

12/25/2014

## **Nanticoke family helped Canadian boy's Christmas dreams come true 75 years ago**

### **Area's Christmas gifts to orphan recalled**

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Some 75 years later, Mackie Scott's letter to Santa Claus is still a part of Christmas.

During the Christmas season of 1939, Mackie, then an 11-year-old sixth grader in New Brunswick, Canada, was worried that Santa may forget to visit his house.

So the kid penned a letter to Santa, telling the jolly old elf of his situation. Scott was living with his grandmother and they were poor. They needed stuff, and Santa was his best chance of getting some of that stuff.

Scott's mother had died shortly after Mackie was born. His dad later remarried and left him with his grandmother.

So Mackie knew that if he could get his letter to Santa, a Merry Christmas would happen for him and his grandma.

The letter was delivered — and Santa responded in a big way.

For those of you who don't believe in Santa Claus, rest assured this story will convince you otherwise. For Santa indeed lives, and is very real.

And if you don't believe that, look up Mackie Scott.

Mackie's story

Don and Bridgid Shappelle of South Wilkes-Barre recently visited Jim Thorpe and they bought a used book at their favorite book store, Sellers Used Books on Broadway. It was titled "Big Christmas Book" and published by Good Old Days. The book was falling apart, but the Shappelles decided they would add it to their collection.

While leafing through the book, Don Shappelle found a story titled "The True Spirit of Christmas." He started reading and that's when he found the connection between Mackie Scott and the Wyoming Valley.

In 1976, Oliver "Ozzie" Thomas, a native of Plymouth and a nephew of Fred and Verna Boltz of Nanticoke, wrote the story of Mackie Scott and that Christmas of 1939 for Good Old Days Magazine. He put into words how the 11-year-old Canadian boy influenced not just the Boltz family, but the entire Wyoming Valley.

The Boltz family would purchase several fir trees each year, stand them up in their yard and sell them to their neighbors. In 1939, Mrs. Boltz noticed a small leather pouch hanging from one of the trees. She removed it and opened the stitching to find Mackie's letter to Santa Claus inside.

The story goes that Mrs. Boltz was moved to tears and told her husband that they had to help this little boy in Canada.

So the letter was sent to the Times Leader, and it ran in the Little Studies column that was featured on the front page. The response was overwhelming. According to the story that Thomas wrote in 1976, perhaps we see the first evidence of "The Valley With A Heart."

"The good people of Wyoming Valley were real concerned about Mackie Scott," Thomas wrote. "One businessman sent him a warm coat, cap, and a warm pair of shoes. A lot of people called up and wanted to know if anyone was sending Mackie a Lone Ranger suit. They were told that Aunt Verna and Uncle Fred were sending Mackie his Lone Ranger suit. People from all over the valley sent Mackie warm stockings, underwear, games, toys and money for him and his grandma."

It was a while, but Fred and Verna Boltz received a thank you letter from Mackie. The young boy told them about the exciting Christmas he had, thanks to all of the generous donations. Mackie vowed to send thank you notes to all. Mackie followed up with a letter to the Times Leader that also appeared in Little Studies.

"This was the first real Christmas I ever had," he wrote. "I received more than 150 letters from children and older people."

Mackie thanked Mrs. Boltz, who he said "must be a very nice lady." He said he received sweaters, caps, gloves, mitts, underwear, pants, pajamas, socks, handkerchiefs, ties, books, games and toys, of course.

"It would not have seemed like Christmas without a toy," Mackie wrote.

He said he received a lot of chocolates — learning the correct spelling of the word along the way.

Mackie said he never received the Lone Ranger suit, but he took it in stride, thanking every person — known and anonymous — for remembering him at Christmas.

"Once again, grandma and I extend our sincere thanks to all the people of Pennsylvania," Mackie closed his letter.

Thomas ended his account of Mackie's story by noting that it showed "the true spirit of Christmas." He wrote, "And as the Bible tells us, it is much better to give than to receive."

Thomas then offered some moving words.

"And remember, there is nothing wrong with this world; it's just the people who live in it," he wrote. "If we had more people like Uncle Fred and Aunt Verna and all the good people of Wyoming Valley who pitched in to give a little orphan boy who they had never seen the best Christmas he ever had, wouldn't it be wonderful?"

Lasting legacy

Some 75 years later, Mackie Scott's story has resurfaced, but it has lived on every Christmas in the Boltz family. Even though Mackie Scott was never to be heard from again, his name and his story have endured.

Carolyn Boltz Higgins is the daughter of Fred and Verna Boltz. She lives in Alden and she has a clear and vivid memory of Mackie Scott's story. "My parents talked about Mackie all the time," she said. "Every Christmas we would hear the story of Mackie Scott and how our family and the people of Wyoming Valley helped make a Merry Christmas for him and his grandmother."

Higgins, 78, has done her part to keep the story alive. She has 9 children, 16 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. There will be nearly 40 people at Higgins' home on Christmas day.

"And we will talk about Mackie Scott and my parents and this wonderful story," Higgins said. "I can still see that pouch and I can hear my parents talking about finding it hanging on that tree and opening it and finding Mackie's letter."

Higgins said her brother, Henry, also recalled the story for years with his family. But Higgins said she doesn't know what became of the leather pouch and Mackie's letter.

Lonnie Kreitzer, Mrs. Higgins' daughter, said she never gets tired of hearing the story.

"My grandparents liked to help people," she said. "And my mother is the same way. Mackie Scott's story affected us all that way."

Kreitzer said it's good for the Wyoming Valley to hear the story again.

"It tells us how important it is to help people in need," Kreitzer said. "And not just at Christmas, but all year round. Life is about making memories."

Kreitzer's daughter, Kelly, is 19 and attends Penn State University. She said the story is still amazing to her.

"Nanticoke is such a small area," she said. "Nobody really knows where Nanticoke is. But this story shows you that no matter where you're from and no matter who you are, you can make a difference in somebody's life."

12/22/2014

### **Nanticoke hosts Christmas festival**

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The holiday season was in full swing at Patriot Square in Nanticoke on Sunday afternoon, chock-full of festive music, holiday treats and other entertainment.

This Christmas in the park event took place immediately following the Santa parade that began at the Greater Nanticoke Area High School parking lot and ended at the square.

Various community groups participated in the parade including the Nanticoke Crime Watch, the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, the Greater Nanticoke Area High School homecoming court, the high school varsity and junior varsity football teams and cheerleaders, the marching band and many other local organizations.

Mayor Richie Wiaterowski decided that for his first Christmas season in office, he wanted the city to sponsor its first annual Christmas festival.

"It's been mainly to get everyone together in the Christmas spirit," Wiaterowski said. "It was great seeing people come out on their porches and cheering. One woman was yelling 'Merry Christmas' and ringing a bell."

Entertainment at the square included pictures with Santa, horse-drawn wagon rides around the square and dance routines performed by the Greater Nanticoke Area High School cheerleaders.

Hot chocolate was donated by the Nanticoke Fire Department, cookies were donated by the Luzerne County Community College culinary school and hot dogs were cooked and handed out by the council and the mayor.

Karen Washik and Marlene Hughes of Honey Pot Recreations in Nanticoke, have been handing out hats and lollipops for the past four holiday seasons. Washik spends a couple months prior to the event knitting the hats for the local children.

"I think it's great that everyone comes together and the kids love (the event)," said Washik.

Another holiday event held in Nanticoke this season was a tree-decorating competition in which six local organizations came to City Hall and decorated a Christmas tree to display. On Tuesday, residents are invited to donate \$1 to cast their vote for their favorite tree. The money raised from this event will be donated to Toys for Tots.

Councilwoman Nicole Mackiewicz said Nanticoke city has been trying to hold more events throughout the year to bring out the community such as a wing fest, an upcoming spring festival and a St. Patrick's Day event.

"We were astonished with the outcome today," said Mackiewicz. "Everything was perfect. It's only going to be bigger and better next year."

12/22/2014

### **Nanticoke gets festive with parade**

'Christmas in the Park' was event theme

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

"Christmas in the Park" was the theme as a holiday tradition wound through the streets on Sunday, with the season's parade ending in festive spirit at Patriot Square Park.

This was the first year that Glen Lyon residents Kristina Mitchell and her daughter, Victoria, 7, attended the parade. Victoria's 10 year old sister, Brianna, was a participant in the parade with the Greater Nanticoke Area cheerleaders.

The Mitchells were accompanied by Kristina's father, Sean Fogarty, also of Glen Lyon, and 5-year-old twin nieces, Jaylynn and Madison Fogarty, of Hazleton.

Mitchell said that it was nice to "see how many people came out for the traditional parade." Fogarty added that he remembers 50 plus years ago, "Nanticoke held parades for everything."

He added that it is nice that they still have parades to acknowledge the GNA's sports teams.

"Even if it is not a victory parade, their efforts are celebrated" Fogarty said.

Mary Nash of West Nanticoke was in attendance for her fourth year. Her sons, Merrit 6, and 1-1/2-year-old Miles also were spectators. Their father, Merrit Nash, line chief at the Plymouth Township/Tilbury Station, rode in the parade with his company.

Mary Nash said that she always enjoys the city's Christmas parade. She added that their family tradition for the holidays is Christmas breakfast together, due to the fact that both she and her husband often have work scheduled on Christmas Day. The younger Merrit said that his favorite part of the family breakfast is the rolls.

The parade and day's activities were sponsored by the City of Nanticoke Events Committee. City Council and the mayor, code enforcement, Nanticoke Crime Watch, Nanticoke Historical Society, and the events committee all took part in the event.

Junior Girl Scout Troop 30861, Boy Scouts troop 418, GNA's sports teams, band, and cheerleaders represented the younger participants. Fire and rescue trucks from Nanticoke, West Nanticoke, and Plymouth Township/Tilbury Station fascinated the young spectators with their lights and sirens. There was a special appearance by Elsa from Disney's "Frozen" and of course, Santa, himself.

At Patriot Square, sleigh rides, a horse and carriage ride, hot dogs, hot chocolate and cookies were available.

Nanticoke's holiday festivities continue this evening, as Christmas carolers will gather at the high school, to organize an old fashioned Christmas caroling event within the community from 6 to 8 p.m. For more information or to participate with the carolers contact Becky Seman at 570-793-7910.

12/19/2014

### **Nanticoke will make accommodations for people displaced by projects**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

The city council adopted a resolution at Wednesday night's meeting that ensures the city will make accommodations for people displaced due to Community Development Block Grant projects.

The council also voted to authorize city Manager Andrew Gegaris to execute any documents associated with the 2014 Local Share Account Grant application. The \$2.5 million grant application will be used for acquisition and demolition in conjunction with the upcoming Streetscape Project. In another matter, the council voted to authorize a placement of a stop sign on the West Field Street approach to the intersection of Lincoln Avenue and West Field Street.

The Special Events Committee will sponsor a Christmas parade at 1 p.m. Saturday. There will be a visit from Santa and Elsa from 'Frozen,' hot chocolate, hot dogs and a horse and carriage ride. A photographer will be present, and photos will be available for \$5.00.

On Dec. 22, community caroling will run from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. The event will begin at the high school and proceed through the east side of town. Voting for the Christmas tree decorating contest will end on Jan. 5. The trees are on display at the Nanticoke City Building, 15 E. Ridge Street, and were decorated by Greater Nanticoke Area Family Center, Nanticoke Junior Football, Girl Scout Troop 30829, Nebo Baptist Church, NEPA in Need and Northeast Counseling Act Team. Voting costs \$1, all proceeds benefit Toys for Tots.

The next council meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on Jan. 7.

12/16/2014

### **Nanticoke, Pittston students to represent Wilkes-Barre Area Career and Technical Center at states**

Janine Ungvarsky - Times Leader

Five Wilkes-Barre Area Career and Technical Center students will represent the school at the state Skills USA competition, the school's joint operating committee learned Monday.

Four students from the [Greater Nanticoke Area School District](#) and one from Pittston Area earned the right to take part in the state competition by winning first place honors at local competitions in November. A total of 21 tech school students placed at the local Skills contests, but only first place winners move on to state level competition, according to information presented by tech school Principal Frank Majikes.

**Edward Wolfinger, Dylan Eichorn, Kristen Meaney, and Melissa Svetovich from Nanticoke Area** and Bridgett Kinlaw from Pittston Area were district winners, and will move on to states in the spring.

12/6/2014

### **Several Nanticoke homes destroyed by fire last month to be razed**

Jacob Seibel - Citizens Voice

Several properties in Nanticoke ruined last month by a blaze that displaced six people will soon be razed, city officials said.

The fire started at about 10 p.m. Nov. 7 in a vacant double-block home at 311-313 Hanover St., near the corner of West Green Street, then rapidly spread to two homes on West Green Street, firefighters said. The Hanover Street properties and a single home on West Green Street will be demolished within the next 30 to 60 days, said City Manager Andy Gegaris.

"We were able to track down the owners, and we're in the process of setting up escrow accounts from their insurance funds to help us cover the demolition," he said. "Our goal is to get them down as quickly and expeditiously as possible."

Gegaris said a code enforcement officer accessed the homes, determining the three homes were a total loss. If the damaged homes posed any danger to the public, the city could move forward immediately with demolition, then put a lien on the properties, he said. But as of now, there's no threat, he said.

The city's department of public works assisted investigators with a backhoe to rummage through the ruins to help try to determine what caused the blaze, but Nanticoke Fire Chief Kevin Hazleton said the damage was too extensive for a state police fire marshal to determine what sparked the fire. No one was injured, but six people from three families were displaced from their homes, according to Nanticoke firefighters. The American Red Cross provided food, clothing and lodging for them, said Red Cross spokeswoman Sara Smith a day after the fire. Fast thinking and faster action on the part of firefighters also saved a 4-year-old Jack Russell terrier.

12/5/2014

### **Nanticoke passes budget without tax hike, refuse-fee increase**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

The city council officially adopted the 2015 budget, which includes no tax increase and no refuse fee increase.

The total general fund budget is \$5,157,936. Last year's budget was \$4,820,100.

The council also approved the establishment of the millage rate of taxation as 4.8785. A mill is \$1 in tax for every \$1,000 in assessed value.

Initially, the proposed budget called for a sewer fee increase of \$50 per household. The council voted no to the increase, and only approved the budget upon the agreement that sewer fee remains at \$100 per year.

In other matters, the council voted to appoint Pennoni Associates as city engineer.

**The Special Events Committee will sponsor a Christmas Parade on Dec. 21 at 1 p.m. The parade will begin at the high school parking lot. It will feature a horse and carriage ride, available to all spectators. Hot dogs, hot chocolate and cookies will be available, and goodie bags will be furnished to all children. Visit the committee's Facebook page for further details.**

**On Dec. 22, a gathering of Christmas carolers will meet at the high school, and will sing Christmas carols around the community from 6 p.m. through 8 p.m. For more information contact, Becky Seman at (570) 793-7910.**

**The honey Pot Volunteer Firefighters are conducting a comedy night fundraiser at the Mohegan Sun Casino on Dec. 6. The cost is \$20 per ticket. To purchase tickets or for more information, contact Linda Prushinski at (570) 735-0508.**

**The council will meet next at 7 p.m. on Dec. 17.**

12/5/2014

### **Verazin re-elected as GNA board president**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

The Greater Nanticoke School Board held its reorganization meeting on Tuesday.

Ryan Verazin was re-elected president. Ken James was elected vice president, Tony Prushinski secretary and Gary Smith treasurer.

Attorney Vito DeLuca was reappointed as solicitor for the district for the year 2015 at a salary of \$22,000 from December 2014 to December 2015.

The board voted to add an additional monthly meeting to its schedule beginning with the 2015 calendar year. Previously, there had been no meeting held during the month of July. The board unanimously voted to add such a meeting.

The board also voted against a \$12,000 settlement, regarding the district and a special education student. DeLuca said that five votes were needed to pass the motion. The vote was 4-3 in favor of the motion.

All members were in attendance with the exception of Chet Beggs and Bob Raineri.

Superintendent Ronald Grevera stated that the school's new Bullying and Wellness Committee is "in the works" and the board is anticipating its first meeting after the new year.

Ken James of the athletic department announced that sports passes are available for the winter sports season. The passes are \$30 for adults and \$10 per student. The passes are good for any combination of ten winter sporting events at the school and can be purchased at the door or through the athletic department.

The board's next meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Jan. 15.

12/4/2014

### **Nanticoke resident spearheads hockey rink fundraiser**

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Shawn Myers of Nanticoke already has everything he could ask for this holiday season. A loving wife. A healthy, newborn daughter. A brand new job with Apple. The only gift he is asking for this Christmas is a donation made toward a project he developed to help his community thrive and steer today's youth from idle time that could lead to poor decisions. Myers has launched a fundraising campaign to bring a hockey rink to NEPA.

"At some point, everyone questions the meaning of life. They question the meaning of their life. Now that I'm a father, I believe that the meaning of life is leaving behind something to be remembered for," Myers said.

The 26-year old is determined to carry on a legacy that will be remembered by his daughter, and the community, just as Myers' mother did for him. Myers recalls his mother being involved with the community as far back as he can remember.

"She was always heavily involved with charity events and fundraisers. She was one of those, 'What do you need me to do because I'll do it' type of people, whether it was cooking food for a charity event or collecting toys for Toys for Tots. Even when she got sick, she was still doing whatever she could to help the community," Myers said.

His mother, Michelle, lost her fight with cancer in January, 2011.

Following the loss of his mother, Myers found strength to carry on by remembering six simple words.

"My mom used to tell me, 'Be something you love and understand'. Whenever I would try to achieve a goal or struggle to figure out what I wanted to do in life, she would tell me that," Myers said.

Prior to her passing, Myers asked his mother to write the phrasing on a piece of paper so he could have the quote tattooed on his chest in her handwriting.

"Now I am reminded every day to be a person I want to see in the world and always be something I am good at. After my mom passed, I knew one day I would stand by those words by doing something great for the world and make her proud," Myers said.

Myers didn't have to look far or wait long. While playing street hockey in the basketball court of Quality Hill Playground in Nanticoke, a pastime for most of his life, an idea came to mind. There should be a hockey rink at Quality Hill Playground.

Instead of feeling discouraged by the hard work the project would require, including raising funds, maintaining unyielding determination and chasing down approval, Myers felt calmed by remembering the advice his mother preached. He wanted to see a hockey rink built and realized it was time to be the change he wanted to see in the world.

"My mother said I should be something I loved and I love hockey. Plus, I firmly believe that having a place for kids to play hockey for free would bring many advantages to the community. Our area has a deep interest in hockey. Wilkes-Barre is home to the AHL affiliate of the Pittsburgh Penguins and on the streets of NEPA you'll see anything from Penguins' gold, Flyers' orange to Devils' red. Unfortunately, the area lacks a place for kids to go play hockey without being charged just to skate or shoot around," Myers said.

The hockey-enthusiast claims his concept for the rink can provide a great game of hockey free of charge as well as provide a stream of income to better the playground where the rink will be housed.

"There aren't many options in this area to keep kids occupied and out of trouble. I mean, yeah, there are two other rinks in the area. One is in Wright Township and the other is all the way in Hazleton. I have played in both and had a fun experience at both, but they charge. Having this rink could encourage young people to play hockey because they could play often for free and take advantage of the physical benefits, like improving coordination, flexibility, their reflexes and agility, but it can teach life skills that will improve the quality of people they grow up and become," Myers said.

Life skills that many people in today's generation are lacking according to Myers can be developed once his project reaches fruition.

"Hockey players learn from a young age and carry on well past their hockey playing careers to work as a team toward a common goal, develop strong communication and listening skills and to have respect for authority and rules. Not every player will become the next Sidney Crosby, but every player will benefit from being part of the game," Myers said.

On the financial front, the desired Nanticoke rink promises to bring forth revenue from organized hockey leagues throughout the year, which will be put back in to the park for new attractions.

Nanticoke mayor Rich Wiaterowski feels the hockey attraction will help with local business.

"I admire Shawn's determination and fully support his effort. His spirit reminds me of a younger version of myself. Nanticoke is a great city with great local businesses including shops and restaurants. Having a hockey rink could attract people from other parts of northeastern Pennsylvania to our town and they could be visiting our local businesses," Wiaterowski said.

Myers also gained the support of Kenneth Gill, president of Quality Hill Playground Association. The representative of the privately owned non-profit playground said the park is always looking for new ways to improve the grounds and the neighborhood.

"Shawn and his friends would play street hockey here for years. In fact, they still do today. When he approached us with the idea of getting the hockey rink started we said we would support him completely. We believe in him and we believe in the popularity of hockey," Gill said.

Myers budgeted the cost to total \$100,000. The six-figure amount didn't stop him from raising funds. Through fundraisers, Myers raised \$1,095, but realizes he needs more help. He decided to look for support on GoFundMe. The personal fundraising website allows people to petition for money for anything from medical emergencies to travel expenses.

"I know \$100,000 seems like a lot of money to ask for, and it is, but I hope people will see the good that this project will do for the community and donate something," Myers said.

Whether you're a hockey fan or not, Myers hopes people will be inspired to be change they wish to see in the world by donating what they can and to ask themselves what they would like to change about the world. Then, go out and be that change.

## IF YOU DONATE

What: Hockey rink at Quality Hill Playground, Nanticoke

How: Donations can be made online at [www.GoFund.me/NanticokeHockey](http://www.GoFund.me/NanticokeHockey)

Online: Information on upcoming fundraisers can be found on the project's page at [Facebook.com/NanticokeAreaHockeyRink](https://Facebook.com/NanticokeAreaHockeyRink)

12/3/2014

### **Verazin remains president of Nanticoke Area board**

Michael P. Buffer - Citizens Voice

The [Greater Nanticoke Area](#) School Board voted to retain Ryan Verazin as board president during a reorganization meeting Tuesday.

The board also voted to retain Ken James as board vice president and kept Vito DeLuca as school district solicitor for another year.

Also Tuesday, the board voted on monthly agenda items and rejected a \$12,000 settlement on a special-education matter with a student. The vote was 4-3 in favor, but the board needed five votes to approve the settlement, Verazin said. Two board members were absent from Tuesday's meeting.

11/29/2014

### **Nanticoke avoids tax, refuse fee hikes**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

During a recent council meeting, it was announced that there will be no tax increase and no refuse fee increase.

The proposed budget was approved, pending the amendment to the sewer funds. The initial budget called for an increase of \$50 per household in sewer fee. Council voted no to the increase, and would only approve the budget if the sewer fee remained at \$100 per year.

The general fund balance as well as the expenditures is \$5,157,935.

Council also passed a motion to accept an intergovernmental agreement between the City of Nanticoke and Hanover and Newport townships for sharing of emergency response vehicles. Each township would be responsible for a specific emergency response vehicle to be shared with the other townships. The agreement benefits the residents and saves the municipalities money.

On Dec. 6, a comedy night benefiting the Honey Pot Fire Department will be held at Wisecrackers Comedy Club, located in the Mohegan Sun Casino. Tickets are \$20 per person. For more information, call Linda Prushinski at (570) 735-0508.

The city's annual Christmas parade will take place on Dec. 21, starting at 1 p.m. Hot chocolate and hot dogs will be served. The parade begins at the Greater Nanticoke Area High School and ends at the park. Christmas in the Park is this year's theme.

The next meeting of council will be held at 7 p.m. on Dec. 3.

11/27/2014

**For grieving family, a year without answers**

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Before Thanksgiving last year, Carol Belmont tried to convince her mother to come live with her in Jackson Township for the winter — or at least for the holidays.

Gertrude Price didn't want to hear it.

The 97-year-old Nanticoke woman took pride in living alone and taking care of herself. The conversation began with Price asking for some rock salt to help combat the coming winter weather. Price said she enjoyed being in her own home and sleeping in her own bed. She declined the offer.

"In hindsight, I would have insisted," Belmont said.

After spending last Thanksgiving with family in Dallas, Price was beaten to death that evening in a home invasion robbery inside 23 E. Grand St. in Nanticoke. The great-great-grandmother endured such a pummeling, relatives say, that the right side of her face was crushed in.

Belmont and her husband, Richard, found Price dead the morning after Thanksgiving, her battered body motionless in her bed.

"It was a nightmare from then on," Belmont said at her home in Jackson Township. "I can't believe someone could hit a 97-year-old woman in the face."

Plea for information

For a year, Belmont and grieving relatives have wondered who that someone could be.

Price's murder remains unsolved and no suspects have been publicly identified.

"Somebody somewhere knows something. I just wish they would help the state police so we could get some closure," Belmont said. "I pray every night someone comes forward with a piece of information."

There is an incentive for someone to come forward: thousands of dollars in reward funds.

Local residents pledged more than \$10,000 in a fund set up at PNC Bank in Nanticoke and Pennsylvania Crime Stoppers has also offered a reward for information leading to an arrest and conviction.

Unlike many other killings, police have said this one is different: it appears to have been a random attack.

Belmont, 77, struggles to understand how someone who lived such a long, healthy and productive life could be taken by such a senseless act of violence.

"My mother was 97. She had never been in the hospital. She never had an operation. She never took a pill. She didn't know what it was to have a headache," Belmont said. "She took care of her own sidewalks, her own house, her own lawn."

Nanticoke and state police continue to investigate and Belmont said she is happy with how aggressively they have worked the case.

"I feel it when I talk to them," she said. "They have taken this to heart."

'Heinous, senseless'

Lt. Richard Krawetz, commanding officer of state police at Wyoming, said investigators have taken the case to heart and continue to pursue leads.

"It was a heinous, senseless killing of a totally defenseless woman. This was an individual who was able to live 97 years safe and sound within the confines of the City of Nanticoke. Then, a perpetrator enters her home — her safe haven — and kills her. She was laying in bed and was the victim of a brutal attack," Krawetz said. "We vowed to bring a successful conclusion to this investigation."

The investigation remains a top priority and troopers are still awaiting results from extensive forensic tests that were conducted at the scene, he said.

"We have worked hard and we continue to work hard," Krawetz said.

While tracking down leads in Price's murder, state police arrested two men they say committed another burglary in the city the same night.

Police said Earl Hoopingarner, 29, ransacked and looted his neighbor's home at 201 Enterprise St. in Nanticoke while Shane Hempel, 26, served as a lookout. Weeks after their arrests, they were hit with more charges related to the break-in and bail was increased to \$250,000 cash. The two men have been jailed since. Earlier this month, Hoopingarner was hit with felony gun charges for allegedly stealing a rifle during the Thanksgiving break-in on Enterprise Street. Hoopingarner's bail was increased to a total of \$395,000 cash.

Authorities have never called the duo suspects in Price's murder, only saying their arrests resulted from the investigation into her death.

Her final hours

A day before Thanksgiving last year, Belmont's aunt and Price's sister-in-law, Marie Hamilton of Nanticoke, died at age 83. Belmont waited until Thanksgiving to tell her mother. The family gathered at Belmont's son's house in Dallas, the annual gathering spot for holidays for the past five years or so.

"She kind of was depressed. She wasn't herself," Belmont recalled. "She was sad my aunt died."

After dinner, Price's daughter drove her home to Nanticoke and escorted her inside. It was about 6:30 p.m., just in time for Price's routine of watching television in bed before sleep.

Investigators believe the killing occurred around 11 p.m. Thanksgiving night because neighbors noticed lights on in the house at a time Price

normally sleeps. The killer or killers gained entry through a basement window that was found busted open in the morning. Family members sensed something was wrong when Price didn't answer the phone the morning after Thanksgiving. Belmont decided to go check. She and her husband brought along bolt cutters in case they'd have to cut through a chain lock Price always used to secure her front door from the inside.

During the drive, they determined that the first clue something was wrong would be if Price's newspaper was still outside since she religiously retrieved it from her front porch each day at 6:30 a.m. When they arrived just before 10 a.m., they found the newspaper laying on her front porch. "I knew we were in trouble," Belmont said.

Bad thoughts immediately raced through Belmont's head. Did her mother have a medical emergency? Did she fall in the bathtub? Did she trip down the steps? Someone causing harm to her kind and gentle mother was not among those thoughts.

"Never did I think anything like this," she recalled.

When they got to the door, it was unlocked. The chain lock was not in place, either. As they creaked open the door, they saw the usually tidy place was a mess.

Still, Belmont didn't want to think the worst. Maybe Price was traumatized about the news of Aunt Marie's death, she thought.

After going inside, she and her husband soon realized someone else had been in the house — and destroyed it. Whoever was inside the house was there for a long time, they said.

"There was stuff everywhere," Belmont said. "You couldn't walk."

Her husband took the lead to go looking for Price, walking around, over and through the debris. Nearly every drawer in the house was pulled out and the contents dumped. The drawers were smashed to pieces, as if they had been violently thrown to the ground, he recalled.

"They ransacked the house," Mr. Belmont said. "When I say trashed, they trashed everything."

They found Price upstairs in her bed, with devastating wounds to the face.

A forensic pathologist would later declare her death a homicide due to blunt force trauma to the head.

The only things taken during the robbery were multiple items of mostly inexpensive jewelry, Belmont said. If the suspects were looking for prescription drugs, they didn't find any, because Price wasn't taking any. She had hid \$300 she took out of the bank earlier in the week. The suspect or suspects didn't find the money.

The one stolen item Belmont is determined to find is an antique piece of jewelry — a cameo brooch — that Price had worn since she was a teenager. German relatives sent it to her as a confirmation present when she was 13.

"It means a lot to me," Belmont said. "I've been to a few pawn shops with police looking for it."

Family first

Belmont and her husband found Price's body a day before their 23rd wedding anniversary. They were supposed to leave that day for a several-day visit to Mount Airy casino to celebrate.

Price's killing will forever be entwined with each Thanksgiving and anniversary. But they are used to somber holidays. Price's son, Randall, 45, died unexpectedly on Memorial Day in 2011 due to an aneurysm.

"Holidays are tough," Belmont said.

Today, the family plans to repeat the tradition of gathering at Price's grandson's home with the same people who were there last year.

"The only one missing this year will be mom," Belmont said. "It's best that we're together. Family means everything."

11/27/2014

**2013 beating death of Nanticoke woman, 97, remains unsolved**

Edward Lewis - elewis@civitasmedia.com

Police Chief William Shultz stood on the sidewalk in front of the tiny home on East Grand Street, telling a reporter a body had been found and the investigation was going to be "a major case."

That was one year ago this week on a blustery cold morning, and the brutal beating death of 97-year-old Gertrude Price remains unsolved.

"The year has been a very difficult one," Price's daughter, Carol Belmont, said during an interview Wednesday night. "The first year is so hard — her birthday, holidays ... like tomorrow."

Last Thanksgiving was the final holiday the strong and independent Price would spend with her family. After being dropped off home by her granddaughter on the evening of Nov. 28, 2013, Price fell prey to a home invasion sometime after last speaking with family at about 10:20 p.m. When a family member's calls when unanswered the next morning, the relative looked in to check on Price and discovered the house had been ransacked.

The lifelong Nanticoke resident was found dead in an upstairs bedroom.

An autopsy showed Price died from blunt force trauma to her head, according to the Luzerne County Coroner's Office. Her death was ruled a homicide.

"All I have heard is that it is an open investigation," Belmont said Wednesday.

Shultz said state police at Wyoming are leading the investigation, which remains a priority.

State police Lt. Richard Krawetz, commander of the criminal investigations unit, could not be reached for comment this week. He said in October that the case remains highly active, with evidence being analyzed at several state police crime labs.

"I do talk to the state police, and they have been very nice," Belmont added. "They say, 'don't ever think it's not an open investigation. It is.'"

Investigators have said the killer is believed to have entered Price's home through a ground-level basement window sometime between 10:30 p.m. on Nov. 28, 2013 and 9:35 a.m. the next day. State police said neighbors reported lights were turned on in Price's house at about 11 p.m., which they said was not normal.

During the homicide investigation, authorities uncovered a burglary several blocks away on Enterprise Street, arresting two men, Shane Hempel and Earl Hoopingarner on Dec. 21.

Authorities have not said if there is a connection between the Enterprise Street burglary and Price's death.

Community support

Price's death shocked the region and soon spurred a community drive of monetary donations for a reward leading to the arrest of those responsible. Kevin Grevera, owner of the Hunting Depot and a former Nanticoke police officer, initiated the fund, starting with \$1,000. Arica Grabowski, a Greater Nanticoke Area senior who never knew Price, organized a charity Zumbathon with classmates Jessica Saraka and Kara Voyton, pushing the fund above \$10,000.

Pennsylvania Crimestoppers is offering a second reward of up to \$2,500 for information that leads to an arrest.

"People in Nanticoke have been so caring and so concerned," Belmont said.

Such support has been much appreciated as Belmont waits for answers and justice.

"I'm still hoping," she said. "I know things take time."

11/27/2014

### **R Bar moves and expands in Nanticoke area**

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Just a few weeks after opening, the R Bar is hopping on a Friday night — and now they have the space for it.

Sisters and co-owners Lauren Maga and Lindsey Temarantz zip around, seating customers and checking in with staff at the Nanticoke area bar. The R Bar opened in its new location, the former Alden Manor on Kirmar Avenue in Newport Township, at the beginning of November after three and a half years of business on Union Street in Nanticoke.

"We're the first building in Newport Township," Temarantz said.

"Half of our parking lot is in Nanticoke," Maga said.

The move took them just a couple of miles, an easy transition for customers, though the owners put a lot of work into getting the new business to have that signature R Bar flair. Maga and Temarantz, who own the bar along with their father, Rick Temarantz, decorated the bar in the same industrial style as the former location on Middle Road in Nanticoke. They kept the emphasis on garage and vehicle decor, inspired by Rick Temarantz, who owns a garage. He's a collector, his daughters said, and many customers also have given them items to hang up.

They did some renovations to bring the place up to date, said Lindsey Temarantz, while showing off the new place.

"That was a salad bar," she said. "So we turned it into a bar. An upper bar."

They expanded some of the menu offerings, adding in some new burgers and fried Sicilian pizza. They now serve fish dinners every day, instead of just on Fridays, and also boast an extensive selection of wing sauces.

"We're at over 70 flavors," Maga said, and Temarantz added that's just their base flavors.

"We can make more than 100 flavors by mixing them together," Maga said.

The sauces include many traditional choices, as well as more adventurous selections like Vidalia onion, spicy jalapeño ranch, Cajun caesar parmesan and broccoli cheddar.

The burgers include the pepperoni pizza burger, buffalo mozzarella burger, and the "rogi" burger. The latter is topped with a choice of cheese, tomato basil sour cream, grilled onion and a buttery, fried potato pierogi on a toasted ciabatta bun.

Seafood dinners include crab cakes, a cod sandwich, and Yuengling Lager-battered haddock.

Their drink menu is also extensive, with featured seasonal beers, and their signature fishbowl mixed drinks.

Above the main bar, The Alden Room is available for private parties like showers, birthdays and other get-togethers.

The family is very hands-on at the R Bar, and Temarantz said they're lucky to have a great staff to help create a comfortable, friendly atmosphere for their customers.

"One of us is always here. Most of the time, it's both of us," Maga said.

11/14/2014

### **GNA to conduct study on moving 8th grade**

Michael P. Buffer - Citizens Voice

The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board voted Thursday to approve an internal administrative study on moving the eighth grade out of the high school.

The study will look at the feasibility of moving the eighth grade into the educational center with the sixth and seventh grades to create a middle school, Superintendent Ronald Grevera said.

The change also could give the high school space for a cyber lab and STEM — science, technology, engineering and mathematics — courses, Grevera said. The study should be done by March, Grevera said.

11/14/2014

### **Nanticoke football players raise \$9,000 for charity**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

Four Nanticoke football players raised over \$9,000 to aid cancer patients, Coach Ron Bruza announced at Thursday's school board meeting.

The money will benefit the Dr. David Greenwald Prescription Plan. The Kingston Oncologist's plan helps patients who are in need of financial assistance for prescriptions and other treatment supplements.

The four players — Michael Rasario-Clark, Ronald Kotz, Tyler Hanna and Robert Burke — held fundraisers, such as T-shirt sales, to raise the money.

Bruza said that this was the first year that the group of students participated in the fundraiser, but it was the fourth year that the football program has been involved. During the four-year period, players have raised over \$20,000 for the cause. Approximately \$16,000 was donated to Greenwald's fund, and \$4,000 to the American Cancer Society.

The board approved a motion to authorize Superintendent Ronald Grevera and the administration to conduct a study to examine a sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade configuration. Grevera said that the study will look at possibilities such as the eighth grade moving to the Educational Center and forming a Middle School with the sixth and seventh grades.

Grevera added that the study will review the social, emotional and psychological aspects of such a change, as well as if the move would be financially feasible.

Grevera also announced that Frank Grevera, director of the buildings and grounds department, saved the school district \$30,000 by renovating the swimming pool's existing starting blocks, making the pool safe for the swim team.

Ken James, of the athletic department, announced that he was pleased with the "increased participation and academic progress" of the school's sports teams. The fall sports teams had a GPA total of 92.8.

The board will meet next at 6 p.m. on Dec. 2 for a reorganization meeting.

11/14/2014

### **Author to return to Nanticoke to sign copies of Bilko book**

Jonathan Bombulie - Citizens Voice

The first time California native Gaylon White visited Nanticoke, it was Oct. 2, 1976. He was a 30-year-old author starting to put together a book on players who were big stars in the minor leagues but never captured the spotlight in the majors.

The project grew and changed over the years until it became *The Bilko Athletic Club: The Story of the 1956 Los Angeles Angels*, a book that details the life, times and exploits of larger-than-life Nanticoke slugger Steve Bilko.

Now, on Saturday, White will return to Nanticoke to sign books and greet fans from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Nanticoke Historical Society in the Samantha Mill House on 495 East Main Street, next to the Mill Memorial Library.

On his first visit to town, White spent a day with Bilko, having lunch at his Honey Pot home, stopping at Yeager's for a drink and visiting the Dana Perfume Company in Mountain Top, where the ballplayer worked after his playing days were through.

"It was initially the Bilko story that led me down this path, and then that story led me to some other wonderful stories," White said last summer.

On this visit to Nanticoke, Steve Bilko Jr. is scheduled to attend and baseball cards and photos from Bilko's career will be on display.

White recently wrote about one of the photos in the collection on his blog at [bilkoathleticclub.com](http://bilkoathleticclub.com). It shows Bilko, who was listed at 6-foot-1, 240 pounds, standing side by side with 5-5, 140-pound outfielder Albie Pearson. The contrast makes Pearson look like a Little Leaguer.

"He was one of the biggest boned men I've seen," Pearson said on the blog. "His legs – you could put mine together and make one of his."

Pearson's recollections of Bilko's power at the plate are typical of the sentiments White documented in the book.

"In the (Pacific) Coast League he was King Kong," Pearson said. "I tell you, if you didn't get the ball in on his hands, he'd just kill you."

11/9/2014

### **Neighbors help neighbors after Nanticoke fire**

Bob Kalinowski, staff writer, contributed to this report.

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Helping out those in need comes naturally to Joshua and Melissa Gyle. They have been there themselves.

As soon as they heard about Friday night's fierce fire in Nanticoke, the Hanover Township couple rushed to organize donations to help the six people from three families displaced by the blaze.

By dinner time Saturday evening, donated clothing, furniture and other supplies filled one end of the Pope John Paul II School gymnasium, on West Church Street near Maple Street, the headquarters for the donation drive.

Joshua Gyle said he and his wife know what the fire victims are going through, even if they do not know them personally.

"It hits home, especially with the holidays coming," Gyle said.

He said he knows first-hand what it's like to lose a home to a fire, while Melissa Gyle's mother, Joelle Smith of Nanticoke, lost everything in the 2011 flood.

Social media helped spread the word.

The Gyles credited a vigorous Facebook campaign — with multiple shares of their original post — for the steady stream of donated items brought in on Saturday. Nebo Baptist Church in Nanticoke also contributed generously, Joshua Gyle said. The Rev. James Nash, of St. Faustina Kowalska Parish, literally opened the doors of the gym, which is affiliated with the parish, for their use, Joshua Gyle added.

Anyone who wants to help the fire victims can bring clothing or other items to the gym any time today, the Gyles said. Officials had not released the ages and genders of those in need as of Saturday night, but Melissa Gyle said she had heard that a 2-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl were among the displaced.

Among items requested were clothing, bedding, smaller furniture and grooming and personal care supplies. However, the Gyles and their fellow

volunteers will take whatever people contribute.

“No matter what it is, we will take it,” Joshua Gyles said.

Any donated items not need by the fire victims will be given to charity, he added.

“It will go to whoever needs it,” he said.

11/9/2014

### **Six displaced after Nanticoke blaze tears through three homes**

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A raging fire in Nanticoke destroyed three homes and damaged others Friday night.

No one was injured, but six people were displaced from their homes, according to Nanticoke firefighters. The American Red Cross is providing food, clothing and lodging for a total of six people from three families, Red Cross spokeswoman Sara Smith said Saturday night.

The fire started at about 9:50 p.m. Friday in a vacant double-block home at 311-313 Hanover St., near the corner of West Green Street, then rapidly spread to two homes on West Green Street, firefighters said.

John Gacek was among a throng of neighbors who stood behind yellow emergency tape and watched as dozens of firefighters from Nanticoke and surrounding fire companies battled the flames and smoke as midnight neared Friday night.

“I was sitting in the living room getting the kids ready for bed, when I saw firemen dragging hose through my yard,” said Gacek, who lives about five houses from the fire scene.

Fast thinking and faster action on the part of firefighters saved at least one pet.

Kyle Makavensky lives next door to the house where the fire started. He was driving home from the movies with his fiancée, when they saw smoke spiral high in the sky near their home.

“All we could think of was our dog in there,” he said, referring to Pup, his 4-year-old Jack Russell terrier.

When they neared their home and saw the extent of the fire, Makavensky ran toward his house to check on Pup. Firefighters warned him not to go into the home.

Then Nanticoke firefighter Jeff Grzynski rushed into the house himself.

A minute later, he came out with Pup in his arms.

“He came out so fast with that dog I couldn’t believe it,” Makavensky said. “It was a great scene.”

Makavensky said his house has smoke, water and heat damage, with “soot everywhere,” but is not a total loss. He and his fiancée will stay elsewhere for about a week as the home is repaired, he said.

The house where the fire started has been vacant for about six to eight months, Makavensky said.

The fire appears to have started in the rear of the vacant house, Nanticoke police Chief William Shultz said.

The fire is under investigation and a state police fire marshal was at the scene Saturday, Shultz said, adding that the fire marshal “spent a lot of time here.”

Among the fire companies who responded were Nanticoke, Plymouth Township, Hanover Township, Kingston, Ashley and Honey Pot.

11/9/2014

### **Nanticoke resident pleased with city’s response**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

Resident Ed Topper said he was grateful to the city administration for addressing a problem at his Orchard Street home that had become a bit of a controversy.

Before last week’s meeting began, Topper said the city responded in a timely fashion to the issue. Some residents at last week’s council meeting had questioned the city’s response time.

Topper explained that at October’s meeting he told council and city Manager Andrew Gegaris that the basement of the home he shares with his 85-year-old grandmother, Rose Rittenhouse, was filling with water.

Topper, a pilot for American Airlines, said that he noticed the water was rising in his basement after a substantial rainfall.

He said that at 9 a.m. the morning after the meeting, Gegaris, city Engineer Daryl Pawlush and “numerous public works employees (arrived at his home) to access the situation.”

He said that the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority found a two-by-four causing an obstruction in a pipes. Once WVSA also checked the sewer lines and cleaned out the manholes, “water holes are flowing again,” he added.

Gegaris also said that he is “proud of the responses by the Fire Department, WVSA, consultant engineer and the street department.”

Gegaris said that city and Topper are working together to find a permanent solution to the situation, but if the same amount of rain falls again, the home will not experience the same degree of problems. Topper said that he is “grateful for the immediate response.”

In other matters: Stanley Cardinale stated that he was a victim of a phone scam where someone called him and told him his grandson needed to be bailed out of jail. He was instructed to deliver the money to a Kingston address, which was actually in Edwardsville. The police departments in both municipalities said that it is a common scam in that area.

Council President William Brown urged all residents, especially senior citizens to be aware that these scams are taking place.

Council will meet next on at 7 p.m. on Nov. 19.

11/8/2014

### **Multiple homes damaged in Nanticoke blaze**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

Multiple homes were damaged Friday night in a massive two-alarm blaze at the corner of Hanover and Green streets in Nanticoke. Fire departments from throughout the area were on the scene assisting the Nanticoke Fire Department. A suspected cause for the fire, which started around 10 p.m., was not immediately released.

Georgia Wielgosz was babysitting her grandchildren Friday at one of the homes when one of the children said they smelled something. She said it smelled like sulfur and the next thing she knew there were firefighters pounding on her door telling her to get out.

Two houses on Green Street and a double-block home on Hanover Street were involved in the blaze.

11/8/2014

### **Nanticoke man sniffs out phone scam from phony cop**

Eric Mark - Citizens Voice

Nanticoke police say a man posed as a police officer in an attempted phone scam earlier this week.

A Nanticoke resident told police that he received a phone call at about 11:15 a.m. on Monday from a man who said he was a Kingston police officer. The caller said he had arrested the resident's grandson in a drug bust, and had drug-tested and then arraigned him. The alleged officer, who had a Spanish accent, identified the resident's grandson only by first name, police said. The caller asked the resident if he wanted to bail his grandson out of jail. He said it would take \$2,000 to do so and asked for MoneyPak vouchers of \$500 each to be brought to Roosevelt Street, where he said his office was located, police said. The resident figured out he was being scammed and contacted Nanticoke police, who notified police in Kingston and Edwardsville.

Anyone with information about the suspect or the scam is asked to call Nanticoke police at 570-735-2200 or contact the Kingston or Edwardsville police departments.

10/23/2014

### **Greater Nanticoke Area elementary school receives state grant**

Last updated: October 22, 2014 11:47PM - 988 Views

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Christine Mash played the guitar and students in the K.M. Elementary School's early education program sang their favorite Halloween songs. It was sort of a celebration of the school being one of 12 statewide selected to receive an Early Childhood Education Community Innovation Zone grant that will be used to connect early childhood providers, families and schools.

The Early Childhood Education Community Innovation Zone Grants, awarded by the state to expand local programs that bridge the achievement gap for at-risk young children. Barbara G. Minzenberg, Ph.D., deputy secretary at the state Department of Education and Public Welfare, was at the school Wednesday to announce the grant award.

Minzenberg said the K.M. Smith school program will receive \$27,738 over three years. She said the grant will provide communities with much-needed funding to expand the program and ensure children are entering kindergarten ready to learn.

She said preparing students for school success requires collaboration of the family, school and community.

State Rep. Gerald Mullery, D-Newport Township, is a graduate of Greater Nanticoke Area and he attended K.M. Smith Elementary School.

"There is not a dollar spent in this commonwealth that brings a better return than those dollars spent on early education," Mullery said. "We have seen such great outcomes. Students do better throughout their school years, getting better grades."

Mullery said the Early Childhood Education Community Innovation Zone Grant is a wise investment.

"There's a great amount of research about the benefits of early childhood education," he said. "Conservatively, it shows that every dollar invested in early childhood education and care returns \$10. The return on investment comes when children who are in danger of failing or getting into trouble succeed in school and become healthy, productive citizens."

GNA Superintendent Ron Grevera said the grant will better prepare pre-kindergarten students.

"The earlier we can expose children to early education, the better they will be in their development and the better they will achieve," Grevera said.

Minzenberg said the Early Childhood Education Community Innovation Zone Grants are part of Pennsylvania's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant.

She said in December 2013, Pennsylvania was awarded the \$51.7 million grant from the federal government. She said the grant builds upon Pennsylvania's successes to provide high-quality early learning opportunities to close the achievement gap for at-risk children such as those in low-income families, English language learners, children with disabilities and developmental delays, and children experiencing homelessness.

Mash said there are 38 children in the program and 50 families participating in the "Parents As Teachers" program. She said the pre-K students and their families will participate in educational, social, athletic and recreational events.

"We are honored to have been selected for this grant," Mash said. "We will offer well-rounded experiences for the children and their families, encouraging family engagement and community connections."

10/23/2014

### **Nanticoke Area will receive state grant**

Michael P. Buffer - Citizens Voice

The Greater Nanticoke Area School District will receive \$27,738 from a state grant to expand its early childhood education program, according to a news release from state Rep. Gerald Mullery.

“There’s a great amount of research about the benefits of early childhood education,” said Mullery, D-Newport Township. “Conservatively, it shows that every dollar invested in early childhood education and care returns \$10. The return on investment comes when children who are in danger of failing or getting into trouble succeed in school and become healthy, productive citizens.”

The grant will help the school district ensure that at-risk young children starting kindergarten at the K.M. Smith and Kennedy elementary schools are ready to learn. The Greater Nanticoke Area School District was just one of 12 recipients of these grants.

The Early Childhood Education Community Innovation Zone Grants are part of Pennsylvania’s Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant. In December 2013, Pennsylvania was awarded a \$51.7 million grant to close the achievement gap for at-risk children, such as those in low-income families, English language learners and children with disabilities and developmental delays.

10/18/2014

### **Nanticoke awards contract for fire station repairs**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

The city council approved a contract with Multiscape, of Pittston, for exterior repair work at Nanticoke Fire Station No. 4 at Wednesday night’s meeting.

The contract, which is for \$41,448, will include work on upgrading to the telephone poles, handicapped parking accessibility, concrete landscaping for the front and asphalt for back of the building at the Epsy Street station.

City Manager Andrew Gegarlis said the Multiscape contract was the “most affordable, while remaining ADA compliant.”

Council also awarded supplementary snow plowing contracts to Voyton (\$69 per hour), Zoltewicz (\$70 per hour), Owazany (\$77 per hour) and Capozzi (\$70 per hour). All subcontractors are pending solicitor review.

Mayor Richard Wiaterowski administered oaths to three career firefighters who have recently received promotions. Rich Bohan has been promoted to assistant chief, Mark Boncal to captain and John Polifka to lieutenant.

Boy Scouts Troop 418 attended the meeting with proposal for potential community projects.

A “Family Fall Festival” is being planned from noon to 6 p.m. on Nov. 1 in Patriot Park. Entertainment, vendors and a costume parade, including prizes, will be part of the festival. Visit the City of Nanticoke Event Committee Facebook page for additional information.

The council will meet next at 7 p.m. on Nov. 5.

10/13/2014

### **GNA superintendent pleased with safety conference**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

Greater Nanticoke Area School District Superintendent Ronald Grevera announced at Thursday’s board meeting that the Safe Schools Conference that he and police officer Mike Wisnieski recently attended has very informative.

The conference focused on such issues as how the school can handle incidents of bullying, emergency management plans, hazards and drills.

Grevera also said that all grade levels of the school system have been and will continue participating in emergency preparation practices, such as school lock downs, bus and fire evacuations and shelter in place drills.

Principal Dr. Mariellen Scott of the GNA Education Center was pleased with the turn out for the recent Positive Behavior Family Night. Scott said that 120 families attended the event.

The board unanimously voted to appoint Susan Lipsey as supervisor of Special Education at a salary of \$83,500, under Act 93. All members of the board were present for the voting, with the exception of Tony Prushinski and Frank Shepanski, both of whom were absent.

The board also accepted the first reading of policy changes regarding Pupils, Promotion and Retention. The new policy will provide for parents being notified by May 15 if their child is in jeopardy of failing to pass their grade level.

Four letters of citation have already been sent out for the new school year regarding students who have missed more than 13 days of class. The action is in accordance with the new attendance guidelines.

The next school board meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Nov. 13.

10/10/2014

### **Nanticoke Area OKs severance for supervisor**

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The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board voted Thursday to hire a new special education supervisor and approved a severance agreement for the district’s former supervisor of special education.

The board hired Susan Lipsey to be the new supervisor at \$83,500 year. She is director of special education for Wyalusing Area School District in Bradford County.

Board President Ryan Verazin and solicitor Vito DeLuca said they could not comment on the severance agreement for Daniel Burkholder because it involved private personnel matters.

Burkholder agreed to resign as an administrator and swimming coach and is entitled to three months of his base salary as severance pay and any pay from unused time off, according to the agreement.

Burkholder's salary amount was not available. He agreed he will not file a lawsuit against the school district and is prohibited from future employment with the district.

Signatures on the agreement were dated Sept. 25. At the Sept. 11 meeting, the school board postponed a vote on the severance agreement and hired Judith Lapinski as interim special education supervisor at \$325 a day, retroactive to Aug. 26.

At Thursday's meeting, the board hired Jeff Katra as interim special education supervisor at \$325 a day, effective Oct. 7 until Lipsey starts.

The Wyalusing Area School District has an option to keep Lipsey there another 60 days, Greater Nanticoke Area Superintendent Ronald Grevera said.

10/6/2014

### **\$27k grant will aid early childhood education in Nanticoke**

Times Leader

Greater Nanticoke Area School District will receive more than \$27,000 in early childhood education grant money, state officials announced today. The cash comes as part of a statewide series of awards under which nearly \$2.7 million in Early Childhood Education Community Innovation Zone Grants will be distributed to 12 communities to expand local programs that help bridge the achievement gap for at-risk young children, according to the state's Public Welfare and Education departments.

The grants cover the period of Oct. 1, 2014, through June 30, 2015.

Nanticoke was the only recipient in Luzerne County.

"This grant will provide communities with much-needed funding to expand their successes and ensure children are entering kindergarten ready to learn," Acting Secretary of Education Carolyn Dumaresq said. "Preparing students for school success requires collaboration of the family, school and community. We all want our children to succeed, and we all can play a part in building a bright future for our students."

The grants will target innovations on individual at-risk communities serving select elementary schools.

Grantees include school districts, nonprofit organizations, universities, social services agencies, foundations and early childhood education programs.

"What's unique about these grants is their laser focus on individual at-risk elementary schools," DPW Secretary Bev Mackereth said. "Grantees can intensify and expand their successful programs and receive more intensive state supports and assistance. These grants are almost incubators to learn more about what's working and how we can make these successes a reality for similar communities throughout the commonwealth."

The Early Childhood Education Community Innovation Zone Grants are part of Pennsylvania's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant. In December 2013, Pennsylvania was awarded the \$51.7 million grant. This grant builds upon Pennsylvania's successes to provide high-quality early learning opportunities to close the achievement gap for at-risk children such as those in low-income families, English language learners, children with disabilities and developmental delays, and children experiencing homelessness.]

The state will award 38 additional three-year grants in 2015-16.

10/6/2014

### **Nanticoke Crime Watch plans Night Out**

Citizens Voice

Nanticoke Neighborhood Crime Watch will hold its first Night Out from 4 to 8 p.m. Oct. 18 at Quality Hill Park playground, Nanticoke. Free hamburgers and hot dogs will be served from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. or while supplies last. Vendors are welcome. Cost is \$5 for up to two tables. Three or more tables are \$10. Nanticoke Police Department will offer fingerprinting for children. Nanticoke Fire Department will display a truck. Guardian Angels will demonstrate self defense. A walk patrol around the city will be held for approximately one hour.

9/20/2014

### **Close apparently counts in Nanticoke Quoit Club members love their horseshoes**

Todd Oravic - Times Leader

Since the days of the Great Depression, quoits has been the name of the game for one Nanticoke club.

Originally, the game was played with two five-pound metal rings. The object was to toss the rings around a peg planted in a box of soft clay. Today, the metal rings have been replaced with horseshoes, giving the game its current name.

Either way, the Nanticoke Quoit Club is for those who enjoy tossing a few shoes.

Members play every Wednesday evening outside a barn tucked behind the armory on Railroad Street.

"We used to have the old quoits in a dirt pit inside the club near the bar," Karen Kryzanski, a member of the Nanticoke Quoit Club for 22 years, said.

Quoits or horseshoes, it's all good fun.

"It's a good group. We're quiet and no one causes any trouble. Everyone's there to have a great time," Sue Russell, a member of the club from Nanticoke, said.

The Nanticoke Quoit Club reaches back to the early days of the city of Nanticoke itself. Originally chartered in June 1933, the club began with 69

members, all male. A close-knit club at the beginning, members' wives became involved in club events, though it remained a men's club. The wives of club members soon formed their own organization, the Ladies' Auxiliary Club, which helped organize many club events. However, tensions began to rise.

"The quoit club changed hands numerous times, some for the good and some for the not so good," Kellie Conti Havey, a member of the club from Nanticoke, said. "People have stolen money from the club, people that were supposed to help better the organization and not themselves."

In 2005, the Ladies' Auxiliary Club was disbanded and the Nanticoke Quoit Club opened its membership to women. Membership has grown, and recently the club took occupancy in the barn on Railroad Street. In the past, members held tournaments in different bars around the community.

"Everyone works together now. We all cut the grass, clean the place and just generally pitch in," Kryzanski said.

The club often donates its building and surrounding lands for community use from private parties to events, including a fundraiser organized by the Valley with a Heart Benefit.

Members also help tend the community garden nearby, which produces fresh tomatoes, peppers and other vegetables. They often use the produce for club cookouts, dances and parties.

Today the club remains an independent, non-profit organization with 42 regular members and 104 social members. Social members pay less club dues than regular members, but regulars are allowed to vote in meetings held once a month, during which the club's board of directors discuss any issues as well as suggestions to raise money and bring new members.

New members are signed in by current members, who can only invite three members each.

Kryzanski remembers when she was first invited into the club in the early 90s.

"I remember joining with a few friends, and I found the atmosphere to be very relaxed," Kryzanski said. "We actually knew a lot of each other's parents."

Kryzanski, Russell and Havey agree that the club has become an extended family, bonded by dedication. Members commonly attend each other's weddings and Christmas and New Year's Eve parties. The club looks forward to a big Halloween bash this October.

"I'd like to thank all of our new and old members who stop in to chit chat and laugh. We wouldn't be here without them," Havey said.

The Nanticoke Quoit Club is nonprofit and all offices are volunteer. New members pay \$15, with regular and social members paying yearly club fees of \$12 and \$10, respectively.

9/12/2014

### **Nanticoke Area sign change criticized**

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The [Greater Nanticoke Area School](#) Board secretly decided to scrub the name of former superintendent Anthony P. Perrone from the entrance sign to the school district's campus, a former board member said at Thursday's board meeting.

Jeff Kozlofski also accused the board of violating the state Sunshine Act, which requires public votes on board decisions. The name was removed in July, shortly after Ronald Grevera became superintendent.

District Solicitor Vito DeLuca told Kozlofski removing Perrone's name didn't cost the district any money. DeLuca added it was done in response to an administrative decision and noted the board never voted to put Perrone's name on the sign in the first place.

Kozlofski said the board voted to approve the bill covering the cost to put Perrone's name on the sign. The cost was \$4,347, and his name was placed on the sign in 2011.

Perrone retired in January. In July, board President Ryan Verazin said Perrone's name was removed from the sign because it "created divisiveness" and "wasn't done the right way from the beginning."

Also at Thursday's meeting, Grevera announced district is imposing stricter requirements to reduce student absences. After a tenth absence, students will need a doctor's note for an excused absence, Grevera said.

9/12/2014

### **Five injured in Nanticoke rollover wreck**

Bill Wellock - Citizens Voice

Five people were hospitalized after a rollover crash around 11:40 a.m. Thursday in Nanticoke.

John D. Herb, 18, of Nanticoke was speeding his Jeep across the West Nanticoke bridge into the city when he lost control of his vehicle near Lower Broadway, police said. The Jeep went off the road, then swerved back onto the road and through traffic, almost hitting another vehicle, before leaving the road again and rolling several times into a grassy field.

Herb was partially ejected from the Jeep. Four juvenile passengers were wearing their seat belts and were able to leave the vehicle. They all went to Geisinger South Wilkes-Barre for treatment.

Herb went to Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center in Plains Township and was in critical condition at 6:15 p.m., spokesman Matt Van Stone said.

Police said Herb's Jeep was not registered and was not insured.

A Pennsylvania State Police R&I team and the Nanticoke fire department assisted Nanticoke police at the scene.

Police are still investigating the accident.

9/11/2014

### **Stanky and the Coal Miners continue to mine success**

## Stanky continues Coal Miner Tradition

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In an igloo in Alaska, John Stanky played his accordion for a Alaskan native, when the man became frantic.

Stanky asked the interpreter what was wrong.

The interpreter said, "He thinks you are playing too loud, and he is afraid the walls of the igloo are going to crack."

Stanky, who was born John Stankovic, still wholeheartedly thrusts himself into his music.

John Stanky and The Coal Miners will play from 5 to 7:30 p.m. at The Mohegan Sun Pocono Downs Casino on Sept. 13.

He said there is a correlation between the distinct sound of polka music and dancing.

Stankovic has been all over the world, including, New Zealand, Australia, Sweden, Germany, and New England.

The difference between playing in the states and playing abroad is how quickly people respond to the music.

It takes a while for an American audience to get into the music, he said.

However, once they do, the personal walls and self-consciousness that people have fall. What emerges is a celebration of life and music.

"As soon as the audience hears the first lyric in Europe they are already up and dancing. In America, it usually takes the audience one or two songs from the set list before they get moving," Stankovic said.

Overall, "The effect that our music has is that it makes our fans happy. As soon as we start to play people get up and dance," Stankovic said.

"We have a fan base of over 2,000 people that come out and join us," he said. "We have been playing for years and years."]

Stankovic, a Nanticoke native, began playing in 1945. His father was from Czechoslovakia and played both the accordion and the violin. In 1949, Stankovic used to play at weddings with his father. In 1951, he started John Stanky and the Tip Toppers. It was not until 1960 that he went by Stanky and The Coal Miners.

"In those days, people used to take the furniture out of the house. There would be an empty room. Everyone would dance, drink a few beers and eat. There would also be tents in the backyard. So, the wedding would be going on inside and outside of the house. That's what we did in the 50's," Stankovic said.

He produced Pennsylvania Polka. His wife, Dottie hosted the show. It has been 35 years since its conception.

WVIA runs re-runs six days a week.

John Stanky and The Coal Miners have about 25 albums, 60 songs, and a book titled, "Apples, Peaches, Pumpkin Pie: The Story of Stanky and the Coal Miners," which outlines stories of the band's experiences.

John Stanky's fondest memories include when he played with the band on airplanes.

"In China, we played on an airplane and Billy Joel was there with his now ex-wife Christie Brinkley, as we were walking around playing" he said.

"We also made commercials with Robert Kline."

The music has become a family tradition.

His two daughters play in The Coal Miners. Kim Bukuwski, plays the saxophone and clarinet and Debra Horoschock, plays the trumpet.

"My father made me practice for 1 hour every day. He also used to say, 'If you learn five songs you will never starve.' I learned 10." Stankovic laughed.

"That's a joke, by the way."

9/9/2014

## Local projects receive \$12.4M in slots money

BY ROBERT SWIFT, HARRISBURG BUREAU CHIEF

A state authority Tuesday approved the distribution of \$12.4 million in slot machine revenue from Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs to help fund local projects in Luzerne County.

A total of 46 projects will receive funding through the annual local share distribution approved by the Commonwealth Financing Authority. They include \$250,000 to renovate the former Ramada Hotel in downtown Wilkes-Barre for use by King's College, \$500,000 to improve flood protection along Solomon Creek in Wilkes-Barre and \$600,000 to upgrade surveillance cameras in Wilkes-Barre.

Funding has also been approved for projects in other municipalities in Luzerne County, including: Interstate Window and Door will receive \$350,000 to expand its manufacturing operations and create 25 new, full-time jobs in Pittston Township.

Finch Technology in West Pittston will receive \$300,000 for improvements and training necessary to apply for certification necessary to provide services to drillers in the Marcellus Shale industry.

The city of Pittston will receive \$450,000 to complete the third phase of their Main Street Revitalization plan.

Pathway to Recovery Counseling and Educational Services will receive \$244,678 to upgrade their counseling facilities and expand their services offered in the city of Hazleton.

DHD Realty Holding will receive \$500,000 to convert the Hazleton National Bank Building into office space in downtown Hazleton that is expected to generate 160 new jobs.

**The city of Nanticoke will receive \$500,000 for the final component of the downtown revitalization plan. The funds will also match a federal earmark for the initiative.**

The Greater Pittston Memorial Library will receive \$500,000 for the construction of a 5,175 sq. ft. addition that will facilitate a new children's wing and a community conference room.

Valley View Estates in Larksville will receive \$400,000 to install a sewage treatment facility within the estates to correct a Clean Streams Law violation and solve the long-standing sewage problem for current residents. The facility will also open the area up for additional development.

The West Side COG will receive \$800,000 for the purchase of specialized public safety and public works equipment that will be shared by the twelve member municipalities.

Ashley Borough will receive \$300,000 for the acquisition and renovation of a building that will serve as the new municipal building and replace their existing 100 year old, partially condemned facility.

Exeter Borough will receive \$200,000 to complete phase 2 of their storm water improvement project.

Foster Township will receive \$150,000 for the construction of roadways, shoulders and a storm water management system in the AgMar Estates residential development.

Freeland Borough will receive \$300,000 to complete Phase 2 of the streetscape improvement project in their central business district that includes Centre Street and South Street.

The Freeland YMCA will receive \$77,678 to renovate the historic Freeland YMCA building.

Hazleton City will receive \$100,000 to repair and replace the roof on the city's municipal garage. The city will also receive \$350,000 for the preservation and improvement of City Hall.

Plymouth Township will receive \$275,000 for the replacement of the Coal Street Bridge that was severely damaged by tropical storms in 2011.

West Hazleton Borough will receive \$200,000 to complete the renovation of the police station and allow the annex to house the West Hazleton Fire Department.

The Hazleton Little League Association will receive \$25,487 to assist with the renovation and rehabilitation of the little league complex located in the city of Hazleton and Hazle Township.

Laflin Borough will receive \$250,000 for the resurfacing of multiple roadways throughout the borough.

Bear Creek Township will receive \$225,000 to assist with the purchase of a pre-engineered insulated metal building with 7 bay doors to house the township's public works maintenance operations.

Hanover Township will receive \$75,000 for the purchase of a new municipal street sweeper.

Jenkins Township will receive \$100,000 to assist with the purchase of new municipal vehicles and maintenance equipment for the public works department.

The demand for project funding far exceeded the amount of slots revenue available, said CFA official Scott Dunkleberger.

The authority also approved a \$950,000 grant for an alternative energy heat and power project by Mohegan Sun.

9/8/2014

### **Temporary parking ban in effect for Nanticoke street**

Citizens Voice

Nanticoke police are warning of a temporary parking ban this week for road construction.

There will be no parking on East Church Street, between College and Chestnut streets, between the hours 8 a.m. and 7 p.m., starting Monday and ending Friday evening.

All vehicles parked in this area during that time frame will be towed at the owner's expense, police said..

9/6/2014

### **Nanticoke to look at cutting energy costs**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

City Manager Andrew Gegaris said at Thursday night's council meeting that representatives from Smart Watt Energy will be attending the Sept. 17 meeting to discuss a proposed Custom Incentive Plan for the city.

Gegaris said that Smart Watt Energy is a "sole-source contractor for UGI" and that their purpose is to "make energy costs more effective."

Gegaris added that the company will also do a survey and assessment of the city's traffic lights and street lights. The assessment comes at "no risk (financially) to the city," he said.

Council adopted an ordinance which provides for additional mandatory recycling requirements. The ordinance includes only minor changes, for example the requirement of mandatory yard-waste containers at all public events, according to solicitor William T. Finnegan.

Gegaris said that the ordinance is favorable because it will affect the recycling practices of commercial properties, who sometimes disregard the voluntary recycling methods, leaving city with a reduction in credit for recyclable items.

The ordinance is a requirement for the city to become eligible for a 902 Grant, which Gegaris has applied for. The grant would provide for more recycling containers for residents.

Also announced at the meeting:

- The Honey Pot Volunteer Fire Department will host wing night on Saturday, beginning at 5 p.m. Wings are \$8 per order. Contact Linda Prushinski at (570) 735-0508 for more information.
- The Hanover section of Nanticoke Block Party will be held from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Saturday in the vicinity of Center Street and Front Street to the first alley. Contact Emalie or Leonard at Front and Center Music at (570) 740-2009 for more information.
- The citywide yard sale will be held from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sept. 13. The rain date is Sept. 14. The deadline to register is Monday. For more information, call (570) 735-2800 ext. 101.

City clerk Mary Beth Cheshinski said that the city's first wing festival was a success and commended Becky Seman for her organization of the event.

Council's next meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Sept. 17.

9/5/2014

### **Last remnants of Perrone name gone from GNA**

Mark Guydish - mguydish@civitasmedia.com

It looks clean and unaltered, almost as if nothing was missing. The last remnants of former Superintendent Tony Perrone's name have been removed from a sign outside the high school, and the school board president said he feels the controversy is behind them.

Perrone, of Pittston, began working in the district full-time in 1966 and became superintendent in 1996. He was credited with helping pull the district from the brink of bankruptcy and overseeing new construction. Perhaps most notably, he retired in 2003 but stayed on, unpaid, until stepping down abruptly in January, citing health problems.

A sign that read "Greater Nanticoke Area Tony Perrone Educational Campus" was set up outside the main district buildings in his last years, but controversy erupted in April 2013 when seven of nine board members claimed they had been misled as to where money for the sign — \$4,346 — came from, believing it had been private donations. The head of district grounds said the money came from the general fund.

Only board members Cindy Donlin and Jeff Kozlofski seemed to know where the money had come from, and both denied misleading other members about the source. The pair lost their bid for reelection that year, but controversy about the sign continued.

Ultimately, the new board agreed to remove Perrone's name. It disappeared in July, leaving tell tale signs where the letters had been.

Drive by the sign these days and those scars are gone. It looks as though nothing was ever there. In a brief interview Board President Ryan Verazin said the board had agreed to the move to end the controversy.

9/4/2014

### **Save the 109th Field Artillery**

The Citizens' Voice

The 109th Field Artillery must be saved.

The National Guard unit's importance to the Wyoming Valley during natural disasters is reason enough to preserve and protect this vital community resource.

But beyond that, we absolutely must have an appreciation for history and recognize that the soldiers of the 109th have and could continue to play roles in the national defense of our nation. The new terror threats emerging in the Middle East provide ample proof that unknown dangers lay ahead. It is not wise to dismantle reserve or Guard units in Hometown America.

The unit has an economic impact. Its 600 or so members in batteries in Wilkes-Barre, Nanticoke and Plymouth contribute to the region's economic base. There are full-time jobs involved also, the men and women who keep the batteries functioning between drills.

The importance of the National Guard units on the chopping block nationwide is indicated in the bi-partisan opposition of legislators at the state and federal levels, including the governors of all 50 states.

The 109th dates to Oct. 17, 1775 when it was formed as the 24th Regiment of the Connecticut Militia. Connecticut and Pennsylvania fought over the land and eventually the dispute was settled, and to this date the 109th, successor to the 24th through a colorful and complex history, carries flags of both states. Those flags were on the train when 33 Guardsmen were killed en route to training at the outset of the Korean War in 1950.

In an area where we tear down historic coal breakers, hotels and train stations, we should halt this desecration of our history. Area citizens should scream out, "Enough!" and join with legislators to save and protect the 109th and its historic armory, the base of local Guard operations.

Those who recall the 109th Jeeps patrolling the dikes in June 1972 will never forget that image. It is the image that should drive the community to demand retention of the 109th.

9/2/2014

### **109th targeted for elimination**

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A plan to slash national military spending could hit home in a big way as the historic 109th Field Artillery in Wilkes-Barre is slated for elimination. An Army proposal for a nationwide slimdown in forces calls for the local National Guard unit to shutter, the state's top National Guard officer said last week.

But a bipartisan group of lawmakers has vowed to make sure that doesn't happen.

Founded in 1775, prior to the United States itself, the 109th has armories in Wilkes-Barre, Nanticoke and Plymouth. The unit currently boasts a compliment of 320 soldiers and recently was authorized to add another combat unit of 90 soldiers.

Asked about the fate of the unit, the 109th's commanding officer, Maj. Gerard Wrazien, said it was "too early to tell."

"The unit goes back to the founding of our country," Wrazien said, describing how the 109th fought alongside the Connecticut Militia during the Battle of Wyoming during the American Revolution.

The 109th is one of five battalions in the National Guard's 55th Armored Brigade Combat Team, which is headquartered in Scranton. Under the current proposal, three of the five battalions — the 109th, along with units in Philadelphia and Sellersville — would be eliminated. That would leave battalions in Scranton and Lewisburg.

"The Army's proposal to eliminate the National Guard's 55th Armored Brigade Combat Team is the wrong approach," U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, a Democrat, said in a statement. "The 55th plays a vital role in contributing to our national defense and helping Pennsylvanians recover from natural disasters."

The drawdown plan is part of a federal effort to shrink the Department of Defense budget by at least \$75 billion over the next two years. Under the

proposal, the nation's current compliment of 350,000 National Guard soldiers would be reduced to 315,000 by 2016.

Pennsylvania's top National Guard official Maj. Gen. Wesley E. Craig last week said 1,400 soldiers from Pennsylvania must be eliminated as part of the plan and he identified the 109th as being one of the battalions eyed for closure.

Nationwide, lawmakers are working to stop the National Guard cuts.

A bipartisan group of U.S. senators, including Casey, have organized a commission to analyze the proposed changes included in President Barack Obama's 2015 budget and force the president and military officials to justify the cuts. A U.S. House of Representatives bill, which has 217 cosponsors from both political parties, would prohibit any funds in the 2015 budget to be used to shrink the National Guard below current levels. The National Governors Association wrote a letter to Obama, signed by the governors of all 50 states, saying, "the nation's governors strongly oppose the potential cuts to the Army National Guard."

Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Corbett has vowed he can and will block the proposed cuts. Corbett recently sent a letter to Secretary of the Army John M. McHugh, claiming federal law prevents such reductions without his approval.

"I am confident that the Department of the Army will comply with federal law, and I urge you to cancel this ill-advised reduction in force structure," Corbett wrote in a recent letter.

Should the reduction plan be successful despite the opposition, it's "too soon" to speculate on what that would mean for local 109th soldiers or the armories in Wilkes-Barre, Nanticoke and Plymouth, Wrazien said.

One thing, he said, is certain: the National Guard will always be available to protect and serve local citizens in time of need.

"The 109th Field Artillery has always been a part of the community here," Wrazien said. "The National Guard will always have a presence in the community because we have an obligation to the citizens of Northeastern Pennsylvania."

The nation and region has relied heavily on the 109th in modern times, especially since Sept. 11, 2001.

Troops were called to fight in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, where Sgt. Sherwood Baker, 30, of Plymouth, was killed in the line of duty.

They've been sent on other missions to Germany, Egypt, Kuwait, the Sinai Peninsula and Qatar. They've been dispatched to guard the U.S./Mexico border in Arizona.

On the homefront, they've guarded the nuclear power plant in Salem Township after the 2001 terror attacks and were mobilized to help stranded motorists following the Valentine's Day blizzard of 2007. More recently, they were called to duty twice in 2011 following Hurricane Irene and then Tropical Storm Lee, which led to record flooding of the Susquehanna River.

The debate over military funding comes as the 109th is poised to add another combat unit.

Currently, the 109th houses Headquarters Battery in Wilkes-Barre, often referred to as the Kingston Armory. Alpha Battery is in Plymouth and Bravo Battery is in Nanticoke. A new Charlie Battery is coming to Wilkes-Barre and 109th officials will soon be recruiting the 90 soldiers they need to fill the battery, Wrazien said.

Wrazien worries that national military leaders — number crunching while looking at troop staffing — might see the 109th as expendable because of so many open spots in the brand new unit.

This is a critical time because as the Department of Defense looks at reducing force structure, they look at how units are maintaining their strength," Wrazien said. "We are looking for soldiers. I'm gaining a whole new battery and I have to man it."

8/31/2014

### **Longtime GNA worker honored**

Citizens Voice

State Sen. John T. Yudichak (D-Luzerne/Carbon) recently presented a Pennsylvania Senate citation to Frank A. Wolfe of Nanticoke. Wolfe retired from the [Nanticoke Area School District](#) earlier this summer after 40 years of service. A member of the maintenance department, Wolfe was one the longest tenured employees in the district and well known for his work behind the scenes preparing the athletic fields for competitions.

8/25/2014

### **Nanticoke's 1st annual Wingfest brings camaraderie, greasy fingers**

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Fingers and lips dripping with ghost pepper sauce, Mendel Fernandes and Kristopher Tagnani threw up their hands and backed away from the table leaving a few uneaten chicken wings behind.

A crowd of more than 100 moaned at their defeat.

The two had succumbed to the blistering heat of their Jolokia Heat Wave Ghost Pepper wings from Nanticoke's The Parkway Inn. Meanwhile, their competitors in speed eating continued to chow down hoping to finish their own portions of wings in the shortest time.

The wing-eating contest, featuring seven contestants from Nanticoke, was the grand finale Sunday for the first annual Wingfest on Patriot Square.

A few moments before the wing-scarfing commenced, organizer Rebecca Seman, 30, made rounds visiting vendor stands. She stopped for a moment to explain her vision for Nanticoke with a stronger sense of community — something, she said, that takes a little effort.

Money paid by the 34 vendors as entry fees will help pay for future community events, Seman said.

"It's just a way to bring Nanticoke together," Seman said. "To get everyone out talking and getting to know each other."

Maryann Olver and Jonathan Lang of Nanticoke sat at a table with their friends Lisa and Scott Percevault of Mountain Top. A paper wing boat containing only sauce from The Parkway Inn's Chipotle Ranch wings sat on the table between them.

They were taking their time, savoring thoughtful selections of the deep-fried morsels to build a consensus on which area restaurant brought the best. Admittedly, Uncle Buck's Sweet and Tangy wings were pretty good they said, and a close competitor. But the spicy, yet savory fare from The

Parkway brought complexity that was hard to beat.

“And we haven’t even gotten to the R Bar (& Grill) yet,” Scott Percevault said.

After Fernandes and Tagnani backed out, the remaining five speed eaters were in to the end. Faces turned red, eyes and noses started to run while spent chicken bones piled up on the table.

John Bugdonovitch of Nanticoke took first place consuming his dozen in 3 minutes and 5 seconds, a record he aspires to beat next year.

With red-stained fingers and a little wing sauce persistently stuck to his goatee, Bugdonovitch said it was his technique — pulling the meat off the bone in one swipe, not gnawing it off — that gave him an edge.

“Not thinking about how hot it is, just chewing and swallowing,” he said.

As the day was winding down, the Percevaults, Olver and Lang had reached their consensus they said. They had sampled wings from the R Bar & Grill, but agreed The Parkway’s Chipotle Ranch had earned a unanimous sauce-covered thumbs-up from all of them.

8/25/2014

### **Districts implement changes at schools**

Michael P. Buffer - Citizens Voice

A new school year brings a variety of changes in districts across Luzerne County.

Greater Nanticoke Area

Ronald Grevera has taken over as superintendent of the Greater Nanticoke Area School District. He had been superintendent of the Northwest Area School District until July.

The district has made some other administrative changes, Grevera said. John Gorham is the principal at K.M. Smith Elementary School for pre-kindergarten through first grade and Kennedy Elementary School for second grade.

Maryellen Scott is the principal of the Elementary Center for grades three to seven. Joseph Long is the high school principal.

The district is building a locking vestibule by the high school to restrict access to district facilities, Grevera said.

“I will be leading a committee of teachers to conduct a safety audit of each building, reporting needs back to the board to increase school safety district wide in each building,” Grevera said.

The district also will operate its own cyber program to bring students back to the district, Grevera said.

8/23/2014

### **Nanticoke to use tax collection service**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

The council voted unanimously at Wednesday’s meeting to enter into a contract with [e-Collect Plus](#), a Pittsburgh-based tax collection service.

The service “makes sure that all fees, permits and taxes owed to the city” are collected and that there is “no cost to the city or the tax payers,” City Manager Andrew Gegaris said at a meeting earlier this month.

Gegaris also said that many times there are “wrong records, wrong millages and various other mistakes that are keeping the city from obtaining the money which is owed. The e-Collect firm audits Berkeimer to make sure that it is correct.”

The contract agreement states that no fee will be charged if less than \$25,000 in taxes is recovered. Upon reaching the \$25,000 minimum, e-Collect will charge 15 percent fee. The company is examining the past three years and is estimating a projected collection of \$169,000 and \$206,000.

The contract is subject to solicitor approval.

Gegaris has also applied for a 902 Grant, which would provide for more recycling containers for residents.

Mayor Richard Wiaterowski swore in Firefighter Justin Gildea. Gildea will replace Firefighter Travis Temarantz, who resigned last month to join the Wilkes-Barre Fire Department.

The Honey Pot Volunteer Fire Department will host wing night on Sept. 6, beginning at 5 p.m. Wings will be \$8 per order. Contact Linda Prushinski at (570) 735-0508 for more information.

The Hanover Section of Nanticoke Block Party will be held Sept. 6 from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. in the vicinity of Center Street and Front Street to the first alley. For more information, contact Emalie or Leonard at Front and Center Music (570) 740-2009.

8/23/2014

### **Nanticoke tot gets new lease on life**

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Alexa Mihalos celebrated her second birthday on July 8, 2014, but to members of her family, the celebration was a rebirth because of everything the little girl has been through over the past two years.

Born with narrow nasal passages which impaired her breathing, Alexa has spent a large portion of her young life in a hospital and connected to a tracheostomy (trach) tube undergoing numerous medical procedures to correct the problem.

And even though she received numerous presents for the occasion, the Nanticoke tot was on the giving end of her birthday by letting her parents Jeanna and Manny and grandparents hear her laugh and talk for the first time.

By all accounts when Alexa was born, everything seemed fine. Her maternal grandfather Ron Bau of Hunlock Creek recalls getting the call that he had a healthy granddaughter. But minutes later, that changed.

The doctors noticed that tiny Alexa was having trouble breathing and suspected that there was trouble with swelling in her nasal passages but later

they realized it was much more than just swelling. She was sent to Moses Taylor Hospital, Scranton.

Mother Jeanna Mihalos held her for the first time two days after she was born. Four days later, Alexa was lifeflighted to Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Jeanna didn't hold her child again until six weeks later.

While at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Alexa had two operations on her nose for pyriform aperture stenosis, a rare anomaly where the anterior opening of the nose is narrow and there is overgrowth of the maxillary bone. The time she was recovering from these surgeries she kept taking her breathing tube out which caused a build up of scar tissue and an inflammation in her trachea, which brought about the necessity for having a trach tube inserted to help her breathe.

"I remember the day that she got the trach," Jeanna said. "My husband and I had mixed emotions over seeing her with the trach but we said maybe this will help her get home faster. Then she gave us a big smile as if to say, 'Finally, I can breathe on my own.'"

But that was just the beginning of her battle. Since Alexa was a baby, she often dislodged the trach tube by sheer movement or by trying to pull it out. Her parents were unable to be away from her side. She needed eyes on her 24/7 to make sure she didn't block her trach. Jeanna quit her job at the Red Cross and became a full-time stay-at-home mother and caretaker.

Jeanna and Manny stayed at a hotel for two weeks before they were able to get a room at the Ronald McDonald House, where they lived for 2-1/2 months, while Alexa was hospitalized in Philadelphia. Staying in the city proved costly for the couple.

Her mother and father had to be certified in trach CPR and emergency procedures before Alexa was discharged so that they could come to her assistance should something happen.

On Oct. 4, 2012, Alexa was finally able to come home, but it wasn't the homecoming they had hoped for. "Bringing a new baby home was overwhelming enough," Jeanna said. "But we had tons of medical equipment, boxes everywhere and there were strangers in my house." There were several times in the hospital that Alexa coded, needed resuscitation, and once at home.

During one of those times, Jeanna had to resuscitate her daughter when a night nurse neglected to notice the baby pulled out her trach tube. After that experience, the family let that nurse go and Jeanna often slept on the floor near her daughter's crib while her father stood guard to wake her should something happen. After two months without night nursing, the couple signed on with another nursing agency and received three nurses Alexa loves.

But through it all, Alexa was determined. "She was always the happiest baby," her mother said.

Although Alexa couldn't speak, her progression in other ways, such as walking, was right on par with other children her age. When Alexa was just a few months old, her mother began teaching her sign language. "It was a big way for her to communicate with us," Jeanna said. "She could tell us she was hungry or tired. She also learned signs for animals that she saw."

Last November was a major step forward for Alexa when she had double stage laryotracheal reconstruction. Cartilage from her rib was used to expand the airways in order to widen the trachea. A follow-up single stage surgery was conducted in June. Her surgeon Dr. Ian Jacobs proclaimed her diagnosis stellar. Dr. Jacobs said "she has a better trachea than all of us, and she exceeded all my expectations."

Jeanna got a major surprise in the middle of the night, days after surgery, when she awakened to the sound of a cry. It took her a minute, and then she realized the baby's crying was her own daughter marking the very first time she ever heard Alexa cry. Then she and Alexa cried together.

Things are changing at the Mihalos household and slowly getting back to the normal of what it would be to have a 2-year-old child. Alexa can take regular baths now as opposed to sponge baths. A suction machine and emergency trach bag doesn't have to be carried everywhere that Alexa goes. Alexa visited Knoebel's Amusement Park as part of a trach-free celebration planned for her.

"The things you didn't think of before, you take for granted," Jeanna said. "It's so freeing. I couldn't drive for the longest time because I had to always sit next to her. Now Alexa and I can go for rides together. I couldn't wear perfume because she couldn't be around strong smells."

Jeanna still has to thicken all of her liquids because Alexa still aspirates them. She has a large scar on her neck from the trach tube and two scars on her chest from the rib graft surgeries. She also lost some of her hair, which the doctors diagnosed as alopecia attributed to stress. Alexa still has

night nursing to monitor her oxygen levels with a pulse ox and hopefully nursing will be discontinued after her bronchoscopy in September.

Alexa has been talking now and can say "mama," "dada" and "two." She is receiving speech therapy and doctors are sure that she will catch up to her peers before she enters preschool.

Caring for her daughter over the past two years provided the impetus for Jeanna to begin a rebirth of her own. She plans on studying surgical technology at Luzerne County Community College this fall since she saw first hand how successful Alexa's surgeries were.

If Alexa had been born in the early 90's she would have probably had her trach into her 20's. "Dr. Jacobs gave Alexa something we couldn't give her," her mother said. "He gave her the gift of breathing."

Alexa will never remember any of this but her parents will tell her all about it and she has the scars and pictures to prove it.

"The past two years were draining and exhausting, but I don't even see that now," Jeanna said. "This is an exciting time for us."

8/23/2014

**Heated bidding over Nanticoke property in tax sale**

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A former Nanticoke bowling alley fetched the highest bid — \$70,000 — in this week's free-and-clear Luzerne County back-tax auction.

Hazleton resident Pasquale Scalleat acquired the 1.6-acre property on Washington Street after fending off intense competition from three men — Jignesh, Bhikhabhai and Anup Patel.

Bids started at \$856.

Attorney John Rodgers, who ran the auction, quickly snapped his head back and forth numerous times between the competing bidders seated on opposite sides of the county courthouse rotunda Thursday to see if they were willing to go higher.

Scalleat said he didn't expect bidding to exceed \$30,000 to \$40,000 but was willing to pay more because he operates a demolition and salvage

company and won't have to pay someone else to remove the deteriorating 121,556-square-foot structure. He expects to recoup much of his investment from scrap value.

"We're very interested in buying up these dilapidated eyesores in our area and getting them back on the tax rolls," Scalleat said. "The building is a liability, and if kids get hurt, it's a bad situation."

The former L.S. Bowl-A-Rama was owned by Ellis Investment Inc. Bowling alley owner George Ellis, of Conyngham Township, pleaded guilty in May 2010 to possessing more than 1,100 marijuana plants and money laundering. The plants were discovered during a raid at the bowling alley in November 2009, police said.

Jignesh Patel said he owns two businesses near the bowling alley site — Ruminski's Market and the Beer Stop Deli — and wanted to replace the rundown, vacant Ellis property with a new commercial and residential plaza.

"We are trying to make a better city. We love Nanticoke," Patel said.

Scalleat said he has no specific development plans for the parcel and is willing to meet with the Patels and others to explore options.

Bidders purchased 67 of the 137 properties listed for sale Thursday, paying a combined \$420,750, according to Sean Shamany, of Northeast Revenue Service LLC, the county's tax-claim operator.

Eight properties were removed from the sale because the owners filed for bankruptcy protection. Another 146 properties eligible for sale were postponed to a special free-and-clear auction Oct. 16, largely because Northeast Revenue wanted to ensure all lien holders were sufficiently notified of the sale.

The 70 properties that did not sell Thursday will go into a repository and may be purchased at any time with approval from taxing bodies.

One of the largest properties on the auction roster was removed the morning of the sale: a retail structure at 259 S. Main St., Wilkes-Barre, owned by Igor Kleyman and Then You Win Inc. The property, which once housed the Rides & Rhythms auto parts store, includes three parcels with a combined assessment of \$480,000.

The property owner convinced a judge to delay its auction listing until Oct. 16 after filing a petition promising to pay the back-tax debt now that a commercial tenant has been secured for the building.

Jasmine Rodriquez bought her first home at the sale — a half-double on Regent Street in Wilkes-Barre — for \$2,000. She and her cousin, Christina Davis, discussed plans for the property, which is assessed at \$38,000, as they waited in line to pay after the sale.

"It's exciting. It needs work, but I plan to do most of it myself with the help of family," said the 32-year-old Back Mountain renter.

8/17/2014

### **Nanticoke makes security changes for school year**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

Recently appointed Greater Nanticoke Area Superintendent Ron Grevera announced several changes to increase safety at the high school that will be implemented this school year at Thursday's school board meeting.

The new policies include:

- All staff will now be required to wear ID badges at all times while on the school's premises.
- Visitors to the school will no longer have access to roam freely around the campus.
- Visitors will have to sign in and wear visitor's badges.
- Parents or others wishing to enter any of the offices will be escorted by a member of staff.
- There will be locking vestibule in the high school lobby.

Grevera is also asking for parents' cooperation with the new safety and security measures. He is also hoping to get approval for the installation of additional cameras and door alarms.

Grevera also discussed the inclusion of classroom diagnostic tools being incorporated into the curriculum. The tests are a way of identifying issues and problems at an early stage and are in correlation with the PSSA tests.

"I know that our kids can do better" stated Grevera.

In other matters:

- The board approved the establishment of a Policy Committee within the school board. The committee is comprised of Wendy Kotsko-Wiaterowski, Megan Tennesen and Chairperson Tony Prushinski. The committee replaces the Planning Committee and will make decisions on matters such as safety, education and athletics policies.
- The bus stops for the 2014-2015 school year are listed on the school's website <http://www.gnasd.com>.
- The first day of classes will be Aug. 25.

The next school board meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Sept. 11.

8/16/2014

### **GNA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS PLAN BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHTS**

Citizens Voice

Greater Nanticoke Area elementary schools are planning Back to School nights. The events will offer parents and guardians opportunities to meet their child's teacher. Students may accompany their parents/guardians to the program. Each teacher will present an overview of the school year. The evening is not for individual conferences. K.M. Smith Elementary School will hold its Back to School Night from 5 to 7 p.m. Monday. Kennedy

Elementary and the GNA Elementary Center will hold a Back to School Night Aug. 26. There will be three identical presentations from 6 to 6:15 p.m., 6:25 to 6:40 p.m. and 6:50 to 7:05 p.m. On the first day of school, Aug. 25, only students will be allowed in the buildings. No parents or guardians will be allowed to enter the school buildings. Packets of information and forms that must be completed by the parents/guardians will be distributed that night. Dr. Mariellen Scott is principal of the GNA Elementary Center and John Gorham is principal of K.M. Smith Elementary School and the Kennedy Elementary School.

8/13/2014

### **Nanticoke council hears benefits of auditing service**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

City Manager Andy Gegaris pitched the benefits of the city using an auditing service agency to make sure the city is collecting all the taxes and fees it should at Aug. 6's council meeting.

Gegaris explained that e-Collect Plus "makes sure that all fees, permits and taxes owed to the city" are collected and that there is "no cost to the city if less than \$50,000 is collected."

In the event that more than \$50,000 is collected, e-Collect Plus charges 15 percent of the collected fees.

Gegaris added that many times there are "wrong records, wrong millages and various other mistakes" that are keeping the city from obtaining the money which it is owed.

"The e-Collect firm audits Berkeimer to make sure that it is correct," Gegaris said.

Gegaris also said that the city doesn't have the resources to double check all businesses, and that Hanover Township is using e-Collect's services. The council will vote on whether to approve e-Collect's proposal during a future meeting.

Gegaris also answered some of the negative comments regarding a proposal to bring an inter-modal transportation center to the city.

Gegaris detailed the benefits of an inter-modal for LCTA buses, LCCC vans and taxis. He said the inter-modal will not only "compliment the street-scape project" by "enhancing the city's appearance" but will also "revitalize the city by bringing in new businesses and jobs."

Gegaris also said the intermodal would "increase public safety" as the buses would have a central location, eliminating the need to stop in the middle of the street for passengers.

The council will meet next at 7 p.m. on Aug. 20.

8/9/2014

### **Nanticoke nursing home will close in October**

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A personal care home in Nanticoke with a history of health violations will close in October.

Nanticoke State, formerly known as Nanticoke Villa under previous ownership, will close Oct. 6, or when all of its residents have found alternative facilities, according to a state Department of Public Welfare official.

Nanticoke State's owner, Constantinos Mallios, notified the department Wednesday that he would be closing the facility, leaving its 47 residents in search of new living facilities.

"Obviously closing the facility is the last thing that we want to do," Matthew J. Jones, director of human services licensing, said Friday. "The situation is very serious, and Mr. Mallios has also come to the conclusion that the facility has to close."

Before deciding to close Nanticoke State, Mallios in July had appealed the department's decision to revoke his license based on repeated violations that risked exposing residents to hepatitis B, according to the department's violations history report on the property.

The personal care home was sold to Mallios on May 12, after the Bureau of Human Services refused to renew the license of the previous owner, Ron Halko. Under Halko's ownership, a Department of Public Welfare inspection found that several Nanticoke Villa residents had been infected with hepatitis B after health-care personnel used the same blood glucose equipment to treat several patients. Jones said no more than 10 people were infected with hepatitis B.

"As the result of those findings, we non-renewed Mr. Halko's license," Jones said, adding that the license was essentially revoked.

Halko was notified of the non-renewal on March 18, and sold the personal care home to Mallios after appealing the bureau's decision.

During a June 17 inspection, the Department of Public Welfare found that workers under Mallios's ownership continued sharing blood glucose equipment with numerous patients, according to the department's violations history report on the property.

"This, of course, we considered to be extremely serious because of the known presence of hepatitis B in the facility," Jones said.

In a letter dated July 15, the Bureau of Human Services Licensing notified Mallios that it was revoking his license, "based on gross incompetence, negligence or misconduct in operating the facility," citing "multiple and repeated violations including unsanitary conditions related to infection control and fire safety." In a May 22 inspection, a code enforcement officer found that Nanticoke State's fire alarm and sprinkler systems did not comply with the 2009 International Fire code.

Mallios appealed the bureau's decision to revoke his license on July 22, but notified officials Wednesday that he would instead close the personal care facility, Jones said. The state Department of Health, Jones said, is looking into whether any additional patients were infected with hepatitis B under Mallios's ownership.

Nanticoke State personnel were contacted, but refused to comment on Friday.

While Nanticoke State remains open, a relocation team assisted by Luzerne County Human Services will work with the 47 residents to help them find new living facilities.

"We'll do our best to keep them as close to the Nanticoke area as we can," Jones said, adding that their medical needs will take priority in the

relocation process. "We'll look at all options available for these folks."

8/2/2014

### **Volunteer wants to 'bring back Nanticoke pride'**

#### **Lou Gianuzzi has spent more than 100 hours beautifying Patriot Square Park**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

As a city resident for 23 years, Lou Gianuzzi wants to "bring back Nanticoke pride."

That's why Gianuzzi has volunteered nearly 100 hours of his time beautifying Patriot Square Park, an effort that was completed on July 8.

"I just want the families and citizens of the community to have a nice place to relax and enjoy themselves" Gianuzzi said.

Gianuzzi said that the idea to renovate Patriot Square came on May 10, while he was helping out with another community project.

Rebecca Seman, founder of the Nanticoke Community Garden, members of her organization and members of city council all gathered together in an effort to clean up the park and plant flowers in the flower box that surrounds the park's display of the American flag. Gianuzzi said that on the day of the cleanup, he decided to start early, at 9:30 a.m., in preparation for the project.

"I wanted to get a head start and have everything ready for when the volunteers arrived. I pulled up weeds and small trees, raked, and dug up the ground," which took four hours, Gianuzzi explained.

After the flowers had been planted, "the idea came to me; I would sand and paint the outside of the (10-by-20 foot) flower box" Gianuzzi continued.

A few days later, while looking at the box and watering the newly planted flowers, Gianuzzi thought: "this needs something else."

He then decided to paint "Welcome To Patriot Square" on both sides of the flower box.

"A few days later, I was sitting in the park, and I decided to repair and paint all 10 benches. The benches were in poor condition; some were broken and some had paint peeling off. It took seven days because of the rain," he said.

"I sat there and saw how nice everything looked. Patriot Square was glowing! Three days later, again I thought about what else I could do to make it look even nicer, so I painted the words Patriot Square on each bench. This took four days."

Gianuzzi and Walter Pavelick, who is the head of the city's Public Works/Street Department, posted signs on the trees and throughout the square stating which actions were prohibited in the park, such as no smoking, no drinking, no littering, in accordance with local ordinances.

The city paid for most of the expenses associated with the renovation. Gianuzzi said that he paid for a few supplies out of his own pocket without asking for reimbursement.

7/30/2014

### **Road ends for Nanticoke**

By Nicholas Gill - Citizens Voice

Nanticoke scored 32 runs in its first three games of the Pennsylvania 10-11 Little League softball tournament.

On Tuesday night, Nanticoke ran into a buzzsaw named Lexi Rogers, whose no-hitter propelled Nittany Valley to a 5-0 win in an elimination game.

Rogers was masterful changing speeds and using her funky, but effective delivery to keep the Nanticoke hitters off balance all night.

Rogers tossed six innings, allowed zero hits, walked five and struck out 12.

"The windup is different and throws people off," Nittany Valley coach Chris Morelli said. "Lexi is a gamer. She has done this all tournament, not no-hitters, but she has thrown strikes and mixed up her pitches which you don't see at this level."

Nittany Valley broke a scoreless tie in the second inning when Molly Richendefer brought home Alyssa Bickle on a ball that got past first base. The team extended the lead in the third when Jaelyn Smith singled home Rogers to make it 2-0.

Nanticoke worked a few very tough at-bats to draw walks and put runners on base. The team was aggressive trying to manufacture runs because of how dominate Rogers was on the mound. Nanticoke was thrown out trying to steal third and left a runner on third in their best scoring chances.

"Once we got on base, we took chances," Nanticoke manager Colleen Baird said. "The pitcher's windup threw them off. They have faced that speed before, but the windup got them."

Nittany Valley continued to manufacture runs in the later innings. Richendefer singled home an RBI in the third to make it 3-0.

Rogers brought Lily Gardner home with an RBI ground out and Makenna Port hit a bloop single to centerfield to plate the final run.

Nanticoke rallied in previous games in the late innings, but could not get Roger's timing down on Tuesday.

Nanticoke ended the year with a third-place finish in the state tournament.

"It has been a great season," Baird said. "I'm proud of these girls. We were third in the state and there is not much more you can ask for."

Nittany Valley will play West Point at 2 today for the state title. If Nittany Valley, wins the two teams will meet again at 5.

7/27/2014

### **Frank Wolfe retires from GNA School District**

Citizens Voice

Frank Wolfe III, Honey Pot section of Nanticoke, retired recently after a four-decade career with the Greater Nanticoke Area School District.

Wolfe was employed in the maintenance department at GNA for 40 years and was one of the longest-tenured employees in the district. He retired effective June 27.

As a member of the maintenance department at GNA, Wolfe lined the fields for football games, soccer and baseball games and was well known for his work behind the scenes to prepare the facilities for athletic competitions.

On the occasion of his retirement, he was featured in the GNA Insider, the school district's internal publication, in an article headlined "GNA says goodbye to a legend."

District Director of Buildings and Grounds Frank Grevera in that article described Wolfe as "an icon to anybody who was involved with sports at GNA."

Wolfe is the son of Alice Wolfe, Nanticoke. He and his late wife, Patricia, have two daughters.

7/27/2014

### **Slashing victim Jennifer Mieczkowski still on mend Nanticoke woman slowly getting back what was taken away**

Jerry Lynott - jlynott@civitasmedia.com

With the stroke of a finger Jennifer Mieczkowski slides across the screen of her cellphone color photographs of her face stitched together with thick black sutures.

She kept them as reminders of the box cutter attack early New Year's Day 2012 inside a Nanticoke bar and how far away she's come from the slashing and the plastic surgery to hide the wounds.

"It doesn't go away. I know it looks good, but I can still see it," Mieczkowski said Saturday.

There's still ground to make up, trust to be regained and life to be lived for Mieczkowski, 33, the mother of a 9-year-old daughter, Gabbie. The guilty plea last week to simple assault by the woman whom Mieczkowski identified as the attacker has helped, but charging her with the slashing would have helped get back so much of what's been taken away.

Mieczkowski said that on the urging of the Luzerne County District Attorney's office she kept quiet in order not to jeopardize the case. She decided to open up after Melanie Figueroa entered her plea July 21.

"I'm happy it's over," Mieczkowski said.

Still she faulted the district attorney and police for a lackluster investigation. She said they questioned her recollection of events that morning inside the former Prospect Street Cafe, going so far as to say it was affected by the trauma and the blood in her eyes that night.

She's started to prepare a victim's impact statement for the court and planned on attending Figueroa's sentencing on Sept. 9.

"I don't want her to have house arrest," Mieczkowski said, adding Figueroa should serve time in prison, even if she has a young son.

"Her son's life hasn't changed," Mieczkowski said. "My daughter has gone through more than any normal child her age has gone through."

As for Mieczkowski, her life had been upended. She tried to go back to work at her hair salon after the attack, but shut it down in April 2012.

A new customer came in and while doing her hair, Mieczkowski said, she looked in the mirror and saw the woman's eyes shifting from scar to scar.

"How do you go to work and make somebody feel beautiful when you don't?" she asked.

For two years she wouldn't shop, she said, for fear of people recognizing her as "that girl" from the slashing. Just a month ago she went to the Wyoming Valley Mall with her mother, Dawn.

Family has been a unwavering source of support. "My mom didn't leave my side," Mieczkowski said of being with her after plastic surgeon Dr. George Speace restored her face. Her younger sister, Ashlee, has provided help and encouragement. "She's just been such a big part of me getting over it," Mieczkowski said.

Mieczkowski suffered a loss earlier this month when her father, Walter, died from cancer at the age of 53. He used to own People's Food Market in Nanticoke.

She's not worked since she closed her salon. She's been diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder. She's without health insurance and has medical bills to pay. She hopes that the lawsuit she filed against the bar will pay for the bills. The case is still pending in Luzerne County Court.

Her goal is to reopen her salon and put as much distance as possible between herself and the attack. It's a slow process.

"I'm definitely coming back to who I was," she said.

But there are moments when she catches herself playing "what if," she said, asking what if she didn't go into the bar with a friend to buy a 12-pack of beer for take out. She also asked what if she wasn't charged with resisting arrest in February for an early morning incident at J. P. Mascaro & Sons in Hanover Township. The criminal case has nothing to do with the bar attack and in no way portrays her as someone who looks for trouble, she said.

Instead Mieczkowski's tattoos speak for her. "Beautifully Broken" in cursive script bows from right to left under her neck. A macabre portrait of Marilyn Monroe covers her right arm from shoulder to just above her elbow. Part of the movie star's skull is exposed under her sculpted hair.

Wounds sutured together mar her face and a spider web tattoo graces her neck.

The blonde Mieczkowski explained that the tattoo shows inner and outer beauty. "We put my scars on her," she said of the actress she's enamored with

7/22/2014

### **Nanticoke discusses storm water grant**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader Correspondent

At the July 16 meeting of Nanticoke City Council, Robert Hughes, a representative from Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition of Abandoned Mine Reclamation, discussed a grant application that the city has applied for.

The MS4 Public Education and Outreach grant would focus on storm water and environmental problems within the municipality.

Nanticoke Creek would be a particular issue of interest. The creek "is on the federal list of impaired waters", said Hughes.

Hughes, a Nanticoke resident, said that the grant has been beneficial to areas such as Scranton, and the Mid Valley regions when dealing with

similar problems with the Lackawanna River.

Nanticoke City Manager Andrew Gegaris said he will “get in touch with other municipalities (who are involved) and their leaders” to try to find solutions to the problems associated with the creek. Gegaris as well as Earth Conservancy have written letters in support of the grant.

In other matters:

- Council awarded engineering contract to Penn Eastern for the Forge Creek Dredging project in the amount of 12,190,000.
- Lou Gianuzzi and Becky Seman, coordinators of the Nanticoke Patriot Square Activity Committee, are hoping to continue bringing new events to the park.

Gianuzzi said that about 200 people turned out for the July 12 event at the square. “Over 20 vendors participated, and most said that they would return,” Gianuzzi said.

Gianuzzi also stated that “almost every resident who I asked, said that they want to see more events like this” in Patriot Square.

- Council president Bill Brown announced that about 3,000 people attended Nanticoke’s “Big Bang” Independence Day celebration. The celebration and fireworks display was put together “within a month by the mayor” Brown said. Mayor Richard Wiaterowski planned and organized the city’s 4th of July event.

- The Luzerne County District Attorney’s Office will be hosting a concealed Carry Law and Castle Doctrine seminar at the Nanticoke Municipal Building, on Monday, July 28 from 6 to 8:30 p.m. Space is limited. Those interested may call Marilyn at 570-825-1714 to reserve a seat.

The next council meeting will be held on Aug. 6 at 7 p.m.

7/22/2014

### **Wilkes-Barre swears in newest firefighter at City Hall ceremony**

#### **Travis Temarantz, 25, started firefighting at 14**

Bill O’Boyle boboyle@civitasmedia.com

Praise from the mayor and the fire chief highlighted Tuesday’s swearing in of the city’s newest firefighter/EMT, Travis Temarantz.

“I have heard nothing but outstanding compliments about Travis,” Mayor Tom Leighton said. “He comes to the city with great credentials and experience and we are very fortunate to have him in our fire department.”

Temarantz, 25 of Plymouth Township, started firefighting at age 14 and **his most recent job was with the Nanticoke City Fire Department.** His hiring brings the city’s complement to 70 firefighters and eight paramedics, said Fire Chief Jay Delaney.

“Travis worked for the city fire department as a per diem paramedic,” Delaney said. “As you can see by the number of our firefighters here today, Travis is well thought of by his peers and he will be on the fire engine starting Sunday.”

Temarantz, son of Joseph and Renee Temarantz of Hanover Township, is the first of 12 new hires for the fire department. On Monday, Luzerne County Community College hosted a graduation ceremony for 11 city fire department cadet trainees who successfully completed their initial fire academy training at the Public Safety Training Institute at the college in Nanticoke. Cadets received more than 500 hours of classroom, fitness and tactical training over three months.

Delaney said the city received a \$1.2 million grant through the Federal Emergency Management Agency that will pay for the firefighters for their first two years on the job. Delaney said the department was hit with a lot of retirements recently.

Temarantz said he was excited to join the city fire department that Leighton called the largest paid fire department in Luzerne County.

“I’m thrilled to be a part of a great fire department,” Temarantz said. “I’ll keep my head down and work hard.”

On Monday, Delaney said city firefighters have well over 1,000 years of experience.

Liza Prokop, city spokeswoman, said there are 70 firefighters, eight paramedics and 83 police officers in the city.

“This city, the administration and council are committed to public safety,” Leighton said.

Prokop said in 2014, Leighton hired 10 new police officers and with the assistance of the FEMA grant, he was able to hire 11 firefighters in April.

Prokop said staffing levels were fairly consistent over the past five years for both departments until the 2014 increases. The fire department did experience a decrease in 2012 due to layoffs and retirement incentives.

7/21/2014

### **Nanticoke wins Section 5 softball championship**

Michael Cignoli - Citizens Voice

Kasidy Slusser struck out eight in a complete-game shutout and Alison Keener went 3 for 3 with an RBI as Nanticoke won the Section 5 10-11 softball championship with a 4-0 victory over West Side on Sunday.

Olivia Nice and Nina Zendarski added hits for Nanticoke, while Zendarski and Kyrstin Montgomery drove in runs.

Sarah Hoskins struck out six for West Side.

7/20/2014

### **Nanticoke native remembered as baseball superstar**

#### **Book calls Steve Bilko ‘Babe Ruth of West Coast’**

Bill O’Boyle boboyle@civitasmedia.com

Life seemed normal for Steve and Tom Bilko when they would travel each summer from their Nanticoke home to southern California to visit their dad in the 1950s.

As normal as those visits seemed, there was nothing normal about their dad, Steve Bilko, who played for many baseball teams, most notably the Los Angeles Angels of the Pacific Coast League.

Bilko, who died in 1978 at the age of 49, was, according to the author of a new book, the Babe Ruth of the West Coast. Gaylon White has chronicled the amazing 1956 season of the L.A. Angels, and Bilko is the focal point of much of the book.

Titled “The Bilko Athletic Club,” a picture of the Nanticoke native adorns the cover of the book and one look at it tells you that this was one imposing slugger.

White grew up in Los Angeles and often attended games in Wrigley Field — not the one in Chicago, the one in Los Angeles, which was patterned after the home of the Cubs.

He and thousands of others were Angels’ fans. The minor league team was their major league team. There was no major league baseball west of St. Louis at the time. The Dodgers and Giants didn’t move to the West Coast until 1958.

“When Bilko arrived, we all became instant fans,” White said. “He was Babe Ruth to me.”

White said he remembers Bilko hitting tape-measure shots out of the park on a daily basis, it seemed. He said Bilko was “considerably bigger” than other players — not fat, but solid and big-boned.

In 1956, Bilko won the PCL Triple Crown — highest batting average, most home runs and most runs batted in — the same year Mickey Mantle of the Yankees accomplished the feat in the major leagues.

“Bilko was our boyhood hero,” White said.

**Bilko’s popularity**

White said no baseball player from the Sandy Koufax era through the Nolan Ryan era was ever as popular as Bilko.

“The Bilko name was magic,” he said. “There was Bilko-mania long before Beatlemania. More people in L.A. knew who Bilko was than Marilyn Monroe.”

White said Phil Silvers named his television character, Sgt. Bilko, after the slugger.

White said the Pacific Coast League Historical Society meets once a year. At a recent meeting in northern California, he asked how many in the room had seen a Bilko home run.

“Almost everybody raised their hands,” White said.

But there was something about Bilko, White said, that drew everyone to him.

Bilko’s last home run came off of Jim “Mudcat” Grant, who had faced him in the PCL and in the big leagues.

“Mudcat referred to Bilko as a Santa Claus type of guy,” White said. “He told me guys didn’t mind giving up home runs to Bilko because he hit them so far. He said it was a badge of honor to have Bilko hit one a country mile off of you.”

White said George Genovese, a 90-year-old baseball scout who signed Dave Kingman, Bobby Bonds and Gary Matthews, said he once saw Bilko and Frank Howard, a 6-foot-7 slugger who played in the major leagues for years, hit back to back homers.

“Genovese swears those two home runs were the furthest he had ever seen,” White said. “He said they traveled about a mile and a half.”

**Fan-friendly player**

White said Bilko was the kind of guy everybody could relate to.

“He was introverted and shy, but he would stay at the park until he signed every autograph,” White said. “Gene Mauch (former Phillies manager) once told me you will never find anyone to say anything bad about Bilko. And he was absolutely right.”

While Bilko enjoyed celebrity status on the west coast, his family and friend back east, in Honey Pot and Wyoming Valley, were somewhat oblivious to his success.

“We called him Bilko the Great,” White said. “His name and picture were in the paper every day. He was idolized, and people were in awe of him.”

White said players who played with him and against him still talk with great reverence of Bilko. He said if Bilko were playing today, he would be one of if not the best power hitter in baseball.

“And he wouldn’t need steroids,” White said.

White said Bilko made \$15,000 in 1956, his best year ever, and another \$15,000 in endorsements. Mantle made \$35,000 that year for the Yankees. White came to the Honey Pot section of Nanticoke to interview Bilko in 1976, two years before his death. He said Bilko told him there was one guy he did enjoy hanging around with — legendary actor John “Duke” Wayne.

“Bilko told me he and John Wayne got along because Wayne was most like the folks in Nanticoke,” White said. “Bilko was a regular guy who preferred watching Lawrence Welk to the Hollywood fast living. He was just a very likeable guy.”

**Family appreciative**

Steve, 63, and Tom, 62, Bilko remember their father as the man White described and how everybody, apparently, felt about him.

“We would go out to California every summer and we would meet all the players,” Steve said. “When we came back, we wouldn’t tell anybody much about who we met because they wouldn’t have believed us anyway. My dad was the same way. He kept most of California out of Nanticoke.”

Steve said he remembers a story his dad told him about a wealthy man he met in a bar in L.A. He said the man bought Bilko a drink and Bilko bought him one back.

“This rich guy came over and asked my dad what he was doing,” Steve said. “My dad told him that where he comes from, if a man buys you a drink, you buy him one back.”

Steve said the man gave Bilko a Cadillac to use when he was in California.

Steve said years after his dad retired, Gene Autry, owner of the Angels, invited Bilko to an old-timers’ game after the team became a Major League Baseball team.

“Mr. Autry told my dad that he could bring his whole family and he did,” Steve said.

Steve said the Bilko clan was treated like royalty by the Angels and the fans. He said when his dad was introduced at the game, there was thunderous applause.

"I think that was the moment we all realized how popular my dad was out there," Steve said.

When Bilko retired he returned to Honey Pot and worked briefly for Woodlawn Dairy and later at Dana Perfume in Mountain Top. Bilko's widow, Mary, lives in Honey Pot and currently is staying in Allentown with her daughter, Sharon.

Steve said the book makes him appreciate his father even more. Prior to Steve Bilko's death he had one grandson, Steve's son, Stephen, who Bilko idolized. And now Bilko's grandson has a son, Stephen, who is 3 years old.

"He's my dad," Steve said of his grandson. "He looks like him, he's built like him and even at 3, he has athletic ability."

Tom Bilko is an orthopedic surgeon in Chicago, and he said he will never forget the memories of his father playing in California.

"We really didn't realize what a big deal it was," Tom said. "It was so routine to go out to the ballpark, into the locker room. We took it for granted, but always felt it was a privilege for us."

Escaped the mines

Tom said his grandfather worked in the coal mines and his father was very appreciative that he never had to do that.

"My father appreciated the fact that he could make a living playing baseball rather than working in the mines or some other job," Tom said.

Tom said he remembers seeing pictures of his dad with President Dwight Eisenhower and visiting at actor Chuck Connors' house for cookouts.

"Dad never forgot his home," Tom said. "He would tell us how when he visited different cities across the country, he would always try to make a connection with somebody from back home. He liked it when somebody with a Wyoming Valley connection was at one of his games."

The Bilko Athletic Club

Gaylon White said the book reveals "Stout Steve" as larger than life, just as he was in 1956 when it was suggested that Mickey Mantle and Bilko run for president and vice president in that year's U.S. presidential election. "A vote against Mantle and Bilko is a vote against home, mother and bottled beer," one Los Angeles columnist wrote.

According to the book, in 1956 Bilko paced the PCL in eight categories: home runs (55), batting average (.360), runs batted in (164), hits (215), runs scored (163), walks (104), total bases (410) and slugging percentage (.683).

In the book's introduction, it reads:

"With Bilko as King Kong, the Angels piled up 107 wins to finish 16 games ahead of their closest competitor. They belted 202 home runs, two shy of the league record; posted a team batting average of .297; and scored 1,000 runs in 168 games or nearly six runs a game. Six players belted twenty or more home runs and had batting averages of .300 or higher. Four players batted in 100 or more runs. Six players, including the entire infield, were named to Look magazine's PCL all-star team for 1956.

• To read about the career of Steve Bilko and to review his statistics, go to:

<http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/b/bilkost01.shtml>

• For more on The Bilko Athletic Club, by Gaylon White, go to:

<http://www.bilkoathleticclub.com/>

7/19/2014

**Former superintendent's name removed from GNA school sign**

James Halpin - Citizens Voice

Where there once was honor is now a stripped facade.

The Greater Nanticoke Area School District board recently ordered the name of former superintendent Anthony P. Perrone removed from the sign on its campus, leaving behind torn patches of paint where gold letters were once affixed.

The unannounced and unceremonious removal took place just about six months after Perrone retired at age 72 due to congestive heart problems. He had 51 years of service with the district.

"It's just created divisiveness in this entire community, and it wasn't done the right way from the beginning," board President Ryan Verazin said.

"There have been many great employees and leaders go through this district over many decades, and they all deserve to be thanked for their tremendous contributions to the district."

|Perrone, who had been superintendent since 1996, worked for a decade without receiving any salary or benefits, saving the district more than \$1 million. He began his career with the district as a school psychologist who taught Spanish and psychology. The district honored him in 2011 with the dedication of the entire school campus in his name.

"I didn't want that," Perrone said at the time. "I hate being the center of attention."

The dedication, however, soon became the topic of heated debate, with school board members clashing during an April 2013 meeting at which Verazin accused fellow members Cindy Donlin and Jeff Kozlofski of using \$4,347 in public funds to pay for the sign and lying about it to the rest of the board.

Donlin and Kozlofski denied lying about where the funds came from, saying board members never asked. Both have since lost their seats.

Verazin said Friday that the board wants to bring a "renewed sense of unity and trust" between the community and district by giving the community involvement in such matters, rather than having it done "behind the scenes" by two board members without community input or a public vote.

"The time has come at GNA to hit the refresh button," he said. "We want to give the community and the district a blank slate to move forward together."

When Perrone retired in January, the board expressed gratitude for his service, with Verazin saying he "will be greatly missed." School Board member Frank A. Shepanski Jr. said that sentiment hasn't changed.

"We're not saying we're not satisfied with the service," Shepanski said.

"Mr. Perrone has a lot of respect from a lot of people. This is a sensitive subject," Verazin said. "Anytime you dedicate an entire campus to one

individual, I think there's people that are for it and there's people that are against it just like anything else."

Perrone did not immediately return a message seeking comment Friday.

The district intends to clean up the sign to make it more presentable, and will be seeking a more public way to revise it, Verazin said. One possibility is coming up with several designs that could be voted on at the school district's website, he said.

"People are very passionate about the school district," Verazin said. "Things need to be handled a certain way so that you try not to step on everybody's toes."

7/10/2014

### **Nanticoke wins 9-10 title**

Logan Godfrey - Citizens Voice

After an explosive first inning, defense played a large role in Wednesday night's District 16 9-10 Little League championship game.

At the game's end, members of the Nanticoke squad were exuberant, running around the field with their newly acquired championship banner thanks to a 4-3 win over Mountain Top.

The winning team's head coach, Eric Spencer, who was drenched in Gatorade, knew the hard work the kids put into practice after practice finally paid off.

"It feels great. They work hard in practice every single day and it pays off," said Spencer. "I love these guys. These guys are awesome. They are a good group of kids to be around."

In the first inning, Nanticoke shortstop Derek Cease slammed the ball into right field to score two runs for a 2-0 lead.

Mountain Top answered in the bottom of the first, when first baseman Colin Williams hit a three-run homer.

When the first inning concluded, the game took a defensive turn. Neither team was able to score for the next few innings due to great pitching performances from Nanticoke's Nick Matson and Mountain Top's Adam Litchkofski, who had two hits.

With defense being a major factor throughout the game, outfielder Bryant Keegan made a game-changing catch near the fence to end the inning.

In the fourth inning, Nanticoke's Devyn Sura and Charlie Casey both scored by stealing bases to make it 4-3.

In Sura's case, he scored from first base.

Mountain Top was unable to score any runs in its last three at bats.

Matson and Justin Spencer combined on a six-hitter and struck out six.

After the game, the winning team had a parade through Nanticoke.

The team advances to the Section 5 tournament, which begins Monday at the Newport Little League field.

7/10/2014

### **Nanticoke win softball championships**

Citizens Voice

District 16 10-11

Nanticoke 12 Mountain Top 2 (4)

Kasidy Slusser struck out four batters and had an RBI double and Jenna Baron had two hits and three RBIs to lead host Nanticoke to the District 31 championship.

Olivia Nice had a two-run single and both Ali Keener and Myla Vnuk added run-scoring singles.

Kelsey Caladice had an RBI single for Mountain Top.

Nanticoke will play in the Section 5 Tournament, which begins next Thursday.

7/9/2014

### **Nanticoke wins D16 title**

Citizens Voice

SOFTBALL District 16 9-10

Nanticoke 10 Duryea/Pittston Twp. 0 (5)

Elizabeth Mendrzycki pitched a one-hitter and struck out 10 to lead Nanticoke to the District 16 9-10 softball title on Tuesday.

Tiffany Brogan 2 for 2 with a triple, double and three RBIs. Mendrzycki drove in two runs for the winners.

Alexis Atkins, Amanda Cheslaw, Cameron Turak, Xandra Thomas, Rachel Goss and Sophia Lukowski also helped Nanticoke's offense.

Samantha Quinn singled for Duryea/Pittston Township.

Nanticoke opens Section 5 play Monday.

7/9/2014

### **Letter to the Editor: GNA retiree Frank Wolfe lauded for 40 years of service**

Times Leader

For 40 years, Frank Wolfe had been on the maintenance crew for the Greater Nanticoke Area School District.

On June 29, Wolfe hung up his large set of keys to retire.

As president of the Greater Nanticoke Area Educational Support Professionals, I congratulate Frank on his 40 years of service to our school district. It is not very often that you see or hear of someone who dedicated 40 years of their life to one job.

I felt, as president, I wanted to write this. Not only for myself, but to everyone who came in contact with "Wolfie." He will be missed by all of us at the GNA schools.

Wolfie has shown everyone the meaning of dedication, humor and spirit, and his was a "voice" that everyone knew.

We at GNA wish him all the happiness and health in his retirement.

J.D. Verazin

President

Greater Nanticoke Area Educational Support Professionals

7/7/2014

### **Nanticoke applies for \$1 million grant**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

City Council last week approved an application for a Multimodal Transportation Fund grant for \$1 million from the Commonwealth Financing Authority.

The vote was 4 to 1 in favor of the application with Steve Duda voting against.

Speaking about the proposed use for the grant, City Manager Andrew Gegaris stated there is reason to believe that a property on Main Street across from the old Bartuska warehouse is going to be put up for sale. The purchase of the property, near Walnut and Arch Streets, would be in the city's best interest, Gegaris said.

He said that the city would be able to "mold the streetscape around it." Gegaris said project would provide a "common entrance and exit for mass transportation" and that it would be "safer for pedestrians."

Gegaris said that once the traffic study is complete, the city will have more details and that safety is the goal of the project. Buses and LCCC vans would utilize the project.

In other matters:

- Council awarded the demolition contract for 127 E. Union St. to low bidder Stell Enterprises in the amount of \$12,840.

- The Farmer's Market will be held on Saturday, July 12, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at Patriot's Square. The list of vendors for the Farmers Market/ Community Garden includes: First National Community Bank of Nanticoke, Scentsy Products, Pink Zebra, Origami Owl Jewelry, Wyoming Valley Dog Squad, Apollo Circle Resident Council, GNA Family Center, Wyoming Valley Children Association, Tarnowski's Kielbasa, Avon, Thirty One Gifts, Just Crazy Face Art and DJ Mendel G. Fernandez Jr. Entertainment.

Resident Lou Gianuzzi has been volunteering his time and services to painting the benches and the flower box in Patriot's Square, in preparation for the event.

The next council meeting will on July 16 at 7 p.m.

7/6/2014

### **Nanticoke rallies to win District 16 Majors title**

Nicholas Gill - Citizens voice

Being down late in a championship game might rattle some Little League teams, but not Nanticoke.

Nanticoke showed it has championship poise, rallying from a two-run deficit to tie the game, then adding three runs in the top of the seventh inning to capture the District 16 Majors title with an 8-5 win over Plains on Saturday afternoon.

Austin Norton blasted a three-run home run and notched five RBIs in the victory.

"Our kids are always up for the game," Nanticoke manager Pat Heffron said. "They don't hang their heads. They get back in the game. This was a great game. We could not have asked for a better competition."

Nanticoke struck first in the opening inning. Norton smashed a three-run home run over the wall in dead center to put his team up 3-0.

Plains rallied right back in the bottom of the second inning. Josh Rhodes slapped a solo home run to cut the deficit. After two more singles, Kyle Costello belted a monster home run that landed in the trees in center field to give Plains a 4-3 lead.

After allowing the home run in the first, Costello hit his pitching groove for Plains. He retired nine straight Nanticoke hitters, six by strikeout, to preserve the lead into the fifth inning. Tanner Smith provided insurance with an RBI single in the fourth.

But Nanticoke rallied in the fifth to tie the game at 5-5.

Norton struck again with a two-run double to plate his fourth and fifth RBIs of the afternoon.

The pressure mounted with the score tied in the fifth. Devland Heffron came into the game to pitch for Nanticoke and loaded the bases.

With two outs and the ever-dangerous Costello at the plate, Heffron forced a pop out to preserve the tie and end the inning unharmed.

"There are lots of nerves in those spots," Heffron said. "We have been in that position quite a bit this season. Our guys go in and keep calm."

The game remained tied into extra innings, where Nanticoke showed its championship form. Heffron led off the inning with a triple. Jayden Heald and Colby Butczynski both walked to load the bases.

Chris Ormes worked a terrific at bat from an 0-2 count to draw a walk and give Nanticoke a 6-5 lead.

One batter later, Jake Krupinski ripped a two-run double to extend the lead to 8-5.

Norton worked a clean bottom of the seventh inning to give Nanticoke the District 16 championship and send them to sectionals. "You get chills when the game ends and the reason is for the kids," Heffron said. "They are great ball players who will remember this for the rest of their lives."

7/3/2014

### **Nanticoke to hold 4th of July fireworks display**

Citizens Voice

Nanticoke will host Independence Day celebrations, including a fireworks display sponsored by local community groups. The festivities will run from 6 to 10 p.m. today on the football field and parking lot behind Greater Nanticoke Area High School.

Admission is free. A hot dog eating contest is scheduled for 8 p.m. The celebration will also feature face painting, rides, food vendors and live music.

The fireworks display will be the first time the city has organized one, said Mayor Rich Wiaterowski.

**The weather forecast calls for rain. Should that happen, the festivities would move to Sunday. Wiaterowski said local community groups and vendors donated funds.**

6/29/2014

### **Nanticoke's Bilko was king of the PCL in the 1950s**

Jonathan Bombulie - Citizens Voice

Nanticoke natives of a certain age will never forget his long-ball exploits. Southern Californians who saw his titanic blasts in person will always remember too.

But there's a whole country full of baseball fans – whether due to their age or point of origin – who have forgotten or never knew the story of legendary slugger Steve Bilko.

Author Gaylon White would like to change that.

White was an enthusiastic 9-year-old when Bilko came to his hometown as a member of the Pacific Coast League's Los Angeles Angels in 1955 and made an indelible impression.

Unwilling to let the accomplishments of the team and its star player fade into the cobwebs of baseball history, he wrote a book that was published this year, almost six decades later, entitled "The Bilko Athletic Club: The Story of the 1956 Los Angeles Angels."

After doing about 200 interviews with players, managers, umpires, sports writers and fans, White tells the story of a dominant team that ran away with the PCL championship thanks in large part to Bilko, who won the Triple Crown with a .360 batting average, 55 home runs and 164 RBIs.

"Not one person had a negative word to say about Steve Bilko. He was a genuinely lovable individual," White said. "People liked him. It always conjured up fond memories when I would say the name Steve Bilko."

The book details just how big a star Bilko was in Southern California, perhaps a bigger star than anyone back home in Nanticoke even realized. The PCL was a minor league, for sure, but not a minor league in the sense that the term is used today. Fans didn't go to Los Angeles' Wrigley Field to collect a bobblehead, buy the kids some ice cream and head home in the sixth inning unless a fireworks display was scheduled for after the final out.

"There was no major-league team west of Kansas City in '56," White said. "There was no ESPN. You had the game of the week come on on Saturday, but all we had, when it came to major-league sports, was the Los Angeles Rams. There were no Kings, Lakers, Dodgers or major league Angels. All we had was the Pacific Coast League."

As such, Bilko grabbed his share of headlines.

Phil Silvers named the lead character on popular CBS sitcom Sgt. Bilko after the Nanticoke slugger.

"He was our Babe Ruth, Mickey Mantle and Ted Williams all rolled into one," the book quotes former all-star second baseman Bobby Grich as saying. Grich was a 7-year-old in nearby Long Beach during Bilko's Triple Crown season.

Bilko's personality wasn't necessarily a perfect fit in Southern California, but somehow, it worked.

"He preferred beer over wine. He preferred roller derby over the kind of parties they threw in Hollywood," White said. "He said he had a couple of celebrities he hung out with. He mentioned John Wayne. But I loved what he said about that. He said they were more like the people in Nanticoke."

The highlight of the book is the chapter that details White's visit to Nanticoke in October of 1976, less than two years before Bilko died of a heart attack at age 49. Bilko's wife, Mary, made them lunch in their Honey Pot home before they headed out to Yeager's for a drink and a visit to the Dana Perfume Company in Mountain Top, where the ballplayer worked as an inspector of raw materials after his playing days were through.

White asked many of the 200 people he interviewed why they thought Bilko didn't stick in the major leagues, despite his dominance in the PCL, and their replies represent a thread that runs throughout the book.

Most colorfully, one theory says that when Bilko went to the majors, he didn't have future Philadelphia Phillies manager Gene Mauch as a teammate to, ahem, help him out like he did when they played together with the Angels.

"Mauch stole a lot of the signs and fed the signals to Bilko," White said. "Bilko knew what was coming that year."

There are plenty of other theories too. Hitting a high fastball that minor-league pitchers leave out over the plate was, still is and will always be, easier than hitting the one major leaguers paint the corner with. Or Bilko didn't have the Reggie Jackson-style cockiness required to be a major-league power hitter. Or because he was making nearly \$30,000, counting endorsements, while playing in the minors – by comparison, Mantle made \$35,000 in 1956 playing for the Yankees – Bilko simply preferred being a PCL star to scratching out a roster spot for himself on a major-league roster.

Most interestingly, perhaps, White notes that the St. Louis Cardinals and Chicago Cubs tried to change Bilko in the early days of his career, perhaps doing him more harm than good. They wanted him to give up on his natural gap-to-gap power and become a pull hitter. They demanded he slim down his 6-foot-1, 260-pound frame.

Bilko's build was more Jason Giambi than Prince Fielder, but it was an issue that nagged him throughout his career anyway. He tried to lose weight, but an obstacle got in the way. In addition to being a legendary slugger, he was also a legendary beer drinker.

In the book, White recounts a story of the general manager of a team that Bilko played for in the Dominican Republic offering \$1,000 if he could down two quarts of beer in an hour, drinking out of a shot glass at one-minute intervals. Bilko turned down the bet, but having been tutored in the fine art of beer drinking by fellow Nanticoke major leaguer Johnny Grodzicki, sucked down the two quarts in 60 minutes anyway.

"If they had left him alone in the majors like they left him alone L.A., Bilko would have been the star that Tommy Lasorda said, if he played today, would have hit 60 home runs easily," White said.

Ultimately, White disputes the premise that Bilko was a big-league flop in the first place.

The one year he was a full-time regular in a major-league lineup, in 1953 with a Cardinals team that included Stan Musial, Red Schoendienst and Enos Slaughter, Bilko hit .251 with 21 home runs and 84 RBIs. Today, that would make him a millionaire several times over.

"He played parts of 10 seasons. He hit 76 home runs. He had a .249 batting average," White said. "While those weren't the kind of numbers he had in the minors – he hit 313 home runs in the minors – he had a decent major-league career, certainly by today's standards."

For a generation of baseball fans in Nanticoke and Southern California, of course, Bilko's career was always more than decent. He was larger than life, and the story of his days on the diamond bring back floods of warm memories.

With "The Bilko Athletic Club," White lets everyone else get a little taste of those memories too.

6/28/2014

### **Greater Nanticoke Area raises taxes 3.1 percent**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

Greater Nanticoke Area School District on Thursday night adopted a final budget for the 2014-15 school year that increases real estate taxes by 3.1 percent.

The budget includes expenditures of \$25,793,630 and revenues of \$25, 570,269. The tax rate was set at 10.4932 mills. GNA School District is comprised of Nanticoke City and Plymouth, Newport, and Conyngham townships.

Homes within the district that are valued at \$78,000 will see an approx. tax increase of \$24 per year, whereas a \$150,000 home will see a \$47 increase. All board members voted in favor of the budget, with the exception of Robert Raineri, who voted against it, and Chet Beggs and Ken James, who were not in attendance.

The board has also approved Matt Foster Associates for auditing services for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2014, June 30, 2015, and June 30, 2016.

In addition, the board has approved the following administrative assignments effective Tuesday for the 2014-15 school year: John Gorham, pre K to second grade principal; Dr. Mariellen Scott, third to seventh grade principal, and Joe Long, eighth to 12th grade principal.

Denise Manganello, coordinator for the Seneca Valley Cyber School gave a presentation on the benefits of the program.

Benefits include cost effectiveness to the district, monthly webinars, wide variety of courses, and greater teacher involvement.

The program helps "special and general education students" according to Manganello. The school board has approved the contract with the Seneca Valley Cyber School for the next two school years.

Dr. Mariellen Scott reported that 20 staff members have completed CPR, AED, and seizure management courses, along with an Act 126 course on child abuse.

The next school board meeting will be held next at 7 p.m. Aug. 14.

6/28/2014

### **Nanticoke school board approves \$25.8M budget**

Michael P. Buffer - Citizens Voice

The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board voted Thursday for a \$25.8 million budget with a 3.1 percent increase to the property tax rate.

The rate is now 10.4932 mills. A mill is \$1 on every \$1,000 in property assessment.

The board voted 6-1 to approve the budget, and two members did not attend Thursday's meeting, board President board President Ryan Verazin said.

Robert Raineri opposed the budget, and Ken James and Chet Beggs were absent, Verazin said.

The following members voted for the budget: Verazin, Frank Shepanski Jr., Wendy Kotsko Wiaterowski, Megan Tennesen, Tony Prushinski and Gary Smith.

6/22/2014

### **Nanticoke authorizes transfer of land parcels**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

City Council on Wednesday authorized the transfer of two parcels of land.

One of the parcels is 30 feet by 100 feet, located at Market and Spring streets, and is appraised at \$12,000. The other parcel, which faces Market

Street, is a bit larger and is appraised at \$11,000.

Mayor Richard Wiaterowski said the city is looking for a developer to purchase the parcels.

The developer will have 18 months to pay the appraised value of the parcels to the city. If the value is not paid in full, the developer will have to return the parcels.

In another matter, Hank Marks, president of the Taxpayers Association, asked about the status of the Downtown Streetscape Project.

City Manager Andrew Gegaris said the city has to pay close attention as to how the \$7 million grant, which was awarded for the project, will be used.

Gegaris said the first step will be the traffic study. He added that council and the mayor are anxious to see the project's completion.

Also, Gegaris publicly thanked residents Lou Gianuzzi and Rebecca Seman for their work on beautifying Patriot Square.

Gianuzzi painted the flower bed in the park and posted signs on the trees announcing some actions prohibited in the park, such as smoking and consuming alcoholic beverages.

He is now in the process of painting the 11 benches located within the park.

Seman, founder of the Community Garden, is looking for farmers for the Farmer's Market, which will be held on Saturday July 12, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at Patriot Square. Seaman can be reached at 570-793-7910 for further information.

The next Crime Watch meeting will be at the Municipal Building on June 25 at 7 p.m.

The city's fireworks display will be on July 3, starting at 6 p.m. at the Greater Nanticoke Area High School football field.

In addition to the fireworks, the event, which is sponsored by the city, will feature music, food, face painting, a hot dog eating contest and a dunk tank.

The next council meeting will be on July 2 at 7 p.m.

6/17/2014

### **GNA graduate accompanied by service dog**

Michael P. Buffer - Citizens Voice

When Courtney Whitmire's name was called during the Greater Nanticoke Area High School commencement, she walked on the auditorium stage with a friend - a four-legged friend.

Whitmire walked with her service dog, Cassie, on a leash across the stage to get her diploma. Both were wearing white gowns.

Cassie, a St. Bernard-Chow mix, was very willing to get dressed up for the big event, Whitmire said prior to start of the ceremony. The gown on Cassie came from a friend, who was unable to attend Monday's ceremony.

"I got this from Party City," Whitmire said holding a small graduation cap.

Whitmire, 18, said she has a service dog because of a medical condition. She is going to Misericordia University to study medical imaging.

"I can't wait to go to college," she said.

A total of 138 seniors officially became Greater Nanticoke Area High School graduates at Monday's ceremony.

"I'm happy, but I'm scared," said Amanda Edwards, 18, a Plymouth resident who plans to attend Luzerne County Community College and hasn't decided what to study.

Class Treasurer Michael Condoluci, 18, of Warrior Run, said he felt nervous before the commencement. He plans to attend Luzerne County Community College to study about computer technology.

"It's a cliché, but it's the first step of the rest of your life," he said.

Class President Jordan Williams addressed graduates and ceremony attendees.

"I can't believe! We made it! We all made it!" Williams enthusiastically said.

School Board President Ryan Verazin noted that 2014 Valedictorian Evan Saunders was the third valedictorian from his family.

6/15/2014

### **Karen Schinski inspires many while fighting stage 4 pancreatic cancer**

Mark Moran - CitizensVoice

Karen Schinski, of Honey Pot, is an inspiration to many. The pretty, blonde 45 year old is a devoted wife to her husband, Kevin, and a loving mother to her four children: Kevin, 25, Kayley, 19, Kendell, 18, and Kassie, 16. Karen's family, along with her friends and neighbors, witnessed first-hand the strength and courage she displayed while battling stage 4 pancreatic cancer.

In June 2009, Karen noticed that she had lost a little bit of weight, along with her appetite, and, in general, wasn't feeling well. Karen already had an established relationship with Hershey Medical Center because she had been treated there for ulcerative colitis since she was 11 years old. At her yearly check-up in Hershey, doctors ran special blood work. Results showed that one particular reading, CA 19 - 9, came back extremely high. Karen spent the whole summer going back and forth to Hershey to get diagnosed. On Sept. 12, 2009, Karen received the news: she had stage 4 pancreatic cancer. Karen's particular cancer type, squamous cell, was extremely rare.

"Of course I wanted a second opinion," stated Karen. "I went to the University of Pennsylvania, but both Hershey and the University of Penn told me that even if I got chemo, I would have six to 12 months, hopefully, because it was stage 4 already, and it was two tumors. They told me to go home and get my affairs in order."

"My brother, Jimmy, told me to go to Dr. Greenwald, since he heard very good things about him," continued Karen. "I was like, 'Oh, a third opinion, Jim?' My husband and I were so upset because we already heard two diagnoses. But we went to see Dr. Greenwald and he was great. I'll

never forget what he told me. He told me that there's no expiration date stamped on the bottom of my foot."

Karen began chemotherapy with Dr. David Greenwald at Medical Oncology Associates in October of 2009. Karen's "cocktail" of medications included Zeloda, Gemzar and Taxotere.

"The Gemzar was rough; I remember losing my fingernails and toenails, besides my hair," said Karen. "I lost 35 pounds off my frame. I was really thin with the treatment. I remember the one day, I had started my treatment and I was getting out of the shower. I looked into the mirror and wondered, 'When did I lose all of this weight?' You don't realize you are actually going through it when you are. And now that I look back, I realize that when I first started treatment, I was really sick. That was hard."

"After my course of treatment, I was sent for a PET Scan at Christmas time of 2009," said Karen. "I remember on New Year's Eve, after my husband called for the results, he came back into the room, crying. I thought, 'Oh my God, I am dying.' He said that they found that the tumors were gone! That was a great New Year's Eve!"

Karen continued chemotherapy treatments until September 2013.

"Dr. Greenwald would tell me that, with cancer, there's a book to show him when things go bad, but there isn't a book to tell him when things are going good," explained Karen. "There wasn't a lot known about my type of cancer, and, after five years, we had to stop at some point because you don't want to keep doing chemo if you don't have to."

Medical Oncology Associates not only treated Karen's physical needs, but assisted her emotionally as well. Carol Greenwald, a licensed professional counselor, introduced her to a support group which she runs for cancer patients, and also counseled Karen's children when they were told about their mother's diagnosis. Family means everything to Karen, and her family was the first thing she thought of when she was diagnosed with cancer.

"The biggest thing that went through my head was not being there for my husband and kids," said Karen. "I think that when you are a mom, you just want to take care of your kids. That's the most important thing in life - not money, but your family."

"My son took it very, very badly," said Karen. "Kayley was 13 and the other girls were a little younger. It was hard to sit down and tell them that. You have to kind of give them the bad news, yet say that we are going to hope for the best."

Karen's journey included meeting some very special friends at Medical Oncology Associates. Her "chemo click" included herself and three other women, Donna, Roz and Carol. The four women went through chemotherapy together and developed a strong, supportive bond with each other. The four would meet for breakfast or lunch every Friday, and shared both laughter and tears with one another. Karen tears up when recalling these wonderful friends who have since passed away, and holds their memories dear to her heart.

Karen greatly appreciates all of the support she received throughout her recovery. Her community, doctors and family helped her remain strong. A benefit was held for Karen at the Tillbury Hose Company, organized by her best friend, Sue Phillips. This event put Karen's mind at ease by helping her pay a number of bills while focusing on getting better. Friends and neighbors prepared food for her family and assisted her in countless other ways. Karen is also thankful for all of the support from her children's sports community and Nanticoke Area High School.

"My doctors were amazing," recalled Karen. "It's a big adjustment: the medicines, treatments, tests you have to get. It's a lot. When being diagnosed, it's tough. Dr. Greenwald and Dr. Saidman were such a support to me, and Dr. Gary Verazin, who put in my portacath, was fantastic, too."

"My husband was so wonderful," added Karen. "He would cook for me and run for anything for me because he wanted me to gain the weight back." Karen feels very grateful that she has such a close, loving family. Her parents, Jim and Dorothy McDermott and siblings Jimmy, Doreen, Jason and John were always there for her.

Karen's advice for others who are faced with a cancer diagnosis is to stay positive. She would also tell them to trust their doctor, and if they are not comfortable with their doctor, they should find someone whom they are comfortable with.

"I think all of the support that I had helped me be positive throughout my recovery," stated Karen. "And just knowing that I had my kids' lives to look forward to has allowed me to remain so positive."

6/10/2014

### **Reservists' families awarded additional \$400k**

thesesecker@timesshamrock.com

The families of two naval reservists who died from injuries suffered in a car crash in Kuwait were each awarded more than \$400,000 in interest, bringing their total recovery to more than \$4 million each.

A federal judge last week awarded the additional damages to Amy Patton, widow of Brian Patton of Nanticoke, and Margaret and Charles Morgan, parents of David Morgan of Wilkes-Barre.

Patton and Morgan's parents sued Combat Support Associates in connection with a 2009 crash caused when the company's employee, Morgan Lee Hanks, passed a convoy of military vehicles and hit a vehicle driven by Patton head-on. Patton died at the scene. Morgan, who suffered severe brain damage, lived for several years before he succumbed to complications from his injuries.

A federal jury heard the case in March and awarded Patton \$3,875,000 and the Morgans' \$3,750,000.

U.S. District Senior Judge Edwin Kosik on Wednesday awarded Patton an additional \$411,137 in interest, bringing the total verdict to \$4,286,127. The Morgans were awarded an additional \$441,342, bringing their total verdict to \$4,191,342.

6/5/2014

### **Nanticoke rejects bid for Stickney Fire Company**

City Council President Bill Brown said Tuesday night that council has turned down a \$47,000 bid for the purchase of the Stickney Volunteer Fire Company.

Brown also said the \$2,500 deposit check was returned to the bidder.

City Solicitor William Finnegan said the fire company's building was appraised at more than \$100,000. He said there are other considerations that have to be taken into account with the sale of such a property.

Finnegan said it cannot proceed as if it were a private sale.

In another matter, Rebecca Seman of the Community Garden announced that the city will present The GNA Community Garden Farmers Market on July 12 at Patriot Square.

The event will take place 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and will feature music, food, fruits, vegetables, arts and crafts and more. Vendors interested in renting a 10-foot-by-10-foot space for \$20 may call Seman at 570-793-7910.

The Honey Pot Volunteer Fire Department will host wing night on Saturday June 14, 2014 beginning at 5 p.m. Wings are \$8 per order. Contact Linda Prushinski at 570-735-0508 for more information.

The Nanticoke Crime Watch meeting will be on June 18 at 7 p.m. at the Municipal Building on Ridge Street.

The next council meeting will be on June 18 at 7 p.m.



5/29/2014

**A cut above: On the job at 100**

Bob Kalinowski - Citizens Voice

When Zelino Vici opened his barber shop in Nanticoke, the United States president was Franklin Delano Roosevelt, baseball legend Babe Ruth was about to embark on the final year of his Hall of Fame career and canned beer was just hitting the market.

Vici charged 25 cents for haircuts and competed against dozens of other local barbers struggling to survive during the Great Depression.

All these years later, Vici is still at it.

Vici turned 100 years old on Wednesday and spent his birthday cutting hair for loyal customers who popped in to deliver well wishes and get a trim.

"What was I going to do, sit around and do nothing?" Vici said when asked about working a full day on his milestone birthday. "I work because I like to do it, not because I have to."

Born on May 28, 1914 to Italian immigrants, Vici said he grew up amid the Great Depression and hopes of going to college were bleak. In the early 1930s, he found a job as a lather boy, preparing customers' faces for their shave.

He opened his own barber shop next to his family's Prospect Street homestead in January 1935, months before the Social Security retirement program became law and years before the country was thrust into World War II.

Vici has been cutting hair on Prospect Street in Nanticoke ever since, though he moved several doors down to his current location at 412 S. Prospect St. in 1956. At 79 years of service and counting, Vici vows to keep working for as long as he can.

"What could I do if I retire, just sit on the couch all day?" Vici said. "You can't do much when you're 100 years old."

Ken Turley, 73, a Nanticoke native now from Lake Silkworth, stopped in to get his hair cut Wednesday, not knowing it was Vici's 100th birthday.

"His customers won't let him retire," Turley joked.

Turley has been getting his hair cut by Vici since he was 6 years old. At age 100, Vici hasn't missed a beat, he said.

"Notice how steady his hand was when he's cutting," Turley said. "It helps keep him alive what he's doing here."

Vici credits "good doctors" for his longevity. He had triple bypass heart surgery when he was 78 and survived bladder cancer several years ago. He also has diabetes.

These days, Vici averages six to eight haircuts a day, opening daily 6 a.m. to noon.

"That's enough for me," Vici said. "Enough to keep me occupied for a while."

Frank Waitkus, 64, of Dorrance Township, stopped in Wednesday for a haircut and brought Vici a bag of nectarines as a gift. Waitkus said he moved to the area decades ago to take a job at a local state prison, but continued seeing his longtime barber during occasional trips back to western Pennsylvania. About three years ago, shortly after his 86-year-old barber retired, he read a Citizens' Voice profile of Vici and started getting haircuts from him.

"These guys are old masters," Waitkus said. "He's quite the artist."

Walking into Vici's barber shop is like stepping back in time — a handwritten sign of the prices (\$12 for a standard cut), Frank Sinatra (almost always) playing on the radio, and a set of 1927-made barber chairs. But first you'd have to find the place. There's no red, white and blue barber pole, or much of anything indicating there's an active business in the lower level of his home. There's just a tiny, handwritten cardboard sign that reads "Barber shop" tucked in the corner of a window.

"I never had a sign. I never needed one," Vici said. "My customers have been quite faithful."

But Vici isn't totally stuck in his old-school ways.

Asked what the widower does after work, he responded, "I like to work on my computer all afternoon." Yes, you can be friends with this 100-year-old barber on Facebook.

"Yeah, I check that out," he said.

5/23/2014

### **Guffrovich takes over at Northwest**

Steve Bennett - Citizens Voice

Paul Guffrovich won't need a history lesson on the tradition of Northwest Area basketball before he conducts his first team meeting or holds his initial offseason workout as the program's new head coach.

Thanks to his father, Emory, who went to Newport High School with Northwest legendary basketball coach Eddie Gayeski, Guffrovich has first-hand knowledge of the Northwest tradition.

"Before I got into high school, my father used to take me to watch Northwest when they had their state championship teams," Guffrovich said. "I knew about Northwest and the tradition for a long time. When I heard the job was open I thought it would be kind of cool. It will be a nice challenge."

Guffrovich takes over for Jerry Blazick who stepped down following the end of the 2013-2014 season.

As a high school player at Nanticoke Area, Guffrovich was one of the best to ever play in the WVC. He scored 2,271 points thanks to a jumper that extended anywhere from 20 to 25 feet, and that was before the PIAA adopted the 3-point shot.

After graduating from Nanticoke Area, Guffrovich played at Wichita State where he still ranks fifth all-time in career 3-point field goals and 3-point field goal percentage. His team went to the NCAA tournament during his freshman year.

His experience as a point guard with the Shockers should allow him to make a smooth transition to coaching

"Being a point guard, especially at the Division I level you are a coach," Guffrovich said.

Guffrovich will bring his experience at Wichita State to Northwest and will begin getting to know the players on an individual basis and working with them one-on-one over the summer.

5/22/2014

### **Nanticoke welcomes White Haven man as new city manager**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

Mayor Richard Wiaterowski on Wednesday night appointed Andrew Gegaris as Nanticoke's new city manager.

Gegaris was raised in Sugar Notch and at present resides in White Haven. He will relocate to Nanticoke within the coming year, in accordance with the city's Home Rule Charter Agreement.

Gegaris said he is "excited to work with the mayor and council." He added that he see "a bright future for Nanticoke."

Gegaris also commented on how council and the mayor constantly make references to "we" and not "I," showing the group's concern for what is best for the city as a whole, rather than focusing on the leaders' individual preferences.

Wiaterowski welcomed Gegaris to his new position, and said that he is confident that Gegaris will "move the city forward."

The mayor also said that Gegaris attended PennDOT's streetscape project meeting and drove around the city in to prepare himself for his new position, which will begin today.

His starting salary is \$62,000.

Wiaterowski also thanked acting City Manager Donna Wall for the outstanding job that she did by taking on the responsibilities of the position until a permanent manager was appointed.

The person who previously was given the city manager's job, Jay Zupa, who was supposed to report for his first day of work on March 24, wound up declining the position in order to take advantage of a new opportunity. He officially became city manager on March 5.

In another matter, Assistant Fire Chief Chester Prymowicz will retire from the Nanticoke Fire Department on May 30 after 25 years of service.

Wiaterowski thanked Prymowicz for his dedication to the city and for his commitment to serving the fire department.

Council approved the purchase of two police department vehicles, and one street department vehicle. The money will come out of the police equipment fund and the highway aid fund, respectively, and will not cost the city taxpayers any money.

Rebecca Seman of the Nanticoke Community Garden organization has been granted approval to use the parking lot space behind Luzerne County Community College's parking lot for the garden.

Seman also asked that all residents take just one hour per day to do something to improve the city, and to come together as a community.

Resident Lou Gianuzzi has been volunteering his services by painting the benches in the garden. Anyone who is interested in the organization can contact Seman at 570-793-7910.

The next council meeting will be on June 4 at 7 p.m.

5/22/2014

### **GNA's proposed final budget raises taxes**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

The [Greater Nanticoke Area](#) School Board has approved a proposed \$25.77 million final budget for the 2014-2015 fiscal year that would raise property taxes \$20-\$25 per household.

The anticipated expenditures are \$25,770,598 and estimated revenue figures of \$25,760,704.

The property tax will be 10.4932 mills. A mill is a \$1 tax on each \$1,000 of assessed property value.

The district consists of the the city of Nanticoke and Plymouth, Newport and Conyngham townships.

Albert Melone, of Melone Associates, said the figures are "preliminary and non-binding."

He added that “all is tentative” and that there “should be changes in June.”

Melone emphasized that “This is not a spending problem; we have a revenue problem.”

The final budget has to be approved by June 30.

The board also approved the updating of the CFF computers from 2009 by leasing 180HP notebooks with carts, at a total cost of \$101,478 to be divided over a three-year period. All funding for the project is included in the 2013-2014 technology budget, and there will be no additional costs to the district.

Also, the board approved the renovation of the baseball field and surrounding grounds area at a maximum cost of \$806,386. The funds will come from a maintenance reserve fund that was set up in 1996, with money set aside for projects such as the baseball field renovation.

The field is anticipated to be ready for use before September 2015.

Ken James, of the sports department, said that approximately 200 athletic award letters will be sent to high school students participating in any of the 18 varsity sports. Plaques will be awarded to the athletes who will be graduating in June.

The next board meeting will be on June 19 at 7 p.m.

5/16/2014

### **Nanticoke has new accounting director**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

City Mayor Richard Wiaterowski has appointed Jennifer Polito as Nanticoke’s accounting director.

Polito, of Roaring Brook Township, is a graduate of the University of Scranton, and a previous employee of Melone Co. She has been a public accountant for more than 22 years, and is currently working toward becoming a CPA.

Polito said she applied for the city position of while working for Melone, where she had been employed for the past seven years.

“I feel that my experience and education will guide council (in the right direction)” Polito said.

Wiaterowski has also proclaimed May 17 Kids to Park Day, in Nanticoke. The city will participate in the National Kids to Park Day during which children and families are encouraged to attend outdoor activities such as visiting a neighborhood, county or state park.

The goal of Kids to Park Day is to promote outdoor activities which will be beneficial for health, as well as to call awareness to the natural beauty seen while visiting a park.

The appointments of Planning Commission Board members Stephen Buchinski and Theodore Katra have been confirmed.

The Arch Street Demolition Project has been awarded to low bidder Brdaric Excavating for \$19,874.

Rebecca Seman, founder of the Community Garden, said she is hoping to get a farmer’s market together in July, as well as other community orientated events. For further information on the organization, Seman can be reached at 570-793-7910.

Engineer Daryl Pawlush said the downtown Streetscape Project is “moving along quickly” and that the “water, gas, and electric companies are relocating their facilities this month.”

Pawlush added that it is taking longer to complete the project to ensure that it is “done right.”

It will be a project that “everyone in Nanticoke will be proud of,” said Pawlush.

The citywide yard sale will be held on Saturday.

The next council meeting will be Wednesday at 7 p.m.

5/16/2014

### **Gigantic steps for little lifes**

### **March for Babies gives the most vulnerable infants a fighting chance**

The Guide

gkaikowski@civitasmedia.com

#### **IF YOU GO**

What: March of Dimes March for Babies Northeast

Where: King’s College Betzler Field, 221 Highland Park Blvd., Wilkes-Barre

When: 9:30 a.m. registration Sunday; 10:30 a.m. walk

Admission: Team pledges; donations accepted

More info: 570-829-1019

Little Bryce Cunningham loves to listen to the lullaby “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,” but the tiny tot, who has survived despite all odds, doesn’t realize he is a star.

The Exeter toddler, 1, is the ambassador for this year’s March for Babies walk, sponsored by the March of Dimes Northeast, which helps mothers have healthy babies.

Bryce was born 13 weeks early, weighed in at 1 lb. 9 oz. and was 12.5 inches long. He suffered from respiratory issues due to underdeveloped lungs and spent his first 92 days fighting for his life in a newborn intensive care unit.

Today he’s doing well and will attend the march, which is the largest annual fundraising event for March of Dimes, at 10:30 a.m. Sunday at Betzler Field, Wilkes-Barre. Registration is at 9:30 a.m.

His family will participate in the event organized as Team Bryce. His mother, Kristen, also raised money at a Zumbathon in his honor.

The one-mile walk consists of eight laps around the track. Additionally, look for a T-shirt contest, games and refreshments.

Before the walk begins, the group will assemble at the starting line in front of the track entrance for some inspirational words from chairman Jerry Palmaioli.

The atmosphere will be festive, thanks to music provided by 97 BHT as well as costumed characters roaming about and face painting.

Bryce was supposed to arrive on June 17, 2013, but instead was born on Feb. 28, after 24 weeks and four days. He was finally brought home 17 days before he should have been born. Although he is still on oxygen today, he is a happy and healthy baby, who loves playing with his light-up turtle toy.

"I can't tell you how difficult it was, seeing our own little boy, lying in the NICU, fighting for life," Kristen said. "All our hopes and dreams for him hung in the balance. We felt so frightened. But thanks to the care Bryce received and the support of the March of Dimes for research and treatment, now we know the relief and joy parents feel when their child survives and becomes healthy enough to leave the NICU and go home."

His father, Jason, is proud of the fact that Bryce has become a success story.

"Serving as the Northeast Pennsylvania Ambassador family is a way for us to show our appreciation for our child's good health and serve as advocates for life-saving March of Dimes programs," he said. "My son is a perfect example of what March of Dime efforts have accomplished."

The money raised supports area programs that help moms have healthy, full-term pregnancies, community director Ashley Fulmer said. And it funds research to find answers to problems that threaten babies. Premature births affect nearly half a million babies and their families each year.

The goal of the march is \$171,500, Fulmer said.

5/15/2014

### **Northwest Area to move quickly in replacing Superintendent Ronald Grevera**

mguydish@civitasmedia.com

Asked about Superintendent Ronald Grevera's decision to take a job with another district, Northwest Area School Board President Randy Tomasacci first made light of the loss.

"We're going to make him stay," Tomasacci quipped.

Then, while heaping praise on Grevera's three-year tenure at Northwest, Tomasacci said he expects the board to move quickly to find a replacement.

Grevera was tabbed by the Greater Nanticoke Area School Board on Tuesday to replace retired Superintendent Anthony Perrone. After that meeting he said the decision to leave Northwest, where he's held the top job since 2011, was difficult, and that he had notified the board there of his likely departure.

On Wednesday, Tomasacci confirmed Grevera had told the board he was in the running for the GNA post, but added that the rumor mill at Northwest had already churned out that secret.

"I knew he was leaving before he told us," Tomasacci said.

Tomasacci expects the board will receive and accept Grevera's formal resignation at the monthly meeting May 21, and then vote to authorize the start of a search process.

"I'm sure we'll go through the PSBA," he said, referring to a search service provided by the Pennsylvania School Boards Association. "This is not new ground for us."

While Tomasacci said he believes one person on staff has obtained the state-required "letter of eligibility" to be a superintendent, he also said the choice "is open at this time. Nobody is on the fast track."

Grevera is set to move to GNA at the end of July, which Tomasacci said should be enough time to find the right person to fill the slot. But "it depends on the candidates and who is the best fit. We don't want to get someone and jam them in place saying "you're our superintendent, here are the keys."

While the full board needs to discuss what qualities they would prize most in a candidate, Tomasacci said he'd be looking for "someone forward thinking. Education is changing so rapidly, and the finances are getting tougher and tougher. The old models just aren't working. We can't just do what we did in the past."

One of Grevera's strengths was his ability to move the district forward smoothly, Tomasacci said. "The board had a great relationship with him. I can tell you our executive sessions were shorter and shorter, and that's a reflection of the leadership style of your superintendent.

"He made it easy to be a school director."

5/14/2014

### **Northwest superintendent takes job at GNA**

mbuffer@citizensvoice.com

Northwest Area School District Superintendent Ronald Grevera is getting a new superintendent's job at a neighboring district.

The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board unanimously approved a five-year deal with Grevera to be superintendent, starting July 1 at \$120,000 a year. Grevera, 40, of Mountain Top, had been Northwest's top administrator since 2011 and had two years left on his Northwest contract.

Grevera said Tuesday he had informed Northwest Area officials of his decision and has to give at least 60 days notice. Leaving Northwest Area was "a difficult decision," Grevera said.

His salary will increase about \$20,000, he said. The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board received 14 applications for superintendent, board President Ryan Verazin said. Grevera and three other applicants advanced to a second round of interviews.

"We are looking forward to working with him," Verazin said.

Longtime superintendent Anthony Perrone resigned Jan. 28 due to health problems. Acting Superintendent Mariellen Scott will go back to being

elementary school principal.

Perrone had been superintendent since 1996. In October, the school board voted to appoint Perrone to a three-year term that was set to end June 30, 2016. He continued to work without receiving pay, and the district continued to provide his health benefits.

Grevera grew up in Edwardsville and went to Bishop O'Reilly High School in Kingston. Grevera was principal at Fairview Elementary School in the Crestwood School District from 2004 to 2011 and principal at Panther Valley Middle School from 2002 to 2004.

He received bachelor's and master's degrees from Wilkes University. He has a doctoral degree from Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

5/14/2014

### **Ronald Grevera, Northwest Area superintendent, to move to Greater Nanticoke Area Grevera will replace longtime super Perrone**

mguydish@civitasmedia.com

Greater Nanticoke Area School Board appointed a new superintendent Tuesday: Northwest Area School District Superintendent Ronald Grevera. The board gave Grevera a five-year contract at a starting salary of \$120,000.

Grevera said the Northwest Area board is aware of the move and that he will submit his resignation now that his appointment in Nanticoke is approved.

Grevera replaces Anthony Perrone, who resigned abruptly as superintendent Jan. 28 after 17 years on the job, including working without pay since 2003.

The departure from Northwest Area, where he was made superintendent in 2011, was not made lightly, Grevera said after the meeting. "I've been crying all weekend," he said.

But he felt the move was a "good opportunity to work the new faces and staff here, to increase student achievement." Grevera will be moving from Luzerne County's most rural district with the smallest enrollment, about 1,200 students, to one with roughly double that count occupying one of the county's four cities. He said the salary offer at GNA is about \$20,000 more than he is currently paid at Northwest Area.

Board President Ryan Verazin said the board received 14 applicants, including one from within the district and five total from the area. Three women applied and two were offered interviews, but one didn't show up, he said.

Verazin will get the same health insurance benefits provided to other administrators in a five-year deal that requires they start paying part of the premium, 1.5 percent, in 2015-16, Verazin said.

Grevera was the top choice in a strong field of candidates "because his background really suits us," Verazin said, citing improved student outcomes "wherever he has worked."

Perrone, who had been with the district more than 40 years, cited health problems as one reason for his unexpected departure.

Generally credited with helping steer the district back from the brink of bankruptcy in the late 1990s, Perrone was originally from Pittston and graduated from King's College in 1963. By 1966, he had a full-time teaching job in Greater Nanticoke Area.

He became superintendent in 1996 and retired in 2003, but agreed to stay in the post, unpaid, for at least a year.

Asked at the time why he decided to stay without pay, Perrone quoted poet Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening": "I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep."

The School Board appointed Elementary Principal Maryellen Scott as interim superintendent until the search for a permanent replacement was completed. She will return to that position at the end of July, when Grevera officially moves in.

Grevera, who grew up in Edwardsville, and earned degrees from Wilkes University, Marywood University and Indiana University of Pennsylvania, is 40 and remains the youngest superintendent in Luzerne County, a title he took when by landing the job at Northwest at the age of 38.

5/9/2014

### **Forge Creek dredge project in Nanticoke will move forward**

Citizens Voice

Help is coming for residents of West Union Street in Nanticoke who are affected by repeat flooding, as soon as Luzerne County gets promised money to dredge Forge Creek.

Nanticoke received a \$205,350 state Department of Community and Economic Development disaster relief grant, which is administered through the county Office of Community Development.

Interim City Manager Donna Wall said the county anticipates the money any day.

"It is a priority; the project is a go," she said.

When the money is released, an engineer will do the scope of work for the project, then a request for proposals will be put out for a contractor to do the dredging.

Wall said city officials are looking into another grant to expand the scope of work.

In other business, Mayor Richard Wiaterowski hired Jennifer Polito as accounting director at a salary of \$45,000. Polito, who has a master's degree in accounting from the University of Scranton, was chosen from 18 people who applied.

"We had a good pool of applicants," Wall said.

Council awarded the demolition of a flood-damaged property on Arch Street to Brdaric Excavation for \$19,874. Work should be done by the end of the month, Wall said.

5/9/2014

## **Nanticoke resident plans community garden**

eskrapits@citizensvoice.com, 570-821-2072

Rebecca Seman wants to see the Nanticoke area community growing. Mainly vegetables, but she'd like to see people grow some flowers, too.

About a month ago, Seman started the Greater Nanticoke Area Community Garden initiative with the idea of getting area residents interested in sustainable farming. She also wants to organize events to improve the community, including a cleanup and flower-planting at Patriot Square Park this Saturday.

"It's just something I've kind of always wanted to do," Seman said. "Lately I've seen a lot of places around the country are trying to become more sustainable. I'd like to see that in Nanticoke."

Thomas Vitale is allowing the use of four acres of his land in the Plymouth Flats in Plymouth Township for creating garden plots. The garden hasn't been set up yet because of the rain, but it should be in another two weeks, Seman said.

She said there are about 25 plots reserved for families and community groups, including the Plymouth Crime Watch. Everyone gets their own plot to plant and tend, and it's free to participate, she said.

Seman said the farming will be done without pesticides and, when possible, using heirloom seeds. She said group members are touring an organic farm in Noxen next week to learn more.

A few weeks ago, Seman's group had a table at the grand reopening of Nanticoke's Burger King, where they held a raffle. With the money they earned, the plan is to buy some extra plants and donate the produce to the food bank, seniors in the high rises and local day care centers. Seman also wants to hold a farmer's market in July.

Seman said she has always grown her own flowers and used to garden with her mother when she was younger. She'd like to see her own three children - Bridget, 7, Alex, 6, and Rose, 7 months - learn to grow things, too.

In fact, it was Alex who got Seman interested in organics. He has had severe asthma since he was born, and had to be hospitalized as a baby, Seman said. She started researching holistic medicine, and with organic food and vitamins, Alex hasn't had problems since.

Seman wants people to take pride in the community. The Patriot Park cleanup - scheduled to start around 1 p.m. on Saturday - came about because it was something residents wanted to do, she said.

"We're trying to get it across to a lot of people that the more activity we have in town, the more pride we show in it, the less people are going to want to sneak around, drug activity, things like that," she said. "People don't realize that the more you focus on the positive, those things can be little steps to changing the big things."

A goal is to have a garden in town that people can tend every year, Seman said.

"What I want to get across to the community, no matter what little space you have, you can always grow food," she said.

Seman would also like to encourage local businesses and restaurants to have their own gardens or plots to grow their own vegetables,

"There's so many things you can do with a garden, you know? It's good for everybody," she said.

The cleanup of Patriot Park will take place starting at 1 p.m. Saturday. Anyone interested in helping out can stop by.

For information about the Greater Nanticoke Area Community Garden initiative, visit their Facebook page.

5/6/2014

## **Nanticoke nursing home evacuated for fire**

JacobSeibel - Citizens Voice

Nearly 50 nursing home occupants in Nanticoke were evacuated after a fire started in a second floor apartment early Tuesday morning.

Forty-seven residents at the Nanticoke Villa, a three-story assisted living facility on Walnut Street, were evacuated from the building and transported to the Greater Nanticoke High School gymnasium after the fire started around 2 a.m., said Nanticoke fire Capt. Richard Bohan.

Bohan said the fire was contained to the second-floor apartment where it started and caused minimal damage. He said it was mainly the second-floor apartment and the one below it that had most of the damage, which was caused by smoke and water.

Code enforcement officials have yet to determine when occupants can go back to their apartments, Bohan said. Those who didn't have family to stay with remain housed at the high school Tuesday.

A state police fire marshal on scene later Tuesday morning said the cause of fire was accidental and started when an air conditioning unit overheated.

About 40 firefighters responded from Nanticoke, Hanover Township, Kingston and Newport Township and were cleared by 8 a.m.

No injuries were reported.

5/4/2014

## **Exeter boy named 2014 local March of Dimes ambassador**

Lois Grimm - Citizens Voice

Before Bryce Cunningham, the 2014 Ambassador for the Northeast Pennsylvania chapter of the March of Dimes, was born, he kicked all the time. His development was completely normal. His heart rate was good and he was growing as he should.

The signs of a normally progressing pregnancy should have been happy news for Exeter residents Kristen and Jason Cunningham, Bryce's parents. Instead, with each kick, Kristen felt helpless.

Kristen, a second grade teacher at Greater Nanticoke Area, was at the Lehigh Valley Cedar Crest Center for Mother Baby Care when her world

turned upside down. Her body was trying to go into labor even though she was only 22 weeks pregnant. Her cervix, which should have been measuring about 4 cm was instead .6 cm.

"The hardest part was feeling him kick. There was nothing wrong with Bryce. He was perfectly healthy, perfect size, everything fine. Nothing wrong with him inside. But my body was trying to get him out. It would kill me every time he kicked because I knew he was fine but if he was born that day he doesn't make it," said Kristen.

Two weeks before her trip to Lehigh Valley Cedar Crest, Kristen was preparing for a routine first time pregnancy.

"We decided we wanted to have a baby and I got pregnant almost right away," said Kristen.

Besides what she believed to be normal morning sickness and pressure, her pregnancy up to her fifth month was uneventful.

"It is not normal to feel like you are nine months pregnant when you are only four or five months along," said Kristen.

After a routine ultrasound showed there might be fluid in her cervix, doctors sent Kristen and Jason to the Maternal Fetal Medicine Montage Center in Moosic the next day. Throughout the night, Kristen tried to research what might be happening.

"I was just very uncomfortable the whole pregnancy but again this was my first pregnancy so I had no idea that it wasn't normal," said Kristen.

Jason and Kristen remained optimistic on their way to Moosic the following day.

"I was just thinking everything was going to be ok," said Jason.

When the ultrasound showed an abnormality of Bryce's position within the womb a specialist was brought in to speak with the Cunninghams. When the doctor began to cry with Kristen, Jason knew the situation was more serious than he had imagined.

"The doctor came in and everything changed," said Jason.

From her research and talking with the doctor, Kristen knew a 22-week fetus had very little chance of survival and even if they do survive, the prognosis is often bleak. Babies born before 26 weeks gestation or weighing 1lb 12oz or less are called micro preemies. They can face many short or long-term health issues such as cerebral palsy, blindness, cognitive problems like learning and behavior problems, chronic lung disease and sepsis.

"We were given goals. One of the goals, the first goal, was viability, which is 24 weeks. It doesn't mean he would be out of the woods, but he could survive," said Kristen.

According to the March of Dimes Foundation, a nonprofit organization focused on the health of mothers and babies, the likelihood of survival nearly triples from 22 weeks, when approximately 10 percent of babies survive, to 24 weeks, when 50 to 60 percent of babies survive.

For two weeks, Kristen stayed at Lehigh Valley Cedar Crest. Jason stayed with her as much as his job would allow. Every three days, Kristen's cervix was checked to see if it had dilated more. It hadn't. The Cunninghams grew more optimistic with each day.

"I planned on being on complete bed rest when I came home. I really thought I would be going home once I hit 24 weeks," said Kristen.

On Feb. 28, 2013, the day Kristen thought she would be going home, Bryce was born. The doctor wanted to check Kristen one more time before discharging her. She was 1.5 cm dilated externally.

"It was just a rush. I called Jason and told him Bryce was coming today. All the doctors scrubbed up, I was prepped and out the door," said Kristen. Bryce weighed 1.9 pounds and measured 12.5 inches in length when he was born. He weighed approximately the same as an average carton of eggs and slightly longer than a piece of computer paper.

For the next three months, the Cunninghams helped Bryce fight his way to health. He suffered through episodes of apnea, had two blood transfusions and a bout of sepsis. He also needed artificial surfactant, a lubricating agent to keep his lungs from sticking together as they expanded and contracted.

Today, Bryce is 14 months old though his milestones are measured by his adjusted age of 10 months. So far, he has no long term complications.

"We were so lucky. Everything that could go wrong for a preemie didn't happen to him. We feel good now and we are hoping for the best," said Kristen.

On May 18, the Cunninghams will participate in the local March for Babies walk at King's College Betzler Field in Wilkes-Barre. Anyone can participate by signing up at [marchforbabies.org](http://marchforbabies.org).

5/2/2014

### **Cardone, Harnischfeger set for swan song**

Jill Snowdon - Citizens Voice

Since they were 9, Amanda Cardone and Jenn Harnischfeger have spent their summers together, playing softball and riding bikes. It's nothing for either of them to walk into the other's house and sit down for a family dinner. And they've already discussed being in each other's weddings.

The best friends, who share fond memories of leading Nanticoke Area's softball team to a PIAA championship in 2009, are enjoying their final season at King's College and are set to help the Monarchs make a run in this weekend's Freedom Conference Tournament at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown.

The Monarchs (26-8) are making their 15th straight appearance in the conference playoffs and take on FDU-Florham at 1. Only the champion earns an automatic berth in the NCAA Division III Championships.

"It's hard to believe that this could be it," Harnischfeger said. "It's the first time ever that we won't be talking about our next season. That definitely hasn't sunk in with me yet."

The pair were instrumental in guiding Nanticoke Area's program to success and they transferred their efforts to the collegiate level with instant results. In fact, on Thursday, Cardone and Harnischfeger were selected first-team All-Freedom Conference for the fourth straight season. Other Monarchs honored were Brittany Haight and Nanticoke Area graduate Maggie Gola to the second team, while Erin Beane and Nicolette Pizzo were honorable mention selections.

"I'm so proud of us," Cardone said. "Jenn and I came out of high school on such a high note with winning the state title and it ended up being a

stepping stone for us with college. I think all of our accomplishments have gone beyond my expectations."

Cardone is a four-year starter at catcher, has played in 137 games and has a .409 career batting average, which includes 21 home runs, 41 doubles and a 143 RBIs.

In the classroom, Cardone carries a 3.5 grade point average and will continue her academic career in medical school.

Harnischfeger is also a four-year starter in the infield. She has a .390 career batting average with 35 doubles, 10 triples, six home runs and 70 RBIs.

She too is an excellent student with a 3.3 GPA as an English major and she will begin student teaching in the fall.

Since they were little girls, the softball diamond has been the focus for Cardone and Harnischfeger. But another special diamond brought the friends even closer together this past winter.

"I was working on a project for school and Jenn sent me a text with a picture of this huge rock on her finger," Cardone said. "I called her screaming!"

Cardone was one of the first people Harnischfeger broke the news of her engagement to high school sweetheart Josh Olzinski. The newly engaged couple are taking their time with the wedding plans, but big decisions have already been made.

"She is absolutely going to be in my wedding," Harnischfeger said proudly. "I couldn't imagine it without her and we've already been talking about dresses."

Regardless of how far the King's softball team goes this season, the end of exceptional careers is near for Cardone and Harnischfeger.

But both are adamant that they won't give up softball just yet.

"We are already talking about which rec leagues we are going to play in," Harnischfeger said. "And when we aren't playing softball, we love to ride bikes together. It's one of our favorite things to do together."

"I'm sad softball at King's is almost over for us," added Cardone. "But we have so many other things to look forward to together as friends."

4/30/2014

**A scholarly man of letters**

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When Frank Mrufchinski tells you he feeds the birds in his backyard and has given a home to four cats, you might start to think of the Nanticoke man as a modern-day St. Francis of Assisi.

But his love for animals is only one dimension of this 80-year-old retired teacher.

A writer of frequent letters to the editor — often regarding spiritual topics — Mrufchinski also attends weekly Bible discussions at the Berean Baptist Church, prays a daily series of traditional Catholic prayers called the Liturgy of the Hours and treasures the memory of the occasion when he exchanged a few words with Karol Wojtyla, who later became Pope John Paul II.

If his life is really starting to sound theologically oriented, perhaps that's not surprising.

"I wanted to be a priest," he said. "But I was so concerned about my parents, I didn't want to go far away. I had my mother until she was 94, and I spent 24 hours a day taking care of her. My father had died years earlier from miners asthma."

Instead of studying for the priesthood, Mrufchinski joined the Order of Secular Franciscans as a layperson devoted to prayer, charity and peace-making.

He also became a teacher and worked for years in Potter County and, later, for the Lake-Lehman School District in Luzerne County.

Coaching basketball and directing school plays, he took pride in his students' accomplishments.

Decades later he still can recite some of them from memory.

Lois Carpenter from Potter County won a Daughters of the American Revolution essay contest, he said, beaming like a proud dad, and Joe Dempsey won a state contest for his essay on Milton Hershey.

Another former student, Earl Cunningham, received a state honor as a volunteer firefighter, "based on his work and my letter of recommendation," Mrufchinski said.

Equally precious to the former teacher are the letter from Susann Salansky Apgar thanking him for being a positive influence in her life and the note from Shannon Klemunes, who thanked him for teaching her "to be polite and considerate of others."

A prolific writer himself — in old-fashioned longhand — Mrufchinski has penned letters to the editor on a variety of topics. He has thanked retired pastor Monsignor Thomas Banick for his work at Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Wilkes-Barre, expressed gratitude to King's College for helping him attend the annual Century Club party and lauded former Denver Broncos quarterback Tim Tebow for praying on the football field.

"That's the heart of a newspaper, the editorial page," Mrufchinski said, explaining why he likes to share his thoughts. "I just want to make the community a better place."

On Sunday the late Pope John Paul II was canonized St. John Paul, and Mrufchinski happily recalls a time he met the former Karol Wojtyla, then cardinal of Krakow, at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia and exchanged a sentence or two in Polish.

"We are overjoyed," Mrufchinski said last week, speaking for his twin sister, Teresa, and other people of Polish heritage. "One of us is in heaven. I believe he's there with my mother and father and all my relatives."

4/17/2014

**Soil contamination puts Nanticoke skate park in limbo**

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Thirteen years after helping convince city council to move ahead with building a park for skateboarders, Bill Borowski came back to city hall to

find out what happened.

In 2005, the South Valley Partnership presented plans for a 140-acre park along the Susquehanna River in Nanticoke, and it included soccer and baseball fields, hiking trails, a boat launch and a skate park.

City officials were still promoting the plan in 2011 when the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources announced a \$60,400 grant for the first phase of the project.

But at Wednesday's city council meeting, officials said the project is in limbo because of soil contamination at the site of the skate park. A soccer field at the site was closed several years ago, officials said.

Last October, the city submitted a notice of intent to remediate the former soccer field off Lower Broadway Street due to soil contaminated from an automotive junkyard and landfill/scrap yard. Donna Wall has been interim city manager since Pamela Heard was forced out as manager in January, and Wall said she has been busy researching and learning details about the remediation plan.

About 20 skate park supporters attended Wednesday's meeting to hear Borowski question city officials about the skate park project. He is 27 and was 14 when he and others promoted the idea for a skate park.

The cost of the skate park was tagged at \$250,000 in 2005 by the South Valley Partnership.

"These trees don't have money growing on the them," Councilwoman Lesley Butczynski said at Wednesday's meeting, noting trees outside the windows of city hall.

Officials at the meeting were uncertain of the status of the South Valley Partnership, whether the organization represented the city and how much money it had spent on the park project.

Former Mayor John Bushko said the South Valley Partnership was a nonprofit organization formed to represent the city, Newport Township and Plymouth Township on regional projects. He said the city should have a representative on the South Valley board.

Wall also said the city will seek an extension to avoid losing grant money from state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

In 2008, city officials said the park project had been delayed by legal issues. The city had to secure ownership of the land, roughly 140 acres of former residential properties torn down in a hazard mitigation project after the Tropical Storm Agnes flood of 1972. The city owned the land, which is part of the Susquehanna River flood plain, but didn't have clear title to it because deeds were either lost or improperly filed.

4/13/2014

### **Nanticoke council tables vote on liquor license**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

City Council earlier this month tabled a vote to allow the Park Market, located at 30 E. Broad St., to apply for the transfer of a Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board restaurant liquor license.

The license is needed for the establishment to sell six packs of beer to go.

Attorney John Rodgers, representing the business' owner, stated the premises would be divided into two sections: the grocery store area, and a section where 30 seats would be available to sit down and eat prepared food or sandwiches. The area would have a separate entrance.

There would be no music or live entertainment, Rodgers added, and the business would have to follow all state Liquor Board rules and regulations. Several residents disapproved of the proposal, saying that it would increase litter, public drunkenness and underage drinking in the Patriot Square area. Council will vote on the issue at the April 16 meeting.

Hank Marks, president of the taxpayers association, said the 20 percent property tax increase is in violation of Nanticoke's home-rule charter. Marks said the home rule charter allows for an increase of only 8 percent.

Hanks said that "in 2013 there was no property tax increase from the previous year." He said the millage was 4.0594, and in 2014 the budget increased property taxes by 4.8785 mills.

Hanks suggested that council hire an accountant to declare whether or not the increase is within the home rule charter guidelines.

But Donna Wall, acting city manager, responded by saying that she used former City Manager Pam Heard's worksheet and that the increase is under the 8 percent limit.

Firefighter Chester Prymowicz has submitted his letter of retirement as of May 31, the council learned earlier this month. Prymowicz has served the fire department for the past 27 years.

In another matter, Mary Grobinski of East Grand Street asked what could be done about the excessive noise and fumes coming from a home located at the rear of Union Street, adjacent to Grobinski's home.

Grobinski said that noise from a stereo system, as well as the fumes and excessive noises from the hot rods located at the home, make it impossible for her to sit on her porch or to function normally in her own home.

She said the noise is continuous, all day into the night, seven days a week. Grobinski also said she has tried speaking with her neighbor, but he has an uncaring and defiant attitude about the situation.

She said the neighbor quieted down for a brief period after the police got involved, but it was short lived and he returned to the noise making within a short period of time.

Mayor Richard Wiatrowski assured Grobowski that Code Enforcer Joe Kordek would look into the situation.

The next council meeting will be on April 16 at 7 p.m.

4/13/2014

### **GNA teachers' hospital program a success**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

Greater Nanticoke Area fifth-grade teachers Jennifer Ferro and Karie Yefko coordinated an event to bring Jared boxes to the pediatric department of Geisinger Hospital, it was announced the school board's meeting Thursday night.

The plastic boxes were filled with donated toys and games to make the young patients' hospital stay a little more pleasant. Ferro and Yefko were hoping to donate 25 boxes to the unit's patients, but the response from the students, parents and GNA staff was so overwhelming that the end result was 118 donated boxes.

Second-grade teacher Lauren Dembowski will take her class to visit Guardian Elder Center on Wednesday. Guardian has requested visits from the students.

In other business:

- The board voted not to renew the contract with VLN Cyber School for the 2014-2015 school year.
  - Veronika Popyk, Samantha Russin, Alexis Seery and Joanna Tushinski were selected to join Junior Leadership in Wilkes Barre.
  - It was announced that on April 30 the district will hold a mock accident in preparation for the prom with the hopes of promoting safe driving.
- The next board meeting will be on May 15.

4/5/2014

### **Nanticoke 5-sport standout heading to Lock Haven**

Tom Fox - Times Leader

Sometimes, you just know.

The minute Kayla Gronkowski walked on the campus of Lock Haven University, the Nanticoke field hockey standout knew she might have found her new home.

It was just the feeling she had, and one she's sticking with.

Gronkowski, a five-sport letterman at the school, recently signed a letter of intent to play for the Division I Lady Eagles and head coach Pat Rudy.

"I love it there. To be honest, it feels like Nanticoke," she said. "The campus is really nice, and I'm just excited to continue my career there.

Drive and dedication. Those are the two assets Gronkowski followed her entire career

Drive to be the best she could. Dedication to her sport

"I spent a lot of time in the summer at camps to improve my skills and become the best player that I could be," she said. "I knew that my coaches always rewarded hard work and dedication, and I knew that all my hard work would pay off.

It did.

Playing through the rigors of a brutal Wyoming Valley Conference schedule, the senior found herself among the best in the league and an all-conference selection.

"I was happy with my season, but you always want to see the team win more," she said. "We play in a really tough conference against teams that have a great level of success in the state. Honestly, I think we do pretty good against them."

The choice to attend Lock Haven was pretty simple.

It's an opportunity to play at the Division I level. The Lady Eagles, a former national champ at Division II, recently moved up and are members of the Atlantic 10 Conference. Even in non-league action, Lock Haven has squared up with national powers like Penn State and North Carolina.

More importantly, the Clinton County school just felt like home.

"It's the kind of place that made me feel like Nanticoke," she said. "I loved it when I first went there, and after I attended a camp, it pretty much sealed the deal for me. I knew it was the right place for me. I felt a good connection with Pat Rudy. I met her, and it was like eight months before I saw her again, and she still remembered my name. That meant a lot because she remembered who I was. That made a real good impression on me.

"It's going to be a big change, but I would love to play early in my career. I know that I have to catch up on some things, but I think I can do that."

If her high school career is any indication, expect her to accomplish any goals.

She's a five-sport standout - cross country, field hockey, swimming, track and softball.

And that's not counting the numerous school clubs and activities she has her hand in.

"I manage it," she said. "I'm pretty dedicated with every activity that I participate in. I've always taken the role that I wanted to be involved. I've always been involved in whatever I could. Sometimes, Nanticoke gets a bad rap, and people say things. I've always been a person that's taken an active role and tried to show everything Nanticoke has to offer."

At Lock Haven, Gronkowski plans to major in physics and engineering.

4/5/2014

### **McCord tours schools to study education**

#### **State treasurer, a Democratic gubernatorial hopeful, chats with students, administrators**

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State Treasurer Rob McCord was impressed Friday when one young student at Greater Nanticoke Area Elementary Center said of a recent PSSA test: "The only thing I liked about the test is all the hard questions."

McCord, who is hoping to win the Democratic nomination in his bid for governor, was visiting with students in the school library. Later he toured classrooms in that school, where third-, fourth- and fifth-graders attend, and at neighboring Kennedy Elementary, which is for second-graders.

It was a campaign stop on his tour of schools across the commonwealth to talk about his plan to invest \$1.3 billion in early childhood education and kindergarten-through-12th-grade classrooms, funds he plans to raise with a 10 percent natural gas driller's tax. Those plans encompass two criticisms he has of Gov. Tom Corbett, whom McCord accuses of making "disastrous education cuts" and who has refused to tax drillers.

McCord, of Montgomery County, who is backed by the Pennsylvania State Education Association, toured the schools and met with administrators to learn their concerns. Acting district Superintendent Mariellen Scott, Ed.D., led the tour, joined by state Sen. John Yudichak, D-Plymouth Township; Nanticoke Mayor Richard Wiaterowski and his wife, Wendy, a school board member; fellow school board member Megan Tennesen, and interim city administrator Donna Wall.

McCord clearly enjoyed himself as he met and chatted with students, teachers and school officials and talked with students about his struggles with reading as a child. He sat in a tiny chair at a student desk among second-graders in Leslie Ginocchietti's classroom in Kennedy Elementary and pulled up a yoga ball in Ed Grant's fifth grade at the elementary center to interact with students and learn what the teachers were teaching.

There, the candidate was even more impressed by a question from a girl who asked if he had plans to increase state funding for education. McCord then explained his position that he plans to restore funding that Gov. Corbett reduced for investing in education.

He also explained to the class how his mother went through a tough divorce when he was young and how he was in a slow reading group when his mother moved to Pennsylvania for a job and a good school district.

In teacher Kelly McCabe's fourth-grade classroom next door, he told his background, but with the additional detail that his dyslexia was not diagnosed when he was 8. But, he said, to encourage students in the class who have trouble with reading, he got help and eventually went on to Harvard and success in business.

Later, he and Yudichak met with Scott, District Principal Mary Ann Jarolen, Special Education Director Dan Burkholder and Educational Center Principal Joe Long to talk about what educators and the district need.

Jarolen expressed concerns that the district receives nothing in return for payments made toward charter schools. McCord suggested cyber and charter schools should have massive re-certification requirements "to make sure they are not a scam."

The group talked about after school and summer programs, and the fact that many students don't take part in after-school activities because they ride the bus.

Later, McCord told reporters he didn't want to over-promise on property tax reform, but, "I think we can reduce property tax and offer rebates for seniors."

McCord is facing York businessman Tom Wolf, U.S. Rep. Allyson Schwartz and former Environmental Protection Secretary Katie McGinty in the May 20 primary.

4/5/2014

### **McCord makes campaign stop at Nanticoke school**

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When state Treasurer Rob McCord learned some fifth-grade students at Greater Nanticoke Elementary Center were sitting on yoga balls in class, he became eager to join them.

Some students in Ed Grant's class use the balls because it helps them focus, Acting Superintendent Mariellen Scott explained. With McCord atop one of the big bouncy balls, a student in the class later asked the Democratic candidate for governor if he wanted to restore state funding cuts in education.

McCord said he wants to do just that on "day one, year one, budget one." He said he wants to impose a 10 percent tax on natural gas drilling to generate an additional \$1.3 billion in annual revenue.

Political ally state Sen. John Yudichak, D-Plymouth Township, accompanied McCord on the elementary center tour. They later met with school administrators and talked about issues concerning special education, cyber-charter schools and after-school programs.

McCord told students in several classes his personal story about having "undiagnosed dyslexia" and going to Harvard University thanks to his public school education in the Philadelphia area.

"What's Harvard?" a student in Kelly McCabe's fourth-grade class asked.

"It's the second best college in the world, second to Penn State," McCord replied, looking over at Yudichak, a Penn State alum and former Greater Nanticoke Area School District student.

Also on the tour were: Nanticoke Mayor Richard Wiaterowski; his wife and school board member Wendy Kotsko Wiaterowski; Donna Wall, Nanticoke's acting city manager and benefits and finance coordinator; and school board member Megan Tennesen.

Wiaterowski's son, Ryan, is a student in Leslie Ginocchetti's second-grade class.

"When you go home, do you call your dad Mr. Mayor?" McCord joked when visiting the class.

4/5/2014

### **GNA board to interview six superintendent candidates**

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The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board plans to interview six applicants for superintendent, school board members said.

Board members Megan Tennesen and Wendy Kotsko Wiaterowski talked about the search for a new superintendent during Treasurer Rob McCord's tour of the elementary center. A total of 12 applied to succeed Anthony Perrone, who resigned Jan. 28 as superintendent due to health problems.

The school board wants a new superintendent on board by June 30. Acting Superintendent Mariellen Scott wants to return to working as elementary school principal.

Perrone had been superintendent since 1996. In October, the school board voted to appoint Perrone to a three-year term that was set to end June 30, 2016. He continued to work without receiving pay, and the district continued to provide his health benefits.

4/4/2014

### **Controversy over Nanticoke tax hike persists**

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A taxpayer advocate says Nanticoke's property tax hike for 2014 is 20 percent, but the city's home rule charter limits tax increases to 8 percent. However, the city's financial recovery coordinator is confident the increase does not violate the charter.

Turns out, they're both right.

In 2013, property tax millage was 4.0594, and in the 2014 budget it is 4.8785 mills, which resident and taxpayer advocate Hank Marks points out is an increase of more than 20 percent.

That's true, says Joe Boyle of Pennsylvania Economy League.

He confirmed the charter is clear on the fact that taxes cannot be raised more than 8 percent above the previous year's revenue.

But that means total revenue, not just from one source. The city's 1.5 percent earned income tax brings in 43 percent of the city's revenue, about \$2.1 million a year, and 29 percent is from the property tax, or about \$1.4 million, Boyle said. The rest of the general fund income comes from other sources including the local services tax, the mercantile tax and code enforcement revenue.

The total 2014 revenue from all the sources, including the increased property tax, is 7.46 percent more than 2013 revenue - just under the 8 percent limit set by the home rule charter. The adopted budget for 2013 had \$4,485,950 in general fund revenues, and for 2014 it has \$4,820,486.

Marks isn't convinced.

"That's voodoo accounting, to try to circumvent what they did by raising taxes 20 percent," he said. "That still doesn't change the fact that we're paying 20 percent more on our taxes."

The property tax increase amounts to \$81.91 more per year on a house assessed at \$100,000, Marks said.

Before the reassessment, Nanticoke's property tax was 60 mills. But since then, the city has probably lost about \$5 million in assessed valuation, Boyle said.

"Nanticoke's problem since reassessment is its assessed value is declining each year as people appeal," he said.

As a result, the real estate tax becomes less productive, but Boyle said it is the only vehicle the city has to meet increasing expenses: Nanticoke gets very little non-tax revenue. As an Act 47 or financially distressed community - also through having a home rule charter - city officials could raise the earned income tax. But it's already at 2 percent, counting the 0.5 percent that goes to Greater Nanticoke Area school district.

City officials didn't raise taxes in 2012 and 2013, Boyle pointed out.

"They held the tax line for two years and had to raise it. That raise is not unusual for municipalities," he said.

Nanticoke is running a full-service city with full-time municipal services - police, fire and code enforcement - across the board, Boyle said.

Due to contractual obligations, the tax increase was necessary to "Fund the level of services the residents consistently ask for," he said.

But Marks thinks the 8 percent increase is too much. He would like to see a 4-percent limit on taxes and will try to get that provision in the charter changed.

If not, he wants to try to get the whole charter thrown out.

"I was an advocate for home rule, but I wouldn't be any more," Marks said.

4/3/2014

### **Nanticoke hospital will be vacant by fall**

#### **Kindred employees eyed for jobs**

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A deal between Commonwealth Health and a Camp Hill company to manage its post-acute care services at two local hospitals will leave the Special Care Hospital building vacant this fall for the first time in more than a century.

Post Acute Medical LLC, a provider of post-acute care at more than 20 hospitals and facilities nationwide, wanted to expand its footprint in its home state and eyed Northeastern Pennsylvania as a place to start.

But rather than operating in the facility on South Washington Street that opened as a state hospital in 1909, it opted to use space inside Wilkes-Barre General Hospital and the Regional Hospital in Scranton.

Anne Leon, a spokeswoman for Post Acute Medical, said the company sees this market as a good place to do business. Being located inside existing hospitals presents a good opportunity for itself and its patients, she said.

The company signed an agreement to lease the seventh floor of Wilkes-Barre General starting in mid-September.

Though the number of employees it will need hasn't been determined, it's likely that the dozens at Kindred Hospital Wyoming Valley who currently work on that floor will be viewed as potential Post Acute employees.

"Sure. They're doing it. They've been doing it for 12 years," Leon said of Kindred staffers.

Kindred Healthcare

Kindred Healthcare has operated the hospital within a hospital on the seventh floor of Wilkes-Barre General Hospital since 2002. The company did not renew its contract with Wilkes-Barre General for the 36-bed long-term acute care facility and will exit on or before Sept. 16. Post Acute will move right in.

Continuing to have an outside company providing post acute care was something Commonwealth Health, Wilkes-Barre General's parent company, viewed as the best option.

Annamarie Poslock, a Commonwealth Health spokeswoman, issued a statement confirming the Post Acute Medical agreement: "Selling LTAC (long-term acute care) operations to a single specialty organization would support quality of care for patients and keep the system's resources

focused on other hospital services. As we developed our strategy and contemplated this transaction, we had discussions with multiple LTAC service companies, including Kindred.”

She said Post Acute Medical “will continue to operate within these hospitals as independent providers and offer services to patients who require additional resources for recovery.”

Leon said Post Acute Medical operates the bulk of its facilities in Texas with additional ones in Wisconsin, Louisiana and Oklahoma, but “we were looking to start growing in Pennsylvania.” And having a facility inside Wilkes-Barre General, as Kindred learned, just made sense.

“There’s access to diagnostic equipment, facilities, physicians. ... You can serve your patients much better,” Leon said.

Part of the company’s agreement with Commonwealth Health was to retain as many of the company’s employees working in its Special Care Hospital in Nanticoke.

Post Acute Medical will operate long-term acute care units at Regional Hospital of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, and inpatient operations at Special Care Hospital will end. The units will function as independent providers located within the hospitals, which will help in patient transitions between levels.

Long-term care

With just two units — Wilkes-Barre General Hospital and Regional Hospital of Scranton — there will be sufficient beds to accommodate long-term acute care patients in the region based on patient volumes of the past four years, Poslock said.

The land and building occupied by Special Care Hospital are owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Poslock said.

Troy Thompson, a Pennsylvania Department of General Services spokesman, said the news came unexpectedly and since the state considers that building “surplus property” it will entertain purchase offers.

When Commonwealth Health, a for-profit company, purchased the Special Care Hospital from a non-profit company, the Pennsylvania Department of General Services negotiated a four-year lease for \$2,000 per month, with a \$500,000 option to buy. The lease expires in June 2014 on the 81,839-square-foot building situated on 3.9 acres.

4/3/2014

### **Nanticoke’s new city manager quits**

#### **Jay Zupa was scheduled to take over position on March 24**

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Jay Zupa’s tenure as Nanticoke’s city manager was short-lived.

Zupa was initially supposed to report for his first day of work on March 24.

A new opportunity, however, resulted in Zupa declining the job and leaving Nanticoke without a city manager.

Zupa was present at the city council meeting on March 5, where he officially became the city manager.

Interim City Manager Donna Wall said he was not present at the meeting on March 19.

She said he received an opportunity “to further himself even better,” and ultimately turned down the position before his initial start date.

Wall said she heard that he took a position for a realty company in Boston.

“Another opportunity came, and he felt that he couldn’t pass it up,” she said.

Wall admitted that Zupa’s departure put the city in “a spot,” but the search for a new city manager will be on hold temporarily.

Wall said the city has advertised for a new financial manager, and interviews for that position are expected to be held sometime next week.

Wall explained that the position took priority as the city works to close finances for 2013 and begin the audit process.

“That position (financial manager) was really more important at this time,” Wall said.

Once a financial manager is hired, the search for a new city manager will begin.

“We’re not by any means standing still here,” Wall said.

Zupa previously worked as the benefits coordinator for Luzerne County.

Zupa could not be reached Wednesday for comment.

4/3/2014

### **Taxpayer advocate: Nanticoke tax hike violates charter**

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A taxpayer advocate said residents are being overtaxed with a 20 percent property tax hike that violates Nanticoke's home-rule charter.

But city officials say the increase is acceptable under the charter.

In 2013, there was no property tax increase from the previous year; millage was 4.0594. But the 2014 budget increased property taxes by 4.8785 mills, which means \$81.91 more per year on a house assessed at \$100,000.

"They raised our tax more than anybody around, and we were the highest to begin with," resident and taxpayer advocate Hank Marks said.

He pointed out the home-rule charter does not allow for a tax increase of more than 8 percent, but the property tax hike comes out to 20 percent. He took council to task on that point during Tuesday's meeting.

"Did you hire an accountant yet?" Marks asked.

"Did we? No, not yet," council President Bill Brown said.

"Well, I think you're going to need an accountant to look into this and see where you stand on that 8 percent restriction with income sources," Marks said. "Because if you're not following under the regulations that limit this right now, you just raised them 20 percent, and I know a lot of people paid their taxes, including me, with that 20 percent. What's going to happen if you find out that you exceeded the limits on that income requirement

in the home-rule charter?"

Acting City Administrator Donna Wall said she used a worksheet from former city Administrator Pam Heard, and it was "below 8 percent, definitely."

Joe Boyle of Pennsylvania Economy League, the city's financial recovery coordinator, said the increase was within the charter limits.

Marks said the city has a lot of low-income people, the county raised taxes 8 percent, "and then we have a sewer tax, a garbage tax, other taxes people have to pay," including a 1.5 percent earned income tax.

In response to Marks' comparison to neighboring Newport Township, Wall said Nanticoke provides more services, including a fully paid fire department.

Resident Lou Gianuzzi asked why, if city officials were going by numbers provided by Heard, she wasn't there.

"Who is our manager now, being that the guy quit the first day?" Gianuzzi asked.

Heard was put on administrative leave in January. Council recently hired Jay Zupa, who worked as Luzerne County's benefits coordinator for 18 years, as Nanticoke's new manager, but he is moving to Boston.

"We weren't aware and neither was he of the fact that he had a better opportunity in life," Councilwoman Lesley Butczynski said. "Good for him. That's awesome."

Asked after the meeting why Heard was no longer with the city, Mayor Richard Wiatrowski replied, "Different direction."

Boyle said the city hopes to have a financial administrator by the end of the month, and then officials will do a manager search.

In other business, council tabled a vote until April 16 on whether to allow Rashimikaben Patel to transfer a liquor license from Freeland Borough to the Park Market at 30 E. Broad St. Patel, who has owned the market for about a year and a half, plans to renovate the store and sell beer six-packs, his attorney John P. Rodgers said.

Rodgers said the store would be partitioned off, with 30 seats where people can sit and eat, like any restaurant. He said Patel would follow state Liquor Control Board regulations.

However, some residents expressed concerns about increased public drunkenness in Patriot Square Park, the potential for underage sales and competition with mom-and-pop establishments.

3/30/2014

### **Former big leaguer, college coach Cihocki dies**

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With a plug of tobacco in his cheek and a pair of shiny, white metal spikes on his feet, Al Cihocki would sit on the bench in the first base dugout at the baseball field at Luzerne County Community College and tell stories.

He would talk about managing and playing in Puerto Rico. He would tell stories about Tommy Lasorda and his time spent playing with the Cleveland Indians. Cihocki could tell a story and 99 percent of those stories revolved around baseball.

Cihocki, who was born in Nanticoke, died on Thursday at the age of 89. His obituary appears on page B13 of today's edition of The Citizens' Voice. Mostly known as "Doc" around the Wyoming Valley, Cihocki played in 92 games as a 21-year-old infielder for the Cleveland Indians in 1945. One of his most memorable games from that season came on Aug. 24, where he was the starting shortstop in a game pitched by Bob Feller. It was Feller's first game back since returning from World War II.

"Doc was a baseball treasure of baseball stories," said former longtime Nanticoke Area baseball coach John Kashatus. "He always kept the game interesting. He loved to try to identify talent in a player. Doc was tough. If some guys didn't have it, they knew it. He wouldn't hold back. His wife was always proud that he was one of three guys from Honey Pot to make it to the major leagues."

Cihocki played for the Baltimore Orioles of the International League from 1946-1952. He was known as Baltimore's first Ironman, playing in the most games in Class AAA Oriole history, 850 in all. In 1946, he played every inning of all 154 games. He also played for the 1954 Wilkes-Barre Barons, an affiliate of the Detroit Tigers.

Baseball took Cihocki all over the world from Batavia, N.Y., to Puerto Rico, Venezuela and the Dominican Republic.

After retiring from baseball in 1955, Cihocki worked at Chase Prison in Dallas. He also was an assistant coach at King's before moving on to coach at LCCC for 22 seasons.

"I worked with him at the prison," said Coughlin coach Moe Rodzinak. "When he was coaching at LCC he would call me down on the block and tell me to get him players. He was a great guy. A couple of guys from work went to a ballgame with him. He took them right down along the field and all the players came running up to him. He knew everybody. They all knew him. He was a great guy."

3/23/2014

### **Lawmakers to recognize Nanticoke Eagle Scout**

Times Leader

Chandler Prymowicz, an Eagle Scout with Troop 418 sponsored by the Nanticoke American Legion, will be recognized on the House and Senate floors in Harrisburg on April 7 for earning all 137 Boy Scout merit badges. This includes the four "Heritage" merit badges that were only available for one year during the BSA Bicentennial year.

Chandler, 18, has been pursuing his Boy Scout career since he joined Troop 418 on May 8, 2006. As he worked through the years, he achieved all Boy Scout ranks — tenderfoot, second class, first class, star and life — by March 2010. In the meantime, Chandler achieved additional honors, including membership in the Order of the Arrow, designated as the honor society of Scouting, on June 1, 2008; Great Expectation Leadership training on Nov. 15, 2008; and his Brotherhood Membership on March 28, 2009. Chandler earned his Eagle Scout rank on Nov. 17, 2010.

Thereafter, he continued earning merit badges and completed the last one on Oct. 28, 2013.

3/18/2014

### **Luzerne County trooper hurt in crash**

Citizens Voice

A state trooper from Luzerne County was among four people injured in a head-on crash early Sunday in Monroe County. Troopers Jeffrey J. Kowalski, 32, a Nanticoke native who now lives in Drums, and Gary J. Fedorczyk, 38, were driving a marked state police car on Route 115 in Chestnuthill Township when another vehicle hit them head on. The crash occurred around 12:39 a.m. on Route 115 just south of Weir Lake Road, according to police. Jean A. Fonte, 25, of Kunkletown, and Erin C. Dooner, 30, of Effort, were traveling southbound on 115 in a 2004 Dodge Stratus. For unknown reasons, the car crossed over into the northbound lane, striking the troopers' 2011 Ford Crown Victoria head-on. All four were all transported to area hospitals with what police describe as moderate injuries. State police said they are still investigating the crash and will release more information as it becomes available. Kowalski and Fedorczyk worked out of the Fern Ridge barracks.

3/18/2014

### **Special Care Hospital in Nanticoke closing Commonwealth Health selling facility**

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Commonwealth Health will unload one of its eight member hospitals later this year, leaving the livelihoods of some employees at the Nanticoke facility in question.

The company has reached a definitive agreement to sell Special Care Hospital and its satellite operations to a subsidiary of Post Acute Medical LLC, Commonwealth Health announced in a news release on Monday.

Financial terms of the transaction are not being released, said Annmarie Poslock, vice president of marketing for Commonwealth Health.

Based in Camp Hill, Cumberland County, Post Acute Medical is a specialty health care company focused on providing post-acute care through a multistate system that includes specialty hospitals and inpatient rehab facilities.

Special Care Hospital is referred to in the medical community as an "L-TAC" because it provides long-term acute care services for seriously ill patients with complicated medical needs. The hospital has about 130 employees, about 110 of whom are clinical and will be hired by Post Acute Medical, Poslock said.

"Over the coming months until the transaction closes, we will work with the 20 employees in dietary, housekeeping and maintenance to identify opportunities within the other Commonwealth Health facilities. Should any employees not be placed, severance will be provided for those who qualify," Poslock said.

Work will be done to retain as many employees not hired by Post Acute Medical as possible to staff outpatient services in Nanticoke and redeploy others to positions at Commonwealth Health facilities, she said.

Outplacement services will be offered to prepare affected staff for the job-search process, and job fairs will be held to share other open positions available within the network.

Assessing services

After the close of the transaction later this year, Post Acute Medical will operate long-term acute care units at Regional Hospital of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, and inpatient operations at Special Care Hospital will end. The units will function as independent providers located within the hospitals, which will help in patient transitions between levels.

"Special Care Hospital has been a facility dedicated to providing patients with quality, personalized care," Bob Williams, chief executive officer of Special Care Hospital, said in a news release. "We have a compassionate, skilled team of physicians and employees who have served our patients and community well. Their professionalism is appreciated and we thank them for their years of service."

As part of a regular assessment of services, Commonwealth Health identified that selling long-term acute care operations to a single specialty organization would support the highest quality of care for patients.

With just two units — Wilkes-Barre General Hospital and Regional Hospital of Scranton — there will be sufficient beds to accommodate L-TAC patients in the region based on patient volumes of the past four years, Poslock said.

L-TACs admit complicated, seriously ill patients, generally from critical care areas of acute care hospitals. Many physicians favor an L-TAC within a hospital versus a free-standing L-TAC such as Special Care because of the depth and breadth of resources available within an acute care hospital, Poslock noted.

"We welcome the opportunity to work with the hospitals of Commonwealth Health and their network of providers in the community," says Anthony Misitano, president and CEO of Post Acute Medical. "At the same time, these long-term acute care units bring us close to home in Pennsylvania, providing a foothold as we look to expand our operations here and in other areas within the Mid-Atlantic region."

Nanticoke presence

The land and building occupied by Special Care Hospital are owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Poslock said.

Previously known as Mercy Special Care Hospital, the property was leased from the state by Mercy Health Partners until it was sold to Community Health Systems in 2011. Special Care Hospital then merged with seven other area hospitals to form Commonwealth Health in February 2012.

Mercy had been leasing the hospital property from the state for \$1 per month for 20 years. When Mercy decided to sell the hospital, the

Pennsylvania Department of General Services negotiated a new two-year lease with Nanticoke Hospital Co., a subsidiary of Community Health Systems, for \$2,000 per month, with a \$500,000 option to buy.

The option to buy was pending legislative approval, because all sales of state-owned property must be approved by the General Assembly. The status of the lease could not be ascertained Monday. Any state plans for the fate of the building could not be ascertained on Monday.

Commonwealth Health will continue to have a presence in Nanticoke through expansion of the outpatient services center in downtown Nanticoke at the corner of East Main and North Market, Poslock said.

Those services most used by the Nanticoke community will be offered there, including diagnostic imaging, EKG testing and lab draws. Renovations of the facility will provide more clinic space for primary care physicians.

3/18/2014

### **Special Care Hospital in Nanticoke sold to Post Acute Medical LLC**

dallabaugh@citizensvoice.com

Commonwealth Health has reached an agreement to sell Special Care Hospital in Nanticoke and its satellite operations to a subsidiary of specialty health care company Post Acute Medical LLC based in Camp Hill.

Special Care Hospital, which provides long-term acute care services to seriously ill patients with complicated medical needs, employs approximately 130 people, according to Commonwealth Health spokeswoman Annmarie Poslock.

Commonwealth Health announced Monday, in a press release, that substantially all Special Care Hospital employees "in good standing at the time the transaction closes are expected to be offered employment by Post Acute Medical, with the exception of employees in dietary, maintenance and housekeeping."

Poslock said Commonwealth Health officials will work with about 20 employees in dietary, housekeeping and maintenance to identify job opportunities within other Commonwealth Health facilities.

"Should any employees not be placed, severance will be provided for those who qualify," she said.

About 110 employees are clinical and will be hired by Post Acute Medical, she said.

Outplacement services will be offered to prepare affected staff for the job search process, and job fairs will be held to share other open positions available within the network, according to the press release from Commonwealth Health,

Poslock would not release financial terms of the transaction.

Following the close of the transaction later this year, Post Acute Medical will operate long-term acute care units at Regional Hospital of Scranton and Wilkes-Barre General Hospital and inpatient operations at Special Care Hospital will end. The units will function as independent providers located within the hospitals, facilitating patient transitions between levels of care.

Commonwealth Health officials said with the two units, Wilkes-Barre General Hospital and Regional Hospital of Scranton, there will be sufficient beds to accommodate long-term acute care patients in the region based on patient volumes of the last four years.

"Special Care Hospital has been a facility dedicated to providing patients with quality, personalized care," Bob Williams, Chief Executive Officer of Special Care Hospital, said in a statement. "We have a compassionate, skilled team of physicians and employees who have served our patients and community well. Their professionalism is appreciated and we thank them for their years of service."

As part of a regular assessment of services, Commonwealth Health identified that selling long-term acute care operations to a single specialty organization would "support the highest quality of care for patients," according to the press release.

"We welcome the opportunity to work with the hospitals of Commonwealth Health and their network of providers in the community," Anthony Misitano, President and CEO of Post Acute Medical, said in a statement. "At the same time, these long-term acute care units bring us close to home in Pennsylvania, providing a foothold as we look to expand our operations here and in other areas within the Mid Atlantic region."

Commonwealth Health will continue to have a presence in Nanticoke through expansion of the outpatient services center in downtown Nanticoke at East Main and North Market streets. Services most utilized by the Nanticoke community will be offered including diagnostic imaging, EKG testing and lab draws. Renovations of the facility will provide more clinic space for primary care physicians, according to Commonwealth Health.

3/15/2014

### **Justice served: \$7M to families of late reservists**

Rebekah Brown - Citizens Voice

For the families of two late Naval Reservists, a jury's award of more than \$7 million Friday represented justice.

The two Luzerne County men died following a crash in Kuwait in 2009. Morgan Lee Hanks, an employee of civilian contractor Combat Support Associates at the time, was driving an SUV on the two-laned Kuwaiti road, passing a convoy of military vehicles. His SUV hit another, driven by Brian Patton, in a head-on crash.

Patton, 37, of Nanticoke, died at the scene. His passenger, colleague and friend, David Morgan of Wilkes-Barre, sustained a traumatic brain injury and succumbed to complications from his injury in August 2013 at age 38.

Friday, families of the men heard the result of a suit they filed in 2010. The jury deliberated for about 4½ hours following the eight-day federal civil trial before returning a verdict, finding Hanks negligent in the crash and Combat Support Associates liable. The unanimous verdict awarded Patton's family \$3.875 million and Morgan's family \$3.750 million in damages.

When asked if he had anything to say leaving the courtroom, Hanks, 29, declined to comment.

"I do, but under the advice of my attorney, not right now," he said.

Amy Hynoski Patton turned to hug Morgan's parents, seated behind her in the courtroom, after the verdict was read. She looked forward to sharing

the news with her son Nicholas.

“He’ll be thrilled to know his daddy won,” Patton family attorney William Anzalone said.

He pointed out that the families had sat through a criminal trial in Virginia where Hanks was acquitted of involuntary manslaughter charges.

“In their hearts, they always knew Morgan Lee Hanks was responsible,” Anzalone said. “Today in Scranton, the jury said Morgan Lee Hanks was responsible.”

Attorneys for Hanks and Combat Support Associates declined to comment after the proceedings.

Morgan’s parents of Wilkes-Barre said the award would provide for the families of both men.

“Justice has been served,” Margaret Morgan said. “Dave and Brian can rest in peace.”

3/14/2014

### **GNA lauds students for fundraising**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

Greater Nanticoke Area acting Superintendent Dr. Mariellen Scott announced that kindergarten through fifth-grade students raised \$4,200 for the American Heart Association.

The students participated in a “jump rope for heart health” fundraiser. The event was held during the last week of February, which is National Heart Health Month.

Scott also gave notice of the change in the PSSA testing dates.

The new dates are as follows: Reading and math for grades three through eight will begin on March 24; writing for grades five and eight will begin on April 7; and science for grades four and eight will begin on April 28. Scott added that students who arrive late will not be allowed in the class once the testing has begun.

Board Vice President Ken James announced that the PIAA will require mandatory coaching education for all coaches. There will be two fundamental courses that coaches will be required to pass. The new PIAA rule take effect as of July 1, 2016.

The board has given approval for the school district to authorize Professional Design & Construction, Inc. to proceed with the necessary planning, design and cost estimating for the baseball field and adjacent practice field renovations.

The next board meeting will be held at 7 p.m. on April 10.

3/8/2014

### **Nanticoke resident questions lack of natural gas**

#### **David Guzofsky wants to know why UGI hasn’t run lines to his development**

David Guzofsky has noticed that houses around his home have access to natural gas and wants to know why his development does not.

Guzofsky, 63, is a long-time resident of the Kelfield Acres in Nanticoke, a development of about 140 homes. He said that a natural gas line owned by UGI surrounds his development and provides natural gas to surrounding houses.

“There’s no availability of natural gas here,” Guzofsky said. “We’re surrounded by natural gas customers.”

Guzofsky has a propane fireplace and an on-demand underground water heater, so he has managed without natural gas, but he still would like access to natural gas.

“It pops into your head now and then,” he said. “I’m surviving without natural gas, but it’s just a courtesy that a company like that (UGI) should think of.”

He has also talked to some of his neighbors, and he said they are not happy about not being able to use natural gas. Guzofsky also said a lot of his neighbors have had to resort to propane gas, a more expensive alternative. With those potential customers, Guzofsky did not understand why natural gas was not available and that he can’t seem to get an answer from UGI.

Guzofsky said he has tried contacting UGI before, and was told that a survey would be done. He has not heard back since.

UGI spokesman Don Brominski said natural gas is, in fact, available, but customers may have to bear some of the costs of installing pipelines to homes.

“We are required by law to provide service,” he said. “However, we do not have an obligation to serve at no cost.”

Brominski explained that once a request is made inside of a franchise territory, UGI evaluates the cost to serve the customer compared to what the customer will use and the generated revenue.

UGI Penn Natural Gas tariff rates and rules state that the company’s investment in facilities “is warranted by the anticipated revenue to be derived from the extension. The costs of extending facilities beyond that provided by the company shall be paid by the applicant.”

If the cost to serve will be greater than the revenue derived, Brominski said the difference is asked for through a contribution for construction. If a number of people in the same area expressed interest, Brominski said UGI would send letters out to gauge interest.

He also said any potential contribution for construction could also be spread out and handled more like a larger project if several customers were interested.

“These protections are in place so that we don’t make uneconomic investments that would cause us to raise our rates,” Brominski said.

Brominski said request similar to Guzofsky’s can be made by visiting UGI’s website at [www.UGI.com](http://www.UGI.com), or by calling (800) 276-2722.

3/6/2014

### **Nanticoke selects a new city manager**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

Jay Zupa on Wednesday night became Nanticoke's new city manager by appointment of Mayor Richard Wiaterowski approved by City Council at an annual salary of \$55,000.

He will take over for acting City Manager Donna Wall. The previous city manager was Pamela Heard, who reportedly was paid more than \$68,000 a year.

As per home rule charter, Zupa will have one year to become a resident of the city.

City Council approved the appointments of Larry Butczynski and Gary Grodzicki to the Municipal Authority to the unexpired terms of Stephen Duda and Richard Wiaterowski, who have resigned from the authority.

The appointments will end in March 2016.

Council and those in attendance of the meeting stood for a moment of silence for former Nanticoke Mayor Stanley Glazenski, who passed away on Thursday, Feb. 27, at the age of 82.

A meeting with PennDOT and engineers Borton-Lawson concerning the South Valley Parkway Roadway Project is scheduled for March 19 at 6 p.m. in Council Chambers.

In other matters, the Honey Pot Volunteer Fire Co. is sponsoring an all you can eat breakfast March 30, 7 a.m to noon. Tickets for adults are \$8 per person and \$4 per child. For more information, contact Linda Prushinski at 570-735-0508.

The Fraternal Order of Eagles has made a donation to the Police Equipment Fund in the amount of \$300.

The next council meeting will be March 19 at 7 p.m.

3/6/2014

### **Naval reservists' families seek damages**

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In a case with millions of dollars at stake, the families of two Naval Reservists who died from injuries in a grinding car crash in Kuwait in 2009 appeared in federal court Wednesday for the civil trial against a civilian contractor accused of causing the accident.

Brian Patton, 37, of Nanticoke, died at the scene of Nov. 19, 2009 crash. His friend and co-worker, David Morgan of Wilkes-Barre, suffered a traumatic brain injury and lived for several years before succumbing to complications from his injury in August 2013 at age 38.

The Morgan and Patton families filed suit in 2010 against Combat Support Associates, a private, California-based firm that provides support services to the military, and its former employee, Morgan Lee Hanks, who was driving an SUV that struck another SUV driven by Patton.

In opening statements Wednesday, William Anzalone of Wilkes-Barre, the Patton family attorney, said evidence will show Hanks acted recklessly when he veered into the opposing lane of a two-lane road while attempting to pass a slow moving military convoy of buses and SUVs as he crested a hill.

"The facts are not complicated. The consequences were catastrophic," Anzalone said. "Mr. Hanks exhibited a reckless pass that killed two American heroes."

Attorney Evan Eisner of Philadelphia, who represents CSA, said evidence will show Hanks had a clear view and was acting safely when he made the pass. The crash, he said, was caused by the convoy bus drivers, who failed to keep a sufficient distance between the buses to allow Hanks to pull back into the lane and avoid the collision.

Patton and Morgan, who worked as prison guards at the State Correctional Institution at Dallas, both served in the Naval Reserves and were on assignment in Kuwait as military police officers. Then men were on their way to a police call when the crash occurred on a paved supply road between military camps.

Anzalone and David Pennington of Philadelphia, attorney for the Morgan family, are seeking \$2 million to \$3 million in lost earning capacity each for Patton and Morgan. The families are also seeking additional damages for pain and suffering of the crash victims and compensation for the emotional harm caused to Patton's wife, Amy, and their two children, and Morgan's daughter and parents.

Amy Patton and members of Morgan's family were present for opening statements. Speaking during a recess, Amy Patton said it was difficult to relive the tragedy, but she felt compelled to attend.

"It's important to us to be here to get justice," she said. "This has been going on for 4½ years and there's no closure."

The trial, before Senior U.S. District Judge Edwin Kosik, is being heard by a jury of six women and two men. Federal civil trials differ from those in state court, which consist of 12 jurors.

3/3/2014

### **Former Nanticoke mayor leaves behind legacy**

mbufano@citizensvoice.com

Stanley Glazenski played many roles in Nanticoke.

He was an elected official, championship-winning Little League coach, father, grandfather, husband and even a humanitarian, according to his daughter.

Following Glazenski's death Thursday, his hometown paid homage to the well-known community figure, as Nanticoke's city hall this weekend raised its flags at half-staff in honor of the former mayor.

"I saw the flag at half-staff and I knew right away what it was for," said Chester Zaremba, vice president of the Nanticoke Historical Society.

"That's the least we could do."

Glazenski, 82, and a Korean War veteran, died Thursday, leaving behind quite the legacy.

"He wasn't an elected public official that didn't care about the community," said Glazenski's daughter, Ann Marie Coughlin. "He cared about every

single person in that community."

Glazenski was elected into Nanticoke's City Council in 1971, where he held his post for six years, before serving as the city's mayor for four years. "He was silent behind the scenes in getting the job done," Zaremba said of Glazenski in his tenure as mayor. "I admire him. He would get the job done without controversy or malarkey."

When asked about specific memories attached to Glazenski's stint as mayor, Coughlin and Glazenski's best friend, George Zelenak, mentioned the same thing: How he handled big snowstorms.

"The community was really devastated with the snow storm and people couldn't move," Coughlin said. "My father would get the bulldozers. He rode on the truck and made sure the people were safe in case there was a problem."

Outside of politics, Glazenski also led the Hanover Yanks to three Little League championships in consecutive years, with Zelenak serving as an assistant coach.

Following his mayorial run, Glazenski stayed involved in the community by way of the Little League and church picnics, as well as being a member of the American Legion and the Lions Club.

Zelenak recalled an occasion when Glazenski was several years out of politics, in which Glazenski, out of the good of his heart, delivered an oxygen tank to the home of a woman in need.

"He would just go and do what he could for anybody that needed help," Zelenak said.

Coughlin remembers her father, who she said was her best friend, in a way usually only seen in movies.

Glazenski was the kind of guy who would lend \$5 to someone who needed it or pick up the bill at a restaurant for someone who looked down, Coughlin said.

In Glazenski's later years, Zelenak said the former mayor did not make it out of the house as much as he used to - and people noticed.

"Until he got sick, we'd go out for breakfast or go to the VA (Medical Center)," Zelenak said. "When he ended up not going, people would always ask me, 'Where's your friend?' People would wait for him to see him, even people at the cash register."

With Glazenski's death, he leaves behind many family members, including his wife of 60 years, Nellie.

While having Nanticoke's flags fly at half-staff is among the highest honors presented to a city resident, Coughlin said Glazenski, in his humble nature, would probably brush the honor off.

"My father would probably say, 'Why in the heck are you doing that? I don't deserve it,'" Coughlin said.

However, the surviving family members certainly appreciate the gesture, as Coughlin remarked: "It meant the world to myself and my family to see that." My father truly only saw the good in people."

2/28/2014

### **PennDOT invites West Side COG members to consider shared service agreements**

Paul Golias - Citizens Voice

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation has invited towns in the West Side Council of Governments to consider shared service agreements that could trim or eliminate costs of municipal improvements.

Matt Lipka, of PennDOT's Luzerne County Maintenance Division, based in Hanover Industrial Park, spoke at the COG meeting Thursday night at Kingston Fire Department.

Lipka said PennDOT does not share equipment or manpower, but it can provide services.

"There is a lot of flexibility in the program," Lipka said.

Winter programs can include snow plowing, he said.

Several towns expressed interest and said they would have someone contact Lipka.

Nanticoke officially withdrew its bid to join the COG. Donna Wall, the city's acting administrator, thanked the COG for including Nanticoke in the current gaming funds grant application which, if approved, will provide police communications equipment for the city and member towns.

"We would love to share equipment, but we understand the problems," Wall said.

COG delegates had questioned the possibility of having disabled COG equipment in the East Side town, and Wall said Nanticoke understands those concerns.

Mayor Richard Wiaterowski of Nanticoke said earlier this week that he believes that a South Valley Council of Governments is feasible and could mirror the success of the West Side Council of Governments. Wall said Nanticoke and its neighbors "could get some pointers from the West Side COG," and she again thanked the COG "for letting us be part of the (police equipment) application."

Eileen Cipriani, COG president, said the concept of a COG in the South Valley is "a great idea." The West Side group will offer support and advice as requested, she said.

The COG approved purchase of insurance on its new shared public works equipment, taking the low bid of \$3,216 from Selenski Insurance Agency, Wyoming. Attorney Jim Bobeck's quote of \$85 an hour for legal services also was approved.

Kevin Fulton of Larksville reported the equipment committee continues to work on scheduling, storage, and repair and workmen's compensation issues. The street sweeper should go into use in March and will be used through mid-November, he said. Public works officials from the member towns will meet again March 12, he said.

Gary Mack said the public safety committee will meet March 5 and ambulance response issues will be discussed again.

He said there have been preliminary talks of outright merger of some ambulance companies or creation of a joint advanced life support service in several communities.

Mack said the joint meeting of area police chiefs to hear a report on gang activity will be rescheduled after weather forced postponement of the session.

2/27/2014

## **Nanticoke mayor hopeful for South Valley cooperative**

Paul Golias - Citizens Voice

Nanticoke's new mayor said a South Valley Council of Governments is feasible and could mirror the success of the West Side Council of Governments.

The seed for a possible South Valley or East Side COG was planted when West Side COG towns balked at including Nanticoke in the fledgling West Side configuration.

"I would love to see towns here (in the South Valley) try to form our own council," Mayor Richard Wiaterowski said Monday.

He said he plans to call a meeting of area communities to discuss the concept. The call could go out once Nanticoke hires a new city administrator, he said.

Meanwhile, Nanticoke's acting administrator, Donna Wall, will attend the West Side Council of Governments meeting at 7 p.m. today at Kingston fire headquarters on Wyoming Avenue.

"She can clarify some issues that developed after we applied for membership in the West Side COG," Wiaterowski said.

When it met in January, the West Side COG aired the Nanticoke overture. Officials from Kingston and Swoyersville were among those who questioned the feasibility of sending equipment to Nanticoke. A street sweeper sent there, for example, would be far removed from upper West Side towns. Should the sweeper break down, it could become a complicated matter to get it back to the West Side, officials said.

Wiaterowski concurred and said it appears to be more feasible for the South Valley towns to create their own COG and to share equipment in that region. He listed Plymouth Township, Conyngham Township, Newport Township, Hanover Township, Ashley, Sugar Notch and Warrior Run as possible partners.

Plymouth Township attended some West Side COG organizational meetings, but it is not a member. Because the township is in the Greater Nanticoke Area School District, it might be a better fit in a South Valley COG.

Eileen Cipriani, president of West Wyoming Borough Council and West Side COG president, said Mayor Wiaterowski's idea of starting a COG in the Greater Nanticoke area is a logical choice for that region.

"It will give Nanticoke and its surrounding municipalities the opportunity to work cooperatively and potentially improve services and reduce costs for their residents," she said.

Although Nanticoke is not a full-fledged member, its police department is in line to obtain a mobile police data terminal through the West Side COG. Nanticoke was listed as a 12th town in the COG's application for state gaming grant funds.

The West Side COG received \$460,000 in gaming grant funds for 2013-2014. The money purchased a street sweeper, vacuum truck and hot box that public works departments will share. Meetings are being held on the West Side to discuss scheduling and cooperative use of equipment and manpower, according to Cipriani.

Meanwhile, the West Side COG has filed for \$1 million in 2014-2015 funds, hoping to buy dump trucks, police cruisers and other equipment.

At the same time, the COG's safety committee, chaired by Gary Mack of Edwardsville, is exploring joint purchase of ambulance supplies and ways that emergency services can cooperate. A meeting of police chiefs is planned to discuss gang and drug activity.

2/24/2014

## **Ukraine on many minds at festival**

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The Myasopusna festival is always a big event for parishioners at Transfiguration of Our Lord Ukrainian Catholic Church.

The pre-Lenten celebration features signature Ukrainian dishes, and performances by dance groups and a choir. It has happened every year since 2006.

But on Sunday, about 200 people flocked to the church for the Myasopusna festival, which organizers said may be the largest crowd for the event yet.

Christine Mash, a church school teacher at the parish, chalked the big turnout up to three things: Warmer weather, people wanting to return to the festival after their first visit and Ukraine being in the news.

Mash said the revolution for independence happening in Ukraine, which has left at least 82 people dead, has made residents more mindful of what is going on in the country.

The parish's pastor hails from Ukraine.

The Rev. Volodymyr Popyk, in his thick Ukrainian accent, speaks proudly of his former home, explaining the protestors in Ukraine are fighting what we take for granted in America.

"People in Ukraine want to live like we do here," Popyk said. "Because the United States is good example of how to have a good democracy, how to free yourself, how to be free."

According to Joanne Kawczenski, a council member at the church, this year's Myasopusna festival had "extreme meaning" for members of the church.

"We opened with a prayer for those that lost their lives in Ukraine," Kawczenski said. "(The revolution) is really tied into the festival this year."

Mash said she got choked up when reciting Ukraine's national anthem, titled "Shche ne vmerla Ukraina," which translates to "Ukraine Has Not Yet Died."

"(The song title) is so true," Mash said. "The whole history of Ukraine has been a struggle for independence."

One line, which translates to "Our enemies will vanish, like dew in the sun," hits Mash particularly hard, she said.

While the revolution in Ukraine did have an impact on Sunday's theme, Mash and Kawczenski said the event was not meant to be political, but rather, an entertaining day out as the weather heats up.

"We like to bring the people out of their doldrums and we like to have a little bit of a festival," Kawczenski said. "The singing and the dancing is really gorgeous. It just lifts everyone's spirits. In a way, we're preparing for Lent."

By Popyk's account, the day was a success, saying his favorite part of the meal was Ukrainian borshch, which is a soup-like dish comprised of beets, meat and assorted vegetables.

But according to Popyk, Sunday was "Meatfare Sunday," which means stricter fasting rules, including eating no more meat until Easter.

Popyk said some of Sunday's attendees of the celebration came from more than an hour away to experience the unique festival.

2/21/2014

### **Nanticoke swears in new fire chief**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

Kevin Hazleton was sworn in Wednesday night as the city's new fire chief, replacing Michael Bohan, who submitted his letter of resignation effective Jan. 31.

Bohan had been the city's fire chief for the past 10 years. He cited health reasons for his resignation.

Jay Munson will replace Hazleton on the Fire Civil Service Commission.

Also, council approved an ordinance for carbon monoxide monitoring requirements within the city. The ordinance states that any new construction will have to comply with the monitoring requirements and have the proper detectors installed on the premises.

The ordinance does not provide for the inspection of the current structures without cause. The ordinance does provide that in event of an emergency such as fire, Code Enforcer Joe Kordek has the right to enforce the ordinance.

Council also passed an ordinance governing the establishment of 30 minute parking limits where a business requests such. Any fees linked to signs, labor and or advertisements associated with the limits will be paid for by the business.

In addition, council has approved an ordinance prohibiting the discharge of any gun or any fireman within the city. According to police Chief William Schultz, the ordinance does not infringe on a citizen's rights to fire a gun within legal limits.

President of the Taxpayers Association Hank Marks questioned whether the ordinance applies to target practice, as well. Schultz replied that target practice can take place only in approved areas.

Marks also commented on Nanticoke's 20 percent tax increase, saying that "it is the largest of any municipality in Luzerne County." Marks asked if council would be able to rescind the large increase.

Council President William Brown said that council would "keep the issue in mind."

Benefits and Finance Coordinator Donna Wall has been named as agent for the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

The next Crime Watch meeting will be Feb. 26 at 7 p.m.

The next council meeting will be March 5 at 7 p.m.

2/21/2014

### **GNA announces interim superintendent**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board announced Thursday night that Mariellen Scott was appointed as interim superintendent of district effective Jan. 28.

The appointment came after the board's official acceptance of longtime Superintendent Anthony Perrone's letter of resignation, for health reasons, also effective Jan. 28. The school is posting for the position of superintendent for the new school year in August.

Scott praised the job that Frank Grevera and the maintenance team did removing the snow, and making the school grounds safe for the students, faculty and staff.

Scott also stated everyone worked together during the recent power outage at K.M. Smith Elementary School, turning the misfortune into a "fun day" for the students. Scott commented on the transferring of the elementary school students to the High School, during the Feb. 12 power outage.

The younger students spent the day with the high school students, who were very helpful throughout the occurrence.

The board approved a resolution to contract with the ELA Group Inc. in the lump sum amount of \$9,640 to conduct a topographical survey of approximately 16 acres of athletic fields on the high school educational campus.

The survey work will occur under the management of Professional Design and Construction Inc.

The next board meeting will be on March 13 at 7 p.m.

2/21/2014

### **GNA hopes to hire new super by June**

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The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board wants a new superintendent in place by June 30, board President Ryan Verazin said after Thursday's meeting.

Acting Superintendent Mariellen Scott wants to return to working as elementary school principal by then, Verazin said.

"She made that very clear," he added.

Scott has been acting superintendent since Anthony Perrone resigned Jan. 28 due to health problems. Perrone had been superintendent since 1996. Before Thursday's public meeting, the board met in a closed session to discuss personnel matters and a matter involving a student, district Solicitor Vito DeLuca said. At the meeting, the board voted to officially accept Perrone's resignation, appoint Scott as acting superintendent and post the superintendent's position.

Scott will help with the process to fill the position, and the board has not yet determined an application deadline, Verazin said.

In October, the school board voted to appoint Perrone to a three-year term that was set to end June 30, 2016. He continued to work without receiving pay, and the district continued to provide his health benefits.

2/20/2014

### **Nanticoke council approves agreement to pay city manager's health benefits until April**

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City council voted Wednesday to approve a settlement agreement with former city manager Pamela Heard.

Under the agreement, Heard will receive pay and health benefits until April, city solicitor William T. Finnegan Jr. said. Heard went on paid administrative leave in January after Mayor Richard Wiaterowski decided to go in "a different direction" with a new manager, Finnegan said. Heard's salary was \$68,500 a year, said Donna Wall, the city benefits and finance coordinator who has been the acting manager. The city has advertised the manager's position, and the deadline to apply is Friday, Wall said.

The city's new home-rule charter requires the manager to be a city resident within a year after starting in the position, Wall said. Wiaterowski was elected in November and began his first term as mayor in January.

Heard was not at Wednesday's meeting and could not be reached for comment. She had been city manager since July 2012.

Hank Marks, president of the Greater Nanticoke Area Taxpayers Forum, addressed council and criticized the decision to replace Heard as manager.

"Council members, use your own heads," Marks said, complaining about decisions since William Brown became council president in January.

"I didn't feel like I was being a rubber stamp at all, and I really don't like that accusation," Councilwoman Lesley Butczynski replied.

Marks later asked the mayor for a letter to Heard with complaints about her as manager. Finnegan replied that correspondence with Heard involved personnel matters, adding releasing that type of confidential information would "infringe on her privacy."

2/20/2014

### **Icicles present winter hazard**

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A common winter sight is of concern to many - icicles.

While these eye-catching figures serve as decorative ornaments on houses and businesses, their beauty is not without burden.

"If anyone walks by and one drops, it'll kill them," said Mike Dutzar, a member of the Fraternal Order of Eagles club in Nanticoke.

A stretch of sidewalk that runs along the right side of the club was blocked off by caution tape on Tuesday. Directly above the sidewalk hangs a gutter with a nearly 10-foot long row of icicles.

"We did it just for safety's sake," said Carole Duzinski, member and bartender of the Fraternal Order of Eagles club.

The sidewalk is the property of the club, which the City of Nanticoke requires property owners to maintain. The club did not see the conditions as safe and decided to take precautionary measures - something Duzinski explained is done frequently.

"We end up doing this 98 percent of the time, depending on the size of the icicles," she said.

City hall in Wilkes-Barre called in the fire department on Tuesday to assist in the removal of troublesome icicles. The department does not regularly receive calls from the general public for assistance with icicle removal, and they hope to keep it that way, said Wilkes-Barre Fire Department Assistant Chief Edward Snarski. He said they don't normally remove icicles because they don't want to be liable for structure damage.

But, he added, "If there's a danger to the general public, of course we'll try to help."

The larger and thicker the icicle becomes, the more likely it is for a problem to occur. Snarski urged people to proceed with caution.

"Use good common sense," he said. "If you have the ability to remove the icicle safely, then do so."

Not only are icicles a possible hazard to people, but also to the homes and buildings they hang from. Dr. William Shergalis, a professor in the chemistry and physics department at King's College, explained that icicles form as the result of a melting and refreezing process. Heat escapes through the space above the living floors, commonly the attic, he said. When that heat hits the snow packs that form on roofs, it produces water. As the water runs off of the edges of the roof, it refreezes due to the coldness of the edges, resulting in clogged gutters. From there, the water drips and begins to form icicles.

Icicles can become heavy enough to pull gutters downward and sometimes even off a building. Depending on the structure of the house, rooftop damage can occur from fallen icicles. The more serious damage that could occur is water leakage into the house.

Shergalis mentioned some techniques for damage prevention, such as shoveling snow from the roof and installing heating tape. Having a thoroughly insulated home is the most effective way to prevent damage, he said.

When in doubt, "The best thing to do is to let it be," Shergalis said. "If temperatures stay above freezing overnight, they'll begin to disappear."

2/18/2014

### **Nanticoke infant's death under investigation**

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Luzerne County authorities are investigating the death of a 2½-month-old infant at a Nanticoke home. Nanticoke police say they were dispatched to a residence at rear 340 E. Noble St. around 9:20 a.m. Friday to investigate the death of Jaxon Eckrote, according to a press release sent Monday. Authorities did not immediately release information on how they think the baby boy died. Forensic pathologist Dr. Gary Ross performed an autopsy at about 11 a.m. on Saturday at Wilkes-Barre General Hospital, according to the release. Both the cause and manner of Eckrote's death are pending further investigation and toxicology reports, the release said. Luzerne County Coroner Bill Lisman said the death investigation is an open case, but wouldn't comment further. On Friday, Nanticoke Police Capt. Robert Lehman, Luzerne County Detective Charles Balogh and Luzerne County Assistant District Attorney Jenny Roberts were seen filing a sealed search warrant at the Luzerne County Clerk of Courts Office regarding the case. What they were looking for, or what information was obtained, was not immediately known. Members of the Nanticoke Police Department, Luzerne County District Attorney's Office, the Pennsylvania State Police forensic unit and the Luzerne County Coroner's Office are investigating the death, the release says. Matt Bufano, staff writer, contributed to this report.

2/14/2014

**Area native back on air 5 months after beating  
Brian Carey has returned to NYC radio station**

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Nanticoke native Brian Carey has returned to the New York City airwaves after a five-month recovery from a beating that nearly took his life. Carey, 52, is the afternoon drive news anchor at 1010 WINS in Manhattan, billed as one of the most listened to radio station in the country. He was back on the air Wednesday.

The beating took place on Sept. 9 in Carey's Manhattan apartment. Elton Anthony, a man Carey described as a person he trusted and who did errands for him, is facing felony assault charges. His next scheduled court date is March 17.

"It feels wonderful to be back on the air," Carey said Thursday. "They tell me I almost died. I can say that the support of family, friends, colleagues and listeners played a major role in my recovery."

Growing up in Nanticoke, where he attended high school, Carey then went to King's College, graduating in 1983 with a degree in communications/English. Having cultivated many friendships along the way, Carey never realized how important those people would be later in life.

But as Carey said, during his five-month recovery, he discovered just how many good people are out there. Because of the tremendous amount of support, Carey is back in the job he's had for 14 years, broadcasting the news 3 p.m. to 6 :30 p.m. every weekday.

"All the time I was recovering, I looked forward to getting back to my job," he said. "I just felt like a fish out of water."

His station, 1010 WINS, is where "everybody looks for news," Carey said. "In New York when you're looking for news, you turn to us," he said. "And I enjoy letting people know what's happening."

Carey has been doing just that for years, having started out at WRKC, the King's radio station, and then working at WBRE-TV for two years. He said he got his first real job at WNAK in Nanticoke, not so much because of his talent, but rather because he agreed to also cut the grass. He worked as news director at WILK Radio in Wilkes-Barre, then later at WARM Radio, where he anchored the Five O'clock PM News Hour, and he was the morning anchor on MAGIC 93 FM.

His award-winning career has taken him to major markets in Philadelphia and then to New York City.

Won't get over incident

Carey understandably doesn't like to talk about the attack that left him with bleeding on the brain, a broken jaw and a shattered eye socket. He said it's something he doesn't expect to get over completely.

"This was a person I completely trusted," he said. "One minute I'm in my apartment about to eat and two days later I awoke from a medically induced coma."

Carey, who has Multiple Sclerosis, relied on Anthony for help. He had recently returned from a trip to the shore and needed his apartment cleaned and some groceries.

"This person did those things for me," he said.

He said Anthony "just lost it." He said there was no arguing before the attack.

Overwhelming support

After his hospitalization, Carey returned to Nanticoke to recover. His brother, James, said family and friends visited Brian at home.

"It's true, there's a silver lining in everything," James Carey said. "This was a terrible situation that upset everybody. But the outpouring of support and compassion from so many people really helped Brian's rehab."

James Carey went to his brother's side at First Presbyterian Hospital in New York. He said doctors told him they were unsure Brian would live.

"Brian has been through many difficult bouts with the MS," James Carey said. "But after the attack, he didn't want to leave his job. The people at work were so supportive. And Brian didn't want to go out this way. He could have filed for disability, but that's not him. When he retires, he wants to do it on his terms."

Brian Carey often comes home for visits. He has a home in the Nanticoke area. He keeps in touch with many friends, like former WBRE colleagues Kevin Jordan and Kathy Bozinski, and the Rev. Tom Carten, formerly of King's College.

"King's will always be a phenomenal place for me," he said. "I learned so much there that prepared me for the future. People there genuinely cared about me."

Life altered

The attack has had deep effects on Carey.

“It did change my life,” he said. “The experience showed me how many good people are out there. So many have been there for me.”

Carey said he has heard from too many people to ever be able to mention them all. He said that through Facebook, phone calls and e-mails messages have come from high school and college friends — many he hadn’t talked to in decades.

“That made me feel really good about people,” Carey said. “Yes, this was a terrible thing that happened, but it showed me how good people can be. They really were a big part of me getting through all of this.”

Carey said he is much more careful who he talks to and, especially, who he trusts.

“Of course you have to be careful who you talk to,” he said. “But I’m a Christian and I’m a caring person and always will be.”

2/13/2014

### **Power restored to Nanticoke elementary school**

Michael P. Buffer - Citizens Voice

UGI Utilities worked into the night Wednesday to restore power at K.M. Smith Elementary School in Nanticoke after an outage forced the Greater Nanticoke Area School District to transfer students to the nearby high school.

UGI restored power around 8:15 p.m., Wednesday, spokesman Joseph Swope said. Crews ran a new transmission line to the school after an underground cable failed, Swope said.

2/13/2014

### **Attempt to thaw pipes sparks Nanticoke blaze**

Jacob Seibel - Citizens Voice

A Nanticoke couple was displaced Wednesday after an attempt to thaw pipes accidentally started a fire in the basement that spread to the rest of the house.

Nanticoke Fire Capt. Steve Kotch said the male occupant was thawing pipes in the basement of his home at 129 Loomis St. using a propane torch when he caught the insulation on fire. The fire followed the framework of the home and spread upward behind the walls to the first and second floors and the attic.

Firefighters rolled in with five fire trucks around 5 p.m.

They stopped the fire up to the second floor, but Kotch said they had a difficult time getting to the fire behind the walls of the attic because of the clutter in the room.

Kotch said the home is likely salvageable because it was mostly damaged by smoke and water from the firefighters' hoses.

No injuries were reported.

2/11/2014

### **Hope lingers in missing woman’s case**

Jon O’Connell [joconnell@civitasmedia.com](mailto:joconnell@civitasmedia.com)

Still without closure on Phylcia Thomas’ disappearance 10 years ago today, loved ones are to gather again this year to keep her memory alive. Thomas went missing on Feb. 11, 2004, and, though her family presumes she has died, their grief continues because investigators have not found any remains.

### **A candlelight vigil is to take place at 6 p.m. today in the Nanticoke Town Square along East Broad Street.**

Thomas was last seen at her Lake Township home. She would have been 32 years old this year.

“It’s 10 years, and it feels like it was yesterday,” Thomas’ mother, Pauline Bailey, said. “It just affects everybody so bad.”

Bailey, of Nanticoke, has not let her daughter’s memory fade and still believes her remains will be found. She tucked a thick binder — cover worn off from age and use and filled with newspaper clippings, photographs and other documents — beneath her arm and said some of her friends and family stand with her in hope.

“They won’t stop looking. We’ll never stop looking,” Bailey said.

She wears a knotted rope necklace around her neck, one similar to the kind seen on Thomas in the old photographs.

Shortly after Thomas was reported missing, state police looked at one man, Steven Martin of Ross Township, as a person of interest in the investigation and in the investigation of another missing woman, Jennifer Barziloski, 18, who disappeared in 2001.

Barziloski’s skull was found near Martin’s former residence. Martin, who is now deceased, was known to both Thomas and Barziloski. He told police during an interview that he had spoken with Thomas the night she disappeared when he called her home to speak to her boyfriend, Ed Rudaski.

Though police searched Martin’s home, he was never charged in the women’s disappearances. However, Martin pleaded guilty the following spring to involuntary manslaughter after killing a woman in with his vehicle in Wilkes-Barre, according to arrest papers.

Martin died at a Hershey hospital after trying to hang himself in his jail cell.

Another skull found in 2012 near Alden Mountain Road, which is south of Nanticoke, was tested and did not belong to Thomas.

The annual vigil is to help memorialize Thomas, but Bailey said she wants the community to be mindful.

“Let’s never forget Phylcia. Let’s never forget Jenn. And we can’t let this happen to other people,” Bailey said.

Bailey has told The Times Leader she believes investigators have given up the search after Martin committed suicide.

Calls made to the district attorney and state police headquarters were not returned Monday.

In the last 10 years, Bailey has presented new information to investigators but feels frustrated as it appears her leads are often dismissed. She would like to see the Luzerne County District Attorney's Office pick up the trail, but state police are handling the investigation, which remains open.

2/2/2014

### Man cave celebrates loyalty to Seahawks

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Michael Zarembo couldn't wait to buy his own house and turn his basement into a Seattle Seahawks man cave.

When the time finally came to buy their Nanticoke home, he didn't care what his wife Megan did to the upstairs.

"She could paint the whole house pink if she wanted to," Zarembo said. "But the basement was mine."

His subterranean sanctuary leaves no question about which team the Zarembo family is rooting for in today's NFL Super Bowl XLVIII. He has collected Seahawks memorabilia since 1976, including at least one of every jersey style the team has ever worn. The walls are covered with large posters, pennants and towels. Even the pool table features a Seahawks lining.

Zarembo has been a fan of the team since its inception in 1976. He picked the team over the Tampa Bay Buccaneers based solely on its gray, white, green and blue color scheme.

Zarembo describes himself as a diehard fan, and can rattle off player names from the past four decades. During the course of five minutes, he mentioned Steve Largent, Isaiah Kacyvenski, Shaun Alexander, Matt Hasselbeck and Richard Sherman. He even has multiple life-size posters of Hasselbeck and Alexander on his basement wall. He is also fond of Jim Zorn, the team's quarterback from its inaugural season.

His favorite piece of memorabilia is a framed picture of the 2005 NFC Championship Seahawks, which he had autographed by Kacyvenski.

Zarembo's two children, Braden and Tyler, don't consider the Seahawks their favorite teams, but they will be rooting for their dad's team today.

"Braden is a Packer backer and Tyler is a Steelers fan, he loves Ben (Roethlisberger)," Zarembo said. "Figures Braden has his cheese head on."

His wife became a Seahawks fan through marriage.

"We're going to go broke if they win the Super Bowl," she said with a smile. "He's going to want to get anything that says Super Bowl champions on it."



1/29/2014

Perrone resigns as head of GNA

Longtime district employee had been working for a decade without pay

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So long, "Sunny."

After more than four decades with the district, including being credited with helping avoid imminent bankruptcy in the late 1990s and working since 2003 without pay, Anthony Perrone — affectionately referred to as "Sunny" by some — resigned as Greater Nanticoke Area Superintendent on Tuesday evening.

Contacted at home Wednesday morning, Perrone declined comment other than to say he has had health problems that contributed to his decision to leave the district for good at the age of 72.

Board President Ryan Verazin said Perrone had contacted solicitor Vito DeLuca on Tuesday evening to convey his resignation due to health reasons, effective immediately, and that DeLuca then contacted board members. Verazin said an executive session was held and elementary principal Maryellen Scott was appointed acting superintendent.

Perrone, originally from Pittston, graduated from King's College in 1963 and by 1966 had a full-time teaching job in the district. He became superintendent in 1996 and retired in 2003, but agreed to stay in the post, unpaid, for at least a year.

Asked at the time why he decided to stay without pay, Perrone quoted poet Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening": "I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep."

That year became a decade with no end in sight as the board repeatedly talked him into postponing departure and staying on board. But while Perrone didn't voice retirement plans in public, he would frequently talk of leaving during casual conversations, acknowledging the job had grown harder and his health more frail.

Even so, as recently as this month, when asked if he was planning to step down, Perrone replied, "I wouldn't know what to do with myself if I left this job. I have to keep busy."

Verazin said the board will launch a search for a new superintendent, but that details have not been worked out. "We're in uncharted waters for this district," he said.

He did not expect to call for a special meeting, saying the issue would likely wait until the next regular meeting Feb. 13.

The district should run smoothly in the interim, Verazin added. "We have a well-rounded administrative staff," he said.

Verazin praised Perrone's time with the district. "He's probably the best leader the district has had," he said. "I wish him nothing but the best, and I'm glad he is finally making time for himself."

Wilkes-Barre Area School District Superintendent Bernard Prevuznak expressed surprise at the news.

"I'm shocked, but I wish him well," Prevuznak said. "Tony Perrone has been a friend of mine for the last several years. I always appreciated his help and friendship in regard to my position here."

Dallas Superintendent Frank Galicki lauded Perrone's success in turning around one of the area's poorest districts.

"Tony has done wonderful things here," Galicki said. "There was a point where Nanticoke Area had the potential of going bankrupt, and he did some unique things to pull them out of the hole.

"I think he did an outstanding job," Galicki said. "He will be sorely missed."

### **Anthony Perrone's service at GNA**

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A time line of Anthony Perrone's employment at Greater Nanticoke Area School District:

1963: Graduates from King's College.

1966: Begins teaching Spanish full-time at GNA High School. Perrone goes on to work as guidance counselor, home-and-school visitor, and school psychologist.

1973: Named supervisor of pupil services.

1990: Perrone is named acting superintendent when the man who had the job, Charles Davis, becomes ill.

February 1993: The board hires a new superintendent, Anthony Trosan, to replace the retiring Davis. Trosan, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction at the Westmont Hilltop School District, was one of three finalists that included Perrone.

November 1995: The board publicly blames Trosan for not telling them about a letter from the district architects citing safety concerns at the middle school, which is subsequently closed.

February 1996: After months of tension, the board ousts Trosan, agreeing to pay him through the remainder of his contract, which runs through June. They appoint Perrone as acting superintendent, again.

June 1996: Perrone is appointed superintendent.

April 1997: State Department of Education financial advisor Ron Stainbrook finds that GNA is facing a \$3 million deficit and possible bankruptcy for the 1998-99 school year. The district undergoes a series of cuts and tax hikes to stave off a state takeover.

May 1997: Perrone investigates what he calls improper payments to teachers since 1992 for tuition reimbursement. Perrone contends teachers were getting reimbursed for mail and audio-visual courses that did not qualify for the payments. Perrone puts a stop to the payments, and an effort to recoup about \$300,000 goes to arbitration.

November 1997: The district unveils plans for \$10 million in construction and renovation, with a new middle school as the centerpiece.

March 1998: An arbitrator rules the teachers get to keep the money because the reimbursements had been approved by Perrone's predecessors.

March 2001: With the financial crisis seemingly settled, the district announces construction of a new elementary school should begin in six months.

May 2003: Perrone announces his plan to retire at the end of June, but agrees to stay on without pay.

April 2013: A sign bearing Perrone's name appears in the parking lot of the Nanticoke campus. Several board members question where the money for the sign, which cost \$4,347, came from, and are told it came from the general fund.

Tuesday evening: Perrone unexpectedly turns in his resignation, effective immediately, citing health reasons.

1/24/2014

### **Football players raise \$9k for cancer fund**

#### **'Rush for the Cure' a big winner for 4 Nanticoke athletes**

Jon O'Connell joconnell@civitasmedia.com

Four Greater Nanticoke Area High School football players raised more than \$9,000 selling T-shirts, hats, socks, shoelaces and cupcakes, all part of their senior project, and presented the check to Dr. Bruce Saidman and Dr. David Greenwald on Thursday afternoon.

The Greater Nanticoke Area vs. Lake-Lehman football game on Oct. 18 might have been a bust for the Trojans, but four GNA players left the stadium victorious.

The game ended with Lake-Lehman winning 62-13, but Nanticoke seniors Joe Shimko, 17, Frank Marcinkowski, 17, Brad Yanus, 18, and Tyler Myers, 17, cleaned up that night by covering the stands with pink.

For their senior-year projects the students pulled off a record-setting fundraiser feat for their high school, collecting \$9,181 selling T-shirts emblazoned with sponsor names and the slogan "Rush for the Cure."

The money they raised was turned over Thursday to the Medical Oncology Associates' Prescription Assistance Fund. The fund is managed by the oncology clinic and assists cancer patients in paying for prescriptions and nutritional supplements.

The students were carrying on a tradition that started two years ago when player Christian Stevenson decided to raise money for cancer to cap his high school career, Shimko said.

Yanus said he never expected they would succeed like they did.

"I'm glad we did," Yanus said. "And everyone's pretty proud of us. We thought we would make about \$5,000, but no where near what we did."

The guys solicited donations from past contributors in Nanticoke for seed money. They printed a first round of T-shirts to sell in the school hallways and during football games. Then they printed a second batch, then a third until they lost count of just how many T-shirts they printed.

"At one point, it was around 500," Marcinkowski said. "But I'm sure it went farther than that."

They sold pink shoelaces and pink ball caps, and during the pink-out game they had pink-frosted cupcakes and cookies — anything pink that they could swap for a couple bucks.

Yanus said the selling started slowly, but the deadline approaching started breaking down the inhibitions for hard selling. "In the beginning, we had a little trouble selling," Yanus said. "But once it came closer to the deadline, we started selling them at the football games."

They sold from September through October, but the blitz began just before the Lake-Lehman game, Shimko said.

"We really pushed it two weeks before the game," he said.

Marcinkowski said that for him the fundraiser meant a little bit more than earning credits for graduation.

"After I agreed to doing it, my grandma was diagnosed with breast cancer," Marcinkowski said. "So it kind of motivated me more to do it, because I knew how it felt."

1/24/2014

### **West Side COG tables vote to include Nanticoke**

Paul Golias - Citizens Voice

The City of Nanticoke's bid to join the West Side Council of Governments, either as a full-fledged member or in some other role, is on hold. The COG, meeting Thursday night at the Kingston Fire Department, tabled Nanticoke's application. The city will be asked to have representatives at the February meeting to discuss the matter further.

Concerns were voiced about the logistics of moving COG equipment to and from Nanticoke from West Side communities. The 11 COG towns stretch from Plymouth Borough on the south to West Pittston Borough on the north.

Paul Keating, administrator in Kingston, said inclusion of Nanticoke could hurt COG membership continuity and "gets into lots of gray areas."

Swoyersville's Joe Onzik concurred, citing the upcoming spring street sweeping season and planned use of a COG-purchased street sweeper by all 11 member towns.

"I don't see the benefit if we go to another geographic region," Keating said.

Nanticoke is included in the 2013-14 gaming grant application. The city will get a mobile police data terminal if the grant is approved. The grant seeks funds for 12 mobile data terminals, 12 thermal imaging cameras, 12 dash camera and 12 CAD software packages, one for each town.

Eileen Cipriani, COG president and president of West Wyoming Borough Council, suggested possible associate member status, a move that would require amending COG bylaws. She also noted that accepting a new member takes a unanimous vote and two towns (Exeter and Wyoming) were absent. The issue was then tabled.

The COG allows member towns to pick and choose what projects they wish to apply to their communities. Seven towns are in the asphalt hot box project and eight will share a vacuum truck used to clean storm drains.

There is no east side COG comparable to the West Side COG.

In other business, the COG will schedule a meeting of public works officials to set the street sweeper schedule and adopt rules for its use, similar to the rules used by the West Side Composting Commission for its waste grinder.

Gary Mack, chairman of the Public Safety Committee, said area police chiefs will be invited to a meeting at 9 a.m. Feb. 18 at the fire station to hear a talk by Chris Orozco of Hazleton Police Department on anti-gang efforts. Mack's committee continues to explore ambulance response times and the potential for joint training and joint purchase of ambulance supplies.

Cipriani said volunteer fire fighters have asked the COG to assist in doing bulk purchases of bunker coats and fire hoses. The COG can help facilitate such purchases, she said.

The COG is expected to join the Pennsylvania Council of Governments in February and Karen Szwast of Exeter will continue to gather data on liability and errors and omissions insurances.

Mack suggested looking into bulk purchasing of gasoline and diesel fuels. Kingston has two 3,000-gallon tanks, one for each type of fuel, and Keating said this would not be adequate for 11 towns. However, if the tanks are replaced, it would be possible to look into this major cooperative way to cut fuel costs, he said. Anthony Gallagher of Key Energy Consulting, Blue Bell, PA, spoke on opportunities open to communities to save on energy costs. He is working with Forty Fort Borough which estimates it can save about \$2,200 per year through competitive buying of electricity, according to Barbara Fairchild, borough manager.

1/24/2014

### **Four local districts get school safety funding**

Citizens Voice

Four local school districts are among 81 across the state to receive part of \$3.9 million from the state Department of Education for school safety, state Sen. John Yudichak, D-Plymouth Township, announced Thursday.

Wilkes-Barre Area and Hazleton Area school districts are getting \$40,000 each, Pittston Area will get \$39,471 and **Greater Nanticoke Area will receive \$36,224.**

The grants are to help districts hire and keep school resource officers and school police officers.

"Through initiatives like Operation Gang Up and grant programs like this one - we have made great strides in public safety and especially school safety across the region in recent years," Yudichak stated.

Yudichak thanked Luzerne County state Reps. Tarah Toohil, Gerald Mullery, Mike Carroll and Eddie Day Pashinski for their help securing the funding.

1/21/2014

## **Nanticoke murder case reward grows**

By Edward Lewis - elewis@civitasmedia.com

Greater Nanticoke Area senior Arica Grabowski did not know 97-year-old Gertrude Price.

Price, who lived alone in her tiny house on East Grand Street, was beaten to death in a home invasion Thanksgiving night, state police at Wyoming said.

Her homicide stunned the Nanticoke community prompting Kevin Grevera, owner of the Hunting Depot and a former Nanticoke police officer, to initiate a reward fund starting with \$1,000.

The fund has passed \$10,000 thanks to the efforts of Grabowski and her fellow classmates Jessica Saraka and Kara Voyton.

For their senior class project Grabowski, Saraka and Voyton held a Zumbathon at the Nanticoke Fitness Center and Training on Middle Road on Jan. 11. The event raised nearly \$1,100 the three seniors donated to the Gertrude Price Reward Fund.

"I've been wanting to do a Zumbathon for a while now and when this happened in Nanticoke, we joined together and came up with ideas and held the Zumbathon," Grabowski said.

Attendees paid \$10 to participate in the Zumbathon, and the seniors sold T-shirts for \$10. There was also a silent auction held at the fitness center for the reward fund.

"Zumbathon is a group of people that dance to music," Grabowski said. "You can burn up to 2,000 calories a day. It's that intense."

Grabowski said she couldn't put a number on those who participated in the event, noting "it was packed."

"I was surprised by the number of those who came," she said.

Travis C. Buchanan, president of the Nanticoke Crime Watch, said the reward fund is being managed by a committee with the Fraternal Order of Eagles, of 48 E. Ridge St., Nanticoke.

"From the beginning when Kevin (Grevera) set up the reward, it is for the arrest and conviction in Gertrude Price's murder," Buchanan said. "The reward has grown. We have not stopped talking about it or asking about it. I'm hoping someone will come forward, not for the money, but for the principle of it."

Donations can be made at any PNC Bank in care of Gertrude Price Reward Fund.

Pennsylvania Crime Stoppers is offering an unrelated reward of up to \$2,500 for information that leads to the arrest and conviction of the person responsible for Price's death.

State police said the assailant entered Price's residence by forcing open a basement window. Price's home had been ransacked.

Price had last spoken with family at about 10:20 p.m. on Nov. 28.

State police said lights were turned on inside Price's house at about 11 p.m., which neighbors said was unusual for that time of night.

An autopsy showed Price died from blunt force trauma, according to the Luzerne County Coroner's Office.

No charges have been filed.

1/21/2014

## **West Side COG to vote on Nanticoke's inclusion**

Citizens Voice

The West Side Council of Governments will meet at 7 p.m. Thursday in the chief's room at Kingston fire headquarters, 600 Wyoming Ave., Kingston.

The COG may vote on approving Nanticoke as a member. Luzerne County also has expressed an interest in membership.

The COG, continuing the nuts-and-bolts work of building inter-governmental cooperation projects, has secured a hot box that communities will share. The hot box was one of the items purchased with the 2013 gaming funds grant. The COG has filed an application for funds in 2014 with the goal of buying more public works and public safety equipment.

The hot box can be used for any paving project, from potholes to small and medium paving projects.

1/18/2014

## **Fired Nanticoke Housing Authority director says dismissal was political**

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The former head of the Nanticoke Housing Authority is suing her former employer, stating her firing was politically motivated.

In the suit filed in federal court this week, Jean Ditzler is asking for a jury trial to get her \$78,000-a-year job back from former Luzerne County Clerk Doug Pape, who was given the job after she was terminated two years ago.

Ditzler claims she was fired as housing authority executive director because she wasn't politically aligned with authority solicitor Vito DeLuca, as she said Pape was.

The federal department of Housing and Urban Development grants the Nanticoke Housing Authority approximately \$1 million a year to manage and operate six buildings containing 268 elderly high-rise apartments and 149 low-income family apartments.

Ditzler, who was on the authority board for many years, served as an unpaid volunteer in the position of executive director starting in 2007, when the director quit. She was named to the position permanently on Nov. 18, 2010 at a salary of \$78,000.

But after allegations including misuse of the authority's credit cards, failure to follow purchasing policies and an unauthorized \$26,000 payment to herself to compensate for the time she was unpaid, the board terminated Ditzler on Jan. 20, 2012. To replace her, the board hired Pape, who lost his job when home rule kicked in on Jan. 30, 2012.

Ditzler unsuccessfully appealed her firing to the state Civil Service Commission, but the commission upheld the housing authority board's decision in a 66-page document on March 21, 2013.

"The issues were never resolved to our satisfaction," Ditzler's attorney Kimberly Borland explained as the reason for the new action. "The other avenues that we pursued didn't resolve it."

The suit filed Wednesday states that Ditzler never received a written or oral warning, notice of correction or reprimand until the date of her termination. Ditzler said she complied with every suggestion DeLuca made in a Dec. 14, 2011 email.

The suit states that DeLuca, who was Luzerne County solicitor when Pape was hired as chief clerk for the county in 2008, was "a close political affiliate of Mr. Pape." It also states that Pape supported DeLuca's unsuccessful candidacy for county judge in 2011; that Ditzler was better qualified for the position, and that her constitutional rights were violated.

She is asking for her job back, compensatory damages, back pay and attorneys' fees, among other relief.

"I think it's a joke, and I think it's laughable, and an utter waste of court time," DeLuca said of the suit. "But it is what it is. We'll defend it, like we did with the other actions she filed."

He deferred further comment to his statements in the decision by the civil service commission.

Ditzler's position to the state commission was also that her firing was political. The housing authority countered that she was terminated for charges of financial impropriety, conduct unbecoming a public official, improper use of her position, gross negligence, insubordination, lying to the solicitor during an investigation and unsatisfactory job performance.

These charges included:

- n Using a housing authority vehicle and employee to drive to Harrisburg for a state senator's swearing-in ceremony, as well as using the vehicle to take friends and relatives to medical appointments and to lunch.

- n Buying \$100 worth of shrimp for a vendor with authority funds.

- n Buying makeup, face cream and other personal items from QVC on the authority's credit card and denying she did so until confronted with the credit card statements.

- n Charging a \$635 room at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City on the authority credit card to attend a vendor-sponsored event the board believed was unrelated to authority business.

- n Making purchases without board approval, and without putting them out to bid.

- n Allowing the board's liability insurance to lapse.

- n Moving her sister ahead on the list of people waiting for housing units.

Asked about Ditzler's alleged misdeeds, Borland said, "Jean didn't do anything wrong."

1/17/2014

### **Nanticoke fire chief to resign**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader

Fire Chief Michael Bohan has submitted his letter of resignation effective Jan. 31, it was revealed at Wednesday night's City Council meeting.

Bohan has been the city's fire chief for the past 10 years. He cited health reasons for his resignation.

In other matters, American Legion Post 350 has given a donation of \$3,000 to the Nanticoke Police Department to be used toward equipment for the department.

Council also OK'd a motion to approve contracts for grant procurement and grant compliance with Ashburn Advisors for a state Local Share Account grant for the downtown streetscape project, the purchase of a fire truck and for an Americans With Disabilities Act City Hall remodeling contingent upon the successful award of the grants.

1/17/2014

### **GNA makes changes to security procedures**

Susan Bettinger Times Leader correspondent

The Greater Nanticoke Area School Board announced changes in security procedures at Thursday's meeting in response to an incident earlier this month at the high school.

The changes include limiting the amount of hall traffic by requiring visitors to wait at the door until admitted by school official.

The new rule comes in the aftermath of an incident where a student's mother and a several students became involved in an altercation.

Board President Ryan Verazin said that the situation is being taken very seriously. The district is also hoping to secure a grant which would enable it to hire additional police to patrol the school.

The board also made changes to the school calendar to comply with Act 80. Jan. 20, Feb. 17 and April 17, all of which had previously been scheduled days off, will now be full school days. Jan. 29 and Feb. 14, which were originally scheduled as half days, will also be full school days.

The changes were necessary due to days missed because of weather.

In other matters:

- Board Vice President Ken James announced that flex passes can still be purchased at sporting events. The pass entitles the holder to discounted entry into boys basketball, girls basketball and wrestling events.
- Tara Ebert was appointed as the Title I department head as required by the collective bargaining agreement.
- The board accepted the resignation of Michelle Bednar, Conyngham Township tax collector, as of Dec. 31, 2013.

1/14/2014

### **New Geisinger Careworks clinic opens in Nanticoke**

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Geisinger Careworks opened a walk-in clinic Monday at 75 N. Market St. in Nanticoke.

The opening of the \$175,000 facility follows Geisinger Health System's recent opening of a \$3.8 million family practice facility at 128 E. Main St. in downtown Nanticoke.

In the fall of 2012, Geisinger Health System announced it would open 20 to 25 walk-in medical clinics within the next two years and throughout the state, creating more than 100 jobs. Recently, Geisinger Careworks opened after-hours clinics in Tunkhannock and West Hazleton.

The growing popularity of Careworks clinics among consumers can be attributed to their convenience and affordability, said Careworks Chief Executive Officer Ken Berndt.

"Careworks clinics do not require an appointment, are conveniently located, involve only a short wait time, are open evenings and weekends and most of all, they are affordable," Berndt said. "We bill insurance and patients only pay an office visit co-pay."

Patients generally visit Careworks facilities for basic health services related to colds, sore throats, minor cuts, wounds and immunizations.

Careworks also treats other health problems such as allergies, asthma, infections and sprains. One of the most important aspects of Careworks, Berndt said, is they help relieve overcrowding in hospital emergency rooms.

The new 1,000-square-foot Geisinger Careworks walk-in clinic in Nanticoke will be staffed from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday with no appointment necessary.

The facility features a reception area, exam rooms and an on-site laboratory. Its four-person staff includes two family nurse practitioners and two certified medical assistants.



1/10/2014

### **Nanticoke welcomes \$3.8M Geisinger facility**

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Officials from Geisinger Health System joined elected officials Thursday to celebrate the opening of a \$3.8 million family practice facility in downtown Nanticoke.

The 12,000-square-foot facility at 128 E. Main St., next to Luzerne County Community College's Health Sciences Center, features pediatric and adult primary care services as well as laboratory services.

Primary care providers Drs. Susan Werner and Jon Oleginski, physician assistant Lindsey McGeehan and pediatricians Dr. Marie Grabowski and Shaifali Gupta recently started seeing patients at the clinic. The facility employs 13 people, including providers, nurses, a phlebotomist and administrative staff. Its opening marked the completion of a year of construction.

"We are very proud to have Geisinger as part of our downtown," said Nanticoke Mayor Rich Wiaterowski.

State Sen. John Yudichak, D-Plymouth Township, remembered when the Nanticoke State Theatre, the Cove and Broadway Lunch once were located at the site on East Main Street. He said the opening of Geisinger's new health care facility "is one more step in the revitalization of downtown Nanticoke."

Yudichak praised Geisinger for its private investment dollars and for bringing jobs to downtown Nanticoke. Praising developments such as Luzerne County Community College's Health Science Center and Culinary Arts Institute, he said, "We've come a long, long way."

Geisinger Health System has about 40 community practice sites throughout its 44-county coverage area and has continued to expand its primary care services. The family practice facility in Nanticoke is Geisinger's 11th such facility in Luzerne County, officials said.

Geisinger Careworks recently opened after-hours clinics in Tunkhannock and West Hazleton and plans are underway for a new clinic on South Mountain Boulevard in Fairview Township.

The planned 20,800-square-foot facility in Fairview Township would consolidate three current Geisinger locations in the Mountain Top area, including its pediatrics facility, a family practice on Kirby Avenue and an after-hours clinic on South Mountain Boulevard. Geisinger officials hope to break ground for the new facility in the spring, said Kathy Lloyd, associate vice president of regional operations for community practice.

"We find there is more and more need," said Dr. John Gardner, Luzerne County department medical director of community practice for Geisinger Health System. "The demand continues to rise and we want to be here to serve that demand."

1/10/2014

### **Geisinger gives Nanticoke \$3M booster shot**

### **East Main Street facility is 11th of its kind in county**

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Another Geisinger health care site in Luzerne County also is a shot in the arm for Nanticoke's revitalization.

Patients have been coming in to the Geisinger-Nanticoke family practice center since late November. On Thursday, the health care system and local officials made it official with speeches, a ribbon-cutting and an open house.

State Sen. John Yudichak, who was among the speakers during the brief ceremony, characterized the nearly \$4 million center at 128 E. Main St. as another part of the plan to aid Nanticoke's ailing downtown.

He said local officials came together 10 years ago to put together a plan to revitalize the city. The health care facility joins Luzerne County

Community College's adjacent Health Sciences Center and the nearby Joseph A. Paglianite Culinary Arts Institute in the city's downtown. "This is what we dreamed of 10 years ago," Yudichak, who is from Nanticoke, told the small crowd from behind a podium. He credited Nanticoke Mayor Rich Wiaterowski and other city officials, state Rep. Gerald Mullery, as well as Geisinger President Dr. Glenn Steele and Lee Meyers, Geisinger vice president for community practice, for making the center a reality. The \$3.8 million clinic is the 11th such Geisinger clinic in Luzerne County. Dr. John Gardner, Geisinger's community practice director for Luzerne County, said after the ceremony Geisinger plans to open a new family practice clinic in Mountain Top in late spring. He said enactment of the Affordable Care Act, which requires everyone to have health insurance, has not led to opening more clinics than planned. "Perhaps there will be more patients," he said, which could result in adding more physicians at some future point. Geisinger Health System broke ground in November 2012 for the 12,000-square-foot Nanticoke facility. It opened Nov. 25, 2013. It features an adult primary care unit on the second floor and pediatric clinic on the first, as well as on-site laboratory services. The center includes 11 adult care examination rooms, six pediatric examination rooms and a procedure room. The center employs 13, including physicians Susan Werner, M.D., and Jon Olinginski, D.O.; physician assistant Lindsey McGeehan; pediatricians Marie Grabowski, M.D., and Shaifali Gupta, M.D., as well as nurses, a phlebotomist and administrative staff.

1/9/2014

### **On tap: Ben Schonfeld barrels ahead with homebrew operation in Nanticoke**

By Jim Reeser

Ben Schonfeld brews his own beer at Marty's Blue Room in Nanticoke. He brews a barrel of beer at a time and uses four converted refrigerators as fermenters.

View Image Gallery for On tap: Ben Schonfeld barrels ahead with homebrew operation in Nanticoke Image Gallery for On tap: Ben Schonfeld barrels ahead with homebrew operation in Nanticoke

Benny's Brewing Company Image Gallery for On tap: Ben Schonfeld barrels ahead with homebrew operation in Nanticoke

Ben Schonfeld caught the homebrewing bug about seven years ago.

"My family and friends thought the beer was pretty good and it led to this," the 33-year-old Schonfeld said.

"This" is Benny's Brewing Company located in the popular Marty's Blue Room restaurant in Nanticoke.

With each barrel of beer, Schonfeld proves it doesn't take a big, fancy production facility to make good ales and lagers. His work space is an old stairwell that he remodeled into a brewery. He brews one barrel of beer at a time and uses four converted refrigerators as fermenters.

The end result is a main line of beers that includes Amber Lager, Hopenstein (IPA) and Wit - a Belgian-style wheat beer brewed with coriander and bitter orange peel.

"The Amber and Wit are the most popular," Schonfeld said.

Schonfeld typically has one rotating seasonal on tap. There's a Kolsch-style for the summer, Benny's Oktoberfest, Dunkel (a dark German-style lager) and an oatmeal stout.

"I try to do as many styles as I can, but I have to be able to meet the demand of the year-round beers," Schonfeld said. "I do different styles to appeal to the entry level drinker to the craft beer expert."

Schonfeld is currently perfecting a recipe for a single-hop pale ale using the El Dorado hop. The El Dorado is growing in popularity among brewers and provides a tropical fruit or watermelon-like flavor similar to a Jolly Rancher.

"A lot of the beers I brew are based on styles that I like to drink," Schonfeld said. "I research the recipe before making the physical batch of beer.

Once I start brewing there's going to be some trial and error until I get the beer how I want it."

New to Benny's are the 32-ounce growlers. Customers can get a 32-ounce growler - the equivalent of about two beers - filled with their favorite beer to take home.

Tasting notes

Session IPAs are a growing trend in the beer world. Founders, Lagunitas and Boulevard are among the breweries releasing these hop-forward, low-ABV beers.

Lagunitas Brewing Company beers are tough to find in Northeastern Pennsylvania, but I was able to pick up a six-pack of their DayTime ale on a recent road trip.

DayTime, which is 4.65 percent ABV, pours a pale straw color. This dry-hopped ale has an intense aroma of lemon, grapefruit and pine. The taste is all hops - fresh, citrusy, piney, bitter. There's almost no malt sweetness.

Overall, a decent beer, but it's not something I'll keep on hand.

Brew news

We're No. 4! According to a recent Brewers Association analysis, Pennsylvania is No. 4 in craft beer economy and contributed \$2 billion to the economy.

Nationwide, the craft beer industry contributes almost \$34 billion to the economy. Large corporate brewers are not included in the totals. The amount is based on sales from craft brewers to distributors and retailers and the sale of non-beer items at brewpubs.

California tops the list at \$4.7 billion. Texas (\$2.3 billion) is second followed by New York (\$2.2 billion). Colorado is fifth (\$1.6 billion).

Have craft beer news? Email to [jreeser@citizensvoice.com](mailto:jreeser@citizensvoice.com) or follow @CVJimReeser on Twitter.

Meet Ben Schonfeld

Owner of Benny's Brewing Company, located at Marty's Blue Room in Nanticoke

What's the first beer you ever brewed? "It was an ESB."

What's your favorite beer? "Whatever's new. I'm looking to try something new all the time."

What styles of beer would you like to try to brew? "Sour or barrel-aged beers."

What's the one ingredient you want to brew with? "Spruce tips."

If you could brew a beer with anyone, who would it be? "John Kimmich of The Alchemist." (Alchemist, located in Waterbury, Vt., brews Heady Topper, an Imperial IPA considered the world's best beer by Beer Advocate.)

1/8/2014

### **Nanticoke swears in a new mayor**

Susan Bettinger - Times Leader Correspondent

Richard Wiaterowski took the oath of office as the new mayor of the city at Monday evening's reorganization/City Council meeting.

Wiaterowski's wife, Greater Nanticoke Area school board member Wendy Kotsko-Wiaterowski, along with the couple's three children, stood next to Wiaterowski as he was administered the oath by outgoing Mayor Joseph Dougherty.

District Judge Donald Whitaker administered oath to newly elected council members William Brown and Nicole Colatosti-Mackiewicz, as well as to returning council members Lesley Butczynski, and Kevin Coughlin.

Brown was also elected council president, replacing Stephen Duda. Hank Marks, president of the Nanticoke Taxpayers Association for the past 23 years, said that Duda did "a great job" as president and "always had the taxpayers' best interest in mind."

Marks added that the Greater Nanticoke Area School District and the city as a whole have recently improved.

Coughlin was elected vice president, replacing James Litchkofski, who has resigned from council.

Attorney William T. Finnegan Jr. will remain as the city's solicitor.

The next council meeting will be on Jan. 15 at 7 p.m.

1/8/2014

### **Police investigate fight at Nanticoke high school**

Matt Bufano - Citizens Voice

Police and the Greater Nanticoke Area School District are investigating a recent scuffle that reportedly involved students and one mother.

Nanticoke police said Nanticoke high school officials are looking into a Jan. 2 fight, which allegedly featured one mother traveling up the stairs of the high school to apparently confront students.

There is little information to release right now, as the school, in conjunction with the school police officer, are still conducting interviews and investigating, said Nanticoke police Chief William Shultz.

According to Shultz, the parent was picking up her daughter from the school. Shultz said the child went upstairs to her locker but along the way got into a fight with other students. Shultz didn't know how the mother got involved.

The extent and number of injuries resulting from the fight is unknown, Shultz said.

After the school district's investigation is complete, police will determine whether to file charges or issue citations.

1/8/2014

### **Area residents again warned of phone scammers**

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New year, same old scams.

Nanticoke resident Jeff Andrews said he received more than 30 telephone calls from Jamaica this past week telling him he won a Mercedes-Benz and millions of dollars in a lottery.

But before Andrews, 60, could collect his winnings, he was instructed to go to Walmart to purchase a pre-paid Visa-type card, put \$500 on it and share the card number with the caller.

"They were all very persistent," he said. "One of the times they called I just hung up, and three minutes later, someone else called back."

The phone calls originated from the 876 area code, an area code in Jamaica. The U.S. Embassy website for Kingston, Jamaica, warns American citizens that the lottery scam is the most prevalent advance fee fraud used in that country.

Promises of luxurious prizes didn't get in the way of Andrews' judgment, and he reported the calls to police on Monday.

Nanticoke police Chief William Shultz said his department often receives complaints about telephone scams, but its authority doesn't reach foreign soil. He recommended residents block the numbers and contact the attorney general's office and the Department of Justice.

"There's not a lot we can do in the police department except pass the information along," he said.

In 2012, the Federal Trade Commission received 98,479 complaints about lottery scams, the agency's fifth most common complaint, according to FTC spokesman Jay Mayfield.

Many third-party agencies, such as the Better Business Bureau, funnel complaints to the FTC, which are put into a database to help law enforcement conduct investigations to combat fraud.

FairPoint Communications, a local and long-distance telephone and broadband Internet service provider, launched the "Beware: Scams from Area Code 876" campaign in March 2013 in response to the lottery scam and created a website for tips on preventing phone scams: bewareof876.com.

Some tips residents can use to help protect themselves from con artists include don't pay any money to collect supposed sweepstakes winnings, never wire money to anyone with whom you are unfamiliar and never provide anyone with personal information such as bank accounts, pin

numbers or Social Security numbers.

Under federal law, it's illegal to play a foreign lottery from the United States, and legitimate operations won't require you to pay to collect the winnings. If you're getting calls saying you won a lottery you never entered, it's likely a scam.