorly attended, he said.

"Now is the most critical time," Hudak said. "It's very urgent that people come out now and give some input on what they like in the current government and what they don't like in the current government."

Nanticoke was declared Act 47, or financially distressed, in May 2006. The state limits municipalities to 0.5 percent earned income tax. With Act 47 status, Nanticoke was allowed to raise it an additional 1 percent, to 1.5 percent. But when the city loses its Act 47 designation, it can't keep the higher rate - unless it goes home rule.

Home rule involves adopting a charter, or new form of government written by residents, to replace third-class city code, which is the default form.

Without the additional earned income tax, the city would have to plug the \$1.2 million hole through property taxes, Quinn said. And those property taxes would end up more than doubling, she said.

"Fewer people would be able to afford to pay their property taxes. They would have to sell their homes, move. Our collection rates would drop," Quinn said.

Hudak doesn't believe property owners should bear the whole tax burden.

"That's the last thing I think we want to see," he said. "There are alternatives, but people have to tell us which of the alternatives they want."

Resident Mike Stachowiak, an outspoken critic of Nanticoke's government, doesn't plan to attend the meeting.

"I don't think it's going to make any difference. They're going to do what they're going to do," he said.

But Hudak said the commission does need input from residents - and the more, the better.

"Home rule is exactly that, but the home's got to tell us how they want to be ruled," he said. "We want to see a lot of people, to get diverse opinions, to get creative solutions."

1/23/2011

### **Solar panel plan sparks interest**

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Two area men have proposed a \$1.2 million project in Nanticoke selling and distributing solar panels, which are growing in popularity as a renewable energy source.

Jerry Hudak, president of the South Valley Chamber of Commerce and operator of Pollution Control in Nanticoke, and Ted Warkomski, an environmental planner from West Nanticoke, want to open Mid-Atlantic Solar Supply on undeveloped land owned by the Earth Conservancy on Espy Street in Nanticoke.

Nanticoke's Zoning Hearing Board will hold a public meeting at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 27 to hear their request to open the business on land now zoned for residential use.

If approved, Hudak said the business would create 40 to 60 jobs. They have funding commitments from local governments, banks and private contributions from local businesses.

Their goal is to establish an office and distribution center which sells solar panels throughout the East Coast to homes and businesses in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Maryland and Delaware.

They are in talks with four large worldwide manufacturers they would not identify to provide the solar panels.

"The companies are located in the United States, but the manufacturing isn't necessarily in the United States," said

Warkomski, who has been involved in developing the project for more than three years.

Warkomski expects the project could begin in late spring or early summer. The building would be 40,000 to 60,000 square feet, he said. They plan to partner with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers union to install the solar panels.

"We're bringing green into the valley," Hudak said. "We want to guarantee our customers that the people who install the solar panels are certified, knowledgeable and have experience."

Hudak, 74, and Warkomski, 57, have found there is a drastic need for a business that sells solar panels in the area. An increased demand throughout the world has led manufacturers of solar panels to increase production.

"We did some surveys of solar manufacturers in the United States and abroad and we always came to the same conclusion that there was a void in this part of the United States," Hudak said. "People are starting to realize the advantages of having them. At first, they were expensive but now with the government rebates, it becomes quite possible and profitable in the long run to install them."

Hudak and Warkomski said one of the biggest benefits of solar panels is the money they save people on energy costs. "With utility prices rising and pocketbooks shrinking, everyone is looking for ways and means to save money," Hudak said. "We're providing something that is backed by the government to provide a somewhat economic to people to recoup losses they pay to utilities, reduce their bills and generally improve their way of life."

Although solar panels have not been utilized in this part of the county as much as areas such as California, Nevada or Arizona, Warkomski believes their use will increase.

"It's coming," he said.

Earth Conservancy President/CEO Mike Dziak supports the plan.

"The solar business is picking up. It's very feasible," Dziak said. "It would be neat for the area and it would bring jobs. We certainly hope this would stimulate other development to take place as well."

**1/22/2011**

**Nanticoke citizens to get their say**

**A panel studying possible governmental changes sets a public hearing.**

slong@timesleader.com

### **What's next?**

#### **Nanticoke Government Study Commission Public Hearing**

**7 p.m. Tuesday in council chambers at Municipal Building, 15 E. Ridge St.**

Members of the city's Government Study Commission want to know what the public thinks about how the city operates. The commission will hold a public hearing at 7 p.m. Tuesday to listen to views of what the citizens like and don't like regarding how the city functions, Commission Chairman Jerry Hudak said.

Since taking oaths of office in June, the seven-member volunteer panel has heard testimony from city employees, current and former council members and city administrators detailing how the city is run.

To help the commission navigate the Home Rule process it hired the Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance last year as its consultant.

The commission plans to vote on Feb. 8 to decide if it will draft a charter that will later be presented to voters for their approval or disapproval during the November elections, said Jeff Box, Alliance president and chief executive officer. Hudak said the commission can't and will not decide on its own whether a charter should be written.

"Right now we need to hear the voice of the citizens of Nanticoke... We (the commission) are not going to create anything. What is going to be created is going to be done by the citizenry of Nanticoke. We will not be dictating anything," Hudak said.

Before deciding to draft a charter the commission must consider if changing the form of government will be more beneficial, accountable, economical and efficient to citizens, said commission solicitor Jeff J. Malak.

The state will allow communities to generate revenue with particular tax programs if the community is in distressed status, he said. Yet once that status is removed the community doesn't have the ability to continue the earned income tax at the same level as under Act 47.

"Nanticoke is quickly coming to a crossroads and a crisis... If you don't have a plan or a means of securing these revenues then you could fall right back into the same troubles that you had originally when it all started," Hudak said. He called the Third Class City code that governs the city "archaic," saying it had not been updated since the 1950s. Any revisions to the code must be made by state lawmakers in Harrisburg.

1/21/2011

## **Nanticoke moves on 2 grants**

### **Information on a federally funded roads program must wait until next month.**

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What's Next

City Council will meet Feb. 2 in City Hall.

Finance Director Pam Heard said the city received 98 percent of its budgeted amount for earned income taxes as it received \$2,059,496 out of a projected \$2.1 million.

Council approved two ordinances Wednesday that clear the way for City Administrator Holly Quinn to submit two grant applications that could help the city acquire \$500,000 from the state.

Quinn said she has been working with state Sen. John Yudichak, D-Plymouth Township, on two redevelopment projects on Market Street and in downtown. Project details were not available.

If the grant applications are approved, money from Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program would propel these projects forward.

In other business, a resident living on Alden Road asked about the status of the "K-route" project that has been in the works for several years.

The K-route is a federally funded program because the roads, Alden, Union and Prospect streets, are federal emergency routes out of town. Some of the sewers on the three streets will be replaced, and all three will be repaved and resurfaced.

Quinn said the city's engineer from Michael J. Pasonick and Associates would attend the city's next meeting on Feb. 2 to answer questions about the progress of the K-route project.

The resident asked if the engineer was originally due to attend Wednesday's meeting and Quinn said the engineer had another commitment he had to take care of so he could not attend this week's session.

Officials also learned the city received its temporary tax anticipation note loan of \$250,000 last week and it was deposited into the general fund. It must be repaid by the end of this year.

Councilman James Litchkofski said the city will save roughly \$15,000 in interest charges this year with the loan because of a lower percentage rate. The exact rate was not available.

Finance Director Pam Heard said the city received 98 percent of its budgeted amount for earned income taxes as it received \$2,059,496 out of a projected \$2.1 million.

"Berkheimer are holding fast to their projections for 2011. We will stay in constant touch with them to make sure that we are hitting the target we are supposed to," Litchkofski said.

Treasurer Al Wytoshek said he was pleased with the amount of property collections paid in 2010 as 89 percent of all homeowners paid their taxes. He hopes it will be 90 percent next year.

He said the city is still owed a little more than \$87,500 from different homeowners throughout the city.

Also, the council, in a 3-0 vote, approved an ordinance defining what types of picketing would not be allowed.

Quinn said the adoption of the ordinance was a housekeeping matter. During an indexing of all the city's ordinances, it was discovered the city did not have a picketing ordinance on the books, so officials, realizing most other communities already have such a description, decided to pass the ordinance.

Councilmen Jon Metta and Brent Makarczyk were not at the meeting.

1/20/2011

## **Quick-thinking man brings ladder to aid renter who climbed out on porch roof in Nanticoke fire**

### **Neighbor comes to the rescue**

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Bill Meixsell said he realized he was trapped on the second floor of his rented home on South Prospect Street by a fire that erupted on the first floor on Wednesday.

"Because of my neighbor, I didn't have to jump."

Flames quickly spread up the stairs of the small, two-story wood home, causing Meixsell to escape onto the front porch roof.

"I lifted up the window and kicked out the screen and climbed out," Meixsell said. "Of course, the roof was covered with snow and ice. I was hanging on the window sill and felt the heat and smoke."

Meixsell was rescued when a neighbor, Ken DiGuilio, ran to the burning house carrying a ladder. "I heard him yelling, saw what was happening and grabbed my ladder. I set the ladder up and helped him get down," DiGuilio said.

Meixsell said the heat singed his eyebrows and hair but he escaped without any serious injury.

"Because of my neighbor, I didn't have to jump," he said.

Meixsell said he lived in the home with his brother, Forrest, and mother, Charlotte, who were not home at the time of the blaze. No injuries were reported.

Nanticoke firefighters responded to the house, next to the Nanticoke Municipal Building and around the corner from fire headquarters, just before noon. Hanover Township firefighters as part of a mutual aid agreement were called to provide support.

Firefighters battled the flames from the inside and all four sides of the house on the outside. Several firefighters climbed onto the second rear porch roof and used a saw to cut away the wood siding to reach flames in the wall.

It took firefighters about two hours to bring the fire under control.

A state police deputy fire marshal was called to the scene.

Nanticoke Fire Chief Michael Bohan said the investigation into the cause of the fire focused on the first floor. However, because of the extensive damage, the fire is being labeled as not suspicious and the cause is undetermined. Meixsell said he had two pet cats he hoped were able to get out of the house.

The owner of the house is listed as William and Johna Voyton of Hunlock Township, according to Luzerne County property records.

1/13/2011

ON CAMPUS

**Bieski wins all-around honors for West Virginia**

BILL ARSENAULT

It's a new season but it's still the same old Amy Bieski.

Bieski has been a top all-around performer for the West Virginia University women's gymnastic team the past three seasons, so it was not surprising she kicked off her senior season with the Mountaineers in the same fashion – winning all-around honors against No. 13-ranked Missouri in a meet in Cancun, Mexico last week.

Bieski (Nanticoke) has been a first team All-Around selection by the Eastern Atlantic Gymnastics League in her first three years. Last season, she also earned first-team in all four events (floor, vault, balance beam and uneven bars).

Against Missouri she matched her career-best mark on the beam (9.85). Her all-around score was 39.025. It was her 16th career 39.0-plus mark and pushes her career point total to 1,513.925 which ranks her 15th on the all-time career points list at West Virginia.

"Every year Amy continues to improve," coach Linda Burdette-Good said. "It's hard to believe she's a senior now."

Burdette-Good knew Bieski was a good athlete when she recruited her.

"But she just keeps getting better and better," the coach said. "She works very hard and is a pleasure to have in the gym. We hope she continues to be successful throughout her final season."

Bieski also does the job in the classroom. A speech pathology major, she's a three-time EAGL All-Academic selection.

1/7/2011

**City Council approves budget, hears paving woes**

CAMILLE FIOTI Times Leader Correspondent

East Grand Street resident Tracy Fabian asked council Wednesday if there is any money in the city's budget to pave her street.

"I've lived there for 21 years, and our street has never been paved," she said. "It's a mess."

Mayor Joseph Dougherty agreed with Fabian but said the funding to pave most of the streets came from federal block grants, of which eligibility is met when the majority of the street's residents fall under low-income guidelines.

"From east to west it's the worst (street) in Nanticoke," he said. "If we could find the money, we'd pave it tomorrow."

Dougherty and council told Fabian that they'd do what they can to try to find grants that might help fund paving.

In other business, council voted to approve a resolution to adopt the city's capital budget and five-year plan.

Funding sources for the capital budget consist primarily of grant dollars. The total funding for 2012-15 is estimated at \$16.875 million with 94 percent, or \$15.828 million, coming from grants.

Capital expenditures are primarily for downtown development, road repair, building improvements and equipment acquisition.

Capital expenditures for 2011 are projected at approximately \$7.5 million with a majority coming from federal and state sources.

Council also voted to recognize the city's housing authority's PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) contribution for 2010 in the amount of \$55,204. The contribution for 2009 was \$8,331.